

Local Government Boundary Commission - New Ward Arrangements Between Area North and East Committees

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Purpose of the Report

1. Following the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Review of South Somerset, several new Wards have been created. One new Ward has been created which crosses both Areas North and East and, in order to retain Area based working, it is proposed that the whole of the new Ward be encompassed within one Area Committee.

Public Interest

2. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament whose main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England. This electoral review was carried out to ensure that:
 - The wards in South Somerset are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
 - The number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the district.

Recommendations

3. That subject to confirmation by Full Council, the Area North Committee agree that:-
 - a. the newly created Northstone / Ivelchester / St Michael's Ward (NIST) be wholly within Area East Committee for the purpose of Area Committee working from May 2019.

Background

4. In May 2017 a review of South Somerset's electoral arrangements commenced with a review of the number of District Councillors. This review concluded that the Councils should retain 60 Councillors as the electorate forecasts projected 5 years ahead suggested that the councillor:elector ratio would increase from 2,196 electors at present to 2,290 in 2023.
5. The next stage was to invite proposals on a warding pattern to accommodate 60 Councillors. Submissions were made by the Liberal Democrat group, the Conservative group, an officers submission, individual District Councillors, Parish and Town Councils and local residents. In January 2018, the Boundary Commission published their draft recommendations based on these submissions and invited comments on them.
6. Following the consultation period, in May 2018, the Boundary Commission published their final recommendations. In these final recommendations, several Ward boundaries had changed and some Wards had been amalgamated. However, the new three member Ward of Northstone / Ivelchester / St Michael's (NIST) has been proposed which currently straddles two Area Committees.

The Ward of Northstone / Ivelchester / St Michael's (NIST)

7. The newly proposed Ward of Northstone / Ivelchester / St Michaels (NIST) had not been considered previously in the consultation process and as such, had not been consulted upon. Both officers and Councillors questioned this and the Boundary Commission response was:-

“While geographically large, this ward will be well connected throughout by the A303 and A37. We acknowledge that some of the communities within this ward may feel that they have little in common. However, we will always endeavour to keep communities together and avoid splitting any parishes wherever possible. The Commission will, on occasion, place seemingly disparate communities within the same ward if necessary to achieve what we consider to be the best balance of our statutory criteria. The only other option would have been to create smaller district wards but divide parishes between them in order to secure good electoral equality.

Our proposals now largely follow as requested by the submissions received, the existing Ward Boundaries for Cary, Camelot, Blackmore Vale and Milborne Port. We acknowledge that our recommendations have brought together the existing Wards of Northstone, Ivelchester and St Michael's into a single ward, but, we have retained the wider external boundary lines for this area subject to a minor alteration in the south west which reunites the parish of Stoke-sub-Hamdon into a single ward.

The Commission did consider the warding pattern proposed by the Conservative group very carefully. However, we also received, what was in our opinion, a very strong and well evidenced submission from Yeovil Without Parish Council that did not support any warding pattern that would cross its existing ward boundaries.”

8. The draft Order was laid in Parliament on 15 October 2018 for 40 days. The Order completed its passage through Parliament on 3 December 2018.
9. It is prudent to consider that the Order will be completed and it will provide for the new electoral arrangements for South Somerset District Council to come into effect at the local elections in May 2019.
10. Currently, Area North Committee has 13 Councillors and Area East has 12 Councillors. If the new Northstone / Ivelchester / St Michael's Ward (NIST) was moved wholly within Area North, there would be 15 Councillors in this Area and it would leave 10 Councillors in Area East. To achieve a better balance of representation, it is proposed that the newly created Northstone / Ivelchester / St Michael's Ward (NIST) be wholly within Area East Committee for the purpose of Area Committee working from May 2019. There would then be 13 Councillors in Area East and 12 in Area North.

Current number of Councillors on each Area Committee

Area North	Area South	Area East	Area West
13	19	12	16

Proposal	Councillors in Area North	Councillors in Area East
NIST Ward in Area North (not proposed)	15	10
NIST Ward in Area East (preferred proposal)	12	13

11. Although this proposal would increase the geographical area of the Area East Committee, it does create a more equitable divide of Councillors across the four Area Committees.
12. This proposal may create some local issues for the residents of Chilthorne Domer, Montacute and Tintinhull in the current St Michaels Ward who would have to travel to the venue for Area East Committee meetings (currently at Churchfields in Wincanton) to speak to their Area Committee or hear a planning application within their parish being determined. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on this issue. The impact of the new Ward and Area Committee will also need explaining to the 3 affected Parish Councils in the current St Michaels Ward.

Financial Implications

13. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this proposal.

Council Plan Implications

- To build healthy, self-reliant, active communities
- Supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

14. There are no carbon emission or climate change implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

Privacy Impact Assessment

16. No personal data was involved in the compilation of this report or the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

Background Papers

- Final Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)
 - Letter from Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) dated 07 June 2018 to Alex Parmley, CEO.
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