

Shropshire Council

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Comment text:

Electoral equality: Whilst I note that this review is ideally seeking a single member ward outcome with around 3,600 electors, I believe this is not possible to achieve equitably currently: It is difficult to expand the current geographical boundaries in each of the directions (in part due to the fact it is located along one side with the Welsh border: 1. Border with Oswestry Town: The communities encompassed by the current division use the town of Oswestry as a service centre but have distinctly separate issues to the town itself and many residents conduct a lot of their daily life without the need for use of the town. 2. Border with St Martins: St Martins is a distinct village and whilst there are links between the two existing divisions in terms of daily life there is a clear village boundary, and it would seem unfair to extend the boundary into the village and give different representation on village issues depending upon which side of a road they live in. Any such arrangement would also likely put the village primary school under a Councillor who represents a small percentage of the village itself. 3. Border with Whittington: There may be an argument for including a small number of properties on Twmpath Lane which sit on the other side of the road under current boundaries. These are distinct from the neighbouring village of Park Hall which has strong historical and social ties to Whittington, but the seat of Whittington would need major reconfiguration to cope with the loss of any further properties from its numbers. The geography of a single-member split seat East and West within the existing boundaries would leave one seat over 20% larger than the other (based on the council draft figures I have seen). It would also mean that a western seat would cover a large rural geography which is difficult and time-consuming to traverse. The eastern seat meanwhile would have a tight urban geography with substantially less constituents. The planned development for the area within the timeframe given is modest in scale in terms of effecting the electorate with much of the adopted development plan built out. Community Identity It is true to say there that each community within the existing divisional area retains a unique sense of identity they also integrate socially and economically. Whilst the A5 provides a divide upon the map there have been clear ties across the area for interacting on issues and bringing people together socially. Services are split between the villages including a rail station, hospital, specialist college (both of which are large employers) and shops. With the majority of these being based in Gobowen the rural community Examples of organisations which reach outside of the villages include or have included until recently churches, lottery funded organisations such the Three Parishes Big Local (The three parishes were based around Selattyn and Gobowen, Weston Rhyn and St Martins) which for ten years has worked to distribute funds and provide services and well attended events for the area. In addition, a local joint committee operated successfully between the parish councils and Shropshire Council for several years. There are also numerous social and specialist interest groups such as an area-wide wildlife group. I note the previous review also had difficulty in achieving the numbers hence the current dual-member arrangement. For the reasons set out above and limited expected development within the timescales being considered I think the current arrangements need to remain.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded