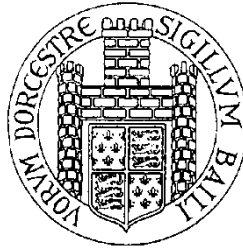


DORCHESTER



TOWN COUNCIL

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend the **SPECIAL MEETING** of the **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL** to be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, DORCHESTER** on **TUESDAY, 22nd APRIL 2014** at 7.00pm when the following business will be transacted:

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND;
REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR DORCHESTER TOWN
COUNCIL**

To consider a report of the Town Clerk.

15 April 2014

Town Clerk

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND (LGBCE)
REPORT ON ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR DORCHESTER**

1. The LGBCE commenced a process of reviewing West Dorset’s ward boundaries in June 2013, making final recommendations that the number of councillors should be 42, of which Dorchester should elect 9, in February 2014.
2. The ward arrangements provide 2 members each for Dorchester West, South and East, and 3 for North Ward, recognising that North ward will grow substantially during the period under review, such that it is c. 50% bigger than the other wards by 2019.

Ward	Electors 2012	Electors 2019	Growth %
North	4,274	6,071	42
East	3,557	4,303	21
South	3,609	3,743	4
West	3,745	4,022	7
Total	15,185	18,139	19

3. Paragraph 42 of the LGBCE report proposes some minor adjustments to ward boundaries, which relocate a small number of properties in the Bridport Rd/Wessex Road/Poundbury Crescent area and Prince of Wales Road and Great Western Road between wards. These fit with LGBCE’s aim of having more clearly defined boundaries (mainly roads).
4. Buried towards the end of the report the LGBCE make recommendations for changes to the Town Council ward boundaries, again seeking to recognise the growth of North ward out of proportion to the rest of the wards. Unfortunately the LGBCE’s recommendation seems to place overreliance on the current Council size of 20 as being the right number of Councillors going forward. As a result, for the period from now through to 2023 (the end of life of the 2019 Council period) they propose twice as many North Ward members (8) as in other wards (4).
5. If the Council does not support this proposal it needs to provide a reasoned argument for a different number. The following table considers some of the options

Ward	Electors 2012	Cllrs 2012	Electors 2019	LGBCE Proposal	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
North	4,274	5	6,071	8	6	7	8
East	3,557	5	4,303	4	4	5	5
South	3,609	5	3,743	4	4	5	5
West	3,745	5	4,022	4	4	5	5
Total	15,185	20	18,139	20	18	22	23

6. Points that the Council might wish to consider include: -
 - a. Electoral fairness – votes carrying equal weight in the final make-up of the Council – this is the key point that needs to be emphasised whichever of the options is proposed to LGBCE. Clearly the LGBCE option is electorally unfair, giving North ward electors too great a say. All 3 alternative options address the electoral fairness issue better.
 - b. Overall growth in size of the town – is it counterintuitive to reduce the number of councillors at a time when the town's population is growing, and the Town Council is seeking to play a greater role in the future of the town? A proposal to reduce would, however, be consistent with the approach taken at the District Council.
 - c. Pace of growth – these arrangements will be set until at least 2023, the next two electoral cycles. Clearly there will be growth during that time, and planning approvals are in place to facilitate that growth. More importantly, the pace of growth tends to be driven by economic confidence, which appears to be growing at present but is cyclical and fickle, but also as a result of government support for affordable housing delivery, which has collapsed in recent years with no sign of a new arrangement being put in place.
 - d. Cost and Practicality – In simple terms it costs around £1,500 a year to service one member, being the cost of allowances and agendas. The three options could be argued to produce a £3,000 saving through to a £4,500 cost, but these are tiny compared to the Council's overall budget of £1.5 Million. In practicality terms the biggest issue is the size of the Council Chamber, where an additional three members would bring the room close to, if not beyond, its comfortable capacity.
7. Whichever option members choose to support, or indeed an option not included in this paper, it would be helpful when writing the letter to the LGBCE, to be able to identify very clearly both the merits of the option over the LGBCE's proposal, and its merits over other options that were fully considered and rejected.
8. The Council's instruction is sought.

Adrian Stuart
Town Clerk