



**Telford & Wrekin**

**C O U N C I L**

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW  
PARISH OF LILLESHALL AND DONNINGTON**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN  
HEALTH ACT 2007**

**FINAL PROPOSALS**

**THESE FINAL PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED BY THE COUNCIL  
ON:**

**1 APRIL 2010**

**THE LICENSING COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL WILL PUBLISH ITS  
RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REVIEW ON:**

**15 APRIL 2010**

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Telford and Wrekin Council received a Community Governance Petition, signed by 333 local government electors of the Lilleshall Ward of the Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington, calling for a community governance review for the purpose of considering forming a separate parish for this ward. In accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Act by the government Department for Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission, the Council has been required by law to conduct a Community Governance Review.

1.2 This Review commenced on 22 April 2009, when the Licensing Committee of the Council published a Terms of Reference document and invited initial submissions from individuals or organisations who had an interest in the Review. In the Terms of Reference, the Council published a timetable for the Review and it published a consultation strategy.<sup>1</sup> The period for initial submissions closed on 22 June 2009. The Council published its Draft Proposals in response to the Community Governance Petition on 15 October 2009, and then allowed a period of three months ending on 29 January 2010 for comments on its Draft Proposals.<sup>2</sup>

1.3 In preparing its Draft Proposals, the Council was mindful of the request of the petitioners and the initial submissions that were received. The Council has the role of balancing these requests and submissions against the wider requirements and duties that are placed upon it in the 2007 Act. In particular, the Council has a duty to ensure that community governance within its area:

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<sup>1</sup> Terms of Reference, Tables 2.1-2.2

<sup>2</sup> Copies of the Terms of Reference and Draft Proposals documents are available from our contact address at paragraph 9.2 below or at <http://www.telford.gov.uk/Council+democracy/Democracy+elections/CommunityGovernanceReview.htm>

- reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area;
- is effective and convenient, and
- takes into account any other, non-parish, arrangements for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in the area.<sup>3</sup>

1.4 In Part 2 of the Terms of Reference document consideration was given to the important question of consultation with the electors and other interested persons or bodies in this Review. A timetable for the Review was established which allowed for appropriate consultation periods, and a consultation strategy was devised and published. The Draft Proposals document was issued to 130 individuals and community organisations that have an interest in the parish of Lilleshall and Donnington. During the consultation period, two press releases were issued to advertise the publication of the Draft Proposals and the closing date for submissions. Copies of the Draft Proposals were made available on the Council's website and in local libraries.

**1.5 It was the Council's Draft Proposals that there should be no change in the present community governance arrangements in the Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington. Reasons were given to support the Draft Proposals. In summary these reasons were as follows:**

- at this time there would appear to be an absence of community consensus that there is a distinct community of identity in the Lilleshall ward and to date there is an absence of submissions from the Donnington and Muxton wards; taken together this would seem to argue against any change to the current arrangements;
- the warding arrangement that exists in the present parish of Lilleshall and Donnington would appear at this time to be appropriate for this parish because it will allow the different parts of the parish to continue to be separately represented on the parish council;

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<sup>3</sup> Section 93(4-5) of the 2007 Act

- at this time there are no pressing reasons for altering the present warding and electoral arrangements;
- it would appear at this stage in the Review that any change would not provide any substantial benefits in terms of the effective and convenient local government for the electors of the area.

1.6 In drawing up these Final Proposals, the Council has been primarily concerned to identify any submissions which significantly alter and influence the reasoning behind the Draft Proposals that there should be no change in the community governance arrangements in the Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington.

1.7 In this Review, the Council has been required to balance the greater good for all the residents of all the parts of the existing Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington against any substantial impetus for change to the present community governance arrangements. This question has been at the heart of this Review: the balance between providing effective and convenient local government on the one hand with the recognition of a community of identity on the other. In the Draft Proposals, the Council expressed its concerns that there might not be significant benefits in terms of the costs of providing parish services to the residents of Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton and indeed in some areas there would be cause for concerns about the future provision of services.<sup>4</sup> However, such a finding would have been tempered by a clear desire for change from the residents of the parish, and, in particular, from the residents of Lilleshall. A petition from 359 local residents was received towards the end of the initial submissions period opposing the creation of a separate parish.<sup>5</sup> A further petition of 477 local residents has also been received in response to our publication of Draft Proposals, again opposing the creation of a separate parish.

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<sup>4</sup> Paragraphs 5.11-5.15, Draft Proposals

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 3.9, Draft Proposals

## **2. Submissions Received**

2.1 The publication of the Draft Proposals on 15 October 2009 and the opening of a three-month period of consultation on them permitted the residents of the Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington, and particularly those who wanted change, to provide evidence of widespread support for change. It also permitted them to show that the Council's concerns with regard to the future provision of parish services in their area were unfounded.

2.2 The Council received a total of 59 submissions in response to its Draft Proposals up to the closing date for submissions on 29 January 2010. The Chairman of the Licensing Committee has requested that all submissions that are made in response to the Council's Draft Proposals be copied and supplied to Members of the Committee. The submissions will also be placed in a deposit file that is open to inspection by members of the public. A submission number follows the names of all respondents, and refers to the submissions that have been supplied to Members and the copies in the public deposit copy of submissions.

2.3 Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council has made a substantial submission (23). This is the first submission that the Parish Council has made and will be referred to throughout this document. The council "agrees that there should be no change in the present community governance arrangements" for the reasons that Telford and Wrekin Council outlined in its Draft Proposals.

2.4 The following 21 individual responses represented the views of 24 residents. The submissions expressed support for a separate Lilleshall parish:

Commander Howard Broadbent (2)

Norma E.J. Sadler (5)

Mrs S Brotherton (two submissions) (7 and 33)

Susan Tiller (8)

Mr P. and Mrs D. Sayer (17)

R.J. Tiller (28)

Ian Holden (30)

Mr D. and Mrs M. Cartwright (31)

Derek Stiles (34)

Simon Collier (37)

Keith Coffey (39)

Pauline Coffey (40)

Donald V. Marshall (41)

Margaret A. Marshall (42)

Sheila and Warwick Large (45)

Mr J.W. Hockin (46)

Matthew and Mrs Helen Franklin (54)

Philip Hawkins (55)

Mrs S.J. Hockin (57)

Teresa Kean (59)

2.5 The following individual respondent has expressed his support for a separate Muxton parish:

Councillor Nigel Dugmore (58)

2.6 The following 18 individual responses represented the views of 20 residents supporting the current arrangements and the conclusions of the Draft Proposals:

Kathleen Turner (1)

Shirley and Michael Harris (3)

Mr E.P. and Mrs J.G. Millard (10)

Norman and Jean Rozzell (13)

Mr R.C. Burroughes (15)

Mr J.M. and Mrs V.L. Margerrison (16)

Neil and Rosemary Sampson (22)  
Ralph Morgan, Clerk to the Parish Council (26)  
Mr and Mrs A.T. Parker (27)  
Philip and Sharon Hardy (Muxton residents) (32)  
Geoff Lott (44)  
Donald A., Janet R., and Rachel Johnson (47)  
Linda Parker (48)  
Andrew D. Baker (49)  
Carol A. Baker (50)  
F. Graham Platt (51)  
Cedric R.G. Ayres and Mary H. Ayres (52)  
David and Ruth Taylor (55)

2.7 Several submissions supporting a separate Lilleshall parish council are brief, expressing support but with no reasoning given.. A few examples follow: Norma E.J. Sadler (5): “I would like it known that I support Lilleshall having its own parish council.” Mr and Mrs P. Sayer (17) and Mr I. Holden (30): “As a Lilleshall Ward elector, I would like it recorded that I support Lilleshall in having its own parish council.” Mrs D. Cartwright (31): “Having followed the debate for an independent Lilleshall parish council closely, we are writing to show our support for independence.” Keith Coffey (39): “With reference to decision over whether Lilleshall village should become an independent council, I would like to register my preference for independence”.

2.8 Likewise, many of the submissions that support the Draft Proposals take the form of brief letters or e-mails. A few examples sum up their content. Neil and Rosemary Sampson (22): “As residents of this parish since 1985, we write to express our support for the draft proposal that there should be no change in the present community governance arrangements in the Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington. Having now had the time and opportunity to fully consider all the available information, we are both of the opinion that the changes suggested are ill conceived and with little merit. The local council services that we have experienced for over 20 plus years have been of a high standard. We have had no complaints or criticisms of the council over this

period and we see no benefit of any changes.” Or the views of J.M. and V.L. Margerrison(16), “Lilleshall and Donnington should stay together with one tried and trusted parish council”, and the views of Donald A., Janet R., and Rachel Johnson (47): “we have lived in Lilleshall for over forty years and are very satisfied with the united Lilleshall and Donnington Council. We do not want to become independent.”

2.9 While such comments do not significantly alter and influence the reasoning behind the Draft Proposals, they are nevertheless a measure of the local impetus for change, and, among the individual submissions, that seems about balanced. (Where comments have been more substantial reference has been made to them throughout this document.)

2.10 Submission 53 comprises a petition signed by 477 residents of Lilleshall, each of which has provided their name, address and signature, and received on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Each page of this petition is headed “We, the undersigned, support the Telford and Wrekin Council draft proposals published on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 in that there should be no change in the present community governance arrangements because: Lilleshall is not an exclusive community in as much as the facilities of the village are supported and used by people of the wider area; the existing warding arrangements are appropriate for Lilleshall; any change would not provide any substantial benefits for the electors of Lilleshall; there is no firm evidence that a separate parish council for Lilleshall would be financially viable.” This petition, signed by nearly half the adult residents of Lilleshall, seems to indicate a significant impetus against change. It follows a former petition signed by 359 residents and received in June 2009 in response to the Council’s Terms of Reference document and headed, “We are well satisfied with the standard of service we receive from Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council and feel that moves to change existing arrangements are neither necessary nor desirable”.

2.11 In his present submission (51) F. Graham Platt stated that, “I believe that this [petition] should be one of the overriding factors in your decision. In spite of what is being suggested there was no pressure applied on the doorstep.

What is interesting is that the Independence Group has not been able to produce a similar petition for their views”.

2.12 A number of community groups or organisations have made submissions in response to the Draft Proposals. With the exception of the submission of the Lilleshall Independence Group these submissions all support the Draft Proposals.

2.13 Lilleshall Memorial Hall Management Committee’s (43) submission is as follows: “We agree with both your reasoning and proposals that there should be no change to the existing arrangements in the parish... We on this committee are responsible for attracting user groups to the hall, a vast majority of whom come from areas outside the village, namely Muxton and Donnington. To separate ourselves from them would, we believe, not be in the interests of the Hall and send out entirely the wrong message to neighbouring communities. At the same time, the Hall has received generous grants from the existing parish Council over the last ten years because firstly they appreciate the Hall is dependent on support from outside the village and secondly they have the resources to do so. To sever what we see as the umbilical cord that binds the three communities together would, we think, not be in anybody’s interests.”

2.14 Lilleshall Youth Centre Building Management Committee (36) states that “Only two of [its] committee members... actually reside within the current Lilleshall ward. The other committee members come from Donnington, Muxton, Newport, Apley and Shawbirch. Of the youth who use the building, approximately one third live in Lilleshall, the other two thirds coming mainly from Muxton... The only occasion we, as a Committee, come into contact with the current Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council is when applying for grants to help to improve/ maintain our building, we have always had favourable responses. If there were to be an independent Lilleshall Parish Council, we feel that the quality and quantity of grants would not be readily available, particularly at the beginning of a new arrangement with all its

financial uncertainties. We therefore agree with your proposals that there should be no change to the current arrangements.”

2.15 St Michael and All Angels Lilleshall Parochial Church Council (38): “We believe that over the years the present arrangement of local authority governance has served us well and therefore we have no desire for change.” They cite the support given to the restoration of the church bier house and resurfacing of footpaths. With regard to the ‘closed churchyard’, “The Lilleshall Independence Group proposed expenditure budget we believe is woefully short of what will be required. Our main concern in this area is the closed churchyard. In the near future there will be considerable expenditure required on maintenance... We do not see that an independent Lilleshall would be able to meet the expenditure required and therefore we are in favour of retaining the ‘status quo’.

2.16 In the Lilleshall Pantomime Group (11) “there was a unanimous decision to accept the Council’s view that there should be no change in the current arrangements.”

2.17 In the Muxton area, the Residents Association Breton Park (14) through their Chairman and spokesman “have studied all the facts, figures and arguments contained in the Draft Proposals and it seems to me that Muxton has the greatest reason for becoming an independent parish council, but I go along with the comment that if it is not broken do not try to mend it, let the situation remain the same, we therefore recommend no change.”

2.18 The most substantial submissions have been made by a group of ten people who comprise the Lilleshall Independence Group” (12, 21, 35) The Lilleshall Independence Group claims that it was “formed at the request of the Review to present the case for an independent Lilleshall Parish Council”. It should be noted that officers of Telford and Wrekin Council did not “request” the formation of a group. However, if there had been a suggestion that such a group would be a means of putting forward a case, then officers of Telford

and Wrekin Council would have indicated that this would be an approach that might be appropriate.

2.19 The Group has made three detailed submissions: the first entitled 'Finance and Administration' and the second 'Petitions and Process' and its third 'Community and Governance'. Its first submission provides a financial analysis and a case for a separate parish council based on financial grounds. In its second submission it reviews the history of the Community Governance Petition and the Group's formation; this document is then largely a critique of the Council in its conduct of the review together with a critique of opponents of the Group's position. The third submission makes a case for the community identity that the group considers exists in Lilleshall.

2.20 The group comprises ten members:

Jilly Broadbent\*  
Carol Brown  
Rowland Brown  
Peter Cawthorne  
Simon Collier\*  
Philip Hawkins\*  
John Hockin\*  
David Parker  
Ian Sadler\*  
Rick Tiller\*

\* Some members of this group have also contributed one or more individual submissions.

2.21 Four members of this group requested that their willingness to stand as candidates for election to a separate Lilleshall Parish Council be recorded, also asking that it be recorded that they were not, however, willing to serve on a Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council: Jilly Broadbent(29), Philip Hawkins(18), Ian Sadler(20) and Mr R.J. Tiller(9).

2.22 The Group has been critical of the progress of the review, of the Terms of Reference and Draft Proposals documents. This criticism is voiced through their submissions. For example, the Terms of Reference document “did not present any information about the change to becoming a parish for informed consideration or comment”. Likewise “the first Review by Telford and Wrekin Council has given every impression of working towards the pre-determined decision that there should be no change.” Or “failures in process have complicated and confused what should have been a simple exercise. They have undermined the case for independence and the standing of our Group and they have encouraged opponents to raise a counter-petition based upon misinformation... The Review has so far proven complex and subjective. It has failed to cover the basic issues relevant to Lilleshall electors and has published extremely long and involved documents that dissuade them from participating in the process. It has given the impression of working towards a pre-determined decision that there should be no change. Its financial analysis has used unsustainable methodology to reach indefensible conclusions. The case for independence has been recognised but seriously disadvantaged by biased findings elsewhere.”

2.23 Individual submissions have followed up this criticism. Mr J.W. Hockin (46), in his own submission: “The Review did not appear to understand the concept of parish council governance... The Review was supposed to have researched the most convenient and effective form of governance. This is a major failing of the Draft Proposals... The Review’s conclusions on the budget (of the Independence Group) were inaccurate... The Review, in its analysis of submissions, gave ‘weighting’ to the number of submissions in favour of the present governance and in particular to the further petition”... “The Review’s bias for the further petition”. Likewise, the individual submission of Philip Hawkins: “The documents so far published by the Review have failed hopelessly to communicate with electors. They are excessively long and long-winded and somehow manage to contain vastly more detail than is needed whilst being woefully incomplete in many areas and biased in not a few.” However, Mr Hawkins’s submission also includes very many

constructive comments for the conduct of future reviews by the Borough Council.

