

12 September 2000

Philip Perry Esq.,
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Dear Mr. Perry,

It was probably in July that I spoke to you about the submission from Bromsgrove District Council about a possible parish council for Lickey End and you told me that in due course you would be advising the Minister, Beverly Hughes MP, on the matter. I should be grateful if the following information could form part of your briefing.

In November 1999 I chaired a well supported meeting of Lickey End residents which our three District Councillors were kind enough to attend, accompanied by officers.

Among the items of local concern discussed was the possible formation of a parish council for Lickey End and this was supported strongly by the Leader of the Council, Mr. Psirides, who promised that the District Council would give whatever help it could. Apart from Rubery and the town centre, Lickey End is the only sizeable area in Bromsgrove not covered by a parish council.

Subsequently a small committee was formed and we obtained 272 signatures calling for the creation of a new parish and a parish council. The District Council then polled all residents in the area to get their views and, apart from Burcot which I shall mention later, this resulted in a 820 (38%) return from 2159 electors in the two main population areas. Of these, 506 (61.7%) were in favour and 361 (38.3%) against. The figures were reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 July 2000, which resolved not to recommend the formation of a parish council because of lack of support! This recommendation was subsequently adopted 'on the nod' by the full Council.

Let me just deal with Burcot, which consists of only 137 electors, 6% of the total of 2269 for the whole area. It has no close ties with Lickey End and has its own elected parish hall committee. Nobody really thought that Burcot residents would want to come in with Lickey End, as proved to be the case, but it was felt that they should have the opportunity to express an opinion. In their report the council officers recommended that Burcot be excluded from any parish council which might be formed and nobody quarrels with that. For all intents and purposes, therefore, Burcot can be ignored.

Along with many other Lickey End residents, I was astounded by the District Council decision. 38% was a remarkably good return for an exercise of this kind and 61.7% constitutes a significant majority. Any local councillor elected with a similar majority on a similar turn out would consider himself/herself very fortunate indeed, and it is worth noting that, leaving aside Burcot, 24% of those eligible to vote were in favour of a parish council, which is just 1% less than the percentage of Welsh electors who voted to set up the Welsh Assembly.

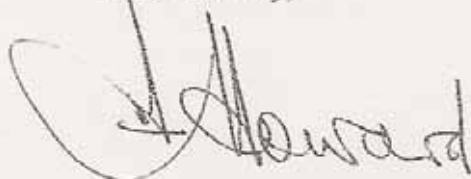
In 1981/82 the District Council conducted a parish council review and several new parish councils were set up after a series of public meetings. I can give you the voting results from three of those meetings, which I obtained from the District Council offices.

In Lickey, which is a different area from Lickey End, with an electorate of 3,000, two meetings had to be arranged because so few people turned up at the first one. At the second meeting the vote was 60 in favour and 22 against. In Bourneheath, electorate, 400, there were 23 in favour and 2 against. In Catshill, electorate 5,000, there were 22 in favour and 2 against. As a direct result of those meetings parish councils were established in Lickey, Bourneheath and Catshill.

Those figures lend support to the view which many Lickey End residents share, i.e. that the consultation exercise conducted by the District Council was fully democratic and that the outcome was a valid expression of majority opinion. Surely the 62% who voted in favour of a parish council, excluding Burcot for reasons given above, are entitled to have their opinion respected and acted upon.

With a motorway junction in the middle and further substantial housing developments about to begin, Lickey End badly needs a parish council. So many of us, including a majority of the local residents' committee, of which I am a member, hope that the Minister will regard the recommendation of the District Council as perverse and will decide that Lickey End should have a parish council.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Howard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "F".

Frank Howard
