

Fuller, Heather

From: Stephen Inman [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 December 2013 15:49
To: Reviews@
Subject: Wyre Forest Electoral Review - Submission by Bewdley Town Council

Dear Sirs

The Town Council has agreed a response to this electoral review of Wyre Forest based on a total of 33 councillors for the District which I set out below.

Our comments relate primarily to the areas which come within the current District Council Wards of Bewdley & Arley (1) and Wribbenhall (2) plus the adjoining Ward of Rock (3).

The area lying within the boundary of Town Council comprises part (not the whole) of the two Bewdley & Arley and Wribbenhall District Wards. The remaining parts of those two District Council Wards lie in the Parishes of Upper Arley (part of Bewdley & Arley) and Kidderminster Foreign (part of Wribbenhall). The Ward of Rock has a co-terminus boundary with the Parish. Ribbesford which comes within the Bewdley and Arley Ward which at present has 348 electors is unparished for local government purposes.

The Council debated first whether Rock should become incorporated within Bewdley & Arley to make a three member ward under the new arrangements. The unanimous view was that Rock is very much a distinct parish (reputedly one of the largest by area in England) which does not have that great a liaison with the town of Bewdley. Indeed the main access route of the A456 which bisects Rock now bypasses Bewdley so there is a tendency to link up with the larger adjoining town of Kidderminster for retail shopping, sport, entertainment and transport connections to further afield. In terms of local community activities including the church, Rock with its constituent hamlets tends to form a cohesive unit. On those grounds it was felt that Rock should be a single member ward. The District Council has indicated that with a present electorate of 2025 and an estimated electorate in 2019 of 2104, it would lack sufficient numbers to justify a single seat ie be below the requisite threshold set by the LGBCE.

This problem may be addressed by bringing the unparished area of Ribbesford into the equation. This presently has 348 electors. However the area is not a unified one with approx 100 electors living in or close to the hamlet of Ribbesford which has a strong link to Bewdley and the remainder most of whom live at the Little Lakes Caravan Park (approx 250 electors) being very close to the Rock parish boundary and having closer connections with that parish. Indeed a recent governance review was conducted by the District Council to examine whether Ribbesford should have some representation at local council level and whether that should be the responsibility of the two adjoining local councils namely Rock Parish Council and Bewdley Town Council. By adding the component of the 250 Ribbesford (Little Lakes) electors to Rock produces a figure of 2275 which comes within the range applicable for a one member ward.

The Council then debated whether the urban area of Bewdley and Wribbenhall should be combined to form a single ward of three members. There are many reasons why this should be so for example most residents of Wribbenhall will be registered with the doctors' practice a Bewdley, do local shopping in Bewdley and look to Bewdley for local entertainment. Conversely the children (aged 11 to 18) of most Bewdley families will go to Bewdley School which is located in Wribbenhall. In that sense the river and bridge unite the two communities. However it is also recognised that historically the two communities can be treated separately and for example there are two Parochial Church Councils. However having a three member ward for the urban area of Bewdley and Wribbenhall leads to a problem of how to deal with Bewdley's rural hinterland of Upper Arley and Wribbenhall's equivalent of Kidderminster Foreign. Adding those parishes to the next adjoining ward of Wolverley may not be ideal though clearly those communities would be better able to speak for themselves.

Ultimately therefore the Town Council by a majority felt that the split should be:

- Bewdley plus the hamlet of Ribbesford referred to above;
- Wribbenhall to include the parishes of Kidderminster Foreign and Upper Arley.

This split is much closer to the present position though it would see Upper Arley transferred from Bewdley & Arley to Wribbenhall.

It was noted that at present Upper Arley comprises three polling districts two of which are to the east of the River Severn ie have a land boundary with Wribbenhall/Kidderminster Foreign. The third district of Upper Arley lies to the west of the river Severn with only a pedestrian bridge to connect. If parishes are not to be split then it would be preferable (as means of increasing the numbers for Wribbenhall) to bring Upper Arley into Wribbenhall ward.

By reference to current Polling Districts the position would then be :

Bewdley

BE – A Bewdley East 2259

BE – B Bewdley West 2187

BE – C Ribbesford 100 (an apprx figure based on unparished area being split with remainder forming part of Rock)

Total 4546 = Two member ward

Wribbenhall

WR – A Wribbenhall No 1 3379

WR – B Wribbenhall No 2 307

WR – C Kidderminster Foreign No 1 178

WR – D Kidderminster Foreign No 2 264

Sub-total 4128 (insufficient for two members)

BE- D Upper Arley No 1 172

BE- E Upper Arley No 2 206

BE- F Upper Arley No 3 215

Total 4721 = Two member ward

For completeness I confirm the wish that Rock would be a single member ward to include the electors of the Little Lakes caravan park part of Ribbesford.

I would like to be kept apprised of further thoughts on this review and if I can assist or clarify the above or indeed generally I would be very happy to do so.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Inman
Town Clerk
Bewdley Town Council



Tel: [Redacted]
Email: townclerk@bewdley.org.uk
Website: www.bewdley.org.uk

Normal days of work: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays