

STIRCHLEY AND BROOKSIDE PARISH COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO THIRD CONSULTATION OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

At a meeting of Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council on 14 October 2025 Council UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO OPPOSE the proposal by Telford & Wrekin Council under their Community Governance Review to divide Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council; specifically, the proposal to place Stirchley within Hollinswood and Randlay Parish and place Stirchley Village and Stirchley Park within a separate Brookside Parish.

The following points detail the reasons why the Parish Council believes that the correct course of action is to remain as it currently exists and allow the Parish Council to continue delivering ever improving services and offerings on an equitable basis to the residents of Brookside, Holmer Lake and Stirchley.

This submission sets out the reasons why such a change would undermine established community identity, reduce local government effectiveness, create unnecessary financial burdens and in opposition to local opinion.

1. Community Identity and Interests

Stirchley and Brookside has functioned as a shared community for decades, bound by common facilities, services, and a shared sense of belonging. Residents of both areas use and identify with the same schools, library, shops, post office, sports fields, youth facilities and community centres – the majority of which are based in Stirchley Centre but serve the entire parish effectively. These are not simply service points, but genuine community hubs that foster social interaction, belonging and cohesion across both neighbourhoods.

Youth provision offers a particularly strong example of this shared identity. Programmes such as FunZone bring children and families together from across Stirchley and Brookside and their success depends on a unified parish structure. A separation would risk undermining this provision, fragmenting funding and governance, and ultimately disadvantaging young people in both Stirchley and Brookside who currently benefit from shared youth resources.

Geographically, Randlay Avenue forms a clear, long-established physical boundary between Stirchley and Randlay. This boundary reflects genuine differences in community identity. Stirchley residents do not naturally look to Hollinswood or Randlay for their local facilities or sense of belonging. Similarly, Hollinswood operates as a wholly separate community, with its own facilities, playing fields, shops and community centres that Stirchley residents neither use nor identify with. There is no practical or social link that justifies merging the two.

Stirchley Village and Stirchley Park residents strongly identify with Stirchley, not Brookside. Placing Stirchley Village and Stirchley Park within Brookside would erase that distinct identity and force residents to identify administratively with an area they do not live in, undermining the community's integrity. That erasure would totally undermine the history of Stirchley Village and Stirchley, which has been a parish since the 1200's. It should be noted that should Stirchley Village and Stirchley Park be placed within Brookside it would be the third time since the early 2000's which is considerable totally unacceptable to residents. As stated, residents

of Stirchley Village and Stirchley Park do not associate themselves with Brookside and fear that any move to make them become part of Brookside would result in their views and interests being ignored and that the majority of funding would be spent on the part of Brookside within the ring road.

2. Effective and Convenient Local Government

The current parish structure is efficient and well understood by residents. It ensures that local services, facilities and representation are easy to access and it reflects clear, logical boundaries recognised by residents.

Splitting the parish as proposed would create confusion about which council provides which services, risk duplication of administrative functions and potentially disrupt established maintenance responsibilities. It would also be impractical to split polling districts across parish lines. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) concluded in 2023, after extensive consultation and an Act of Parliament, that polling district TTT (formerly TBZ) should move away from Brookside and enter The Nedge ward. To now disregard those findings would be inconsistent and disingenuous, undermining the integrity of that process conducted by the commission at the request of Telford & Wrekin Council just a few short years ago.

3. Value for Money & Financial Considerations

The current combined parish achieves economies of scale, allowing resources to be shared efficiently and equitably across both Stirchley and Brookside. Community grants, community interest organisations and youth programmes all benefit from joint management and funding.

If the areas were divided, both parishes may face increased administrative and staffing costs, duplicated governance structures, and reduced capacity to deliver community projects. It would also be unreasonable for Stirchley residents' council tax precepts to subsidise Hollinswood facilities they do not use.

With significant housing development planned on The Hem, the responsibilities for maintenance, play areas, bus stops (17 of 25 within Brookside), and community spaces will only increase, requiring strong, unified local governance rather than fragmentation and confusion.

4. Local Support

There is no evidence of local demand for this change. On the contrary, local opinion is overwhelmingly opposed. During recent canvassing for the Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council elections in August 2025, a subsequently successful candidate encountered widespread opposition to both the previously proposed *Nedge Parish Council* (since rejected) and to the idea of merging Stirchley Village and Stirchley Park into Brookside. Residents consistently express pride in living in Stirchley and a desire for their identity and representation to reflect that fact.

It is therefore clear that the proposal does not have community support and, if implemented, would generate significant opposition.

5. Potential Risks to Current Services and Offerings

The proposal throws into doubt the following services currently provided by Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council to residents of Brookside, Holmer Lake and Stirchley:

a. The Sambrook Community Centre, Stirchley

The building incorporates (i) community library; (ii) hub for social, recreational and educational activities; (iii) activities by groups including arts and crafts, short mat bowls and other wellbeing-focussed sessions; and (iv) hub for support organisations providing counselling and advice services to the community.

Adding another building to those currently maintained by Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council questions the sustainability and viability of the Stirchley centre. Closure of the centre would remove a key amenity for the community for groups as well as support organisations working within the local community. Vulnerable members of the community will not wish to travel to other parish buildings.

b. Youth Provision

Provided by the FunZone team within the Parish Council through the last 20 years. The youth offerings are delivered through The Sambrook Centre in Stirchley and the Brookside Central Community Centre. Question arises over the possibility of delivering these under a split environment. The Parish Council's approach towards youth provision in Stirchley and Brookside is strategically different to that of Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council. The success of the provision by Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council is reflected in increasing numbers of youths attending and benefitting from the offerings. Membership numbers as at September 2025 were:

- i. Brookside at 118 (commenced November 2024);
- ii. Stirchley midweek at 242;
- iii. Stirchley Saturday at 230 (commenced April 2024).

Key to success of this provision is down to a well-trained and dedicated team living within and knowing the community and not solely relying on third party organisations who have no local investment. The combined offering enables young people to come together from differing elements from the community and improve social interaction.

Fragmentation of this provision runs serious risk of loss of team members heavily invested in improving the wellbeing of young people. Loss of this provision would run risk of increase in anti-social behaviour, an area where the local Police have noted improvements.

The Stirchley FunZone offering is dependent upon the Stirchley centre as its hub.

c. Environmental Services

The services provided by Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council differ in approach to those of Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council.

Stirchley and Brookside's services cover:

- i. **Gardening scheme** for eligible residents. Currently stands at 84. Question over how this could continue as operating model differs to Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council.

Implementation of the proposal would result in 40 properties being in scope of Brookside Council. Recruitment of an operative to deliver in Brookside would add to

- costs. Relying upon volunteers runs separate risks. For those properties in Stirchley, risk is the service not continuing at the level currently provided or at all.
- ii. **Bus stops** maintenance. 17 of the 25 stops are located within Brookside. Separate future maintenance within Brookside would add to costs.
 - iii. **St James Church graveyard** part of which is maintained by the Parish Council. Future responsibility would fall to Brookside. Future maintenance would add to costs. Relying upon volunteers runs separate risks.
 - iv. **Stirchley allotments.** If integrated into Hollinswood and Randlay question arises whether the new Council would wish to maintain two separate sites.
 - v. **Stirchley and Brookside roundabout;** half in Brookside, half in Stirchley. Separate future maintenance costs would increase.
- d. **Play Areas.** Maintenance of the 5 play areas owned by the Parish Council would fall under the responsibility of Brookside. Future maintenance of these would add to costs.
- e. **Community events.** Would these continue and be viable if the current parish is split? Current events see residents from Brookside, Holmer Lake and Stirchley all participating. Residents in Stirchley may not wish to travel to Hollinswood or Randlay for events and vice versa if event held in Stirchley.

6. Councillor Membership

The statement is made that “the recent spate of councillor resignations from Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council may be considered to indicate that the arrangements need to be reviewed.”

Like any other town or parish council councillor membership can evolve. The Parish Council rejects any suggestion that a review is required as a result of recent resignations which were for varying reasons.

The recent vacancies showed strong interest from parishioners in representing their community with three of the four positions being filled through the election process and the fourth via co-option. It can now be seen that with new membership the Parish Council is increasing its engagement with the community.

CONCLUSION

The proposed reorganisation is unnecessary, divisive and inconsistent with the principles of community identity, effective governance, and value for money that underpin the Community Governance Review process. Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council has a long, successful record of joint working, shared services, and community cohesion. Splitting it would deliver no identifiable benefit and would instead undermine the social, financial and administrative integrity of both communities.

The Committee of the Community Governance Review is urged to reject this proposal and instead retain the existing boundaries of Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council and Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council.