



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
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Dear Ian,

20th April 2021

Thank you for your letter of 16 April, following our recent telephone conversation.

As you recognise, it is of the utmost importance to me that I approach my decision making about the two unitary proposals for Somerset in a manner that is unambiguously clearly in line with all legal requirements and is, and is seen to be, scrupulously fair.

It is for this reason that I responded as I have done to the letter which the district council leaders sent to me on 6 April about their proposal to hold some sort of poll. Whilst recognising that it is for the district councils to decide how to proceed, having regard to all the circumstances, including legal and propriety requirements and value for money for local tax payers, I made clear in my letter that in my view that the councils would be best advised to concentrate on further promoting the statutory consultation on which there has already been a very significant number of responses.

For these reasons, it would also not be right, as I hope you will appreciate, for me to indicate that I would consider departing from the timetable which all expect me to follow, namely to announce my decision before the summer. You refer to altering the timetable for a few short weeks but such an alteration, given the summer recess, could risk a considerable delay of months which itself could risk having elections in May 2022 to any shadow or continuing authorities.

Finally, I would mention that the consultation finishes at the close of Monday 19 April and that for Somerset we have thousands of responses which we will consider very carefully.

I understand that the district councils have yet to decide how to proceed.

*Yours,
Robert*

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP