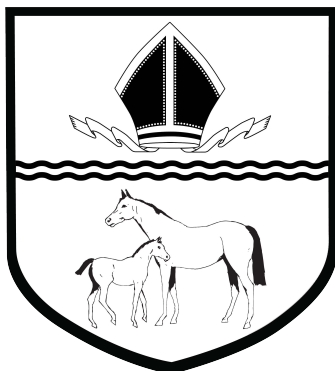




East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Council Meeting

20 November 2025

**Agenda
Minutes and Recommendations**

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO THE GRANGE

Parking

Limited visitor parking is available during the daytime at the access area to The Grange, for people making short visits on Council business of up to 30 minutes. Ample free public car parking is available nearby for longer visits and location plans can be forwarded on request. On-site car parking is available for evening meetings after 5.00pm.

Access and Security

If you are visiting The Grange during normal office hours you should report to the main reception desk, where you will be asked to fill in a visitor's pass that must be worn at all times whilst you are in the building. Please remember to return your pass before you leave.

This will not apply if you come to an evening meeting: in this case you will enter via the rear access doors in the glass atrium at the back of the building and a Facilities Assistant will direct you to the room in which the meeting will take place.

Emergencies

In the event of a fire or any other emergency during the day, you will hear a continuous alarm. The designated officer or their deputy as set out in the displayed plans for each floor will take charge of any evacuation and try to ensure that no one is left within the areas for which they are responsible.

You should leave the building by the nearest available exit and go to the assembly point near to the exit barrier in the front car park. **Do not** use the lifts, and **do not** re-enter the building until someone advises that it is safe for you to do so.

If you discover a fire immediately operate the nearest fire alarm call point, inform reception or another member of staff, leave the building and go to the assembly point.

In the event of a fire or another emergency during an evening meeting, a member of staff will direct you to the nearest available exit.

First Aid

If someone feels unwell or needs first aid, please let a member of staff know.

Access for People with Disabilities

The Council Chamber and majority of Committee rooms are accessible to wheelchair users via the lift. There are specially adapted toilets on the ground floor (in main reception) and on the first floor of the building.

In the event of a fire or another emergency, wheelchair users will be guided to an area near to an exit to await the arrival of the emergency services.

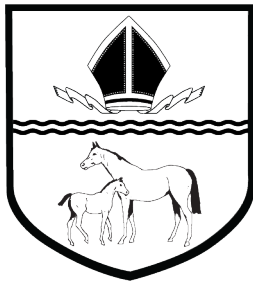
Toilets

Public toilets are on the ground floor in the main reception area.

If you are visiting The Grange for an evening meeting, the toilets in close proximity to the Chamber and Committee rooms are all clearly signposted.

Smoking

The Council operates a NO SMOKING policy in all its office buildings, including the car park to The Grange.



East Cambridgeshire District Council

NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Meeting of the **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held on **THURSDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2025** in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER** at **THE GRANGE, NUTHOLT LANE, ELY, CB7 4EE**, commencing at **6:00pm** with up to 15 minutes of Public Question Time, immediately followed by the formal business, and you are summoned to attend for the transaction of the following business

Agenda

- 1. Public Question Time** **[oral]**
The meeting will commence with up to 15 minutes Public Question Time (PQT) – questions/statements can be submitted in advance or placed in the PQT box in the Council Chamber prior to the commencement of the meeting – see Notes below for further information on the PQT scheme.
- 2. Apologies for Absence** **[oral]**
- 3. Declarations of Interests** **[oral]**
To receive declarations of interests from Members for any items on the agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.
- 4. Minutes – 18 September 2025** **Page 7**
To confirm as a correct record.
- 5. Chair's Announcements** **[oral]**
- 6. To receive Petition(s) (If any)** **[oral]**
- 7. Notice of Motions under Procedure Rule 10** **[oral]**
 - a) Tackling Long-Term Empty Homes**

Council notes:

- The number of long-term empty homes (empty for 6+ months) in the district: 528 (Sept 2022), 546 (Sept 2023), 531 (Sept 2024), 473 (Sept 2025)—a recent improvement, but still a significant wasted housing resource.
- The council's most recent Empty Homes Strategy was adopted in 2006 and despite being linked on the council's website is believed to be no longer live.
- The council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy dates from 2022 and is based on other policies which expired in 2017 and 2021.
- The fiscal levers available to councils to deal with the blight of long-term empty homes.

Council believes:

- Bringing empty homes back into use is among the fastest and best-value ways to increase supply, cut blight, and improve access to housing in East Cambridgeshire.
- A modernised strategy should combine support, incentives and firm enforcement, learning from councils that have delivered results.

Council resolves to:

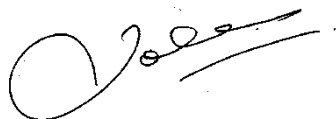
1. Commission and adopt a new Empty Homes Strategy by July 2026, replacing the 2006 and 2022 documents, with clear targets, resourcing, and an annual public report. This strategy to include
 - a) ambitious district targets to reduce long-term empty homes and return them to use.
 - b) the full range of fiscal levers, including council tax rates and published local exemptions and deferrals for active renovation.
2. Develop and approve a business case for the resources required to implement the strategy, including consideration of
 - a) a revolving Empty Homes Loan Fund to finance works to bring empty homes back to habitable standard.
 - b) expanded enforcement capacity (including training and legal support) to deploy Empty Dwelling Management Orders and targeted Compulsory Purchase Orders for persistently problematic properties.
 - c) an Empty Homes Partnership with local housing associations, community-led housing groups and social enterprises to support owners to bring properties up to standard and explore external funds to underwrite conversions.
 - d) the creation of a dedicated Empty Homes Officer post and a review of case management systems.
 - e) resourcing of a public “Report an Empty” portal and matchmaker service for buyers and renovators, and publish a quarterly dashboard, in line with LGA best practice.
3. Run an annual communications campaign during Empty Homes Week to showcase success stories and promote offers and enforcement.

Proposer: Cllr Mark Inskip

Seconder: Cllr Christine Colbert

- | | | |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| 8. | To answer questions from Members | [oral] |
| 9. | Schedule of items recommended from Committees and other Member bodies: | |
| 1. | <u>Finance & Assets Committee – 25 September 2025</u> | Page 41 |
| | a. Council Tax Reduction Scheme | |
| 2. | <u>Audit Committee – 21 October 2025</u> | |
| | a. Adoption of Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy | |
| 10. | Local Government Reorganisation Final Report | Page 71 |
| 11. | Constitution Review – Further Amendments | Page 249 |

12. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority:	
(a) Update report – September 2025	Page 251
(b) Update report – October 2025	Page 252
13. Appointment of Chief Executive	Page 253
14. Appointment of a Director to ECTC and ECSS	Page 255



J Hill
Chief Executive

To: All Members of the Council

NOTES:

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. Admittance is on a "first-come, first-served" basis, and public access will be from 30 minutes before the start time of the meeting. Due to room capacity restrictions, members of the public are asked, where possible, to notify Democratic Services (democratic.services@eastcambs.gov.uk or 01353 665555) of their intention to attend a meeting.

The meeting will be webcast, and a live stream of the meeting will be available for viewing. Further details can be found [here](#). Please be aware that all attendees, including those in the public gallery, will be visible on the livestream.

Public Questions/Statements are welcomed on any topic related to the Council's functions as long as there is no suspicion that it is improper (e.g. offensive, slanderous or might lead to disclosures of Exempt or Confidential information). Up to 15 minutes is allocated for this at the start of the meeting. Further details about the Public Question Time scheme are available at: <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/committees/public-question-time-scheme>

The Council has adopted a 'Purge on Plastics' strategy and is working towards the removal of all consumer single-use plastics in our workplace. Therefore, we do not provide disposable cups at our meetings and would ask members of the public to bring their own drink to the meeting, if required.

Fire Instructions for the Meeting: Instructions for the event of a fire at the venue will be announced at the start of the meeting.

Reports are attached for each agenda item unless marked "oral".

If required, all items on the agenda can be provided in different formats (e.g. large type, Braille or audio tape, or translated into other languages), on request, by calling Main Reception on (01353) 665555 or e-mail: translate@eastcambs.gov.uk

If the Committee wishes to exclude the public and press from the meeting, a resolution in the following terms will need to be passed:

“That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item no(s). X because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item(s) there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category X of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of East Cambridgeshire District Council
held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE
on Thursday 18th September 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillor Chika Akinwale	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith	Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor James Lay
Councillor Ian Bovingdon	Councillor David Miller
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Kelli Pettitt (Chair)
Councillor Christine Colbert	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Lee Denney	Councillor John Trapp
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Ross Trent
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Lucius Vellacott
Councillor Mark Goldsack	Councillor Mary Wade
Councillor Martin Goodearl	Councillor Alison Whelan
Councillor Kathrin Holtzmann	Councillor Christine Whelan
Councillor Keith Horgan (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gareth Wilson
Councillor Julia Huffer	

1. Public Question Time

Question from Peter Bates, Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network, read out by the Democratic Services and Elections Manager

The East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network fully supports ECDC's initiative to increase the number of agricultural reservoirs across East Cambridgeshire in order to mitigate the impact of climate change. Equally so, the East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network is starting to develop a complementary project, working with Anglian Water to develop a network of Water Conservation Champions across the District – to actively encourage householders and small businesses to save water and their money.

The Water Conservation Champions initiative is one of three key high impact projects that the Network is currently focusing on. It is also developing a network of Community Energy Champions that will offer initial domestic energy saving advice, including renewables – and at the other end of the spectrum - the development of community led and benefit projects like wind

turbines, solar PV installations, linked to battery storage and EV Charging points.

The third high impact initiative is the development of community-based local nature recovery projects aligned with the CPCA's Local Nature Recovery Strategy including the ECDC commissioned "Nature Recovery Network for East Cambridgeshire" - Final Report published in 2022.

Questions:

1. How would the Council take the opportunity when planning Agricultural Reservoirs to ensure that they also double the biodiversity of the surrounding reservoir areas and also take the opportunity to plan for increasing access to the general public by improving neighbouring byways and bridleways - public rights of way - particularly as there is a need to increase more access to the countryside for the general public as a result of all the housing developments?
2. Does the Council think the East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network could play a positive role in further developing this idea? And if so, how can the Network get involved in the project?
3. Will the Council financially support the East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network with its emerging proposal to establish community water conservation champions, whereby such champions actively work with discreet local communities on water saving actions and advice? An initial £5,000 to pump-prime this activity would be useful.
4. How will the Council actively support the development of innovative water management/community energy solutions that could also result in sustainable projects like water source heat pumps for heating community buildings, micro-water turbines for electricity production and micro water-cooling systems for Data Centres? Can the Council fund some initial economic growth activities that will increase awareness of such business opportunities?

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey

"I want to thank East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network and Mr Bates for the question and all the work that they do. They are heavily invested in this type of work in East Cambridgeshire, so I thank them for everything that they do and their support for all our efforts at this Council.

"We have a recently published report that we commissioned from Eastern Powerhouse, which I am delighted to be talking about and it has already gained an awful lot of attention. We sent it off far and wide and I will be alluding to it later when we discuss our Corporate Plan.

"We are constrained by the laws of the land and agricultural reservoirs obviously require planning permission and so access and biodiversity matters are dealt with through the planning process. Whilst we can encourage

biodiversity improvements and we certainly do and will, we cannot insist on the doubling of biodiversity surrounding the reservoirs. Actually, in my experience, farmers are very keen to progress this agenda and we can certainly encourage them. Access will depend on the location of any future reservoirs, because for example, if they are on private farmland the Council cannot insist on public access.

“The Council has only recently published its reservoirs feasibility study, so the project is obviously at an early stage of work. We will absolutely keep East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network fully informed of progress and any opportunities to be involved. The Council is of course committed to water efficiency, as far as we are allowed to be by the constraints that we work under and we promote sustainable water management, not only by the Agricultural Reservoirs project but we have of course included the actions to achieve this in our own Climate and Nature Strategy. Four of the top twenty actions for the 2024/25 strategy were water related, which shows you how important it is rapidly becoming. Our Climate Change and Natural Environment Team are available to help you with your proposal and our economic development team would also be happy to support local businesses with water management and community energy solutions.”

Question from Marianne Pickles, read out by the Democratic Services and Elections Manager

Originally, with funding from the CPCA, the Net Zero Villages Project in East Cambridgeshire has been highly successful and oversubscribed resulting in some projects being unable to get funding.

For those not familiar, the Net Zero Villages project took place earlier this year, managed by ECDC and was actively supported by the East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network, including discussing potential options with individual community groups across East Cambridgeshire. Unfortunately, no funds are presently available to re-open the grant scheme, despite considerable demand from community groups looking to save money on their running costs and contribute to reducing their climate emissions.

It is noted that there are going to be some changes at the senior management officer level which if handled sensibly, could result to savings for the Council which could then be re-directed to community-based projects.

Question: How can the Council proactively find additional funding internally for such projects as well as seek to identify other funds from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and/or Cambridgeshire County Council, the Greater South East Net Zero Hub and/or Great British Energy – the British government-owned renewable energy investment body?

East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network would be willing to take on the management role of such an initiative, if the Council can find funding. This could also include extending it to the urban areas of Ely and Soham which were not included in the original project.

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey

“Before I answer the question, I want to pay tribute to our small officer team for the way in which they have brought together the Net Zero Villages project and also the other projects that have come forward. It was really excellent and inspiring.

“Thank you very much for the question and of course for the offer of support. For those of you who are not aware, the successful Net Zero Villages programme has awarded a total of £150,000 to ten village halls across the district for solar panels, batteries and insulation, which has helped our vital community facilities reduce their running costs and their carbon emissions at the same time.

“Identifying and applying for relevant grants is an ongoing part of our work and our officers are continuously seeking new funding opportunities from both internal and external sources, including the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. We will continue exploring all suitable funding streams to enable the development and delivery of impactful community led climate action initiatives across the district.”

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Charlotte Cane.

3. Declarations of Interest

The Director Legal explained that as local taxpayers, councillors had a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in the motion on Council Tax and so they could fully participate in the discussion on that item and vote on it, without having to disclose an interest or have a dispensation.

4. Minutes – 22 May 2025

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd May 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

5. Chair’s Announcements

The Chair made no announcements.

6. Petitions

No petitions had been received.

7. Notice of Motions Under Procedure Rule 10

(i) Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed and Cllr Julia Huffer seconded the following motion.

The Council notes that:

1. Since the Government's White Paper on English Devolution was published in December 2024, Leaders and Officers of the six principal Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together to produce an agreed proposal, or an agreed set of proposals, in time for the final submission deadline in November 2025.
2. The initial work undertaken to support the business case includes a detailed analysis of the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on Adults, Children and SEND services; a financial analysis of the relative funding allocation from Government; analysis of demand across other services such as homelessness and environmental services; and analysis of the viability of the tax base (business rates, Council Tax, and other income) to support each Unitary configuration.
3. This work has led to the development of three different options all of which are for a two Unitary solution across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. See below the three options.

Proposal A North-West/South-East

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

Proposal B North/South

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District along with County Council functions

Proposal C East/West

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

4. Each Council across the region has directly input into the development of a suite of baseline data to be used in each business case and is now directly inputting into a chosen business case. Based on the shared data and analysis undertaken to date, at this stage East Cambs District Council officers are inputting directly into the development of the Proposal B business case and indirectly (through sharing of data) into Proposals A and C.

5. The business case for Proposal A is being led by Cambridgeshire County Council. This proposal is currently the preferred option of the County Council's Administration. District Councils are not directly inputting into the development of this business case.
6. The business case for Proposal B is being led by Cambridge City Council and is the only business case that has direct input from all District Councils and an upper tier authority, namely Peterborough City Council.
7. South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council Leaders have given public support for the creation of a Greater Cambridge Unitary – The Greater Cambridge Unitary comprises of the geography covered by these two Councils only, which forms part of Proposal B.
8. The business case for Proposal C is being led by Huntingdonshire District Council but is not receiving direct input from either of the upper tier authorities or any other District Councils at this stage. For clarity, HDC offered to lead on this piece of work as collectively the Leaders felt it was too soon to narrow down the options to just two.
9. A fourth Unitary option, which proposes the creation of three Unitaries across the region, is being developed by Peterborough City Council, however this does not have the backing of any other Council within Cambridgeshire, as a three unitary option was shown to be unlikely to be a financially sustainable solution longer term.
10. The Council can only endorse one or none of the Unitary proposals at the point of submission to Government in November 2025.

The Council believes that:

1. Each proposal has benefits and disbenefits for our residents, businesses, visitors and communities in general; however the early analysis shows that some proposals will have a greater impact than others.
2. Proposal A
 - Appears to have a logical geographical alignment due to areas in the south of our district bordering Greater Cambridge.
 - However, this option could see East Cambridgeshire being folded into the Cambridge Growth Company which is required to build 150,000 new homes in the Cambridge area with the Government directing where those homes will be located, rather than local people.
 - Would see East Cambridgeshire residents grouped with the highest Council Tax charging areas and see the biggest increase in Council Tax of all Unitary options for our residents.
 - Would also mean East Cambridgeshire would be joining an area where the existing District Councils have decided to permanently adopt a 4 day working week for 5 days' pay funded by tax payers.
3. Proposal B
 - Protects our district from over development and handing over control of the planning of new homes to the Cambridge Growth Company.
 - Brings rural districts that share similar characteristics and challenges together, giving them a stronger voice, while still being economically underpinned by a vibrant city.

- By virtue of its geographic and population size will need to maintain a council footprint presence and service delivery model in the northern Unitary, rooted in the local communities it serves, like the successful North Yorkshire Unitary established in early 2023.
 - Meets the Government's ambition to deliver growth by forming a Greater Cambridge region in a southern Unitary that has the scale required to be financially sustainable, given its high tax base and future growth.
4. Proposal C
- Would align similar geographies and Councils with similar housing growth ambitions and constraints.
 - However, it may lead to a northern Unitary that has such a low funding base, it would struggle to support an aging population and increased demands in Social Care and SEND services.

The Council resolves to:

1. Continue to actively and directly participate in the development of the Proposal B business case.
2. Consider all three business cases (A, B and C) at a meeting of the Council on 20th November 2025 prior to submission to Government.

The proposer and seconder accepted that the word “six” should be amended to “seven” in the first sentence of the first paragraph of the motion.

Cllr Anna Bailey explained that she was opposed to the Government's Local Government Reorganisation initiative. It was not devolving power to local people, and the Government had recently admitted that it had not carried out proper costings of its proposals. The Council had frozen its Council Tax for the last 12 years and unlike most other authorities it was debt free. It had also scored far higher than its neighbours in the recent satisfaction survey. It was clear that larger authorities were not necessarily more efficient and her preference was for the Council to form a unitary on its own.

Cllr Bailey expressed concerns about the Council forming a unitary with Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. 150,000 new homes had to be built in the Greater Cambridge area in addition to the houses already pledged in their Local Plan. Both authorities increased their Council Tax by the maximum allowed and South Cambridgeshire District Council's staff and their shared service staff with the City Council worked a four-day week. It was clear that Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire already had a close working relationship, and it was likely that the Council would become a junior partner if it joined with the other two authorities. Cllr Bailey supported proposal B, as this would provide financial resilience, with a bigger tax base with other rural authorities.

Cllr Lorna Dupré proposed and Cllr Mark Inskip seconded the following amendment:

The Council notes that:

1. Since the Government's White Paper on English Devolution was published in December 2024, Leaders and Officers of the ~~six~~ **seven** principal Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together to produce an agreed proposal, or an agreed set of proposals, in time for the final submission deadline in November 2025.
2. The initial work undertaken to support the business case includes a detailed analysis of the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on Adults, Children and SEND services; a financial analysis of the relative funding allocation from Government; analysis of demand across other services such as homelessness and environmental services; and analysis of the viability of the tax base (business rates, Council Tax, and other income) to support each Unitary configuration.
3. This work has led to the development of three different options all of which are for a two Unitary solution across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. See below the three options.

Proposal A North-West/South-East

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

Proposal B North/South

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District along with County Council functions

Proposal C East/West

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

4. Each Council across the region has directly input into the development of a suite of baseline data to be used in each business case and is now directly inputting into a chosen business case. Based on the shared data and analysis undertaken to date, at this stage East Cambs District Council officers are inputting directly into the development of the Proposal B business case and indirectly (through sharing of data) into Proposals A and C.
5. The business case for Proposal A is being led by Cambridgeshire County Council. This proposal is currently the preferred option of the County Council's Administration. District Councils are not directly inputting into the development of this business case.
6. The business case for Proposal B is being led by Cambridge City Council and is the only business case that has direct input from all District Councils and an upper tier authority, namely Peterborough City Council.

7. South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council Leaders have given public support for the creation of a Greater Cambridge Unitary – The Greater Cambridge Unitary comprises of the geography covered by these two Councils only, which forms part of Proposal B.
8. The business case for Proposal C is being led by Huntingdonshire District Council but is not receiving direct input from either of the upper tier authorities or any other District Councils at this stage. For clarity, HDC offered to lead on this piece of work as collectively the Leaders felt it was too soon to narrow down the options to just two.
9. A fourth Unitary option, which proposes the creation of three Unitaries across the region, is being developed by Peterborough City Council, however this does not have the backing of any other Council within Cambridgeshire, as a three unitary option was shown to be unlikely to be a financially sustainable solution longer term.
10. The Council can only endorse one or none of the Unitary proposals at the point of submission to Government in November 2025.

The Council believes that:

1. ~~Each proposal has benefits and disbenefits for our residents, businesses, visitors and communities in general; however the early analysis shows that some proposals will have a greater impact than others.~~
2. ~~Proposal A~~
 - ~~○ Appears to have a logical geographical alignment due to areas in the south of our district bordering Greater Cambridge.~~
 - ~~○ However, this option could see East Cambridgeshire being folded into the Cambridge Growth Company which is required to build 150,000 new homes in the Cambridge area with the Government directing where those homes will be located, rather than local people.~~
 - ~~○ Would see East Cambridgeshire residents grouped with the highest Council Tax charging areas and see the biggest increase in Council Tax of all Unitary options for our residents.~~
 - ~~○ Would also mean East Cambridgeshire would be joining an area where the existing District Councils have decided to permanently adopt a 4 day working week for 5 days' pay funded by tax payers.~~
3. ~~Proposal B~~
 - ~~○ Protects our district from over development and handing over control of the planning of new homes to the Cambridge Growth Company.~~
 - ~~○ Brings rural districts that share similar characteristics and challenges together, giving them a stronger voice, while still being economically underpinned by a vibrant city.~~
 - ~~○ By virtue of its geographic and population size will need to maintain a council footprint presence and service delivery model in the northern Unitary, rooted in the local communities it serves, like the successful North Yorkshire Unitary established in early 2023.~~
 - ~~○ Meets the Government's ambition to deliver growth by forming a Greater Cambridge region in a southern Unitary that has the scale required to be financially sustainable, given its high tax base and future growth.~~

~~4. Proposal C~~

- ~~○ Would align similar geographies and Councils with similar housing growth ambitions and constraints.~~
- ~~○ However, it may lead to a northern Unitary that has such a low funding base, it would struggle to support an aging population and increased demands in Social Care and SEND services.~~

The Council resolves to:

1. Continue to actively and directly participate in the development of the Proposal B business case; **and to join with Cambridgeshire County Council in the development of the Proposal A business case.**
2. **Consult residents and parish councils in East Cambridgeshire with the specific purpose of establishing local residents' views of all options being worked on.**
3. Consider all three business cases (A, B and C) at a meeting of the Council on 20th November 2025 prior to submission to Government.

Cllr Lorna Dupré was pleased that the correction of six councils to seven had been accepted. She stated that the paragraphs under the heading "The Council believe that" should be removed as they were misleadingly selective in the evidence quoted and did not list the disadvantages of proposal B. She explained that whilst councils could only endorse one proposal, they could work on other proposals by preparing more than one business case. She suggested that if a proposal had the support of a Council's Leader, it did not necessarily indicate support of the whole Council. She concluded that the Council should engage with the business case for proposal A, as this was preferred by residents, parish councils and interest groups.

Cllr Mark Inskip stated that Local Government reviews were very infrequent as it was 50 years since the last reorganisation. This made it imperative that the right decision was taken on the new structure, which would last decades. This was why he supported the amendment as the original motion ruled out proposal A and only argued for proposal B. He concluded that residents identified with Cambridge and not with Peterborough and their views should not be ignored.

Cllr Anna Bailey explained that the authority had tried to engage with Cambridgeshire County Council on proposal A but had not received a response. The administration was working hard evaluating all proposals, but the County Council were only promoting proposal A and were communicating this to parish councils. The Council would be sending out a questionnaire to residents and the administration was still open to all proposals and would carefully examine the business cases. It was clear that the business case for proposal B had huge merits.

A vote was taken and with 13 votes in favour of the amendment and 14 against, with no abstentions the amendment was lost.

Cllr Mark Goldsack reminded Council that Local Government Reorganisation was being imposed by the Government against the interests of the local

people that all the Members in the Chamber represented. He hoped that Members would not be divided by the Government's proposals. He expressed his disappointment in the fact that the Government would not consider any change in the county boundary near Newmarket. He was concerned that the Cambridgeshire County Council Chief Executive was being a spokesperson on this matter but had been assured that it was legal.

Cllr Lorna Dupré agreed with Cllr Mark Inskip that the proposals were for the long-term and she doubted that anybody would still be concerned about matters such as the four-day week in 50 years' time. She stated that the district's residents were drawn towards Cambridge for jobs, health, education and leisure and not towards Peterborough, who were less likely to understand the rural issues of the district. The district's parish councils and residents also preferred Cambridge, with connections to the Greater Cambridge Partnership, and the Greenways project.

Cllr Keith Horgan expressed concern about the loss of a rural voice due to Local Government Reorganisation and the increase in Council Tax, which would be greater under proposal A, that joined the district with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. He concluded that there was a risk of being dominated by the urban areas under all the proposals and East Cambridgeshire's representatives would have to speak up for its residents.

Cllr Bill Hunt expressed his opposition to the four-day week, council tax increases and parking charges. He opposed proposal A, that recommended that the Council combined with South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City.

Cllr Alan Sharp agreed with Cllr Goldsack that it was disappointing that the Government were refusing to consider any amendments to the county boundary, and he too had concerns about all the options. He also expressed concern about the amount of debt that Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council had incurred, which would have to be shared with the new unitary. He feared that if the Council joined Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire it would be seen as the junior partner, as had been demonstrated with the lack of consultation over the Greater Cambridge Travel Plan and the Greenways project. He reminded Council that no final decision was being taken, and he wanted to see the business cases.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott stated that residents wanted to preserve their community, and this would be under threat from the development coming from Greater Cambridgeshire in proposal A. Council Tax would be lower under proposals B and C, which would result in more rural areas coming together that could resist the influence of the urban areas more effectively than in proposal A. He supported the motion, which did not represent a final decision and he recognised that Council should wait for the results of the business cases before reaching a verdict.

Cllr John Trapp suggested that the motion was premature as Members did not have the details of the business cases. He suggested more research was

required on the amount of debt other authorities had incurred before making a decision. He believed that the four-day week issue was of little importance.

Cllr Mark Inskip expressed his opposition to Local Government Reorganisation but accepted that it was happening. He stated that the debt of Peterborough City Council dwarfed that of the other authorities. He suggested that it would be up to the newly elected councillors of the new unitary authority to ensure that East Cambridgeshire residents were not excluded. He also suggested that such a long-term decision should not be based on current levels of Council Tax. He agreed with other members that the Council had little influence over the Greater Cambridge Partnership but this would be reduced further under proposal B. He concluded that residents identified far more with Cambridge than with Peterborough and so he would not be supporting the motion.

Cllr James Lay explained that he was involved with the development of Peterborough many years ago and he knew that the city had no relation to the established villages in the rural district of East Cambridgeshire. He suggested that considerable economic growth was expected along the Oxford to Cambridge corridor and the district's school children went to sixth form colleges in Cambridge. He would not be supporting the motion.

Cllr Gareth Wilson argued that most of a resident's Council Tax was paid to the County Council to pay for social care and education and without detailed figures it was impossible to know how this would be allocated to the new unitary authorities. Peterborough was harder for residents to get to than Cambridge and East Cambridgeshire was part of the Greater Cambridgeshire area and its growth. He would not be supporting the motion which focussed on many short-term issues on a long-term matter.

Cllr Martin Goodearl suggested that where people lived was often different from where they worked or shopped and this would not be affected by Local Government Reorganisation.

Cllr Christine Colbert stated that it was premature to prefer one proposal at this stage and so she could not support the motion.

Cllr Julia Huffer reminded Council that the final choice on the new unitary authority boundaries would be made by the Secretary of State. The Council should come up with an evidence based recommendation. She was concerned about the number of homes planned in the Greater Cambridge areas, the likely increase in Council Tax and the already close relationship between South Cambridgeshire and City Councils. She also expressed her opposition to the four-day week. She supported proposal B, as it would mean joining with other similar rural areas and so she would be voting for the motion.

Cllr Anna Bailey repeated her opposition to Local Government Reorganisation and she spoke of the need for local offices to remain in the district after the restructure was completed. She explained that residents valued their

communities and she supported Proposal B as it would allow the rural villages to run themselves and not be dominated by the nearby city of Cambridge. Residents were also concerned about development and the Greater Cambridge area had agreed to an additional 150,000 homes on top of those already agreed in the local plan. A proposed development in north eastern Cambridge of 5-6,000 homes was not now going ahead and this would put greater pressure for homes elsewhere. Cllr Bailey concluded that ultimately this was the Government's choice and she urged councillors to work together and support the motion.

A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour and 13 votes against, with no abstentions, the following motion was carried:

Local Government Reorganisation

The Council notes that:

1. Since the Government's White Paper on English Devolution was published in December 2024, Leaders and Officers of the seven principal Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together to produce an agreed proposal, or an agreed set of proposals, in time for the final submission deadline in November 2025.
2. The initial work undertaken to support the business case includes a detailed analysis of the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on Adults, Children and SEND services; a financial analysis of the relative funding allocation from Government; analysis of demand across other services such as homelessness and environmental services; and analysis of the viability of the tax base (business rates, Council Tax, and other income) to support each Unitary configuration.
3. This work has led to the development of three different options all of which are for a two Unitary solution across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. See below the three options.

Proposal A North-West/South-East

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

Proposal B North/South

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District along with County Council functions

Proposal C East/West

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

4. Each Council across the region has directly input into the development of a suite of baseline data to be used in each business case and is now directly inputting into a chosen business case. Based on the shared data and analysis undertaken to date, at this stage East Cambs District Council officers are inputting directly into the development of the Proposal B business case and indirectly (through sharing of data) into Proposals A and C.
5. The business case for Proposal A is being led by Cambridgeshire County Council. This proposal is currently the preferred option of the County Council's Administration. District Councils are not directly inputting into the development of this business case.
6. The business case for Proposal B is being led by Cambridge City Council and is the only business case that has direct input from all District Councils and an upper tier authority, namely Peterborough City Council.
7. South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council Leaders have given public support for the creation of a Greater Cambridge Unitary – The Greater Cambridge Unitary comprises of the geography covered by these two Councils only, which forms part of Proposal B.
8. The business case for Proposal C is being led by Huntingdonshire District Council but is not receiving direct input from either of the upper tier authorities or any other District Councils at this stage. For clarity, HDC offered to lead on this piece of work as collectively the Leaders felt it was too soon to narrow down the options to just two.
9. A fourth Unitary option, which proposes the creation of three Unitaries across the region, is being developed by Peterborough City Council, however this does not have the backing of any other Council within Cambridgeshire, as a three unitary option was shown to be unlikely to be a financially sustainable solution longer term.
10. The Council can only endorse one or none of the Unitary proposals at the point of submission to Government in November 2025.

The Council resolves to:

1. Continue to actively and directly participate in the development of the Proposal B business case; and to join with Cambridgeshire County Council in the development of the Proposal A business case.
2. Consult residents and parish councils in East Cambridgeshire with the specific purpose of establishing local residents' views of all options being worked on.
3. Consider all three business cases (A, B and C) at a meeting of the Council on 20th November 2025 prior to submission to Government.

Cllr Keith Horgan proposed and Cllr Christine Ambrose-Smith seconded the following motion:

Motion to Oppose Proposed Changes to Council Tax Powers

Council notes:

1. The Government is considering proposals to allow local authorities to set their own Council Tax bands, rates, and property valuations.
2. These changes would dismantle the nationally consistent framework that currently governs Council Tax, introducing significant regional variation.
3. Council Tax already exhibits stark disparities across the UK:
 - (a) The average Band D bill in England is £2,171 but varies from £829 in Westminster to £2,226 in Nottingham. (see note 1)
 - (b) Residents in poorer areas pay a higher percentage of their income on Council Tax — up to 10.3% in places like Blackpool and Teignbridge — compared to just 2% in wealthier boroughs like Westminster. (see note 2)
 - (c) The poorest 10% of households pay 7% of their income on Council Tax, while the richest 10% pay just 1.2%. (see note 1)
 - (d) Council Tax arrears have reached a record £8.3 billion, with 4.4 million people behind on payments — a third of whom live below the poverty line. (see note 1)
4. Nine out of ten councils in eastern England, including those in East Anglia, have already opted for the maximum allowable Council Tax increase of 4.99% for 2025–26. (see note 5)
5. If councils gain full control over rates and valuations, this could lead to even steeper increases, especially in areas facing financial pressure or service demand.
6. East Cambridgeshire District Council has frozen its share of Council Tax for the 12th consecutive year, maintaining Band D at £142.14. (see note 6)
7. This contrasts sharply with neighbouring districts, and under a decentralised system, such disparities could widen—leading to confusion and perceived unfairness among residents.

Council believes:

- A. Council Tax should remain a nationally regulated system to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability.
- B. The valuation of properties is a complex and sensitive process that should remain under the purview of an impartial national body, not subject to local political pressures.
- C. Local autonomy over tax bands and valuations risks deepening regional inequalities, as wealthier areas with high property values can raise more revenue, while poorer areas face greater financial strain. (see note 3)
- D. The administrative burden of implementing localised valuations and banding would be substantial, requiring new systems, staff training, and oversight — diverting resources from essential services. (see note 4)
- E. A fragmented system would confuse taxpayers, reduce public trust, and make it harder to compare services and costs across regions.

Council resolves to:

- A. Oppose the proposed changes that would allow councils to set their own Council Tax bands, rates, and property valuations.
- B. Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government to express our concerns and urge the Government to retain a nationally consistent Council Tax framework.

- C. Request that our local MPs raise this issue in Parliament and advocate for a fair and transparent taxation system.
- D. Collaborate with other councils, the Local Government Association, and relevant stakeholders to build a coalition against these proposals and promote alternative reforms that enhance fairness without fragmenting the system.

Sources:

1. <https://moneyweek.com/personal-finance/council-tax-burden-highest-lowest-uk>
2. https://www.taxpayersalliance.com/mapping_britain_s_council_tax_burden
3. <https://www.bing.com/search?q=impact+of+local+Council+Tax+autonomy+on+regional+inequalities&toWww=1&redig=791556156BA44C6BABE461EA99D19A08>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax>
5. <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/national/24946349.analysis-shows-nine-10-areas-facing-maximum-council-tax-rise-england/>
6. <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/finance-and-budget/council-tax/council-tax-bands>

Cllr Keith Horgan explained that it had come to his attention that a report published by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on 23rd July 2025, had called for the Government to give more control locally on deciding property valuations, Council Tax bands, rates and discounts. Under these proposals the levels of Council Tax would be decided locally instead of being set nationally. He suggested that if agreed, this could lead to Council Tax rises in excess of 4.99% and a growing disparity between the percentage of income being paid by rich and poor residents. He therefore requested that Council agree this motion and write to the Minister and Local MP to share the authority's concerns.

Cllr Lorna Dupré reported that the Government were not considering these proposals and had not yet given a response to the Select Committee's report. She accepted that since its inception, the Council Tax had unfair elements to it and whilst she welcomed debate on this issue, the motion seemed premature. She therefore invited the proposer and seconder of the motion to withdraw it.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott praised Cllr Horgan for his research and expressed his support for the motion, as taxation of local residents was a very important issue. He did not think the Council should have to wait for a Government press release before raising its concerns.

Cllr Anna Bailey suggested that the Council should be proactive in expressing its views whilst the Government was considering these radical proposals. Cllr

David Miller agreed and suggested that the evidence indicated that the Government were seriously contemplating these suggestions.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith found the Government's proposals worrying, as it would put control of Council Tax property bands and rates into the hands of political parties who could not be guaranteed to act in the best interests of their residents on this matter.

Cllr Keith Horgan disagreed with the suggestion that the motion should be withdrawn until the Government formally announced its plans, as by then it could be too late to influence the Government's policy. He opposed councils being allowed to increase Council Tax over the limit imposed by the Government and feared that if local authorities were allowed to set their own bands there would be a large increase for local taxpayers.

A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour and 13 against the above motion was carried.

Cllr Lorna Dupré proposed and Cllr Chika Akinwale seconded the following motion.

New Homes Ombudsman

This council notes that

1. The New Homes Ombudsman Service exists to help customers resolve issues with their new homes, which the registered developer has been unable or unwilling to fix.
2. The remit of the New Homes Ombudsman Service covers the whole period from the reservation and legal completion of a property through to after-sales and complaints management for issues during the first two years of a new home purchase.
3. The primary purpose of the service is to provide a free and independent redress service to customers, which can impartially assess and adjudicate on issues that have arisen that fall within the Ombudsman's scope. This includes complaints around the reservation, legal completion and complaints management processes, or issues or defects that have arisen at or after occupation and which are not major defects.
4. The New Homes Ombudsman Service can resolve complaints through early resolution, negotiation, mediation, and adjudication.

This council further recognises that

- a) If a developer is not on the register of developers, or the customer reserved their property before their registration date, the Ombudsman will be unable to help.
- b) The New Homes Ombudsman is also unable to help with homes that are sold as affordable homes, or those under a shared ownership scheme or bought as part of a buy-to-let scheme.

This council expresses concern that

- i. Its own developer Palace Green Homes is not a registered developer for the purposes of this scheme, meaning that its customers will not be able to make use of the New Homes Ombudsman Service should they need to.
- ii. A number of other developers building homes locally are also not registered developers under the scheme.

This council therefore

- A. Calls upon its wholly-owned company East Cambridgeshire Trading Company to register its developer arm Palace Green Homes as a registered company with the New Homes Quality Board and agree to accept the New Homes Quality Code, thereby entitling their customers to use the services of New Homes Ombudsman.
- B. Resolves to encourage developers building in East Cambridgeshire to register under this scheme.

Cllr Lorna Dupré expressed concern that residents who bought their homes from Palace Green Homes would not be able to contact the New Homes Ombudsman Service with any problems. The purpose of the Motion was to ensure that new buyers had this right. She urged Council to agree this Motion unamended.

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed and Cllr Julia Huffer seconded the following amended motion:

New Homes Ombudsman and Consumer Code for New Homes

This council notes that

1. The New Homes Ombudsman Service exists to help customers resolve issues with their new homes, which the registered developer has been unable or unwilling to fix.
- ~~2. The remit of the New Homes Ombudsman Service covers the whole period from the reservation and legal completion of a property through to after sales and complaints management for issues during the first two years of a new home purchase.~~
2. The primary purpose of the service is to provide a free and independent redress service to customers, which can impartially assess and adjudicate on issues that have arisen that fall within the Ombudsman's scope. This includes complaints around the reservation, legal completion and complaints management processes, or issues or defects that have arisen at or after occupation and which are not major defects.
3. The New Homes Ombudsman Service can resolve complaints through early resolution, negotiation, mediation, and adjudication.
4. The Consumer Code for New Homes, approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, has been established to ensure that best practice is followed by registered developers in respect of the marketing and selling of new homes to consumers. The Code also sets expected standards for after sales customer care service.

5. The Council's own development company, East Cambs Trading Company trading as Palace Green Homes is a member of the Consumer Code for New Homes.
6. The Building Safety Act 2022 makes provision for the New Homes Ombudsman to be mandatory. However, the secondary legislation is not yet in place.

This council further recognises that

- (a) If a developer is not on the register of developers, or the customer reserved their property before their registration date, the Ombudsman will be unable to help.
- (b) The New Homes Ombudsman is also unable to help with homes that are sold as affordable homes, or those under a shared ownership scheme or bought as part of a buy-to-let scheme.

This council expresses concern that **a number of developers are not registered with an independent resolution service.**

- i. ~~Its own developer Palace Green Homes is not a registered developer for the purposes of this scheme, meaning that its customers will not be able to make use of the New Homes Ombudsman Service should they need to.~~
- ii. ~~A number of other developers building homes locally are also not registered developers under the scheme.~~

This council therefore

~~Calls upon its wholly owned company East Cambridgeshire Trading Company to register its developer arm Palace Green Homes as registered company with the New Homes Quality Board and agree to accept the New Homes Quality Code, thereby entitling their customers to use the services of New Homes Ombudsman.~~

~~R~~esolves to encourage developers building in East Cambridgeshire to register ~~under this scheme~~ with an independent resolution service, for example, the New Homes Ombudsman or the Consumer Code for New Homes.

Cllr Anna Bailey stated that the New Homes Ombudsman was an independent dispute resolution service, for new home buyers who have exhausted a developers' internal complaints process. There was also the Consumer Code for New Homes, which provides an independent dispute resolution service and a set of established standards for developers to follow. The East Cambridgeshire Trading Company (ECTC) had signed up to the Consumer Code for New Homes, so purchasers had access to an independent resolution service. Registration to the New Homes Ombudsman was voluntary but will become compulsory at some point in the future and the cost of the registration fee was £1,500 per year. However, it could not apply

retrospectively to any already homes completed or sold and as there were no future homes that ECTC that could benefit from registering to this service, signing up now would be an unnecessary expense. The expectation was that ECTC would sign up to the service, although this was a matter for the company, which was independent of the Council.

Cllr Bailey was aware that some developers in the area had not signed up to an independent dispute resolution service and she encouraged them to do so. She acknowledged that the County Council's company This Land was registered, but it was delivering less affordable homes and at a greater cost than Palace Green Homes.

Cllr Mark Inskip stated that the Government was on the verge of making it compulsory to sign up to the New Homes Ombudsman and so it made more sense to ensure that ECTC signed up to the consumer code now, than to wait until instructed to do so by the Government. The New Homes Ombudsman service gave more rights home buyer than the Consumer Code for New Homes and the Council should set a good example by agreeing the Motion without amendments.

Cllr Chika Akinwale explained that purchasing a new property was stressful and signing up to the New Homes Ombudsman service would give home buyers a simple redress if there were any issues and allow disputes to be resolved early. The cost was minimal and it would build trust and ensure high quality. She was proud to support the motion.

Cllr Keith Horgan saw much to recommend the motion but there were currently no new developments pending and so it made sense to wait instead of paying for a service that could not be used. He therefore suggested that the motion should be withdrawn. Cllr Martin Goodearl agreed, as he saw no reason to pay for something that could not be used.

Cllr Julia Huffer opposed paying £1,500 for something that could be of no benefit to new homeowners. She concluded that the motion was premature and would commit the Council to spend taxpayers' money when it was not necessary.

Cllr Lorna Dupré suggested that the amendment essentially negated the original Motion and should not have been allowed. It was important to ensure that those who purchased a house from Palace Green Homes would have access to the Ombudsman and if the amendment was agreed it would mean waiting until the Government made it compulsory. Cllr Anna Bailed interjected that the purpose of the amendment was to sign up when residents could benefit from the Ombudsman service and not to wait until the Government required it by law.

Cllr Dupré explained that the current County Council administration had inherited This Land from the previous administration and were working hard to improve the organisation. She expressed her concern that the governance of East Cambs Trading Company was not separate from the Council. She

agreed with Cllr Inskip, that the New Homes Ombudsman service was superior to the Consumer Code for New Homes service and she concluded that the Council should be leading the way by agreeing the motion, unamended.

A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, 13 against and no abstentions the amendment to the Motion was carried.

Cllr Alison Whelan left the meeting.

The Chief Executive explained that the amended Motion now became the substantive Motion. Members now had the opportunity to propose any further amendments. The Chief Executive proposed that the Constitution needed to be clarified to advise on which councillor became the proposer in this situation and he agreed to bring a report to the next Council meeting.

Cllr Anna Bailey reported that Members were broadly in agreement, the only issue was when ECTC should sign up to the Ombudsman service. She maintained that this should be done only when there were future homeowners who could benefit from the service.

Cllr John Trapp stated that the cost of £1,500 was insignificant and signing up to the Ombudsman service would send a message to future customers that the company was committed to high standards.

Cllr Lorna Dupré expressed her disappointment that the amendment had been agreed. However, she supported the amended motion as it was important that the company signed up to the Ombudsman standards. She suggested that the Constitution needed to be reviewed by a standing committee and changed so that it was clear what the procedure was when motions were amended.

A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed the following amended Motion:

New Homes Ombudsman and Consumer Code for New Homes

This council notes that

1. The New Homes Ombudsman Service exists to help customers resolve issues with their new homes, which the registered developer has been unable or unwilling to fix.
2. The primary purpose of the service is to provide a free and independent redress service to customers, which can impartially assess and adjudicate on issues that have arisen that fall within the Ombudsman's scope. This includes complaints around the reservation, legal completion and complaints management processes, or issues or defects that have arisen at or after occupation and which are not major defects.
3. The New Homes Ombudsman Service can resolve complaints through early resolution, negotiation, mediation, and adjudication.
4. The Consumer Code for New Homes, approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, has been established to ensure that best practice is followed by registered developers in respect of the marketing

and selling of new homes to consumers. The Code also sets expected standards for after sales customer care services.

5. The Council's own development company, East Cambs Trading Company trading as Palace Green Homes is a member of the Consumer Code for New Homes.
6. The Building Safety Act 2022 makes provision for the New Homes Ombudsman to be mandatory. However, the secondary legislation is not yet in place.

This council further recognises that

- a) If a developer is not on the register of developers, or the customer reserved their property before their registration date, the Ombudsman will be unable to help.
- b) The New Homes Ombudsman is also unable to help with homes that are sold as affordable homes, or those under a shared ownership scheme or bought as part of a buy-to-let scheme.

This council expresses concern that a number of developers are not registered with an independent resolution service.

This council therefore resolves to encourage developers building in East Cambridgeshire to register with an independent resolution service, for example, the New Homes Ombudsman or the Consumer Code for New Homes.

Councillor Mark Inskip proposed and Cllr Christine Colbert seconded the following Motion, whilst accepting the amendments proposed by Cllr Mark Goldsack and Keith Horgan without debate:

Ely Junction capacity improvements

This council expresses its grave concern that the Government's announcement in June of progress on fifty rail and road schemes once again failed to include Ely Junction.

The congestion at this bottleneck means it is unable to handle the demand for both freight and passenger services. Solving this would return £4.89 for every £1 spent; remove 98,000 HGV journeys; enable an additional 2,900 freight services a year from Felixstowe; reduce carbon emissions by 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ over sixty years; and reduce traffic congestion by 5.6 million hours a year.

It is now twenty-three years since the first business case for upgrading the junction was made, and yet successive governments have failed to make the investment in this vital piece of infrastructure for our region and for the country.

This council calls on the Government to release funds for planning the project, conduct a rapid departmental review of the scheme and its benefits to present

to the Treasury, and listen to the concerns of the local MP, businesses, and stakeholders including this council at the effect of further delay.

Council agrees to:

1. Instruct the Leader to write to the Secretary of State requesting a rethink on the funding of Ely North junction, pointing out the data and statistics available to support the huge benefits available to all concerned for a positive outcome.
2. Provide a copy of the letter to local media to demonstrate that the Council is united in fighting for this important piece of infrastructure for East Cambs and the country.
3. Instruct the Leader to write to British Rail and Network Rail executive management teams asking for their full backing of the planned upgrade, including a request to both bodies for how they think we, the local authority, could further assist with progress on the project.

Cllr Mark Inskip explained that the Motion called on the Government to release the necessary funds to upgrade Ely North junction. This would allow for the increase in number of trains an hour from 6.5 to 10, benefiting both the passenger and freight service. This would reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles and ordinary cars on the roads, which would reduce carbon emissions and promote economic growth, with an expected return of £4.9 for every £1 invested.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott supported the Motion and welcomed the political cooperation on this issue, led by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It would benefit villages and towns in the district and was clearly in residents' interests.

Cllr Anna Bailey agreed with the Motion and she welcomed the support of the Mayor for the upgrading of Ely North junction. She hoped that the cost of the scheme would not result in its aims being downgraded.

Cllr Martin Goodearl supported the Motion and explained that not only did the junction have to be upgraded but also the track at Soham needed to be dualled.

Cllr Mark Goldsack thanked Cllr Inskip and Cllr Colbert for accepting the suggested amendment to the Motion. He explained that nearly ten years ago it had been suggested that to open Soham North, trains would have to be able to travel from Bury St Edmunds to Newmarket to Dullingham and then to Addenbrookes and back. The benefit to cost ratio was one of the largest he had seen but the Government had little support in the area and so it was not being seen as a priority. He hoped that the area's MPs could champion this. Cllr Lorna Dupré reported that Cllr Charlotte Cane MP was too unwell to attend the meeting but had promoted this initiative and was keen to see the junction upgraded.

Cllr Alan Sharp supported this Motion as the project would greatly reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles from the district's roads. He added that putting freight onto the rail lines from Felixstowe that was bound for the midlands and the north would greatly benefit the entire country. Cllr James Lay agreed and mentioned that the A14 was blocked most mornings due to the amount of traffic and vehicles were then redirected onto the villages' roads.

Cllr Mark Inskip expressed his disappointment in the fact that the Government were not focussing on this, as it would benefit the entire nation.

A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed the above amended Motion.

8. To Answer Questions From Members

Two questions were received, and the response were given as follows:

1) Question from Cllr James Lay to Cllr Julia Huffer:

"I sit on the Planning Committee and on the whole we allow 30% of homes to be affordable or for rent, so I want some reassurance.

- How many affordable homes and homes for rent have we completed in ECDC in the last year?
- How many homes for rent have gone to the 1,000 on the housing register?
- How many of the new rented properties have been let to people from outside Cambridgeshire?"

