**Council Re-organisation Proposals**

**Complete Consultation Questionnaire BY 22 JULY 2018**

A card came through doors this week about a Democracy in Daventry event held on 14 July 2018. The event concerned proposals to re-organise the current three tier structure (County; District; Parish) and create two unitary councils. The reorganisation results from the financial failure of Northamptonshire County Council.

It is proposed that the area covered by Daventry District Council joins with Northampton town and South Northamptonshire to become one unitary council. Do you want this?

**What can you do – give your view by completing the Consultation Questionnaire**

Full details can be found online at

<https://futurenorthants.co.uk/>

The criteria for the new unitary authorities is that they must:

• Improve local government and service delivery across the area, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and be more sustainable

• Command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal

• Be based on existing local government areas, and any new authorities should have populations substantially more than 300,000.

The questionnaire (accessible from the link) which you are urged to complete ASAP, gives you the opportunity to comment. Clearly you must express your own view but some of the feedback from the event on 14 July which you may wish to consider:

* Northampton town will have different requirements from the largely rural area of Daventry
* Reducing councillor representation but retaining communication channels may require committees and sub groups. Is this in effect be a District Council just under another name
* We should be encouraging interest in local government not distancing ourselves
* Joining with Northampton town would lead to a decline in services for rural areas. This is not acceptable
* The current proposals do not meet the three point criteria.
* Giving Daventry District Council unitary status maintains current communication links and leaves a council that has a proven financial track record. Whilst it does not fit the over 300,000 population criteria it meets the other two factors.

You may also wish to consider the petition here

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/223194>  which is about making Daventry into its own unitary authority

FAQs on the proposals can also be found online at

<https://futurenorthants.co.uk/images/pdf/FAQs.pdf>

The FAQ includes 30 questions. However the first 6 questions are pasted below as they give a short summary

**1 - What is this unitary talk all about?**

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) has significant financial challenges. In January 2018, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government at the time, Sajid Javid, appointed Max Caller to carry out a Best Value Inspection of NCC.

In his report, published in March 2018, Mr Caller concluded that NCC’s financial, cultural and governance problems could not be solved in isolation.  He recommended that plans be worked up for two unitary authorities to be introduced, one covering the north and the other covering the west of the county. These would replace the current eight-authority, two-tier system consisting of NCC and the seven District and Borough councils across the county.

The Secretary of State has invited proposals from any council or group of councils in the county, and has expressed a strong preference for one proposal that is signed up to by everyone.

**2 - What are the options?**

The Government requires that any proposal adheres to the following criteria:
• A single county-wide unitary is explicitly excluded as an option

• Each new proposed authority must have a population substantially in excess of 300,000

• The proposal must be based on existing council boundaries

These criteria mean that only a two-unitary solution is possible.  In addition:
• Only one proposal will be accepted, not a range of options

• It must demonstrate clear potential for savings

• It must command a good deal of local support • Due consideration should be given to Max Caller’s recommendations

• Any solution should prioritise the Government’s wider housing and growth agenda • Extensive consultation must be carried out

The Government originally set a deadline of 27 July, 2018 for us to submit our proposal.  That has now been extended to 31 August 2018.

**3 - Will the public get a say on the future of public services in Northamptonshire?**

Yes. Before the government considers any proposal to create new unitary councils, extensive consultation has to take place across the county. That consultation is taking place from 18th June to 22nd July.

**4 - How do I have my say?**

You can give your views by going online to complete a questionnaire at www.futurenorthants.co.uk
There you will also find a detailed consultation document that fully explains the proposal. Alongside the consultation website, copies of the consultation document and the questionnaire are also available in libraries and local council offices. If you can’t complete the survey online, please check your local council website for details of venues where you can pick up a copy.

**5 - I have just completed the online questionnaire. Where is the control? There is nothing to stop anyone completing many multiples of the questionnaires and enhancing or invalidating true results.**

The open consultation questionnaire is not intended to be a referendum, or a survey that is designed to represent any specific population, and ORS (the experts running the consultation process) often observe disproportionately greater levels of response from particular areas or groups; it is by its very nature an opportunity for anyone that wants to provide feedback about the proposal. It is therefore potentially susceptible to multiple completions by individuals and/or organisations, or local groups who sometimes organise campaigns.

However, during analysis and reporting of findings, ORS will seek to identify and describe where there is clear evidence of duplicate questionnaires being submitted by a single respondent or as a result of organised campaigns (for example, identical photocopied forms, identical organised responses or identical online submissions from the same IP address and cookie).

**6 - What if the public doesn’t want change?**

The Secretary of State will take into account all the responses received during the consultation process and will consider them ‘in the round’.  The views of partner organisations such as the police, the health sector, businesses and the voluntary sector will be important factors in his decision, as well as the views of the general public.