IFORD PARISH MEETING
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22 August 2025

Mr Jim McMahon OBE, M.P.
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
Jim.mcmahon.mp@parliament.uk Also sent by post

and

Councillor Bella Sankey
Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove
BN3 3QB
Bella.Sankey@brighton-hove.gov.uk Also sent by post

Dear Minister and Councillor Sankey,

Re: Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) – consultation on proposed eastward expansion

Last month BHCC launched its consultation on its four options for its eastward expansion of its boundaries, (the B&HCC proposals), one of which to include Kingston Ward, part of Lewes District Council (LDC). Iford is a parish of the Ouse valley and forms part Kingston Ward.

LDC is one of the second-tier authorities, which with East Sussex County Council submitted their interim plan to you on 21 March 2025 to become a unitary authority. That plan proposes the creation of a coherent new unitary authority, reflecting the integrity of the geography.

On Wednesday, 13 August 2025, Iford held an extra-ordinary Parish Meeting to decide:

> **Which, if any, of the four options proposed by Brighton & Hove City Council for eastwards expansion does the meeting support or oppose?**
>
> **and**
>
> **In either case does the meeting support or oppose the sending of a letter to the Minister of State for Local Government, Jim McMahon OBE MP to express its support or as the case may be, opposition to any of the four options**?

The meeting strongly opposed all four of BHCC's proposals and unanimously supported the sending of a letter to you to express its opposition. This is that letter.

The meeting unanimously expressed the desire that the areas concerned be governed by the new unitary authority for East Sussex. It does so on the triangle of:

1. **Geography:** our parish is tied to Lewes, it and the parishes along the Ouse valley are separated from BHCC by the Downs.

2. **History**: our parish's history and that of the others along the Ouse valley is with Lewes, with East Sussex and to the coast at Newhaven; and

3. **Identity:** Culturally our parish's identity is tied to the historic town of Lewes, the Ouse Valley and the rural and smaller borough and town geography of Lewes District and East Sussex. B&HCC's unique identity is described in its interim plan as:

   " *...a cosmopolitan, dynamic city by the sea, located on the edge of the South Downs National Park. This inspiring place to live, work and visit is home to over 280,000 people and attracts 10 million visits each year. The city's success is a result of continually adapting innovating and growing while maintaining its independent spirit and distinct identity."*

   To subsume small Ouse valley villages in B&HCC's unitary authority would result in a loss of their proud identity and be a mis-match. B&HCC's particular identity as a city was reflected in the grant to it of city status on 31 January 2001: an identity that has not changed in the intervening period.

Additionally:

- East Sussex County Council and its second-tier authorities' interim plan is well prepared; that of B&HCC is not, in particular it does not have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance on proposals for unitary local government as set out in the Schedule to your letter to East Sussex and Brighton dated 6 February 2025;
- Neither the B&HCC interim plan, nor the B&HCC proposals have taken account of the matters identified in your letter of 6 February 2025 under the heading **Developing proposals for unitary government**;
- B&HCC has not, despite requests in public meetings and in writing from Kingston's Ward councilor, provided the data upon which B&HCC says it is relying to reject expansion westwards. Moreover, written enquiry of B&HCC's Programme Director as to the source of the requirement to increase the existing unitary authority's population to between 300,000 and 400,000 has received no reply. This stated requirement contradicts the English Devolution White Paper's statement that "*decisions will be made on a case by case basis.*";
- With the exception of one lone voice at the public meeting in East Saltdean on Friday, 1 August that supported the joining of East and West Saltdean, all that was said there was very hostile towards B&HCC's proposals, despite B&HCC's Councillors Sankey and Hewitt seeking to answers residents' questions and allay their concerns;
- With the exception of one lone hand at the meeting in Peacehaven on Tuesday, 12 August all that was said there was also very hostile towards B&HCC's proposals, despite B&HCC's Councillor Hewitt seeking to answers residents' questions and allay their concerns;
  At each meeting of these two meetings there were between 200 and 250 people, including at the latter, a representative of the local M.P., who is the Prime Minister's PPS, who will have witnessed first-hand the strength of feeling.
  A meeting of parishioners in Kingston parish attracted 100 of its parishioners, at which they expressed their strong opposition to B&HCC proposals; and
- It has been noticed that B&HCC's proposals would enlarge, for local government purposes, Labour's control, whereas westward expansion would give it no such advantage, a cynical approach, which diminishes trust in politics, in particular because B&HCC has been unable to articulate any benefits for the areas subject to B&HCC's proposals.

It is for all the foregoing reasons that Iford Parish Meeting considers the B&HCC proposals to be flawed with no evidence of benefit and that therefore they should be abandoned.

Yours faithfully,

Christopher Baker
Chairman
Iford Parish Meeting