Comments from Cllr Dan Morris Shropshire Councillor for the Ward of Burnell

I do not believe that the changes that the LGBC proposes to Burnell are the correct ones to make for the following reasons:

*With regard to Church Pulverbatch Parish joining Bishops Castle:*

* That would make it 14 miles away from its main population centre
* There are no bus links from Pulverbatch to Bishops Castle
* There are no Church /Diocese links between Pulverbatch and Bishops Castle
* On leaving Pulverbatch southbound you head up Cothercott Hill, a steep incline that makes you climb around 400 ft, you have the sense of leaving a place & moving into a new area
* There are no school catchment links between Pulverbatch and Bishops Castle
* It is not supported by the Parish Council, nor the residents of the parish as a recent well attended public meeting demonstrated.

*With regard to the parish of All Stretton, Smethcott and Woolstaston joining Bishops Castle*

* The virtual tour taken by the Commission doesn’t take into account that the 3 parishes are separated from Bishops Castle by the 7 mile Long Mynd range of hills (1700ft) and the Stiperstones (1759ft).
* The LGBC will note that the nearest bus service stops at Pulverbatch, there is no service to Bishops Castle.
* It is not supported by the parish council

*With regard to the Parish of Cardington moving into Corvedale*

* There are currently 10 parishes in Corvedale, and it is already very large geographically. Adding more land area, plus another parish council, would make this ward in my view demographically unsound. I can not see that a Unitary Cllr can effectively serve 10 parishes, let alone one more making the parish count 11
* This is not supported by the parish council

My opinion is that Burnell ward should be left as it is. The voting numbers now and in 2027/8 are within the 10% tolerances envisaged by the LGBC. The 3 other parishes in the ward of Burnell (Condover, Acton Burnell and Leebotwood/Longnor) do not support the proposed changes to Burnell. It seems Burnell is being used a tool to rectify the rigid numbers target that the LGBC has set itself, and I believe that a more balanced view is needed by the LGBC to reflect geography, area, topography and historical context.

Burnell and Bayston Hill as a joint 2 member ward, something the LGBC itself recognises is not satisfactory, does not make sense as a joined up 2 member ward. No one in the parish of Burnell sees any link between the two areas, indeed people in Burnell generally regard Bayston Hill as part of Shrewsbury. Bayston Hill is an urban environment, Burnell is rural. There are no school catchment links and they sit in different place plan areas and will soon sit in different parliamentary constituencies.

I understand the number criteria that the LGBC faces, and that the population of Bayston Hill in 2028 is forecast to be 4397 (numbers taken from the Electorate figures downloaded from the LGBC website), 22% higher than the target of 3595. However it is my view, and that of every elected member in Shropshire, as well Council Officers, that Bayston Hill should be made a special case and left on its own with 4397 voting population. Bayston Hill is such a tightly defined geographical area, and even with 4397 voters would be easier to represent than Corvedale (for example) that has 10 current parish councils, and recommended to be 11.

If the LGBC is insistent that voting numbers are the overriding factor, then it is my opinion that the 2 member ward should be Bayston Hill and Otley/Reabrook and not Bayston Hill and Burnell. We have already ascertained that the voting population for Bayston Hill will be 4397 in 2028. On page 22 of the full LGBC report it states that in 2028 the population of Otley & Reabrook would be 9% below the variance. 9% below 3595 voters is 3271 voters. If you add 3271 to 4397 (the forecast for Bayston Hill) it makes a total of 7668 voters. Following the guidelines of the LGBC a 2 member ward should be represented by 7190 voters (2 x 3595). 7668 voters is 7% above the LGBC guidelines and therefore within the 10% tolerance.

Otley/Reabrook and Bayston Hill are far more suited to be a 2 member ward than Burnell and Bayston Hill. The numbers make sense and they are both Urban wards. Those against Bayston Hill and Otley/Reabrook being a 2 member ward, maybe because Bayston Hill is not part of Shrewsbury Town Council, should also reflect that Bayston Hills current situation is that is currently a 3 member ward, and this solution improves it from 3 to 2.

I also understand that the LGBC is looking at numbers in the more sparsely populated areas of Shropshire and trying to make the numbers work. I think that the LGBC should consider whether or not the weight applied to numbers should be toned down to allow more weight to be applied other factors, particularly geographical area covered and numbers of parishes within a particular Ward.

This balance is a tough one and I have sympathy for the decisions that need to be taken, with regard to the Corvedale and Bishops Castle ward numbers. **From a purely numbers point of view**, it would make sense for Cardington to go Corvedale, for All Stretton/Smethcott/Woolstaston to go to Bishops and then for Cound to join Burnell to bring Burnell back into the 10% tolerance.

The LGBC may be interested to note the photo attached that shows a map of the “Condover 100” from around 1840. This shows the rump of Burnell all together. At no point has any of the Burnell parishes had any historical link with Bayston Hill, nor Bishops Castle. This shows why linking Bishops Castle and Bayston Hill with various parts of Burnell is an idea without historical relevance or precedent.



In conclusion, it is my strong feeling that Burnell should be left untouched, Bayston Hill should be made a special case to allow a higher number of voters, and the LGBC should apply more weight to their decision making in the more rural parts of Shropshire.

If that is not something the LGBC can consider then my next suggestion would be for Bayston Hill to join Otley/Reabrook. **But please do not join Burnell with Bayston Hill**. If the LGBC can not apply sufficient weight to geographical area and number of parish councils then I have made some points above moving around some parish council areas, but this should be seen as an idea of last resort.

I sincerely hope my thoughts will add value to the decision-making process and wish the LGBC all the best as it navigates its way through this tricky decision-making process.

Cll Dan Morris 6th July 2023.