



Local Government Reorganisation in Somerset
2022 Elections
Views of Holford Parish Council

Holford Parish Council, at its meeting on 6th September, considered a report on local government reorganisation in Somerset.

The Parish Council had before it a paper prepared by Somerset County Council and noted a reference in it to the 278 City, Town and Parish Council elections scheduled for May 2023, and held every four years.

The Parish Council notes that the process for creating a Unitary Council for Somerset will require a Structural Changes Order (SCO) to be drafted by mid-October 2021 and that this SCO will include electoral arrangements for the proposed Unitary Council elections in May 2022.

Apparently the SCO is likely also to address proposed arrangements for Parish Councils which are currently scheduled to be held in May 2023.

The proposed SCO may align Parish Council elections with the election date for the Unitary Council. This would bring Parish Council elections forward to May 2022.

Holford Parish Council wishes to emphasise that Parish Councils are not subject to reorganisation or structural review.

There is therefore no legislative imperative to bring forward Parish Council elections to May 2022.

Parish Council elections should remain scheduled for May 2023. The responsibility for arranging, publicising, conducting and meeting the cost of such elections should logically and properly be the responsibility of the new Somerset Unitary Council following the Vesting Order bringing it into being from 1st April 2023.

However, Holford Parish Council considers that it would be totally inappropriate for the cost of 2023 Parish Council elections to be borne by the Parishes. That would be an indefensible and unnecessary financial burden on small rural communities.

Reluctantly, therefore, Holford Parish Council would recognise that the next Parish Council elections might need to be aligned with elections in May 2022 for the new Unitary Council if that is the only way in which the financial burden of an election can be lifted from Parish Councils.