Response from Cllr Julia Huffer

"Thank you for the question, Cllr Lay. You will of course be aware that the Council is not a housing provider, but we also do not sit idly by. We do what we can through the policies that we have in place and then deliver what we can through East Cambs Trading Company and with our established CLT network who do remarkable work. We are passionate about delivering genuinely affordable housing that enables people to live and work locally. Officers are working on both our annual monitoring report and our returns to Government. Once this work is finished, we will have the answer to your first question and I will ask our officers to share this information with all members as soon as they are able. However, whilst the numbers are not available for us today for this year, there is good information in the 2023/24 annual monitoring report. That year there were 154 affordable completions and when you add that to the two previous years there were 489 affordable homes. The last three years have been the strongest years and long may this continue. In 2024/25, 479 properties were rented. 376 were allocated to people on the East Cambs waiting list but only 7 properties went to people outside Cambridgeshire. We do not know how many of these properties were built in the same year, and as I have already said we are working on this and I will make the information available. I do know that this year, CLT took a huge step forward and are now the proud owners of 10 affordable homes with 5 of those

for affordable rent, in fact they welcomed new tenants just this week. This may seem like a small number but that is 10 new affordable homes for people with a strong local connection to their area and there are 50 more homes to come, with 35 of those for affordable rent. In previous years in Swaffham Prior, Soham, Stretham, Wilburton and Haddenham, affordable housing has been delivered that enables people who have a strong local connection to have decent affordable housing. Delivery to date through our CLTs is 91 and 63 of those are affordable rent and there is more to come. Kennett, I have already mentioned and Haddenham CLT has ambitions to do more and is actively working with East Cambs Trading Company to make this ambition a reality. It will not count in this year's figures, but I would like to thank East Cambs Trading Company as they are on site right now building 27 affordable homes in Ely. A few years back, in this very chamber, we asked them to try and deliver more than our 30% policy on affordable housing and they have delivered for us. 100% of the 27 homes are affordable housing and they are all for social rent. We do all this because we put in place a framework to enable it. We have a company that shares our vision and we have a community led development policy with grants available for start-up and pre-development costs. The 100k homes policy is targeted at people who live and work locally and we influence where we can, to build affordable housing to those with a strong local connection. On this last point we worked with Accent at their site in Little Downham, where we delivered 39 affordable homes to ensure that our local connection criteria was secured and that extra efforts were made to market the properties in the local area so that people knew that there are affordable homes available that they can access. I am proud of what we have been able to achieve through the actions we have taken. I hope that answers your questions."

Question from Cllr Lucius Vellacott, to Cllr Anna Bailey, Leader of Council

"Could the Leader of Council explain her understanding of the circumstances surrounding planning application 25/00437/LBC for Listed Building Consent (Retrospective change of use to secure office) at The Old Dispensary in Ely, initially converted without permission into an office for the Liberal Democrat MP?"

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey

"Thank you for your question. In fact, there were two planning applications in relation to the Grade 2 listed building, the Old Dispensary building on St Marys Street in Ely. They were both submitted by Cllr Gareth Wilson in his capacity as a director of the registered company "The Old Dispensary Ely Ltd". One application sought permission for listed building consent, the other was for change of use, away from community use, to secure it for office accommodation for our MP Charlotte Cane. Both applications were retrospective, as the works had already taken place, in breach of planning law and this was confirmed by the planning officer's report, which stated that the nineteenth century gothic style building lacked both consent for alterations and any approved state of use and that the conversion was unlawful. Cllr Wilson has served for many years on the Planning Committee and it is surprising; I do feel that he ought to have been aware of the need for planning

permission. Obviously planning laws exist to protect our communities and our heritage and it is very surprising that work was carried out in breach of planning law. The public have also rightly questioned why Cllr Wilson was removed by Cllr Dupré from his long-standing position on the Planning Committee in May this year. The applications were heard by the Planning Committee in July and indeed were granted retrospective permission. So, the position now has been regularised. Cllr Wilson's fellow company directors are in fact his wife, former East Cambridgeshire District Councillor Pauline Wilson and Mr David Wright who is the partner of Cllr Lorna Dupré, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Deputy Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council and of course they do all stand to profit from rental income paid from Westminster by taxpayers, which does raise questions of ethics, transparency and accountability given the issues that occurred with change of use to the building without planning permission. So, it was not a great look or a great start for the new accommodation for our MP but we wish them the best."

9. Schedule of Items Recommended from Committees and Other Member Bodies – to review the Council's treasury operations during the 2024/25 financial year

Council considered a report (AA49, previously circulated) containing details of a recommendation to Council from the Finance and Assets Committee on 26 June 2025 to review the Council's treasury operations during the 2024/25 financial year.

Cllr Alan Sharp stated that the Finance and Assets Committee had unanimously recommended this report to Council. He thanked the report author, the previous Section 151 Officer, for his work and hoped that he was enjoying a happy retirement.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Ian Bovingdon seconded the proposal in the report.

A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed

To resolve:

To approve the report detailing the Council's treasury operations during 2024/25, including the prudential indicators and treasury, as set out in the Annual Treasury Management Review (Appendix 1).

10. Appointment of Finance Director / Section 151 Officer

Council considered a report (AA50, previously circulated) which sought to appoint the Council's Section 151 Officer. The HR Manager explained that interviews had been held on 19 August 2025 and Council was being asked to endorse the appointment, as according to its procedures.

Cllr Anna Bailey paid tribute to Mr Ian Smith, the outgoing Section 151 Officer and was delighted to support the appointment of Mr Jude Antony. She had observed the interviews and was happy to report that Mr Antony had a wealth of relevant experience and she was looking forward to working with him.

Cllr Lorna Dupré expressed concerns about both the appointment process, which had no councillors on the appointment panel, and the lack of any supporting criteria in the report. She suggested that the Constitution should be amended to include rules for future appointments. With regret she declared that she would be abstaining on this matter. She wished Mr Antony every success in his new position.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott expressed his disappointment in the fact that the appointment of the Council's Section 151 Officer would not be unanimous. He stated that Council had appointed a Chief Executive who was responsible for appointing his staff and he trusted him to ensure that the right person was appointed. He looked forward to working with Mr Antony. Cllr Alan Sharp also supported the appointment of Mr Antony and was also disappointed that the vote was not going to be unanimous.

Cllr John Trapp stated that without knowing more information regarding the appointment process, he would be abstaining.

Cllr David Miller stated that due to data protection legislation, the CV of candidates could not be circulated. He did not consider that external advice was integral to the appointment of senior officers. He trusted the officers of the Council and the appointment process.

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed and Cllr Alan Sharp seconded the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, no votes against and 12 abstentions, Council agreed

To resolve:

To endorse the appointment of Mr Jude Antony as the Council's Section 151 Officer.

11. Appointment of Chief Executive Appointments Panel

Council considered a report (AA51, previously circulated) which proposed the arrangements for the appointment of a new Chief Executive. The HR Manager stated that the Chief Executive had announced his retirement, and his last day of work would be 31 December.

Cllr Anna Bailey expressed her gratitude and thanks to John Hill, one of the longest ever serving Chief Executives who would be difficult to replace and left a huge legacy. She added that she supported the recommendation, which complied with the Constitution.

Councillor Lorna Dupré proposed and Cllr Christine Whelan seconded the following amendment to the recommendation:

2.1. Members are requested to:

- (i) approve the establishment of a 'task and finish' Constitutional Review Working Party to review Section 4 Part 7 of the council's Constitution and make recommendations to a Special Meeting of the Council;
- (ii) this review to include, but not be limited to, establishing terms of reference for an Appointments Panel to make a recommendation to Council on the appointment of the Chief Executive; and
- (iii) agree to the appointment of a politically balanced number of members including but not limited to the Leader of Council, Chair of Council and Leader of Liberal Democrats and Independent Group to the above panel; and
- ~~(iii) advertise the post on an internal only basis in the first instance.~~
- (iv) confirm that no further action in the appointment of a Chief Executive will take place until the Special Meeting of the Council has considered the Working Party's recommendations.

2.2 In the event that the changes required cannot be completed before the post of Chief Executive falls vacant, authorise officers to make arrangements for the appointment of an interim Chief Executive to fulfil the necessary functions until a proper appointment process can begin.

2.3 The Constitutional Review Working Party shall comprise six elected members, three from each group, and be chaired by the Chair of Council. Its terms of reference shall be to make recommendations to a Special Meeting of the Council to amend Section 4 Part 7 of the council's Constitution to ensure that it provides for a thorough, robust and informed process for the appointment, disciplinary action or dismissal of staff.

2.4 The Working Party will agree a programme of work and a timetable of meetings to enable it to make recommendations to a Special Meeting of the Council as swiftly as is conducive to a considered review. The lead officers for the Working Party will be the Director, Legal/Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer. All meetings will be clerked and minuted.

Cllr Lorna Dupré stated that this was a significant appointment and the process needed to be checked, with the role of those on the appointments panel, to ensure that it was fit for purpose. To achieve this the Council's Constitution was in need of an urgent review and she proposed that a Task and Finish Working Party be set up to make recommendations to a special meeting of Council and the process for appointing a new Chief Executive should be delayed until this was done. An interim appointment could be made if necessary. She expressed concern about restricting the appointment to internal candidates.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott praised the current Chief Executive who had been in post for his entire life. He saw no reason to amend the recommendations that ensured that the leaders of the two political groups were on the appointments panel. The setting up of a Constitution Review Working Party would unnecessarily delay the whole process. He reminded Council that the Conservative party had won the election in 2023 and as the administration, had the right to decide the appointments process.

Cllr Mark Inskip expressed concern that members had not been directly involved in the appointment of the Section 151 Officer and he suggested the Council could learn from other authorities on how to appoint its next Chief Executive. He would expect to see the use of external consultants, who could shape the job specification and advise the appointment panel. To achieve this the Constitution needed to be amended.

Cllr John Trapp explained that he had been on the previous Constitution Review Working Group about a year and a half ago and it had made minor changes. However, the Chief Executive was a very important post and should follow a strict process. The current process was inadequate and needed to be improved.

Cllr Mark Goldsack reported that there was an urgent need to replace the Chief Executive but the longevity of the job was in question due to the Local Government Review. He believed that amending the Constitution should be considered but it should not delay the process for appointing a new Chief Executive.

Cllr Christine Whelan stated that it was vital that the process for appointing such an important role was transparent and accountable. The Council needed to ensure that it was appointing from the widest talent available and so the post should not be restricted to internal candidates. The Council could learn from other authorities and appoint expert advisers to assist in the process. She concluded that the Council owed it to residents to make the right appointment and not rely on a flawed process. She urged members to support the amendment.

Cllr Anna Bailey agreed that the appointment of a new Chief Executive needed to be done in the best way and this required a pragmatic approach. The proposed amendment would unnecessarily delay the process and add extra costs through the employment of consultants.

A vote was taken and with 12 votes in favour, 14 against and no abstentions the amendment was lost.

Cllr Lorna Dupré suggested that it was possible that the Government could still withdraw the Local Government Reorganisation process and the Council could regret its decision to rush the appointment of a new Chief Executive. She suggested the process could have equality implications by relying on a narrow selection process. She expressed concern regarding the absence of a clear remit for the appointment panel and the absence of any clear instructions for the process in the Constitution.

Cllr John Trapp disagreed with the proposal to restrict such an important position to internal applicants. He suggested that the successful candidate should have a vision for the Council for the next two years and he did not think that the proposals were pragmatic.

Cllr Christine Colbert stated that it was only fair to the future Chief Executive to have a fit and proper appointment process.

Cllr Mary Wade left the meeting.

Cllr Julia Huffer stated that it was very unlikely that the Government would reverse the implementation of the Local Government Reorganisation at this stage. The Leader of the Opposition would be given the opportunity to interview the candidates on their vision for the future and their leadership skills. The successful candidate would potentially be in post for 29 months but if the Council went through an external appointments process this could decrease to just a year and a half, which would reduce the calibre of the candidates wanting to do the job.

Cllr Anna Bailey assured Council that the appointment would be made on merit and if there were no appropriate internal candidates the Panel would not appoint.

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed and Cllr Julia Huffer seconded the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, 11 against and no abstentions

It was resolved:

- a) To establish an Appointments Panel to make a recommendation to Council on the appointment of the Chief Executive.
- b) To appoint the Leader of Council, Chair of Council and Leader of Liberal Democrats and Independent Group to the above panel; and
- c) Advertise the post on an internal basis in the first instance.

12. Corporate Plan

The Chief Executive presented this report (AA52, previously circulated) which invited Council to approve the updated Action Plan for 2025/26 and note the completed actions and progress made during the past 12 months.

Cllr Anna Bailey was pleased to list the achievements of the Council in the past year, including the freezing of Council Tax for a twelfth successive year, the agreeing of a new bereavement centre, funding of solar panels and the funding of Neighbourhood Plans. Cllr Bailey spoke of the need to tackle water shortage and drainage in the area to allow for more sustainable growth.

Cllr Lorna Dupré stated that she supported some elements of the Corporate Plan, including a crossing on the A10, the funding of Neighbourhood Plans and the initiative proposed by Cllr Chika Akinwale to build accessible play areas. However, she opposed the building of the crematorium and that discussions on this project had been held in private. She also expressed disappointment that proposed action on parking enforcement had been reduced to merely the part funding of a single Police Community Support Officer.

Cllr John Trapp suggested that the Corporate Plan should have included more evidence to support its aims, including more numbers and costings. He hoped that it would be updated to include the proposals for Soham railway and the Ely upgrade in the section on active travel and road and rail infrastructure. He did not think that he could support the Corporate Plan in its current form.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott was pleased to see that the Council was going to fund Neighbourhood Plans as the Government's decision to scrap its funding had left Wicken Parish Council with an unexpected funding gap. He welcomed the funding of the cycle route of Soham to Ely and noted that the Soham to Wicken route was almost completed. He also welcomed the plans for the new waste collection service, with a free extra bin if necessary and the plans to deliver £100,000 homes. He commended the Corporate Plan.

Cllr Julia Huffer was proud to support the Corporate Plan which showed that the Council was still supporting services, whilst freezing Council Tax for a twelfth year in a row. The recent survey showed that the district's residents trusted the administration to run the Council.

Cllr Anna Bailey stated that the Local Government Reorganisation survey had shown that residents supported the Council and the way in which it delivered its services. In reply to Cllr Dupré, she stated that it was normal for commercially sensitive projects such as the crematorium to be discussed in private and the Police were responsible for parking enforcement. The Council was aiming to fund the Police to do this work. However, Cambridgeshire County Council was the only authority that could deliver civil parking enforcement. Cllr Bailey was happy to receive any ideas and information from Cllr Trapp on the funding of projects. She reminded Council that the doubling of lines at Soham had been promised by Network Rail and the authority planned to lobby them to deliver this.

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed and Cllr Julia Huffer seconded the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, 11 against and no abstentions

It was resolved to:

- (a) Approve the updated Action Plan for 2025-26 at Appendix 1.
- (b) Note the completed actions and progress made during the past 12 months.

13. Local Government Reorganisation – Public and Stakeholder Findings

The Chief Executive presented the report (AA53, previously circulated), which provided the results of the Public and Stakeholder Survey undertaken as part of the Local Government Reorganisation business case development.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott stated that this report showed that the Council had a satisfaction rating of 63%, which was easily the highest in the county. This proved that residents supported the leadership of the Council that had frozen Council Tax, continued to deliver high quality services and had no debt. He declared the authority to be the best run Council in the country and would be handing this excellent position over to the new unitary authority.

Cllr Lorna Dupré stated that the survey findings indicated that residents had a strong connection with Cambridge and not with Peterborough and this should be taken into account when deciding the future governance arrangements. Cllr John Trapp agreed, explaining that the report indicated support for the work of the Council but foreboding over the possibility of joining Peterborough in a future unitary authority.

Cllr Anna Bailey recognised that many of the district's residents felt connected to Cambridge, but only 15% of those surveyed commented on geography and out of the 325 responses, 263 had been unclear about future boundaries. Instead, residents wanted their local authorities to be well run with low Council Tax and high value services.

Cllr Julia Huffer stated that the survey showed perceptions, which could change and not facts. It was likely that the centre of a future unitary authority would be in Peterborough and so satellite offices should remain in the districts. It would be unfair on the district's residents if they had to go to Cambridge for their services.

Cllr Alan Sharp hoped that accurate data on the debt of the other Cambridgeshire authorities could be provided along with details on how this would be allocated to the future unitary authorities.

Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann stated that rural communities had different challenges compared to those affecting urban areas but the Council would have to join with either the city of Cambridge or the city of Peterborough. The last census indicated that out of the 10,000 commuters in the district, 7,000 went to Cambridge and South Cambs and only 167 went to Peterborough.

Cllr Bill Hunt reported that there were many factors that were important to residents including free parking, no congestion charge and low council tax. He suggested that currently very few residents visited the County Council's offices

at Alconbury, which suggested that the location of an authority's main office was not important.

It was resolved:

To note the report.

14. Local Government Reorganisation Update

The Chief Executive presented this report (AA54, previously circulated), which updated the Council on Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

It was resolved:

To note the report.

15. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority – Update reports

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority's meetings in June 2025 and July 2025.

It was resolved:

That the reports on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's representatives be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9:50 pm

Chair.....

Date.....

SCHEDULE OF ITEMS RECOMMENDED FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Committee: Council

Date: 20 November 2025

Author: Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Report No: AA92

Contact Officer:

Jane Webb, Democratic Services and Elections Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer
jae.webb@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01353 616278, Room 214B, The Grange, Ely

1.0 FINANCE & ASSETS COMMITTEE – 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

a) East Cambridgeshire Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27

The Committee received a report (AA71, attached at Appendix A) regarding the Council's requirement to review its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) and an annual review of the 2026/27 scheme. The Director Finance presented the report.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Goldsack and seconded by Cllr Hunt.

Members felt it was challenging to value a free service; therefore, it should have a cost.

The recommendation received 6 votes in favour and 6 votes against. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote which he used to vote in favour of the recommendation.

It was resolved to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:**

That the annual review of the LCTRS be approved and that the Scheme for 2026/27 remain unchanged.

2.0 AUDIT COMMITTEE – 21 OCTOBER 2025

b) Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Jude Antony, Director Finance, presented this report (AA79, attached at Appendix B), which reviewed the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption strategy in Part 4, Section 7 of the Council's Constitution and invited the Committee to recommend that Council agree an amended Strategy.

Cllr Keith Horgan requested that the Corporate Risk Register be published on the website after it was amended.

Stephen Joyce suggested that additional examples of fraud should be added to paragraph 1.7 of the strategy, such as property fraud and unregistered businesses. He asked how much of the £550,000 lost to fraud in 2024/25 had been recovered and whether 1.6 Full Time Equivalent members of staff was enough to deal with the challenges caused by fraud. The Director Finance agreed to consider these points and report any changes to the Committee.

Cllr Keith Horgan proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and

It was unanimously resolved:

To recommend to Full Council the adoption of the updated Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, as attached at Appendix C to this report.

Title: East Cambridgeshire Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2026/27

Committee: Finance and Assets

Date: 25th September 2025

Author: Theresa Mann, Principal Billing, Benefits and Business Rates Manager

Report No: AA71

Contact Officer: Jude Anthony, Finance

jude.anthony@eastcambs.gov.uk phone: 01353 616470, Room 104, The Grange, Ely

1.0 Issue

- 1.1. Each year the Council is required to review its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). This report details the annual review of the Scheme and considers if any changes are needed to the Scheme for 2026/27.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Committee is asked to approve the annual review of the LCTRS and the recommendation that no changes are needed to the Scheme in 2026/27.

3.0 Background / Options

- 3.1. We are now in the thirteenth year of LCTRS, a locally set scheme that replaced the previous nationally set Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme from April 2013.
- 3.2. In 2013/14, the Council took advantage of a one-off Government grant that compensated in part for the reduction in Government funding for the Working Age scheme. This meant that the maximum LCTRS awarded was 91.5%.
- 3.3. For 2014/15 to 2017/18, the Council retained the original scheme, except that allowances and premiums (the amounts of income from state-administered benefits such as Jobseekers' Allowance) were increased in line with other benefits such as Housing Benefit.
- 3.4. For the 2018/19 scheme, the Council harmonised the scheme with DWP welfare reforms introduced for Housing Benefit and LCTRS for Pensioners and introduced closer links to Universal Credit data share for claims, thereby removing the requirement to make a separate claim.
- 3.5. For 2019/20, the Council made no changes to the scheme.
- 3.6. For 2020/21, the Council introduced a fluctuating earnings rule to the treatment of Universal Credit (UC). A weekly tolerance level of £15 (£65 monthly) was introduced to reduce the number of monthly reassessments impacting customers every time a revised Universal Credit notification is received.

- 3.7. For 2021/22, there were no changes implemented.
- 3.8. For 2022/23, there were four amendments made to the scheme. Reducing the capital threshold from £16,000 to £10,000 and abolishing tariff income for those with under £10,000. Applying a fixed rate non-dependent deduction of £7.40 per week. Streamlining the Council Tax Support application process by signposting customers to claim Universal Credit and Council Tax Support at the same time, and increasing the Universal Credit income variation rule from £65 to £100 each month.
- 3.9. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, the 8.5% minimum contribution scheme was retained for working-age residents with no changes.
- 3.10. For 2025/26, a change was made to the Scheme to enable cases to be re-assessed where evidence has been obtained by the Fraud Team relating to DWP passported benefit in payment. Previously, the Scheme prevented the reassessment of LCTRS entitlement for passported cases where a Council Fraud investigation had been completed, unless the DWP had confirmed the case was also under investigation with them. However, the DWP rarely confirm an investigation was underway which prevented the Council from re-assessing customers' LCTRS entitlement. The change continued the process of requesting the DWP to join the Council's investigations but to permit the Council, based on the evidence gathered, to re-assess LCTRS for those customers in receipt of passported benefit without the requirement for DWP confirming an investigation is in progress. The 91.5% Scheme was continued.

4.0 Arguments / Conclusions

- 4.1. No process changes are proposed for 2026/27, and the recommendation is to retain the current scheme with the 8.5% minimum contribution level.
- To ensure that the principle of everyone making at least a small contribution towards their Council Tax charge is maintained.
 - To maintain a level of Council Tax income to continue to provide funding for services at district and county level.
 - There is other support available for those on low incomes and impacted by the cost-of-living crisis within the Housing Team and those affected should also be signposting to maximise benefit take-up, reviewing discounts and exemptions and providing Exceptional Hardship Payments where there is a need.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

- 5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Human Resources (HR) Implications
Yes	No	No

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No
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6.0 Appendices

None

7.0 Background Documents

None

TITLE: Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Committee: Audit Committee

Date: 21st October 2025

Author: Director Finance

Report number: AA79

Contact officer:

Jude Antony, Director Finance

jude.antony@eastcambs.gov.uk

1.0 Issue

- 1.1. Part 4, Section 7 of the Council's Constitution details the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy. This section of the Constitution was last updated in 2022 and is in need of review and update. The review also needs to be conducted in light of the new offence of 'failure to prevent fraud' established through the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to recommend to Full Council the adoption of the updated Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy as attached as appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 Background/Options

- 3.1. As part of the Constitution, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy needs to be approved for adoption by Full Council. However, it is felt appropriate to first bring it to this Committee to ensure that a full review takes place of the new content before being presented to Council.
- 3.2. The current Strategy was approved by Full Council on 21st February 2023.
- 3.3. A new offence of 'failure to prevent fraud' was established through the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 and came into effect from September 2025. The Act mandates that corporate entities must implement adequate measures to prevent fraudulent activity within their operations. As a result of the provisions of the Act, organisations can be held criminally liable if their employees, subsidiaries, agents or other persons associated with them commit a fraud intending to benefit the organisation, and the organisation did not have reasonable fraud prevention procedures in place.
- 3.4. This new legislation places the onus on organisations, such as the Council, to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to prevent fraud, which includes implementing robust anti-fraud policies, conducting regular risk assessments, and ensuring proper staff training. Organisations which can demonstrate that they had 'reasonable procedures' in place to prevent fraud will be able to use this as a defence.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

4.1. The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy has been reviewed and updated. Amended sections are shown in ***bold italics***. These relate to:

- Definition of fraud – now based on Fraud Act 2006 rather than Audit Commission definition (para 1.6);
- Added section around the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (para 1.8);
- Added action plan (para 7.4); and
- Appendix B to reflect the latest legislation on money laundering.

4.2. In order to comply with the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act, organisations must prove they have taken reasonable steps to prevent fraud. This allows them to use the defence of having ‘reasonable procedures’ in place. The legislation outlines six principles of reasonable prevention that organisations should implement, to demonstrate they are adequately addressing the risk of fraud. The six principles are:

Principle 1: Top level commitment

4.3. Responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with those charged with the governance of the organisation, who are expected to foster a culture where fraud is unacceptable. This is evidenced by the Council through:

- An Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy which sets out a zero tolerance commitment to all forms of fraud, bribery, and corruption. The strategy applies to councillors, employees, contractors/suppliers, partners, consultants, agency and contracted staff, service users, volunteers and members of the public. All are expected to demonstrate integrity and honesty.
- The Council has a comprehensive fraud prevention policy framework in place, including the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Bribery Act 2010 policy statement, Anti-Money Laundering Policy statement, and Whistleblowing Policy. Collectively these policies establish clear roles and responsibilities for the prevention, detection, reporting and investigation of suspected fraudulent activity.
- Members of Corporate Management Team are key contacts under the Council’s Whistleblowing Policy and foster an open culture, where staff feel empowered to speak up if they encounter fraudulent practices. Corporate Management Team and Service Leads also have the responsibility to ensure that effective systems of control are in place corporately and within their directorate to prevent and detect fraud, and that those systems operate properly. Corporate Management Team and Service Leads submit an annual assurance statement, to inform the Council’s Annual Governance Statement.

Principle 2: Risk assessment

- 4.4. The organisation must assess the nature and extent of its exposure to the risk of employees, agents and other associated persons committing fraud in scope of the offence. The risk assessment should be dynamic, documented and kept under regular review. This is evidenced by the Council through:

- A risk management policy and framework with a clear risk assessment and monitoring process for all risks. The risk of “Failure of corporate governance and counter fraud and corruption controls” is captured and monitored as part of the Corporate Risk Register. The risk is regularly reviewed and updated as part of ongoing risk management processes.
- The Internal Audit team conduct assessments of the risk of fraud, bribery, theft or corruption when drafting each Assignment Planning Record, requiring the service leads to highlight any known risks and associated controls.

This is acknowledged as an area where activity could be extended through a dedicated fraud risk assessment. As such, an action has been included in the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

Principle 3: Proportionate risk-based prevention procedures

- 4.5. Under the legislation, an organisation’s procedures to prevent fraud by persons associated with it need to be proportionate to the fraud risks it faces and to the nature, scale and complexity of the organisation’s activities. They also need to be clear, practical, accessible, effectively implemented and enforced. This is evidenced by the Council through:

- The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy setting out clear roles and responsibilities for fraud prevention, deterrence, detection and investigation.
- Key financial and procurement policies such as the Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules which set out controls to prevent fraud within the Council’s financial systems and processes, including purchasing and contracting.
- Individual systems and services with risk-based prevention procedures in place. This includes, for example, the separation of duties and access controls in key financial systems and functions as well as the Council’s recruitment and management processes which aim to establish the integrity of employees.
- The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Fraud and Investigations Team is responsible for all suspected council tax discount fraud and NNDR fraud investigations, in accordance with the requirements of The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the Human Rights Act 1998 and its own Counter Fraud Policy.
- Established processes for Declarations of Interest, Related Parties Declarations, the Gifts and Hospitality process and the Members Register of Interests reduce the risk of conflicts of interest arising.

- Independent external audit is an essential safeguard in the stewardship of public money. Whilst detection of fraud is not the primary role of external audit they have a responsibility to review the Council's arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and irregularity, and arrangements designed to limit the opportunity for corrupt practices.
- The Council takes an active part in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) as organised by the Cabinet Office. This involves a rolling programme of electronic data extraction, data matching, review and investigation of matched reports and reporting on outcomes. The extracted data is matched with other data from public sector organisations to highlight potential fraudulent activity.

Principle 4: Due diligence

- 4.6. Organisations should apply due diligence procedures, taking a proportionate and risk-based approach, in respect of persons who perform or will perform services for or on behalf of the organisation, in order to mitigate identified fraud risks. This is evidenced by the Council through:
- The Constitution sets out processes for proportionate due diligence in procuring contracts. This includes seeking key information from successful bidders, such as insurance certificates, policies, accreditations and DBS checks (where relevant).
 - Checklists are applied for proportionate due diligence on grant payments.

Principle 5: Communication

- 4.7. Organisations should seek to ensure that their fraud prevention policies and procedures are communicated, embedded and understood throughout the organisation, through internal and external communication. The Council evidences this through:
- Publishing of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy within the Constitution, available on the Council's external website.
 - Ensuring access to key policies, such as the Whistleblowing policy, for staff on the intranet.
 - Annual fraud awareness promotional activity, internally and externally, to raise awareness of the Council's zero tolerance and policy coverage.

Principle 6: Monitoring and review

- 4.8. Ongoing monitoring and review processes should be in place to ensure the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures, adapt to new risks, and improve arrangements. The Council evidences this through:
- The regular review and update of key policies and reporting on this to the Audit Committee.
 - Regular review of the Corporate Risk Register.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

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: Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

7.0 Background documents

None

CONSTITUTION

7. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council takes its responsibilities to protect the public purse very seriously and is fully committed to the highest ethical standards, in order to ensure the proper use and protection of public funds and assets. The Council has a zero tolerance stance to all forms of fraud, corruption and theft, both from within the Council and from external sources.
- 1.2 Good corporate governance requires that the Council must demonstrate that it is firmly committed to dealing with fraud and corruption and will deal equally with perpetrators both from inside and outside the Council. There will be no distinction made in investigation and action between cases that generate financial benefits and those that do not. This strategy will not compromise any equalities legislation or any associated Council policies.
- 1.3 In addition, by minimising losses through fraud the Council ensures that the scarce resources available are used for the purposes they were intended for i.e. to support the delivery of the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 1.4 The strategy applies to councillors, employees, contractors/suppliers, partners, consultants, agency and contracted staff, service users, volunteers, members of the public and businesses. All are expected to demonstrate integrity and honesty and offer assistance where necessary.
- 1.5 This strategy has been created with due regard to current best practice. It embodies a series of measures designed to frustrate any attempted fraudulent or corrupt act and the steps to be taken if such an act occurs. For ease of understanding, it is separated into five areas:
 - Culture Section 2
 - Prevention and responsibilities Section 3
 - Deterrence Section 4
 - Detection and investigation Section 5
 - Awareness and training Section 6

The Council is also aware of the high degree of external scrutiny of its affairs by a variety of bodies such as External Audit, the Local Government Ombudsman, Central Government Departments (including HM Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions), and the Media. The Council welcomes such scrutiny.

- 1.6 ***Fraud is a criminal offence as defined by the Fraud Act 2006. Most commonly it occurs when a person dishonestly makes a false representation in order to gain for themselves or cause loss to another.*** Section 1 of the Fraud Act 2006 created a new general offence of fraud and introduced three ways of committing it: -

□

- Fraud by false representation
- Fraud by failing to disclose information
- Fraud by abuse of position

It also created new offences: -

- Obtaining services dishonestly
- Possessing, making and supplying articles for use in frauds
- Fraudulent trading applicable to non-corporate traders

Corruption is defined as “*the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person*”.

In addition, this strategy covers “*the failure to disclose an interest in order to gain financial or other pecuniary benefit*”.

- 1.7 Some possible frauds that the Council may incur include:
- Identity; submitting false identification documentation, deceased identification, stolen identification, false immigration documentation
 - Procurement; false / duplicate invoices, false suppliers, inflated invoices, mis-use of grant project funding
 - Insurance fraud; false claims
 - Recruitment; false CVs, false sickness claims, exaggerated mileage claims, timesheet falsifying
 - Council Tax; false single person discounts being claimed, false exemptions, false discounts
 - Business Rates; small business relief, charitable exemptions, discounted properties, empty properties, illegal billboards
- 1.8 ***The Council takes its responsibilities under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 seriously. Under this Act, the offence of failure to prevent fraud can apply and an organisation may be criminally liable where an employee, agent, subsidiary, or other “associated person”, commits a fraud intending to benefit the organisation and the organisation did not have reasonable fraud prevention procedures in place. This Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy sets out the framework by which the Council ensures reasonable fraud prevention procedures are in place and includes actions to continuously improve.***
- 1.9 The Council also abides by the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010 that covers, amongst other things, the offences of bribing another person, of accepting a bribe and organisational responsibility. The Council’s Policy Statement covering the Bribery Act is included as Appendix A to this strategy.
- 1.10 Theft is defined as “*appropriating property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it*”. Incidents of theft should also be reported to the Council’s insurance team at insurance@eastcambs.gov.uk.
- 1.11 The Council further has a money laundering policy aimed at preventing the Council becoming inadvertently involved in such activity. Details of this are included in Appendix B.
- 2.0 CULTURE**
- 2.1 The culture of the Council has always been one of openness and the core values of fairness; trust and value support this. The Council’s culture therefore supports the opposition to fraud and corruption.
- 2.2 The prevention / detection of fraud and corruption and the protection of the public purse are everyone’s responsibility.

- 2.3 The Council's elected members and employees play an important role in creating and maintaining this culture. They are positively encouraged to raise concerns regarding fraud and corruption, immaterial of seniority, rank or status, in the knowledge that such concerns will, wherever possible, be treated in confidence.
- 2.4 Concerns must be raised when members or employees reasonably believe that one or more of the following has occurred, is in the process of occurring or is likely to occur:
- a criminal offence
 - a failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
 - improper unauthorised use of public or other funds
 - a miscarriage of justice
 - maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
 - endangering of an individual's health and safety
 - damage to the environment
 - deliberate concealment of any of the above.
- 2.5 Depending on the nature of the concerns, these should initially be raised with a line manager. Where this is not appropriate, or an individual feels unable to do so, the Council's Monitoring Officer, Director, Finance or Internal Audit should be approached. The Council also has a Whistleblowing Policy which enables concerns to be raised in confidence. The Council will ensure that any allegations received in any way, including by anonymous letters or phone calls, will be taken seriously and investigated in an appropriate manner, subject to the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 2.6 The Council will deal firmly with those who defraud the Council, or who are corrupt, or where there has been financial malpractice. There is, of course, a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused and, therefore, any abuse (such as employees raising malicious allegations) may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 2.7 When fraud or corruption have occurred because of a breakdown in the Council's systems or procedures, the Chief Executive, Directors and the relevant Service Lead will ensure that appropriate improvements in systems of control are implemented to prevent a reoccurrence. The Council's Internal Audit service will assist in reviewing the control environment and follow up on actions arising.

3.0 **PREVENTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

ELECTED MEMBERS

- 3.1 The Role of Elected Members
- 3.1.1 As elected representatives, all members of the Council have a duty to citizens to protect the Council from all forms of abuse.
- 3.1.2 This is conducted through the Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy and compliance with the Code of Conduct for Members, the provisions of the Council's Constitution (including the Council's Financial Procedure Rules) and relevant legislation.

- 3.1.3 Elected members sign to the effect that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct when they take office. These conduct and ethical matters are specifically brought to the attention of Members during induction and include the declaration and registration of interests and gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer advises Members of new legislative or procedural requirements.

EMPLOYEES

3.2 The Role of Managers

- 3.2.1 Managers at all levels are responsible for the communication and implementation of this strategy in their work area. They are also responsible for ensuring that their employees are aware of the Financial Procedure Rules and the provisions of the Council's Constitution, and that the requirements of each are being met in their everyday business activities. In addition, managers must make their employees aware of the requirements of the code of conduct for local government employees through the induction process.
- 3.2.2 Managers are expected to strive to create an environment in which their staff feel able to approach them with any concerns they may have about suspected irregularities. All managers must be aware of, and consistently apply, the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
- 3.2.3 Special arrangements will apply where employees are responsible for cash handling or are in charge of financial systems and systems that generate payments, for example payroll and the creditor payments systems. Managers must ensure that relevant training is provided for employees. Checks must be carried out at least annually to ensure that proper procedures are being followed.
- 3.2.4 The Council recognises that a key preventative measure in dealing with fraud and corruption is for managers to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, the honesty and integrity of potential employees, whether for permanent, temporary or casual posts. The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy will be adhered to during this process.
- 3.2.5 The Council has a formal recruitment procedure, which contains appropriate safeguards on matters such as written references and verifying qualifications held. As with other public bodies, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are undertaken on employees working in regulated activities. Further checks will be introduced in areas where an increased risk of potential fraud and corruption has been identified.

3.3 Responsibilities of Employees

- 3.3.1 Each employee is governed in their work by the provisions of the Council's Constitution, the Financial Procedure Rules and other codes of conduct and policies (e.g. human resources policies and procedures, the email and internet code of practice, and IT security policy). They are also governed by the code of conduct for local government employees. Included in these are guidelines on gifts and hospitality and codes of conduct associated with professional and personal conduct and conflicts of interest. These are issued to all employees when they join the Council or will be provided by their manager.
- 3.3.2 In addition, employees are responsible for ensuring that they follow the instructions given to them by management, particularly in relation to the safekeeping of the assets of the Council. These will be included in induction training and procedure manuals.

- 3.3.3 Employees who hold professional, trade or other appropriate qualifications are expected to comply with codes of conduct issued by the organisations of which they are members.
- 3.3.4 Employees are expected always to be aware of the possibility that fraud, corruption bribery or theft may exist in the workplace and be able to share their concerns with management. If for any reason, they feel unable to speak to their manager they must refer the matter to one of those named in paragraph 3.3.5 below.
- 3.3.5 Concerns must be raised, in the first instance, directly with the supervisor or direct line manager or, if necessary, anonymously (by letter or phone), and via other routes, in accordance with the Council's Whistleblowing Policy:
- to Service Leads, Directors and the Chief Executive and in all cases to the Council's Monitoring Officer who will report such concerns to the Chief Internal Auditor;
 - directly to the Chief Internal Auditor; or
 - to the External Auditor, who, depending upon the nature of the concern, will liaise with the Chief Internal Auditor.
- 3.3.6 This strategy, although primarily aimed at those within or associated with the Council, enables concerns raised by the public to be investigated, as appropriate, by the relevant person in a proper manner.

3.4 Conflicts of Interest

- 3.4.1 Both elected members and employees must ensure that they avoid situations where there is a potential for a conflict of interest. Such situations can arise with externalisation of services, internal tendering, planning and land issues, etc. Effective role separation will ensure decisions made are seen to be based upon impartial advice and avoid questions about improper disclosure of confidential information.

3.5 Internal Control Systems

- 3.5.1 Appropriate policies and procedures will be maintained to ensure that internal controls designed to prevent or detect fraud and corruption are built into the Council's systems of operation.
- 3.5.2 In addition to the Financial Procedure Rules and the provisions of the Council's Constitution, individual service areas may have their own procedures to prevent and detect fraud. There may also be audit reports that recommend methods to minimise losses to the Council. Managers and employees must be made aware of and be expected to adhere to these various sources of guidance and alter their working practices accordingly.

3.6 The Role of Internal Audit

- 3.6.1 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Council has the responsibility for reviewing, appraising and reporting upon the extent to which the Council's assets and interests are safeguarded from losses due to fraud and other offences; this function is performed by Internal Audit. Internal Audit investigates all cases of suspected irregularity, except benefit, council tax discount and national non-domestic rates (NNDR) fraud (see below), in accordance with the requirements of the Human

Rights Act 1998. They liaise with management to recommend changes in procedures to prevent further losses to the Council.

3.7 The Role of the Anglia Revenues Partnership & Single Fraud Investigation Service

3.7.1 The Council is responsible for the payment of housing benefit and council tax discounts within the East Cambridgeshire area. This function is provided through the Council's participation with a number of other councils in the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP). The Council has a duty to minimise the scope for fraud in this area and protect public funds by ensuring that benefits and discounts are only delivered to those with a true entitlement to them.

3.7.2 The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Fraud and Investigations Team is responsible for all suspected council tax discount fraud and NNDR fraud investigations, in accordance with the requirements of The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the Human Rights Act 1998 and its own Counter Fraud Policy. In cases where employees are involved, they will work with Internal Audit, Human Resources and appropriate senior management to ensure that correct procedures are followed and that this strategy is adhered to.

3.7.3 Since September 2015 the investigation of suspected or alleged housing benefit fraud has been undertaken by the Single Fraud Investigation Service, a partnership between the DWP Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC and local authorities.

3.8 The Role of External Audit

3.8.1 Independent external audit is an essential safeguard in the stewardship of public money. Whilst detection of fraud is not the primary role of external audit, they have a responsibility to review the Council's arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and irregularity, and arrangements designed to limit the opportunity for corrupt practices.

3.9 Co-operation with Others

3.9.1 Internal Audit has set up, and will keep under review, procedures and arrangements to develop and encourage the exchange of information on national and local fraud and corruption activity in relation to local authorities with external agencies such as:

- Police
- External Audit
- Professional bodies – including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
- Central Government including the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenues and Customs
- Local Government Ombudsman's Office
- Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors

3.9.2 The Council will also support local forums where matters of anti-fraud and anti-corruption are discussed. These include:

- Cambridgeshire Audit Group
- North Northamptonshire's Audit and Counter Fraud client base

3.10 Data Matching

3.10.1 The Council will participate in national and local data matching exercises as it sees appropriate for the purposes of identifying and reducing fraud, corruption and error.

3.10.2 In particular, the Council takes an active part in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) as organised by the Cabinet Office. This involves a rolling programme of electronic data extraction, data matching, review and investigation of matched reports and reporting on outcomes. The extracted data is matched with other data from public sector organisations to highlight potential fraudulent activity.

3.11 Social Housing Fraud

3.11.1 The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 created new criminal offences of unlawful sub-letting by secure and assured tenants of social housing. This Act supplements existing offences relating to fraudulently obtaining an allocation of social housing and fraudulently obtaining housing benefits. The Act also includes more powers for local authorities to investigate social tenancy fraud through better access to data from banks and utility companies; although councils could previously request this data, organisations were able to refuse to provide it – under the Act compliance is mandatory.

3.11.2 Social housing fraud is a very significant problem nationally and arises when individuals:

- are allocated a social housing property (a property owned by a registered housing provider or local authority) when they are not entitled to it by lying about their circumstances;
- obtain housing benefit and/or council tax discount they are not entitled to; and
- unlawfully sub-let their social housing property.

3.11.3 Social housing fraud prevents housing from being properly allocated to the people who need it most. It also undermines confidence in the housing allocation system while preventing and detecting fraud stops public money being wasted.

3.11.4 Members of the public are encouraged to report their concerns via the dedicated fraud reporting mailbox - reportfraud@eastcambs.gov.uk

4.0 **DETERRENCE**

4.1 The best deterrent is a clear framework of processes and responsibilities, which make fraud and corruption hard to perpetrate and will be likely to expose fraud and corruption at the earliest opportunity. The following are those related policies and documents that support the anti-fraud and anti-corruption culture:

- Constitution – which includes the Financial Procedure Rules, Member Code of Conduct and Contract Procedure Rules
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Fraud Response Plan

4.2 The risk of fraud cannot be dealt with in isolation. Management of the risk of fraud is a key aspect of corporate governance and it is essential that all members and staff

should have a level of understanding of this strategy. However, some individuals have specific leadership roles and responsibilities and these are identified within Section 3 (Prevention) above.

4.3 Prosecution and recovery

4.3.1 Wherever possible the following actions will be taken where investigation supports suspicions of fraudulent or corrupt activity:

- appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures
- criminal proceedings will be brought whenever appropriate, should the Crown Prosecution Service decide a prosecution can be pursued
- civil proceedings will be brought to recover lost assets whenever appropriate

4.3.2 Other forms of redress to recover losses (such as making a claim against insurance cover or recovering from pension funds) or to prevent further fraudulent activity by the perpetrator, (such as notifying their professional body) will also be used wherever appropriate.

4.3.3 Sanctions applied in relation to cases of housing benefit and/or council tax discount fraud will be applied in accordance with the ARP Counter Fraud Policy. Options include formal cautions, administrative penalties and prosecution.

4.4 Disciplinary Action

4.4.1 Theft, fraud and corruption are serious offences against the Council and employees will face disciplinary action if there is evidence that they have been involved in these activities. Disciplinary action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case, but in a consistent manner, after consultation with the Chief Executive (the police will pass valid cases to the Crown Prosecution Service).

4.4.2 Members will face appropriate action under this strategy if they are found to have been involved in theft, fraud or corruption against the Council. Action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case, but in a consistent manner including possible referral to the police. If the matter is a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members, then it will be dealt with in accordance with the arrangements agreed by the Council in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

4.5 Publicity

4.5.1 The Council's public relations unit will optimise the publicity opportunities associated with anti-fraud and corruption activity within the Council. They will also try to ensure that the results of any action taken, including prosecutions, are reported in the media.

4.5.2 In all cases where financial loss to the Council has occurred, the Council will seek to recover the loss and advertise this fact. In addition to demonstrating the action the Council takes to prevent and detect fraud, it protects itself and the services it provides against the results of fraud within the organisation by obtaining Fidelity Guarantee Insurance.

- 4.5.3 All anti-fraud and corruption activities, including the update of this strategy, will be publicised in order to make members, employees and the public aware of the Council's commitment to taking action on fraud and corruption when it occurs.
- 4.5.4 Reports will be made to the Audit Committee about countering fraud and corruption activities and their success when appropriate.

5.0 DETECTION AND INVESTIGATION

- 5.1 Internal Audit plays an important role in the detection of fraud and corruption. Included in its strategic plan are reviews of system financial controls and specific fraud and corruption tests, spot checks and unannounced visits.
- 5.2 In addition to Internal Audit, there are numerous systems controls in place to deter fraud and corruption, but it is often the vigilance of employees and members of the public that aids detection.
- 5.3 In some cases frauds are discovered by chance or 'tip-off' and arrangements are in place to enable such information to be properly dealt with, in accordance with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 5.4 All suspected irregularities are required to be reported (verbally or in writing) either by the person with whom the initial concern was raised or by the originator, as per paragraph 3.3.5 (including via the Council's Whistleblowing Policy). External Audit will also be notified of all frauds involving sums over £10,000 and any corrupt acts. This is essential to the strategy, and:
- ensures the consistent treatment of information regarding fraud and corruption; and
 - facilitates a proper and thorough investigation by an experienced audit team, in accordance with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 5.5 This process will apply to all the following areas:
- a) fraud/corruption by elected members
 - b) internal fraud/corruption
 - c) other fraud/corruption by Council employees
 - d) fraud by contractors' employees
 - e) external fraud (the public).
- 5.6 Cases under a), d) and e) would normally be referred directly to the External Auditor, Ombudsman or the police.
- 5.7 If the initial investigation reveals that a full investigation is warranted the Council will invoke the Council's Fraud Response Plan and where applicable the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 5.8 Any decision to refer a matter to the police will be taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Internal Auditor, Director Finance and Monitoring Officer. The relevant Director and Service Lead will be notified if appropriate. The Council will normally wish the police to be made aware of, and investigate independently, offences where financial impropriety is discovered. Any internal investigation will be conducted professionally and in consultation with the police so as to avoid jeopardising any evidence or potential outcomes of related criminal investigation.

- 5.9 Depending on the nature of an allegation under b) to e), Internal Audit will normally work closely with the relevant Director and Service Lead concerned and the Director Finance to ensure that all allegations are thoroughly investigated and reported upon.
- 5.10 The Council's disciplinary procedures will be used to facilitate a thorough investigation of any allegations of improper behaviour by employees. The processes as outlined in paragraph 4.4.2 will cover members.
- 5.11 If there is a suspicion that an offence of money laundering may have taken place the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (Director, Finance) may refer the matter to the National Crime Agency. Further details are provided in Appendix B to this strategy.

6.0 AWARENESS AND TRAINING

- 6.1 The Council recognises that the continuing success of this strategy and its general credibility will depend in part on the effectiveness of programmed training and an awareness of fraud by elected members and employees across the Council.
- 6.2 To facilitate this, positive and appropriate provision has been made via induction and for employees via their development plans. This includes specialist training for certain elected members and employees.
- 6.3 A leaflet on the Council's Whistleblowing Policy is distributed to all employees and members, and full copies of all relevant policies and strategies are available on the Council's Intranet.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 The Council has always prided itself on setting and maintaining high standards and a culture of openness, with core values of fairness, trust and value. This Strategy fully supports the Council's desire to maintain an honest organisation, free from fraud and corruption
- 7.2 The Council has in place a network of systems, policies and procedures to assist it in dealing with fraud and corruption when it occurs. It is determined that these arrangements will keep pace with any future developments in techniques to both prevent and detect fraudulent or corrupt activity that may affect its operation.
- 7.3 The Council will maintain a continuous review of all these systems and procedures through Internal Audit. This strategy will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains compliant with good practice and meets the needs of the Council.
- 7.4 ***To ensure the Council continues to strengthen its counter fraud framework, the following areas will be prioritised as part of the Council's strategy:***

Action	Owner	Timeframe
<i>Promotion of an annual fraud awareness week.</i>	<i>Director Finance, supported by Internal Audit</i>	<i>Annually, in November</i>
<i>Fraud risk assessments to be formalised in a consistent format across all service areas and subject to review at least annually.</i>	<i>Service leads</i>	<i>Template to be launched in November 2025, subject to annual review</i>
<i>Review of training for officers and elected members on counter fraud</i>	<i>Director Finance, supported by</i>	<i>Review and update training</i>

<i>Action</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<i>and corruption framework.</i>	<i>Internal Audit</i>	<i>provision by November 2026</i>

Appendix A

BRIBERY ACT 2010 - POLICY STATEMENT

Bribery is a criminal offence. We (East Cambridgeshire District Council) do not, and will not, pay bribes or offer improper inducements to anyone for any purpose, neither do we or will we, accept bribes or improper inducements.

To use a third party as a conduit to channel bribes to others is a criminal offence. We do not, and will not, engage indirectly in or otherwise encourage bribery.

