

Constitution and Governance Committee – 14th January 2025 – Public Questions

Appendix B – Public Questions	
Name of person submitting	
Joy Norris	<p>Good morning,</p> <p>I am the Town Clerk at North Petherton Town Council and I am here today with the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Linda Hyde.</p> <p>The Town Council would like to acknowledge the work of the Electoral Review Working Group and recognise that their task is not an easy one due to the size and diverse nature of this wonderful County of Somerset.</p> <p>The area covered by North Petherton Town Council stretches from the eastern foothills of the Quantocks to the Somerset Levels and includes isolated, rural dwellings, country hamlets and substantial new residential developments styled as villages. All of this comes together cohesively as North Petherton, with local services such as primary schools, Drs and the library, and not forgetting the Town Council, serving the whole community.</p> <p>As at 1 August 2024 the town has an electorate of 8,134 and this is set to grow due to further residential development of at least 500 dwellings. The area is currently a multi member ward for Somerset Council, as it was for Somerset County Council, with 2 serving Councillors. Whilst this can present challenges it has worked with incumbents of different political parties working together for the area they represent.</p> <p>Following a resolution made at a full Council meeting, the Town Council has made a submission to the Boundary Commission that it believes the minimum representation on Somerset Council for North Petherton should be 2 Councillors and that the current electoral boundaries should be retained.</p> <p>Whilst the Town Council would favour increasing the representation to 3 Councillors, taking into account the increasing population and electorate, it believes that such an increase should be based on the existing boundaries and multi-member model, rather than the creation of new wards which may include communities with no commonality of interest other than an artificial electoral boundary.</p> <p>The Town Council's resolution was made after an extensive debate which included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The LGBCE target is for a Councillor to represent approx. 4,900 people

Constitution and Governance Committee – 14th January 2025 – Public Questions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North Petherton needs at least 2 Councillors on Somerset Council to maintain representation for a growing number of residents• Representation of rural areas can be lost if the criteria for wards is purely based on population figures – there needs to be some account for distance and an understanding of the challenges of rural living• Multi-member wards can present challenges but they can also provide choice and a wider democratic approach. <p>As we understand it, the Boundary Commission Review wants to receive the views of local people and that in the future wards should reflect local communities and identities. This has been our only opportunity to feed into the Somerset Council response and whilst we cannot speak for other areas we urge this Committee to take into account the views of the North Petherton Town Council with regard to future democratic representation for North Petherton.</p>
Cllr Alan Bradford	<p>Good morning, I am Cllr Alan Bradford, ward Councillor for North Petherton, the last Chairman of Sedgemoor District Council and longest serving member of North Petherton Town Council, where I was Mayor for 8 years.</p> <p>I understand the tremendous task that had to be undertaken and commend the work that has been done. However, I would say if it is not broken, leave it alone.</p> <p>Proposal 1 Division 32 King Alfred Suggestion: Moorland and North Newton and Lyng are situated on the opposite side of the River Parrett. We would have to fly over Burrowbridge to rejoin the King Alfred Division. Burrowbridge has more historical links with Middlezoy and Othery than Moorland, North Newton and Lyng.</p> <p>Proposal 2 Division 33 North Petherton Suggestion: North Petherton being linked with Dunwear and part of Bridgwater Without. Once again the River Parrett flows in between. You either have to drive through Bridgwater Town or drive the A361/A372 by passing through the majority of the proposed King Alfred Division.</p> <p>Proposal 3 Division 34 Stockmoor and Wilstock Suggestion: Stockmoor and Wilstock being linked with Durleigh. There is no vehicular transport links between the two areas, without entering Bridgwater or North Petherton.</p> <p>I really cannot support these proposals. I do not think local knowledge of how the communities connect have been understood.</p>

Constitution and Governance Committee – 14th January 2025 – Public Questions

	<p>North Petherton has been an LCN in its own right for 20 years. Lessons can be learnt here, ie Library.</p> <p>North Petherton Town Council includes the following areas: Wilstock, Stockmoor, Somerset Bridge, Huntworth, Fordgate, Moorland, Rhode, Woolmersdown, North Newton, Hedging, West Newton, Moon Lane, Farringdon and Shearston, and not forgetting North Petherton. These areas are diverse, rural and urban.</p> <p>What a great shame if we would lose all the community connections built over the years for the sake of finance and penny pitching.</p> <p>Chairman it is my understanding that Cllr Revans has also wrote to you about his disagreement with these proposals. Both Cllr Revans and myself agree on this. Surely Cllr Revans, as leader of Somerset Council must be listened to? As a multimember ward, we work well together and put politics aside to make North Petherton a success.</p>
Humphrey Hardy	