Have your say about plans to change the councils in Northamptonshire

Supporting Information
This document tells you about some changes that the 8 councils in Northamptonshire are asked to think about.

Some words, when they are written for the first time are written in bold with a line underneath. You can see more about what the words mean in a list right at the end called the List of Words.

The 8 councils in Northamptonshire are working on a plan to show to the Government how they could join up to run their services.

At the moment some services you might use are run by the County Council and some are run by the District or Borough councils. These are things like:

- Housing
- Planning
- Social care
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Collecting rubbish
- Looking after roads
In the future these services might be run by just one council in an area. When one council runs all the services in an area it is called a **unitary council**.

If you live or work in Northamptonshire it is important you have your say because your council, local services and the council tax you pay would be changed by these plans.

A government inspection says that Northamptonshire County Council has problems with the way it is run and problems paying for the services it provides to residents. These can only be solved by a new way of working.

The government set out some rules about any new way of working. The councils are asking people to say what they think about their plans to work in a new way that meets the rules. This plan says that instead of 8 councils there would be two new unitary councils.

There is more information about the plans on the next few pages.

You can have your say until July 22nd.

If you want more information or want to give your views online you can go to:  
[https://www.futurenorthants.co.uk/](https://www.futurenorthants.co.uk/)
How the councils work now

The 8 councils work in a two-tier system to run services. This means the main services are split up so:

- Northamptonshire County Council (County Council for short) runs services for residents across the county, like education, social care for children and adults, *highways*, and some *environmental* services.

- Corby Borough Council, Daventry District Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council, Northampton Borough Council, South Northamptonshire Council and the Borough Council of Wellingborough run ‘local services’ for residents in their areas, like housing, planning, waste collection, *revenues and benefits*, and leisure services.

The amount of Council Tax levels people pay is set by each of the councils every year for their area.

Each council has
- a political leader
- a Chief Executive or Managing Director
- and local councillors.

There are also lots of parish and town councils, which look after different services and cover towns and villages.
In total there are 321 councillors running local councils across Northamptonshire.

The next map shows each area of Northamptonshire, how many people live in the area and the number of councillors.

Why things need to change quickly

The councils have worked in the same way for a long time and some people are happy about it.

But the 8 councils accept that change is needed because:
• the councils need to make sure they work well for a long time into the future
• a government inspection says that the problems the County Council has with money and the way it is managed can only be worked out by the councils working together. If the money is not managed in a much better way some very important services could change or stop.

At the moment special officers called commissioners have been sent into the County Council by the government to make sure that the council is run properly and the way money is spent is kept under control.

The government has written to all 8 councils asking them to come up with a new way of working by the end of August 2018. The plans must show that:

• services will be improved
• councils will get more out of their money (called value for money)
• savings will be made
• control and big plans (called a strategy) will be stronger and last for a long time
• there is support for the plans
• the population in any new council area is a lot more than 300 thousand people.

The table on the next pages looks at possible options and if they meet the government rules.
The County Council’s money problems are very big and the inspection report clearly says that a new start is needed for the residents of the county.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>The issues the councils have to think about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No change</td>
<td>• Keeping the two-tier council system will not solve the problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Set up 1 new unitary council to cover all of Northamptonshire</td>
<td>• Setting up just 1 council will not be enough of a new start and the government does not think this will work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Set up 3 new unitary councils</td>
<td>• The population will not be big enough in some of the councils. In other words there will be less than 300 thousand people in some of the areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Set up 2 new unitary councils. One to cover Northampton Borough, and one for all the other areas around it</td>
<td>• The population of Northampton Borough is just under 229 thousand. So the population will not be big enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Set up 2 new unitary councils. One to cover districts and boroughs in the west and one for the districts and boroughs in the north</td>
<td>• The populations in the West and North would be big enough as both areas would have more than 300 thousand people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Some councils in Northamptonshire to join up with councils near to them but in another county</td>
<td>• At the moment the law says this cannot happen as a council could end up covered by more than one Police Force. It will take too long to change the law to make this happen.</td>
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</table>
The possible plan the councils in Northamptonshire are thinking about.

The 8 councils in Northamptonshire talked to each other and the government and they have made a plan to replace the 8 councils with 2 new unitary councils.

**North Northants Unitary Council** to cover the areas that are now covered by East Northamptonshire, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough councils.

**West Northants Unitary Council** to cover the areas that are now covered by Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire councils.

The next map shows what the areas will look like.
The reasons or benefits of setting up two new unitary councils

The possible plan to set up 2 new unitary councils would try to treat all areas fairly and would mean some money can be saved. This is because:

- 2 councils are cheaper to run than 8. Doing some of the same things in just 2 councils instead of 8 might mean that nearly £12 million a year can be saved.
• The way services are planned can be done differently. Things like new ways of working, making the best use of technology and working out what people need from social services can also help to save money.

• Changes could also be made to the way the councils buy goods and services from other organisations to help them spend less money.

• The 2 councils should be able to work much closer to the other public bodies like health and the police and save money.

