

A single council for West Suffolk - letters and emails received

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership

Suffolk Chamber

Newmarket Business Improvement District

Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District

Police and Crime Commissioner

Members of Parliament – James Cartlidge, Jo Churchill, Matthew Hancock

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

Suffolk County Council

Babergh District Council

Mid Suffolk District Council

Breckland Council

Braintree District Council

Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

Norfolk County Council

Lakenheath Parish Council

Troston Parish Council

Horringer–cum-Ickworth Parish Council

Kedington Parish Council

Haverhill Town Council

Brandon Town Council – responded via online engagement

Mildenhall Parish Council

Havebury Homes

Flagship Group

West Suffolk Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group

The Theatre Royal

The Bury Society

Right Honourable Lord Tebbit

From: Chris Starkie <Chris.Starkie@newanglia.co.uk>

Date: 7 September 2017 at 19:36:41 BST

To: "Baird, Julie" <julie.baird@westsuffolk.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Single Council

Julie,

I am writing to confirm New Anglia LEP's support for the proposal outlined in your draft business case to create a single council for West Suffolk, replacing Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury.

Whilst two councils have served their residents well for many years, the business case is compelling in a number of ways.

We agree that combining the two authorities will improve the effectiveness and resilience of service delivery as well as putting the authority on a sounder long term financial footing.

We also agree the proposals will enable the area to have a clearer voice in dealing with partners such as ourselves and be of the scale to maximise investment opportunities for the benefit of the area and its residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on the proposals.

Kind regards

Chris

Chris Starkie | Managing Director

Tel: 01603 510070 | Mobile: 07827 309669

Website: www.newanglia.co.uk

To: Cllr John Griffiths, Leader, St Edmundsbury Borough Council Cllr James Waters, Leader,
Forest Heath District Council

Via Email

31st August 2017

Dear James and John,

I am writing to support plans for your two Local Authorities to formally merge to create a single local authority for the West Suffolk area.

We fully appreciate the significant challenges facing local government, and we welcome the proactive approach from St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council to tackling these issues in a positive manner.

By bringing together all of the voices of businesses from West Suffolk into one organisation, we believe that it will create a stronger voice for business needs locally, particularly when it comes to upgrades to infrastructure and around major project, such as the future of RAF Mildenhall.

It also means you will still be of a scale that will enable you to work with, and listen to, businesses of all sizes – from micro businesses through to large corporations. Something that is vital for the continued growth and prosperity of the local area.

As one of your Local Enterprise Partnerships, we look forward to working in partnership with you through this process, and hope that our letter of support is of assistance.

With best wishes,

Your sincerely



Mark Reeve

Chairman Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP

GCGP.CO.UK  @YourLEP  Your Local Enterprise Partnership

T: 01480 277180 E: info@gcgp.co.uk Company Registration No. 07553554
Unit 3, The Incubator, Alconbury Weald Enterprise Campus, Alconbury Airfield, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 4WX

Dear Julie

The future of West Suffolk Councils: new single council for West Suffolk

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to create a new single district-level council for West Suffolk. I am responding on behalf of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Town Chambers in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, and Newmarket and District.

We support the creation of a new single council for West Suffolk.

The business case claims of significant cost savings, improved accountability and improved services together make a compelling case and we are mindful that the recent services merger between St Edmundsbury BC and Forest Heath DC has already started to progress this project both on the ground and in the public's perception.

Nonetheless we wish to make some specific comments from the business perspective:

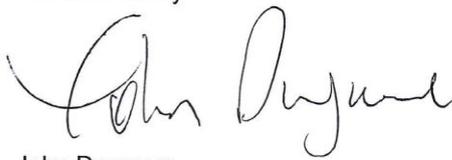
- There are several references in the documents to better engagement with other public partners, families and communities but as far as we can see only one (and none in the 1 x A4 summary) referring to improved business engagement. Given the emphasis in the documents on developing a strong and growing economy, and the fact that over one third of the new council's income will be derived from business rates, we believe that a much stronger commitment should be made to engaging closely with business;
- The business case is currently based on 60 councillors but acknowledges that 50 would better reflect "current trends"; our view is that reducing the overall number to 50 would achieve better savings and efficiencies and would, through competition, drive up the quality of member representation and decision-making;
- There is a section in the documents on how this proposal will be consulted on and we strongly suggest that representatives from the councils should attend forthcoming Town Chamber Boards to directly garner business views; if you consider it helpful we would also be pleased with appropriate support to run up to 3 local business consultation events although we acknowledge that the consultation timetable might not allow for this;