2.24 These criticisms are noted. Considering proposals to split a large and established parish whose council commands a budget of £257,150 providing diverse services to the diverse areas under its administration was never going to be a “simple exercise”. In its Terms of Reference document, the Council laid out a considerable amount of information – budgetary, statistical, cartographic, etc., - that was intended to enable respondents to the review to make carefully considered comments. Furthermore, the Council always made it clear that it was required to balance the greater good for all the residents of all the parts of the existing Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington against any substantial impetus for change to the present community governance arrangements.

2.25 Borough Councillor Nigel Dugmore (58) has also been critical of the Review’s engagement of the public. In part he suggests that this is because Muxton lacks its own community governance arrangements.

2.26 The Independence Group has worked hard to generate support for their cause, for example, through a leaflet entitled “A Lilleshall Parish Council – It’s Not Over”, and through press releases. There has been little evidence, in terms of submissions, of widespread support from outside their own group. Indeed, the Group has resorted to considerable criticism of the submissions that have been made. “The submissions received by the Review are few in number and most are not detailed, providing expressions of opinion and support one way or another rather than providing detailed justification for measurement against the review tests referred to.” The Group’s second submission (21) is highly critical of the review process as well as the Parish Council, supporters of the draft proposals and a number of Community groups and organisations. The submission, although comprehensive and well presented, does not address the issues of community cohesion and, in particular, community support for a separate parish council.

2.27 In response, there has been some opposition to the stance taken by the Lilleshall Independence Group, for example, from F. Graham Platt (15) and R.C. Burroughes (15)

2.28 Hadley and Leegomery Parish Council (24) “would like to express its concern at the current trend of applications for parish councils to be split. The Council feels that this trend is unwelcome, as it would increase costs unnecessarily and result in smaller councils which would be restricted by lower precepts and less effective use of resources.”

2.29 The Council has always emphasised that the main considerations that it would need to be mindful of in coming to recommendations in this Review arise in Section 93 of the 2007 Act (see paragraph 1.3 above). This identified the main ‘tests’ which we would need to apply in the Review which were summed up as a ‘community of identity’ test and a ‘viability’ test. The Council also emphasised that it could not consider the future of the Lilleshall ward in isolation from the future of the Donnington and Muxton wards.<sup>6</sup> The Council noted its duty to promote effective and convenient local government across the whole of our Borough. To reiterate an earlier comment, in this Review, the Council has been required to balance the greater good for all the residents of all the parts of the existing Parish of Lilleshall and Donnington against any substantial impetus for change to the present community governance arrangements. Taking into account the submissions received, it is the Council’s view that there is not an impetus for change to the existing parish arrangements. Individual submissions are broadly balanced. All submissions from Community Groups and organisations, with the exception of those from the Lilleshall Independence Group, have supported the Draft Proposals. Since the Review commenced two further petitions opposing the creation of a separate Lilleshall parish have been received. These petitions appear to represent a significant proportion of the community. There has been very little response regarding the creation of a separate Muxton parish.

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<sup>6</sup> Terms of Reference, para.1.7

### **3. The Community of Identity test**

3.1 The Council's Draft Proposals concluded that there was an absence of any unified feeling or any consensus of wishes with regard to whether Lilleshall, Donnington or Muxton on their own reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest with their own sense of identity. This issue has been revisited in the submissions that have been received in response to the Draft Proposals.

3.2 Lilleshall Independence Group (35) are emphatic that "Lilleshall's governance is an obvious anomaly, as every other village in the Telford Rural Area has a parish council or a parish meeting as its form of governance." And they revisit the differences between Lilleshall, Donnington and Muxton. This theme is followed up by other submissions. Commander Howard Broadbent(2) argues that "Lilleshall is geographically separated with a clear boundary". Mr J.W. Hockin (46): "I restate that Lilleshall is every bit a community with its own identity, evidenced by the many clubs and organisations that it supports under the name of Lilleshall." "The most convenient and effective form of governance has to be that of an adequate number of parish councillors spread throughout the community who are available to be directly approached by their electorate on community issues thereby creating a focal point for a vibrant community. The present parish council fails in this role."

3.3 Simon Collier (37) states: "Lilleshall is a very unique community which has not been well served by the Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council. By this I do not mean that the council has failed in its statutory duties or that it has diverted resources to other parts of the parish (if anything the reverse is true) but that the council has no real connection [with] the village or its community. For most of the parish councillors for most of the time the village of Lilleshall is not and indeed cannot be the focus of their interests and concern. The result of this is that over time a hole has appeared in the community, a lack of central focus which neither the residents association nor the church can truly provide. The inevitable consequence of this is a complete lack of interest in

the parish council from the villagers except for those applying for planning permissions or the few hardworking individuals who need financial help with the Memorial Hall and the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. It seems to me therefore that the establishment of a separate parish council would help give focus to our community and I am certain that it would have far more support and interest from the village than others have implied in submissions to you... The present arrangements do work and the Lilleshall and Donnington Council discharges all its obligations to us in a perfectly acceptable manner; I simply think that the village of Lilleshall would be better served by having its own separate voice and identity and that accepting the status quo because it works after a fashion is not in the long term interest of the village.”

