

**SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF THE PARISH OF CRAVEN ARMS**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007**  
**FINAL PROPOSALS**

These draft proposals have been published by the Council on:

7 March 2012.

The Council will confirm the final proposals on this review on:

3 May 2012.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The principal reason for this review is to overcome concerns raised over the electoral arrangements for Craven Arms. As at 14 June 2011, Craven Arms has two wards; Halford ward, which has two seats and 73 electors and Stokesay ward, which has thirteen seats and 1775 electors. The review has also considered how many members the Town Council should have and how they are divided between each of those wards. The proposals will need to be appropriate for at least the next five years to 2016.
- 1.2 On 13 April 2011 Shropshire Council's Cabinet established a cross party Community Governance Working Party (CGWP) with extensive delegated powers to conduct all aspects of the Community Governance Review of Craven Arms up to the making of the final Order. The nature of this review is specified in the Terms of Reference published on 1 August 2011. These include consideration of:
- the number of members of the Craven Arms Town Council;
  - the division of the parish into wards;
  - the number of members per ward;
- 1.3 The publication of the final proposals relating to these and other matters contained in this document takes account of representations received for a three month period commencing on 1 September 2011. A further period of two months ending on 6 February 2011 was also provided for comment to be received on the draft recommendations. All representations received by these deadlines were considered by the Community Governance Working Party in detail, before this Final Proposal document was published and presented to Council.

## **2.0 SUMMARY OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Community Governance Working Party's draft recommendations are depicted on Map 2 and supported by the statistical analysis set out in Annex B. The recommendations are:

- a) that the parish wards of Halford and Stokesay be abolished and that Craven Arms become unwarded and
- b) that the number of seats be reduced from fifteen to eleven.
- c) that the Council continue be known as Craven Arms Town Council.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The electoral arrangements for Craven Arms currently provide for a 15 seat Council with two wards, one electing two members and the other thirteen members. These arrangements have provided a satisfactory electoral balance between the wards for many years. However, the Town Council requested that consideration be given to abolishing the current warding arrangements.
- 3.2 Shropshire Council (The Council) is undertaking a review of the electoral arrangements for Craven Arms, including its warding arrangements and the number of seats, under the provisions of Section 82 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, together with the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with Section 100(4) of the Act by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission (Revised March 2010).
- 3.3 In preparing these Final Proposals, the CGWP has been mindful of the Terms of Reference document published on 1 August 2011 which require it to take account of:
- the number of members of Craven Arms Town Council;
  - the division of the parish into wards and their names;
  - the number of members per ward;
  - the name of the Town Council.
- 3.4 It has also taken account of the comments received from the Craven Arms Town Council. These are contained in Schedule 1 and 2 to this document and have been received following:
- attendance at a meeting of the Town Council to explain the purpose of the review;
  - attendance at the Craven Arms and Rural Local Joint Committee;
  - the publication of official public notices and press releases to draw attention to the purpose and timing of the Review;
  - the publication details of the review on the Council's website with several front page reminders.
- 3.5 During the first stage of the review all local members of the Council, the political parties and other local organisations were informed of the review and their comments invited. A similar exercise was carried out on the publication of the Draft Proposals.

#### 4.0 **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The comments received are set out in Schedules 1 and 2, attached. In response to the draft recommendations, Craven Arms Town Council has raised no objection to the draft recommendations to reduce the number of seats on the Council from fifteen to eleven, the abolition of the Parish Wards of Halford and Stokesay and Craven Arms being unwarded and that the Council continue to be known as Craven Arms Town Council.
- 4.2 In response to the Terms of Reference, the Clerk commented that the Town Council has not had a contested election for many years with councillors being elected unopposed in 2007. Six of the current members were co-opted.
- 4.3 The Town Council at its meeting on 13 July 2011 resolved ‘that both the current warding arrangements be dissolved with there being one Town Council area consisting of eleven members and that this should be included in the Terms of Reference for consultation.’

## **5.0 ELECTORAL EQUALITY AND COUNCIL SIZE**

5.1 As mentioned in paragraph 2.1 above, the new electoral arrangements for Craven Arms will take effect in May 2013. The current wards will be abolished and councillors will be elected for the whole of the Craven Arms parish. The current elector: councillor ratio is currently as follows:

<u>Ward Name</u>	<u>No. electors per councillor</u>	<u>% variance from electoral average</u>
Halford	37	-70.4
Stokesay	137	10.8

5.2 The electorate for Craven Arms as of 14 June 2011 stood at 1848 and this figure is predicted to rise to 1972 (Halford 197 and Stokesay 1775) by June 2016. With a Council of 15 members, the electoral average (that is the number of electors each councillor should ideally represent if each vote is to be of equal value) presently stands at 123 and is estimated to increase to 179 2016.

