

Wyre Forest District Council Proposed Changes to Ward Boundaries

Submission to the Local Authority Boundary Commission

Ref: Wolverley and Cookley

As Chairman of Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council I am dismayed at our District Council's proposal to create "a 3 member ward policy" to accommodate a 33 member council. As I understand the situation an option of a 34 member council is still possible. Indeed the 33 is not yet set in stone and therefore any number is still negotiable.

The Parish of Wolverley and Cookley has a **registered** electorate of almost 4000 and growing. In addition there is a seasonal influx of visitors staying in our Parish thus giving rise to greater demands on its representation for a large part of the year.

I strongly believe that the Parish of Wolverley and Cookley represents a discrete, two member District Council Ward. I am mindful that the total number of registered electors falls a little outside the 10% variance, however we do comprise 2 villages and a substantial rural area giving rise to a large geographic area. Currently residents enjoy efficient and effective service from the 2 district councillors and the Parish Council. I fear that expanding to a 3 member ward including the parishes of Blakedown and Chaddesley would greatly dilute resident representation and the huge geographic area would be truly unworkable.

Our large Parish community has a very long history dating back to the 9th century. We are bounded by the A449 and A442 roads. It embraces many tourist attractions, eg Kingsford Forest Park, Bodenham Arboretum, the Staffordshire/Worcestershire Canal, the World War 2 underground factory and Cold War seat of Local Government – all of these are huge tourist attractions. The popular Worcestershire Way starts in the north-east of the Parish and ends in Malvern Hills.

There are at least 4 Parish Councils included in the District Council's proposal, which it has to be said was not a unanimous decision by the District Council. In addition to District Council duties and ward work the 3 District Councillors in the proposed new, huge rural ward would have far too many Parish Council meetings to attend resulting in a dilution of service and decreasing quality of relationship between District and Parish Councils.

As chairman of the Parish Council I believe that an effective district councillor must have an intimate knowledge of the needs of the area and its communities. The District Council's proposals do not meet this need as it is possible that the 3 elected district councillors in the proposed, huge rural ward could all be resident at the opposite end of this ward and so be miles away from our communities. Would you not agree that this would greatly decrease our representation?

I am mindful that in order for Wolverley and Cookley to be a discrete, 2 member ward that 34 district councillors may be required. I do hope that you agree that to regard the outlying parishes to be the same as the urban parts of the district is to misunderstand the differences between them and leaves the rural/village areas relatively under-represented. I, therefore, respectfully ask you to allow the Parish of Wolverley and Cookley to become a 2 member District Council Ward.

Cllr Barry McFarland
Chairman Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council