

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 5 – QUESTIONS

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6

QUESTION 1

MR J E CLARKE will ask the following question:

Can the Leader of Shropshire Council advise me of any dialogue with The Boundary Committee over the ongoing local calls for urgent further review of the electoral arrangements for the recently combined Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton Division?

Shrewsbury Town Council, Bayston Hill Parish Council and majority of local residents, from Bayston Hill particularly, remain seriously concerned by last year's quite inappropriate merger of the three separate single member wards of Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton, into one single three member division, and continue to press for their reinstatement.

MR K R BARROW the Leader of Shropshire Council will reply:-

The Council has contacted the Electoral Commission to determine whether any change to the arrangements applying in Shropshire's only three member division, which serves the Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton and Reabrook area, is possible.

The advice received is that a change to the present electoral arrangements is a possibility, but that it would necessitate an electoral review of the entire unitary council area. This stance is justified by the fact that the Council would be requesting the decision made in respect of the former Shrewsbury and Atcham area to be reversed.

Also, the Commission would need to be provided with strong evidence before it would even consider making changes to the current electoral arrangements. This evidence would need to be new as the evidence that was provided initially during the review to the Boundary Committee and the further evidence produced by all parties to the Electoral Commission is not considered to be sufficient to trigger a further review or for the Commission to depart from its final recommendation.

In addition, the Commission has stated that, although the Council may request a further review, this is unlikely to happen given the level of available resources and the fact that the last review was completed less than 2 years ago.

The position is the same in the Market Drayton area too.

QUESTION 2

MR N J HARTIN will ask the following question:

Given the Governments call for 'outstanding' schools to register interest in becoming a 'fast track' academy by September 2010, can the portfolio holder list those schools across Shropshire who are classed as outstanding? - (both according to the old & new audit rules) & could the portfolio holder also indicate what methods are intended to be used to ascertain which, if any, schools have currently registered such an interest?"

"Could she also indicate what financial impact there would be should a significant number of schools opt for this route?"

MRS CECILIA MOTLEY the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People will reply:-

1. Outstanding schools

Only schools (primary, secondary and special schools) that have been rated as outstanding overall in their most recent Ofsted inspection are eligible to convert to academies through the new process. In Shropshire these schools are:

Secondary

Lacon Childe
Priory

Primary

Greenfields Primary
Burford Primary
Whittington (2010 report not yet published)

Under the older style Inspection criteria, the following were graded outstanding:

Secondary

Corbet (2008)
Lakelands (2006)
Thomas Adams (2007)

Primary

St Giles (2008)
St John's Catholic (2008)
St Peter's Wem (2007)
Stottesdon (2008)
Wilfred Owen (2008)
Woodfield Inf (2007)
Welshampton (2006)

2. Methods of notification

A school meeting the outstanding is free to discuss its plans with any local partners, including the local authority, however the proposed legislation will remove the need for the Local Authority to approve such a plan. All that is required is a resolution passed by the governing body. The Council has had initial discussions with Primary and Secondary school headteachers to consider the outline proposals. The schools themselves, in the spirit of partnership, indicated their preference to inform all partners including the Local Authority should they wish to proceed with an application. This very much reflects the spirit of partnership and openness engendered within the schools community and their relationship with the local authority and other partners.

3. Financial Impact

It is not possible at this stage to assess the financial impact of schools electing to apply for academy status under proposed legislation. Further details regarding local funding requirements are awaited by schools and the local authority.