

Title: Proposal to create a South Warwickshire District Council
Lead Officer: Chris Elliott & David Buckland
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Day
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Further to the questions and queries received from members following the publishing of the Proposal to create a South Warwickshire District Council reports which is due to be considered at both Councils on Monday, it has been agreed that the following are shared ahead of the meetings:

1. **Statistics:**
Stratford-on-Avon District Electorate 105,448 : Population 132,402
Warwick District Electorate approx. 109,000 : Population 144,909
2. **The cost of employing ORS to undertake the consultation** – Around £57,000. The cost is shared equally by both Councils.
3. **Letters received by ORS during the Consultation** - see attached (Consultation on Proposals to Create a South Warwickshire Council – Submission Letters.pdf)
4. **Interpretation of the sample set of the Residents' Telephone Survey and Open Questionnaire** – see attached (Proposal to create a SW Council – Interpretation of Sampling.pdf)
5. **List of Frequently Asked Questions for Councillors** – see attached (Proposals to Create a South Warwickshire Council – Councillor FAQs.pdf)
6. **Full Consultation Report** – published on both websites – links below:
[Consultation - South Warwickshire Council Proposal | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)
[Public consultation begins on proposal to create a South Warwickshire Council - Warwick District Council \(warwickdc.gov.uk\)](#)
7. **Additional Finance Information** – see attached (Merger financial summary v3.pdf) table that consolidates the most recent estimates of the financial case based on the savings to be achieved over the period 2025/26.
8. **Deloitte and Programme Risk Registers** - Since the work was initially undertaken by Deloitte, the transformation programme has now become more established and has further reviewed the identified risks. It should be noted that any risk assessment is as good as its most recent update. The Programme Risk Register is very much a working document that will be subject to regular review by the programme board and the WDC risk management team. Subsequently additional factors and their mitigating actions could result in the impact scores being affected positively, negatively or neutrally.

SDC/WDC Proposal - Summary of Key Financial Information referred to in Cabinet report and appendices

This paper seeks to bring together the various costs/savings figures within the main report and accompanying appendices, and how the figures relate to each other. This should be regarded as a reference document to be considered alongside the report. No new figures or calculations have been included.

Ref		SDC £000	WDC £000	Total £000	Joint £000	Total £000	Ref in report	Comments	Comments on savings assumptions and savings to be achieved.
Deloitte's									
1	Service Optimisation	1,827	1,955	3,782		3,782	Deloitte's report		
2	Democratic savings				172	172	Deloitte's report		
3	Management Team				611	611	Deloitte's report	Total saving after 5 years (0.5yr imp, 4.5 yrs savings) estimated at £2.75m.	
4	Total	1,827	1,955	3,782	783	4,565	Deloitte's report		
Deloitte's figures updated									
5	Service Optimisation	1,827	1,955	3,782		3,782	Business Case	From Deloitte's report LGA report, updating Deloitte's figures	
6	Democratic savings				303	303	Business Case	Per new JMT, assuming reduce from from 12 to 10 HoS in 2023 and to 1 CE.	
7	Management Team				560	560	Business Case	Estimate per CEs/S151	
8	HQ				600	600	Business Case	Rounded to £5.3m	
9	Total	1,827	1,955	3,782	1,463	5,245	Para 3.3.3, 8.2.7 and Business Case		
Medium Term Financial Plans									
10	MTFP Shortfall	2,050	7,011	9,061		9,061	Business Case, rounded to £9m	Shortfall as reflected by savings included in MTFP to "balance off" shortfalls	This is the overall estimated financial shortfall that needs to be addressed irrespective of the proposed merger.
11	Service Optimisation savings included in MTFP	1,000	1,260	2,260		2,260	Para 8.2.7	Prudently, not the full estimated savings from service optimisation (Ref 1 and 5) have been included in the MTFPs.	These savings would be greatly reduced without a full merger, with only shared service arrangements.
12	Annual total savings from merger included in MTFP	1,250	2,510	3,760		3,760	App 12, para 2.2 table	Part of overall savings plans for each council. This includes savings from service optimisation (ref 11), Democratic (ref 6), Management Team (ref 7) and HQ (ref 8).	These savings are likely to reduce substantially without a full merger.
13	Other proposed savings being implemented	800	4,501	5,301		5,301	Business Case, rounded to £5m	Row 10 less row 12.	If there is not a formal merger, substantial additional "other" savings would need to be found by both councils if services are to be protected.
One off costs to support Service Integration									
14	Support to Integration				1,500	1,500	App 12 section 5	Para 8.2.7/App 12 section 8	
15	Redundancies				1,500	1,500	App 12 section 6		
16	Terms and Conditions - Pay Protection				1,500	1,500	App 12 section 7		
17	Total				4,500	4,500	App 12, section 8		
18	Savings against 1 off costs						App 12 para 8.2	Profiled savings ref 11 against costs ref 17	

Value of savings from a full political merger compared to continuing shared services.

The Deloitte and LGA reports highlight that a full constitutional merger is likely to maximise savings. However, it is not possible to accurately assess what the differential in savings from a full merger compared to shared services will be.

As a potential comparison, the two councils that formed East Suffolk District Council had made savings from operating shared services for 8 years. By formally becoming a single council, additional savings estimated at £900k per annum were made.

A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE COUNCIL INTERPETING THE SAMPLE SETS OF THE RESIDENTS TELEPHONE SURVEY AND THE OPEN QUESTIONNAIRE

This note explains the differences in the samples from the questionnaires used for the South Warwickshire Council merger proposal.

The consultation included two survey components - a Residents' Telephone Survey and an Open Questionnaire:

- The Residents' Telephone Survey was designed to be statistically representative of both Districts. It therefore gives a good insight of the views of the population as a whole.
- The Open Questionnaire provided an opportunity for anyone to give their opinions and gives a good insight into the typical concerns that the residents of both Districts have. It is not however statistically representative of the Districts.

Residents' Telephone Survey

- A residents' survey was undertaken to ensure that a representative profile of opinions across Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts was achieved. To capture the views of the general population, 613 residents took part in structured telephone interviews with ORS interviewers during the consultation period. A survey approach was used because, with a population of almost 275,000 residents, it would have been neither practical nor cost-effective to do a postal census of all households or residents. This is normal for this type of consultation.
- The survey used random digit dialling combined with quota-based sampling to ensure that residents who were less likely to engage with the consultation were included and encouraged to give their views about the proposal. Residents were provided with summary information by the interviewer before being asked for their views.
- The extent to which results can be generalised from a sample depends on how well the sample represents the population from which it is drawn, for different types of people may be more or less likely to take part. Such 'response bias' is corrected by statistical weighting based on a comparison of the demographic characteristics of the respondents with data for the whole population.
- In order to better understand how views differ between the two local authorities' areas, equal numbers of interviews were targeted in each District; this was taken into account in the weighting process, to give each district a proportional influence on the overall result relative to the size of its population. The remaining quotas (i.e. those for age, gender and working status) were designed to be representative of the overall population of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts.
- The achieved sample was compared against secondary data for the District - age and gender, working status, disability and tenure, and subsequently weighted by those criteria.

- As a result of this process, the survey estimates should be broadly representative of the overall population of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts to within around +/- 5 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence. In other words, 19 times out of 20 (95%) if the whole population was interviewed then the findings would not differ by more than \pm 5 percentage points from the survey estimates.
- Considering the sample sizes, the opinion splits, and the degrees of statistical weightings used (to compensate for different response rates from different demographic groups), the survey findings are accurate enough for reliable conclusions to be drawn about residents' opinions on the Councils' proposal.

