



Local Government Reform West Northamptonshire Update

9 October 2018

Regular meetings are now taking place as work moves forwards with preparations for a proposed new unitary council for West Northamptonshire, so here's an update. On Thursday, 4 October, there were two key meetings – chief executives or their deputies from Daventry District, Northampton, South Northants and the County met as the Programme Board, and the leaders or deputies of those same four councils met as the Steering Group.

We know how interested people are in this process, and we're committed to keeping people properly up to date, so we will regularly share highlights of the outcomes of these meetings, alongside the key issues coming up next on the agenda. Sometimes these updates will be short and sweet; other times, they will involve sharing more detail.

The Government will be running its own consultation on the two-unitary proposal starting sometime soon, though we are not yet currently sighted on the details of this. The Secretary of State will then make his decision on whether to proceed.

In the meantime there is a huge amount of detail to work through in advance of an anticipated go-ahead for a proposed new West Northamptonshire unitary council, set against a tight timescale.

We're developing our programme to include a number of work streams, some of which will manage several important work packages. This initial list includes:

- Baseline – establishing clearly the scale, scope and detail of the services, staffing, assets, building, IT systems, contracts etc. across the four councils proposed to come together.
- Governance – including work packages on the Structural Change Orders which will be considered by Parliament, and another on drafting the Shadow Authority and Assembly Constitutions
- Services – beginning the huge piece of work on working out the future shape of services following the integration of the current authorities into the proposed new unitary council
- Communication and Stakeholder Management.

The two groups considered a 'risk register' of the various things that might influence (or get in the way of) the smooth development of the proposed new council. These programme risks will exist alongside each council's own risk registers with the purpose of ensuring that proper attention is paid to these issues, with mitigating actions taken as appropriate to the likelihood and impact of that risk.

For example, the register includes entries such as: if there were an unscheduled General Election during the anticipated Parliamentary processes to come, then this

may well lead to the process not proceeding on the currently anticipated timetable. Another example is the risk of a Judicial Review being brought which, if successful, would potentially impact significantly on the process. Most risks identified will have actions agreed to reduce the likelihood of that situation coming to pass (such as making sure that legal processes are properly followed, to mitigate the risk of facing or losing a Judicial Review); some other risks cannot be reduced as they are completely outside local control (like any early General Election).

We've agreed that it's vital that the future shape of the proposed authority is underpinned and that all of our thinking is guided by important values and principles, before we get sucked into the inevitable mass of important detail. We will be holding a series of 'design principle workshops' during November, with a broader range of elected members being involved in some and wider senior staff teams involved in others.

We're interviewing for extra programme management staff to provide the capacity to help drive forward this important and complicated work at sufficient pace, and hope to have people in place in coming weeks. We'll be meeting again as both leaders and chief executives on a weekly basis for the time being, so we'll aim to let you have another update soon thereafter. On this week's agenda, we'll be considering issues such as the communication and engagement strategy, further discussion on the Structural Change Order, and process for determining the proposed new council's name.

Cllr Chris Millar – Leader
Ian Vincent – Chief Executive

Daventry District Council