

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
03/04/22

Submission from
Councillors Janetta & Tom Sams
Independent Councillors
Harrietsham & Lenham Ward
Maidstone Borough Council

Dear Commission

We write to voice our serious concerns with the suggestion from Maidstone Borough Council as to the future of the Harrietsham & Lenham Ward.

This submission is a draft submission as there will be an update added as agreed in correspondence to and from [REDACTED] 31/03. Depending on the actions of councillors and officers we may need time to reflect this on behalf of local residents. We have given notice in that correspondence to formally complete our full submission by 5pm Friday 15th April

The splitting of the Lenham parish with residents of Platts Heath Liverton Street, Sandway and Lenham Heath, moving them to another ward Headcorn has proven unsurprisingly unpopular with those residents affected. We would ask that, given the significance of the MBC proposal, we would appreciate the officer charged with leading this review, looking at all supporting evidence to gain an understanding of the intention of MBC councillors and officers.

Background

Lenham & Harrietsham is a tight knit community with many shared services and organisations. Formerly before re-organisation and the establishment of Maidstone Borough Council, Harrietsham and Lenham Parishes were part of Hollingbourne rural district council.

Lenham was designated a broad location in the last 2017 MBC local plan, taking 1000 houses. This has been accepted by the residents through a well organised and community led Neighbourhood Plan involving the whole Parish with planned infrastructure and facilities. Under the Local Plan Review currently underway, Lenham has been designated to take 5000 houses through a Garden Community known as Heathlands. This unviable and unsustainable proposal has been met with huge, very organised and well-informed opposition across the whole Parish and indeed the whole ward because of the additional impact on Harrietsham. It would also widely affect neighbouring Parishes, though much less significantly Headcorn. We believe that the move by Maidstone Borough Council ward boundary suggestion have been driven by political expediency, by removing these Hamlets to the south of Lenham from the Lenham and Harrietsham ward the community would be divided.

The proposed development would move into the Headcorn Ward thus diluting the opposition to the Heathlands proposal.

It is our sense that the Maidstone Borough Council recommendation is more about their agenda and does not follow any of the guidelines laid down by your commission.

1. New wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority.

The suggested ward would be a 2-member ward with 6790 electorate, it would be the largest ward in Borough, over and above Maidstone Borough Councils electorate per councillor amount even with the 10% variance

2. New wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable. Consider transport links, community groups and facilities, natural or physical boundaries, parishes and shared interests.

The proposed new ward does nothing to reflect community interests and identities. So many community groups and organisations are run for villagers across the whole ward. For both young and old, involve residents from both Harrietsham & Lenham parishes. The football club, the cricket club, Young at Heart, Community hub club, Dance club, Ballet School, Scouting and Guiding movement are but some of the examples of joint enterprises.

During the covid 19 pandemic a large group was established to support those most vulnerable across both parishes especially those in the more rural hamlets such as Lenham Heath, Liverton Street, Sandway and Platts Heath. Indeed, the funding for this was through the much-used **Harrietsham and Lenham Parish** Residents Association Group, known as HELPERS. The same arrangement has helped in the past Pre Covid provide assistance to Harrietsham Big Lunch and Lenham Festival.

There is a connection that is felt very strongly by residents of both parishes.

The ward also shares statutory services such as GP, Dentist, Vets, along with a KCC community warden and a KCC councillor. Additionally, the one secondary school serves both parishes and beyond, including pupils from Maidstone and Ashford.

It seems a strange suggestion indeed that makes no sense to include Hollingbourne a village with no connection to Harrietsham & Lenham and remove a similar amount of electorate with great affinity to Lenham & Harrietsham.

Similarly, there is no association to Headcorn.

There are no public transport links to Headcorn from Lenham. From Grafty Green, south of Liverton Hill in the Headcorn Ward there is an Arriva bus. Lenham is served by stagecoach. Different service providers. There is nothing from Lenham Heath nor any other parts of Lenham South Parish. No railway line connection. The main linking road between Lenham South is Liverton Hill which is the prime route, a narrow winding road which is often subject to traffic congestion issues. Other serving roads are even narrower and used mainly by those living nearby. If you visit the area there is significant impact of the M20. Indeed, it is the overwhelming feature common to this area. It can be seen and certainly heard. Additionally, the High-Speed

rail link which follows the similar path is also prominent in its industrial design and although hidden in parts is also heard and seen. These artificially created features are common to this area, they are integral to the landscape and unique in features and function but have no impact or effect on the Headcorn area.

