



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Alex Parmley  
Chief Executive  
South Somerset District Council  
Brympton Way  
Yeovil  
BA20 2HT

Dear Mr Parmley,

29<sup>th</sup> April 2021

I am aware that SSDC is holding a Special Meeting tomorrow (30<sup>th</sup> April) to seek approval for progressing with a local poll regarding local government reorganisation in the county.

I am opposed to this measure and strongly believe that such a step could undermine the Government's own consultation and confuse people in South Somerset as to the reason for, and application of, any results from this exercise.

However, the main reason for my objection comes as a result of our discussions and also time I am spending in and around our High Streets as we look to bounce back from the last year. Regeneration and support for our town centres has to be an overriding priority and I know from speaking to you that you are concerned that Yeovil's regeneration project will be too short of funds to proceed despite the £9.5 million central government has extended to help make it happen. At this time to divert available funding elsewhere is simply wrong. Whilst we may not agree on the best model for local Government, I hope we can agree that the people we serve would see regeneration projects as a far better use of their money. That is certainly my view and the view of everyone I have spoken to.

I also note that your own legal advice questions whether such a step represents value for money. You state that SSDC's costs would be limited to those just relating to the actual poll itself. This is of course misleading given you have already incurred significant legal costs and you will also incur further costs in publicising and communicating this exercise.

Papers for the meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> April makes clear, "To make such resources, including staff resources, as necessary to the Counting Officer to enable the referendum to be conducted." The claim, therefore, that this exercise is costing 72 pence for every eligible voter is wrong and misleading and I would ask you to formally withdraw it. Please, therefore, detail how much have you spent on this exercise to date and what additional costs you will incur, to your members as well as to me.

You have also provided no evidence or proof to substantiate your justification that large numbers of people felt excluded from the Government consultation. I am, therefore, formally requesting such supporting material. I certainly encouraged participation repeatedly and believe many people have participated.

I look forward to receiving your response as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely,

*Marcus*