Open Questionnaire

The open questionnaire was available for anyone to complete online, and paper versions were readily available on request. The questionnaire could be completed by individuals and on behalf of organisations and, in total, 1,633 responses were received, including 1,602 from individuals and 31 on behalf of organisations.

Open questionnaires are important forms of consultation, in being inclusive and giving people an opportunity to express their views; but they are not random-sample surveys of a given population – so they cannot normally be expected to be representative of the general balance of public opinion. For example, younger people aged under 35 are underrepresented in the responses to the questionnaire, relative to the proportion who live in the two Districts, whilst the elderly are over-represented. Also, the more motivated groups or areas are, they typically are over-represented in the sample compared with others.

Overall the response profile is not necessarily representative of the Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon adult populations, the open questionnaire findings should be considered in this context; nonetheless they are important.

In Summary

In respect of the surveys, the Residents' Survey has been designed to give a representative sample that reflects the makeup of people across the two District populations. Achieving a sample size of around 600 means that we are confident that it reflects the views of residents as a whole. We have used this to gauge the level of support for the merger. The Open Questionnaire was completed by any member of the public and therefore was self-selecting. Whilst it doesn't provide a statistically sound base, it is nevertheless an important source that will help us identify the key concerns that need to be addressed across the programme implementation.

Proposals to Create a South Warwickshire Council

Councillor Frequently Asked Questions

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
Climate Emergency	In terms of future development policy how the proposed DPD on carbon will zero housing be treated. Will it be adopted as the policy of any future organisation to guide future planning policy and decision making?	It is proposed that the policies of the Net Zero Carbon DPD will be enhanced and rolled in to the South Warwickshire Local Plan and will be recommended for adoption by the new organisation. If the new South Warwickshire District Council is formed before the adoption of the local plan, the DPD would still apply to the Warwick District area until such time the South Warwickshire Local Plan is adopted.
Consultation	1.7 of the cabinet paper reminds us of the things we set out to do at the beginning of the process. Point 6 of this highlights the need for a communication plan that covers the consultation period but also the implementation programme. In the Programme Implementation plan the communications and consultation phase completes on 21st November 2021. What is the plan to continue to communicate with residents if the programme proceeds?	There is a communications management plan for the programme available to view on the South Warwickshire Together Hub. Operational communications activity planning is managed by a Communications workgroup who meet fortnightly. They are now planning for the key the messages that will go out both internally and externally following the Council meetings on 13 December, using appropriate channels.
Consultation	In Appendix 8, paragraph 1.18 gives some information on how the weights for the Residents' Survey were calculated, including that there were capped at 5. Please could we also be told what the Effective Sample Size is? The ESS is a measure of how the weights have affected the robustness of the data.	±3.95% would have been the interval without taking effective sample size into consideration (i.e. raw sample of 613); whereas ±4.76% is the slightly larger confidence interval based on an effective sample size of 422.

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Consultation	Section 3.4 deals with the subject of consultation and 3.4.4 is specific about the inputs from the open questionnaire. How will the input from this part of the consultation be used in shaping the future direction?	<p>Section 4 identifies the issues that have been raised by all of the consultation avenues and by Councillors and either a response is given in the report or further work is planned by way of mitigation. There is a specific recommendation in the report for a Working Group to look at the issues and work through them.</p> <p>As the programme progresses, efforts will be made to mitigate and address issues of concern that were raised during the open consultation, where feasible. Where these are found to be inaccurate or untrue, these will be responded to as part of a myth busting exercise.</p>
Consultation	Tables 6 & 7 in paragraph 3.49 of the same appendix give a summary of the comments for the open-ended questions in the Open Consultation. Please could you give a summary of how the Concerns About the Proposals raised by residents varied in Warwick and Stratford Districts? Adding Warwick & Stratford top breaks to both tables would be even better.	This information has been provided in a separate email.
Consultation	Finally, please could a copy of the data tables for the Residents' Survey be shared with Councillors. I was hoping to see a table for each question on the survey, with simple top breaks, including all of the demographics that were used in the weighting calculations.	This is a lot of data so can we suggest that interested Councillors ask Simon Purfield for a copy. His email is simon.purfield@stratford-dc.gov.uk

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Consultation	<p>Is it possible please for ORS please to produce a slide comparing the responses to the residents telephone survey of residents aged 34 or less with those aged 65+ to the following two questions:</p> <p>1) overall concerns with the merger, and 2) their ranking of different criteria.</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="1176 199 2033 655"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4" data-bbox="1176 199 2033 256">Residents Survey Criteria</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="1176 256 1603 314">18-34</th> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="1603 256 2033 314">65+</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1176 314 1249 371">8.0</td> <td data-bbox="1249 314 1603 371">Sustainability</td> <td data-bbox="1603 314 1677 371">7.9</td> <td data-bbox="1677 314 2033 371">Local Public Services</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1176 371 1249 430">7.4</td> <td data-bbox="1249 371 1603 430">Local Public Services</td> <td data-bbox="1603 371 1677 430">7.7</td> <td data-bbox="1677 371 2033 430">Sustainability</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1176 430 1249 489">7.4</td> <td data-bbox="1249 430 1603 489">Value for Money</td> <td data-bbox="1603 430 1677 489">7.7</td> <td data-bbox="1677 430 2033 489">Value for Money</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1176 489 1249 549">7.1</td> <td data-bbox="1249 489 1603 549">Stronger & Accountable Local Leadership</td> <td data-bbox="1603 489 1677 549">7.5</td> <td data-bbox="1677 489 2033 549">Stronger & Accountable Local Leadership</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1176 549 1249 608">6.5</td> <td data-bbox="1249 549 1603 608">Cost Savings</td> <td data-bbox="1603 549 1677 608">7.0</td> <td data-bbox="1677 549 2033 608">Cost Savings</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" data-bbox="1120 718 2033 1088"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1120 718 1738 906">Proposal to replace Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils with one new council to provide all district council services across South Warwickshire</th> <th data-bbox="1738 718 1890 906">18-34 (93)</th> <th data-bbox="1890 718 2033 906">65+ (159)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1120 906 1738 965">Agree</td> <td data-bbox="1738 906 1890 965">48.8%</td> <td data-bbox="1890 906 2033 965">59%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1120 965 1738 1024">Neither agree nor disagree</td> <td data-bbox="1738 965 1890 1024">16.7%</td> <td data-bbox="1890 965 2033 1024">7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1120 1024 1738 1088">Disagree</td> <td data-bbox="1738 1024 1890 1088">34.5%</td> <td data-bbox="1890 1024 2033 1088">34%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Residents Survey Criteria				18-34		65+		8.0	Sustainability	7.9	Local Public Services	7.4	Local Public Services	7.7	Sustainability	7.4	Value for Money	7.7	Value for Money	7.1	Stronger & Accountable Local Leadership	7.5	Stronger & Accountable Local Leadership	6.5	Cost Savings	7.0	Cost Savings	Proposal to replace Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils with one new council to provide all district council services across South Warwickshire	18-34 (93)	65+ (159)	Agree	48.8%	59%	Neither agree nor disagree	16.7%	7%	Disagree	34.5%	34%
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Consultation	What's the plan for greater engagement with town/parish councils? How can we be sure that the new SW council will do this?	<p>Section 4 of the report identifies a number of issues which would need to be considered post the merger decision. In addition the recommendations to Cabinet specifically identifies the establishment of a working group from the Council and representatives from WALC and other key parish and town councils in order to undertake a community governance and function review for South Warwickshire.</p> <p>Whilst the details of how the working group will operate have not been determined, if this recommendation is approved then this would be a requirement. The work would be initiated by the present Councils and that would ensure it is done in advance of the new Council.</p>
Consultation	The business case (appendix 10 page 6) gives local support from a university, hospital trust and a tourism organisation that receives income from the districts. Have important local political organisations such as MPs, WMCA and PCC also been consulted? 3.4.5 of the main report says other councils have not objected but WCC's response is more ambiguous. Can responses from all of these people and organisations be shared with councillors?	<p>Of course, these are attached as a separate document.</p> <p>Extracts of the 18 written submissions that were received as part of the consultation have been published within the report from ORS – where we have received their consent to do so.</p>
Consultation	2.6.7-9 In the presentations it was stated in answer to question that a significant majority of the 613 respondents to the random telephone questions were unaware or mostly unaware of the merger proposals. Can this be stated somewhere and if possible quantified?	This is contained within the full report.

