

WARWICKSHIRE North / South



Shaping the future of our Councils

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Introduction

Central government plans to restructure local government. It aims to remove the current two-tiers of county, district and borough councils and replace them with a single tier of councils, called unitary councils. Four of the five local borough and district councils across Warwickshire have united to reach a preferred option: to split the county in half with a single council in the north and a single council in the south of Warwickshire. Rugby Borough Council has yet to make a decision.

Warwickshire currently has six councils which make up the two tier structure:

- **Tier 1**
 - Warwickshire County Council
- **Tier 2**
 - North Warwickshire Borough Council
 - Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
 - Rugby Borough Council
 - Stratford-on-Avon District Council
 - Warwick District Council

These councils are responsible for a wide range of local services from housing, planning, and social care for children and adults; to collecting and disposing of waste and recycling, maintaining roads, and running libraries.

This document explains how the councils have reached their preferred option and will also provide you with the information you need to understand what the changes mean to you, so that you can share your views with us in our questionnaire which will be available from 7 August until 14 September 2025. The information collected will be considered together with the other evidence, to help the councils put together their final recommendation in November 2025.





All the councils in Warwickshire received a letter from government on 5 February 2025 asking them to submit proposals for restructuring local government.

In response, the five district and borough councils, have reviewed possible options for a smaller number of new unitary authorities to deliver council services across our area. This initial review of options was called an "interim plan", and this was approved in mid-March by all five district and borough councils, the detail for this can be found [here](#). Warwickshire County Council also developed its own "interim plan" which can also be found [here](#).



How are the local councils organised now?

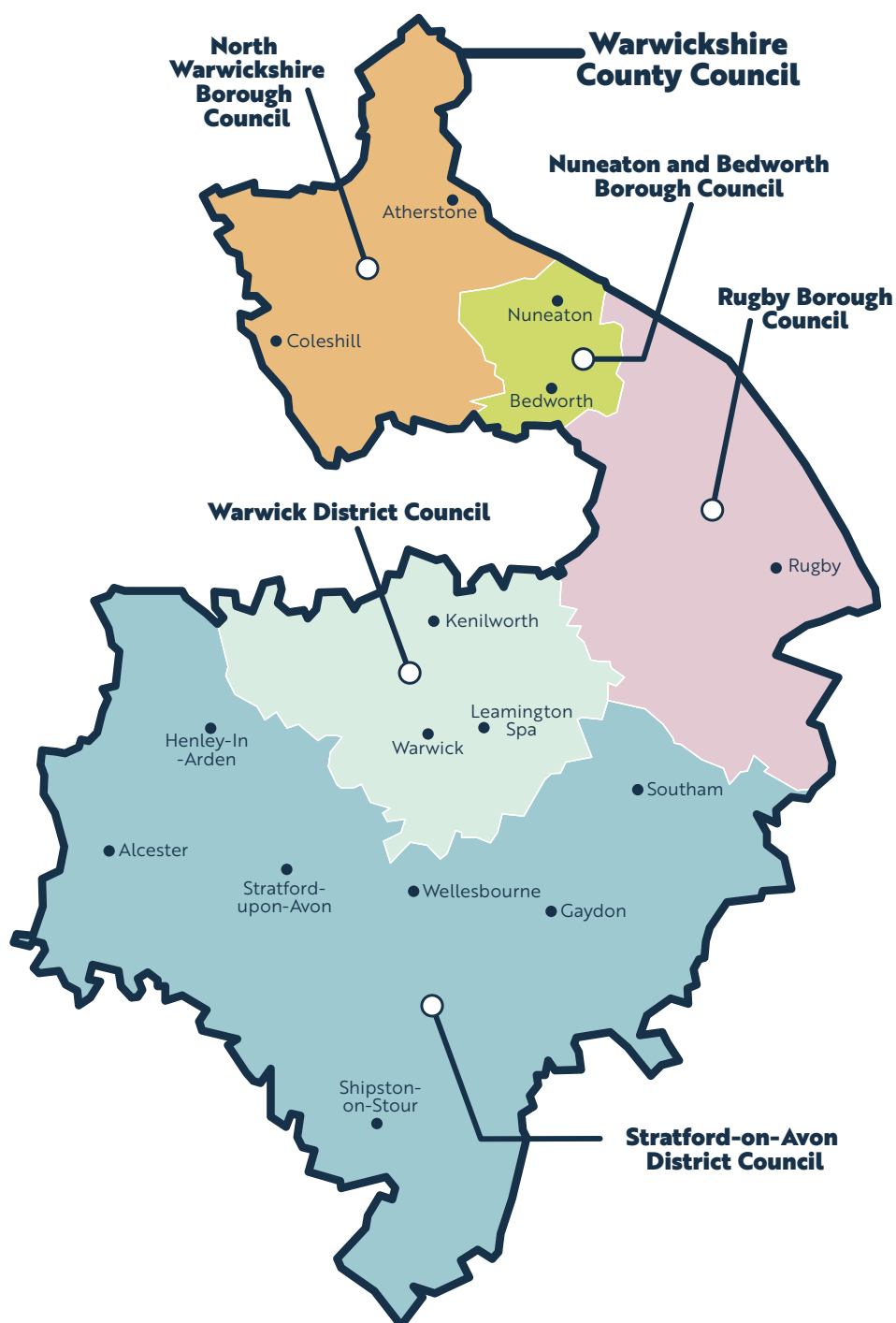
There are currently six councils across Warwickshire, plus many parish and town councils. All the services you receive are divided between the county council, and the five district and borough councils.

