

# **A SINGLE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR WEST SUFFOLK**

## **BUSINESS CASE**

**Proposal from the Leaders of Forest  
Heath District Council and St  
Edmundsbury Borough Council for  
the creation of a new, single council  
for West Suffolk**

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils



**West Suffolk**  
working together



## Contents

3	A. Executive Summary
5	B. Introduction
8	C. Local Government Transformation in West Suffolk – our journey to a single Council
12	D. Benefits of a Single Council for West Suffolk
15	E. The role and vision of a West Suffolk Council
18	F. The Financial Business Case
30	G. Future Changes and Challenges
32	H. Outcomes of Public Engagement
35	Appendix A: Options Appraisal
37	Appendix B: Council Tax Harmonisation Options
39	Appendix C: Risk Management
43	Appendix D: Engagement Outcome Summary
54	Appendix E: Responses to online feedback
130	Appendix F: Equality Impact Screening Assessment



## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council have prepared a business case to test the option of a new, single district or borough council for West Suffolk from May 2019.
2. The proposal has arisen out of a commitment to shape the arrangements for local government in West Suffolk in the best possible way, in order to support our residents and business communities in achieving their ambitions and facing the changing and challenging future in the next decade.
3. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have a long, shared history, culminating in recent years in the formation of a full shared service partnership between the two councils that has created ongoing savings in excess of £4 million in staff and other costs since 2013.
4. Appendix A to the draft business case tests the following four options for further transformation in West Suffolk, against the Government's criteria for considering changes in local council structures:

### ***Options***

1. do nothing
2. revert to working as two separate councils (dismantle the shared service partnership)
3. expand the shared service partnership to include other councils
4. create a new, single district council for West Suffolk

### ***Government criteria***

- better local/public services;
  - significant cost savings;
  - greater value for money;
  - stronger and more accountable local leadership; and
  - sustainability in the medium to long term.
5. The options appraisal shows that doing nothing or reverting to two separate Councils would have a generally negative outcome. It concludes that a new, single district council for West Suffolk would bring the greatest benefits for local businesses and communities, including:
    - value for money, financial savings and self-sufficiency;
    - simplicity;
    - democratic accountability;
    - influence; and
    - resilience.
  6. Central to the proposal to create a new, single council is the desire to ensure that we can continue to meet the challenges that we are facing and take advantage of opportunities. For example, we are ambitious to go

further in our place-shaping role, growing our local economy further, and putting families and communities at the heart of everything we do.

7. We also want to move forward with new forms of local government, for example, putting decisions and services at the most local level possible, investing in prevention, not crisis interventions, maximising our assets, and integrating with the rest of the public sector system.

8. All of this will require strong leadership from elected ward members. Both councils will already be subject to Electoral Reviews by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) before the 2019 elections. So, whatever happens, the make-up of the two councils will be changing in the coming years to reflect growth in the districts over the last 15 years and changes in how local government works.

9. In spite of these strategic changes, there will be no change to the things that are currently valued about Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils, in terms of locally delivered services, good customer access and strong connections between local councillors and their communities.

10. As the financial section of the business case makes clear, the main financial driver of the proposal to become a single council would be to protect the over £4m per year savings already achieved and to maximise the organisation's efficiency to address future challenges. There would be some immediate cashable savings of around £0.5m per year and £0.3m non-cashable efficiencies and extra capacity. The proposal would also ensure resilience and sustainability of much-valued local council services across the whole of West Suffolk, enabling us to continue to support businesses and residents.

11. A new single council would have a single level of council tax after a period of harmonisation. Appendix B sets out how this might be achieved, building on the existing commitments and requirements for changes in council tax over the medium term.

12. This business case was agreed in draft by Councils in 13 and 14 June. A public engagement exercise, started with the announcement of the proposals in May 2017, and concluded on 31 August. Appendix D describes the engagement undertaken, and demonstrates public support for the proposals, from amongst both our residents and key partners and stakeholders.

## **B. INTRODUCTION**

13. Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council are committed to shaping the arrangements for local government in West Suffolk in the best possible way, in order to support our residents and business communities in achieving their ambitions and facing the changing and challenging future in the next decade. Our belief is that the best option for us to achieve this is through the creation of a new, single district or borough council for West Suffolk from May 2019.

14. Our proposal to create a single council is shaped by our commitment to:

- a strong and growing economy;
- strong families and communities;
- self-sufficient and resilient local government;
- using our commercial approach to invest back into our communities; and
- efficient, effective services, offering value for money.

15. This document gives further detail on what creating a single district council for West Suffolk would entail, and compares it to the other organisational options available to the councils.

### ***About West Suffolk***

16. The concept of West Suffolk has a long history, and the two councils of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have a lot in common, most recently reflected in the strong will amongst both authorities to work together more closely. This has led, over the past 8 years, to the formation of joint strategic plans and objectives, and a fully shared officer structure. At a member level, the joint families and communities strategy and a shared portfolio holder for housing has emphasised a growing leadership role to create strong, empowered communities.

17. West Suffolk lies at a crossroads between the larger urban centres of Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich with whom it is well connected by the A14 and A11. But the area also has its own unique environmental, economic, social and cultural strengths. West Suffolk is a beautiful rural area, with 85 parishes, nationally significant forest and heathlands and a number of thriving market towns. In particular, West Suffolk includes the historic town of Bury St Edmunds; the world centre for the horseracing industry at Newmarket; enterprise zones at Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds, Center Parcs near Brandon, the US Air Force bases at Mildenhall and Lakenheath and the RAF base at Honington. The results of our recent independent poll undertaken by ComRes highlight that a large majority of residents are happy with the place where they live.

18. The two districts are marked by their similarities, not their differences. Similar proportions of residents live in urban and rural areas; there are similar levels of deprivation in the two districts and residents

and businesses in the two districts face similar challenges and opportunities for the future, for example, benefitting from the growth of Cambridge on the one hand, and supporting an increasingly ageing population on the other hand.

19. An assessment of our governance structure will enable us to review how we can work more effectively to support these common challenges, without losing our strong community relationships.

#### ***About the councils***

Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils are adjacent district councils in the west of Suffolk, a county with two-tier governance (Suffolk County Council plus 7 district councils). The councils are members of both New Anglia and Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEPS. They are not part of any current or proposed future combined authorities.

	<b>Population (2015)</b>	<b>Number of Councillors</b>	<b>Revenue budget (2017-2018)*</b>
Forest Heath	63,691	27	£31.5m
St Edmundsbury	112,523	45	£62.1m

*\*Gross budget including Housing Benefit payments*

## The Geography of West Suffolk



West Suffolk –  
so much in common...



## **C. LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION IN WEST SUFFOLK – OUR JOURNEY TO A SINGLE COUNCIL**

20. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils are proud of our track record of sharing services and formulating joint plans and initiatives. Both Councils have been at the forefront of transforming local government to better support and deliver high quality services for our local communities. We have made ongoing savings in excess of £4 million in staff and other costs since 2013 through our full shared service and management partnership arrangements, and continue year-on-year to do this. This enables us to continue delivering excellent services and to support our communities to shape their futures. Since 2014, we have operated under shared Strategic Plans, Medium Term Financial Strategies and other major policies and strategies, underlining our shared commitment to working in partnership to make a difference in West Suffolk.

21. Our transformation journey has progressed over the past 10 years, beginning with a shared waste service in order to improve customer service, optimise service delivery and ultimately reduce costs to the taxpayer. The success of the partnership led to consideration of other ways in which the authorities could work together to deliver the same outcomes for the residents of West Suffolk.

22. Sharing services for West Suffolk was deeper than simply co-location of staff on a wider geography.

- Business Process Re-engineering – identifying the optimal way to deliver services to our customer, evaluating how our customers interacted with our services through our Customer Access Strategy and rationalising our approach to improve performance
- Integration of our systems, structures and approach –at a service level minimising differences in operational procedures
- Transitioning to a single-officer structure, on a single payline, with shared single terms and conditions and clear structure across all service levels
- Harmonisation of strategic approach and policy – developing common goals and aspirations, sharing risks and rewards in delivery. This has included formulation of a joint Medium Term Financial Strategy and a joint Strategic Plan.

23. These changes formed the first part of our transformation journey in West Suffolk – aligning our approach to service delivery, ensuring customers received a consistent experience and approach across both Councils. This sought to achieve £2.4m of savings across both Councils per year; we have actually achieved in excess of £4m of savings per year.



24. In addition to evaluating service delivery, opportunities arose to evaluate the way in which our Councillors worked on a collaborative basis, to share knowledge, insight and resources. Councillors in Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury already work on a joint basis, for example through joint committees and working parties, joint Cabinet meetings, a joint Council meeting, joint portfolio holder briefings and shared induction and learning and development programmes. Our councillor body consists of 72 members (27 in Forest Heath and 45 in St Edmundsbury). Both councils are currently Conservative-led, and each has its own Leader and Cabinet arrangement. Both councils currently set separate council taxes and budgets, even where used to fund jointly delivered services.

25. Sharing services has allowed the councils to remain strong in the face of recent challenges, and to support communities and deliver services in spite of ongoing cuts in funding. However, there is now a sense that the limits have now been reached of what the shared services model and traditional transformation and efficiency saving approaches can achieve in terms of making savings and creating a resilient organisation to face future challenges. Like several other councils locally and nationally, West Suffolk is ready to take the next step.

