**Unitary Councils’ Network – Application to form a Special Interest Group**

## Purpose of Report

## 

## For decision.

## Summary

Councillor Paul Bettison OBE (Leader of Bracknell Forest) has written to the LGA Chief Executive requesting that the LGA Leadership Board consider an application to form an LGA Special Interest Group to further the specific interests of unitary councils.

A copy of the application, including the purpose of the Unitary Councils’ Network and list of members committed to joining, is attached at **Appendix A**.

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| **Recommendation**  That the LGA Leadership Board approves the application to form a Unitary Councils’ Network LGA Special Interest Group.  **Action**  Officers to action in accordance with the Board’s decision. |

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**Unitary Councils’ Network – Application to form a Special Interest Group**

**Background**

1. The LGA Constitution provides for 10 or more member authorities with common features, interests or concerns to form a Special Interest Group (SIG). The LGA’s Statement on Special Interest Groups (SIG) is attached at **Appendix B**.
2. A letter of application and supporting documentation has been received from Councillor Paul Bettison OBE, Leader of Bracknell Forest Council, acting on behalf of 16 authorities in membership of the LGA, proposing to establish a SIG to better represent the interests of unitary authorities.

**Purpose of the Group**

1. Members will be aware that there are already LGA SIGs representing the interests of district, county and metropolitan authorities through the District Councils Network (DCN), County Councils’ Network (CCN), and the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA). Whilst some unitary councils are represented on CCN and SIGOMA, there is currently no SIG solely representing the interests of unitary councils.
2. The stated purpose of the Network is to further the specific interests of unitary councils, large and small. The applicant authorities anticipate that these will include resilience to financial issues, especially the repatriation of the business rate.
3. There are currently 16 authorities committed to join the SIG. However the Network anticipate that the final number of unitary authorities wishing to join will be higher.

**Financial/ Resource Implications**

1. Should the Unitary Councils’ Network wish to utilise the support offer open to SIGs (as set out in paragraph 3 of the LGA’s Statement on SIGs), there would be minor budgetary and resources implications as a result of lost revenue from hireable meeting rooms and cost of providing secretariat support services.