



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Debbie Ward
Chief Executive
Dorset County Council,
County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester DT1 1XJ

7 November 2017

Dear Debbie,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DORSET

I am writing to let you know that the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, has announced that he is minded to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for restructuring local government in Dorset, which your and five other Dorset councils submitted to him on 9 February 2017. Please find enclosed a copy of the Written Ministerial Statement which the Secretary of State made today.

As you can see from that statement, he has carefully considered the proposal and the representations made to him. Based on all the information and material currently available to him, he has reached an initial view that the proposal, if implemented, is likely to improve the area's local government, that it commands a good deal of local support, and that the area of each of the proposed new unitary authorities is a credible geography.

There is now a period until 8 January 2018 during which those interested may make representations to the Secretary of State. These representations can include suggested modifications to the proposal, and it is also open for any council in the area to come forward with an alternative proposal.

Moreover, during this period the Secretary of State has said that further steps should be taken to secure local consent, and he hopes that his announcement will facilitate the necessary discussions to conclude this.

Once this period of representations has ended, the Secretary of State will carefully consider all the material and representations available to him and reach a final decision as to how to proceed.

Paul Rowsell CBE
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I understand that all the nine Dorset councils are working together in Joint Implementation Committees – your council participating in the Implementation Committees for both the proposed Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole unitary and for the proposed rural unitary. The Secretary of State's announcement that he is minded to implement, subject to Parliament's approval, the proposal submitted means that my team will now be looking to engage with your councils' teams supporting the Implementation Committees. This is to help prepare us for drafting the legislation that would be necessary if the final decision is to implement the proposal submitted.

As indicated previously, once a final decision on the unitary proposal is made, the Secretary of State also intends to decide whether to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Dorset councils' proposal for a Dorset Combined Authority.

The Secretary of State has written to the leaders of all Dorset councils to inform them of his initial decision, the chair of the Dorset LEP and the Lord Lieutenant.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Rowsell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

P ROWSELL

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS232)

Department for Communities and Local Government

Written Statement made by: **Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid)** on 07 Nov 2017.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENT

Local government in Dorset

I am announcing today that, having carefully considered all the material and representations I have received, I am 'minded to' implement the locally-led proposal for improving local government in Dorset. This was submitted to me in February 2017. In the Dorset area, there are currently two small unitary councils (created in the 1990s) of Bournemouth and of Poole. They are surrounded by a two-tier structure of Dorset County Council and the district councils of Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland.

I am satisfied on the basis of the information currently available to me that this proposal if implemented is likely to improve local government across the area, establishing two new councils with a credible geography, and which would command local support. The existing nine councils will be replaced by a single council for the areas of Bournemouth, Poole, and that part of the county of Dorset currently comprising the Borough of Christchurch, and by a single council for the remainder of the current county area.

I understand that all the councils in the area are already working together in joint implementation committees. However, further steps are needed to secure local consent, and I hope this announcement will facilitate the necessary discussions to conclude this.

Before I take my final decision, there is now a period until 8 January 2018 during which those interested may make further representations to me, including that if the proposal is implemented it is with suggested modifications. It is also open to any council in the area to come forward with an alternative proposal. The final decision would also be subject to Parliamentary approval.

Once I have made my final decision on the Dorset proposal, I will also decide whether to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, Dorset councils' proposal for a combined authority to facilitate collaboration on certain matters between whatever councils are to be in place in Dorset.

Local government in Suffolk

I am also announcing today that having carefully considered all the material and representations I have received, I am 'minded to' implement the locally-led proposal I received from Suffolk Coastal and Waveney district councils in February 2017 to merge their two respective councils to become a single, new district council.

I have reached this decision on the basis that I consider:

the proposal is likely to improve local government in the area (by improving service delivery, giving greater value for money, yielding cost savings, providing stronger strategic and local leadership, and/or delivering more sustainable structures);

the proposal commands local support, in particular that the merger is proposed by all councils which are to be merged and there is evidence of a good deal of local support; and

the proposed merged area is a credible geography, consisting of two or more existing local government areas that are adjacent, and which, if established, would not pose an obstacle to locally-led proposals for authorities to combine to serve their communities better and would facilitate joint working between local authorities.

I intend to assess any further locally-led merger proposals that I receive against these criteria.

Before I take my final decision on this proposed merger there is now a period until 8 January 2018 during which those interested may make further representations to me, including that if the proposal is implemented it is with suggested modifications. The final decision would also be subject to Parliamentary approval.