We are committed to the prevention, deterrence and detection of bribery. We have a zero-tolerance towards bribery. We aim to maintain anti-bribery compliance as “business as usual” rather than as a one-off exercise.

Objectives of this policy

This policy statement provides a coherent and consistent framework to enable East Cambridgeshire District Council employees to understand and implement arrangements to comply with the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010. In conjunction with other related policies and key documents, it will also enable employees to identify and effectively report a potential breach.

We require that all employees, including those permanently employed, temporary agency staff and contractors:-

- act honestly and with integrity at all times and to safeguard the Council's resources for which they are responsible
- comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of laws and regulations of all jurisdictions in which the Council operates, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all of the Council's activities. For partners, joint ventures and suppliers, we will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Within the Council, the responsibility to control the risk of bribery occurring resides at all levels of the Council. It does not rest solely within assurance functions, but in all service area and functions.

This policy covers all staff, including all levels and grades, those permanently employed, temporary employed, temporary agency staff, contractors, agents, Members, volunteers and consultants.

The Council's commitment to action

The Council commits to:-

- setting out a clear anti-bribery policy and keeping it up to date
- making all employees and members aware of their responsibilities to adhere strictly to this policy
- training all employees and members so that they can recognise and avoid the use of bribery by themselves and others

- encouraging employees and members to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately
- rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution
- taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in bribery
- provide information to all employees and members to report breaches and suspected breaches of this policy
- include appropriate clauses in contracts to prevent bribery.

Definition of bribery

Bribery is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided to gain personal, commercial, regulatory or contractual advantage.

It is unacceptable to:-

- give, promise to give, or offer a payment, gift or hospitality with the expectation or hope that a business advantage will be received, or to reward a business advantage already given
- give, promise to give, or offer a payment, gift or hospitality to a government official, agent or representative to “facilitate” or expedite a routine procedure
- accept payment from a third party that you know or suspect is offered with the expectation that it will obtain a business advantage for them
- accept a gift or hospitality from a third party if you know or suspect that it is offered or provided with an expectation that a business advantage will be provided by us in return
- retaliate against or threaten a person who has refused to commit a bribery offence or who has raised concerns under this policy
- engage in activity in breach of this policy

Facilitation payments

Facilitation payments are not tolerated and are illegal. Facilitation payments are unofficial payments made to public officials in order to secure or expedite actions.

Gifts and hospitality

The Council’s policy regarding the acceptance of gifts or hospitality from a third party is set out in the Member and Officer Code of Conducts.

Public contracts and failure to prevent bribery

Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended by the Public Procurement (Amendments, Repeals and Revocations) Regulations 2016, a company is automatically and perpetually debarred from competing for public contracts where it is convicted of a corruption offence. There are no plans to amend the 2006 Regulations for this to include the crime of failure to prevent bribery. Organisations that are convicted of failing to prevent bribery are not automatically barred from participating in tenders for public contracts and so the Council has the discretion to exclude organisations convicted of this offence.

The Bribery Act

There are four key offences under the Act:-

- bribery of another person (section 1)
- accepting a bribe (section 2)
- bribing a foreign official (section 6)
- failing to prevent bribery (section 7)

The Bribery Act 2010 makes it an offence to offer, promise or give a bribe (Section 1). It also makes it an offence to request, agree to receive, or accept a bribe (Section 2). Section 6 of the Act creates a separate offence of bribing a foreign public official with the intention of obtaining or retaining business or an advantage in the conduct of business.

There is also a corporate offence under Section 7 of failure by a commercial organisation to prevent bribery that is intended to obtain or retain business, or an advantage in the conduct of business, for the organisation. An organisation will have a defence to this corporate offence if it can show that it had in place adequate procedures designed to prevent bribery by or of persons associated with the organisation.

Is the Council a “commercial organisation”?

The guidance states that a “commercial organisation” is any body formed in the United Kingdom and “...it does not matter if it pursues primarily charitable or educational aims or purely public functions. It will be caught if it engages in commercial activities, irrespective of the purpose for which profits are made”. There are circumstances in which we will be a commercial organisation for the purposes of section 7. This policy is intended to ensure that we have in place the necessary procedures to act as a defence to a section 7 offence.

Penalties

An individual guilty of an offence under sections 1, 2 or 6 is liable:-

- On conviction in a magistrates court, to imprisonment for a maximum term of twelve months, or to a fine not exceeding £5,000, or both
- On conviction in a crown court, to imprisonment for a maximum term of ten years, or to an unlimited fine, or both

Organisations guilty of an offence under section 7 are liable to an unlimited fine. In addition, a public exposure, or even an allegation, of bribery would entail severe reputational damage.

Bribery is a serious offence against the Council and employees will face disciplinary action if there is evidence that they have been involved in this activity, which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct. Disciplinary action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case.

Adequate Procedures

Whether the procedures are adequate will ultimately be a matter for the courts to decide on a case-by-case basis. Adequate procedures need to be applied proportionately, based on the level of risk of bribery in the Council. The Government considers that procedures put in place by commercial organisations wishing to prevent bribery being committed on their behalf should be informed by six principles:-

- Proportionality
- Top level commitment
- Risk assessment
- Due diligence
- Communication (including training)

- Monitoring and review

These principles are not prescriptive, but are intended to be flexible and outcome focussed, allowing for the different circumstances of organisations. For example, small organisations will face different challenges to those faced by large multi-national enterprises. The detail of how organisations apply these principles will vary, but the outcome should always be robust and effective anti-bribery procedures.

The Council is committed to proportional implementation of these principles.

Anti-Bribery procedures

The Council's Anti Bribery procedures cover the six principles detailed above:-

Proportionality – The Council has in place policies to ensure that it has procedures to prevent bribery by persons associated with it. These will be proportionate to the bribery risks faced by the Council and to the nature, scale and complexity of the Council's activities.

Top level commitment – The Chief Executive, Directors and Service Leads are committed to preventing bribery by persons associated with the Council. They foster a culture within the organisation in which bribery is never acceptable.

Risk assessment – The nature and extent of the Council's exposure to potential external and internal risks of bribery by persons associated with it are periodically assessed. This includes financial risks but also other risks such as reputational damage.

Due diligence – The Council takes a proportionate and risk based approach, in respect of persons who perform or will perform services for or on behalf of the organisation, in order to mitigate identified bribery risks.

Communication (including training) – The Council will seek to ensure that its bribery prevention policies and procedures are embedded and understood throughout the organisation through internal communication, including training that is proportionate to the risks it faces.

Monitoring and review – Procedures designed to prevent bribery will be monitored and reviewed and improvements made where necessary.

Staff and member responsibilities

The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for the Council or under its control. All staff and members are required to avoid activity that breaches the policy.

You must therefore:-

- ensure that you read, understand and comply with this policy
- raise concerns at the earliest opportunity if you believe or suspect that a conflict with the policy has occurred, or may occur in the future

As well as the possibility of civil and criminal prosecution, staff that breach this policy will face disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct.

Raising a concern

If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of bribery or corruption then you can report this through the Council's whistleblowing procedure where concerns can be made anonymously. In the event that an incident of bribery is reported, we will act at the earliest opportunity to evaluate the situation.

If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact either Rachel Ashley-Caunt, Chief Internal Auditor on 07799 217378, e-mail Rachel.Ashley-Caunt@northnorthants.gov.uk or Jude Antony, Director Finance on 01353 616470, e-mail jude.antony@eastcambs.gov.uk

Appendix B

Anti-Money Laundering – Policy Statement

Introduction

The Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) Regulations 2023 came into force on 10 January 2024. Although Local Authorities are not obliged to comply with the requirements of this legislation, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) advises that an organisation should consider a policy framework which supports the implementation of the anti-fraud strategy and includes an anti-money laundering policy to prevent the use of their services for money laundering. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Terrorism Act 2000 are also relevant in informing the Council's response.

The Council has sought to establish internal procedures to prevent the use of its services for money laundering and the prevention of terrorist financing. The Council has further appointed a Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO) to receive disclosures from employees of suspected money laundering activity.

We are committed to robust arrangements to identify and prevent any attempts to use East Cambridgeshire District Council to launder money. Offences under money laundering legislation may be committed by individuals or organisations, and money laundering is widely defined as “possessing, concealing, disguising or in any way dealing with the proceeds of any crime by any person known or unknown”.

When a person knows or suspects that money laundering activity is taking place (or has taken place) or becomes concerned that their involvement in a matter may amount to a prohibited act under the legislation, they must report this as soon as practicable to the Money Laundering Responsible Officer (MLRO) or risk prosecution. Offences under the Proceeds of Crime Act and Money Laundering Regulations can attract penalties of unlimited fines and up to fourteen years imprisonment.

This policy has been written so as to enable us to meet the legal requirements in a way that is proportionate to the risk of contravening the legislation. It also serves to protect the Council's employees through making them aware of their personal obligations and providing a mechanism for them to raise any issues of concern.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees and agency workers.

This policy aims to maintain the high standards of conduct that currently exist within by preventing criminal activity through money laundering. The separate Anti-Money Laundering - Employee Guidance sets out the steps that must be followed to comply with its legal obligations.

Further information is set out in the Anti-Money Laundering - Employee Guidance which is available to all staff.

Definition

The introduction of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 broadened the definition of money laundering and widened the range of activities controlled by the statutory framework. Money laundering has been defined as:

- concealing, disguising, converting, transferring or removing criminal property from the UK;
- entering into or becoming concerned in an arrangement which a person knows or suspects facilitates the acquisition, retention, use or control of criminal property;
- acquiring criminal property, using criminal property; or possession of criminal property.

These are the primary money laundering offences and thus prohibited acts under the legislation. In addition, an offence of “Tipping off” can be committed should an individual make a disclosure that is likely to prejudice a current or potential investigation into any potential money laundering.

Potentially any employee could contravene the money laundering provisions if they know or suspect money laundering and either become involved with it in some way and/or do nothing about it.

Whilst the risk of contravening the legislation is low, it is extremely important that all employees are familiar with their legal responsibilities - serious criminal sanctions may be imposed for breaches of the legislation.

Council obligations

To comply with the obligations and recommended practice, we have:

- Nominated a Money Laundering Reporting Officer (“MLRO”) to receive disclosures from employees of money laundering activity;
- Nominated a deputy Money Laundering Reporting Officer; and
- Implemented a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering and communicated this policy to members of staff.

The Money Laundering Reporting Officer

The officer nominated to receive disclosures concerning potential money laundering activity is the Council’s Director, Finance and their contact details are set out in the Anti-Money Laundering - Employee Guidance. Also provided within the employee guidance is a template form for making a referral to the Director, Finance.

In the absence of the Director, Finance, the Deputy Money Laundering Reporting Officer is the Senior Accountant.

Contact details for the Money Laundering Reporting Officer and Deputy are provided on the Council’s intranet pages and the supporting employee guidance.

Further information

If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact Jude Antony, Director Finance on 01353 616470 or e-mail jude.antony@eastcambs.gov.uk

TITLE: Local Government Reorganisation Proposals

Committee: Full Council

Date: 20 November 2025

Author: Director Operations

Report number: AA93

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

1.0 Issue

- 1.1. To consider the final proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested

- 2.1. To note this report and the proposals for Options A–E for Local Government Reorganisation.
- 2.2. To endorse **one or none** of the proposals for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.
- 2.3. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to finalise the draft business case and a joint covering letter for submission of the Council's preferred proposal to Government.

3.0 Background/Options

- 3.1. On 16 December 2024, the Government published the *White Paper on English Devolution*, which sets out wide-ranging reforms to local government in England. The paper requires all remaining two-tier areas (those with both county and district councils) to reorganise into unitary authorities, while strengthening devolution arrangements. The White Paper can be accessed here: [English Devolution White Paper](#).
- 3.2. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough already benefit from devolved powers through the Combined Authority. This report, therefore, focuses solely on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.3. The Government intends to implement LGR in all two-tier areas and may also consider reorganisation where an existing unitary authority is underperforming or where current structures are deemed unsustainable.
- 3.4. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough currently comprise one of the most complex governance arrangements in England, including:
 - Cambridgeshire County Council
 - Five District Councils: Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and Fenland
 - Peterborough City Council (existing unitary authority)

- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- A network of Town and Parish Councils (which will not be directly affected by LGR)

Overview of the Proposals

- 3.5. An informal Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Leader and Chief Executive LGR working group was established in early 2025, and a range of options for new unitary councils were considered. Independent financial analysis was undertaken by Pixel¹. This demonstrated that three-unitary options would be more costly to establish, would generate lower savings, and result in longer payback periods. At the point when the Pixel report was issued, the Leaders therefore decided not to take forward the three unitary options that were being considered at that time, and agreed that Options A, B and C, all of which are two unitary proposals, should be developed further.
- 3.6. However, since this time, five distinct proposals have been developed across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region:
- 3.7. **Option A North-West/South-East option**

Unitary 1	Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils, along with County Council functions
Unitary 2	Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, along with County Council functions

- 3.8. **Option B North/South option**

Unitary 1	Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils, along with County Council functions
Unitary 2	Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District, along with County Council functions

- 3.9. **Option C - East/West option**

Unitary 1	Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils, along with County Council functions
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¹ Pixel is a leading financial consultancy which provides advice to over 160 local authorities through their Funding Advisory Service, using forecasting models to identify the impact of government funding patterns and arrangements on Medium Term Financial Planning.

Unitary 2	Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions
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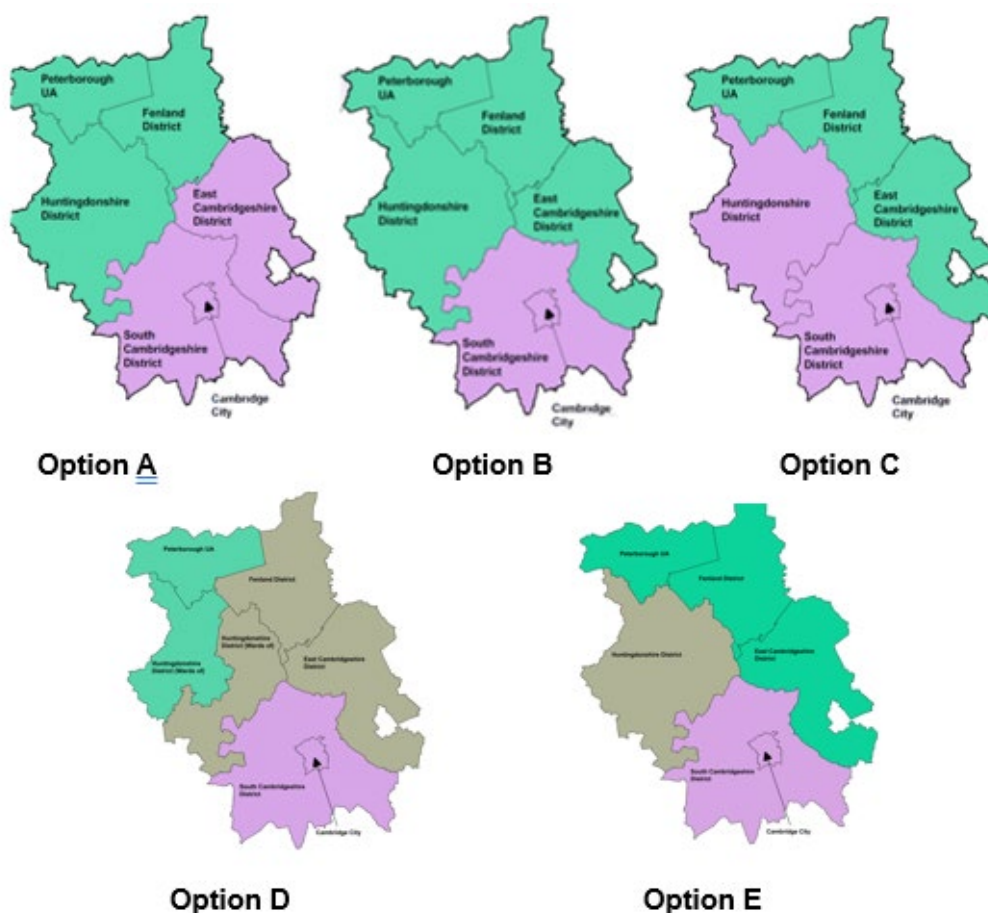
3.10. **Option D – Three Unitary proposal**

Unitary 1	Peterborough City Council, parts of Huntingdonshire District Councils, along with County Council functions
Unitary 2	Parts of Huntingdonshire District Council, Fenland, and East Cambridgeshire, along with County Council functions
Unitary 3	Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District, along with County Council functions

3.11. **Option E – Three Unitary proposal**

Unitary 1	Peterborough City, Fenland, East Cambridgeshire District Councils with County Council functions
Unitary 2	Huntingdonshire District Council with County Council functions
Unitary 3	Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District along with County Council functions

Image Below: Maps of Options A to E



3.12. Each proposal has been developed by different councils as outlined below:

Option	Lead Council(s)	Contributing Councils
A	Cambridgeshire County Council	—
B	Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire	Huntingdonshire, Fenland, and Peterborough
C	Huntingdonshire District Council	—
D	Peterborough City Council	—
E	Huntingdonshire District Council	—

3.13. A shared baseline dataset was commissioned collaboratively across all councils, covering financial modelling, service impacts (Adult and Children’s Social Care, SEND, Housing, Homelessness), and stakeholder feedback. Each lead council has also undertaken further analysis or commissioned consultants to refine their individual business cases.

3.14. At its meeting on 18 September 2025, the Council agreed that it should have the opportunity to consider all LGR proposals for the region. However, it noted that Option B appeared to offer the best alignment with the Government’s criteria and the interests of East Cambridgeshire residents. The Council therefore requested that Officers contribute directly to the development of the Option B business case.

3.15. Not all proposals were finalised at the time of publishing this report; however, links to each of the published proposals are included in the appendices list, and the draft

Option B proposal is appended to this report (Appendix 1). Supporting analysis and reference documents are linked in Appendix 7.

- 3.16. Each proposal includes some form of an options appraisal; however, the approaches differ, reflecting the individual lead councils' interpretation, weighting, and judgments against the Government's assessment criteria (Appendix 2).
- 3.17. On 21 October 2025, Cambridgeshire County Council approved submitting Option A to the government.
- 3.18. Other councils are considering the proposals on the following dates:
- 07 November 2025 - Fenland District Council
 - 18 November 2025 - Peterborough City Council
 - 20 November 2025 - Cambridge City Council
 - 24 November 2025 - Huntingdonshire District Council
 - 24 November 2025 - South Cambridgeshire District Council

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The Council may endorse one or none of the proposals prior to submission for consideration by Government.
- 4.2 In line with the Government's request for joint submissions, a single cover letter will be prepared to clearly set out each Council's respective position on endorsement (or otherwise) of the LGR proposals.
- 4.3 The latest indicative LGR timeline for our area is:

Activity	Period
Councils submit final LGR proposals	28 November 2025
Govt consultation	January to May 2026
Govt decision on proposals	By July 2026
Legislation prepared, laid and made subject to parliamentary approval	September 2026 to December 2027
Shadow Unitary Elections	May 2027
New Unitaries Go – Live	1 April 2028

5 Implications

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

Financial Implications

- 5.1 All proposals have significant financial implications. Detailed modelling within each business case examines one-off transition costs and payback periods, disaggregation of services, tax base and council tax harmonisation, debt and reserves, and future funding arrangements.

- 5.2 The Council will need to budget for transitional costs once the preferred model is confirmed; however, these costs are not yet known.
- 5.3 A total of £318,000 was received from MHCLG to support all councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with the business case development
- 5.4 A provisional contribution of £28,000 has been identified to support a jointly funded post to coordinate the early stages of the transition programme (excluding Fenland DC). The role will be hosted by Peterborough City Council. The costs will be met from the Councils surplus revenue reserves.

Legal implications

- 5.5 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides the key statutory framework for local government reorganisation.
- 5.6 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited proposals for unitary arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with final submissions due 28 November 2025 and new authorities operational from 1 April 2028.
- 5.7 The existing Mayoral Combined Authority will transition to a Mayoral Strategic Authority with enhanced powers as set out in the government's white paper.
- 5.8 Following submission of a proposal to government, the Secretary of State will consult on all valid proposals that address the government's criteria (Appendix 2). This will be a formal consultation with statutory consultees, other stakeholders and members of the public. The Council will be consulted on all unitary proposals it has not endorsed or formally submitted to government.
- 5.9 A final decision will be made by the Secretary of State, and the relevant Structural Change Orders (SCOs) will be laid before Parliament to establish the new authorities.
- 5.10 Elections to the new authorities are expected in May 2027, followed by a shadow year to oversee the transition. Further details about this process can be found here [Summary of the local government reorganisation process - GOV.UK](#)
- 5.11 During the period of the 'shadow year', the newly established shadow council will have authority to make key decisions or prevent decisions being undertaken by legacy councils. The details will be set out in the SCO and are usually limited to financial decisions. These will not be known until the SCO is drafted, which is done with some consultation with all affected Councils.

Human Resources

- 5.12 There are no staffing implications associated with this report; however, it is likely to be an unsettling time for some staff. It is important to note that all staff will transfer automatically to one of the new authorities under 'TUPE' regulations (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)).

Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.13 In developing the business cases, each proposal has considered the potential impacts of LGR on key communities and demographic groups. During the transition to a new unitary authority, there may be varying levels of impact on different stakeholders. Transitional changes could result in temporary disruption to services, which may disproportionately affect some groups more than others.
- 5.14 To mitigate these risks, a robust risk and programme management framework must be embedded throughout the transition period and beyond. In addition, individual Equality Impact Assessments would need to be undertaken at key stages of the programme to ensure that potential adverse impacts are identified, monitored, and appropriately addressed.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Option B business case draft

Appendix 2 – Government Criteria

Appendix 3 – Option A business case [\[LINK\]](#)

Appendix 4 – Option C business case [\[LINK\]](#)

Appendix 5 – Option D business case [\[LINK\]](#)

Appendix 6 – Option E business case [\[LINK\]](#)

Appendix 7 – Supporting analysis and reference documents for Option B business case [\[LINK\]](#)

7.0 Background documents

English Devolution White Paper December 2024

Local Government Reorganisation – Submission to Government – Extraordinary Council 20 February 2025

Local Government Reorganisation – Motion to Council – 18 September 2025

DRAFT – WORK IN PROGRESS

05 Nov 2025

LGR v 5.5 (PRE-DESIGN FORMATTING)

‘OPTION B’

CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE PRIOR TO SUBMISSION

Working Draft

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION
PROPOSAL – **OPTION B**

**SIMPLER COUNCILS,
STRONGER SERVICES:**
THE RIGHT SIZE TO THRIVE, AND
LOCAL ENOUGH TO CARE

NORTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH
AND
GREATER CAMBRIDGE

CONTENTS

FOREWORD - Statement signed by political leaders that support the proposal

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. INTRODUCTION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

3. AN OVERVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – WHAT OUR COMMUNITIES TOLD US MATTERS TO THEM

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

6. OUR PROPOSAL FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH - How our proposal will deliver against our vision and principles as well as against government criteria

THEME 1 – ECONOMY & HOUSING

THEME 2 – SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL FINANCES

THEME 3 – BETTER PUBLIC SERVICES

THEME 4 - LOCAL IDENTITY, DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THEME 5 – DEVOLUTION

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND TRANSITION PLAN

8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE

9. CONCLUSION

10. APPENDICES AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: detailed appendices can be provided as separate attached to reduce length of core document. **NOTE: THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING APPENDICES:**

A1) FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS A-E

A2) OPTION APPRAISALS

Foreword

[Work in progress]

Working Draft

Executive Summary

Context

In December 2024, the Government launched the White Paper on English Devolution. It asked areas with two-tiers of councils, like Cambridgeshire, to create fewer, single-tier unitary councils. Peterborough was included because it is a relatively small unitary authority with fragile finances.

Local government arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are amongst the most complex in England: seven councils, four different types - City, District, Unitary and County; a Mayoral Combined Authority; and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Our councils all face financial challenges, and rising demand for social care, Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND), and affordable homes. The Government views reorganisation as a once in a generation reform to establish stronger councils equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and empower communities.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils have worked together collaboratively. Consensus on a single proposal to present to Government has not been possible. Four options for reorganisation have been developed (known as Options A, B, C, D and E).

Option B for Me!

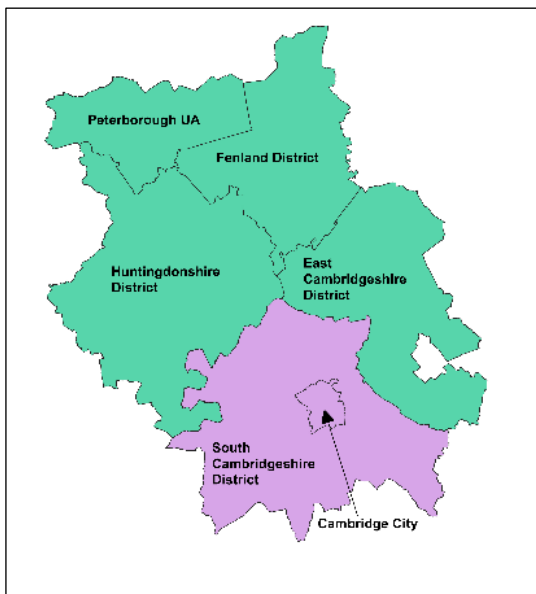
Our proposal (Option B) would replace seven existing councils with two financially resilient unitary authorities that have similar sized and complementary economies.

Each council would have unique strengths and differing local needs. They each require distinct strategies to deliver services that will improve outcomes for their local communities.

Working in partnership with a Strategic Mayoral Authority they can help to overcome our region's challenges to unlock growth, accelerate housing delivery, and fund excellent public services.

Simpler councils, Stronger services:

The right size to thrive, and local enough to care

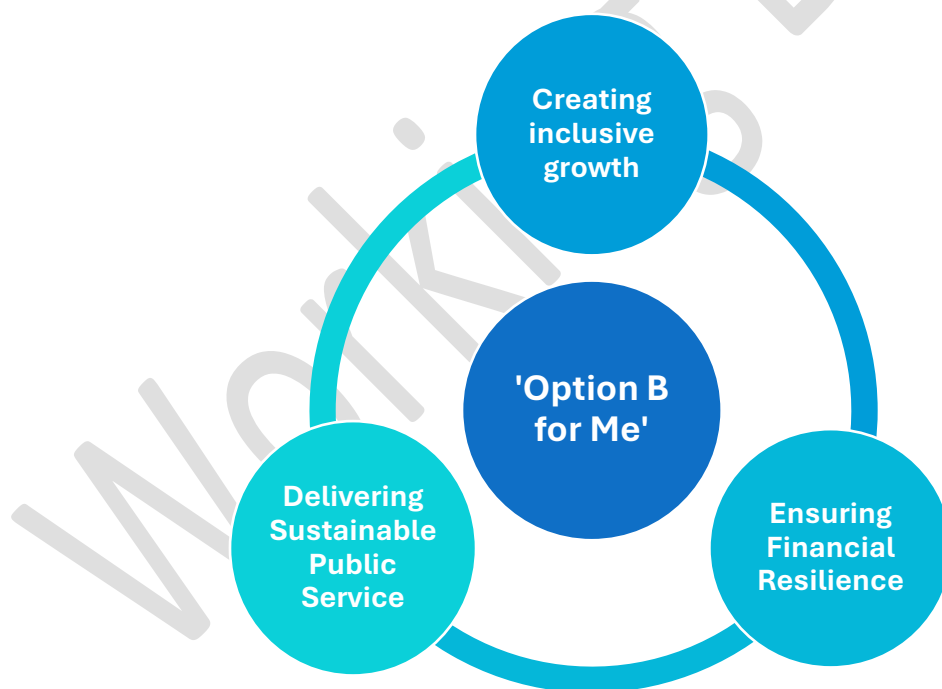


North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough – a new unitary authority serving 612,000 people (*comprising Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, and elements of Cambridgeshire County Council*)

Greater Cambridge – a new unitary authority serving 322,000 people (*comprising Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, and elements of Cambridgeshire County Council*)

Option B would help to create a “virtuous circle”.

Two unitary councils designed around the region’s economic strengths to maximise our growth potential and deliver excellent public services.



Increased economic growth will expand each council’s tax base, strengthening their budgets and financial resilience.

Healthier budgets mean our councils can invest more in growth initiatives and high-quality services that deliver better outcomes for our residents, businesses, communities and visitors.

What our residents told us

Residents are open to change. Their support for reorganisation is conditional on new councils delivering tangible improvements: simpler access, greater responsiveness and investment in frontline services.

Residents want diverse local identities to be respected and would prefer new councils to take a locality or place based approach to service delivery.

Local partners tended to emphasise the importance of maintaining continuity of service provision during reorganisation as well as the reform leading to sound council finances.

When asked if they supported option B, 63.5% of residents agreed or strongly agreed, and 29% did not.

Feedback from the public and businesses about unitary council priorities

Operational focus

Improving council services

Better responsiveness

Councillors with good local knowledge



Future investment

Health infrastructure

Transport and connectivity

Community facilities



Other options considered and discounted

- Single unitary: not legally possible within an existing Mayoral Combined Authority area
- Three unitary proposals are not financially sustainable, too costly to implement and would lead to worse outcomes for our residents
- Only two unitary proposals have been independently assessed as being financially sustainable over the long term

Against the Government's key criteria for local government reorganisation (LGR) option B performs best.

Government criteria for reorganisation	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E
Economy and housing	3	5	3	2	2
Financial resilience	3	4	2	1	1
Sustainable Public Services	4	4	3	2	2
Collaboration	3	4	3	2	3
Devolution	4	5	4	4	4
Democracy and engagement	4	4	4	4	4
OVERALL (out of 25)	21	26	19	15	16

The Benefits of B

Theme 1 – Economy and Housing

[image]

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has one of the most important regional economies in the UK. We make a significant contribution to UK GDP (1.4%), innovation, and international competitiveness.

Our proposal meets the Government's criteria for sensible and equitable economic areas. Both councils would have distinct but complementary strengths; high growth prospects that support strong tax bases and financial resilience; and streamlined governance that accelerates housing delivery.

Benefit 1: A sensible balance built on the region's functional economic areas, which creates two councils of national economic significance without undue disadvantage for one area.

Option B achieves the best economic balance for the region - North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough £20bn (GDP, 2023 ONS latest estimates) and Greater Cambridge £17bn. Both councils would be ranked in the top 20 by economic size in the UK (excluding London).

Both councils reflect the realities of the region's functional economic areas.

The geographies build on established labour and housing markets, and consumer spending patterns. A very high proportion - around 88% - of working residents would live and work within their new council area, which Government guidance suggests is ideally suited to being a characteristic of unitary authorities.

Both councils would have national influence and contribute equally to the region's economic coordination via the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). Over time Greater Cambridge will grow more rapidly.

In Option B in 2040, Greater Cambridge will be 10% larger than North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

In Option A in 2040 Greater Cambridge will be nearly 50% larger than the second unitary authority in the proposal.

In Option C in 2040 Greater Cambridge will be 100% larger than the second unitary authority in the proposal.

Both Options A and C struggle to meet the Government's criteria as one council would have an undue economic and fiscal (business rates) advantage over the other; Option B is the most balanced outcome.

Benefit 2: Two economies with distinct and complementary strengths to support the region's growth ambitions.

Option B creates two councils representing distinct economic areas with complementary strengths and the scale to attract national and international investment.

The proposal pairs North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - a nationally significant 'industrial powerhouse' that has expansive agriculture and production facilities, with Europe's leading knowledge intensive innovation cluster centred in Greater Cambridge.

Both economies are interconnected, providing spillover benefits to each other and beyond. These complementary strengths can facilitate mutual interdependence rather than competition to support the region's shared prosperity.

Each area contributes in different ways to the region's economic punch. Each council can focus on and develop its core economic advantages and potential.

That will enable a clearer prioritisation of key sectors in the [National Industrial Strategy](#) and the CPCA's [Local Growth Plan](#).

Benefit 3: Two councils capable of maximizing the housing and infrastructure potential of the whole region sustainably.

Our proposal aligns new councils with housing markets, planned housing growth and infrastructure investment patterns. This will ensure sustainable development that supports economic objectives while meeting environmental targets.

The economic coherence and scale of the two councils would provide confidence for investors and remove cross boundary barriers to housing and commercial development.

As a large council, North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would be able to take a more strategic approach to its infrastructure and homebuilding needs. This would also reduce the risk of the council being forced to choose between land for food or homes.

The proposed Greater Cambridge Local Plan to 2025 increases the total number of homes allocated up to 77,000, with over 2 million square metres of commercial floor space.

Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Housing and Planning (October 2025)

“The economic growth of Cambridge has been a phenomenal success and the city and its environs are home to the most intensive science and technological cluster in the world. Yet, Cambridge’s continued position as a world-leading centre of innovation is dependent on tackling infrastructure deficiencies, commercial accessibility and housing affordability.”

The Government has identified Greater Cambridge as a key growth area. Aligning a unitary authority with a Government led Development Corporation will support the rapid housing, business and infrastructure development needed to meet the needs of its high-growth economy.

Theme 2 - Financial Sustainability

[image]

Financial sustainability is key to successful LGR and is one of the underlying principles that has driven our decision to support Option B. Councils need to balance their budgets if they are to meet rising demand, improve delivery of public services, grow their economies and deliver more housing.

Benefit 4: Substantial savings will be delivered - £42.8m in the base case and £57.3m in the stretch case - with a payback period by Year 4.

Rigorous financial modelling has been undertaken using real budget data assured by Chief Financial Officers from all Cambridgeshire and Peterborough authorities. That analysis demonstrates Option B creates two financially resilient councils that can generate substantial and achievable savings.

Our **base-case scenario** projects total annual savings of £42.8m by 2032/33, achieved through reduced duplication, digital transformation, and preventative approaches that address demand at source rather than managing failure.

Our **stretch-case scenario** increases annual savings to £57.3m with more ambitious service transformation, deeper integration of social care and housing services, and enhanced productivity. This represents what is possible when councils have the right scale and capacity for their local needs to genuinely innovate.

The £57m implementation investment across both new councils achieves **full payback by 2031/32 – just four years after Vesting Day**. From that point forward, the savings compound year-on-year, delivering cumulative **net savings of £167.4m by 2035/36**. This is reorganisation that pays for itself and continues to deliver value for our communities.

Critically, these savings create fiscal headroom to invest in the improvements our residents deserve, rather than simply managing decline. Option B provides the financial foundation for councils that can thrive and deliver excellent services, not just survive.

Benefit 5: Balanced and equitable finances across both new councils taking a range of factors into account, reducing the risk that local services cannot be funded in the future.

Option B is the most financially viable for the **whole area**, through aligning economic geography with governance.

It ensures that the northern unitary has the scale and financial capacity to achieve long-term sustainability and address areas of high public service need. The southern unitary benefits from a sound tax base that accompanies economic growth, allowing it to fund essential services and meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.

Option B creates two councils that perform best on key measures of financial sustainability:

- **Funding-to-budget ratio:** more funding available than budgets they inherit from existing councils, which creates financial certainty at the outset.

- **Reserves:** most balanced split of combined reserves (approximately £200m to each authority) to manage unexpected spending pressures, meet the costs of volatile people services and ensure continuity of provision.
- **Debt:** the lowest level of debt gearing of all options - 38% in Greater Cambridge and 58% in North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Peterborough City Council has high debt gearing and below average council tax. If Peterborough becomes part of a larger unitary authority the financial resilience of the whole region will improve.

Theme 3 – Better Public services

[image]

Benefit 6 - Better financial resilience to future proof services for residents.

Our proposal would create two councils that are the right size to meet the rising costs of demand-led, statutory ‘people services’ (including Adult Social Care, Children’s Social care, SEND and homelessness), which make the biggest call on council budgets.

Our existing children’s services are ‘inadequate’ or ‘require improvement’. Reorganising local government is an opportunity to deliver excellent children’s services with the ambition to be outstanding.

While Greater Cambridge is smaller in population, it would be above the median size for authorities that have Ofsted rated ‘outstanding’ children’s services, and, it would have a higher forecast children’s social care grant per child than several of those outstanding councils.

As a larger council, North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough would have the financial scale needed to meet the higher levels of demand that exist in Peterborough and Fenland, in particular, for adult social care and costly specialist services such as children’s residential placements. This Council would have the buying power where it is needed most to reshape care markets.

Benefit 7 - Greater fairness and better outcomes for all residents.

Option B has the most equitable social needs distribution for key people services that are the priority for Government. This means that Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough will each have lower needs initially and over the long term than under Options A and C.

Under our proposal the difference in the needs within each council's population are also narrower. All other options create greater inequality of social needs.

Option B splits higher-growth, lower-need Greater Cambridge from higher-need, predominantly rural North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. This would support differentiated service strategies across distinct but complementary geographies. Specialisation means a better local offer, tailored to the needs of residents.

It would also allow clearer commissioning, workforce planning and risk management than Options A or C. Over time these comparative advantages could also improve the productivity and efficiency of the region's public services.

Each council is the right scale to work for the statutory social challenges they face.

Benefit 8 - Localised approach to service delivery with partners and communities that prioritises prevention and early intervention.

Option B can provide a platform for prevention and early-intervention, which would reduce costly crisis spending.

The new councils would want to join the national 'Test, Learn, Grow' programme to redesign services through a place-based approach. They would build on the preventative services already provided, use existing community centres and establish Best Start Family Hubs as the backbone of this approach.

Both new councils would adopt neighbourhood-based models of service delivery. This will enable them to begin the journey to genuinely integrate social care, education and health services, with housing, community safety and the wide range of preventative services currently provided by district councils to meet resident's needs.

In the North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough unitary in particular, a localised, 'patch-based' approach will help ensure that services meet the diverse needs of market towns, villages and rural communities across the area.

Benefit 9 - Putting residents first when transforming services.

Our proposal would create two new unitary councils with statutory people services that are 'safe and legal' from day one.

Where cross-boundary collaboration offers better outcomes and value for money, the new councils will maintain or establish joint commissioning arrangements.

We will create plans for public service reform during the transition period, so that the two new unitary councils can take forward transformation opportunities once they are established.

In addition to neighbourhood working, service integration and early intervention, these potentially include personalised care and support, co-designed services and digital transformation.

Theme 4 - Democratic representation, community engagement, local identity

[image]

Benefit 10: Respect for distinct historic identities that make Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unique.

Option B builds on historic identities and local governance arrangements that developed across our region over a millennia.

The North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough unitary mirrors the historic counties of Huntingdon, The Isle of Ely (including Fenland) and The Soke of Peterborough. The Greater Cambridge unitary restores the smaller, historic County of Cambridge

Benefit 11: Deliver strong democratic accountability while maintaining local connection.

Both new Councils will operate the Leader and Cabinet model of governance. This will provide clear, visible and accountable leadership, and quicker decision making. Ruling administrations will be held to account by independent scrutiny committees.

Our proposal would reduce the total number of Councillors in the region from 331 to 190 during the transition period - 125 in North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, and 65 in Greater Cambridge.

That number of Councillors would support good governance and ensure democratic accountability and representation in both councils.

The average number of electors per councillor in North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough would be 3,463, with 3,300 electors per councillor in Greater Cambridge.

Benefit 12: Enhance community voice through flexible, place-based engagement.

Our proposal will enhance community engagement by adopting a flexible approach to governance arrangements across the region that reflect local community needs and existing best practice.

This could involve a range of different mechanisms, including structured approaches that involve Parish councils and area committees, and more informal settings such as neighbourhood forums and councillor drop-ins.

The councils will also adopt enhanced multi-agency, neighbourhood or 'patch-based' models of engagement in neighbourhoods where more significant change is planned, or in communities where there are higher levels of deprivation or barriers to accessing services in rural areas.

Theme 5 – Devolution

[image]

Benefit 13: Unlocking the full potential of devolution through balanced economic governance.

Option B will establish constituent councils with similar sized yet distinct and complementary economies within the CPCA area.

With two complementary councils of national significance ranked in the top 20 by GDP outside London, the Mayor and constituent council Leaders will be in the best position to influence Government policy and achieve policy outcomes.

This will enable a more equitable partnership that supports regional economic coordination and maximises the benefits of devolution. Neither unitary would dominate the region's economic policy agenda, which instead would work in harmony to benefit the whole area, including delivery of the CPCA's strategic growth plans.

Our proposal ensures strategic decisions on growth, transport, skills and investment reflect the distinct strengths and needs of both the Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough economies.

2. Local Government Reorganisation

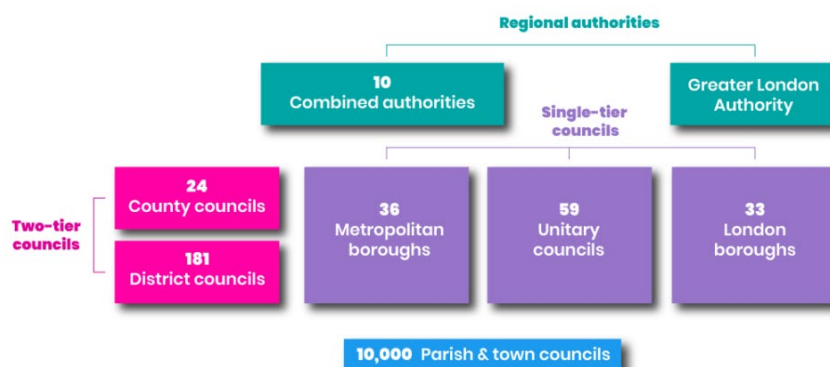
Local Government in your area is changing

In December 2024, the Government launched the White Paper on English Devolution ‘Power and partnership: Foundations for growth’, promising a “rewiring of the state.”

It proposes new Mayoral Strategic Authorities with more local powers over transport, skills, planning, regeneration, public safety and public service reform.

The White Paper requires areas with two-tiers of councils, like Cambridgeshire, to change to fewer, single-tier unitary councils.

English local government structures



This diagram represents the key local government structures in England.

[Local Government Explained \(2025\)](#)

Unitary councils provide services previously delivered by both district and county councils.

The Government’s reorganisation plans include some existing unitary authorities. These include those that are adjacent to affected areas judged to be too small, or financially unsustainable. As a result, Peterborough has been included.

All eligible areas in England have agreed to submit reorganisation proposals.

Why Change?

The Government has stated that ending the two-tier system and replacing it with a single tier is a once-in-a-generation reform.

It wants to create stronger local councils, that are equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and empower their communities.

All councils in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have been single-tier or unitary authorities for some time.

Cambridgeshire may have the most complex local government arrangements in England.

We are a two-tier area with County, City and District Councils; a unitary authority – Peterborough; a Mayoral Combined Authority; and the Greater Cambridge Partnership established to deliver the £1 billion ‘City Deal’.

Ministers believe that simpler and stronger local government will help to drive up living standards – the Government’s number one mission.

“With one council in charge in each area, we will see quicker decisions to grow our towns and cities, and connect people to opportunity.”

Alison McGovern, MP, Minister of State (Housing, Communities and Local Government).

What does this mean for residents?

Change is coming. But it must be shaped carefully, with local people and communities at the centre.

Across England, the public recognise that local government is critical to the quality of life in their local areas¹.

Reorganisation offers the chance to build more resilient, responsive and sustainable councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that deliver better outcomes for our residents.

Reorganisation will bring:

- Easier access: one council to contact for all local services
- Stronger local leadership through clearer accountability

¹ LGIU, ‘State of the Locals 2025’ ([State of the Locals 2025 - LGIU](#))

- Simpler structures that reduce bureaucracy and costs, and deliver better services for residents
- Greater financial resilience for councils
- A clearer focus on jobs, skills and growth
- New opportunities for collaboration across councils, health, police, business, the voluntary sector and local communities

But challenges will remain:

- English councils face a £6bn funding gap over the next two years - the difference between demand for services and annual budgets
- The need and cost of providing some services is rising – homeless accommodation, support for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND), and social care as our population ages
- LGR needs to be funded locally – the Government will not finance the transition costs to new councils

This is just the beginning of the process. If our proposal is successful, we will embark on detailed rounds of engagement with local communities, businesses and other key partners to design councils that are fit for the future.

What this means for our Councils

The Minister for Local Government wrote to all our Councils inviting proposals to create new unitary authorities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Council Leaders responded and agreed to submit proposals to reorganise all local authorities in our area.

From April 2028, all local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will cease to exist. They will be replaced by unitary authorities.

As Cambridgeshire and Peterborough already have devolved powers through the CPCA this will become a Mayoral Strategic Authority taking on additional powers under the Government's reforms.

What does successful reorganisation look like?

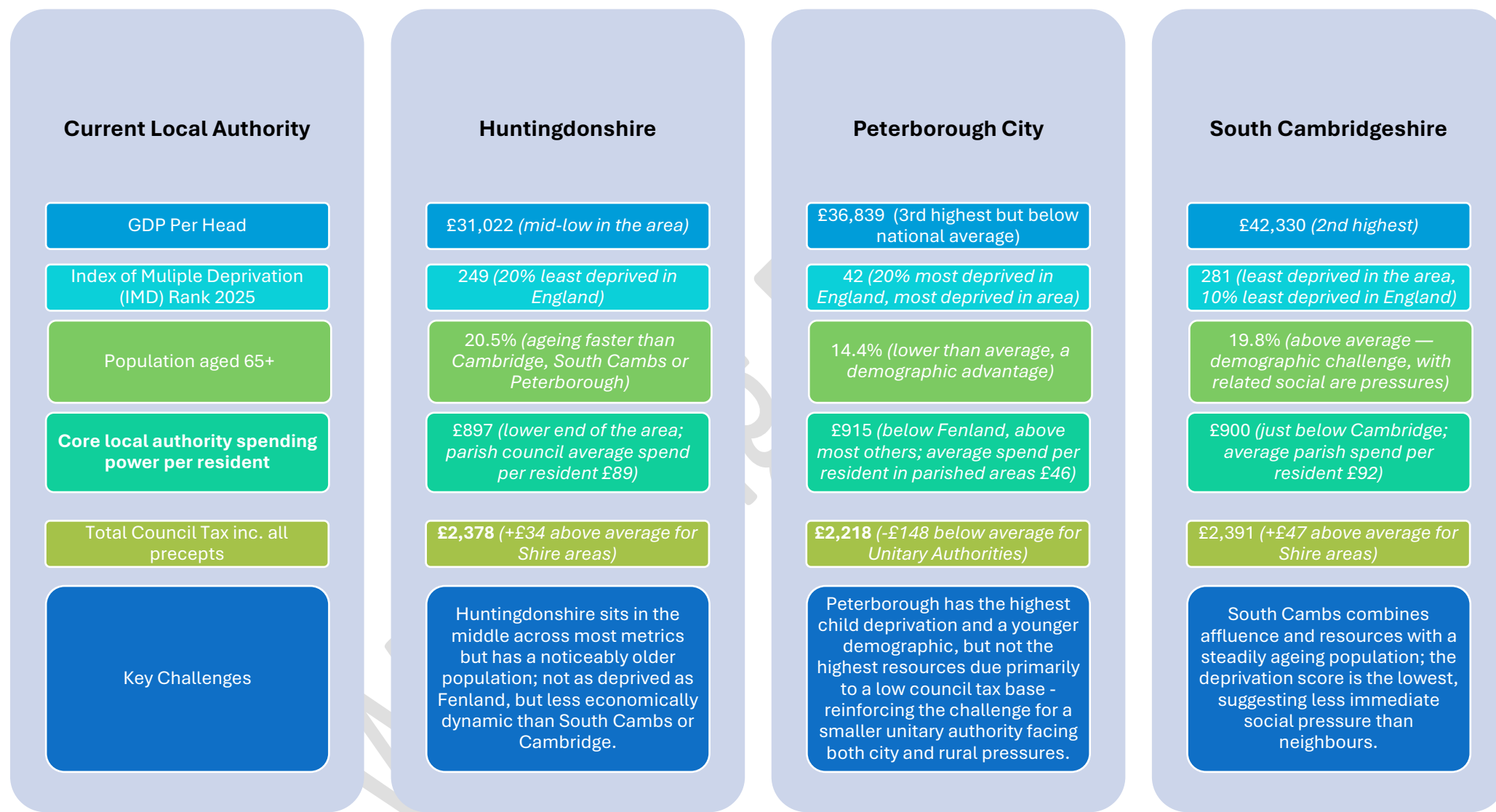
The Government has set out some tests it will apply to the proposals it receives.

These include:

- **Financial resilience:** “the right size [of council] to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks”.
- **Economy and housing:** “sensible economic areas that support growth”, “with a strong and fair tax base that does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area” and helps “to increase housing supply and meet local needs”.
- **Sustainable public services:** “prioritising the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens” with “consideration given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety”.
- **Democratic representation and community engagement:** “enabling stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment”.
- **Collaboration:** “Demonstrate how councils have worked together and engaged” to develop reorganisation proposals in the interests of the whole area.
- **Devolution:** “new unitary structures must support devolution arrangements”.

2.1 Local Government Reorganisation: building blocks at a glance

Current Local Authority	Cambridge City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland
GDP Per Head	£57,831 (<i>highest in the area</i>)	£27,002 (<i>2nd lowest</i>)	£23,162 (<i>lowest in the area</i>)
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Rank 2025	255 (<i>20% least deprived in England</i>)	242 (<i>20% least deprived in England</i>)	42 (<i>2nd most deprived in the area, 20% most deprived in England</i>)
Population aged 65+	11.4% (<i>youngest population in the area</i>)	21.1% (<i>older rural population</i>)	23.4% (<i>oldest demographic</i>)
Core local authority spending power per resident	£925 (<i>one of the highest in the area; no parish councils</i>)	£897 (<i>lower than average; parish councils average spend per resident £102</i>)	£931 (<i>highest; parish council average spend per resident £63</i>)
Total Council Tax inc. all precepts	£2,355 (<i>+£11 above average for Shire areas</i>)	£2,367 (<i>+£23 above average for Shire areas</i>)	£2,442 (<i>+£100 above average for Shire areas</i>)
Key Challenges	Cambridge has higher resources, low deprivation, and a younger population - but financial, housing, and infrastructure pressures driven by high growth and population increases.	East Cambs appears less deprived by rank, but its lower income and ageing profile hint at rising social care pressures.	Fenland faces combined challenges: high deprivation, an ageing population, and the lowest GDP per head - despite relatively high spending power per resident, underlying social and economic pressure is more severe.



Council Tax Band D per authority area (2025/26)²

	City/ District share	County share	Local Authority Total	Average parish precept	Total including all precepts	Comparison to England averages
Cambridge	£232.13	£1,700.64	£1,932.77	n/a	£2,355.41	+£11 shire areas
East Cambridgeshire	£142.14	£1,700.64	£1,842.78	£101.53	£2,366.95	+£23 shire areas
Fenland	£254.79	£1,700.64	£1,955.43	£63.46	£2,441.54	+£100 shire areas
Huntingdonshire	£165.86	£1,700.64	£1,866.50	£88.54	£2,377.68	+£34 shire areas
South Cambridgeshire	£175.40	£1,700.64	£1,876.04	£91.98	£2,390.66	+£47 shire areas
Peterborough	n/a	n/a	£1,749.42	£46.43	£2,218.49	-£148 unitary areas

Peterborough has parished and non-parished areas; Cambridge does not have parish councils; average parish precepts for local authority areas include zero-rated parish precepts; averages have not been weighted by parish populations. The England average Band D parish precept in 2025-26 is £92.22.

** The England average Band D council tax 2025/2026 is £2,280. Average Band D can be compared by type of local government arrangements. In London, the average Band D council tax in 2025/2026 is £1,982; in metropolitan areas £2,289; in unitary areas £2,366; and in shire areas £2,344.

3. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough:

3.1 Economy, Housing and Infrastructure

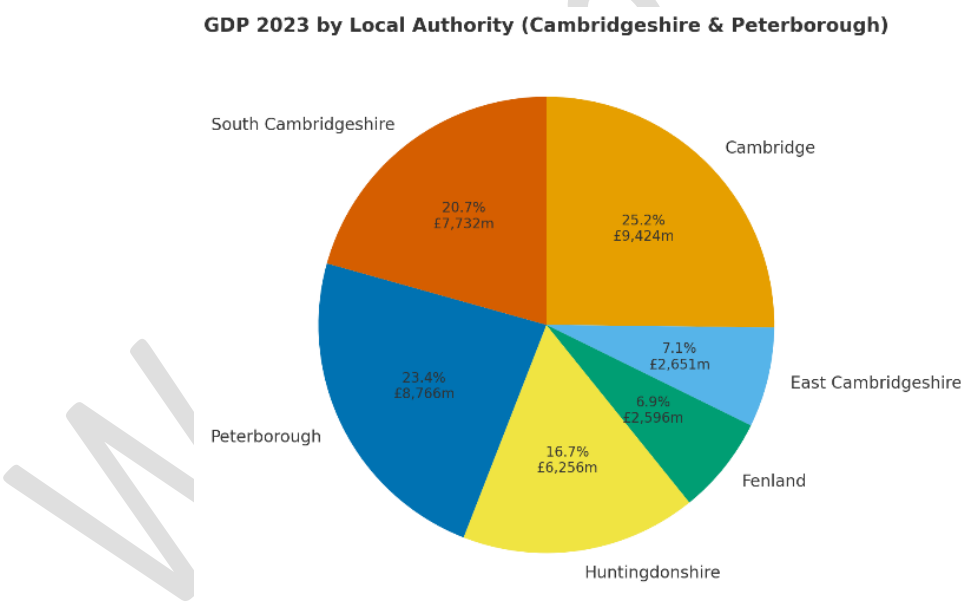
The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy generates around £37.5bn GDP annually². Our region helps to power the Government’s ambitions for growth.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has the third highest GDP per capita of any Mayoral Combined Authority area, behind only the West of England and Greater London³.

We combine urban dynamism with thriving market towns and flourishing business parks, creating a dynamic and highly resilient rural-urban economy.

Fenland - ‘Breadbasket of Britain’
Home to some of the UKs leading food brands, including Princes, McCain and Nestlé. HQ for H. L. Hutchinson a leading farming innovation company with an annual turnover of £276m.

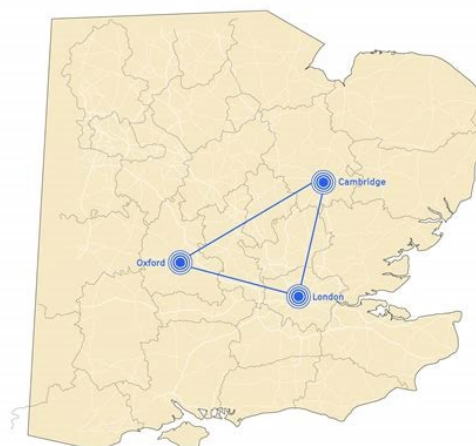
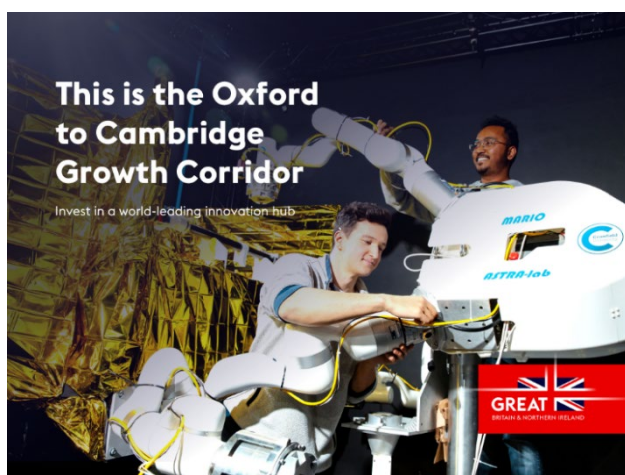
Peterborough, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire make up nearly 70 per cent of the region’s economy.



² (ONS 2025; latest data available for 2023)
³ [Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

Our region sits at the confluence of two strategic growth corridors that make up the 'Golden Triangle':

- Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor
- London to Cambridge - the UK Innovation Corridorⁱ

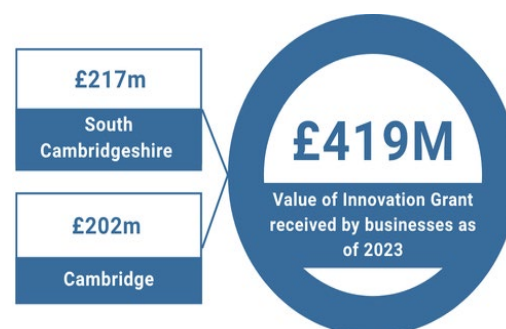


Our region is anchored by two of England's most dynamic and rapidly expanding cities: Cambridge and Peterborough.



Peterborough⁴ has one of the highest business formation rates in the UK. It is a great place to start a new business. Its affordability and regional connectivity also make it an attractive base for distribution, manufacturing, and a notable cluster of environmental firms. Its growth rate is double the national average at 1.5-2.5 per cent annually over the last few years.

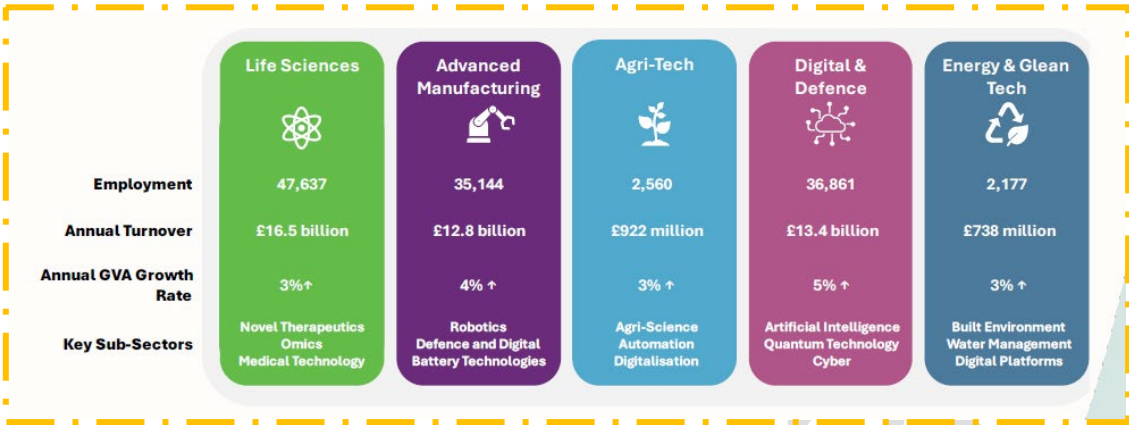
The **Cambridge city-region** contains 36 research parks, global companies and a thriving startup and investor community. This innovation cluster contains 26,000 companies which attracted the 2nd and 3rd highest proportion of innovation grants in the UK. Jobs growth among knowledge-intensive firms has been consistently increasing at 6% year-on-year.



⁴ [Good Growth for Cities: Unlocking the potential of our cities](#)

From Agri-Tech to AI: diverse economies

Our region hosts enterprises and centres of excellence across multiple sectors that directly support the Government’s National Industrial Strategy.



1 TO BE REMADE – graphic from CPCA local growth plan.

The Fens provide a fifth of the nation’s crops and a third of its vegetable production; it is vital to the nation’s food security⁵.

NIAB (The National Institute of Agricultural Botany) and Ceres Agri-Tech, founded by Cambridge Enterprise, and Agri-Tech East are developing solutions to tackle hunger, disease resistance and climate change.

East Cambridgeshire

Ranks 5th in UK for number of international exporting businesses. It has the largest locally owned company by turnover (£550m): G’s Fresh Ltd, located in Barway near Ely, and operates in Europe and the USA.

Huntingdonshire

HQ for mega employers including Anglian Water with over 4,500 employees, Hilton Foods Group nearly 3,000 employees and £1.2bn turnover; and advanced manufacturing, such as Paragraf, a graphene electronics spinout from Cambridge University.

Anglia Ruskin University, Peterborough has been a catalyst for skills development, social mobility and prosperity with the aim of attracting 12,500 students by 2032.

The University of Cambridge supports 86,000 jobs and delivers an estimated economic impact of £30bn across the UK annually.⁶

⁵ National Farmers Union, 2019, Delivering For Britain: Food and Farming in the Fens

⁶ Cambridge University, 2025, Cambridge Innovation in Numbers

Cambridge Can: bring AI to life

The Greater Cambridge Area is home to over 5,000 innovation-driven companies, including 120 AI-powered companies who employ 13,000 people and have a combined turnover of £6bn.

The region can lead the way in bringing the UK's vision for AI to life.

Benevolent AI enables scientists to uncover new insights from data, helping to accelerate innovation and increase the probability of discovering successful new drugs.

South Cambridgeshire

Home to Cambridge Science Park and the Wellcome Genome Campus. The latter played a key role in developing Covid vaccines. Wellcome is also the largest grant-making organisation in the UK. Last year, its global grants totalled £967m more than the combined total of the top 10 other philanthropic organisations in the UK.

Fast Growth Cities Network

Cambridge and Peterborough are members of the Fast Growth Cities Network, alongside Milton Keynes, Norwich, Oxford, and Swindon. These cities all make significant contributions to the national economy and hold strong potential for further growth.

Cambridge

The unicorn capital of Europe, with 26 companies that have grown to a public valuation of over \$1bn (ARM, Darktrace, Bicycle Therapeutics, CMR Surgical). HQ for Astra Zenica the UK's third-largest company. If ARM was listed on the FTSE 100, it would be the UK's fourth-largest company by value.

Peterborough

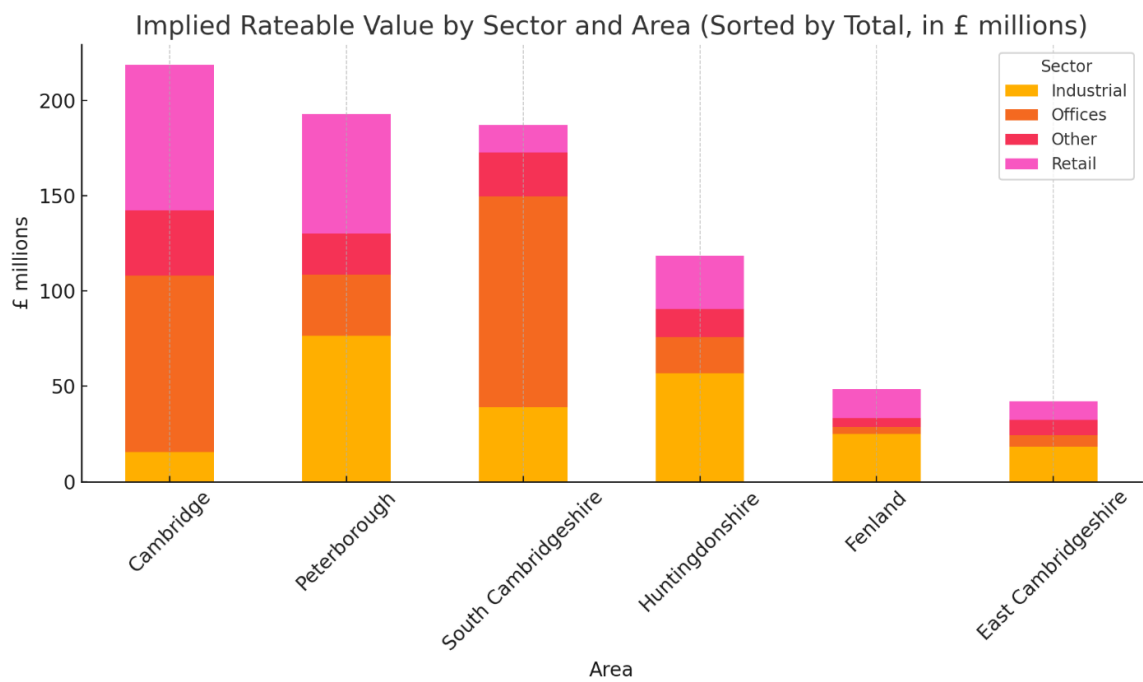
Headquarters for famous comparethemarket.com (BGL Holdings), the 2nd largest locally owned company, and the most profitable in the area too. Renowned for diesel engines, Perkins has its UK HQ in Peterborough and is the 4th largest foreign-owned company in Cambridgeshire.

Business Rates

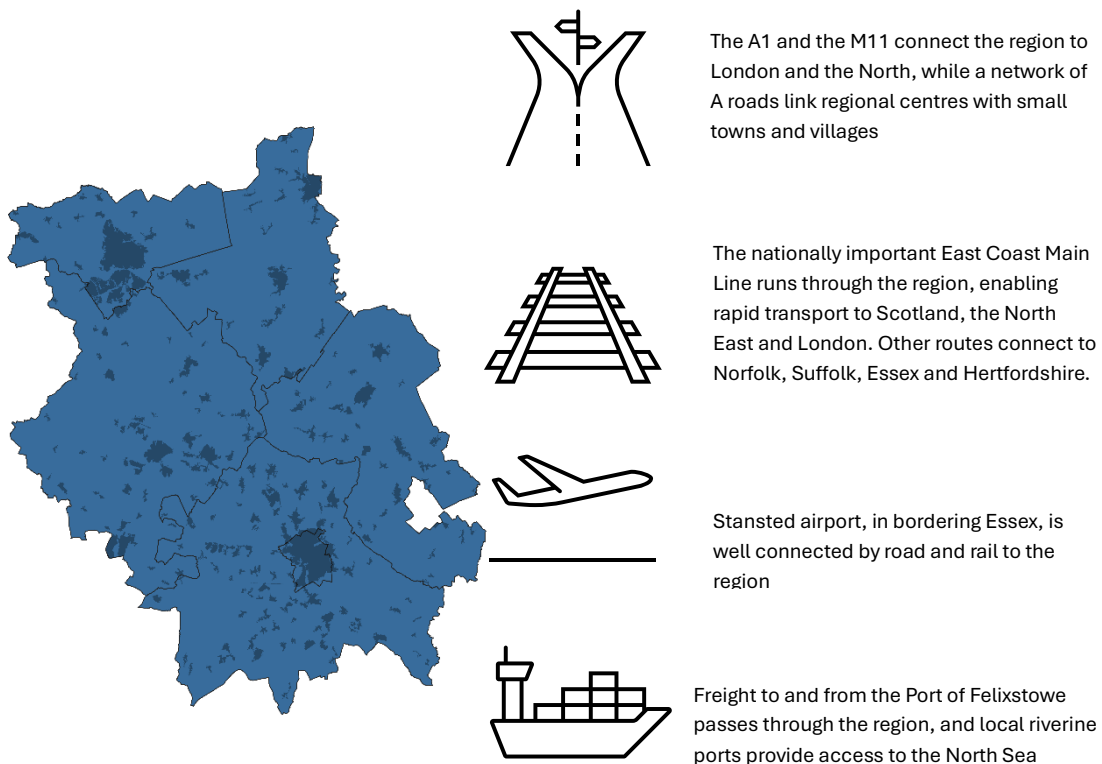
Total ratable values by local authority can be used to understand the variation between different areas' economic make-up.

This illustrates the strength of the office-based knowledge economy in the south, and the industrial strength of the north.

It also shows the importance of Cambridge and Peterborough as retail centres for the region.



Connectivity



The area is a hub for domestic and international logistics. There are major transport routes and railway connections to London and the East Coast Mainline. The A14 connects our region to eastern ports and the midlands.

Locally based logistics companies including DHL, Amazon and Eddie Stobart, contribute £1.2 billion annually to the region's Gross Value Added (GVA).

Transport links within the region are less developed. Limited public transport and east-west rail and bus connections restrict access to jobs, education, and services, especially for rural communities.

Growing congestion in and around Cambridge and Peterborough undermines productivity and could deter investment unless addressed.

There are good active travel options in some areas and high rates of cycling in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

Further active travel investment in and around strategic growth sites is required to sustain economic and housing growth.



Regional commuting patterns

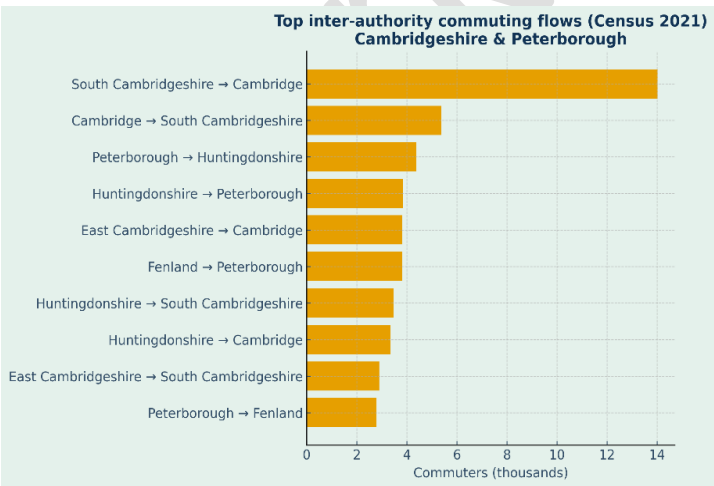
Travel to Work Areas, (TTWAs) reflect local labour market catchments based on commuting patterns. Each TTWA represents an area where most people both live and work⁷.

The Cambridge TTWA population is around 619,000 people - the 15th largest in England and Wales, encompassing large areas of Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk.

Cambridge is a large net importer of commuters; 56% of its jobs are filled by non-residents. Of these commuters, half reside in South Cambridgeshire, 7% in East Cambridgeshire, 7% in West Suffolk and 6% in Huntingdonshire.

Peterborough's TTWA has a population of 303,000, the 45th largest. Its jobs are predominantly filled by its own residents, with the largest flows from South Kesteven, Huntingdonshire and Fenland.

Huntingdon and Wisbech have relatively small but important TTWAs.



East-West Rail (EWR),

A nationally significant infrastructure project to strengthen the east-west corridor. Its delivery will unlock the potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, with the capacity to boost the regional economy by £6.7bn of GVA annually by 2050. Together with the East Coast Main Line improvements, EWR will position the area at the heart of the UK's innovation economy, reinforcing the region's role in driving national prosperity

Headlines

Most self-contained: Peterborough (74%).

Least self-contained: South Cambridgeshire (39%).

Largest net importer of workers: Cambridge (+22,527).

Largest net exporter of workers: East Cambridgeshire (-4,444).

Biggest single flow: South Cambs to Cambridge (14,014 people).

⁷ ONS Census 2021. Please note that these TTWA data was collected during the COVID19 pandemic. It is useful for comparative purposes but likely reflects the significant changes to working patterns during that period.

Regional consumer patterns

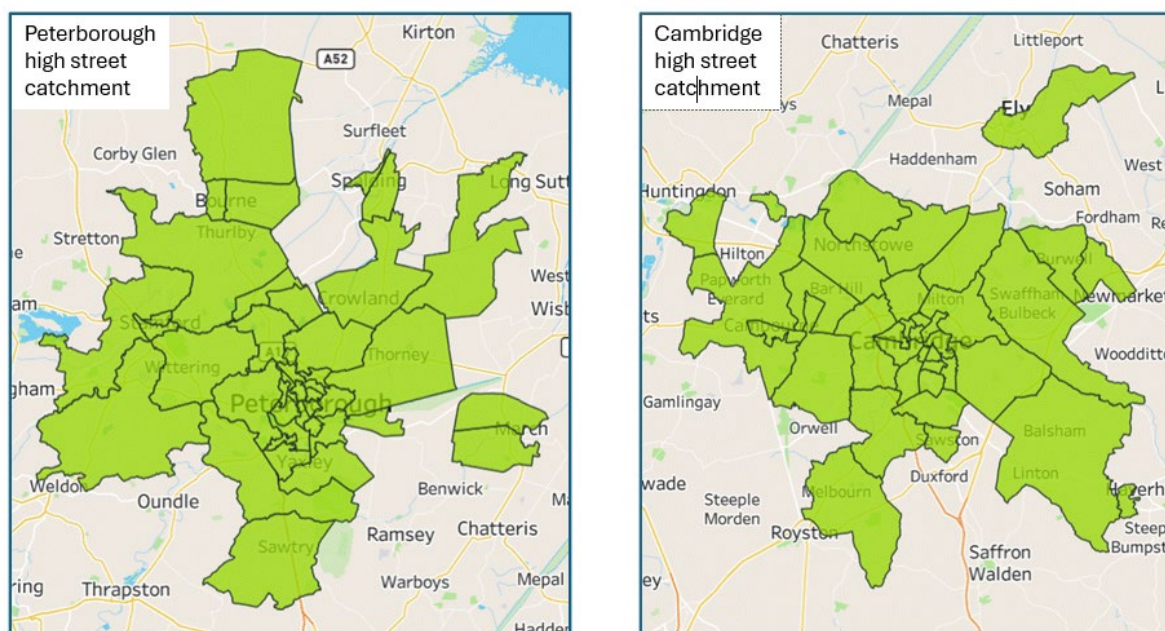
The catchment area of our major cities for high-street shopping reveals a different pattern of consumer behaviour compared with commuter flows.

Peterborough's catchment area is the 21st largest in UK with over 393,000 people⁸.

The number of people who are drawn to shop regularly in Cambridge is 323,000 people, the 27th largest in UK.

While around a third of East Cambridgeshire residents shop in Cambridge, roughly half remain local, using Ely as their primary centre.⁹

When not using their own city's high streets, London is the next most popular shopping destination for residents of Peterborough and Cambridge.



High Street Catchment areas for Peterborough and Cambridge

⁸ [High streets catchment data tool | Centre for Cities](#)

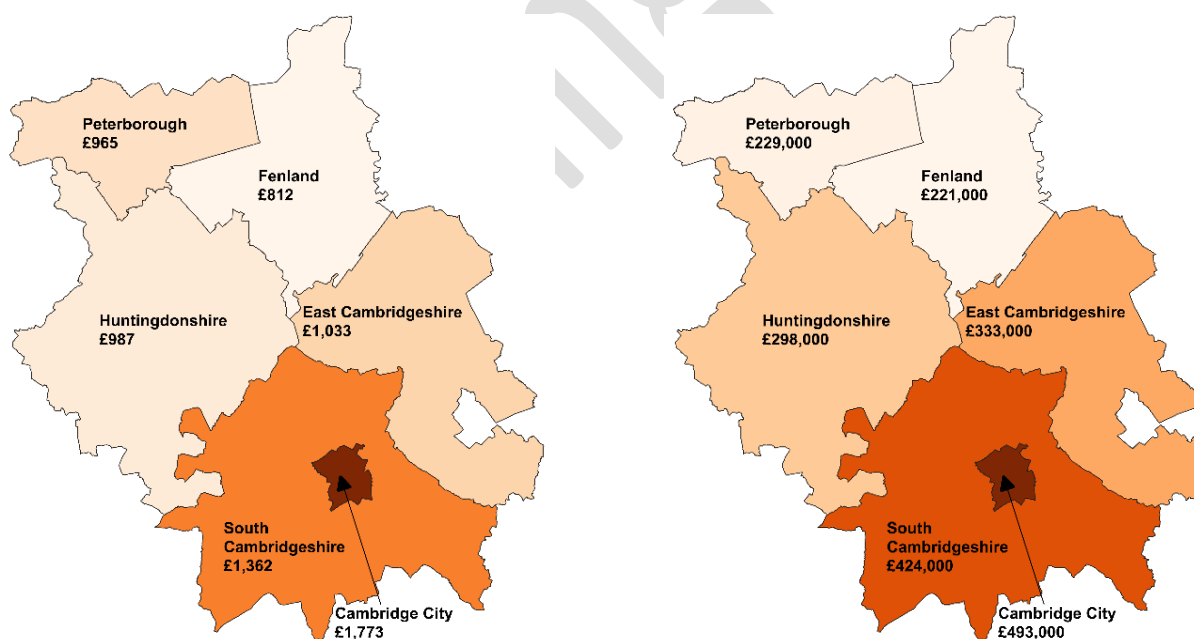
⁹ CPCA Survey Results

Housing

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have distinct housing markets.

In the majority of areas, average monthly private rental costs are below the England average of £1,386 per calendar month¹⁰.

Only in Fenland and Peterborough are average house prices below the national average of £291,000.



Average private rental (PCM) and house prices¹¹

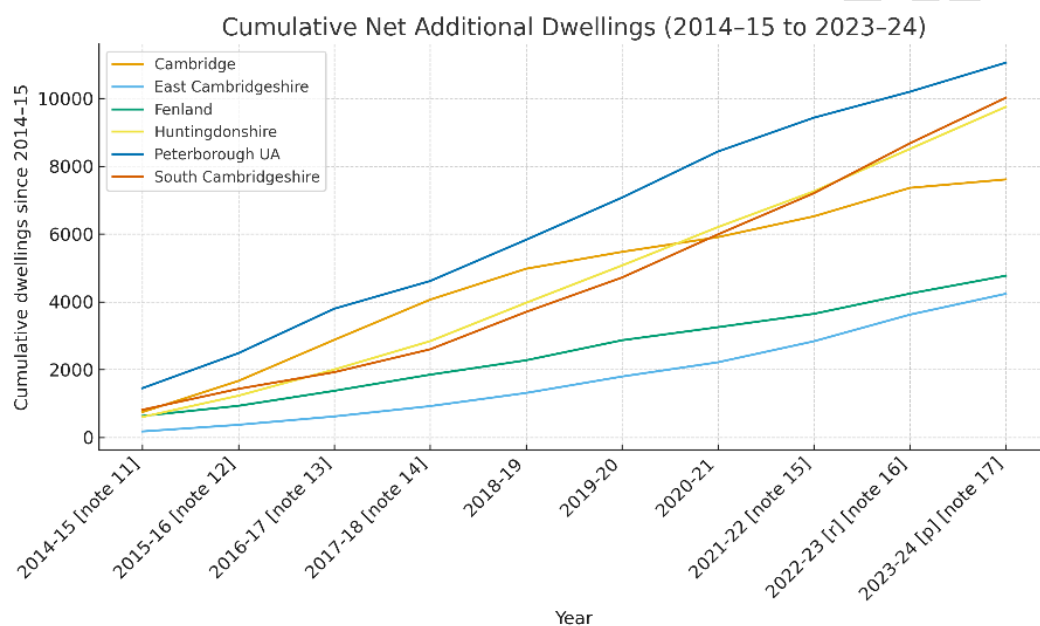
¹⁰ [Private rent and house prices, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

¹¹ ONS/Land Registry UK HPI “average price” for all property types. ONS monthly average private rent from the Price Index of Private Rents for that month (covers a broad set of private lets, not just new tenancies). [ONS local pages](#), 17 September 2025.

The north of the region is more affordable relative to average incomes. Cambridge has the third highest house prices of any UK city behind Oxford and London¹².

Housing growth varies across the region. Peterborough has had the highest total increase in additional homes over the last 10 years.

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire have also seen significant increases in the total number of homes. During the 2010s the number of homes in Cambridge increased by 16% - a higher proportion than any other city in England¹³.



14

Delivering affordable and high-quality housing is an issue of national importance.

With the right support and resources, our region is ideally placed to underpin the Government's national aim of building 1.5 million new homes over the next five years.

Housing markets in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire operate in a different context to the rest of the region.

¹² [Data tool | Centre for Cities](#)

¹³ DLUHC Live tables on dwelling stock, cited, p44 <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/12916/state-of-the-city-report-2023.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-net-supply-of-housing>

3.2 Infrastructure and Skills

Accelerating housing and economic growth to provide jobs and affordable housing hinges on bold investment in three essentials: infrastructure, connectivity, and skills.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

Water scarcity is a critical barrier to attracting investment and delivering new homes and commercial development.

As one of the UK's driest regions, limited reservoirs and wastewater capacity coupled with climate change and population growth, are increasing the pressure on water resources.

Major infrastructure projects must be delivered urgently, as set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Growth Plan¹⁵.

Fens Reservoir

Anglian Water working in partnership with Cambridge Water is proposing a new reservoir in the Cambridgeshire Fens that will secure water supplies to meet the needs of future generations.

The new reservoir will supply enough water for up to a quarter of a million homes every year.



In addition to these challenges, the provision of digital infrastructure varies across the region. Broadband and mobile coverage in rural and newly developed areas can act as a barrier to inclusion¹⁶ and business productivity, particularly when compared with international competitors.

Energy infrastructure

A new 240MW substation for the West of Peterborough will deliver power to new homes and businesses with more reliable energy.

Sunnica is planning a new 500MW energy farm with solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage in East Cambridgeshire.

Energy is also a challenge. The grid capacity is limited in some areas. This slows the rollout of renewables and clean technology and impacts some of our key sectors, including Agri-tech and food processing, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and digital technologies.

Without investment in energy supply and grid upgrades, we will not be able to power our growth ambitions.

¹⁵ [CPCA Local Growth Plan 2025](#)

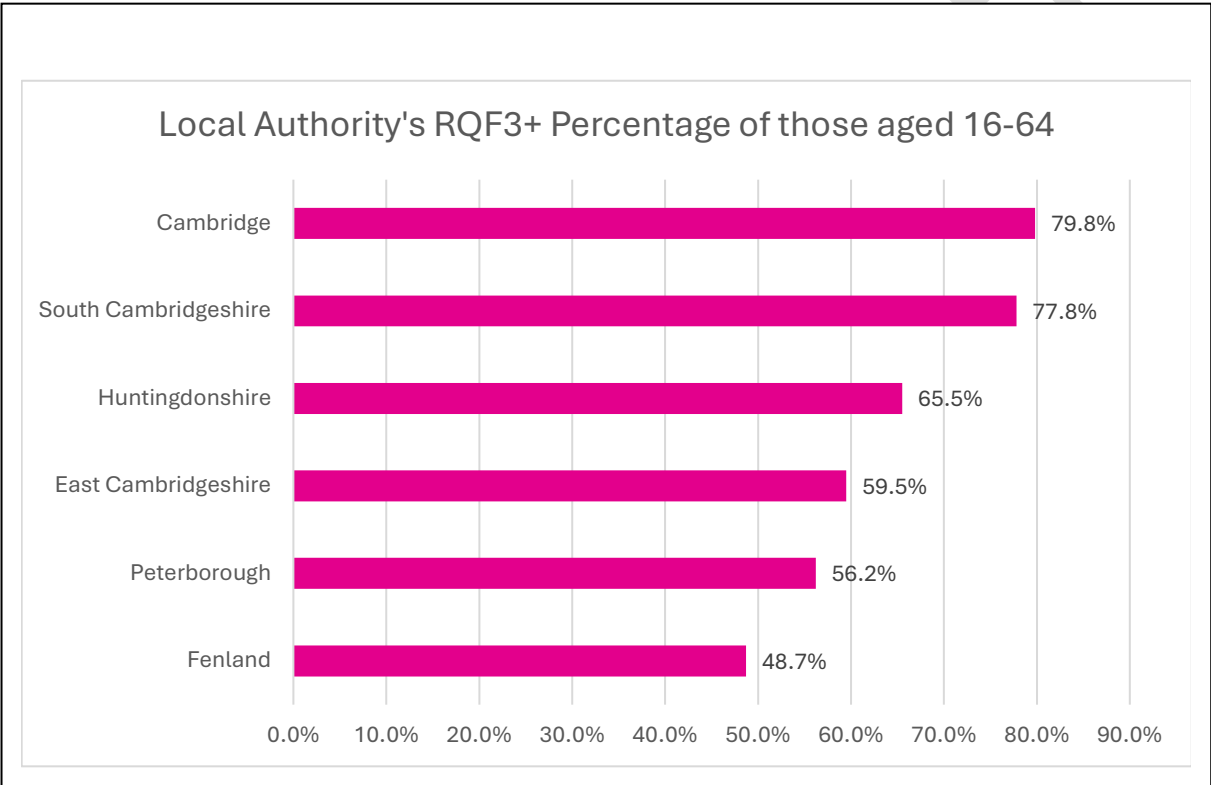
¹⁶ [Experiences-of-digital-exclusion-among-temporary-accommodation-and-social-housing-tenants-08.05.2025.pdf](#) UoC

Skills and Education

Our industrial strengths, engineering, digital, health, and life sciences, depend on a steady supply of skilled workers. Nearly 1.1 million people will live and work in the region by 2040.

Supporting training, upskilling, and education is vital to ensure that future jobs are filled by local people, and to retain the competitiveness of the region

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough averages 2–3 percentage points below the England average of 65% for the proportion of 16-64 year olds with A-levels, BTEC National and advanced apprenticeships. However, there is significant regional variation.



Skills gaps are greatest in the following sectors: Information & Communication; Hotels & Restaurants, Transport & Storage, Health & Social Work¹⁷. High rates of economic inactivity are also a challenge in parts of the region, most notably in Fenland, threatening to entrench inequalities over the long term.

It is crucial that targeted interventions to reduce skills gaps are supported, in order to increase business competitiveness, up-skill residents to meet future labour market demands and support economic growth.

¹⁷ [Local Skills Improvement Plan \(LSIP\) - Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce](#)

3.3 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough: Environment, Demography, and Quality of Life

Environment

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a diverse natural landscape: rare chalk streams, ancient fens, and nationally significant reserves.

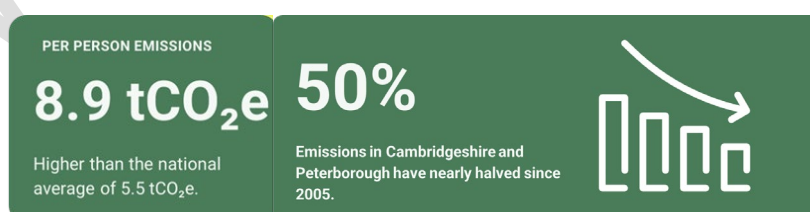
The area is home to 27% of England's peatland¹⁸, which plays a valuable role in promoting biodiversity, minimising flood risk and storing carbon. Peatland is concentrated in East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and Huntingdonshire.

Fenland and East Cambridgeshire contain over one third of England's Grade 1 agricultural land – the most productive farmland.

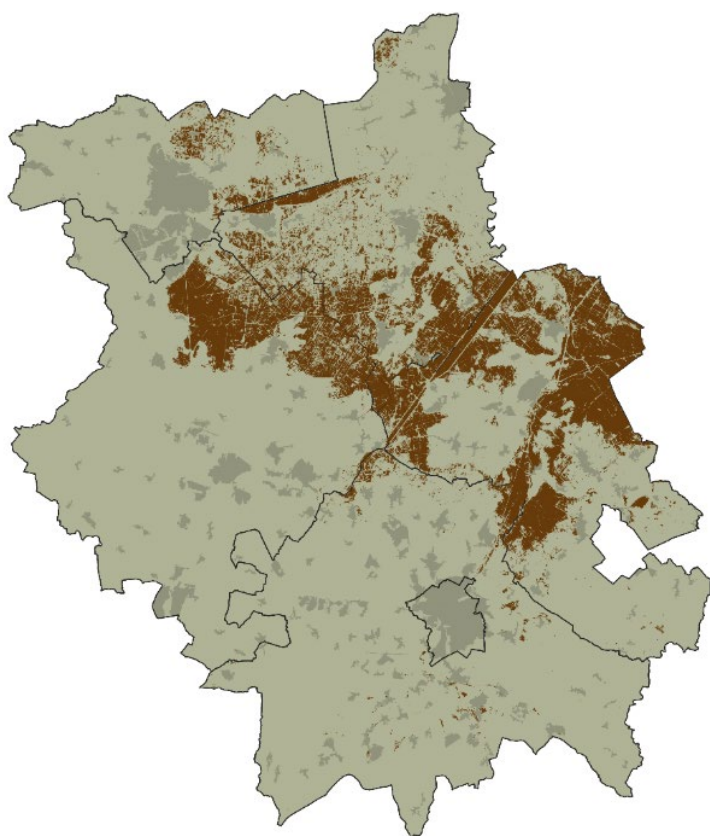


The region has above-average biodiversity - 8.6% is classified as nature rich compared with a nationwide average of 6%. This is mainly semi-natural grassland and broadleaved woodland, which play critical roles in carbon storage, water regulation and supporting wildlife.

Urban growth and land-use changes are putting pressure on our ecosystems. The area has experienced extreme weather in recent years. The second highest UK temperature was recorded in Cambridge in 2019 at 38.7 degrees Celsius.



¹⁸ Cambridgeshire County Council, [Peatland](#)



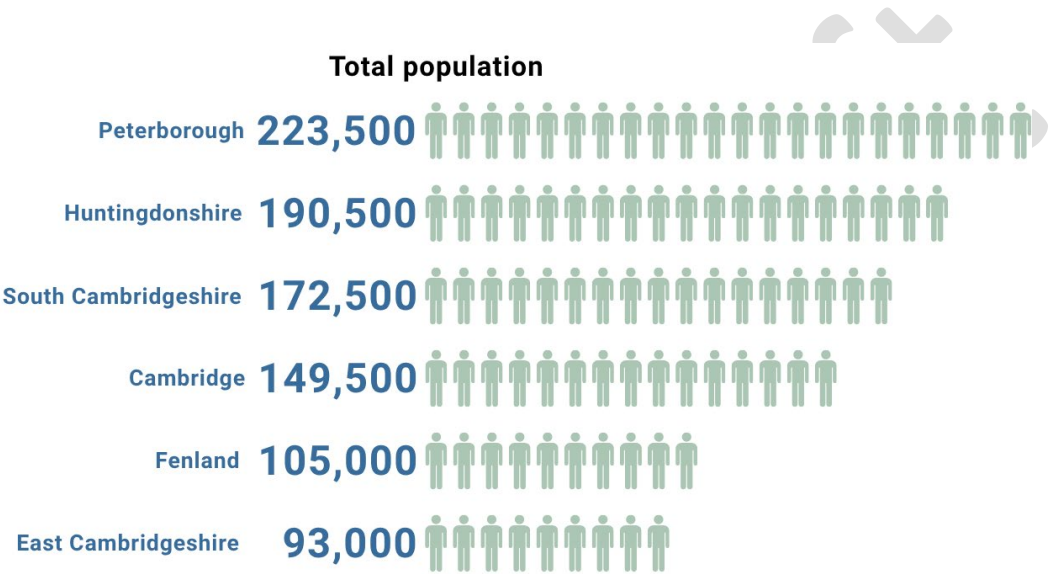
Distribution of peatland¹⁹

¹⁹ [Natural England, Peatland Map](#)

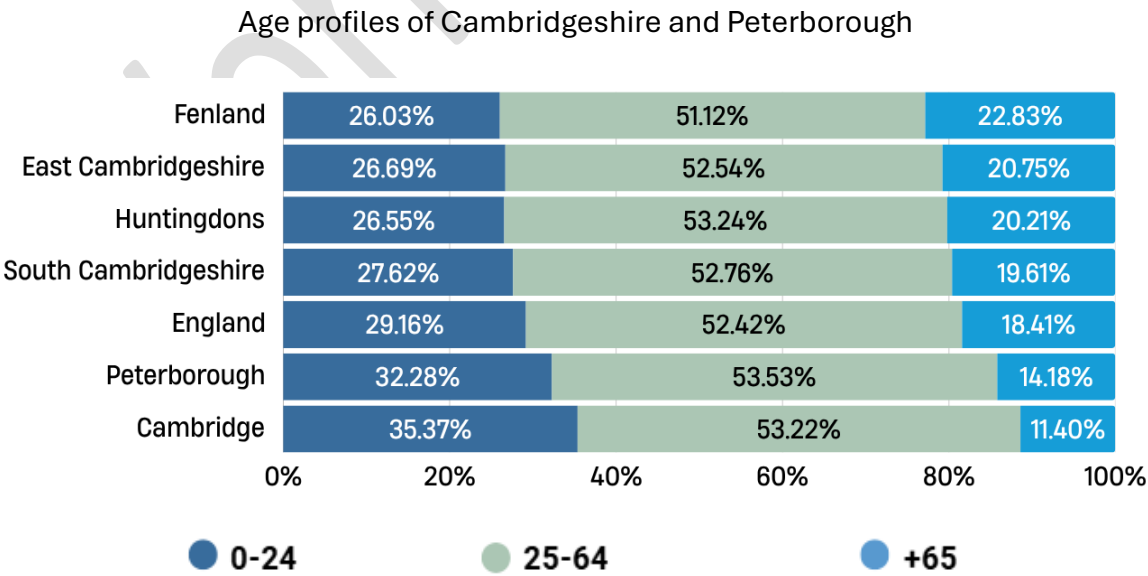
Demography

An area’s demography is the fundamental driver of service demand. Core statutory services such as social care and education are affected hugely by the population profile of the area.

The region has an estimated population of 934,000 in 2024, with a possible upper bound of 965,000²⁰.



Age profiles vary across the area, with younger populations in cities and ageing populations in market towns and rural areas.



²⁰ ONS 2024 [Mid-year local authority population estimates](#)

Cambridge and Peterborough are the most ethnically diverse areas in the region, with 25% of their populations self-identifying as being from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Market towns and rural areas in Fenland (4.1%), East Cambridgeshire (5.5%), Huntingdonshire (7.6%) and South Cambridgeshire (11%) are less ethnically diverse than the national average (19%).

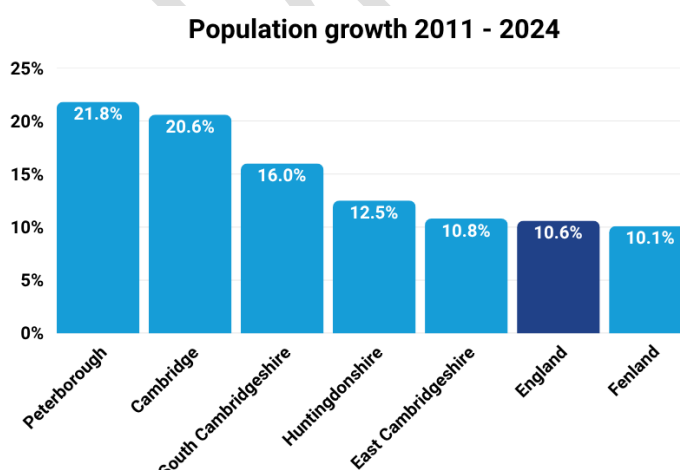


Two-thirds of the population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough live in urban areas²¹.

Cambridge is entirely urban, while Peterborough is classified as over 3/4 rural, though nearly 90% of the population live in its urban areas.

Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, and South Cambridgeshire are the most rural areas. Though predominantly rural 89% of Fenland residents live in urban areas.

Population growth has been greatest in Cambridge and Peterborough. Both were ranked in the top 5 fastest growing UK cities between 2011-2024. Rural areas such as East Cambridgeshire and Fenland have had population growth close to the England average.



Population forecasts 2025-2040²²

The population is forecast to grow by nearly 16 per cent or around 150,000 people by 2040 to nearly 1.1m people. The region will then account for 1.7% of England's total population.

The population will follow national demographic trends, which will lead to a large relative increase in the proportion aged over 65.

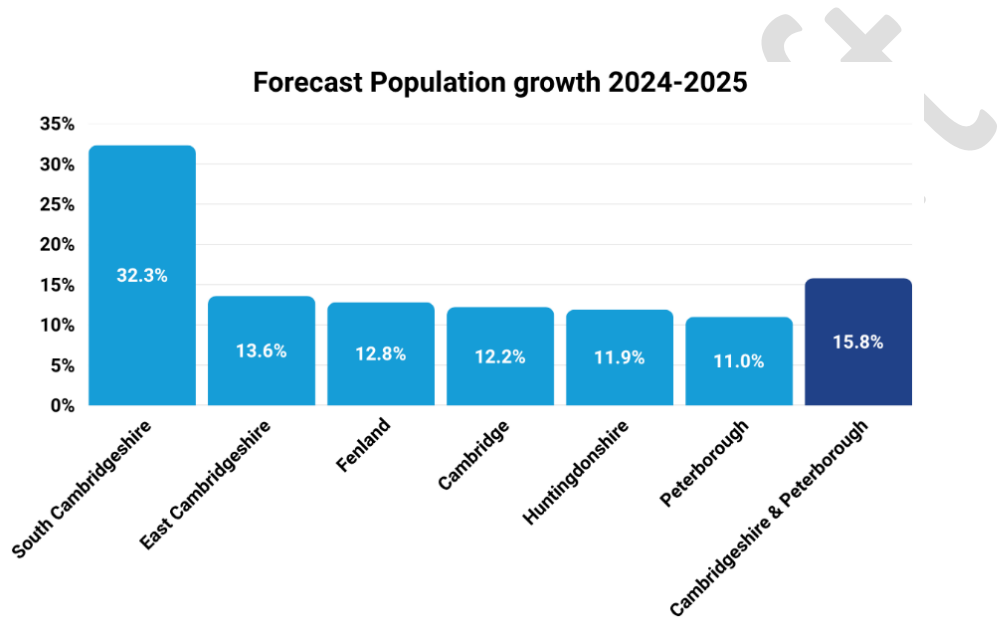
²¹ [ONS, Rural/urban classifications](#)

²² East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough are Cambridgeshire County Council's published 2023-based population forecasts. Greater Cambridge is a scenario informed by the 2024 housing trajectory plus emerging Local Plan allocations from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning.

A high proportion of population growth is due to planned housing development in urban areas and city fringes.

The most significant population increase is expected in South Cambridgeshire due to the tight boundary around Cambridge and expansion of new settlements in Northstowe, Waterbeach, and Cambourne.

This single district accounts for around 38% of the region’s total population growth to 2040.



Life chances, health & quality of life

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a varied distribution of social needs, life chances and health outcomes.

Deprivation

Rural areas such as South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire have relatively low levels of deprivation, though there is a notable pocket of deprivation within Huntingdon town.

Fenland and Peterborough are notably more deprived than other areas in the region.

Deprivation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

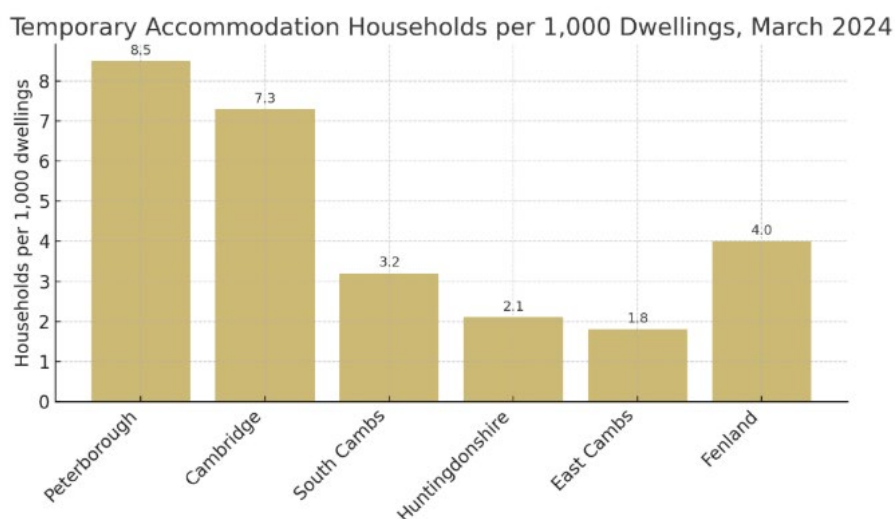
Local Authority	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Rank (2025)	Decile relative to all England LAs
Fenland	42	20% most deprived
Peterborough	51	20% most deprived
East Cambridgeshire	242	20% least deprived
Huntingdonshire	249	20% least deprived
Cambridge	255	20% least deprived
South Cambridgeshire	281	10% least deprived

The revised Indices of Multiple Deprivation published in 2025 provide a more nuanced view of each local authority area than their overall average rank suggests:

- Though one of the least deprived authorities in England, South Cambridgeshire is in the 20% most deprived in relation to ‘barriers to housing and services’.
- Fenland ranks first in England in relation to ‘education, skills and training deprivation’.
- Peterborough has the region’s lowest ‘income’ rank and is in the 20% most deprived on that domain of all English local authorities.
- In Cambridge, only one neighbourhood ranks in the most deprived 20% in England.
- Huntingdonshire is the least deprived authority in our region in relation to ‘living environment’, while Cambridge is the region’s outlier with the lowest score by far as it is entirely urban.

An urban-rural divide is evident in other metrics.

Temporary accommodation rates are rising in urban settings and market towns. Rates are highest in Peterborough (8.5 per 1,000 dwellings) and Cambridge (7.3), compared with much lower levels in rural districts, reflecting housing stress in urban centres.