26. The financial business case identifies that should both Councils not elect to become a single council, additional costs are likely to be incurred in supporting the divergent agendas that both Councils may require. However, more fundamentally, becoming a single Council gives us the best opportunity to protect the savings we have already achieved, and avoid a deeper division between both Councils which may put these savings at risk of being undone.

27. Our move towards self-sufficiency is described in the six themes of the councils' shared Medium Term Financial Strategy, as follows:

1. aligning resources to both councils' new strategic plan and essential services;
2. continuation of the shared service agenda and transformation of service delivery;
3. behaving more commercially;
4. considering new funding models (e.g. acting as an investor);
5. encouraging the use of digital forms for customer access; and
6. taking advantage of new forms of local government finance (e.g. business rate retention).

28. In the future, Communities require local government that is strong and influential in the face of radical change in the public sector and society more widely. These challenges include supporting an ageing population while driving growth in the local economy and in the context of reduced funding.

29. Working as two organisations builds in additional administration and costs that, under a new approach, could be removed – for example, production of two statement accounts which both require auditing.

Having harmonised our strategies, policies and approach to working, the next logical step is to evaluate how our structure of governance can be re-assessed to most effectively support us achieve the outcomes we seek and avoid duplication in our democratic structures.

30. In formulating the proposal for our future governance, consideration has been given to the following four options<sup>1</sup> :

- do nothing
- revert to working as two separate councils (dismantle the shared service partnership)
- expand the shared service partnership to include other councils
- create a new, single district council for West Suffolk

31. Based on the high level options appraisal at Appendix A, we have developed the option of creating a new district council for West Suffolk (the 'single council'), as set out in the remainder of this document.

32. Our belief as Leaders, supported by our members, is that creating a new, single West Suffolk Council will give us the best possible opportunity to secure our future as viable councils as well as the future of the services delivered to our residents, businesses and communities.



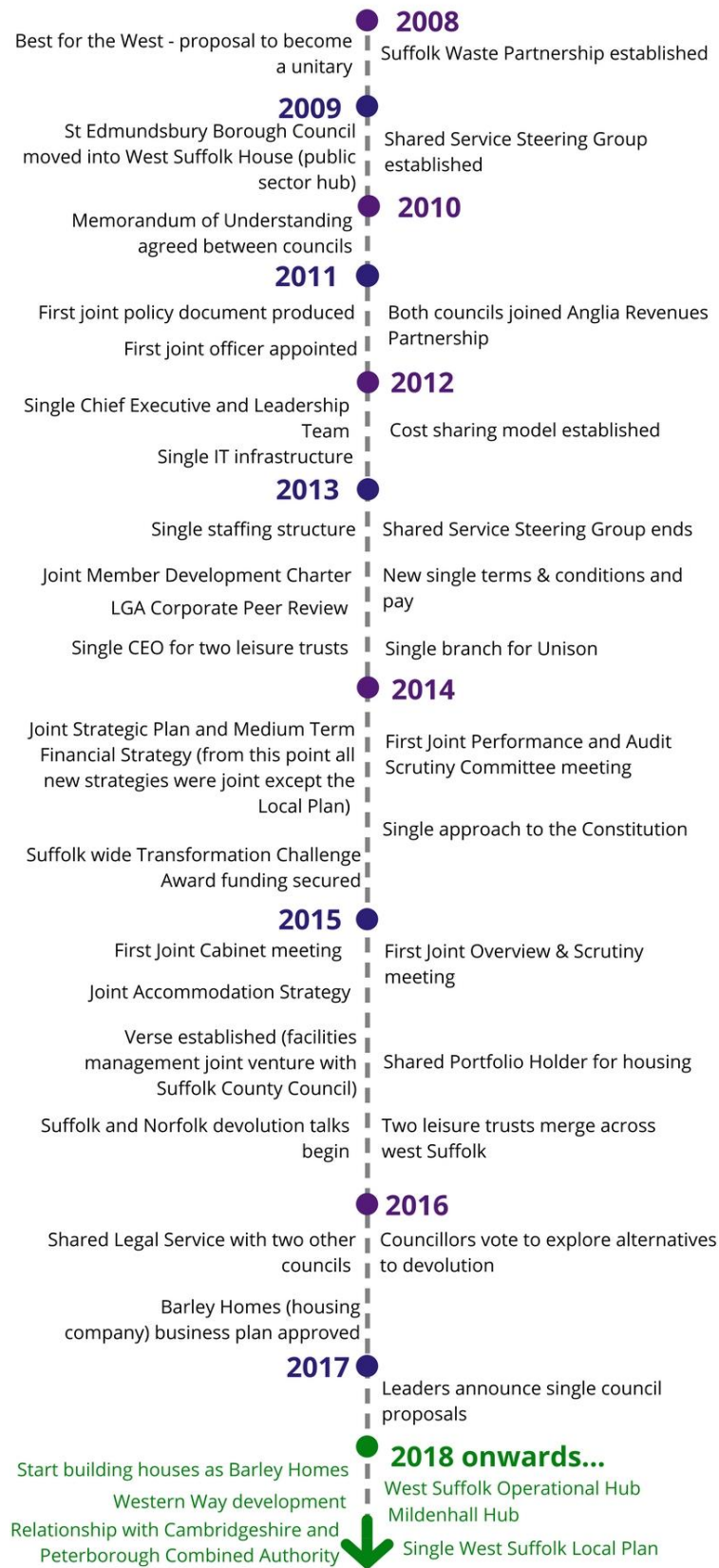
*Toggam Farm – the largest Solar Farm in public ownership in the UK*

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<sup>1</sup> Options 1-3 will entail some element of change from the status quo, as if both Councils elect not to become a single Council, then the LGBCE will be undertaking an electoral review.

# Timeline of West Suffolk

Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council at the forefront of Local Government Transformation



## **D: BENEFITS OF A SINGLE COUNCIL FOR WEST SUFFOLK**

33. A single council for West Suffolk would support the Department for Communities and Local Government's broad, non-statutory principles for local government reorganisation. These principles have been adopted for considering proposals for changes in local governance, in advance of their being submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. It should be noted that these benefits, indeed the business case as a whole, remain the same in the event that for reasons beyond the Councils' control, implementation of a single council was not able to take place in May 2019 and was delayed to 2020.
34. West Suffolk Councils are further advanced in our transformation journey than many other district councils. As such, several of the criteria have already been achieved in the context of our shared services and wider transformation programme as described in section C. In allowing the councils to further develop and pursue an ambitious agenda around growth and supporting communities, the creation of a single council would allow us to go above and beyond the criteria set by DCLG as follows, thereby achieving national, sub-regional and local objectives:

### ***Greater value for money and significant cost savings***

- i) As set out in more detail in the financial business case below, becoming a single council is estimated to generate a further £0.5 million of annual cashable savings, £0.35m non-cashable savings and protect the annual shared services savings of £4 million plus across West Suffolk we have already achieved.
- ii) Becoming a single council would also mean releasing some capacity that is currently absorbed by serving two bodies, for example, through requiring two Committee meetings to independently make the same decisions. This would enable us to focus more on growing a single council's business areas (to generate new income to support services) and investing in communities. It would also mean doing the best for residents in terms of maximising the resources directed towards achieving outcomes, rather than spending time on complex or duplicated processes. This issue was raised as a priority for residents during our engagement period.
- iii) New income opportunities and savings will continue to be realised when contracts and system requirements come up for review, and dual arrangements can be replaced with a simpler, cheaper, single contractual relationship.
- iv) In the longer term, a single council would mean a bigger asset base to borrow against, without individual ring-fenced budgets.
- v) Achievement of i) – iv) above would provide a stronger basis from which to build a more financially self-sufficient organisation.

### ***Better local/public services***

- vi) Becoming a single council could be seen as a natural continuation of the shared service journey. By removing the

remaining red tape and complexities inherent in serving two bodies, the organisation would be simpler to run and manage, especially when considering new delivery models, investment and commercial opportunities. Financial systems would be simpler, with single reporting requirements, a removal of ring-fences and the need for reconciliation between different council budgets when running a shared operational service. Working in these more efficient ways would provide the councils with more capacity and would protect funding so as to allow greater focus on high quality service delivery to our families and communities. This was seen as a high priority by those who responded to our phone poll carried out during the engagement period.

- vii) Specific examples of where becoming a single council would directly improve service delivery can be found in West Suffolk's approach to providing homes for our communities. On the one hand, a single local plan for West Suffolk would give a broader view of infrastructure and housing need; while on the other hand, individuals in housing need would be offered a wider range of potential accommodation without having to apply to neighbouring councils.
- viii) Becoming a single council would also have benefits for our partnership working. Having seen the benefits that collaboration and clear leadership can bring to communities, some of our key service delivery partners have also joined together, so a single council for West Suffolk would mean a simplification of the decision making and service delivery relationships operating within partnership relationships in local government and associated sectors.
- ix) Delivery of services within local government and associated sectors has become increasingly fluid, with partners transferring responsibilities or working together more closely to deliver services. With increased fluidity, a single democratic decision making structure would support other systems established to support fast and efficient service delivery, meaning this proposal should be to the benefit of our key delivery partners.