5.3 Because it is extremely difficult to achieve an identical councillor: elector ratio across all of the wards, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England accepts a 10% tolerance to allow for local circumstances. This equates to each Craven Arms Town Councillor representing an electorate of between 161 and 196 electors based on the estimated electorate of 1,972 for 2016.

5.4 In terms of the number of councillors, there is no statutory guidance on the size of a Council serving a parish with over 1,900 electors beyond the minimum five councillors required to establish a Parish Council. However, based on the respected formulae produced by both the Aston Business School and the National Association of Local Councils, a town of Craven Arms' size should have a council of between 6 and 12 members.

5.6 The Town Council's preference to reduce the number of councillors to eleven lies within this range and is therefore entirely acceptable. The suitability of reducing to a Council of eleven members is reinforced by the fact that since the last local council elections in 2007 there has been some difficulty in maintaining a full complement of councillors for the fifteen seats. There have been several vacancies during that time and six of the current members were co-opted.

5.7 This tends to suggest that if the number of seats on the Town Council was reduced to the top of this range, this would help to alleviate this problem. A council of 11 councillors therefore appears to be both viable and sustainable.

## **6.0 PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES**

- 6.1 After taking account of the representations received and the implications for future local government in the parish, the CGWP considers that no changes should be made to the external boundaries of the parish.
- 6.2 There are proposals to change the warding arrangements for the area and they are considered in section 7 below.



## **7.0 WARDING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY**

- 7.1 When considering whether to establish a warding pattern for the purpose of parish elections, the law requires the Council to first consider whether it is desirable for any part of the parish to be represented separately. It must then consider whether the number or distribution of electors within the parish/town would make a single election of councillors impracticable.
- 7.2 Clearly, in urban settlements, there is a very strong case for dividing the parish into electoral wards, as community identity and community interests tend to focus on a locality or neighbourhood. This can be an existing housing estate, a shopping centre or some community facility. Where there is evidence that different parts of a town have had their own sense of identity historically, this supports the establishment or retention of electoral wards.
- 7.3 However, as highlighted in a previous section, it is critical where warding arrangements exist that each vote continues to be of equal value, as far as is practicable. No ward should be significantly over or under represented.
- 7.4 It is intended that the new electoral arrangements will incorporate the use of the same polling places (buildings where polling stations are located) as are presently being used. For the Craven Arms area this is the Craven Arms Community Centre.
- 7.5 The Council is anxious not to introduce more change into the electoral arrangements for Craven Arms than is absolutely necessary. The CGWP has also considered the terms of reference which were limited to considering:
- the number of members of Craven Arms Town Council
  - the division of the parish into wards
  - the number of members per ward
  - the name of the Town Council.
- and does not wish to make any other proposals.
- 7.6 The Town of Craven Arms has grown over many years and is by far the largest settlement in the Parish. The Halford ward covers a large geographical area to the north east of Craven Arms but at June 2011 had only 73 electors who elect 2 councillors. In addition, the Halford ward boundary currently cuts through some parts of the town itself, including Craven Arms Business Park. Halford, a small hamlet is only a short distance from Craven Arms.
- 7.8 The abolition of the two parish wards will improve electoral parity across the area and will more closely reflect the current and future patterns of development in the parish and provide convenient and effective local governance for local residents.
- 7.9 There will also be a cost saving in that there would be just the one whole Council election and not two parish ward elections as at present.
- 7.10 It proposes that:

- the parish wards of Halford and Stokesay be abolished and that Craven Arms becomes unwarded.

## **8.0 COUNCIL TAX PRECEPTS**

- 8.1 Council Tax precepts are paid in respect of Shropshire Council, Fire and Police. The level of precept is the same across all areas of Shropshire for these authorities.
- 8.2 Each town and parish council can set its own precept to raise funds to be spent on local services. No boundary changes are proposed within the draft recommendations and therefore no changes to the level of Council Tax paid by residents of Craven Arms will be made as a consequence of implementing the final proposals.

## **9.0 EFFECTIVE AND CONVENIENT LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

- 9.1 Delivering effective and convenient local governance is a vital part of any Community Governance Review. The CGWP is conscious of this responsibility and considers that its final recommendations will achieve this key objective for the reasons stated in this report.

