

HSM Extraordinary Meeting of PC Wednesday 14th Oct

Meeting Commenced 7pm.

Apologies: Vivian Hitchmough (HSM Parish Clerk), Valerie Pitt-Rivers (HSM Estate) Alice Fox-Pitt (Fox-Pitt Eventing)

Present: Cllr Celia Wright (Chair), Cllr Robbie Bartlett, Cllr Ben Cooper, Cllr Jo Curtis, Cllr Mark Steggles, 16 Hinton St Mary residents, 2 representing HSM organisations.

CW welcomed all and said this is an extraordinary meeting convened by the PC to enable Cllrs and residents to come together to understand Electoral ward changes proposed by Dorset Council with every attendee welcome to contribute equally for the good of Hinton St Mary & would therefore not follow the conventional PC format.

In September our excellent Ward Councillor Carole Jones from Dorset Council informed HSM PC that there was a proposal to move Hinton St Mary away from Sturminster Newton ward to a new proposed Marnhull Ward.

The Chair thanked Cllr Mark Steggles for suggesting we hold an extraordinary meeting of the PC.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (**lgfce**) has published an extensive document of approximately 70 pages on **New Electoral arrangements for Dorset Council – Draft Recommendations September 2026** which can be viewed at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/dorset. (CW distributed 1 page document Have your say Dorset Electoral Review which runs from 1st Sept & **closes on 9th November**)

Dorset Council requested an electoral review in July 2025 and there was an initial consultation from 24th March to 1st June 2026 where submissions were received from 12 Dorset Councillors, 16 Town & Parish Councils and 24 Dorset residents.

No one had the courtesy to inform HSM PC or any Hinton St Mary resident that there was a review underway.

The start of the 2nd Consultation runs from **1st September - 9th November 2026**

The review aimed at ensuring:

- I. The wards in Dorset are in the best possible places to help Dorset Council carry out its responsibilities effectively
- II. The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across Dorset (c3,800)

The Proposals

- I. Dorset Council should have 84 Councillors (2 more than there currently are now)
- II. Dorset Council should have 58 wards (6 more than there are now)
- III. The boundaries of most wards will change. (Copies of a map showing the North Dorset proposed wards was circulated for all to see)
- IV. Some wards will have 1 Councillor, some 2 Councillors (Shaftesbury), some 3 councillors (Gillingham)

What does this mean for Hinton St Mary & the current Sturminster Newton Ward?

- I. It is proposed Hinton St Mary is removed from the Sturminster Newton ward
- II. It is proposed Hinton St Mary is placed in the newly created **Marnhull Ward** which would include several other Parishes. Copies of a map showing proposed wards in North Dorset were distributed.
- III. It is proposed on page 24 that **Hamoon & Manston** are included in the Sturminster Newton Ward (they are currently in the Beacon Ward represented by Cllr Jane Somper) (Manston & Hamoon PC have 156 on the electoral register) as they “share close geographical links with Sturminster Newton.

Observations

- i. The proposals for Ward changes were made by Cllr Legg of Dorset Council (Sherborne Rural ward) who has made **zero consultation with Hinton St Mary PC or any Hinton St Mary resident**
- ii. To REMOVE HSM from Sturminster Newton ward (**1.3 miles from Stur** & joined by a single road **B3092 & pavement**) and place Hamoon (which is **3.3 miles from Stur** & you have to drive on **3 different roads**) & Manston (**2.4 miles from Stur** & you drive on **2 roads** (B3091 & B3092) seems odd.

Cllr Robbie Bartlett stated it was important that Councillors did not try to influence those present.

There was a lively discussion with the majority indicating they want no change but it was agreed we will encourage as many residents to submit comments. Cllr Wright distributed a 1 page document giving details how people could submit their views by i.) Email, ii) website where there is a HAVE YOUR SAY option iii) a postal address for people who preferred to write.

Questions included:

- Would the HSM Village Hall remain our voting station? **A:** We have no reason to expect that it would change.
- Why are DC proposing these ward changes **A:** (Cllr Wright) To balance number of electors to each councillor with a target of 3,800 seems very logical. I honestly don't think the person proposing the wards with HSM out of Stur and Hamoon and Manston into Stur has thought things through and with zero consultation we are all frustrated.
- Would Council tax change with a change of Electoral Ward? **A:** It should not but Dorset Council sets council tax according to guidance by Central government
- What should residents consider when looking at what Electoral Wards? **A:** Cllr Wright showed the lgbce/Dorset Council Draft recommendations (2 page summary of proposals) and read. “A good pattern of wards should: Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of strong community links. Community identity such as **Facilities:** does your pattern of wards reflect where local people go for shops, medical services, leisure facilities etc.
- How might changing wards effect Hinton St Mary? **A:** Cllr Bartlett said a move in the future could effect the way planning decisions are made.
- What are the views of Sturminster Newton? **A:** Cllr Wright said that she had not consulted with any Stur town Councillor as this was a Dorset Council initiative and read out an email Cllr Carole Jones (current Ward Councillor) had sent to Julia Powell of Dorset Council which stated: Having represented Hinton since 2019 I feel strongly it should remain in

Sturminster. The link between both areas is strong with land adjoining both areas naturally and the main road running between us. Residents in Hinton use Sturminster as its main shopping and entertainments area, we share the same GP surgery, the youngsters come to school in Stur. I would be grateful if this could be considered.

- What would changes mean for residents? **A:** The service and support we get from our current ward councillor is excellent and we do not know how changes might impact residents.
- If we to move wards to Marnhull who would be our ward Councillor? **A:** This is still going through the Consultation process so we wouldn't know till the next election 2028. Cllr Curtis commented our current Stur Ward Cllr might change.

Discussions Included

- Many felt that if we were moved to a rural Marnhull Ward with several Parish Councils any future ward councillor might be stretched and not give HSM the time our current ward Councillor does. Cllr Curtis said there could be benefits from being part of a rural ward.
- We sort opinion from those present on whether it would be a good idea to let every household have a 1 page document regarding the proposals and as a team we would encourage as many residents as possible to engage. This was agreed and Cllr Wright committed to preparing a document which would be distributed to every household. It was suggested by 2 members to i) keep wording brief ii) enclose the map of wards would be useful. Once prepared she would distribute it to Cllrs for approval.
- It was agreed it would be a good step to include the LGBCE Dorsal Consultation details on the HSM Facebook page and on the HSM Village website. Cllr Wright committed to actioning.

AOB

Cllr Wright reported that we have been notified that the 20mph Consultation goes live on 15th and as soon as we have details we will encourage residents to respond.

Cllr Wright thanked everyone for attending and meeting was closed 8pm.