

Please ask for: David Fothergill

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Date: 11 June 2020

Dear colleague

Update on progress towards a single unitary authority for Somerset

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

This approach was well underway earlier 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 projects, including local government reorganisation.

All five councils in Somerset 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. We are now developing a business case that will highlight those successes. However, it will also highlight where this could have worked better, faster and more effectively for our residents and businesses, not just in a crisis, but in our day-to-day work and operations.

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

The business case will demonstrate public engagement and that activity formally began last week and will continue through the coming weeks. Please do take the opportunity to review the proposals on our website - onesomerset.org.uk - which will be regularly updated. In the meantime I would be delighted to talk to you and explain our work in the hope that this will gain your support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Fothergill', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Cllr David Fothergill
Leader of Somerset County Council