

Together we are delivering your

New Somerset Council

**Local Government Reorganisation
(LGR) Advisory Board**

25th November 2021



Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Advisory Board

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions (ALL)
2. Draft Structural Change Orders (CB)
3. LCNs (AJ/SS)
4. Communications programme (SC/AL)
5. Forward plan (FP)



Introductions

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Draft Structural Changer Order & Programme Update

Dr Carlton Brand

Background

- A Structural Changes Order (SCO) is the essential legislation developed by DLUHC for agreement by Parliament in early 2022 that enables the transition from the current five councils to a single unitary council on 1 April 2023
- DLUHC invited the five councils to respond to several questions, including potential electoral arrangements, in September to inform the preparation of a draft SCO by late October
- Draft SCO issued to all five councils on 3 November
- No public or statutory consultation on the draft SCO, councils being invited to provide comments on the key elements

Summary of key elements in draft SCO

The key proposals in the DLUHC's letter are:

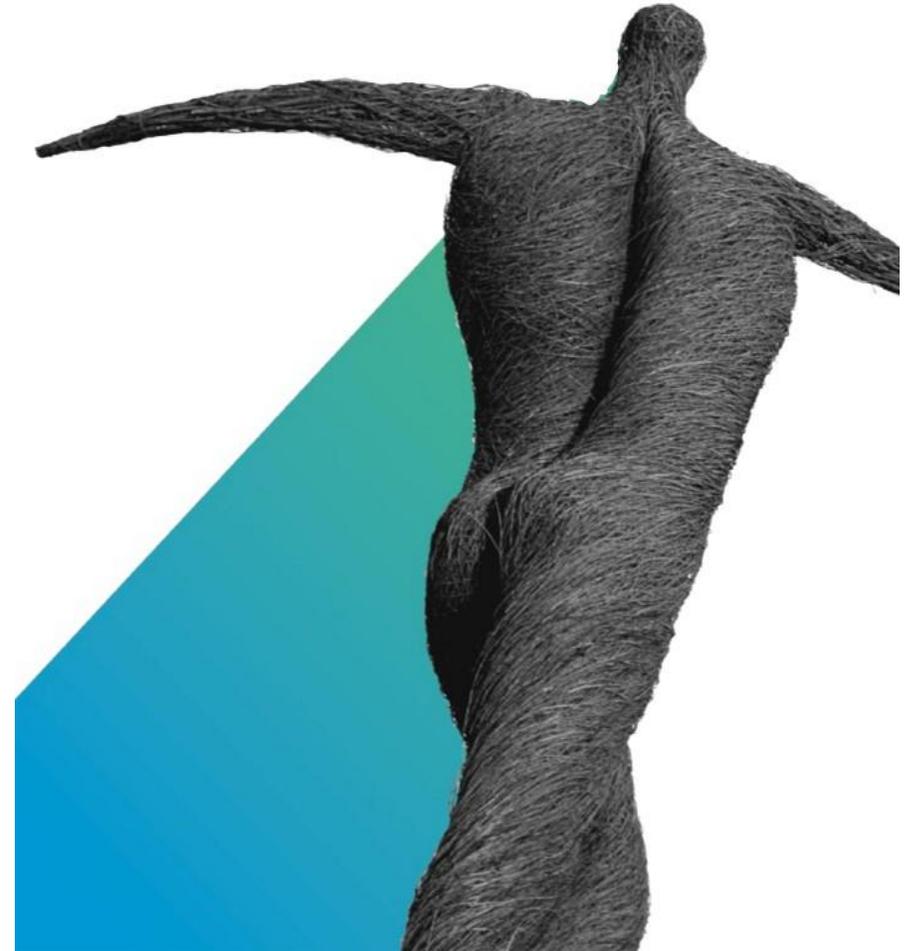
- The new Council will be called Somerset Council
- For the period between the Order being approved and the first elections to the unitary council, an Implementation Executive is to be the transitional decision making body with a membership of nine members (County Leader, 4 county members and 4 district leaders)
- Officer Implementation Team led by the SCC Chief Executive, including four district Chief Executives, along with SCC's Monitoring Officer, S151 Officer and LGR Programme Director

