

Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council's Response
Adopted at its Council meeting held on Monday 7th December 2009
Regarding the Draft Proposals Community Governance Review
Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington
Published by Telford & Wrekin Council on 15th October 2009

This response is to be read in conjunction with the draft proposals Community Governance Review, Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington published by Telford & Wrekin Council on 15th October 2009. The numbers illustrate comments to coincide with the numbering in the draft proposals.

1.1 The wording suggests that 333 local government electors of the Lilleshall Ward are calling for a separate parish to be formed for their ward, when the fact is that the electors signed the Community Governance Petition so that a **review** could be carried out. It must be stressed that a respondent petition has, to date, been submitted by 359 electors stating that they do not want any change to the present community governance arrangements. Many of these 359 are the same electors who originally signed the Community Governance petition requesting a review. The Licensing Board **should** take this into consideration.

1.3 Having studied all of the information received to date, the Democratic Officers have come to the conclusion to propose “**no change in the present community governance arrangements**”. Their experience in these matters should be considered as one of much significance.

1.7 It should become an independent parish of its own **providing the majority of electors in Lilleshall wish this.**

1.9 Petition received to date signed by 359 electors opposing a separate Lilleshall Parish Council. Their views **must** be considered as they make up 35% of the electorate in Lilleshall. See 1.1

1.10 The creation of small parish councils greatly reduces their effectiveness in achieving satisfactory levels of service to the community they serve, most of which is down to lack of adequate finances. By studying the budgets provided it can be seen that Lilleshall has been greatly subsidised by Muxton and Donnington but each Ward supports the others in their own way. Lilleshall is “asset heavy” in comparison with adjacent small parish councils. It has a large closed churchyard, street lighting, bus shelters and the Talbot Centre tennis courts and club house. **A planning application has now been submitted for the provision of allotments within the Lilleshall Ward.** If this permission is given then this will also become an asset for Lilleshall that will have to be maintained and a budget for this will be required. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is encouraging current small parish councils to cluster together to enable them to work toward affordable levels of standards of service to their electorate. This highlights the point made at the start of 1.10. The lack of

submissions made by electors within Muxton and Donnington indicates satisfaction with the current present community governance arrangements.

2.4 This Parish Council considers that any split made within its Wards to create separate Parish Councils would greatly **reduce their ability to promote effective and convenient local government of which it is the duty of Telford & Wrekin Council to maintain and promote.**

3.1 Whilst Lilleshall differs from Donnington and Muxton on a geographical basis submissions received to date show there is a lack of consensus on whether the wards have distinctive communities of identity.

3.2 The Government's Guidance addresses the point that "the feeling of local community and **the wishes of local inhabitants** are the primary considerations". See respondent petition signed by 35% of the electorate of Lilleshall stating that they do not want any change to the present community governance arrangements

3.3 There is no hard evidence that Muxton and Donnington Wood residents have better qualifications and managerial and professional levels between the two Wards. Donnington Wood is in the Muxton Ward and therefore there is a distinct commonality between Donnington and Muxton. The area is represented by two Borough Councillors and six Parish Councillors. The lack of response to the CGR from the electorate of Muxton and Donnington Wood appears to indicate that the majority are satisfied with the current community governance arrangements. At the last Parish Council elections only one new resident from Muxton put his name forward to be elected as a councillor.

The Parish Council agrees that the differentials listed in 3.3 do not adequately substantiate the community of identity test.

3.4 With regard to community cohesion one must historically remember the effort put in by **residents from all Wards** to fight the proposed plans for open cast mining in Muxton. Mr Tony Cox, a resident of Lilleshall, together with other Lilleshall and Muxton residents, strongly supported by this Parish Council, started an action group campaigning against the proposed mine in Muxton. As a result of this combined effort the plans were eventually dismissed but, unfortunately, the threat still remains. This success was down to members of the electorate within the **whole** parish supporting each other. This demonstrates that the whole community is strong, cohesive and socially inclusive. The division of the parish on the basis of indices of deprivation and similar considerations appear to be contrary to both the Government's Guidance and the Council's community objectives and therefore should not be considered as a reason for altering the present community governance arrangements.

3.5 The Parish Council concurs that the facilities in Lilleshall depend heavily on outside support and residency, including the village school and pre-school and Lilleshall Memorial Hall, as assisted by grants from this Parish Council. Many children from Muxton attend the school in Lilleshall and will continue to do so as Muxton continues to expand through development. Once again, this demonstrates the support and commonality that each Ward has with each other.

3.6 Many local residents are happy with the service provided by the current Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council as expressed in the respondent petition signed to date by 359 electors. Once again it must be stated that “if it is not broken, then don’t fix it”.

3.7 The Parish Council agrees that recent history shows that elections for parish councillors for Lilleshall Ward have not been contested for a considerable number of years and therefore concurs with this statement. Proof of this can be provided by Telford & Wrekin Council Electoral Services.

