EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER 2018

2018 No. [XXXX]

1. Introduction

1.1 This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Purpose of the instrument

2.1 The Order provides for new district wards and numbers of councillors for Somerset West and Taunton at the district elections in 2019 and thereafter.

3. Matters of special interest to Parliament

Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1 None.

Matters relevant to Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83T of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons relating to Public Business (English Votes for English Laws)

3.2 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure there are no matters relevant to Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83T of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons relating to Public Business at this stage.

4. Extent and Territorial Application

4.1 The territorial extent of this instrument is England and Wales.

4.2 The territorial application of this instrument is England.

5. European Convention on Human Rights

5.1 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

6. Legislative Context

6.1 The Commission has power under section 59 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) to make an order giving effect to recommendations contained in a report, prepared under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act, after conducting an electoral review under section 56(1) of that Act. This instrument is being made to give effect to the Commission's recommendations for new electoral arrangements set out in its report prepared following an electoral review of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

7. Policy background

What is being done and why?

7.1 The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements including the number of councillors and the names, number and

boundaries of wards or divisions for a specific local authority. In November 2017, the Government approved a bid from Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council to merge. A Local Government Changes Order[1] was subsequently approved by Parliament on 25 May 2018, establishing a new Somerset West and Taunton Council from 1 April 2019. The Local Government Changes Order also provided interim electoral arrangements for the new Council. As indicated in the Explanatory Memorandum to that Order, the Commission would be invited to conduct an electoral review of the new Council in time for its first elections in 2019. The Commission was of the view that an electoral review of the area was appropriate to ensure that the new council had electoral arrangements that reflected its functions and responsibilities in time for its first elections in May 2019. The Commission therefore began the electoral review of Somerset West and Taunton in June 2018.

7.2 An electoral review aims to ensure that the number of electors represented by each county or district councillor is as close to equal as possible, but the recommendations must also have regard to community identities and interests and the need for effective and convenient local government. To achieve these aims, the Commission tries to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in every division or ward is as close as possible to the average for the authority, but is happy to show flexibility in moving away from the average based on the evidence provided during the consultation stages of the review. Following a two-stage review process the Commission published its 'New electoral arrangements for Somerset West and Taunton - Final Recommendations' [2] on 23rd October 2018.

7.3 The Order provides for changes to the electoral arrangements for Somerset West and Taunton Council at the district elections in 2019 as recommended by the Commission. Thirty-five new wards will be created. Five wards will each return three councillors, 14 wards will return two councillors and 16 wards will each return a single councillor. The Commission considered that the evidence received justified one ward having electoral variances of greater than 10% from the average for the authority by 2023.

7.4 Under section 56 of the 2009 Act, whenever the Commission recommends changes to the electoral arrangements for a borough, district or county council it must also recommend whether, in consequence of those changes, any changes should be made to the electoral arrangements for any parish council that is within the authority. Among other things, under Schedule 2 to that Act, recommendations must ensure that no parish ward is split between new district wards, and under section 56 of that Act, recommendations must be made regarding the number of parish councillors for each parish ward.

7.5 Consequently, in addition to making changes to the electoral arrangements for the district the Order also, where necessary, makes provision with respect to the establishment of new parish wards and sets the number of parish councillors for each of those parish wards.

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[1] The Somerset West and Taunton (Local Government Changes) Order 2018 (S.I 2018/649)

[2] http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/South%20West/Somerset/Somerset%20West%20and%20Taunton/Final%20Recs/Somerset%20West%20and%20Taunton%20Report%20Web%20final.pdf

8. European Union (Withdrawal) Act/Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union

8.1 This instrument does not relate to withdrawal from the European Union.

9. Consolidation

9.1 This Instrument does not amend or revoke any legislation.

10. Consultation outcome

10.1 The Order gives effect to recommendations that were consulted on during the review of electoral arrangements from June 2018 to October 2018. During the course of the review, the Commission received 128 representations. The consultations involved the current district, borough and county councils, parish and town councils, local MPs, local residents and other interested parties. Initially, the Commission asked for proposals on the most appropriate number of councillors and ward boundaries for the district from representatives of the current councils. The Commission considered that a council size of 59 would ensure effective and convenient local government for the authority. Having considered the submissions received, the Commission published its 'New Electoral arrangements for Somerset West and Taunton Council - Draft recommendations'[3] on 3 July 2018. Following an eight-week consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission considered the further evidence received and published its final recommendations.

10.2 In response to the consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission modified its recommendations for Taunton, in particular the areas of Halcon, Blackbrook, Holway and the town centre. It also renamed nine wards. It recommended that Bishop's Hull & Comeytrowe be renamed Comeytrowe & Bishop's Hull, Brendon & Wiveliscombe be renamed Wiveliscombe & District, Creech & Durston be renamed Creech St Michael, Creechbarrow be renamed Halcon & Lane, Minehead South be renamed Periton & Woodcombe, North Curry & District be renamed North Curry & Ruishton, Tangier be renamed Manor & Tangier, Trull & Pitminster be renamed Trull, Pitminster & Corfe, Vivary East be renamed Vivary, and Vivary West be renamed Wilton & Sherford.

10.3 The Commission confirmed its draft recommendations for the remainder of the district as final.

10.4 A detailed analysis of the outcome of the consultation is set out in the report 'Final recommendations - New electoral arrangements for Somerset West and Taunton Council' which is available at http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/South%20West/Somerset/Somerset%20West%20and%20Taunton/Final%20Recs/Somerset%20West%20and%20Taunton%20Report%20Web%20final.pdf

11. Guidance

11.1 The Commission does not intend to issue any guidance alongside this instrument. This is not considered necessary as the Order is self-explanatory and gives effect to

[3] http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/South%20West/Somerset/Somerset%20West%20and%20Taunton/Draft%20Recs/Somerset%20West%20and%20Taunton%20report%20web.pdf

recommendations following consultation with interested parties as to the changes to electoral arrangements.

12. Impact

12.1 There is no impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies.

12.2 The impact on the public sector will be limited to the area for which the Order makes provision. The one-off cost of producing the map referred to by the instrument is to be funded by the Commission. The one-off cost of amending the electoral register to reflect the new wards is to be funded by Somerset West and Taunton Council.

12.3 An Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument.

13. Regulating small business

13.1 The legislation does not apply to activities that are undertaken by small businesses.

14. Monitoring & review

14.1 The Commission will have no role in monitoring the Council's implementation of the Somerset West and Taunton (Electoral Changes) Order 2018. The Commission is not required to undertake such monitoring; that is a matter for the relevant officers of Somerset West and Taunton Council. The Order will be reviewed insofar as the Commission continually monitors local authorities in England to identify any that meet its criteria for electoral reviews.

15. Contact

15.1 Marcus Bowell, Director of Strategy & Communications at the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Telephone: 0330 500 1250 or email: marcus.bowell@lgbce.org.uk) can be contacted with any queries regarding the instrument.