***Stronger and more accountable local leadership***

- x) A single council would mean the retention of a democratically sound model, but with an end to the need for joint decisions by the councils. Continuing with joint, but separate, decision-making could over time create a perceived 'democratic deficit', as joint decisions may be seen as blurring accountability, especially as financial pressures will differ over time. Residents would also benefit from a renewed democratic relationship with a new body. This would complement the opportunity of forging new relationships with communities, an issue that was raised as a priority during the formal public engagement on the draft business case in Summer 2017.
- xi) A larger council, with a bigger population, local economy and GVA (Gross Value Added) would allow us more influence on the regional or national stage. A West Suffolk Council would have a population of over 176,000 (using 2015 estimates), rising to

202,129 in 2039<sup>2</sup>. This would bring the councils from being 86th and 189th largest district councils in England (out of 202) to one of the top tens largest district/borough council when combined – a big voice among our peers, funders, infrastructure providers and central Government.

- xii) In particular, a larger council would be a more significant organisation to support our partners in delivery, should we wish to pursue integrated working. This would be especially important when it comes to services such as health and social care where, as a council small enough to have strong local working relationships and knowledge, but large enough to deliver complex services competently, we could have a real impact on the lives of our residents and families.
- xiii) By creating a single council, we would be keeping pace with other areas where similar activities are taking place, such as East Suffolk, thereby allowing us to take advantage of being in the vanguard of transformation and reform.

### ***Sustainability in the medium to long term***

- xiv) A single council will be a more resilient organisation than two smaller councils in the future and therefore better able to face the significant changes and challenges that local government will experience in the remainder of this decade and into the next. The current governance arrangements, which date back to 1974, while they have been fit for purpose so far, are likely to come under challenge in the longer term, particularly from the point of view of the potential for each individual council's financial strategies to diverge in the future, in light of some of the different financial pressures and opportunities facing each one. These pressures relate especially to those arising from changes to local government funding, such as the cut in government grants, 2017 business rates valuations, as well as significant changes expected around New Homes Bonus and 100% Business Rates Retention from 2019-20. All of these changes will put pressure on shared service delivery and therefore the cost-sharing model that supports them. This is explored further in the financial section later in this document. The small size and rural nature of the councils, also raises questions about vulnerability in the medium term.
- xv) Our engagement work confirmed our view that a clear priority for local residents in West Suffolk is continued access to local council services. Becoming a single council would give us the financial stability to protect our customer access points across the area, and make sure we continue to design services with residents at their heart.

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<sup>2</sup> This compares to East Suffolk, whose combined population in 2014 was 240,695 and is expected to rise to 259,450 in 2039.



*Research at GE Aviation, Newmarket*

## **E: THE ROLE AND VISION OF A WEST SUFFOLK COUNCIL**

### ***Building on our success – shared ambitions***

35. At the heart of the proposal to create a new, single council is a desire to continue to deliver against our strategic priorities and to make a difference for our residents, communities and businesses. These priorities are currently:

**Priority 1:** Increased opportunities for economic growth

**Priority 2:** Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active

**Priority 3:** Homes for our communities

### ***Looking ahead***

36. As we look towards the next decade, we want to build on the councils' successes so far, by driving forward progress. West Suffolk is a thriving and dynamic part of the world, with vibrant market towns, strong village communities and beautiful countryside as well as significant future potential deriving from our proximity to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It has a broad-based economy, with a diverse range of small and medium sized enterprises, as well as some major employers. Tourism is a major asset, and new businesses are attracted to the area due to our relatively affordable housing, safe local areas, and good strategic and international transport links. However, we remain aware that some people in our communities can be left behind and don't enjoy these benefits. We therefore want to bring about inclusive growth and support our communities in making sure everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and overcome challenges to their social, financial and physical wellbeing. In doing so, we will be reflecting the priorities of the Government's industrial strategy, for example, developing skills, upgrading infrastructure, supporting businesses to start and grow and cultivating world-leading sectors.

### ***Our vision for a new council***

37. If a new single council, fundamentally different from our existing councils (which have diligently served their communities for the past 40 years), becomes a reality then we would expect it to build its own vision through engagement with its councillors and, through them, its communities and local businesses.

38. However, a new West Suffolk council would present an opportunity to put in place many of the new ways of working and constitutional and corporate changes that Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have been moving towards in recent years, and that do the best possible job in terms of supporting residents. From the outset, the new organisation could develop these ways of working further, for example:

- place-shaping on a wider scale than we do now, championing our localities and shaping them for the future;



- having the capacity to grow our own economy further, and reinvesting the benefits into supporting our local area;
- putting families and communities at the heart of everything that we do by engaging them in service delivery and reducing the need for some services;
- making sure things are done at the right level (subsidiarity), including a greater role for town and parish councils in truly local matters;
- using our community links to support our customers to access services in the best way;
- investing in prevention, not crisis interventions;
- integrating with the rest of the public sector system
- maximising our assets;
- behaving more commercially; and
- ensuring financial stability.

### ***Council Governance***

39. Critical to the success of a single council would be the leadership role of ward members, who would be at the frontline of our engagement with communities and integral to our ways of working, championing their localities, and providing local leadership, including liaising with town or parish councils.

40. Both councils will already be subject to Electoral Reviews by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) before the 2019 elections. The last reviews were in 2001 and implemented in 2003 and growth in the area has unbalanced the existing wards. So, whatever happens, the make-up of the two councils will be changing in the coming years to reflect growth in the districts over the last 15 years and changes in how local government works.

41. If FHDC and SEBC were to proceed with the creation of a single council, councillors from both authorities would still need to submit a proposal to the Secretary of State for the size and governance arrangements for the new council. As with the existing planned reviews, this would need to include the number of councillors needed for effective representation of the community and strategic decision-making, but in relation to a single council rather than two separate ones. The proposal would then inform the work of the LGBCE who would carry out an Electoral Review of the new council following the agreement of the Secretary of State to the proposal.

42. The proposals for the size of the new council would need to reflect the guidance from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on how many councillors are needed in 21st century councils. Applying the guidance to the whole of West Suffolk at the same time would allow a coherent view to be taken on the issue of ward size ensuring, among other things, electoral equality for shared decision-taking.

43. During the phase of public engagement, a steering group of Councillors from both councils reviewed the potential role, governance

arrangements and size of a future Council. The group has firmly recognised the need for local leadership; for the Council to effectively appraise the way it works to ensure fairness across the different rural and urban areas a new Council represents, for local members to have a strong, powerful role in a single Council, and for the governance arrangements to support the executive in influencing on a broader scale. These principles reflect the views put forward by residents during our engagement work, particularly the phone poll carried out.

44. Whilst it is recognised that there may be scope for efficiencies in the way Councillors work as a result of Single Council (for example, having 1 Cabinet rather than 2), Councillors have emphasised the need to ensure future Councillors have the capacity to deliver the “21<sup>st</sup> Century” role – being strong local members, and knowledgeable and empowered decision makers. With this in mind, a working assumption of 64 Councillors for the new Council (compared to 72 across both Councils at present) has been adopted.

## F. THE FINANCIAL BUSINESS CASE

### **Background**

45. As discussed above, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils have been on a journey of transformation and public service reform for many years creating ongoing saving in excess of £4 million in staff and other costs since 2013. The creation of a new, single council is a model of local government which would meet our communities' needs in the future and which would ensure a local provider of services which is sufficiently stable, strong and influential in the face of radical change in the public sector and society more widely.

46. In February 2017, both Councils approved 4 year balanced budgets covering the MTFs period 2017-2021. Post April 2021 the anticipated combined savings targets (see paragraph 49 for business rates income assumptions) for West Suffolk Councils are as follows:

	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Savings Target (Cumulative)	921	1,404	1,887	2,370	2,853

47. Although this financial business case identifies those costs and savings directly attributable to the creation of a new, single council, it also focuses on the strengths and opportunities that would accompany the creation of a financially stronger council with a higher worth than the current separate authorities.

48. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have both some similarities and differences in their financial profiles. In terms of their balance sheets they have similar profiles reflective of their sizes; however their revenue budget positions have some differences.

49. The table below presents a summary of a new, single council balance sheet for West Suffolk based on the 2015/16 audited Statement of Accounts. Whilst there would not necessarily be immediate or directly quantifiable advantages, the combined balance sheet would undoubtedly be stronger and qualitatively more favourable. West Suffolk would essentially be financially stronger, with a higher net worth base to borrow against and to continue to invest in its communities, without individual ring-fenced budgets.

	<b>Forest Heath</b> £'000s	<b>St Edmundsbury</b> £'000s	<b>West Suffolk</b> £'000s
Long-Term Assets	£65,783	£109,602	£175,385
Current Assets	£31,736	£51,118	£82,854
Current Liabilities	(£5,013)	(£10,539)	(£15,552)
Long-Term Liabilities	(£21,163)	(£47,821)	(£68,984)
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>£71,343</b>	<b>£102,360</b>	<b>£173,703</b>
Usable Reserves	£26,525	£35,008	£61,533
Unusable Reserves	£44,818	£67,352	£112,170
<b>TOTAL RESERVES</b>	<b>£71,343</b>	<b>£102,360</b>	<b>£173,703</b>

50. In terms of the revenue position of the two councils, probably the most noticeable difference concerns the position of the authorities in respect of council tax receipts and the relative importance of localised business rates and government grants as an income source.

51. In 2019/20, Forest Heath has estimated net business rates income (including direct 'section 31' grants from Government and renewables income), and revenue support grant of around £3.2 million (approximately 50% of their net revenue budget). In contrast, St Edmundsbury's net business rates income is estimated to be nearly £4.0 million, approximately 32% of their net revenue budget. Forest Heath consequently has a greater reliance on both business rates income and the residual Revenue Support Grant, which has been subject to major Government spending reductions and policy changes.

