Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Consultation outcome

Proposals for local government reorganisation in Surrey: government response

Updated 28 October 2025

Contents

This publication is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-surrey/outcome/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-surrey-government-response

Introduction

A statutory consultation on proposals for unitary local government in Surrey was opened on 17 June and closed on 5 August 2025.

This document provides a summary of the 5,617 responses received to the government's consultation on the proposals for future unitary local government in Surrey. The 2 proposals in this consultation were made by councils on 9 May 2025.

The government announced to Parliament in October 2025 that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for 2 unitary councils submitted by Elmbridge Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council.

The Elmbridge Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council proposed 2 unitary councils:

- East Surrey, comprising the current districts of Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge
- West Surrey, comprising the current districts of Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Woking

From here, this is referred to as the '2 unitary proposal.'

The consultation also invited views on the proposal submitted by the **Borough Councils of Epsom and Ewell, Guildford, Reigate and Banstead, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking, and Tandridge District Council**. They proposed 3 unitary councils:

- East Surrey, comprising the current districts of Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge
- North Surrey, comprising the current districts of Elmbridge, Runnymede, and Spelthorne
- West Surrey, comprising the current districts of Guildford, Surrey Heath, Waverley, and Woking

From here this is referred to as the ‘3 unitary proposal’.

The consultation on these proposals informed an assessment of the merits of the proposals. Both proposals were considered carefully, alongside the responses received to this consultation, all representations and all other relevant information, in assessing the proposals against the criteria before reaching a judgement in the round on which proposal, if any, to implement.

The criteria by which a proposal for local government reorganisation was assessed are set out in the letter of invitation (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-invitation-to-local-authorities-in-two-tier-areas/letter-surrey), sent to councils in Surrey on 5 February 2025. The consultation asked questions relating to the criteria about each of the above proposals.

The Secretary of State decided, subject to Parliamentary approval, to implement the proposal for 2 unitary councils submitted by Elmbridge Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council.

This consultation relate to the structure of local government in Surrey. These proposals related to England only.

Methodology

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 states that the Secretary of State may not implement a proposal unless they have consulted with every authority affected by the proposal and other such persons as they consider appropriate. Those councils and persons considered appropriate are hereafter referred to as ‘named consultees’.

The list of named consultees for Surrey is available in annex B of the original consultation (https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-surrey/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-surrey#annex-b-named-consultees).

In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (the Ministry) welcomed the views of any other persons or bodies interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish

councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.

The Ministry used Citizen Space, a third-party consultation programme, to collect responses online. Citizen Space was open to both named consultees and all other interested parties. Further information on the statutory basis for, and methodology of, the consultation is available in the original consultation (https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-surrey/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-surrey#scope-of-the-consultation).

Responses to the consultation were also received by email and letter.

Consultation questions

The questions were as follows:

Question 1
Does the proposal suggest sensible economic areas and geographies which will achieve a single tier of local government for the whole of Surrey?

Question 2
Will the local government structures being put forward, if implemented, achieve the outcomes described?

Question 3
Is the proposal for unitary local government of the right size to achieve the efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks and is this supported by a rationale for the population size proposed?

Question 4
As an area covering councils in Best Value intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, do you agree the proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing?

Question 5

Will the proposal prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens, improve local government and service delivery, avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services and lead to better value for money in the delivery of these services?

Question 6
Has the proposal been informed by local views, and does it consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance?

Question 7
Does the proposal support devolution arrangements?

Question 8
Will the proposal enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Question 9
Do you have any other comments on the proposed local government reorganisation in Surrey?

Summary of respondents and findings

Summary of respondents

There were 5,617 responses to this consultation. We have categorised responses by whether they were from named consultees or other respondents.

Responses from named consultees

Respondents from named consultees	Number of responses
Principal councils	11
Neighbouring principal councils	6
Heath bodies	2
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3
Business bodies	1
Voluntary and community sector	1
Education bodies	1
National bodies	1
Total named consultees	26

Responses from other respondents

Respondents from other respondents	Number of responses
Residents living in affected area	5337
Residents not living in affected area	97
Other respondents	157
Total other respondents	5591
Total responses	5617

Summary of findings

All tables in this report include numbers rounded to the nearest whole number, and as such, not all cumulative scores will equal 100%. For example, if a response was split equally between ‘yes’, ‘no’, and ‘no response’, each will be marked as 33% and the 3 responses will total 99%.