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Consultation	Similarly after presentations, a question was asked and answered about the 82% favouring change of some sort from Councils, given the financial challenges they are facing. This did not however in itself endorse the merger option. It would be helpful to know what other changes were favoured by respondents eg further sharing of services and other savings, Unitary authority, higher charges for some services, higher local taxes etc - and by what District and demographic cohorts.	<p>Please see data tables which have already been shared.</p> <p>The second open question asked (Q10 on Residents Telephone Survey) - Please let us know if there are any alternative options that address the identified challenges, any potential equalities impacts, or if you have any other comments relating to the possible merger of district councils in South Warwickshire. The spreadsheet shows the results by District and demographic cohorts.</p>
Consultation	2.6.10 it would be helpful to disaggregate the responses to Q2 by District and type of responder.	This has been shared in a separate email.
Consultation	<p>2.6.12 it is hard to understand the characterisation of the outcomes of the various exercises as showing 'a good deal of support' for the merger, given that even the random survey of 613 largely uninformed residents were only 57% in favour</p> <p>45% of Warwick District residents were not in favour in the same survey</p> <p>64% of the 1633 responding to the questionnaire were not in favour (57% opposed) within that total</p> <p>70% in Warwick district were not in favour (64% opposed)</p> <p>52% in Stratford district were not in favour (44% opposed)</p> <p>That seems to indicate profound disquiet, even amongst those unaware of the proposals</p>	<p>The conclusion in relation to the level of support is contained within the independent report from ORS, see paragraph 2.40.</p> <p>As stated in the covering report the Government take the view of local support in the round and not as a referendum result. The key facts are that there is a clear majority in the representative sample across both Council areas and overall in support. There is a clear majority of support from organisations. There is clear support from staff.</p> <p>The open questionnaire indicates otherwise but that is the only indicator which does. Given the preponderance of support it is reasonable to make the assumption of local support in the round.</p> <p>It was explained at the briefings to elected members that the representative sample was a statistically reliable measure of public opinion on this issue.</p> <p>It was also explained that the online consultation survey would be an incredibly rich source of information to help form any future Council if the decision was made to merge the two Councils.</p>

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
	<p>before being asked and especially in Warwick District. The case for change is accepted by all groups - but what change is open to doubt.</p> <p>At the very least do we not need to test opinion again <u>after</u> a period of public information and debate - whether by citizen's assembly, survey, referendum or some other mechanism?</p>	<p>The Councils embarked upon an extensive period of consultation and supplied extensive information and used several channels. The Government has advised against use of referenda in this situation and it excludes parish and town councils from participation. We have had focus groups and meetings with parish/town councils and with voluntary groups. Also four resident focus groups were undertaken. The process was approved by Councillors.</p> <p>Councillors have the information upon which to make a decision.</p>
Democratic Representation	<p>Democratic Accountability - 3.3.20 of the report references that a future consultation on engaging with Town and Parish Councils will be done via WALC. What provision will be made for engagement with councils who are not members of WALC but who may wish to be involved.</p> <p>How much resource is it anticipated will be put against this part of the work?</p>	<p>The recommendation refers to other organisations so it offers the possibility that the Community Governance and Function Review can be opened up to include non-members of WALC that would like to be involved.</p> <p>Resource allocation for this work is yet to be decided but would be led by the members working group.</p>
Democratic Representation	<p>There are 3 mentions of a Shadow Council that would be created if both Councils decide to proceed with the merger. Please could you provide some high-level information on its role, make up and what its decision-making process would be? If this is already documented somewhere, please could you point me in its direction.</p>	<p>Question and answer #38 on the South Warwickshire Together Hub references this at a very high level.</p> <p>Experience from elsewhere indicates that the Shadow Council is in fact the two Councils together – so all current Councillors – for particular purposes on issues in the lead up to the new Council coming into operation e.g. setting of first year budget and Council Tax levels etc.</p> <p>Another reference and as an example from a recent merger, please see this document from East Suffolk on the Creation of a Shadow Authority.</p>
Democratic Representation	<p>3.4.6 (page 9) notes the possibility of a democratic deficit and 4.1 the reduction in councillors may be "from a small handful to closer to 20". Going from 80 to 60 councillors</p>	<p>If the merger proposal is agreed the Council will have the opportunity to recommend to government the future size of the new Council ahead of a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. There seems no set rule that is followed,</p>

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	<p>would be a substantial reduction: can there be any guarantee that this won't happen?</p>	<p>in West Suffolk when St Edmondsbury and Forest Health Councils merged, they reduced from 71 to 64 elected members. In East Suffolk the reduction was from 90 to 55. This issue is considered in section 4 of the report and would be subject to a decision of the shadow Council.</p>
<p>Democratic Representation</p>	<p>2.6.13-16 Clear concerns have been expressed about potential weakening of local democracy. This will now be looked into by a working group. What new powers and functions if any could legally be delegated to towns and parishes to ensure their Neighbourhood plans have proper weight in the decision-making processes? Could planning powers be delegated for example?</p> <p>Again, would it be sounder to test public opinion only after firm revised plans for local delegations of powers have been developed?</p>	<p>As parish and town Councils vary enormously in size, capacity, ambition, and capability there can be no one size fits all. This is what other Councils have found and the example of Cornwall is given at Appendix 9. It is being recommended that a working party be set up to develop a policy which would examine the opportunities, limitations and support necessary to develop greater delegation to parish and town councils.</p> <p>Adopted Neighbourhood Plans already have due weight legally in the planning process. Powers related to determining planning applications need to be carefully assessed legally but there are examples elsewhere in the country that could be used as starting points to explore the art of the possible and also what is not possible.</p> <p>For example, recent guidance issued by the LGA talks about the possibility of arranging for district council services to be delivered by parish councils via a <i>contractual</i> arrangement:-</p> <p>https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-service-delivery-and-place-shaping-framework-support-parish-and-town-councils</p>

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Finance & Risk	<p>Programme Risk Register - whilst it's accepted that there are many personnel (staff and members) on the merger programme, is there still not a major risk that if key personnel are - heaven forbid - lost for whatever reason or cause this would have a significant negative impact on the merger process? Keeping all key personnel up to speed about the progress of the merger will undoubtedly mitigate this risk, but it's not shown in Appendix 6 Programme Risk Register.</p>	<p>PR022 on the risk register identifies this. The mitigation suggested can also be added to the register as part of the existing controls.</p>
Finance & Risk	<p>LGA Financial implications - the biggest monetary saving of the proposed merger arises, as set out in Appendix 5, from a reduction in the number of members across the two existing councils. As the report states this is a matter for the Boundary Commission and beyond the direct control of either WDC or SDC. The Appendix provides a useful comparison with other merged councils. If a comparative analysis could be done on the current and proposed ratios of members: FTE staff, what would it show?</p>	<p>The biggest financial saving is not directly allocated to a reduction in the number of Councillors but should be considered in the round along with elements such as the servicing of one set of committee meetings, external and internal audits, banking fees and corporate subscriptions including ICT for example. Also, irrespective of the number of Councillors there would be a reduction in the number of portfolio holders, Committee Chairs, Leaders and Chairs.</p> <p>It should be noted that East Suffolk estimated a saving of £900k per annum from a political merger after having worked together for 10 years or so.</p> <p>There is no consistency of the 3 recent mergers on electors to Cllrs ratio and given the different starting points for all of the 3 recent mergers there is not a comparative benchmark re staffing.</p>

