

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group

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11<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Rt Hon. James Brokenshire MP  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Submitted by email to: [james.brokenshire@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:james.brokenshire@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

Dear Secretary of State,

**Local Government Policy: Written Statement - HLWS515 (12<sup>th</sup> March 2018)**  
**Devolution in Buckinghamshire**

May we first congratulate you on your new appointment and welcome you back into Government.

In March the Government announced it was 'minded-to' implement one new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire, which it said is 'likely to improve local government and service delivery in the county'. We understand that before making a final decision you want to hear people's views by 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 – see [HERE](#).

**About the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce**

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) is one of the largest accredited Chambers within the United Kingdom, and the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for the Thames Valley region. It is a proven centre of excellence for trade and inward investment services. Representing over 4,000 companies in membership the Chamber credits a range of impressive statistics:

- 295,000 combined number of staff employed by members.
- 5000+ number of active trade customers.
- £1.9 billion – value of international trade enabled (2017)
- 28,500 – the number of individual shipments (2016) – over 68,000 recorded by the end of September 2017 (latest available annual stats).
- Average 150 new trade customers each year.
- 172 countries trading with our customers.
- 83 sectors represented by members and international trade customers.
- Consistently one of the top performing regions for attracting inward investment.
- 65% of international companies setting up or expanding in the Thames Valley have been supported by TVCC.

Read more about the TVCC [Business Manifesto](#), launched by Rt Hon Lidington, CBE MP late last year.

#### TVCC's views on devolution in Buckinghamshire

We consult our membership widely on the full range of issues that affect business. In doing so we work closely with the local Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce.

On behalf our membership in Buckinghamshire, and the wider Thames Valley, our current considered opinion is outlined as follows:

- As a business membership organisation, the Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce supports the delivery of efficient, effective local government services provided at the very best 'value for money' rates. From our elected members, we welcome leadership and a focus on putting 'business first', ensuring Buckinghamshire remains 'open for business'.
- From central and local government, we welcome their continued dedication in managing services to ensure business can deliver the economic growth and wealth creation that helps fund wider Council services and UK plc priorities.

In Buckinghamshire, our membership has identified the following key priorities that we welcome any future local government structure to consider as high priorities:

- Delivering sustained improvements to local transport (road/rail) infrastructure.
- Providing access to high speed broadband.
- Developing skills and ensuring we continue to attract the right talent into the local area.
- Increasing the volume and value of inward investment (new and expansions) entering the County, including maximising the potential of the new Enterprise Zone sites.
- Encouraging a greater number of businesses to export and trade internationally.
- Providing an adequate supply and range of housing, enabling the County to grow economically.

We welcome the continued, and direct, engagement by your Department in working with an interested business community here in the Thames Valley and Buckinghamshire. May we therefore take this opportunity to extend an open invitation to you, and/or your Department colleagues, to come and talk to our membership (and wider business community). In the most recent past we have and continue to welcome representatives from BEIS, DIT and DfT, and your colleague David Lidington, at invitation only business roundtables, our Business Alliance dinner and Windsor (Castle) event programme and 'working groups' on topics including BREXIT and Western Rail Link to London Heathrow.

With thank you again for this opportunity to express our views and opinions on behalf of our membership. Please do keep the TVCC updated on your deliberations and final decision.

Yours sincerely,



**Paul Britton**  
Chief Executive  
Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce



**Mike Watson**  
President  
Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce