

Community Government Review and Local Government Boundary Commission for England's current Review of Electoral Divisions in Shropshire

Since 2015 Bridgnorth Town Council (BTC) have submitted three requests to Shropshire Council for a Community Governance Review to change the boundaries of the local government parish of Bridgnorth Town Council. All three requests failed, as did similar requests to Shropshire Council from other Shropshire parish/town councils. The response from Shropshire Council to all such requests was that they would be dealt with after the May 2021 Council Elections, and this was the confirmed written policy of Shropshire Council until that date.

But after May 2021 Shropshire Council changed this policy and persuaded the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a review of its ward boundaries, based on the premise of retaining a total of 74 Shropshire Councillors, but with seventy-four single councillor wards. Following many months of discussion this Review has now officially started on 22nd November 2022 and is expected to finish on 26th September 2023 when the LGBCE publishes its Final Report.

It is understood that no Community Government Reviews involving parish boundaries would be undertaken during this current LGBCE Review.

The LGBCE Review will have a significant effect on the current numbers and wards of Shropshire Councillors representing the electors of Bridgnorth, and possibly profoundly serious implications for any future Community Government Reviews involving BTC.

The LGBCE has publicly requested all organisations and members of the public to submit their views, comments, observation to the Review, and BTC as one of the most significant councils in Shropshire would be expected to do so.

The initial period of public consultation, as stated above has already started on 22nd November 2022 and will finish on 30th January 2023. This includes the Christmas and New Year, and so does not give much time for BTC to give a measured response.

A Working Group (WG) for Community Government Review already exists. Community Government Review and the LGBCE Review of Ward Boundaries for Shropshire Council are basically very similar, and cover much of the same ground – namely wards and numbers of electors. It would make sense for the existing WG to also take on the role of examining the implications for BTC of the LGBCE Review and submit suggestions and recommendations to BTC to agree or modify before submitting to LGBCE before the end of January 2023. Note that the WG membership and any revised Terms of Reference would need to be agreed at BTC's December Meeting, in time for proposals and recommendations to be presented to January's BTC Meeting.

Suggested revised Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review Working Group.

The WG would:

1. Consist of up to three Members
2. Research and propose ideas and recommendations to BTC for submission to the LGBCE Review of Shropshire Council Ward Boundaries.
3. Continue working on preparation of a submission to Shropshire Council for a Community Government Review of BTC's boundaries.