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Finance & Risk	<p>Section 1.2 states there will be "a shortfall of around £9m..." Is this an annual (recurrent) shortfall? If not, over what period? LGA report Table 2 Appendix 4 p3 shows total WDC surplus £172k and SDC losses (gap) £5.968m from 20/21 to 25/26. So, is the financial argument stronger for SRC? Financially, could WDC cope without merging? How does this fit with the £9m in section 1.2?</p>	<p>The £9m is the recurring total shortfall of the two Councils by 2025/26 as included in the respective Medium Term Financial Plans when the 2021/22 Budgets were agreed, with savings of £7m (WDC) and £2m (SDC) included in the MTFPs. The figures in Table 2 Appendix 4 p3 reflect the balances after the agreed savings. For SDC, with the savings are more loaded towards the latter years of the MTFP; there is still the need for the Council's General Fund Balance to be used in the short term to make up the gap until the savings have been put into place. This use of the General Fund Balance has been allowed for in projecting the Council's balances forward.</p> <p>The planned savings for both Councils included savings from the proposed merger and various other savings. If the merger does not progress, both Councils would need to seek substantial further savings if services are to be protected whilst setting a future balanced budget.</p>
Finance & Risk	<p>LGA report, appendix 5 page 3 states "The largest area of savings identified was Service Optimisation - £3.782m per annum ongoing", but later adds "There is no breakdown of this and no way of splitting it between the benefits from a merger and the further benefits from becoming one authority, and which therefore are "over and above operational elements such as staff / service integration." "Does this mean that this £3.782m figure includes savings from service integration i.e. not going ahead with the political merger? If so, what is the estimated savings from the political merger?</p>	<p>The £3.782m was from page 23 of the Deloitte report (page 59 of SDC Agenda pack). The savings shown are high level. Much of these savings should be able to be achieved without a formal merger, although the savings should be far more achievable if a new single council is formed. The potential gains should be greater and more realistic with a single council.</p> <p>Members will need to consider whether joint work would be possible if one Council decides not to proceed with the merger. It cannot be automatically assumed that just doing service integration will be acceptable to the other Council hence the recommendation that if the decision is no that another Full Council meeting is held quickly in order to determine the strategic direction of the Council.</p>

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
Finance & Risk	What evidence is there that larger District councils are more efficient/ provide better value for money than smaller District councils?	<p>From observing and discussing the experience of recent district council mergers, we do see evidence of greater efficiencies being created, enabled more dedicated capacity to address challenges within the economy and the community, has greater influence to represent a larger population and a wide range of businesses and community sectors. This is reflected in the experience of the 3 recent mergers of Districts.</p> <p>It will however, require a combined effort from members and officers, from both councils, working together to achieve positive outcomes in South Warwickshire.</p> <p>As with most things there is a limit on the benefits of scale and that becoming too big for example say serving a population of circa 500k or more, has diseconomies. E.g. Birmingham with a population of over 1m.</p>
Finance & Risk	Risks are ranked differently by Deloitte and WDC e.g, Deloitte's puts risk of IT integration at 2, 4, =8 (joint 10th risk out of 16) where as WDC programme risk shows 4, 4 =16 (1st risk out of 23). Who's right? Can we have confidence in these risk assessments?	<p>Since the work was initially undertaken by Deloitte, the transformation programme has now become more established and has further reviewed the identified risks.</p> <p>It should be noted that any risk assessment is as good as its most recent update. The Programme Risk Register is very much a working document that will be subject to regular review by the programme board and the WDC risk management team. Subsequently additional factors and their mitigating actions could result in the impact scores being affected positively, negatively or neutrally.</p>

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
Finance & Risk	<p>Rec 7 & 2.7 What are the costs across each Council now budgeted for planning and implementing the merger and how much of these budgets has already been spent? To include WDC's £1.5m for integrating services, £1.5m for redundancies and £1.5m for pay harmonisation now indicated helpfully in App 12.</p> <p>To what extent will any such savings be offset by increases in pay to staff who may be required to take on greater responsibilities for staff or service areas (broadly indicated for Councillors in App12 but not staff)?</p>	<p>Both Councils agreed £100k each for 21/22, 22/23, and 23/24. The current year funding has been committed in the work agreed to date. It is also referenced in the report that provision is made for £1.5m for integrating services; £1.5m for redundancy costs and £1.5m for pay harmonisation, in total; that is £4.5m provision to be shared between both Councils. The reference to just WDC costs is erroneous WDC's would be only half of these costs and they are one off whereas the proposed savings are ongoing.</p> <p>The pay harmonisation provision is for the time limited cost of pay protection (30 months under agreed policies), for any staff who find their pay grade re-assessed downwards. Any recurring increased costs for staff taking on greater responsibility would need to be met from savings from service integration, with this forming part of the individual Business Cases.</p>
Finance & Risk	<p>1.4 & App12 1.2 and 2.6. Is it correct that a significant proportion of the savings identified by Deloitte and officers, may be delivered without political merger by sharing services, cutting premises costs etc?</p>	<p>The report discusses that, yes, it is reasonable to expect that service integrations could deliver savings. However, this would result in a single workforce reporting to two separate Councils who will not be fully aligned meaning that not all efficiencies can be achieved.</p> <p>The LGA report specifically addresses the issue about the additional savings which can be achieved through a merger rather than sharing services. Their report also contained the following view:</p> <p><i>"The non-financial and non-cashable benefits of a full merger are potentially as significant as or more significant than the financial ones and will also enable financial savings to be maximised."</i></p> <p>It is also the case that it cannot be assumed that in the event that one Council does not agree to the merger and another does not that there would then be an accord to just do operational integration. Hence the recommendation in the report to the need for an emergency Council meeting should that situation arise as the Council will need to set out a different strategic direction for the Council finances.</p>

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
Finance & Risk	<p>Strong indications in the feedback from residents is that they give higher priority to sustainability and to delivery of services and much less priority to 'cost savings'. Should public opinion be further tested in one or both councils? For example, would residents support higher Council taxes for priority and earmarked purposes such as actions on Climate change.</p>	<p>In the opinion of officers there is sufficient information contained within the report from ORS for Members to make a decision in relation to the key issue surrounding the merger proposition.</p> <p>It is also the case that even if the public's view on the priority for cost saving is less than for other issues it does not take away from the fact that the underlying financial issue has to be addressed and that is Councillor's role.</p> <p>It would be appropriate however, to engage with the public in the future when determining spending priorities and issues surrounding Council Tax that though would be considered by the Shadow Council. Of course, Councils are presently limited on Council Tax levels by the Government before a referendum is required.</p>
Finance & Risk	<p>A key related question - is there a risk of the seven year process of harmonising of Stratford Council Tax levels upwards thereby limiting any necessary and desirable tax increases in the WDC area?</p>	<p>There are a series of options as to how the Council Tax levels would be harmonised, examples of which are given within Appendix 8 relating to the financial aspects of the proposal. Councils do not have to take 7 years to achieve harmonisation. West Suffolk which had a bigger gap to bridge proposed 5 years and is going to achieve it sooner. The balance between the increases and frozen levels is a decision that will need to be taken by in the first case the Shadow Council. The Section 151 officer does not advocate a harmonising downward of the Council Tax levels so as to undermine future council tax revenue.</p>
Misc	<p>Merger could be a logical first step to becoming a unitary council; if this is the case, what are possible steps in the process?</p>	<p>To be clear the proposal being considered relates purely to a district council merger, as the report identifies to request local government review from DLUHC is not within the gift of the Council. It is also clear that whilst DLUHC is currently implementing unitary proposals in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset their priorities are now focussed on the levelling up agenda and county deals and they have stated that this does not mean local government review.</p>

