



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Simon Clarke MP
Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

Chris Heaton-Harris MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

16 April 2020

Dear Chris,

When announcing on 19 March, in a Written Ministerial Statement, the postponement of the May 2020 elections, Chloe Smith, the Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, informed the House that provision would be made to address the particular circumstances of councils in Northamptonshire. These provisions would ensure that the two shadow authorities to be established on 11 May 2020 would be able to be so established and operate effectively as shadow authorities, and from 1 April 2021 as full local authorities, until members elected in the postponed elections on 6 May 2021 can take office.

I am writing to let you know that the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Structural Changes) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 have now been made, laid before Parliament, and will come into force on 8 May. These Regulations fulfil that commitment to Parliament, and I am grateful for your support on these matters. Please see link here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2020/426>.

The Regulations provide that the membership of each shadow authority will comprise all the existing county and district councillors in the shadow's area mirroring the approach taken for the establishment of shadow authorities in Buckinghamshire and elsewhere. The Regulations specify 4 June as the date by which the first meetings of the shadow authorities must take place and define quorums for each shadow authority as five members from each district and five members who have been elected to county electoral divisions within the area of the shadow.

The Regulations also specify the composition of the shadow executives:

- For the North Northamptonshire shadow executive, there must be ten members, two drawn from each of the four existing districts, that is the leader of the district and a second member nominated by the leader, and two from the County Council (nominated by the leader of the County Council drawn from Cabinet members representing divisions in the North Northamptonshire area); and
- For the West Northamptonshire shadow executive, there must be eight members, two drawn from each of the three existing districts, that is the leader of the district and a second member nominated by the leader, and two from the County Council (the leader and a second member nominated by the leader who represents a division in the West Northamptonshire area).

In addition, the Regulations specify the leaders of the North and West Northamptonshire shadow executives to be the current leader of Kettering Borough Council and the current leader of South Northamptonshire Council respectively. They also specify the deputy leaders of the shadow executives to be the current leaders of Wellingborough Borough Council and Northampton Borough Council respectively. The appointments reflect the discussions we have had with the local leaders and are considered appropriate given these leaders' role in driving unitary implementation across the whole of Northamptonshire. The current Kettering leader is chair of the Future Northants Leaders Oversight Board and the current South Northamptonshire leader is the deputy chair. The leaders of Wellingborough and Northampton are the chairs of the statutory North and West Northamptonshire Joint Committees.

As to future elections to the Northamptonshire councils, the Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ensure that the electoral cycle envisaged in the original structural changes order is preserved. Following the postponed elections held in May 2021 the next elections for the Northamptonshire councils will thus be in May 2025 and thereafter every four years.

The Government's firm intention is for the new unitary authorities to go live on 1 April 2021 to deliver as soon as possible the improved local government that people in Northamptonshire deserve. This legislation enables this to happen. We will work closely with the local leaders to ensure that the safe transition of services on that date remains viable, assessing progress against key implementation milestones and developing with them any necessary contingency options to drive progress or review timescales. If the local leaders were unanimously to be of the view that the new unitary councils would not be able to deliver safe and legal services on 1 April 2021, we have, subject to Parliamentary approval, the necessary powers to defer the implementation date.

I am very grateful to the members and officers of all the councils both for their hard work on local government restructuring in Northamptonshire and for all that they are doing to respond to the current emergency.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

SIMON CLARKE MP