

## Question 4. Do you support the proposal from the councils?

Yes  No

### Why we do not support the Stronger Somerset proposals

In summary our views of Stronger Somerset's proposals are:

- We have concerns around the financial analysis and modelling used in the Stronger Somerset business case including an apparent failure to recognise the additional costs of its proposed model.
- We have concerns about the methodology used including lack of baseline data/facts underpinning existing service delivery and lack of tangible indications of what improvements would look like under the proposals.
- We have identified a lack of detail and evidence to substantiate claims made regarding the delivery of place, adult and children's services, and around the proposed models of service delivery. The proposal also fails to recognise that the majority of proposed system or service improvement changes have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.
- We believe that Stronger Somerset fails to understand and properly assess the impact of its proposals to break apart existing county wide services, including public health and adult social care. It also fails to understand and properly assess the impact on those services of creating two unitary authorities and in the case of children's services, an Alternative Delivery Model.
  - From a public health perspective, it is unclear how the current proposals will enable the local authority Public Health function to influence the entire Somerset system, including the new Integrated Care System.
  - It is also unclear whether the Children and Young People's element of Public Health would continue to sit under the specialist function or would be transferred into the proposed Alternative Delivery Model. This lack of certainty in itself is a risk to health outcomes. A transfer to the proposed Alternative Delivery Model would be likely to be detrimental: Public Health Nursing has recently moved into Public Health in the local authority and we are already seeing the benefits of this move.
- The specialist public health function is a relatively small resource and relies heavily on being able to have influence across the entire Somerset system. The Stronger Somerset proposal would require this resource to be thinly spread across five organisations and the Integrated Care System. This would require significantly more senior level capacity than currently exists, and would represent an unacceptable risk to health and wellbeing in Somerset. This

would include our ongoing response to Covid-19 and future resilience to the disease.

- We believe that Stronger Somerset fails to understand the current operating and policy environments for health and social care services including Government reforms such as the integration of health and care services, or ongoing cost pressures within adults and children's services.
- We are concerned about the future financial viability of the proposed Stronger Somerset model.
- We have significant concerns around the effectiveness of an untried model for public service delivery including the creation of an Alternative Delivery Model for children's services and the proposed combined authority model and its future role, both of which are without precedent and seemingly contradictory to existing Government policy.
- We have concerns that certain major services are absent from the Stronger Somerset business case including highways and transport.
- We have concerns regarding Stronger Somerset's dependency on its expectations of £22.22m income from commercial activity over the first five years. The District Councils have invested heavily in commercial assets to provide income streams which have been badly impacted by the economic impact of the pandemic. The Treasury has now blocked Public Works Loan Board loans to councils to buy commercial property and this can be expected to have an impact on viability of the Stronger Somerset business case.