

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINISHED (?)

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----- JACK WOOLFORD -----

DESPITE OUR GOOD ADVICE to Mr Gummer, to maintain the whole of the County of Kent as an integrated peninsula according to the wishes of its people, he has decided to accept the recommendation of the "new" Local Government Commission that Gillingham-Rochester (but not Dartford-Gravesend)) should be separated out from the County and become a unitary authority.

This what the "STOP PRESS" in our April Newsletter 25 forecast, although I was mistaken in guessing that the removal of pressure for decision on a government in difficulties would necessarily mean delay.

Consequently Rochester-Upon-Medway City Council and Gillingham Borough Council will be abolished and their functions and those of the County Council in those areas transferred to the new (as yet unnamed) authority in 1998 after elections in 1997. Meanwhile transitional arrangements for services and staff will consume more time and money, and, as the President of our fraternal CITY OF ROCHESTER SOCIETY observes in its May Newsletter:

"... Henceforth our elected members will no longer be able to blame Maidstone for any shortcomings, real or imagined, and will have to stand by their own decisions. Their decision

to support unitary status is perhaps already having an effect on current "County" projects, for I cannot imagine that the County Council will initiate new projects in an area for which it soon will not be responsible ... Thus it would seem unlikely that Chatham will gain a new library or Strood a new northern bypass ..."

The future of Local Government will continue to be interesting and important, if not actually exciting. Political activity in North West Kent has still not ceased: but even assuming that this is the end of a sordid story, a new government may alter the rules. Contrariwise the new non-Kentish Unitary Authority (as yet unnamed: Dickensia, "Medwavia"?) may show us how much better to do it. The implications for Dover are endless. Watch this column! In the meanwhile, we should pay close attention to the new Dover Town (Parish) Council - and attend its meetings.

TILMANSTONE Photographs and History EXHIBITION

Saturday and Sunday
3 - 4 August 1996

in
Tilmanstone Village
Hall

Saturday: Open 11 am - 6 pm
Sunday: Open 10 am - 4 pm

ADMISSION: Adults 25P
Children 10P

REFRESHMENTS