

## Somerset County Council

County Hall, Taunton  
Somerset, TA1 4DY



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government  
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London  
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**Please ask for:** David Fothergill

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**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020

Dear Secretary of State

### **One Somerset – A Unitary Council for Somerset**

Firstly, my sincere congratulations to you on returning as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. I very much look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

When we met in Taunton in December, we spoke of the opportunity that we have in Somerset for public services to make a real difference to our communities, whilst enhancing the local and regional economy. As Leader of Somerset County Council I am now writing to formally ask you to invite me to submit a business case, before the summer recess, defining our unitary proposals for better, more local, joined-up public services in Somerset.

Not only will a unitary solution be a significantly improved deal for the people of Somerset, it will also better enable us to support the emerging national aspirations for regional governance, cooperation and devolution.

For almost two years I have been working with District colleagues to try and develop an improved governance and service delivery solution. The goal being to better support and serve our communities, whilst removing considerable inefficiency and waste that is evident in our current structural arrangements. All council leaders agree that the current situation cannot continue but there is little common commitment or impetus to grasp the moment and truly unlock our potential. Too many are content to roll out the same initiatives that have demonstrably failed previously and where we have found little appetite for true collaboration between authorities.

The current two-tier system in Somerset cannot react and adapt to deliver the change that is needed to provide a quality service and joined up vision. With five management teams (and

leadership that can change through elections every two years) there is no time for strategy to be developed and implemented and it is the residents of Somerset who are missing out.

I believe that one council for Somerset now offers the best vehicle to deliver joined up services and opportunities for the residents of Somerset, with more local focus, delivery and accountability. A council where everyone knows who is responsible, where crucial services can work in a more joined up way and where more, not less, is managed in the heart of our communities.

There is a significant saving, a huge unitary bonus for us to invest in Somerset's frontline services. I believe that it is essential we secure that bonus and listen to residents about where it should be spent.

I would be delighted to come up to discuss this matter with you and your colleagues and very much look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely



**Cllr David Fothergill**  
**Leader of the Council**

**Copies to:**

Rebecca Pow MP  
Marcus Fysh MP  
James Heappey MP  
Ian Liddell Grainger MP  
David Warburton MP