

Information

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for all County Councillors

From:	Dr Carlton Brand, Programme Director, One Somerset
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Date:	1 June 2020
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To:	All County Councillors
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One Somerset, Local Government Reform (LGR) in Somerset - Update

Although the Council's focus very much remains on supporting our residents, communities, businesses and partners through this coronavirus pandemic, some limited work has continued on the business case for the Leader's preferred option of a single 'Unitary' Council for Somerset.

This approach was well underway early in the year, but of course Coronavirus took over our attention and focus. We are now gradually returning teams and services to some form of business as usual, so it feels appropriate that we are now able to accelerate some of our key strategic projects to improve outcomes for Somerset, including local government reorganisation.

All five councils agreed before the pandemic that the existing arrangements were not working well, and that we couldn't continue without change. Coronavirus has shown that working in a crisis with our district colleagues can bring about some great results.

The business case will highlight those successes as well as forecasting where this could be dramatically stepped up and enhanced for the benefit of our residents, not just in a crisis, but in our day-to-day work and operations.

It will be presented to our July Council meeting and run through the full governance timelines ahead of that, including the Scrutiny Place and Cabinet meetings. Should the business case be supported it will then be submitted to Government.

The business case will demonstrate public engagement and that activity will commence from tomorrow (Tuesday) and involve residents and businesses as well as city, town and parish councils and other key partners. There will be opportunities for residents to get involved online, by phone and through our own surveys carried out using post and other “non-digital” opportunities. Member briefings will also be held ahead of the July democratic meetings. Further information is available in the June 10 Scrutiny Place meeting along with the Programme Initiation Document (PID) paper and supporting presentation.

For more information, visit the One Somerset website at onesomerset.org.uk which will be regularly updated.

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