

**Lawrence, Arion**

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**From:** Robertson, Sally (Cllr) [srobertson@herefordshire.gov.uk]

**Sent:** 07 May 2012 20:07

**To:** Reviews@

**Subject:** Local Boundary Review - Herefordshire Council

Dear Sir or Madam

**Re: Local Boundary Changes – Herefordshire Council**

I am writing in response to the current review and would ask you to take into consideration my submission on behalf of the electorate of Burghill, Holmer & Lyde when making your decision.

I disagree with the reduction of councillors from 58 to 54 based on the following reasons:-

1. The Council's submission refers to one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At a recent review of the current system it was unanimously agreed by committee members that having one committee was not working; the councillors were not coping with the current workload and concerns were raised that the remit was now too wide with the risk of items of important being dropped off the radar. The recommendation to the leader and cabinet was to have two additional committees and that the membership would be drawn from those councillors not at present on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Therefore, to reduce the number of councillors would put even more strain on the current councillors.

2. We do not know the implication of the Localism Bill and in particular the new Health and Policing arrangements. Concerns were raised at a recent meeting of the Electoral Review Working Group of the impact of these changes on the councillors' workloads "Members conceded that the delivery of the Locality Strategy was still somewhat unclear as this was in very early stages. However, there appeared to be consensus that this would increase pressures on workload, particularly given any implications of the Health and Social Care Bill". To make a change to the current seats now without knowing what is going to happen in my view would be detrimental to the electorate of Herefordshire.

3. The Core Strategy and Local Development Framework has not yet been approved by Council and with the Enterprise Zone now playing a key role with the possibility of thousands of jobs, it makes sense for housing to be targeted in this area. Therefore, the housing identified in the Local Development Framework could shift to different areas and even more imbalance of the electorate occur. It would make sense, therefore, due to the uncertainty to retain the current number of councillors until the housing allocation/settlement areas are confirmed.

4. Herefordshire Council has recently committed considerable time and resources to implementing nine locality areas. The changes could cut across several locality areas resulting in identify confusion and double the work for the ward councillor who may have to attend different meetings for different areas. I do not feel this was taken into account when Herefordshire Council made their submission recommending 54 seats.

I would also like to comment on the first draft map which was the basis of Herefordshire Council's submission. There has been concern in the local media about the loss of four seats and members of the public have commented that it seems a coincidence that these seats are all held by high performing, high voting independent councillors wards; public perception has inferred political interference.

I would finally comment that in the area I represent the three parish councils and electorate are totally against any change to their ward and I am sure you will have already received their submissions. They will also be responding to the next round of consultation. To set the scene, following the boundary

changes about ten years ago, considerable work has been done in my ward and other wards to break down barriers and bring communities together after a time of uncertainty. The reduction in seats will totally undermine this work and could affect the future viability of joint working projects between various parishes. An example of this joint working is in my own ward, where many hours of voluntary hours has been given to dealing with common issues, i.e. sharing briefing sessions on lengthsman scheme, speeding, local development framework consultation. This joint working has resulted in the electorate being fully engaged and has played a key and active part in the business of Herefordshire Council – my ward had the highest number of responses on the Local Development Framework – in effect empowering communities

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments which I hope you will consider when making your recommendations for the boundary/ward changes in Herefordshire.

Yours faithfully

*Sally Robertson*

**Cllr Sally Robertson  
Burghill, Holmer & Lyde Ward  
Tel. 01432 769459**

**Email: [srobertson.@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:srobertson.@herefordshire.gov.uk)**

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