

## **Unitary Transition Task and Finish Group**

Chair: Cllr Leigh Redman

Vice Chair: Cllr Rod Williams

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Jamie Jackson – Service Manager - Governance Scrutiny

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** To provide a progress update on the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Task and Finish Group on the 'Continuity of Children's Services through local government reorganisation'.

### **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1.** That the update be noted.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** In early 2021, Somerset County Council's Children and Families Scrutiny Committee agreed to create a Task and Finish Group examination, to consider potential issues and risks that may impact outcomes for children and families in Somerset, from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), should the Secretary of State (SoS) decide to move Somerset to a Unitary authority.
- 3.2.** Stage one was to reach out and seek initial thoughts from internal officers and stakeholders – and to learn from Councils that have already transitioned, with a view to report back to Cabinet in July 2021. The Group would then reconvene for Stage 2, after the SoS decision, to allow refined questioning and develop the report further.
- 3.3.** The following were appointed to serve on the Task and Finish Group - Councillors Leigh Redman, Rod Williams, Bill Revans and Mrs Eileen Tipper, who is one of the co-opted members on the Committee. Since March, the Group has held five meetings.
- 3.4.** Following consideration of initial feedback, the Group agreed to pause the examination until the SoS has made public his decision on how Somerset may become a Unitary authority; this would allow for a more detailed and outcome aware examination once the direction of travel was clearer.
- 3.5.** The work done to date has produced some initial comments and the Group

members will ensure they are included in future work. Initial feedback has not allowed for any definitive conclusions.

- 3.6. The Task Group Chair would like to thank everyone that took the time to respond to the initial call for evidence. It became clear that more detail would be needed for the Group to be able to come to an informed conclusion.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1. As described in the report.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1. As described in the report.

#### **6. Background papers**

- 6.1. For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.