Christchurch to rejoin Hampshire ?

[Will Frampton](http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/author/profile/40632.Will_Frampton/) 15 November, 2018

CHRISTCHURCH Councillors are making overtures to rejoin Hampshire County Council rather than merging with Bournemouth and Poole. The decision was taken at a Conservative group meeting on Monday night.

The borough is currently involved in negotiations with its neighbouring towns about merging with them to form a new unitary authority as part of the Future Dorset proposal, which has Government approval but was rejected by Christchurch in January.

Council leader David Flagg confirmed members were seeking an alternative to present to the Government. “I will be writing to the leaders of Dorset and Hampshire with a view to holding formal talks,” he said. “Clearly there are time constraints on this. It is in response to the Secretary of State’s statement to say that he is open to any council coming forward with an alternative proposal.” He said Christchurch would need consent from both county councils to proceed with the idea. “There is a long way to go, it will need a resolution from the council to move forward,” he added.

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An extraordinary council meeting on Thursday at 6pm will see members discuss holding a local referendum on Future Dorset, which could, the Daily Echo understands, be adapted to present joining with Bournemouth and Poole or with Hampshire as a choice.

Christchurch and Bournemouth were both a part of Hampshire until the big boundary shake-up in 1974. It is not the first time the idea of rejoining Hampshire has been mooted. Earlier this year the borough began talks with [**New Forest District Council**](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/) about forming a close partnership, similar to its current partnership with East Dorset. This plan has been backed by MP [**Christopher Chope**](http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/search/?search=Christopher+Chope&topic_id=6447).

Residents will have a chance to air their views on the matter and the Future Dorset plan at a public meeting at 7pm on Monday, at the Priory Church. Sue Bungey, chairman of Christchurch Joint Residents Association, said:

"This is to help people decide how they would like to vote in the planned referendum. It is open to everyone and is the first of other planned public meetings over the next few weeks."

The referendum plan was originally approved in March but put on hold due to delays in the Government's response to Future Dorset. It would take the form of a postal ballot, and residents would have just two weeks to return their ballot papers.

The final decision on Future Dorset takes place on 8 January 2018.

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Christchurch to begin talks on rejoining Hampshire instead of super council plan

Christchurch from the air, with Bournemouth and Poole in the distance. Picture, Stephen Bath

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Councillor David Flagg, leader of Christchurch council, will write to Hampshire and Dorset county councils





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