

Appendix 2

**Hagley Parish Council
Feasibility Study**

FEASIBILITY STUDY

In respect of

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE
REVIEW FOR PROPOSED
BOUNDARY CHANGE TO
HAGLEY AND CLENT
PARISHES**

On behalf of

Hagley Parish Council

Ref: RCA031g

Date: March 2014

rca

REGENERATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document objectively assesses the feasibility of a Community Governance Review (CGR) in respect of a proposed boundary change between Hagley and Clent Parishes.

It identifies the background to the proposal and our brief in assessing the feasibility of the proposal. It also analyses the historical development of Hagley as a settlement and the anomalous boundaries that have been created as a consequence of the on-going physical development of the village. Thereafter, it identifies the legislative framework governing proposed boundary changes and explores the factors which are important in the consideration of a CGR. Finally, this document assesses the potential impact which the proposed change in the Parish boundary will have upon the governance of the Proposed Transfer Area (PTA) and the greater community of Hagley.

We conclude that the proposal responds to the current needs of the populous to support strong, recognisable, local governance and demonstrate that the proposal adheres to the guidance set out in the CGR legislation.

On this basis, we recommend on behalf of Hagley Parish Council (HPC) and Hagley Residents Action Group (HRAG) that Bromsgrove District Council undertakes a CGR and that this Review should result in the realignment of the Parish boundaries to include the PTA within Hagley Parish with a target adoption date of 1st April 2015.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Hagley Parish Council (HPC) received a petition from the Hagley Residents Action Group (HRAG) seeking a case to be made by HPC for an amendment to the existing Parish boundary to be presented to Bromsgrove District Council and for the Council to conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR). The amendment sought by HRAG is for the extension of the Parish broadly in line with the Electoral Ward Boundary which would incorporate existing and proposed residential areas to the south east of the A456 Worcester/Kidderminster Road and those around Thicknall Lane. A plan for the proposed boundary change is shown in Appendix A.
- 1.2 HPC considered this request at a Parish Council meeting on 10th February 2014. At this meeting HPC resolved to commission a feasibility study into the impact of transferring that part of Hagley village that is not part of Hagley Parish to the governance of HPC. The area identified in this document as the 'Proposed Transfer Area' (PTA) is currently governed by Clent Parish Council. As such, it was resolved to support HRAG's request on the basis that they believe that the residents of the PTA will be best served from a number of perspectives by the incorporation of their properties within Hagley Parish, thereby coming under the governance of HPC.
- 1.3 This document will assess the feasibility of a CGR and will identify if the Review is in the best interests of the residents in the PTA and Hagley Parish. It will consider whether HPC has the ability to meet the statutory duties of a Parish Council and has capacity to absorb the approximate 1,400 parishioners, meet their needs and address the concerns identified by HRAG in seeking the transfer.
- 1.4 Should this assessment conclude that a Review is warranted, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, HPC will call upon Bromsgrove District Council to conduct a CGR. The Review would, therefore, consider the alteration of the Parish boundaries between Clent and Hagley to add Western Road, Newfield Road and South Road, and the roads leading off them, to Hagley Parish. In addition, the Review would also consider the inclusion of Meadowcroft, Millpool Close, Pinewoods Avenue and parts of Thicknall Lane, Kidderminster Road South and Worcester Road

within Hagley Parish. Finally, the fields surrounding these roads would also be included to ensure that potential future development would not lead to another anomalous boundary and the need for another CGR in the foreseeable future.

1.5 This document will consider, among other things, the following issues:-

- The need for a CGR;
- The basis of the current Parish boundary and the representation of residents within the PTA;
- The relationship of the PTA to Hagley Parish;
- The implications for the residents of the PTA of the Hagley Village Strategic Plan and of HPC's aspirations for a more strategic approach to the sustainable development of the village and to the provision of improved services and facilities; and
- HPC's desire for a more cohesive and dynamic community which embraces the true spirit of Localism, as encouraged through changes in planning and community governance laws.

