

Help us shape a new unitary council for Somerset

Organisations from across the county are joining together to deliver a new unitary council for Somerset – and local people are encouraged to be part of the conversation.

A public meeting is planned at Donyatt Village Hall, near Ilminster, on 25th November, 3pm until 5pm. It's the third in a series of monthly events where residents and communities are invited to learn about, and feed into, the new council process.

Members of the recently-established Joint Advisory Board will be on-hand to answer any queries. They include representatives from Somerset County Council, the four District Councils, Somerset Association of Local Councils, City, Town and Parish Councils, health, police, education, and the voluntary and community sector.

The Board is also developing links with the Somerset Youth Parliament, and is particularly keen to engage young people in the sessions.

The role of the Board is advisory but its proposals, ideas and recommendations will feed in to the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Committee – the decision-making body.

On the agenda at the Board this month will be the operating and governance principles of the new council, communications, an update on Local Community Networks (LCNs) and emerging plans for the next Town and Parish Council Conference.

Covid safety measures will be in place and mask-wearing is encouraged by attendees.

On 1st April 2023, [Somerset will become a unitary authority](#), replacing the current County Council and four District Councils with a single council governing the whole area. Find out more [HERE](#).

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Three committees oversee the move to a new unitary council

The LGR Joint Committee

The Joint Committee is designed to steer the move to a new single council and oversee the implementation plan and development of the new unitary council's constitution and budget. The terms of reference are available [here](#). The papers and audio for the first meeting are available [here](#). The committee has nine members, the Leaders of the district and county councils and four members of the County Council cabinet.

The LGR Advisory Board

The Advisory Board is, as its name suggests, a less formal public meeting and is intended to provide a route for public sector partners, members of the public and other interested parties to contribute to the process and ideas of creating the new council. Meetings will be held monthly at locations around the county. The Board's role is advisory, but its proposals, ideas and recommendations will feed into the unitary programme and the decision-making Joint Committee. It is hoped that a wholly inclusive meeting will encourage fresh thinking and innovative contributions from public, partners and members.

Membership is eight Elected Members (County and District with SCC's Cabinet Member for LGR chairing the meetings), and reps from Somerset Association of Local Councils, Somerset Society of Local Council Clerks, health, police, education and voluntary/community sector (Spark Somerset). The Board will develop links to the Somerset Youth Parliament.

The LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee

Proposals for a LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee are being developed to be considered at each Council's Full Council meeting in either December or February 2022. It will work in the manner of scrutiny committees elsewhere in local government, operating as a critical friend and providing oversight and review of policy development ahead of decision making by the LGR Joint Committee, and ensuring that decision-making processes are robust and transparent.

The move to a new unitary council – website launch

We are working on a standalone website, which is imminent. Notifications of all meetings and the terms of reference will be published on this site once it's live.

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