

Shropshire

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Organisation Name: Wem Rural Parish Council (Parish or town councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Wem Urban

Wem Rural PC and serving Shropshire Councillors for this Wem Division are strongly opposed to the proposal to create two single-Councillor Divisions with one being the majority of Wem Urban, us in Wem Rural, Whixall and a segment of Wem Urban using the railway line as a boundary.

The proposals refer to the need for boundaries that “reflect community identities and provide for clear and identifiable boundaries”, but creating a Division from the entire rural area plus a small area in the SE of Wem Urban satisfies neither of these conditions.

Wem Town is a relatively small, ancient, coherent ‘market town’ community as a whole (served by Wem Town Council). The proposed Wem Urban Division could meet the needs of most of the town but those living in the detached SE section of Wem in the rural Division are very much part of the town, not the rural hinterland. They could be largely disenfranchised as most of their services and infrastructure would lie in a different Division.

It is appreciated that creating a Division from the whole of Wem Urban would not be feasible in terms of electoral numbers but we consider that removing part of the town into a different Division is not logical in terms of community identity or community cohesion.

If this proposal by the Boundary Commission is based largely on achieving single member divisions with electoral numbers between 3235 and 3953 with 3594 as the mean average, then:

- the proposed division numbers of 3231 for Wem Rural, Whixall and a small wedge of Wem Urban would be -10.1 % below the mean average.
- The proposed Division numbers of 3958 for the remainder of Wem Urban would be +10.1 % above the mean average.

The proposals conclude that, notwithstanding the suggestion of creating two separate Divisions, “We remain open to the possibility of retaining a two-member division in this area”. Wem Rural PC, when informed of these LGBCE Proposals feels that this would be the best course of action.

This was the decision that was also arrived at, after full consideration by the LGBCE, when the Unitary authority was formed in 2009. Nothing has changed and should change.

Consequently, the current Shropshire Councillors as elected members for this Wem Rural PC and Wem Town believe that the current Division works effectively in serving the needs of both the whole town and rural areas and strongly favours the retention of the present two-member Division.. Their reasoning for this:

1. Would mean a total number of residents of 7145 for the two members to represent which is only -0.6% below the average – so this then also gives better electoral equality of representation.
2. Complies with clear and identifiable boundaries, that reflect three differing communities identities of Wem Urban, Wem Rural and Whixall as shown by their Parish Boundaries.
3. Eases ongoing administration, as well as representation, because the Division Boundary then follows those of the outer edge of these three Parish Boundaries.
4. Is that nothing has changed in the electoral balance in this area since the Boundary Commission agreed that this should be a Dual Member Division when the Unitary Authority was created in 2009, so to do otherwise would arbitrary and inconsistent.

Attached Documents:

None attached