2.0 CONTEXT

Geographical

- 2.1 The original village of Hagley grew up around St Johns Church. After the construction of the railway in the 19th century, a new settlement (West Hagley) grew up around the Station and along Worcester Road, as a convenient place from which people could commute by rail. This settlement has become larger than the original village and has spread beyond the Parish boundary into the adjacent parish of Clent. In particular, Western Road, Newfield Road and Pinewoods Avenue, together with estate roads leading off them form part of West Hagley but lie in Clent Parish.
- 2.2 The current Parish boundary follows Gallows Brook but this no longer represents an easily identifiable natural break between communities. Gallows Brook flows through the south of Hagley and splits Hagley in two. The continued relevance of the brook as a boundary demarcating two different communities is questionable and, many residents would claim, is no longer relevant. Indeed, the Parish boundary that exists today has been in place since 1888, when Blakedown and Harborough were taken from the Parish and the boundary has hardly been altered otherwise. In fact, the use of Gallows Brook as a Parish boundary in this area can be traced back to the ancient parishes and manors of Hagley and Clent.
- 2.3 HPC supports the view expressed by HRAG that the Parish boundary should encompass the whole of the village of Hagley, including the southern area of west Hagley. They state that this will provide a coherent boundary for a unified village of Hagley removing the anomaly caused by housing development in Hagley in during the 20th century. They also claim that re-alignment of the Parish boundary to encompass the PTA will bring the recently approved application for 70 dwellings on Western Road, the remaining proportion of the Area of Development Restraint and areas identified in Bromsgrove District Council's 2013 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for possible future expansion within Hagley Parish's demise.

Socio-Economic

2.4 We have considered the socio-economic profile of the PTA in comparison with those of Hagley and Clent. The physical extent of the PTA is broadly the same as the Census Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) Bromsgrove 001a ('the Newfield Road area'). Table 1 highlights that the demographics of the PTA are notably similar to those of Hagley Parish as a whole. The high level of children below 16 years of age and of families and married couples as a whole would suggest that there will be a significant call upon play provision, schools and community facilities from those within the PTA. These similarities are borne out of the fact that the two areas are effectively part of the same community.

Table 1: Demographic comparison between Hagley Parish and the PTA

Table	Hagley Parish	Percentage	Bromsgrove 001a	Percentage
Total Population	4,817		1,419	
16 and over	3,798	79%	1,103	78%
In Employment	2,249	59%	642	58%
Children below 16	1,019	21%	316	29%
All Families	1,427	29%	435	39%
Married Couples	2,218	58%	740	67%
No Qualifications	544	14%	205	19%

Source: Census, 2011.

2.5 Table 2 below concentrates on the economic activity of the LSOAs of Hagley and Clent Village. It highlights the similarities between those living in the PTA, the Haybridge High School catchment area, West Hagley and Hagley as a whole. It also demonstrates the differences between these areas and the Clent & Bell End LSOA.

Table 2: Socio-economic comparison between the PTA and adjacent areas

LSOA code	LSOA name	LSOA no	Claimants Aug-13	Economically Active	%
E01032138	West Hagley, Newfield Road (PTA)	Bromsgrove 001A	11	786	1.4%
E01032139	Haybridge High School Area	Bromsgrove 001B	11	947	1.2%
E01032140	West Hagley	Bromsgrove 001C	10	947	1.1%
E01032141	Hagley	Bromsgrove 001D	10	890	1.1%
E01032136	Clent & Bell End	Bromsgrove 002A	3	852	0.4%

Source: ACORN, 2013.

- 2.6 This data would appear to support the view that there are marked socio-economic similarities between Hagley and the PTA. The case put forward by HRAG and HPC, therefore, is that the PTA community has similar characteristics to that of the other parts of Hagley Village and is more cohesive with these communities than with those in Clent. This, in their view, provides a clear statistical basis for the transfer of the PTA to the governance of HPC.