52. It is important to note that, around 2020, the business rates system will be completely re-set when the Government moves towards 100% retention of business rates by local government. This reset will also be accompanied by the transfer of additional responsibilities to local government, which could include a requirement to part-fund areas such as housing benefits. At this stage, it is impossible to predict the financial positions of both authorities under the new arrangements from 2020/21 onwards.

53. A single authority would have a different profile to the two current districts. Based on Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts, the table below illustrates the comparative net budget and reserves and balances position of a new authority as at 2019/20, compared with the existing position.

**2019/20 West Suffolk Net Budget Requirement (as approved February 2017)**

<b>NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>Forest Heath £'000S</b>	<b>St Edmundsbury £'000S</b>	<b>West Suffolk £'000S</b>
Council Tax	£2,730	£7,007	£9,737
Revenue Support Grant & Rural Services Delivery Grant	£214	£121	£335
Business Rates Retention	£2,992	£3,831	£6,823
New Homes Bonus Grant	£417	£1,493	£1,910
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,353</b>	<b>£12,452</b>	<b>£18,805</b>
Council Tax	43%	56%	52%
Revenue Support Grant	3%	1%	2%
Business Rates Retention	47%	31%	36%
New Homes Bonus Grant	7%	12%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
General - Revenue	£2,000	£3,035	£5,035
Earmarked - Revenue	£6,204	£17,681	£23,885
<b>TOTAL RESERVES</b>	<b>£8,204</b>	<b>£20,716</b>	<b>£28,920</b>

54. The creation of a new, single council would enable a fundamental review of the earmarked reserves and balances held by the two separate authorities. In a number of areas, both authorities hold earmarked reserves for the same stated purpose, and a single council approach would entail consideration of revised and potentially lower levels for these. A new single council would be able to make more efficient use of its reserves, both in providing for future revenue commitments, and in enabling consideration of capital financing options, which are referred to in more detail later in this document.

***Financial business case methodology***

55. The ongoing savings / costs and one-off transition costs that could potentially be expected as a result of the creation of a new single council are based on an initial review, incorporating assessment by service managers of cashable and non-cashable costs and savings, experience gained through our existing transformation programme, and by taking into account others undertaking similar work in this area, such as East Suffolk.

56. As West Suffolk councils have been sharing all services since 2011, there are limited opportunities to generate further material savings from simply creating a new, single council. The savings are therefore based on the elimination of the relatively fixed costs of being separate authorities.

57. The ongoing savings have been categorised into the following areas:

- a. democratic savings
- b. corporate savings
- c. opportunity cost savings from removing need to invest in additional resources to support diverging financial strategies of two separate authorities

58. Later sections of this proposal consider two other financial aspects of a potential single council - council tax equalisation and capital finance considerations.

59. Overall, this financial analysis indicates that a creation of a single council could potentially produce further annual cashable savings of £0.5 million on top of the £4 million plus shared service savings being delivered annually to date across West Suffolk.

60. Estimated transition costs are likely to be recoverable within a year and will cover officer time and some external legal and software system costs to support the move to a single council.

### ***Ongoing savings***

#### Democratic savings

61. As noted in paragraphs 37-40 (above), the question of how many councillors should be elected to a new West Suffolk Council has not yet been considered by current Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councillors. Whilst our draft business case proposed a future Council Size of 60 Councillors, further detailed consideration by members of the Future Governance Steering Group have developed a Council Size of 64 which will be proposed to Councils in October should this business case be agreed. This represents an 11% reduction in the total Council Size, taking into account potential savings that may be achieved through reduction in democratic duplication.

62. We recognise that the setting of Councillor remuneration will be a matter for the new Council to determine, taking into account the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel. Remuneration needs to be set to take account of the expectations we set for local Councillors taking a strong, empowered ward role, whilst accepting that Councillors should be influential players in the region, helping drive and shape growth. With this in mind, democratic budgets need to have sufficient flexibility to ensure Councillors can be fairly rewarded for the work the undertake.

### ***Potential Annual Financial Savings as a result of a Single Council***

<b>Area</b>	<b>Saving</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Corporate Costs – cashable	£300k	The potential for savings have been identified in a number of areas; however, these are subject to contract tenders/or negotiations.

		<p>Specific identified costs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Audit Fees (£30k)</li> <li>• Bank Fees (£35k)</li> <li>• Corporate Subscriptions (£35k)</li> <li>• Insurance costs (£30kk)</li> <li>• Reduced local plan production costs (£20k)</li> <li>• Reduced IT subscriptions (£25k)</li> <li>• Reduced procurement outcome costs (£25k)</li> <li>• Other ancillary savings (£50k)</li> </ul> <p>The other ancillary savings includes the potential for savings within the Democratic structures, as set out within paragraphs 60-61 above.</p>
Opportunity Cost - cashable	£200k	Should both authorities not decide to become a single Council, the challenges they will face as individual Councils with potentially diverging financial agendas, are likely to increase. It is anticipated that to support both authorities to deliver their agendas without the capacity and productivity savings that may be achievable under a single Council, approximately £200k of additional resource will be required.
Staff Costs – non cashable efficiency savings	<p>£350k</p> <p>This includes a 20% efficiency gain for the Council's Leadership Team 10% efficiency gain for service managers (approx. £350k per annum)</p>	In addition to the cashable savings, the business recognises the gain in efficiency and capacity that would be released as a result of a single council. Particularly at senior management team level, serving two authorities generates a considerable level of diseconomies, especially in attending committee meetings, briefing councillors, report writing, etc. In these areas, a single council would create a high level of efficiency savings that, whilst not immediately cashable, would create increased effectiveness of management and productivity. This would enable greater focus on growing business areas (to generate

		<p>new income to support services) and investing in communities.</p> <p>We expect that staff efficiencies in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Officer support to multiple Council meetings – preparation of separate reports, attendance at twin meetings, potential increase in delegation authority etc</li> <li>• Simplified invoicing / charging / billing arrangements, one statement of accounts</li> <li>• Simplified procurement exercises</li> <li>• Simplified elections and Democratic processes</li> <li>• Opportunities to review and streamline operating practices</li> </ul>
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### **Corporate costs**

63. In this financial analysis, a quantified estimate has been made in respect of a number of corporate areas where a single council would effectively automatically generate cashable savings compared with the current arrangements.

64. In addition to these estimates, however, an extremely important element of a single council that needs to be recognised is the gain in efficiency and capacity that would be released (non-cashable savings). Particularly at senior management team level, serving two authorities generates a considerable level of diseconomies, especially in attending committee meetings, briefing councillors, report writing, etc. In these areas, a single council would create a high level of efficiency savings that, whilst not immediately cashable, would create increased effectiveness of management and productivity. This would enable greater focus on growing business areas (to generate new income to support services) and investing in communities. To express this in financial terms, a 20% efficiency gain for leadership team, and a 10% efficiency gain for service managers is estimated to be equivalent to around £0.35 million per annum.

65. Examples of corporate areas that would effectively see immediate savings include external audit fees, corporate memberships, insurance policies costs and banking. External audit fees contain a significant element of fixed cost relating to the existence of both authorities as separate entities, and savings could be expected in both corporate audit costs, and the audit of benefit subsidy claims. Corporate memberships, such as Local Government Association (LGA) membership and insurance and banking charges would also be expected to reduce.



### **Opportunity cost savings**

66. One of the risks of status quo is the councils could begin to diverge in their financial strategies as they face different pressures due to their revenue profiles, population sizes and other factors. This could then begin to unravel the considerable financial and service delivery benefits of shared services and as a result is likely to add cost back into the system through additional staffing capacity to deliver the diverging agendas. An estimated £0.2 million is expected to be saved under a single council model as additional capacity would not be required to support the diverging agendas of two separate authorities.

### **One-off transition costs**

67. Estimates of one-off transition costs have been made at a corporate level, taking into account as far as possible the projects needed to support the two authorities through their transformational journey to a single council date and beyond as a new authority becomes embedded. Allowances for corporate one-off costs include estimates for change management, HR support, software system changes, legal and financial matters, contract novation and branding and signage (which could be phased), estimated to be below £0.5million with payback well within one year (assuming a 2019 implementation)

### **One-off Transition Costs to becoming a single Council**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
ICT and Systems – direct costs	£150k	We continue to work with software suppliers to allocate appropriate budget for this transition cost. We have estimated these costs based on conversations to date and from software estimate on the following key systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• iTrent HR System</li><li>• Agresso Accounting System</li><li>• Xpress elections system</li><li>• Idox Planning System</li><li>• Modern.gov Democratic System</li><li>• Academy Anglia Revenues Partnership Council Tax / NNDR systems</li></ul>
Advisory costs – direct costs	£50k	This will include specific advisory costs related to work to transition the local plan and housing requirements and costs associated with additional work that our external auditors may be required to undertake, such as reviewing the opening balances for the new

