

**Local Government
Boundary Commission
For England
Report No. 544**

Review of Electoral Arrangements

**DISTRICT OF SOUTH
SOMERSET**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BOUNDARY COMMISSION

FOR ENGLAND

REPORT NO. 544

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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TO THE RT. HON DOUGLAS HURD MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE
DISTRICT OF SOUTH SOMERSET IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET

BACKGROUND

1. The present electoral arrangements for the District of South Somerset (formerly the District of Yeovil) date from 6 May 1976, when the District of Yeovil (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1975, giving effect to the proposals contained in our Report No. 35, came into force. The Yeovil (Parishes) Order 1982 and the Yeovil (Parishes) Order 1984 subsequently gave rise to minor consequential changes in the electoral arrangements.
2. On 10 July 1984, Cllr. T J Chant, a member of Yeovil Without Parish Council, wrote to us asking us to consider improving representation for the Houndstone District Ward of the then District of Yeovil, of which the parish of Yeovil Without formed part. Cllr. Chant requested a review of the district in order to remove electoral imbalances in the Houndstone Ward and to redistribute the existing sixty seats on the District Council more equitably. Yeovil Without Parish Council subsequently sent us a copy of a letter addressed to the

District Council supporting Cllr. Chant's desire for an early review of district electoral arrangements.

3. The District Council accepted the need for a further review but considered that it should not be conducted before about 1988, when local plans for the Chard, Wincanton and Langport areas - and the statutory review of the Yeovil Local Plan - should be finalised. In addition, the Council argued that there should be a period of stability following the changes to district ward boundaries in 1984. We decided, however, that a further review was warranted at the earliest practicable date, in view of the changes in the size and distribution of the electorate in the Houndstone ward, and in other wards, since the initial review of the district electoral arrangements. We accepted, however, that the Local Plans might have an effect on the pattern of development and thus on the distribution of local government electors within the period of five years to which we are obliged to have regard by paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4. We wrote to the District Council, on 23 April 1985, explaining that the review need not wait until 1988 and that it could take place once the principles of the Local Plans had been agreed and five-year forecasts of electorates could be provided. The District Council informed us on 22 November 1985 that five-year forecasts of the electorate in each parish were available.

START OF THE REVIEW

5. We formally announced the start of the review, on 31 January 1986, by means of a letter to the District Council. Copies of the letter were also sent for information to Somerset County Council, all the parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament for the constituencies concerned, local newspapers circulating in the district, local television and radio stations and the local government press. The start of the review was also announced by public notice and advertised in the local press.

6. The District Council had circulated its original draft scheme to the parish councils concerned and to Somerset County Council and told us that it had taken into account all the comments it had received before deciding on its final scheme, which it submitted to us on 30 May 1986, after first having advertised it locally.

THE DRAFT SCHEME

7. The draft scheme was based on 1986 electorate figures. However, we noticed that 1991 electorate forecasts had not been provided and that incorrect figures had been quoted in the draft scheme. The District Council remedied the omissions in its letter of 20 June 1986 and the correct figures were inserted into the draft scheme.

8. The draft scheme provided for forty wards (a reduction of two); four returning three councillors, twelve returning two councillors and twenty-four

returning one councillor, which would continue to give a council size of 60, as at present. Fifteen wards, Blackdown, Neroche, Tatworth and Forton, St Michaels, Langport and Huish, Turnhill, Wessex, Northstone, Ivelchester, Mudford, Camelot, Cary, Milborne Port and Blackmoor Vale, were conterminous with the existing wards, and the names of the majority of the existing wards were retained.

9. The District Council forwarded to us copies of all the correspondence it had received in response to the circulation of its original draft scheme to the parishes and to Somerset County Council. After publication of the final draft scheme, nine comments were made direct to the Commission, mainly from local authorities.

COMMENTS

10. Somerset County Council commented to the District Council (rather than direct to us) objecting to multi-member wards and wards which straddled parliamentary constituency boundaries. These objections were based on the original scheme, rather than the final scheme as submitted to us. There were, in fact, fewer multi-member wards in the draft scheme than currently existed in the district.

11. The Parish Councils of Ilton, Lopen, Pitney and Seavington objected to the draft scheme, mainly on the basis of their lack of affinity with other parishes

in the proposed new wards, the inadequate representation of rural voters in predominantly urban wards, and their preference for the existing arrangements.

12. Yeovil Town Council objected to the proposed reduction in the number of councillors representing the town, from 13 to 12, on the grounds that the town had grown rapidly since 1974 and that its ratepayers contributed a large proportion of the total district rate. However, the District Council, having seen Yeovil Town Council's letter, replied to us pointing out that other parts of the district had grown more rapidly than Yeovil and supplied figures to show this.