The table below takes the average response across the 8 ‘yes or no’ questions to provide an overall view of whether consultees viewed a proposal positively or negatively. This includes the responses of both named consultees, residents, and other consultees (local businesses, local organisations, town and parish councils etc). These overall figures closely follow the responses provided by residents given that residents constitute 97% of the total consultees.

Proposal	Average of responses that answered ‘yes’	Average of responses that answered ‘no’	Average responses that did not answer the question
2 unitary proposal	19%	56%	25%
3 unitary proposal	51%	29%	20%

Residents
The responses demonstrate a clear preference among residents for the 3 unitary proposal. 51% of respondents to the 3 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 29% of respondents provided negative responses. The ratio of ‘yes’ to ‘no’ (~50% to ~30%) was broadly consistent for all questions.

On average, the 2 unitary proposal received negative responses (19% ‘yes’, 56% ‘no’) across the 9 questions. A ratio of ~20% ‘yes’, ~60% ‘no’ was broadly consistent across the 8 questions.

The free text responses covered a broad number of themes. In summary, support for the 3 unitary proposal was based on the view that a 3 unitary council model resulted in authorities that were a good size and that the groupings of current authority areas made sense. Residents generally believed that the proposal would achieve good economies and efficiencies and be good for local identity, accountability, community engagement and service improvement.

Negative responses relating to the 3 unitary proposal highlighted concern that it would not generate significant efficiencies, as well as concerns about how debt would be addressed.

Those who supported the 2 unitary proposal typically did so on the basis of the greater efficiencies presented in the proposal, with the belief that it would create authorities of a good size. Negative responses highlighted the larger size of the authorities, indicated that the proposals created geographies that would not be good for community identity and had concerns about the potential negative impacts on services and local accountability.

There were a small number of respondents who did not favour either proposal or were not convinced by the overall case for change. This number is challenging to quantify as such sentiment was often provided inconsistently across responses. Some respondents did not want change or reorganisation in any form, some provided tacit support for 1 or both options, and others preferred a single unitary.

Named consultees

Of the named consultees, principal councils demonstrated a preference for the proposals that they had submitted. The views of the neighbouring principal authorities were generally split, with a small preference for the 2 unitary proposal across a small sample size.

Among the notable responses were those of police, fire, and health organisations. These consultees supported the 2 unitary proposal on the basis that it aligned with their own proposed service reform or delivery footprints.

Of the other public sector bodies listed as named consultees, we received 1 response that provided information they had shared with councils in Surrey to help shape their proposals, but did not indicate a preference for either of the models proposed

We received a response from the National Association of Local Councils. The response did not indicate a preference for either model, instead advocating for a greater role for town and parish councils within any new unitary structures.

Multiple named consultees chose not to state a preference or provided positive responses to both proposals. A respondent from the voluntary and community sector chose not to provide a response on behalf of their membership, instead amplifying the consultation to members. Though they answered neutrally to each question, they used question 9 to reflect that, anecdotally, they felt there was an overall preference for the 3 unitary proposal among their membership.

Other responses

Though they were not listed as named consultees, we assessed a number of detailed and well considered responses from town and parish councils. 68% of respondents provided favourable responses to the 3 unitary proposal, citing the increased emphasis on locality and community engagement. In contrast, only 18% of respondents provided an on average positive response to the 2 unitary proposal.

Local businesses also favoured the 3 unitary proposal, with an average 25% providing an average positive response to the 2 unitary proposal and 65% providing on average positive responses to the 3 unitary proposal.

Analysis of responses to questions

Question 1

Does the proposal suggest sensible economic areas and geographies which will achieve a single tier of local government for the whole of Surrey?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered 'yes'	Number that answered 'no'	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	3	2	1
Health bodies	2	2	0	0

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	13	11	2

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	19%	58%	23%
Resident not living in area affected	97	37%	52%	10%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	30%	39%	31%
Total named consultees	26	50%	42%	8%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Total all	5617	20%	57%	23%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	3	2	1
Health bodies	2	0	2	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	13	9	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	57%	26%	18%
Resident not living in area affected	97	49%	36%	14%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	50%	25%	25%
Total named consultees	26	50%	38%	12%
Total all	5617	56%	26%	18%

Principal councils

In their responses, those councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal cited its fit with areas of work, travel, and local identity, suggesting that the boundaries proposed by the 2 unitary proposal did not provide the same alignment and were therefore arbitrary or artificial.

Those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal refuted this assessment in their response, setting out the economic case for a 2 unitary option, citing council and business tax bases and closer alignment to the 500,000 population target identified in the criteria. The councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal also criticised the 3 unitary proposal's interpretation of the Interim Strategic Statement and the 2050 Place Ambition.