Summary of key elements in draft SCO

- The first election for the new unitary Council will be in either May 2022 or May 2023. If the first election is in May 2022 the elections will use County Council division boundaries but with 110 members elected rather than 55. This is the fall-back position for a May 2023 election, unless DLUHC progress different electoral arrangements.
- The unitary council will be a “continuing authority” – that is a body corporate of Somerset County Council with a new name and new membership.

Next steps

- Councils able collectively or individually to provide comments to DLUHC on whether the elections should be in May 2022 or May 2023 by 10 November and also the key elements in the draft SCO by 17 November.



Programme Update

- Work continues in the design and planning phase (Sep–Nov), specifically:
 - Programme communications – internal and external
 - Town and parish councils
 - Programme resource recruitment
 - Product definition
 - Work stream work planning
 - PwC on board as quality assurance and delivery partner
 - Benefits management planning (cash and non cash benefits)
 - Risk management
 - Change management approach
 - Prep for programme gateway December (start implementation phase)

LCN Update and Town & Parish Conference

Alyn Jones & Sara Skirton

Progress update

- Progress is being made as we begin to look towards a February 2022 Town & Parish Council Conference. Theme – creating connections and developing peer to peer support. We have a pencilled date but have begun building a small working group which, includes both partners and clerks, from different areas of the County, who will help collaborate on ideas going forwards.
- Three workshops have been held to shape the products for delivery under the Community, Customer & Partnership Workstream in the LRG Programme. These were:
 - Customer Experience & Contact Centre – Thursday 18th November – am
 - Digital, Website & Accessibility – Thursday 18th November - pm
 - Data & Information Management – 22nd November 2021
 - Overall workstream – 29th November 2021 all day
- Outcome - The Board will confirm timings, capacity and interdependencies as a few of the products cut across the programme. The workshops suggested that building on our combined best practice was important and securing some external peer support may be beneficial. There was also agreement that a number of our products would benefit from involving users/customers to co-design/produce.

LCN Update

Wincanton, Bruton & Castle Cary

- This week is a key one as initial discussions are taking place with Wincanton, Bruton & Castle Cary: Potential Health and Wellbeing pilot on Thursday (25th).

Frome Area LCN – Children, Young People and Families

- Second LCN pilot meeting with Frome Town Council and surrounding Parishes took place on 15 November
- Beginning to identify potential priorities, including around transport, access and mental health support
- Reviewing evidence and data to clarify priorities and provide baselines for outcomes
- Next steps to bring partners on board, including schools - stakeholder mapping exercise
- Linking with district and county colleagues
- Securing shared ownership of LCN meetings, e.g. Chair can rotate

LCN Update

Exmoor Area LCN

- Members of the Somerset Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Programme Team spent 3 days visiting parishes in the Exmoor County electoral division in order to better understand the opportunities for improvement expressed by residents in this area.
- Summarised below are the main themes identified through analysis of parish feedback as well as proposals for how this pilot can test new ways of working.
- Communication
- Programme of planned and reactive works
- Discretionary local highway works
- Discretionary budget
- Asset Information
- Highway Steward Scheme – draft specification
- Next Steps

LGR Communications Approach

Ally Laing & Steve Coomber

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Communications will 'champion the vision'

- Collaborative and works in partnership
- Accessible and places residents and communities at the centre of decision making
- Dynamic, enabling high performing, quality services and effective and efficient use of public money



Communications: approach and outcomes

Approach

- Engage stakeholders through two-way dialogue, so they support and advocate the change
- Deliver communications using available media, and monitor effectiveness

