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**Sent:** 21 July 2021 20:58

**Subject:** [OFFICIAL] - message from Cllr Duncan McGinty re local government reorganisation

Dear Colleague

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick, MP, has today announced he has decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the existing administrative county of Somerset.

The decision, announced in a [ministerial statement to Parliament](#) means that a single unitary council for Somerset will be formed on 1 April 2023 to replace the county's five existing county and district councils.

The decision follows a government-run consultation from 22 February to 19 April, with a reported 5,500 responses, and a local poll organised by the district councils that took place from 18 May to 4 June, that saw more than 111,000 people voting, with 65% preferring the Stronger Somerset proposal.

We believe that with the decision the Secretary of State is riding roughshod over the people of Somerset who voted 65% to 35% in favour of the Stronger Somerset plan over the other scheme chosen by the Secretary of State.

That vote was the third time in recent history that the people of Somerset have decisively rejected proposal for a single unitary – following the referendum in 2007 and the Ipsos MORI survey in 2020.

By ignoring the will of the people, the Secretary of State is breaking the bond of trust between elected representatives and those they represent. The opportunities to address the real challenges our county faces – how to reduce demand on expensive crisis services, to break the cycle of inequality and under-achievement, to invest in local solutions to local issues – risk being squandered by foisting a manifestly unpopular new local government on our residents.

We are duty bound to represent the interests of our constituents to our fullest ability. We will continue to seek to ensure that their voices are heard. There is still chance for Parliament to see sense and force a rethink. We just cannot understand why the wishes of the people of Somerset are being ignored.

We must understand further the grounds for this decision. We will always act in what we believe are the best interests of our residents and in a way that aligns with their wishes

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