

Submission by Ct5 People's Forum to Canterbury City Council re Devolution 2025

Our main purpose is to ensure that devolution enhances local democracy.

However you cut it, three or four unitaries for Kent means unitary councillors will be further from the people they represent than our district councillors are now.

That means a democratic deficit will be created and the chances that a councillor will be interested in or have time to deal with individuals, their bin collections, housing problems, green spaces or pot-holes are reduced.

There is therefore a danger that devolution will actually mean centralisation to most people and on the basic local and community issues they face.



We are determined that Whitstable's voice will be heard by the district (and hopefully county) councils during this transition and of course into the future. Canterbury City Council have said they want the same and we welcome this opportunity to set out our position.

We are aware that the City council is drafting the plan to implement the new unitaries. This includes how to ensure neighbourhoods and communities have an enduring voice, as

required by central government.

We have gleaned from our own research that Canterbury is an outlier. It is the only Kent district, bar two - Dartford and Gravesham - that is not currently considering carrying out a review to fill the gaps in the local council map. We have three glaring gaps - Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable towns.

We could be left even further out in the cold after unitaries are formed and be forced to live with an entrenched democratic deficit. This means that we believe a district-wide review should be carried out by the City council to protect us.

Local democracy requires in our view -

- 1) *An enduring body as the Voice for Whitstable such as a local parish or town council or cluster thereof.*
- 2) *Democracy - all its decisions to be made by representatives elected for that purpose by the electorate within the space it covers.*
- 3) *A coherent and sustainable geographical scope.*
- 4) *Adequate funding in perpetuity from the unitary for any functions delegated to it.*
- 5) *The power to raise a perhaps capped local precept and seek funds from elsewhere for agreed activities.*
- 6) *A building in the town centre for meetings, staff to work and as a community hub.*
- 7) *Capacity to support local charities and voluntary groups.*
- 8) *Powers to initiate plans re the economy, retail, tourism, open spaces, wellbeing, sustainable transport, nature, etc.*
- 9) *Power to preserve and enhance the community assets of the town be they buildings or open spaces*
- 10) *Freedom to work with other similar local bodies as appropriate.*