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From: Trevor Harvey <Trevor.Harvey@stratford-dc.gov.uk>
Sent: 17 October 2021 11:31
To: reviews
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: New electoral arrangements for Stratford-on-Avon District Council - August 2021
Attachments: TGH's comments re LGBC's proposal - 17 Oct 21.docx
Categories: [REDACTED]

Dear Sir

Please find attached my comments on the LGBCE's recommendations in relation to new arrangements for Stratford-on-Avon District.

These relate to:

- the false premise upon which the LGBCE has put forward recommendations for six multi-member wards in contradiction to SDC's stated position, and
- the recommendation to create a new ward of Tredington which is based solely on a numerical convenience that ignores the strong and longstanding community cohesion between the parish of Tredington and the town of Shipston.

I would be grateful if you would acknowledge their safe receipt.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Dr Trevor Harvey
District Councillor, Shipston North
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Portfolio Holder for Resources

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
New electoral arrangements for Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Draft Recommendations August 2021

Comments – Cllr Dr Trevor Harvey, Shipston North

1. Multi-member Wards

The LGBC's draft recommendations in this regard are based on a false premise. Its recommendation for six multi-member wards is based on the assumption that, because SDC did not request that the review be undertaken on the basis of single-member wards, SDC was open to proposals that included multi-member wards (Draft Recommendations, para 33. p. 7). This assertion is in contradiction to the facts set out in SDC's submission.

In its submission of June 2021 to the LGBC, SDC cited the methodology agreed by its Electoral Review Working Group to be used by its officers in the preparation of its proposals as follows:

2.5 Methodology for Proposed Warding Arrangements

The Electoral Review Working Group tasked officers with the drawing up of a warding arrangements proposal. Existing polling districts and their projected 2027 electorate have been used as the 'building blocks' for the proposed warding. Where required and appropriate, existing polling districts have been split between proposed wards.

The Working Group required officers to:

- **Arrange the new wards as "single" member wards to mirror the current arrangement**
- Plan residential development into electorate forecasts
- Keep diversions from parish boundaries to a minimum
- Identifiable boundaries, such as A-roads and waterways.

The main aim was to create five new wards in the district centred around;

- Creation of a new ward to reflect the new settlement being developed in the Gaydon/Upper Lighthorne area of the District
- Creation of new wards around the built up areas of Bidford-on-Avon, Wellesbourne, Southam and Alcester.

The instruction to officers reflected a discussion by members of the Working Group which concluded its support for a submission to the LGBC based on 41 single-member wards. The

veracity of this statement is reflected in the proposals submitted independently by SDC's Liberal Democrats Group which were similarly based on 41 single-member wards.

The LGBC's draft recommendations in this regard, therefore, are fundamentally at variance with the stated policy and intentions of SDC. On this basis alone, the LGBC's recommendations are unacceptable.

2. Proposals for Shipston

(i) Electoral Equality

Shipston is currently represented by two wards – Shipston North and Shipston South. Shipston North is composed of the northern portion of Shipston together with the parish of Tredington which itself is composed of two villages (Newbold on Stour and Tredington) and three hamlets (Armscote, Blackwell and Darlingscott).

Shipston South is composed of the southern portion of Shipston together with the parishes of Burmington, Stretton-on-Fosse and Tidmington.

The LGBC proposes that Shipston should become a single ward with two members. The northern and southern portions of Shipston should be amalgamated. The parish of Tredington would form part of a new ward as would the parish of Stretton-on-Fosse. Shipston ward would retain Burmington and Tidmington parishes and would have added to it the parish of Barcheston. The new ward of Tredington would be comprised of the parishes of Stretton-on-Fosse and Tredington together with the parish of Ettington that currently forms part of Ettington Ward.

Ignoring the fact that the LGBC's proposals are inconsistent with the principle of single member wards, the merit of the LGBC's proposal is that, on the basis that +/- 10% is regarded as the measure of 'good electoral quality', its proposals meet this criteria. The variation against the average of the number of electors per councillor would reduce in Shipston from -10% to -8% between 2020 and 2027. The proposed Tredington Ward would see a variation of +6% in 2020 reduced, on the figures forecast, to -5% by 2027. This is the only factor in favour of the LGBC's recommendations.

(ii) Community Identity

The LGBC's recommendation for the creation of a new Tredington Ward does not reflect community identity. There is no common or connecting bond between the parishes of Stretton-on-Fosse, Tredington or Ettington, other than the A429 runs through them. There is, for example, no direct bus service connecting Ettington with either Tredington or with Stretton-on-Fosse.

For all practical day-to-day purposes the residents of Stretton-on-Fosse and Tredington gravitate to Shipston. Stretton-on-Fosse has no retail shop. Residents shop in Shipston. Amongst the five settlements in Tredington parish, there is only one general shop/newsagent/post office in Newbold. Residents of the parish predominantly undertake their day to day shopping in Shipston. Residents of Ettington, on the other hand, have

available a Spa mini-supermarket that also provides the village's Post Office. For their larger shop, Ettington residents have access to both a Sainsbury's and a Co-op supermarket in Wellesbourne, a mile and half closer to Ettington than is Shipston.