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
		<p>However, if it arises, then the first legal step is that the Government would have to issue an invitation to send proposals for Unitary Councils for any given area. In recent exercises this has required each Council to respond within 8 weeks which is not a long time. The recent examples of reorganisation have taken almost a year from the issue of the invitation (October 2020) to the decision and it will not be till 1st April 2023 that the new Councils come into operation.</p> <p>Reflecting on recent LGR examples, it would be approx. 2.5 to 3 years from invitation to implementation seems to be the benchmark so that could be April 2025 for new unitary council arrangements.</p>
Misc	If the merger doesn't work out, how can councillors or residents seek to revert back to the previous district councils?	If the formal merger is implemented then there would be no mechanism to revert back to a Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council. With shared working there always remains the risk that relationships could sour and end such working as with what happened between West Mercia and Warwickshire Police. The merger proposal removes this risk.
Misc	3.5 The analysis here is accurate as far as it goes. But does it not understate some of the important differences between the Districts, logistically, socially and culturally - Stratford predominantly rural, dispersed and relatively homogeneous, Warwick predominantly urban and diverse, with significant areas of student accommodation and of deprivation? Warwick is more closely tied to Coventry and Birmingham by proximity and transport links than to Stratford, let alone its rural parishes.	<p>It is acknowledged that there are differences in relation to the mainly rural and urban nature of the two Councils. However, the report does identify where there are many similarities.</p> <p>There is significant evidence of cross border travel between the two Council areas. Indeed, there is far more traffic between the two Districts than between Warwick and Birmingham. Travel to Work data backs this up.</p>

Theme:	Question:	Answer:
Services	How will the programme be setting targets for future service delivery to ensure that we are levelling-up rather than levelling down? Does sufficient quality data exist across both Councils to measure this? What measures and reporting will be put in place to ensure that the new council delivers against these targets?	<p>The Programme and more specifically, the Service Integration and Optimisation workstream, will be managing the phased sharing of services initially. The business cases for each of these will set out any service impacts for either or both Council's current services for members to make decision upon where this is significant and not operational.</p> <p>As this is one of the issues raised in Section 4 it will be the subject of the recommendation for a Working Party to consider over the coming year.</p> <p>This work will set the foundations in place for a new council for its future service delivery.</p>
Services	With larger planning authorities, how do they organise planning committee? (e.g. do councillors have to travel further to the meetings, and decide on more remote applications?)	The arrangements for Planning Committees varies from Council to Council. There can be greater frequency, area-based Committees, alternate Committees, greater delegation to officers or a mixture of all of the above. This would be another matter that will need to be worked upon and decided by the Shadow Council.

Consultation on Proposals to Create a South Warwickshire Council

Written Submission Letters

LEAMINGTON SPA TOWN COUNCIL



THE TOWN COUNCIL OF ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA

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T: 01926 450 906

Email: clerk@leamingtonspatowncouncil.gov.uk
www.leamingtonspatowncouncil.gov.uk

8th October 2021

To Warwick District Council
& Stratford District Council
Via email - swconsultation@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Consultation – Proposal to create a South Warwickshire Council

Royal Leamington Spa Town Council recently considered the consultation on the 'Proposal to create a South Warwickshire Council'. Please find below its response / comments.

The Town Council:

Twinned with:
Sceaux
(France)
Heemstede
(Netherlands)
Bruhl
(Germany)

Friendship
Links with
Bo
(Sierra Leone)
Leamington
(Canada)

-recognises the financial and operational challenges being faced by the existing District Councils and the potential implications for service delivery.

-acknowledges that there may be benefits of a new Council operating at a larger (South Warwickshire) scale, but emphasises the need to maintain local dialogue and capacity to engage at the local level, including a local presence of senior staff.

-welcomes the recognition of the importance of engaging with town and parish councils, both in the lead up to any new Council being created and subsequently.

-requests that capacity to deliver events and projects in Leamington Spa is considered carefully and maintained.

-requests that the implications of a potential reduction in the number of District Councillors is considered carefully, including through dialogue with town and parish councils.

-requests that local governance and decision making processes are considered, to support partnership working and engagement of local organisations and communities.

-would welcome further dialogue to explore the opportunities for services to be passed down to the Town Council, subject to adequate funding being made available.

I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this response.

Regards,

STEPHEN MARKS
TOWN CLERK

HARBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Harbury Parish Council is broadly supportive of the move to merge SDC and WDC. The two regions share a similar demographic and both are characterised by a small number of larger settlements amidst a mainly rural district. Merging the two authorities will encourage a more strategic and holistic approach to policy making.

We can see that there will be efficiency savings to be made and we would urge that all such savings are directed towards maintaining or enhancing the services provided to residents and not towards tax cutting. The budgets will be under a great deal of strain as it is and therefore all energy should be devoted to providing a robust and sustainable number of services.

TYSOE PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council meeting held on October 11th 2021, the Council met and considered the Merger of Stratford District Council with Warwick District Council. Their response was as follows:

Following is the response to the proposed merger of Stratford on Avon and Warwick District Councils submitted by Tysoe Parish Council (TPC).

TPC very reluctantly supports the proposed merger but only as a stepping stone to a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire. TPC find the forecast savings of £10m pa non-credible especially at a cost of only £600,000 over three years. It is our view that these savings will not be realised and only by progressing to a Unitary Council will substantial savings be made. TPC is also very concerned by the reduction in number of District Councillors that will be an inevitable consequence of the merger. This will lead to a dilution in the representation that our residents enjoy. TPC also believe that, as a consequence of the merger some services will be delegated to Town and Parish Councils to deliver. These bodies are ill-equipped to carry out such services and by making the Town and Parish Councils service providers they will eventually become politicised; a step that we believe must be avoided.

Our reluctant support of the merger is driven by our belief that a "do nothing" option does not exist. If no action is taken one or both of the District Councils will become insolvent, something that must be avoided.

GREAT WOLFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Great Wolford Parish Council response to the proposal is as follows:

In general, the Parish Council recognises that there are advantages to combining the two Councils to deliver economies of scale and reduce duplicated costs across a wide range of services that they both deliver to their communities. The Parish Council recognises and supports moves that have already been made to work together in such areas as the Local Plan where the combination of effort can, and will, result in reduced costs for each of the councils.

However, the Parish Council finds itself unable to give the full proposal, its full support.

The main reason for this is that the Council Tax in Stratford could well rise to match the levels in Warwick with no discernible improvement in Council Services to Stratford residents. Being a rural parish some distance from the centres of population, we are even less likely to see any improvements in services in our immediate area, even if Council Tax does rise.

The projected savings of up to 3.9% of existing costs after five years seem very small. There is a risk that these savings may not materialise, and the Parish Council also notes that integral to the proposal, the number of District Councillors will be reducing.

Great Wolford Parish Council – 15 October 2021

NAPTON PARISH COUNCIL

Napton Parish Council has considered the proposals for a merger of the 2 authorities and would like to make the following comments:-

- NCP can see the sense in trying to combine some services but would want to see satellite provision spread across the District in the form of “one stop shops” or information hubs in some towns and larger villages to ensure the public still has access to information about services.
- NPC would only support the merger if the discretionary services which the process is designed to protect, are maintained in the future.
- NPC is reluctant to take on additional services as we have neither the expertise nor the staff to deliver them.
- There is concern that devolving services to Parish Councils would inevitably result in an increase in the precept which would shift the financial burden of provision from central government onto council tax payers.
- NPC is against the idea of merging Parish Councils as it would result in a loss of local representation.
- In summary NPC is not against the proposed merger provided it results in a better service for the Community as a whole.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

This consultation was discussed at last evening's Town Council meeting and sparked a lengthy debate. The following comments were made:

- The Town Council does support cost saving by sharing jobs and sees merit in sharing services;
- There would be a democratic deficiency if wards were increased, impacting fundamentally on localism which would be lost;
- What additional costs and responsibilities, if any, will be handed down to the town and parish councils?
- One unitary council for the whole area would be far too large and once again, impact on local democracy. However, splitting the area into two with a southern and northern unitary authority may address this imbalance, which would do away with the need for District Councils.
- The Town Council questions why point 6 of the 10 options put forward 'cannot be considered at this time'. This is a statement not an explanation and if consulting, then consultees should be provided with the reasoning behind such a statement – unitary authorities remain 'the elephant in the room'.
- A merger to get a super district on the way to perhaps getting something else (unitary) is not the answer;

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That the Town Council finds the consultation lacks clarity, is confusing and there is concern over the transparency of its compilation. If the status-quo is not on the table, any merger should safeguard local democracy at its grassroots.

KINETON PARISH COUNCIL

A RESPONSE TO THE SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE COUNCIL CONSULTATION MADE BY KINETON PARISH COUNCIL

sent to:

Cllr Tony Jefferson – Leader, Stratford District Council
Cllr Andrew Day – Leader, Warwick District Council
David Buckland – Chief Executive, Stratford District Council
Chris Elliott – Chief Executive, Warwick District Council
Cllr Chris Mills – District and County Councillor for Kineton

Kineton Parish Council (KPC) discussed the proposal to merge the two District Councils at its meeting on the 28th September 2021. Consideration was given to submitting a response using the online Consultation process but the questions posed through that methodology offered limited opportunity to express the Council's concern.

KPC is unable to give unreserved support to the proposals; the reasons and reservations are outlined below. In summary, there is limited detail available to indicate why the benefits forecast from the existing joint working arrangements (albeit not proven) will be enhanced by a total amalgamation of both District Councils.

1. The proposals for merging seem to be silent on the differences and how they could be addressed.

The recommendation to merge is being presented as a joining of equals with each needing to make a similar level of savings. The need to make significant cost reductions is fully understood but the savings and benefits will fall disproportionately on the individual councils. For example, if Warwick DC's costs are 9% of total Council tax paid compared to 8% for Stratford¹ then WDC's cost base is 12.5% higher. This is further supported by the Band D Council tax charges of £149 for SDC and £177 for WDC²; a difference of 18.8%.

Democratically the Councils are mismatched with 110 Town and Parish Councils in SDC but only 35 in WDC. It is unclear how the proposed new District Council would relate to and link with the disparity.

2. Insufficient information has been provided on the way in which new development needs will be changed and the impact on local communities.

KPC was the first Main Rural Centre in SDC area to establish a 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plan. Whilst recognising that a joint South Warwickshire Local Plan is in the early stages of development, KPC is concerned that the policies established by its NDP will be significantly eroded if the merger takes place, and before any Local Plan is formally established.

In relation to planning matters, at a briefing for Parish and Town Councils³ the CEO of WDC suggested closer working between planning officers and the Parish/Town Councils with the potential for increased decision-making powers for those Councils.

Such powers could be introduced without the merger and therefore the suggestion carries limited weight. Furthermore, there is no detail to explain how the costs of providing the necessary additional skills at local level will be funded and met.

3. Reductions to services at a local level have not been adequately addressed

KPC has reasonable concerns about the potential to reduce local services as a result of any merger and reduction in District Council costs. At a presentation by the 2 District Councils⁴ the option for

¹ Detail confirmed in the ORS presentation to Parish and Town Councils 7 October 2021

² Detail confirmed in the ORS presentation to Parish and Town Councils 7 October 2021

³ Presentation by SDC and WDC to WALC members 30 September 2021

⁴ Presentation by SDC and WDC to WALC members 30 September 2021

Parish and Town Councils to take on the delivery of more services was presented as a potential advantage with an assurance that as such devolution would be optional but the level of services at local level would not be reduced if not taken on by local councils.⁵ Again, there is no detail to explain which services might be affected in this way or how the costs of providing the necessary additional skills at local level will be funded and met.

As a restatement of the KPC position, we fully understand the urgent need for both District Councils to reduce an imbalance between income and expenditure. We also support the inevitable financial benefits which can be achieved by working together. We are far from convinced that a full merger between the two Councils will achieve all the financial savings forecast without a reduction in benefits and services at a local (Town and Parish Council) level.

KENILWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Further to discussion at last night's full Town Council meeting, Members have asked that I submit the response below to the Consultation, following the very useful and informative briefing with Chris Elliott earlier this month.

Kenilworth Town Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Proposal to Create a South Warwickshire Council. We also welcome the intention that the merger "will ... make our local government more resilient and better able to help local communities tackle challenges such as the climate emergency or a future pandemic, while also continuing to improve our current services by... enhancing local democracy by creating tailored services to support and strengthen the work of parish and town councils."

As a Town Council we have benefitted from the support for our work provided by Warwick District Council. However, as the scope of our obligations as a Town Council has expanded in recent years, particularly as a result of the CIL funding following the successful making of our Neighbourhood Plan, the need for ongoing support from District Council officers is likely to increase. We would therefore like to hear more about the new "tailored services" which will "strengthen the work of parish and town councils" as set out in the case for the merger in respect of CIL-funded developments and other areas, and to receive assurances that the current level of support received by Kenilworth Town Council from Warwick District Council will be continued under the new South Warwickshire Council.

We also understand that there is an opportunity to consider whether some local services currently provided to Kenilworth by the District Council might be devolved, together with the funding, to Kenilworth Town Council. If the merger is agreed we would want to open a dialogue with both Councils to review the current range of services and look at which, if any, might be suitable for devolution.

BISHOP'S TACHBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Response to Proposed South Warwickshire Council

On balance, Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council ("BTPC") does not support this merger at the councillor level on the basis we believe it will result in reduced local autonomy and democratic representation for our residents. Whilst the financial benefits of the merger are clear, we believe that such synergies could be realised through greater cooperation (and potentially integration) between both councils at the operational level, whilst still remaining separate in terms of democratic representation. It is possible that with specific legal safeguards such concerns could be overcome and we remain open to further discussions on this matter. We hope councillors will reflect on our comments and consider if the long term implications will be in the best interests of their residents within their individual wards.

Benefits of the merger

BTPC accepts the reasoning behind the financial need for closer working together between Stratford District Council and Warwick District Council from both a financial and an efficiency perspective. The benefits of working together are already being borne out in some areas and the forecast cost savings should be applauded.

