

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NEW ELECTORAL WARDS – SUBMISSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

December 2013

Introduction

1 Wyre Forest District Council welcomes the opportunity to submit its proposals for the boundaries and names of wards to be used for the election of 33 councillors in May 2015. This submission was agreed at the Council's meeting on 27 November 2013.

2 In summary, the Council proposes that there should be 12 wards, made up of nine three member wards and three wards with two members. The Council does not believe that it is possible to achieve three member wards in all areas, as this would involve crossing parish/town boundaries. The Council's proposals would provide the following pattern of representation:

Stourport-on-Severn 7 members

Bewdley, Upper Arley and Rock 5 members

Wolverley, Cookley, Blakedown and Chaddesley Corbett 3 members

Kidderminster 18 members

3 The Council has developed its proposals through a cross-party working group. It has not been possible to achieve unanimous views on every area and the Council's submission therefore reflects the consensus that has emerged in each of the four geographic areas mentioned above.

4 The proposals reflect the interests and identities of local communities, aligning the wards with identifiable communities. They build on existing polling districts wherever possible in order to minimise confusion and disruption for voters, and do not involve any proposals to split a parish. Key transport links and community facilities are taken into account. Significant geographical features are respected wherever possible, and some minor anomalies in existing ward boundaries are resolved by the proposals. Where possible, the proposals for ward boundaries seek to provide better alignment with Worcestershire County Council electoral divisions. All the proposals lie within the Commission's acceptable range for electoral equality.

5 The proposals promote effective and convenient local government, reflecting the electoral cycle as far as possible. All wards would have two or three members, allowing some sharing of workload. With the exception of the three proposed wards with two members, every ward would have three elections in

each cycle of four years. Proposals for wards with two members have been included in order to meet the guiding principle of delivering equality for voters and that the ward boundaries do not split parishes or towns.

- 6 The detailed suggestions for the boundaries and names of wards, and the rationale for them, are set out in the remainder of this submission.

Stourport-on-Severn

- 7 The choice lies between either two 3 member wards and a single member ward or one 3 member ward and two 2 member wards. The Council's proposals recognise that the River Severn marks a major boundary through the town, defining communities, even though both banks are joined by a major road and pedestrian bridge. The proposal is to retain Areley Kings as a two member ward as this respects the river boundary and the defined communities in Areley Kings, which are served by a primary school and a number of faith and community facilities. It follows that the remainder of the town should be covered by a three member ward and a two member ward. This will involve merging polling districts in Lickhill and Mitton to produce two new wards. The Council's preferred option largely follows the main north-south axis of Minster Road and the canal as the boundary line and ensures that all the areas around Lickhill Park are in the same ward.

Proposed new ward	Current polling districts	Estimated electorate, 2019 and variance from electoral equality
Areley Kings Two member ward	AK-A, AK-B, AK-C	4786, -3.6%
Lickhill Three member ward	LI-A, LI-B, LI-D, MI-D	7587, +1.9%
Mitton Two member ward	LI-C, MI-A, MI-B, MI-C	5087, +2.5%

Bewdley, Upper Arley and Rock

- 8 Any consideration of Bewdley is bound to look at the situation of Rock as that parish is adjacent only to the present Bewdley and Arley Ward. Rock falls outside the variance permitted for single member wards. The Council believes that the only workable option in this area sees Rock added to Bewdley town and the parish of Ribbesford to produce a three member ward. With the exception of Upper Arley, the proposed **Bewdley and Rock** ward covers the same area as the county council division for Bewdley.

- 9 This would provide a two member ward for the remaining area. Wribbenhall has two community Centres, one associated with the Church and another on the Queensway housing estate. Upper Arley centres on the village itself with outlying hamlets in Shatterford and in Pound Green, as well as the Severn Valley Railway station to the south of the village. Upper Arley parish sits on both banks of the River Severn with the only physical link between Upper Arley (BE-D) and Pound Green (BE-E) being provided by a footbridge. While the River Severn is used as a boundary between wards in Stourport and Bewdley, the Council has paid regard to the Commission's preference not to split parish council areas. The proposal therefore is for the whole of Upper Arley parish to be included in a ward with Wribbenhall and Kidderminster Foreign parish.

