

## **Shropshire County Council Away Day at Albright Hussey 7 March 2006**

### **Purpose**

To discuss Proposals by the Minister for Communities, David Milliband MP for the Re-organisation of Local Government within Shropshire.

### **General Introduction**

Howard Davies, Regional Associate with ODPM set the tone of the meeting and the later discussions in his opening remarks. Proposals for the existing local government organisational structures to be changed will be published by the Government in a White Paper to be published in, or around, June this year.

Shropshire County Council have been allowed to formulate their own changed structure which will be incorporated as an example within the structural element of the White Paper. The Geographic Boundary of the SCC will be retained. Neither Herefordshire nor Telford will be changed.

Mr Milliband has specified strategic elements that must be met in our structural thinking.

1. Double devolution shall be incorporated to ensure that local groups have strategic potential.
2. Strategic Leadership
3. Ensuring better value for money
4. Strategic Capacity [which being translated apparently means that if several groups deal with a specific problem sequentially then this is essentially less efficient than arranging that only two groups deal with the matter, one after the other.]
5. A strong Strategic Shropshire will have a direct link to central Government for funding

List of some Possibilities for the Structures

1. Status Quo [Not an Option ODPM]
2. Enhanced Status Quo [Not fully explored by us but Not an ODPM Option]
3. Merger of District Councils [eg Oswestry with Shrewsbury and Atcham...]
4. Single Strategic Unitary Authority

We have about 8 weeks in order to generate a consensus for a possible structure. Such a document will be presented to ODPM where the Minister will incorporate it into the text of the White Paper [or may incorporate an edited version] as an Alternative Structure. What the final document shall incorporate:-

- Means of combating Rural Poverty
- Reflect Local Communities and allow Local people to influence decisions
- Enable Strategic Leadership that can Deliver Cost Efficient Services and value for Money
- Promote the tackling of Inequalities
- Consideration of the Implementation Risks [Additional Criteria]
- Parish Councils vary considerably in size around the county. What should be done about this imbalance?

### **Results of the Meetings Discussions**

No Complete agreement was reached but possibly the Majority accepted the Idea