Neighbouring principal councils
Of the 6 councils that responded, 3 supported the geographies put forward in the 2 unitary proposal and 3 supported the geographies put forward in the 3 unitary proposal. One council responded positively to this question for both proposals. One neighbouring principal council did not offer a view on a preferred option stating that they trusted the councils and residents of Surrey to decide on an option that was appropriate for themselves.

The justifications for the options supported broadly align with the councils' own proposals, referencing the efficiencies likely to be created by the 2 unitary proposal and the greater proximity to local communities of the 3 unitary proposal.

Health
One healthcare sector respondent supported the geographies established in the 2 unitary proposal, noting their alignment with the east and west areas established in local health reforms. Conversely the geographical make-up of the 3 unitary authority proposal was seen to present more challenges in terms of service delivery 1 respondent felt that the 2 unitary proposal better met the population guidance, and that economies of scale would take longer to achieve in the 3 unitary proposal .

Police and Fire
Police and fire sector respondents supported the 2 unitary proposal referencing better alignment with their current or planned service delivery models, such as Basic Command Units.

Business bodies
The business body respondent noted that the geographies and economic areas of either proposal were viable.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent set out their broad support for both proposals, stating that each represents a vast improvement on the current system of 2-tier local government in Surrey. They cited greater responsibilities

and capacity for efficiency and financial resilience and how reorganisation would pave the way for further devolution, unlocking regional economic growth.

Their response concluded that the 2 unitary proposal was more likely to fully meet the criteria as set out in the invitation letter, notably with regard to efficiencies, further noting how the 3 unitary proposal challenged some of these assumptions.

Residents
In their responses, residents demonstrated a clear preference for the geographies proposed within the 3 unitary proposal. Only 19% of respondents believed that the 2 unitary proposal put forward a sensible economic area and geography, whereas 58% of residents responded ‘no’ to this question. There was no single factor as to why residents did not support the 2 unitary proposal, though the most common theme in responses was that the 2 unitaries were too large and secondly, that the proposals would be bad for local identity.

Residents expressed greater overall support for the geographies proposed in the 3 unitary model. 57% of respondents supported the proposed geographies and 26% did not. In these responses, residents generally felt that the authorities would be a good size, that groupings of existing authorities made sense and that the proposal would be good for social, cultural and economic identity.

Question 2

Will the local government structures being put forward, if implemented, achieve the outcomes described?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	4	0	2
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	14	8	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	18%	58%	24%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	32%	57%	11%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	24%	43%	33%
Total named consultees	26	54%	31%	15%
Total	5617	18%	57%	24%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	2	3	1
Health bodies	2	1	0	1
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	13	8	5

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	52%	29%	19%
Resident not living in area affected	97	43%	40%	16%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	44%	27%	29%
Total named consultees	26	50%	31%	19%
Total	5617	52%	29%	19%

Principal councils
The response from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal focussed on challenging the assumptions made in the 3 unitary proposal in relation to efficiencies. The response set out the belief of these councils that the savings put forward in the 3 unitary proposal are overly optimistic, and the costs of disaggregation are underestimated. The response further highlights disparity between revenue generation and adult and children's social care demand, and unequal service demand on areas such as the maintenance of highway infrastructure.

In their response to this question, 2 of the councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal questioned whether the outcomes set out in the 2 unitary proposal were unique to that model, and made the case for how they would be delivered by their 3 unitary approach also. In other responses, councils remade the case set out in their proposal that the 3 unitary proposal would achieve better outcomes due to its greater reflection of Surrey's economic areas, and how the people of Surrey live, work, travel and access their services.

Neighbouring principal councils
4 of the 6 neighbouring principal councils that responded believed that the 2 unitary proposal would achieve the described outcomes, with the remaining councils not directly addressing this question. 2 of the 6 councils believed that the 3 unitary proposal would create efficiencies, with 3 believing that it would not, and 1 choosing not to respond to the question. Justification for these answers was broadly consistent with the evidence provided in the proposals of the principal councils, with the councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal citing efficiencies and the prevention of service fragmentation and the councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal noting the greater proximity to communities.

Health
One healthcare sector respondent favoured the 2 unitary proposal, referencing alignment with the NHS 10-year plan. They set out how the proposal to create neighbourhood Area Committees will help support the government's 3 shifts of care, support improved community engagement and a population health focused model. Another healthcare sector respondent supported the 2 unitary proposal citing improved funding and community services.