Residents of the Lenham South Parish shop consistently locally. If they do travel to shop it is along the A20 corridor. Overwhelmingly it is to Lenham for local shopping. A much smaller number shop in Charing, usually those who reside nearest. Lenham Square is a focus for social and shopping and is the prime location. Further afield residents use Maidstone and Ashford, all via the M20/ A20. There is little appetite for the overwhelming majority we have spoken with to shop in Headcorn. If they do, it's an occasional trip. One lady said that the last time she went to Headcorn was to get something for her horse 13 years ago!

As mentioned by others, the landscape and geology are also different. Headcorn is part of the Lower Weald whereas the whole of Lenham is part of the Eyhorne Vale. The area known as Lenham South Parish has no natural, historic connection to Headcorn. Interestingly viewing from the North Downs (Lenham North Ward) Lenham South can be clearly seen and the wide and rolling landscape can be viewed from much of it, particularly Lenham Heath. Surprisingly and not obvious, the historic chalk cross can be seen from Lenham Heath and can be seen as far away as Platts Heath. Certainly, Headcorn has no connection to this historic feature.

[3. New wards should promote effective and convenient local government. Consider the number of councillors for, the geographic size of, and the links between parts of the ward.](#)

Effective and convenient local government is by no means promoted within the suggestion of a Harrietsham Lenham and Holingbourne ward. We feel that the suggested ward would make for an unworkable rural area for just two member representatives.

It would be the longest geographically in the Borough, stretched over the North Downs and is unmanageable to allow Councillors to effectively serve their electorate.

It would cover 9 parishes, more than any other proposed ward.

The workshop we as councillors attended organised by officers paid no attention to our concerns. The size of their newly created ward of Hollingbourne, Harrietsham and Lenham (they couldn't even agree a name) its sheer size, and diverse needs and lack of identity was felt to be irrelevant. The objective was undoubtedly to make Headcorn work and whatever that meant, it would have to be! We made it patently clear that they were creating an unworkable monstrosity but whilst councillors smiled and nodded, they took advantage of the steer given by officers that this was a good fit and could work. In the reality the areas they represented were sorted, it really didn't matter. A clear objective had been established and the end game became the division of the Lenham Parish Ward along a railway line. The numbers have not been properly assessed; the council were unaware that the homes built south of the railway line were already

built let alone occupied! The cake of 48 Councillors fitting into the MBC boundary cake meant that whatever was left, this ward would be cobbled together.

At the meeting of the Democracy & General Purposes Committee 09/03, six councillors were present. Our response, detailed below, was read out by the Chairman of the committee. Though lasting nearly 5 minutes no reference was made to our detailed letter within the minutes. **We have asked the chair who has asked the officer to make an addition to reflect this, which we believe this will be done**

Letter sent to Democracy and general purposes committee 09/03/20. Read out by the Chairman Cllr Purle.

Dear Members, we apologise for not attending in person as we are attending the community engagement presentation for Heathlands

We are very surprised with the suggestions being put forward to you tonight.

We feel that our community has been affected significantly by this council's poor decision making unfortunately if you vote for this tonight residents will feel a sense of deja vu

We understand that with less councillors we all need to have a larger electorate

The figure of 3042 is being used as councillor per electorate. 10% variance to be allowed

- Harrietsham Lenham & Hollingbourne would be a new ward encompassing from East to West Otterden Wichling, Frinsted, Wormshill, Bedmorton and Broad Street as well as Hollingbourne Village*
- It would be a 2-member ward with 6790 electorate, largest electorate and longest geographically in the Borough*

The suggestion would make for an unworkable rural area for just two member representatives. Hollingbourne has no alliances with either Harrietsham, which is nearest, nor Lenham.

The Narrative states In order to keep electoral equality within reason the southern part of Lenham parish has been split and is part of Headcorn ward. This split is a difficult boundary in the sense that it clearly cuts close to Lenham.

This is not the case. Lenham Parish would be split down the middle with Platts Heath, Sandway and Lenham Heath to be part of Headcorn.

As the numbers of electorate in Hollingbourne almost match those of Platts Heath Sandway & Lenham Heath it would seem far more reasonable and fit with the LGBCE objectives if Hollingbourne was removed and those Lenham residents remain within the Harrietsham & Lenham ward

The narrative goes on to say

It is proposed to minimise the impact on electoral integrity and because the railway line forms an easily recognisable boundary. There are developments going in to the south of the railway line as part of Lenham which are not built out yet. It is recognised that this is not ideal but the boundary does not split off existing electors in those properties.

These areas are built and occupied. Additionally, this area forms a significant part of Lenham Neighbourhood Plan (adopted July 2021) and will provide some 400 additional homes.