13. The proposed ward name 'Parrett' drew an objection from Haselbury Plucknett Parish Council, which suggested 'Haselbury and Chinnock' instead. The District Council explained that it thought multi-barrelled combinations of some of the names of the five parishes in the ward would be unwieldy and pointed out that the River Parrett formed the western boundary of the ward, so that 'Parrett' was a logical name.

14. The Countess of Winchilsea, a Parish Councillor in South Cadbury, endorsed the recommendations in the revised draft scheme, and East Coker Parish Council favoured being included with Hardington in the new Coker ward; but thought Barwick and Stoford should be detached to reflect separate interests in the area.

15. Crewkerne Town Council objected to the draft scheme, on the grounds that its representation was satisfactory, and would remain so over the next five years, and that its urban concerns were not compatible with the rural needs of the Parish of Misterton, which had been included in its ward. Misterton Parish Council did not comment direct to us but it objected to the draft scheme and produced an alternative, which was rejected by the District Council as it involved creating a large and dispersed rural ward and failed to improve the overall quality of representation for the area. The Parish Council's main objection was that its rural voice would be lost in a largely urban ward. However, the Parish Councils of both Misterton and Crewkerne had already objected to the District Council's original proposal to split Crewkerne into three wards and to include Misterton in the small southern ward, which would have meant a lesser preponderance of urban voters.

16. Of the comments put to us, many re-iterated or reinforced comments previously made to the District Council and taken into account by it in producing its final draft scheme.

DRAFT PROPOSALS

17. We considered the draft scheme, together with the representations received. We concluded that, as a whole, the proposals were satisfactory and that the District Council had done its best to accommodate both equality of representation and the wishes of the parishes as reflecting local ties. On 22 December 1986, we issued our draft proposals, details of which were sent to everyone who had received our consultation letter or had been involved in the

draft scheme. Notices were also inserted in the local press, in January 1987, announcing that the draft proposals had been published and could be inspected at the District Council's offices.

18. Our draft proposals were based essentially on the District Council's draft scheme. Some minor adjustments, of a technical nature, were made in order to obtain better defined boundaries.

RESPONSE TO DRAFT PROPOSALS

19. We received eight representations on our draft proposals, two from Crewkerne Town Council, one from Yeovil Town Council and one each from the Parish Councils of Whitelackington, Wincanton, Montacute, Misterton and Odcombe.

20. The Town Councils of Crewkerne and Yeovil and the Parish Council of Whitelackington restated their previous objections. The Parishes of Wincanton and Montacute had no objections to our draft proposals.

21. Odcombe Parish Council would have supported our draft proposals if they could have been implemented in time for the 1987 elections. However, as they will not come into force until 1991, the Council considered that they would no longer be relevant, in view of the likely expansion of the population of Brympton, a more urban parish, which, it was feared, would swamp rural Odcombe.

The Council suggested combining the Parish with other rural parishes in, for example, Coker, Hamdon or Parrett ward instead, in order to retain its rural identity.

22. Misterton Parish Council re-iterated its objection to being included in Crewkerne ward but its opposition was even stronger now that it was, as it saw it, to be 'appended' to the urban ward rather than be part of a small southern ward of Crewkerne Town, with the town divided into three wards, as originally proposed.

23. In the light of the comments we had received, we concluded that, although our draft proposals were satisfactory on the whole, the repeated pleas of both Crewkerne Town Council and Misterton Parish Council that they should not be joined in one ward, merited further consideration.

24. We felt that the District Council's original proposal, for dividing Crewkerne Town into three wards and placing Misterton in the southern ward, appeared to respond more to the Parish Council's wishes in reflecting more closely the local sense of identity, than one in which the whole of Crewkerne and Misterton were joined in a single ward. However, although we preferred this alternative we could not propose it because, in these circumstances, it is the responsibility of the District Council to ward parishes and because Paragraph 3 of Schedule 11 of the 1972 Act requires that unwarded parishes lie wholly in a single district ward.

25. We wrote to the District Council in June 1987 to indicate our concern about Crewkerne and Misterton and to ask if the Council would be willing to reconsider its original proposal. The Council agreed to do so and we deferred publication of our final report until the outcome of this issue was known. However, the District Council informed us in August 1987 that it felt unable to impose warding upon Crewkerne in the face of renewed opposition to it from the Town Council. We concluded that we had no alternative but to proceed on the basis of our draft proposals; joining Crewkerne and Misterton in one ward.

FINAL PROPOSALS

26. As required by Section 60(2)(d) of the 1972 Act, we have considered the representations made to us. The terms of the Act require us to have regard to changes in the number or distribution of local government electors over the next five years and, on that basis, we are satisfied that our draft proposals provide an acceptably even standard of representation for the district. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft proposals as our final proposals.

27. Details of our final proposals are set out in Schedule 1 to this report. A map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries accompanies this report.

