

SURREY HEATH LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCIL GROUP

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Thumbs Down to a County Council Led Surrey Unitary Authority

Surrey Heath Borough Council Liberal Democrat leader, Sashi Mylvaganam, rejects any attempt by Surrey County Council to form a Unitary Authority based on the existing County boundaries.

“Whilst my Group are sympathetic to the idea of a single unitary authority replacing the existing County Council and eleven Surrey District Councils – including Surrey Heath Borough Council – we believe that there should be a full public consultation on the matter, ideally followed by a local referendum. Central government most certainly should not be dictating to local people how a new Authority should be organised.

However, we reject outright the idea of any new single Authority being led by Surrey County Council. Good practise suggests an optimum size for a Unitary Authority is between 300,000 and 500,000 residents. Surrey has about 1.2 million and would be far too big.”

In claiming that Surrey County Council had plucked savings figures out of the air, like the £135m they are suggesting, Cllr Mylvaganam added “The current County is also far too diverse to become a single Unitary Authority. We should look at all the options available the boroughs to ensure the Rate Payers get the benefit. This process should not be used to cut services.

Cllr Mylvaganam concluded, “If we are going to have a Unitary Authority, it should, in my view, probably be supported by a comprehensive network of Town/Parish Councils with a wider set of responsibilities - including a local Planning function. Any new authorities should also be elected using a proportional voting system to ensure proper representation”

- Ends -

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