3.4 Mrs S. Brotherton(7) considers that a separate parish council “would be better placed to defend the village from any outside influences”, that it would have “total control over its budget for the benefit of its residents”, and that “much more local interest in parish affairs would be generated through the village as residents would feel much more involved at a local level”. She also considers (33) that “it would be possible to keep a tight control over planning applications; Lilleshall’s money could be spent on solving Lilleshall’s problems such as traffic flow and parking.” This theme is pursued by Derek Stiles(34) “an independent parish council would be able to have full control over its finances and be able to channel funds to areas which Lilleshall residents considered to be the most important to them. It would be able to concentrate on solving problems peculiar to Lilleshall such as parking for the school, traffic calming measures and, perhaps more importantly, planning applications. I also feel that an independent parish council would generate much more interest in local parish meetings; at present such meetings at Turreff Hall are very poorly attended by the general public”. Likewise for Mrs S.J. Hockin (57): “Most of the people that I associate with consider the present parish council to be irrelevant and have never visited the parish office in Donnington and none of the parish council meetings. An independent parish council, which focuses on the Lilleshall community, would generate more interest from the residents.”

3.5 The Parish Council (25), in its submission, considers that a separate Lilleshall parish should only be formed “providing the majority of electors in Lilleshall wish this”, and drawing attention to the petition of June 2009 signed by 359 electors opposing a separate Lilleshall Parish Council. “Their views must be considered as they make up 35 per cent of the electorate in Lilleshall,” and the Parish Council reminds us that the Government’s Guidance has also emphasised that “the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.” The Parish Council considers that this petition illustrates that “many local residents are happy with the service provided by the current Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council.” Likewise Mr Ralph Morgan (26), Clerk to the Parish Council, alludes to this high satisfaction among many parishioners with the existing community governance arrangements. “Each year this parish council issues vouchers... to pensioners for Christmas. Approximately 131 pensioners from Lilleshall have claimed their vouchers this year and virtually every one of them that came to the parish office complained bitterly about the proposed split stating that they wanted to remain part of the Parish Council as it is now.” He adds, “After speaking to many of the residents of Lilleshall, it is becoming more and more apparent that the majority of those living in Lilleshall do not want any change to the present community governance arrangements.” The Parish Council (25) considers that the community cohesion in the present parish was best illustrated by “the effort put in by residents from all wards to fight the proposed plans for open cast mining in Muxton... [with] members of the electorate within the whole parish supporting each other”. The Parish Council concludes, “This demonstrates that the whole community is strong, cohesive and socially inclusive.”

3.6 The Breton Park Residents Association (14), with 91 homes on the site, states that “it is the general view of most of the people that they are content with the current situation and see no reason for change”.

3.7 Mr David and Mrs Ruth Taylor (56) consider that “we should celebrate the social diversity of Lilleshall, Muxton and Donnington. Each contributes to and

strengthens the whole, especially in terms of shops, sport and social facilities. They have a marvellous opportunity to work together even more closely than they do at present. We must not throw away this opportunity by division or separation of our three communities. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our objective should be to diminish perceptions of class difference, to produce inclusive communities and not exclusive ones.” Mr Geoff Lott (44) adds, “I also agree that the Lilleshall groups are supported by residents of the three wards and beyond in all directions.”

3.8 Mr Geoff Lott (44) notes “there is not consensus between Lilleshall residents”. “I appreciate your dilemma with so little agreement on the separate nature of Lilleshall to the others and accept your conclusion.” “I accept your draft proposal for the status quo”. His comments lead on to the latest community petition, signed by a significant 477 local residents and referred to in paragraph 2.10 above .

3.9 Support in Lilleshall for a separate parish council has therefore been limited and the view that Lilleshall is a separate community of identity has only gained limited local support. In the Draft Proposals, the Council considered that the absence of community consensus in the Lilleshall parish ward and the absence of submissions from Donnington and Muxton parish wards argued against any change to the current community governance arrangements. Since publication of the Draft Proposals, there has been no evidence of a clear impetus for change. Accordingly, the Council’s concerns for the future provision of parish services in Lilleshall, Donnington and Muxton, as outlined in those proposals, remain unchanged.

#### **4. Effective and Convenient Local Government**

4.1 The Parish Council (25), in supporting the Draft Proposals, emphasises its view that “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 support 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." "The National Association of Local Councils is encouraging current small parish councils to cluster together to enable them to work toward affordable levels of standards of service to their electorate". "The 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 and Wrekin Council to maintain and promote."

4.2 In the Draft Proposals, the Council considered whether a separate Lilleshall parish council could prove to be a viable entity and, in turn, whether any residual parish or parishes – Donnington and / or Muxton – would be viable as separate parishes. The parish council budget for 2009-10 shows an overall total expenditure for the year under four different budget headings of £257,150. The parish council's precept for 2009-10 is £187,000. In the Draft Proposals, the Council disaggregated the council tax base for the parish between each of its wards. In turn, the Council disaggregated the parish council's budget between the wards, warning that this is a very difficult exercise, but suggesting that the methodology used was the only way in which the Council could give a balanced and realistic assessment of the situation that would confront three separate parish councils.