Warwickshire County Council provides services for residents across the whole of the county, including education, social care for children and adults, highways, fire services and some environmental services.

The five district and borough councils – North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council – provide services for residents in their local areas including housing, planning, and waste collection.

Each of the six councils is independent, has its own political leadership and senior management team, and sets its own share of the council tax bill. Together, they have 257 councillors.

This map shows the current structure of local government in Warwickshire.



Why are changes being considered?

In December 2024, the government published a “Devolution White Paper” [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) in which it stated that all two-tier areas in England should be restructured into single-tier unitary authorities. The government believes that change is needed to make local government simpler and more efficient and invited the six councils to work together on a plan to achieve this.

At the same time, the government also wants to create a network of strategic authorities, made up of two or more unitary authorities with each being run by an elected mayor.

Strategic authorities would be responsible for planning things like transport, housing and economic growth over the longer term. They would make decisions on important issues and receive funding direct from government for large scale schemes and projects.

There were two options identified for future unitary authorities in Warwickshire within this plan:

a. A single unitary authority for the whole county of Warwickshire. The latest population estimate for 2024 of this Council would be 632,207.

b. Two unitary authorities in Warwickshire, these being made up as follows:

- i. The north: which includes the boroughs of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby. This area would have an estimated population of 331,060.
- ii. The south: which includes the districts of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. The population for this area is estimated to be 301,147.

The option for two unitary authorities is favoured by the district and borough councils of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. Rugby Borough Council has yet to decide. Further information on these options can be seen on page 9.



Why is it time for change?

Across the country, there are 21 county council areas, within which there are 164 district and borough councils. Over the last 30 years there have been several changes to the structure of local government nationally and successive governments have supported moves towards unitary councils. This has been the case in Buckinghamshire, Cumbria, Dorset, Northamptonshire, and Somerset which have already moved to unitary structures.

With the prospect of the setting up of strategic authorities across the whole of England, the government believes further change is needed to ensure consistency across the whole country..

While the two-tier system of local government has served communities well for years, Warwickshire councils recognise that the proposals offer an opportunity to make things simpler. Indeed, there is often confusion from residents about which council provides which services. In late 2020, a pre-consultation on options for local government in Warwickshire took place. Two-thirds of residents who were surveyed agreed with the idea of replacing the two-tier system with two single-tier (unitary) councils to run local government services across Warwickshire.

The five district and borough councils of Warwickshire have collaborated on an interim plan that would abolish the existing six councils and create two new unitary councils, which they believe would:

- Ensure our communities stay connected to the council.
- Simplify services and offer clarity on who provides them.
- Balance the size of the council with addressing the diverse needs of residents.
- Build on the strengths of the district and borough councils in working with local people.



What options have been considered by the district and borough councils?

Two options for unitary government in Warwickshire have been considered:

1. A new single county-wide unitary council for Warwickshire
2. Two new unitary councils for north and south Warwickshire

The district and borough councils commissioned external consultants, Deloitte, to review these two options against the six criteria that the government will use for their final decision. New unitary structures should aim to:

- achieve a single tier of local government for the whole area.
- be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial challenges.
- prioritise high quality and sustainable public services.
- show how councils in the area have worked together to meet local needs and are informed by local views.
- support devolution arrangements.
- enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Following this independent evaluation, the report concluded that the option which scored highest was the proposal for two unitary councils. The full report from Deloitte can be found on our website <https://shapingourcouncils.co.uk>.

Deloitte found that one of the six criteria, around financial savings, favoured the option of a single new unitary authority covering the whole of Warwickshire. However, with a combined turnover of almost £1bn, the difference between the two options was relatively small, around £3m per year.