Statutory objectives of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

Electoral Equality Community Identity Effective and Convenient Local Government

Summary

Electoral Equality

Ward is too large numbers 3042 + 10% 304 = 3346, a 2 member ward would be 6084 +/- 10%

our ward figure suggested is 6790 over 700 more and the largest ward by numbers and distance within the Borough

Based on the 2027 numbers Harrietsham & Lenham Ward would be at 6305

Community Identity

*Platts Heath & Lenham Heath are part of the parish of Lenham, splitting the parish is not reasonable
Harrietsham & Lenham are intrinsically linked by services.. medical education, community warden and many many
organisations for young and older people groups alike. They are linked historically and socially.
There is little or no affinity from Lenham & Harrietsham, to Hollingbourne*

Effective & Convenient Local Government

It will be the largest ward in Borough

Too stretched and unmanageable to allow Councillors to effectively serve their electorate

Would cover 9 parishes, more than any other proposed ward.

As the numbers of electorate in Hollingbourne almost match those of Platts Heath, Sandway & Lenham Heath it would seem far more reasonable and fit with the LGBC objectives if Hollingbourne was removed and those Lenham residents remain within the Harrietsham & Lenham ward. Perhaps it might have been more sensible to have started on that basis rather than ending with this perceived solution which to Lenham residents is no solution at all. This like other problems this council face will not wash under inspection and independent scrutiny.

We ask you to please reconsider this proposal.

Thankyou

Janetta and Tom Sams Harrietsham and Lenham Ward

The councillors and officers listened to our response but voted with the officer's recommendation unanimously.

Significantly the officer stated that ..at 34.50 minutes into the meeting

"look at some areas of contention, this is one boundary (referring to the boundary of the railway line) they (the boundary commission) will come and have a look at and the truth is its the boundary i'm least satisfied with,....Lenham Parish can be warded off, there are enough people living in the south side, so that the Parish itself retains its integrity...i will amend some of the narrative..to reflect the electors living in the south of Lenham."

It is our contention that with the reduction of councillors from 55 to 48 MBC councillors and officers have used this as an excuse to divide a community that has been extremely forceful in objecting to MBC's own proposal for 5000 homes as part of their own Local plan.

Can we add that we have appreciated the concerns of residents, Parish Councils and other organisations that share our concerns. We believe that a case for retaining the existing boundary line that comprises Lenham South Parish is overwhelming.

A petition with the wording has been sent to Maidstone Borough Council for its full council meeting on April 13th. It states

[Petition to Maidstone Council.....](#)

[Keep Lenham together We are not Headcorn!](#)

We the undersigned residents of Harrietsham & Lenham ward of Maidstone Borough, call upon this council to stop its proposal to divide the Lenham parish area for future Borough elections. We strongly believe that Lenham Heath, Platts Heath, Sandway, Liverton Hill and all

the isolated homes in the [Lenham](#) South area (South of the railway line), are strongly attached to Lenham, and reflect community interests and identity so should remain part of Harrietsham and [Lenham](#) Borough ward. We do not wish those areas to be forced by MBC in its Boundary Commission response to be joined to Headcorn ward. We call upon MBC to offer an impartial view to the Boundary Commission for electoral integrity and not one that cuts a community directly in half.

This petition currently has between 250-300 signatures

Can we add the www.enoughsenoughmbc.co.uk website which was partly created to inform residents as to the consultation and how it was being used by Maidstone Borough Council. It is currently solely about the boundary commission and MBC actions. It is important to see what is being put forward by MBC and how it has been managed.

As an aside, we have been advised that the reorganisations as proposed by MBC could potentially have dramatic financial implications for Lenham. Lenham Parish Council has an approved Neighbourhood Plan and as such attracts an enhanced CIL payment (monies paid from housing developments for infrastructure etc)

The parish boundaries are due to be reviewed by MBC next year, if part of Lenham is removed from the ward this will give encouragement for MBC to endeavour to reorganise the Parish accordingly, resulting in loss of considerable funds for Lenham Council and its residents. We are very concerned at these potential ramifications.

Finally, and raised by a resident for consideration because local connection is important.

The following signs pictured below, are located within the site (Lenham South parish ward) planned by MBC to be part of the new Headcorn ward.

It is interesting that they reflect not only how irrelevant Headcorn is to this community, but the distance it is from the area. This illustrates the fact that MBCs proposal to connect communities with little or nothing in common except the fact they have been neighbouring wards, just does not wash. Local residents are aghast at the proposal.

We are sure their responses reflect this.



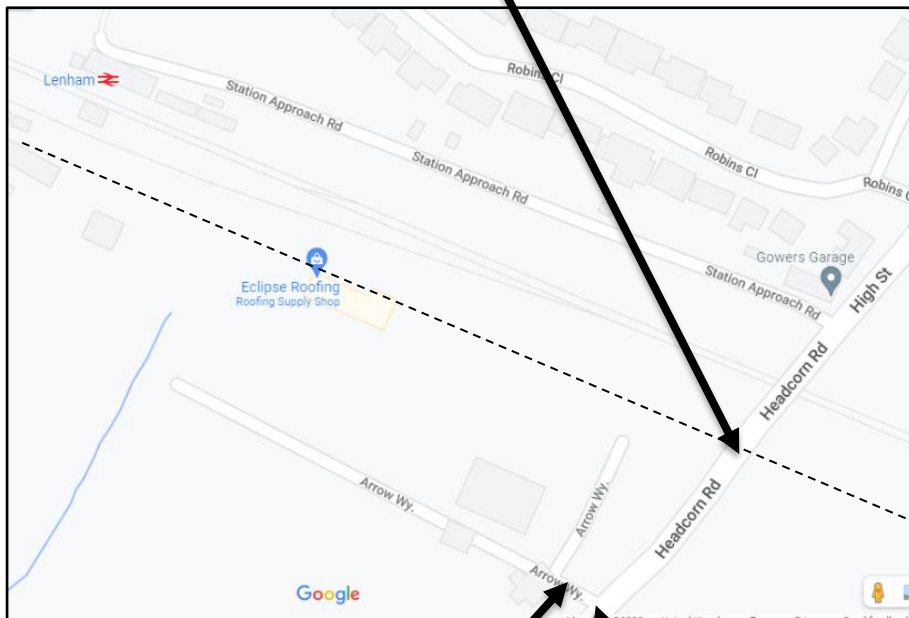


On 12/4/22 prior to the full council meeting, we sent this out to all Councillors

These are photos of Lenham Springs, a new development built adjacent to Lenham Station, the narrative below in italics that has been struck out from the council report is incorrect on all points but used to make a decision that still stands!!

There are developments going in to the south of the railway line as part of Lenham which are not built out yet. It is recognised that this is not ideal but the boundary does not split off existing electors in those properties.

The entrance is 100m south of the railway line. This is to be the part of Headcorn Ward in your boundary review submission. Those residents are horrified by your proposal. Having just moved in they say Headcorn Where is that? Whilst driving or walking into Lenham village. Lenham square is ½ mile away **800m**. Headcorn is 7 miles away **11,265m**



Briefing Note – Petition – Keep Lenham Together We Are Not Headcorn

1. The Council has received a petition concerning the recommended submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's consideration of wards for the borough.

"We the undersigned residents of Harrietsham & Lenham ward of Maidstone Borough, call upon this Council to stop its proposal to divide the Lenham parish area for future Borough elections. We strongly believe that Lenham Heath, Platts Heath, Sandway, Liverton Hill and all the isolated homes in the Lenham South area (South of the railway line), are strongly attached to Lenham, and reflect community interests and identity so should remain part of Harrietsham and Lenham Borough ward. We do not wish those areas to be forced by Maidstone Borough Council in its Boundary Commission response to be joined to Headcorn ward. We call upon Maidstone Borough Council to offer an impartial view to the Boundary Commission for electoral integrity and not one that cuts a community directly in half".
2. Democracy and General Purposes Committee (D&GP) considered the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) consultation on its Local Government Boundary review at its meeting on 9 March 2022. The recommendation from that meeting is on the agenda for Council to approve.
3. The Council's submission setting out a proposed ward scheme has been put together with extensive consultation of Members and a significant amount of work by officers to produce a scheme that meets the objectives set by the LGBCE. This results in a scheme that has been recommended by D&GP to Council with only two of the proposed wards slightly outside of the target electoral variance (+/-10% of the average electorate per councillor).
4. The Local Government Boundary Review is not the Council's and the Council are a consultee to the review. Given the complexities in calculating the proposed ward scheme and meeting the LGBCE's objectives making amendments to the proposed scheme, even on one boundary, would significantly impact on the overall scheme.
5. Recommended options for Council tonight are therefore to consider the petition alongside the report on the boundary scheme from D&GP and:
 1. Submit the ward scheme as recommended by D&GP to the LGBCE; or
 2. Submit the ward scheme as recommended by D&GP and the petition to the LGBCE as part of one submission for the LGBCE to consider
6. There will be a second round of consultation on the LGBCE's draft ward proposals in the summer (July to September). This will provide the Council, Councillors, Parishes, Communities, and the public a further opportunity to influence the boundary review outcome based on what the LGBCE are proposing.

Presentation of petition [Webcast speech in Full 1.17.30](#)

Good evening Members – I am John Britt and I am Chair of LPC.

For clarity I am presenting this petition on behalf of Lenham Parish Council and the residents of Lenham Parish.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about why we launched this petition.

In just over a week, we have managed to get more than 700 people to support the petition, imagine what the response might have been had we started it earlier?

So that ought to tell you something about how we, all the residents of Lenham, feel about the treatment we have been subjected to over this last couple of years.