One healthcare sector respondent did not respond to the question for the 3 unitary proposal. Their commentary cited positive opportunity for local alignment, but also included concerns that 3 unitaries would not allow for economies of scale and alignment to optimum population sizes. Another healthcare sector respondent

expressed that the 3 unitary proposal doesn't easily fit with the developing Frimley and Surrey Integrated Care Board restructure to provide multi-year funding streams.

Police and Fire
Each police and fire sector respondent supported the 2 unitary proposal, referencing the simplification of overall local government structures, removal of the 2-tier system, and alignment with proposed Basic Command Units. Two respondents felt these benefits would be lessened by a 3 unitary solution unaligned with police structures.

One respondent believed the 2 unitary proposal would enable the delivery of government's outcomes whilst aligning with wider fire and rescue strategy in Surrey.

Business bodies
The business body respondent interpreted efficiencies as being the primary outcome sought. They believed both the 2 and the 3 unitary proposals would achieve this outcome to some degree. They further noted that while as business leaders they recognised the value of efficiency, as residents they were concerned the reduction in council capacity would impact service delivery.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent supported both the proposals, providing no specific commentary on either option but rather welcoming the overall benefits that the aggregation of services otherwise dispersed across multiple councils could bring.

Residents
Residents did not believe that the 2 unitary proposal would achieve the desired outcomes, with only 18% of the respondents providing a positive response, and 58% of the respondents providing a negative response. Of the negative responses, the most common themes were that the councils proposed were too large and that this would be bad for local accountability.

Residents responded that the 3 unitary proposal would achieve the desired outcomes. 52% of residents responded positively to this question. 29% of residents did not believe that the proposals would achieve the desired outcomes. Responses to this question were broad and varied with the main reasons behind support being a belief that the proposal would lead to good economies and efficiencies and would be good for local accountability.

Question 3

Is the proposal for unitary local government of the right size to achieve the efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks and is this supported by a rationale for the population size proposed?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered 'yes'	Number that answered 'no'	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	3	1	2
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	12	10	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	20%	55%	25%
Resident not living in area affected	97	36%	52%	12%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	24%	43%	34%
Total named consultees	26	46%	38%	15%
Total	5617	21%	55%	25%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	2	3	1
Health bodies	2	0	2	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	12	10	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	52%	28%	19%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	42%	42%	15%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	43%	29%	28%
Total named consultees	26	46%	38%	15%
Total	5617	52%	28%	19%

Principal councils
The response from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal raised concerns that the 3 unitary proposal would result in the creation of new authorities that were vulnerable to financial shocks, would have decreased buying power, and would achieve significantly lower overall savings and efficiencies, citing a midpoint cost of £16 million compared to the £23 million benefit presented in the 2 unitary proposal.

The response from 2 of the councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal acknowledged that their proposal would generate fewer short-term savings, but that the proposal would generate significant savings by year 4. The response further justified the population sizes and geography for each unitary, on the basis of local identity and economic areas.

Neighbouring principal councils
3 of the 6 neighbouring principal councils who responded believed that the 2 unitary proposal would create efficiencies, with 1 responding that it would not, and the remaining 2 declining to answer the question. 2 of the neighbouring councils believed that the 3 unitary proposal would also result in efficiencies, with 3 responding that it would not, and 1 not answering. Justification was broadly consistent with the arguments set out in the proposals submitted by the principal councils.

Health

Responses from the healthcare sector favoured the 2 unitary proposal, referencing the 2 unitary proposal's potential to provide economies of scale and population sizes in line with government guidance. One noted that 2 unitaries would be co-terminus with health services, and both citied that service delivery in 2 unitaries would be more efficient and consistent across authorities than 3 unitaries.

Police and Fire
Police and fire respondents favoured the 2 unitary proposal, with 2 referencing the potential for greater efficiencies to be realised by the 2 unitary proposal.

Business bodies
The business body respondent believed that the 3 unitary proposal was likely to generate efficiencies based on the areas having worked together in the past. Though noting the greater overall savings set out in the 2 unitary proposal, they expressed concern that there was an overall lack of clarity as to how this would be achieved.

Education bodies
The respondent from the education sector supported both proposals, noting that in both models there would be efficiencies to be made compared to the existing model. They further referenced the arguments made in the 3 unitary proposal that the efficiencies proposed in the 2 unitary proposal may be offset by the need to increase capacity to cover the larger footprints.

Residents
In their responses, residents indicated their belief that the 2 unitary proposal would not create efficiencies. 55% of residents responded negatively to this question and 20% supported the proposal. The most commonly stated reason for this view was that the proposed unitaries were too large.

In their responses residents indicated their belief that the 3 unitary proposal had greater capacity for achieving efficiencies, with 52% answering 'yes' to the 3 unitary proposal and 28% answering 'no'. Many residents noted that this did not align with the content of the proposals, but believed that in the medium- to long-term many of the proposed savings from the 2 unitary proposal would be lost, and need to be reinvested to better connect the larger unitaries with their communities. A high number of responses indicated that respondents believed that the 3 unitaries would be a good size.

Question 4

As an area covering councils in Best Value intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, do you agree the proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered 'yes'	Number that answered 'no'	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	4	0	2
Health bodies	2	1	0	1
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	12	9	5

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	18%	56%	26%
Resident not living in area affected	97	33%	53%	14%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	22%	45%	34%
Total named consultees	26	46%	35%	19%
Total	5617	18%	56%	26%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	2	3	1
Health bodies	2	0	1	1
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	12	9	5

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	46%	34%	21%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	35%	42%	23%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	36%	35%	29%
Total named consultees	26	46%	35%	19%
Total	5617	45%	34%	21%

Principal councils
The responses from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal noted the ongoing financial challenges in Surrey and requested financial assistance from government to support the ongoing management of debt. The response further reiterated that 3 small unitaries would be less capable of managing future financial shocks.

The councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal used this section to make the case for a government intervention regarding the debt of Woking and Spelthorne.

Neighbouring principal councils
4 of the 6 responses from neighbouring principal councils indicated agreement that the 2 unitary proposal would put local government on a firmer footing. Respondents noted that the larger unitaries would have greater revenues and therefore better resilience to economic shocks, with the potential for finances to be further enhanced by the reinvestment of efficiencies.

Responses indicated that neither option was ideal in relation to debt, and that there was risk in coupling Woking and Spelthorne in 1 unitary, however this was deemed the better of the 2 options. 2 of the 4 respondents supported the 3 unitary proposal, though they noted this was likely dependent on some measure of additional support from government.

Health
Healthcare sector respondents responded that this question was out of scope of their organisation. One favoured the 2 unitary proposal due to more opportunity for economies of scale.

Police and Fire
All police and fire sector respondents favoured the 2 unitary proposal and 2 commented on the importance of the financial viability of new councils, and the dependency of the police on councils for the delivery of their own services.

Business bodies
The business body respondent did not support the 2 unitary proposal, raising concern about the inclusion of Woking and Spelthorne in the same unitary authority. They did support the 3 unitary proposal, though noting that this would likely require some degree of additional government support to ensure the long-term viability of the councils.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent supported both proposals, stating that both would create efficiencies which could be reinvested in services and thereby improve councils' ability to withstand financial pressures.

Residents
18% of residents believed that the 2 unitary proposal would put local government on a firmer footing and 56% believed that it would not. 46% of residents believed that the 3 unitary proposal would put local government on a firmer footing and 34% believed that it would not.

Although the 3 unitary proposal was significantly better supported than the 2 unitary proposal, it is notable that neither commanded support among the majority of respondents. A good number of responses in favour of the 3 unitary proposal and against the 2 unitary proposal commented on their preference for Woking and Spelthorne to be in separate authority areas. Many comments also noted concern about the responsibility for debt being shared with authorities that are not currently in severe financial difficulty.

Question 5

Will the proposal prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens, improve local government and service delivery, avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services and lead to better value for money in the delivery of these services?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered 'yes'	Number that answered 'no'	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	4	0	2
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Total named consultees	26	14	8	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	18%	57%	25%
Resident not living in area affected	97	35%	53%	12%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	21%	45%	34%
Total named consultees	26	54%	31%	15%
Total	5617	19%	56%	25%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	2	3	1
Health bodies	2	0	2	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	12	10	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	51%	30%	20%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	41%	36%	23%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	45%	27%	29%
Total named consultees	26	46%	38%	15%
Total	5617	50%	30%	20%

Principal councils
The response from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal highlighted concern about variations in service demand and the fragmentation of services in the 3 unitary proposal. The councils reiterated the case made in their proposals that the impacts of disaggregation would be minimised in their 2 unitary option. Councils further set out how the 2 unitary proposal aligns with proposed reforms to Surrey Police Force Basic Command Units and changes to be implemented by the Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board, and conversely how the 3 unitary proposal would not align with these boundaries.

Councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal acknowledged the risk of service disaggregation but pointed to potential mitigations such as shared service models and partnership arrangements. Moreover, they pointed to current delivery models that frequently operate on smaller sub-areas. Other responses suggested that greater proximity to local communities would result in better service delivery outcomes.

Neighbouring principal councils
4 out of 6 neighbouring councils that responded supported the 2 unitary proposal, citing a minimising of disaggregation and the possibility of reinvesting efficiency savings into front line services. 2 neighbouring councils supported the 3 unitary proposal, stating their belief that services would be enhanced by the greater proximity of smaller councils to the communities they serve.

Health
Healthcare sector respondents favoured the 2 unitary proposal, quoting economies of scale and a more efficient and consistent approach across authorities than the 3 unitary proposal. The future Integrated Care Board would be co-terminus with the geographies in the 2 unitary proposal. One respondent also referred to the timeframe for the 3 unitary proposal to reach sustainability as too long term.

Police and Fire
Police and fire sector respondents welcomed the simplification of service delivery afforded by local government reorganisation, favouring the 2 unitary proposal and raising the concern that the 3 unitary proposal may result in fragmentation of services and bureaucratic duplication.

Business bodies
The business body respondent noted that both the 2 and the 3 unitary proposals may result in improved public services, further noting that this may be enhanced with the 3 unitary proposal where 3 councils may have greater connectivity to their local communities.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent supported both proposals, and welcomed the reorganisation of local government in Surrey, expressing the belief that it would increase the speed and efficiency by which their organisation can work with local authorities to support innovation and improve public services.

Residents
57% of residents did not believe that the 2 unitary proposal would improve services, while 18% believed they would. As with other responses, the most common comments were that the unitaries were too big, and it would be bad for local accountability.

51% of residents believed that the 3 unitary proposal would improve services, while 30% believed that the proposal would not. Those residents that supported the 3 unitary proposal did so most commonly because they believed that the unitaries would achieve good economies and efficiencies and that the smaller unitaries would be better for local accountability.

Question 6

Has the proposal been informed by local views, and does it consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	3	1	2
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Total named consultees	26	13	9	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	15%	60%	25%
Resident not living in area affected	97	27%	61%	12%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	18%	52%	30%
Total named consultees	26	50%	35%	15%
Total	5617	16%	60%	25%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	5	0	1
Health bodies	2	1	1	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	0	3
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	16	4	6

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	49%	31%	20%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	46%	36%	18%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	40%	34%	26%
Total named consultees	26	62%	15%	23%
Total	5617	49%	32%	20%

Principal councils
The response from the councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal referred to the surveys they had undertaken in the development of their proposal. These surveys indicated support for their model among both the public and local organisations, with 63% of respondents favouring their model. They further note the importance of local cultural identity as a theme among the responses they received.

The response from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal challenged the methodology of the survey undertaken by councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal, and further noted strong support among residents for better value for money from their council.

Neighbouring principal councils
3 of the 6 neighbouring principal councils that responded believed that the 2 unitary proposal was informed by local views. In their responses councils noted the input from strategic partners. Those councils that did not support the 2 unitary proposal cited the greater support for the 3 unitary proposal indicated in the engagement exercise that informed that proposal.

The 3 unitary proposal received support from 5 of the 6 neighbouring councils that responded, with no negative responses. This included support from councils that otherwise favoured the 2 unitary proposal. Those councils cited ‘the impressive level of input from residents and stakeholders, with this section of the proposal being

strong, carefully considering historical and cultural identities and local concerns – and using these to support the case for 3 unitaries by enabling a closer continuity to existing social, cultural, and local economic geographies.'

Health
One healthcare sector respondent felt they had been well engaged in the development of the 2 unitary proposal and that engagement had been comprehensive. They had not been directly invited to engage with the 3 unitary proposal. The other healthcare sector respondent felt both proposals appeared informed by local views with local issues considered.

Police and Fire
Police and fire sector respondents felt that they had been appropriately consulted in the development of the 2 unitary proposal, and that their insight was appropriately reflected in the final proposals.

Business bodies
The business body respondent felt that there had been sufficient engagement from councils in relation to both the 2 and the 3 unitary proposals. They further noted their concern that continued connectivity to local communities may become more challenging once the new unitaries are established across broader geographies. They believed that continued engagement with the community would be more likely should the 3 unitary proposal be implemented.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent felt well engaged and sufficiently consulted by the councils developing the proposals for both the 2 and the 3 unitary proposals.