4.3 It was the Council's view that a separate Lilleshall parish council could prove viable. However, it was suggested that it would probably wish to find savings and in turn these might need to amount to as much as some £7,500. In particular, it was not considered that a separate parish council could afford the level of grant funding that the present ward receives. On the other hand, the Council considered that a separate Muxton parish council would be well placed, and, despite its high street lighting budget, there could be a possible budgetary surplus of between £7,000 and £14,000. It was noted that, even with the revenue that it receives from Turreff Hall and Cordingley Hall, a

separate Donnington parish council would encounter a budgetary shortfall of up to £15,000. The Council considered that in a number of areas of its budget, the present Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council commands economies of scale in the services that it provides and that these served to mask any real gains or losses that separate parish councils would obtain in their budgets. It was also noted in the Draft Proposals that separate parish councils might wish to incur future expenditure in due course to promote a community of identity within their area. For example, a Muxton parish council might, at some future date, wish to address the shortage of community meeting places and amenity that presently exists in its largely residential area. Likewise, a separate Lilleshall parish council might be reluctant to reduce the current high level of grants to community organisations within its area. On balance, therefore, and within the best budgetary estimates that were available to it, the Council was concerned that the future provision of parish services across the whole of Lilleshall and Donnington would probably not benefit from a partition of the parish. However, that concern would have been less pronounced had there been a marked local impetus for change.

4.4 A comparison is often made by the Lilleshall Independence Group (25) between Lilleshall and Edgmond and other nearby rural parishes. The Parish Council refutes such comparisons, noting that Edgmond, with its precept of £6,300 and assets of one bus shelter, 110 street lights, one war memorial and two play areas, while Tibberton and Cherrington with its precept of £2,750 only has three benches and one bus shelter, and Church Aston with its precept of £14,000 has two bus shelters, 74 street lights, one closed churchyard and the trusteeship of a village hall. The Council considers that this comparison is not entirely helpful: Lilleshall has assets that are more than most rural parishes in England and that are more commonly found in larger, or semi-urban parishes, even if the Group suggests that “the assets and liabilities that would transfer to a Lilleshall Parish Council are the lot of rural parish councils across the land. There is nothing daunting about managing them.”

4.5 Lilleshall Independence Group (12) has been critical of the Council's budgetary findings. Its initial conclusion is "that independence does not require an increase in precept". It has provided a detailed budget and a critique of the disaggregation that was shown in the Draft Proposals. It shows an income of £26,379, and total expenditure of £16,823, with a further £9,556 available as a "discretionary sum" based on the current precept level. The Group assert that actual spending inflates the costs to Lilleshall: "The Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council budget routinely shows sums against Lilleshall headers that are mostly spent elsewhere". In turn the Group identifies a range of savings in budgets for the Talbot Centre – Tennis Courts, the maintenance of the closed cemetery and the maintenance of bus stops. It particularly identifies savings in administration which it reduces to £4,095. "Becoming a rural parish council would entail foreseeable reductions in Lilleshall's administrative service levels... the high central staffing and administrative costs permeate the Review's disaggregation exercise, with disproportionate effects on its supposed Lilleshall figures." In conclusion, the Group urges: "a Lilleshall Parish Council would have lower councillor expenses; it would have far lower office administration and staff on-costs, a Lilleshall Parish Council would produce a cost effective parish plan reflecting the wishes of our rural community after detailed consultation,... it would be content with a far more economical flyer that is wholly relevant to them, and ... [it] would pay £1,524 for a grounds maintenance contract."

4.6 This approach is also taken by Mr J.W. Hockin (46): "The inherent problem of disaggregation is that the LDPC budget 09/10 as given in the Terms of Reference, has an administrative cost of 68%! In the real world of commerce, this is known as the 'bottom line' and it is the costs of an organisation just existing before performing any of its functions. In the disaggregated budget, at Annex 2 to the Draft Proposals, for Lilleshall, the 'bottom line' costs are in the order of 61% of the budget. Examination of other village parish councils' budgets reveals much lower 'bottom line' costs of about 25%. LDPC is overburdened with overhead expenses and is therefore inefficient. Obviously, if an inefficient organisation has its costs disaggregated the resulting components will reflect that inefficiency. That is the error of

judgement that the Review made in its Draft Proposals and must now correct during this consultation phase.”

4.7 Borough Councillor Nigel Dugmore (58) considers that “a Muxton parish council would have no loss making assets. Administration costs would be minimal requiring a part time clerk. Meetings could be held at the parish meeting room attached to St John’s church or the facilities of Muxton Primary school could be utilised... From the figures provided in the draft proposals the major outlay would be street lighting (£25,000 p.a.) and grounds maintenance (£19,000 p.a.): the latter would go out to tender. With no reduction in the current precept, this would leave a balance of £48,000 p.a. which when administration costs have been removed would leave in excess of £25,000 p.a. to be spent directly on community projects. This is not an inconsiderable amount of money which could be used to the benefit of Muxton residents.”

4.8 However, there are other views too. Philip and Sharon Hardy (32) “can see no real benefit in any split in the current arrangements... I believe that the parish will be stronger as one entity as at present.” Mrs Linda Parker (48), “I do not see how independence will not see a rise in tax... I have not seen any firm evidence that Lilleshall would be better off having an independent parish council. Therefore, I would like Lilleshall to remain as it is, joint with Donnington as a parish council.” Or the views of Mrs Carol A. Baker(50): “After giving considerable thought to all the pros and cons regarding an independent Lilleshall Council, it is my conclusion that the move would not be good for the village in that we are asset heavy and therefore could not possibly afford to stand alone. A lot of income has been ploughed into Lilleshall recently, and without substantial increase in the precept I cannot see how we would be able to maintain the same depth of commitment.”

