

## **Changing the names of Electoral Divisions**

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report follows the Committee's decision in October 2017 to agree a process for taking forward requests from members for changes to the names of electoral divisions.
- 1.2. In accordance with the procedure, this report brings forward four proposals for consideration and the approval of the Committee to go out to public consultation.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. **The Committee is asked to agree the four proposals detailed in the appendix to this report for public consultation.**

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Following the Committee's approval of the process, all members were given the option of submitting a proposal to change the name of their electoral division. Four members accepted the invitation and with the agreement of their Group Leader submitted these to me to bring to the Committee for consideration.
- 3.2 **Consultation:** The consultation process agreed at the last meeting was as follows:
  - (a) minimum of a 10 week period for consultation
  - (b) key focus on consulting organisations in the locality rather than individuals – but to also give individuals the ability to comment should they wish to do so via the Council's website
  - (c) key audiences proposed: relevant local councils (parish and town) and district councils
  - (d) the political groups with Somerset
  - (e) inclusion within the Your Somerset publication
  - (f) other groups that the local member considers appropriate.

It was agreed that the outcomes of the consultation processes be fed back to this Committee for consideration. The Committee will then make recommendations to Full Council at a special meeting for any amendments to the names of electoral divisions.

- 3.3 The plan is to bring the outcomes from the consultation back to the Committee for consideration prior to consideration by Full Council (as required under the legislation). Because of timings this is likely to require a special meeting of the Committee in early May to allow sufficient time for the consultation if the May Council date is to be achieved for the required special Council meeting on the rise of the annual meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Alternatively, the proposals could be considered at a June meeting of the Committee (date to be confirmed) with the special meeting of Council on the rise of the main Council meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

- 3.4** The four members who submitted the proposals for changes have been invited to attend the Committee's meeting and contribute to the debate.
- 3.5** The four proposals as headlines are:
- (a) 'Quantock Coast' to replace 'Watchet and Stogursey' Election Division – submitted by Cllr Hugh Davies
  - (b) 'Wellington and Rockwell Green' to replace Wellington Election Division – submitted by Cllr Andrew Govier
  - (c) 'Neroche and Wellington East' to replace 'Blackdown and Neroche' Election Division – submitted by Cllr John Thorne
  - (d) 'Cary' to replace 'Castle Cary' Election Division – submitted by Cllr Mike Lewis

The detail of all 4 proposals is attached as the Appendix to this report.

- 3.6** Cllr Lewis refers to an ongoing consultation about South Somerset District Council ward boundaries and the need to avoid a clash of consultations in relation to the change proposed with the title of his electoral division. It is likely that some consultees may receive information about both consultations and it will have to be made clear that they are very different – the key point in relation to the SCC consultation being that any changes will not impact on the electoral division boundaries.

## **4. Implications**

- 4.1.** Legal & Risk: None.
- 4.2.** Impact Assessment: No implications.
- 4.3.** Financial: It is anticipated that any costs of consultation will be contained within the existing budget. It will involve electronic communication in the main as part of business as usual.
- 4.4.** HR: Not applicable.

## **5. Background papers**

- 5.1.** None

**Note:** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.

## **APPENDIX**

### PROPOSAL: 'Quantock Coast' to replace 'Watchet and Stogursey' Election Division – submitted by Cllr Hugh Davies

“The suggested name change to "Quantock Coast Electoral Division" reflects a more appropriate title. The area encompasses the settlements from the start; Sampford Brett, Williton, Sea-port Town of Watchet, West and East Quantoxhead, Kilve, Holford, and ending at Stogursey. The two titles "Quantock" and "Coast" cover all Parishes and the only Town in the Division and provides a more generic description of the area. This is preferable to naming specific settlements which is inevitably a more divisive approach unless you name all of them. And in the case of the existing title the current names selected seem to have been chosen more on the basis of marking the western and eastern boundaries of the division rather than necessarily reflecting the size of settlements – given that Williton is excluded.

With reference to receiving representations to support the change I have only spoken to individuals. I have not yet approached Parish/Town or the Political groups.”

### PROPOSAL: 'Wellington and Rockwell Green' in place of 'Wellington' – from Cllr Andrew Govier

“I believe that there is a good case for amending the name of the division that I currently represent to Wellington and Rockwell Green Electoral Division. I think this would better identify the make-up of the division and give the village of Rockwell Green the appropriate status it deserves. I have represented the area for over 20 years now and during this time the village of Rockwell Green has grown significantly in size. A number of new estates have transformed the village in terms of size and socio-economic make up. There are now over 2000 electors in Rockwell Green which is obviously a significant proportion of the overall electorate and I feel that to include the village in the division's name would reflect this. There has always been an anecdotal view that Rockwell Green misses out on things that Wellington gets and I think that by adding the village to the name this would encourage local residents that they are considered in decision-making. There is considerable local pride in the Rockwell Green community and being a 'Greener' is something that many locals would be proud to declare that is what they are. I think this move would increase the visibility of the community and ensure that it is put on an equal footing with the rest of the town.

