**REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR SHROPSHIRE**

**This is the official submission on behalf of the Labour Party in Shropshire.**

**1. INTRODUCTION**  
Following a meeting of group leaders on Shropshire Council held on Thursday 29th June 2023 there is cross party support for proposed amendments to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England proposals, which follow. The Labour Party largely supports the boundaries proposed by the LGBCE and fully supports the Council’s proposed amendments, although on further reflection, in light of comments by residents including local councillors we are proposing name changes in a small number of divisions. We support the principle of single-member divisions throughout the county but have concluded that in a very small number of cases convenient and efficient governance would be better met by a two-member division. The geography of Shropshire does present particular difficulties in achieving divisions which are both within a 10% variance from the mean electorate for the county and respecting local communities. We are therefore proposing exceptionally a small number of cases with a variance beyond 10%.

**2. IN THIS SECTION WE OUTLINE OUR THE PROPOSALS – AREA BY AREA.**

**North-Eastern Shropshire**

We support the LGBCE proposals for all the divisions in this area except for the proposed **Wem Rural & Whixall** and **Wem Town** divisions. We do not support the division of Wem town into two separate divisions. We feel that the town should be entirely within one division, and that any dividing line in the town would be entirely arbitrary. The surrounding parishes of Wem Rural and Whixall look naturally to the small market town of Wem as a focus for all facilities. Therefore, we feel that the best solution and one that both provides for convenient and efficient local governance and produces a division that is within a 10% variance is to create a two-member Wem division by merging the two proposed divisions.

Otherwise, we support the proposed:

* **Cheswardine,**
* **Hodnet,**
* **Shawbury,**
* **Market Drayton East & Rural,**
* **Market Drayton North,**
* **Market Drayton South,**
* **Prees,**
* **Whitchurch North,**
* **Whitchurch South & Rural** and
* **Whitchurch West** divisions.

**North-Western Shropshire**

We support the LGBCE proposals for all the divisions in this area.

We are pleased that the LGBCE support have proposed a two-member division for **St Martins** avoiding splitting the parish. We considered single member solutions for this area, but all of them involved a somewhat arbitrary division of St Martins village in a way that we considered divided a community in an unsatisfactory way. We welcome the inclusion of Weston Rhyn in this division. There are historic links between the two villages, originally based on mining. There is no doubt that Weston Rhyn relates more closely to St Martins than it does to Selattyn and Gobowen, with which it is currently paired. This allows Selattyn & Gobowen to be a single member division representing that parish. The St Martins division currently includes part of Ellesmere Rural and the proposed division unites the whole of that parish in one division. Therefore, we support the proposed division but in recognition of the three parishes that will make up this division we would however recommend a name change to **St Martins, Weston Rhyn & Ellesmere Rura**l.

We support the proposed:

* **Ellesmere Urban,**
* **Selattyn & Gobowen,**
* **The Meres,**
* **Llanymynech,**
* **Ruyton & Baschurch,** and
* **Whittington** divisions.

We support the proposed **St Oswald** division. There has been discussion about Morda and into which division it should be placed. We are of the view that Morda is a distinctly different place to Oswestry and that it should remain in the St Oswald division as at present.

**Oswestry**

We support the LGBCE proposals (and names) for all the divisions in this area, namely:

* **Oswestry North-East,**
* **Oswestry South,**
* **Oswestry South-East** and
* **Oswestry West**.

As stated above we do not support the inclusion of Morda in any of the Oswestry divisions.

**Western and Central Shropshire**

This area has proved the most difficult. We have alternate proposals for much of this area.

We support the LGBCE proposals for:

* **Chirbury & Worthen,**
* **Rea Valley,** and
* **Tern** divisions**.**

We support the proposed **Strettondale** division, but recommend a name change to **The Strettons** (or Church Stretton.) Strettondale is not a place. Whilst the parish is called Church Stretton it is made up of the three parts, Church Stretton itself, All Stretton, and Little Stretton, so either The Strettons in recognition of that fact, or Church Stretton, as the name of the parish, would be a better name in our view. The electorate of proposed division is slightly beyond the 10% variance, but we think this is acceptable in order to have a division coterminous with parish.

We propose slightly different boundaries for the **Loton** and **Longden** divisions. Ford is currently in the Longden division. We can see no advantage in moving the parish to the Loton division. We accept that Loton will have to undergo some change in order to accommodate the need to increase the electorate of Chirbury & Worthen. There does not seem to be any better way than that proposed of moving the Westbury parish ward of Westbury parish from Loton to Chirbury & Worthen. To compensate for that the LGBCE proposed moving Ford parish. We propose that a better alternative is to move Bicton Rural parish ward to Loton instead of including it in Longden. The changes to the Tern division mean that no part of Bicton parish can remain in that division. As Bicton Rural must be moved in seems most sensible to go for the minimum movement, including Bicton Rural in Loton and leaving Ford where it is.

**We do not support** the proposed two-member **Burnell & Bayston Hill** division.   
**We propose** two single member divisions **Bayston Hill** coterminous with the parish, and **Burnell** with the same boundaries as at present.

The parish of Bayston Hill has been an issue because of its size of population since 2000 in electoral terms. In the 2008 LGBCE Review it was linked with two Shrewsbury Town Council seats, Column and Sutton & Reabrook to form the three member Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton Division. The links for this seat in terms of community were tenuous at best. There is no way either on foot or by car to get from Bayston Hill to the two Shrewsbury areas without passing through the proposed Meole division. There is no public transport between Bayston Hill and Column and Sutton. The Meole division in the south of the town has no community link with Bayston Hill whatsoever.

Bayston Hill, as its name suggests, sits on a hill to the south of Shrewsbury, separated from Shrewsbury by the A5 dual carriageway. It is also in a separate parish (Bayston Hill) rather than the Shrewsbury Town Council area.

In looking at the 22/23 review the LGBCE have considered 3 options: -

1. A Bayston Hill division with an electorate 22% above the average following the review.
2. As proposed, a dual member seat covering Bayston Hill parish and a significant proportion of the current Burnell division.
3. A review as to whether it is possible to divide Bayston Hill and link parts with other divisions such as Burnell, Severn Valley or Longden.

It is recognised that there is great difficulty in creating a satisfactory division because of electorate in Bayston Hill, although we believe the best option is option 1 as an exceptional case.

Bayston Hill originated from Condover parish, and the original settlement was the area to the left of the A49, if travelling from Shrewsbury to Church Stretton, that is to the east. The much larger part of the settlement is now developed on the right or west side of the A49.

Bayston Hill is an autonomous community, a sizeable proportion of its residents will work in Shrewsbury and the wider Shropshire. However, Bayston Hill has; -

1. An infant and primary school
2. A GP practice
3. A dental practice
4. A Library
5. A parade of shops
6. A Village Hall
7. Other commercial businesses, including 3 public houses.

We do not believe the situation will be improved by option 3, dividing Bayston Hill. Comments have already been made that Lyth Hill would be difficult to separate and the electoral numbers involved would be too small. Similarly, to remove the area to the east of the A49 from Bayston Hill would remove the original settlement of the village and would not bring Bayston Hill within a 10% variance. In order to do that a significant number of electors on the west side of the A49 would additionally need to be transferred. The boundary between the two parts would be entirely arbitrary; there is no obvious feature which would provide a strong boundary. Such a division would not result in good and efficient governance.

Local residents, including the parish council and sitting Shropshire councillors support option 1.

In terms of the proposal to have the dual member division, option 2, we see the following issues,

1. Bayston Hill will be linked with a number of other communities. Whilst there are strong links with Condover, the links to Dorrington and Leebotwood in terms of community are weak, despite the link of the A49. The links between Bayston Hill with Acton Burnell and Cound are non-existent.
2. The reduction in size of the current Burnell Division will lead to an additional parish, Cardington, being moved to Corvedale Division which is the second largest in area of the Shropshire divisions. It would also transfer Church Pulverbatch parish to Bishops Castle with which there are no community links, although if it needed to be transferred, we recognise that to Longden Division may be a better option. Similarly, the parishes of All Stretton, Smethcott and Woolstaston have no direct link to villages making up the Bishop’s Castle division.
3. The parish of Cound is presently in the Severn Valley division. It clearly relates much more closely to villages off the A486 rather than the A49 and would be much better placed in the revised Severn Valley division. Whilst it is clear that the existing Severn Valley division does need to be reduced in electorate, it does not need to lose Cound with its projected 386 electors. It being included in Severn Valley would bring that division close to the electoral mean for the county.
4. Whilst not a reason not to act, we believe that the dual member division will be represented by two MPs, Bayston Hill from Shrewsbury, and Burnell from South Shropshire, as would Bishop’s Castle, whereas option 1 will clearly leave the divisions in separate parliamentary constituencies.

If the LGBCE were to agree to option 1 then we would propose that those areas of Burnell which were removed from the division to bring the dual member size to an appropriate level, should be returned to Burnell division i.e., Cardington from Corvedale, and the parishes of Church Pulverbatch, All Stretton, Smethcott and Woolstaston from Bishops Castle. The current division which links rural villages to the south of Shrewsbury with similar character and concerns has worked well.

We understand the Bishops Castle Division does require additional electors but believe these could come from the southwest of Craven Arms Division or Clee Division, most likely the parish of Hopesay.

**Shrewsbury**

We support most of the proposals for Shrewsbury.

We support the:

* **Bagley,**
* **Battlefield,**
* **Castlefields & Ditherington,**
* **Harlescott,**
* **Quarry & Coton Hill**,
* **Monkmoor**,
* **Underdale,**
* **Belle Vue,**
* **Porthill** and
* **Meole** divisions**.**

We support the proposed **Sundorne** division but recommend that it be renamed **Sundorne & Old Heath** to reflect the inclusion of the separate communities in the division. The Old Heath area is separated from the rest of the division by the Heathgates roundabout and has a different character to the rest of the division. This is emphasised by it being a separate but small polling district, created in recognition of that.

We support **Oteley & Reabrook** but recommend that it be renamed **Oteley, Sutton Farm & Reabrook.** Please note the spelling of Oteley. It was incorrect in the initial proposals. Oteley relates to the considerable amount of new housing developments along the Oteley Road, and Reabrook relates to the existing area of the town in the old Sutton & Reabrook town ward The area known as Sutton has ancient origins around St John’s church but has grown considerably over the years, including all the areas off Sutton Road and Sutton Lane. Sutton will be divided between two divisions, and we feel that the name Sutton should be included in both. SuttonFarm is the well-known name for the area off the south of Sutton Road, so we feel that although quite long our proposed name is the most appropriate for the division.

We support the **Abbey** and **Column & Sutton** divisions with the following amendment from Shropshire Council, that the Wenlock Road/London Road triangle should be moved from Abbey to Column & Sutton. We also recommend that the Column & Sutton divisions be renamed **Wenlock & Sutton Park**. As outlined above whilst part of what residents regard as Sutton will be in this division, much of what residents regard as Sutton will be in the Oteley & Reabrook division. We feel that the Sutton part of the name needs to be more specific, particularly as Sutton Park will be moved into this division from the existing Sutton & Reabrook town ward. We feel that Column is no longer appropriate. The Lord Hill Column is on Abbey Foregate outside the Shirehall where the Wenlock and London Roads converge. Most of the properties around the roundabout will be in Abbey division including the Lord Hill Column, so Column seems counter-intuitive. Wenlock & Sutton Park relate to different parts of the division as proposed by the council and would be more appropriate.

