

# Constitution & Governance Committee

## Electoral Review Briefing

Wednesday 18 October 2023



**Somerset**  
Council

# Background

- The LGBCE have approached the Council to inform us that they intend to commence an electoral review in Somerset
- It was always known that a review would take place before the next Council elections in 2027.
- With 110 Members, Somerset Council is the 3rd largest Council in the country (after Buckinghamshire 147 and Durham 126), comparing the Council with similar sized areas and population 70-90 elected members is likely to be the target.

# Electoral Review

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The review will consider the following:

- Overall number of Councillors
- Overall number of wards/divisions
- The boundaries of wards/divisions
- The names of wards/divisions
- The number of Councillors elected to each ward/division i.e. single or multiple Cllrs
- • The building blocks for a review will be the existing City, Town and Parish boundaries.

# Electoral Review

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The review will consider the following statutory criteria:

**Electoral Equality** – Each Councillor should represent the same number of electors. This should consider electoral forecasts to future proof the review for up to 5 years.

**Community Identity and Interests** – A shared sense of community should be reflected in ward/division boundaries e.g. common shops, schools, sports facilities, places of worship, residents associations and community groups.

**Convenient and effective local government** – Strong and identifiable boundaries and ward names that are recognisable

# Electoral Review

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The review will **not** take into account:

- The political consequences of boundary changes;
- Parliamentary boundaries;
- The overall size of the Council area and boundaries with neighbouring Councils.

# Electoral Review

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The review will be split into 4 distinct phases:

- **Phase 1** – Establishing the appropriate number of Councillors. This will be through consultation with the Council itself and can include a number of representations from different sources e.g. Officers, members, political groups, working groups etc ideally with a variety of numbers. This phase will last 3-6 months.
- **Phase 2** – Establishing the warding arrangements. This will be through x2 community consultations with each consultation taking approximately 10 weeks.
- **Phase 3** – Seeking Parliamentary approval.
- **Phase 4** – Applying the changes to the next Somerset Council Election in 2027

# Electoral Review – Next Steps

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- Group Leader and All Member briefings have been arranged 7 November
- The Commission will welcome multiple responses on the review e.g. from political groups/cross party working group/C&G Committee
- A thorough review should have a broad rather than a narrow approach and taken as an opportunity for a necessary conversation about the councillor role, with a view to concluding whether council size is appropriate given the roles that members play. This work can play into a wider review of governance or a more general review of local democracy.
- It should cover the following key substantive areas:
  - The wider national and local policy context
  - Local geography and demographics
  - The role of the councillor within the Council
  - The role of the councillor within the Community
  - The role of the councillor in other institutions
  - Technology and social media

# Electoral Review – Next Steps

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- Spring/Summer 2024 receive submissions on number
- Aug-Nov 2024 receive submissions on boundaries
- LGBCE aim to publish their draft recommendation in May 2025
- LGBCE aim to publish their final recommendation in August 2025

[The Review Process - YouTube](#)



# Time for Questions