One of the factors influencing shopping patterns is the availability of cash machines that are available at any time of day or night. The nearest such facility for the residents of the parishes of Tredington and Stretton-on-Fosse is Shipston where there are three ATMs available in High Street. The nearest such facility for the residents of the parish of Ettington is not in Shipston but in Wellesbourne.

The registered doctor of the majority of residents of Tredington parish will be at the Badger Medical Centre in Shipston. The same is likely to be true of residents of Stretton-on-Fosse. In contrast, Ettington residents are likely to be registered with the Hastings House Surgery in Wellesbourne or with a practice based in Stratford. Both Wellesbourne and Stratford are geographically closer to Ettington than is Shipston.

Both Tredington and Stretton-on-Fosse parishes lie within the catchment area of Shipston High School. Children of secondary school age who live in Tredington parish very predominantly attend Shipston High School. The same is true of those who live in Stretton-on-Fosse. The exceptions will be either those who attend selective schools in Stratford or who attend private schools.

Ettington, in contrast, does not lie within Shipston High School's catchment area. It lies in the catchment area of Kineton High School.

Shipston has the benefit of a leisure centre provided by SDC located on the western edge of the town adjacent to the Shipston High School. It is convenient for the residents not only of Shipston but also for those of Stretton-on-Fosse (3.3 miles) and Tredington (2.2 miles). The nearest similar facility for residents of Ettington is the Stratford Leisure Centre. (Ettington is 6.3 miles from Shipston and 5.9 miles from Stratford.)

An indicator of the close relationship between the residents of Tredington parish in particular and Shipston is the delivery to every residence in Tredington parish of the *Shipston Forum*, the monthly newsletter of Shipston Town Council. This is a much valued means of communication that keeps residents of Tredington in touch with Shipston news, community activities & issues and forthcoming events. Copies of the *Shipston Forum* are not delivered to residents in either Ettington or Stretton-on-Fosse.

A further indicator of the societal relationship between Tredington and Shipston concerns the local foodbank. St David's Church is the parish church in Newbold, the largest of the settlements in the Tredington parish. Donations are routinely made by residents of Tredington parish and are collected at St David's Church on a monthly basis. These donations are not distributed within Newbold but are taken to St Edmond's, the parish church in Shipston. Here they are combined with donations generated within Shipston and distributed to any residents in need, whether they live in Shipston or any of its surrounding settlements, including some residents of Tredington.

The LGBCE's recommendations have been discussed by both the councillors who sit on the Tredington Parish Council and those who sit on the Shipston Town Council. In each instance, these representative bodies of local opinion have expressed their opposition to the LGBCE's recommendations, both to the principle of multi-member wards and to the recommendation for changed ward boundaries that would sever Tredington parish from Shipston.

(iii) Effective and Convenient Local Government

SDC is a council that holds whole-council elections every four years. It is open to the Commission to make the recommendations it has set out. That said, the issue of multi-member wards has been debated within the Council. The conclusion has been drawn that the present arrangement of one member per ward has served the residents of the District well. It provides absolute clarity over responsibility for the effective representation of residents in any particular ward. It leaves no room for doubt over who is dealing with what or any opportunity to shift or avoid personal responsibility. It is open to the Commission to respect the views of SDC councillors and at the same time to comply with its statutory obligations by concurring with the Council's submission based on 41 members and 41 wards.

3. Summary

The only merit in the LGBC's recommendations for the warding arrangements in Shipston is that they are likely to deliver 'good electoral quality'. But it is argued that the information presented demonstrates that the grouping together of the parishes of Ettington, Tredington and Stretton-on-Fosse at the expense of the present arrangements would be to replace an existing coherent arrangement that reflects demographic realities of life with an artificial administrative construct. There is no overwhelming reason to make such a change. The balance of between the three criteria to be applied in such instances lies in favour of the maintenance of the present arrangements.

In the case of Shipston South, the proposals submitted by SDC would see the current number of electors per councillor of 3,101 (+6%) fall to 3,043 (+8.7%). This projection would fall within the +/- 10% criteria for 'good electoral quality'.

In the case of Shipston North, the proposals submitted by SDC would see the current number of electors per councillor of 3,144 (+8%) increase by 14 electors to 3,158 (12.8%). Were this forecast to be fulfilled, this would involve 79 electors falling with this ward above the 10% level of 3,079.

In evaluating this outcome, attention is drawn to the latitude already applied by the LGBC in some of its own proposals. For example, the LGBC recommends that it is acceptable for the number of electors in Long Marston Ward initially to be 26% fewer than the average in 2020 (1,905 c.f. 2,557 i.e. 652 electors fewer than the average). At the same time, the LGBC recommends that it would be acceptable that in Stratford Orchard Hill Ward the number of electors of 3,001 i.e. +17% is acceptable in 2020, despite the fact that this number exceeds the 2020 average of 2,557 by 444 electors (3,001-2,557).

4. Conclusion

It is submitted that:

- (i) the Commission should withdraw its proposals for six multi-member wards.
- (ii) the Commission should maintain the current arrangements for both Shipston North and Shipston South as elements of the proposals submitted by SDC for 41 single member wards which should be substituted for the Commission's recommendations.

TGH/-
17 October 2021