3.8 The Parish Council has not received any reports of disquiet amongst the residents of Muxton despite regularly holding Councillor Surgeries and Community Engagement Meetings in Muxton and therefore disagrees with the statements made by the Borough Councillors for Muxton Ward unless evidence substantiating the claim can be provided. Many of the local residents that attend these meetings have never mentioned this issue and often praise the work requested by them which is undertaken by the local police and Parish Council. At one of these meetings held in November some actually stated to the Clerk that they did not want a separate Muxton Parish Council as they appreciated the work currently undertaken by the present Council.

A newly formed Muxton parish council would not necessarily have more money to spend per head of population than currently, as no suggestion as to what the precept could be has been submitted. This would be decided by the Parish Councillors elected. As the Borough Councillors are relatively new to the area it is possible that historical links between all the Wards have been overlooked.

3.9 The Parish Council concurs with this statement.

4.1 The current warding arrangements that exist in this parish provide a community that is strong, cohesive and socially inclusive. Each of the three Councillors from Lilleshall represents 340.66 electors. Each of the Councillors from Donnington and Muxton represents 780.5 and 789.33 electors respectively. Therefore this Parish Council considers that Lilleshall is adequately represented on the Council.

4.6 See 4.1

5.1 See 2.4

5.2 The Parish Council agrees with the budgets and their allocation provided for this document.

5.4 Lilleshall cannot be compared to neighbouring villages and their financial viability due to it having far greater liabilities within the village and the costs that these bring in maintenance and funding. For example:

Edgmond Parish Council

Precept 2009/2010 of £6,300

Assets – 1 bus shelter, 110 street lights, 1 war memorial, 2 play areas.

Tibberton and Cherrington Parish Council

Precept 2009/2010 of £2,750

Assets – 3 benches, 1 bus shelter

Church Aston Parish Council

Precept 2009/2010 of £14,000

Assets - Two bus shelters, 74 street lights, 1 closed church yard, trustees of the village hall.

Proposed separate Lilleshall Council (based on current warding boundaries)

Precept £24,345.53 (Based on Council Tax and Electorate percentage of current precept).

Assets – 9 bus shelters, Talbot Centre tennis courts and club house, 1 closed churchyard consisting of two large areas, 130 street lights, and allotments (expected to be purchased by 29th January 2010).

Administration costs involved with running parish councils such as a Clerk, stationery etc also have to be taken into consideration.

5.8 After resolving parking issues regarding the proposed allotments a **planning application has now been submitted for the provision of allotments within the Lilleshall Ward**. If this permission is given then this will also become an asset to go with Lilleshall's many others. A separate Lilleshall Parish Council will then have to allocate extra funding for the maintenance of the allotments within its precept.

5.9 The Parish Council concurs with this statement.

5.11 Whilst savings could be made in salaries and employee on-costs Lilleshall currently benefits from the availability of a full time experienced and qualified Clerk and part time Assistant Clerk who can be contacted during normal office hours. A separate Lilleshall Parish Council would, at best, have a part time Clerk who, if also employed elsewhere, would only be available for a limited time during the evenings. Difficulties would arise if issues had to be raised with Borough Council Officers who also work normal office hours. There would also be a loss of financial benefits to local groups currently receiving grants from the current Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council, some of which are quite considerable sums of money.

5.12 Whilst street lighting could be contracted out to an individual provider small parish councils have experienced difficulty in maintaining a reasonable standard of service. The economies of scale could play a significant part in this as bigger clients, such as Telford & Wrekin Council are given greater priority by the service provider due to the number of street lights involved.

5.16 The Parish Council concurs with this statement.

5.18 The Parish Council concurs with this statement.

6.1 Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council currently holds the majority of its meetings at Turreff Hall, Donnington. However, once a year, the Parish Council holds a full Council meeting at Lilleshall Memorial Hall. An enquiry has been made to hold meetings in Muxton and only recently has a date and venue become available. The meeting will be held in Muxton Primary School on Monday 8th February 2010. In future, this Parish Council intends

to investigate the possibility of holding meetings on an equal basis in Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton.

6.2 This Parish Council considered adding the name Muxton to the Parish Council as far back as its full Council meeting held on **12th March 2007**. The decision made then was to postpone the matter until after the forthcoming elections or the Parish Boundary review. It was then further discussed at a full Council meeting held on **10th November 2008**. The decision then was that “whilst it was stated that Muxton should be included, concerns were raised that the issue regarding Lilleshall becoming an independent Parish Council was ongoing. Due to the amount of legislative changes that would have to be made to alter the Parish Council name, it was proposed to delay this action until the issue regarding Lilleshall is settled.” If the CGR had not been presented then it is highly likely that Muxton would now be included in the Parish Council name. If it is decided to keep the parish council as it currently is then there would be justification in including Muxton in its title.

7.1 The Parish Council concurs with this statement.

Conclusion

Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council agrees that there should be **no change in the present community governance arrangements** for those reasons as per 7.1 of the draft proposals for the Community Governance Review, Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington and as highlighted in its comments above.