

Somerset

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: Somerset Council (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Frome

I have already written to you once before about the new divisions (or wards) in Somerset & the need to include population forecast figures to 2030 for southern Frome, which is a housing growth area. Permission was granted for approx 700 houses in the last 5 to 6 years, of which about 150 were built and occupied during 23/2024. Another 150 are being built out now & the remainder are expected to be completed well before 2030.

My original submission of July 2024 is pasted below. This was sent by email to reviews@lgbce.org.uk

A working group of Somerset Council, composed of councillors & officers, recently put together a report with a recommendation for the shape and size of the new divisions, which I broadly supported as it took into account most likely population growth. (Another large application for 1,700 houses is likely to get planning permission this year, but the population projections were not included by the working group as it does not have permission yet and the rate of build out is expected to take 15 years).

However the recommendation was voted down at the relevant 'Constitution & Governance' committee, mainly due to a small but vocal number of unitary cllrs concerned about arrangements to their rural areas.

I would like to reiterate that I broadly support those working group recommendations and I attach their subsidiary report with the projected statistics for polling districts in 2030 and how these might be combined to create new divisions. Frome figures are shown on pages 119 to 124.

I have some minor suggestions to improve these proposed divisions that I ask you to consider.

1. The most important is that Division 90 should be called FROME EAST. This must be a mistake made by a tired officer as 2 of the polling

districts are currently in Frome East and the extra Market ward is to the east of the centre.

2. Re Frome EAST, I suggest that this extra Market polling district, E-DA, representing an area for town centre regeneration & housing, be moved into Frome Central so removing 1095 electorate. Instead Frome East could include E-CP with 776 electorate (as it currently does)(and the rural polling district of E-DY with 474). Then Frome East would have 4,833 which allows for a little more housing growth which is very likely as another planning application in E-CU is going in some time this year.

3. Re Frome Central. The area E-DA is viewed as a town centre regeneration area but would add 1095 electorate if you go with my suggestion in 2. above. However the Innox area is not generally viewed as town centre, although the 2 polling districts here represent an olde worlde part of town quite high up, and a newer council housing area nearer the town and the river. I therefore suggest E-CU comes out Frome Central & goes in with Frome West . Following my suggestion in 2. Above, Frome central would also lose E-CP so the total electorate would be 4,513. This is a busy central division and I anticipate the increase in population in E-DA is an underestimate.

Unfortunately I have much more to say but have run out of time. So will just say that its inappropriate to have Nunney lumped in with Frome area.

Thank you for your consideration,

Helen

ORIGINAL EMAIL SENT 26.07.24

To whom it may concern,

I understand that today, 26 July 2024, is the last day for comments on the population size of any revisions to divisional boundaries for Somerset unitary council.

The division of Frome east has seen an incredible amount of housing developments in the last 20 years both with infill and with Greenfield developments making it the largest division in Somerset by population with over 13,000 people (though that might be registered electors). This needs to be split up into 2, or even 3 divisions in my view as it is just too big at the moment. I would like to counter the argument from rural councillors that somehow the density of population makes it easier to manage such a large number of people, as opposed to having people spread out like in Exmoor division which only has about 8,000.

Before Unitary, Frome East was represented by 1 county councillor, plus 2 district councillors for the more urban Keyford ward, and another District Councillor representing the more rural areas of this division, although that district councillor also covered other rural parts around Frome. So you could say it was represented by 3 and half local authority cllrs and now has two. However, Frome town council recognised that with all the building that had taken place and the increased population size of the old Keyford ward that they needed three town councillors to cover the area, as opposed to the usual 2 for the other wards.

During my time as a Mendip and then a Unitary cllr (5 years) I have sat on the planning committee and, in what is now my Frome East division, we have approved over 700 houses of which only about 100 have been built out and are occupied. About 300 more are being built now and the remaining 300 are expected to be built out within the next few years. Our work as councillors includes tracking the progress of the build outs. Eg. I get complaints about hedgerows being removed, builders vehicles using lanes, or traffic jams caused by roadworks as underground cables are put in. There will easily be 15,000 people (registered electors?) in Frome East division by the end of my term as a councillor.

In the five years preceding my time as a councillor, we had 450 houses built and now occupied near Asda (Edmund Park estate). In the five years before that several medium to large estates were built on infill sites in Keyford ward ,eg. along Garston Rd and leading to Great Western Road, behind Woodland Rd (Singers Knoll), down Knights Maltings. I estimate that was another 500 easily.

For some of these estates there are still planning issues to be resolved about how Section 106 monies should be spent, where are the schools that were promised, or the footbridge over the river, and whether building standards are good enough etc. The officers do not always have time to follow these issues up and sometimes I have to prod them! That's more work for us councillors.

Furthermore there is an outline application for another 1,700 houses in my division to be decided quite soon, calling itself Selwood Garden Community. I fully expect the officer to recommend approval as they all work to housing targets, so that means even more work for us councillors making sure the section 106 is right, tracking the smaller FUL applications as they come in etc. It is anticipated it will take 15 years to build out that huge development.

As a result Frome East is the largest division in Somerset by population and is getting bigger and bigger as I write. That means we also have a larger number of people than other divisions needing help with their children's schooling, complaining about parking, etc as they interact with all the normal council services. Yet more work for us councillors.

I therefore implore you to look properly at population projections for Frome East and to create new divisions with a fair ratio of cllrs to population size regardless of whether it is urban or rural. I imagine Frome East might have to split into 2 or even 3 divisions, possibly along the A362 and B3092 to make 3 triangle shaped divisions.

You may need to liaise with the Planning Policy team on this, so I have copied in Andre Sestini who I think is the officer most knowledgeable on

this matter and has 5 year housing projections which could be split up by division, or preferably at a more granular level if the division is to be split up.

I have also copied in Cllr Shane Collins who is my co-divisional cllr.

Thank you for your consideration,

Helen

Cllr Helen Kay
Frome East division



Attached Documents:

None attached