4.9 Mr Geoff Lott (44) notes that, although “I get some slightly different figures from you. But when comparing the costs the separation group are putting about I note with concern the differences,” and in his accompanying spread sheet he points out shortfalls in the Independence Group’s budget that

amount to £3,000 in the Talbot Centre, Bus Shelters, street lighting and cemetery maintenance budgets. He notes the considerable expenditure that some of the assets of Lilleshall will need in the near future, and concludes, “I do not believe we could maintain the same level of service as an independent parish – without raising charges or use of volunteers.” “We are supported by the others and also that the permanent staff is a very good thing for the Parish Council to have. With only £25k per annum only part time or voluntary staff could be employed which would make communications for parishioners more difficult. There certainly wouldn’t be a quality Parish Magazine that we get at the moment.”

4.10 Mr Andrew D. Baker, (49) considers that “the outline budget seems to be very light and, as a councillor with knowledge of what we have spent in the village, I would need to be persuaded that this low expenditure could be achieved.” Mr Cedric R.G. Ayres and Mrs Mary H. Ayres (52) state: “The proposals for separation, in our view, would not provide any substantial benefit for the electors of the area... We are well served by Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council under existing arrangements and it is therefore neither necessary nor desirable to make any changes.” Likewise for Mr R.C. Burroughes(15): “From my own point of view it is far more desirable to stay within a tried and tested system which has, to date, served the whole community with integrity and impartiality.”

4.11 The viability issue was always difficult in a parish where each part of the parish supports and underwrites the costs of providing different services in other parts of the parish. The Borough Council made the best attempts it could to analyse this and to disaggregate a complex budget. This has drawn considerable criticism from the Lilleshall Independence Group. The Group has countered the disaggregation and presented their own budget. However, in truth only moving to separate parish councils would really answer the difficult budgetary questions that this Review has raised. In the Council’s Draft Proposals, it was concluded that on balance, there was no persuasive evidence that changing the present arrangements would lead to any significant and tangible benefits for effective and convenient local government

in the area currently served by Lilleshall and Donnington Parish Council and its electors. And, in response to the publication of the Draft Proposals, nearly half of the residents of Lilleshall have signed a petition rejecting the proposals for a separate parish.

## **5. The name of the parish**

5.1 In the Draft Proposals the comments of Borough Councillor Adrian Lawrence were cited, in that the parish name “doesn’t even mention Muxton which pays a significant percentage towards its precept”. The Council asked the present parish council and others to give consideration to this, because the Review offers an opportunity to change the parish name.

5.2 The Parish Council (25) states that it has considered adding the name Muxton to the parish name “as far back as its full council meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007”. It states that it has delayed a decision on this matter, largely pending the outcome of this Review. The Parish Council considers that if the present community governance arrangements are retained, “then there would be justification in including Muxton in its title”. Mr Geoff Lott (44) states, “I’m sure the name could be changed to be inclusive without too many feathers being ruffled.” Meanwhile, Philip and Sharon Hardy (32) “strongly believe that the parish council should change its name to reflect the three areas that it serves as it currently has no mention of Muxton, which is more than twice the size of Lilleshall village... I would therefore propose that the parish should be renamed Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton Parish Council – three areas in alphabetical name order. The important thing is that the village of Muxton is mentioned in the name. It is also important that the parish council is seen to represent the whole parish and rotate the venues for its meetings.” Likewise, Mr David and Mrs Ruth Taylor (55): “I think it would be a wise move to recognise the contribution of Muxton to the parish, by re-naming it The parish of Lilleshall, Muxton and Donnington. There is historical precedent for this, for the present parish was originally called the ‘parish of Lilleshall’ when Donnington and Muxton were insignificant hamlets. Donnington’s growth was

recognised by a re-name (rather than by creating a new parish), and I believe that Muxton's more recent growth should be recognised similarly.

5.3 The Parish Council (25) has stated, "in future, this Parish Council intends to investigate the possibility of holding meetings on an equal basis in Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton." Mr Andrew D. Baker (49) concludes on this point, "like all situations, some improvements can be made and the parish council have already taken steps to make all wards more inclusive, for example, by rotating full council meeting between the wards. So many residents have questioned the motives for change, particularly as they are concerned that the economics of scale would be lost and it is not broken so why fix it?"

5.4 Mr Geoff Lott (44) has reiterated an earlier concern: "I find it confusing with the split of police boundaries being different to the parish, resulting in apparently no regular feedback meetings, as there is in Muxton (for instance) with the Donnington Police" "The good relations the Parish has with the Donnington Police I appreciate, but it would be good if they could also co-ordinate with the Newport Police too. When I attend the joint meeting in Muxton I find it hard to bring up any Lilleshall matters as that is beyond the boundaries of the officers present." Again, the Council can only suggest that this is a matter that the present parish council may wish to consider addressing.

## **6. Summary of Final Proposals**

6.1 This Review began with a community governance petition which was prepared and organised by some of the residents of Lilleshall. Some of those residents were clear from the outset that they considered that the community governance of Lilleshall would be better served by its having its own parish status and its own parish council. They organised themselves into a group known as the Lilleshall Independence Group. However, they have met with opposition from within the community, and this has culminated in two successive petitions signed by significant proportions of the resident who are

opposed to any change. The Council, in its Draft Proposals, expressed its view that, at that stage in the Review, any change would not provide any substantial benefits in terms of the effective and convenient local government for the electors of the area. The Council also expressed its concerns that service provision in parts of the existing parish might be constrained by partitioning the parish, and it was considered that this was particularly the case in Donnington and Lilleshall. A strong impetus for change and a clear message from the residents of Lilleshall – or for that matter, Muxton and Donnington – that change was wanted may, of course, have obliged the Council to accept that, even if change might not necessarily be in the interests of effective and convenient government for residents in some of the areas of the parish, it was what the residents wanted. That strong impetus has not been forthcoming in this Review, and it is for this main reason that the Council considers that the Final Proposals in this Review should be that there should be no changes in the present community governance arrangements in the parish of Lilleshall and Donnington at this time.

