

# Constituents Choosing Representatives

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

*Worthing Herald Article*

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Within six weeks, the independent impartial Boundary Commission should publish their responses to representations about their initial proposals for fair boundaries. Constituencies will have approximately the same number of voters, with a few island exceptions. It is known I intend to offer myself for selection to be a candidate in the expected new Worthing constituency.

The last major change came in 1997, coinciding with the retirement of Worthing's distinguished MP Sir Terence Higgins. As Baron Higgins, he then participated in the House of Lords for over twenty years.

He represented the whole town, before it was split. Part has been with Tim Loughton, MP for East Worthing and Shoreham. Some of those wards will be recombined with most of the Worthing West constituency I serve.

The Boundary Commissioners could have brought in fairer voting, while letting most West Sussex residents keep the constituency they have been in. It may be too late to reverse that. We should prepare for major change for general elections coming after autumn next year. By law now, neither government nor parliament can again delay or block implementation.

Salvington residents objected with vigour to the odd idea that they might have greater identification with Arundel or Littlehampton than with Worthing. Voters in Adur wondered why they might be combined with much of Worthing instead of keeping the whole District together. Constituents should be able to make their choice between candidates rather than candidates choosing the boundaries that best suit them. Look to America to see the effect political interference in boundaries has on some elections.

The vital work of an MP is to represent constituents' views to Westminster – rather than Government views to the constituency. I have enjoyed meeting many constituents over the recess period. I was able to visit Jankel, a manufacturing business based in Rustington, which employs many local people to assist with its global distribution network. I visited the new Tarring Manor Care Home for the Topping Out ceremony. The new care home will provide a great place to live and local employment in this much under-valued sector. My recent visit to the Martletts Care Home in East Preston underlined the importance of the work of care home staff.

Working together with Worthing Borough Council I was pleased to discuss a number of vital local projects in need of central government funding. We await the outcome of the Levelling Up bid in the coming days.

I was pleased to meet with the team at the coastal office on the promenade to hear about their work to protect water users and to restore local habitats. Without this team beach users would rely on the blue light services which are reactive rather than proactive.

It is reassuring to hear the positive impacts already being seen thanks to restorative interventions such as the trawling ban and kelp forest designation – increased and more diverse fish populations as well as greater bird flock sizes and murmurations spotted locally.

Constituents at my recent advice surgery raised a number of issues including parking and accessibility at Worthing pavilion theatre as well housing and cost of living concerns. I continue to feed these concerns back to government. The second Cost of Living payment from central government should with those most in need next month.

Turbulent economic times are not new to Conservative governments. We faced similar outrage when the UK decided against joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism in the 1990s but in time the decision was shown to be right. I am glad that the Chancellor has listened to concerns about the mini-budget recently.

In the midst of the economic drama, it is reassuring to see how our local economy is flourishing. It will help us all to see the new businesses and organisations blossoming, as I did at the Better Business Show last week. Communities working together and supporting each other will win out.

Changes in constituency boundaries remind us that free and fair elections frequently take place in the UK. Even within Europe democracy is currently threatened with sham referenda being used to legitimise Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

No matter the boundaries, the vital work of an MP continues.