

Why councillors discussing unitary plans are meeting behind closed doors

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The first in a series of behind closed doors meetings to discuss plans to scrap the county, district and borough councils and replace them with one authority has taken place.

Leader of the council Nick Rushton chaired the first meeting of the cross party working group tasked with [scrutinising the plans](#) at County Hall on Friday.

The meetings are taking in place in private and members of the press and public were not invited to attend so that 'members can speak freely about their views' according to Coun Rushton.

The 10 person panel is made up of: Coun Rushton; leader of the Lib Dems, Councillor Simon Galton; leader of the Labour party, Councillor Dr Terri Eynon; Councillor Brenda Seaton (Con: Thurmaston Ridgemere); Councillor Rosita Page (Con: Lutterworth); Councillor Maggie White (Con: Stoney Stanton & Croft); Councillor Alan Pearson (Con: Melton West); Councillor Peter Bedford (Con: Markfield, Desford & Thornton); Councillor Dan Harrison (Con: Ibstock and Appleby) and Councillor Michael Charlesworth (Lib Dem: East Wigston).

The councillors have been selected so they represent the whole of the county.

The aim of Friday's meeting was to agree its focus and approach.

Over the coming weeks, the council will speak to and seek the views of MPs, [district councils](#), [parish and town councils](#), the NHS, criminal justice agencies, businesses, universities, the voluntary sector and other stakeholders.

It will also look at any other options put forward and use the feedback to shape proposals for future widespread public consultation.

Coun Rushton, said: “Local government is facing a perfect storm – the financial pressures, national funding context and growing service demands underline that now is the time to consider change. This is something we can all agree on.

“The cabinet report clearly makes the case for change and assesses two different options. Now that we’ve had the opportunity to draw up tangible ideas, I’m keen to start the conversation with a wide range of stakeholders.

“I hope this involves the district councils putting forward options themselves. And these could be considered by the new cross-party working group.

“The views of residents are really important and if people want to let me know their thoughts at this stage, they can email or write to me.”

A series of scrutiny committees will discuss the plans and the advantages and disadvantages for each of the council’s main departments.

The meetings are scheduled to take place in the week beginning November 5.