Some time ago, the District and Borough Councils in Northamptonshire jointly commissioned an independent study to consider options for the future delivery of public services in the county. Following a formal procurement process, Deloitte were commissioned to undertake the work.

The report has now been issued by Deloitte.

The study was commissioned as a precautionary measure to help the Districts and Boroughs be prepared for two potential things – either the County Council submitting a proposal for a single countywide unitary council to the government and/or the County Council suffering a major service or financial failure.

Since the report was commissioned, a number of significant events have occurred at the County Council - the LGA finance peer review, the report of the best value inspector, and the recent budget setting process have moved the debate forward at pace. Whilst the report by Deloitte makes interesting reading it has effectively been overtaken by events. The report does however contain much useful information and comment, none more so than the commentary that without wider reform of public services, local government re-organisation (in isolation) is unlikely to resolve the financial challenges that are faced.

Given the report of the Best Value Inspector (and the subsequent response of the Secretary of State), the Deloitte report will primarily now be used as part of the required evidence base for any response by the councils to the Secretary of State’s recent formal invitation to submit proposals ‘for a single tier of local government in Northamptonshire’.