



Town and Parish Briefing

August 2026

David Buckland
Chief Executive



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation - Update

- Main points
 - Invitation received by the Council from Minister on 5 February 2025
 - Response from the Council made on 27 November 2025
 - Government consultation on options from 5 February 2026 to 26 March 2026
 - Decision made on 16 July 2 unitary Warwickshire – North and South
 - **Go Live for new Council(s) – April 2028**



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation - Decision

- 16 July MHCLG letter explains that:
 - Two unitary proposals reflects the County's different economies, identities and demographics.
 - Better integration of housing and planning policies.
 - Greater flexibility for devolution.
 - Locally responsive services tailored to the local needs in the North and South of Warwickshire.



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation - Decision

- Result of Public Consultation
 - Government consultation received 2,120 responses compared to the 2,334 responses from our exercise
 - 68% agreed to the two unitary proposal, compared to 73% from our exercise
 - 24% disagreed to the two unitary proposal compared to 22% from our exercise
- Acknowledged savings would have been greater for a single unitary



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Programme

- All Warwickshire principal councils already working together on LGR.
- Chief Executives formed a Project Board supported by, at this stage, six workstreams:
 - Finance, Legal, contracts, ICT, People, Assets
- PWC appointed as programme delivery partners for LGR for first phase.
- SDC has allowed £2m towards the shared implementation costs for LGR, plus a further £1.75m to meet their own costs.



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Programme

- Following the decision, further workstreams are to be formed in areas such as:
 - Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing, and Planning
 - This will result in a Housing Revenue account covering the SDC area
- Discussions are ongoing with Government about the rules of the game – Structural Changes Order (SCO)



Ministry of Housing,
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Local Government

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Chief Executives of Warwickshire Councils

19 May 2026

Dear Chief Executives,

I am writing to seek your views on matters that will be necessary for the Secretary of State to consider in any Structural Changes Order (SCO). The final decision on all these matters, including whether to implement a proposal, with or without modification, lies with the Secretary of State. Seeking your views is without prejudice to whether the Secretary of State decides to implement a proposal.

For the matters below, we would appreciate your response by **Tuesday 16 June**, and if you are able to provide an earlier response this would be appreciated. This is so the Secretary of State can consider and take decisions on these matters after he has taken decisions on which proposal, if any, to implement, with or without modification. These decisions will then be shared alongside the announcement of any reorganisation decision, which we expect to make before summer recess. While all views expressed will be considered, it is ultimately for the Secretary of State to decide what to include in the legislation to ensure any new councils are well placed to go live and to implement the proposal that is chosen.

We encourage you to work together to seek to agree representations for each proposal that would affect your councils for the Secretary of State to consider. You can respond singly, jointly, or as a collective, to MLGReorganisation@communities.gov.uk and to your delivery lead, Jon Scanlan (jonathan.scanlan@communities.gov.uk). Even if agreement cannot be reached, we encourage you to discuss your thoughts with each other. If you are unable to provide a view at this stage on any of these matters, it would be helpful if this could be set out so it can be considered by ministers.

Interim implementation structures

In the event of a decision to reorganise, a SCO will provide for the creation of a new single tier of local government for the area. This could either be through the creation of an entirely new council, or by establishing the new council as a continuing authority of one of the existing councils – known as a preparing council. Our current view is that a preparing council will only be considered where there is an existing council on the same geography as the new unitary council. We understand there is interest from some in whether a preparing council model is possible where the geography is very similar – if you think this could apply then your thoughts on democratic accountability and other practical considerations in the transition period in this model would be welcomed.

Warwickshire Structural Changes Order

- Letter received from MHCLG on 19 May
- Addressed to CEX requesting response by 16 June
- Seeking views on issues such as name, elections, Joint Committee etc
- Do not have to agree



Representations on SCO – SDC Specific Comments

- *In the case of two Unitary Councils, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils in particular would prefer the use of the existing **Borough and District Wards to give greater representation at least initially until a full electoral review**, which would be beneficial in the first years of the new Authorities. **This would result in 85 Councillors for the South/Southern Warwickshire Council.***
- *However, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council notes that in previous local government reorganisations, such as Cumbria and Northamptonshire, there has been **equal membership from each Council**, and their preference would be for this model.*



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Draft SCO

- The SCO determines a number of issues ahead of the shadow council elections
 - Council names
 - North Warwickshire Council (covering NWBC, NBBC & RBC)
 - RBC still unhappy, now would prefer North & East Warwickshire Council, separate letter submitted
 - South Warwickshire Council (covering SDC and WDC)



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Draft SCO

- Electoral Arrangements use electoral divisions;
 - North $30 \times 2 = 60$ Members, plus 1 extra to address voter imbalance
 - South $27 \times 2 = 54$ Members, plus 2 extra to address voter imbalance
- Joint Committee
 - North Warwickshire Council
 - WCC – 6 – NWBC, NBBC, RBC 2 each;
 - South Warwickshire Council
 - WCC – 4 – SDC and WDC 2 each.

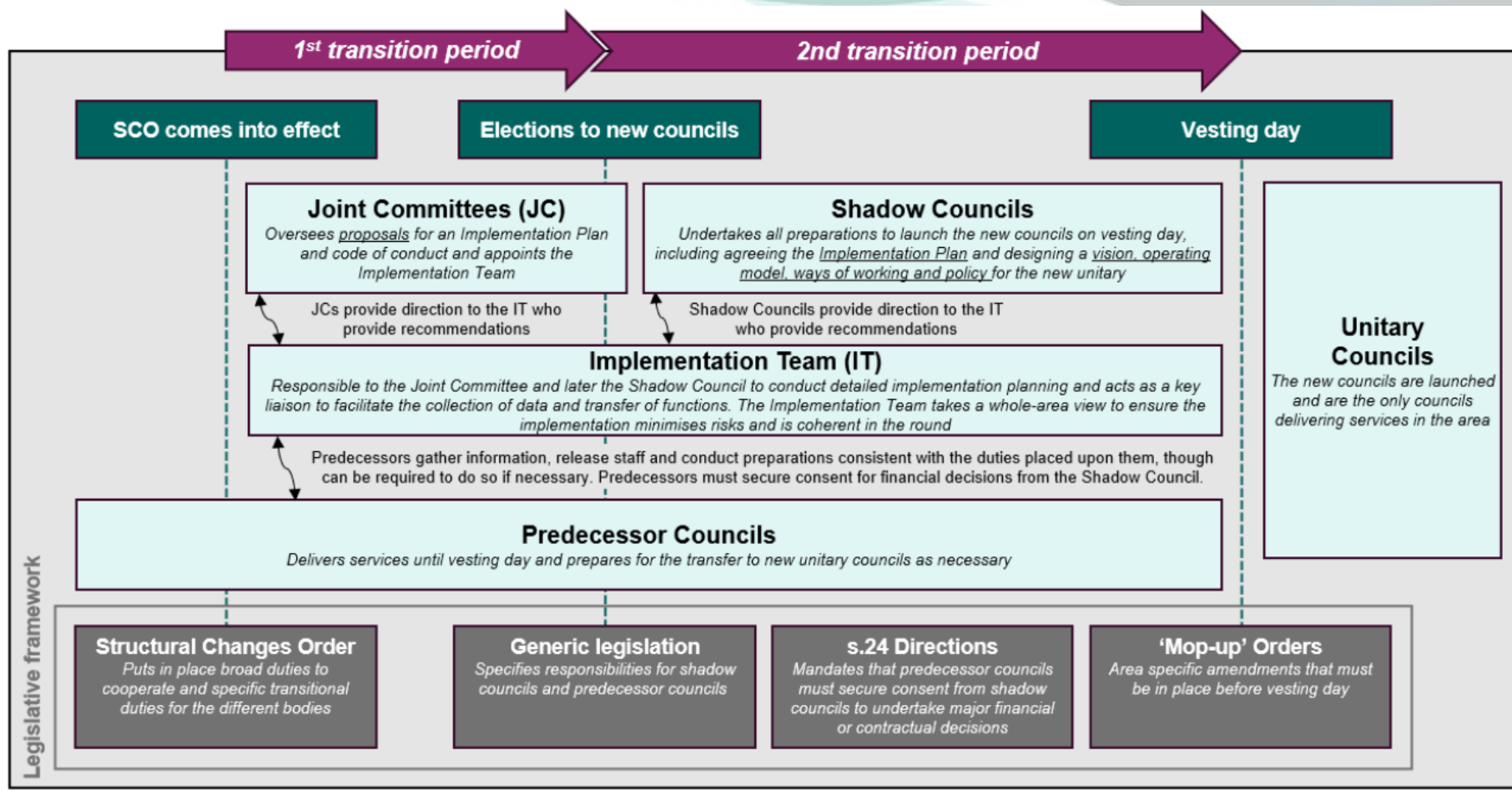


Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Draft SCO

- Electoral Arrangements - term
 - Shadow Council elections to be held in May 2027 – for **five-year** term.
 - Town and Parish elections to be held also in May 2027.
 - Town and Parish term confirmed as five-year term to avoid stand alone elections – costly to small councils. Then revert to four-year cycle.
 - 2023 elections – out of 80 parish councils contested elections in 9 areas.



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – What next





Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Joint Committee

- Role of Joint Committee
 - Agree to the creation of the implementation team – SRO to develop proposals
 - Develop proposals for the new council to be able to agree a Leader and Cabinet Governance model
 - A draft Code of Conduct
 - Draft member's allowances
 - Draft Constitution
 - Proposed key interim appointments for the first meeting of the Shadow Council



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Joint Ctte

- Statutory Officers
 - Roles required; Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer
 - Made up **exclusively** from the existing predecessor councils
 - Permanent appointments to be made by Shadow Council by 31 December 2027
 - Permanent appointments must be subject to open competition



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Joint Ctte

- Implementation Team
 - Made up exclusively from the existing predecessor councils
 - Led by Monica Fogarty – Senior Responsible Officer
 - Two deputy roles – South DB, North TBD
 - Responsible to the Joint Committee then the Shadow Council
 - Undertake detailed implementation planning



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Shadow

- Adopting the Constitution – including Code of Conduct and Member's allowances
- Appointment of senior officers
- Preparing vision, operating model, ways of working, policies and budget for go-live 1 April 2028
- Agreeing split of current County Council grant, no dispute mechanism
- Determining s24 direction issues



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Shadow

Section 24 Direction

1. dispose of any land if the consideration for the disposal exceeds £100,000;
2. enter into any capital contract-
 1. under which the consideration payable by the relevant authority exceeds £1,000,000; or
 2. which includes a term allowing the consideration payable by the relevant authority to be varied;
3. enter into any non-capital contract under which the consideration payable by the relevant authority exceeds £100,000, where-
 1. the period of the contract extends beyond 1 April 2028; or
 2. under the terms of the contract, that period may be extended beyond that date.



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Shadow

However !

- All councils free to set their own budgets for 2027/28
- Budgeted expenditure within 2027/28 will not be subject to restrictions
- Does **not** include any budgets that are 'provisional' or 'pipeline projects'
- Cannot commit to recurring contracts above threshold beyond 2027/28



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Asset Transfer

- Approach from Alcester Town Council surrounding transfer of areas of POS and allotments
- No current SDC process to consider such requests
- Paper has been developed for consideration at Cabinet on 7 September 2026
- Would also need to ensure no major objections from other Councils



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Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Assets

Expression of Interest Form to be completed

- Appropriate organisational governance and management arrangements
- Financial competence and long-term sustainability
- Robust plans for the future management of the asset to be transferred
- Alignment with the Council's published principles relating to Equality & Diversity and Climate Change



Devolution/ Local Government Reorganisation – Assets

- Proposed that it would relate to Non-operational and Community Assets only;
- Discusses transfer to Town and Parish Councils or Properly Constituted Community Bodies
- Still considering valuation and legal costs
- Decision proposed to rest with Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with MO and s151



Changes to Planning Delegations

- Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026
- To be implemented on 31 October 2026
- Changes to constitution require Audit & Standards Committee 21 September and Council on 12 October 2026



Changes to Planning Delegations

- Likely only major applications will be considered by Committee, even if Parish Council objects
- However, there are safeguards through the "Gateway" test – Chair of Planning Committee and Head of Development
- Committees must not have more than 13 members
- Own-interest applications will have to be considered by Committee



Questions