

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Electoral and Polling District Review Sub Committee

held on Wednesday, 6th November, 2024 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Clowes (Chair)

Councillors L Crane, D Jefferay, R Vernon, F Wilson, S Edgar and S Gardiner

OFFICERS

Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services

Diane Barnard, Electoral Services Team Leader

Leanne Austin, Electoral Services Officer

Peter Jones (virtual), Senior Lawyer

Laura Bateman, Project Officer

Nick Billington, Research and Intelligence Analyst

Sam Jones, Democratic Services Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Clowes be appointed as Chair of the Electoral and Polling District Review Sub Committee.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris O'Leary and James Pearson.

Councillors Steve Edgar and Stewart Gardiner were present as substitutes.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interests of openness and honesty, Councillor Gardiner declared that he was one of the three Members for Knutsford, which the report for Item 5 proposed changes to.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

The public speaking procedure was noted. There were no members of the public registered to speak.

5 CHESHIRE EAST ELECTORAL REVIEW - WARDING PROPOSALS

The sub-committee considered a report containing the draft recommendations of the Boundary Commission for England in respect of the Council's electoral arrangements.

It was noted that there were a number of minor typos, which were not substantive, in the Appendix 1 and Annex A, which would be corrected in further versions. It was noted that the Town and Parish Council boundary proposals were recommendations, and not absolute.

It was noted that the Commission are able to make recommendations to Parliament who in turn can order changes to parish electoral arrangements (i.e. the number of councillors for each parish ward, and the number, names and boundaries of parish wards) as part of an electoral review, but it was not common practice.

Councillor David Edwardes attended to speak as a visiting Member:

"When I saw that the Boundary Commission was recommending splitting Tytherington into two Town Council seats, one of 4596 voters and one of 223 voters I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The whole draft recommendation for Tytherington is preposterous.

Cheshire East Council (CEC) debated and voted on this three times (including full council). In democratic votes they decided to leave Tytherington Ward well alone (except the addition of the area south of The Silk Road being added).

If Tytherington was reduced to one Councillor there would be a variance of 12%. We were advised at our CEC meetings that this variance was impossible and unacceptable.

The Silk Road: In (106) there is mention of The Silk Road. The Labour Party proposal believes that the area south of the road should all go to Bollington. I wish to point out that Kingsfield Park, Tytherington Business Park/Village and Mulberry Park are new builds and have no historical significance whatsoever. All look towards Macclesfield and have no desire to be classed as part of Bollington. The small children go to Marlborough Primary School, Tytherington (plus nursery) where they can safely walk or cycle on paths without touching Manchester Road. There is a private nursery on the business park. The older children will attend Tytherington High School that can be reached, again, without needing to cross a major road. This is an excellent school that I will refer to in my comments on Bollinbrook. The Boundary Commission draft proposal talks of The Springwood Estate. There simply is no such place. Springwood Way is in two halves, not joined up (an administrative error years ago). That whole area, as I say above, is Kingsfield Park (plus a little bit near the Beefeater pub/hotel, The Springwood Park), the business park (note: will this be renamed "Bollington Business Park if this proposal is successful?) They also talk of "electors east of Tytherington Lane". As Tytherington Lane

runs from The Silk Road down to Manchester Road this would include all the properties mentioned including Mulberry Park.

Central ward additions: They are talking of "electors south of Tytherington School" (113). Are they aware that the high school shares an entry/exit with Beech Farm Drive? Does this not make things messy administratively? There is also a new estate, The Kings Quarter, that has been built on the old Kings School playing fields. This doesn't get a mention in your proposals that I can see? At the back of the estate, off Wightmans Avenue, there are steps up onto Northgate Avenue, which leads to Beech Lane and then the high school. This estate isn't Bollinbrook and isn't Central Ward. Have the boundary commission even considered this estate? All the roads north of Coare Street would definitely prefer to stay in Tytherington.

Bollinbrook: Perhaps the most contentious of the proposals. With respect, I do wonder which residents they spoke to in Bollinbrook. The feeling that the residents would prefer to be part of Broken Cross and Upton is certainly not the feeling I get. How did the commission decide who to ask for their opinion? The only arguments I can see mentioned in the proposals are: 1. The children of Bollinbrook Primary attend a feeder school for Fallibroome Academy. Therefore, they look towards Broken Cross and Upton. Tytherington High School, as I have said previously, is an excellent school. Many Bollinbrook parents chose to send their children there after Bollinbrook Primary (this is their freedom of choice). I just did a google map search. The Packhorse to Fallibroome, walking, 1.4 miles, The Packhorse to Tytherington High School 0.6 miles. Half the distance! 2. They mention the river Bollin and railway line. There is a footpath/cycle path from Bollinbrook across The Riverside Park, crossing the Bollin on a substantial bridge and then going under the railway beside the Park offices, car park and toilets then out onto Beechwood Mews. Across a controlled crossing and you are at the high school.