3.0 THE ROLE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL AND THE PURPOSE OF THE PRECEPT

- 3.1 Parish councils are the most local form of government. They collect money from Council Tax payers (via the District Council) known as a 'Parish Share' or precept and use this to invest in the area for the improvement of services and facilities. Parish councils take different forms but are usually made up of local people who stand for election as Parish Councillors to represent their area. They can be the voice of the local community and work with other tiers of government and external organisations to co-ordinate and deliver services and work to improve the quality of life in the area.
- 3.2 District councils have a responsibility to ensure that parishes should be viable and should collect a precept that enables them to actively and effectively promote the well-being of their residents and to contribute to the real provision of services in their areas in an economic and efficient manner. Conversely, the precept ought not to be spent on facilities not likely to be used by residents, as applies to the PTA.
- 3.3 Clent Parish Council has no landholdings and there are no other community facilities within the PTA and, therefore, the precept collected within the PTA cannot, as a matter of fact, benefit the PTA. Conversely, there are a wide range of facilities available on the other side of the Kidderminster Road/Worcester Road in Hagley under the governance of HPC and budgeted through the precept raised by Hagley Council Tax payers. Consequently, the use and maintenance of these facilities by residents in the PTA is effectively free of charge at the point of provision and completely subsidised by Hagley Council Tax payers. Indeed, it has been calculated by reference to the precept currently paid, that Hagley Parish residents are paying 120% of the precept that would be payable if the PTA were part of Hagley Parish. This could potentially lead to a situation whereby a funding gap emerges such that HPC would have to ration which amenities are maintained. This, thereby, raises issues over the value for money and effective use of the precept collected by Clent Parish Council in the PTA.
- 3.4 HPC provides a range of services and facilities in the locality, including car parking facilities, a playing field and a cemetery, which are funded from its

precept. These facilities are also used by residents of the PTA, due to their proximity and because there are no equivalent facilities within or in closer proximity to the PTA. Clent Parish Council provides no facilities likely to be used by residents of the PTA other than footpath lighting and notice boards. Instead, it spends funds raised by precept on facilities in Clent and Holy Cross that are unlikely to be used on any consistent basis by the residents of the PTA.

- 3.5 HPC believes that a sustainable community is one which is well run with effective participation, responsibility and leadership. HPC states that it is committed to being representative and accountable with a strategic and visionary leadership that aims for inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations. On the basis of the current boundary, HPC contends that it is not possible to adequately represent and interact with all those residents of Hagley who rely upon and use the services and facilities which are provided within the village.

4.0 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 A CGR is a review of the whole or part of the Principal Council's (Bromsgrove District Council) area for the purpose of making recommendations with regard to creating, merging or abolishing parishes, the naming of parishes, with electoral arrangements for parishes and grouping arrangements for parishes.
- 4.2 The legislative instrument which governs a CGR is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007; specifically section 100 of this Act. This Act puts into statute what was proposed in the Government's 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' white paper of 2006. The Act is further supplemented by 'Guidance on Community Governance Reviews' prepared by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in March 2010.
- 4.3 The process of undertaking a CGR is summarised in Table 3 below and in Appendix B.
- 4.4 It has been over 10 years since the last Community Governance Review for Hagley. An electoral review was undertaken by LGBCE in 2013, in which Hagley West's Ward boundary was expanded to include the majority of the PTA. In light of this recent change, it would seem an ideal time to alter the Parish boundary to broadly reflect this, as well as any potential growth as identified in the 2013 SHLAA.
- 4.5 HPC considers it important that electors should be able to identify clearly with the Parish in which they are residents. It considers that this sense of identity and community lends strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representative and accountable government, engenders visionary leadership and generates a strong inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.
- 4.6 Bromsgrove District Council recently undertook a Community Governance Review to decide whether the Parish of Lickey End should be abolished. The decision for this was undertaken by Bromsgrove District's Full Council who

considered the findings of its Electoral Matters Committee in July 2010. There was no challenge to this as the recommendation followed a request from the community for this course of action to be taken.

4.7 An example timetable for a Hagley Community Governance Review is provided below.

Table 3: Indicative timetable for CGR for Hagley Parish

Stage	Action	Timeline	Outline of Action
1	Report to Full Council	March 2014	Council approves principle of review and its terms of reference
2	Publish terms of reference	April 2014	Council publishes terms of reference and notifies stakeholders of the commencement of the review
3	Invite initial submissions	April 2014 to July 2014	Initial submission invited Consultation/Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with parish councils • Consultation with parish and borough councillors • Local groups and interested parties to be consulted • Information pack to be sent as requested Representation/proposals to be sent to District Council
4	Consider Submissions	July/August 2014	Consider Submissions and prepare draft recommendation for report to council
5	Publish draft recommendations	September 2014 to November 2014	Publish draft recommendations for further consultation
6	Make final recommendation	November 2014 to December 2014	Consider further submissions and prepare final recommendations for report to council (26 th November)
7	Publish final recommendations	January 2015	Publish final recommendations and make final order

5.0 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Issues for Residents

5.1 Whilst a change in a parish boundary may seem unimportant to the layman, in reality it can make a huge difference in respect of which communities residents identify themselves as being part of and community cohesion as a whole; to the quality of service residents receive from their local councillors and parish councils; in respect of the strategic planning of the development of the community; and in terms of the provision of funds towards improving local facilities, amenities and services.