Proposed new ward	Current polling districts	Estimated electorate, 2019 and variance from electoral equality
Bewdley and Rock Three member ward	BE-A, BE-B, BE-C, RO-A, RO-B, RO-C	6947, -6.7%
Wribbenhall and Upper Arley Two member ward	WR-A, WR-B, WR-C, WR-D, BE-D, BE-E, BE-F	4758, -4.1%

Wolverley, Cookley, Blakedown and Chaddesley Corbett

- 10 The existing wards in this area are too small to justify retention of the current pattern. There has to be change. Exhaustive consideration has been given to various alternatives but they would involve either wards that fall outside the acceptable range for electoral equality or wards that cross the boundary with Kidderminster and attach rural areas to adjacent parts of the town. While Kidderminster is not presently parished, the Council believes that the latter approach would be inappropriate. The proposal recognises the common interest that exists between the villages, hamlets and rural areas that lie to the north and east of Kidderminster. Each has its own community and faith facilities which provide a community focus.
- 11 The proposal therefore is for a three member ward covering these 6 rural parishes of Wolverley and Cookley, Churchill and Blakedown, Stone, Broome, Rushock, and Chaddesley Corbett. This has historical resonance, being the area covered by the Kidderminster Rural District Council prior to 1974. The proposed ward is well served with main roads, with the A449 running towards Wolverhampton in the north, the A456 north east towards Birmingham and the A448 running east towards Bromsgrove. The railway line runs through the ward, with a station at Blakedown, but it has several vehicular and pedestrian

crossing points. Another transport link is the canal which runs north from Kidderminster through Wolverley and Cookley.

Proposed new ward	Current polling districts	Estimated electorate, 2019 and variance from electoral equality
Wyre Forest Rural Three member ward	WO-A, CO-A, BL-A to BL-H	7209, -3.2%

Kidderminster

- 12 The Council's proposals for Kidderminster start by building on the **Broadwaters** ward. While the present ward would fall within the variance for a 3 member ward, it would have 7032 electors, a variance of -5.6%. The proposal is to add most of GR-A1 polling district to this ward, including bringing the whole of Hurcott village into the same ward. The proposal sees the continuation of the southern boundary of the ward eastwards from St George's Church along the Birmingham Road A456. In the south-eastern corner of the ward, the boundary would be drawn to the east of Cairndhu Drive.
- 13 It is recognised that the Birmingham Road has a dual carriageway section that divides GR-A1 from GR-A2. The railway line to the north of Offmore and Comberton ward also presents a significant physical division. There are many cases where wards already cross such physical divisions in Kidderminster and that is likely to continue to be so. Against this backdrop, it is appropriate to merge the remainder of GR-A with neighbouring polling districts in Offmore and Comberton. Residents in GR-A2 to the south of Birmingham Road tend to look towards the Offmore district shopping centre; and it is also the case that families on both sides of Birmingham Road in GR-A are served by the Offmore Primary School.
- 14 A reordering of wards in the eastern and central parts of Kidderminster is necessary. It is best achieved in the Council's view by linking remaining parts of Greenhill ward (apart from GR-B and GR-E) with the bulk of the present Offmore and Comberton ward to form a new **Offmore and Comberton** Ward. This would be centred on the communities of the Offmore Farm and Comberton housing estates. Both estates have distinct community and faith centres. The proposal also uses the A448 Comberton Hill/Comberton Road as a natural boundary to extend the ward towards the Town Centre Ring road, which provides a further natural boundary. The proposed ward uses the A448 would as the boundary for its entire length, and part of OF-C to the north east of the road would therefore fall within the Offmore and Comberton ward.