In addition BTPC accepts that, given notable inflationary pressures, the status quo is unlikely to be sustainable without both efficiency savings and increased funding to councils (either centrally or through increased local taxes on individuals and businesses).

We note the references to further empowerment and dedicated support for parish and town councils and this may be welcomed; however, further detail would need to be provided and safeguards put in place to ensure that anything promised is actually delivered.

Finally, as both councils will have different stand-out specialist officers there is clearly an operational benefit to those specialists being deployed with a wider remit in a leveraged model - this will hopefully deliver a better service for the taxpayer e.g. reducing planning permission lead times.

Drawbacks to the merger

BTPC believes that local representation is critical to the wellbeing and prosperity of an area. This means being able to engage regularly with your local representatives and knowing that they are likely to have sufficient influence within their organisation to raise and act on any concerns brought to their attention.

Bishop's Tachbrook has experienced first-hand the implications of having the decisions for their community made by representatives living on the other side of the District and it is clear that this resulted in some poor planning decisions and a woeful level of investment in infrastructure - reducing the quality of life for residents living here.

BTPC believes that the proposed political merger will reduce the power of residents of the Towns and Parishes throughout both Districts as the voice of their individual ward councillors will be diluted. The proposed South Warwickshire Council will not be a 'local council' and we believe this will lead to a loss of democratic accountability.

Whilst BTPC is very much an apolitical organisation, we would note that Stratford District Council has been under the control of one political party for most of its existence; by contrast Warwick District Council is presently under no overall control. It is important that the decision to merge considers the

political ramifications (both short and long term) and is seen to deliver a result that does not favour any party.

Conclusion

Considering the benefits and drawbacks set out above, BTPC (on balance) cannot support the proposed political merger at this time and would call for both councils to reflect and consider how they achieve the benefits of working together whilst ensuring and enshrining the preservation of local democratic accountability for the coming decades.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Dear Chris and David,

Consultation on Proposed South Warwickshire Council

Many thanks for the invitation to contribute to the consultation on the merger to form the proposed South Warwickshire Council.

Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts are home to many of our staff and students. We have shared the consultation and encouraged them to participate by providing their own views.

The University of Warwick's estates and wide-ranging activities span the length of both districts. Much of our main campus lies in Warwick District and we work closely with partners in Leamington Spa, for example around the Creative Futures incubator in Mill Street. We also support our campus neighbours and local communities through student volunteering and cultural activities such as Kenilworth Arts Festival. Stratford-on-Avon district is home to our Wellesbourne campus, which is building momentum as an investment attractor with major high-technology companies such as Lotus Engineering, Rimac and Corteva already on site – and ambitious aspirations for growth.

We recognise the opportunities and challenges for the districts. Economically, both districts perform extremely well in terms of GVA and are home to a number of innovative firms. There is an extremely strong cultural offer and a high quality of life. Taken together, this presents a strong narrative to celebrate the combined area. The University will continue to support through our research, innovation and skills offers; through business support and encouraging start-ups (particularly focused on existing local clusters and student enterprise); and through our cultural engagement. At the same time, there are opportunities to align further, such as tackling the climate emergency and health and social inequalities – issues which benefit from working in close partnership.

Already, activities such as the Local Plan and Economic Strategy are under joint development, and the University is engaging with both to ensure we play a key part in the future of our local communities. In light of the significant financial challenges facing local councils and the potential for shared activities, we recognise the opportunity to increase your efficiency.

Professor Stuart Croft
Vice-Chancellor & President
University of Warwick
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www.warwick.ac.uk

The proposed council would be one of the largest in the country in terms of population and economy and cover many of the cultural strengths of our region. We welcome the councils working closely together to amplify your influence for the benefit of both districts.

We see a unified South Warwickshire as hugely advantageous to the people and communities of the region and to the interests of the University. We are very happy to support the preferred approach to create a new single district council for South Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Stuart Croft
Vice-Chancellor and President

c.c Tina.Brain@stratford-dc.gov.uk

THE STRATFORD SOCIETY

This response is on behalf of the Stratford Society.

They support the premise of this proposition, namely that financial pressures have become so strong that a merger needs to be considered as an essential means to protect and support local services. The pre-eminent responsibility of local government is to deliver those services as well and as fully as possible. And there may well be other benefits, not immediately financial, given the geographical cohesion of the two authorities and their common interest in the business, cultural and tourist economy. South Warwickshire as a unit has a defensible identity and is sound basis for future administrative reform.

However, though the principle is undoubtedly a good one it is not without consequences some of which may prove problematic. Two obvious examples. Will local interests, discrete to individual towns or localities be prejudiced, particularly though not exclusively in the context of planning. Have the Councils looked at how they are to be protected by the administrative and decision making systems they will set up.? And have the financial consequences of a merger been fully researched and explored? There have been too many examples of reform in different areas of public life based on financial assumptions which prove not to be accurate. After all local Government does notoriously suffer from a relatively arcane financial system involving distinct bodies especially central government and associated grant making bodies.

All this leads to the conclusion that though the principle is endorsed it should be pursued only after these and other possible issues have been fully explored so that we can be reassured that the Councils have gone into the merger having thought through all the possible downsides. The consultation gives no indication that they have. Difficult this may be but it is essential in our view and calls into question the set timetable. It seems that a decision to proceed is to be taken in December only after a consultation that closed at the end of October which leaves scant time for this critical exercise to be done.

John Scampion

Deputy Chairman

The Stratford Society

STONEWATER

Stonewater is supportive of the proposal to merge the two councils and understands the rationale. The demographics and geography of both districts are similar enough that this would be sensible. Please consider this to be our formal response to your consultation. (Non-merger information was included in the letter)

SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Dear Kester Holmes

As CEO of South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust, I am writing to you in response to consultation on proposed South Warwickshire Council. Before I do so I would like to express gratitude to Warwick and Stratford Upon Avon District Councils; they are valued partners and we grateful for 50 years' service that they each have provided to NHS, residents, and business.

We recognise that in order to continue to preserve, invest and to ensure a financially sustainable future the decision to explore the principle of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council to be formally merged. As NHS legislative changes progress through Parliament the Trust in its work in alignment of NHS Organisations into Place based working has benefited from strong engagement and guidance from Warwick and Stratford Upon Avon District Councils acting as one voice. This has given the Trust insight into how a South Warwickshire Council would operate in connecting with and delivering deeper NHS connections within South Warwickshire Place.

For South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust this is an important development as in keeping with Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System principle of subsidiarity, the Trust is working on planning assumption that 80% of NHS services will be planned and delivered locally in South Warwickshire by NHS Trusts and Primary Care. The proposal to merge and create a South Warwickshire Council from the Trust perspective demonstrates evidence of a credible geography and aligns with Trust objective of serving our Communities and working collaboratively with partners to improve Health and Wellbeing of our South Warwickshire population. We also see this move as an opportunity for even closer alignment with colleagues at Warwickshire County Council who have also been strong advocates of integration with NHS delivery in our Place based delivery model.

In conclusion we are grateful to Warwick and Stratford District Councils for their service, we recognise the drivers for change and from our experience of working with Warwick and Stratford District Councils acting as one voice in South Warwickshire Place the Trust is supportive of a formal merger.

Chair: Russell Hardy

Chief Executive: Glen Burley

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Yours sincerely



Glen Burley
Chief Executive

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND



22 October 2021

Kester Holmes,
Head of Research Projects,
Opinion Research Services,
The Strand,
Swansea SA1 1AF

Dear Kester,

Consultation on Proposed South Warwickshire Council

Shakespeare's England, the DMO (Destination Management Company) for South Warwickshire is pleased to support the proposal for a South Warwickshire Council. We are probably in a unique position regarding commenting on this as we have to all intents and purposes been working with both Stratford District Council and Warwick District Council as if they were one body since 2011.