There are other things I'd like to mention:

- 1. (113) "Hibel Road is not a physical barrier" (4 lane road) (107) "Community ties between the Springwood Estate (sic) and the area of Bollington north of The Silk Road" (fast 4 lane highway with no physical barrier) and yet (111) says "Chester Road and Congleton Road ...clear, identifiable boundaries" (both 2 lane roads).*
- 2. Bollinbrook has no places of worship, yet Tytherington has Tytherington Family Worship, a thriving church holding 2 services every Sunday, dementia groups, coffee mornings, mothers and toddlers groups and so on. By alienating Bollinbrook from the Tytherington Community it will damage the spirit engendered over the years.*
- 3. Tytherington has Rugby Drive playing fields (not mentioned in the recommendations) plus the football pitches on Summerlea Close, Beech Hall School and Sandwich Drive. Tytherington Juniors Football Club, the driving force of football in Tytherington has 67*

junior teams. Bollinbrook has none. Again, if Bollinbrook is split off there will be an "us and them".

- 4. Bollinbrook has just the Packhorse Club (rescued from bankruptcy 5 years ago), The British Flag on Coare Street (soon to close) and the Ship on Beech Lane (already closed). Tytherington has The Brocklehurst Arms, The Tytherington Club and the Beefeater. Again, I fear the alienation of Bollinbrook if it were to be no longer part of the Tytherington Community.*
- 5. Bollinbrook has a small parade of shops. Tytherington has a busy precinct. Tytherington business park has a thriving cafe that acts as an important social centre.*
- 6. West Park is just in the present Tytherington Ward and no other play areas, but the "new" Tytherington has five children's play areas.*
- 7. Last year we planted an orchard in Bollinbrook on behalf of the Tytherington Community."*

Councillor D Edwardes also read a statement from the Independent Group:

"I think what is important to emphasise is that the boundary commission say they do not want to separate communities yet that is exactly what they are proposing to do to Tytherington to make the numbers fit, even though they will still end up with 12% too many residents for one member ward. The houses to the north of Tytherington have no connection with Bollington which is a long-established small town with its own canal identity. Again, the only reason to include them is to try and make the numbers add up for the labour proposal.

The council did not seek to get direct feedback from residents as the Labour group did. However, that evidence will be provided before the end of the consultation.

Bollinbrook is an isolated community (it has its own shops and school) and it does not matter which ward it sits in, it doesn't have much in common with Upton Priory or Broken Cross as they each have their own shops and schools too. Tytherington and Bollinbrook do share the Bollin Valley country park which can be accessed from each side of the Bollin River on the numerous footpaths, likewise there are several underpass's that enable residents to pass under the railway on foot or cycle and is very popular with dog walkers from both communities.

The council proposal worked very well which is why we should support it as is but enhance it with resident's support by means of a petition against the labour proposal."

Councillor Janet Clowes read a statement from Councillor Chris O'Leary:

"In addition to the comments previously made about Livesley Road in Tytherington, I would have made the following comments today:

Bolinbrook. I agree that this is very much a community in of itself. While the argument can be made that it has little in connection with Tytherington, such arguments can also be made about its connections with Broken Cross. There is some considerable distance between Bolinbrook and other similar housing in Broken Cross, and residents do not look towards Broken Cross for their shopping etc. Secondary school children from Bolinbrook go equally to Tytherington School and Falibroome.

On Livesley Road, I note that the Boundary Commission is recommending a new Macclesfield Town Council ward of Macclesfield Springwood, that would have some 300 voters. It is worth stressing that it is Cheshire East Council, not the LGBCE, that will need to consult on these proposals, and it is Cheshire East Council that will face accusations of gerrymandering here.

On Beech Farm Drive, there is no possible justification for treating this as anything but Tytherington. It is divided from Macclesfield town by the river Bollin and open green space, the houses are of similar character to most of Tytherington (and dissimilar to Macclesfield central), and residents there very clearly associate with Tytherington.

On the Hibel Road, it is indeed the case that people cross this road every day. But it is a dual carriage way that is 5 lanes wide along most of its length. It is crossed at one of two places – the junction with Jordangate/Beech Lane and an elevated footbridge that crosses near Brock Street/Pownall Road. This elevated footpath crosses the Hibel Road at a major cutting – there are very high brick walls to the north separating the road from the much higher land and housing on the northern side. The housing to the north of Hibel Road – the area that the Commission wants to be in Macclesfield Central ward – is further cut off not just by the road, but by the Toyota dealership. Jordangate multi-storey car park, the old telephone exchange, the Post Office local sorting office and delivery centre, and a range of other businesses and public buildings. While there are some residential properties along Cumberland Street for example, much of this is office and commercial space.”

Councillors Vernon and Wilson spoke in support of the Boundary Commission’s Macclesfield proposals, noting that it would be inappropriate for a Springwood Parish Ward, and that a 12% variation in the proposal for Tytherington had been justified by the Boundary Commission due to low levels of deprivation.

It was noted that Macclesfield Members submitted warding proposals for Macclesfield, which was confounded by the fact it had to reduce from 12 to 11 Members. It was noted that it would be acceptable for Bollinbrook to return to its previous Ward due to its links with that area.

