

From your County Councillor, Dudley Hughes

Report following decision to move to Unitary Authorities.

Last week the notice was passed that there should be a move to two unitary authorities in Northamptonshire; East Northamptonshire will be part of the North Northamptonshire Authority.

This is the result of the County Council having insufficient funds to pay for the ever increasing cost of Adult and Social Care together with Children's Services with a decreasing budget. Although NCC maybe could have spent more wisely the failure to increase council tax was in line with government policies and all initiatives to save money were approved by the government and the auditors. The reality is that whatever new structure is put in place it will not succeed to cover the costs unless there is a considerable change in which this and other authorities are funded.

As your councillor I appreciate change is necessary but I strongly objected to the way it was done as undemocratic in that there was no proper consultation with the electors. The changes mean a large sum, possibly as high as £50m will be spend on the changes and there is likely, especially for the people of East Northamptonshire, to be a considerable increase in council tax. I did not therefore vote for the document now sent to the Secretary of State.

The new authorities will mean two separate Ault and Social Care and two Children's Services which I find difficulty in accepting will be more cost effective than one of each. Similarly the proposal is that Transport and Highways and other departments will be split.

At ENC there was a reluctant acceptance of the changes – ENC has worked well and within budget to set up Community Funds, bring about developments such as Stanwick Lakes and Rushden Lakes as well as providing an efficient and cost effective waste collection services. I will be sorry to see its demise and want to pay tribute to the successes of the Council.

NCC has Children's Homes that are all good or better, has a Children's Service that has put caring for children first – some authorities have reduced the numbers of children in care but that does not mean there are less families desperate for help. Unfortunately as funding has reduced its services which are not statutory but are needed and wanted by the council tax payers so that it is reduced to doing a minimum of services which are used by a minority of people.

I am sad that after over 20 years as a councillor I have to report to you that we are in this situation which could have been avoided with more support from the government and those elected to support us there.

Cllr Dudley Hughes