

## Chat Summary

Please note that any DALC comments will be highlighted.

- **What should parishes developing Neighbourhood Plans do?**
- **Do district councils have the option to 'carry on as they are'? i.e. opt out.**  
I'm afraid they can't
- **Our clerk is already doing quite a bit more than we are probably paying them for. If our responsibilities increase, could we lobby for more resource?**
- **Do we know how this will impact the National Resilience Framework?**
- **Will small parish councils be expected to take on more responsibilities?**
- **I used to clerk a parish in Cornwall. The unitary authority worked well, it's nice to only have one authority to go to. As a Council we relied on our single Councillor to represent our views - which is great if you have a good Councillor. I'm hoping that this process will be good for us.**

Our concern is that we become one of 20-25 parishes that they represent

A worry is that Devon County Council currently says 'can't afford it' to everything, so engagement really challenging. The district council tends to be more open to engage and find solutions.

- **Will the parish councils remain as they are? Does this only affect district councils?**  
Parish councils will be unaffected. District and county councils will be abolished & replaced
- **I see this as a benefit with the possible exception of planning that will move further away**  
It is difficult enough dealing with our district on planning. It will be worse if a bigger authority is dealing with planning, particularly when taking into account the parish views on planning applications.

We are a small parish on Dartmoor so all our planning goes through DNPA. Don't have much to do with the district council apart from waste collection and a little more.

- **Minehead has just agreed significant asset transfer with its new unitary authority including revenue generating assets to cover costs**
- **Will precepts be capped?**
- **I suspect that the new Council will be cash strapped and will only be able to focus on their statutory requirements...meaning that they offload anything/everything that doesn't raise revenue or is a requirement. With parish and town councils being the only place they can transfer them to.**
- **Parishes must be able to raise precepts to cover new responsibilities.**
- **I worry that parish councillors, as volunteers, will simply not want to take on extra responsibilities. we may end up with no councillors or not enough to be quorate.**
- **There seems to be no way small parishes can take up the slack due to cut backs. When budgeting/precepting we don't know if county will continue to fill the grit bins in the village for the winter in the next financial year.**
- **Are very small parishes likely to have to merge to take on responsibilities dropped by the district councils?**
- **We try to raise our precept every year so we don't have a large rise in a particular year. Having said that a 10% rise adds less than £10 per year to a council tax payer.**  
Our view, with concerns about the cost of living, is a little every year to prevent the possible need for a huge hike in the future
- **If parish councils have to raise precepts to cover the transfer of assets and services, is it likely that savings made by unitary councils from offloading will be used to reduce their ask?**  
There haven't been any savings from previous reorganisations, so I can't see there being any this time
- **Will this potentially reduce the council tax if there are no district councils?**
- **Beware of the district or county offering assets that we refuse and then lose the asset altogether. Think of toilets and associated costs. The public will still see themselves already paying for things, and then we are asking them for more money. I can't see taxes going down, whatever the formation of the new authorities.**

- **If Devon CC ceases to exist when replaced by a Unitary, does the Combined Authority also cease to exist?**
- **Districts will have trouble filling vacancies as jobseekers will not want the uncertainty, which will have a knock-on effect on delivering services**
- **Planning seems to be the biggest issue**
- **Comments about isolation will make an argument for more online engagement - attending planning meetings by Teams/Zoom.**
- **I think that there are savings to be made from economies of scale and some parishes are perhaps too small to be efficient or have the means to serve their communities. I also see a danger that some town councils become too big and become replacement district councils.**  
Having been through a unitary process, I find the opposite to be true. Communities become more reliant on their parish councils as their local point of contact.
- **Parishes who fall under National Parks for planning have additional tier in place (Lynton & Lynmouth). Growth plans tend to be delivered through planning initiatives.**
- **Who will receive our Parishioners Council Tax payments?**  
Assume the new unitary will be the replacement billing authority
- **If district councils go, will boundaries be looked at? We are in one district but our parish goes into the next village which is in another district.**
- **The workload of clerks is already very high, we don't have the capacity to take on new areas without some support or help (from DALC and/or other parishes)**

Workload is a discussion you have with your Council. If you are prepared to agree increased hours or you do not want to do extra - the Council would need to consider an assistant clerk etc. It's all about money and the requirements of your residents on accepting a precept increase.

For larger parishes this is true, but for tiny parishes this is not so easy to do. Clerks are increasingly needing to be experts in everything, no matter the size of their parish. Financially small parishes cannot afford to pay for the same level of expertise as larger parishes, but it may still be needed.

I agree about the workload and knowledge requirements increasingly being placed on Clerks. Where agreeable it may be that smaller Councils need to jointly employ a single clerk to service them both. Given the dearth of people willing to take up the role currently it may be necessary in some areas.

- **I think that this highlights the issues on how equipped Parish Councils are to take on additional responsibility. I agree that Parish Councils are a representation of their communities and communication channels are very important. It does not take a parish Council to be the only voice of a community. The primary role of any Council is to deliver services and there must be a process where a decision is made on what Council is best placed to deliver that service.**