[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 04 January 2018 15:02
To: EEMA-SJavid
Subject: [redacted] Merger of Bournemouth, Poole, and Christchurch Council [redacted]

Dear sir

As a resident of Poole Borough, since 1983, I wish to register my protest at the manner in which Poole Council is proceeding with the merger of the 3 Councils, which is pending your approval.

There has been some, if not minimal consultation with the residents of Poole, there was a small consultation in which selected residents were allowed to voice their opinions in favour or not, this was totally non representative of the majority of Poole residents, who have not been allowed any say on the proposed merger.

Christchurch residents were recently allowed a referendum on wether to merge with Bournemouth and Poole, the result of the referendum as you probably already know, was 84% against merging with the other Councils.

I firmly believe it is the democratic right of all Poole residents to also be allowed a say in what happens in our borough, therefore I request that any form of merger is delayed until such time as Poole, and Bournemouth, residents have been allowed their rightful say on the matter, and if that proves that the residents do not consent to the merger then it should be postponed indefinitely.

It was reported at the end of last year that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, was minded to approve this merger on January 8th 2018, however I feel sure the Honourable gentleman must be aware that this merger does not have the full consent of Poole residents, and therefore it would be contrary to earlier government statements, that mergers could not go ahead without consent of the residents, therefore any approval could be only be construed as non consensual and undemocratic.

I urge you to give this matter your full consideration prior to approval, or not, and allow the residents of all three boroughs the democratic right in having a say as to how our Councils proceed in this matter before any merger is confirmed.

Best regards

[redacted]

TO - Government restructuring - [redacted]

[redacted]

Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Department for Communities
and Local Government,
2 Marsham Street,
London
SW1P 4DF.

4th January 2018

Dear Mr Javid

Reorganisation of Local Government in Dorset

By now I am sure you are aware of my home town of Christchurch in Dorset. It is one of the smallest Boroughs in the country, but it shouts very loud indeed. This small town is quite remarkable and a fabulous place to live, bring up children and work. It is with great dismay that our well-run council is under threat of abolition and of being replaced by a much larger authority. I say this with a great deal of experience on the matter.

I was [redacted] and lived in a former mining village called [redacted]. At that time and until 1974, there was a two-tier system of local government. [redacted] Lancashire County Council [redacted]. Through Dad, myself and my sisters were brought up civic minded and aware of how local government worked. Little Lever Council was well run by councillors well known to the villagers as friends and neighbours. However, in 1974 things were to change. Local district and borough councils were abolished, and the large, unitary Metropolitan Borough of Bolton was created. [redacted]

soon having problems. [redacted]

[redacted] Our idea of this being a 'start' soon became permanent residency in this lovely part of the world. Our families remained in the North West which means frequent visits. As the years passed by I saw a deterioration in my home village. The much-cared for parks were closed or weed-filled. The roads were deteriorating. It was very sad to see. It was at least a generation before I saw any real investment in the village when the roads and street lighting were repaired, and the village centre had some work done. My family said it was difficult to get things done. The councillors were outvoted most of the time. There are just three councillors not just for the village, but for two former districts.

[redacted] on what those who remember the former council think. Had it saved money? How did they feel about representation? There wasn't a single positive word.

Responses included: '*I don't think it was a good thing, don't think it saved money. Don't think Little Lever has the same clout. The money is spent in Bolton Town Centre.*' '*It was a far better place. I suppose change is inevitable, although not for the better in this case.*'; '*It was the beginning of the end of the village.*' '*Absolute disaster* [redacted] *The forgotten cash cow! Roads are a disgrace, footpaths in disrepair, rubbish and weeds growing everywhere.*' '*It's an absolute shambles.*'

This was exactly my own observations.

[redacted]. It was a [redacted] to help with consultation on a review of local government. There were a variety of options, including a merger with neighbouring Bournemouth. The consultation was comprehensive. Residents were given details of all options and we undertook roadshows all around the Borough explaining what was being proposed and what people's views were. The vast majority of people who spoke to us or wrote to the council were of the 'anything but Bournemouth' view. The review was undertaken by the Local Government Commission and the two members of staff covering Christchurch spoke to me of their surprise at the vehemence of the views. I was sent to London to read the correspondence and it was

overwhelmingly against joining Bournemouth. In the end the decision was made to create unitary authorities of Poole and Bournemouth and leave the rest of the County two-tier. To make efficiencies Christchurch and neighbouring East Dorset District Council made a successful initiative of sharing services, whilst keeping local accountability. There was no further talk of any mergers until September 2015, in the local newspaper, *The Echo*, the headlines rung out: *Bournemouth, Poole, Christchurch and East Dorset councils set for merger.* This was the first anyone had heard of this. It wasn't in any election manifestos, just four leaders standing smiling like the cat got the cream.

There was a supposed 'consultation. This consisted of a mailout to anyone lucky enough to receive a questionnaire. There was also an opportunity to complete it online, so I did so. But the questions were loaded in favour of the merger, there were no 'status quo' options, in fact the only opportunity to speak against was in a comments section at the end. Thinking back to 1992 when so much effort was made, it was a joke.

I don't need to speak any more of what has gone on since. Suffice it to say it is obvious there is no will in Christchurch to lose our Council. Personally, I dread to see the experience of my one beautifully kept village's deterioration being repeated here in Christchurch. As a historian it would also be a tragedy to see our centuries-old civic autonomy end. But, more than that, it is how things are run and the quality of life we enjoy – even at a higher rate of council tax than neighbouring councils. Knowing our local councillors as friends and neighbours whose hearts are in the town also. This will be lost, just like my former home.

In these cases, people like myself will write these long letters and offer no alternative. My own suggestion is this. We are told the motivation behind the merger idea is to save money by providing a more strategic way of providing services and, in particular, social care. Surely the simplest – and inexpensive way is to revert Poole and Bournemouth back to district status and allow Dorset County Council to, as before, provide these services.

Thank you for the opportunity to put my views directly. I hope they will be considered.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted]

January 4, 2018

The Right Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation in Dorset

I've been trying to see through all the fog and smoke Dorset's future is generating.

It seems to me that there are only three questions you need to answer:

1. Which option provides the most likely cost savings?
2. Which has strategic benefits built in?
3. Which is the most attractive for inward investment?

Can the answers really be anything other than the two unitaries of option 2b?

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 04 January 2018 11:38
To: EEMA SJavid
Subject: [redacted]o, to merger with Bournemouth & Poole Councils [redacted]

Dear Mr Javid

I respectfully write to you regarding the recent referendum that took place in Christchurch whereby 84% of the people voted against the merger with Bournemouth & Poole Councils to form a "super council".

Both my partner and myself along with most of our families (both of which are large and long standing Christchurch families) had voted "no".

The way this plan came about blind-sided a lot of people. So much so that not even our Ward Councillors knew about the proposed plans. Sadly, on the run up to this bombshell being reported in the local press, the people of Christchurch had become disillusioned with situations which had occurred which had been as a result of "behind closed door" meetings, most of which the rest of the Council at the time were not apparently a party too. A search of our local press will evidence this. As you can imagine, this left a great amount of distrust and superstition amongst the community of Christchurch. Thankfully there has since been some positive changes.

To give you a bit of background and my opinion as to why so many people voted this way, is that since the "grand scheme" was revealed, people have felt that the vulchers have almost been circling the town. It is well know that Bournemouth have no land on which to build/develop further and have had their eye on the land surrounding Bournemouth Airport (formerly referred to as Hurn Airport and therefore part of Christchurch), and the green belt land that we have around our town and up to the boundary with Hampshire. Despite local protests at the idea's proposed by Bournemouth and Poole which seemingly "swallow up" our historic town, Bournemouth and Poole Councils seem to have no regard to the fact that due to development that has already taken place in the area over the last twenty years, we already suffer with regular flooding in the green belt area's and our roads are already at capacity and in poor condition. For example in the last five/six years, the village of Burton was cut off from the main drag into Christchurch due to severe flooding in the green belt area around the town. I believe there is drone footage of this on YouTube.

As the townsfolk joke, Christchurch by-pass in the only by-pass in the country that doesn't by-pass the town. Quite simply there only has to be a small accident anywhere on this route and the knock-on effect brings the whole area to a standstill. Even major events such as the very successful Bournemouth Air Festival in August can see the town and the surrounding area's being brought to a standstill with the amount of traffic trying to get into Bournemouth via the New Forest and we are the first town on that route.

Bournemouth have also taken to building on car parks and residence are worried that this will be another avenue of development they will pursue around the town. Parking is already at a premium and Christchurch Council currently has plans to redevelop the former Police Station/old Law Courts site and car parks – and these are car parks favoured by workers based in the town. There is not enough parking to go round especially in the height of summer.

The current planning laws that Christchurch Council impose see's relatively good judgement that buildings are usually a) in keeping with the surrounding area b) do not go beyond a certain height in keeping with the buildings around it and c) do not overcrowd/overpopulate the square footage of the site. If you look towards Southbourne Overcliff, part of Bournemouth Borough Council – all the large characterful homes that once

stood proudly overlooking the sea have now been replaced with soulless glass fronted multi-storey buildings often dwarfing the few remaining "traditional" buildings that are there. Yes, housing is needed – but not this luxurious/retirement type. The area has become quite ugly as a result.