Residents
Residents did not respond in favour of the 2 unitary proposal, with only 15% saying that the proposal had taken into account local views, and that it considered issues of local cultural identity and importance. 60% said that the proposal had not done so. Comments most frequently related to a lack of consultation and concerns that the geographies of the new authorities would be bad for local identity

The 3 unitary proposal was seen to have better incorporated local views, with 49% of residents responding positively and 31% of people saying this was not the case. There were mixed views on the level of engagement done on this proposal, with those in favour indicating there had been sufficient engagement, while those against

the proposal indicating there had been a lack of engagement. Many of the positive comments indicated respondents' views that the geography of the authorities in the 3 unitary proposal would reflect local identities.

Question 7

Does the proposal support devolution arrangements?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered 'yes'	Number that answered 'no'	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	4	0	2
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	14	8	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	26%	46%	28%
Resident not living in area affected	97	45%	39%	15%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	32%	34%	34%
Total named consultees	26	54%	31%	16%
Total	5617	27%	46%	28%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	3	0	3
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	15	5	6

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	52%	25%	23%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	55%	25%	21%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	48%	24%	29%
Total named consultees	26	58%	19%	23%
Total	5617	52%	25%	23%

Principal councils
The response from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal noted again how misalignment between local government, health, and police boundaries may hinder partnership working within the proposed strategic authority.

In their response, councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal set out how their proposal would support devolution, whilst providing wider commentary on the potential governance and geography of a Surrey mayoral strategic authority.

Neighbouring principal councils
In their responses, 4 of the 6 neighbouring councils that responded said that the arrangements proposed in the 2 unitary proposal would support devolution and 3 of the councils said that the arrangements in the 3 unitary proposal would support devolution arrangements. There were no negative responses to either proposal.

Health
Healthcare sector respondents noted that both proposals support the government’s ambition for devolution and welcomed the opportunity to be more involved in this process.

Police and Fire

All police and fire sector respondents supported the 2 unitary proposal, citing concerns around how the population sizes in the 3 unitary proposal differ from the preference set out in the letter of invitation.

Business bodies
The business body respondent felt that both the 2 unitary proposal and the 3 unitary proposal would support devolution ambitions, encouraging MHCLG also to increase the speed by which devolution was implemented.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent supported both proposals, welcoming local government reorganisation as a step towards devolution in Surrey, and recognising some of the benefits that may bring to the education sector in Surrey.

Residents
Residents did not believe that the 2 unitary proposal supported devolution arrangements in Surrey with 26% answering ‘yes’ and 46% answering ‘no’. Reasons given for the responses were mixed. A theme in the comments was the belief that larger authorities would mean less devolved decision making.

Residents were more supportive of the 3 unitary proposal with 52% of residents believing that the proposal would support devolution arrangements. In the converse of the negative responses to the 2 unitary proposal, a theme in the comments was the belief among respondents that smaller authorities would lead to greater devolution of decision making.

Question 8

Will the proposal enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

2 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	3	8	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	3	1	2
Health bodies	2	2	0	0
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	3	0	0
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	12	10	4

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	15%	60%	25%

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident not living in area affected	97	28%	60%	12%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	19%	49%	32%
Total named consultees	26	46%	38%	15%
Total	5617	15%	60%	25%

3 unitary proposal

Summary of named consultee responses

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Principal authority	11	8	3	0
Neighbouring principal authority	6	4	0	2
Health bodies	2	1	0	1
Police and Fire and Rescue bodies	3	0	2	1

Respondent type	Total	Number that answered ‘yes’	Number that answered ‘no’	Number that did not answer
Business bodies	1	1	0	0
Voluntary and community sector	1	0	0	1
Education bodies	1	1	0	0
National bodies	1	0	0	1
Total named consultees	26	15	5	6

Summary of total responses

Respondent type	Total	Percentage that answered ‘yes’	Percentage that answered ‘no’	Percentage that did not answer
Resident living in area affected	5337	49%	31%	20%
Resident not living in area affected	97	41%	37%	21%
Other responses (not named consultee)	157	45%	29%	26%
Total named consultees	26	58%	19%	23%
Total	5617	49%	31%	21%

Principal councils
The response from those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal makes the case that there is too great an assumption within the 3 unitary proposal that the residents of Surrey associate their communities with council boundaries rather than the towns and villages in which they live. The councils further highlight how they are piloting neighbourhood area committees and that they will 'underpin the new unitary configuration for robust and locally led community engagement'.

The response from the councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal raised concerns that the larger geographies proposed in the 2 unitary proposal would dilute accountability for residents in Surrey. They pointed to the engagement and empowerment mechanisms within their own proposal, and how residents would more likely engage with democratic processes if council boundaries aligned with a geography that they recognised.