1

- We would like to see, or hear at the Town Chamber Board meetings, more detail on how a merged Council would "support businesses" (there are no specific proposals in any of the documents), especially as it is claimed that one of the greatest benefits of the merger for local businesses and communities, would include "democratic accountability" (para 5 of the Executive Summary); this will be especially important from 2020 when 100% of Business Rates will be retained; we seek reassurance that businesses will benefit from the new arrangements and that the increasing of Business Rates does not become an easy solution to future financial challenges; and
- We would also like to know more about the way that a new single council for West Suffolk would take decisions on investments intended to generate income, something that is referred to several times in the documents; the making of "bold" investments (para 77) with public finances drawn to a significant extent from businesses would merit close scrutiny from business itself.

We hope that the proposals to establish a new single council for West Suffolk are realised and we look forward to your responses to our specific comments and questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Dugmore', written in a cursive style.

John Dugmore
Chief Executive

From: Graham Philpot [mailto:graham.philpot@newmarketbid.com]

Sent: 15 August 2017 15:35

To: Baird, Julie <julie.baird@westsuffolk.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Single Council

Dear Julie,

Thank you for the detailed proposal below and attached regarding the proposed merger to a single council.

I have completed the online form as requested, and Newmarket BID is in support of the proposal.

Kind Regards,

Graham

From: Mark Cordell [mailto:mark.cordell@ourburystedmunds.com]

Sent: 01 August 2017 17:53

To: Baird, Julie

Subject: RE: Single Council

Julie, it was good to meet you at the Chamber Board meeting last month.

As I think most of us indicated at the meeting I can understand the logic behind the proposal and I am fully supportive of it, and I am confident the vast majority of our members are too.

I have completed the online survey and provided a bit more detail in regards of my thoughts.

Thank you for the offer to come and talk through the proposal but to be honest that's not necessary and I wouldn't want to waste your time but happy to have a catch up about the town centre and local businesses whenever is convenient for you

Best wishes

Mark Cordell

Chief Executive Officer

Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District

2nd Floor

2 Woolhall Street

Bury St Edmunds

IP33 1LA

Tel: 01284 766258

mobile: 07703 193511

web: www.ourburystedmunds.com

twitter: @MarkourbseBID

BSE BIDCO LIMITED T/A Our Bury St Edmunds BID



Councillor John Griffiths, Leader, St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Councillor James Waters, Leader, Forest Heath District Council
By email

13 September 2017

Dear John and James

Thank you for your letter concerning the creation of the West Suffolk Council. I would like to place on record I am very supportive of your proposal and sincerely hope both existing councils will agree to bring this project to fruition.

During these challenging times of financial stringency and increasing demand on services it is vital the whole public sector seizes any opportunity for improving efficiency and effectiveness. I am quite sure the merging of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils will help deliver this objective.

As you know, for some years I have been a passionate advocate for much wider public sector reform which involves joint working and collaboration across sectors which could include the pooling of budgets and other resources. This will provide better value for money for the taxpayer and has the potential to enhance the quality of the services provided.

You also have a very commendable focus on economic growth and development which I wholeheartedly support. As Police and Crime Commissioner I have seen at first hand the link between economic and social deprivation and raised levels of crime, abuse, addiction and antisocial behavior. Any initiative that assists with wealth generation and greater prosperity is most welcome.

With very best wishes and good luck with your plans.

Yours sincerely

Tim Passmore
Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Ian Gallin
Chief Executive
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
West Suffolk House
Bury St Edmunds
IP33 3YU

27th July 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Cartlidge'.

RE: WEST SUFFOLK COUNCIL

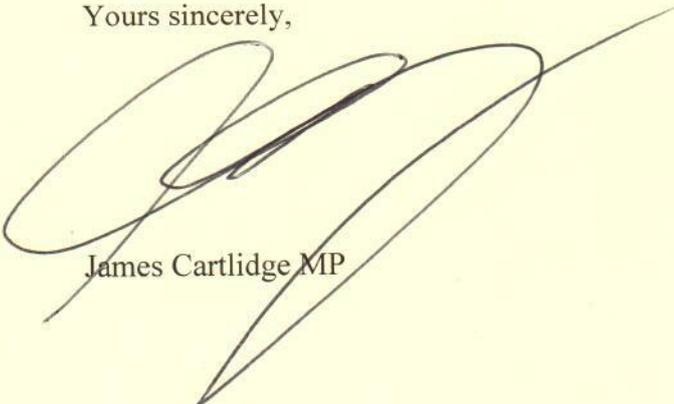
I write to express my support for the creation of a single council for West Suffolk.

By combining the existing Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils, I believe that a new council for West Suffolk would be better placed to deliver vital services to our local communities.

The councils have a history of working well together through combined services, having already saved the local taxpayers £4 million per annum, and I believe that this partnership should be fully extended to provide further benefits in other areas of local council activity.

As such, I would like to endorse the proposal set out in the draft business case and would encourage the councils to further pursue this shared ambition.

Yours sincerely,



James Cartlidge MP



JO CHURCHILL MP
Member of Parliament for Bury St Edmunds



Mr Ian Gallin
Chief Executive
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
IP33 3YU

July 2017

Dear Ian,

I write to express my support for the creation of a single council for West Suffolk; combining Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils.

The case for a single council for West Suffolk is compelling; combining efforts to deliver services and continued investment to support local communities, drive local jobs and deliver vital savings and efficiencies.

A single council would be best placed to deliver local, bespoke solutions whilst ensuring a voice, which can champion on the national stage, the aspirations of local communities. This vibrant community is well poised economically and geographically to attract new business. Working more efficiently will further enable us, to do just that.

This is a bold new direction for West Suffolk and one which I whole heartedly lend my support to.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Churchill MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr James Waters & Cllr John Griffiths
Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils
Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 3YU

14 August 2017

Dear James and John,

Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

Thank you for your letter of 26 July about the future of local government in West Suffolk.

I am writing to give you my warm support for the proposed creation of a single council. With strong leadership and using shared facilities, a single council will deliver efficient services for the community.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help move these proposals forward.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt'.

Working for West Suffolk

www.matthewhancock.co.uk
matthew@matthewhancock.co.uk
[@matthancockmp](https://twitter.com/matthancockmp)

London: 020 7219 7186

Suffolk: 01638 576 692

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

James.Waters@Forest-Heath.gov.uk
John.Griffiths@stedsbc.gov.uk

14 June 2017

Dear James and John

Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

Many thanks for your letter of 6 June 2017.

Martin and I would very much like to offer our support to your process.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and others to discuss strategic transport issues joining up east to west.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.Palmer', with a small flourish at the end.

James Palmer
Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Our Ref: CN/JT/WS01

Date: 14 September 2017

Enquiries to: Colin Noble

Tel: 01473 260 535

Email: Leaderspa@suffolk.gov.uk

FAO: Cllr John Griffiths and Cllr James

Waters

Via Email

Dear John and James

The Future of West Suffolk

Overall, Suffolk County Council is broadly supportive of the proposal for Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council to merge to form West Suffolk Council. The draft business case communicates clearly the rationale and this is mainly an issue for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councillors. The proposed public consultation and delivery timelines are noted.

The challenges and aspirations set out within the document match those of the County

Council as described within "Our Priorities 2017 – 21". We share a desire to build on previous joint working and successes achieved with partners, and continue to work together acknowledging the contribution of the wider public sector in West Suffolk.

I wish you both, the Councillors and Officers at Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury good luck in the transition to West Suffolk and we look forward to continuing to build on our positive, productive and valued partnership.

Best wishes



Councillor Colin Noble
Leader of the Council

Leaders of the Councils



Councillor James Waters
Leader
Forest Heath District Council
Council Offices
College Heath Road
Mildenhall
Suffolk
IP28 7EY

Please ask for: Jennie Jenkins / Nick Gowrley
Direct line: 01473 825751 / 01449 724669
Fax number:
Your reference:
Our reference: JJ/NG/AJB
E-mail: jennie.jenkins@babergh.gov.uk
nick.gowrley@midsuffolk.gov.uk

16th August 2017

Dear James

RE: Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

This letter is to confirm our support for your intention to look at the creation of a new single council for West Suffolk, which will replace Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils value the strong bonds that have been developed with West Suffolk and look forward to those continuing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gowrley', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Nick Gowrley
Leader
Mid Suffolk District Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennie Jenkins', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Jennie Jenkins
Leader
Babergh District Council

Cllr Griffiths and Cllr Waters
West Suffolk District Council
West Suffolk House,
Western Way,
Bury St Edmunds,
Suffolk IP33 3YU

11th August 2017

Ref: Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

Dear John and James

Thank you for sending me your exciting and innovative proposal. You are to be applauded on this innovation in delivering better local public services whilst reducing costs and strengthening local democracy. Boundaries of organisation are in my view artificial and it's the delivery for the best outcomes for the communities that is of greatest interest.

Your business case appears to be an honest and transparent assessment of the risks and financial outcomes associated with the proposal, alongside the benefits. Communication on something of this nature is vital in helping all understand the rational and outcomes desired.

Implementation is not covered fully although you have included a timetable and am sure you are fully aware of the challenges this will bring, given a May 2019 deadline.

Whatever the final outcome of this proposal, Breckland Council is committed to working with you going forward, through our ever strengthening ARP relationship and new growth initiatives such as Cambridge to Norwich Technology Corridor.

Breckland's community especially around the Thetford area looks south into your part of Suffolk for health and other related services so our close working is important. How we work together may change and we would want to be fully engaged in this discussion.

Please keep us informed of your progress and best of luck in this endeavour.

Yours sincerely



Cllr William Nunn
Leader, Breckland Council

Dear Cllr. Griffiths and Cllr. Waters,

Thank you for sharing your draft business case for a single District Council in West Suffolk.

I have discussed this with the Council Leader, Graham Butland and he has asked me to respond on behalf of the Council.

We appreciate that in these challenging times for local authorities that there is a need for considering new ways of providing services for our local residents whilst improving cost effectiveness. Your proposal to create a single authority appears to be a sensible way forward. As you say we already have strong working relationships but we are keen to develop stronger working relationships around infrastructure, business support and managing growth as this is our top priority. We would therefore welcome an opportunity to discuss developing stronger working relationships as your plans develop.

We wish you well with your plans and look forward to meeting a suitable time in the future.

Kind regards,

Andy Wright

Acting Chief Executive

Braintree District Council | Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB

☎ 01376 557700 | www.braintree.gov.uk | ✉ andy.wright@braintree.gov.uk

Your ref:
Our ref: RH/HS
Please ask for:
Direct dial: (01553) 616245
Direct fax: (01553) 616736
E-mail: ray.harding@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Leader of the Council
Councillor Brian Long

Councillor James Waters
Leader
Forest Heath District Council
Council Offices
College Heath Road
Mildenhall
Suffolk IP28 7EY

Chief Executive
Ray Harding

22 August 2017

Dear James

Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

Thank you for your letter dated 27th July jointly from yourself and John advising us of your intention to join together to form West Suffolk Council.

The draft business case made for interesting reading and displayed constructive and solid objectives for a larger, more resilient organisation.

We would, of course, welcome a continuing positive relationship with a newly proposed West Suffolk Council and wish you every success with this opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Brian Long
Leader

Ray Harding
Chief Executive

cc: Councillor John Griffiths, Leader – St Edmundsbury Borough Council

King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1EX
Tel: (01553) 616200; fax: (01553) 691663
DX 57825 KING'S LYNN

Chief Executive – Ray Harding

Your ref:
Our ref: RH/HS
Please ask for:
Direct dial: (01553) 616245
Direct fax: (01553) 616736
E-mail: ray.harding@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Leader of the Council
Councillor Brian Long

Councillor John Griffiths
Leader
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 3YU

Chief Executive
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22 August 2017

Dear John

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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Brian Long'.

Brian Long
Leader

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Ray Harding'.

Ray Harding
Chief Executive

cc: Councillor James Waters, Leader – Forest Heath District Council

King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1EX
Tel: (01553) 616200; fax: (01553) 691663
DX 57825 KING'S LYNN

Chief Executive – Ray Harding

CJ/MBC

23 August 2017

Tel: 01603 223201

Councillor John Griffiths
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 3YUCouncillor James Waters
Forest Heath District Council
Council Offices
College Heath Road
Mildenhall
Suffolk IP28 7EY

Dear Cllr Griffiths and Cllr Waters

Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

Thank you for your letter of 27 July with the business case outlining your plans to create a new single council to replace Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils.

We are in support of the changes you are proposing which will help to generate efficiencies and direct resources in to front line service delivery. Norfolk County Council values the existing cross county arrangements such as the Local Enterprise Partnership which helps to grow jobs, drive innovation and increase productivity in Norfolk and Suffolk. We hope that this collaboration amongst others would continue to strengthen under the governance of a new single council.

