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COUNCIL MEETING

ITEM 13

Wednesday, 24th June, 2015

7.30 pm

Town Hall, Watford

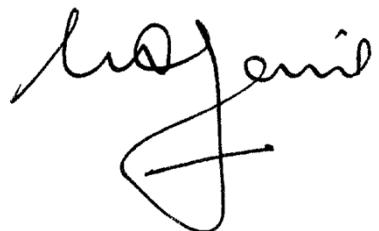
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CONTACT

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13. REVIEW OF WARD BOUNDARIES

Report of Head of Democracy and Governance

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "manny lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "manny" on top and "lewis" below it, separated by a diagonal line.

Manny Lewis, Managing Director

PART A

Report to: Council
Date of meeting: 24 June 2015
Report of: Head of Democracy and Governance
Title: Review of Ward Boundaries

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Council of the deliberations of the Boundary Review Group on Ward Boundaries for Watford

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council note that the Boundary Review Group have been unable to make a unanimous recommendation to Council on any changes to Watford's boundaries but have agreed that Council should consider any individual submission from the party Groups presented to it.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Carol Chen Head of Democracy and Governance
telephone extension: 8350 email: carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Council at its meeting on the 28 January 2015 agreed to make a submission to the Boundary Commission that the number of councillors for Watford should remain at 36.
- 3.2 The Boundary Commission on 12 May 2015 published its consultation on Boundary change for Watford and indicated it was minded to keep 36 councillors. It also indicated that as Watford elects by thirds it would expect that each ward should contain 3 members.
- 3.3 Members will recall that the reason for the review is the fact that at present Watford has 4 wards where the electoral imbalance is over or under 10%.

3.4 When making any recommendations the Council will need to have regard to the criteria that the Boundary Commission require to be satisfied.

These are:

- Delivering electoral equality for local voters-this means ensuring that each local councillor, or in this case ward represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of their vote is the same regardless of where they live in Watford.
- Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities-this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- Promoting effective and convenient local government-this means ensuring that the new wards can be represented effectively by their elected representatives and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the council to conduct its business effectively.

3.6 Delivering Electoral Equality

This is the only criterion that the Boundary Commission can actually measure.

They have published on their web site details of the current number of electors in each ward and we have given them figures of anticipated growth up to 2020 (based on projections on extant planning permissions) which was the date they specified they would consider.

It should be noted that the Council should be aiming for an average of 2,165 electors per councillor or 6,494 per ward by 2020.

3.7 Reflecting the Interests and Identities of Local Communities

The Commission will be looking for evidence to support any new wards based on this factor, things they will have regard to are, transport links, existence of local community groups, what areas do such groups cover. Local facilities. Identifiable boundaries such as natural features such as rivers or major roads and railway lines forming well known barriers between communities. Shared interests between communities.

3.8 Promoting effective and convenient local government and reflecting electoral cycles

We have already made a submission relating to this when making our recommendation on councillor numbers. The Commission have indicated they are minded to accept this number. As we elect by thirds the premise we will be working under is that each ward will comprise 3 councillors.

3.9 The Council appointed the Boundary Review Group to consider any proposals put forward and if possible come to Council with recommendations on a submission. The Review Group has met three times on the 11, 17 and 22 June (minutes of those meetings are attached as Appendix 1). It was discovered at the 11 June meeting that the Boundary Commission had not published the figures the Council had provided for

it for projected electors up to 2020 correctly, this was pointed out to the Commission who have apologised and corrected the figures.

- 3.10 All Groups submitted proposals for altering the ward boundaries to try to achieve both better electoral balance and retain the identity of communities and recognised boundaries. Each of the proposals had merit, however there was no common ground between all three. After much debate the Review Group reached the conclusion that it was not going to be able to put forward any proposals that had unanimous agreement. It therefore agreed not to make any recommendation at all to Council but to leave it to any of the Groups to put forward their submission for consideration by Council.
- 3.11 Council is reminded that whatever set of proposals Council decides to adopt must be supported by evidence to satisfy the Boundary Commissions criteria.
- 3.12 Submissions have to be made by 6 July 2015. The next steps for the Boundary Commission after the close of this round of consultation will be for them to draft their recommendations for new Ward patterns for Watford. These will be published for consultation on or around 26 August with a closing date for comments of 24 October. It is proposed that the Boundary Review Group will be reconvened once the proposals are published to consider the Council's response. Council will consider its response in October Council. The Boundary Commission will publish its final decision on 3 December 2015.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

- 4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications in this report

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that members need to be mindful of the Boundary Commissions guidance when making any recommendations

Appendix

Minutes of Boundary Review Group 11, 17 and 22 June 2015

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

None

Boundary Review Group

Thursday 11 June 2015

Present: Councillor Sharpe (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Johnson, Khan, Mehta and Scudder

Also present: Head of Democracy and Governance
Electoral Services Manager
Democratic Services Manager

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
	None were received
2	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
	There were no disclosures of interest
3	REVIEW OF WARD BOUNDARIES
	<p>The Head of Democracy and Governance outlined the current situation. Work had started on the Boundary Review at the end of 2014. Council made a recommendation to the Boundary Commission that we retain the current number of Councillors at 36. There was now a consultation period open with the Boundary Commission where they had recommended retaining 36 councillors across 12 wards.</p> <p>In making recommendations regarding the size of wards, the Head of Democracy and Governance reminded the group that there were three criteria which the Boundary Commission would take into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Delivering electoral equality – this was their primary consideration2. Reflecting interests and identities of local communities e.g., housing estates, natural boundaries (roads and rivers)3. Effective and convenient local government – this case has already been made through the submission on the number of councillors. <p>The Boundary Review Group now needed to look at what ward patterns might work and have the evidence to support any recommendations.</p> <p>If councillors were unable to unanimously agree on a proposal then areas where there was some agreement could be forwarded to the Boundary Commission. If the Council did not make a submission then the Boundary Commission would decide how to divide the Borough.</p> <p>The Head of Democracy and Governance commented it had been discovered that</p>

the incorrect data had been put on the Boundary Commission website for public consultation as they had missed out the projected figures up to 2020 that the Council had supplied them.

The Elections Manager explained that the projected figures had been obtained from the Planning Policy department regarding developments which had been given planning consent.

He also explained that the 1 December 2014 actual elector figures used by the Boundary Commission were lower than those now on the electoral register at 1 June 2015 as there had been no autumn canvass due to Individual Electoral Registration earlier in the year. There had also been a drive by elections to register voters prior to the General Election in May 2015. The Elections Manager had pointed out the error in the projected figures to the Commission and also given them the actual electoral numbers as at 1 June 2015 and suggested if they were correcting the projected figures to 2020 they might want to also update the actual figures. However, the Boundary Commission may continue to work with 1 December 2014 figures.

The Elections Manager continued that any developments which would not take place for more than 5 years, i.e. beyond 2020, were not taken into consideration in the projected figures.

Following a question from Councillor Sharpe, the Elections Manager said that the figures councillors should use in order to make ward calculations were the total electorate at 1 December 2014 and the 2020 projection figure of 75,762 but undertook to advise members further upon receipt of confirmation from the Boundary Commission.

Councillor Mehta commented that it was important to link councillors' local knowledge with the figures presented by the Elections Manager. The Elections Manager responded that Councillors would be provided with a list of all electors in every street which would show the impact of moving a street to another ward. However, moving sections of streets would have to be looked at closely with the elections team.

The Group discussed an extension of the consultation deadline to take into account the incorrect numbers published on the website as some community groups had already been looking at the figures. They also requested that the Boundary Commission be asked to contact all those who had already made a submission to explain that the figures were incorrect. Also, that councillors who had been publicising the consultation to residents should try to make them aware of the error. The Head of Democracy and Governance would contact the Communications team regarding putting a message on the Council's website.

The Group requested that urgent contact be made with the Boundary Commission to ask them to take into account the figures which were correct at 1 June 2015.

Councillor Khan commented that the wards which would need to be looked at were: Tudor, Central, Vicarage and Oxhey. There was a possibility that Woodside and

	<p>Stanborough may also have to be considered. Councillor Mehta asked that the Group work towards a 0% variance to avoid having to repeat a Boundary Review too soon. The Elections Manager stated that for a further boundary review by the Boundary Commission to take place within the next five years, or anytime soon thereafter, there would need to be a variance which exceeded 10% in 25% of wards.</p> <p>The Group requested that the figures circulated at the meeting be provided electronically.</p> <p>Councillor Sharpe asked that each group bring back a proposal to the next meeting. It was decided in order to give time for this that the meeting on Monday 15 June be cancelled, therefore the next meeting would be Wednesday 17 June 6.30pm. The Head of Democracy and Governance asked that any suggestions from groups be forwarded to her 24 hours before the next meeting in order that they might be displayed on maps for discussion at the next meeting. A map would also be produced showing electoral equality without any community boundaries being taken into account to be shared at the next meeting.</p> <p>ACTION – Elections Manager to contact Boundary Commission to request that everyone who has already made a submission as part of the consultation is contacted regarding the error in the figures on the website. Also to request that the Boundary Commission uses 1 June 2015 figures.</p> <p>ACTION – Elections Manager to provide figures circulated at the meeting electronically to the Group.</p> <p>ACTION – Head of Democracy and Governance to contact Communications team regarding putting notice on the website that the figures had been incorrect.</p> <p>ACTION – Group members to bring back proposals from each political group to be discussed at next meeting. Also, a copy sent to the Head of Democracy and Governance 24 hours prior to the meeting.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED That the meeting on 15 June be cancelled</p>
5	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
	6.30pm Wednesday 17 June, Committee Room 1

Chair
Boundary Review Group

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m.
and finished at 7.35 p.m.

Boundary Review Group

Wednesday 17 June 2015

Present: Councillor Sharpe (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Johnson, Khan, Mehta and Scudder

Also present: Head of Democracy and Governance
Electoral Services Manager
Democratic Services Manager

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
	None were received
2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
	The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.
3.	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
	There were no disclosures of interest
4.	POLITICAL GROUP PROPOSALS FOR BOUNDARY REVIEW
	<p>Councillor Iain Sharpe outlined the structure of the meeting, that each group had been asked to produce a proposal for the Boundary Review and they would present this in turn and collectively look for any common ground to go forward with as a Council proposal.</p> <p>The first map considered was one produced by officers showing near electoral equality across the Borough. The Elections Manager explained that this was not a proposal and no community considerations had been taken into account. The exercise had just been undertaken at Members' request to illustrate wards as close to equality as possible.</p> <p>Councillor Khan presented the Labour Group proposals. Which included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moving Courtlands Close to Woodside (from Leggatts)• Moving the Meriden section of St Albans Road into Stanborough• Extending Nascot ward further down Langley Road• Moving Raven Close into Park (from Holywell)• Ending Callowland boundary at Penn Road• Moving new development at Watford Junction into Tudor along with part of Central ward• Move Watford Fields into Oxhey along with a section of the Health Campus• Split Health Campus across Oxhey, Vicarage and Holywell

	<p>The Elections Manager commented that with regards to the Oxhey proposals it would need to be Watford Health Campus or Watford Fields moving and not both. Therefore, the Labour Group proposal could put Watford Fields back in Central.</p> <p>Councillor Mehta presented the Conservative Group proposals. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move whole Health Campus into Oxhey Ward (Health Campus development seen as one community) or move Watford Fields into Oxhey • Make whole of Avenue into Nascot (currently half Nascot, half Park) • Nascot ward – move Greenbanks into Leggatts • Kytes estate move to Woodside from Meriden • Tudor to gain electoral district HA (Radlett Road) <p>Councillor Sharpe presented the Liberal Democrat Group proposals. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving the blocks of flats in the Health Campus that would be overlooking the river into Oxhey (to take in Colne Valley) • Vicarage – move Raven Close into Park • Nascot – move Greenbanks into Leggatts. However, Nascot is currently at 8% and the percentage difference would be decreasing as a result of developments in other areas of the Borough • Radlett Road estate to Tudor • No change to Woodside and Stanborough as both are at the lower limit. <p>Following discussion around whether the Watford Junction development would be completed by 2020 the Elections Manager advised that in the Council's supporting evidence detailed explanation could be given on expected developments. This was in response to Members concerns that moving the whole of the development into Tudor may not increase Tudor's numbers sufficiently by 2020.</p> <p>Areas of possible agreement between the groups' proposals were identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Campus into Oxhey • Watford Fields into Central • Radlett Road into Tudor • Raven Court into Park
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Group representatives to remain in contact over next few days to look for areas of common agreement.</p> <p>Extra meeting if needed on Monday 22 June 6.30pm</p>

Chair
Boundary Review Group

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m.
and finished at 7.35 p.m.

Boundary Review Group

Monday 22 June 2015

Present: Councillor Sharpe (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Johnson, Khan, Mehta and Scudder

Also present: Head of Democracy and Governance
Electoral Services Manager
Democratic Services Manager

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
	None were received
2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
	The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed and it was noted that the areas of agreement outlined in the minutes were only possibilities that had been discussed.
3.	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
	There were no disclosures of interest
4.	PROPOSALS FOR BOUNDARY REVIEW SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL
	<p>Councillor Sharpe set out that at the last meeting proposals were put forward and there were areas identified for possible agreement. Having looked further into this Councillor Sharpe commented that there was merit in unanimity but little merit in trying to get agreement in 2 out of 3 groups. It had not been possible to find a solution for Radlett Road/Oxhey Fields. The Council could propose up to a 10% variance but going over this percentage would be hard to justify unless there were exceptional reasons. With regards to moving the Avenue completely into Nascot it would mean moving areas of Greenbanks and Courtlands Drive into Leggatts. The disadvantage of this move would be that residents in those areas also identified themselves as part of Nascot. Therefore, no move may be preferable.</p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor Mehta, Councillor Sharpe explained that Nascot would not be too large by 2020 as developments in other wards would have taken place. The Head of Democracy and Governance commented that by 2020 Nascot would only be 8% over.</p> <p>Councillor Khan commented that as the numbers were incorrect initially this meant that parties and residents were working on the wrong figures. As the figures had been changed it had meant less consultation with the parties and a shorter time frame in order to make comments. Councillor Sharpe agreed and thanked the Elections Manager for his e-mail to the Boundary Commission.</p>

	<p>Councillor Sharpe concluded that the Boundary Review Group had sought to achieve unanimous agreement but this had not been reached. He would put forward the Liberal Democrat Group's submission to Council and the Labour and Conservative Groups could move their proposals as amendments. The Council could then send the minutes of the Council meeting to the Boundary Commission along with the submission. Groups could also make their own submissions directly to the Boundary Commission.</p> <p>The Head of Democracy and Governance outlined the next stages following the submission from Council. In August the Council would receive the Boundary Commission's draft recommendation. In October Council would meet to consider the proposals and in December the Council would receive a final response from the Boundary Commission.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That unanimous agreement could not be reached and that each group would put their proposal to Council.</p>

Chair
Boundary Review Group

The meeting started at 7.00 p.m.
and finished at 7.30 p.m.