

Somerset Council
Constitution and Governance Committee
– 18 October 2023



Somerset Council Electoral Review - arrangements, update and timeline

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Executive Lead Member: Councillor Bill Revans – Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Governance and Communications

Division / Local Member: All Councillors

1. Summary

- 1.1.** In March 2022, Parliament authorised the creation of a new unitary council through the implementation of the Somerset Structural Change Order 2022.

The new unitary council was called Somerset Council and began on 1 April 2023.

- 1.2.** Following on from vesting day, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have advised the leaders of Somerset Council of their intent to commence an electoral review on the Somerset Council divisions and councillor allocation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Constitution and Governance Committee are asked to note the update.

3. Background

- 3.1.** With 110 councillors, Somerset Council is the third largest in the country. When compared with other similar sized areas and populations, it is likely that, as part of the review, the number of councillors will be reduced.

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- 3.2.** The review will consider many factors, such as overall number of councillors, overall number of divisions and the number of councillors elected to each division.
- 3.3.** The review will take into account certain statutory criteria and also be split into four phases:-
 - Phase 1 – Establishing the appropriate number of Councillors.
 - Phase 2 – Establishing the warding arrangements.
 - Phase 3 – Seeking Parliamentary approval.
 - Phase 4 – Applying the changes to the next Somerset Council Election in 2027

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** Consultations will take place as part of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Review.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** This is an opportunity for Somerset Council to engage with and influence the review process. A broad approach to a review will ensure that the wider national and local policy context is considered. The impact of local geography and demographics on democratic representation and the role of the Councillors role within the Council, the community and other institutions and partnerships should also be considered.
- 5.2.** Representations can be submitted from various groups within the Council e.g. political groups, working party, Constitution & Governance Committee, individual Councillors.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** LGBCE Website: [Changing wards & number of councillors a council has | LGBCE](#)

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny: [Council size changes: learning lessons from submissions and implementation - Centre for Governance and Scrutiny \(cfgs.org.uk\)](#)

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