

Hinds, Alex

From: Janet King [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 May 2012 13:57
To: Reviews@
Subject: Bromsgrove Liberal Democrat response to proposed reduction of councillors for Bromsgrove District Council

Bromsgrove Liberal Democrats
Response to Local Boundary Commission for England consultation re. the
number of district ward councillors in Bromsgrove.

Although we did not take part in the initial stage of this revision, we have some reservations about the reduction in councillors from 39 to 31, resulting in an average increase in potential caseloads for each councillor from 1,871 to 2,354 residents (were they to be equally shared). For some councillors this will present more problems than others and we hope and expect that all our present councillors will be given an opportunity to express their own views on any change in their ward. The initial consultation suggested that there were differences between the proposals of the Conservative and Labour groups on the council. These will need to be resolved fairly.

There appears to be no available data at Bromsgrove District Council on the actual number of residents dealt with by councillors each year nor of the time taken on each case. It would be helpful to have such information. It seems likely that some councillors spend more time than others on individual cases and maybe some wards generate much more work than others though whether these are the most economically deprived wards is not certain. It is certainly true that councillors with special responsibilities and Cabinet members work longer hours than those without such extra duties.

We do not agree that 31 councillors can adequately represent the present number of wards in the district.

At present 15 wards are represented by 2 councillors and one, Alvechurch, by 3. The rest have only a single councillor. **We prefer two councillor wards** throughout the district for the following reasons:

- Two heads are better than one and it is reassuring to have a colleague to consult if difficulties arise, even if the fellow councillor is of a different party.
- Illness and other needs for absence can leave a single councillor ward without a representative temporarily
- Should a resident or county/parish councillor find their district councillor unsympathetic, it is sensible to have an alternative member to consult

We therefore suggest that as many Bromsgrove District Council wards as possible should be represented by 2 councillors even though we accept that this will mean substantial boundary changes. Changes are required anyway to reduce the number of parishes split between two or three district wards.

We recommend that 36 councillors represent 18 wards, which is a reduction in wards from 23 but would allow all wards to be represented by 2 councillors for the reasons stated above. This would mean that all single councillor wards would need to be enlarged and would necessitate substantial boundary changes and amalgamations but we believe that this would be justified. Ideally no councillor should represent more than 2,300 residents.

We suggest that parish councils be consulted separately at an early stage in the boundary review, which is to follow.

We hope that this document will be looked at sympathetically and look forward to taking part in the preliminary stage of the next consultation re. boundary changes.

Yours sincerely.

Janet King, Chair, Bromsgrove Liberal Democrats, on behalf of the local constituency party.