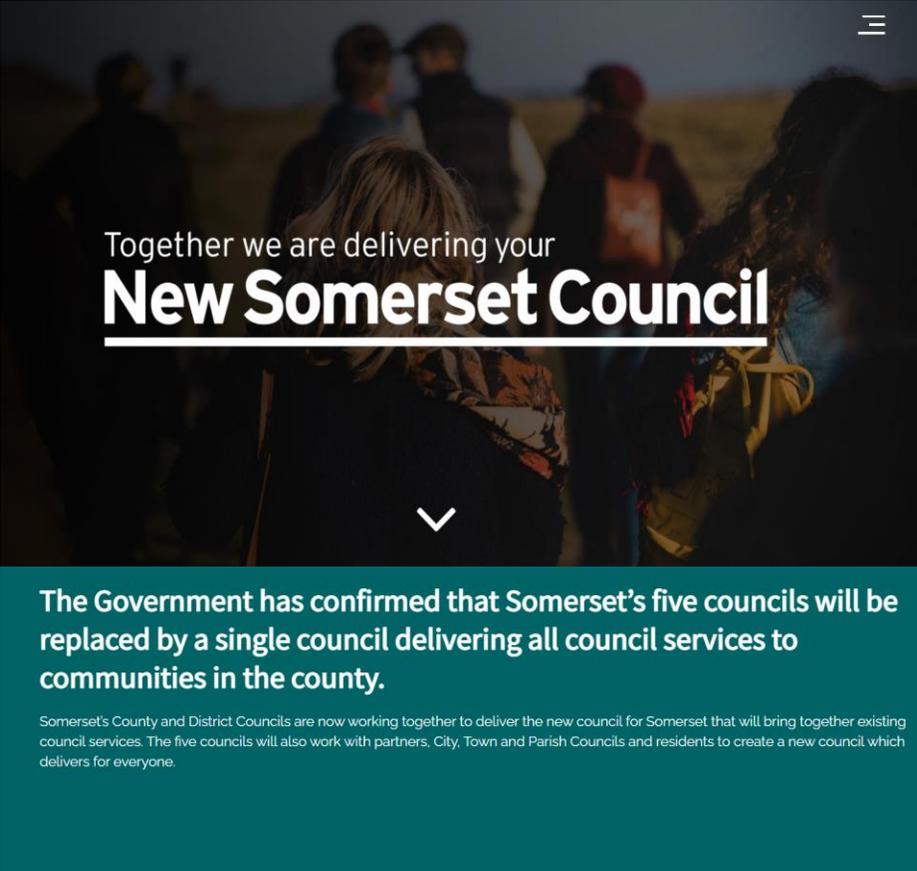
Outcomes

- Agile, coordinated communications with targeted, compelling messages
- Somerset citizens and council staff understand what's coming; the impacts of change, and how it will benefit them

Communications to date...

- Website launched
www.newsomersetcouncil.org.uk
- Advisory Board meetings
- Press and broadcast media
- Contact email address
info@newsomersetcouncil.org.uk

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The Government has confirmed that Somerset's five councils will be replaced by a single council delivering all council services to communities in the county.

Somerset's County and District Councils are now working together to deliver the new council for Somerset that will bring together existing council services. The five councils will also work with partners, City, Town and Parish Councils and residents to create a new council which delivers for everyone.

What happens now?

The new council will officially come into being in April 2023. Until then your services will continue to be provided by the four District Councils - [Mendip](#), [Sedgemoor](#), [Somerset West and Taunton](#) and [South Somerset](#) along with [Somerset County Council](#).

[The original proposal for the new council can be found here](#). This proposal was approved by the Secretary of State in July 2021.

What next?

- **How do you want to be updated?**
Website; Email; Telephone; Social media; Newsletters
- **How can everyone have the chance to participate?**
Community groups; Surveys
- **How can we mobilise supporters?**
Community champions, attend events, share stories



Forward Plan

- **December**
 - **LCN Boundaries**
 - **Unitary Councillor Job Description**
 - **Taunton Town Council**