Norfolk County Council wishes you, the Councillors and Officers at Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils good luck in the transition to West Suffolk, and we look forward to continuing to build on our positive, productive and valued partnership.

Yours sincerely

**Cllr Cliff Jordan**
Leader of the Council

From: lakenheathpc@btconnect.com [mailto:lakenheathpc@btconnect.com]

Sent: 10 August 2017 11:35

To: future.council <future.council@westsuffolk.gov.uk>

Subject: A new single council for west Suffolk

Good morning

Lakenheath Parish Council have discussed the proposal for a new single council for West Suffolk.

They would like to highlight what they feel are the advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

- A better use of technology and new ways of working will mean the team can work more flexibly across the whole area.
- The governance structure could be simplified, with fewer multi and single council committees, task groups and working parties.
- A combined council would have a bigger voice due to numbers within it. The removal of two political masters would support officers being able to deliver a better and smoother service with a reduction in cost.
- A combined council would deliver enormous financial savings and provide for better services for the community.
- Planning, policy and regulatory decision-making would become consistent across the whole district, removing the potential for gaps or inconsistencies created by current council boundaries. This is at a time when funding streams for local councils are being tightened considerably.
- Better financial resilience, the new larger district council would be in a better position to cope with unexpected change and challenges.
- Increased scale would mean better ability to provide a diverse portfolio of community facilities across the whole area.
- The councils could benefit from the two companies' extensive experience across the public and private sectors to continually review and improve services across the whole area.

Disadvantages

- Fewer District Councillors representing residents, as there is likely to be a reduction in number.
- The changes could be unsettling for some council staff. Rather than face a period of uncertainty, possible redundancy, staff with important local knowledge might seek employment elsewhere and be lost during the consultation process.
- It is assumed that office space will be reduced, resulting in longer journeys for some residents to visit District Offices.
- Rural villages will become the poor relation to bigger towns, who undoubtedly will receive the better and improved services due to the economic benefits.

Kind regards

Clare

Mrs Clare Shimmon - Clerk of the Council

From: (Email address redacted)
Sent: 22 August 2017 09:51
To: future.council <future.council@westsuffolk.gov.uk>
Subject: Combined Council

Dear Mark

As Chairman of Troston Parish Council I have been asked by my colleagues to express our support for the plans for the future combined council. Our caveat is that Councillors and staff (in particular Highways) seem stretched already. We would not wish to see the task of budget holders stretched further.

For and behalf of Troston Parish Council,

Dr Graeme Norris

Clerk: Marilyn Bottomley CILCA

8 Church Close,

Rede,

Tel: 01284 789303

Bury St. Edmunds,

Suffolk IP29 4BG

e-mail: (Email address redacted)

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

West Suffolk House

Western Way

Bury St Edmunds

IP33 3YU

22nd August 2017.

Dear Sirs

A new single council for west Suffolk – Consultation by St. Edmundsbury Borough Council.

Horringer Parish Council wish to comment on the above consultation as follows:-

1. **In principle, the parish council support the proposals, in that the merger of district/borough councils should allow for simpler, more straightforward efficiencies in the delivery of local government services.**
2. **Whilst the parish council supports the proposal generally, it is vital that service quality is not compromised. It is our experience that the quality of the service we receive from the borough council has, in recent years, been uneven. There is currently a need to address areas of poor service quality by the council and this proposed merger should examine its systems and procedures concurrently with the changes that are due to take place. This is essential if you are going to achieve the “high quality services” to which you aspire.**
3. **The Boundary Commission review referred to is supported as this should realise a reduction in the number of councillors and thus reduce costs.**
4. **No reference is made to the role or relationship with the County Council as a result of this process. An opportunity should present itself to improve co-ordination with SCC in the delivery of services to the public. A key example of which is highway matters.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal. The Parish Council would be happy to enlarge on these comments should you wish us to do so.

Yours truly,

Marilyn Bottomley

Clerk

KEDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

NEW SINGLE COUNCIL FOR WEST SUFFOLK

The “potential” savings of having a single council for West Suffolk are not great enough to make this proposed change worthwhile and the whole exercise is about cost cutting. The likely outcome will be confusion caused by re-structuring and a lower quality of service; by the time amalgamation is complete, it will be too late to go back in the same manner. Local services organised at a local level should always be more economic. If an administration area is too big, then it will cost more, as people will be spending more time travelling further to carry out their jobs, therefore delivering a more costly service.

The only saving in combining the two authorities is the £800,00 saving by having only one “council office” and reduction of staff under one roof. It is questionable whether a single council with combined buying power will be able to purchase cheaper services. Would a single council have the staff who are knowledgeable enough to know the problems in all the areas across the single council, again this is questionable and could lead to areas of the single council “losing” out on services they currently receive. Areas such as Haverhill and Kedington already lose out with just one council being in control, what would it be like with a new single council? The larger the authority, the more complicated it becomes and local areas will get neglected. Providing more infrastructure, jobs, housing, etc. with a “slimmed down” single council cannot be achieved. Different areas have their own particular needs and these needs will not be served with a single council where governance spans such a large area. It is highly unlikely that a single council would still be able to deliver local and tailored solutions but also have a large and unified voice to champion the aspirations of our communities nationally and to attract new businesses. How would Councillors from Forest Heath know what is needed locally in Kedington and vice-versa.

Getting local issues “aired” within the current governance is already difficult and a merger to a single council will only make this harder; this goes against local democracy taking power further away from the electorate. Our local services will get steadily worse whatever the structure, due to unpayable government debt.

Reading through the consultation paperwork and website there is little evidence to show what actual savings will be achieved. St Edmundsbury Borough Council’s current area has different issues to Forest Heath, for example, if RAF Mildenhall closes, this would have a huge impact in the Forest Heath area, but with a single council, St Edmundsbury’s area would have to absorb this impact as well. The draft business plans do not seem to highlight any “cons” just “pros”.

An independent review carried out by the Public Sector Executive has stated:

“The introduction of combined authorities has led to the structure of local government becoming too complicated to drive real change”. In a report released today by the National Audit Office (NAO), the new combined authorities were described as having inherently complex structures that had been added to England’s already complicated local government arrangements”.

Researchers also found that the evidence behind investment, decision-making and oversight at a sub-national level being linked to positive local economic outcomes was mixed and inconclusive.

The consultation of a single council seems to be somewhat rushed, when only one month has been allowed to collate all responses from local councils before a decision is taken at September's Full Council Meeting at St Edmundsbury.

KEDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL IS AGAINST A NEW SINGLE COUNCIL FOR WEST SUFFOLK

Signed: Marion Farrant

Marion Farrant – Parish Clerk

On behalf of Kedington Parish Council

Dated: 30 August 2017



Haverhill
Town Council

Alex Wilson

Director

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

West Suffolk House

Western Way

Bury St Edmunds

IP33 3YU

22nd August 2017

Dear Alex,

Haverhill Town Council response to the proposal for a single council for West Suffolk

Haverhill Town Council (HTC) submits the following responses to this consultation:

- a) Local decision-making: What is the proposal for a locality structure to serve the geographically dispersed communities? The 'summary of information' table on page 5 of the consultation document, suggests the creation of a single council for West Suffolk would give "greater focus on locality based working", but only identifies families and communities under that opportunity. However, given the perception of remoteness of decision-making that already exists within the populations of areas well away from Bury St Edmunds, there is a genuine concern that decisions on matters that are purely local rather than strategic, such as most planning applications, would be made by Councillors from such a wide geographic area who may have little or no knowledge of the community for whom they are making decisions. Could Haverhill have dedicated staff based in the town, such as a planning officer, given the level of workload generated by a large and expanding town? Staff could be embedded in the Town Council as a single point of contact but still be managed by and report to West Suffolk. Local planning committees could deal with planning applications that are referred to the delegation panel at the moment, reserving the large-scale, strategic or most controversial decisions for a council-wide planning committee, which would only meet when needed.

The argument often made against local determination of planning matters is that Haverhill, for example, is represented on the planning committee anyway and in practice Councillors from other areas give weight to the opinion of the local Councillors in these matters. This of course is also an argument for local determination, where more local councillors can be involved.

- b) Redundancies: There is a concern that the projected savings are going to be mainly achieved through redundancies focussed on Forest Heath, as the Council will centre itself on West

Suffolk House. What assistance can be given to employees as far as travel to Bury St Edmunds is concerned, so this is not a barrier to staff who live in an area where employment opportunities are not as plentiful as Bury St Edmunds. HTC recognises the constant pressure to make savings, but would ask that a holistic view is taken. Locality working across a broad range of services and responsibilities would maximise the opportunity for the new council to retain staff who are restricted by travel issues – and has green credentials too.