Another point of concern is that under the plan for the "super council", the ratio of Christchurch Councillors that will be in on planning meetings is vastly inadequate compared to the representatives of Bournemouth and Poole. So even if Christchurch is opposed to a planning scheme in the area, Bournemouth and/or Poole Councillors could quite easily override Christchurch's decision/wishes and go ahead anyway. We feel we will just be roughshod over on major planning decisions. Another death nail in the town's coffin.

It is well publicised that Bournemouth Borough Council have made a number of poor financial decisions in the past which has resulted in much depleted funds for their borough. Again, this has been much publicised in the local press. It is also well publicised that Christchurch's coffers are relatively healthy by comparison and the towns people are loathed to think that this money will be gobbled up by the new super council with the town of Christchurch not seeing any of the benefit.

There has also been a lot of scare mongering about social care and how Christchurch will suffer as a result as Christchurch does have a high ratio of elderly residents. This scare mongering is rubbish. The plans in place for social care are already up and running and so nothing will change. I know this first hand as I have dealings with the social care providers for Bournemouth & Poole through my line of work.

Over the last ten years, Bournemouth has become a shadow of its former self with empty shops, streets strewn with litter and no provision for the numerous homeless people that frequent the streets (which I see first-hand as I have worked in the centre of Bournemouth for many years). This, I fear, could be the way Christchurch will end up with our High Street disappearing in favour of new transport links to Bournemouth/Castle Point Shopping Centre and area's such as Saxon Square becoming a succession of high rise properties.

Christchurch is not perfect, but we have a lot of history, a lot of lovely architecture and area's of natural beauty. The area has seen generations of families grow and stay here. My family have had a great involvement with the town over the last 80 years plus. To insist on a merger with Bournemouth & Poole will see our lovely little market town swallowed up and become a dumping ground for all the developments that Bournemouth and Poole haven't got room for. The town's motto of "Where time is pleasant" will be a long and distant memory and then it will be too late.

Christchurch already has a suffering infrastructure. An increase in local development at the degree Bournemouth and Poole Councils would like will see the residents of Christchurch miss out further.

Basically, a majority of the Christchurch towns people can see no benefit to the town or its people for us to merge with Bournemouth and Poole. We do not have the financial issues or lack of land that they do – but we are expected to roll over and let them take-over to the detriment of our town and our lifestyle. We are not being small-minded, we can see the bigger picture and its not good for Christchurch.

Please, when making your decision, be mindful that the history and sovereignty of Christchurch is very important to its people.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

With kind regards

[redacted]

future Dorset

[redacted]

The Rt.Hon. Sajid Javid MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

4th January 2018

Dear Secretary of State
Local Government Reorganisation – County of Dorset

First some background – I am the [redacted] now known as East Dorset, where I have been a [redacted]

I do not believe that creating two Unitary Councils for Dorset is in the best interest of the people I represent. For ease of reference I will call them a Rural Dorset Unitary (West, North, East and Purbeck District Councils with Weymouth and Portland Borough) and an Urban Dorset Unitary (Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole).

My main concern is for the Rural Dorset Unitary, as in your 'minded to support decision'. This would create a council that is 60 miles long from east to west and 50 miles deep from north to south. Local decision making, and accountability, would be compromised.

My view is, that the original suggestion of a 'Combined Authority' (previously agreed by all Dorset Councils) submitted to you a while back is the most suitable arrangement for Local Government in Dorset. The 'rural' six Districts should work in two partnerships, one of West Dorset, North Dorset and Weymouth – already working well – and the existing, successful partnership, of Christchurch and East Dorset being joined by the Purbeck District. Also, Bournemouth and Poole are now working in partnership.

The Combined Authority (all Dorset Councils) should deal with strategic matters – land use / transportation / highways / adult services / social services etc. The existing second tier councils would deal with development control / health /housing /leisure recreation etc. this would mean that the 'two tier' arrangements would continue and that the non-statutory services, as well as some statutory, would be subject to local decision.

The only authority that has consulted all its residents is Christchurch and that resulted in a very strong rejection of the suggested Urban Unitary. Some councillors at East Dorset wished that our residents had been likewise consulted. I would have expected a similar rejection but, maybe, not as strong as in Christchurch (result - 84% against 16% for).

I hope you will consider my view and the views expressed by Christchurch residents and its council and allow extra time for the alternative suggestion of retaining a two-tier structure to be worked up and costed, taking into account the changes in Local authority funding that result from policies set out in the recent budget.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 05 January 2018 10:32
To: EEMA SJavid
Subject: [redacted] - Unitary proposal for Dorset - Paul Rowsell

Categories: [redacted]

From: parish clerk <sturminstermarshall@dorset-aptc.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, January 4, 2018 7:15 PM
To: JAVID, Sajid
Subject: Unitary proposal for Dorset

Dear Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP,

Sturminster Marshall Parish Council would like to support the unitary proposal for Dorset, regarding the formation of two new unitary authorities in the county, as we feel it is the most appropriate way forwards for the area.

Kind Regards,

Alison Clothier

Parish Clerk for
Sturminster Marshall Parish Council

[redacted]

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From: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 08 January 2018 09:17
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: Cllr Judy Butt - Future Dorset - Paul Rowsell

From: Judy Bu[redacted]
Sent: 05 January 2018 17:28
To: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Future Local Government in Dorset - IN CONFIDENCE

Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP
Department of Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
' ondon SW1P 4DF.

Future Local Government in Dorset

Dear Minister,

I write, somewhat belatedly, to ask you to consider views that represent the interaction I have had with the members of the public both within my ward and the wider Borough.

As a result of reading your earlier decision I was of the view that you required, quite properly in my view, further evidence of the views of the residents of the areas affected by the proposed LGR. Unfortunately in Poole and Bournemouth it would appear that a different interpretation has been put on that element of your statement and no further dialogue with the public has been attempted.

This is most unfortunate as the original "consultation" was in the electorate's opinion deeply flawed and subject to methods and "weightings" that eroded its credibility.
This is further evidenced recently by the results of the Christchurch referendum. This recorded a ɹrge majority against the proposals and remains the only true test available of the public's view of the proposals.

I have noted with dismay that recently the whole issue has taken on a party political nature. The Poole conservative group was under a whip and faced with censure should they vote with their consciences in a manner that differed from the Conservative group stance. Backed up by Group rules that carry penalties for non support of group views. Given the massive conservative majority this effectively gave a large majority in support of the proposals.
A genuine free vote would have been a far healthier way to decide such an important matter that is so vital to the future of this area and would have ensured a non partisan approach.
It is also a fact that the Chairman of Poole Conservative Association has called for its members to lobby you in favour of the proposals providing a template for those who wish an easy way to construct a response. At the same time potentially discouraging those who may oppose the LGR proposals.

As I say the matter should have risen above party politics and I am sure you will be as disappointed as I and others are in this regard, you having made every effort during the whole process to keep the matter apolitical.

It is of interest to note the great success of Elected Mayors in an increasing number of local authorities. Particularly where such Mayors are overarching several historical Councils.
It is most unfortunate that consideration of an elected Mayor for the Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch areas were dismissed by the three council Leaders , without any reasonable level of evaluation or consideration. It is felt by many here in Poole that it could have offered a solution which would have had a very real of chance of delivering considerable economic benefits to the area and avoided much of the local opposition to the current proposals put forward regarding LGR.

Minister I would urge you to clarify your comments regarding testing the levels of local support for the current proposals. If such a clarification brought about a legitimate debate, with a definitive mandate following a referendum, then there would be genuine confidence that public support existed. If such a referendum were to also seek the public's views on an elected mayor then so much the better and it would perhaps justify the cost to the council tax payer of a referendum. That would in the eyes of the electorate I am sure right the wrong of the Elected mayor issue having been dismissed, with little or no evaluation by people who are seen by the public quite clearly to have vested interests.

Minister I wish you luck with what is currently a far more contentious decision than you may have currently been led to believe.

Thank you for your kind consideration of the above.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Judy Butt
Creekmoor Ward
Borough of Poole

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To - local government restructuring - [redacted]

[redacted]

m.howell@poole.gov.uk

08 JAN 2018

The Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

5th January 2018

Dear Sir,

Representation regarding the proposed merger of the Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole local authorities

I write as a councillor for the Poole Town ward in the Borough of Poole and Leader of Poole People, the independent group on Poole Council.

Our group opposed the council resolution proposing the merging of the authorities because we felt:

1. The proposal had been formulated solely with the purpose of maximising council tax collection;
2. No consideration was given as to how to maintain or improve democratic accountability within a larger authority;
3. No mechanisms were proposed to secure a fair distribution of resources across the conurbation;
4. There were no safeguards to protect the characters of Poole town and other centres within the conurbation, like Christchurch, which are at risk of being harmed by the actions and mentality of a centralised, city-style council based in Bournemouth (the new council's likely location); and
5. The consultation process was insufficient to accurately gauge the views of the population of Poole.