5.2 The Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (para. 52) requires Principal Councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:-

- reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- effective and convenient.

5.3 With these requirements in mind, we consider the issues referred to at the beginning of this section in turn.

Identity

5.4 There is significant guidance contained within the aforementioned document that stresses the importance of identity in community governance. Paragraphs 50 and 51 of the Guidance states that:-

"Parish councils continue to have two main roles: community representation and local administration. For both purposes it is desirable that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity. The views of local communities and inhabitants are of central importance.

The identification of a community is not a precise or rigid matter. The pattern of daily life in each of the existing communities, the local centres for education and child care, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication generally will have an influence."

5.5 Further, paragraph 80 states that:-

"The general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government. This is generally because of the representative nature of parish councils and the need for them to reflect closely the identity of their communities."

5.6 It is clear that the PTA forms part of the community of Hagley. It is geographically part of Hagley; its residents use the services and facilities within Hagley; and by virtue of the petition which was raised through HRAG, many, and arguably the majority of the residents, consider themselves to be part of Hagley. Therefore, from the perspective of identity, it would appear logical for the Parish boundary to reflect this. Conversely, the residents of the PTA are unlikely to use facilities in Clent and Holy Cross because they are less accessible, as the PTA is separated from Lower Clent by the A491 and from Clent and Holy Cross by an area of fields without any adopted road.

5.7 In geographical terms the paragraph 83 of the Guidance states that:-

"As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable. For instance, factors to consider include parks and recreation grounds which sometimes provide natural breaks between communities but they can equally act as focal points. A single community would be unlikely to straddle a river where there are no crossing points, or a large area of moor land or marshland. Another example might be where a community appeared to be divided by a motorway (unless connected by walkways at each

end). Whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable."

- 5.8 Clent Village and the PTA are geographically quite separate and, as such, the issues of one community do not mirror those of the other. The current Clent Parish Councillors reside nearby to Clent village and as such it is likely that they focus their attention on Clent village before the PTA. It would be logical to propose that by transferring the area in question to Hagley Parish, both Clent and Hagley Parish Councils would be better able to concentrate on their own village issues. HPC's aim is to support and enhance a vibrant local community and it considers the community is 'better together' as one rather than split.
- 5.9 It is important to note, given the rumours which accompanied the previous (unsuccessful) attempt to review the boundaries, that the 2007 Act does not provide Bromsgrove District Council with the necessary powers to alter District Boundaries. Therefore, Hagley cannot be absorbed into Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council through a CGR and vice versa, if Dudley MBC were to undertake a CGR, Hagley Parish could not be included in that review.

Representation of Residents

- 5.10 Directly related to this is the issue of resident representation. Again, there is significant text in the Guidance which relates to the need for residents to be adequately represented by their Parish Councils.
- 5.11 Paragraph 15 of the Guidance states:-

"In many cases making changes to the boundaries of existing parishes, rather than creating an entirely new parish, will be sufficient to ensure that community governance arrangements to continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. For example, over time communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across the boundaries resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours.

In such circumstances, the council should consider undertaking a community governance review, the terms of reference of which should include consideration of the boundaries of existing parishes."

5.12 It is because of the expansion of Hagley village into Clent Parish that a boundary change of the kind referred to in paragraph 15 of the Guidance is expedient. With the recent increase in the number of planning applications for residential developments which Hagley and the District as a whole have faced over the past few years, HPC have become proficient in making representations on such applications where they impact upon the local community. With their knowledge of the planning system HPC are, therefore, ideally placed to advise parishioners how best to deal with applications and are able to provide a voice for or against planning applications.

5.13 In the above respect, paragraph 56 of the Guidance continues by saying that:-

"Parish councils can contribute to the creation of successful communities by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, as well as improving the management and maintenance of such amenities. Neighbourhood renewal is an important factor to improve the quality of life for those living in the most disadvantaged areas. Parish councils can be well placed to judge what is needed to build cohesion. Other factors such as social exclusion and deprivation may be specific issues in certain areas, and respect is fundamental to the functioning of all places and communities. The Government remains committed to civil renewal, and empowering citizens to work with public bodies, including parish councils, to influence public decisions."

5.14 It is important that local Councillors have a connection with the local area; many of the current Hagley Parish Councillors live or work in Hagley and have a close detailed knowledge of Hagley. This is aided by their personal knowledge about local issues and concerns, exemplified by their close working relationship with HRAG. It is notable that the present HPC has three members living in the PTA, whereas Clent Parish Council has only one.

5.15 The Hagley Parish Councillors have a close working relationship with the Hagley Community Association, Hagley Business Association (HBA), self-help and charity groups based in Hagley. HPC are regularly sought as the primary point of public support for issues related to highways works and congestion, policing and planning issues. Many of these representations are made by people living in the Furlongs Ward. HPC is, in particular, working with HBA to improve car parking provision in Hagley.

5.16 HPC and its Councillors are apolitical and are free to make decisions based upon merit. This allows the Councillors to concentrate on local issues and frees them from party political battles with other Parish Councillors. Many PTA residents felt that Clent Parish Council and, in particular, certain Clent Parish Councillors did not represent them adequately in respect of recent planning applications which affected them directly. This was looked upon negatively by many of the residents of the PTA and has been the catalyst to bringing the proposed boundary change to its current position.

Funding for Facilities

5.17 Paragraph 47 of the Guidance states that:-

"One of the characteristics of a sustainable community is the desire for a community to be well run with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership. This means:

a) representative, accountable governance systems which both facilitate strategic, visionary leadership and enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations; and

b) effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence."

5.18 As part of its extensive efforts in producing the Hagley Village Strategic Plan (adopted 2013) (see Appendix C), HPC has identified the main areas of work

that need to be undertaken across Hagley. With this background work, HPC is working towards attaining grant funding for several projects identified in the Strategic Plan. Should the proposed boundary change be granted, HPC will be able to use the increased precept to match fund much larger amounts of grant funding for community facilities thereby increasing the opportunities for development of community facilities. Without such a change, HPC's ability to match fund proposals will be less.

- 5.19 HPC employ the services of a litter picker who has a litter picking routine which incorporates the HPC owned playing fields, Worcester Road, Station Road and Park Road, as well as the alleyways throughout Hagley. The current position is that the litter picking regime is only on a limited schedule. An increased budget would provide for the litter picking regime to be extended to wider public areas and would reduce the costs of litter picking on the existing Hagley residents. Current precept paid by the Furlong residents does not contribute to keeping the playing fields and streets neat and tidy but is spent on Clent Village upkeep.
- 5.20 The majority of community facilities used by residents of the PTA lie in Hagley Parish (see Tables 4 and 5 below). This includes a shoppers' car park and playing fields provided by HPC. The Community Centre, adjoining the car park and playing fields is managed by a separate committee, but receives financial assistance from HPC, as do the Scouts and Guides groups. The use of facilities by the local junior football team, West Hagley Colts FC, and the maintenance of those facilities is also funded by HPC despite the fact that some of the children who play come from the PTA. In addition, most of the residents of the PTA use the doctors' and dentists' surgeries, pharmacies, the post office and other shops, banks and other community facilities in Hagley Parish. There are no similar facilities in the PTA. With the increased precept HPC would be in a position to provide improvements to the community facilities, as envisaged in the Hagley Village Strategic Plan.

Table 4: Distance to Facilities from Pinewood Avenue Area

Area 1 Pinewood Avenue	Hagley	Clent
	Hagley Primary School - 1.369km	Clent Parochial Primary School - 2.925km
	Hagley RC High School - 967m	No viable alternative
	Haybridge High School and Six Form - 1.123km	No viable alternative
	Hagley Train Station - 1.046km	No viable alternative
	Hagley Free Church	No viable alternative
	Hagley Community Centre - 1.036km	Clent Parish Hall - 2.943km
	Post Office - 897m	No viable alternative
	St Saviours Church - 1.218 km	Broome Parish Church - 3.206km
	Car Parking Facilities - 1.052km	No viable alternative

Table 5: Distance to Facilities from Thicknall Rise Area

Area 2 Thicknall Rise	Hagley	Clent
	Hagley Primary School - 714m	Clent Parochial Primary School - 2.234km
	Hagley RC High School - 882m	No viable alternative
	Haybridge High School and Six Form - 974m	No viable alternative
	Hagley Train Station - 769m	No viable alternative
	No viable alternative	Hagley Free Church
	Hagley Community Centre - 654m	Clent Parish Hall - 2.234km
	Post Office - 392m	No viable alternative
	St Saviours Church - 721m	Broome Parish Church - 2.441km
	Car Parking Facilities - 601m	No viable alternative

Increased Parish Council Precept

5.21 The Parish precept helps pay for the Parish Council to undertake many of the activities listed below and more:-

- Xmas lights
- HBA fireworks
- Twice monthly meetings
- Introduced lead councillor for Highways and road safety
- A lead councillor for IT
- Quarterly newsletter
- Hagley Village News monthly report
- Twitter
- Notice Boards
- Support for village fete
- Support for Bromsgrove street theatre
- Playing fields
- Management of Sweetpool Nature Reserve
- Civil cemetery
- Facebook
- Online consultation
- Charities and voluntary groups
- Involvement with Stourbridge news, Stourbridge Chronicle and Express and Star

5.22 HPC consistently positions itself as the community champions, proactively campaigning for the betterment of the community, e.g. the New Homes Bonus being paid to the community at point of impact, and Parish Grant being paid on time as directed by Central Government.

5.23 The difference in precept between Hagley Parish and Clent Parish is negligible. Each Parish Council looks at the cost of running its affairs and then sets the level of required finance. This is the 'Parish precept' – the sum of money, part of the Council Tax, which the District Council collects from households within the Parish and then pays back to the Parish Council. The present annual precept for HPC is

approximately £70,000 (2013/2014). It is predicted that the PTA provides an estimated £25,000 toward Clent Parish Council. With this precept HPC will be able to spend more money on improving the facilities in Hagley and provide a more robust service, centralized around the new community centre, as visualised in the Hagley Village Strategic Plan. It will also be able to improve the funding of the library service, community bus and refurbishment of the West Hagley Colts FC changing rooms.

Issues for Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council

- 5.24 District and County Councils have had to make cutbacks and find savings rather than take on more responsibilities. Significant costs have been stripped from budgets resulting in equally significant cuts in services. Increasingly, the emphasis is on different ways of delivering services and this often means that parishes must do more for themselves, often unfunded. By altering the Parish boundary, this would provide HPC with a solid base from which to consider producing a Local Neighbourhood Plan for the enlarged Parish and where to allocate future grant funding, as well as meeting its strategic goals.

Budget Cuts and Protecting Local Facilities

- 5.25 More recent District and County budget cut backs have increased the pressure on the Parish Council to keep services open in Hagley. This is currently reflected in the County Council review of Library Services in Hagley which is considering all options, including its closure. There is increasing pressure upon HPC to support the continuation of the Library Service through funding and management. The Library is the only one on the western side of the M5 in the District and is used by many people, including those from outside Hagley. The following table indicates the type and amount of usage.

Table 6: Library Statistics	
Visits to library Per Annum	43,725
Enquiries Per Annum	7,500
Issues	62,600
Computer Bookings	2,150
New Members Per Annum	380

- 5.26 It has recently been resolved that HPC will work with WCC on an action plan and future operating agreement which will result in HPC funding the maintenance of the library building. This will result in a precept being submitted to take into account the funding required to keep the Library and Information Centre open.
- 5.27 Similarly, there is a Worcestershire County Council consultation on funding subsidies to the bus operators. Following previous consultations, a number of services have either been scaled back or cut altogether. There is nothing to suggest that this will not be the same outcome in this current consultation. Reducing or removing the service leaves communities such as Hagley isolated and dependent on private vehicles or services such as the 'Hagley Help Line'. HPC is under increasing pressure to subsidise any public bus service that comes through Hagley. Therefore, increased funding and wider community support would ensure the service has greater potential to continue being supported fully at the point of use.

