

ACRA

Alliance of Christchurch Residents Associations

Representing over 10,000 local homes

www.wcresidents.co.uk

Cllr Ray Nottage

30th November 2015

Dear Ray

Local Government Reorganisation in Dorset

As representatives of residents of Christchurch Borough we are trying to ensure that their interests will be best served by the eventual outcome of the project to reorganise Local Government in Dorset.

Our grasp of this issue has come from very helpful discussions with DCC Leader Councillor Robert Gould, the Executive of Christchurch Council, and a number of other informed sources. However, the picture that we have of the proposed new East Dorset Unitary Authority and how it would fit into the full pan-Dorset picture is fragmented and confusing.

Your personal presentation at the recent Christchurch Citizens' Association meeting helped to clarify some aspects of the matter, but was delivered to a very small audience.

To gain the support of the majority of taxpayers of Christchurch what is needed is a non-political, independent, dialog with them about what you are doing and why you are doing it. It must be expressed in a way which is not seen as political propaganda. ACRA members can help you to achieve that.

We have already established that taxpayers perceive several causes for concern:

1. a loss of local identity (which has very little to do with keeping a mayor);
2. a loss of financial control exacerbated by Bournemouth's penchant for grandiose and expensive projects and Poole's reported financial difficulties;
3. a loss of control over local planning issues leading to exploitation by Poole and Bournemouth, both of whom appear to suffer from a shortage of land suitable for new housing, particularly affordable housing
4. a move to Cabinet style governance with its associated lack of transparency and accountability. You have said that you are determined to retain the "Committee" structure for Christchurch but that is widely seen as untenable in any merger with much larger authorities

They also perceive some opportunities:

1. an opportunity to invoke "bottom up" management rather than "top down" diktat
2. an opportunity for local rather than remote decision making

3. an opportunity to participate in strategic planning and development for our overall area
4. an opportunity to invest increasing local business revenues to the benefit of local residents – this whole business should not be seen solely as a cost cutting exercise

When you make your eventual approach to Whitehall *the more inclusive you look in your planning the stronger your bid to Central Government will be*. What you don't need is individual Residents Associations writing to Central Government saying they haven't been consulted and have grave reservations about what you propose.

We think a meeting to discuss this would be of mutual benefit.

Yours sincerely

Jim Biggin

Secretary

Christchurch Citizens; Friars Cliff; Grange; Highcliffe; Somerford;

Stanpit and Mudeford; Winkton; West Christchurch