6.2 However, in the interests of inclusiveness of all parts of the parish in its governance, the Council considers that there is a strong case for changing the parish's name to the Parish of Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton, and this Final Proposal is now made.

**6.3 The Final Proposals are that there should be no substantive changes in the present community governance arrangements in the parish of Lilleshall and Donnington at this time because it is considered that:**

- **there would appear to be an absence of community consensus that there is a distinct community of identity in the Lilleshall ward and to date there is an absence of submissions from the Donnington and Muxton wards; taken together this would seem to argue against any change to the current arrangements;**

- the warding arrangement that exists in the present parish of Lilleshall and Donnington would appear to be appropriate for this parish to reflect local identity and represent local people;
- there are no pressing reasons for altering the present warding and electoral arrangements;
- it would appear that any change would not provide any substantial benefits in terms of the effective and convenient local government for the electors of the area.

**6.4 The Final Proposals are that, in the interests of inclusiveness of all parts of the parish in its governance, the Council considers that there is a strong case for changing the parish’s name to the Parish of Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton.**

- that the name of the parish should be changed to the Parish of Donnington, Lilleshall and Muxton, with effect from the date at which the Council publishes a Reorganisation Order in this matter.

## **7. What happens next?**

Final Proposals are published by Licensing Committee		April 1, 2010
Licensing Committee publishes the Recommendations	Two weeks later	April 15, 2010
Council publishes the Reorganisation Order	thereafter	

There will then be a short period before the Council publishes its Recommendations in this Review, and this period allows time for any final submissions and arguments to be made covering matters which have not have arisen earlier in the Review.

## **8. How to contact us**

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<http://www.telford.gov.uk/Council+democracy/Democracy+elections/CommunityGovernanceReview.htm>

## **9. A List of Annexes**

Annex 1 – Submissions received following the publication of the Draft Proposals

## **Annex 1**

### **Submissions received following the publication of the Draft Proposals**

1. Kathleen Turner, by email, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009
2. Howard Broadbent, by letter, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009
3. Michael Harris, by email, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009
4. Lilleshall Independent Group, Circular, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2009
5. Norma E.J. Sadler, by email, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009
6. Kathleen Turner, further email, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009
7. Mrs S Brotherton, by email, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009
8. Susan Tiller, by letter, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2009
9. R.J.Tiller, by letter, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009
10. Mrs & Mrs E.P. Millard, by email, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009
11. Lilleshall Pantomime Group, by letter, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009
12. Lilleshall Independent Group Part 1, by letter/email, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009
13. Norman & Jean Rozzel, by letter, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009
14. V Rainsford for Breton Park Residents Association, by letter, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009

15. R.C. Burroughes, by letter, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009
16. J.M & V.L Margerrison, by letter, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009
17. Mr P & Mrs D Sayer, by email, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009
18. Philip Hawkins, by email and covering letter, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009
19. Philip Hawkins, by email covering copy letter, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009
20. Ian Sadler, by letter, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009
21. Lilleshall Independent Group Part 2, by letter, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009
22. Neil & Rosemary Sampson, by email, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009
23. Lilleshall & Donnington Parish Council, email & submission, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009
24. Hadley & Leegomery Parish Council, by letter, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009
25. Lilleshall Industrial Group Query, by letter and email response, 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> December 2009
26. Ralph.L.Morgan, by letter, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009
27. Mr & Mrs A T Parker, by letter, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010
28. R.J.Tiller, by letter, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010
29. Jilly Broadbent, by letter, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010
30. Ian Holden, by email, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010

31. Mrs D & M Cartwright, by letter, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2010
32. Philip & Sharon Hardy, by email, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010
33. Mrs S Brotherton, by email, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010
34. Derek Stiles, by email, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010-03-19
35. Lilleshall Industrial Group, Part 3, by letter, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010
36. Lilleshall Youth Centre Build, by letter, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010
37. Simon Collier, by letter, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010
38. Keith R Greenhalgh for St Michaels & All Angels PCC, by letter, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010
39. K.B Coffey, by email, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010
40. Pauline Coffey, by email, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010
41. Donald V Marshall, by email, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010
42. Margaret Marshall, by email, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010
43. Lilleshall Memorial Hall, by letter, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010
44. Geoff Lott, by letter, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010
45. Simon Collier (2<sup>nd</sup>), by email, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2010
46. J.W.Hockin, by email and attach, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010
47. D Johnson/Mrs J Johnson/ R Johnson, by letter, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010

48. Mrs Linda Parker, by letter, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010
49. Mr Andrew Baker, by letter, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010
50. Mrs Carol A Baker, by letter, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010
51. Mr F Graham Platt, by letter, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010
52. Mr & Mrs C Ayres, by letter, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010
53. Mr C Ayres – Petition, by letter, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010
54. Mr & Mrs M Franklin, by email, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010
55. Mr P Hawkins, by email, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010
56. Mr David Taylor, by email, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010
57. Mr John Hockin, by email, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010
58. Councillor Nigel Dugmore, by email, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010
59. Teresa Kean, by letter, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010