We know that your response to the L G B C (England) consultation has already been submitted and that this evening you are “validating” that submission,

However, perhaps we can have a conversation about how this whole process could have been done better?

While we accept that this is not Maidstone Council’s consultation, it is hosted by L G B C E, and therefore you are not required to formally consult on your submission, maybe, on reflection, the kind of hostile proposal you have made, in respect of the suggestion to divide Lenham into two, might have been something about which, in hindsight, you could have discussed with us?

One of the key criteria of the L G B C E consultation is ensuring that any change is balanced with: **...the need to reflect local community identities and interests, and provide for effective and convenient local government.’**

Clearly, Maidstones response does not meet that criteria.

Lenham is an old community, it dates back to the Domesday register, the various elements which make up the parish, including the settlements around the village, which you are proposing to detach, are cohesive and the synergy rotates around the village as it grows and matures. 92% of those who voted in the recent referendum supported the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan which will double the size of the village over the next ten years. So, I can, with my hand on heart and with evidence to back it up, say that Lenham is a “proper community”, with purpose and cohesion.

The borough council’s proposal to divide it, arbitrarily along the railway line, is seen for what it is: a bad idea, poorly researched and totally impractical, that is why in such a short time so many people have supported this petition.

We also feel that, if this proposal to divide the electoral ward is accepted, the next stage will be to follow that up with a realignment of the parish boundary – and no, I am not suggesting you even think along those lines because, be assured, that will be met with **significant** resistance.

So do not say you were not alerted to that reality.

And this is not the first time the folk of Lenham have felt they are being “done unto”

You’ll forgive me if I mention the “elephant in the room” which is, of course, Heathlands and the way LPC perceives that whole project is being mismanaged.

You cannot continue launching these intimidating initiatives on our parish and not expect us to react ...

So, please do not be lured by anyone who suggests to you that it will be alright if you just keep muddling along – it will not - and I think we have begun to demonstrate to you just how not “alright” this approach has been thus far.

Legend would have us believe Einstein is credited with defining insanity as continually doing something in the same way and expecting a different outcome.

Might I respectfully suggest that you reflect on how this might apply to the recent history between the borough and the Lenham Parish Council?

May I also remind the Leader of his words last May when he said “The authority will seek to champion the work of, and listen to, parish councils ...”

Perhaps this is a good time to remind you that, as a former local government officer, I am now poacher turned gamekeeper, so please do not think you can continually ride roughshod over our community, neither will we provide you with the opportunity to “tick” the consultation box – you really do need to do much better than this.

You need to work with us – you never know, you might even find that we agree with you on some things – but, clearly, not this.

Thank you for listening. **Ends 1.22.40**

Main comments from councilors

Cllr English “it may well be a less than optimum solution”

Cllr T Sams *A long standing supporter of the party opposite and a Lenham resident said on Sunday to me “This is gerrymandering”*

Now sadly he hasn’t been the only resident to use that term

It is a very very sad day when this council Maidstone Borough Council should have an association with residents to that work

*More than 700 Residents have said in the petition, **we are not Headcorn** Residents have commented”*

Many other comments from residents including

“We have far closer ties to Lenham than we do Headcorn”.

“The suspicious would say that the timing of this unnecessary change is to dilute the protest vote against the utterly outrageously destructive heathlands project”

Sadly, everyone out there see that

It has nothing to do with following any of the guidelines laid down by the boundary commission and frankly members it does absolutely nothing to raise this council’s position, credibility or trust from residents in Lenham or the surrounding villages

So what will be gained in putting forward a proposal that fails in all respects.

On every count it does not measure with Boundary Commission guidelines.

All of it is driven by lack of evidence.

Fall on inspection and both will be seen for being politically motivated attempt to crush the spirit of a rural community.

We have faith that the boundary commission will make their decisions based on fairness and objectivity using their 3 points criteria, and we have faith that they will come to the right decision for our residents.

Cllr J Sams

Looking at the report it does seem to be Full of contradictions

Words like “geographically sensible” “good size and shape”!,

Harrietsham and Lenham and Hollingbourne

“The ward is slightly above the tolerance for electoral equality”

“this is not desirable”

in order to keep electoral equality Lenham Parish split to be part of Headcorn.

It is a difficult boundary “

“It cuts close to Lenham”

using the railway as a recognisable boundary. Why? We wouldn’t do that on other boundaries

On the narrative part of it has been taken out

(Of Lenham Springs, south of railway line)

they are occupied and i know its crossed out but it shouldn’t have been in there

It is recognised that the boundary is not ideal but the boundary does not split off existing electors in those property, yes it does, those properties as you saw from the pictures we sent are 100 m south of the railway line”.

(Lenham square is 800m to the north Headcorn 11.25km to south)

“Yes there is a Headcorn road in Lenham as there is a Faversham, Ashford and Maidstone road and like Headcorn they are far away”.

