

As you may be aware, the government has now invited Somerset County Council to submit its business case for local government reform in Somerset. There are currently two proposals - one from Somerset County Council (One Somerset) and one from the four district councils - on the table for submissions. **One Somerset** would see the county council and four district councils replaced by a single, new council. The article below sets out the case for **One Somerset**.

One Somerset: Together we can work as a united team

Somerset: It's a county of contrasts but it works as a whole - not two halves. If asked where you are from, you may say your town or village, your county. It's your identity.

That's just one of the reasons why One Somerset, a single new council for the county, works. It makes sense. It unites Somerset as a single team with a strong and clear voice and sense of place and belonging.

All are agreed that the current, three-tier system (county, district and town or parish) is past its sell-by date, that reform is needed and that unitary is the way forward. It makes sense that it's a single unitary under one Somerset flag.

The plans have been developed with the people who know Somerset – like the County Council teams who provide threequarters of local government services and city, town and parish councils who are right at the heart of communities.

Together we can: work as one in a crisis. Since March, Somerset like the rest of the country, has been rising to the challenge of the pandemic. But it shouldn't take a crisis to bring Somerset together – such as flooding or coronavirus. When these happen, it takes time to bring every council, agency or organisation on board at a time when we can least afford to delay.

As a single council Somerset would have one strong response from Day One, harnessing the strength of our long-established partnerships with health, care, education and blue-light services.

Together we can: realise ambitions. One Somerset is aiming high – it's about making life better **for** people in Somerset **with** people in Somerset. It's giving people in their city, town or village the power to do more at the grass roots. Local Community Networks would bring parish/town/city councils together with the unitary council as well as voluntary and community groups. Together we can get things done.

Together we can: keep supporting the mums-to-be, the vulnerable children, adults and families and deliver quality services that ensure ALL people, whether young, old or somewhere in between get the respect and care they need.

Together we can: invest in Somerset with a unitary bonus of £18.5m each year. This is cash that can be spent on issues that really matter from addressing climate change to caring for the most vulnerable. One Somerset's sums add up: the savings are realistic.

Together we can: stay as Somerset. One Somerset doesn't want to split up the county, build a new bureaucracy or create more confusion. One council equals one strong Somerset voice, one point of contact for customers and one, united team to serve the residents, communities and businesses of Somerset. Together, we can.

Issued by One Somerset