



Council

To: All Members of South Bucks District Council

Your attendance is requested at an **extraordinary meeting** of the South Bucks District Council to be held at **6.00 pm** on **Monday 9 April 2018**, **Council Chamber, Capswood, Oxford Road, Denham**, when the business below is proposed to be transacted.

A G E N D A

Item

1. Evacuation Procedure
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire - Announcement (*Pages 3 - 4*)

Appendix A: the Secretary of State's minded to decision (Pages 5 - 6)

5. Exclusion of Public (if required)

To resolve that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: All reports will be updated orally at the meeting if appropriate and may be supplemented by additional reports at the Chairman's discretion.



Bob Smith
Chief Executive
South Bucks District Council

Audio/Visual Recording of Meetings

This meeting might be filmed, photographed, audio-recorded or reported by a party other than the Council for subsequent broadcast or publication. If you intend to film, photograph or audio record the proceedings, or if you have any questions please contact Democratic Services. Members of the press please contact the Communications Team.

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SUBJECT:	Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire - Announcement
REPORT OF:	Councillor Nick Naylor
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Bob Smith, Chief Executive
REPORT AUTHOR:	bob.smith@southbucks.gov.uk
WARD/S AFFECTED	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

Full Council is asked to note the Secretary of State's minded to decision regarding Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire, and to consider the approach to making representations and next steps. The Joint Committee considered the recommendations below at the meeting held on 4 April 2018. Due to the timing of publishing the agenda for Full Council, an update on the discussion at Joint Committee will be provided at the Full Council meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To note the Secretary of State's minded to decision published on the 12 March 2018 (appendix A).**
2. **To agree to make representations to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Councils.**
3. **To delegate the final wording of the representations to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leaders.**
4. **To delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leaders to take such action as deemed necessary to protect the best interests of Chiltern District Council / South Bucks District Council residents and communities including but not limited to seeking expert legal advice and lodging of legal challenges, communication campaigns, further stakeholder engagement and associated activities.**
5. **To agree an initial budget of £20,000 for each Council to support the above actions.**

2. Reason for Recommendation

- 2.1 To enable representations to be made to the Secretary of State following his announcement, and any supporting action to be taken.

3. Content of Report

- 3.1 At the meeting of Council held on 16 January 2017 it was agreed to submit a unitary bid to the Secretary of State to deliver a two unitary model for the County. In September 2016 the County Council submitted a case for a single unitary model. This report does not rehearse the bids in any way, but members are advised to read the Council report of 16 January 2017 if they require further background. The two unitary bid can be found on our website <http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/article/8301/Modernising-Local-Government>.

- 3.2 Since our submissions in January 2017 there has been and inordinate delay on the part of the Secretary of State in coming to a view on the two competing submissions in front of him. However during this interregnum we have not let the matter distract us and both Councils have continued with their day to day delivery of services to our residents alongside making good progress with our various transformation projects et al.

On the 12 March 2018 the Secretary of State issued a 'minded to' decision in favour of a single county wide unitary (see appendix A for the full statement). This decision is followed by a representation period expiring on 25 May 2018.

- 3.3 Following the representation period, the process is then for the Secretary of State to lay orders to effect the change, assuming nothing in the representations gives him cause to reconsider. It is then a final Parliamentary decision to finally enact the process. The timings of this process are, at the time of writing the report, unclear and dependant on available parliamentary time.
- 3.4 The current position of all the Bucks district councils is that a move to a single unitary council to service Buckinghamshire (excluding Milton Keynes) would not be in the best interests of our resident and is not a proposal considered to enjoy widespread local support.

4. Options

- 4.1 The Council could decide to make no representations to the Secretary of State, however it is considered essential for the views of the Council to be made known to the Secretary of State and therefore such an approach was not considered further.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 As with all representations of this type it is likely that there will be funding required to either develop further evidence base, or to undertake supporting activities, and as such the recommendations include a preliminary budget to be made available from general reserves.

6. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 6.1 The final decision concerning local government re-organisation in Buckinghamshire will fundamentally affect the Council's overarching objectives for the district and its residents.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Officers will continue to work with Members to shape the final representations to the Secretary of State and undertake all necessary work in support of the District Council's position.

Background Papers:	None other than those referred to in the report.
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Appendix A

Local Government Policy: Written Statement – HLWS515

Made by: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government)

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I am today announcing how I am minded to proceed in response to the locally-led proposals that I have received for improving local government in Buckinghamshire. Currently in the administrative county of Buckinghamshire, there is a two-tier structure of Buckinghamshire County Council and the district councils of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, High Wycombe, and South Bucks.

There is broad local consent for change in Buckinghamshire, though there have been two alternative approaches for how precisely it should be configured. In September 2016 and January 2017, I received locally-led proposals for replacing the current structure, in one case with a single new unitary council and in the other case with two new unitary councils – one for the area of Aylesbury Vale and the other for the remainder of the current county area.

Having carefully considered all the material and representations I have received, I am minded to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval and further discussions, the locally-led proposal to replace the existing five councils across Buckinghamshire with a single council for the area.

I am satisfied that this new single council, if established, is likely to improve local government and service delivery in the county, generating savings, increasing financial resilience, facilitating a more strategic and holistic approach to planning and housing challenges, and sustaining good local services. I am also satisfied that across Buckinghamshire as a whole there is a good deal of local support for this new council, and that the area of the council represents a credible geography.

Whereas, I am equally satisfied that establishing two councils for the current county area is unlikely to improve local government in the area, generate significant savings, or provide the capacity to sustain major services or to address planning and housing challenges. I believe the areas of the two councils would not represent a credible geography or clear local identity, and that there is significantly less local support for

two councils than for a single council. Accordingly, I am not minded to proceed with the proposal for establishing two councils.

Notwithstanding, I am clear that in relation to establishing a single council further steps are needed to secure local consent amongst the local partners, and I hope this 'minded to' announcement will facilitate the necessary discussions to deliver this local agreement.

Before I take my final decision, there is now a period until 25 May 2018 during which those interested may make further representations to me, including that if a proposal is implemented it is with suggested modifications. The final decision would also be subject to Parliamentary approval.