**County Councillors want Dorset split into two unitary authorities**

DORSET county councillors have thrown their support behind the formation of two unitary authorities in the county. Councillors held a debate to discuss plans to change the organisation of local government in the county.

At the end of the meeting, councillors were asked to vote on which option for the new unitary authority they would prefer. The vote was not binding and was made so councillors could indicate their preferred direction going forward.

All nine councils across the county have been discussing plans to change the way local government runs.

During a series of votes, councillors indicated they would prefer to see the county split in to two unitary authorities.

In a final vote, where councillors were asked to indicate their preferred option, 53.8 percent of councillors backed two authorities- a ‘shire’ Dorset authority and a merger of Poole and Bournemouth.

Of the rest, 41 percent indicated their preferred option was for a merger of East Dorset, West Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck and Weymouth and Portland councils with Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth forming a separate unitary authority, while the remaining 5.2 per cent voted for no change.

During votes on the individual proposals, 88 percent of councillors opposed or strongly opposed a plan for a whole county Pan-Dorset authority.

Cllr [Lesley Dedman](http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/search/?search=Lesley+Dedman&topic_id=3681) said she was “surprised” that 41 per cent of councillors preferred the option of Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth councils merging.

She said: “The way we were given the options meant it would balance out the population figures beautifully. But I’m surprised and shocked so many county councillors are prepared for a council without Christchurch.

“However, I’m pleased we voted for some change - that will be good.”

Councillors said that the changes shouldn’t just be made for financial reasons but to better allow them to serve their communities and to end confusion over services.

11th March 2016

**http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk**