

Bowden, Tim

From: Edwards, Philip (Cllr) [pjedwards@herefordshire.gov.uk]
Sent: 23 August 2012 00:18
To: Lawrence, Arion
Cc: Bowden, Tim; Matthews, Bob (Cllr); Hardwick, John (Cllr);
Subject: FW: Electoral Review Warding Arrangements for Herefordshire
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red
Attachments: Herefordshire Independents Group response to Draft Warding arrangements July 2012.doc; Herefordshire Council BC Review of Wards.doc

Dear Mr Arion Lawrence – LGBC Review Officer for Herefordshire,

I write on behalf of **Herefordshire Independents Group** of 14 current independent Members of Herefordshire Council.

Please find attachment (No 1) our Local evidenced based 30 para Report to the Herefordshire Electoral Review Urban Warding Project as regards draft Warding Arrangements (details found within the two PDF Appendices below) and our attachment (No 2) which demonstrates we have consistently opposed total 'single member ward working' across the entire County, whilst supporting a more flexible approach toward recognising Community Identities and in particular, within Hereford City and the Market Towns.

- Appendix 1 - Electoral Review - Warding Arrangements , item 10. PDF 7 MB
- Appendix 2 - DRAFT WARDING CRITERIA - updated for Council on 20Jul12 , item 10. PDF 63 KB

1)Herefordshire Independents have considered **Electoral Equality** but fully recognise that Communities develop in all shapes and sizes and therefore we absolutely concur with paragraph 6 to be found in the above Appendix 2 DRAFT WARDING CRITERIA as presented to our Council when it formally met 20th July 2012.

The following is taken from the Council's Par 6;

"general presumption for single Member Wards where this can be achieved without detriment to local communities. In order to protect community interests, avoid splitting communities and to retain local community identities as far as is possible, flexibility will be provided to allow 2 Member Wards where needed, and in exceptional cases to enable the possibility of one or more 3 Member Wards, primarily in more urban areas".

Again, these words support what we have consistently inputted to Herefordshire Council's Electoral Review working (see our attachment (No 2) at the head of this Response. Where a more flexible approach is taken toward a small number of multi-Urban Warding arrangements (such as in Hereford, Leominster, Bromyard and Ledbury) the uncertainty around future housing developments proceeding or not, can be better managed toward Electoral Equality percentages. Dividing Ledbury Town into 3 Single Wards could lead to -20 % inequality if development does not come forward. We note the current Multi-Ward Members (from different Political Parties) have jointly been quoted in the Local Press as wishing

to retain the status quo.

Please note Herefordshire Council wrote to all its Parish, Town and City Councils on 13th July (**ahead of its meeting on 20th July**) advising that *“the Council is to agree to proposals for a new pattern of Wards which can be seen by following a quoted website link”* but the reality was that Herefordshire Council failed to agree to the Draft Ward Mapping of the County, at its formal Council Meeting on 20th July. The Council did (by a very slim majority) support the Single Ward working proposal.

Despite promptly requesting that Parish and Town councils be informed that Herefordshire Council **had not supported each of the other recommendations associated with Draft Warding Arrangements including Mapping**, this advisory letter has only just been communicated dated Monday 20th August! Herefordshire independents therefore believe Parish and Town Councils should be offered additional time beyond 28th August deadline, should they wish to reconsider their position since now being informed that Herefordshire Council did **not agree** with the original ‘e-link’ proposals.

2) Herefordshire Independents believe that **Community Identity** is paramount to community engagement and the ongoing roles of its people volunteering plus added value for money for which Herefordshire is nationally recognised. Hereford City’s Mayoral Cultural Heritage is totally different to the current County Burghill Ward rural village communities around the northern boundary of the City. To the contrary, the current County Belmont 3 Member Ward does embrace Belmont Rural Parish (despite its name) because it is in fact an urban housing estate. In Belmont’s current 3 Member Ward, the 10,000 population are jointly served by Community Centres, Community Library, Community Health Facility, urban fringe Country Parks and a major supermarket, all being accessed within a matter of minutes so why change. These are good examples of established Communities which are replicated elsewhere within Hereford City and the Market Towns (see our attached July 2012 doc at the head of this e-mail for additional evidence).

3) Herefordshire Independents believe that **Effective and Convenient Local Government** should be allowed to continue through a flexible sized approach toward warding arrangements whilst retaining (often hard worked for) excellent community structures which we currently have. Indeed as a hard working and visionary Group of Active Members, we believe that the perceived Electoral Inequality in a minority of current Herefordshire Council Wards should be directly dealt with so that there be lesser community impact and resultant destruction as has been recently proposed.

In summary, our response to draft warding arrangements and suggested changes can be found in the attached documents at the head of this e-mail and we hope these will be taken into consideration, in due course.

Cllr Phil Edwards

Herefordshire Independents nominated member for BC Matters

Submission 23/08/2012

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Herefordshire Independents Group response to July 2012 Draft Urban Warding arrangements

Our Herefordshire Council Independent Group of Members has hurriedly consulted on the latest set of Electoral Boundary Review Draft Mapping Papers provided by Officers on Tuesday 26th June and collectively provide the following comments aligned to the order in which they were presented at the meeting:-

1. Referring to Map E_7 some Members are still concerned about the manner in which the County draft mapping of the Rural Wards has negatively impacted on this latest exercise attempting to divide the City & Market Towns into **Single Wards**. A glaring example being that the current Bringsty Ward would lose two of its Group Parish councils (Bredenbury & Thornbury located just 3 miles from Bromyard) to new Wards orientated to Leominster some 9 miles away!
2. Map E_7 proudly proclaimed "*Parish Councils intact*" yet the first example offered (relating to) **Bromyard Wards for E7 Warding Model** for Market Towns, promptly sliced the Town & its recognised historic boundary Community, into two halves!
3. This first Draft proposal for Bromyard would place the Town's Two Industrial Estates into the more Rural based Ward whereas these Business & Job creation / retention sites are and should remain closely aligned to the Market Town.
4. We recognise the challenges that Officers have been presented with and the time constraints but believe this current Draft proposal will lead to **less convenient & less effective local government for Bromyard & its Rural surrounding Parishes**.
5. Our solution; If County Map E_7 remains then the Total Area described as Draft 'EE' should become a **Dual Ward with two Members** thus recognised Town & Parish Boundaries are retained along with established Community Identities leading to less confusion and resultant More Effective local government.
6. Ditto for Ledbury. There is **no rational** & therefore should be **No Presumption** to support the division of Ledbury Market Town into 3 Single Member Wards.
7. The year 2012 % variance of **-20.8** makes a **nonsense of electoral equality** aims for the proposed **AB3 Ward**, and should developments not proceed in Herefordshire, this variance will not court favour with the Boundary Commission.
8. Retaining Multi-Wards would reduce the above risk & lead to more Convenient & Effective local government throughout the Ledbury Area.

9. The Draft proposals for Ross-on-Wye are more clearly defined, aligned to recognised Communities & match our Herefordshire Independent Group's initial proposals which we presume will be readily accepted by the Boundary Commission.
10. Leominster draft proposals appear even more bizarre than Ledbury, pressing for Single Wards and electoral equality where dated planning housing approvals have not proceeded so could lead to gross electoral inequality numbers and Boundary Commission non compliance.
11. The Town Urban Housing section of the proposed **BB2 Ward** (amongst the 10% most deprived in England) has **little correlation** with Monkland, Ivington, Upperhill or Stretford Rural Agricultural Communities!
12. Again, simply dividing Leominster Market Town Urban Community peacemeal into 4 Wards simply in attempt to equalise electorate numbers by adding each section to outer Rural Parishes will (in our opinion) be rapidly frowned upon by the Boundary Commission because **less convenient & less effective local government would ensue**.
13. We recommend further discussion direct with current Leominster & neighbouring Ward Members on these particular Draft proposals for the Leominster Area.
14. Turning to the Hereford Area; We still have difficulty in accepting that Holmer & Shelwick Parish should be added into the City electorate numbers (**AA3**) as their respective Communities are entirely different, one being Urban City related & the other is very Rural in its nature. In contrast, the exact opposite is the case with (**Belmont Rural**) given that this Parish Area is in fact heavily urbanised albeit a Parish in its own right.
15. **AA1** proposed Ward has clear identified boundaries with the Railway Line & Roads.
16. **AA2** matches electoral equality numbers & current Communities.
17. **AA3** is divided by the Railway Track, Shelwick & Munstone Rural Communities have little in common with the Victoria Park Urban inhabitants.

18. **AA4** is accepted.

19. **AA5** would be more easily understood if the A4110 Road boundary could define the Ward Area noting proposed boundary continuation South of the Whitecross Roundabout. (Failing this in equality of number concerns, **AA7** should be Duel Warded with **AA5**.)

20. **AA6** Draft proposal has one of the 'most unusual imaginary' boundary suggestions and dissects recognised Communities of Hinton, Putson and St Martins plus the greater South Wye Regenerated Community which is still ongoing. This proposal could consider linking **AA6** to a modified Area **AA15** as a Duel Ward including the triangle bounded by the A465, A49tr & Walnut Tree avenue, thus leading toward more recognised convenient & more effective local government.

21. **AA7** Referred to earlier, if to be a Single Ward then use the A4110 as a recognised boundary or Duel Ward with **AA5**.