Members residents are very angry and just to be brief on the legal factors

Point 1 each councilor representing roughly the same electorate

It has FAILED it is bigger, the largest in the borough

Point 2. Reflect communities interests and identities,

Again its FAILED on transport links

FAILED on Facilities.

FAILED on natural and physical boundaries

FAILED on community groups.

Point 3. Promote effective and convenient local government. It doesn't do that it

FAILS on Geographic size. This ward has got 9 parishes. It

FAILS. On Links between parts of the ward

So on all counts it **FAILS**

1.33.00 Cllr Garten , with a heavy heart i have to agree with Cllrs Sams and Lenham Parish Council. It is not an ideal decision. “If we move boundary on one ward it has an effect on other wards. We have a plan that serves the whole council well.....

1.35.50 Cllr Webb “I have sympathy for Lenham as i have for any other parts of the wards...

1.40.10 Cllr Perry “I do have a lot of sympathy with what Cllrs Sams says and Lenham Parish Council and because there is one issue they mentioned and i think is very important is one i have argued myself and that is one of the issues here is about the community, that the community is very important, it's one of the boxes you have to tick to get this whole boundary review right, and that is something we must take into account.....

1.41.55 Cllr Cooke ..I just want to talk about the process that we went through and the understanding of the way the local boundary commission actually does its work, and yes there are a number of defining things that are put out and community is one of them, but there is one over-riding measure that they tend to look at and that's the numbers. **We believe that this is an unjust comment, Councillor Cooke is implying that the Boundary Commission give more weight to one of their 3 guidelines than the others (our comments)** And when you start to look at the numbers. If You start to move one boundary now, there is a domino effect, right the way across the whole of the borough, and that's why i think it's, whilst I have sympathy and i understand why the petition has come forward but the petition

deals with one ward, and what this report is dealing with is the whole of the borough. And you can't change one ward without changing every one, because there is a knock on domino effect that is going to go across, and frankly at the end of the day the way this will be decided by the boundary commission, who will be geared towards the numbers and getting the numbers nearest to they possibly can, and I'm concerned that by changing one thing here if we were to go along with this, in this sense we are going to upset the applecart, we're going to end up with something that nobody wanted

1.44.15 Lenham Parish Council Cllr Britt.... *LPC has submitted its own proposal its available on the Parish Council website, our response has been developed with Harrietsham Parish Council discussed with Headcorn Parish Council and supported by our County Councillor as well. So we are not doing this in isolation...in your discussion I hope you will decide to add to the petition to your response to the local boundary consultation*

1.46.15 member of the public Ms Kate Hammond

We wanted to remind Councillors as to the human impact of your decision

We are again in front of you saying we have had enough. The Boundary changes proposed by Maidstone Council are for no other purpose than to divide the Lenham Community.

It is discrimination, it is bullying, it is a targeted assault on a community that has done nothing to deserve it. It is discrimination as we feel we are being treated differently to other areas of the Borough because we are represented by strong Independent Councillors.

The targeted assault on the Lenham Community has been constant for over 6 years.....

Intervention by deputy mayor as to relevance ..

Kate Hammond response...What its telling is the fact that Lenham community should not be divided, and why it has been singled out especially Lenham Heath is something the community opposes, and we want the councillors to understand we are not going to sit back and stand for it

We are going to make a stand, we are going to make our voice heard..we feel like we have been constantly, Lenham has been picked on for a number of different reasons..... MBC is threatening the historical medieval village residents have worked so hard to preserve....The attacks on the Lenham Community have been relentless. No other ward has been targeted like Lenham has. ..The latest onslaught is the change to the boundary of the ward. The proposal by Maidstone Council is to do nothing more than to tear a close-knit community apart. This can only be no more than a purely political move.

This is an assault on a community that has democratically chosen to have independent representation who understand and know what local people want rather than being represented by one of the big political parties.

Residents do not support the boundary change proposed at Lenham. Residents do not support Maidstone Council's Heathlands proposals. Residents want the Council to stop the targeted assault on the Lenham Community.

There is no equality across the Borough.

We will continue to fight this through our independent Councillors and through every means available to us to stop the bullying, stop the blight and discriminatory actions of this Council against the residents of Lenham. We will fight for our democratic right as a community. ..

1.51.45 Cllr Blackmore moved the recommendation.. *This has caused a lot of angst for many people and not on an individual basis in certain quarters and in certain communities as this has been referred to, and i think it's important that all councilors do appreciate the human side.....take into consideration certain areas bits that need protecting, those that follow natural boundaries and as far as that has been possible this is the result...everything has been looked at across the borough....*

Seconded by Cllr Cooke

Further discussion between cllrs. Potential amendment disagreement between cllrs

1.56.18 intervention by Cllr Burton Leader of the council

I think we are in a slightly unique position because we have had a petition presented. We need to think what we do with that petition. It seems the fairest way to me, that we put the petition alongside the submission as an additional response. Thats my personal view.....