## 10.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- 10.1 An initial timetable for this review was outlined in the Terms of Reference document published on 16 May 2011. However, it has been possible to foreshorten the period required to prepare both the draft and final proposals such that the CGWP has set a revised timetable for completing the review which is as follows:-

<u>What Happens?</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Final Recommendations are published – concluding review	6 March 2012
Council resolves to make Reorganisation Order	10 May 2012

- 10.2 For the reasons outlined above, the CGWP considers that a Council size of 11 councillors based on an unwarded parish can provide for effective and convenient community governance for the whole of Craven Arms and these Final Proposals explain its recommendations for the future of Community Governance for Craven Arms parish.
- 10.3 There will then be a short period before Council publishes its recommendations in this Review. This is time to allow for any final submissions and arguments to be made covering matters which did not arise during earlier stages of the Review.

## **11.0 HOW TO CONTACT US**

11.1 Comments should be submitted to the Democratic Services Section of the Council. They can be submitted either by letter or email.

11.2 You can contact us at:-

Democratic & Electoral Services  
Shropshire Council  
The Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
SHREWSBURY  
SY2 6ND

Telephone Number : 01743 252725

Email: [democracy@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@shropshire.gov.uk)

Web: [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

11.3 Details of officer contacts are as follows:

**Richard Thomas – Democratic Services & Elections Manager**

Telephone number : 01743 252725

Email : [richard.thomas@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:richard.thomas@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Adrian Dean – Senior Committee Officer**

Telephone number : 01743 252893

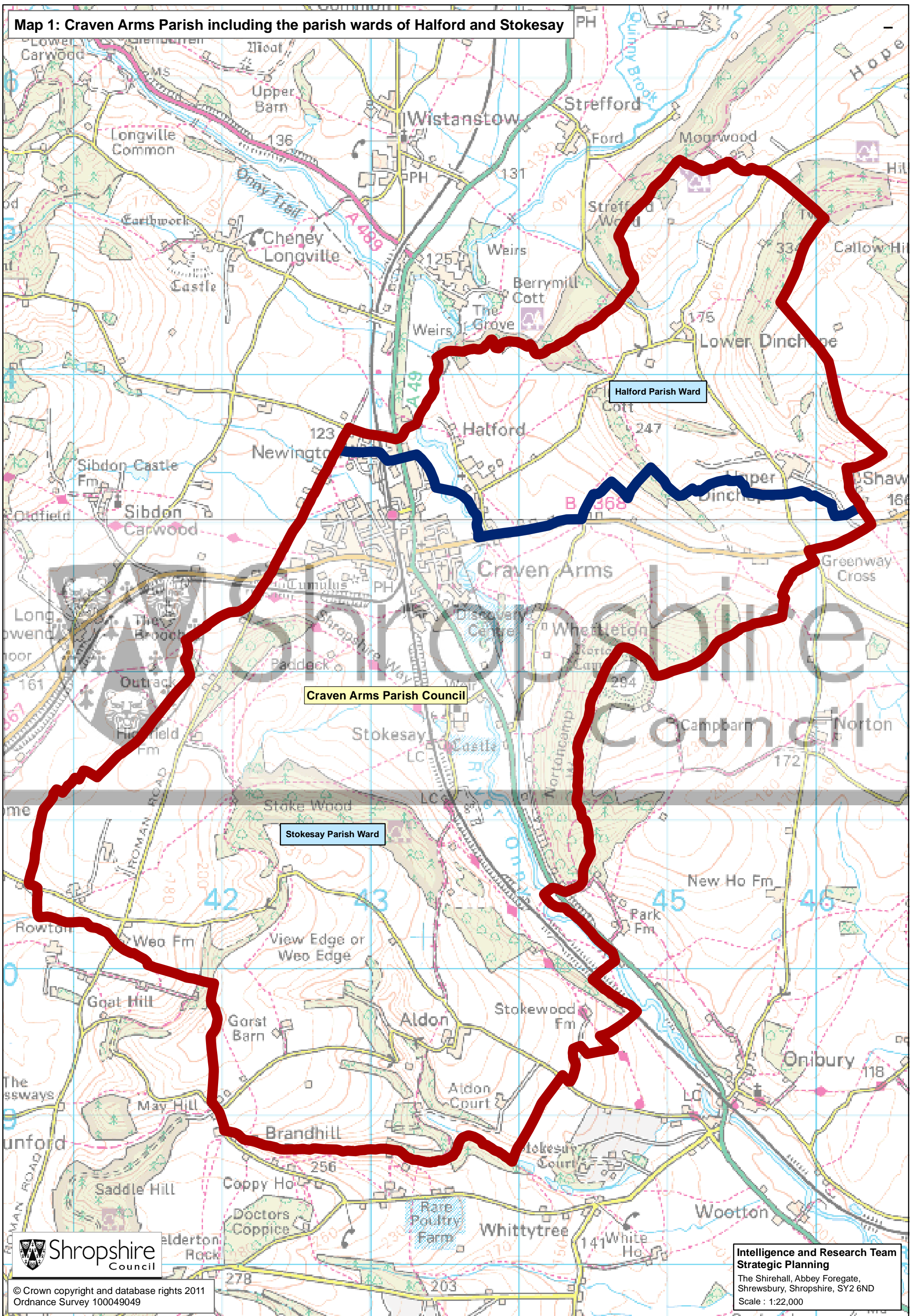
Email : [adrian.dean@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.dean@shropshire.gov.uk)