22. **AA8** Could become a Single Ward albeit there is a recognition that a well known Social Housing Company is reaching its final stages before lodging a Housing Regeneration Housing and Community Hub Planning Application during year 2012. Being one of the 10 % most deprived areas in England, huge social demands for a Single Ward Councillor so could be retained within a Treble or Duel Ward sharing Councillor resources with **Belmont Rural** and or **AA9**.

23. **AA9** Could be considered as a Single Ward if recognising the previously requested Triangle below Walnut Tree Avenue be removed (see **Duel AA6 with AA15**) or retained as a Treble Ward, sharing Councillor resources with **AA6 + AA15** with no need to modify **AA15**. Further considerations could be given to linking this modified **AA9** with its very similar Social Neighbour **AA8 + Belmont Rural** to again assist with social demands from the 10% most deprived area in England demands.

24. **AA10** draft proposal is accepted.

25. **AA11** draft proposal is accepted.

26. **AA12** is understood but which Ward is to inherit the recently agreed 190 New Homes Approved at Planning Committee via this new warding structure, Urban or Rural?
27. **AA13** May need to reconsider its boundary with **AA12** or Duel Ward them to accommodate the Additional New Housing now agreed, unless these are to be added to a Rural Ward.
28. **AA14** Is accepted as it retains Industrial sites & adjacent housing common issues.
29. **AA15** options should be considered as offered in previous **AA6, AA9, AA8 & Belmont Rural** suggestions.
30. **Belmont Rural** has been consulted (June 2012) regards New Housing Development just under 100 Homes so could easily break the 10 % electorate equality numbers if this proceeds. Both its current neighbours **AA15** (Hunderton old School site awaiting Planning determination for New Homes) and **AA8** as referred to earlier, awaits a Planning Application during this year with former Church site heading for New Housing. Multi-Warding these could share the best flexible approach to housing numbers & Social Support leading to more Convenient & Effective local government.

In Summary, Herefordshire Independent Group is not supportive of many of these First Draft Map proposals for Single Urban Wards throughout Herefordshire and has supplied genuine 'on the ground knowledge' reasons as base evidence, trusting that these will be given due consideration through the process.

Herefordshire Council BC Review of Wards + Urban Multi-Member Ward Supporting Communities

1. Urban Communities assemble greater numbers, often served through one Community Facility such as a **multifunctional Service Delivery Centre**.
2. My Hereford City knowledge supports Multi-Member Ward working around such Centres, examples being St Nicholas, Belmont Wards & with Tupsley Ward plus St Martins & Hinton Wards waiting for their New Community Centres to come forward.
3. With The County rapidly moving forward into **Locality Working** our Herefordshire Independent Group believes flexibility in determining Single or Multi-Member Urban Wards is an important issue because the Boundary Commission favours equality in Member per Electorate ratio numbers but Urban Communities have 'themselves' formed in an array of number variances.
4. At the last BC Review meeting, I asked the question, who is going to **divide communities** such as St Nicholas or Belmont Ward so that Building Assets and Community Group activities also become divided & disenfranchised whereas we currently have good examples of Team Working within Multi-Member Wards.
5. Perhaps the best Urban Example is Hereford's South Wye which has more than 1/3 of the City population within its River Wye & former railway (GWW) strategic Foot / Cycleway boundaries creating 2 Wards which are each 3 Member Wards.
6. Thankfully, The S Wye Regeneration Partnership continues to play a major role in supporting some of the most people 'at risk' from a variety of **Social & Economic reasons** & Multi-Member Ward working fits into this Best Practice Partnership working example striving to resolve a wide number of difficult challenges.
7. With a wide variety of Social backgrounds folks living in these Multi-Member Wards, Local Members can be better prepared to respond to specialist requests, perhaps through their personal background or life qualifications & our Ward customer public soon recognise this.
8. In a very demanding Multi-Member Ward such as Belmont (see Health & Well Being Report referring to **"confirmed as amongst the worst in the UK for unemployment" and "child poverty is a significant issue"** so what are the 3 Members doing about this – They have teamed up with HHL (The main Social Landlord) plus City & County Council Members & Officers, actively producing The evidenced based Hereford City Community Plan, linking with Health Providers via S Wye Regeneration Partnership. This Multi-Member working with providers is bringing a Major Housing Regeneration scheme & Community Hub to the forefront!
9. If a Team Player within a Multi-Ward falls ill for a period (I can think of Ledbury, Ross, Bromyard, Three Elms or Belmont within the City in recent years, the remaining Members will 'pick up the extra workload' and Ward Service continues to a large number of people, Single Urban Ward residents could be left out of the communication loop, leaving a significant problem to get worse..

10. This Herefordshire Independent Group submission provides a rational & reasoned short Report aimed to safeguard flexibility in Urban Ward types to reflect the known Urban Community differing sizes & to ensure Herefordshire Council does not request The Boundary Commission to convert the whole County into restrictive Single Member Wards.

Cllr Phil Edwards

Nominated Herefordshire Independent Member for BC matters