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**U-turn over 'super council' plans**

**19.04.16**

COUNCILLORS have made a U-turn on plans to discuss 'super council' options in south east Dorset.

[East Dorset District Council](http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/search/?search=East+Dorset+District+Council&topic_id=3822) voted strongly against being involved in the negotiations at a meeting in December, but last night they reconsidered and voted the other way.

In total 23 councillors supported the motion to enter discussions with the county's other authorities about forming one or more larger unitary bodies, with four members opposed and one abstention.

Cllr Mike Dyer, whose motion to reject discussion was carried in December, was among those who attributed their change of heart to their concern that by not taking part the authority would be at the mercy of decisions made elsewhere.

"The leader of Bournemouth council has gone public on many occasions with his vision of a greater Bournemouth which involves part of our district," he said. "He wants to change the boundaries. In these circumstances it would be very foolish not to have our leader in the room."

Cllr Derek Burt, who voted in favour with "serious reservations", said he had not yet had a single member of the public express support for a unitary authority. He said: "The impression one gets is that some people think it is already signed, sealed and delivered - a done deal." However, he added: "The leader of Bournemouth council gave an interview the other day in which he suggested splitting our district."

Members expressed concern that land in the district might be used by any combined authority for housing people from nearby towns. Cllr Janet Dover, who voted against, said: "People have told me about their fears of East Dorset becoming a land bank for Bournemouth and Poole."

In December, 20 of 28 councillors opposed the motion to join discussions. However, since then all Dorset's other authorities have agreed to consider the options.

Cllr Simon Gibson, one of those who supported the proposal on both occasions, said it would give the authority a chance to choose from "a menu of options". He added: "Indeed, if we are not in the room we will not be able to choose from the menu, we will be on it."

Four members maintained their opposition to the proposal.

Among them council chairman Steven Lugg, speaking as a ward councillor, said: "Residents have made their views quite clear, every single person who has spoken to me about it.

"It was a sound decision made by an overwhelming majority in December."