

Comments from Mr Michael Mullaney CC, De Montfort

I write to object to Item 5 on the agenda the White Paper on Devolution and Local Recovery, that seeks to push the County Council further into supporting one Unitary Authority for Leicestershire and the abolition of Hinckley and Bosworth and the other 6 Districts and Boroughs in the county. I object to the proposals as I believe they are the wrong time; when efforts should be on fighting the Covid-19 pandemic we should not be undertaking disruptive changes to local government. And because I believe it will see communities like Hinckley further cut off from decision making and it will not be in the financial interests of people in Hinckley and Bosworth.

To abolish Hinckley and Bosworth and the other Boroughs and Districts in Leicestershire would be a hugely disruptive, time consuming distraction at a time when people are trying to get through the Covid-19 pandemic. Getting through Covid-19 must be the top priority that occupies council officers time and effort not reorganisation.

Plans for one unitary authority for Leicestershire will mean decision making being taken further away from local people particularly in areas like mine in Hinckley which are on the edge of the county. One authority for Leicestershire's 700,000 population will mean communities like Hinckley feeling even more remote from decision making.

The previous Conservative Local Government Minister Simon Clarke said that any new Unitaries should have populations between 3-600,000. With exceptions only if the places are one united community (such as a single city). Given Leicestershire's population is around 700,000 and our county is a large sprawling geographical area of many varying and spread out towns and villages, Leicestershire is clearly too big and too diverse to be squeezed into one authority.

Furthermore it has been trailed that a move to Unitary status would save residents money in Council Tax (an assertion I challenge due to the likely costs of the disruption of moving to the new Unitary system and the continued government underfunding of Leicestershire) but even taking that into account, it has been stated by the County Council's leadership that after the Unitary plans the Council Tax cut would not be given to residents in Hinckley and Bosworth because they currently pay the lowest Council Tax in Leicestershire. I believe it is unfair that residents in my area of Hinckley will not receive any benefit from a move to Unitary status but will lose out by having a more remote form of government, that will not be local and see key decisions currently taken in Hinckley taken in future many miles away from our area.

In conclusion I object to the proposals to move to one Unitary authority in Leicestershire and I hope you drop the proposal on today's Cabinet Agenda that says that Mr Rushton should write to the government encouraging them to press on with the Unitary plans.

Michael Mullaney
County Councillor for Hinckley De Montfort

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