		Council and undertaking audit of the closing balances.
Change in identity and statutory requirements – direct costs	£80k	This will include costs associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs, notices, front line staff uniforms</li> <li>• Civic Office and insignia</li> <li>• Website, intranet, internal and external communications</li> </ul>
Shadow Authority Support Costs	£20k	This will include direct cash costs associated with the running and administration of the shadow authority, including expenses and costs associated with meetings
Direct Service Costs including project management	£200k	We have worked alongside all Council services to develop specific information about resource demands. This budget will include internal staff time requirements which will require in most cases to be back filled, in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal modifications to systems and processes, including changes required to system templates as a result of new branding, changes to wards and boundaries and changes to resolve small anomalies between Council processes and policies (c. £50k)</li> <li>• Communications to external parties, including notification to suppliers and customers, partner arrangements (c. £20k)</li> <li>• Internal officer support to Shadow Authority (c. £20k)</li> <li>• Project and programme management of the transition (c. £30k)</li> <li>• Specific advisory services from HR, finance, ICT, legal, procurement (c. £50k)</li> <li>• Leadership and programme oversight (c. £30k)</li> </ul>
Delayed implementation	£50k-£75k	Should implementation not occur

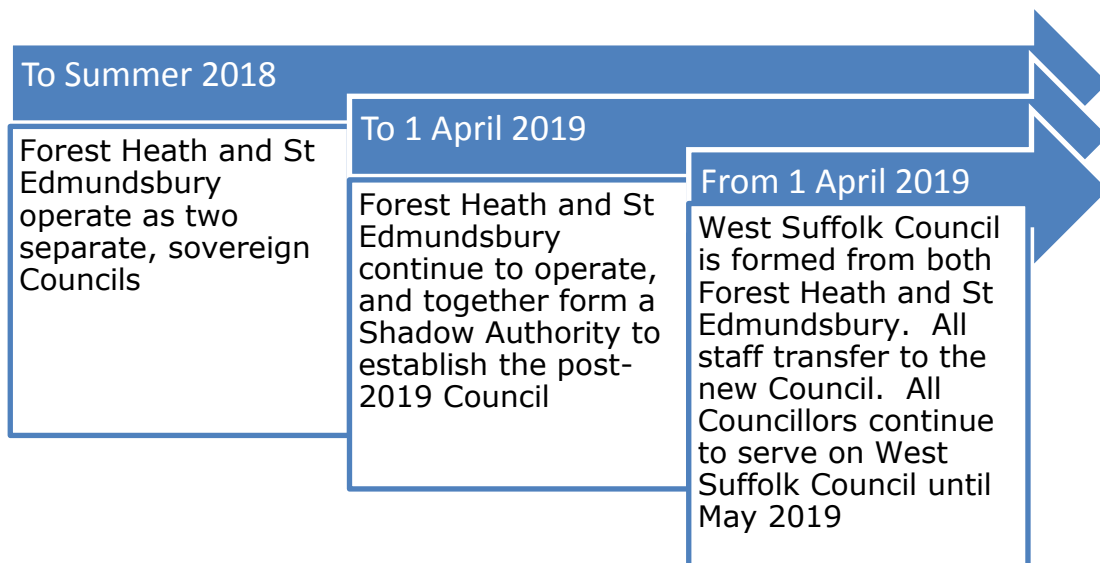
contingency		until 2020, then an additional contingency has been built into to support additional costs that may be occurred as a result of delayed elections, and in particular Parish Council elections
<b>Total - One Off Transitional Costs</b>	<b>£500k (2019 implementation) £575k (with contingency)</b>	

### ***Implementation***

67. Becoming a Single Council for West Suffolk represents an opportunity to both Councils, as sovereign bodies, to come together to improve community governance. In that regard, we strongly support a shadow authority arrangement to implement the proposals; this will enable consideration to what is the "best" approach to operation in the future, and for both authorities to come together as equals.

68. It is anticipated that the Shadow Authority would become operational in the Summer of 2018. It will adopt all necessary policies; determine whether to apply for Borough Status; appoint statutory officers and determine its constitution. Importantly, it would also agree an Implementation Executive to oversee the planning of the transition arrangements.

69. In April 2019, both current authorities would cease and the new West Suffolk Council will take on the powers and responsibilities of the former bodies. Elections to the new West Suffolk Council would take place in May 2019. This will mean that all necessary modifications to systems and procedures will need to be implemented for April 2019, and on 1 April 2019, all staff TUPE transfer to the new Authority.



70. Due to the level of integration between the two Councils at present, work to create the new Authority will be less significant than within authorities that do not have the same level of harmonisation. In particular, due to staff operating on single terms, conditions and pay, the TUPE requirements are more straightforward. Work undertaken indicates that implementation at a service level should be achievable within a concentrated, 6 month period if required.

### ***Other financial considerations***

#### Capital finance considerations

71. There could be some potential to reduce the external borrowing requirements that would normally be projected if a single treasury management function, with access to greater volumes of cash and varying profiles, was available under a new, single council. There could also in the short term be some potential reduction in the Minimum Revenue Provision (annual allowance for the repayment of borrowing) requirement as the single council has access to a single capital receipt budget. Based on an estimated borrowing of around £1 million a year, which results in a MRP of around £40,000 (assuming a rate of 4%), and the use of capital receipts this revenue impact could effectively reduce by around £35,000 a year. The cumulative effect of adopting this approach would obviously be dependent on the availability of capital receipts or other resources.

72. No allowance has been made at this stage in this financial summary for any revenue savings arising from these possible revisions to capital financing policy – a new, single council would need fundamentally to review its capital programme priorities and funding, and financing considerations would form an element of this.

73. It is worth highlighting that the progress we have achieved to date in simplifying structures, moving to a completely integrated officer

structure delivering, as far as possible, single strategies and policies, mean that both our costs to becoming a single Council, and the savings we will achieve, are not as high as other authorities who are not as far in their journey towards a single Council as West Suffolk. However, we fully believe that this should not detract from our own Business Case, given the potential benefits that a single Council can achieve.

### **Summary financial analysis**

74. A summary of the financial analysis work that has been quantified at this stage is shown below as a high-level summary. This summary is focused on the narrower consideration of the costs and benefits associated with the creation of a single council which could assist DCLG in consideration of this proposal. Consequently, a number of areas where the new authority would need further to develop its approach to deliver the financial advantages associated with being a stronger, single, authority have not been built into this summary. Using these relatively narrow parameters, this summary indicates payback of estimated transition costs early in year 1 following establishment of a new council, and ongoing savings are estimated to progressively increase during this analysis period when the new authority would be becoming increasingly embedded.

75. In addition to these identified ongoing savings, further potential revenue savings could result from review of both earmarked reserves and capital financing policy, as referred to later in this section. Additional non-cashable savings of £0.35 million a year are also expected through the management efficiencies and capacity created, as explained under the corporate costs section at paragraph 61.

<b>On-going savings</b>	<b>Cashable savings</b>	<b>Non-cashable savings</b>	<b>Total</b>
Democratic/corporate	£0.30m	£0.35m	£0.65m
Opportunity cost savings	£0.20m	£-	£0.20m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£0.5m</b>	<b>£0.35m</b>	<b>£0.85m</b>

### **Council Tax Modelling**

76. There would be a need (and opportunity) to establish a new budget for a single council, supported by a single level of council tax. The current (2017/18 rates) council tax levels for Band D are as follows:

- i. Forest Heath DC - £142.38
- ii. St Edmundsbury BC - £182.16

77. It is important to note that council tax income is increasingly becoming one of the more reliable and resilient elements of an authority's income budget. With the increased uncertainty of business rates income and government grants (councils continue to experience significant reductions) it is increasingly likely that councils will need to consider a stable level of council tax income in any future budget projections, alongside wider investment strategies and the use of fees and charges. This approach supports the desire to become more self-sufficient in order to protect services for our various communities. For Forest Heath Council

councillors, in particular, increased council tax receipts are likely to continue to be an essential element of their financial strategy in the next administration even if a single council is not created.

78. DCLG has in the past offered the opportunity to harmonise to a single council tax level over a five-year period but indicated that other options could be considered taking each business case on its own merits. It should be noted that it will be for the new, single council to determine the appropriate level of council tax, however for the purposes of this paper and the overall single council discussion and debate a number of harmonisation options have been worked on.

79. The modelling, attached at appendix B), seeks to ensure the following principle in any single year of a harmonisation period (for example 5 years): that the overall council tax receipts of a single council would not be significantly less than the projections of the combined receipts of the two separate councils over the medium term. (The receipts for a single council take into account the assumed cashable savings of becoming a single council.) The modelling also takes into account the current annual council tax increase referendum limit (2% or £5 whichever is higher).

80. Based on the above, the level of council tax for the new, single council across the options modelled is likely to be around £182 - £188 per average band D property by 2025/26 (7th year of new single council). This charge is commensurate (perhaps slightly on the lower side) when compared with projected levels for other similar, local councils. This comes with the caveat that, of course, it will be for councillors at individual authorities to set their council tax levels taking into account all financial and political considerations.

## **G: FUTURE CHANGES AND CHALLENGES**

81. In moving forward in these areas, we recognise as Leaders that, in common with many local councils, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils are now facing unprecedented levels of change, challenges and opportunities, including:

- localism and devolution;
- changes in funding (for example, reductions in Government grant and New Homes Bonus and the move to 100% Business Rate retention by local government);
- the need to focus on prevention and integration;
- technological change; and
- wider societal change.

82. We believe that we therefore need to maximise the resilience of local government in West Suffolk in order to be able to achieve the ambitions set out above, while responding intelligently to, and overcoming, the challenges facing our communities and the councillors who serve them.

