

# **SSDC Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission**

*Chief Executive: Alex Parmley*

*Lead Officer: Ian Clarke, Director (Support Services)*

*Contact Details: ian.clarke@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462184*

## **Purpose of the Report**

1. To agree the attached submission on the future council size of South Somerset District Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as the first stage of the electoral review of South Somerset.

## **Public Interest**

2. An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. This means:
  - the total number of members to be elected to the council;
  - the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards/divisions) for the purposes of the election of councillors;
  - the number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority; and
  - the name of any electoral area.
3. Where it appears that an area's electoral arrangements should be changed in order to provide for better representation of an area's electors, a review will give rise to recommendations for changes which the Boundary Commission will lay before Parliament. Whenever the Local Government Boundary Commission undertake an electoral review, they aim to deliver good electoral equality across a local authority area. This means ensuring that, for any principal council, the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral ward/division, is as nearly as possible, the same. The first stage in the process is to agree the number of councillors i.e. council size as that is the building block from which all subsequent considerations flow.

## **Recommendations**

4. That Council:-
  - a) agree the attached submission on the future council size of South Somerset District Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England
  - b) note the next stage of the review

## **Background**

5. In January 2017, officers from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England met with the Chief Executive, Leader of Council and Director (Support Services) to discuss the forthcoming electoral review of South Somerset District Council.
6. The review has been triggered because 13 of the Council's current 39 wards (33%) have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average. One ward (Brympton) has a variance outside 20%. The Council recognises the importance of electoral equality to a fair democratic process by ensuring that each vote carries the same value,

whilst at the same time it must ensure that governance of the Council is maintained at a level which can best serve the electorate.

7. Members will recall the presentation by officers of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England made at Council in March 2017.
8. The Council's submission has been developed by a cross party working group consisting of executive and non-executive members in consultation with their respective group members.
9. Information in this Council Size Submission report has been provided by Spatial Planning, Development Control, Election Services, Scrutiny and a Councillor survey.

### **Next Stage of the Review**

10. Once the Boundary Commission has agreed this submission of the total number of councillors, we then move on to Part 2 – warding patterns. This is the review of the boundaries of wards, number of councillors in each ward and (potentially) names of wards. In making these decisions the Commission must consider the following statutory criteria:-
  - Electoral equality – every ward to have a similar number of voters, based on our current electorate and forecasts for 2023.
  - Community identity – recognising communities and putting communities together rather than dividing them.
  - Effective and convenient local government – clear boundaries, not detached wards, ideally with complete internal transport links
11. SSDC will be given the opportunity to submit comments on warding patterns between 29 August 2017 and 30 October 2017. The Boundary Commission will then collate this evidence and visit the area. They will then put together a set of draft recommendations and publish a report and map. SSDC will then have a second opportunity to comment on the draft boundaries, number and names of wards between 16 January and 19 March 2018 and the final recommendations will be published by the Commission in June 2018. Any changes will take effect in time for the local election in May 2019.

### **Financial Implications**

12. There are no direct financial implications in agreeing the recommendations of this report. There has been officer time spent in compiling the information, however, this is absorbed within current budgets.

### **Council Plan Implications**

13. In reviewing the number of Councillors and ensuring their Ward Boundaries are relevant to the local area and have good levels of electoral equality we are contributing to the aims, values and focuses of the Council Plan 2016 – 2021:-
  - Protect and enhance the quality of our environment.

- Supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves.
- Work with partners to achieve economies, resilience and influence.
- Help keep our communities safe.

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

14. None arising from this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

15. None arising from this report.

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

16. No personal data has been collected in the compilation of this report.

### **Background Papers**

Ward and electoral information supplied by electoral services  
Sites of 10 dwellings or more supplied by Spatial Planning  
GIS mapping of SSDC polling districts  
Councillor survey information (May 2017)