Child poverty is particularly concentrated in Peterborough, with over 20% of children in poverty, in Fenland the figure is moderately lower at 16%. The rest of the region has significantly lower levels of child poverty, ranging from 8.5% in Cambridge to 6.4% in South Cambridgeshire.²³

There is a complex pattern of social mobility amongst families with children eligible for free school meals (FSM).

Pupils on FSM in Peterborough and North-East Cambridgeshire parliamentary constituencies perform worse than their peers in South Cambridgeshire on a range of employment metrics.

Cambridge notably has the region's lowest rate of FSM children that go on to attain higher paid jobs²⁴.

²³ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insight: State of the Region [HYPERLINK](https://cpca.dashboards.cityscience.com/health_and_wellbeing)
"https://cpca.dashboards.cityscience.com/health_and_wellbeing" [State of The Region Data Portal](#)

²⁴ Sutton Trust - [Opportunity Index Interactive Map - The Sutton Trust](#)

Health outcomes

Life expectancy is equally varied across the region. South Cambridgeshire has amongst the highest life expectancy at birth in the county, at 83.7 years. The north of the county has a notably lower life expectancy, with Peterborough the lowest at 78.9 years.

East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire see high overall life expectancies, at 82.9 and 82.6 years respectively. Cambridge features a difference of 12 years life expectancy between different wards in the city, with an overall figure of 82.9 years.

In East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, outcomes are similarly varied. Women in Alconbury live on average 10 years less than those in Ely South ward.

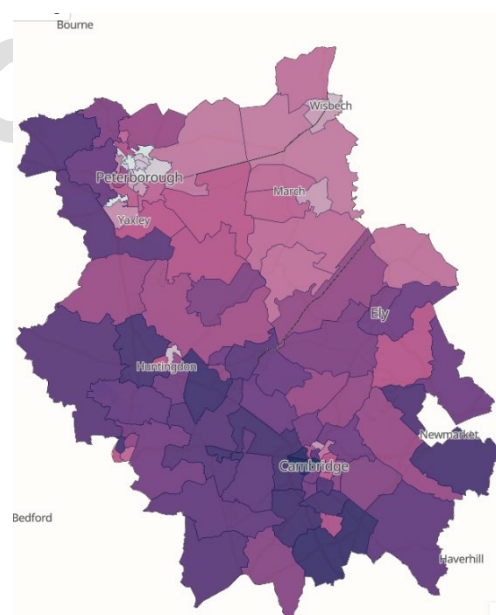
In the 2021 census, 50% of residents living in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire reported 'Very Good Health', placing them within the top 40% of all areas in England and Wales.

East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire residents place near the average. Fenland and Peterborough ranked in the bottom 20%, each reporting around 42%²⁵.

Healthy life expectancy (HLE) – the average number of years a person lives free from serious disease or disability shows even deeper divides in the region.

The highest area, in west Cambridge, sees an HLE of 73.5 years. Meanwhile, in north Peterborough, it is 55.8 years.

This has profound implications for quality of life, alongside labour force participation and social care demand.



2 Healthy life expectancy by LSOA

²⁵ ONS Census 2021

3.4 Key public services

Fire and Police

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities share the same geographic footprint as Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue and Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

LGR is not expected to have a disruptive impact on how these public services operate and how they deliver services in future alongside new unitary authorities.

NHS

The NHS is going through a period of significant reorganisation too.

From April 2026, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) will be abolished and merged with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB and Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB.

Together, they will form a larger NHS Central East ICB cluster. This is part of a national plan to reduce running costs by 50% and achieve economies of scale.

In future, some services will be commissioned at a regional level or by each ICB cluster. There will also be scope for joint commissioning of neighbourhood health services with new unitary authorities.

Most patient-facing services, such as GPs and urgent care, should remain locally led.

Hospital services

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board serves around 1.2m people.

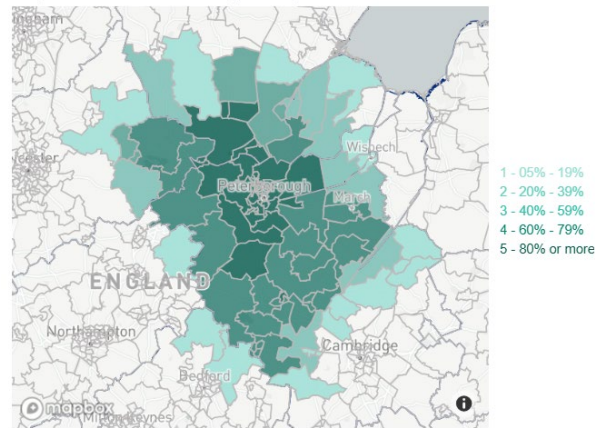
Hospital catchment areas are geographically large and do not map closely with local government administrative boundaries. Proposed changes to ICB footprints will embed larger regional patterns of commissioning and hospital attendance.

Annually around 425,000 people receive hospital treatment from Cambridge University Hospitals, North West Anglia Hospital Trust or Royal Papworth.

Our hospitals also treat 135,000 people - about one third of the annual total, from out of our area, mainly from Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, Essex and Bedfordshire.

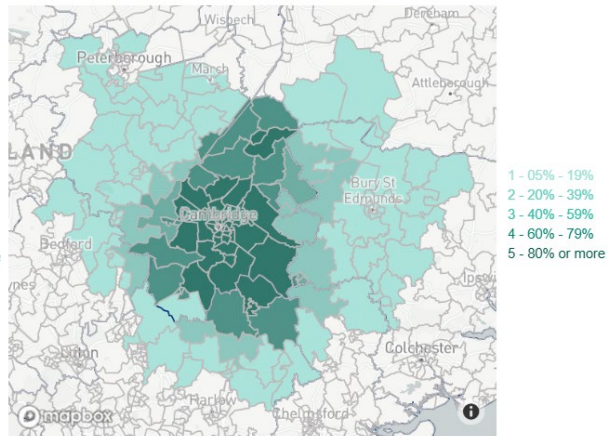
Nearly 10% of our residents receive treatment in hospitals outside our area. Most notably from East Cambridgeshire to the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, and from Fenland to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn.

Proportion of Patients Attending Trust by MSOA



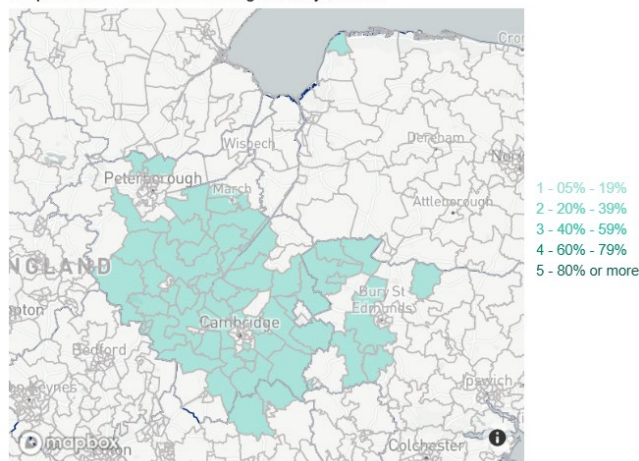
3 Patient spread of NWAFT Hospital Trust

Proportion of Patients Attending Trust by MSOA



4 Patient spread of CUH Hospital Trust

Proportion of Patients Attending Trust by MSOA



5 Patient spread of Royal Papworth Hospital Trust

4. LGR – what did our communities tell us matters to them?

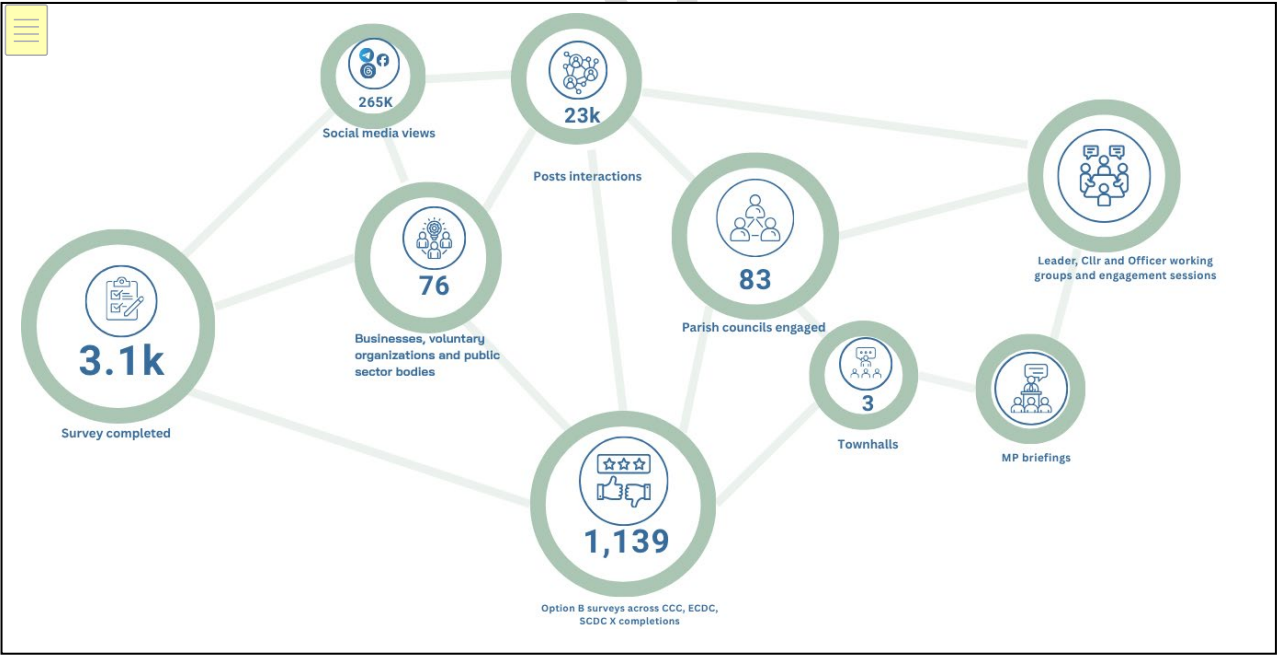
Engaging with our Communities and Stakeholders

All seven councils committed to engaging the public across the region together. The goal was to develop a shared understanding of how residents, stakeholders, and staff feel about LGR and their priorities or concerns regarding the creation of new unitary councils.

Subsequently, Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire carried out further surveys to collect more information about our specific proposal.

This joint engagement across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was anchored by a residents’ survey, complemented by focus groups in each council area and a separate survey for stakeholders.

The results of the joint survey are set out below, followed by the results of the additional local surveys. These results have been reflected in the development of our proposal.



We found residents and stakeholders are open to change, but want reassurances about **service quality, representation, and local identity**.

Successful reorganisation will require balancing efficiency with community voice, embedding decision-making closer to people, and designing unitary councils that respect the diverse identities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

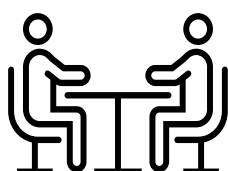
Feedback from the public and businesses about unitary council priorities

Operational focus

Improving council services

Better responsiveness

Councillors with good local knowledge



Future investment

Health infrastructure

Transportation

Community facilities



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Survey Findings

We engaged **2,407 residents, 767 staff, and 231 stakeholders**, who represent a broad cross section of the region. The findings show strong appetite for LGR, but only if it delivers **better services, stronger local voice, and clear accountability**.

Support for Change

- Residents, staff, and stakeholders overwhelmingly support reorganisation, frustrated by the complexity of multiple tiers.
- Backing is conditional on **tangible improvements**: simpler access, more responsive councils, and investment in frontline services.
- People in **rural areas, particularly East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, 81% worry about being overlooked or left behind**; stakeholders also fear loss of local representation.

Trust and Accountability

- **Trust in decision-making is low** (net -4). Residents want confidence that decisions reflect their community, not a one-size-fits-all model.
- Stakeholders stressed the importance of **local councillors with genuine local knowledge**, robust scrutiny, and clear engagement channels.
- Parish and Town Councils, alongside voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, are seen as vital to grounding services in community priorities.

Across England the public have greater trust in local government and their local Councillors than MPs, and the UK Government

[State of the Locals 2025 - LGiU](#)

Priorities for new unitary councils

- Top resident priorities: health infrastructure, transport, and community facilities.
- Businesses emphasised **economic infrastructure, efficiency, and streamlined delivery**.
- Both groups demand **faster response times** and **councillors who understand local contexts**.

Balancing scale and local voice

- Residents leaned towards **larger councils of 400,000–500,000**, recognising benefits of scale but wary of losing local identity.
- Nearly half of stakeholders preferred **smaller units of 300,000–400,000**, reflecting community identity and fears of remoteness.
- Focus groups revealed the central tension: larger councils bring efficiency and resilience, but smaller ones offer closer connection.

Current Performance

- Councils scored well on digital services (+44) and councillor knowledge (+43) and typically those in rural districts felt their local Councillor understood their community.

- Weaknesses: **investment in services (-32)**, **reducing complexity (-46)**, and unclear points of contact - except in Peterborough's single unitary model, which residents praised.
- This demonstrates the practical value of simplifying structures.

Community Identity

- Community belonging is generally strong (+43), though uneven: residents in East Cambridgeshire reported higher rates of belonging (76%) than Peterborough (47%) locals.
- Residents want unitaries that reflect **the distinct character of each area**.
- Older residents placed a higher value on community connection, whereas younger residents consistently reported weaker community connections. This highlights the need for tailored engagement.

Stakeholder Priorities

- **Foundations for success:** local representation, service efficiency, and financial stability.
- **Opportunities:** cost savings, economies of scale, reduced bureaucracy.
- **Risks:** loss of local voice, disruption during transition, and balancing urban and rural demands.
- Investment priorities: health, transport, local economy, and digital connectivity.
- Critical success factors: **responsiveness, devolved powers, and clear implementation planning**.

Additional community engagement

Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire undertook additional engagement exercises to inform residents about the benefits of LGR, and specifically how our proposal could lead to better outcomes for residents.

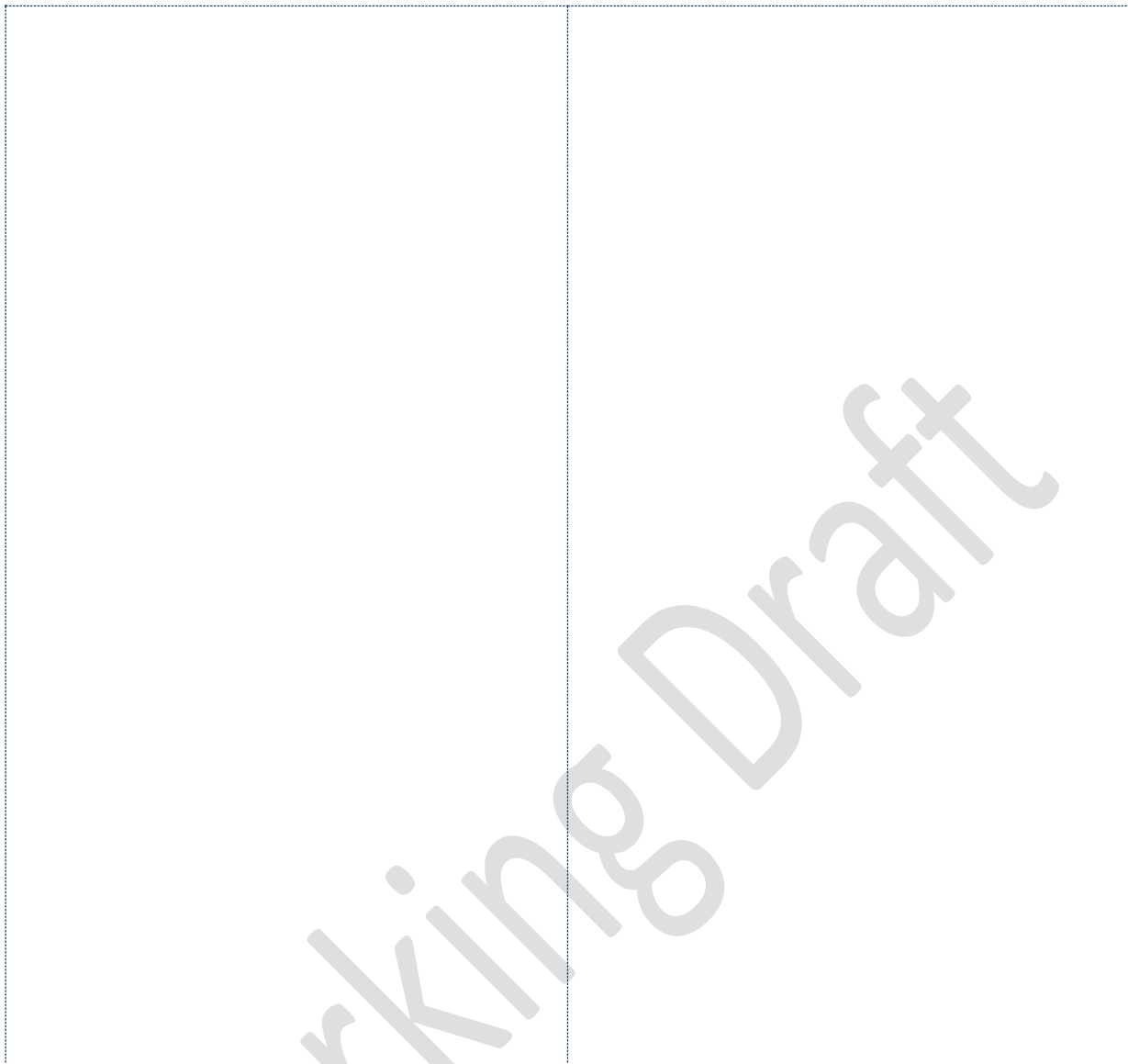
These engagement exercises included a short survey and public forums.



East Cambridgeshire District Council led #OptionBforMe engagement focused on the benefits to residents of being in a larger rural unitary, how a larger unitary would provide financial resilience and give the rural areas a stronger combined voice.

The Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire engagement emphasised the joint working already embedded in Greater Cambridge and the need for a unitary council to focus on the specific economic and housing needs of the growing city-region.

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire	East Cambridgeshire
890 responses. 69% of respondents either 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with Option B, while 24% either 'Disagreed' or 'Strongly Disagreed' The most common name suggested for the new unitary authority was Greater Cambridge. Additional comments revealed that many supporters view it as a sensible option, due to shared economic and cultural ties. Many comments in opposition revealed disagreement with LGR overall. Others expressed preference for alternative options.	249 responses. 52% expressed support for Option B, while 48% did not support Option B. Of those who supported Option B, a majority did so out of an opposition to merging with Cambridge, especially regarding concerns of being overshadowed by the city. Of those who did not support Option B, many were unhappy about merging with Peterborough and Fenland. Many of these responses highlight a cultural connection with Cambridge instead.



Residents and stakeholders consistently told us they value councils and councillors who understand their local areas and reflect their communities.

They emphasised the importance of ensuring that the new unitary authorities represent and protect the distinct cultural identities of each area.

If our proposal is successful, we will embark on detailed rounds of engagement with local communities, businesses and other key partners to design councils that are fit for the future.

The dual affinity of East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire

Survey findings from East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire – the two central districts of the region – reveal that both areas have strong connections in multiple directions.

To the south, some of their communities share practical, economic, and cultural ties with Cambridge, as well as Bedford and Newmarket.

To the north, some communities maintain close links with Peterborough and neighbouring areas outside our region. These include commuter flows, transport and infrastructure networks, shared service footprints, and community identities.

At first glance, these southern connections suggest a case for including East Cambridgeshire and/or Huntingdonshire within a Greater Cambridge unitary.

However, deeper analysis suggests this would risk positioning both districts as peripheral areas within a council dominated by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

Residents recognised this could weaken their influence in economic planning and service delivery, with 81% of residents in East Cambridgeshire expressing concerns they could be overlooked.

Greater Cambridge already functions as a single, integrated system — anchored by an internationally significant economy, a shared Local Plan, and coordinated housing, transport, and infrastructure strategies.

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire councils jointly manage housing stock and a wide portfolio of shared services, giving them a cohesive governance and delivery structure closely aligned to their shared growth priorities and communities of interest.

Merging an additional district into this framework would fracture that coherence, including decisions already embedded in the proposed joint Local Plan. That could risk slower decision-making, governance imbalances, and weaker democratic accountability.

Public engagement demonstrated that residents fear a new authority could find its local priorities overshadowed by the Cambridge high-growth agenda. This now has direct Government backing through the Cambridge Growth Company and a recently announced Development Corporation.

Option B avoids these pitfalls. East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire residents will have greater voice and influence within a more balanced and coherent northern unitary alongside Peterborough and Fenland, with local design and delivery of services.

Option B reflects shared rural and market-town identities and interests and ensures that investment and service planning are distributed more equitably across the region.

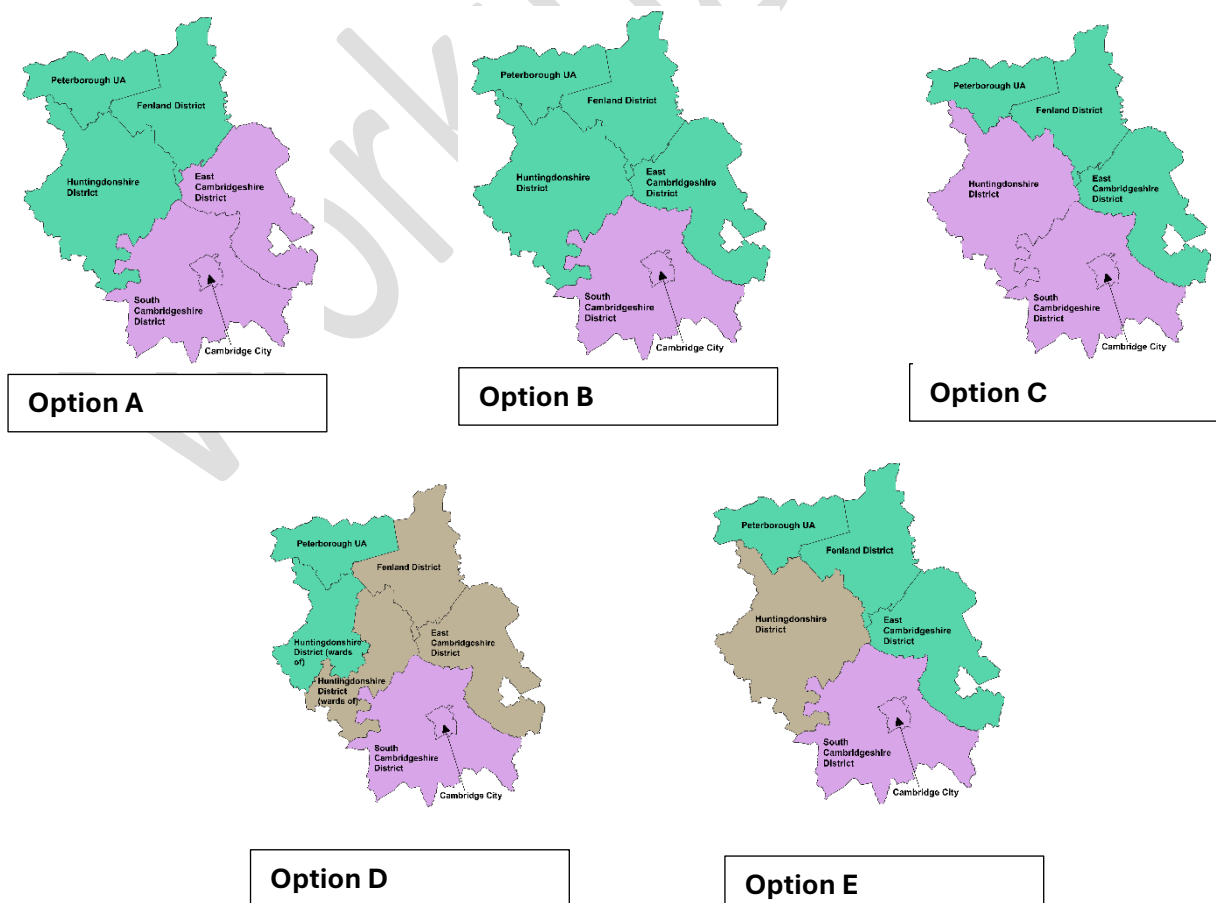
5. Options Appraisal

Introduction

This section provides a balanced appraisal of the five lead proposals to Government from councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Each proposal is assessed against the Government's 6 key reorganisation criteria:

- economy and housing
- financial resilience
- sustainable public services
- collaboration
- devolution
- democratic representation and community engagement

The appraisal demonstrates that Option B best supports inclusive and sustainable economic and housing growth for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Better economic prospects have a direct and positive impact on the fiscal outlook for local government through stronger business rates and council tax growth. As a result, this option can enable both new councils to be financially resilient and have better funded public services. Option B also supports devolution, democratic representation, and community engagement.



Option	Unitary 1	Unitary 2
A	North-west unitary	South-east unitary
	• Peterborough • Fenland • Huntingdonshire • County Council functions	• Cambridge • East Cambridgeshire • South Cambridgeshire • County Council functions
	519,000 population	415,000 population
	£1,057 budget per head	£945 budget per head
B	North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	Greater Cambridge
	• Peterborough • East Cambridgeshire • Fenland • Huntingdonshire • County Council functions	• Cambridge • South Cambridgeshire • County Council functions
	612,000 population	322,000 population
	£1,055 budget per head	£916 budget per head
C	North-east unitary	South-west unitary
	• Peterborough • East Cambridgeshire • Fenland • County Council functions	• Cambridge • Huntingdonshire • South Cambridgeshire • County Council functions
	421,500 population	512,500 population
	£1,105 budget per head	£926 budget per head

Option	Unitary 1	Unitary 2	Unitary 3
D	North-west unitary	Central unitary	Southern unitary
	• Peterborough • Parts of Huntingdonshire • County Council functions	• East Cambridgeshire • Fenland • Parts of Huntingdonshire • County Council functions	• Cambridge • South Cambridgeshire • County Council functions
	292,000 population	320,000 population	322,000 population
E	North-east unitary	Central unitary	Southern unitary
	• Peterborough • East Cambridgeshire • Fenland • County Council functions	• Huntingdonshire • County Council functions	• Cambridge • South Cambridgeshire • County Council functions
	421,500 population	190,500 population	322,000 population

Scoring

The table below provides a generic appraisal of one, two and three unitary options for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's circumstances against the MHCLG criteria for LGR. It demonstrates that overall, two unitary options meet the criteria, but one unitary and three unitary options only partially meet the criteria.

MHCLG CRITERIA FOR LGR	One Unitary	Two Unitaries	Three Unitaries
Economy and housing - Sensible economic areas; helping to increase housing supply and meet local needs. Seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	Not viable. Government has indicated there must be at least two principal authorities in a Strategic Mayoral Authority.	4	2
Financial resilience - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks		4	1
Sustainable Public Services - Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens in particular adult social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness.		4	2
Collaboration - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views. Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, and evidence of local engagement		4	3
Devolution - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements		4	4
Democratic representation and community engagement - New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment		4	4
OVERALL	N/A	24	16

The table below provides an appraisal of the 5 options (A-E) considered by local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It demonstrates that overall, Option B best meets the MHCLG criteria. Options A and C partially meet the criteria, while Options D and E only slightly meet the criteria.

MHCLG Criteria for LGR	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E
Economy and housing - Sensible economic areas; helping to increase housing supply and meet local needs. Seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	3	5	3	2	2
Financial resilience - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks	3	4	2	1	1
Sustainable Public Services - Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens in particular adult social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness.	4	4	3	2	2
Collaboration - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views. Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, and evidence of local engagement	3	4	3	2	3
Devolution - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	4	5	4	4	4
Democratic representation and community engagement - New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment	4	4	4	5	4
OVERALL	21	26	19	16	16

- 1 Does not meet criteria
- 2 Slightly meets criteria
- 3 Partially meets criteria
- 4 Meets criteria
- 5 Exceeds criteria



A summary of the rationale for the scoring is set out below and a detailed appraisal of each option in the annex.

The key issues highlighted by the options appraisal are:

Economy and housing

- Option B would create two councils of most similar economic size (in terms of GDP, employee numbers and business turnover) now and over the longer-term. Options A and C would advantage or disadvantage one area over another, which would increasingly widen over time.
- Option B creates two unitary councils that reflect distinct, nationally significant economic geographies, that are complementary and provide spillover benefits to each other. The Southern ‘innovation’ unitary would reflect the footprint of Cambridge’s internationally significant knowledge economy (life sciences, AI and clean-tech). The Northern ‘powerhouse’ unitary would be amongst the largest in England, with nationally significant sectors (advanced manufacturing, digital, defence, logistics and agri-tech) supporting a balanced, dynamic and resilient economy.
- By aligning governance and public service delivery most closely with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough’s three functional economic areas and housing markets, Option B would support inclusive and sustainable economic and housing growth and maximise the sub-region’s contribution to national economic growth.

Financial resilience

- Option B is the clear choice for financial sustainability. Using a balanced scorecard approach, it delivers the most equitable and resilient solution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole. It gives both new councils the financial resilience needed for long-term stability, reducing the risk that essential local services cannot be funded.
- Option B delivers both immediate sustainability and long-term value. Full payback of the initial implementation costs will be achieved by 2031/32 (Year 4 after vesting). Option B will deliver annual recurring savings of £42.8m by 2032/33 (Year 5), and cumulative savings of £167.4m by 2035/36 (Year 8).
- Option B is the only proposal that genuinely addresses regional inequality for Peterborough and northern Cambridgeshire. It ensures the northern unitary has both the scale, financial resources and resilience, and capacity to tackle entrenched deprivation and inequality.
- Option B also aligns economic geography with governance. By matching council boundaries to areas designed for growth, it creates the conditions for economic

expansion to generate the tax base needed to fund improving public services – a virtuous cycle that benefits all our communities.

Public services

- Option B is more likely to deliver high-quality and sustainable public services than Options A and C, because resources would be divided more equitably across the whole area.
- The size of the northern unitary will also help balance the higher social care needs and levels of deprivation in Peterborough and Fenland, creating a council with needs that will be below the national average, whereas Options A and C will create smaller councils with more concentrated demand. The fast-growing economy of the southern unitary will provide the tax base needed to meet the increasing social care needs of a rapidly growing population.
- Both new unitary councils will develop neighbourhood services tailored to meet distinct local needs. Public services will be better aligned to how people live and work, which will help meet community needs and reduce demand failure. A localised approach will also allow both councils to determine spending and strategies around prevention and early intervention.
- In the longer-term, Option B will best support improvement of children's services (from the current "inadequate" and "requires improvement" Ofsted ratings), adult social care services and SEND provision in the area through new delivery models and opportunities for prevention and transformation.

Collaboration

- Option B has involved the most collaboration between councils of all the proposals. 3 of the 7 council's Leaders (Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire) are supporting the proposal, and 3 other councils (Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough) have significantly contributed to its development.

Democratic representation and community engagement

- Option B best reflects current and historic local identities and enables local communities to influence the future of their area. The northern unitary will be large enough to accommodate distinct local governance and community engagement arrangements to meet the diverse needs of urban Peterborough, market towns and rural villages. The southern unitary reflects the Cambridge city region and has a

coherent, interdependent identity that makes sense to local people and how they live their lives.

- The southern unitary will reflect the historic county geography of Cambridgeshire, while the northern unitary will contain the three historic counties of Huntingdonshire, Isle of Ely and Soke of Peterborough.

Devolution

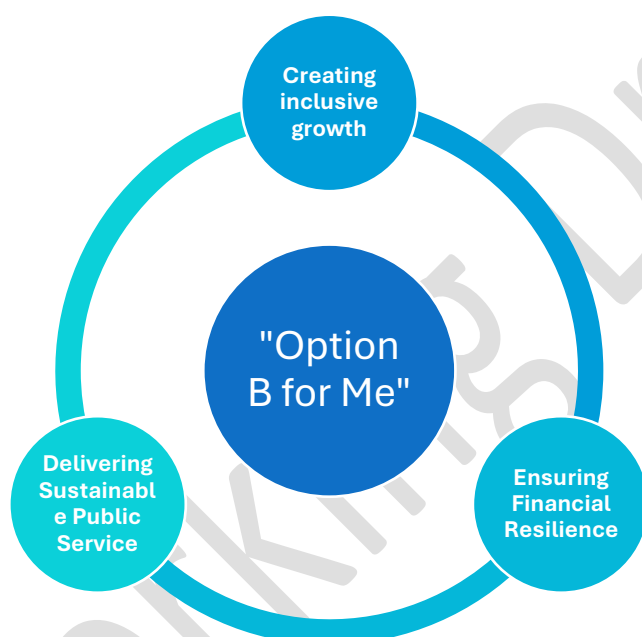
- Option B creates two economically balanced constituent member councils. This will result in more balanced representation around the CPCA table than other options, resulting in more effective strategic decision-making. It will also minimise the risk of policy, investment or delivery bias towards either member council.
- Option B will support the CPCA more than other options to deliver growth, jobs and housing across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area by allowing plans, strategies and investments to focus on each area's unique strengths and challenges, whilst creating opportunities to harness the complementary strengths of each area.
- Option B will support the Government's continued focus on the Greater Cambridge economy as a driver of UK economic growth. The geographic alignment between the Greater Cambridge unitary and the Cambridge Growth Company will protect and enable more coherent governance of economic growth, infrastructure and housing issues. It supports delivery of the Government's growth ambitions for Cambridge and the CPCA's Local Growth Plan.

6. Our proposal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

All options for LGR have been carefully appraised against the Government's criteria. Our proposal scores the highest and is the clear front-runner.

‘Option B for Me’

It will deliver better services for residents because it builds on the area's strengths and opportunities for **growth and public service reform**.



Inclusive growth and public service reform

Growth and public service reform go hand in hand and are vital to the success of our area and the well-being and prosperity of our residents.

Taking advantage of the growth potential of our region's unique economies requires councils that can think and act at the right scale.

Our proposal will deliver that change by creating a North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Council and a Greater Cambridge Council.

The Benefits of Option B

The benefits of Option B are numerous and include:

1. A sensible balance built on the region's functional economic areas
2. Distinct and complementary economies
3. Alignment of housing and infrastructure investment
4. Substantial and achievable savings will be delivered
5. Balanced and equitable finances across both new councils, now and in the future
6. Better financial resilience to future poof services
7. Greater fairness and better outcomes
8. Localised approach to service delivery
9. Councils committed to putting residents first when transforming services
10. Respect for distinct historic identities
11. Delivery of strong democratic accountability while maintaining local connection
12. Enhancement of community voice through flexible, place-based engagement.
13. Unlocking the full potential of devolution through balanced strategic governance
14. Supporting delivery of the Government's growth ambitions for Cambridge and the CPCA's Local Growth Plan

Theme 1 - Economy and Housing

Balanced and inclusive: two functional economic areas of national importance

Government Criteria...to support and create “sensible economic areas that support growth [...] with a strong and fair tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area” and help “to increase housing supply and meet local needs¹”

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough already have one of the UK’s most important combined regional economies. LGR can deliver additional economic benefits for residents and businesses in both proposed new authorities.

There will be a single front door for growth, infrastructure and housing decisions. Each Council will have the capacity to promote and attract new investment and jobs.

Each council will be anchored by two of England's most dynamic and fast-growing cities - Cambridge and Peterborough - and complemented by rural areas and market towns creating strengths across multiple critical growth sectors.

Outside London, both councils will be in the top 20 authorities by GDP in the UK²⁶. They will both have the attention of the Government and the ability to influence and deliver regional and national policy.

Our proposal delivers on the Government’s economic and housing objectives for LGR:

1. A sensible balance built on the region’s functional economic areas, which creates two councils of national economic significance without undue disadvantage for one area.
2. Two economic areas with distinct and complementary strengths, and spillover benefits to support the region’s growth ambitions.

²⁶ ONS 2025 – based on 2023 chained volume GDP compared to existing authorities.

3. Two councils capable of maximizing the housing and infrastructure potential of the whole region sustainably.

[image/image collage: economy; apprentices; industrial, agri-tech, distribution; wet lab; tech]

Our proposal creates the scale and focus needed to accelerate inclusive growth so important for local jobs, the national economy and council finances.

North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough [612k pop.]	Greater Cambridge [322k pop.]:
The regional backbone of industrial production and distribution, including key rail freight routes and motorways. The area boasts nationally significant advanced manufacturing, logistics and agri-food. Key growth sites are located along the A1/A14/A47 corridors, the Fens provide critical national food supply. With £20.3 billion GDP and over 250,000 employees, generating £40 billion annual business turnover, this unitary council will represent one of England's most diverse and resilient industrial powerhouses.	Europe's most successful science and technology cluster, ranked second globally for innovation (footnote - Global Innovation Index 2025 - Cluster ranking). The area contains a high value bio-medical and AI-tech ecosystem, anchored by the world-renowned science and business parks and the University of Cambridge. With £17.2 billion GDP and 226,000 employees generating £80 billion annual business turnover it is in the top 15 largest UK employment clusters and has one of the highest densities of knowledge intensive businesses in the world.

Three compelling economic benefits

Benefit 1: A sensible balance that reflects the region’s functional economic areas

Economic balance for the region

Councils with national economic significance

If North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough were around today it would have the equivalent sized economy of Liverpool. Outside London, the 10th largest local authority economy ranked by GDP in the UK.

Greater Cambridge’s GDP would be larger than Cardiff’s, making it the 17th largest outside London.

The two council geographies are different sizes, but each has a similar sized economy.

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough’s geography has a slightly larger economy, around £20bn compared with Greater Cambridge at £17bn (Gross Domestic Product, ONS 2023)²⁷.

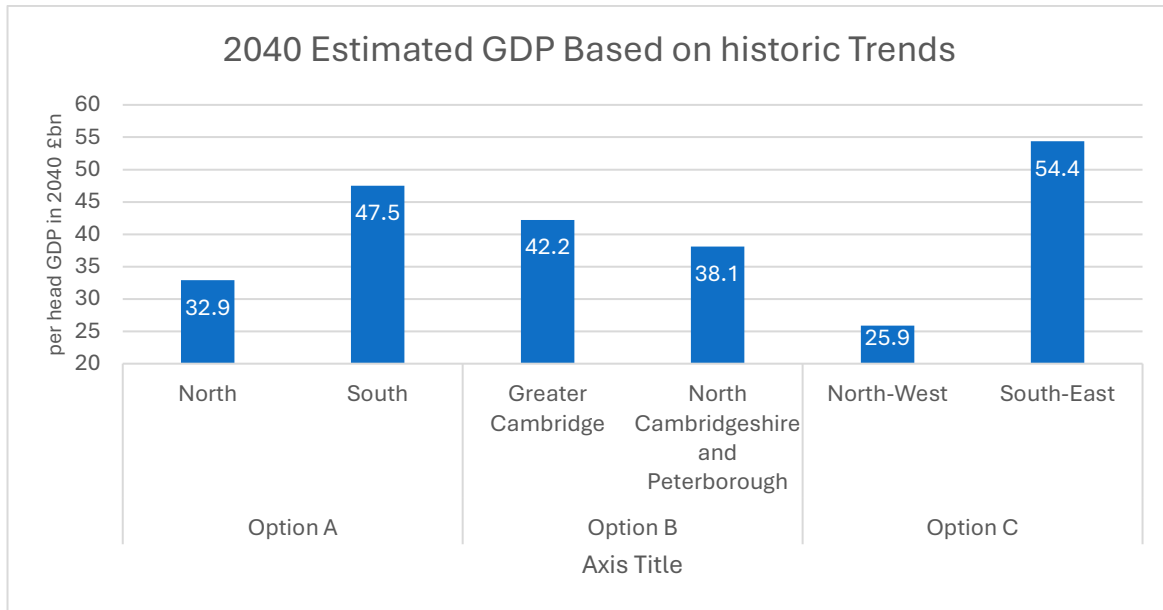
Both councils will also have fiscal balance. They will have a similar total rateable value of commercial space at around £400m per annum.

If economic trends continue and populations increase as forecast, by 2040 the Greater

Cambridge economy will be 5-15% larger than North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough²⁸.

²⁷ ONS 2025, ‘Regional gross domestic product: local authorities’.

²⁸ Based on 2014-2023 per head GDP cumulative annual growth rate by local authority trends continuing to 2040; for example, Greater Cambridge GDP per head growth 4.25%; North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough 3.1% (ONS 2025, Regional gross domestic product: local authorities).



Options A and C would lead to distinctly imbalanced and inequitable economies across the region.

Option A would lead to the southern council with an economy 40-50% larger than the northern council in 2040, and Option C more than double the size of the northern council.

Both these options struggle to meet the Government's criteria as one council would have an undue economic and fiscal advantage over the other. See [table X](#) below to illustrate these disparities in more detail.

Option B achieves the best economic balance for the region, now and in the future.

Increasing the size of a southern unitary, as in Options A and C, would increase economic and fiscal disadvantage for the northern unitary.

Functional economic areas

Each council area represents a functional economic area with a high level of alignment with local labour markets and consumer patterns (see page XX [31]).

Distinct Economies

Greater Cambridge has a high value knowledge intensive economy which accounts for 2/3rd of the region's total annual business turnover. Average ratable values are 2.5 times higher due to the concentration of premium office and lab space.

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough by comparison is an industrial giant with nearly five times the amount of industrial floorspace. It has competitive land values, and an advanced manufacturing heartland combined with high value agricultural sectors.

Our proposal creates new councils that align with the economic realities or the way people live and work:

- **Coherent geographies** for existing business clusters, supply chains and CPCA economic policy
- Each area will **facilitate specialist sectors**, skills and further education strategies that align with the Local Growth Plan²⁹
- **Across the region nearly 88% of working residents** will live and work within their council area³⁰.

Working patterns	Self-containment % (incl. WFH/No-fixed)	Self-containment % (commuters only)
Greater Cambridge	91	81
North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	86	75

Employment self-containment for proposed authorities³¹

There are several positive benefits that flow from the high level of labour market self-containment in each council area:

- **Productivity** through alignment of residents' skills and local employers' needs³²
- **Fiscal stability** - a larger share of income tax and business-rates receipts are retained locally, improving fiscal resilience and making infrastructure investment more efficient

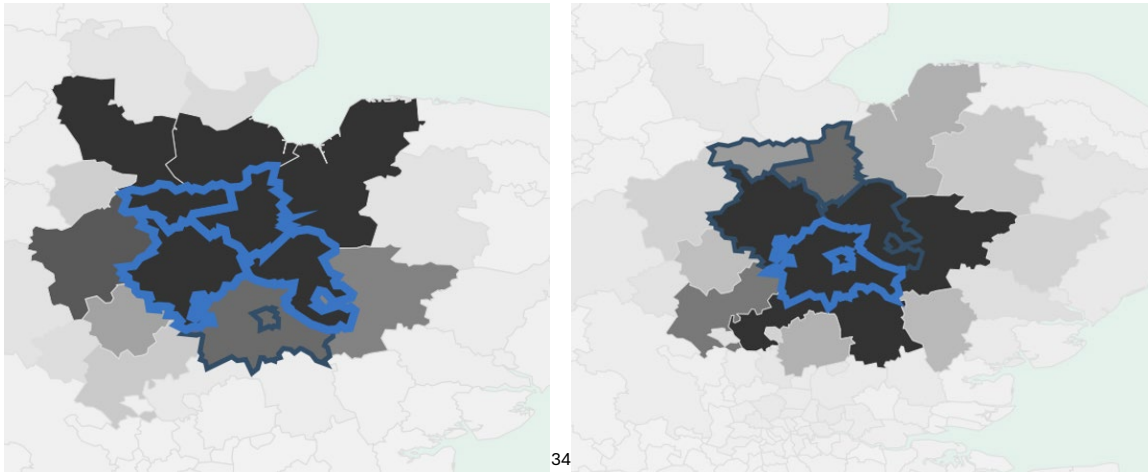
²⁹ [C220817 CPCA Prospectus](#)

³⁰ Includes working from home and no-fixed place of work; ONS Census 2021 was conducted during the Covid pandemic and patterns may since have changed.

³¹ ONS Census 2021, residents in employment

³² **OECD** (2020). *Functional Urban Areas: Economic and Spatial Integration*; **Centre for Cities** (2022). *Small Business Outlook*.

- **Economic coherence** across housing and jobs markets, and transport systems
- **Greater wellbeing and social inclusion** outcomes³³ – higher life satisfaction and enhanced social mobility



Commuting heatmaps for proposed authorities

These diagrams indicate the TTWAs for the Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough unitary authorities using ONS data mapped to their boundaries. Darker areas indicate a greater intensity of commuter flows.

Conclusion

Options A and C create economic imbalance for the region which would:

Functional economic areas and unitary local government

Where self-containment exceeds 75–80%, Government guidance suggests an area likely constitutes a complete functional economic market area, which could serve as the logical geography for a unitary authority. (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC, 2020). *Functional Economic Market Areas Guidance*.

- give the southern unitary significant advantage over the northern unitary that would widen over time
- lead to policy tensions and the risk of neither council being able to maximise its own or the region's potential to maximise the benefits of devolution, and

³³ ONS (2019, Personal Well-being and Commuting Distance); **Public Health England (PHE)** (2020). *Healthy Places: Promoting Well-being in the Built Environment*.

³⁴ ONS Census 2021

- cut across existing functional economic areas and sectors

Option B ensures economic balance built on functional economic areas, achieved by:

- both councils having sufficient scale to attract investment and speak powerfully to Government
- the conditions for an equitable partnership that supports regional economic coordination and the devolution agenda
- neither unitary dominating the regional economic policy agenda co-ordinated through the CPCA
- greater opportunities to lift-up communities and share prosperity for all in the region

Our proposal achieves critical economic balance and ensures both councils are nationally significant. The functional economic areas reflect the realities of established labour markets and consumer spending patterns and provides confidence for investors.

Key economic indicators for proposed unitary authorities

	Option B		Option A		Option C	
	North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	Greater Cambridge	North Unitary	South Unitary	NW Unitary	SW Unitary
GDP total (ONS 2023)	£20.3bn (54%)	£17.2bn (46%)	£17.6 (47%)	£19.8bn (53%)	£14bn (37%)	£23.4bn (63%)
Annual Business turnover (2023 ³⁵)	£40.1bn (33%)	£80.3bn (66%)	£33.7bn (28%)	£86.3bn (72%)	£20.9bn (17%)	£99.5bn (83%)
Implied non-domestic Rateable Value (2023) ³⁶	£402m (49.8%)	£406m (50.2%)	£360m (44.5%)	£448m (55.5%)	£283m (35%)	£524m (65%)

Option B delivers greater economic equity and balance for the whole region now and over the long term.

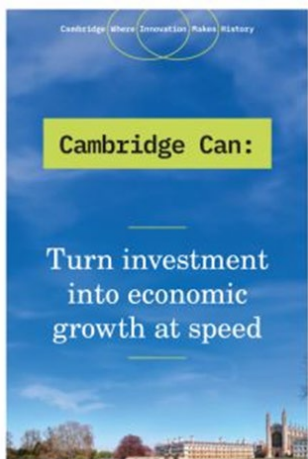
³⁵ <https://www.beauhurst.com/blog/uk-council-ranking/> (2024)

³⁶ [Non-domestic rating: stock of properties including business floorspace, 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

Benefit 2: Distinct and complementary economies

Each council will focus on and develop its core economic advantages. This will enable clearer focus on key sectors that are prioritised in the [National Industrial Strategy](#) and the CPCA’s [Local Growth Plan](#).

Greater Cambridge is geographic footprint critical to national economic growth and builds on an established global brand. Cambridge-based companies have now raised £7.9bn in investment since 2015³⁷. The Government has established the Cambridge Growth Company to accelerate economic development across the area.



- Focus on attracting high-value R&D, life sciences and biotech, digital technology and AI, and knowledge-intensive companies and developing a deep skills pool
- Nurture partnerships with the globally recognised innovation and technology clusters
- Maintain investor confidence in internationally competitive sectors
- Absorb the Greater Cambridge Partnership, reducing governance complexity and enhancing growth opportunities

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough specialises in growing, making and moving. It can become a manufacturing and logistics powerhouse that can:

Image to follow

- Promote nationally significant advanced manufacturing, industrial and agri-food sectors, including the UK’s ‘bread-basket’
- Build upon the areas with the highest proportion of exporting businesses in the region
- Develop defence sector opportunities linking southern R&D with northern manufacturing
- Focus on supply chains, services, and jobs that support regional growth to increase workforce participation and reduce statutory service demand

³⁷ Cambridge start-ups raised £0.8bn of private equity investment during 150 funding rounds in 2023 (Beauhurst 2024); and £1.7bn in 2024 (Dealroom 2025). [Cambridge tops UK for science investment as US capital surges into tech and life sciences | Cambridge Network](#)

Each council has different economic strengths and specialisms, supported by distinctive place offers. This allows the councils and the CPCA to focus investment and support on the key sectors in their area.