83. Any consideration of the proposal for creating a single council needs to be set against this background of change. When comparing the 'do nothing' option with the single council proposal, for example, we need to bear in mind that the context in which both will operate will be very different from the current position in five to fifteen years' time. Our thinking therefore needs to focus on which model will best allow us to achieve our ambitions, give us the greatest resilience and financial self-sufficiency from 2020 onwards, not at the current time.

### **Examples of future changes and challenges**

#### ***Behaving more commercially***

The way councils are financed is changing and the main Government grant will end by around 2020. This means looking at new investments which generate an annual return and allow the councils to be more self-sufficient and therefore to protect public services.

And the councils have been bold with our investments. For example in August 2016 Forest Heath became the owners of a £14.5 million solar farm. This is largest publicly-owned solar farm in the UK and will generate income rising from £300,000 in the first year to just over £700,000 per year by year ten of the 25-year project.

#### ***Considering new funding models***

The councils have been taking new steps to develop our organisation, estate, councillors and staff. We're now looking at new ways to provide efficient services which generate efficiency savings and build resilience into our services in the future.

One model being explored is joint ventures. West Suffolk councils recently set up Verse Facilities Management Limited with Suffolk County Council.

Verse has enabled the partners to consolidate facilities management services into one company, saving more than £40,000 a year. But this joint venture isn't only about putting facilities management under one hat, it also enables the partner councils to offer commercial services to other organisations and businesses to generate revenue which will contribute to the cost of running vital public services.

Becoming a single council would make the process of forming joint ventures and partnerships more straightforward, enabling us to drive forward this element of our commercial agenda.



*East Town Park, Haverhill*



## **H. OUTCOMES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

84. The draft proposal to become a single Council was considered and agreed by St Edmundsbury Borough Council on 13 June 2017 and Forest Heath District Council on 14 June 2017. Although engagement started in May 2017, the Council decisions triggered a period of formal public engagement. The engagement process was designed to inform residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders of the proposals as well as giving people an opportunity to have their say if they wished. It also included an independent and representative telephone poll which gave a 95% (+ or - 3%) confidence level.

85. The outcomes of the public engagement are being provided alongside this business case. In summary:

- a. Our engagement exercise show there is strong support for the proposals – in fact, when provided with a little more information, 70% of residents were supportive towards it. Stakeholders and residents are supportive of having a stronger voice for our area, cost savings and delivering services effectively;
- b. Sector stakeholders have shown particularly strong support. Local MP's are universally supportive, as is Suffolk County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Health partners and neighbouring District Councils.
- c. Feedback from our Parishes, local communities and residents highlights that the operation of our new Council should be fair to all parts of our District, recognising the unique nature and challenges that all parishes, Towns and communities face

We have prepared a full report summarising the engagement exercise, the outcomes and how we have responded to the feedback which is attached to this report at Appendix D.

86. As Appendix D highlights, there are some concerns that have been raised regarding the proposals. We believe that we demonstrate throughout this business case how we are addressing these concerns, but to provide some further insight in relation to the most common concerns:

- a. The concern that significant redundancies may arise as a result of the proposals – both Councils already have a shared officer structure; however, there is concern that officer time could be more effectively employed driving forward key initiatives rather than supporting two Councils. As a result, we propose to more effectively utilise officer time available to the Councils through Single Council, and there is no expectation of redundancies arising.
- b. The loss of local identity and representation – this is an important consideration our councillors are making when putting forwards their case for the future Council Size, which will be submitted to DCLG should this business case be agreed. The Council's Families and Communities Strategy is a core part of the way we expect our Council to operate,

supporting communities to help themselves. This approach requires strong ward representation, and as a result, we have approached our consideration of future governance with the view that whilst there may be opportunities to make savings in decision making, strong local representation must continue.

- c. The loss of local service provision – we expect to continue operating our services at all current service locations, and in particular, will hold meetings and deliver services from our two main locations, West Suffolk House (Bury St Edmunds) and Mildenhall (which we expect will be replaced by the Mildenhall Public Service Hub in 2019/20)

87. In summary, we believe that the outcomes of this engagement shows strong public support towards the proposals, and all concerns raised through the engagement can be adequately addressed through this business plan and the way that the new Council operates.

## Future form of local government in West Suffolk - options appraisal

	<b>Better local/public services</b>	<b>Significant cost savings</b>	<b>Greater value for money</b>	<b>Stronger and more accountable local leadership</b>	<b>Sustainability in the medium to long term</b>
<b>Do nothing</b>	Poor financial sustainability puts at risk delivery of services in the medium term.	Ongoing costs of servicing two sovereign bodies (i.e. lack of opportunity to make savings).	Little opportunity for additional value for money savings to be made on top of the existing shared services savings.	Some possibility of democratic deficit as more and more joint decisions are taken. Lack of opportunity to refresh leadership structures.	Risk of divergent agendas between two councils could lead to financial vulnerability.
<b>Revert to working as two separate councils (dismantle the shared service partnership)</b>	Transition costs and poor financial sustainability would place ongoing delivery of services at serious risk.	Need for additional costs to reappoint individual officers to serve the two councils.	Duplication of work would inject additional costs into the organisations.	Traditional model of district council leadership.	Most vulnerable form of local government in the future (poor sustainability of very small councils)
<b>Expand the shared service partnership (to include additional new partners)</b>	Increased scale could enhance service delivery, but complexity of arrangements could reduce the speed, efficiency and simplicity of service delivery.	Significant staff savings with minimal transitional costs.	Could generate greater efficiencies and economies of scale, up to a point of diminishing returns (due to distance and multiple sovereign bodies)	More opportunities for democratic deficit as shared decisions are taken by a wider pool of members	Significant risk of divergent agendas between a wider number of partner councils

<b>Future form of local government in W Suffolk - options appraisal</b>	<b>Better local/public services</b>	<b>Significant cost savings</b>	<b>Greater value for money</b>	<b>Stronger and more accountable local leadership</b>	<b>Sustainability in the medium to long term</b>
<b>Create a single council for West Suffolk</b>	Opportunity of a new streamlined council that can benefit from economies of scale and strong financial position	Some transitional costs due to formal processes that need to be followed, plus harmonisation of council tax levels.	Most efficient model of working across W Suffolk, plus better opportunities for integrated working in the wider public sector due to scale and simplicity.	Opportunity for strong strategic leadership, strong partnerships and greater focus on locality based working alongside families and communities	Most resilient form of local government in the future due to scale (inc investment potential), simplicity and potential for integration.

	Strong positive impact
	Weak positive impact
	Weak negative impact
	Strong negative impact

## Council Tax Harmonisation options

## APPENDIX B

### Option 1 - Harmonisation over 5 years

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Council Tax Levels</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Forest Heath DC	152.28	157.23	162.18	167.13	172.08	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change Forest Heath DC</i>	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95
St Edmundsbury BC	182.16	182.16	182.16	182.16	172.08	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change St Edmundsbury BC</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-10.08	4.95	4.95
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Council Tax Foregone	0	0	135	275	808	771	736
Transitional costs (est.)	300						
Savings	(300)	(300)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<b>Net impact (income)/cost</b>	0	(300)	(365)	(225)	308	271	236

### Option 2 - Harmonisation over 6 years

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Council Tax Levels</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Forest Heath DC	152.28	157.23	162.18	167.13	172.08	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change Forest Heath DC</i>	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95
St Edmundsbury BC	182.16	182.16	182.16	182.16	182.16	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change St Edmundsbury BC</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-5.13	4.95
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Council Tax Foregone	0	0	135	275	420	771	736
Transitional costs (est.)	300						
Savings	(300)	(300)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<b>Net impact (income)/cost</b>	0	(300)	(365)	(225)	(80)	271	236

### Option 3 - Harmonisation over 7 years

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Council Tax Levels</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Forest Heath DC	152.28	157.23	162.18	167.13	172.08	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change Forest Heath DC</i>	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95
St Edmundsbury BC	182.16	182.16	182.16	182.16	182.16	182.16	181.98
<i>Annual change St Edmundsbury BC</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.18
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Council Tax Foregone	0	0	135	275	420	572	736
Transitional costs (est.)	300						
Savings	(300)	(300)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<b>Net impact (income)/cost</b>	0	(300)	(365)	(225)	(80)	72	236

### Option 4 - Merged rate from April 2019

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Council Tax Levels</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5
Forest Heath DC	166.94	170.28	173.69	177.16	180.70	184.32	188.00
<i>Annual change Forest Heath DC</i>	19.61	3.34	3.41	3.47	3.54	3.61	3.69
St Edmundsbury BC	166.94	170.28	173.69	177.16	180.70	184.32	188.00
<i>Annual change St Edmundsbury BC</i>	-15.22	3.34	3.41	3.47	3.54	3.61	3.69
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Council Tax Foregone	300	207	244	280	316	351	392
Savings	(300)	(300)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<b>Net impact (income)/cost</b>	0	(93)	(256)	(220)	(184)	(149)	(108)

For information - cost of reducing to the lowest level, discounted as not financially viable

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Council Tax Levels</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5
Forest Heath DC	152.28	157.23	162.18	167.13	172.08	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change Forest Heath DC</i>	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95
St Edmundsbury BC	152.28	157.23	162.18	167.13	172.08	177.03	181.98
<i>Annual change St Edmundsbury BC</i>	-29.88	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Council Tax Foregone	1,105	931	889	848	808	964	743
Savings	(300)	(300)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<b>Net impact (income)/cost</b>	805	631	389	348	308	464	243

**Note:** The 'annual change' rows under each option above, reflect the annual change under the harmonised council tax options as a single council. Both council's financial plans, as standalone councils, would have assumed a continued rise in council tax during the same period. Forest Heath DC at £4.95 a year and St Edmundsbury BC at 2% per year.