Since the passing of the resolution, it has become clear that councillors and consultees were deliberately or negligently misled regarding council tax. The proposal was justified on the basis that:

A. It was necessary to merge in order for the councils to remain financially solvent once the Revenue Support Grant is removed in 2019;
B. Council tax harmonisation would take place over 20 years.

It has now become clear that your department would never have countenanced a harmonisation period of more than five years and I understand the longest that has been permitted to date is two years. A rapid harmonisation would require Christchurch's council tax to be reduced. This would render the budgeting assumptions in the merger proposals obsolete and greatly reduce the amount of additional funds that merger would generate. In any case, the authorities will have virtually completed the cost cutting that is necessary for them to adapt to the withdrawal of the Revenue Support Grant. There is therefore no financial necessity for merger.

In your "minded to approve" letter you asked for the authorities to provide more evidence of local consent. Following the non-binding but overwhelming decision of Christchurch residents to reject merger in their recent referendum, their consent is clearly lacking. The Borough of Poole has not made any attempt to secure further evidence of local consent from residents of Poole despite requests from opposition members to do so. The Leader of Poole Council has stated that "local consent" means the consent of councillors, not residents, which you may find surprising. Even so, no attempts have been made by her or her administration to secure the consent of opposition councillors who opposed the resolution and, indeed, it is now becoming clear that a significant number of Poole's Conservative councillors are against merger and only voted for it in compliance with a whip.

In our view, the merger of only Bournemouth and Poole would be detrimental to Poole because, in the absence of Christchurch councillors, there would not be an effective counterbalance to the centralising force of Bournemouth. This option was also, by some margin, the least favoured option in the consultation.

We do not oppose merger under any circumstance, but I would ask you not to approve the merger as proposed. If you decide not to approve the merger, but remain favourable to it in principle, I would request that you ask the authorities to address the issues raised in the second paragraph of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Howell

Councillor for Poole Town and Leader of Poole People

[redacted]

From: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 05 January 2018 10:29
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: Mike White - LGR IN DORSE[redacted]

Categories: James

From: Mike Whi[redacted]
Sent: Friday, January 5, 2018 10:09 AM
To: JAVID, Sajid
Subject: LGR IN DORSET

As a Poole Councillor I fully support the proposed LGR in Dorset and the creation of two unitaries...one for rural Dorset and one urban (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole).

I am appalled at the lack of effective political leadership from Christchurch members and their local MP. They have had well over a year to consider this and have failed totally to come up with any clearly supported alternative. Only a few weeks ago the Council leaders were exploring possible solutions with Hampshire! In my view their local campaigning has been utterly negative and in several instances downright misleading.

I recently represented Poole at a meeting of the conurbation Joint Committee which was held in Christchurch and spoke afterwards to several residents. I found no clear consensus as to the best way forwards. Indeed they seemed surprised to be told that neither Hampshire nor rural Dorset actually wanted to combine with them in any way.

Given that the whole of the rest of Dorset is speaking with a unified voice in favour of the proposed LGR it would seem quite wrong to allow one small confused and misled town to set the agenda.

Please approve the proposal.

Rgds...

Mike White (Cllr.), Borough of Poole

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Cllr. Margaret Phipps
Christchurch Borough Council
[redacted]

4th January 2018

The Rt. Hon Sajid Javid
Secretary of State
Department for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 4DF.

Dear Secretary of State,

Proposed Changes to Local Government in Dorset

I am a Conservative Christchurch Borough Councillor and Dorset County Councillor. I write to point out to you why I believe that forming 2 Unitary Authorities in Dorset is a mistake, and to tell you why it will be a political disaster for the Conservative party and will seriously dilute democracy in the county. If you decide to agree to the "Future Dorset" proposal, I believe your decision will be based on out of date and flawed information.

THE POLITICS

Conservative Councillor Losses across Dorset

I am astounded that the Unitary Option for Dorset is still being progressed when the National context has changed and the Conservative Party needs all the loyalty and support it can find. The Future Dorset Unitary proposal will mean a drastic reduction in the number of Local Councillors, the majority of which will be Conservatives who form crucial front line support for the Party and MPs in Dorset. Across Dorset, Labour and Liberal Councillors have voted in favour of Unitary Authorities, (and in a recent vote in East Dorset Council on LGR they held the balance of power), because they will immediately get rid of more Conservative Councillors than they could ever dream of unseating in an election.

The Conservative Manifesto

The Conservative Party Manifesto 2017 makes no mention whatsoever of Unitary Authorities, however it does promote local growth through Combined Authorities. There is unanimous agreement in Dorset from all 9 Councils that a Combined Authority should be formed and an application has been with your office since 2016 awaiting approval. A Dorset Combined Authority which is in line with the manifesto could pool decision making of strategic services, demonstrate co-operative joint working and be a strong basis for economising on service costs. This should be the first step, not Unitary Authorities.

Comments made in The House of Commons

On numerous occasions in the House of Commons it has been made clear that change will not be imposed on areas that do not want it, and that local government should be "bottom up":

House of Commons debate on 7th December 2015 – Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 – Column 822:

Mr. Chris Chope (MP for Christchurch) – "Will my Rt. Hon friend give the House an assurance that amendment 56 will not be used by the Government to force change on any Local Authority?"

Mr. Greg Clark (Secretary of State) – "I will indeed ....."

End of Day Adjournment Debate 1st December 2016 – Christchurch and East Dorset Councils proposed abolition – introduced by Chris Chope MP – volume 617:

Mr. Chris Chope (MP for Christchurch) – "Will the Minister emphasise the importance of trying to achieve consensus....."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Mr. Marcus Jones – ".....in making my comments this evening I have made it clear these proposals must be "bottom up", not top down, and we will certainly listen to views".

16th January 2017 – Christchurch and East Dorset Conservative Constituency Chairman Mr. Ray Bryan met with Sir Patrick McLoughlin to express concerns. *Sir Patrick McLoughlin stated* – "It is not this Government's policy to force any council into doing anything against their wishes".

The possibility of The Government opposing its own electorate

Politically, to force Christchurch Council into a Unitary Authority against its will, is a contradictory situation and will have a serious negative impact on Conservative representation in Christchurch and in Dorset as a whole. Christchurch, and indeed Dorset, is a strong Conservative Area. Our MP Chris Chope stated in his 2017 election literature, and campaigned on the door step against joining a Unitary Authority. He was re-elected with a vastly increased majority. Opposition parties will be delighted if you decide to ratify your "minded to" decision and impose a Unitary Authority on Christchurch. This will be a Conservative Government which will be going against the will of its own electorate.

DEMOCRACY

The Christchurch Referendum Result

You will know that Christchurch Borough Council recently held a Referendum (Local Poll) to ask those residents who are on the electoral role the question – "Do you support the current proposal for a single Council covering Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole?" With a huge turnout response of 54%, the result was that 84% of Christchurch residents voted NO. This result is local "bottom up" democracy, which is exactly what Mr. Marcus Jones said he wanted to see (noted above), and confirms their re-election of Chris Chope MP who campaigned against Christchurch joining with Bournemouth and Poole. We are noting that Councillors and residents of other areas of Dorset are now saying that they were not properly consulted and they should have referendums of their own. There is no "consent" in Christchurch for joining a Unitary Authority.

The now discredited ORS Consultation

Based on the Christchurch Referendum result, I believe that the ORS consultation across Dorset is completely discredited. This 2016 consultation result is a key piece of evidence submitted with the "Future Dorset" proposal, and it cannot now be relied on. How can a so called "representative" household survey of 459 people produce a result of 64% of Christchurch residents supporting joining with Bournemouth and Poole, when 17,676 of them – 84% - in the Local Poll, resoundingly voted *against*? Our Chief Executive has been asked several times for the Terms of Reference for the ORS appointment, as Councillors have not seen them, but they have not been forthcoming. They are still being pursued by the Council Leader.

On 4th January 2018, a Professor from Bournemouth University was featured in the Bournemouth Echo newspaper giving his views about a consultation ORS had done about hospital care, where he highlighted that a required result can be achieved by the way questions are worded. He then tweeted: ***"@bournemouthun[redacted] takes ORS to task for 'analysing data from questions deliberately set up to contain bias and reflect the results wanted'. As we know Christchurch residents proved them wrong in their data for Dorset LGR"***

Ineffective Democratic representation for Christchurch in a Unitary Authority

Christchurch has only 50,000 residents whereas Bournemouth has 195,000 and Poole 150,000. Representation is allocated by population, so Christchurch will proportionally have much less representation than the other 2 Councils. The PwC Case for Change Document sets out on pages 80 and 81 that Councillor Numbers in Option 2b would be reduced to 76. Therefore Christchurch would have 9 Councillors, Bournemouth 39 and Poole 29. Councillors representing Christchurch will be unable to represent their residents properly on any issue unless Bournemouth and/or Poole are in agreement. This is not a merger it is a takeover of Christchurch. The same problem is already occurring on the Joint Committee where Christchurch only has 2 Members out of 16, and is being outvoted and having its views overridden.

THE OUT OF DATE/FLAWED EVIDENCE BEFORE YOU TO SUPPORT "FUTURE DORSET"

You have 3 pieces of evidence before you to support the "Future Dorset" proposal:

The ORS Consultation – as already noted above in this letter, I consider this to be completely discredited by the results of the Christchurch Local Poll and it is questioned by a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society.