- c) Harmonisation of council tax levels: HTC expresses some surprise that this issue is included as a 'weak positive impact' within the consultation document. There is surely a negative impact on the precept, given the differences in levels of precept and reserves for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury. Can St Edmundsbury freeze council tax for that long without damaging services or depleting reserves? HTC believes that this issue needs to be set out transparently so that the public and Councillors know what the potential impacts are. Is there a potential for a legal challenge on merging reserves?

- d) Local Plan: How will the different shortage of housing supply be dealt with – will St Edmundsbury area have more houses to mitigate the shortfall in Forest Heath? Much more detail is needed on this matter than an acknowledgement that there is a 'need to continue to find new ways of increasing housing supply'.

HTC fully understands the arguments for a single council for West Suffolk and recognises the opportunities both for efficiencies but also for embracing a locality structure which balances financial efficiencies whilst maximising local decision making to result in a Council more rooted in its communities than the 1974-era top-down local government structures West Suffolk seeks to replace.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Poole

Town Clerk, Haverhill Town Council

Mildenhall Parish Council

Consultation Feedback on The Single Council proposal

The Single Council proposal was discussed as an agenda item at Full Council on Thursday 31st August 2017, with a view to submitting to Forest Heath some feedback from Councillors on their views.

A number of points were raised and can be summarised as follows:-

Concerns that there would be a loss of identity for Forest Heath and a new District would be dominated by Bury St Edmunds

There was a concern that the personnel numbers working locally would be reduced and jobs will be lost, that local services should not be diminished.

A comment was made about where this would end? Would large Districts then be joining up to make even bigger entities and all local identities would be lost?

It was acknowledged that savings could be made from a decision to join up and resilience for the future would be strengthened, considering ever more challenging finances.

A key point was made by several members about the protection of democracy in the local area, that no one wanted to see a loss of representation of local people and issues because of this type of change.

There was a specific query about how Planning would work in a single much larger District. That local knowledge and representation should not be lost. Whether an east and west approach to planning would be retained to protect the current processes?

Kind Regards

Chris Emmerson

Deputy Clerk

Chris Emmerson

Mildenhall Parish Council

The Pavilion

Recreation Way

Mildenhall

Suffolk

IP28 7HG

Dear Sir or Madam,

Having seen the steps that you have already taken to lead and deliver services to the wider area of St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath, it makes complete sense now to follow through and become a single authority.

We would like to see any financial benefits derived from the consolidation reinvested in our communities, to drive economic growth and ensure important services such as Affordable Housing provision keep pace with the demands of the area.

Kind regards

Karen Mayhew | Chief Executive | The Havebury Housing Partnership

Havebury House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3SP

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31 King Street
Norwich
Norfolk
NR1 1PD

Wednesday 9 August 2017

Dear Mr Wilson,

I am writing to you in relation to the proposed merger of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils.

In May of this year Councillors John Griffiths and James Waters kindly wrote to me outlining the financial and structural challenges faced by their councils. In order to continue to invest in and support the communities they serve they go on to state their intention to investigate the option of forming a single council at the district/borough level.

On behalf of Flagship Group I would like to express our support for the principle of a merged council that if adopted, will be in a stronger position to deliver vital public services.

This is of particular interest to Flagship Group as we have strong roots in the community. We currently have approximately 3,500 homes across the proposed West Suffolk council. Our primary concern is the delivery of homes and services to our customers and we welcome the opportunity to increase collaboration between our organisations to further this aim.

We would be keen to hear the results of the engagement period and output from the steering group. The opportunity to contribute to the comprehensive planning stage in the run up to elections in May 2019 would be very welcome.

We look forward to continuing to work with the councils to deliver the best possible service to the people of West Suffolk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David McQuade', written over a thin horizontal line.

David McQuade
CEO
Flagship Group

21st August 2017

Ian Gallin
Chief Executive
St Edmundsbury Borough Council & Forest Heath
District Council
West Suffolk House
Western Way Council Offices
College Heath Road
BURY ST EDMUNDS
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

Chief Executive's Office
West Suffolk Hospital
Hardwick Lane
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 2QZ

Tel: 01284 713538

www.wsh.nhs.uk

Dear Ian

Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

I am writing in response to your letter dated 27 July 2017 regarding the proposal to look at the creation of a new single council for West Suffolk, replacing Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

The basis of the proposal from the Councils' perspective is very much aligned with our own strategy for the integration of health and care. This is evidenced through the shift in the delivery of community services aligned to the west of Suffolk and the structure of an Integrated Care System (ICS) for West Suffolk.

The opportunity the proposal presents to further strengthen integration and joint-working is most welcome and is something we wholeheartedly support.

The offer in your letter to meet to ensure we translate these opportunities into delivery would be most welcome. Perhaps we could schedule some time in the coming weeks to further consider the opportunities the proposal presents.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours sincerely



Dr Stephen Dunn
Chief Executive



integrated working



West Suffolk
Clinical Commissioning Group

West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 3YU
Tel: 01284 758010

Direct Dial: 01473 770048

Email: ed.garratt@suffolk.nhs.uk

www.westsuffolkccg.nhs.uk

Date: 14 September 2017

Ian Gallin

Chief Executive

St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council

Via email

Dear Ian

Many thanks for sharing your document on the future of local government in West Suffolk.

The local NHS is very supportive of the proposal you set out.

We are very keen that we continue to build on the transformation work that we are driving together, such as Buurtzorg. In time we think there is possibility for local government in West Suffolk to develop further the community services alliance that launches in October.

I am sure we will continue to discuss these and other ideas in our regular meetings.

Yours sincerely

Ed Garratt
Chief Accountable Officer
NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group



24th August 2017

Ian Gallin

Chief Executive Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils

Dear Mr Gallin

Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds about the proposal to form a single new council for West Suffolk, replacing Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. At its meeting on 20th July the Theatre Royal Board considered this proposal and decided unanimously that it was strongly in support of the creation of a single new council for West Suffolk.

We agree that a single council will carry more weight in dealing with third parties, in particular central government and its various arms length bodies, including those concerned with arts funding. In addition however we feel that the proposed new council will offer opportunities for the Theatre further to extend its reach into the Forest Heath area. As I am sure you are aware we have been making real progress in getting performing arts into the local communities we serve and the Children's Arts Festival in particular has been an outstanding success in this regard – involving over 35 schools and reaching 4000 young people. We have also been active in engaging with disadvantaged groups, for example the Women's Refuge in Bury St Edmunds. We see lots of opportunities for this sort of initiative across the broader West Suffolk area and welcome the opportunity to do so.

Over the years we have had a very good relationship with St Edmundsbury Borough Council and we look forward to developing a similarly strong and productive relationship with the new council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen E. Simpson'.

Karen Simpson

Artistic Director and Chief Executive Officer

Roger Quince

Chair of Board of Trustee

Mr Ian Gallin
Chief Executive
West Suffolk Councils
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
IP33 3YU



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Founded 1971
www.theburysociety.org.uk

16th August 2017

Dear Sir,

The Bury Society is very concerned about the possibility of Bury St Edmunds losing its Borough status. I believe you have stated "that you are seeking advice about the application process so that, once West Suffolk becomes a District Council, it can apply for Borough status". This, the Bury Society is glad to hear from someone such as yourself in your role as Chief Executive.

Another suggestion put forward is that the Town Council applies for Borough status before the District Council is created. However, it is decided, the town to lose its Borough status is unthinkable, it is part of our heritage given in 1606 by James 1st.

I enclose the current Bury Society Review which has an article on the front page detailing the society's concerns. On behalf of the society I would like to thank you for your consideration of all of the forthcoming discussions and issues which surrounds the future of Bury St Edmunds as a Borough.

Your sincerely,

Martyn Taylor
Chairman- The Bury St Edmunds Society
01284 703495
E-mail martyn_taylor@tiscali.co.uk

RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD TEBBIT CH

Churchgate House, Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1RD

Tel: 01284 750 404

29 June 2017

Cllr John Griffiths
Leader
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Dear John,

I should have replied before now to your letter of 11 May on the future of local government in West Suffolk.

I strongly believe as do you and Cllr Waters that the informal merger of recent times has worked well, but your proposal for a new single West Suffolk Council would put the two existing local government units in a much better position amidst other possible mergers in the region.

Should that come to pass I would happily give it my support here and at Westminster.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Griffiths', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.