## Appendix C: Risk management

1. In order to properly consider whether to proceed with the proposed single council creation, we need to be mindful of the risks associated both with proceeding and with not proceeding, to ensure that the benefits described above outweigh the risks.

2. An appraisal of the risks associated with proceeding with a new council is set out below, covering the following risks and potential mitigations.

1. Proposal is not approved by the Secretary of State.
2. Insufficient time for Parliamentary Processes
3. Creation of a new council is not implemented effectively.
4. Predicted benefits are not realised.
5. Changing status results in unforeseen changes in funding.
6. Confusion over new governance arrangements.
7. Residents perceive the council is more distant.
8. Lack of support from the public.
9. Resistance to change among staff and councillors.
10. Lack of clarity on overall vision and outcomes.
11. Changes in the external environment.

3. Meanwhile, there are a number of risks associated with NOT proceeding with a single council, which need to be borne in mind including:

1. Financial risks of diverging priorities – leading to cuts in service provision, reduced customer satisfaction and higher acute costs (due to lack of investment in prevention).
2. Risks of diverging political priorities during a time of intense pressure on local government (competing priorities). Possible breakdown of shared services arrangements.
3. Greater pressure on council tax levels.
4. Creating asymmetrical member arrangements across the two councils through the forthcoming electoral review process (in 2017) and missing the opportunity to align ward sizes.
5. Reduced councillor, staff and resident morale due to potential impacts on service delivery.
6. Missing out on 'first mover' advantage.

<b>1. Proposal is not approved by the Secretary of State</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Unable to implement the creation of a single West Suffolk Council.	We will continue to seek advice and guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and other associated bodies

	such as the Local government Association (LGA) and Local Government Boundary Commission for England (BCE) to ensure we meet their expectations and make our vision and outcomes clear.
<b>2. Insufficient time for Parliamentary Process</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action / Control</b>
Implementation of a West Suffolk Council takes place in 2020, rather than 2019, resulting in a loss of financial benefits for one year	We continue to work alongside DCLG counterparts to ensure priority is given to progressing the proposals for a 2019 implementation
<b>3. Creation of new council is not implemented effectively</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Negative impact on political relationships and service delivery. Negative impact on profile of the previous councils and new merged Council.	We will create a clear and long term vision with regular performance management and progress reports. We will also establish robust political and officer governance to deliver the creation of a new council and long term vision.
<b>4. Predicted benefits are not realised</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Savings and service benefits are not delivered which creates additional budget pressures for the new council.	We will create a clear framework for managing the financial benefits expected from the change. Detailed project design will ensure successful implementation of the new arrangements and associated benefits.
<b>5. Changing status results in unforeseen changes in funding</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Unforeseen budget and service delivery pressures for the new council.	We will continue to horizon scan and engage with Government departments on new developments and announcements. Throughout the transition to a new council we will assess the impact not only on the separate councils but also the future council.
<b>6. Confusion over new governance arrangements</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Reduced public confidence in the decision-making process and quality of decisions being made by the council.	We will establish robust political governance in consultation with DCLG, the LGA and the BCE.



Inability to make key decisions which are essential to the running of West Suffolk services.	Cross-party and cross-authority work on the new constitution will start during 2017 to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place ahead of the first election in May 2019.
<b>7. Residents perceive the council is more distant</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Less sustainable and resilient communities resulting in increased public sector demand and costs. The council could experience a reduced ability to understand and address different needs across the west Suffolk localities.	There will no change to customer access arrangements. We have a new approach to supporting families and communities and would look to take this approach into the new, single council. A detailed communications plan will be in place to ensure we actively engage with key partners, stakeholders and the local community to minimise any impacts.
<b>8. Lack of support from the public</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
This would bring a lack of credibility from residents, businesses, councillors and partners. The knock-on effect would be reduced willingness to form partnerships with a new council and a lack of public trust in the councils' ability now, or future new council's ability, to deliver public services.	A comprehensive communications plan will be in place and will include detailed engagement with the public. Engagement with the public will include a telephone poll with a representative sample of West Suffolk residents alongside the ability for anyone to comment. The communications plan will also include briefings with staff and politicians so that the key messages can be disseminated to and discussed with the public, local business and our partners.
<b>9. Resistance to change among staff and councillors</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Difficulty trying to establish an organisation culture and potential for councillor resignations/disaffection. The message being disseminated by staff and members could be negative and this could impact on the public support for the creation of a single council. Increased employee and member dissatisfaction could lead to poor performance.	Our strategy for the creation of a new council will be open and transparent so that all staff and members are fully informed and engaged with at every step of the process. In addition we will work with the Unison to ensure that any staff transitional arrangements are clear and straightforward. We will have

	regular briefings with all members and ensure that all communication channels are used to keep members are fully informed at all times.
<b>10. Lack of clarity on overall vision and outcomes</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
Increased senior officer and member time to manage internal and external relationships. A lack of clarity regarding the direction of the council could also have a negative on the profile for the council and bring difficulties to service delivery. Elected members' commitment to the partnership could falter and there could be a return to the previous separate arrangements.	We will have a clear, long term, strategic vision for the new single council. The political and officer structures and governance arrangements will have been established and in place ready for the first elections. We also have a performance management framework in place to ensure that the ambitions for the new council are being delivered.
<b>11. Changes in the external environment</b>	
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Action/ control</b>
New Government initiatives or policies or a change in local government reorganisation could halt or delay the creation of a single council.	We will continue to liaise with DCLG and the LGA regarding any national developments or Government announcements. Our business and service planning arrangements will remain flexible so that we can make changes to reflect the changing economic climate and political landscape.

## **A single council for West Suffolk - stakeholder engagement**

### **Summary of engagement**

Comprehensive publicity and engagement of the proposals started in May 2017 and ran until the end of August. The purpose was to inform people and stakeholders of the Councils' proposals and give them the opportunity to engage and have their say if they wished to. As part of the comprehensive engagement an independent and proportional representative phone poll was also held to help gauge public opinion. This was to help inform councillors in debating the proposals.

#### **Engagement activities included:**

- ComRes phone poll which gave a 95% confidence level and margin of error of plus or minus 3.09%.
- more than 160 local organisations, parish and town councils as well as stakeholders contacted and provided with information, packs and offers of meetings.
- face to face briefings of groups and local representatives
- media and social media campaigns resulting in more than 50 stories and tens of thousands of people engaged with online including 45 dedicated community Facebook pages.
- dedicated web page, with links to all relevant documents, questions and answers, summary and full draft business case and dedicated e-mail address set up to give information and people the opportunity to leave comment.
- advert on social media and posters in public places, such as libraries
- information with frontline staff, such as refuse collectors.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Some 70% of the people polled by the independent company said they were in favour of the creation of a single council.
- There was strong support from local business and industry groups, including both Local Enterprise Partnerships (New Anglia and Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough). This also included major industries, such as horseracing.
- Partner public services gave letters of support as did neighbouring authorities, including the newly formed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as well as Suffolk County Council. Local NHS health partners and the Police and Crime Commissioner were very supportive.
- Overall the balance of feedback was favourable, with many stakeholders acknowledging the benefits of savings and efficiencies as well as the opportunities it would bring to the area.
- 88 responses through the website where people could leave comments, ask questions or raise concerns.
- Important priorities for a new single council were highlighted as continuing the delivery of important services to local people, being better placed to plan for the future and strengthening west Suffolk's voice in the region and nationally.
- Concerns raised included the needs of all towns and villages taken account of, especially the need to avoid an excessive focus on one town or area over another. Other concerns include the need for effective local democratic representation and decision making. A range of questions were posed in relation to implementation costs including council tax implications, how savings would be achieved, any changes to local authority boundaries and any impact on the nature and location of future service delivery.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 Following the agreement in principle of the draft business case for a single council by both Councils in June 2017, it was agreed that a formal period of public and stakeholder engagement would be undertaken to test the business case and ascertain if there was support amongst the communities, businesses and partner organisations in west Suffolk for the proposals, before the final business Case was presented to Councils in September.
- 1.2 Key stakeholders were informed of the proposals, via a formal communications programme on the day that the Leaders' intentions were announced (9 May 2017). The announcement was accompanied by a media briefing, which significantly increased the profile of the issue in the local and regional media and drew it to attention of many residents. The opinion polling work carried out by ComRes showed that within the month that the Councils agreed to engage, 50% of the population were aware of the initiative. Subsequent media releases and publicity was sent out through the formal Cabinet and Council meetings stages, including follow-up letters to stakeholders. From June, a full engagement programme was carried out as summarised below.

