



Wednesday 13th May 2026

Stuart Anderson MP

Member of Parliament for South Shropshire

75A High Street, Bridgnorth Shropshire. WV16 4DX

Dear Stuart,

Re: Advocacy Request – Role of Parish and Town Councils in Neighbourhood Governance Reforms

I am writing on behalf of Highley Parish Council to raise significant concerns regarding the Government’s emerging neighbourhood governance proposals contained within the English Devolution and Community Empowerment (EDCE) Bill.

As you will be aware, the Bill introduces a new legal duty for all local authorities to establish “effective neighbourhood governance” structures. However, accompanying commentary from Government indicates that local authorities should not rely solely on parish and town councils for this purpose, stating that councils should have ways of working with neighbourhoods “so they are not relying on town and parish councils to do it.”

At the same time, the Bill grants the Secretary of State new powers to define neighbourhood areas and set criteria for governance arrangements. These definitions and criteria have not yet been published, leaving considerable uncertainty about how existing parish and town councils—who are the most local, democratically elected tier of government—will be positioned within the new system.

Highley Parish Council strongly believes that parish and town councils must have an influential, clearly recognised role within any future neighbourhood governance framework. Our councils hold deep local knowledge, democratic legitimacy, and established relationships with residents, voluntary groups, and service providers. Creating parallel structures risks duplication, confusion, and the weakening of local democratic representation.

At its meeting on April 14th, Highley Parish Council considered the SALC Neighbourhood Governance Briefing Pack and unanimously agreed the following motion:

Motion Passed by Highley Parish Council

09. Neighbourhood Governance – SALC Briefing Pack

Members received and considered the Neighbourhood Governance Pack circulated by SALC, produced in partnership with the West Midlands County Associations (WMCALC), outlining the emerging neighbourhood governance proposals within the English Devolution and Community Empowerment (EDCE) Bill. The briefing and supporting documents were noted.

Councillors discussed the template council motion and covering letter included within the pack, along with potential local priorities and adaptations.

It was **unanimously agreed** to support the principle of ensuring an influential role for parish and town councils within any future neighbourhood governance arrangements.

Members further agreed that this position should be raised with Shropshire Council, the local MP, and communicated to residents as appropriate.

Power: Local Government Act 1972, s.111 (incidental powers)

In line with this resolution, we respectfully request that you raise the following points with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government:

- 1. That parish and town councils are formally recognised as key partners in neighbourhood governance arrangements.**
- 2. That forthcoming regulations and guidance provide clarity on how parish and town councils will be integrated into the new framework.**
- 3. That the creation of parallel neighbourhood structures is avoided where it would duplicate, undermine, or diminish the role of democratically elected local councils.**

We would be grateful for your support in ensuring that community-level democratic representation is strengthened—not weakened—as these reforms progress.

Please let us know if you would like to meet to discuss this further or require any additional information.

Yours sincerely, Alison Palmer, Clerk

On behalf of Highley Parish Council

The Severn Centre, Highley. Shropshire WV16 6JG