



Neil Gulliver
Clerk to the Council

Email:



9 December 2020

Dear Sir

Community Governance Review for Proposed New Parish within the current Stoke Parish Area

The Parish Council wishes to make the following comments in response to the initial stage of the Review:-

1. There would appear to be no logical reason for splitting the current Parish as suggested under the petition which has been submitted.
2. Stoke Heath is a relatively new estate that currently has no community facilities or recreation areas other than one very small play area. Equally it does not have any building in which to hold meetings should a new parish be formed as a result of the Review.
3. It is difficult to see how any new Parish Council could function without a meeting venue within its parish boundary.
4. It is almost inconceivable for a housing estate to form its own Parish Council without any facilities to offer to its parishioners. It is highly likely that the residents of Stoke Heath Parish Ward would continue to make use of the current facilities provided by Stoke Parish Council ie Stoke Heath Recreation Area with its large field, children's play area and the outdoor gym. They would also continue to have access to such events as the Annual Film Night and Carols in the Park.
5. Have the residents in support of the petition thought about the prospect that Stoke Heath Parish Ward could be absorbed in the Bromsgrove District Council area and become a District Ward such as Charford?
6. If Stoke Heath was able to set up its own Parish Council residents would still be required to pay a parish precept. The real question would be what would a Parish Council spend that precept on?
7. If the residents of Stoke Heath Parish Ward are so unhappy with the Parish Council why have they not expressed their concerns directly to the Council. The Parish Council would question the aims of this Review given that a separate Council for Stoke Heath would have nothing to offer its parishioners.

8. The current boundaries between Stoke Prior and Stoke Heath include some streets which, if the 2 areas were split, would mean that streets such as Harvest Close would be part of 2 Parish Councils. How would that work?

9. Stoke Parish Council has worked hard over the years to provide as much support it possibly can to Stoke Heath Parish Ward but given the nature of that part of the parish it is very difficult to provide material support in that area. Hence the level of facilities provided at Stoke Heath Recreation Area for all. A good example of how the Parish Council has supported Stoke Heath Parish Ward has been the distribution of smartwater kits to 90% of homes in the area at no cost to residents.

10. Reference has been made that certain residents in Stoke Heath Parish Ward object to contributing towards the cost of street lighting in Stoke Prior Parish Ward. It should be pointed out that parish councils have legal responsibilities and statutory duties associated with the ownership of their streetlights. The Parish Lighting Initiative as far as Stoke Prior is concerned has been in operation since 2004. As Stoke Heath was expanded from its original status by housing developers it is likely that the street lighting was installed by them and adopted by the local authority. It should be pointed out that all the street lights in Stoke Prior Parish Ward are maintained by the Parish Council under the above scheme. No street lights are provided by the County Council despite certain assertions to that effect.

11. Reference has also been made to the lack of support given to the area by the Parish Lengthsman. Support is given wherever necessary including litter picking as the District Council does not have the resources to always carry out this work. Maintenance of the Vehicle Activation System which monitors traffic speeds through the area is also carried by the Lengthsman.

Yours faithfully

Neil Gulliver
Parish Clerk