

8 JANUARY 2016

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a special meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee held in Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Friday, 8 January 2016

- * Cllr S J Clarke (Chairman)
- * Cllr L R Puttock (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * G C Beck
- * G R Blunden
- * Ms L C Ford
- * R L Frampton
- * A T Glass
- L E Harris
- * J M Olliff-Cooper

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

J E Binns
Mrs F Carpenter
M R Harris
Mrs A J Hoare
B Rickman

Councillors:

- * A K Penson
- D N Tungate
- A S Wade
- * Mrs C V Ward
- * J G Ward
- * Mrs P A Wyeth

Councillors:

W S Rippon-Swaine
M A Steele
D B Tipp
R A Wappet
C A Wise

Also In Attendance:

County Cllrs Miss England, Rice and Thornber
Mr G P Flexman, Clerk, New Milton Town Council
Mr B Olorenshaw, representing New Forest Business Partnership & Hampshire Chamber of Commerce

Officers Attending:

Mrs R Rutins and Ms M Stephens

Apologies:

Cllrs Harris and Tungate.

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

37 ELECTORAL REVIEW OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Committee considered the District Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Committee for England's (LGBCE's) draft recommendations on their electoral review of Hampshire County Council. The current consultation period ended on 11 January 2016. Final recommendations from the LGBCE were expected to be published on 5 April 2016, with new electoral arrangements coming into effect at the 2017 elections. He reminded the Committee that it had been given delegated powers by the Council to agree the Council's response to the LGBCE.

The Chairman reported the receipt of a communication from Burley Parish Council expressing their wish for the Parish to form part of the Brockenhurst Division, and not the Ringwood Division. He also reported that New Milton Town Council had informed the District Council of its decision to ask the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for the Bashley ward of the Town Council to form part of the Milford and Hordle Division (together with the Fernhill Division).

In recommending new electoral arrangements for Hampshire County Council, the LGBCE proposed that the total number of county councillors for Hampshire remain at 78, but that the number representing New Forest District be reduced from 11 to 10. Eastleigh Borough Council would be allocated 8 county councillors in place of the current 7. The reduction in the number of councillors for New Forest District involved the substantial redrawing of the divisional boundaries in the district.

It was reported that Hampshire County Council had decided to request the LGBCE to increase the number of County Councillors from 78 to 79, to enable the continued allocation of 11 Councillors to New Forest District. If, however, the number of members for New Forest District remained at 10, it was recommending the changes set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of the report to the Committee.

County Cllrs Thornber, England, Rice and Rippon-Swaine were in attendance and addressed the Committee. Cllr Thornber expressed the view that the LGBCE had placed undue weight on achieving electoral equality across Hampshire. The consequences were particularly evident in New Forest District where community identity and effective and convenient local government would be compromised. The LGBCE's proposals to reduce the number of divisions in New Forest District would lead to the relation of the largest and the third-largest divisions in the county in geographical terms, with multiple parish councils within them. This would make the task of a New Forest County Councillor very challenging.

If the LGBCE did not reinstate the 11 Divisions in New Forest District, the County Council had made its own recommendations based on a 10 division model. The most significant of the changes included moving Burley to the Brockenhurst Division, Exbury & Lepe to the South Waterside Division and Hyde and Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley from the Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge Division to the Ringwood Division. The proposals avoided splitting the Copythorne, Netley Parish and Bransgore Parishes. The County Council's recommendations did not differ greatly from the "NFDC Options" put forward for the Committee's consideration. Cllr Thornber appreciated that District Councillors, with their own knowledge of the communities they represented, had a valuable contribution to make to proposals for the re-drawing of the Divisions and he understood the rationale leading to the "NFDC Options".

Cllr England expressed the view that the LGBCE had not taken on board the unique considerations that applied to the New Forest, such as the large number of tourists in the summer months and the complexities surrounding decision making, with the need to consult numerous organisations, some of which had powers to veto decisions.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine agreed that New Forest District should have 11 County Councillors because of the size and unique characteristics of the area. However, if the number was to be reduced to 10, he favoured the proposals set out in the "NFDC Options". These included Hyde being in the Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge Division and Burley in the Ringwood Division. He saw no objection to Burley being in the Ringwood Division because of its proximity to the Ringwood area, and because properties shared a Ringwood post code

Mr Olorenshaw representing the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and the New Forest Business Partnership was invited to speak. He said that businesses within the New Forest often contacted their local county councillor for assistance and advice on a variety of issues. There was general concern from the business community that, by reducing the number of divisions, the workload on the remaining councillors would become overly burdensome and would affect their ability to assist local business due to time constraints.

Mr Flexman, Clerk to New Milton Town Council, reported that the Town Council wished Bashley ward to fall within the Milford & Hordle Division. He pointed out that New Milton was the only town/parish in the District to be divided across three County Divisions. However, it was explained that, without making compensating reductions in the size of the Milford & Hordle Division, moving the whole of Bashley ward into the Milford & Hordle Division would make the Division too large to comply with the LGBCE's electoral equality thresholds and would almost certainly be rejected by the LGBCE. It was also pointed out that, if the County Council's proposals for splitting the Bashley ward with one polling district in the Milford & Hordle Division and the other in the Brockenhurst Division, it would be necessary to create an additional town council ward in Bashley. In addition, the town and district wards would no longer be coterminous.

Cllr Harris reported that Exbury & Lepe Parish Council did not wish the Parish to be within the South Waterside Division, but rather to remain in the Brockenhurst Division. Exbury & Lepe was a very rural parish, with greater affinity to communities in the Brockenhurst Division, rather than Fawley, its neighbouring parish to the east.

Cllr Wise spoke on behalf of Boldre Parish Council to request that Boldre be not joined with Lymington as a combined Division. The Parish Council felt strongly that the interests and characteristics of Boldre Parish were very different to Lymington. The Parish Council had written to the LGBCE outlining their views on this matter.

The various options put forward by the LGBCE, the County Council and the District Council were discussed in detail by the Committee.

In discussing the options regarding Exbury and Lepe, Cllr Glass moved that Exbury and Lepe form part of the South Waterside Division. The motion was seconded. Members expressed views both for and against the motion. Upon a vote the motion was carried.

In the ensuing debate, members agreed with the views expressed by the County Councillors, that the New Forest was a unique area with many challenges that had not been properly considered by the LGBCE. The Committee supported the County Council's recommendation that the number of County Councillors for Hampshire be increased to 79 to enable the New Forest to retain 11 Councillors. If this increased number was not agreed by the LGBCE, the Committee favoured the "NFDC Options", subject to Exbury & Lepe forming part of the South Waterside, and not the Brockenhurst, Division.

RESOLVED:

That representations be made to the LGBCE –

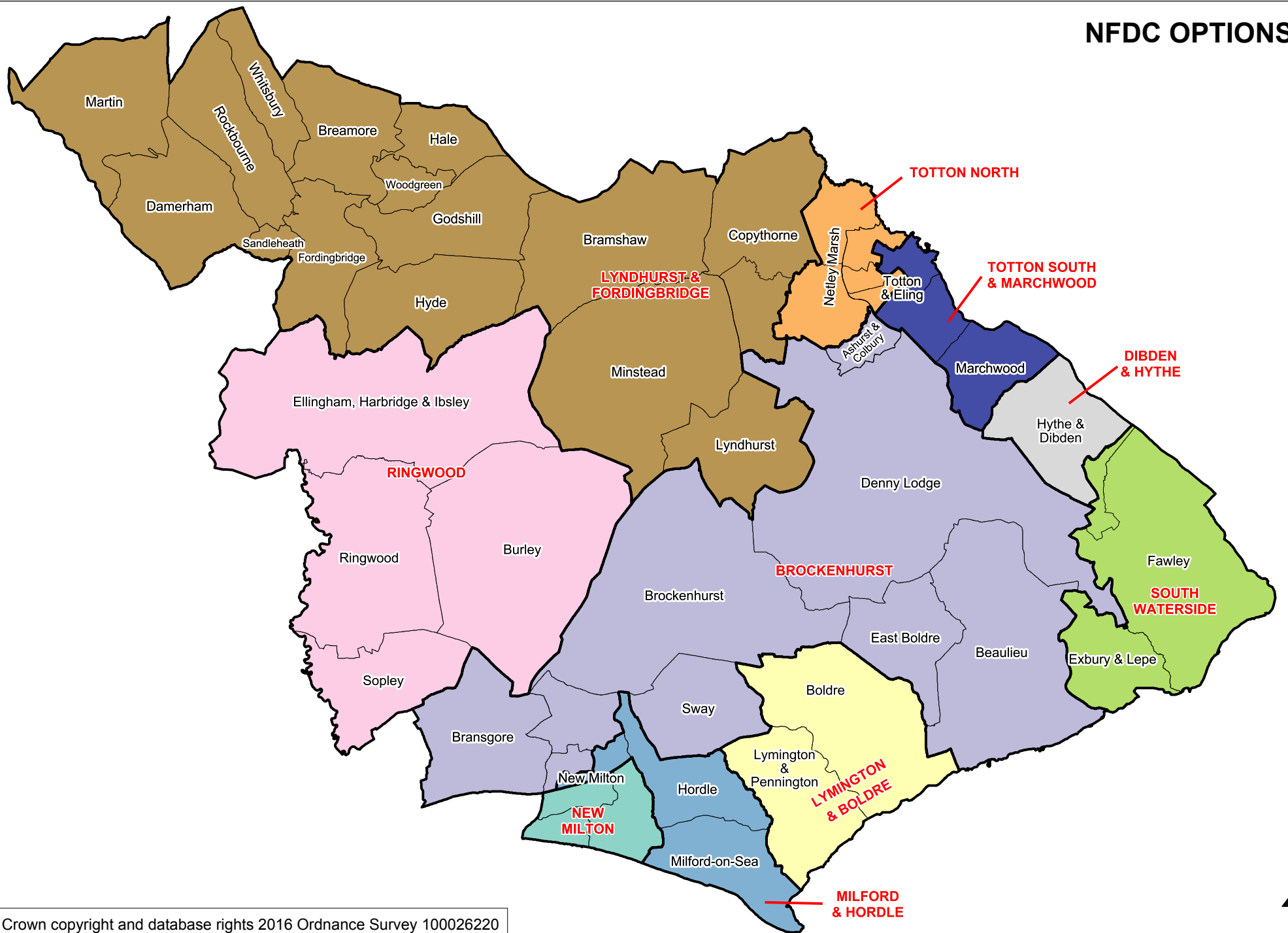
- (i) that the number of County Councillors for Hampshire be increased to 79, and that an extra County Councillor be allocated to New Forest District;
- (ii) that, if the number of County Councillors for New Forest District is reduced to 10, the Divisions be as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to these minutes; and
- (iii) that the following names be given to the proposed Divisions: -

