

Broseley Town Council

Submission on the Electoral Review of Shropshire, July 2023

1. In January 2023, Broseley Town Council submitted a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) consultation on the Review of Shropshire's Divisional Boundaries, arguing for the re-integration of the Broseley Wood Ward into the Broseley Division. Since that time, the Council has received no communication at all about this exercise, until 23 June, when an urgent 'reminder' of the need to respond to the draft proposals from Shropshire Council was circulated by the Secretary of the Shropshire Association of Local Councils. This suggests that the communication of the results of the consultation has been wholly inadequate, and you may wish to reconsider your timetable for receiving responses.
2. We note in paragraph 104 of the draft document that Broseley Town Council's proposal has been rejected. This decision is directly contrary to paragraph 3.18 of the LGBCE Guidance document, which states that 'we will recommend that the parish be divided into parish wards with boundaries that are common, or coterminous, with the district ward and/or county division boundary.' As explained in our original submission, the present arrangements cause confusion and diminish representation for the residents of Broseley Wood, and create additional work and complexity for the relevant Shropshire Councillors.
3. Paragraph 104 seeks to further justify this decision by stating that 'following the parish boundary would still mean that electors on Bridge Road, Spout Lane and neighbouring areas, who might reasonably consider themselves to live in Broseley, would not be included in a Broseley division.' This completely misses the point: these areas are not currently within the Broseley Town boundary, they are in Barrow Parish. Our objective, consistent with the guidance provided, was to create a coherent boundary so that everyone living in Broseley was represented by one Shropshire Councillor.
4. Paragraph 105 suggests an alternative means of equalising electoral numbers would be 'for the settlement of Jackfield, together with electors from the rural eastern portion of Broseley parish to be placed in a neighbouring division'. Jackfield is a small, distinct community lying between Broseley and the River Severn, most of which lies within Telford and Wrekin; fewer than 40 properties in Jackfield itself are in Shropshire. Broseley Town Council takes great pains to ensure that the Jackfield residents within Broseley are included in communications and other activities in the town. There is, in fact, no neighbouring Division within Shropshire to which electors in Jackfield could be attached. The small number of residents in the rural area south of Jackfield and east of Broseley could, in theory, be absorbed into Barrow Parish, which is part of the Much Wenlock Division, but these residents regard Broseley, not Much Wenlock, as their local centre for services. Such a move would simply replicate the current misalignment of boundaries and would make a different set of Broseley residents of Broseley Town confused about their representation at Unitary Authority Level.
5. Similarly, the suggestion in Paragraph 106 of increasing the size of the Broseley Wood Ward would only make the present unsatisfactory situation worse, by removing even more residents of Broseley from representation by Broseley's Shropshire Councillor. There are no clear geographical features to the east of Broseley Wood that would justify such a change.

6. In summary, It is hard to escape the view that this exercise is, in fact, only concerned with reducing disparities in numbers of electors, not in creating coherent electoral divisions and improving the representation of electors, despite this latter objective being clearly stated as taking precedence in the LBGCE guidance. Broseley Town Council considers this is a missed opportunity to correct the present confusing and anomalous situation and urges the Commission to look again, and more carefully, at our proposals. We invite the relevant LBGCE staff to visit Broseley to understand the situation on the ground and to enable us to explain our position in more detail. Should our wishes be ignored, we strongly reject the alternative proposals contained in Paragraphs 105 and 106, which do not address the underlying problem and would only cause additional confusion and administrative workload.