We support the proposed **Bicton Heath** division and agree that it should be so named rather than Bowbrook. Bicton Heath is actually a place. Bowbrook is not even recognised by many as the name of the water course, which is in any case an insignificant feature.

We support the Council’s proposal for different boundaries for **Radbrook** and **Copthorne** to better represent the community and to bring the variance in Radbrook closer to 10%. We propose to move the area off Mytton Oak Road comprising Toronto Avenue, Falcons Way, Churchill Road et al to Copthorne from Radbrook, and to move the area off Radbrook Road comprising the Crowmeole Farm (Ryelands, Sandiway et al), Alan Gutridge Drive, Radbrook Hall Court from Copthorne to Radbrook, using the Rad Brook watercourse as a dividing line. The electors off Mytton Oak Road see that and Copthorne Road as the main route into town. They relate much more closely to Copthorne rather than Radbrook. Conversely the electors identified off Radbrook Road see Bank Farm Road and its facilities, surgery, shops post office, and community hall as being part of their community.

**Southern Shropshire**

We propose an amendment to the boundary between **Much Wenlock** and **Broseley**. We noted with interest the comments from the LGBCE in their initial recommendations. We support the Council’s proposal to move the Broseley Wood area from Much Wenlock to Broseley to reunite it with the rest of the parish and to move Jackfield to Much Wenlock from Broseley to keep Broseley within a 10% variance.

As a consequence of the proposals for Burnell, as discussed above, we propose removing Cardington from **Corvedale** and adding Cound to **Severn Valley**. Otherwise, these two divisions are recommended to be unchanged from the LGBCE initial proposals. We further propose that the parish of Hopesay is transferred from **Craven Arms** to **Bishop’s Castle** to improve the electoral variance.

We support the Council’s proposals for:

* **Brown** **Clee,**
* **Cleobury Mortimer,**
* **Highley,**
* **Stottesdon**,
* **Clee**, and
* **Clun**.

And the minor alterations in the

* **Ludlow East,**
* **Ludlow North** and
* **Ludlow South** areas.

**Eastern Shropshire**

We support the LGBCE proposals for all the divisions in this area.

* **Albrighton,**
* **Shifnal North,**
* **Shifnal Rural** and
* **Shifnal South**.

We largely support the LGBCE proposal, because it strengthens the democratic process for the people of Shifnal and Albrighton. Shifnal is now by some margin the largest settlement in the area and though services lag somewhat behind, the largest centre of population. Shifnal North and Shifnal South have distinctive differences, with Shifnal South being the more affluent area, while Shifnal North has on the whole more dense and older housing, though these differences are being diluted by the new housing estates which appear in both wards. The two wards share (though not equally) the town centre and they also share many of the same challenges of small-town living e.g., lack of youth services, small scale anti- social behaviour, access to schools and medical services etc.

The rural areas around Shifnal face very different challenges, notably transport, planning and land use and also environmental issues (e.g., use of pesticides) which are much closer to home for them than for many of us who live in towns. It makes very good sense for these communities to be represented by someone who can take up on their behalf their collective issues and represent their interests at the council.

Albrighton is one on its own; it is in many ways a rural community (not unusual to see a tractor on the High Street) though it is a very successful dormitory town with good transport links and a wide range of services available in the village. In that respect it is somewhat different to Shifnal which has closer links to Telford. It is right that the people of Albrighton have their own representative in our view.

We support the:

* **Bridgnorth Castle,**
* **Bridgnorth East,**
* **Bridgnorth Rural,**
* **Bridgnorth West & Tasley** and
* **Claverley & Worfield** divisions.

The divisions proposed in Bridgnorth town seem to us the best that can be achieved, given that the River Severn cannot be used as a strong boundary due to the electoral numbers on either side. We see the need to separate Alveley and Claverley, and to increase the electorate of the existing Worfield division.