

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL



Urgent Question – Standing Order 7 (3) Council meeting 15th October 2025

Councillor Stuart:

I noted yesterday evening that the BBC reported on the County Council meeting headlined “Devolution debate sees ‘super council’ plan agreed”. The opening paragraph details that **“Councillors in Warwickshire have decided they should form a new "super council" and become part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).”**

Standing Orders only allow for questions of fact rather than opinion and as such I may not ask whether you agree that such reporting suggests that the move to a single unitary authority a “done deal” rather than an ongoing matter for discussion and decision making to be made by the proper authority.

The questions I would therefore like clarification on are as follows:

1. Given that I have not been aware of any journalist attending a full council meeting in person in a professional capacity since at least May 2023, and given that the matter of local government reorganisation (LGR) is of fundamental importance to the delivery of local services and the democratic representation of our residents, can the leader take steps to see that any full council meeting where our submission to government on the matters of LGR and devolution is finalised is live streamed to enable ease of access, transparency and enable accurate reporting.
2. Are you aware of any engagement with any County Councillor representing North Warwickshire wards engaging with NWBC members or officers relating to LGR or Devolution ahead of the meeting reported yesterday?
3. Will you be offering members of your party a free vote on the matters relating to devolution and LGR and encourage all other party groups to do the same to enable a true evaluation of the benefits of any proposed future council to be made purely on the basis of residents needs and wants and not influenced by any other matter or interest?

Councillor D Wright, Leader of the Council

I'd like to thank Cllr Stuart for raising this important matter and Councillors overall have been unanimous on the issue of Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution, and I agree with most of the sentiments behind his questions.

On point 1, the Council resolved last year that it would not livestream meetings but record them and publish the next day. Part of the reason for that decision was the very low viewing figures and also Members' preference to encourage the press and the public to attend in person in order to get a fuller and better understanding of the meetings and debates, as important factors are often missed when viewed online. We will not therefore be suggesting to Council that it reverses the decision made last year but I can assure Councillors however that we will particularly encourage the press, and our residents, to attend this meeting given the subject matter. I note that the County Council's meeting took place at 11am yesterday which would not have encouraged much public participation.

On point 2, whilst I have had a number of meetings with the Leaders and Chief Executives of the councils in Warwickshire, I am not aware of the County Councillors engaging with NWBC members or officers ahead of the decision. I attended the meeting of Grendon Parish Council last evening at their request to discuss LGR and Devolution and it would appear that the County Councillors for this area have not engaged with Town and Parish Councils in North Warwickshire either. If this is the case then that is in my view very disappointing. The recent residents' engagement exercise on LGR showed that 73% of residents would prefer two unitary Councils rather than one, very large Council covering all of Warwickshire. The County Council's decision yesterday flies in the face of that result and maybe this is the result of a general lack of engagement by the County Council with residents and other stakeholders on this matter.

On point 3, we will be suggesting a free vote on the final decisions on LGR and devolution and given the very strong cross-party support in this Chamber I would not expect that to be an issue for any Group on this Council.