

REPORTS - HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Malcolm Wade

Local Government Review Consultation

Following the Leader of the Council's announcement at Full Council on 13 May, and subsequent Cabinet decision on 6 June, work is underway to prepare for public consultation and wider engagement on potential future options for local government in Hampshire. The County Council commissioned Deloitte to undertake independent analysis on options for unitary local government in Hampshire. This work was commissioned when it became clear that other authorities were exploring reorganisation, including unitary schemes, which could lead to the disaggregation of the County Council's high performing services. Deloitte's analysis concluded that the best option, in terms of both financial and non-financial criteria, would be to create a single unitary council for Hampshire. As per Cabinet's decision, the County Council will not be consulting on a preferred option and has made a commitment to listening to the people of Hampshire first before any decision is taken.

Consultation Actions

Public consultation - Preparations for public consultation are underway in line with Cabinet's decision on 6 June. To ensure that the consultation is objective, factual and accessible, Ipsos Mori is working with the County Council to provide independent support to the exercise. Officers from both the Heart of Hampshire and Solent districts are being engaged in an effort ideally to achieve a joint consultation.

PricewaterhouseCoopers review - Hampshire districts and the unitary councils of Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight have commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake a study on potential options for unitary local government. The County Council is recognised as a critical stakeholder for this work, which is due to report by the end of September. This review was commissioned after the publication of Deloitte's analysis on options for unitary local government, which provided evidence in favour of a single unitary council for Hampshire.

Solent Devolution Deal Governance Review – The County Council is considering its response to a review being undertaken by the unitary councils of Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight on governance options to underpin the proposed Solent devolution deal. The County Council has not yet agreed to join this proposal pending our consultation. The Government has indicated that the three unitaries may progress without the Hampshire districts in the first instance. The unitary councils have invited responses by 14 July.

Town and parish council engagement - Several local events are taking place where groups of town and parish councils have invited the County Council to present the findings of Deloitte's analysis on unitary council options. A series of four workshops are also being planned for parish and town councils in September. These will complement public consultation and focus on exploring opportunities to strengthen the role of town and parish councils as part of any future arrangement.

Business engagement - A parallel, complementary programme of work is being designed to hear the views of Hampshire's business community and to understand the implications of any future arrangement for Hampshire's continued economic growth and prosperity.

School Engagement - The County Council will be writing to all Hampshire schools in advance of the summer break about its plans for public consultation and how to engage.

Staff and general communications - Various mediums are being used to communicate and provide reassurance to Hampshire County Council employees. For example, three briefings have been held for senior managers since May and key messages are being communicated to all staff through chief officer blogs. A sustained social media drive has been running for several weeks - Serving Hampshire - to promote Hampshire's great services and the County as a whole. This can be followed this on the twitter feed [@hantsconnect](https://twitter.com/hantsconnect) <<https://twitter.com/hantsconnect>> which is tagged as #ServingHampshire.

Members of Parliament - Hampshire and Isle of Wight MPs received a briefing on devolution and local government review at Hampshire and Isle of Wight All Party Parliamentary Group meeting on 10 June and engagement with MPs is on-going. HCC will continue to keep members informed as this work progresses and will share further detailed information in advance of the consultation launch to enable members to participate fully, and to encourage all residents and parishes, where applicable, to do likewise