LGCE Proposal	Recommended Alternative
Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge	North Forest
Brockenhurst	Mid-Forest
Ringwood	West Forest
Milford & Hordle	Milford, Hordle & Fernhill

CHAIRMAN

Attachment: Minute 37 – Appendices 1 and 2

NFDC OPTIONS



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APPENDIX 2

Suggested composition of County Divisions - recommended by NFDC

			Variance from County Average - 2021 (13,846)
Brockenhurst		14,957	8%
Ashurst & Colbury	1833		
Denny Lodge	260		
Beaulieu	663		
East Boldre	693		
Brockenhurst	2904		
Sway	2903		
Bashley ward of New Milton Town Council	2168		
Bransgore	3533		
Dibden & Hythe (as LGBCE's recommendation)		14,371	4%
The parish of Hythe & Dibden, with the exception of the Furzedown ward			
Lymington & Boldre (as LGBCE's recommendation)		14,749	7%
The parishes of Lymington & Pennington; and Boldre			
Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge		14,981	8%
Bramshaw	564		
Breamore	280		
Copythorne (north & south)	2,267		
Damerham	418		
Fordingbridge	4,994		
Godshill	379		
Hale	452		
Hyde	750		
Lyndhurst	2,681		
Martin	329		
Minstead	567		
Rockbourne	241		
Sandleheath	505		
Whitsbury	151		
Woodgreen	403		
Milford & Hordle (as LGBCE's recommendation)		13,877	0%
Parishes of Milford on Sea and Hordle; and the Fernhill ward of New Milton Town Council			

New Milton (as LGBCE's recommendation)		14,511	5%
Barton, Becton and Milton wards of New Milton Town Council			
Ringwood		14,240	3%
Ringwood	11,641		
Burley	1,119		
Sopley	586		
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	894		
South Waterside		12,738	-8%
Fawley Parish and Furzedown ward of Hythe & Dibden Parish Council	12,602		
Exbury & Lepe	136		
Totton North		14,705	6%
Totton Central; Totton North and Totton West wards of Totton & Eling Town Council	12,890		
Netley Marsh North	314		
Netley Marsh South	1,501		
Totton South & Marchwood (as per LGBCE's recommendation)		13,781	0%
Totton South and Totton East wards of Totton & Eling Town Council	9,329		
Marchwood	4,452		
Total		142,910	