The Local Partnerships Financial Analysis – This was carried out in Spring/Summer 2016, and was robust at that time, but is now completely out of date. Much has changed since then, for instance, the Government's allocation of £2 billion for adult social care and the as yet unknown implications of the recent Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2018/19. Also the period for Council tax harmonisation has been reduced from 20 years to less than 10. No analysis has been made of any of these changes to ascertain the current situation.

The PwC Case for Change – This document is entirely based on the flawed consultation and the outdated financial information. Also it was written with the aim of creating a case for change. It cannot be relied on as "evidence" to support such a drastic change to local government in Dorset.

The Missing Evidence – No Business Case was submitted with the "Future Dorset proposal, which is a critical and essential piece of information.

THE SECRECY AND IMPOSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING UP TO DATE FINANCIAL INFORMATION
As residents of Christchurch, I and other Christchurch Councillors legitimately submitted questions to the Joint Committee under the agenda item for "Questions from members of the Public". All of us were dismissed, and told that as Christchurch Councillors, we had "other means" to obtain information. Since 18th December 2017 I have been trying to obtain answers to my questions from the Christchurch Council Chief Executive. My questions have not been answered and he has referred me back to the JC. This is an intolerable situation. Our MP Chris Chope has also tried to obtain financial information from the Christchurch Section 151 Officer who refused, and said he will be reporting to the JC. He then wrote to the Chief Executive of Dorset County Council who said that some of the up to date financial information will not be available until June 2018. The Christchurch Council Leader asked certain questions at the JC Meeting in December 2017 and has still not received answers. I have written to the Chairman of the JC, who still has not produced any answers. The whole process appears to me to be secretive, evasive, and clearly not open and transparent, with financial information which is available being withheld by Council Officers and the Joint Committee.

The request for more time to produce a full "alternative" case
Due the withholding of, and failure to produce any up to date financial information, Christchurch Borough Council has been unable to obtain sufficient data to provide any financial analysis to support its alternative proposal. Therefore I consider it imperative that you give serious consideration to the Council's request for additional time to submit a full case for the "alternative option" which has been sent to you. I do hope that you will be sympathetic to this request.

CONCLUSION
I do not believe that you have sufficient credible, robust or up to date information before you at this time to make an informed final decision on the "Future Dorset" proposal, and there is no local consent in Christchurch. You are being asked to impose radical and extreme change on Dorset Councils and residents, against Government policy as noted above, which will be irreversible. You will seriously reduce the number of Conservative Councillors and activists in the county to the detriment of the Conservative party.

Full up to date financial data should be made available for not only Option 2b, but also the alternative Option put forward by Christchurch Borough Council. I urge you to reject the "Future Dorset" submission, and have another look at the whole situation in Dorset, where savings can be made, and are already being made in other ways.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Phipps

Cllr. Mrs. Margaret Phipps
St. Catherine's and Hurn Ward
Christchurch Borough Council

cc. The Prime Minister
Sir Chris Chope MP

[redacted]

From: Trish Jamieso[redacted]
Sent: 05 January 2018 09:27
To: EEMA_SJavid
Cc: CHOPEC@parliament.uk; david@flaggsafety.co.u[redacted]
Subject: Trish Jamieson - Christchurch LG[redacted]

Categories: James

Dear Sajid
I realise that you are well aware of the result of the recent poll in Christchurch regarding the proposed unitary council with Bournemouth and Poole when there was a sizeable response and a solid vote against the proposal.
The people of Christchurch are not stupid, they can see the improvements and savings made in Dorset by partnership working in Dorset Waste Partnership, SVPP and mainly by the very successful partnership with East Dorset DC.
This partnership has made big savings and also won awards for efficiency and inspiration over the past few years. Why would anyone want to give this up?
The history and sovereignty of Christchurch is also very important to the residents, they do not connect with the urban areas of Bournemouth and Poole.
We have been advised that no council will be forced into a LGR against its wishes therefore I ask that you reconsider your "minded to" decision regarding the future of Christchurch and Dorset.
Yours sincerely
Cllr Trish Jamieson
Christchurch BC

Sent from my iPhone

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[redacted]

From: John Challinor <J.Challinor@poole.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 January 2018 10:23
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: John Challinor - Local Government Reorganisation in Dors[redacted]

Categories: James

Dear Minister

The Future Dorset proposal in support of Local Government Reorganisation is a well thought through solution to the funding crisis affecting councils throughout Dorset.

Not only will the savings delivered enable us to protect vital services for our residents, it will also facilitate the redesign of council services and delivery models to ensure long-term sustainability.

ı addition, the Future Dorset proposal shows the ambition and vision that the leadership in the county have for the area in creating two strong, distinct and independent authorities best able to meet the needs of their residents and drive future growth.

There is overwhelming democratic support for the project, with all but one council voting to endorse LGR and only one of the Dorset MPs opposed to the proposal. Local businesses, large and small, also want LGR.

We have the vision, passion, ability and energy to deliver the changes that will benefit all of the residents of Dorset for many years to come. Please give us the opportunity to do so when you make your final decision.

Yours sincerely

John Challinor

Cllr John Challinor | Parkstone ward
Portfolio Holder: Communications | Corporate Estates | Legal & Democratic Services | Public Health | Strategic Commercialisation
[redacted]
Borough of Poole | Civic Centre | Poole BH15 2RU
www.poole.gov.uk

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-----Original Message-----
From: noreply@number10.gov.uk [mailto:noreply@number10.gov.uk]
Sent: 05 January 2018 18:42
To: Treat Official Transfers
Subject: Forwarding - Christchurch concil merger

Please find below a Treat Official e-mail received via the 10 Downing Street website for your department to respond to.

From [redacted]
Address: [redacted]
18 10:45
Subject: Christchurch concil merger

Dear Mrs May

Why is it that MPs and politician do not listen to the people. Christchurch have voted with an overwhelming, to stay independent and not merge with Bournemouth and Pool. This is the will of the people of Christchurch that you should listen to.

A minority of great Britain voted to leave the EU and the government listened. Act for the people of Christchurch keep us independent.

Kind regards

[redacted]

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[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 05 January 2018 12:17
To: sajid.javid@communities.gov.uk
Subject: [redacted]ocal governement reorganisation Dorset and Bournemouth and Po[redacted]

Importance: High

Dear Sir

As you are aware the proposed merger of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch Councils has not had full support from the residences of these Boroughs. The initial recommendation stated that there was full support for this reorganisation. But this is not so as around 80% of the people in Christchurch voted against in the recent referendum.

the people in Poole were allowed to have such a referendum the result I believe, would be very similar as most residents in Poole are opposed to the proposals.

It seems the reason for joining the 3 Councils is to save money. Since most of the council tax (about 70%) is used for Social Services, then perhaps it makes sense to amalgamate these services and leave the rest of the Council tax for each borough to administer the other services related to their own Towns. This would then give a reduction based on the 70% spend and would be a better way forward.

The 3 towns are very diverse and have their own history and needs. This is NOT the best way forward.

Please do not approve the current recommendations and it should be a democrat decision by the people for the people. They will have there say at the next election and the ruling Conservatives in the 3 Boroughs will see the consequence's of this ill thought-out position.

[redacted]

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[redacted]

5th January 2018.

Dear Secretary of State,

Council Merger - Poole.

I am writing to you in a last effort to seek two aims:-

1. To save the proper democratic process in local government decision making within my area of residence.

2. To retain the proper independence of my town as a clear community in its own right.

I should point out that I am a [redacted] of Poole B.C. and was the [redacted] Authority in 1996. As such I feel I have a clearer knowledge of the views of Poole residents in relation to any attempt to join with Bournemouth. At the time of the Unitary Authority bid there was a consultation with all residents in terms of the Councils aims and objectives. This was replicated across Dorset. The result was an overwhelming support for independence in Poole. I cannot believe that this view has changed since that time except by what I consider to be dubious manipulation of the process of consultation, or extremely limited consultation.

The restricted consultation across the County and just 2.1% returns from a population of over 750,000, demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the limited process adopted to achieve the required result. I personally attended Council meetings in Poole and watched in dismay at what I considered to be the death of local democracy. Arguments to substantiate the benefits of such a merger were put aside by a ruling group secure in the knowledge that they could always win the vote.

Together with a colleague I also attended a so-called Road Show within Poole. This was supposed to provide an opportunity

TO - Local government [redacted]

for residents to seek greater understanding of the issues involved in the merger proposals. My personal experience was that questions which countered/challenged the proposals were quickly dismissed and that even at that stage the Council had set its course and were not open minded to democratic discussion.

This has, to my mind, remained the case with few people I know being fully aware of the actions already being taken to remove the control of services in the town in favour of centralisation within Bournemouth. Albeit that your final decision has yet to be made. Those residents I have spoken to are, without exception, against such a merger, something that might have been clear if the consultation process been carried out democratically on a house to house basis. This proper method of consulting has achieved a very different result when applied in Christchurch and I consider would be the same in Poole if adopted.