PUBLICATION

28. In accordance with Section 60(5)(b) of the 1972 Act, a copy of this report, together with a copy of the map, is being sent to South Somerset District

Council and will be available for inspection at the Council's main offices.
Copies of this report are also being sent to all those persons or bodies who
received the consultation letter.

LS

Signed: G J ELLERTON (Chairman)

J G POWELL (Deputy Chairman)

JOAN ACKNER

G R PRENTICE

PROFESSOR G E CHERRY

K J L NEWELL

BRIAN SCHOLES

S T GARRISH

Secretary

5 November 1987

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

SOUTH SOMERSET - FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW

FINAL PROPOSALS

BLACKDOWN WARD

The parishes of Buckland St Mary
 Combe St Nicholas
 Wambrook
 Whitestaunton

BLACKMOOR VALE WARD

The parishes of Abbas and Templecombe
 Charlton Horethorne
 Henstridge
 Holton
 Horsington
 Maperton
 North Cheriton

BRUE WARD

The parishes of Bratton Seymour
 Brewham
 Bruton
 Charlton Musgrove
 Pen Selwood
 Pitcombe
 Shepton Montague

BURROW HILL WARD

The parishes of Barrington
 Drayton
 Kingsbury Episcopi
 Muchelney
 Puckington
 Stocklinch

CAMELOT WARD

The parishes of Compton Pauncefoot
 Queen Camel
 South Cadbury
 Sparkford
 West Camel

CARY WARD

The parishes of Alford
 Ansford
 Castle Cary
 Lovington
 North Barrow
 North Cadbury
 South Barrow
 Yarlington

CHARD AVISHAYES WARD

The Avishayes ward of the parish of Chard Town.

CHARD COMBE WARD

The Combe ward of the parish of Chard Town.

CHARD CRIMCHARD WARD

The Crimchard ward of the parish of Chard Town.

CHARD HOLYROOD WARD

The Holyrood Ward of the parish of Chard Town.

CHARD JOCELYN

The Jocelyn Ward of the parish of Chard Town.

COKER WARD

The parishes of Barwick
 Closworth
 East Coker
 Hardington Mandeville
 West Coker

CREWKERNE WARD

The parishes of Crewkerne
 Misterton

CURRY RIVEL WARD

The parish of Curry Rivel

EGGWOOD WARD

The parishes of Dinnington
 Hinton St George
 Merriott

HAMDON WARD

The parishes of Norton sub Hamdon
 Stoke sub Hamdon

ROUNDSTONE WARD

The parishes of Brympton
 Odcombe

ILMINSTER WARD

The parishes of Ilminster
 Kingstone
 Whitelackington

ISLEMOOR WARD

The parishes of Beercrocombe
 Curry Mallet
 Fivehead
 Isle Abbotts
 Isle Brewers

IVELCHESTER WARD

The parishes of Ilchester
 Limington
 Yeovilton

LANGPORT AND HUIISH WARD

The parishes of Huish Episcopi
 Langport

MARTOCK WARD

The parishes of Ash
 Long Load
 Martock

MILBORNE PORT WARD

The parish of Milborne Port

MUDFORD WARD

The parishes of Chilton Cantelo
 Corton Denham
 Marston Magna
 Mudford
 Rimpleton

NEROCHE WARD

The parishes of Ashill
 Broadway
 Donyatt
 Horton

NORTHSTONE WARD

The parishes of Babcary
 Barton St David
 Charlton Mackrell
 Keinton Mandeville
 Kingweston
 Kingsdon

PARRETT

The parishes of Chiselborough
 East Chinnock
 Haselbury Plucknett
 North Perrott
 West Chinnock

ST MICHAELS WARD

The parishes of Chilthorne Domer
 Montacute
 Tintinhull

SOUTH PETHERTON WARD

The parishes of Lopen
 Seavington St Mary
 Seavington St Michael
 Shepton Beauchamp
 South Petherton

TATWORTH AND FORTON

The parish of Tatworth and Forton

TURN HILL WARD

The parishes of Aller
 High Ham
 Long Sutton
 Pitney

WESSEX WARD

The parishes of Compton Dundon
 Somerton

WINCANTON WARD

The parishes of Cucklington
 Stoke Trister
 Wincanton

WINDWHISTLE WARD

The parishes of Chaffcombe
 Chillington
 Cricket St Thomas
 Cudworth
 Dowlish Wake
 Knowle St Giles
 Wayford
 West Crewkerne
 Winsham

YEOVIL CENTRAL WARD

The Central Ward of the parish of Yeovil

YEOVIL EAST WARD

The East Ward of the parish of Yeovil

YEOVIL PRESTON WARD

The Preston Ward of the parish of Yeovil

YEOVIL SOUTH WARD

The South Ward of the parish of Yeovil

YEOVIL WEST WARD

The West Ward of the parish of Yeovil

YEOVIL WITHOUT WARD

The parish of Yeovil Without

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