

District Councillor report

Poll on the future of local government in Somerset

On Friday 30 April 2021 Mendip District Council (MDC) passed a motion to “Endorse the holding of a local authority poll (referendum) of all residents of Mendip District Council on the Electoral Register at 6th May 2021 who are eligible to vote in local elections, on the two options for the future of local government in Somerset i.e. ‘One Somerset’ and ‘Stronger Somerset’.”

The other three Somerset District Councils all passed similar motions that day.

The local authority poll will be conducted as a postal and online referendum utilising Civica Electoral Services (formerly the ‘Electoral Reform Services’) with the poll commencing on Tuesday 18th May 2021 and closing at 5.00PM on Friday 4th June 2021.

The holding of the local authority poll will be done jointly with the other 3 Somerset District Councils and the costs of the poll will be shared with those Councils. The cost to MDC will be approximately £61,000.

The poll will follow the single non-transferable vote system and the question to be asked will be: “Which of the two options for change in local government in Somerset to replace the existing five Councils do you support (select one only):

- i. One council for Somerset (“One Somerset” - the plan for a single Council proposed by Somerset County Council)
- ii. Two Councils for Somerset: Eastern Somerset and Western Somerset (“Stronger Somerset” the plan for two Councils for Somerset – an Eastern and a Western Somerset Council –proposed by South Somerset District Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council.

Face-to-face meetings

On 3 May 2021 MDC that the application to the High Court has been dismissed. MDC are still digesting the full implications of the judgment but it appears that their Committee Meetings will have to return to physical meetings after the 6 May and virtual Committee Meetings will no longer be permitted.

The first MDC scheduled meeting this will impact is Scrutiny Board on 17 May.