1.57.00 Intervention by Cllr English...*I do have a problem with sending a representation with our submission as that gives the impression in some way that Maidstone Borough Council is supporting it.....I don't think we should single out individual representations to go with the councils response.*

Various other speakers

Cllrs Cllr Harper..*There's no reason to add that to our recommendation tonight as it would appear to suggest perhaps the council isn't convinced by what we are submitting, and i thought we all were pretty well convinced.....*

Cllr Garten *I was not convinced, I was not convinced at the Democracy and General purposes committee, and i said so. I did vote for it because it was a council wide proposal and it's a game of number crunching.....but we have other members C'llrs Sams over there, possibly other members who have certain concerns for their current wards plus we have petition tonight, so if we kindly request the electoral boundary commission to take those representations into consideration, it just show we as a council it shows put forward a draft plan but we don't see it set in stone we would like professionals who deal with it, to take*

regard of other opinions. We have petitioners here in front of us and i think its only fair to put this request in. It's only a polite request.....

2.00.55 Cllr Cooke*I thought actually as a group of Councillors on a cross party basis i thought those meetings were incredibly well conducted ...we worked together..to get the best outcome for the whole of Maidstone...(on the amendment) that is the duty, of the boundary commission to consider every single petitioner, and representation that they receive, in exactly the same way that they will consider the representation from Maidstone Borough Council. The correct way for us to conduct ourselves this evening is to approve the original recommendation moved by my colleague Mrs Blackmore.....reject the amendment and i ask all members on a cross party basis to do exactly that*

2.03.12 Cllr Springett..*I just think it's quite insulting to tell the boundary commission how to do their job, they will be listening, they should be listening to all the people who submit to them, they said that clearly on the online meeting i attended with them ...(on the wards) .i found it very upsetting actually i hate what they've done to my ward.....I expect there are many other Councillors here who think their worlds been changed, it wasn't done for political reasons.....*

Cllr J Sams seeking clarity..

2.05.00 Cllr Burton...*the piece of clarity I want is the public consultation period has closed, we have yet to submit our subject to the will of this meeting. We have received the petition this evening. I wanted to do the petitioners the courtesy of their petition reaching the commission and by submitting it alongside ours with neither endorsement or rejection i thought that actually gave respect to the petition and it sits there, otherwise we have received the petition and it goes nowhere. That is what i was wanting to achieve.....not to endorse it..but a mechanism that the petition could be received by the boundary commission*

2.06.02 Chief Executive explanation ..(on amendment and advice)

2.17.00Cllr Burton The public consultation period has closed (Repeats previous comments to send petition alongside MBC representation)

2.08.00 Chief exec explanation

2.09.00 Cllr Burton ...the amendment is withdrawn

Interventions from Cllr Brice, Cllrs English

2.10.22 Cllr T Sams I apologize i was equally confused because i thought we were actually going to discuss 5.2 and put that forward as I, to be honest Cllr Burton i was heartened by what you said because there is no other mechanism it could be heard by the commission to be even handed with we have our view , the borough council has its view, but either way residents took the time effort and trouble to turn up and put forward a position and i would go with 5.2 on the briefing note.

Cllr English,....(Insisting the vote be taken)

Cllr Sams I want to put forward an amendment (This was not taken)

Deputy mayor ruled and vote taken. **All in favour except 2**

End of meeting.

The petition **Keep Lenham Together We are not Headcorn** now has 580 signatures online and 230 on a hard paper copy

We understand that the boundary commission do not consider petitions based on their numerical value
but, as with any other submission, only on the strength of the evidence contained within the petition, so we hope that these comments are helpful for you to see the views and strength of feeling of Lenham residents

"We hope the boundary commission can see that this is another attempt by MBC to divide our community. Lenham and others will be United in their opposition to this"

"Maidstone Borough Council's plans to split half of Lenham parish from the Harrietsham and Lenham elector ward are totally unsuitable."

"Living in Platts Heath I am five minutes drive or half an hour's walk from Lenham. Lenham is our nearest village with shops and amenities, it is where our doctors surgery and dental surgery are, it's where we go to catch a train. Headcorn is much further away and less convenient, we are not part of Headcorn."

"I have lived in Lenham all my life and it is heart breaking to see local government slowly destroying it"

"Lenham is not in any way related to Headcorn, however nice it might be, with diabolical road connections between the two places. Total joke to take parts of Lenham and make part of Headcorn."

"I am signing because the split makes no sense and we are closer to Harrietsham than to Headcorn."

