

Dear Resident

Possible creation of a new Parish from the Stoke Heath Ward of Stoke Parish – please tell us what you think

Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) has received a petition from a number of residents in Stoke Heath Ward requesting that consideration be given to creating a new Parish from the current Stoke Heath Ward. We are therefore writing to every household in the existing Stoke parish, to explain what we have been asked to consider and to get the views of residents.

It is very important at this stage to be clear that it is not a foregone conclusion that the new Parish will be created. Under the regulations relating to parish matters, when a valid petition is received the local council, BDC in this case, has to carry out a review. The views of local residents are an important part of the review process, and this first consultation stage will help BDC to find out what residents across the Parish think of the suggestion.

What would creating a new Parish mean?

Creating a new Parish for Stoke Heath area would create two parishes from the current Stoke Parish. A Parish Council consisting of the current Stoke Prior Ward and a new Parish Council consisting of the Stoke Heath Ward.

When a new Parish Council is formed, in order to be able to carry out its functions the new Parish Council would have the power to decide whether or not to levy a precept.

What are Parish Councils?

Parish councils make local decisions and introduce policy that is relevant to the public interest of the parish. This is done at meetings of the Parish Council, by Parish Councillors who are elected to serve for a four year term. Parish Councillors are unpaid. The existing Stoke Parish Council has 12 Parish Councillors (8 for Stoke Prior Ward and 4 for Stoke Heath Ward). If the Parish is split into two, each Parish Council would have its own Parish Councillors (numbers to be determined).

Parish Councils represent the local community, for example, by providing responses to planning or licensing consultations, they also deliver services to meet local needs and improve the quality of life and community well-being. Parish councils have powers to provide and maintain a variety of important local services, such as allotments, burial grounds, bus shelters, open spaces and village halls.

Parish councils are funded by a “precept” which forms part of the council tax residents pay. BDC collects the precept on behalf of Stoke Parish Council and gives this money to the Parish Council who use it to support its operations and carry out local projects. The precept that each household pays depends on which Band of Council Tax you fall into. For a Band D

property in Stoke the amount paid in 2020/2021 is £30.11 for the year. The Parish Council review this amount every year.

The petitioners feel that a disproportional amount of the precept money is spent in the Stoke Prior Ward.

Where would the parish be split?

The map below shows the parish ward boundaries. As part of the submitted petition, suggested the current Stoke Heath Parish Ward make up the new parish.

[map]

Will the amount of Council Tax I pay change?

It might do. If the split goes ahead, both Parish Councils would need to decide how much money they need to raise via their precepts, collected as part of your Council Tax bill, to help run their respective parishes. Therefore, whichever parish you live in, your Council Tax bill could go up or down.

Currently, Stoke Parish Council can spread its running costs across the whole parish. Should there be a separation into two parishes, there would be fewer properties to meet these costs, however there might be fewer services to provide. For example, if the parish council currently mows the grass in open spaces, insures bus shelters and pays someone to empty dog bins, and half of these assets were located in the new parish area, the new parish council would take responsibility for providing the services in their area.

What would the name of the parishes be?

If the parish was separated, consideration would also need to be given to the names of these parishes. It is possible for the Stoke Prior Ward to remain as Stoke Parish and the new Parish to be called Stoke Heath.

Please let us know if you have any name suggestions.

What happens now?

Under legislation the review must be completed within a year and the review ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more efficient delivery of local services.

These are the things BDC will focus on when making its recommendations.

BDC is opening a consultation period for anyone with an interest to share their views. More specifically it is consulting every household, via this communication, in Stoke Parish to ensure that everybody in the parish has an opportunity to give their views.

Further information regarding the review including the timetable can be found at the dedicated webpage for the review: [webpage]

At the end of this letter you will find a short questionnaire. Please take a few minutes to fill this in and return it using the envelope supplied.

Alternatively, you can reply electronically. You can visit the above webpage and click on the link to answer the questions through an online version of the questionnaire, or send an email to elections@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk .

All written or emailed responses should reach us by Monday 14 December 2020 to be taken into consideration. The online survey will close at 11:59pm on the same date.

Responses will then be considered by the Electoral Matters Committee, who will come up with a set of recommendations. There will then be a second consultation on proposals for the area.

Yours sincerely,

Darren Whitney

Electoral Services Manager