



**Business case for a new single
unitary council for Somerset**

David Fothergill

Leader of Somerset County
Council 2017-2022
and Promoter of the One
Somerset Business Case

May 2018 Launch of LG review – FOLGIS Report
August 2020 Invitation to submit business case
July 2021 Business Case chosen
March 2022 SCO approved
May 2022 Elections
April 2023 Vesting Day



Future of Local Government in Somerset

Delivering Together for the
People of Somerset



Introduction & Scope

5 Councils have been working together, exploring the best approach to address the challenges we face across Somerset.

- FoLGIS (Future of Local Government in Somerset)

Research was commissioned into the options for the future:

- High level – not a detailed business case
- Ignite, Collaborate, Pixel Finance and De Montfort University
- Somerset Internal Consultancy Team

Conclusions are:

- that change needs to happen.
- no change is not an option, the only real question is what changes we need to make and when.



one somerset

Business case for a new single
unitary council for Somerset



- Took nearly four months to write
- 170 pages
- Two main sections
- Only a small number of copies printed – rest online

<https://wiveygp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/onesomersetbusinesscase.pdf>



Based on the
FOLGIS report

one
somerset

PART
B

REALISING ONE SOMERSET



TRANSITION NOT TRANSFORMATION

NOT JUST ABOUT
SAVING MONEY

Key to remember the involvement of:

All local Councils –County, District, Borough etc

Cabinet and Members including opposition

Council Officers and Staff

City, Town and Parish Councils

Businesses

VCSE

MHLCG

Major gaffe as Somerset's district councils direct people to offensive spoof website

24TH MAY 2021

News ▶ Somerset News ▶ Bridgwater

Plans to create new unitary authority in Somerset slammed by Bridgwater MP Ian Liddell-Grainger

Somerset County Council announced a proposal to merge the county's five district and borough councils earlier this month

Plans to abolish Somerset councils would create new 'distant' body 'larger than Luxembourg'

by Daniel Mumby | @CountyGazette

IF YOU WANT TO JEOPARDIZE MY FREEDOM
THAN A STATE OF WAR IS IMMINENT
AND NOTHING BUT NOTHING WILL PREVENT
IT FROM HAPPENING !!!

s) Sedgemoor District Council

LGR – governance prior to SCO approval

- Somerset CEOs meeting weekly
- Somerset Leaders and CEOs continuing to meet to discuss strategic matters
- Political leaders and senior managers signed up to collaborative working
- Option investigated to assist this interim period with the potential formation of a LGR Joint Committee involving members from all 5 councils and based upon the membership to the potential Implementation Executive
- Programme management arrangements

LGR Programme Governance
Democratic arrangements

Five Councils
(receives reports on progress /
motions for decision)

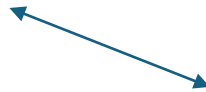


LGR Joint Committee
(1 DECISION MAKER)
(Districts / County)

Joint LGR Scrutiny
Committee
(1 scrutiny body)



LGR Advisory
Board



Programme Board
Chief Executive Officer Group
(Districts / County)



Meets in public with
publication of
agendas and
minutes



Meets in private -
no publication

*Cabinets and Scrutiny
Committees may ask for
periodic progress reports*

NEW WEBSITE

(Including Q&A and mythbusting)



Somerset LGR - Period: 28th September – 5th October 2021

Status

Implementation planning (Jan-Sept 2021)

Prev RAG

G

Current RAG

G

Programme Update

- Electoral Arrangement options paper for MHCLG submitted on 17th September
- Five Chief Executives agreed programme governance and Leads
- LGR Programme manual now drafted, to be shared in slide format with five CEOs w/c 27th September.
- Data sharing protocol to be shared with programme leads for approval on 28th September.
- Final preparation taking place for the Town and Parish Council Conference on the 7th October.
- LGR Advisory board agenda circulated in advanced of the first meeting on the 30th September.
- LGR Workstream Leads kick off meeting arranged for 4th October, will be used to provide leads with overview of programme, discuss priorities over next 4-6 weeks and give everyone chance to ask questions
- Conversations continue with Town and Parish Councils across Somerset to better understand their needs of a future LCN model, next meeting is with Chard Town Council on the 27th September.

One Somerset Activities

Current week

Ongoing conversations between CEOs & Leaders

LGR manual (in slide format) to be shared with CEOs

Continued work on draft LCN boundaries

Continue conversations with T&PCs around LCNs

Progressing initial actions identified for design & planning phase

Deliver inaugural LGR Board

Next Six Weeks

Develop and cultivate relationships with District Councils,

Further engagement with Town, Parish and City Councils

Additional MHCLG submissions

Approach to Programme Management to be actioned

Mobilise workstreams with leads: workplans, Sub-workstream leads, products lists, benefits definition, roles and resourcing

T&PC Conference taking place on 7th October

Continue to align change activity across the five councils

Milestones

5th November – Submission of v1.2 One Somerset business case to Secretary of State Complete

4th December – Submission of v1.3 One Somerset business case (FINAL) to Secretary of State Complete

22nd February 2021 - MHCLG consultations starts Complete

19th April - MHCLG consultation finishes Complete

30th June - Secretary of State decision on preferred option (range June–July) Complete

July-September 2021 - Parliamentary orders process On track

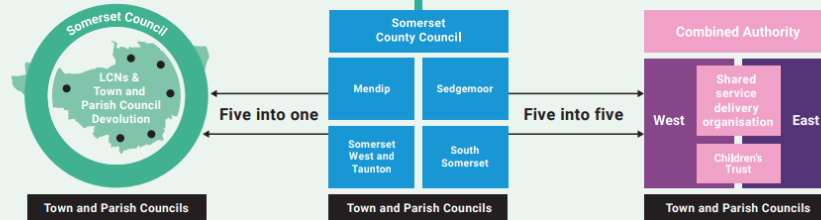
Sep 2021 - Implementation start *if 2023 vesting day* On track

Briefings, briefingsbriefings!



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Stronger Somerset



Annual Savings: **£18.5m** Transition costs: **£16.5m**

Annual Savings: **£9m**⁽¹⁾ Transition costs: **£22.5m**⁽²⁾



Bringing together services with common goals to support economic recovery, growth, health and wellbeing

Complexity, delay, conflicting priorities, increased costs

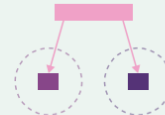


100 councillors with 4,302 electors each (Cornwall 5,072 electors per councillor, Wiltshire 3,924)

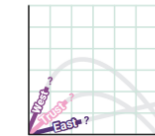
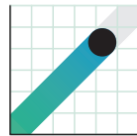


200 councillors with 2,150 electors each – **Considered too low to be acceptable to The Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

Devolution in name only – new unitaries keep control of decision-making and set tests for parish councils to allow them to do more

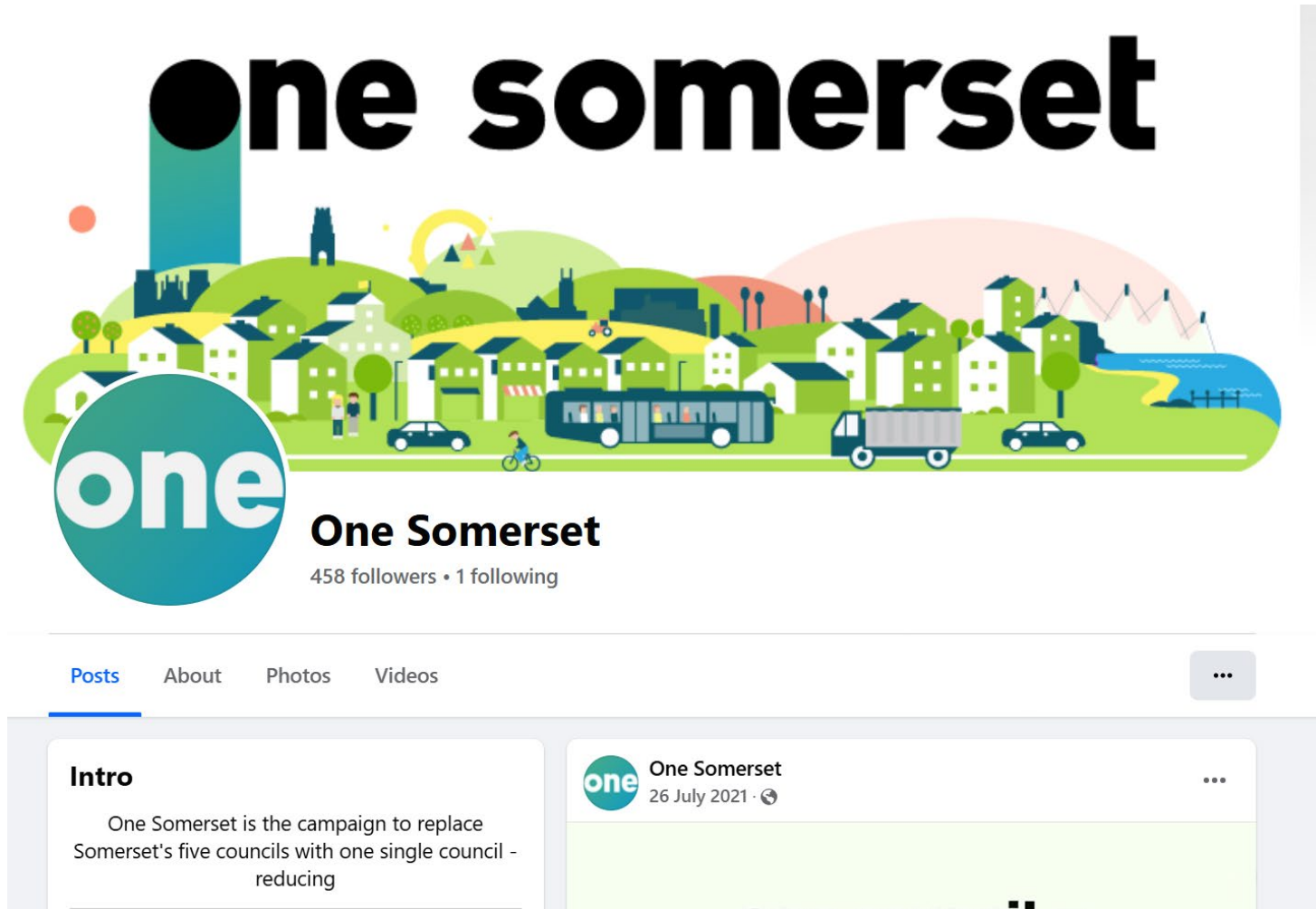


Continuation of children's services improvement plans to support children and young people's wellbeing, education and skills needs




Create a children's trust with a director in each unitary and risk stalling the ongoing improvement journey, as well as missing opportunities to join up old district and county services to support young people

FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA



The image shows a Facebook profile page for 'One Somerset'. At the top, the text 'one somerset' is displayed in a large, bold, black font. Below this is a colorful illustration of a town with houses, a bus, a car, a bicycle, and a bridge over a river. A circular profile picture on the left contains the word 'one' in white on a teal background. To the right of the profile picture, the name 'One Somerset' is written in bold black text, with '458 followers • 1 following' underneath. Below the profile information, there are navigation tabs for 'Posts', 'About', 'Photos', and 'Videos'. The 'Posts' tab is selected. The first post is an 'Intro' post with the text: 'One Somerset is the campaign to replace Somerset's five councils with one single council - reducing'. The second post is a recent post from 'One Somerset' dated '26 July 2021'.

one somerset



one

One Somerset
458 followers • 1 following

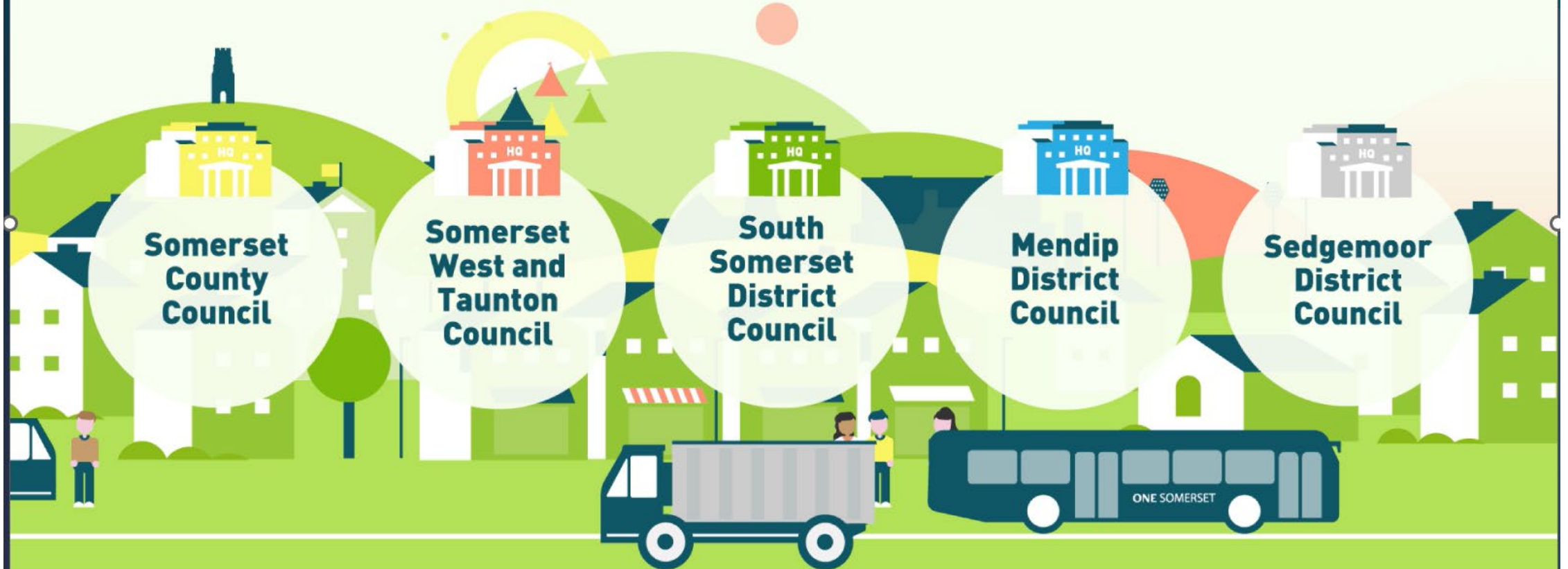
[Posts](#) [About](#) [Photos](#) [Videos](#)

Intro

One Somerset is the campaign to replace Somerset's five councils with one single council - reducing

one One Somerset
26 July 2021

Responsibilities split between



KEY LESSONS

- Maintain your relationships
- Remember you may have to implement the other business case – stay positive
- Important role of Cabinet, Scrutiny and Member Briefings
- Don't neglect any Stakeholder Group
- Maintain control of the finances!
- Don't be tempted to give away assets
- Need to get out there into your communities
- Look after yourself!