Work with Local Groups

- 5.28 HRAG, which includes members from the PTA, are a body that represent the interests of local people in the area. The residents of the area are supported by the Action Group and have shown, by their petition that they want to be included in Hagley Parish and represented by HPC. The effective way to achieve this is to enlarge the Parish boundary to include the PTA.
- 5.29 HPC and HRAG have worked together on several occasions, recently in opposition to the Cala Homes planning application. The strong connection between the two bodies highlights the important work HPC does with and on behalf of the community. With such a close connection to a grass roots group like the Action Group, the Parish Council is able to identify local issues and bring them to the attention of Bromsgrove District Council, providing a voice for the whole of Hagley's community.
- 5.30 By altering the Parish boundary between Hagley and Clent, Bromsgrove District Council will produce a cohesive boundary tied to firm ground detail, removing an anomalous boundary brought about due to housing development undertaken since the boundary was last altered. HPC sees this as an opportunity to deliver a strong, inclusive and voluntary sector that has excellent civic values, responsibility and pride. Sense of place that delivers a positive feeling enhancing local character and local distinctiveness would be formalised. This will lead to improvements in community cohesion brought about by the continued close working relationship between HRAG and HPC.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 As detailed in the document above there are many positive outcomes from including the PTA within HPC's area of administration. From providing assistance to residents' groups to improving and maintaining local facilities in the face of district-wide cuts.
- 6.2 The parish boundaries between Hagley and Clent have been identified as anomalous by the HRAG. The legislation surrounding CGRs identifies this as an important reason to undertake one in this instance. As such the boundaries must be changed to alter this anomaly and provide a coherent boundary which is easily identifiable. This would encompass the whole of Hagley within the same parish, thus removing the anomaly whereby two neighbours are separated by parish boundaries.
- 6.3 Paragraph 179 of the Guidance addresses the issue of variations between parish boundaries and District Electoral Wards when it states:-

"In the interests of maintaining coterminosity between the boundaries of principal authority electoral areas and the boundaries of parishes and parish wards, principal councils may wish to consider as part of a community governance review whether to make consequential recommendations to the LGBCE for related alterations to the boundaries of any affected district or London borough wards and/or county divisions."

- 6.4 By altering the Parish boundary this would also accord with the recent LGBCE district electoral ward boundary change, which will come into force before the 2015 elections. As such, by not altering the parish boundaries to reflect the ward boundaries, this would create confusion amongst local voters. This would result in a loss of community cohesion, as those within the PTA would be included in the Hagley West Ward when it comes to voting for MP's but would not be included when it comes to voting for local councillors in Hagley.

- 6.5 Furthermore, by not altering the Parish boundary, Bromsgrove would create animosity between the PTA residents and the current Hagley residents. The PTA residents receive the benefits of living in Hagley but without any of the cost. This has led to the current Hagley residents precept paying 120% of the cost to maintain local amenities. This will eventually lead to a funding gap due to the increased usage of local facilities, especially with the two new residential developments soon to start construction. As such by including the PTA there would be an increase in funding for local facilities, including keeping the library open.
- 6.6 Pursuant to Section 93 of 2007 Act, the outcomes of this Review should bring about improved community engagement, a more cohesive community and better local democracy and should result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services. Taking into account the original petition, the majority of comments received and the number of residents in support of this proposal, it would appear that the alteration of the Hagley and Clent Parish boundaries would achieve this.
- 6.7 In conclusion, the arguments for change far outweigh the arguments to continue the status quo. The government legislation positively encourages councils to combat these situations, through the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act and the local residents have come forward identifying this as a key issue they want dealt with. On the basis of the above evidence, it is our conclusion that Hagley Parish Council on the behalf of HRAG should formally request that Bromsgrove District Council publish a Reorganisation Order to alter the Hagley and Clent Parish Boundaries with the 1st April 2015 the target date for adoption.
- 6.8 On the basis of the assessment undertaken as detailed in this document, we would recommend that:-

From the evidence considered there would be tangible benefits to the Parish Council, District Council and, most importantly, the residents of Hagley as a whole for the alteration of the Parish boundary to include the PTA within Hagley Parish.

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Appendix A – Map of Proposed Transfer Area

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Appendix B - Summary of Community Governance Review (CGR) Process

Appendix C – Hagley Village Strategic Plan