I have also given some thought to the issue of the fact that although I represent 75% of the town of Wellington, there is a considerable 'chunk' that falls in the division represented by Cllr Thorne. I know that this has caused some confusion in the past but I can't think of a sensible way to describe the division to reflect this. Therefore, on balance, I think that adding Rockwell Green to the current name is as far as we should go. It may well be that there will need to be a revision to the current divisions as the town continues to grow and this may be the time to address this again.

As far as consultation is concerned, I would think that the Town Council would be an obvious place to start as it is made up of representatives from both communities. In addition, I think that Wellington One (a multi-agency team) would be a good cross-section of the community along with Churches Together in the town, which has

representatives from churches in both communities involved. I'm sure that there are other interested parties like local schools etc and I would be happy to work with others to promote this name change."

Cllr Govier has also indicated that he supports Cllr Thorne's proposal outlined below.

PROPOSAL: 'Neroche and Wellington East' to replace 'Blackdown and Neroche' Election Division – submitted by Cllr John Thorne

"Yes, I support the proposed change of division name to 'Neroche and Wellington East'.

Consultation will need to involve the 11 parish and town councils in my division, which are Wellington, West Buckland, Corfe, Pitminster, Churchstanton, Otterford, Neroche, West Hatch, Stoke St Mary, Hatch Beauchamp, and Ruishton and Thornfalcon. Also, Taunton Deane Borough Council, of course, and the political parties.

I cannot think of any other organisations which would be significantly affected by any change of division name.

Regarding the case for change, I have not received any direct representations on this issue. I do not believe there is any particular concern about the name among residents in the rural part of the division because it accurately reflects where they live, but it is something which has been raised with me verbally in the urban Wellington part of the division.

While campaigning for election prior to May 2017, I spoke to many residents in Wellington who were unaware they were in the 'Blackdown and Neroche' division and did not identify with the name at all, expressing some bemusement. I found myself having to explain to them that they lived in the same division as residents in Hatch Beauchamp!

I believe all the major political parties included a reference to Wellington in the titles of their election literature, such as 'Blackdown and Neroche incl Wellington East'. Without the 'Wellington' reference, there is a risk that some of the Wellington electorate are not able to make an informed choice in the polling station because they have dismissed election leaflets which they thought were not relevant to them.

I support a change which includes 'Wellington' in the name because it clearly reflects the inclusion of the division's major centre of population, while the existing name suggests only a sparsely populated rural area stopping short of Wellington."

Cllr Thorne has also indicated that he support Cllr Govier's proposal set out above.

PROPOSAL: 'Cary' to replace 'Castle Cary' Election Division – submitted by Cllr Mike Lewis

"I confirm that I wish to proceed with the outlined consultation procedure for changing the name of my Division to that of "Cary", rather than Castle Cary as at present.

When Somerset County Council agreed to reduce the total number of County Councillors from 58 to 55 in time for the 2013 County Council election this meant

significant communities were added to the Castle Cary Division in the southern part of the Division; namely Mudford, Chilton Cantelo, Ashington, Limington, Yeovilton and Podimore. All these villages and hamlets border, or are closer to Yeovil and indeed are part of the Yeovil Parliamentary Constituency, than Castle Cary which is in the Somerton and Frome Constituency. Mudford is some 10 miles from Castle Cary.

The river Cary runs through Castle Cary, the villages within Carymoor parishes and Babcary, which is close to Podimore .

Certainly when out canvassing in Podimore and Yeovilton one has to take considerable time explaining to the electorate that their polling station is in Ilchester Town Hall ( in the Martock Division ) and not Castle Cary.

My request to change the name to "Cary" is to simplify for those electors, primarily south of the A303, who do not readily identify themselves with Castle Cary.

I am willing to fully support to the consultation process, but I am mindful that the Local Government Boundary Commissioners for England are due to release their proposals for changing the South Somerset District Council ward boundaries on the 9th January 2018 and the consultation period will extend in to March. The proposals may well impact on the villages and hamlets outlined in paragraph two above and one needs to be mindful that the two consultations do not clash."