

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.