

Report to parish councils from County Councillors for Curry Rivel & Langport Division 31st May 2022 v1

Post-election activity

After a complex count of the votes on 6th May – because of the election of two councillors per Somerset County division – we were elected to represent you and all the residents of this delightful county division.

We are part of the group of 61 Liberal Democrat councillors which now controls the County Council, and will be in control of the new unitary Somerset Council which takes over on 1st April 2023.

Annual General Meeting of Somerset County Council

Leader: At the County Council AGM on 25th May, Bill Revans was elected Leader of the Council: he is a Somerset man, a recently-retired senior history teacher from North Petherton, which Division he represents, and an excellent choice: we respect him greatly and look forward to his leadership. He led the Lib Dem opposition Group up to the election, and has been a county councillor for five years.

Deputy Leader: Liz Leyshon, who represents Street, is also a five-year county councillor, a retired Theatre Manager, and is adept at understanding and analysing the county's somewhat intricate finances, ensuring the robustness of which will be one of our first challenges.

The Executive Team (used to be called Cabinet) consists of eight additional roles, filled by a diverse mix of people. There are also eight Associate Leads, who understudy and assist the Exec members. Your councillor Mike Stanton is one of those, responsible for Adult Social Care, which is the biggest spending department, and needs to be reviewed and rationalised.

The new executive lead members and their areas of responsibility are: Liz Leyshon (Finance and Human Resources); Tessa Munt (Children and Families); Heather Shearer (Adult Social Care); Mike Rigby (Transport and Digital); Adam Dance (Public Health, Equalities and Diversity); **Val Keitch** (Local Government Reorganisation and Prosperity); Sarah Dyke (Environment and Climate Change); **Ros Wyke** (Development and Assets); **Federica Smith-Roberts** (Communities).

The names in bold are also leaders of three of the district councils which are being merged with the county council, which will smooth the transition. The Leader of the fourth district council, Sedgemoor, Duncan McGinty, who was not elected as a county councillor, has nevertheless been invited to join the Local Government Reorganisation Board, which is chaired by Val Keitch, to ensure continuity with Sedgemoor.

Council Chair and Deputy Chair: Mike Best, a very long-service councillor from Crewkerne, has been elected the new Chair, and Hazel Prior-Sankey (Taunton South) is now Vice-chair: she claims to be the mother (or grandmother) of the council as she starts her 30th year as an elected member.

The AGM was mostly uncontroversial, with a strong leader's speech and healthy opposition, which is needed in all elected bodies. An interesting debate took place on whether Exmoor National Park's governing body could include councillors from as far away as Wells – one councillor described this as 'colonisation'. In the end it was agreed that the opposition groups could select a more local representative.

We look forward to serving you and your parishioners for the next five years, working on implementing the proposals in our party manifesto, and helping sort out any issues which arise: please bring them to us. One of us will endeavour to attend your meetings as often as possible.

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