## **12.0 LIST OF APPENDICES AND MAPS**

### 12.1

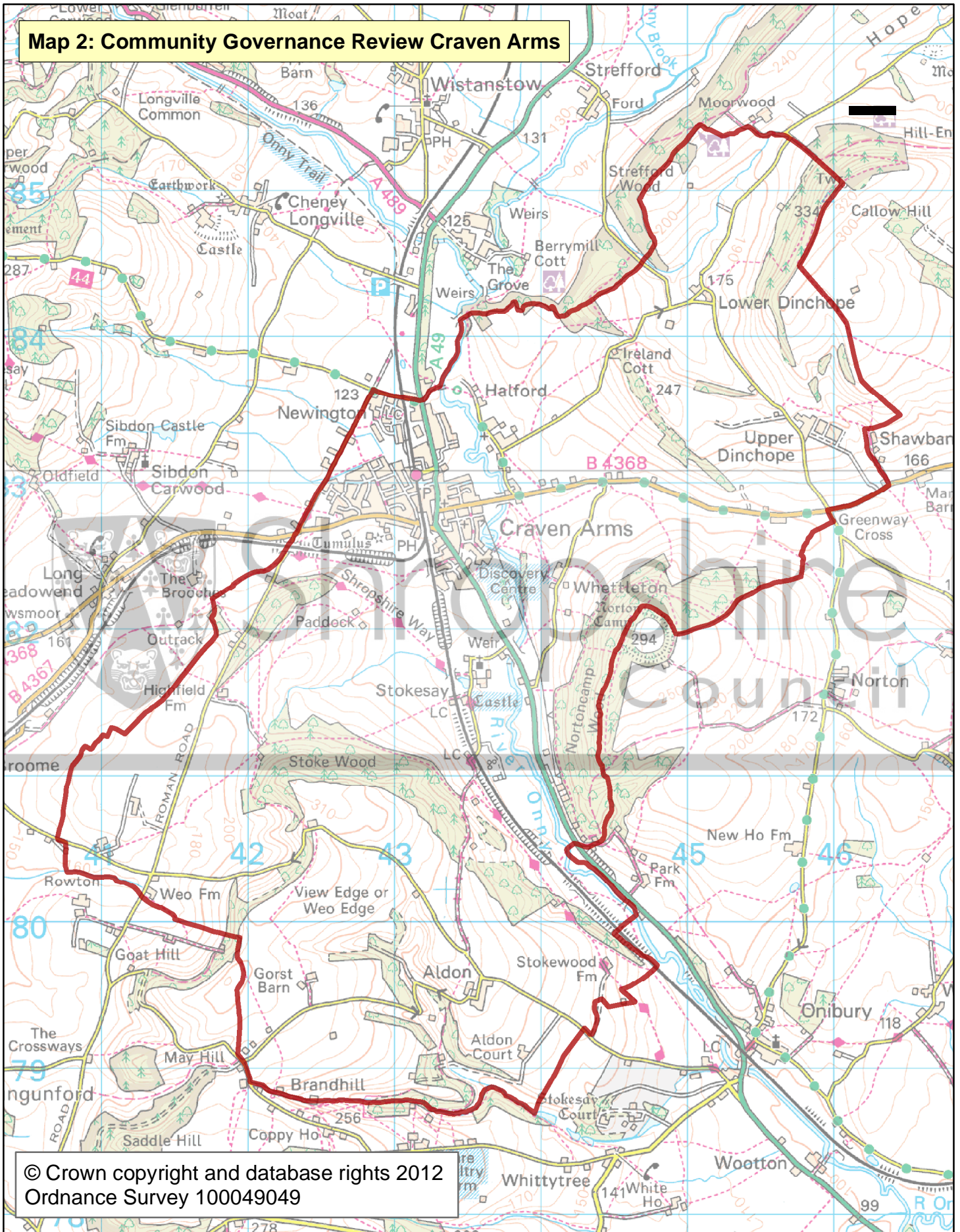
- Map 1 - Map of existing electoral boundaries.
- Map 2 - Map of Craven Arms showing the unwarded parish.
- Annex A - Statistical details of ward arrangements as 14 April 2011.
- Annex B - Statistical details of the new electoral arrangements.
- Schedule 1 - Submissions received by the Council up to 30 November 2011.
- Schedule 2 - Submissions received by the Council up to 6 February 2012.