Poole is an historic working town with a centuries long tradition of independence and self rule. A clearly identifiable community. It is unthinkable that this be removed without all of the residents being aware of the clear choices they have.

In the latest e-mail of 'Council News' from the Borough of Poole there is reference to ' Bin collection; Fostering in Poole; Car Park make-over and Harry Potter at Poole Library. There is absolutely **NO** mention of the right to make representations to yourself on the future of Local Government services in our historic town..

I am writing to ask that you urgently review the process adopted in this important matter and, within your remit of 'Communities and Local Government', to judge whether the ancient community of Poole has been treated fairly, justly and democratically

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

Rt. Hon.S.Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government,
2, Marsham Street,
LONDON
SWIP 4DF.

TO - Local government restructuring -

[redacted]

05.01.18

The Secretary of State

Department of Communities and Local Government

Dear Sajid,

I am writing in response to your written statement ' Local Government Improvement', 7th November 2017, with specific reference to the future of Dorset Councils.

You may recall that I was the [redacted] I was a [redacted] representing the ward where I have lived for over 40 years. [redacted] played a lead role in transforming Poole to a unitary authority and then subsequently I was [redacted]

I am strongly supportive of the current Dorset County Council area becoming a unitary authority or 2 unitary authorities if local residents preferred. Clearly, there are significant savings to be made by reducing the tiers of local government. My own experience also shows that a unitary authority can be much more accountable to its electorate - no longer can the 'buck' be passed. Also, some services can be delivered so much more efficiently, for example, housing and social services can work more effectively together. I have grave reservations about an effective takeover of Poole Council by Bournemouth Council. (Bournemouth will inevitably have more councillors.) There is, of course, a strong case for mergers of 'back office' functions but the two towns should preserve their own very different identities and powers of decision making. The situation is made worse by the fact that the ruling political group in Poole refused to include references in the Council's statements on any option for residents to choose to have a parish/ town council. This will result in a democratic deficit for conurbation residents as the current county council area has both parish and town councils. I am a strong believer in localism and without parish/town councils, decision making based in Bournemouth will be very distant to the electorate for very local matters. Strategic decision making is another matter and of course there is a case for all the unitary authorities to work together.

Christchurch residents clearly feel very strongly against a takeover by Bournemouth and rightly have had the opportunity to express their views in a referendum. It is important that their views are considered. I regret the fact that Poole residents have not had the opportunity of having their say through a referendum. I believe the consultation that took place in Poole was deeply flawed and true engagement with the issues did not emerge. Much was made of savings but for Poole, already a single tier authority, with a relatively low council tax, it seems that residents are likely to be badly affected by harmonisation of tax levels.

I do not believe the case for a full merger between Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch has been made and that there has been every attempt to steam roller it through without due regard to resident engagement and the importance of local decision making on very local issues.

Yours sincerely and my best wishes,

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 05 January 2018 14:55
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: [redacted]uture Dorset [redacted]
Attachments: APPROVED DORSET LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW AND PARISH.doc

Fro[redacted]
Sent: 05 January 2018 12:02
To: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Corfe Castle Parish Council respond to LGR- 'We want a localism agreement before LGR is agreed'

Dear Sajid

Corfe Castle Parish Council respond to LGR- 'We want a localism agreement before LGR is agreed'

Please find the attached document containing Corfe Castle Parish Councils response to the proposed Local Government Reorganisation. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the implementation of a localism agenda,

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

Clerk to Corfe Castle Parish Cou[redacted]

[redacted]

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CORFE CASTLE PARISH COUNCIL PAPER AGREED 11 December 2017

DORSET LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

How do we keep the local in local government?

"The great strengths of local councils are that they are part of the local community. It gives you a unique local insight" Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP NALC conference 31 October 2017

Executive Summary

1-In November 2017 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government said he was minded to approve the application by Dorset County Council Poole and Bournemouth Councils and some District Councils for the creation of two unitary authorities in Dorset in 2019. Purbeck, East Dorset and Christchurch Councils opposed the original proposal. The original consultation was based heavily on the financial case for combining authorities and saving services and there was little discussion of the implications for local democracy. Both Purbeck and East Dorset have now accepted that change is going to happen and are working to make reorganisation a success.

2-The fear has been expressed by many that the new authority would:

I-centralise activity at Dorchester and become a Dorset County Council Mark Two with Countywide policies which do not respect the diversity of the areas within the new authority. Dorset CC has thought strategically about many issues but has a variable track record in dealing with smaller local concerns e.g. recently the diversion of footpaths and replacing Purbeck stones pavements with tarmac in a conservation area.

Ii-cut all discretionary services, which the Districts have been able to maintain in order to finance social care.

3-The over riding principle should be that decisions affecting local people should be taken at the lowest possible level

4-Before the Secretary of State makes his decision we wish to press for the joint committee planning implementation to commit the new authority to a **localism** agenda including:

1-Involve Parish Councils in sensitive decisions such as planning and take most planning decisions in area planning committees
2-respect the diversity of the new areas in policy making: what is right for one area may not be suitable for another e.g. development of new housing
3-transfer responsibilities and assets to as low as level as possible

4-establish formal new Council/parish Council liaison meetings to discuss issues with Cabinet members
5--involve parish councils in new area committees/boards which look at the impact of new authority wide policies on that area, e.g. school reorganisations housing allocations, tourism, transport issues a and have devolved budgets

5-We ask the Secretary of State to give approval to reorganisation on the basis that he expects the new council to implement **a localism agenda.**

Detailed arguments

6-the new Dorset rural unitary authority (all districts except Christchurch and that part of Dorset County covering that area) will not be large or wealthy in resources but will cover a large geographical area. The "Isle" of Purbeck currently has two County Councillors and 8 District Councillors but most of the 25 councillors serving on Purbeck DC know about the issues in the whole of its area.

7-It is understood that there will be a Boundary Review before 2019 and there will be 72 Councillors for the new authority of which 8 would represent the area previously represented by over 30 District and County Councillors .The smaller number of Councillors cannot possibly oversee every service/decision on the impact for Purbeck. Under a Cabinet system councillors who do not know the area well will take most decisions affecting Purbeck.

8- Besides service delivery **the unique role of local government** is to give a voice to local communities through elected councillors. That local voice will be lost or diluted in a large unitary.

9-Purbeck has 21 Parish and Town Councils with over 200 Councillors: a strong resource for knowing their areas, and voicing the concerns of residents. Almost all Parish Councils have however few financial resources and are not staffed for commissioning service delivery. However Swanage TC has a core infrastructure for delivering some services, which could be used subject to appropriate recharge and Swanage TC agreement. The Parishes would need a transferred budget to take on new responsibilities.

10- **Services and Assets**-Annex A looks at services currently provided by Purbeck District Council. The annex concludes that the majority are best provided by a new unitary as they need authority wide policies and practices and economies of scale.

10-**What could be transferred**? Parishes will only want to take on more responsibilities if there is either a long-term devolution of grant from the unitary authority or another source of income such as rents or car park income. For example there may be small areas of open space or land maintained by the District, which could be looked after, locally: many parishes already have some open space which they maintain. In Corfe Castle Purbeck DC own the closed graveyard in East Street whereas the Parish Council supports a graveyard at "God's Acre" through a Committee.

11- Some Parishes have already taken responsibility for public conveniences with time limited grants, Corfe Castle PC has said it would be prepared to take the toilets over if there was a long term source of income such as the car park.

12-A Parish Council voice in decisions

12-a) Planning

Planning committees need some distance from applicants to avoid any sense of undue influence but they also need to know the site and area well. Currently Parishes are consulted but Districts decide. In new unitaries such as Cornwall area planning committees have been established and parishes have the right to ask the area planning committee to decide an issue which would other wise be decided by delegated powers. The new Dorset rural authority would be too large for members to look at all applications and the new Council would introduce a scheme of delegation to officers. It is suggested that we press for the new Council to have *Area Planning Committees* and Parishes council would have the right to refer contentious issues to that area Committee with a right to address the Committee before it takes its decision.

13-One suggestion made in 2016 was that Parishes jointly or separately fund planning expertise so that their objections and comments were based firmly on planning law and would carry greater weight.

12-b) Licensing applications

These can be a source of much local concern but parishes are currently not consulted. It is suggested that in future they are consulted (via the web) and the Parishes could raise contentious issues with the licensing committee.

12-c) Formal new Council/Parish Council liaison meetings in each former District

On say ¾ times a year the new Council's leadership would be asked to meet Parish council representatives in a structured minuted meeting to hear Parish views, discuss large issues affecting the area and to review how Council services and policies are impacting on the District. There are already PC Chairs and Clerks meetings in Purbeck.

12-d) Area Committees/Boards

We urge that the new authority establishes Area Committees or Boards, which would have these roles:

a) Review authority policies before they are made on the impact on the local area e.g. where new housing is proposed and the policy on housing allocations. In the Isle of Purbeck where all local people are priced out of owner occupied housing we are anxious that most new social housing homes

go to local people in housing need in order to keep families together. An Authority wide allocation scheme could mean that all new lettings go to those who have no connection with the area. Other policy areas could include discussion on planning policies, transport issues, school reorganisations etc. The Area Committees/Boards would have the right to place issues on the Cabinet agenda.

b) Hold the budgets and responsibility for transferred services from District Councils for *high profile* local issues e.g. the Purbeck Sports Centre, tourism, the Community Rail partnership, Local Enterprise Park and the budgets for local grants e.g. the CAB

13-The Area committees would comprise both local and authority wide unitary councillors and Parish Councils would have rights to put issues on the agenda and speak. The boundaries of the Area Committee would need discussion. Our view is that it should cover historic Purbeck comprising all PCs south of the River Frome. Swanage Town Council has the infrastructure to organise management functions with appropriate recharging.

Annex A

Purbeck DC currently funds the following services and it seems logical to transfer most to the new authority. Those marked with an asterisk have the most potential for a discussion about some degree of Area Committee/Parish Council involvement.

Planning*, Historic Buildings, Building Control, Waste collection (via DWP) Council Tax collection, Countryside management
Housing allocations*, Housing benefit, Emergency housing, Electoral registration, Emergency planning, Flood prevention, Tree regulation*, Coast protection, Community safety, * Street cleansing*, Land Register, public Health. Open spaces*, public conveniences * Business/Enterprise parks* Car parks* Tourism*. Purbeck DC subsidises the Purbeck Leisure centre (441k a year), which will seem anomalous if treated as a "County wide" issue

30 November 2017.

[redacted]

From: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 08 January 2018 09:18
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: [redacted]uture Dorse[redacted]

From: Bob Gillis (Bridport TC) [mailto:BGillis@bridport-tc.gov.uk]
Sent: 05 January 2018 16:58
To: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Local Government Reorganisation Dorset

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Bridport Town Council supports the proposed local government reorganisation in Dorset and hopes that the decision to establish the new unitary authorities will now be confirmed.

If changes are to be made to the upper tiers of local government in Dorset, then the opportunity must be taken to look at how and where services are best delivered. This should include looking at the delivery, management and funding of discretionary services, currently provided by the District or County Councils and that are better delivered locally and that matter so much to the health and vitality of towns. This includes services such as tourism, public toilets, open space management, community facilities, minor highway maintenance etc.

The Town Council welcomed the decision taken by both West Dorset District Council and Dorset County Council, as part of their support for the unitary applications, that ".. preparation work with town and parish councils be further developed to enable a clear process by which downward devolution of powers to third tier authorities can be timetabled and managed". This has been taken on in West Dorset with the establishment of a Programme Board including representatives from the town councils and the District Council to progress the devolution of services. The Town Council has also been represented at meetings to discuss County services as part of the "Working Together" project. It looks forward to continuing these discussions.

Bridport Town Council has already shown a willingness to take on the management of services that have been under review by West Dorset District Council, when it took over the management of the Tourist Information Centre in 2017. It also helped to establish and provide significant funding for a new community run Trust, that has successfully taken on the management of the Bridport Youth and Community Centre, which Dorset County Council was no longer in a position to support. The Town Council already manages most of the open space in its area, undertakes highway verge cutting under an agreement with the County Council and carries out maintenance both within its own area and for surrounding parishes, through its Lengthsman scheme.

The Town Council is keen to look at what other services can be devolved as part of the establishment of the new unitary councils, but this needs to happen alongside the allocation of funding or assets to support these services. In previous consultations, the Town Council has commented on its wish to see a proportion of the business rates earmarked for town councils, especially if we are now to be delivering services of such importance to the town and local businesses such as tourism services, town promotion, public toilets etc. It would also ask that the Government require the new unitary council to pass on the Town Council's

share of the Local Council Tax Support Grant. In total, Bridport Town Council has lost over £58,000 through the Local Council Tax Support Grant being withdrawn.

The Town Council welcomes the decision of the Government not to apply the referendum principles to town and parish councils, as it is important that local councils have the ability to raise funds through the precept, to support the local delivery of services but it does need to have other funding streams available to support services. Importantly, the Town Council needs to be able to ensure that when a service is devolved to the Council then financially equivalent assets, lost under reorganisation in 1974, are transferred back to the town, as this would provide an ongoing income stream to support these services. Any delegation of services must be accompanied by asset transfers and it is hoped that this position will be supported by the Government.

Finally, the Town Council hopes that there will be scope within the establishment of the new unitary councils for local arrangements to be put in place to ensure that the voice of the local communities is heard and that there is an opportunity for our local communities to properly influence decisions taken by the new unitary authorities.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Gillis
Town Clerk
Bridport Town Council
Bridport DT6 3 JP
[redacted]
r.gillis@bridport-tc.gov.uk
www.bridport-tc.gov.uk

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[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 06 January 2018 12:51
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: [redacted]ture Dors[redacted]

JUMPERS AND ST CATHERINE'S HILL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

[redacted]

Management Committee:D Barnett; J Biggin; M Biggin; S Fotheringham; M Green; L Oliver
Representing Over 2,800 residents

The Right Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Local Government
Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

e-mail: sajid.javid@communities.gsi.gov.uk

6th January 2018

Dear Minister

Local Government Reorganization in Dorset (LGR): Proposal from Christchurch Borough Council (CBC)

We have just received a copy of the covering letter dated 4th January 2018 sent by Christchurch Council leader Cllr Flagg to you enclosing the Council's submission.

That letter contains the following statement: "*It is no surprise to us that in that poll 84% of people in the Borough tell us that they do not want Christchurch to be part of a large and distant unitary Council with Bournemouth and Poole.*"

hat he means is 84% of the 54% that voted - say 45% of the Christchurch electorate (between 2% and 3% of the population of Dorset). Unlike the properly weighted pan-Dorset ORS investigation, the CBC poll comprised a statistically unrepresentative sample limited to the local electorate.

Either he doesn't understand (and given the statistical nonsense in the CBC report that might be true, however worrying) - or he is deliberately trying to mislead (which would be even more worrying).

We won't even ask how he deduces that Bournemouth and Poole are more remote than Dorchester!

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Chairman

From: [redacted]
Sent: 07 January 2018 16:20
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: Cllr Michael Brooke - Future Dorset [redacted]
Attachments: Secretary of State letter.docx

The Secretary of State,

Department for Communities and Local Government,

Dear Secretary of State,

Please find attached a response to the consultation you initiated in your written statement: Local government Improvement on 7th November2017, regarding the roposals for the future councils of Dorset.

Yours sincerely

Michael F Brooke (Cllr)

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Secretary of State

Department of Communities and Local Government

2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF

6th January 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

Re 'FutureDorset' Proposals

As a Borough of Poole councillor, I am writing to you following your written statement "Local Government Improvement" dated 7th November 2017 to express my concerns, and those of many Poole residents, that the proposals for the future of Dorset's councils are being bulldozed through without due consideration and scrutiny. Above all we are concerned that Poole has the least to gain and the most to lose from the merging of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch Councils into a single much larger Unitary Council.

I was first elected to Poole Council in 2003 and was the leader of the Liberal Democrat group for 10 years during which time I was fortunate to be able to work with the then leader of the Conservative Group when the Council was under no overall control. The situation today is very different. As an opposition councillor, I and all other opposition colleagues, have been totally excluded from the processes which have led to the proposals before you.

This exclusion has meant a complete lack of scrutiny and a disingenuous public consultation process. At no time were we given the opportunity to see the consultation documents and comment upon them before they were printed. Once in the public domain it became very clear that the survey was seriously flawed with the questions leading the respondents to the answers the Councils wanted. I understand that 16% of respondents stated that the questions were biased and the process flawed. This is a highly significant proportion and should be given full consideration. With little more than a 3% response rate overall it cannot be claimed, as council leaders are doing, that support for the proposals was overwhelming. 97% of residents did not respond and there were reasons for this, Firstly, only a very small selected group of residents received copies of the survey, and with limited publicity many residents were unaware of the consultation. Secondly, many elderly residents do not use computers and therefore would not have been able to respond unless they had access to a hard copy. The street stalls and occasional information evenings had very limited reach. However, it is significant that Christchurch residents did not support the creation of a single unitary authority comprising Poole Bournemouth and Christchurch, and right across the board there was no support for a new authority consisting only of Poole and Bournemouth.

Unlike Christchurch residents, Poole residents have been refused a referendum. Opposition councillors have argued that a referendum would be the fairest way of determining the real wishes of residents but the administration at Poole has refused on at least two separate occasions. Surely it is unfair for residents who potentially would be within the same unitary authority to be treated differently during the consultation process. Furthermore, both the Leader and Chief Executive of Poole Council have actively discouraged individual responses to the additional consultation you referenced in your statement: "there is now a period until 8 January 2018 during which **those interested may make further representations to me, including that if the proposal is implemented it is with suggested modifications....**". Once again Poole residents have been placed at a disadvantage with regard to expressing their views. Since the process started I have actively sought public opinion within my own ward and I have yet to meet a single resident in favour of a new council which includes Bournemouth. Such a proposal is seen as a Bournemouth takeover –

Bournemouth would always have the greatest number of councillors. In addition, it is seen as a centralising of power and a removal of local decision making.

This suggests a democratic deficit for the residents of Poole which is further entrenched through the differences between the proposed Dorset county unitary authority and the new Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch authority. Parish and town councils remain in Dorset, and even Weymouth, which currently has no town council is being allowed to consult on the issue. Christchurch has from the beginning been allowed to seek town council status as part of the Dorset proposals. I and my colleagues have on numerous occasions requested that communities within the proposed urban authority should be allowed to seek parish or town council status if they so wished, but the requests have been dismissed without any discussion. Poole consequently loses its sovereignty, something which is of fundamental importance to residents who recognise the long history of the town and who also wish to see local decision making and local accountability.

I understand that in 2015 the Government promised it would "not abolish any local councils against their will". Clearly, should you decide to approve the proposals before you then the dissolution of Christchurch District would be concluded against the will of both the Council and the vast majority (83%) of residents. the government would then be seen to have broken its promise and further lack of trust would be the result. Not only that but it could make the working of the new council extremely difficult, impacting upon the supposed benefits, many of which have yet to be proven. It is appreciated that should you decide to exclude Christchurch from a new urban unitary authority consisting of Poole and Bournemouth only you would be creating a situation that no council supported and was overwhelmingly rejected by the residents of both towns.

In your statement you have indicated that you would be prepared to consider modifications to the proposals. There is a perfectly acceptable solution to the problem. The greatest savings are to be found within the proposed Dorset County Unitary Council through the disaggregation of the District Councils, especially if Christchurch is included within this new unitary authority. Its sovereignty, a fundamental issue for the Council and its residents, would be retained as a town council. Poole and Bournemouth do not need to be merged into a single new unitary. They have both been unitary councils since 1997 but are now working very closely together. Firstly, through partnerships, but more recently, through creating a series of single staffing structures. As a result, considerable savings are being made. In addition, both councils retain their sovereignty and status. There would also be no need for a change to ward or borough boundaries.

The final issue is that of council tax harmonisation. While the consultation was based on a twenty - year period, recent announcements suggest that the Government now prefers three to five years. To achieve this would require council tax increases for Poole residents above the level required to initiate a referendum. This is something that Poole residents strongly oppose. Should the new authority keep increases below referendum level then there would be a significant loss of income to the new authority and a serious reduction in possible benefits that might otherwise have accrued.

The case for two unitary authorities in Dorset has not been adequately made, consultation was flawed and a serious democratic deficit will arise should you decide to approve the proposals without modifications.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Michael Brooke, Broadstone Ward, Borough of Poole. [redacted]

CLLR SANDRA MOORE
[redacted]

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities
And Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

6 January 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

Representation Re Future Dorset: The Proposed Merger of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch Councils.

I am writing on behalf of local residents regarding the Future Dorset proposals as per your letter dated 7 November following your announcement that you are minded to implement the merger of Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch Councils.

I have been a Poole Councillor for 20 years and am currently the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. As an opposition councillor, I would advise that none of the 13 opposition councillors from across Poole's political spectrum support the proposed merger and as we were all completely excluded from the merger's development, this has resulted in a lack of meaningful scrutiny and our questions, objections or suggestions have been deliberately ignored.

I would draw your attention to the public consultation process which we were not allowed to see in advance and was subsequently found to be seriously flawed with questions leading the respondents to the answers the council wanted. It can be seen that 16% of the respondents completing the questionnaire commented that the questions were biased and the process flawed. This is a significant number of respondents and their comments deserve consideration. In addition, as only 3% of local people actually responded to the consultation, it surely cannot be considered to be the 'overwhelming support' for the merger that is being claimed.

The majority of residents did not respond to the merger mainly because copies of the survey were only sent to a select number, publicity, street stalls and information evenings were minimal, and there was too much reliance on computer based publicity and consultation which disenfranchised many elderly residents. My Liberal Democrat Group members attempted to keep our residents informed about the proposed merger, council leaders however, sadly did not and 97% of local people did not participate in the survey.

As you are aware, Christchurch residents do not support the proposed merger of the three councils – Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch - and I think it should also be noted that those residents who did complete the survey did not support a merger between only Poole and Bournemouth. Again, as you are aware, Christchurch residents recently took part in a referendum in which 83% voted against a proposed merger with Bournemouth and Poole. Sadly opposition councillors in Poole have not only been refused a referendum, but have also been actively discouraged from making individual responses to this consultation, as suggested in your statement. From representations made to me by residents, I would like to explain that there is a fear in Poole of a Bournemouth 'takeover' as Bournemouth will always have the greatest number of councillors, has a scarcity of land for essential housing and no safeguards have been allowed by Poole Council to protect the characteristics and the 769 years of history of the ancient Borough of Poole.

I would also draw your attention to council tax harmonisation. The consultation carried out was based on a twenty year period during which council tax harmonisation might take place. However, I am informed that Government now prefers a period of three to five years; for Poole residents this would mean a series of council tax increases above the level required to initiate a referendum. Clearly, Poole residents would not willingly support this. On the other hand, however, if the new authority of Poole Bournemouth and Christchurch kept increases below referendum level, there would be a significant loss of income to this new authority.

Regarding your invitation to consider modifications to the proposed merger, I would suggest that the proposed Dorset County Unitary Council is approved but Poole and Bournemouth councils are allowed to continue working together to share services. The greatest savings to be made locally come from the disaggregation of the District Councils but Poole and Bournemouth have been Unitary Authorities since 1997 and are already working very closely together through partnerships and are now creating a single staffing structure. Bournemouth and Poole councils are, therefore, already delivering substantial savings and should be allowed to continue to work together in this manner which would have the positive effect of allowing them to retain their sovereignty, status and Poole its unique history. Separate consideration must, of course, be given to Christchurch residents who are now proposing to seek permission to join with a new Dorset Unitary Authority which would also have the effect of increasing the level of savings to be made.

In conclusion, I would ask you not to approve the merger as proposed. The consultation process was poor and seriously flawed. Christchurch residents are strongly opposed to merging with Bournemouth and Poole and the merger of Bournemouth and Poole without Christchurch is not supported, as evidenced by the consultation results. A consultation response of 3% cannot be considered 'overwhelming support' for a merger and is insufficient to accurately measure the views of the population of Poole.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Sandra Moore
Deputy Group Leader and
Canford Heath East Ward Councillor, Borough of Poole.

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Text Relay call welcome

Our Ref: AA/HE

5 January 2018

Leader of Council
Councillor Anthony Alford
Direct Line: 01305 252389
Email: cllra.alford@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Department for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4FD

Dear Mr Javid

Local Government Reorganisation in Dorset

Your statement to the House of Commons dated 7 November 2017 invited interested parties to make representations to you including modifications in the implementation of proposals and for any council in the area to come forward with an alternative proposal.

West Dorset is one of the original six councils to support proposals for change in the Future Dorset submission and wishes to proceed to implement them from April 2019. We recognise that time is short and we need to move with pace.

This document makes certain representations in support. As a strong supporter of the proposals outlined in your statement, we do not suggest any alternative. The representations in this letter were approved by Full Council at its meeting on 4 January 2018.

Within the area covered by the non-conurbation area of Dorset and subsequent to your statement, East Dorset District Council has accepted the Future Dorset proposals (option 2b) and Purbeck District Council has withdrawn its objection. Therefore all councils within the area covered by the Dorset Area Joint Committee are supportive of change and are actively engaged in preparing for it.

The attitude of the Joint Committee is positive and ambitious and we want to focus on the outcomes that matter most for local people. We want to:

- deliver further growth and prosperity
- address the county's infrastructure, housing and connectivity issues
- improve the health and wellbeing of everybody in the county and reduce the impact of inequality
- give children and young people in Dorset the best possible start in life and help them to achieve their potential.

Our various partnership arrangements have taken us far but the governance required to oversee them is complicated and relatively expensive. Reorganisation provides an opportunity to streamline this approach and deliver even better outcomes at a much reduced cost.

Amongst the Joint Committee's tasks is the consideration of how a single council can remain "local" to the various communities in Dorset. We will look at "area boards" similar to those in Wiltshire for finding solutions to local issues and to maintain links with town and parish councils. We will enable elected members to be effective as advocates for their communities, to be catalysts for change, enabling local communities to do things for themselves and through working with others, develop new solutions.

However, Christchurch Borough Council is now proposing that while the unitary councils of Bournemouth and Poole are merged into one authority, the remainder of Dorset should operate on a two tier basis. This would be a retrograde step. It would mean that Dorset (outside of Bournemouth and Poole) would be deprived of the opportunity of making annual savings of £15.3m through a one-off investment of £14.3m. It would also deprive Dorset of the opportunity of making further savings from transformation in the way that we provide services to our customers. Our proposals for transformation are described in the Case for Change document.

Christchurch Borough Council's local poll has no impact on the Consultation Report submitted. To suggest that it does is to misunderstand its nature and purpose.

The consultation has promoted accountability and assisted with democratic decision making. It has helped us to ensure that all responses are taken into account in order to be informed of any issues, viewpoints, implications or options that might have been overlooked. We have given residents and stakeholders an account of our plans and proposals, conducted a fair and accessible consultation and reported the outcomes openly and considered them fully. We have exercised the appropriate judgement based on the consultation in decision making. While the levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, it is as considerations to be taken into account, not as factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions. In particular the consultation adopted a number of methods that are qualitatively different and their outcomes cannot be just aggregated into a single result. The consultation is not a referendum.