The way that councils are set up and run now confuses a lot of people. They don’t always know which council does what.

Things like:

• the borough and district councils collect council tax, but the county council spends most of the money
• the boroughs and districts collect waste, but the county council gets rid of it
• who looks after highways, roads, footpaths and street lighting is not always clear to people
• and if a business works across the county it might have to get a licence from more than one council.
All these things and others will be made much easier with only 2 new unitary councils. Having 2 new unitary councils might make it easier to know who to contact if you have questions about a service.

The councils might be able to make it easier for people to get support to stay healthy and well. Health and social services could work better together to support people.

2 new unitary councils might also find it much easier to speak up with a stronger voice to get more help for the health services, roads and other things. This will help to support the growing number of people in the county that are living to a much older age.

Councils in lots of other areas in the country have unitary councils.

The cost of making the changes

It will cost some money to organise councils in a different way as it will take a lot of work to do it right. It could cost £22 million at the start to make the changes happen. But within 3 years’ time the councils will start to save more than that.
Parish and Town Councils

There are no plans to make any changes to Parish or Town councils. But they could be more important as they will communicate the needs of their area directly to the 2 new councils.

About Council Tax

If 2 new unitary councils are set up the amount of council tax people pay will probably change.

At the moment someone living in one district might pay a different amount of council tax than someone living in another. Even if they live in a home that is in the same council tax band.

The law says that everyone living in the same council area must pay the same council tax if their home is in the same council tax band.

Council tax amounts in the new councils would need to change over time. This would mean that everyone living in the new council area in the same council tax band ends up paying the same. The amount of time this would take still needs to be decided.
The total council tax some people pay now and what they might pay in the future

The next table shows how people in different districts pay different amounts of council tax at the moment. Even if the homes they live in are in the same council tax band.

If 2 new unitary councils were set up then over time everybody in the same council tax band would pay the same across the new council area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District or Borough</th>
<th>Council tax now</th>
<th>Council tax under the possible new plan</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>£1426</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>East Northamptonshire</td>
<td>£1375</td>
<td><strong>North unitary council:</strong> These 4 areas would end up paying the same</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>£1442</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellingborough</td>
<td>£1382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daventry</td>
<td>£1392</td>
<td><strong>West unitary council:</strong> These 3 areas would end up paying the same</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>£1456</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Northamptonshire</td>
<td>£1422</td>
<td></td>
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Business rates

This is the amount of money people pay in tax to the government for a place where they run a business. There will be no change to the way this is paid.
Contacting a council

It is important that people in Northamptonshire still find it easy to contact their council even if the number of councils changes. There might be less offices but people will still be able to make contact on line and for some things by phone or face to face.

Changes to the number of councillors

If there are only 2 councils a lot less councillors will be needed. The new councils will suggest how many they need to an organisation called the Boundary Commission who will then decide the final number.

Changes to the number of staff

At the moment there are some senior staff in each of the 8 councils who do similar jobs. If there are only 2 councils less of these senior staff would be needed. Changes to the number of people living in each area and changes to the way services are run might mean the number of other staff changes in future.
The next steps

Although the 8 councils have come up with a possible plan to set up 2 new unitary councils they will not decide what to do until people and organisations in Northamptonshire have their say.

After 22nd July 2018 the 8 councils will look at what people and organisations said and decide if setting up 2 new unitary councils still sounds like the best plan or if any better idea has come up. Any new idea would still have to stick to the government’s rules.

At the end of August 2018 the councils will decide whether to send a report to government. If they do, then the government would then decide on any final plan. It would take a while for any new councils to be set up and the government would need to take steps to put the plans into place.

If the plan for 2 new unitary councils is chosen then the aim is for these councils to start in April 2020.
How you can have your say

An organisation called Opinion Research Services (ORS) is doing the work to help people have their say.

Any information given to ORS (by a questionnaire or any other way) will be used only by the rules set by the UK Data Protection Act and the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

Personal information will be kept for no more than 1 year after any decisions have been finalised. For more information, please see www.ors.org.uk/privacy

No members of the public will be identified in any ORS consultation reports; but where feedback is given by a representative for an organisation, or by an elected representative or someone acting in their official capacity, this may be noted.

You can have your say until 22 July 2018

To have your say you can look at a web site called Future Northants by going to: https://www.futurenorthants.co.uk/ You will be able to fill in a questionnaire.
If you fill in a paper questionnaire or write some comments you can send these back by free post to:

ORS,
FREEPOST (SS1018),
PO BOX 530,
Swansea.
SA1 1ZL.

If you have any questions about filling in the questionnaire or need help to do it or need a copy in large print, audio version or in another language, please call ORS on 0800 3247005 or email consultation@ors.org.uk

As well as the website there will be an information booklet called a consultation document with a questionnaire. These will be in libraries and local council offices from Monday, 25 June. You can look at your local council website to see where you can pick up a copy.

Some people will also be asked to do a survey by telephone or to take part in a discussion group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>List of words</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Council tax band</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Highways</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Options</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Revenues and benefits</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Two-tier</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Unitary council</strong></td>
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