

Statement from the four Bucks district councils regarding the new unitary authority for Buckinghamshire

Local government in Buckinghamshire is facing the biggest change in a generation as the five existing councils – Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe district councils and Bucks County Council – prepare to be abolished in 2020 and replaced with a brand new 'unitary district' council. This means just one council providing all council services in Bucks.

This is a golden opportunity to transform all service provision in Bucks and we're encouraged that the Minister for Local Government has reaffirmed that the new council will not be a continuation of any existing authority, but a completely new start. We are all keen to play our part in ensuring that this new council delivers excellent services and improved outcomes to the communities we serve.

The legal orders have to be laid before Parliament in the new year to create the new authority and before this happens there are several details to be decided upon. We are keen to decide these by consensus and are engaging constructively with government politicians, senior civil servants and the county council. However, if we are unable to agree then the Secretary of State will make the final decision.

The formation of the new council will be overseen by an interim executive board. We strongly believe that each of the five councils must have equal representation on this, and that the leader should be appointed democratically by locally elected representatives and not imposed by government.

Buckinghamshire is a large, rural county that covers more than 700 square miles and we are determined to ensure there are sufficient councillors to fully represent our



CHILTERN
District Council



SOUTH BUCKS
District Council



residents. Currently there are 49 county wards containing 169 parishes. The Secretary of State invited us to consider whether to appoint two or three councillors per ward and in our opinion, to deliver proper local democracy, each ward will initially need three councillors. This would make a council of 147 seats. Whilst a large council, this is a significant reduction from the current 236 on the county and district councils. However, we will be recommending a boundary review during the first term of the new council which will determine the optimum number of councillors to serve our residents.

We believe that the foundations we lay now must be robust enough to support Buckinghamshire not only now but also for the long-term future, taking account of the enormous changes that are being planned for our county. Our main priority through this transition is to ensure there is continuity of the services we deliver to our residents and communities.

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