Map 1: Craven Arms Parish including the parish wards of Halford and Stokesay





**Map 2: Community Governance Review Craven Arms**



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Ordnance Survey 100049049



**Shropshire**  
Council

**Intelligence and Research team**  
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Scale: 1:34,000

**Annex A**

<b>COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CRAVEN ARMS</b>
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<b>Current Electoral Arrangements</b>				
<b>WARDS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SEATS</b>	<b>WARD ELECTORATE</b>	<b>ELECTORS PER SEAT</b>	<b>+/- %</b>
Halford	2	73	37	-70.4
Stokesay	13	1775	137	10.8
	15	1848	123	

19/03/2012

As at 1 June 2011

**Annex B**

<b>COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CRAVEN ARMS</b>
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<b>Proposals for May 2013</b>			
<b>PARISH</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SEATS</b>	<b>WARD ELECTORATE</b>	<b>ELECTORS PER SEAT</b>

Craven Arms	11	1972	179
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19/03/2012

As at 1 June 2016

## COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – CRAVEN ARMS

### Schedule of comments received

	Comments from	Summary of Comments Received	Officer Response
1.	Craven Arms Town Council	The Town Council should be an unwarded Council with 11 members	
2.	Craven Arms Town Council	<p>Craven Arms Town Council has requested the reduction in the number of Town Councillors from fifteen to twelve Councillors since 2006 due to the difficulty in recruiting sufficient Councillors to fill the fifteen seats.</p> <p>Prior to the introduction of the new Unitary Authority South Shropshire Council had agreed to the reduction of twelve Town Councillors but had failed to undertake the required Governance Review and was therefore not approved by Shropshire Council.</p> <p>The Town Council have not had contested election for many years with Councillors been elected unopposed because there has not been sufficient nominations received.</p> <p>Currently the Parish Council have fifteen Town Councillors of which six have been co-opted over a period of time.</p> <p>The Town Council again reconsidered the matter at a special meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011 taking account of the information relating to Ratio of Electors to Councillors, the National Association of Local Councils Guide lines for the number of Councillors and the different warding permutations that could be applied to Craven Arms.</p> <p>I attach an extract of the minutes below.</p>	

	<b>Comments from</b>	<b>Summary of Comments Received</b>	<b>Officer Response</b>
		<p>It is disappointing that the public had not responded but the reduction of Town Councillors was an original suggestion from the Town Council.</p> <p>“The Town Council discussed the current electoral arrangements for Craven Arms Town Council which had two wards; Halford Ward electing two members and Stokesay electing thirteen members. As at the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011, there were 73 electors in the Halford Ward and 1775 electors in the Stokesay Ward.</p> <p>After discussing the current arrangements and options available it was the general opinion that many issues discussed by the Town Council affected the whole of the Council area and that the area was fairly compact and too small for effective warding arrangements.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr C Leworthy and Seconded by Cllr R Hallawell and Resolved by the Council that both the current warding arrangements should be dissolved with there being one Town Council area consisting of eleven members and that this should be included in the Terms of Reference for consultation.”</p>	

## COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – CRAVEN ARMS

### Schedule of comments received

	Comments from	Summary of Comments Received	Officer Response
1.	Councillor David Evans (Shropshire Council – Church Stretton and Craven Arms ward)	<p>I fully support the Community Governance Review of Craven Arms. An excellent report that covers everything that Craven Arms Town Council has said.</p> <p>Craven Arms is not compact enough for representation by ward because of the rural areas above Onibury.</p> <p>This review is long overdue and should be implemented for the 2013 elections.</p> <p>I fully support the recommendation to decrease the number of Councillors on the Craven Arms Town Council in the local elections in 2013. I have read the Governance report and fully endorse the comments made an excellent background report with no flaws 100 % in favour.</p>	
2.	Craven Arms Town Council	<p>The Craven Arms Town Council considered the Community Governance Review at the Council meeting held on the Tuesday 13th December 2011 at which the Council confirmed that there was no objection to the Draft Recommendations.</p> <p>a) That the Parish Wards of Halford and Stokesay be abolished and that Craven Arms become unwarded b) That the number of seats be reduced from fifteen to eleven. c) That the Council continue to be known as Craven Arms Town Council</p>	