Nick Billington provided an overview of the report and analysis of the draft recommendation changes and Members discussed the recommendations

in turn, choosing to utilize their powers to resolve a number of issues, and defer others to a later meeting date, when further information would be available.

RESOLVED:

The sub-committee, in accordance with its delegated powers, resolved to fully and formally determine all draft recommendations set out in the Commission's report, except those for Borough warding for Knutsford and Macclesfield (which also affects a section of the boundary with the would-be Bollington & Rainow Borough ward), and those for parish warding for Crewe North, Crewe Central, Knutsford, Macclesfield and Sandbach, and not to utilise its powers to refer any decisions to the Corporate Policy Committee or Council:

(Unanimously) ALDERLEY EDGE & CHORLEY BOROUGH WARD

A friendly amendment was proposed, seconded and voted on to not refer this recommendation to Corporate Policy Committee:

Accept the Commission's recommended name of 'Alderley Edge & Chorley' and not refer the recommendation to Corporate Policy Committee.

(By majority) BRERETON AND DANE VALLEY BOROUGH WARDS

No change to the current Dane Valley Borough ward boundary (and therefore the Bluebell Green area is included in Brereton Borough ward).

(Unanimously) CREWE WEST AND WISTASTON BOROUGH WARDS

That officers continue to work with the Commission, to establish the cause of the boundary line discrepancies identified along the Crewe and Wistaston parish boundary.

That officers seek to reach a common understanding with the Commission on which current and future electoral areas each of the affected properties are/ would be in.

That the Council's formal response to the Draft Recommendations explains that the Commission's statutory criteria (particularly on local communities' interests and identities) would be best met by placing the affected properties in the Borough ward that the Council's submitted proposals envisaged, namely, 76 Dane Bank Avenue and 111 Moreton Avenue in Crewe West Borough ward (and Crewe West parish ward); and 41 Thirlmere Road, numbers 1 and 2 Wistaston Avenue and numbers 74 and 98 Wistaston Green Road in Wistaston Borough ward.

(Unanimously) SANDBACH/ WHEELLOCK & WINTERLEY BOROUGH WARDS

That the Council's formal response to the Draft Recommendations explains the historic boundary line inconsistency around 1 Mill Hill Lane; and explains that the Commission's statutory criteria (particularly on local communities' interests and identities) would be best met by placing this property in the Wheelock & Winterley Borough ward (and consequently in the Commission's recommended Sandbach Wheelock parish ward).

(Unanimously) OTHER BOROUGH WARDS

That officers continue to work with the Commission, to establish the cause of the boundary line discrepancies identified along the Alsager/ Hassall, Rainow/ Macclesfield Forest & Wildboarclough and Wybunbury/ Stapeley parish boundaries.

That officers seek to reach a common understanding with the Commission on which current and future electoral areas each of the affected properties are/ would be in.

That the Council's formal response to the Draft Recommendations explains that the Commission's statutory criteria (particularly on local communities' interests and identities) would be best met by placing the affected properties in the Borough ward that the Council's submitted proposals envisaged, namely: 'Roughwood' in Odd Rode Borough ward; Lower Windyway Farm and Lower Windy Way Barn in Bollington & Rainow Borough ward; and 'Moorlands' in Wybunbury Borough ward.

(Unanimously) CONGLETON PARISH WARDING

To accept the Commission's recommendations for parish warding for Congleton.

(Unanimously) CREWE PARISH WARDING

To accept the Commission's recommendations for parish warding for all of Crewe, except for the Crewe Central and Crewe North parish wards.

(Unanimously) HULME WALFIELD & SOMERFORD BOOTHS PARISH WARDING

To accept the Commission's recommendations for parish warding for Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths.

(Unanimously) NANTWICH PARISH WARDING

To accept the Commission's recommendations for parish warding for Nantwich.

(Unanimously) WILMSLOW PARISH WARDING

To accept the Commission's recommendations for parish warding for Wilmslow.

(Unanimously)

The sub-committee resolved to consider the remaining draft recommendations at the sub-committee's 15 November 2024 meeting:

BOLLINGTON & RAINOW AND MACCLESFIELD BOROUGH WARDS

KNUTSFORD BOROUGH WARD(S)

CREWE PARISH WARDING (FOR THE CREWE CENTRAL AND CREWE NORTH PARISH WARDS ONLY)

KNUTSFORD PARISH WARDING

MACCLESFIELD PARISH WARDING

SANDBACH PARISH WARDING

6 CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW

The sub-committee considered a report which considered the need for the Council to conduct a review of its polling districts and seeks authority for a consultation to take place in respect of the proposals which are set out in this report.

It was noted that the Council was not aware of any specific polling district issues which are significant enough to justify polling district changes in the context of the ongoing electoral review by the Commission.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Electoral and Polling District Review Sub-Committee:

1. Authorise the commencement of a Polling District Review for the Cheshire East Borough.
2. Authorise Officers to undertake a consultation upon proposals for the Council's Polling Districts, as set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of this report, and to take any other associated actions.
3. Agree that a report will be brought back to the Sub-Committee in due course which will provide details of the consultation responses, together with any other associated matters.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.12 pm

Councillor J Clowes (Chair)