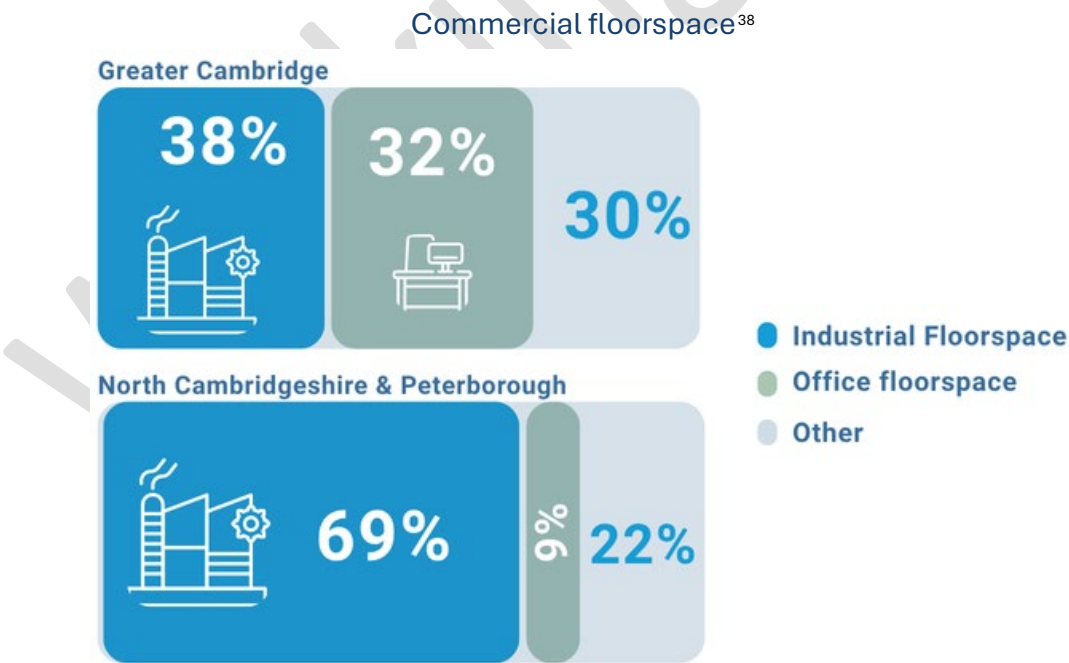
Innovation to production pathway

R&D and HQ functions cluster in Greater Cambridge alongside global brands, and a deep graduate and skills pool.

Scale-up, assembly, and distribution gravitate to North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough where space, manufacturing expertise and transport connectivity adds greater value.

Other proposals for the area would create councils with more mixed or fragmented economies, with the risk that investment flows to particular dominant sectors at the expense of others.

The comparative advantage and specialism of each council area is currently reflected in their make-up of commercial floorspace.



³⁸ VOA Business Floorspace, 2023

Each economy is interconnected. Each provides spillover benefits to each other as well as beyond Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. These complementary strengths – through Option B - can facilitate mutual interdependence rather than competition.

Peterborough's national connectivity, supply chains and logistics, and competitive land prices provide significant benefits for the whole region.

ARU Peterborough delivers skills to support technical roles in bio-medical research and technology companies in the south. Agritech research in Cambridge is applied to agricultural settings in the Fens, which stretch across North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

University of Cambridge spin-outs, such as a CMR Surgical (robotic surgery) and Paragraf (graphene based electronic devices), have established significant headquarters and new employment in East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

Option B pairs North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - a nationally significant 'industrial powerhouse' that has expansive agriculture and production facilities, with Europe's leading knowledge intensive innovation cluster in Greater Cambridge.

Two councils representing distinct economic areas with the scale to attract national and international investment. Each area contributes in different ways to regional and national economic competitiveness. Each area can focus on and develop its core economic advantages and potential.

Benefit 3: Alignment of housing and infrastructure investment

Our proposal aligns new councils with housing markets, planned housing growth and infrastructure investment patterns. This will ensure sustainable development that supports economic objectives while meeting environmental targets.

This is ideal to support ambitious Local Plans for each council that focus on the differing economic strengths and housing needs of their functional economic area.

Complex cross-boundary coordination in the north will end³⁹. This will strengthen regional housing and infrastructure delivery via the CPCA’s anticipated spatial strategy.

Housing strategies can be tailored for different local needs and markets.



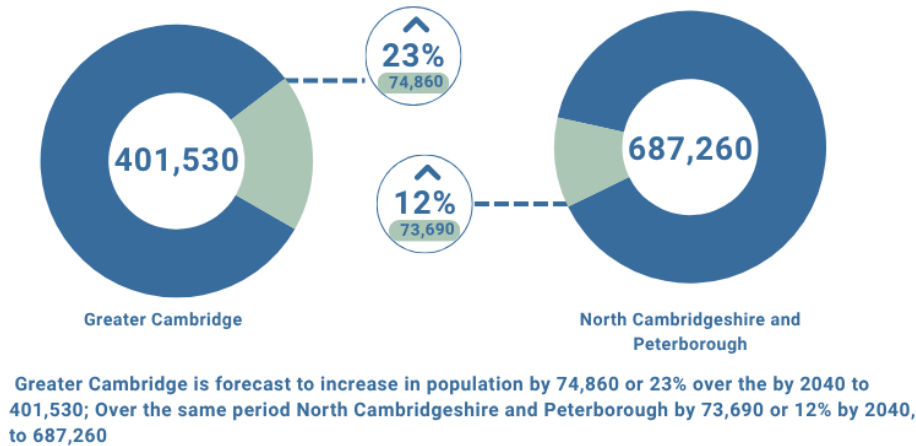
The populations of North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Greater Cambridge are each forecast to increase by around 74,000 people by 2040.

However, as Greater Cambridge has a smaller total population than North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, the rate of population growth in the southern unitary (23% by 2040) will be more than double the rate in the northern unitary (12%).

³⁹ Greater Cambridge already has a shared planning service and is consulting on a Joint Local Plan.



Population increase forecast by 2040



Greater Cambridge: major planned growth is strategically positioned to capitalise on infrastructure investment by the Greater Cambridge Partnership. East-West Rail will enable connections between new settlements and employment centres. Planning permission is already in place for over 35,000 homes and 1.2m sqm of commercial floorspace. The Cambridge Growth Company, a subsidiary of Homes England, has been established to further facilitate development, this could increase the forecast rate of growth.

Greater Cambridge will be well placed to deliver affordable housing, as the existing councils both own and manage significant council housing stock and already have housing development programmes and capacity. Over 1 in 10 homes will be council-owned.

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough: Planned and emerging growth proposals are informed by existing infrastructure connections and planned enhancement. This includes heavy rail and the strategic road network, including the strategic A1 corridor. Peterborough and connected market towns in Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire provide complementary employment and housing opportunities to underpin the city-regions' continued economic growth.

The existing councils in the proposed North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough unitary area have all transferred their housing stock to different housing associations, which will focus attention on the significant opportunities for shaping the market for affordable housing.

“The Link” Wellbeing Community Hub — Stretham

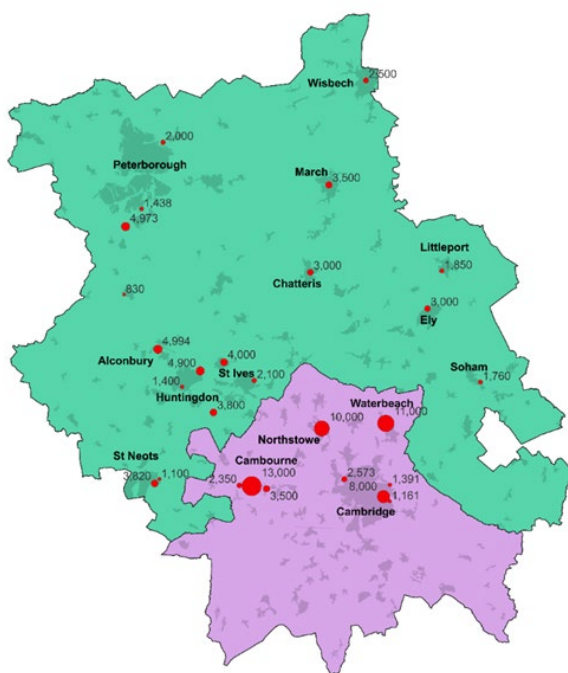
The Link is a transformative infrastructure project, aiming to harness the power of community-led development through a Community Land Trust.

It will deliver affordable housing at the edge of Stretham, and provide a lasting foundation for health, connection and wellbeing.

Funded in part by £1.2m from East Cambridgeshire District Council, the Link brings together a GP surgery, café, meeting/work units, and complementary holistic health service spaces. The Link looks to provide a lifeline of community gathering, support, and economic opportunity.

23 high quality homes have already been built, including shared ownership tenures. An additional 6 homes will be owned by Hundred Houses.





In 2024, the Homes England-CPCA strategic partnership identified that of 68,000 homes being build or planned at strategic sites over three quarters are in Greater Cambridge



Strategic development sites

Planning for sustainable growth

To keep pace with demand for affordable homes, business growth and 73,000 forecast jobs the proposed Greater Cambridge Local Plan increases new homes that can be built up to 2045 to 77,000, including up to 2.5m square meters of commercial and lab space – equivalent to 350 football pitches.

These spatial plans are based on a longstanding strategy that:

- Maximises the value of major transport infrastructure investments
- Ensures new housing supports rather than constrains economic growth
- Creates sustainable travel patterns that reduce carbon emissions

Neighbouring districts, East Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, do not have the same affordability and growth challenges. Neither do they require the transformative scale of development the Government has identified as necessary to support the Greater Cambridge economy.

LGR proposals that interfere with the Greater Cambridge spatial framework risk fragmenting and slowing down these ambitious plans.

For **North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough** outside the A1 corridor and other key growth sites, large scale homebuilding opportunities face different infrastructure constraints.

A different approach is required. Large scale development in these areas would:

- present significant infrastructure funding challenges reflecting development, land values and viability challenges
- strain existing transport networks beyond capacity undermining productivity
- perpetuate car dependency and increase carbon emissions
- result in the loss of valuable agricultural land which is key to national food production and food security

As a large geographic council, North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough will facilitate a more strategic approach to housing and infrastructure delivery to optimise financial efficiency and economic impact. This will enable a focus on development in areas where it is most needed to support economic growth, while preserving areas of high-value food production or environmental importance.

Our proposal ensures each council can develop focused housing strategies that align with their distinct infrastructure capacities and investment programmes, maximising delivery while maintaining sustainability.

Growth, financial resilience and funding public services

Local economic growth and funding for local services are mutually reinforcing ([NAO 2025](#); [IFS 2018](#)). Growth increases locally retained revenues and homebuilding broadens the Council Tax base. This is particularly important to fund statutory services and address deprivation in parts of Peterborough and the Fens.

Councils designed for growth will have more funding to meet statutory needs and **invest in the core drivers of productivity**: housebuilding, transport, skills, business support and place-making. Well targeted investments that support prevention and productivity broaden the local tax base and reduce spend on crisis services, strengthening fiscal resilience ([Institute for Government 2025](#)).

National economic significance

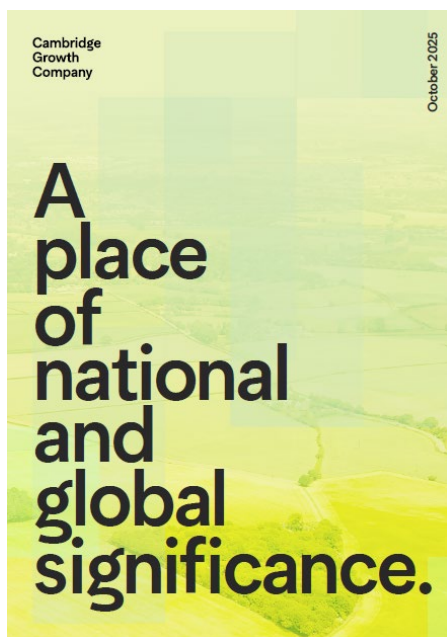
This Government's decision about where to draw local authority boundaries has national significance.

LGR has the potential to assert the national and international significance of our region, or the potential to disrupt sectors, supply chains, development and investment plans so crucial to the national economy.

Our proposal plays to each area's strengths, to enhance business confidence and accelerate growth sustainably.

With two councils of national scale and importance Option B will enhance what makes Cambridgeshire and Peterborough an economic powerhouse.

Our proposal delivers sensible and equitable economic areas that have distinct but complementary strengths; exceptional growth prospects that support strong tax bases and financial resilience; and streamlined governance that will accelerate housing delivery across the region.



Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

The Government intends to establish a Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announced £400 million of initial Government funding which the Development Corporation will deploy to kickstart the development of affordable homes, infrastructure and business expansion.

Science Minister and Oxford-Cambridge Innovation Champion, Lord Vallance: "Cambridge is one of the world's most fertile grounds for innovation to take root, and blossom into opportunities for investment, job creation, and progress in fields ranging from life sciences to deep tech."

Theme 2 - Financial Sustainability

Summary

Financial sustainability is key to successful LGR.

It is arguably the most important of the Government's criteria. Residents, businesses and other local stakeholders also placed it in their top three priorities.

No council can hope to improve its delivery of public services, grow its economy, or deliver more housing if it is always struggling to balance the budget.

Financial sustainability underpins our support for Option B – it is not just desirable, it is essential. This option **delivers the strongest financial foundation for the whole area**, creating two robust councils with the capacity and resources to not only deliver excellent services effectively but also invest in the improvements our communities need and deserve.

Our financial benefits

Option B delivers two significant financial benefits:

1. Substantial savings will be delivered - £42.8m in the base case and £57.3m in the stretch case - with a payback period by Year 4.
2. Balanced and equitable finances across both new councils taking a range of factors into account, reducing the risk that local services cannot be funded in the future.

Why discount three unitary options?

A number of other three unitary options were also considered early on and discounted by Council Leaders for the following reasons:

- Setting up three councils will be more costly and result in a longer pay-back period
- Operating three councils will be more expensive than operating two councils⁴⁰
- Three-unitary options struggle to achieve sufficient population and financial scale⁴¹

⁴⁰ Newton p. 13, final report

⁴¹ Pixel, 6 May report, p. 31

Options D and E propose three unitary councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which would not be financially sustainable for the region.

Financial Sustainability Assessment: Two unitary options

Independent financial analysis by Pixel confirms that all 'two unitary' options for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are viable. However, viability is not enough – **the differences between Options A, B and C are significant and will determine whether our new councils simply survive or thrive.**

The financial analysis, detailed in Appendix XX, goes beyond theoretical viability. It compares the actual funding position of each council: budget, the starting reserves, and the debt implications of each proposal using **real budget data provided by the Chief Financial Officers** across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

This rigorous, evidence-based approach reveals critical distinctions between the options. The high-level findings are summarised in Table X:

Ratings of options A,B and C on key financial themes

	Funding: budget ratio	Reserves	Debt
Option A	✓	-	-
Option B	✓	✓	✓
Option C	X	-	-

The ratings are defined as follows:

- **Red** – Significant concern which brings into question the financial sustainability of one (or both) of the new unitary councils in the option
- **Amber** – Moderate concern warranting consideration
- **Green** – No material concern.

Option B is the clear choice for financial sustainability. Using a balanced scorecard approach, it delivers the most equitable and resilient solution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole. Option B provides balanced strength. It gives both new councils the financial resilience needed for long-term stability, reducing the risk that essential local services cannot be funded. With projected savings of £42.8m and payback achieved by 2030/31, Option B delivers both immediate sustainability and long-term value.

Option A creates significant imbalances. While the funding-to-budget ratio appears healthy, it leaves the Northern council with a more challenging debt position and severely inadequate reserves – inheriting only 57% of the value of the Southern council's reserves. For a council serving communities with higher care needs and more volatile spending pressures, this reserves deficit represents a concern from day one.

Option C is financially unsustainable. The Northwest council would face an immediate budget gap in Year 1, carry the highest debt gearing of any two-unitary option, and hold the lowest reserves of all scenarios. This is not a viable foundation for effective local government.

What would Option B save – and what would it cost to set up?

Efficiencies, savings and transition costs

This section outlines how our proposal for two new unitary authorities for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will deliver financial resilience and reduce costs.

We will achieve this through reducing duplication, achieving economies of scale, and delivering more cost-effective services through transformation and improvement.

While each council faces unique financial challenges, a number of themes are common to all:

- Growth in demand for services, particularly social care, SEND and homelessness
- Inflationary pressures in nearly all areas of spend
- The impact of the Fair Funding reform and uncertainty around future grant funding streams.

The transition to two new unitary councils will inevitably bring further uncertainty. However, because there are already two upper tier authorities within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the current proposal will not create additional *ongoing* costs.

Independent modelling by Newton suggests that any of the proposed two-unitary options will be marginally cheaper than the status quo⁴².

⁴² Newton Leaders and CEX final report p. 16

Savings and transitional costs for Option B are shown below. A detailed explanation of the approach and assumptions is set out in **Appendix XX**.

Projected savings

We have set out two scenarios – a base case and a stretch case.

The ‘base-case’ refers to highly achievable benefits that are built into the proposal, the majority of which will be delivered in 3-4 years from vesting day.

A ‘stretch-case’ is more ambitious and would require careful, planned implementation but could achieve further benefits through deeper transformation.

Using the base case, our financial analysis demonstrates that Option B will generate annual savings by **2032/33** of £42.8m.

While the specific savings achieved will be subject to the ambition and decisions of the new unitary councils, our modelling indicates that substantial savings can be achieved through moving to a two unitary model and specifically Option B.

The financial benefits of our ‘**base-case**’ two-unitary model include:

- Reducing duplicated costs arising from seven councils
- Using digital technology to improve customer/resident experience and accessibility as well as automating simple services and increasing data integrity
- Making better use of social care, public health and benefits data to focus on preventative measures, such as targeted promotion of leisure and wellbeing services

The financial benefits of our ‘**stretch case**’ two-unitary model include in addition:

- A more radical approach to service transformation
- Closer integration of social care and housing to create holistic support systems that don’t just serve residents better, they cost less to deliver over the longer term
- Development of workforce capabilities and new technology to drive productivity gains across every part of our services

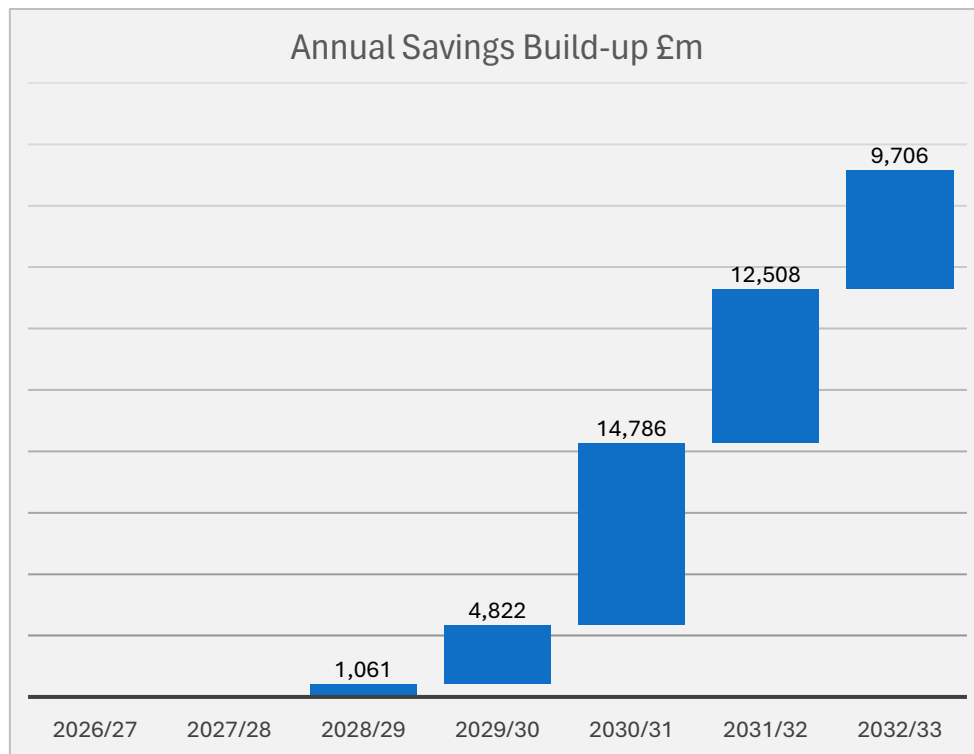
Forecast savings are set out in Table X below, and detailed explanation of all assumptions made for each saving are set out in Table 1 at Appendix XX

Working Draft

Financial efficiencies (savings across both new councils; £m per annum)

	Total spend 7 councils 24/25 £m	Base Savings £m	Stretch Savings £m	Base Saving % of Existing Cost Base
Senior Management	15.4	6.3	6.3	41%
All Remaining Workforce excluding Education, Social Care, ICT	224.1	17.9	26.9	8%
ICT Systems and Workforce	34.6	9.6	11.0	28%
Office Accommodation	10.9	2.7	5.5	25%
Democratic Arrangements (1) Councillor Costs	4.2	0.9	0.9	23%
Democratic Arrangements (2) Election Costs	3.5	1.5	1.5	44%
Supplies and Services (non-ICT, non-Office Accommodation)	50.9	3.8	5.1	7.5%
Total savings across both new councils		42.9	57.3	10%

These savings build up over five years, with the entire £42.8m being delivered by 2032/33 as shown in the chart below:



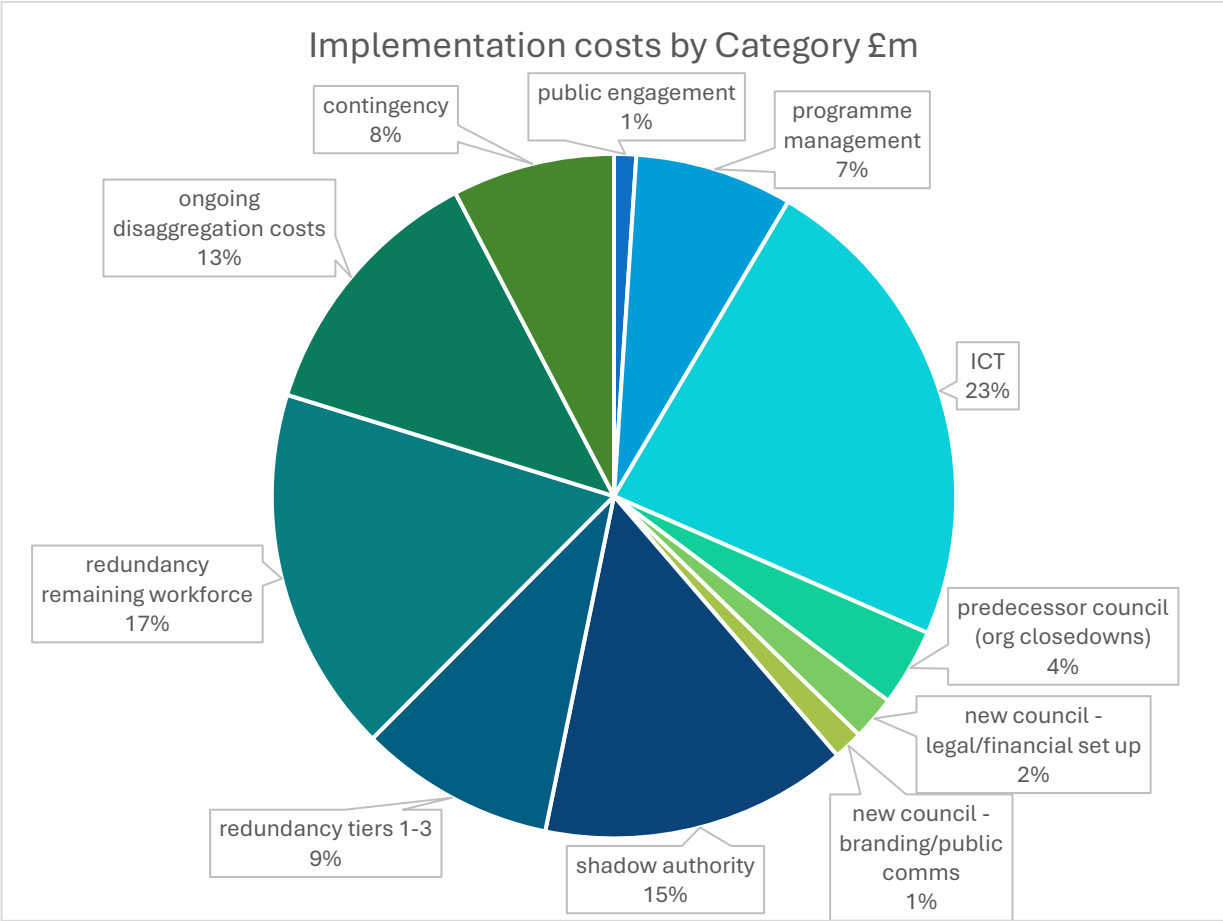
Projected transition and ongoing costs

Set against the savings are the one-off and ongoing costs of reorganisation, which are outlined in Table Y below, and explained in more detail at [Appendix XX](#):

One off and ongoing additional costs (across both new councils)

	Pre-Vesting Day		Post-Vesting Day				Line item total
	26-27 £m	27-28 £m	28-29 £m	29-30 £m	30-31 £m	31-32 £m	
Public Engagement		0.3	0.3				0.6
Programme Management	1.4	1.4	1.4				4.3
ICT		4.2	6.5	2.1	0.4		13.2
Predecessor Council (organisation closedowns)			2.1				2.1
New councils Legal/Financial set up		1.2					1.2
New councils Public Comms/Branding		0.4	0.4				0.8
Shadow Authority Costs		8.3					8.3
Redundancy Tier 1-3			5.3				5.3
Redundancy Remaining Workforce				4.9	4.9		9.9
Ongoing Disaggregation Costs			1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	7.2
Contingency	0.1	1.6	1.8	0.9			4.4
Total	1.5	17.5	19.7	9.7	7.1	1.8	57.4

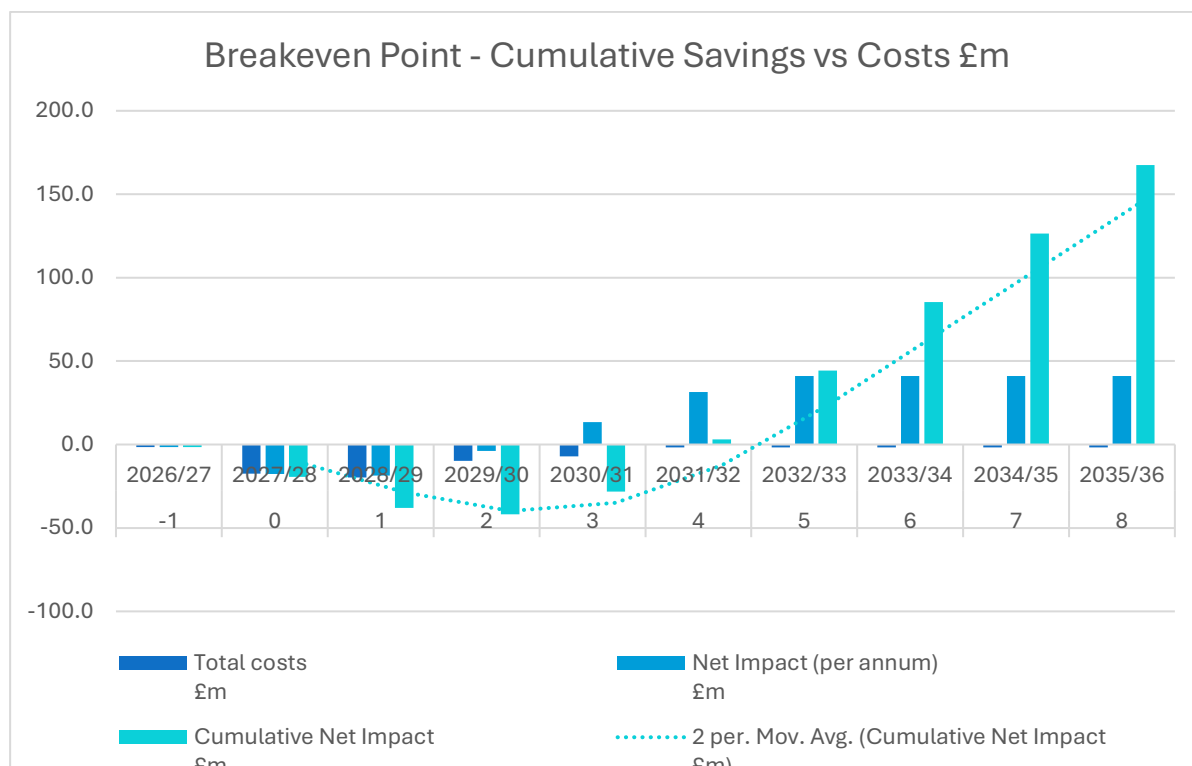
The Implementation Costs by Category and percentage of overall spend are shown below (using the data from the above table):



Payback Period

Option B pays back by Year 4 of the new authorities, meaning the savings will outweigh the upfront costs in only four years, freeing up recurring savings to support the cost of delivering frontline services and deeper transformation – creating a virtuous cycle.

Cumulative Savings vs. Cost of Implementation



Payback Period, using the base case savings scenario

Year	Financial Year	One off Costs £m	Recurring Costs £m	Total Costs £m	Recurring Savings £m	Net Impact (per annum) £m	Cumulative Net Impact £m
-1	2026/27	-1.6	0.0	-1.6	0.0	-1.6	-1.6
0	2027/28	-17.5	0.0	-17.5	-0.2	-17.7	-19.3
1	2028/29	-17.9	-1.8	-19.7	1.1	-18.6	-37.9
2	2029/30	-7.9	-1.8	-9.7	5.9	-3.8	-41.8
3	2030/31	-5.3	-1.8	-7.1	20.7	13.5	-28.2
4	2031/32	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	33.2	31.4	3.1
5	2032/33	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	44.2
6	2033/34	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	85.3
7	2034/35	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	126.4
8	2035/36	0.0	-1.8	-1.8	42.9	41.1	167.5

Comparison of savings and costs for all LGR options

	Savings	Costs	Payback year
Option A	£12.1m	£34m	6
Option B	£42.8m	£57.4m	4
Option C	£6.2m	£14m	2
Option D	£1.4m	£41m	50+
Option E	£2.3m	£17m	8

Council Tax Harmonisation

New unitary authorities are required to harmonise their Band D council tax within 7 years (council taxes must be fully harmonised by year 8). In practice, though, most new unitary authorities harmonise within 1 or 2 years.

A detailed explanation of the impact on each existing authority's council tax levels is set out at **Appendix XX**.

Conclusion: financial sustainability

Option B creates two genuinely sustainable councils with the financial strength to deliver for residents over the long term.

The £57.4m implementation investment delivers clear value: full payback by 2031/32 (year 4 after Vesting Day) and cumulative net savings of £167.4m by 2035/36. This is not simply reorganisation – it's a strategic investment that pays for itself and generates substantial ongoing savings.

Critically, Option B is the only proposal that genuinely addresses the levelling-up agenda for Peterborough and northern Cambridgeshire. It ensures the northern unitary has the scale, financial resilience and capacity to tackle entrenched deprivation and inequality.

Option B also aligns economic geography with governance. By matching council boundaries to areas designed for growth, it creates the conditions for economic expansion to generate the tax base needed to fund improving public services – a virtuous cycle that benefits all our communities.

Theme 3 – Better Public services

“prioritising the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens” with “consideration given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety”.

Transformation and public service reform

Reorganising councils presents an opportunity to be innovative, address current challenges and to make sure they are fit for the future. It can act as a catalyst to improve outcomes for all our residents, alongside wider reforms including:

- The NHS 10-year plan (analogue to digital; treatment to prevention; and hospitals to community)
- Planned reforms to Children’s Services, SEND and Adult Social Care (Casey Commission and the development of a national adult social care reform plan).

We should take an ambitious and localised approach to transformation so that services are organised for our local communities to thrive as they have requested.

People, Powered, Places is a preventative-led approach, with strong roots in local communities, building on evidenced based practice to reduce demand for statutory care, increase responsiveness and provide greater value for money for the taxpayer.

Well targeted investments that support prevention reduce spend on crisis services, strengthen councils’ fiscal resilience and improve labour market outcomes⁴³.

Four key public service benefits of Option B:

- **Better financial resilience to future poof services**
- **Greater fairness and better outcomes**
- **Localised approach to service delivery**
- **Councils committed to putting residents first when transforming services**

⁴³ [Institute for Government 2025](#)

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Greater Cambridge Councils will provide measurably better outcomes than the status quo and achieve better value public services for the taxpayer.

Each council will have distinct qualities and strengths and the best prospects to address their particular local challenges compared with alternative options.

Greater Cambridge faces significant housing affordability challenges and rising SEND pressures, while North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough has greater deprivation, higher working age care needs and an ageing population

The new councils will seek join the national 'Test, Learn, Grow' programme to redesign services through a place-based approach.

This will build on preventative services already provided, use existing community centres and establish Best Start Family Hubs as the backbone of this approach.

Adoption of neighbourhood-based models of service delivery will enable both councils to begin the journey to genuinely integrate social care, education and health services, with housing, community safety and the wide range of preventative services currently provided.

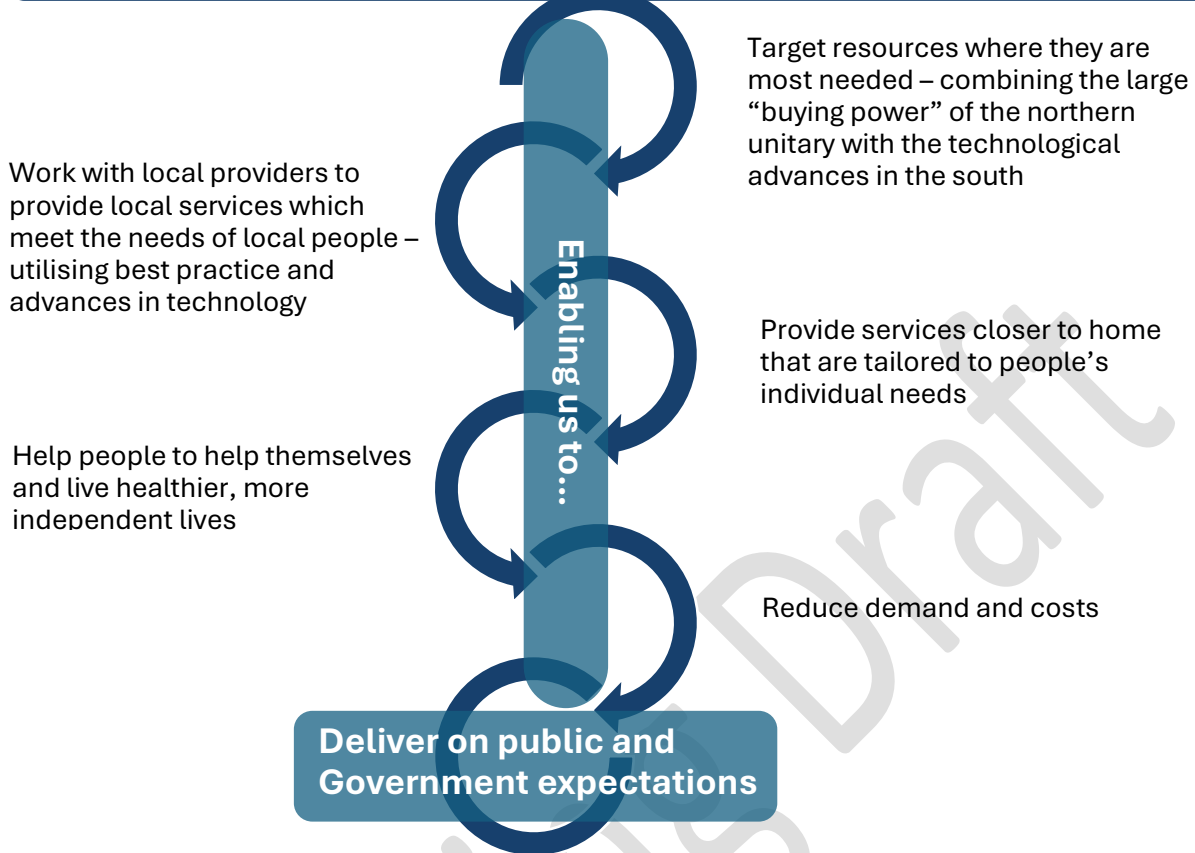
Both councils will be designed to deliver more effective and more responsive services that residents have called for in response to surveys about their reorganisation priorities.

Other reorganisation proposals **do not** provide these benefits. They would:

- create a greater imbalance in social needs between each council area, which could risk perpetuating inequalities in health and employment outcomes
- place additional strain on council budgets
- create the risk of a postcode lottery for residents with housing needs by mixing areas with council owned homes and areas with no council owned homes
- not support growth prospects for the whole area, which will affect future funding for local services

Over time these disadvantages could create greater unfairness between the quality and funding for public services that residents living in each council area receive.

People, Powered, Places recognises the diverse needs of our
neighbourhoods



Simply “lifting and shifting” existing services into the new councils will not resolve these demand and cost pressures. That approach is likely to result in cost and demand trajectories continuing to rise unsustainably.

People, Powered, Places is a new approach for the area which redesigns the way services are delivered to help reduce demand for statutory services and support greater independence and community resilience.

Each council has the right scale to fund services that can enable communities to thrive but is local enough to care.

Summary

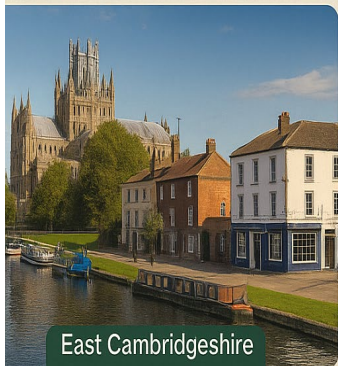
Option B offers the best opportunity to deliver better outcomes for the whole region's residents.

- **Scale and funding where it is needed most because this achieves greater fairness, in particular to improve outcomes for our more vulnerable residents**
- **Designing into the new councils the priorities that residents have told us they want: better health infrastructure, better community facilities, and respect for community identity**
- **A focus on community powered health that puts residents front and centre; going to where residents need us most – to their neighbourhoods and homes**
- **More responsive authorities that are better at listening to communities to understand and respond to feedback in a timely manner that delivers results**

Public services in North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

One council for city, market towns and the Fens



At a glance:

Population:
~612,000 (4th-
largest unitary by
population)

GDP/head
~£31,120
(England median)

Settlement mix:
57% rural / 43%
urban.

Budget per head
~£916

8/10 residents
live and work in
council area

Needs profile :	• Below English average population needs, but unevenly spread. Deprivation hotspots in Peterborough and Fens market towns • Ageing rural communities; higher working-age social care in urban areas; rising adolescent Learning Disability (LD) and autism
Value for money & governance	• Buying power where it is most need to deliver better value for money people services • Localised governance to enable district level accountability: ‘buy big – deliver locally’
Adult Social Care	• Scale to reshape care markets by developing local providers • Joined up prevention, social care and NHS neighbourhoods to keep people independent - home adaptations, reablement, community support, hospital discharge
Children’s & SEND	• Single children’s services for c. +60,000 additional young people (beyond Peterborough), covering child protection, SEND and school admissions. Focus on early help and attainment • Reduced costs by sharing best practice (Peterborough currently 2× County spend per child); • Scale comparable to Leeds and North Yorkshire, which have ‘outstanding’ Ofsted ratings
Housing & Homelessness	• One housing authority to set strategy, align with Housing Associations to increase homes and standardise tenancy support (all council homes already transferred to HAs). • Integrate homelessness prevention with social care; expand Housing First and targeted support for care leavers and older people
Planning & Transport	• Residents have one body to hold to account for potholes, traffic calming and major schemes. One Local Plan supporting key growth sites. One voice to influence CPCA on bus networks and stations and deliver CPCA policy • Build on Peterborough’s strengths in skills, highways, and planning for market-town renewal
Waste & Street Cleansing	• Standardise recycling/collections across the area; larger fleet can lower unit costs; • Smaller back-office allows more frontline work; rural areas benefit from shared kit/crews; crews directed to fly-tipping and litter hotspots regardless of old boundaries
Overall outcomes	• Increased resident satisfaction, lower cost through scale, smoother transition (building on Peterborough’s unitary footing), and neighbourhood-level delivery tailored to different communities

Public services in Greater Cambridge



At a glance:

Population.
~322,000 (ONS
2024); 40th-
largest unitary.

GDP/head
~£49,260; budget
per head ~£1,055

Settlement mix:
64% urban / 36%
rural.

Age profile: U18s
19.2% / 65+
16.0%.

9/10 residents
live and work in
council area

 Needs profile	Below England average population need; low children's social care but rising SEND needs with population growth Housing affordability and above-average rough sleeping; pockets of deprivation (North/East Cambridge) and isolated rural poverty; ageing population in rural villages
Value for money & governance	• Strong emphasis on prevention and community resilience to manage demand as the council receives lower care grant • One council to simplifying complex governance and accountability building on existing shared services
Adult Social Care	• Care joined up with housing and community health to reduce inequalities and keep people independent - home care, adaptations, reablement and care-tech pilots • Streamlined hospital discharge with Addenbrooke's and GPs; single accountable pathway, with fewer hand-offs
Children's & SEND	• Integrated approach to safeguarding and school place planning; family hubs and early help aligned to district community assets and housing services • One council coordinating education, transport and inclusion leading to better SEND provision and planning • Social investment in local care homes supporting the most vulnerable children
Housing & Homelessness	• Back-office consolidation to reinvest savings in new supply and support. One landlord authority (c. 1 in 10 homes council-owned) with significant opportunity for integration with ASC to support prevention agenda • Integrate homelessness prevention with ASC/Children's; scale Housing First and key-worker housing offers
Planning & Transport	• Already shared Local Plan; integrate GCP for one growth plan for labs, homes and infrastructure • Local control of roads/traffic management for faster schemes and better bus/active-travel integration
Waste & Street Cleansing	• Extend Greater Cambridge Shared Waste to waste disposal for higher recycling rates, and stronger commercial income • Integrated street cleansing and highways so city and villages get consistent standards; less back-office duplication and more frontline time
Overall outcomes	• Prevention-led, integrated services to address complex area profile (rising SEND, housing/rough sleeping pressures, and complex transport challenges) • Workforce plan for mental health practitioners, occupation therapists (Ots), Educational Psychologists. • Clearer accountability, quicker delivery, and better value for Greater Cambridge residents

Benefit 6 - Better financial resilience to future proof services for residents

The largest pressure on councils' budgets comes from “people services” - Children's Services, SEND, Education, Adult Social Care, Housing, Homelessness, Community Safety, and Public Health.

These statutory, demand-led services must be provided whenever residents meet eligibility criteria, and therefore account for most council spending.

These services are also the most complex and high-risk areas of council delivery.

Both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council spend a higher proportion on these services than the national average.

On different measures of financial resilience, both existing upper tier councils have a higher exposure to financial risk than councils nationally.

	CIPFA Financial Resilience	LGA Financial Stress	% High Demand Services	Main drivers
Cambridgeshire	3rd quartile – above average exposure	4.3 medium	61%	Rising SEND deficit (£63m tbc.), adult social care inflation, but healthy tax-base and capital financing ratio
Peterborough	4th quartile – highest exposure	7.6 high	67%	Minimal reserves, history of in-year overspends, high debt charges, SEND deficit & homelessness pressures.

Why Costs are Rising

Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will keep driving cost growth due to:

- **rising population:** our region's population is growing well above the UK average – we need to plan for increased demand in a coherent and effective way
- **rising complexity of need** due to a variety of social and economic factors and better diagnosis
- **ageing populations**, which drive demand for adult social care, and place additional costs on councils when fewer people will be responsible for the costs of their own care
- **increasing working age population**, which will lead to more adults of working age with care and support needs, including younger adults with disabilities
- **increasing SEND demand**, partly resulting from rising children's mental health and neurodevelopmental referrals.¹
- **higher than average inflation** due to workforce challenges and a lack of in-area supply resulting in costly out-of-area placements, for example for children's care and SEND placements

Financial Sustainability

It is essential to consider the distribution of statutory needs across the region when designing new unitary councils, as discussed in section XX

It is also essential to protect early help and preventative support. Earlier intervention can prevent needs and costs unnecessarily escalating.

Our proposal will give each new council greater resilience because financial risks are pooled and/or diversified more effectively across the whole region than in other options.

Services will be configured to support affordable housing and economic growth, and joint commissioning arrangements will be fully exploited.

This creates more sustainable council finances and is ultimately better for our residents and provides better value public services for the taxpayer.

Both councils are the right size to work effectively for their needs profile.

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

- Population of over 600,000 exceeding the Government's guidance for resilience; and a larger share of the total adult social care, children's services and public health budget and resource, increasing its ability to benefit from economies of scale.
- Additional £50m per annum due to anticipated reforms to local government finance to reflect population size and needs profile.
- Total reserves at £203.3m are higher per capita than any other northern unitary option - greater resilience against more volatile costs of demand led statutory services.
- Commissioning scale where demand pressures are greatest. Buying power is concentrated exactly where it is needed most with Peterborough and Fenland part of a larger unitary. This offers better value for money and better-quality specialist services. It could include promoting the expansion of local micro providers and micro enterprises to meet the needs of rural communities.
- Independent modelling by Newton suggests that its characteristics (population, need, funding) give it the best chance of achieving Ofsted 'Good' for Children's Services than other northern unitary options.
- Comparable budget per head (£1,055) to the northern unitary in Option A (£1,057).

Greater Cambridge

- Population of over 322,000⁴⁴ exceeding the Government's minimum for resilience. It would be the 20th largest of the 64 existing unitary authorities in England; and is forecast to grow to over 400,000 by 2040 based on existing plans.
- It would have higher than England average homelessness pressures and rising demand for SEND. Smaller commissioning scale could add a premium for specialist care provision. However, the population is above median size for authorities that achieve 'Outstanding' children's services.
- Independent modelling by Newton suggests its characteristics give it the same chance of achieving Ofsted 'Good' for Children's Services as other southern unitary options.

⁴⁴ 63 Unitary Authorities in England, mean population 269,397; median 230,185 (ONS, 2024)

- It would have sufficient per capita budget at £916 to meet lower social needs; and following council tax harmonisation it would have the same Council Tax rate but lower statutory needs than other southern unitary options.
- Total reserves at £206.8m are higher per capita than other southern unitary options, which provides greater mitigation against financial volatility for demand led statutory services.
- Anticipated reforms to local government finance will reduce annual funding by £5m because it has lower social care needs.
- Opportunities to collaborate with the world-leading research and innovation economy on care-tech and workforce development programme, including integrated-care models, and digital innovation pilots for early intervention.
- Over 1 in 10 homes would be council-owned. This would facilitate significant opportunities to integrate social care, social housing and health services to enable a stronger preventative approach and improve vulnerable resident outcomes.

Commissioning at the right scale

Where cross-boundary collaboration offers better outcomes and value for money, and support national reforms to the NHS, social care and SEND the new councils could maintain existing or establish joint commissioning and other arrangements.

Services	Collaboration	Rationale
Community Equipment & Assistive Technology	Joint commissioning with NHS across Greater Cambridge and NC&P	Economies of scale; consistent specification
Hospital Transfer of Care Hubs	Shared cross-boundary hubs at acute hospitals	Supports timely discharge, avoids duplication
Learning Disability Respite and Day Services	Reciprocal access agreements across Greater Cambridge and NC&P	Protects continuity where current services cater for specific cohorts
High cost children's services and specialist mental health and learning disabilities services	Joint commissioning arrangements/unit across Greater Cambridge and NC&P	Economies of scale; consistent specification
Safeguarding Adults Boards and Community Safety Partnerships	Shared/adapted arrangements across Greater Cambridge and NC&P	Maintains strong partnerships and critical expertise
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Services	Shared best practice approaches across Greater Cambridge and NC&P, aligned with health, community safety and welfare	Integration across housing, social care and public health to reduce risk of rough sleeping

Financial modelling by Newton for the County Council's Network

Newton's analysis suggests that Option B achieves £1.6m lower overall costs from year one for 'people services' (CSC, ASC, SEND, and Homelessness) than current arrangements.

Newton also suggests Option A would lead to higher forecast costs for people services than are currently provided. Over the longer term to 2040, Option B will be £13m better value than Option A – the County Council's preferred option.

Newton forecasts that Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough would not have the extremes of per-resident costs and demand-led growth that other options would have. This means that high demand exposure is more sensibly spread.

Our proposal therefore balances financial risks more effectively than other proposals. This is better for financial resilience and sustainable council finances, and ultimately better for our residents.

Residents can have greater confidence that both councils can afford decent public services that will be fit for purpose in the future, including areas in the north with current financial challenges and higher deprivation.

Is Greater Cambridge large enough for Outstanding Children's Services?

The role of children's services is to ensure that all children, particularly the most vulnerable, are safe, supported, and can achieve good outcomes in every aspect of their lives.

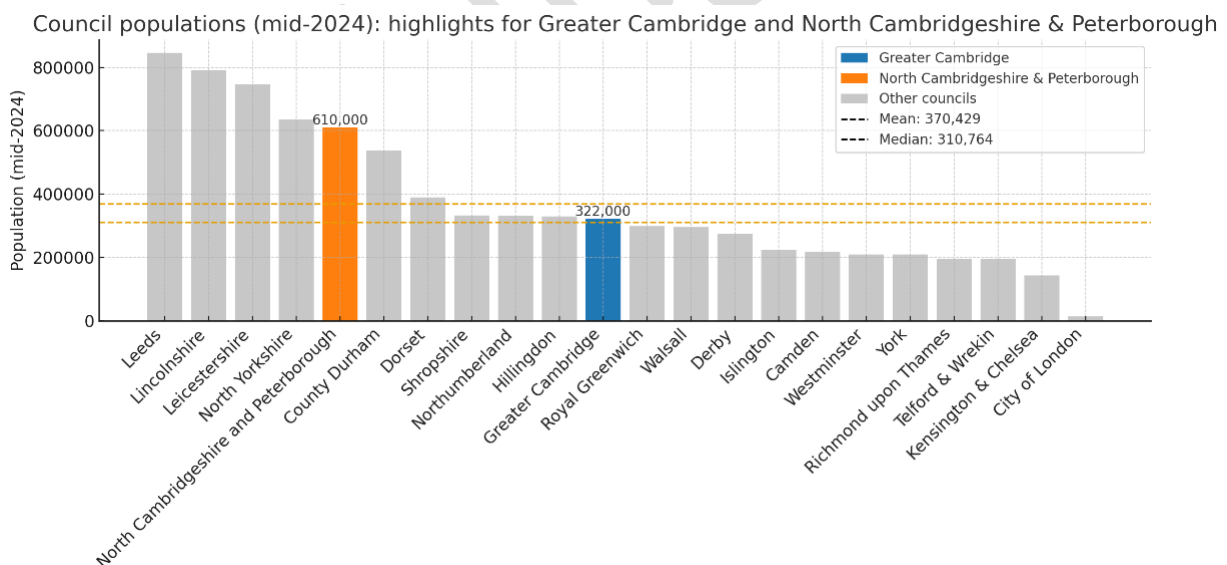
Peterborough City Council is currently rated 'Inadequate' and Cambridgeshire County Council 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted. Reorganising local government is an opportunity to deliver excellent children's services with the ambition to be outstanding.