Both district councils were heavily involved in the proof-of-concept work that was done to ascertain whether the forming of a DMO, Destination Management Organisation, for South Warwickshire would be a good thing and both became founding members of the DMO and have sat as Business Directors on the Shakespeare's England Board ever since. Helping to jointly steer the South Warwickshire Tourism strategy.

This close collaboration from the District Councils has meant that decisions pertaining to South Warwickshire's visitor economy have been taken with the whole of South Warwickshire in mind, as opposed to one geographical area almost trying to out-do another in attracting visitors. All visitors, be they domestic or international, have a tick list of places they want to visit, things they want to do and see. They are attracted by hero brands, be that Shakespeare, Warwick Castle, Kenilworth Castle, The British Motor Museum. The job of the Destination Management Company is then to build itineraries around these hero brands, clustering products together to encourage guests to stay longer, explore further and spend more. These visitors have no concern for paper boundaries, wards, local authority districts, they just want to have the best possible experience and it makes the job of the DMO far easier if they can, without any qualms suggest product based on the client's needs and not have to be restricted by boundaries on a map.

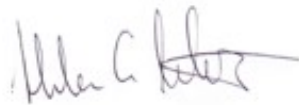
We have been able to achieve this successfully over the last few years and pre pandemic were attracting 10.6m visitors to South Warwickshire, bringing an economic impact to the area of £805m and providing employment for nearly 15,000 people. However, there will always be slightly varying priorities when dealing with two separate authorities, even when there is a close partnership.

Bringing these bodies together will only ever be seen as a positive move by Shakespeare's England especially on the back of the Du Bois DMO Review which recommends the need for cross border cooperation, greater financial support of destination management companies and more focus on what the customer wants, being the major driver, when it comes to product development.

There will be many challenges ahead as we come out of the pandemic, one of which will be showing ourselves as offering a sustainable carbon neutral product, as well as one that is accessible to all. Both of which I know are high on the agendas of SDC and WDC currently. Working together as a single unitary can only make the delivery of these goals more achievable in a shorter time frame.

The Proposed South Warwickshire Council therefore has the complete support of Shakespeare's England and I look forward to working with SWC in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Peters', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Helen Peters, Chief Executive
Shakespeare's England Ltd

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

11th October 2021

Kester Holmes,
Head of Research Projects,
Opinion Research Services,
The Strand,
Swansea SA1 1AF



Monica Fogarty,
Chief Executive
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RE: Consultation on Proposed South Warwickshire Council

Dear Kester,

I am writing in response to the email and letter of 4th October, addressed to 'Stakeholder' which I received on behalf of Warwickshire County Council.

I have consulted with the Leader of the Council and the Leaders of the Opposition Parties on Warwickshire County Council in considering how best to respond. As you will be aware, I have no mandate to respond on behalf of politicians and indeed The Leader of The Council, likewise has no such mandate on this matter. Given this position we have encouraged county councillors to respond direct to the consultation survey.

My understanding is that following the close of the consultation, each council will take a decision on 13th December. The intention is then to make a submission to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to decide upon the plans for merger. It is my view that such a submission will lead the Secretary of State to trigger a review of local government structures across the whole of Warwickshire. Consequently, I fully expect the Secretary of State to initiate a consultation on local government reform in Warwickshire.

There are clearly different views across our county as to the preferred model of local government. It is also clear that there is wide recognition that the current structures are sub-optimal.

Given this position it would seem to be more appropriate for Warwickshire County Council to engage when the Secretary of State consults with us following Stratford and Warwick's proposals for merger.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Monica Fogarty'.

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL



North Warwickshire Borough Council

The Council House
South Street
Atherstone
North Warwickshire CV9 1DE

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Website : www.northwarks.gov.uk

Your ref :
Our ref : PJW

Date : 25 October 2021

Dear Councillor Jefferson and Councillor Day

South Warwickshire District Council – Consultation

North Warwickshire Borough Council is pleased to have been asked to comment on the above consultation. The consultation was considered by this Council's Executive Board on 20 September and authority given to the Chief Executive to respond in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition.

Overall, our view is that this is primarily a matter for the elected Members and residents of Warwick and Stratford on Avon Districts. This Council is content therefore with the proposal given it has been approved by Councillors at the respective Councils.

There are some wider issues that North Warwickshire Borough Council would like to comment on, briefly. Firstly, we note that this proposal is seemingly wholly driven by the need to save money rather than as being the governance model of choice. This Council would much prefer Local Government to be funded appropriately so that decisions such as this are not driven by financial necessity. This Council deeply values the roles of District/Borough Councils in representing meaningful places and therefore would not, as a general principle, support larger Council arrangements. We acknowledge however that South Warwickshire is a definable, coherent place based on a number of real-life factors experienced by residents and businesses in this area.

That said we appreciate that within this context Government has made clear that there are a number of measures that Councils may consider and that this proposal is one such. We note that Government advice that such measures do not constitute local government reform, for which there is insufficient appetite within Warwickshire, and that the proposal works hard to ensure the resultant Council will stay close to residents.

There is no reason therefore in practice why this proposal should be regarded as contrary to Government policy, principally the expected measures that will ensure our two tier County can work together and with Government for an exciting, transformative County deal which will help the country 'Level Up' in general but in particular help bring all areas in our County closer

together, given the very marked differences between South Warwickshire and North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby.

Finally, we would consider it appropriate to consider in detail the risks and exit strategy should Councillors wish to reverse this decision.

To conclude therefore this Council is content to support the proposals, within the context of our keen desire, once the White Paper is published, to work towards a County Levelling Up deal, which works across all tiers of local government and the wider partnership in Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Chief Executive

cc : Cllr D Wright, Cllr Gosling

NUNEATON & BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL



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By e-mail

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Chris Elliott
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Warwick District Council

Enquiries to: Brent Davis

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Date: 21st October 2021

Our Ref: BD/SWDC Consultation

Dear David and Chris

Proposed South Warwickshire District Council – Consultation

Thank you for asking Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council to comment on the above consultation. I have discussed the proposed creation of a South Warwickshire District Council with the Leader of the Council. Arising from this our view is that the merits, or otherwise, of forming a South Warwickshire District Council is a matter for the Elected Members and residents of Warwick and Stratford on Avon Districts to decide upon, so long as it is strictly limited to reform at a district council level only. Hence we have no comments to make either in support of or against the proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Brent Davis
Chief Executive

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Dear Sirs

Consultation on proposed South Warwickshire Council

Thank you for your letters dated 8th September and 4th October and the invitation to comment on the proposals to formally merge Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council.

I note that the financial pressures for both Councils and the impact of Covid has driven the elected members of both councils to pursue this option. For that reason, I consider this is a matter primarily for the elected members and residents of both districts.

I also note both Councils recognise the value of the role district/borough councils undertake at place level, including serving the local population to meet health and wellbeing needs and supporting local economic growth. As Leader of Rugby Borough Council, I feel very strongly about this important responsibility, along with our responsibility to deliver on the Government's levelling up priorities. Therefore, I do not consider the proposals for a South Warwickshire Council to be contrary to supporting this national agenda, nor do I consider the proposals to be a driver for local government reform within Warwickshire.

Overall, I would like to confirm our support for these proposals and also that I look forward to the forthcoming White Paper and working with all tiers of local governments across Warwickshire and our wider partners on a County Levelling Up deal.

Yours faithfully



Cllr Seb Lowe
Leader of Rugby Borough Council