

## DAWLEY HAMLETS PARISH COUNCIL

### Response to the Second Phase of the 2025 Community Governance Review (CGR)



Dear Cllr. Luter and the CGR Committee,

Dawley Hamlets Parish Council (DHPC) respectfully submits this formal response to the second phase of the Telford & Wrekin Council (T&WC) Community Governance Review. DHPC strongly opposes the proposal to abolish our Parish Council and redistribute its wards to neighbouring town and parish councils. We stand by our recommendation in the first phase of the review that it is in the best interests of our residents that the parish wards of Aqueduct, Horsehay and Little Dawley continue to be served by DHPC. DHPC embodies the identity and priorities of this Parish, advocating for our community's interests, maintaining our local identity and ensuring that decisions reflect the needs and priorities of those who live here. The abolition of our Parish Council would erode this local voice, forcing residents into a larger governing structure where our concerns risk marginalisation by broader borough-wide agendas.

DHPC is a well-managed medium sized parish council. It's 6,300 electors equate to 4.5% of all electors in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin. Our £29 precept (av. Band D property) offers good value for money; the Clerk holds a certificate in Local Council Administration and all nine Parish Councillors hold an electoral mandate.

During this review our Parish Councillors have consulted with hundreds of residents via parish council meetings, two public engagement sessions and one summer event and hand delivered 2,500 newsletters. Residents have made it clear to us they overwhelmingly DO NOT want Dawley Hamlets Parish Council to be abolished. The following points reflect the core reasons shared by our residents for retaining DHPC as their local representative body:

- Abolition would remove a level of representation which is familiar and effective at addressing local issues and result in a loss of local democracy
- The larger merged councils would fail to reflect the identity and priorities of our smaller communities and the service residents would receive will be more remote and less responsive to the needs of this community
- The likely increase in precept, which is currently up to 1100% higher in neighbouring town and parish councils, would add to residents' financial strain
- Changing parish boundaries without a clear and compelling benefit would be an unjustifiable expense
- We urge T&WC to reconsider and instead focus on strengthening the existing structures that already serve our communities well, rather than dismantling them.
- Why are you trying to fix something which is not broken?

Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010) states that any proposal to abolish a parish council must be underpinned by "justified clear and sustained local support" from the affected electorate which it clearly does not have. No benefits for abolishing DHPC and redistributing our residents to other town or parish councils have been provided.

DHPC would like noted the following concerns regarding how this review process has been conducted by T&WC:

- The first phase of the 2025 Community Governance Review yielded only 11 submissions for DHPC including our own and neighbouring Great Dawley Town Council. Of the remaining nine submissions from a mix of business representatives, elected members and residents just five submissions made reference specifically to DHPC; the rest were generic in nature addressing town and parish councils across the Borough more broadly. Despite this limited and inconclusive feedback, the CGR Committee proceeded to recommend the abolition of DHPC – a decision made without offering residents alternative options to consider or comment on. This approach raises serious concerns about the transparency and inclusivity of the process:
  - **No clear mandate** - the small number of relevant submissions cannot reasonably be interpreted as broad or sustained support for abolition.
  - **No alternative models** - residents were not consulted on other governance arrangements, such as revised boundaries or warding structures.
  - **No justification provided** - the Committee did not present a compelling rationale for such a significant structural change.

T&WC Public Document Pack, CGR Appendix A, page 35 published 8<sup>th</sup> May:

**PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS LAWLEY & OVERDALE, GREAT DAWLEY TOWN COUNCIL, DAWLEY HAMLET AND THE GORGE**

Proposal and rationale

It is proposed that:

- The areas of Little Dawley and Aqueduct are incorporated into Great Dawley Town Council
- That Cambridge Close and Baptist Avenue are incorporated into Great Dawley Town Council
- That the area formed by Concorde, Milners Lane and Dawley Green Way in the existing Lawley & Overdale Parish Council are incorporated into Great Dawley Town Council
- That Horsehay and Doseley are incorporated into The Gorge Parish Council together with the Nightingale Walk parish ward of the existing Dawley Hamlets Parish Council.
- That the Small Hill area is incorporated into Lawley & Overdale Parish Council
- **Dawley Hamlets Parish Council is abolished**

- A further concern arises from the lack of transparency and consistency in the second phase of the review. When the updated information pack was published on the 19th May, it initially omitted any reference to the proposal to abolish DHPC. As a result:
  - **Residents were unaware:** that abolition remained the proposal under consideration.
  - **No media coverage occurred:** as the omission meant the press had no clear indication of the proposal's continuation.
  - **Public engagement was undermined:** as residents were not given a fair opportunity to respond to the actual recommendation.

Upon contacting the CGR team, DHPC received a response on the 21st May confirming that a clarifying line would be added:

*“these draft proposals, if adopted, would see the parish of Dawley Hamlet subsumed into other proposed parish areas as clearly demonstrated by the maps in Appendix 3”.*

This clarification was briefly included in the information pack (see extract below) but

was then removed without notice sometime in June. This sequence of events raises serious questions about the integrity of the consultation process.

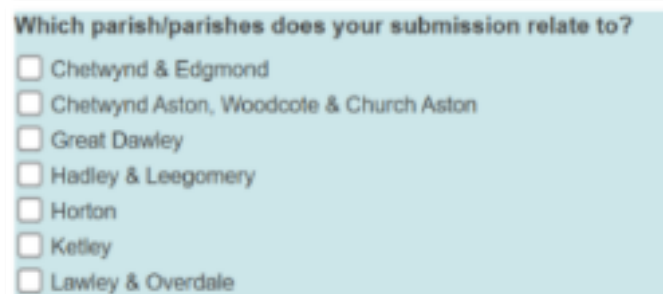
#### DAWLEY HAMLETS PARISH COUNCIL

These draft proposals, if adopted, would see the parish of Dawley Hamlets subsumed into other proposed parish areas as clearly demonstrated by the maps in Appendix 3.

This document should clearly state the CGR committees' proposal to abolish DHPC which it does not.

DHPC also wishes to highlight resident concerns regarding the readability and useability of the maps provided in appendix 3 due to lack of clarity and detail and their sheer volume (98 in total) hindering their ability to understand the proposed changes.

- The second-stage of the CGR consultation invites public responses from the 19th May – 14<sup>th</sup> July primarily via an online survey, with a QR code provided for convenience. Dawley Hamlets is omitted from the town and parish council selection list (see below). Part way through the consultation process, without notification, this question was changed to include the words 'draft proposed'.



Which parish/parishes does your submission relate to?

- ☐ Chetwynd & Edgmond
- ☐ Chetwynd Aston, Woodcote & Church Aston
- ☐ Great Dawley
- ☐ Hadley & Leegomery
- ☐ Horton
- ☐ Ketley
- ☐ Lawley & Overdale

DHPC has received multiple reports from residents expressing confusion and frustration with this online survey. Specifically:

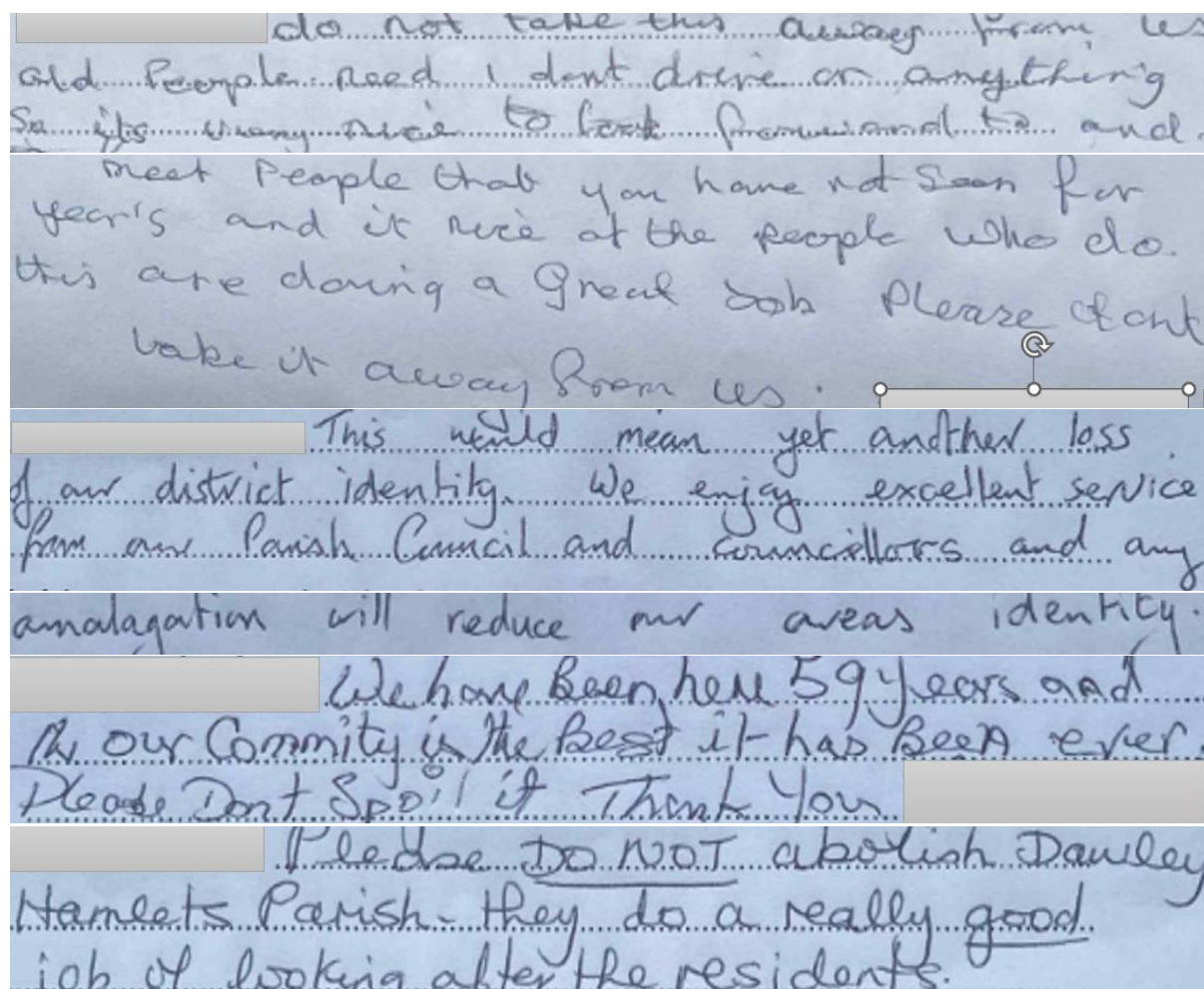
- **DHPC was not listed as a selectable option** in the survey, leaving residents unable to identify the parish they wished to comment on.
- Some residents reported **selecting a random parish** just to proceed with the survey, undermining the accuracy of the data collected.
- Others were **unable to complete the survey at all**, effectively silencing their views.

This flawed design has serious implications:

- **Misattribution of responses:** Comments intended for DHPC may be incorrectly assigned to other councils - especially if respondents used the term "Dawley," which could refer to either Dawley Hamlets Parish Council or Great Dawley Town Council.
- **Underrepresentation of DHPC:** The inability to select DHPC directly may result in artificially low response numbers, misrepresenting the true level of community engagement.
- **Data contamination:** The survey's structure risks producing a distorted picture of public opinion, which could be used to justify decisions not supported by the affected community.

DHPC is deeply concerned that the CGR conducted by T&WC has not upheld the principles of transparency, trust, and meaningful public participation. Despite assurances from the CGR Committee that public feedback would shape the outcome of the review, DHPC has observed several troubling patterns that undermine confidence in the process.

Despite the best efforts of DHPC to make residents and interested parties aware and encourage them to comment on this review, many of our older residents will not take part as they do not have access to the internet or email. Those that attended our recent summer party were very much against their Parish Council being abolished, we leave you with just a few of the residents' comments to think about when you are considering your decision.



Parish Councils should only be abolished in exceptional circumstances and it is required to show broad, long-term community backing for such a decision. Having completed a full engagement process with our residents we believe that there is a clear and sustained desire NOT to abolish this Parish Council. As many of our residents have told us 'if it isn't broke, don't try to fix it!'

Yours sincerely,

Dawley Hamlets Parish Council