

**SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF
THE PARISH OF BRIDGNORTH**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PARISH AND PARISH COUNCILS) (ENGLAND)
REGULATIONS 2008**

DRAFT PROPOSALS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has received a petition to undertake a Community Governance Review of the Parish of Bridgnorth. The area to be included in the review is the whole of the Parish of Bridgnorth and areas of the adjoining Parishes of Tasley and Worfield.
- 1.2 The Council gave public notice of a Community Governance Review and published the Terms of Reference for the review of the Parish of Bridgnorth in July 2019. Notices inviting comments from local residents were displayed in the area by the relevant Town or Parish Council and copies of the Terms of Reference were sent to the Town and Parish Councils which might be affected by the proposals and available to other stakeholders on request. Information on the effect of the review was also available for inspection at the Councils offices at Shirehall, Shrewsbury and on the Council's website.
- 1.3 The Terms of Reference were intended to prompt local consideration and initiate discussion in order that the Council could take account of local feeling when preparing its Draft Proposal Document. All concerned were invited to submit their comments in writing by 06 September 2019.
- 1.4 Both Tasley, and Worfield and Rudge Parish Councils have objected to the proposals. The objections from Worfield and Rudge Parish Council are also supported by a petition signed by 230 residents. It is pointed out that although residents of the Parishes use facilities provided by Bridgnorth Town Council, residents of Bridgnorth also use the facilities provided by the Parish Councils. It is suggested that the plans provided with the petition demonstrate that the motives for seeking a review are purely financial, with a view to increasing revenue through Council Tax from properties which fall within the area which is subject to the review. It is argued that the present arrangements promote effective and convenient community governance which reflect the identities and interests of the communities involved and that that the current arrangements effectively promote community

cohesion and the interests of the wider community. The Parish Councils argue that there is no benefit to the residents of either the Town or the Parishes in making the changes to community governance which have been suggested, the only benefit being of a financial nature in favour of Bridgnorth Town Council to the detriment of both Tasley and Worfield and Rudge Parish Councils.

- 1.5 A response has been received objecting to the proposal to amend the boundaries from residents from each Parish. A resident within the area covered by Worfield and Rudge Parish Council argues that residents of the areas most affected by the changes proposed feel a greater affinity to Worfield than they do to Bridgnorth. A resident of Tasley (and who is also a Tasley Parish Councillor) indicates that they have few ties with Bridgnorth and feel greater affinity towards Tasley Parish, having become involved with local groups. A further resident of Tasley indicates that he has lived both in the Parish of Bridgnorth and, more recently, in the parish of Tasley. He indicates that since moving into Tasley, he has felt great affinity with the Parish community and considers that the proposed change would risk a loss of community identity. All objectors have suggested that the motive for requesting the Community Governance Review is financial gain

- 1.6 Representations have been made on behalf of the Hobbins Management Company, which manages 110 properties on the Hobbins estate in the Parish of Worfield. The Hobbins Management Company opposes the proposals which were made by Bridgnorth Town Council. It is suggested that there is no evidence to explain why the Town Council considers that the addition of a relatively small number of electors from Worfield Parish will better reflect the identities and interests of the communities of the area or continue to provide effective and convenient governance for the area. No evidence has been provided to suggest that residents of Worfield would be better served by the inclusion of their properties in the parish of Bridgnorth or that they identify more readily with the Town than the rural parish. The proposed annexation of part of the parish of Worfield would be likely to lead to a significantly adverse effect on the level of services, community involvement and community identity. There is no physical link between communities of the two parishes. A steep escarpment provides a natural and easily identifiable barrier which should be maintained. It is submitted that there are no circumstances existing which would justify a review of the boundary between the parishes of Worfield and Bridgnorth. There have been no changes to the population, no new development and there are no specific or local issues that would justify making any change. It is currently not possible to establish that any new development which may have been proposed will come to fruition. Even if it did, it is

suggested that it is likely that the existing steep escarpment would remain as a significant physical barrier between it and Bridgnorth and any future residents would be likely to feel greater affinity to the Worfield Parish than to Bridgnorth.

1.7 One resident of Worfield Parish has expressed support for the proposals and indicates that they regularly make use of the facilities provided by Bridgnorth Town Council and do not benefit from any services provided by the Parish Council. They consider that their interests would be better represented by Bridgnorth Town Council.

