July 2023

**To Local Government Boundaries Review Officer.**

**Re; Billingsley Parish Council**

I write to you on behalf of Billingsley Parish Council following a meeting on Tuesday 27th June where discussion took place regarding your draft proposals for the reorganisation of electoral divisions in Shropshire.

Currently, Billingsley Parish Council, which represents the four Civil Parishes of Billingley, Deuxhill, Glazeley and Middleton Scriven, falls within the Brown Clee Electoral Division in its entirety. If adopted, the proposed changes in the draft document would split the parish of Billingsley between three Electoral Divisions. Billingsliey CP would fall within Highley ED, Middleton Scriven CP in Stottesdon ED and Deuxhill CP and Glazeley CP would remain in the revised Brown Clee ED.

Obviously such a change would have many implications for Billingsley Parish Council and its residents.

Currently, the interests of the Parish Council are represented by one Shropshire councillor. Adopting the plans would result in a division of representation amongst three county councillors. Parish councillors feel that this would marginalise the interests of Billingsley PC and would lose its ability to speak as one voice at county council. Councillors also felt that the relationship between the PC and the CC would be weakened.

In the draft document emphasis is placed upon ‘social cohesion’ in the decision-making process. Billingsley PC serves an area that is largely socially homogenous, with communities being based around agriculture with some commuter accommodation. There are virtually no services provided within the parish; a commonality which often unites consensus across the whole parish. Furthermore Billingsley civil parish has developed its own sense of identity that would be undermined if it were broken up.

To link Billingsley with Highley would go against social and community cohesion. Highley, being a substantial village in its own right, has a range of issues that are very different and not related to the needs of the residents of Billingsley. The orientation of the area’s topography runs north to south and ties are strongest along these lines. Ties between Highley, stretching out to the east, and any part of the Billingsley Parish are not particularly developed.

Billingsley CP is for the reasons already stated quite distinctive from the surrounding parishes where there are more services and a greater social mix. As a consequence, parish councillors expressed concern regarding the forthcoming PC boundary review if the current proposals are adopted. Division of Billingsley PC along revised ED boundaries could be used to justify a dispersal of constituent civil parishes and support mergers with neighbouring Parish Councils. This would be met by opposition from parish councillors as such an arrangement would not best meet the needs of the parishioners they represent.

Billingsley PC is currently, and appropriately, located within the Brown Clee ED which is socially, economically and environmentally quite similar. If projected elector figures mean that the future situation does not meet your set targets, is there a case for the whole of Billingsley PC to be placed within the Stottesdon ED? In further support of this many residents of the four civil parishes use the services located in Stottesdon such as the primary school, doctors’ surgery and public house. A brief examination of the projected elector figures would suggest that only 236 potential electors would be added to the Stottesdon ED by 2028. We notice that the Stottesdon ED, when linked with Cleobury Mortimer ED, as stated in the draft proposal, is 14% below the county average of electors per councillor.

To conclude Billingsley PC wishes the four Civil Parishes of Billingsley, Deuxhill, Glazeley and Middleton Scriven to remain in one single Electoral Division in order to best represent the current shared identity and characteristics of the parish and maintain its status in the democratic hierarchy.

Sue Bates

Chair of Billingsley Parish Council

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