

TITLE: Local Government Reorganisation - Public and Stakeholder Survey

Committee: Full Council

Date: 18 September 2025

Author: Director Operations

Report number: AA53

Contact officer: Isabel Edgar, Director Operations, Isabel.edgar@eastcambs.gov.uk

1.0 Issue

- 1.1. To provide the results of the Public and Stakeholder Survey undertaken as part of the Local Government Reorganisation business case development.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested

- 2.1. To note the survey and focus group findings is appendix 1, 2, 3

3.0 Background/Options

- 3.1. As part of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) business case development, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Leaders working group commissioned an external consultant to undertake a public and stakeholder survey.
- 3.2. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued guidance on 5 February 2025. This sets out detailed criteria for the creation of new unitary authorities which the business case for any given proposal must address. The survey centred around themes relating to the criteria including connections people have to different areas; where they work, socialise or receive healthcare, for example. It also covered what priorities they thought new unitary councils should have and what is important to them when it comes to interacting with local government.
- 3.3. The Public survey achieved 3,174 responses during the four-week collection period (19 June - 20 July 2025), comprising 2,407 public responses and 767 council worker responses.
- 3.4. Other stakeholder groups such as parish councils and businesses completed a stakeholder survey that ran for the same period and received 231 responses.
- 3.5. Additionally, six online focus groups were held in each district and city council area, to further inform the findings from the survey.
- 3.6. Feedback from the survey will be used to help inform the business cases for each of the three preferred options and will look to address opportunities, challenges or concerns identified by respondents.

- 3.7. This exercise was designed as an engagement survey and not a formal consultation process, which will be the responsibility of the Government following the submission of the final business cases.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The detailed analysis of the surveys and focus groups can be found in Appendix 1 – Public Survey, Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Survey, Appendix 3 – Focus Group report.
- 4.2 Analysis is broken down into different demographic cohorts, as well as by Council area. East Cambridgeshire District Council consistently out performs all other council areas across a wide range of measures including trust, satisfaction, community and cultural alignment.
- 4.3 Notable findings include:
- a) East Cambridgeshire demonstrated the highest satisfaction at 63%, followed by Fenland at 53%, Huntingdonshire at 50%
 - b) Our residents expressed the highest sense of belonging to their local community at 76% (highest of all councils) and 53% felt that the Councils decisions reflected the cultural values of their community, compared with Cambridge at 38% and Peterborough at 32%.
 - c) Trust in council decision making varied significantly across the region, with East Cambs achieving a net positive score of +24, compared to Fenland +7, South Cambs +4, Huntingdonshire +3, Cambridge + 0 and Peterborough -32
 - d) East Cambs residents were more concerned about Local Government reorganisation than other areas (81%) - noting that the area may be overlooked in the reorganisation process, but most (78%) were supportive of change if it simplified council structures and improved services.
 - e) Residents across the region were sceptical that LGR would lead to financial savings, but most welcomed simplification of council structures.
 - f) Most residents felt that a new unitary council should serve a population of 500,000 or less. Within the focus groups, residents expressed understanding of the challenge that big local authorities may become too remote from local areas, but smaller authorities may struggle with officer capacity and ability to respond to issues.
 - g) Across the region the three main areas residents wanted new unitaries to focus on was; having local Councillors who understand the local area, increasing accountability and transparency, and reducing the complexity of council structures and processes.
 - h) East Cambridgeshire demonstrated the strongest agreement that a Councillor should know their local area with 70%.
 - i) While residents and stakeholders were not specifically asked about the different geographies for potential new unitaries, many residents expressed preferences or otherwise in the comments section of the survey. While the comments have been used to inform the conclusions of the surveys, further analysis of comments by area is currently being undertaken.

5.0 Implications

Financial Implications NO	Legal Implications NO	Human Resources (HR) Implications NO
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) NO	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) NO	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) NO

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Public Survey Report
Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Survey Report
Appendix 3 – Focus Group Report

7.0 Background documents

English Devolution White Paper December 2024
Local Government Reorganisation – Submission to Government – Extraordinary Council 20 February 2025