1.8 A resident of Bridgnorth has responded indicating support for a review. She suggests that democratic representation would be better served by redrawing the Town Boundaries around urban developments and removing the rural areas from the parish of Bridgnorth. It is argued that a rural Parish Council would provide a better understanding of the issues experienced by those residents than an urban Town Council.

1.9 Another resident of Bridgnorth (who is also a Town Councillor) has also responded in support of the proposals. He indicates that the main purpose of the request by Bridgnorth Town Council is to modernise the Local Authority administration of the Bridgnorth Community by bringing recent developments, which fall outside but close or adjacent to the current boundary, and proposed similar future developments, into the parish. Such developments in adjacent parishes are closer to the built-up area of Bridgnorth than other rural developments which are currently situated in the Parish of Bridgnorth.

1.10 Bridgnorth Town Council have also submitted representations in support of their proposals in which it is suggested that there is clear evidence to support them.

2. **What Happens Next**

2.1 An initial timetable for this review was outlined in the Terms of Reference document published in July 2019 as follows:-

| Stage | What happens? | Timescales |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Commencement | Terms of Reference are published | 19 July 2019 |
| Stage one | Initial Submissions are invited | To be completed by 06 September 2019 |

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|-------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Stage two | Consideration of submissions received – Draft Recommendations are prepared and published | To be completed by 14 October 2019 |
| Stage three | Consultation on draft recommendations | To be completed by 13 December 2019 |
| Stage four | Consideration of submissions received – final recommendations are prepared | To be completed by 24 January 2020 |
| | Final recommendations are published – concluding review | |
| | Council resolves to make a Reorganisation Order | 27 February 2020 |

3.0 **Draft Recommendations**

3.1 Having regard to the provisions of the Local Government and Public Government Involvement in Health Act 2007, associated Guidance on Community Reviews produced jointly by the department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and to the responses that have been received during the initial consultation period, it is recommended that there should be no change to the current community governance arrangements.

3.2 It is not considered appropriate to recommend any change to the boundaries of the parish of Bridgnorth until the completion of the partial review of the Local Plan. Until its completion, it is not possible to identify with certainty which areas of land might be appropriate to transfer between parishes.

3.3 Members of the working group do not consider that it has been established that the proposed changes would better reflect the identities of local communities. The petition submitted by Worfield and Rudge Parish Council demonstrates strong feeling against the proposal within that part of the Parish that would be most affected should the proposed changes be made and it is suggested by Tasley Parish Council, and the respondents to the consultation from Tasley, that the community identity is strong.

3.4 There is no evidence to suggest that the proposed changes would improve the ability of individuals and organisations to participate and influence matters in the area in which they are situated. Both Parish Councils which would be affected are fully

functioning and appear to have little difficulty in attracting candidates or engaging with residents.

- 3.5 It is suggested by the Town Council that it maintains a relationship with organisations that lie in the surrounding parishes and there is no evidence to suggest that the proposed change would further improve that relationship.
- 3.6 A firm physical and easily identifiable boundary exists between the Parishes of Bridgnorth and Worfield in the form of a steep escarpment. There is no such obvious boundary between Bridgnorth and Tasley, in the current or proposed forms. It is recognised that this boundary may have become anomalous, but even if it was considered appropriate to amend the boundary at this time, it is not possible to identify with any certainty where that boundary should be drawn until such time as the partial review of the Local Plan is complete.
- 3.6 Consultees, other stakeholders and the public now have until 13 December 2019, in accordance with the above timetable, in which to submit further comments and formal representations.
- 3.7 The Community Governance Working Party's final proposals will be made in response to the outcome of these further consultations and they may wholly change the draft proposals to encompass the broadly held views of the residents of the affected area, insofar as these are compatible with the appropriate legal tests and principles.
- 3.8 There will then be a short period after the final proposals are published before the Council approves the recommendations. This will allow further time for any final submissions and/or arguments to be made covering matters which did not arise during earlier stages of the review.

4. **How to contact us**

- 4.1 Comments should be submitted to the Democratic Services Section of Shropshire Council. They can be submitted either by letter or email.
- 4.2 You can contact us at:

Democratic and Electoral Services

Shropshire Council
The Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Please e-mail your submission to:

Democracy@shropshire.gov.uk

Should you require any further information or need clarification on the review process, please contact:

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