It has been suggested that a Greater Cambridge authority would be too small to have effective Children's Services. In practice, it would receive a higher level of grant per under 18's than several authorities with 'Outstanding' Children's Services. Each of these authorities have the same and higher rates of children in care (CiC; national average 7 per 1000 under 18s) and populations that are smaller, of a similar size and larger.

- **Greater Cambridge: £992 per U18; 2.8/1000 CiC; pop 318,500**
- Richmond upon Thames: £689 per U18; 2.9/1000 CiC; pop. 195,500
- York: £952 per U18; 8/1000 CiC; pop 207,000
- Shropshire: £982 per U18; 10.4/1000 CiC; pop. 329,000
- North Yorkshire: £936 per U18; 3.8/1000 CiC; pop. 627,500
- (North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - tbc)

**2022 ONS mid-year population estimate and DfE CIC used to be consistent with Pixel financial model inputs used to calculate Greater Cambridge Children's Social Care Relative Needs Formula*

Comparison of population size with 'Outstanding' Ofsted rated Children's Services



Benefit 7 - Greater fairness and better outcomes for all residents

Our proposal creates the most balanced and equitable distribution of needs and demand for key people services. These services account for the majority of council spending.

This is fairer and better for everyone in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough than any of the alternative options (see options appraisal pgXX).

It would allow each council to develop distinct people services and strategies to meet the different demands upon statutory services from their unique local communities. Designing councils to reflect the region’s variation in local needs profiles supports better outcomes.

Better outcomes: each authority can develop specialist people services and strategies tailored for the different statutory needs of their communities.	
North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Older profile and greater deprivation, with children’s and ASC demands concentrated in Peterborough and the Fens. Its scale offers the advantage to address higher cost services by buying better and building local alternatives to costly out of area placements. It will need to focus on growing provision and workforce capacity to address family homelessness, adolescent edge of care, SEND sufficiency and travel; and shaping the market in supported living and rural home-care across Huntingdonshire, Fenland, and East Cambridgeshire.	Greater Cambridge Lower statutory needs, a younger and healthier population but fast-growing with pressures on housing affordability and SEND provision. With lower budget per capita and less buying power the council will need to focus its plans and strategies on a prevention first approach. In particular, building schools and SEND inclusion in fast-growing new communities, building affordable housing, improving rough-sleeping pathways, and developing a tech-enabled care offer.

Our proposal will encourage ongoing collaboration and partnership between the two councils. They will be stronger by working together; sharing best practice and local insights, co-commissioning and looking ahead at how public services will continue to change in future, including due to anticipated government reforms.

Two councils, each built around what their communities need.

Greater Cambridge focuses on *prevention and inclusion* (lower statutory demand, fast growth).

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough focuses on *stronger protection and support* (higher need today, more complex cases).

One size doesn't fit all. Option B creates scale where it is needed most. It lets both councils specialise in what works best for their places and encourages ongoing cross-council collaboration for service delivery.

The average level of need for children's services, adult social care and homelessness is lower for our proposed councils than the national average across all key metrics, and lower than the alternative options (Options A, C, D and E). The exception is rough sleeping due to the higher concentration in Cambridge.

Options A, C, D and E concentrate levels of need, neglect and deprivation in the northern unitary. When combined with the significant financial challenges in Peterborough and higher ASC needs in Fenland, these options risk creating greater inequality of outcomes across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

All other options risk deepening social inequalities and placing disproportionate pressure on a single authority, which lacks the scale or financial resilience to respond effectively.

Population-weighted metrics: People Services

	Children in Care (CiC) per 1,000 (0-17)	Children in Need (CiN) per 1,000 (0-17)	EHCP (%)	ASC per 1,000 adults	Temporary accommodation households per 1,000 dwellings	Rough sleepers per 100,000
Option B: Greater Cambridge	2.8	11.3	4.7	11.9	5	9.3
Option B: North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	5.6	21.7	4.8	15.3	4.7	7.6
Option A: South	3	12.1	4.8	11.7	4.3	7.5
Option A: North	6	22.8	4.7	16	5.2	8.8
Option C: Southwest	3.3	13.7	4.6	12.5	3.9	6.8
Option C: Northwest	6.3	23.5	4.9	16	5.9	9.9
England (average)	7	33.3	5.3	19.7	5.1	8.1

To enable a more meaningful comparison of social needs across key people services (Children's, Adults, SEND and Homelessness) for each option individual metrics can be integrated and presented as an index.

Social Needs Index

The table below illustrates a composite of indicators in the table above (table X). It also illustrates forecast changes in demand to 2040 based on Newton assumptions and ONS Subnational Population Projections which enable disaggregation by age group⁴⁵.

Option B has the most balanced and equitable social needs distribution between the two councils of all the options. This means that Greater Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough would both have lower needs initially and over the long term than options A and C.

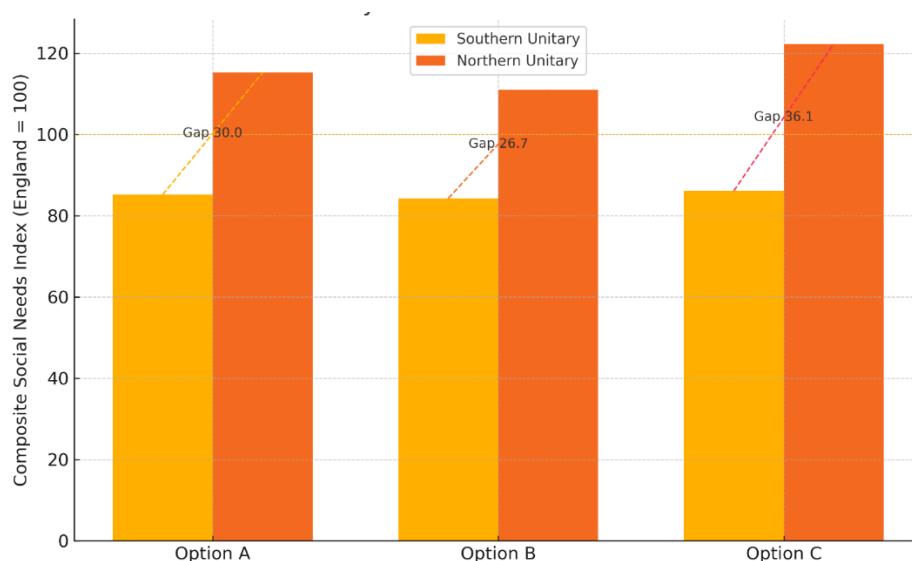
Under our proposal the difference in the social needs between each council's population are also narrower than alternative options (Options A, C, D and E).

(England average = 100; 2024)

	Social Needs Index (2024)	Social Needs Index (2040)	Key Characteristics
Option A	South 61 North 83	South 85 North 115	Moderate balance; mixes higher and lower need areas, less coherent than B.
Option B	Greater Cambridge 61 North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough 79	Greater Cambridge 84 North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough 111	Lower social needs in each authority now and over the long term, and greater balance between each authority.
Option C	South-West 63 North-East 85	South-West 86 North-East 122	Creates highest need northern unitary; least balanced.

⁴⁵ See Annex XXX; the composite Social Needs Index (SNI) weighted domains as follows:
Adult Social Care 45 %; Children's 30 %; SEND 20 %; Homelessness 5 %.

'Comparison of Social Needs Index in 2040



Option B separates higher-growth, lower-need Greater Cambridge from higher-need, predominantly rural North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. Each authority has a clearer differentiation of needs that are more fairly distributed than the alternatives.

Family Psychology Mutual: helping families stay together

Huntingdon based social enterprise that empowers families using evidence-based practice.

Since being established 10 years ago, by former Cambridgeshire County Council staff, FPM have provided family therapeutic interventions to families whose children were on a trajectory to care. This work has avoided over ½ million care days, improving outcomes for young people and saving over £250m for councils.

Though Cambridgeshire based they are not currently operating here. That is a missed opportunity to grow local provision and adopt best practice that has been proven to work.

This would enable greater specialisation in each council area which means a better local offer, tailored to the needs of residents.

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough would have the commissioning scale and buying power where demand and costs for specialist services are greatest, whilst enabling governance models that support localised delivery.

Differentiated service strategies across distinct but complementary geographies would also allow sharper commissioning, workforce planning and risk management than Options A or C. This could include greater use of local exemplar providers⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ [helping_families_stay_together.pdf](#); [Family Psychology Mutual | Explore Evidence-Based Family Therapy](#)

Over time these comparative advantages could also improve the productivity and efficiency of the region's public services, though this has not been considered in the modelling.

Because our proposal provides a fairer and a lower distribution of social needs across the two new authorities it is structurally set-up to support better outcomes for local people. Each council is the right scale to work for the statutory social challenges they face and are set up to succeed.

Ferry Project, Wisbech, Fenland

The Ferry Project provides wrap-around person centred support to help homeless people and prevent homelessness.

As well as providing hostel and independent living accommodation for individuals with complex needs it also teaches the skills they need to live independently and access services.

By bringing council and health services 'into their home environment', trust is built between homeless people and care and health professionals.

The local GP practice also runs a drop-in service at the project with nurses and health and wellbeing coaches.

This has significantly improved health outcomes and reduced missed appointments achieving savings for stretched NHS budgets.

Benefit 8 - Localised approach to service delivery with partners and communities that prioritises prevention and early intervention

Neighbourhood and 'patch-based' working

In Option B, both new unitary councils will adopt neighbourhood and "patch-based" service delivery models, in both urban settings and more dispersed rural areas.

By adopting a localised approach, services will be better aligned to how people live and work and be shaped around the specific needs and characteristics of communities.

Community Powered: Health at the Hub

In Melbourn in South Cambridgeshire residents can access a range of health and wellbeing services provided by Meridian Primary Care Network's Personalised Care Team at Cambridgeshire ACRE Melbourn Hub.

Services include help with anxiety, pressure of being a carer, giving up smoking, cervical screening, healthier eating and the menopause, amongst many other aspects of general wellbeing.

The initiative has brought services out of GP surgeries and into a community setting, to provide easier access for patients. Members of the team include Social Prescribers, Health Coaches and Care Co-ordinators.

Understanding local needs and addressing them through hyper-local service delivery – particularly in the larger North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Unitary, with its broad diversity of market towns, villages, and rural communities – will lead to better outcomes for residents.

This more tailored approach will also increase trust in services within communities, reduce demand failure and unleash greater levels of volunteering.

A localised approach provides opportunities to work more closely with other public and voluntary sector organisations that are also delivering services on an area or neighbourhood basis, including the police and NHS partners.

For example, the two councils will build on work by **integrated neighbourhood teams**, which are already operating with NHS partners, local government representatives and members of the voluntary and community sector.

A localised approach also unlocks the ability to work with smaller, grassroots organisations that are deeply embedded within their communities and have trusted relationships with residents. These groups are often best placed to identify emerging needs early and deliver

culturally relevant, accessible, and preventative services that reduce demand on more expensive statutory provision.

Our localised approach will build on existing local and national good practice, such as:

- Support for children, family and community centres, including the introduction of **Best Start Family Hubs**
- **Community hubs** - taking key services such as housing and financial advice into local areas and closer to vulnerable residents
- **Health, fitness and rehabilitation** – provided through a network of leisure centres, health centres and open spaces to support health, fitness and rehabilitation

Overall, this locally-led approach will strengthen community partnerships, improve service responsiveness, and reduce demand failure - creating a more sustainable and equitable model for delivering public services.

Case Study: Shaping Abbey, Cambridge

The Shaping Abbey programme is a collaborative, resident-centric approach to shaping services and investment priorities in Abbey and Barnwell neighbourhoods.

Community engagement is focused on regeneration and future growth, addressing ASB, and co-designing youth services.

This approach has been recognised in the UK Government's Civil Society Covenant as a national example of empowering local people to positively influence their neighbourhoods, or community wealth building.

[Shaping Abbey - Abbey People](#)



Prioritising prevention and early intervention

Option B will provide a platform for preventative approaches and early-intervention, which will help address the significant demand pressures for people services identified above and reduce long-term spending on costly crisis interventions.

Neighbourhood and patch-based delivery facilitates greater focus on prevention and early intervention. It enables each unitary authority to determine spending priorities and strategies around prevention and early intervention, ensuring that public services are better aligned with how people live and work.

It will enable the two unitary councils to begin the journey to genuinely integrate social care, education and health services, with the wide range of district council-led, locally-based preventative services, such as social housing, homelessness prevention, financial and debt advice, community safety, leisure services, and open space provision.

Neighbourhood-level service integration will bring valuable community insights into provision of social care, education and health services and help ensure that vulnerable households are identified earlier and supported more holistically.

Furthermore, commissioning through local models enables greater flexibility to engage community groups, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, and parish councils as delivery partners for prevention, wellbeing, and low-level support services.

Accessing early support can improve independence and resilience for residents and prevent escalation and demand for statutory services.

The two unitary councils will build upon and strengthen existing preventative services that are working well and use them as the backbone of our approach.

For example, there are a number of existing hubs that can act as nodes for a neighbourhood service delivery network:

- **Early Help** - large numbers of families in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are supported by Early Help, with assessment rates that are above the English average
- **Family Hubs** supporting parents and young children, with examples in place already in Peterborough (e.g. Honey Hill and Orton Family Hubs)
- **Community Hubs and Centres** providing a wide range of resources for communities
- **Breakfast clubs** currently being piloted in 12 Cambridgeshire schools as part of the national programme

Our proposal can enable a range of joined-up, preventative services at a neighbourhood level to help individuals and families to access the services they need, when they need them – building their own personalised support system.

Best Start Family Hubs

Better support during early years can improve education outcomes and reduce inequality. The government is investing £1.5 billion to improve support for babies, children and families.

Best Start Family Hubs serve as a one-stop-shop, where families can access joined-up services:

- **community services and support networks**
- **parenting classes and health services**
- **financial and housing advice**
- **early education resources**, including for children with additional needs

Lauren, 22, a first-time mum in Peterborough attends two perinatal mental health groups, which she says has transformed her mental health and helped her son's development.

"I turned up for a Babbling Babies. All my friends are [now] from the groups. It's made a real difference."

Benefit 9 - Putting residents first when transforming services

Local government presents an opportunity to be innovative, address current challenges and ensure that we have council services that are fit for the future.

Moving towards a model of integrated, neighbourhood-based, preventative services will involve significant transformation for both of the new unitary councils.

Our proposal will put residents first as part of this transformation through:

- Co-designed and community-led services
- Whole system approaches
- Digital transformation to improve the experience of people using council services
- Ensuring that statutory people services are safe and legal on day one

Co-designed services

Residents have consistently told us through consultations and feedback that they want councils to put users first when designing services.

The two unitary councils will co-design services with users wherever possible, as this will enable the councils to improve services and better meet people’s needs.

As part of the service redesign process for people services, the councils will engage and collaborate with people with lived-experience, including children in care and care-leavers, supported older people, disabled people, people with mental health needs, families and carers.

Once new services are established, the two councils will also work closely with residents (through the community engagement approaches outlined in Theme 4) to shape service priorities around the needs of users.

Best Start Family Hubs

An iterative place-based approach to redesigning services at local level with communities – rewiring the state from the bottom up and also changing Whitehall too.

The initiative includes increasing the uptake of **Best Start Family Hubs** to support parents and young children, establishing neighbourhood health services, better support for children with special needs, getting more people into work, rolling out breakfast clubs, and tackling violence against women and girls.

We want to be part of the national programme to embed a ‘Test, Learn, and Grow’ approach as we establish new councils by [becoming an accelerator area](#).

Community Powered Health: making prevention a reality

A central London primary care network employs local people as Community Health Workers. [The results](#) have been promising. From reducing hospital admissions and GP appointment by 10 per cent and 7 per cent to tackling loneliness and detecting and preventing illness early.

This example and other initiatives are changing the way communities engage with healthcare, particularly for those most in need and are helping to join-up disconnected local and NHS services.

‘Healthier Fleetwood’, in Lancashire has had similar results by working with local communities to bridge the gap between services and residents to help people improve their own health and wellbeing. Within a year, A&E attendance had dropped by over 17 per cent.

In Sheffield, a group of GPs have transferred 25 per cent of their additional roles budget to a local community anchor organisation – the Heeley Trust. Their health coaches report significant improvements in people’s weight, blood pressure and measures of confidence.

People, Powered, Prevention works.

[A Community-Powered NHS - New Local](#)

Hospital discharge and community support

The NHS and local authorities work together to support patients discharged from hospital that are eligible to get the right social care support at home.

In Cambridgeshire, 79% of people remain at home 91 days after being discharged and receiving reablement. The figure for Peterborough is 71%. [*Microsoft Power BI (ASCOF)*]

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough perform poorly on this measure, ranked at 112th and 141st respectively, out of 153 nationally. The average is 84%.

Areas that send patients for treatment to our hospitals have higher reablement outcomes. Norfolk 82.7%; Suffolk 85.7%; Hertfordshire 83.4%; Essex 87% and Lincolnshire 91.7%.

This suggests that being treated at hospital in your local authority has less bearing on the outcome than the quality of local social care provided.

LGR offers significant scope for improvement in reablement outcomes by adopting a community powered approach.

Whole system approaches

When designing new services, the two new councils will put users' needs first, and design services around them, rather than starting with operational requirements or the structure of services.

As well as integrating upper tier and district council services, the two new councils will develop strong partnerships with public, voluntary and community organisations to develop whole-system solutions around the needs of residents and service users.

Changing Futures in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

We can build on the platform provided by our existing whole-system partnership for individuals with multiple and complex needs.

Changing Futures is a cross-government initiative supporting people facing multiple disadvantage, such as homelessness, mental ill-health, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the programme focuses on trauma-informed approaches, relational practice, peer support, and better coordination across services that too often operate in silos.

Early evaluations highlight improved engagement, stronger partnerships, and opportunities to reshape services around prevention and recovery.

[Impact data to follow]

Digital transformation

The transition to the new councils and the transformation of services will be underpinned by digital transformation and innovation.

We will build on best practice to design digital systems and services around the needs of services users, so that they help improve outcomes for residents and communities.

To ensure that residents benefit from more seamless and joined-up services, the two councils will implement efficient and effective data sharing systems, both across council services and with other public sector organisations.

Case management systems will be configured for the new authority footprints, with interoperability built in to ensure information sharing with NHS, housing, and education partners.

The councils will also use predictive analytics to identify where early support could be offered and intervention activity targeted to prevent needs escalating. For example, sharing with adult services data about people who have requested assisted bin collections and may be at greater risk of falls or isolation, or data about cases of self-neglect and hoarding.

The two unitaries will work with the globally significant technology and life sciences sectors to develop digital innovation pilots for early intervention and integrated care.

There are opportunities to leverage the expertise that exists in world leading tech companies located in Greater Cambridge, together with the research and clinical skills present in the NHS (including Cambridge University Hospitals, Papworth Hospital, Cambridge Children's Hospital, and the proposed new Cancer Hospital)

Case study - Low Income Family Tracker – LIFT

LIFT is an innovative data analytics tool used to identify vulnerable families. It integrates multiple datasets to provide insights at the household level.

South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and Peterborough are using LIFT to:

- prevent homelessness
- increase benefit uptake – in South Cambs supporting over £3.5m of pension credit claims and 377 families to access Healthy Start
- provide targeted debt advice support

There are plans to use LIFT to increase uptake of free school meals; support residents at risk of loneliness and isolation and take advantage of reduced water tariff to help reduce the cost of living and the impact of water use on the environment.

Case Study – Hey Geraldine!

Geraldine Jinks, a well-respected care expert at Peterborough City Council, worked with a leading AI company to transform herself into a ChatBot.

The 'Hey Geraldine' ChatBot gives advice to social workers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and saves on average 15 mins per conversation.

It means staff have instant access to advice on the technology-enabled care equipment they need to help residents stay in their own homes for longer.



Safe and legal statutory services from Day 1

Adult Social Care, Children's Services, SEND and education, Public Health, Housing, Homelessness, and Community Safety are vital statutory services. They are also the most complex and high-risk of our service areas.

While our proposal will take forward longer-term service transformation to improve outcomes for residents in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, it recognises that individuals and families must be safeguarded by robust transition and strong partnership arrangements. This will be vital to ensure that vulnerable people do not fall through the gaps during the transition period to the new unitary councils.

Our proposal will create two new unitary councils with statutory people services that are 'safe and legal' from day one. To achieve this we will disaggregate existing statutory Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council services into the two new authorities.

Service Area	Day 1	Future Transformation Options
Adult Early Help & Reablement	Existing locality teams transferred to new councils	Embedded into neighbourhood models; potential use of digital triage and reablement services
Care & Support Planning (Older People, Learning disabilities and mental health)	Teams lifted and shifted; existing Section 75 agreements continued	Renegotiate Section 75 to support local integration; embed Learning Disabilities and Autism into neighbourhood teams
Children's Social Care	Locality-based teams, Early Help, SEND and safeguarding transferred	Strengthened locality integration; expansion of in-borough fostering and residential provision
Education & SEND	Admissions, school improvement, SEND casework transferred	Co-commissioning with schools; expand in-area SEND provision to reduce out-of-county placements
Public Health	Statutory services (sexual health, substance misuse, health checks) transferred	Closer integration with ICS and neighbourhood health networks; stronger prevention-led focus
Housing and Homelessness	Housing and homelessness prevention teams transferred from districts into new councils	Integration of housing, health, and social care responses; early intervention to prevent homelessness
Specialist Legal Functions (e.g. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding)	Shared service across Greater Cambridge and NC&P to maintain critical mass	Long-term review of Liberty Protection Safeguards and shared resilience models

Theme 4 - Democratic representation, community engagement, local identity

Healthy democracy requires meaningful local connection and good governance. Our proposal delivers this balance through three key benefits:

- **Respect for distinct historic identities** that make Cambridgeshire and Peterborough unique
- **Strong democratic accountability while maintaining local connection**
- **Enhancement of community voice** through flexible, place-based engagement

Local Government: a brief history and ‘why is it so complicated?’

Local government emerged from our urban centres in Peterborough, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Ely a thousand years ago.

Beyond these self-governing towns, from the 13th to 19th century, in rural areas county courts performed basic administration on behalf of the Crown.

In 1888, these became elected county councils:

- the County of the Isle of Ely,
- the County of Huntingdon
- the County of Cambridge
- the Soke of Peterborough (a self-governing area within the County of Northamptonshire)

The Borough of Cambridge was not affected. However, it tried to become a ‘County borough’ or a unitary in 1912, 1946 and 1960.

These arrangements with five principal local authorities lasted until 1965.

Local origins

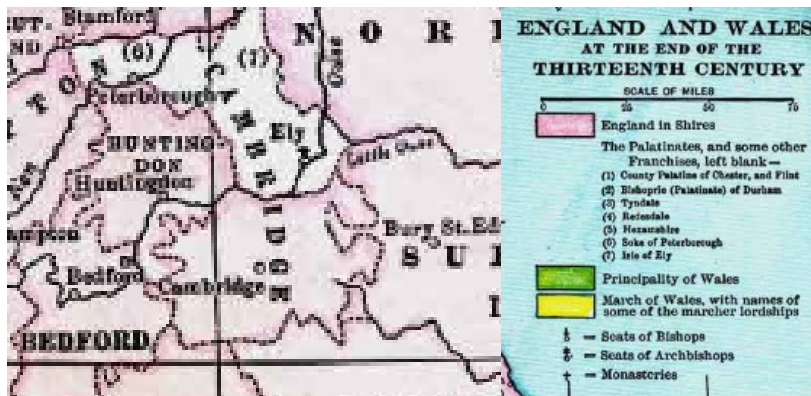
‘The Liberty (or Soke) of Peterborough’

was administered by the church from 972 until 1790, under powers bestowed by King Edgar. It was granted city status in 1541 by King Henry VIII.

Cambridge was noted as a key English borough with 10 wards in the Domesday Book in 1086. It received powers of self-government from King Henry I as early as 1120 and became a city in 1951.

‘**The Liberty of the Isle of Ely**’ was run by the Bishops of Ely from 1109 until 1836 - which included present day Fenland. Regarded as a city since the 12th century, Ely was granted city status in 1974.

Huntingdon became a self-governing borough in 1205 under power granted by King John I. Since 1630 it has continued to appoint a Mayor.



Evolution of local administration reflects complex identities and history



From 1965 to 1974, the four county councils merged into two to create Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely County Council, and Huntingdon and Peterborough County Council.

The last major local government reorganisation in 1974 gave us the arrangements we have today.

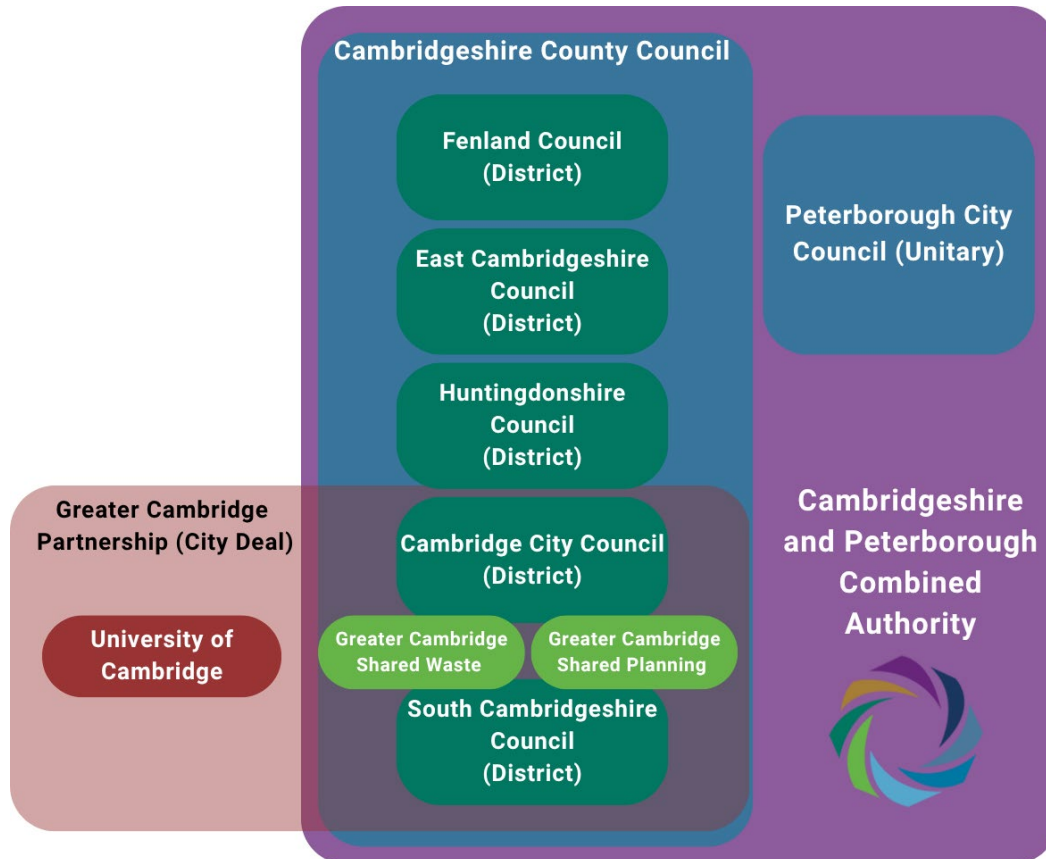
Those reforms created an enlarged Cambridgeshire County Council. The County took on powers previously held by the two cities, and former county councils became districts.

There have been more changes since then:

- **Peterborough City Council** became a unitary authority in 1998. The ceremonial County of Cambridgeshire, the Lieutenancy, was then changed to 'Cambridgeshire and Peterborough'.
- In 2014, the Greater Cambridge City Deal led to the creation of the **Greater Cambridge Partnership** – a joint committee of Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

- In 2017, the **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority**, with a directly elected mayor, was established.

Current Local Government governance arrangements across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



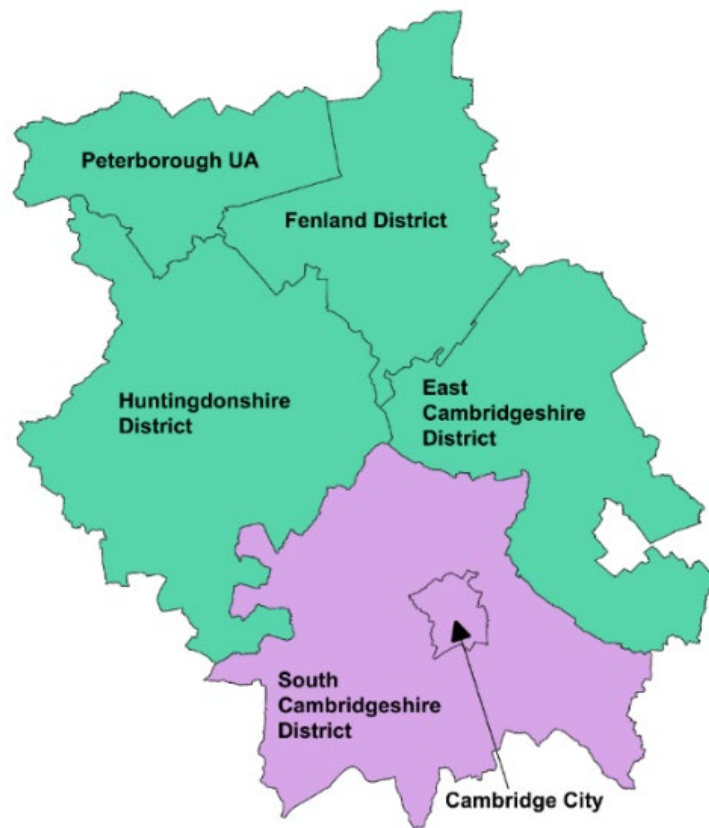
Local Government: what next?

Local government has changed as the area has changed. Today is no different.

Central Government's proposed reorganisation is a once in a generation opportunity to simplify uniquely complex arrangements across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Our proposal builds on the longstanding sub-regional identities and local governance that developed over millennia.

- the ancient administrative geographies of Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely, including Fenland – **North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Council** and
- a southern council that reflects the historically smaller County of Cambridge – **Greater Cambridge Council**



Democratic Representation: How will you be represented in future?

The ideal number of Councillors a local authority requires should take into account the capacity required to provide⁴⁷:

- **Strategic Leadership**
- **Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships) and**
- **Community Leadership**

There are currently 331 elected councillors serving Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Both Councils will operate with a Leader and Cabinet model of governance in accordance with the Government's clear position. This will ensure clear, visible and accountable leadership, and the Cabinet will be able to make decisions faster and with a strong strategic focus.

Leaders and Cabinets will be held to account by independently minded Scrutiny Committees. These committees will act as critical friends and offer constructive challenge to improve decision making on behalf of our communities.

The decision-making structures of the Councils will be reinforced with effective regulatory committees for Planning and Licencing, and a further range of committees to meet the governance needs of each Authority.

Councillors

Our proposal has carefully considered how many councillors each unitary council requires in order to achieve a strong level of democratic representation and maintain a deep connection to communities during the transition period.

The number of councillors must ensure democratic accountability and representation are sufficient to support good governance taking into account the geographic scale, mix of urban and rural areas, and the levels of deprivation.

⁴⁷ [Local Government Boundary Commission for England](#) (2023)

During the transition period, the Shadow Authorities must also maintain the confidence of the citizens they represent so that local needs, issues, and identities are fully reflected in the formation of the new unitary authorities.

North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

Currently 217 councillors represent an electorate of 432,904. This consists of:

- 183 district and unitary councillors, over 80 wards (Peterborough City, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire Councils) and;
- 34 county councillors over 33 divisions (Huntingdonshire, Fenland, East Cambridgeshire areas)

The elector-to-councillor ratio is as follows:

- District councillors serve an **average** ratio of 1:2,366
- County councillors serve an **average** ratio of 1:8,404

The proposal is that 125 councillors will be elected to the new authority. This will result in an elector-to-councillor ratio of 3,463.

This results in a reduction in the number of Councillors of 42%.

Greater Cambridge

Currently 114 councillors represent an electorate of 214,830. This consists of:

- 87 district and city councillors, over 40 wards (South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City) and;
- 27 county councillors over 26 divisions (South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City)

The elector-to-councillor ratio is as follows:

- District councillors serve an **average** ratio of 1:2,469
- County councillors serve an **average** ratio of 1:7,957

The proposal is that 65 councillors will be elected to the new authority. This will result in an elector-to-councillor ratio of 3,305.

This results in a reduction in the number of Councillors of 44%.

Community Engagement and Local Representation

Our proposal will create two new unitary councils that are committed to increasing community input into decision-making and ensuring that engagement is meaningful, inclusive, and responsive.

We are confident it can deliver:

1. Enhanced community voice through neighbourhood and area-based engagement
2. Improved engagement with diverse communities
3. Better democratic governance and increased civic trust

Reflecting the views of our communities, set out in Section 2 above, we will ensure:

- the needs of rural areas are not overlooked,
- all communities are well represented by knowledgeable councillors who understand their locality, and
- that partners including parish and town councils as well as the voluntary sector continue to play their key roles and are supported by the new councils in doing so

Our approach to engagement will be nuanced, recognising the differing needs in urban and rural communities and strike a balance between neighbourhood or patch-based engagement and the need to engage communities of interest.

The proposal recognises the learning and feedback from established mechanisms for local decision-making and community engagement from several of our existing local authorities, as well as examples of good practice from elsewhere.

Enhanced community voice through neighbourhood engagement

The two Councils will adopt a flexible approach to engage local communities on issues that are of interest to them and where community views add value to the decision-making process. This involves a range of different mechanisms, including both structured approaches and more dynamic, informal settings (see diagram below).

We will address the potential imbalance that our engagement exercise identified, by ensuring the scale of the new councils does not result in loss of local voice and that we maintain and protect a deep understanding of our local places.

The Councils will also adopt enhanced models of engagement in neighbourhoods where more significant change is being proposed (e.g. major housing development or regeneration schemes), or in communities where there are higher levels of deprivation or need or where rurality may act as a barrier to accessing services.

A range of public service providers (including local government, health and police services) and the VCSE will work collaboratively at a neighbourhood level and jointly engage with local residents.

In the North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough unitary, where communities are more dispersed across market towns, villages and rural areas, the new council will need to adopt hyper-local, “patch-based” approaches to engagement and service delivery.

This will be built on experience of the Integrated Neighbourhoods model that brings together health and social care resources to deliver hyper-local, community-focused care. Alternatively, similarly sized authorities such as in [North Yorkshire](#) have established Area Constituent Committees and provide a different approach. The new councils will need to reflect on best practice to establish localised forms of governance that are right for their communities and traditions.

Case Study: Haddenham CLT Scheme, East Cambridgeshire

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are organisations run by local people for local benefit. East Cambridgeshire Trading Company and Haddenham CLT worked in partnership to deliver the West End Gardens housing development, providing a mixture of private homes and affordable housing for residents with village ties. Local residents were involved in decisions around the land, house types, layout and design. The project was also designed to foster vibrant, cohesive communities, through balanced tenures and shared green areas and play spaces to encourage social interaction. 

Case Study: Using CIL to Strengthen Local Democracy, Huntingdonshire

In Huntingdonshire, local communities shape development-led investment through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Each year, parish and town councils receive a share of £6m CIL funding to reinvest locally. Residents and elected members influence how growth funds are invested, balancing immediate priorities with longer-term projects. A wide range of projects have been funded including community buildings, sports, play, green space, public realm and traffic management schemes. 



Resident Engagement Pathways

Improved engagement with diverse communities

We recognise that for some communities of identity or interest, neighbourhood or area-based engagement structures may not always reflect their needs and hopes. For example, young people told us in our engagement exercise that they do not feel well connected to their communities. The two new unitary councils will carry out targeted engagement with communities that are often underrepresented by traditional approaches.

This engagement will recognise the important role of:

- Councillors supporting these conversations in line with portfolio or service or ward responsibilities, helping to ensure insights from community groups to scrutinise, and to influence policy and delivery

- Community leaders convening conversations and engagement. Building on experience from existing councils, the two new authorities will enable engagement and community-building through partnership working, enhancing their relationships with communities of interest and faith groups
- When working with communities, embedding a process of continuous learning, empathy and dialogue is important as councils will need to adapt as communities and places change, and new priorities emerge

Our proposal will ensure:

- Clarity of responsibility, so residents understand how to hold democratic representatives to account
- All residents, no matter their location, have good local representation and a variety of opportunities to engage and influence decision-makers
- Historic identities are respected, fostering and promoting pride-in-place

Case Study: Youth Assembly, Cambridge

Throughout 2024 Citizen UK and partners including the Police, City and County Councils, Combined Authority, Housing Providers and Youth Charities commissioned the development of a Youth Assembly to work with young people over a number of months to hear directly from them about their hopes and needs of public services. This culminated in an Assembly, where the public sector got to hear directly from young people regarding their priorities for Cambridge. 

Case study: Islamophobia statement, Peterborough

Peterborough City Council have worked with the Joint Mosque Council to produce an Islamophobia statement highlighting the issues that many Muslims encounter. The statement will be used for the Council, Police, NHS, schools and other stakeholders to demonstrate their support to the Muslim community and develop bespoke actions.



Better democratic governance and increased civic trust and safety

We recognise elected members are central to community leadership. Councillors in the two new unitary councils will be empowered to act as champions of their communities, whether through place-based roles in neighbourhoods or interest-based roles aligned to themes and portfolios. Elected members will play a convening role, helping to lead local

conversations, support place-based work, and connect residents with council services and partner organisations.

Undertaking community engagement in this way is critical to ensuring that the new governance structures, including Cabinet and other committees make decisions based on local views and knowledge. It also complements the role that parish Councillors play, in areas where parish councils already exist.

Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) – a local approach to build into unitary governance

All six CSPs bring together councils, police, fire, NHS/ICB, probation/CRC and others local partners to set annual priorities informed by local strategic assessments.

CSPs in urban areas, Cambridge and Peterborough, tend to focus on the night-time economy, city-centre violence and ASB. There is more emphasis on visible patrols, guardianship and late-night hotspot policing around transport hubs and retail cores.

In rural areas - South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, CSPs focus on place-based problem solving, often coupling ASB prevention with community capacity building and small-grant interventions. They give more attention to vulnerability and rural isolation, fraud/scams/cyber, and practical deterrence.

Localised multi-agency partnerships put safety and wellbeing at the heart of community life. This type of approach could act as a model for local engagement and delivery in unitary councils.

Conclusion

Our proposal for two unitary councils recognises that effective local government must balance strategic scale with meaningful local connection.

The historic complexity of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's administrative arrangements reflects a millennium of distinct identities – from the ancient boroughs and counties to modern partnerships like the Combined Authority and Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all solution, our proposal respects these deep-rooted identities while creating the conditions for more effective democratic representation and community engagement.

By reducing councillor numbers by approximately 42-45% whilst maintaining elector-to-councillor ratios of around 1:3,400, we will create more strategic, accountable leadership without losing local voice.

The commitment to flexible, neighbourhood-based engagement – from hyper-local patch working in rural North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough to collaborative approaches in Greater Cambridge – demonstrates how the new unitary councils will maintain and strengthen community connections.

Building on proven approaches such as Community Infrastructure Levy reinvestment, integrated neighbourhoods, and targeted engagement with diverse communities, the two councils will be well-positioned to enhance civic trust and ensure all residents can influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Reorganisation is not simply an administrative exercise – it is an opportunity to create local authorities that are both more efficient and more responsive to the communities they serve, whilst preserving the distinct character and identity of the places that make up Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Theme 5 - Devolution

Benefit 13: Unlocking the full potential of devolution through balanced strategic governance

Option B positions Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to unlock the benefits of devolution by creating two economically balanced constituent councils that can engage effectively with the CPCA and national Government. This structure ensures strategic decisions on growth, transport, and investment reflect the distinct strengths and needs of both the Cambridge city-region and the North Cambridgeshire economy.

Governance arrangements

The CPCA was established as a Mayoral Combined Authority in 2017.

Following the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, all Mayoral Combined Authorities (including the CPCA) will automatically become Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs). The Bill proposes further devolution to MSAs such as the CPCA, including additional powers for transport, housing, strategic planning, economic development, skills, regeneration, health and public safety.

In future the powers and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner may also be taken on by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Our ambition is for greater devolution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, bringing more powers, decision-making and funding closer to our local communities. If our proposal is chosen by Government, we will work with the Mayor and MHCLG to ensure the right governance arrangements are in place to support further devolution.

There will need to be changes to the current governance arrangements of the CPCA, including its Executive Board, to reflect a reduction from seven constituent councils to two. It will be essential to ensure that new governance arrangements support the integrity and fairness of decision making, whilst ensuring that strategic decision-making enables economic growth and addresses the needs of the area as a whole.

We propose changes to CPCA governance arrangements to achieve this.

Current CPCA governance arrangements



Proposed CPCA governance arrangements



Each of the constituent local authorities will appoint two representatives to the Executive Board, following the approach adopted by the recently established North Yorkshire Combined Authority, which also has two constituent member councils.

This could improve decision-making by ensuring a greater plurality of views and perspectives, in particular where constituent member councils may have ‘no overall control’.

Balanced decision-making

Our proposal will create more balanced representation around the CPCA table than other options, leading to more effective strategic decision-making.

Although Option B leads to different population sizes between North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Greater Cambridge), it more importantly creates two constituent member councils with the same sized economics.

The two constituent members will represent two distinctly different and functional economic areas. Option B will support good governance and enable growth, jobs and housing across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by:

- allowing CPCA plans, strategies and investments to focus on each area’s unique strengths and challenges. For example, it will allow the CPCA to develop strategic transport and infrastructure planning and delivery around functional economies, rather than administrative boundaries
- creating opportunities to harness the complementary strengths of each area and address unique challenges with shared solutions, ultimately delivering balanced and inclusive growth across the whole region
- minimising the risk of policy, investment or delivery bias towards either member council, due to the equal economic balance between the two constituent authorities

Unlocking further growth and devolution

Option B will support the delivery of key national and regional priorities, act as a system enabler and help unlock future devolution opportunities.

It will support the Government’s continued focus on the Greater Cambridge economy as a driver of UK economic growth, including the recent announcement of £400 million additional funding for affordable homes, infrastructure and business expansion.

For example, the geographic alignment between the Greater Cambridge unitary and the Cambridge Growth Company will enable more coherent governance of economic growth, infrastructure and housing issues.

The priority sectors identified in the CPCA's Local Growth Plan⁴⁸ will be concentrated in either Greater Cambridge (Life Sciences, Digital and Technology) or North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (Advanced Manufacturing and Materials, Agri-Food and Tech and Energy and Clean-Tech) rather than dispersed across two or more different administrative footprints.

The NHS is going through a period of significant structural reform. From April 2026, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) will be abolished and merged with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB and Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB. It is expected the Chair of the new Central East ICS will be a co-opted member of the CPCA Executive Board.

The boundaries of the proposed two unitary councils will largely align with the current geography of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough North and South Care Partnerships. These 'Place' partnership are not statutory arrangements. The NHS has indicated that the new ICSs will realign 'place' footprints to match the new unitary councils that emerge through LGR⁴⁹.

Conclusion

Option B will complement the CPCA's increased spatial planning, transport and infrastructure, skills and housing powers with two council's representing coherent functional economic areas. The Mayor and constituent council Leaders will be in a better position to influence and deliver Government policy as both councils are of national significance ranked in the top 20 by GDP outside London.

Our proposal enables a more equitable partnership that supports regional economic coordination and maximises the benefits of devolution. Neither unitary will dominate the region's economic policy agenda, which will benefit the whole area, including delivery of the CPCA's strategic growth plans.

⁴⁸ CPCA [Local Growth Plan](#)

⁴⁹ [NHS England » Strategic commissioning framework](#); [NHS England » Planning framework for the NHS in England](#) (2025)

7. Implementation and Transition Plan

Overview

This section sets out the high-level roadmap, milestones and governance for a safe, legal and well sequenced transition to new unitary arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It also outlines our communications and engagement approach and the risk management framework across the transition period.

Our Commitment

We are committed to delivering purposeful reform to create two stable unitary authorities that will help us achieve our proposed benefits

We will do this by:



High-level roadmap

The move towards establishing two new unitary authorities necessitates a carefully structured and phased implementation programme. This approach is designed to ensure continuity of statutory services, minimise disruption for residents, and accelerate the realisation of reorganisation benefits.

The transition will be delivered in **five staged phases** with clear entry/exit criteria and an overarching objective that services are *safe and legal on Vesting Day* and residents experience continuity of service. The proposed approach and key steps are outlined in the following sections:



Phases at a glance

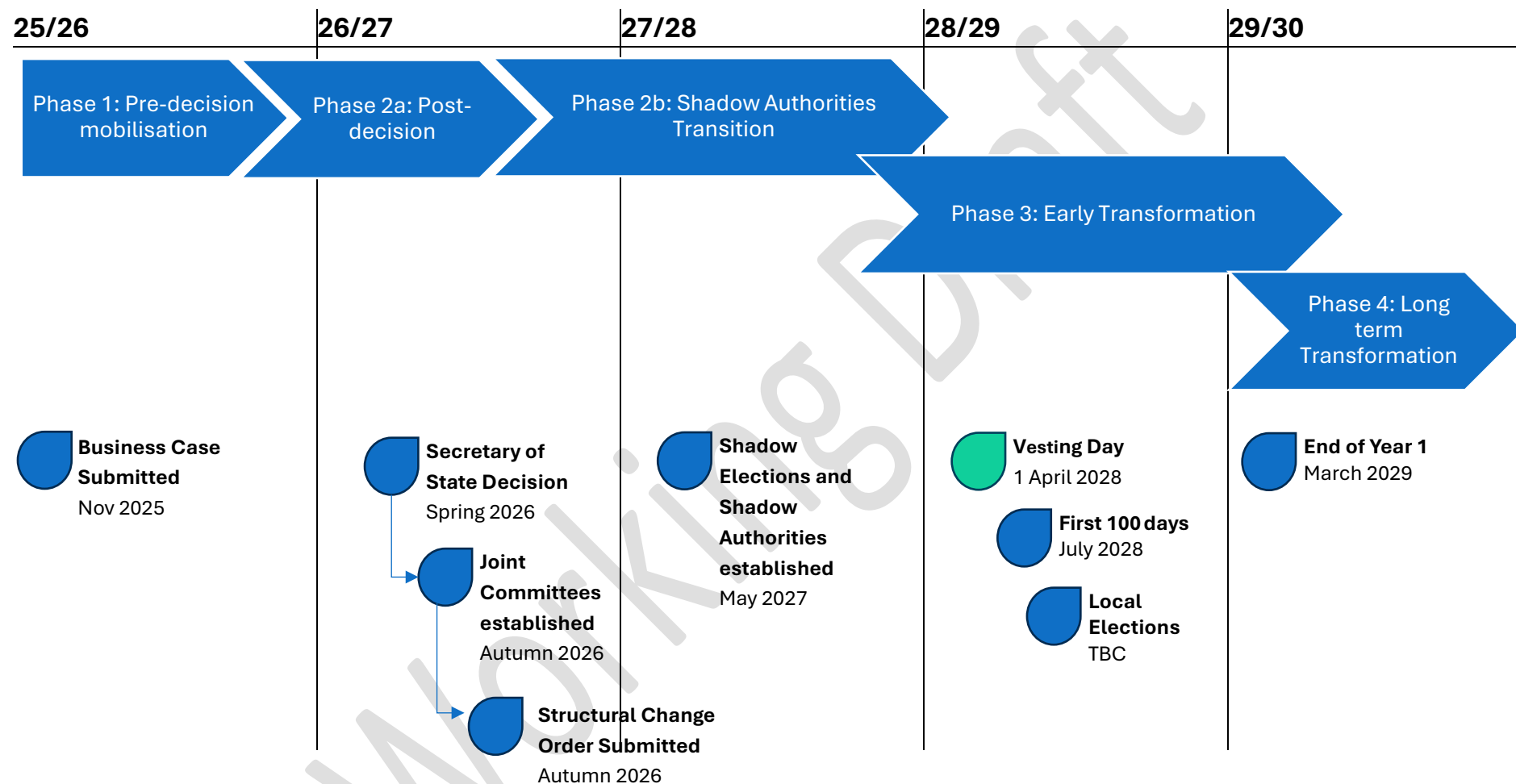
1. Pre-decision mobilisation (now → Ministerial decision/statutory consultation) – risk mitigation, stakeholder engagement, programme mobilisation including data and contract gathering, and establishing governance framework and boards.
2. Post-decision → Shadow elections – Formal cross council design and readiness, mobilisation of Joint Committees to oversee the transition process. Standup of the Programme Office (TPO); creation of service blueprints and baseline assessments of services, finances, assets, and workforce; Initial legal scoping for the structural change order will begin, laying the groundwork for the subsequent implementation phases
3. Shadow Authorities (Shadow elections → Vesting Day): Shadow authorities will be established to prepare for Vesting Day with relevant elections. Priorities include service continuity, senior appointments, budget setting, council tax alignment, system integration, HR policy finalisation, asset rationalisation, and regular communication. Joint Committees will oversee these tasks in accordance with legal and statutory requirements.
4. Early Transformation (Vesting Day → Year 1) – Focus on stabilising, harmonising, and beginning transformation. This phase includes benefits tracking and post-implementation review, with an emphasis on innovating service delivery, integrating teams and systems, and driving digital transformation. Collaboration with staff and partners will be central to achieving efficiencies and improved outcomes, as well as realising the full benefits set out in the business case. The overall aim is to establish modern, efficient, and responsive organisations, with local elections potentially taking place during this period.
5. Long term transformation (Day 365 onwards): Delivering our longer term ambitions in line with public sector reform. Work will be prioritised by each of the two unitary authorities in conjunction with CPCA staff, building partnerships, and tracking long-term goals.

We acknowledge the complexity of this undertaking and recognise that its success will depend on strong cooperation, comprehensive planning, and consensus among all partners and elected representatives. Our proactive and collaborative approach includes advanced detailed planning in anticipation of the proposal's approval, ensuring readiness for both transition and transformation.