On the other five criteria, Deloitte concluded that the option of creating two new unitary authorities scored higher. Some benefits supporting this included:

- The north and south of the county have different economies, which would be difficult to merge.
- The approach ensures councils can respond quickly to local needs and build stronger community relationships.
- The two-unitary model maintains a sense of real place and community.
- The current county council area of Warwickshire is not seen as a coherent single place.
- A two-unitary model is best for Warwickshire as it balances size with a focus on responding to local needs.

Preferred option – two unitary councils

The Councils of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick have all determined that their preferred option for future local government structures is the two-unitary option which would divide Warwickshire into two halves, north and south, as the map shows..

This structure would be more suitable for our communities, because it is found to best reflect the way people live and work in the area, it matches housing and service demands, and supports existing strong links between towns in the north and south, and their relationship with the wider economy.

It is expected that the population of our communities will continue to grow. Government has recently published updated forecasts which show that by 2047, both a north and south Warwickshire unitary would have a population larger than most current unitary authorities.



Services provided by our councils

Town & Parish Councils

- local amenities such as footpaths, cemeteries and small parks as well as events

- parks and green spaces
- elections
- sports and leisure centres and facilities

District & Borough Councils

- housing and homelessness
- environmental health
- community protection
- CCTV
- planning
- building control
- waste collections
- car parking
- licensing

County Council

- adult social care
- highways and transport
- libraries
- public health
- fire and rescue
- children's services
- special educational needs and disabilities
- waste disposal

Before final decisions from the district and borough councils, and ahead of the submission to government in November, additional research is needed to understand how existing services which cover the whole county, could instead be delivered by two separate new unitary authorities.

Analysis of adult social care, children's services, special educational needs and disabilities and fire and rescue services by independent consultants has found that there are opportunities to change the way in which they are delivered to reduce cost and demand by using a more local approach. It would be important for the two unitaries to:

- Become more financially stable through this change.
- Reduce demand on these services by targeting prevention and early intervention on a local level.
- Make the best use of our community assets in each area when targeting prevention and early initiatives.

The government is concerned about additional cost and maintaining the quality of these services under a two-unitary option.

Chesterton Windmill, Chesterton



Miners' Welfare Park, Bedworth

Warwickshire County Council's proposal

Warwickshire County Council's interim plan identifies the same two options for future unitary structures. This plan can be found on their website **here**: <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1980322935-3102>

The County Council evaluated both options at the interim stage and concluded: ***"It is clear that unitary government will bring benefits; greater accountability, simplified governance, greater efficiencies, improved accessibility and joined up service delivery. It is also clear, as shown in the evidence, that a single unitary authority for Warwickshire delivers the most benefits when assessed against the Government's criteria"***

What does reorganisation mean for you?

How would council tax be affected?

When a new authority is created, the amount paid within each council tax band must (after a period) be equalised across the whole area. This means that your council tax rates may go up or down.

The council tax component for the county council is the same across the whole of the county area, this stands at £1,822.95 (for a typical Band D property). However, the level of council tax for the district and boroughs varies from £169.12 to £271.47 (for a typical Band D property). This is a difference of over £100.

2025/26 Council Tax (Band D)	
North Warwickshire	£242.75
Nuneaton	£271.47
Rugby	£223.53
Stratford	£169.12
Warwick	£187.60

For the proposed North Warwickshire unitary the difference between the highest and lowest council tax currently paid by a typical Band D property is £47.94, and in the proposed South Warwickshire Unitary the difference is only £18.48.

Under unitary arrangements, the level of council tax would (after a period of time) need to be the same across the whole of the unitary authority area. In the future, the new councils will decide on the council tax levels, however, with the two-unitary structure, council tax levels are not expected to change significantly.

What about accessing Council services?

The two-unitary proposal would mean that for the first time all residents, businesses and organisations would have one council in their area to contact for most services, from bins to social care to planning and roads.

Under the findings of the Deloitte report, whilst a single unitary council is likely to deliver slightly more savings this would cover a very large area and could be seen as being too far away from the communities that it would serve.



What would be the impact on the number of councillors?

To achieve the government's objective of streamlining councils, it is expected that the two new unitary authorities in the north and south would have around 60 councillors each. If the government went ahead with a single unitary council it is expected that there would be around 114 councillors.

Under both proposals the result would be a significant reduction (over 50%) in the number of elected members, from the existing 257 councillors. Currently in district and borough councils there are on average 2,244 residents per councillor, under the new proposals this would increase to almost 4,000.

The new unitary authorities would work closely with parish and town councils. In addition, the new councils would provide new ways of working closely with local communities. This could be through neighbourhood committees, (these provide a link between residents and councils, to discuss local issues and work on improving their local community) which would be held throughout each unitary council. Subject to local views, opportunities would be explored to create new town or parish councils to represent communities where there are none at present.