Given the improved public services together with reduced costs that we expect from our Future Dorset proposals, it would be unreasonable to allow a single authority to obstruct progress. If we cannot move forward with local government reorganisation, the benefits and opportunities lost will far exceed any (if any) benefits to the residents of Christchurch. We therefore request that your final decision should make an appropriate provision for the area covered by Christchurch Borough Council in the absence of a coherent vision expressed by the council itself (section 15 Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016).

The Dorset Area Joint Committee will continue its work while we wait for your final decision. However, in the period leading up to that decision, there will inevitably be a period of uncertainty about it and we therefore request that the decision is made as early as is practically reasonable. Officers have appreciated the advice and support given by officials in your department and we look forward to that continuing in a way that is efficient to both your staff and ours.

Similarly, pace with the Parliamentary procedure will help. While our Dorset Area Joint Committee is working effectively, the creation of the Shadow Authority or Implementation Executive will set the right tone with our residents, staff and elected members that the new unitary arrangements will be introduced. It will also streamline the decision making processes in advance of April 2019.

It is intended that elections to the new unitary council should take place in May 2019. Current thinking is that under option 2b the number of councillors should be 82. Rapid work by the Boundary Commission will be required before then to establish the new wards and we will be grateful for DCLG's support in ensuring that this gets completed in good time. Further discussions remain about the cycle of elections. However, the timing of town and parish council elections is significant and it will help in due course if the necessary orders provide for them to be coterminous with the unitary council elections.

Harmonisation of council tax will be a major issue in the early years of the new council. This is linked to a wider question of the certainty of revenue streams and the ability to set a budget. We therefore request that DCLG should give us as much flexibility as possible in determining an appropriate period of harmonisation.

You have indicated an intention to give a decision on the combined authority proposals simultaneously with your final decision. You will appreciate that the proposals for local government reorganisation have taken priority and that a combined authority with two members will look different from one with nine. Our Future Dorset submission recognised the opportunity to improve people's quality of life and prosperity and stimulate growth through a global profile. Local Government reorganisation will also provide the Dorset councils with the opportunity to build greater coherence around their strategic plans and objectives. It will provide the clarity of direction and leadership that the county will need if the councils are to maximise the benefits of establishing a combined authority and securing a devolution deal.

We look forward to receiving your decision in due course and trust that it will be one that is positive, one that is supported by the convincing evidence that we have given you and one that is in the best interests of all the people of Dorset.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Alford

ANTHONY ALFORD
Leader – West Dorset District Council

cc: Oliver Letwin MP

Weymouth & Portland
Borough Council

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
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Matt Prosser
Direct dial: 01305 252202
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Date: 5th January 2018

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Department for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4FD

Dear Mr Javid

Local Government Reorganisation in Dorset

We are writing to you as the political group Leaders of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, one of the eight local authorities in Dorset that are pursuing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Our authority has no overall political control, but voted unanimously to support the submission for LGR, not an easy feat – as seen in some councils with overall political control, but reflects the whole council's commitment to this process.

You are of course aware that the councils across Dorset have been working together on LGR since the autumn of 2015, and six of the nine local authorities agreed in January 2017 to submit a proposal, called *Future Dorset*, to yourself. As part of this process Weymouth & Portland Borough Council also agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review, around the creation of a Parish (Town) Council for Weymouth, as one does not exist at present. This will allow some of the more local services to be delivered in the most efficient and responsive way; as is the case presently in the rest of the proposed Dorset area. This process is well underway with first public consultations having been completed and the latest consultations currently nearing conclusion. There is much support for change, including the creation of a town council. We need to make our final decision at Council in late February, but this is contingent of the Future Dorset proposal being agreed.

In addition we still have elections by thirds and are due to hold an election in May 2018, however, if LGR is to go ahead we would seek a deferral of these elections for one year until May 2019. In order to do this we need you to give us your final decision as soon as is possible please.

Our challenge has been driven by the changing fate of our financial position, however, we have not been complacent in Weymouth & Portland and were one of the first councils to work in partnership with a neighbour (2010) and since 2015 have been a part of the ground-breaking Dorset Councils Partnership, the only partnership of three councils supported by a single Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team and Staff cohort. We all agree that we need a further step

change in Dorset to preserve the delivery of public services in light of reductions in funding and increased demand on services for both County and Borough Councils.

However, it is not just about cost reductions alone, this is also about a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a step change in the delivery of public services in Dorset. Utilising state of the art processes that deliver great customer service; the opportunity to create a new organisation, culture and service delivery model, will help us establish sustainable public services in Dorset fit for the future.

To be clear we do need the certainty of knowing what we are doing at the earliest opportunity, both to plan at a managerial level for the new authority and as mentioned above from a political level we need to know if we will be running Borough elections in 2018. We have supported this proposal across the political groups with no Councillor voting against the proposal. This reflected the responses that our constituents gave us in our comprehensive consultation process, with 70% of households, statistically sampled, supporting change.

We therefore need your urgent support to help us to deliver the will of the majority of people in Dorset with a positive announcement at the very earliest opportunity.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Jeff Cant
Conservative

On behalf of the other Weymouth & Portland Group Leaders

Cllr G Taylor	Cllr C Huckle	Cllr M Leicester
Lib-Dem	Labour	Independents

cc Richard Drax MP

Members' Room

Borough of Poole, Civic Centre, Poole, Dorset BH15 2RU
Office Tel: 01202 633855 Fax: 01202 633856

The Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

5th January 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you in support of "Future Dorset" and a single unitary for the towns of Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth.

Views and slogans in opposition may have grabbed the headlines in recent weeks, both locally and nationally. But the calm view of many is that Future Dorset makes eminent sense for our economy and the well-being of our people.

Indeed most of the people I speak to in the ward and more generally across the region – who avoid the newspapers or TV – give me an impatient 'just get on with it' and 'you should have done this years ago'.

They understand the economies of scale we can achieve, the protection it offers to vital services, and the ability to punch higher as a city-sized hub. This means a stronger base for more employers, more jobs and an ability to win bigger deals for trade and funding. It's also a great spur to lift our arts, culture and leisure offerings to the highest levels outside London.

But importantly, the towns won't lose their identity. What the opponents claim to be inevitable isn't so. Poole remains Poole. Ditto Christchurch. Ditto Bournemouth. The problem is when people link the identity of a town to the remit of its council – so that one disappears with the other. Not so – the heritage of each town is integral to Future Dorset – but it will need care on our part to ease through this cultural change and keep the hearts-and-minds with us.

We are up for this challenge and the prize is there to be had. And equally there's much to lose if we stay as we are

Finally, it was a pleasure to meet you briefly with a handshake at the party conference in October. I offer best wishes to you for 2018 – and of course for our journey to Future Dorset!

Yours sincerely,

Mohan Iyengar

Cllr Mohan Iyengar
Cabinet Member for Economy, Tourism, Arts, Leisure & Community Safety
Canford Cliffs Ward
Borough of Poole

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[redacted]

From: JAVID, Sajid <sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 05 January 2018 10:32
To: EEMA_SJavid
Subject: Jerry Laker - Future Dorset - Paul Rowsell

From: clerk@knowltonparishcouncil.org.uk <clerk@knowltonparishcouncil.org.uk>
Sent: Thursday, January 4, 2018 6:39 PM
To: JAVID, Sajid [redacted]
Subject: Future Dorset

ear Mr Sajid Javid MP,
Knowlton is a group parish within East Dorset and thus quite concerned that, should the decision to proceed with the proposed reorganisation of local government be confirmed, the needs of the rural communities should be properly and fully considered in creating the structure for the future administration.

You will appreciate that the per capita cost of delivering services to isolated rural communities is greater perhaps than that in the more compact and better-financed urban areas, and it is far from clear so far as to what responsibilities will devolve onto the parish and town councils when the district councils are removed.

There is a willingness generally to engage with issues not previously within the competences of parish councils, provided the financial support is available and guaranteed. No fixed model has been identified for the essentially rural unitary, although something similar to that in use in Wiltshire seems to be a front runner. If the intent of this reorganisation is to include an enhancement of the democratic influence on decision making, then the town and parish councils' will need a strong authority in dealings with both the unitary authority and any intermediate boards established for specific purposes. Parish and town councillors must be prepared to accept greater responsibilities and it may be necessary to form other, more local, alliances to share administrative costs and to let cost-effective contracts.

The much-publicised issue of the final alliance of Christchurch and either the Bournemouth-Poole conurbation or the rural unitary has, from the rural parishes perspective, a sting in both tails. We all appreciate the strength which can exist in a rural community of interest, but can appreciate that the already thinly-spread parish precept will be spread even thinner in a rural unitary. No doubt Christchurch will want to protect its income from dissipation into the countryside; rural communities will not wish to see their influence over local decisions being eroded by a democratic deficit in favour of an urban community.

This council decided, but only very narrowly, that the better outcome for us would be a rural unitary without Christchurch. However, as with another reorganisation currently being negotiated, there are still many issues which require clarity.

Cllr Jerry Laker
Chairman