

Future form of local government for Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils - Options Appraisal

Scoring:

With associated colour codes:

Strong positive impact = 2

Fairly positive impact = 1

Fairly negative impact = -1

Strong negative impact = -2

	Impact on local public services	Significant cost savings	Greater value for money	Stronger and more accountable local leadership	Sustainability in the medium to long term
1. Do nothing – make no changes to existing Council positions	Puts services at risk as it ignores the financial challenges both Councils currently face	Doesn't offer any cost savings	Offers no further opportunity to improve services or deliver savings	Will leave leadership as is but increasingly policy and service choices will be reduced with limited financial resources available	Not sustainable in the medium to longer term and would create clear potential for Council failure
2. Revert to working as two separate councils	Would increase costs and thereby worsen financial position and threaten service delivery	Doesn't offer any cost savings and indeed is likely to increase costs	Offers no further opportunity to improve services or deliver savings	Will leave leadership as is but increasingly policy and service choices will be reduced owing to limited financial resources	Not sustainable in the medium to longer term and would create clear potential for Council failure
3. Expand partnership working to work with other partner Councils	Could enhance service delivery but adds extra risk of complexity; also need willing partners.	Could deliver cost savings depending on the partners.	Could deliver significant efficiencies. Complex partnership arrangements might however undermine benefits	Would tend to make leadership more opaque and so reduce opportunity to strengthen clear local leadership; hindered also by lack of other willing partners	Significant risk of divergent agendas between a wider number of partner Councils

	Impact on local public services	Significant cost savings	Greater value for money	Stronger and more accountable local leadership	Sustainability in the medium to long term
4. Continue to expand sharing services between Stratford DC and Warwick DC, but do not merge politically.	Could enhance service delivery and help to ensure resilience	Would deliver significant cost savings	Would deliver significant savings and help to cut out duplication; deliver efficiencies; and improve resilience	More joint decisions between 2 separate Councils could reduce democratic accountability. Also carries risk of divergent and clashing leadership priorities.	Improves sustainability but this could be undermined by the risk of divergent agendas of the Councils
5. Create a new single district council for South Warwickshire	Would deliver benefits of economies of scale, improved service resilience and a stronger financial position. Better able to work more closely with wider public sector for South Warwickshire. Able to work at place level given the cohesiveness of South Warwickshire as an area.	Would deliver enhanced significant cost savings. Transitional costs paid back over a short period of time. Need to harmonise council tax levels - £27 difference on band D	Would optimise efficiencies and savings with delivery of them in short to medium term.	Clear opportunity for strong leadership, strong partnerships and greater focus on locality working alongside communities. Would enable closer working with other agencies over South Warwickshire – e.g., community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism.	Opportunity to create a very resilient form of local government in the future due to optimal scale and ability to attract and manage growth and investment.

	Impact on local public services	Significant cost savings	Greater value for money	Stronger and more accountable local leadership	Sustainability in the medium to long term
6. Create a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire	Would deliver benefits of economies of scale, improved service resilience and a stronger financial position. Better able to work more closely with wider public sector for South Warwickshire. Able to work at place level given the cohesiveness of South Warwickshire as an area.	Would deliver enhanced significant cost savings. Transitional costs paid back over a short period of time. Need to harmonise council tax levels - £27 difference on band D between Stratford and Warwick. Savings would take longer to be delivered which is a risk to services.	Would optimise efficiencies and savings in medium to longer term but not in short/medium term.	Clear opportunity for strong leadership, strong partnerships and greater focus on locality working alongside communities. As above would enable closer working relationships across South Warwickshire – e.g., climate change; community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism.	Opportunity to create a very resilient form of local government in the future due to optimal scale and ability to attract and manage growth and investment. This option though is not deliverable at this stage and would require an invitation from government.
7. Create a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire and join the WMCA	Would deliver benefits of economies of scale, improved service resilience and a stronger financial position. Better able to work more closely with wider public sector for South Warwickshire. Able to work at place level given the cohesiveness of South Warwickshire as an area. Also, would be of a scale to work at a regional level on transport and economy matters.	Would deliver enhanced significant cost savings. Transitional costs paid back over a short period of time. Need to harmonise council tax levels - £27 difference on band D between Stratford and Warwick. Savings would take longer to be delivered which is a risk to services.	Would optimise efficiencies and savings in medium to longer term but not in short/medium term.	Clear opportunity for strong leadership, strong partnerships and greater focus on locality working alongside communities. As above would enable closer working relationships across South Warwickshire – e.g., climate change; community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism. Would work at a regional level with Mayoral Authority.	Opportunity to create a very resilient form of local government in the future due to optimal scale and ability to attract and manage growth and investment. This option though is not deliverable at this stage and would require an invitation from government.

	Impact on local public services	Significant cost savings	Greater value for money	Stronger and more accountable local leadership	Sustainability in the medium to long term
8. Create a Unitary Council for the whole of Warwickshire	Would deliver benefits of economies of scale, improved service resilience and a stronger financial position. Better able to work more closely with wider public sector for Warwickshire – e.g., climate change; community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism. Much less able to work at place level across the divergent localities that exists in Warwickshire.	Would deliver enhanced significant cost savings. Transitional costs higher and paid back over a longer period of time. Need to harmonise council tax levels across County - a £100 difference on Band D for SDC and £75 for WDC compared to the highest level elsewhere in the County. Savings would take longer to be delivered which is a risk to services.	Would provide very significant savings and efficiencies in medium to longer term but not in short/medium term.	Clear opportunity for a single leadership for the county. As above would enable closer working relationships across South Warwickshire – e.g., climate change; community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism. Scale and diversity of county area would require other structures to be put in place to allow for locality working adding to complexity and opaqueness to local democracy.	Opportunity to create a very resilient form of local government in the future due to optimal scale and ability to attract and manage growth and investment. This option though is not deliverable at this stage and would require an invitation from government.
9. Create a Unitary Council for the whole of Warwickshire and join the WMCA	Would deliver benefits of economies of scale, improved service resilience and a stronger financial position. Better able to work more closely with wider public sector for Warwickshire – e.g., climate change; community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism. Also, would be of a scale to work at a	Would deliver enhanced significant cost savings. Transitional costs higher and paid back over a longer period of time. Need to harmonise council tax levels across County - a £100 difference on Band D for SDC and £75 for WDC compared to the highest level elsewhere in the County. Savings would take longer to be delivered which is a risk to services.	Would provide very significant savings and efficiencies in medium to longer term but not in short/medium term.	Clear opportunity for a single leadership for the county. As above would enable closer working relationships across South Warwickshire – e.g., climate change; community safety; health and well-being; economy; tourism. Scale and diversity of county area would however, require other structures to be put in place to allow for locality	Opportunity to create a very resilient form of local government in the future due to optimal scale and ability to attract and manage growth and investment. This option though is not deliverable at this stage and would require an invitation from government

	regional level on transport and economy matters. However, much less able to work at place level across the divergent localities that exists in Warwickshire.			working adding to complexity and opaqueness to local democracy. Would work at a regional level with Mayoral Authority.	
10. Set up Private Sector Company to deliver all local services on behalf of SDC and WDC	Has the potential to deliver lower cost services but has not been proven.	Potential to lower costs but as yet unproven on a large scale.	Unclear as to whether it would deliver better value for money services but has potential.	Creates a gap between local democratic leaderships and service delivery.	The sustainability of this model is unproven at scale and so represents a significant risk.

Overall Score

Option	Overall Score
1. Do nothing – make no changes to existing Council positions	-8
2. Revert to working as two separate councils	-9
3. Expand partnership working to work with other partner Councils	1
4. Continue to expand sharing services between Stratford DC and Warwick DC, but do not merge politically.	5
5. Create a new single district council for South Warwickshire	10
6. Create a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire	9
7. Create a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire and join the WMCA	9
8. Create a Unitary Council for the whole of Warwickshire	6
9. Create a Unitary Council for the whole of Warwickshire and join the WMCA	6
10. Set up Private Sector Company to deliver all local services on behalf of SDC and WDC	3

Conclusion on each option:

1. Do nothing – make no changes to existing Council positions
Given the scale of the challenges faced by both Councils on the financial front and the strong desire to deliver services, this option nothing to help meet those challenges and so has been discounted as an option going forward.
2. Revert to working as two separate councils
As per option 1, undoing the existing level of shared working would serve to increase costs and would offer no other opportunity to maintain or improve services and so has been discounted.
3. Expand partnership working to work with other partner Councils
Whilst this option has some merits it also offers increased levels of complexity and risk, any wider partnership would not have the same link to the economy of South Warwickshire. The absence of other willing partners at this stage also means it is an undeliverable option.
4. Continue to expand sharing services between Stratford DC and Warwick DC, but do not merge politically.
This option has a wide range of benefits and is in progress but the lack of a political union involved would create risks of very differing agendas and over a longer term be difficult to manage and maintain the benefits. There also remains the risk that the partnership could be reversed which would undo the financial savings that would be delivered.
5. Create a new single district council for South Warwickshire
This option would deliver the maximum level of savings and ability to maintain service delivery in the shortest possible time. It best meets the 5 tests of all options and is deliverable by SDC and WDC, unlike option 4, this approach would be almost impossible to reverse.
6. Create a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire
This option is very close to the option above although the benefits could be greater, however, this option is not within the gift of SDC and WDC alone to deliver so has been discounted at this stage. However, if the Government so decided then this is an option that could be progressed to from option 5.
7. Create a Unitary Council for South Warwickshire and join the WMCA
This option is very close to the option above although the benefits could be greater, however, this option is not within the gift of SDC and WDC alone to deliver so has been discounted at this stage. However, if the Government so decided then this is an option that could be progressed to from option 5. This option also considers the potential benefits of seeking membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority.
8. Create a Unitary Council for the whole of Warwickshire
This option offers a wide range of benefit but its scale (serving a population of almost 600,000 and the significant differential in needs and in council tax levels across the county make for a dilution of relationships at a local community and an inability to work well at local place level. Again, at this stage this option is not available in any case as it requires a specific invitation from central government.
9. Create a Unitary Council for the whole of Warwickshire and join the WMCA
This option offers a wide range of benefit but its scale (serving a population of almost 600,000 and the significant differential in needs and in council tax levels across the county make for a dilution of relationships at a local community and an inability to work well at local place level. Again, at this stage this option is not available in any case as it requires a specific invitation from central government. This option also considers the potential benefits of seeking membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority.
10. Set up Private Sector Company to deliver all local services on behalf of SDC and WDC
This option could offer benefits but on this scale is unproven and so represents significant risk. It would also dilute the local democratic leadership link to service provision so for these reasons it has been discounted as a way forward.