

SUBJECT:	Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire - Announcement
REPORT OF:	Councillor Nick Naylor
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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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