What would be the impact on existing council staff?

There is likely to be a reduction in the number of senior leadership positions, which will contribute to some of the predicted financial savings. It is expected that the majority of employees will continue to work for the proposed new councils as the level of service for our residents remains the same.

What would be the impact on protection and support for the vulnerable?

We will be liaising with users of these services before we make our final decision on what we believe to be the best structure.

These services are extremely important to our residents, and we have commissioned further research to help decide on the best structure to support our residents most in need. We intend to implement structures which would support stronger partnership working and allow a greater focus on prevention. We expect that a local approach from two unitary councils in Warwickshire would be more responsive and accessible to local needs than a single, larger council covering all of Warwickshire.



Coleshill, North Warwickshire

What other benefits could there be?

The two-unitary proposal would require a complete review of the way in which services are delivered across the county area. Such a review would need to be carefully undertaken to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities are protected through a period of change. It is expected that the new councils would work with planning, housing, health and community safety to develop a local multi-agency approach at the heart of the community. This is an approach that a single large council covering the whole area could not achieve.

Our proposed model aims to achieve the right balance: it's large enough to deliver your services effectively, yet close enough to communities to respond quickly and meaningfully. The two-unitary proposal's key strengths are:

- **Local delivery:** councils which are close to their communities understand them better, enabling earlier intervention and personalised support. They can deliver beneficial services, which provide the best value for money.
- **Community partnerships:** services can be better co-designed with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), ensuring relevance and responsiveness. Local people should feel more ownership through this approach.

What happens next?

All councils in Warwickshire have been asked to respond to government in November on what we would like the future unitary arrangements to be.

The councils are in the process of gathering evidence to help us make our decision. At this point North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council all prefer the option of two unitary councils, one in the north and one in the south, as discussed earlier in this document.

To help the councils make our final decision we really want to understand the views of our residents, businesses and partners. Our questionnaire will give you the opportunity to share your views, and help us to make the right decision for everyone in Warwickshire. The government is expected to make a final decision in 2026, with new unitary authorities in place by 2028.

How can I join in the debate?

Public engagement on the proposals for change starts on **7 August 2025** and closes on **14 September 2025**. The engagement is being conducted by an independent and specialist market research company, Opinion Research Services (ORS).

Residents, town and parish councils and other organisations are being asked to share their views on the proposal by completing a questionnaire available online [here](#).

Paper copies are also available at the district and borough council offices.

ORS will also be talking to local residents, from businesses and voluntary organisations, to town and parish councils, to answer any questions they have, explain how the proposals might affect them, and gather their views.

This is an important engagement about the future of your local councils in Warwickshire. No decisions have been taken yet and we want to know your views, whether you agree or disagree with the proposal for two unitary councils for Warwickshire; and you are welcome to suggest other options.

Any information provided to ORS (via the questionnaire or by any other means) will be processed in accordance with the latest data protection regulations. Personal information will be kept for no more than one year after any decisions have been finalised. For further information, please see

<https://shapingourcouncils.co.uk/privacy-policy>

Members of the public will not be identified in any ORS consultation reports, but where feedback is submitted by a representative on behalf of an organisation, or by an elected representative or someone acting in their official capacity, this may be attributed.

Questionnaires and written responses can be returned FREEPOST to:

**ORS,
FREEPOST (SS1018),
PO BOX 530,
Swansea,
SA1 1AF.**

Please respond as soon as you can and by 14 September 2025, at the latest.

If you have any queries about completing the questionnaire or need assistance, including a copy in large print, please call ORS on 0800 3247004 or email consultation@ors.org.uk

A glossary of terms used in this document:

Two tiers – two levels of local government, for example where you have a district or borough council AND a county council in your area.

Two unitary model – two single councils for one area.

Two unitary structure – two single councils for one area.

Single tier – one level of local government, for example where there is not a district, borough or county council, but one single council.

Unitary council – a single tier of local government, one council in your area.

Interim plan – not the final plan, but a starting point and needs further work.

North south – where the county of Warwickshire would be split into two halves, one in the north and the other in the south.

Devolution – where the government gives powers of decision making and spending to smaller regions.

Strategic authority – this is made up of a few unitary councils, and is governed by an elected Mayor.

Elected Mayor – an elected political leader with the power of decision making and spending in their strategic authority.

Deloitte – an independent consultant for audit, assurance and tax.

Town and parish councils – sometimes referred to as the third tier of local government, they are local to communities.

Neighbourhood committees – made up of residents and council staff, where they can voice concerns, and work together to improve local communities.

Engagement – being involved in a project, ensuring information is shared.

Opinion Research Services – the social research agency that have been commissioned to collect opinions, attitudes and information from people on an independent basis.