

NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

29th October, 2025

An Extraordinary Council meeting of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council was held on Wednesday, 29th October 2025.

Present

Deputy Mayor Councillor T. Sheppard

Councillors, E. Amaechi, J. Bonner, D. Brown, A. Bull, T. Cooper, S. Croft, L. Cvetkovic, J. Gutteridge, W. Hancox, S. Hey, P. Hickling, B. Hughes, T. Jenkins, N. King, M. Kondakor, S. Markham, W. Markham, B. Pandher, C. Phillips, K. Price, R. Roze, J. Sheppard, R. Smith, C. Smith, T. Venson, C. Watkins, K. Wilson and M. Wright.

Apologies were received for Councillors M. Bird, J. Collett, S. Dhillon, A. Khangura, B. Saru (Mayor) and M. Walsh

Absent (Apologies not received) for Councillors J. Clarke, M. Etienne, J. Hartshorn

CL35 **Declarations of Interests**

RESOLVED that the Declarations of Interests for this meeting are as set out in the schedule available to view on the website.

CL36 **Announcements**

None

CL37 **Public Participation**

Question 1 – County Councillor George Finch made the following statement:

Despite how strongly in opposition some of us may be about the concept of Local Government Reorganisation, one thing is for sure, it's happening.

The duty that rests with all of us who are elected at Borough level and at County level, to put forward our recommendations to the Government on what form LGR should take, and to do so while acting in our residents' best interests.

Here in Warwickshire, it's a straight choice: either we split into two smaller unitaries - one in the North, covering Nuneaton and Bedworth, North Warwickshire, and Rugby and one in the South, seeing to the needs of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick.

Or we can unite as one strong authority for the whole county.

I am sure that there are many people in this chamber who are pushing for that two-unitary split, but after careful consideration and a review of the evidence, I firmly believe that it would be a bad idea that would rip our County apart, gamble with our financial future, and put our most vulnerable residents at risk.

Let's first turn to the economic argument, because that's what hits our residents hardest.

The independent Deloitte review, paid for by the districts themselves, shows that a single unitary saves an extra £2.5 million a year compared to the two-model split, with a minimum of £57 million in savings over five years.

That's cash we can pump into fixing potholes, supporting children's services, or easing the SEND crisis that's already leaving us with a provision deficit of £70 million per year which is set to balloon to £150 million next year.

With two unitaries, we'd just duplicate everything; two bosses, two back offices, two of everything.

Wasting taxpayer money on an expansion of bureaucracy when local residents are already struggling with spiralling costs and regularly face challenges to put food on the table.

That's not value for money; that's out of date thinking from the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and the Labour Party, who have no political future in Warwickshire.

Warwickshire is one county, a united family with a shared history, economy and its shared challenges.

People argue that a north-south split would be better for the people of Warwickshire. That's abject nonsense that ignores how we're all connected, from our transport systems to our health partnerships and economic plans.

Two smaller unitaries mean weaker voices in future devolution deals, less clout regionally and nationally, and means real risks of unequal services.

Higher deprivation in the North will mean higher council taxes and worse outcomes from services there.

Widening gaps instead of closing them.

The people of the North who would be hit the hardest by a North-South split. A new North Warwickshire Unitary Authority will find itself hit with a smaller, less dynamic local economy.

An economy that will not be big enough or strong enough to provide the firepower a new North Warwickshire Unitary Authority would need to be able to fund vital local services to cater to a population with much higher needs, in terms of SEND and Adult Social Care.

This is a chance for us to create a simpler, more sustainable local government for our residents.

Reorganisation isn't optional, but my priority, as it should be for all of us, is getting the best deal for the people of Warwickshire.

Improving value for money, ensuring consistent, high-quality services, and standing up for a united county.

A single unitary does that; anything else sells all our residents short.

Thank you.

Councillor C. Watkins, Leader of the Council, responded as follows

Thank you, County Councillor George Finch, for your statement, your comments have been noted.

Question 2 – County Councillor Keith Kondakor asked the following question:

Clearly the best outcome for Nuneaton and Bedworth would be the forming of a single Warwickshire unitary council, based in Nuneaton and Bedworth which would bring jobs and some prosperity back to our Borough. This would be the cheapest option but it is not on the table.

Clearly the worst outcome for Nuneaton and Bedworth would be the forming of a

single unitary council very much based in Warwick with significant disadvantage to some residents of our Borough. If we are forced down this road then we need robust measures to counter any disadvantages in the new structure. This would require the new authority to have significant local presence and local access to services, local jobs and local access to democracy.

The two unitary option is not going to be easy without fair funding for the less well-off part of Warwickshire in the arrangements. We would clearly need to share some services such as waste and fire to get scale but could have a reasonably sized unitary council that better meets the needs of this borough.

This is all down to what the current Labour government selects and giving us fair long-term funding.

I need to ask the current leader of the Council what discussions he is undertaking with the 3 local MPs and his party so that we could get a fair funding system in place to make two unitary model of local Government in Warwickshire viable?

Councillor C. Watkins, Leader of the Council, responded as follows

Thank you for your question, I am having regular meetings with the MPs and have met with John Slinger MP this week. These meetings will be ongoing.

CL38 Local Government Re-organisation

A report by the Chief Executive was submitted to provide an update on Local Government re-organisation ahead of the statutory submission deadline in November. The report summaries previous work and includes a full business case by Deloitte and outlines the rationale for a two unitary structure in Warwickshire.

Councillor C. Watkins moved the following recommendations:

The Council:

a) notes the preference expressed on 2nd July 2025 for a two unitary authority model, which was subject to the development and presentation of a business case.

b) further notes that the business case has now been presented for consideration and Council therefore resolves to support the proposal for a two unitary model, comprising:

- *North Warwickshire Unitary Authority: encompassing North Warwickshire Borough, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough, and Rugby Borough.*
- *South Warwickshire Unitary Authority: encompassing Warwick District and Stratford District.*

c) in line with recommendation 2.2(a), recommend the above position to Cabinet for formal consideration and approval including recommendation 2.2 (b) and 2.2 (c) of the report; and

d) Request that Cabinet take into account any comments or views expressed by Council at this meeting when making its decision.

e) Requests that Cabinet:

- *in its submission to Government, clearly state its opposition to Warwickshire County Council being designated as the continuing authority in the event that a single unitary model is adopted; and*
- *notes the Council's view that any new council established under such a model should be treated as a new entity, reflecting the extent of its new powers and responsibilities. It is essential that this new authority is founded on a legitimate democratic mandate, and that all existing authorities are recognised and represented as equal partners in any transitional arrangements.*

Councillor K. Wilson seconded the motion

Councillor K. Wilson moved a procedural motion to suspend standing orders to allow the Leaders of the Labour, Conservative and Green Groups to speak on this item without the 5 minute time limit.

Councillor S. Markham seconded the procedural motion

A vote was taken

The procedural motion was carried.

A vote was taken on the substantive motion moved by Councillor C. Watkins

The motion was unanimously agreed

RESOLVED that this Council

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- b) further notes that the business case has now been presented for consideration and Council therefore resolves to support the proposal for a two unitary model, comprising:
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Mayor