

CORNWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

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To: The Boundary Committee

Cornwood Parish Council, in the local authority area of South Hams District Council, has considered the various concepts put forward by the Devon Districts and Devon County Council on the proposal to create Unitary authorities in the County of Devon. Cornwood Parish is a completely rural parish, 90% of which lies within the Dartmoor National Park Authority, but is only 5 miles from the border of Plymouth City Council. The majority of the roads in the Parish are no more than country lanes, and a significant number are weight restricted and speed limited. There is one small village, Cornwood, and a number of very small hamlets and clusters of dwellings. There are a number of outlying farms serviced only by tracks. After careful consideration of the concepts, especially those of South Hams and West Devon, and of Devon County Council, this Parish supports the proposal for three new unitary authorities in Devon, based on the **Rural South Devon and Dartmoor** unitary authority concept, for the following reasons:

- 1 It would appear that this concept embraces all the previously learned good practices of running a diverse rural area, and indeed for the past 20 years or more, lessons learned have brought this area up to a very high customer satisfaction level.
- 2 The cost of running a rural area is undoubtedly high because of the distances involved and the intricate nature of the road system. That the cost of waste collection for this area is only a little over £50 per property per year, and that the recycling rate for this area is in the top quartile for the country, are the best indicators of what can be achieved, and what should not be sacrificed.
- 3 Through past experience it has been proved that an experienced rural authority is very well placed to support affordable rural housing, and sustain a diversified rural economy.
- 4 The Rural South Devon and Dartmoor concept offers an opportunity for local engagement with parishes and the unitary authority on a more realistic locally identifiable area, with opportunities to enhance services already proven to be affordable and successful.
- 5 On the basis of what is already being established this Parish believes that the partnership working agreements already in place are a strong foundation for the future. This Parish already feels that it has the opportunity to take charge of some of the service delivery that residents have come to expect, and be in more control of the spend in the area.

Cornwood Parish Council's view is that the Devon County Council concept does not fully understand the effect there would be of the remoteness of the administration from outlying areas, leaving the parishes trying to find a place within a huge Devonwide unitary authority. The Parish Council is also very concerned that Devon County Council would be willing to allow some areas around the already established Unitary areas of Plymouth and Torbay, to be taken into city administration. The DCC concept does not give any reassurance on this, and causes residents, particularly in this area, very great concern.

The Parish believes that the size of a Unitary Devon is unrealistic, the representation would be remote and distances travelled for service delivery would be unreasonable. The county proposal is to split up the area into a number of Community areas – so why bring it all together only to divide it up again.

The Parish also believes that trying to amalgamate the urban area of Plymouth with rural areas to the east would be a very unrealistic and costly exercise, and would meet with a lot of apprehension and opposition. It is obvious from the information available that the challenges of service delivery in urban areas are quite different to rural areas, eg the distances for rubbish collection, and addressing the needs of a deprived rural area for affordable housing, are all totally different.

Cornwood Parish Council therefore believes that the proposal for three new unitary authorities meets the government criteria, would most meet the needs of the residents of the county as a whole, provide the least risk financially and would be the most acceptable.

Cllr T BROWN, Chairman,
on behalf of Cornwood Parish Council.