"I do not agree with the proposal to separate lenham from lenham heath, platts heath and sandway, this is a close knit community with no strong link to headcorn and makes no sense that we are represented separately"

"We have far closer ties to Lenham than we do Headcorn. I'm more than happy with our current local councillors."

"Lenham Heath should not be separated from Lenham Ward."

"I live in Sandway, a few minutes WALK from Lenham. The proposal that we should be in the Headcorn ward is preposterous!"

"The proposals make no sense and are unwanted by people who live here."

"Lenham Heath relates directly to Lenham for its services and community. It is so wrong to split LH off to Headcorn with whom there is no association"

"I am fed up of the dirty tricks being played by MBC to achieve a dictatorial development which nobody except Maidstone councillors want."

"Because it will dilute our community interests"

"This is just yet another insult by MBC to people's intelligence. What can possibly be the reason for excluding Lenham Heath from Lenham???"

"Do not split Lenham Heath from Lenham. They are one and the same community. There is no relationship with Headcorn."

"Lenham Heath is part of the Lenham community and should not be split from it"

"Platts Heath is firmly part of Lenham community. It's our local centre. A proposal to make it part of Headcorn Ward (a town around 5 miles away) strongly confirms MBC's complete MBC's proposal to merge Platts Heath ward with that of a town 5 miles away strongly highlights their lack of understanding of how rural communities work within the Borough. Which is why when they propose to create "new communities" with garden villages everyone should be very suspicious- they can't even look after the communities they already have."

"I want all of Lenham to remain in Lenham."

"The decision by MBC is completely undemocratic, I'll considered and totally unsympathetic to local interests."

"I am supporter of the Village of Lenham and its close surroundings. This proposal splits the area changing its unique life aspects."

"I do not wish those areas to be forcejoined to Headcorn ward. I ask that MBC offer an impartial view to the Boundary Commission for electoral integrity and not one that cuts a community directly in half."

"I do not feel the areas mentioned to be removed from Lenham Ward and moved to Headcorn ward will benefit from this as they are too far away from Headcorn and are hamlets and villages attached to Lenham."

"Plattsheath, Sandway have always been strongly linked to Lenham and Harrietsham more than Headcorn"

"As a resident of Platts Heath for 30 years I do not wish to be part of a Headcorn constituency which is 6 miles away not 1 mile as at present"

"I think this is a con so that Lenham heath garden village is outside of the parish plan that the parish have spent time and money working on."

"Lenham must be allowed to remain as one community with a united voice and not divided up just so MBC can concrete over its greenfields with 5000 houses."

"I am totally opposed to this plan by Maidstone Borough Councils to divide Lenham Heath from Lenham and move it to Headcorn Ward. Lenham Heath has many many ties to Lenham and none to Headcorn."

"It's is very clear from their names and geographical location that Lenham Heath and Lenham Forstal belong in the Lenham Ward and not Headcorn."

"It makes no sense to divide the ward. All the named areas are much closer to Lenham!"

"It does not make any sense to split our wards , we are part of a historic community and never had an connection with Headcorn with regards to all local services."

"The area's South of the Railway are an integral part of Lenham. People that live there have been part of Lenham for hundreds of years and Headcorn which is upto 9 miles away. They use the doctors surgery, library and are part of the many Social activities of Lenham."

"I've have loved in Harrietsham 15 years lenham is a Maidstone village, not a town.. Maidstone is the town. Headcorn is headcorn, half Ashford half Maidstone.. Lenham has its historic name attached the pilgrims way and the chalk cross . Plus many other landmarks.. you can't just then simply label them under Headcorn. Lenham village has its right to its historical name. Just because you want to build more houses, doesn't give you the right to change history!!"

"We live in a new area near the Lenham train station. But on the south of the railway. What do we have to do with Headcorn? We're part of Lenham!!!"

"This is not of value to the communities and should therefore be opposed. Why make the change?!"

"I'm signing because bigger parish/ ward boundaries mean fewer borough councillors to represent more people."

"Hamlets & villages have a significant & historic place within England & therefore should be protected & not come under a huge ward with less representation for the people that live there."

"Lenham should remain as now and this move could weaken the arguments against the Lenham Heath proposal."

"Lenham and its hamlets are Lenham and never Headcorn. The suspicious would say that the timing of this unnecessary change is to dilute the protest voice against the utterly outrageously destructive Heathlands project."

"I believe in keeping the strong identity of Harrietsham, Lenham and outlying villages as they are, evidenced by village activities and facilities currently acting as one large community. I can't help thinking the council is trying to divide the community in order to push through its "Garden Village" development at Lenham Heath."

"Just because you can, doesn't mean you should."

This completes Addendum to T&J Sams submission re Lenham