- 15 GR-E and the bulk of the OF-C polling districts would be added to **Aggborough and Spennells**, although a new western boundary to the ward would follow the Worcester Road and the Bromsgrove Road would be used as the boundary between this ward and Offmore and Comberton. The proposed ward encompasses the clearly identified community around the housing estate of Spennells, together with the Aggborough area encompassing the whole of Hoo Road and adjacent estates. The proposals use the A449 Worcester Road as a clearly defined boundary to divide the AG-A polling district, with roads to the east of the A449 in AG-A to be included in the ward. The A449 is a busy main road, with few clearly defined crossing points.
- 16 Finally, a new **Oldington and Central Ward** would be created taking in the present Oldington and Foley Park, parts of Sutton Park ward, the whole of the town centre (GR-B and a small part of HA-A) and AG-A to the west of Worcester Road. While this would be a large ward in terms of geography within the town, it covers much of the same area as the St Marys electoral division of Worcestershire County Council. It also has the advantage of bringing together in one ward the main commercial and industrial areas of the town along the Stourport and Worcester Roads as well as the town centre. The ward will be strongly linked together by the Hoobrook link road, the first phase of which has been built. The second phase is expected to be completed by 2016: it will link A451 Stourport Road and A449 Worcester Road. The proposed ward has a wealth of community facilities within it, and with the completion of the new road will be very well connected.
- 17 In the western part of Kidderminster, there would be two new wards to replace the remainder of Sutton Park, Habberley and Blakebrook and Franche wards. The proposal would bring all of the roads on both sides of Bewdley Hill within the **Sutton Park and Habberley South** ward. This shares the same boundaries as the St Johns County Council division, in order to avoid any confusion for voters. The proposed ward has Sutton Park Primary School at its heart, with community and faith facilities on Greatfield Road, Hume Street and Sutton Park Road.
- 18 The proposed **Franche and Habberley North** ward is coterminous with the County Council electoral division of St Barnabas. It contains the communities of Franche, Ferndale, Marlpool Gardens and Habberley, each of which has its own community, faith and education centres. The proposal uses Baxter College secondary school as the natural boundary to the south, the outer boundary of Kidderminster to the north and west, and the geographic boundary of Puxton Marsh in the east.

19 As noted above, the Council's proposals address two minor anomalies in the boundaries of present polling districts/wards:

- (a) bring the whole of Hurcott village into Broadwaters ward, using the east-west footpath that runs to the south of the village as the boundary. At present, this hamlet is split between Broadwaters and Greenhill. The proposal affects approximately 20 electors;
- (b) bring the Weavers Wharf development and the site occupied by the Matalan store (currently part of HA-A2) into the Oldington and Central ward. This area has no electors living in it at present. The proposal ensures that the entire town centre falls within one ward.

Proposed new ward	Current polling districts	Estimated electorate, 2019 and variance from electoral equality
Broadwaters Three member ward	BR-A, BR-B, BR-C, BR-D, eastern part of GR-A1 including all of Hurcott village (boundary to be drawn east of Cairndhu Drive)	8175, +9.8%
Offmore and Comberton Three member ward	OF-A, OF-B, part of OF-C (north east of A448), remainder of GR-A1, GR-A2, GR-C1, GR-C2, GR-D1, GR-D2	8171, +9.7%
Aggborough and Spennells Three member ward	Bulk of OF-C, most of AG-A (east of Worcester Road), AG-B, GR-E	7113, -4.5%
Oldington and Central Three member ward	GR-B, SP-A1, SP-A2, SP-C2, part of AG-A (west of Worcester Road), small part of HA-A2, OL-A1, OL-A2, OL-B	6901, -7.3%
Sutton Park and Habberley South Three member ward	SP-B1, SP-B2, SP-C1, bulk of HA-A2, HA-B2, HA-C	7185, -3.5%
Franche and Habberley North Three member ward	HA-A1, HA-B1, FR-A, FR-B, FR-C	7990, +7.3%