This reorganisation represents a pivotal opportunity to drive public sector reform and deliver enhanced value for our communities.

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Timeline for successful delivery



Workstream and deliverables

We will organise delivery through **seven workstreams**, each with clearly defined ownership and deliverables

1. **Governance, Democracy & Legal** – constitutions, standing orders, regulatory committees, election logistics, shadow structures, Equalities reviews, Boundary Commission interface, member development; Day-1 legal and policy framework.
2. **Finance, Commercial & Assets** – MTFP, reserves strategy, council tax equalisation trajectory, fees and charges policy approach, single balance sheet, asset register, contracts novation strategy, procurement pipeline.
3. **People & Culture** – Target Operating Model, staffing models, pay, terms and conditions, and grading roadmap, organisational development, culture plan, Change Management and communications to staff, leadership development, equality impacts.
4. **Customer, Digital & Data** – contact model (telephony, web, face-to-face), CRM and case management approach, identity and access management, data and system migration, integration and retention schedules, new websites and branding, cyber posture.
5. **Service Alignment, Continuity & Delivery** – Day-1 readiness; phased integration plans for Adults, Children & Education (including SEND), Housing & Homelessness, Public Protection, Waste, Planning & Growth, Highways & Transport, Libraries & Culture, Revenues & Benefits, Environmental Health, Regulatory Services, Equality Impact Assessments.
6. **Partnerships, Locality & Communications** –parish/town council agreements, community boards, partner governance interfaces (ICB, Police/Fire, CPCA), Public and Stakeholders communications.
7. **Programme Management** – PMO, planning and coordination, RAID, dependency management, benefits management, reporting, configuration and document control; independent assurance.

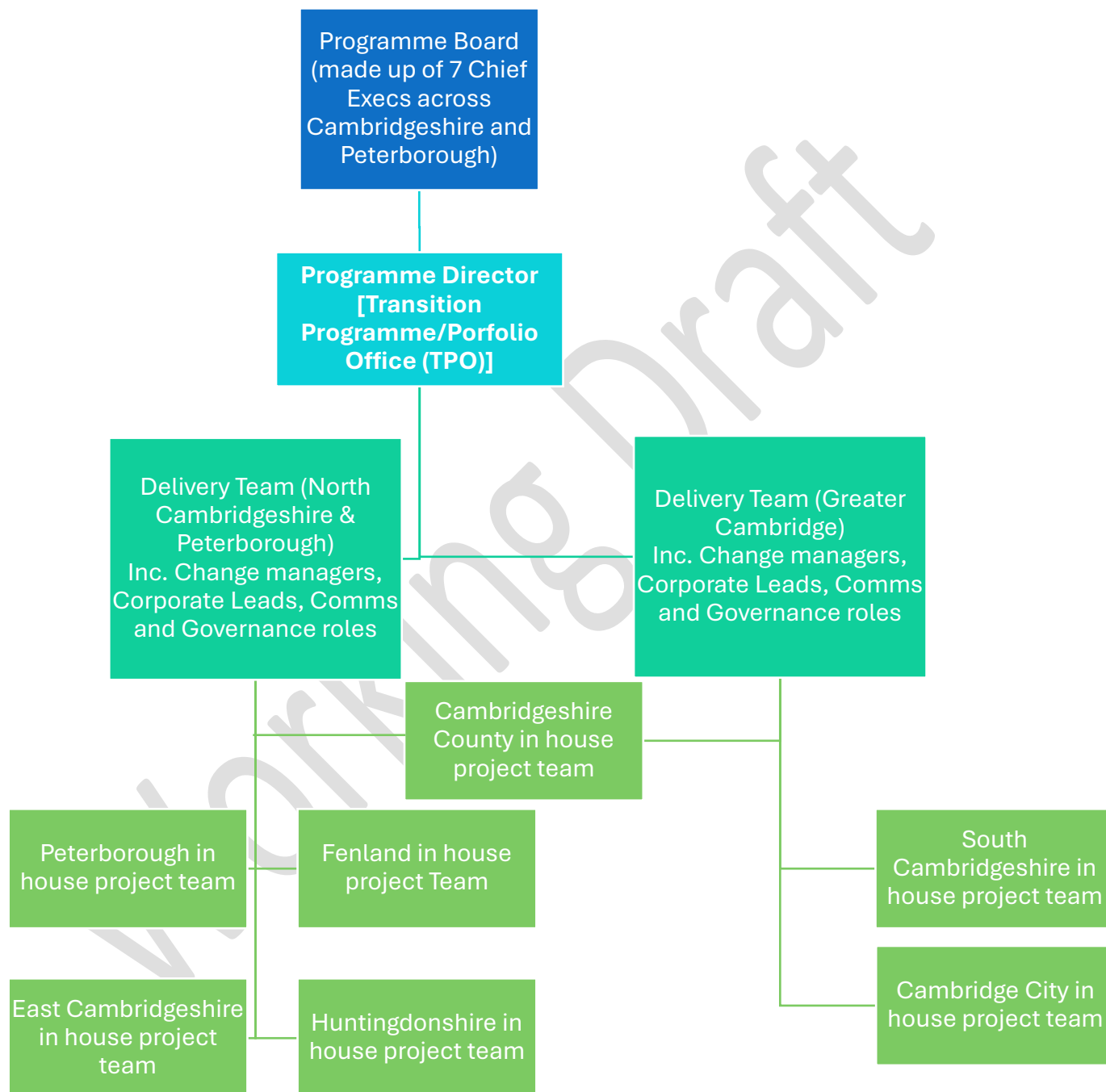
Roadmap

The following roadmap provides indicative key activities at each phase. This will be developed into a full implementation programme plan. The activities within stages three and four are dependent on the ambitions determined by the new authorities:

	Governance, Democracy & Legal	Finance, Commercial & Assets	People & Culture	Customer, Digital & Data	Service Alignment, Continuity & Delivery	Partnerships, Locality & Communications	Programme Management
Phase 1: Pre-decision mobilisation	• Governance arrangements established	• Budget Baseline defined • Shared Assets database established • Shared contracts database	• HR transition plan • HR shared data established	• Digital maturity assessment • Data maturity assessment • Shared database developed	• Additional As Is service analysis for both front line and back office • Enabling functions identified	• Internal readiness workshops • Communication and Engagement Plan	• Programme Team recruited and trained
Phase 2a: Post-decision	• Constitution developed • Elections logistics • Shadow structures • Standing orders	• Contract novation strategy • Procurement pipeline	• Staffing models • Roles T&Cs defined • Job evaluation • People and Workplace culture model	• Customer interaction model • Digital design	• Day 1 readiness • Integration plan for both front line and back office services	• Internal and external workshops	• Implementation Plan Finalised • Ongoing programme monitoring and reporting
Phase 2b: Shadow Authorities Transition	• Day one legal and policy framework • Council structures and boards in place	• MFTP and Reserves strategy	• Job matching, selection, and recruitment into new structure	• CRM and Case management transition • Data Migration	• Agreement on future service offer	• New branding agreed	• Benefits realisation • Programme closure
Phase 3: Early Transformation	• HQ and Civic buildings transition	• Asset strategy developed	• Culture change implemented • New ways of working established	• Day one readiness and testing	• Services reorganised • SLAs developed • Service improvement initiated	• Organisation rebranding	• 3-5 year Transformation plan finalised

Transition Governance Arrangements

Below is a governance overview of how the Transition Programme/Portfolio office will interact with the Programme Board and the delivery teams, with one delivery team establish for each future unitary:



Implementation Risk Management and Benefits Tracking

The table below outlines the key risks to successful LGR delivery, along with proposed mitigation strategies. Effective management of these risks is essential to ensure the programme is delivered successfully – see [Appendix ??](#) for the LGR Risk Management Framework

High-Level LGR Implementation Risks and Mitigations

Risk Description	Mitigating Actions
Service Disruption - Disruption to statutory and critical services (e.g. Adults, Children/SEND, Safeguarding, Revenues & Benefits) during transition, risking continuity of care and essential payments.	- Day 1 Readiness Assessments for all critical services - Dual running of systems where required - Dedicated incident room during cutover - Scenario-based rehearsals and continuity plans
Workforce Capacity & Retention - Loss of key staff, low morale, or insufficient capacity to deliver both transition and ongoing services.	- Early appointments to critical roles - Retention incentives for scarce skills - Visible leadership and change champion network - Wellbeing support and clear TUPE processes - ‘Minimise change for Day 1’ principle
ICT & Data Migration - Data loss, cyber risk, or system failure during migration, risking service continuity and data integrity.	- Rigorous migration rehearsals and validation - Robust Identity and Access Management and cyber controls - Independent technical assurance
Financial Risks - Uncertainty over transition costs, council tax harmonisation, legacy debts, and ongoing financial resilience.	- Ring-fenced transition budget with benefits tracking - Monthly review of prudential indicators - Pre-vesting reserves strategy - Transparent council tax harmonisation plan
Stakeholder Engagement & Public Confidence - Lack of buy-in or clarity among residents, staff, partners, MPs, and other stakeholders, risking resistance and loss of confidence.	- Single, coherent narrative and consolidated FAQs - Structured engagement plan for MPs, partners, and communities - Early and ongoing engagement - Transparent communications strategy
Programme Complexity & Pace - Overambitious timelines, unclear scope, or failure to control programme complexity, risking delivery failure.	- Realistic critical path and clear scope control - Time-boxed discovery for unknowns - Early legal drafting for Orders - Structured escalation and decision protocols
Loss of Local Representation & Community Cohesion - Perceived or actual reduction in local democratic voice and accountability; risk of community tensions or loss of local identity.	- Design governance structures to protect local representation - Empower town/parish councils and area boards - Thematic and neighbourhood engagement models - Monitor and respond to emerging tensions
Failure to Deliver Transformation Benefits - Estimated savings and service improvements not realised, undermining the business case and future delivery.	- Clear benefits realisation approach - Establishment of appropriate monitoring arrangements - Regular reporting and corrective action plans - Invest in long-term programme management capability

Success measures and benefits tracking

Success and the realised benefits of the programme will be monitored as follows:

- Day 1 success tests: All statutory services operational; no missed payments (payroll, suppliers, benefits); customer access channels live; legal frameworks in force.
- 12-month success tests: Harmonised core corporate policies; measurable improvements in customer contact performance; planned integrations completed; delivery of Year-1 efficiency targets; independently validated lessons-learned review.
- Benefits management: Baseline and track savings (recurring and non-recurring) and quality outcomes through a central benefits register; align to Medium Term Financial Plan and transformation roadmap; publish quarterly progress updates.

Commitments

- **Residents first/Safe & legal Day-1 pledge:** All statutory services operating; executive/financial delegations in force; customer access live; payroll/suppliers/benefits payments uninterrupted on Vesting Day.
- **Public transparency commitment:** Launch and maintain a public LGR microsite (timeline, board summaries, FAQs, myth-busters, document library) with monthly updates through to Vesting Day and quarterly thereafter in Year 1.
- **‘Once for the area’ Dual-track readiness:** Maintain option-flexible artefacts (TOM options, ICT cutover variants, council tax trajectories) up to the Ministerial decision.
- **Workforce engagement:** early appointment of statutory officers; retention and wellbeing measures; regular staff briefings and a change-champion network.
- **Data and Financial discipline:** Ring-fenced transition budget; published benefits register; monthly Delivery Confidence Assessments; council tax harmonisation plan agreed pre-Vesting. Single, shared evidence base.
- **Programme Assurance:** Independent gateway reviews at each phase gate (decision to consult → Order drafting → Shadow go-live → Vesting → 100-day review).

Additional measures for sustainability

- Establish a three to five year **Transformation Focus** beyond Vesting Day (digital, demand management, commercial pipeline) with non-recurring vs recurring benefits separated.
- Embed **locality boards/community panels** with devolved micro-budgets and service standards to protect place responsiveness within larger units.
- Introduce a **supplier and contract consolidation plan** (12–18 months) to rationalise legacy contracts and unlock procurement savings while safeguarding continuity.

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8. Risk Management and Legal Compliance

8.1 Risk Management Strategy

We have outlined in section 6 [Theme 3] our approach to service delivery which includes ensuring legal compliance with statutory legislation and duties whilst also making sure that services aren't disrupted on vesting day. This section outlines in more detail how we wish to address some of the wider key risks associated with LGR including legal, governance, and reputational. It is vital that all proposals submitted address the below risks to protect residents and ensure services are operational on Day 1.

In the implementation plan section, we outlined some of the key programme-level risks that will be addressed by a centralised risk register managed by the TPO during the implementation phase. Our TPO will also implement wrap-around assurance with regular risk horizon scans to ensure that we are on top of any emerging risks.

The above outlines our approach going forward but our approach so far has also been collaborative. As part of the proposal phase, we set up a democracy, governance and risk workstream attended by the monitoring officers in the region to ensure shared understanding of key risks and statutory duties.

The below table highlights some of the top-level risks with mitigations that are or will be implemented to manage safe and legal implementation:

Risk	Mitigation
Effective leadership – ensuring clarity of leadership and decision-making processes to keep implementation activities on track with effective oversight.	We will move swiftly to implement our transition programme office and sponsor board. A single responsible officer for each unitary will be appointed, allowing for a central leader to guide decision-making.
Service continuity – balancing LGR with business as usual service delivery to avoid disruptions to services for residents, potentially harming public confidence and trust.	Our approach to service delivery in this proposal is one that recognises the statutory requirements of the new unitaries. We recognise that transformation is a later task with safe transition taking priority. Within our TPO, we will work to effectively prioritise accordingly whilst ensuring that roles are back-filled to continue services in the existing authorities.
Stakeholder engagement – providing clarity to stakeholders on the LGR transition process and ensuring different priorities are accounted for. Lack of clear	Within our TPO, we will have dedicated communications capacity to ensure that communication is timely and effective. A communications strategy will be built to

communication could result in reputational damage and lack of trust.	ensure that communication is targeted and consistent.
Complexity and pace of change – there is a shortened timetable between decisions on the proposal and the go-live date in April 2028. If programme management is not effective, there may be additional increases in time and cost.	The implementation plan section of this proposal establishes a clear plan for accelerating into the transition phase of LGR. It places capacity to deliver as a priority with robust programme management arrangements to manage risk and embed oversight.
Workforce capacity and morale – LGR will lead to significant changes for staff potentially resulting in a drop in morale and capacity. It is important that we manage change effectively and maintain strong engagement to make sure our workforce is on board.	Our communications strategy will work to embed staff feedback and co-design with our processes, making sure that the workforce has an opportunity to build our identities for the new organisations. Our dedicated HR & OD workstream will also be responsible for managing that change, allowing dedicated time and capacity to ensure a smooth workforce transition.

8.2 Assessment of legal compliance

The below table highlights our ‘safe and legal’ checklist for vesting day. This list is not exhaustive and there will be other areas that need to be incorporated however it provides an initial assessment of how we will ensure compliance.

Compliance area	How will we ensure this is met?
Data-sharing and GDPR	Data-sharing agreements have already been established between regional local authorities. We will always ensure that sensitive data is collected in compliance with GDPR and our information governance officers are in conversation to ensure this is met.
TUPE/HR considerations	Transfer of staff will be in line with TUPE regulations – all Ts & Cs will be maintained and continuity protected. We will ensure that payroll systems are high priority and will be aligned by vesting day to ensure consistency and continuity.
SCO	The Structural Change Order will outline the statutory requirements for implementation and electoral arrangements. We have continuously kept in conversation with MHCLG and will continue to do so to shape the SCO. The region has already begun forming implementation plans and are aware

	that our implementation team should be in line with the Government's provisions.
Major financial decisions	Once the SCO comes into effect, the relevant authorities will be responsible for not binding the future unitary through major financial decisions. The SCO will put the process for managing this in place however we have begun to set up procurement working groups to ensure effective oversight of major contracts that directly feeds up to our monitoring officers.
Budget setting	Once the decision is made by Government, the shadow authority will be responsible for budget setting and ensuring financial management (including systems) and financial reporting is in place for vesting day. We will ensure this is completed in line with the shadow authorities' remits.
Democratic Arrangements	The SCO will also outline electoral arrangements for the new authorities. We have outlined our recommendation for arrangements in this proposal however our MO working group will ensure compliance with the arrangements outlined, including the remit of the shadow authorities' decisions on schemes of delegation, constitutions and committees.
Customer services and website	It is key that residents have a way to access the Council. We will ensure that there is one phone number, website and front door to avoid confusion for residents.
Liabilities/asset transfers/intellectual property/legal company agreements	We are undertaking the work now to ensure that all asset registers are up to date. Our IT staff are also creating a centralised repository to manage IT contracts. A procurement sub-group has also been set up to manage our existing procurement regulations to ensure that contracts have clear exit strategies. Once the decision has been made by Government, we will work with our partner Councils to ensure that transfers can be managed legally and as smoothly as possible.
Bank accounts/collection of CTax/payment of benefits	We will ensure that the new authorities' bank accounts are set up for day 1 to avoid any disruptions in the collection of Council Tax and the payment of benefits. We will work to

	harmonise Council Tax within the 7 year limit, as legislated, using member working groups with the new administrations.
Statutory roles recruited	As soon as elections take place, we will advertise for our statutory roles, starting with the Chief Executives. We will begin work on this prior to elections to ensure that the national recruitment happens swiftly with sufficient time for the new corporate Leaderships to play a key role in implementation.
Statutory policies	We will ensure that all statutory policies are a priority for the new shadow authorities, such as the housing allocation scheme, licensing policies, equalities impact assessments, and a homelessness strategy. We will start work swiftly to ensure that a new Local Plan is implemented within the 5 year limit.

Conclusions

[Work in progress]

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9. APPENDICES AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE [SEPARATE ATTACHMENTS]

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Appendix XX - Financial analysis of Options A-E

Our analysis followed a two-stage process. First, we eliminated the three-unitary configurations (Options D and E)⁵⁰ as financially unviable. Second, we conducted a comparative assessment of the remaining two-unitary options (A, B, and C) to identify which offers the strongest long-term financial sustainability. We assessed each option against three critical financial metrics:

1. Funding-to-budget ratio
2. Reserves position
3. Debt levels

Why discount three unitary options?

Options D and E create three unitary authorities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. A number of other three unitary options were considered early on by leaders, and discounted for the following reasons:

- Operating three councils will be more expensive than operating two councils⁵¹
- The three-unitary options would all struggle for population and financial scale. Specifically, 'it might be difficult to persuade Government that they will be financially robust'⁵²
- Setting up three councils (including one option which splits a district) will be more costly, complex, time-consuming and result in a longer pay-back period in both cases

No further financial analysis has therefore been undertaken on these options.

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Any of the 'two unitary' options in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would appear, at face value, to deliver broadly comparable financial sustainability. However, closer analysis, set out in this section, confirms that there are important differences between Options A, B and C.

⁵⁰ early work by leaders identified other 'three unitary' options, and these are referred to in the Pixel 6 May 2025 report as Option 1 and Option 3. Option 1 is closest to Option D, although the Option D boundaries do not include any part of Fenland District Council, unlike Option 1.

⁵¹ Newton p. 13, final report

⁵² Pixel, 6 May report, p. 31

Financial Sustainability Assessment Summary

To evaluate the financial viability of each option, we have assessed three critical metrics of local authority financial sustainability: funding-to-budget ratio, reserves position, and debt levels. Each metric has been assigned a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) rating in the table below.

	Funding: budget ratio	Reserves	Debt
Option A	Green	Amber	Amber
Option B	Green	Green	Green
Option C	Red	Amber	Amber

The ratings are defined as follows:

- **Red** – Significant concern which brings into question the financial sustainability of one (or both) of the new unitaries in the option
- **Amber** – Moderate concern warranting consideration
- **Green** – No material concern identified

Funding to budget ratio analysis

The Fair Funding Review, expected to be implemented from April 2026, redistributes funding in a number of ways. These are set out in the Pixel Report. While a detailed understanding of funding is critical, it is incomplete without comparing the funding-to-budget ratio. All of the new unitary authorities will inherit budgets from their 'joining' councils.

Further analysis therefore combines funding with projected expenditure. Using the funding analysis by Pixel, and the 25/26 budgets of each council, the Finance Workstream created a funding-to-budget model. Cambridgeshire County Council's budget was disaggregated using a range of proxy measures signed off by the section 151 officers. All 25/26 budgets were uplifted by 6.3%⁵³ to create 26/27 notional new unitary budgets. The Pixel Fairer Funding model was then used to predict the likely funding-to-budget ratio of each new unitary in Options A, B and C. The figures do not assume any unitary savings/costs. **Table X** shows the funding-to-budget ratio for the new unitaries in each option.

Option C identifies a predicted funding shortfall of £5m for the North East Unitary, creating financial instability from the outset.

⁵³ Table 2: [Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2025 to 2026 budget - GOV.UK](#)

Table X – Funding-to-budget ratio

	Funding (£m) 2026/27	Predicted Net spend (£m) 2026/27	Difference £m	Difference (%)
Option A				
SE (City, East, South Cambs)	465	417	49	11.6%
NW (Fen, Hunts, P'boro)	595	583	13	2.1%
Option B				
Gtr Camb (City, South Cambs)	367.7	314	54	17.3%
Northern Cambs (Fen, Hunts, P'boro, E Cambs)	694.1	686	8	1.2%
Option C				
NE (E Cambs, Fen, P'boro)	490	495	-5	-1.1%
SW (Hunts, City, S Cambs)	572	505	67	13.4%

Funding taken from new Pixel model for Fairer Funding formula

Net spend taken from Finance workstream leads disaggregated county and reaggregated unitary budget models, uplifted by 6.3% (average increase in local government spend as per RA data table 2:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2025-to-2026-budget>

In the context of funding-to-budget, the North East unitary in Option C is therefore financially concerning and has been scored 'red' on the Financial Sustainability Assessment summary (Table X). **Creating a new unitary that starts with a budget deficit, despite the Fair Funding model drawing more funding into Peterborough and Fenland is clearly unsustainable. On this metric alone, Option C should be excluded.**

Reserves

Moving on to the second key metric of any council's financial sustainability - its reserves. Reserves are critical for any council to manage one off and unexpected spending pressures, volatile people services and to create a safety net to ensure residents have continuity of service provision. They are a core element of any council's financial sustainability.

An analysis of reserves⁵⁴ at year end 2024/25 was undertaken, to identify any concerns related to each proposed new unitary authority's financial health.

⁵⁴ general fund and earmarked

Reserves data were obtained from each council's published draft 2024/25 accounts; Cambridgeshire County Council's reserves have been split on a population basis. The analysis assumes that there will not be an excessive use of reserves to balance budgets up to vesting day.

Chart A shows the level of reserves for each of the possible unitary options and demonstrates that both Option A and Option C start with much greater imbalance in terms of reserves. **This is concerning for both Option A North West and Option C North East, where it is already known that demand for social care is higher and likely to experience more financial volatility. In terms of the overall RAG rating, options A and C are therefore scored amber.**

Chart A



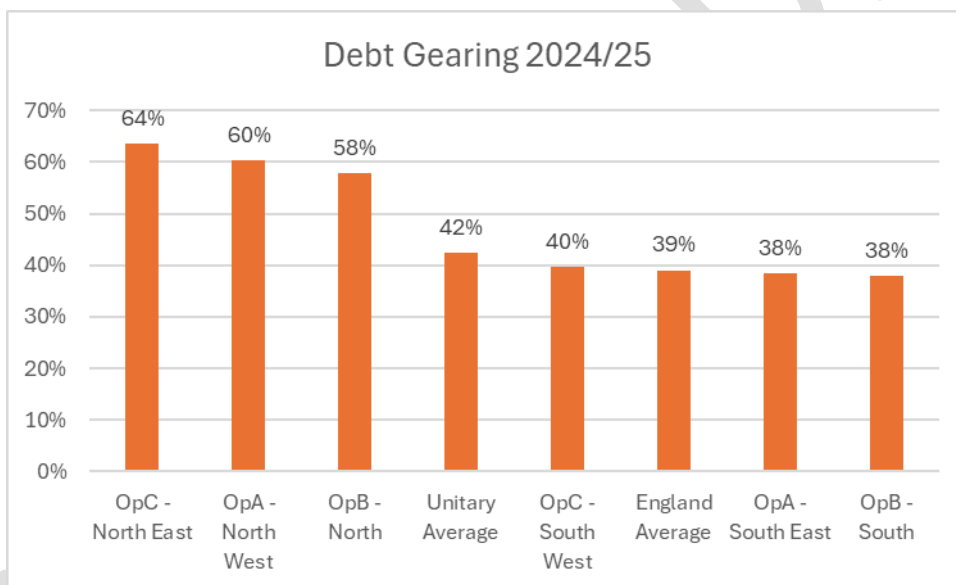
Debt

All Cambridgeshire and Peterborough authorities commissioned work on the councils' debt levels (as at 2024/25), to identify any potential risks related to unitarisation. This work was undertaken by LGFinance. **The full report is attached at Appendix X.** Summary findings show that:

- Generally, those proposed unitaries that incorporate Peterborough will have more challenging issues as Peterborough has lower than average usable revenue reserves, a higher than average 'need to borrow' and higher debt gearing.
- The more districts that are combined with Peterborough the more this reduces the challenge, as the districts have reasonable levels of financial resilience.

- Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire all have better than average levels of financial health and this reflects in the proposed unitary authorities that incorporate these authorities. Even though Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire have high ‘need to borrow’, they both have considerable levels of equity (primarily through their social housing stock) and therefore lower than average debt gearing.
- Cambridgeshire County Council has a higher-than-average Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit. This is reflected in all proposed unitary authorities but higher levels of usable revenue reserves provides resilience against these deficits. Peterborough has a lower DSG deficit so the northern proposed unitary authorities will have lower DSG deficits.

The Debt Gearing for each Option is set out below, which clearly shows that the more authorities that are combined with Peterborough, the better the financial impact (ie. the lower the debt gearing).



The assessment made of debt levels has therefore resulted in an amber rating for Options A and C (due to their higher debt gearing).

Financial Sustainability Assessment Conclusion

In summary, from a financial sustainability perspective, Option B offers the most balanced and equitable solution for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole.

Council Tax Harmonisation

Unitary authorities in a single county area do not have to harmonise at the same time or over the same number of years. There are three broad approaches to council tax harmonisation:

- **harmonising to the lowest district rate:** this would result in a loss of expected income, and could compromise a new unitary authority's financial stability;
- **harmonising to the average of all districts:** known as a 'weighted average Band D', which is often considered the fairest approach;
- **harmonising to the highest district rate:** maximises potential revenue, but can create significant increases in council tax for most residents.

Our proposal follows the standard approach that both future councils would use a weighted average Band D calculation. This protects future funding streams and reduces the possibility of large increases in council tax for the majority of residents.

Our proposal would harmonise Band D council tax over the standard two-year period. This would mean that from year three all residents living in the same unitary council area would pay the same amount of council tax.

Taking any longer creates an inherent unfairness as residents in the same council pay different amounts of council tax.

In all options residents of Peterborough face an increase of 4-5%. This is because council tax levels in Peterborough are significantly lower than other local councils in the area (as set out in **Table X** below) and lower than the England average.

25/26 Council Tax Band D for each authority area

	City/ District share	County share	Local Authority Total	Average parish precept	Total including all precepts	Comparison to England averages
Cambridge	£232.13	£1,700.64	£1,932.77	n/a	£2,355.41	+£11 shire areas
East Cambridgeshire	£142.14	£1,700.64	£1,842.78	£101.53	£2,366.95	+£23 shire areas
Fenland	£254.79	£1,700.64	£1,955.43	£63.46	£2,441.54	+£100 shire areas
Huntingdonshire	£165.86	£1,700.64	£1,866.50	£88.54	£2,377.68	+£34 shire areas

South Cambridgeshire	£175.40	£1,700.64	£1,876.04	£91.98	£2,390.66	+£47 shire areas
Peterborough	n/a	n/a	£1,749.42	£46.43	£2,218.49	-£148 unitary areas

Council Tax levels set by local authorities in England 2025 to 2026 (revised) - GOV.UK

* Peterborough has parished and non-parished areas; Cambridge does not have parish councils; average parish precepts for local authority areas include zero-rated parish precepts; averages have not been weighted by parish population. The England average Band D parish precept in 2025-26 is £92.22.

** The England average Band D council tax 2025/2026 is £2,280. Average Band D can be compared by type of local government arrangements. In London, the average Band D council tax in 2025/2026 is £1,982; in metropolitan areas £2,289; in unitary areas £2,366; and in shire areas £2,344.

COMPARISON OF HARMONISATION COSTS OVER TWO YEARS

Council Tax Harmonisation - to Band D Weighted average								
Option A			Option B			Option C		
Predecessor area	Target Band D and variations	Increase/Decrease in Band D	Predecessor area	Target Band D and variations £	Increase/Decrease in Band D	Predecessor area	Target Band D and variations £	Increase/Decrease in Band D
	£1,886.09			£1,898.48			£1,886.79	
Cambridge	-46.68	-2.4%	Cambridge	-34.29	-1.8%	Cambridge	-45.98	-2.4%
South	10.05	0.5%	South Cambridgeshire	22.44	1.2%	South Cambridgeshire	10.75	0.6%
East Cambridgeshire	43.31	2.4%				Huntingdonshire	20.29	1.1%
	£1,838.55			£1,839.26			£1,825.12	
Fenland	-116.88	-6.0%	East Cambridgeshire	-3.52	-0.2%	Fenland	-130.31	-6.7%
Huntingdonshire	-27.95	-1.5%	Fenland	-116.17	-5.9%	East Cambridgeshire	-17.66	-1.0%
Peterborough	89.13	5.1%	Huntingdonshire	-27.24	-1.5%	Peterborough	75.70	4.3%
			Peterborough	89.84	5.1%			

Differential Council Tax Charges: Special Expenses

Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, provisions allow for different amounts of council tax to be calculated for different parts of a district (e.g. parished and unparished areas), depending on what, if any, special items relate to those parts.

The Special Expenses provision gives authorities a mechanism to ensure that taxpayers do not get taxed twice for the same type of expenditure. For example, in an authority where parish councils maintain play areas, residents pay through their parish precept; in unparished areas where the authority maintains play areas, residents may pay an additional special expense charge.

The new unitary councils would have the option to implement 'special expenses' if councillors considered there was a lack of equity in council tax charges for residents across the precepting area.

The context is more complex when councils with parished and non-parished areas are integrated into new unitary authorities and have gone through a process of council tax harmonisation. Residents in an unparished part of the new unitary would historically already pay for such services through their district/city/borough council tax precept.

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Annex X: Options Appraisals

Option B – appraisal against criteria

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Economy and Housing	5	- Option B creates two unitary councils that reflect distinct but complementary, nationally significant economic geographies. The Southern unitary will reflect the footprint of Cambridge’s internationally significant innovation economy, while the Northern ‘economic powerhouse’ unitary has a strong export base and nationally significant sectors (advanced manufacturing, logistics, agri-tech) that support a balanced, dynamic and resilient economy. - Option B creates two councils that are more economically balanced than all of the other options: - GDP – the Northern unitary will have 54% of GDP (20.3bn) and the Southern unitary will have 46% of GDP (£17.2bn) - Employees – the Northern unitary will have 53% of employees (250,300) and the Southern unitary will have 47% of employees (226,000) (Beauhurst, 2024). - Business turnover – the Northern unitary will have 33% of annual business turnover (£40bn) and the Southern unitary will have 67% (£80bn) (Beauhurst, 2024). - The two unitary councils are closely aligned with functional economic areas, rather than landmass or population numbers. 88% of working residents will both live and work within their unitary areas - Alignment with functional economic areas will enable each unitary authority to develop ambitious Local Plans to reflect differing housing and economic needs in their local areas. - Both new councils will be well placed to deliver affordable housing. The two existing district councils in the southern unitary both own and manage council housing and have housing development programmes and capacity, while the northern unitary will have market shaping opportunities as the existing councils have all transferred their housing stock to housing associations.
Financial resilience	4	Option B gives each new unitary the greatest long-term financial resilience of all options and reduces the risk that local services cannot be funded in the future. A balanced scorecard approach (analysing of funding, budget, reserves and debt) identifies Option B as the most financially sustainable option.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Sustainable Public Services	4	• Option B also achieves a more equitable division of resources and fairer funding for the whole area compared with other options. • Option B delivers both immediate sustainability and long-term value. Full payback of the initial implementation costs will be achieved by 2031/32 (Year 4). Option B will deliver annual recurring savings of £42.8m by 2032/33 (Year 5), and cumulative savings of £167.4m by 2035/36 (Year 8). • The Northern unitary will have a population of over 600,000, which exceeds Government guidance for resilience, but is smaller than average county councils, allowing greater accountability. • As a larger authority, the Northern unitary will have both the scale, financial resilience and capacity to tackle entrenched deprivation and inequality, particularly in Peterborough and parts of Fenland. The northern unitary's larger size, will give it a stronger tax base, better scope to manage existing debt and reduced dependence on Government grants. • The southern unitary will begin with a population of around 340,000 in 2028, rising to over 400,000 within 10 years, well above the 300,000 minimum population that Government considers necessary to be financially sustainable. • The southern unitary will benefit from a resilient tax base driven by its fast-growing economy, which will enable it to fund local services and meet the needs of its rapidly-growing population. • Option B will enable better and more sustainable public services than the other options, because resources will be divided more effectively and equitably across the whole area. • Both new unitary authorities will develop district and neighbourhood services tailored to meet distinct local needs. Public services will be better aligned to how people live and work, which will help meet community needs and reduce demand failure. A localised approach will also allow both councils to determine spending and strategies around prevention and early intervention. • The large northern unitary will have economies of scale, the buying power to reshape care markets, the ability to address variations in community needs through localised services, and opportunities to integrate district council services, social care services and NHS neighbourhood teams. • The smaller southern unitary will have a lower level of need, but as the sole housing stock-owning authority it will have opportunities to integrate social care, social housing and health services to improve outcomes for vulnerable residents.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Collaboration	4	- While the unitary boundaries proposed in Option A would align more closely with the geography of the current Cambridgeshire North and South Care Partnerships, alignment with Option B can be accommodated by moving 2 of the 9 Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (Ely North and Ely South) into the North Care Partnership. NHS governance is going through a period of significant reform and uncertainty, and these changes will be minor in the context of wider reforms to the Integrated Care System (ICS). 6 of the 7 Councils have worked collaboratively to develop proposals. Option B is supported by 3 of the 7 councils in the area (Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, and South Cambridgeshire). Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough have also contributed to the proposal for Option B. - Option B is most reflective of historic identities and governance arrangements in the area. The southern unitary will reflect the historic county geography of Cambridgeshire, while the Northern unitary will reflect the three historic counties of Huntingdonshire, The Isle of Ely and The Soke of Peterborough.
Devolution	5	- Option B will support existing devolution arrangements through the CPCA, with each unitary authority having distinct economic geographies reducing the need for competing priorities and focusing on where the area can provide better outcomes both for itself and the CPCA and to deliver the Government's policies. - The northern unitary will be able to represent the diverse economy, population and needs of its area in strategic decision-making by the CPCA and national Government. - The southern unitary will provide a single, unified voice for the needs of the fast-growing economy and population in the Cambridge city-region in CPCA and national decision-making. - The alignment of the southern unitary authority's geography with the Cambridge Growth Company area will also support effective decision-making and delivery.
Democratic representation and community engagement	4	- Option B best allows for local distinct local identities to flourish and ensures that residents will have more equal voice and influence in the future of their areas. - The northern unitary will be of sufficient scale to sustain distinct local governance and robust community engagement arrangements, combined with locally delivered public services. This model ensures the flexibility to meet the diverse needs of urban Peterborough, while maintaining a unified and effective voice for market towns and rural villages by keeping these areas together.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
		The southern unitary reflects the Cambridge city region, which has a coherent identity that makes sense to local people and how they live their lives day to day. It is made up of interconnected and interdependent urban and rural areas.

Option A – appraisal against criteria

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Economy and Housing	3	- Option A creates greater imbalance than Option B in total economic output, jobs and planned housing development between each council. It would favour the more economically dominant South-east unitary more than Option B, by adding the economic assets of East Cambridgeshire (for example, the district has the 5th highest share of UK exporting businesses): - GDP – the North-west unitary would have 47% of GDP (£17.6bn) and the South-east unitary would have 53% of GDP (£19.8bn) - Employees – the North-west unitary would have 44% of employees (207,400) and the South-east unitary would have 56% of employees (268,900) (Beauhurst, 2024). - Business turnover – the Northern unitary would have 28% of annual business turnover (£33.7bn) and the South-east would have 72% (£86.3bn) (Beauhurst, 2024). - The proposed South-east unitary would not align with the functional economic area as well as the Southern unitary of Option B. It would combine an area with one of the greatest concentrations of high-growth enterprises in the UK (Greater Cambridge) with a district with the least high growth enterprises in the sub-region (East Cambridgeshire). - Unlike Option B, Option A would split the distinctive, high value agricultural economy of the Fens (currently in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland) across the two unitary authorities. There is a risk that Fenland agriculture would not be prioritised for investment and support in a Southwest unitary dominated by the high-growth Greater Cambridge knowledge economy. - It would be challenging to integrate the ambitious housing and economic growth strategy in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan with the paused planning framework in East Cambridgeshire.
Financial resilience	3	- Option A would create councils that are more exposed to financial risks and financial shocks compared with Option B. - While the North-west unitary would have comparable budget per head as the northern unitary in Option B it would have a greater concentration of need and proportionally higher unit costs for social services. It would be less able to grow its tax base and more reliant on social care grants to fund services.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Sustainable Public Services	4	• The South-east unitary would have slightly higher budget per head than the southern unitary in Option B, but it would have a proportionally larger aging population. Care costs could increase faster than tax-base growth as the population ages, which could crowd out spending on universal services. • Option A would create unitary authorities with a greater difference in social care need, making it harder to design sustainable public services. • The North-west unitary would have the second highest per-capita social care burden of any of the unitary Councils in the 2 unitary options under consideration. The unitary would have reduced economies of scale and buying power compared to the Option B northern unitary to address those challenges. • The South-east unitary would have care needs below the England average, but the financial pressures described above (similar budget per head to Option B combined with a larger aging population) could put a strain on non-care budgets. • It could be more difficult to integrate services in the South-east unitary, compared to the Option B southern unitary. The South-east area brings together two authorities which own council housing (Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire) and one which does not (East Cambridgeshire). It also brings together 2 councils that share services (waste, planning) and one that does not. • The geography of the current Cambridgeshire North and South Care Partnerships align with the unitary boundaries proposed in Option A. However, NHS governance and the Integrated Care System are going through a period of significant change so this may not remain the case. • Hospital treatment patterns are broadly aligned with Option A. The majority of Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Fenland patients are treated at Northwest Anglia Foundation Trust hospitals, while the majority of Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire patients are treated by Cambridge University Hospitals Trust. • However, there is a significant flow of patients from outside the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, which makes up one-third of all patients treated. There is also a flow Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that are treated outside the area, with around 10% of East Cambridgeshire patients going to West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, and 36% of Fenland patients going to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Collaboration	3	- Option A is supported by just 1/2 of the 7 councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and has had limited input from other Councils. - Option A does not reflect the historic identities and governance arrangements of the area to the same extent as Option B.
Devolution	4	The greater imbalance in economic output between each authority could create policy tension and unfairly favour the South-east unitary authority's growth agenda giving undue advantage. Additional economic governance challenges are more likely, which could cut across the devolution agenda because the Cambridge Growth Company focus would not reflect the South-east unitary authority's geography.
Democratic representation and community engagement	4	- The North-west unitary would be smaller, so it would be less able to accommodate localised decision making than the Northern unitary of Option B. The South-east unitary would have a less coherent identity than the southern unitary of Option B, which more closely represents the Cambridge City region. - The public survey identified connected community identities and practical realities (e.g commuting and shopping between areas of East Cambridgeshire and Cambridge, however this finding was also reflected by Huntingdonshire residents. Rural areas outside of the Greater Cambridge region expressed concerns about being overlooked if connected to Cambridge.

Option C – appraisal against criteria

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Economy and Housing	3	- Of the two unitary options, Option C has the greatest imbalance in total economic output, jobs and planned housing development between each unitary. - GDP – the North-east unitary would have just 37% of GDP (£14bn) and the South-east unitary would have 63% of GDP (£23.4bn) (Beauhurst, 2024). - Business turnover – the North-east unitary would have 17% of annual business turnover (£20.9bn) and the South-east would have 83% (£99.5bn) (Beauhurst, 2024). - The stronger South-west unitary would have the greatest proportion of total economic activity of all options, posing greater risk to regional economic imbalance over time. - The developing Local Plans for Greater Cambridge and Huntingdonshire would need to bridge two distinct

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Financial resilience	2	functional economic areas, as well as address the economic needs of the growing Peterborough city region which may present operational and political challenges. - Option C would concentrate financial risks in one unitary, creating a North-east unitary with the weaker tax base and higher population needs. - The South-west unitary would have a lower level of need and social care spend, but it would have greater social care financial pressures arising from a larger aging population than the southern unitary authorities in both Options A and B.
Sustainable Public Services	3	- Option C would have the greatest difference in needs between each new unitary, which could make it more difficult to deliver sustainable public services across the sub-region. - The North-east unitary would have the highest per-capita social care needs of any of the six unitary options. The South-west unitary would have below England average care needs, though it would have a greater pressure on social care services due to a larger older population. - All former council housing in the North-east unitary would be managed by existing registered providers, but the South-west area brings together two authorities which own council housing (Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire) and one which does not (Huntingdonshire), making integration of housing services with health and social care more complex.
Collaboration	3	- Option C is only supported by X of the 7 councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Huntingdonshire District Council). There has been greater engagement on this proposal with other councils than Option A. - Option C does not reflect the historic identities and governance arrangements of the area to the same extent as Option B.
Devolution	4	The South-east unitary authority's geography would be less aligned with the Cambridge Growth Company area than the southern unitary of Option B.
Democratic representation and community engagement	4	- The North-east unitary would be smaller, so it may be more challenging to accommodate localised decision making than the northern unitary of Option B. - The South-west unitary authority would have a less coherent identity than the southern unitary of Option B, which more closely represents the Cambridge City region.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
		The fundamental geographic distribution of population centres across both councils could act as an impediment to good governance.

Option D and E (3 unitary proposals) – appraisal against criteria

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Economy and Housing	2	- The three unitary councils proposed in Options D and E would broadly align with the 3 functional economic areas identified in the CPIER report (Peterborough, Cambridge and the Fens). - However, Options D and E would create the greatest imbalance in total economic output, jobs and planned housing development of all options. - The internationally significant innovation economy in the Southern unitary would have 46% of GDP (£17.2bn), 47% of employees (226,000) and 67% of annual business turnover (£80bn), leaving the remaining economic output and employment split between the other two unitary authorities. - There is a particular risk that without a major anchor city, the predominantly rural central unitary authorities in both proposals could have limited visibility creating poor growth in the area and reduced capacity to attract investment or talent which will lead to a weaker tax base.
Financial resilience	1	- Options D and E would be the least financially resilient of all the options, with a greater risk that local services cannot be funded in future than other options. Financial analysis by Pixel concluded that “three-unitary options would all struggle for population and financial scale”. - Both Options also have the longest payback period of any implementation plans which cause greater long-term financial risks, in the case of Option D the payback period is 50+ years. - While the Southern unitary is forecast to experience further rapid population growth and would generate sufficient taxation income to support service delivery, it is likely that the proposed Northern and Central unitary authorities in both proposals would be less financially viable. - Both options would concentrate deprivation in Northern unitary authorities that lack the scale and financial resources to meet the greater demand for people services.

Criteria	Score	Rationale
Sustainable Public Services	2	- In Option D, the population of the Northwest/Greater Peterborough council (287,000) would be below the 300,000 population that government considers necessary to be financially sustainable. - Any three unitary option will be more expensive both to set up and to operate. - Option D has the highest cost for people services (adult social care, children's social care and SEND) of all the options, primarily due to the increased staffing overheads associated with 3 unitary councils. The Newton analysis shows that in total Option D would cost £0.6m more than current arrangements in 2025, rising to £3.7m more in 2040. This represents a 52.3% increase in spend per resident. - The risk of service fragmentation would be particularly acute in the central unitary authority. The rural spread and lack of any central urban hub would complicate service delivery, while issues such as digital exclusion and access to services would persist in the council's most deprived wards.
Collaboration	2	- Option D is only supported by 1 of the 7 councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Peterborough City Council). However, there has been greater engagement on this proposal with other councils than Option A. - Huntingdonshire District Council opposes splitting the district. - While the Northwest/Greater Peterborough and Southern/Greater Cambridge councils would have a clearer local and civic identity based around the two major cities, the Central unitary would potentially lack a unifying identity beyond its rurality.
Devolution	4	The greater imbalance in economic output and housing growth between the Southern/Greater Cambridge authority and the other two proposed unitary councils could create policy tension and unfairly favour the Southern unitary authority's growth agenda.
Democratic representation and community engagement	5	- Options D and E would create 3 smaller councils than Options A, B and C, which could provide greater opportunities for local democratic representation and community engagement. - However, the North-west council could be dominated by Peterborough members, leading to reduced democratic representation for other more rural areas. Similarly, residents living in the Central unitary authority would lose out on the opportunity for a democratic say over Peterborough, a city with strong economic ties to the region.

Working Draft

Appendix 2 – Detailed criteria set out by the government in the 5 February 2025 letter to all leaders in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

[Letter: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/letter-to-all-leaders-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough)

Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.

- a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.
- b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.
- c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.
- d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.

- a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
- b) There may be certain scenarios in which the 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.
- c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.
- d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.
- e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.
- f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can

be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

- a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.
- b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.
- c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.
- b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.
- c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.
- b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.
- c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

- a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.
- b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

TITLE: Constitution Update – Further Amendments

Committee: Council

Date: 20 November 2025

Author: Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Report No: AA94

Contact officer: Jane Webb, Democratic Services and Elections Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer

jane.webb@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01353 616278, Room No. 214B, The Grange, Ely

1.0 ISSUES

- 1.1. To review the proposed amendments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1. That the Council be recommended to approve the proposed amendments to Constitution Procedural Rule 12.5 as detailed in 3.2 below

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

- 3.1. At the Council meeting on 18 September 2025, the Chief Executive acknowledged that the Constitution required clarification regarding the process for considering substantive motions and any further amendments, and any proposed amendments would be presented at the November meeting.
- 3.2. At present, the Constitution is silent on the rules of further amendments. The proposed amendment to 12.5 – Further Amendments within the Procedure Rules is shown below as track changes.

If an amendment is lost, other amendments may be moved on the original Motion. If an amendment is carried, the Motion as amended becomes the substantive Motion and takes the place of the original Motion and shall become the Motion upon which any further amendment may be moved.

If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended takes the place of the original motion. This becomes the substantive motion on which any further amendments are moved. The Proposer of the original motion has the right to reply.

After an amendment has been carried, the Chair will advise the meeting of the content of the amended motion before accepting any further amendments.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT STATEMENT / CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Financial Implications None	Legal Implications None	Human Resources (HR) Implications None
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Not required	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) Not required	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Not required

5.0 APPENDICES

None.

6.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Council - 18 September 2025](#)
[ECDC Constitution - Part 4 Rules of Procedure](#)

Reports from Constituent Council Representatives on the Combined Authority

The following meetings have taken place in September 2025

Funding Committee, 1 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Funding Committee \(September\)](#)

Skills Committee, 8 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Skills Committee \(September\)](#)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 9 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Overview and Scrutiny Committee \(September\)](#)

Growth Committee, 10 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Growth Committee \(September\)](#)

Transport Committee, 15 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Transport Committee \(September\)](#)

Audit and Governance Committee, 18 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Audit and Governance Committee \(September\)](#)

Combined Authority Board, 24 September 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Combined Authority Board \(September\)](#)

Reports from Constituent Council Representatives on the Combined Authority

The following meetings have taken place in October 2025

Combined Authority Board, 22 October 2025

Councillor:

Decision Summary Link: [Combined Authority Board \(October\)](#)

TITLE: APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Committee: Council

Date: 20 November 2025

Author: HR Manager

Report number: AA955

Contact officer: Nicole Pema, HR Manager

nicole.pema@eastcambs.gov.uk 01353 616325, Room 118, The Grange, Ely

1.0 Issue

1.1. Appointment of the Council's Chief Executive.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1. Members are requested to

- (i) Endorse the appointment of Miss Emma Grima as the Council's Chief Executive.

3.0 Background/Options

3.1. In accordance with the Council's Constitution (part 4, section 7), appointment of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service is the responsibility of the Council, following a recommendation from the Appointments Panel.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusion(s)

4.1 Interviews for the post of Chief Executive were conducted on 4 November 2025. The Appointments Panel, chaired by the Chair of Council, recommends the appointment of Miss Emma Grima for the post.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

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

6.0 Appendices

None

7.0 Background documents

Constitution (part 4, section 7)

Appointment of Board Director for East Cambs Street Scene and East Cambs Trading Company

Committee: Council

Date: 20 November 2025

Author: Director Legal & Monitoring Officer

Report number: AA96

Contact officer: Maggie Camp, Director Legal & Monitoring Officer
Maggie.camp@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01353 665555, The Grange, Ely

1.0 Issue

- 1.1. To appoint a Board Director for East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) and East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are recommended to appoint the Council's Chief Executive as Board Director for ECSS and ECTC from 1 January 2026.

3.0 Background/Options

- 3.1. John Hill, Chief Executive, has resigned as Board Director for ECSS and ECTC. The resignation takes effect on 31 December 2025.
- 3.2. It is a requirement of the role of Chief Executive to serve as Managing Director for both ECSS and ECTC.

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

- 4.1. Under the Shareholder Agreement between the Council and ECSS and ECTC respectively, the Council is required to appoint new Directors to the Board of Directors (ref: 6.1.11 of each agreement). It is recommended that the Council's Chief Executive is appointed as Board Director of ECSS and ECTC.

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

- 5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications No	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) n/a	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) n/a	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) n/a

6.0 Appendices

None.

7.0 Background documents

Letter of Resignation ECSS, John Hill- 4 November 2025

Letter of Resignation ECTC, John Hill- 4 November 2025

ECSS & ECTC Shareholder Agreement