Neighbouring principal councils

3 of the 6 neighbouring councils that responded believed that the 2 unitary proposal would enable stronger community engagement. Supporting councils referenced mechanisms for community level governance and engagement set out in the 2 unitary proposal. Councils that did not support this option did so on the basis that the 3 unitary option created smaller councils that would be closer to their communities.

4 councils believed that the 3 unitary proposal would enable stronger community engagement, citing the overall smaller footprints of the proposed unitaries. Councils that did not provide an answer did so on the basis that they believed there was a lack of detail included in the proposal as to how this engagement would be achieved.

Health

Both healthcare sector respondents commented on the neighbourhood empowerment set out in the 2 unitary proposal which would build on the Integrated Care Board's Neighbourhood Health workstream. One also

supported the neighbourhood empowerment set out in the 3 unitary proposal. One respondent did not provide a response on the 3 unitary proposal due to insufficient evidence; however it welcomed the 3 unitary proposal's clear ambition for positive community engagement.

Police and Fire

All police and fire sector respondents supported the 2 unitary proposal. Two noted the risk that the reduction in the number of councils and the increased geographies of the 2 unitaries could dilute community engagement. They believed this was offset by the proposal for the creation of neighbourhood area committees in which they were engaged.

Business bodies

The business body respondent felt that the 3 unitary proposal would result in greater community empowerment, and were sceptical that the larger geographies identified in the 2 unitary proposal could achieve the same outcomes.

Education bodies

In their response the education sector respondent supported both proposals, while noting that the 3 unitary proposal was likely to greater empower communities and that the proposed councils would benefit from closer and more obviously defined ties to the local and economic areas they would serve. They further noted the importance of regeneration and the economic vulnerability of some sectors in Surrey, particularly those

dependent on high street footfall. They believed that the 3 unitary proposal would leave councils better placed to understand and therefore meet this need.

Residents

The majority of residents that responded did not believe that the 2 unitary proposal would result in community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment, with 60% of residents responding negatively and 15% supporting the proposals. The most common theme in free text responses was that the new unitaries would be too large to effectively engage at the community level.

Residents were more supportive of the 3 unitary proposal, with 49% responding ‘yes’ to this question and 31% responding ‘no’. The most common reason provided in the comments was that the unitaries would better reflect local identities and the size would enable local engagement and accountability.

Question 9

Do you have any other comments on the proposed local government reorganisation in Surrey?

Principal councils
Those councils supporting the 2 unitary proposal used this question to make the case for devolution in Surrey and to summarise how their proposal will best align with the criteria set out by MHCLG. Councils supporting the 3 unitary proposal likewise used this section to conclude and reissue their arguments around size, economic and travel to work areas, cultural identity, and resident support.

Neighbouring principal councils
Councils used this section to reiterate their support for either the 2 or the 3 unitary proposals. Councils that supported the 2 unitary proposal reiterated that support, referenced ongoing cross boundary working and the alignment of economic areas. Supporters of the 3 unitary proposal cited its greater support from the public.

Health
One healthcare sector respondent used this section to reiterate their overall support for the 2 unitary proposal, which:

> "demonstrates better alignment to the NHS requirements and plans and is of a workable scale to deliver effective and resilient services to people in Surrey."

One respondent did not comment on the 2 unitary proposal but stated:

> "at the relevant stakeholder forum there was no identified benefit to emergency responses services provision of the 3 versus 2 unitary model presented."

Police and Fire
All police and dire sector respondents used this section to express their support for the 2 unitary proposal. One reiterated their overall support for the proposal by stating:

> "(t)he proposed 2 unitary authority structure for Surrey provides an opportunity to not only improve the efficiency and delivery of services by the local authorities of Surrey but also enhance the coherence of delivery to the public across several partnership functions."

Business bodies
The business body respondent welcomed the overall reform whilst encouraging councils to maintain clear long-term visions for growth in Surrey.

Voluntary and community sector
The voluntary and community sector respondent used this section to explain how they had not responded to the questions in relation to either proposal in order to respect the diverse views of their membership, who they had encouraged to respond individually. They did however note that a number of their members had favoured the 3 unitary proposal in the belief that it would lead to greater engagement with communities and community groups.

Education bodies
The education sector respondent did not provide any further comments in relation to either proposal.

Residents

Residents used this free text question to reassert arguments made throughout previous sections, commonly raising concern over the larger size of the unitaries within the 2 unitary proposal and the extent to which these authorities reflected the different areas within Surrey and would be able to provide tailored services to these areas. This free text question was also used to express views against local government reorganisation in general and raise concerns about a lack of consultation.