

# Somerset

## Personal Details:

**Name:** Helen Hurley

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**Organisation Name:** Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council (Representative of parish/town council)

## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge

Good morning,

Attached please find a letter from the Town Clerk of Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council regarding the electoral arrangements for this parish.

Kind regards,

Helen Hurley

Administration Officer

## Attached Documents:

- review-of-the-electoral-arrangements-letter.docx

5<sup>th</sup> July 2024

To whom it may concern,

**RE: REVIEWING THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR BURNHAM-ON-SEA  
AND HIGHBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL**

The present electoral arrangements for Somerset Council were put in place as a temporary measure with the intention of them being reviewed by the Boundary Commission before the next Somerset Election in 2027 – the aim being to reduce the present membership of 110 to a figure in the mid 80s . This reduction of approximately 25% would mean a likely reduction for the parish from 4 Somerset Council Members to 3 members. Assuming the usual pattern of single member wards, this would mean three wards instead of the present two.

At the moment, the representation of our electorate on the Town Council by councillors is haphazard and uneven. Not only do we have wards of 1,3,3,5 and 6 members, but the number of electors per councillor varies from 731 to 937 – a range of  $\pm 103$  from a mean of 834, i.e.  $\pm 12.4\%$

Ward	Electors	Councillors	Electors per councillor
Burnham North	5021	6	837
Burnham Central	2810	3	937
Burnham South	2192	3	731
Burnham Marine	748	1	748
Highbridge	4405	5	881

(figures May 2024)

In the coming years, this imbalance will get worse due to the current and planned building in Highbridge e.g. Brue Farm, Isleport Grove, Walrow, Lakeside, Boatyard. This will increase the number of electors per councillor for that ward significantly and will mean Highbridge will probably overtake Burnham Central as the having the most electors per councillor.

The review of electoral arrangements for Somerset gives us the opportunity to rationalise our wards and make them more equitable. To give a hypothetical example, if there were to be three Somerset wards covering the parish and not including parts of neighbouring parishes, it would be possible for each of these Somerset wards to contain two 3-member town wards. Given that the Somerset wards will have been designed to have roughly equal electorates, this would produce a better balance of Town Council ward representation.

The fact that the Boundary Commission will be re-warding Somerset gives us the ideal opportunity to request that a review of our boundaries takes place at the same time which will address the anomalies in our present arrangements.

Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council therefore request that the Boundary Commission carry out a review of our electoral arrangements for Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge and Burnham Without, concurrently with that planned for Somerset Council, with a view to producing a more uniform and equitable pattern of representation – particularly in view of the significant increases in population planned in the town council ward of Highbridge.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Noble  
Town Clerk