## **2. The engagement programme**

- 2.1 The programme comprised:
- A proportionally representative 'phone poll', commissioned from a specialist nationwide polling company. The company independently surveyed a representative sample of randomly selected electors across both Councils' areas to capture their views towards the proposal. The methodology used provided a statistically robust set of results, in line with the gold standard for the industry.
  - A media campaign was launched with themed news releases, briefings and letters answering questions raised.
  - An information and publicity pack for every councillor, parish and town council as well as stakeholders and interest groups. The pack included a news release, a draft news story for local parish publications, the draft business case, a summary of the business case, a poster and an invitation to have their say.
  - Dialogue between Members and residents, businesses and community organisations in their Wards;
  - A dedicated section on the Councils' website, explaining why the Councils wished to proceed with the proposals. The website included "frequently asked questions" that had been raised through the process about the proposals as well as Cabinet and Council papers, the draft business case and a summary of the business case;

- An online survey accessed via the webpage described above, to enable the public and other stakeholders to comment on the proposals, provide qualitative feedback and pose questions;
- Identification of existing programmed community events where the single council proposals could be discussed and public attention drawn to the survey;
- Formal communication to 162 stakeholders, identifying the Councils' intention to proceed and why this was the case, offering opportunities to discuss the proposals and raising awareness of the online survey. Opportunities to engage with the Councils via social media, including a Facebook advert;
- Talks at resident and business forums as well as public events; and
- Staff briefings and information provided for frontline employees, such as refuse collectors.

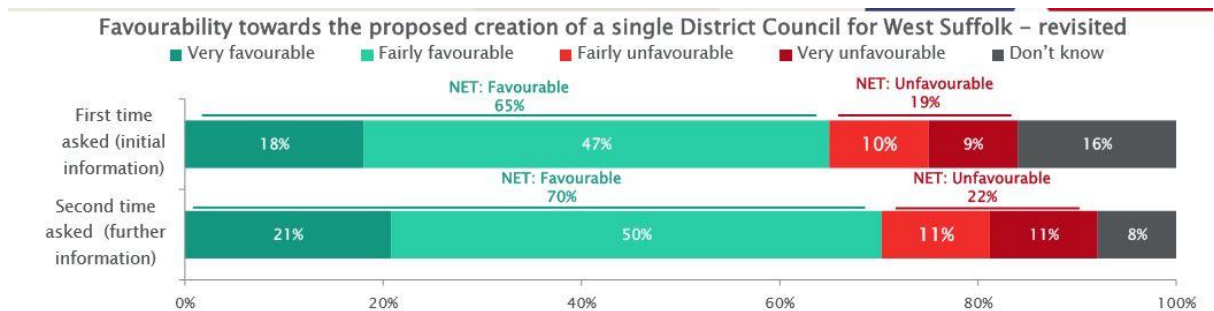


### 3. Findings from the phone poll

- 3.1 The key aims of this research were to understand the views of adults in the Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Council areas about the proposal to create a new single District-level Council for both areas; current concerns and perceived benefits of the proposed creation of a new single District-level

Council for West Suffolk; and residents' priorities and objectives for local government in their area.

- 3.2 Specialist polling organisation ComRes were commissioned to carry out telephone interviews (between 30 June and 24 July 2017) with adults aged 18+ living in West Suffolk. All respondents were eligible to vote in Council elections in either Forest Heath District Council or St Edmundsbury Borough Council areas. ComRes set quotas by Council area and surveyed 400 adults in Forest Heath and 600 in St Edmundsbury, ensuring that samples were balanced in terms of age, gender, ward, socio-economic grade and ethnicity. This gave a 95% confidence level and margin of error of plus or minus 3.09%.
- 3.3 Half (50%) of adults in West Suffolk say they have heard of the proposal to create a new single District-level Council for West Suffolk, with two in five (41%) saying they know at least a little about it. When first asked the majority of local adults (65%) say they are favourable towards it – more than three times the proportion who say they are unfavourable (19%). When provided with more information on the proposal and its impact, residents are marginally more likely to be both favourable and unfavourable than before (70% and 22% respectively).



- 3.4 Almost all residents (97%) surveyed say it will be important for the new single District-level Council to continue the delivery of important services to local people, with around nine in ten (88%) saying this is very important – the most of any objective tested. At least nine in ten adults say that allowing the council to better plan for the future, or ensuring the new council is better equipped to meet the future challenges facing local government is an important objective for it to achieve (93% and 90% say this respectively). Almost nine in ten (87%) residents say that strengthening West Suffolk's political voice in the region and nationally is an important objective to achieve – particularly relevant given central government focus on devolution over the past few years. Despite four in five adults saying that delivering further efficiency savings in the budget of around £800,000 per year is important (81%), it is rated the lowest of all the objectives listed.

- 3.5 Residents are most likely to say they are neutral or positive (34% for both) towards a prospective reduction in the number of

councillors in West Suffolk. A majority of adults in West Suffolk say they are not concerned with the proposal to create a new single District level Council (54%). Around two in five adults in West Suffolk express concerns with the proposal (42%). Indeed, one in nine (11%) say they are very concerned about it. The primary concerns centre around a loss of 'local voices' being heard, a lack of political accountability, and the perception that the delivery of services that are already stretched will be negatively affected.

- 3.6 When asked about the impact a new Council would have on particular demographic groups, local adults are more likely to say this would be positive than negative upon each. In addition, at least a third say that the impact of the proposal will make no difference to any of the demographic groups tested. These results suggest that the changes to the Council are generally seen to have a largely positive or neutral impact on these different demographic groups.
- 3.7 A majority of residents say that the proposal will not have a negative impact on any of the groups tested (63% say none of the groups tested will be negatively impacted by the creation of a single District-level Council for West Suffolk). However, it should also be noted that just less than half say the same about the proposal having a positive impact (at least 45% say each of the groups tested will not be positively impacted by the creation of a single District-level Council for West Suffolk).
- 3.8 It is also worth noting three in ten adults say that people living in rural areas will be positively impacted by the proposed creation of a single District-level Council for West Suffolk (31%), with a further third saying this will make no difference (34%). However, a quarter (25%) say that people living in rural areas will be negatively impacted by this – the highest negative rating of all groups tested.
- 3.9 The full ComRes report is attached at Appendix X. *[NB for the purposes of Council consideration, the report forms appendix 3 to the covering report]*

#### **4 Engagement with external stakeholders**

- 4.1 Council officers and members have engaged with a range of 162 stakeholders to provide information about single council proposals and respond to questions. A summary of engagement by stakeholder group is provided below. This involved a combination of formal letters, meetings and briefings. Letters received from these groups are attached at Appendix X. *[NB for the purposes of Council consideration, the letters form Appendix 6 to the covering report]*

##### **Business stakeholders**

- 4.2 There is broad support from the business sector across West Suffolk. Both LEPs - New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and The Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership has expressed support for the proposal. Both

highlighted that by bringing together all of the voices of businesses from West Suffolk into one organisation, they believe that we will create a stronger voice for business needs locally, particularly when it comes to upgrades to infrastructure and around major projects, such as the future of RAF Mildenhall.

**New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership:**

*"...Whilst two councils have served their residents well for many years, the business case is compelling in a number of ways.*

*We agree that combining the two authorities will improve the effectiveness and resilience of service delivery as well as putting the authority on a sounder long term financial footing.*

*We also agree the proposals will enable the area to have a clearer voice in dealing with partners such as ourselves and be of the scale to maximise investment opportunities for the benefit of the area and its residents..."*

**The Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership:**

*"I am writing to support plans for your two Local Authorities to formally merge to create a single local authority for the West Suffolk area.*

*We fully appreciate the significant challenges facing local government, and we welcome the proactive approach from St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council to tackling these issues in a positive manner.*

*By bringing together all of the voices of businesses from West Suffolk into one organisation, we believe that it will create a stronger voice for business needs locally, particularly when it comes to upgrades to infrastructure and around major project, such as the future of RAF Mildenhall.*

*It also means you will still be of a scale that will enable you to work with, and listen to, businesses of all sizes – from micro businesses through to large corporations. Something that is vital for the continued growth and prosperity of the local area."*

- 4.3 A range of other business stakeholders have been contacted and visited and the sector has expressed broad support. The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce is supportive of the proposal and has highlighted a range of areas where it would like further discussion, both on behalf of and to facilitate broader engagement with businesses. The Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have expressed support as have stakeholders from the horseracing sector, with written support from Tattersalls. Equally there has been support from market traders, such as the Bury Market Traders following a briefing and question and answer session. Engagement also continues with the sector with follow-up meetings being arranged to talk through points raised or looking at opportunities for further benefits.



### **Central Government and MPs**

- 4.4 Contact is ongoing with the Department for Communities and Local Government. A letter was received on 25 July from The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, acknowledging our progress and confirming that our proposal will be considered if/when received.
- 4.5 Letters of support have been received from all local MPs - Jo Churchill, James Cartlidge and The Rt Hon Matt Hancock.

### **Local government stakeholders**

- 4.6 Suffolk County Council and all neighbouring district and county councils have been written to. Support has been received from all Suffolk District and County authorities. Letters of support have been received from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, Breckland District Council, Suffolk County Council, Cambridge City Council, Norfolk County Council, the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and Braintree District Council. In addition Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has also written in support. Our local district councils highlight the draft business case and generally see a creation of a new single council as continuing the strengthened bonds that already exist to deliver the best outcomes for our local communities. Partners across our borders recognise the opportunity and benefits a new single council has not only for west Suffolk but the wider region – especially in terms of housing, infrastructure and the local economy.
- 4.7 In addition the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner has given his support. He is very supportive of the proposal which he says will improve efficiency and effectiveness. The Commissioner also highlights the “commendable focus on growth and development which I wholeheartedly support. As Police and Crime Commissioner I have seen first hand the link between economic and social deprivation and raised levels of crime, abuse, addiction and antisocial behaviour. Any initiative that assists with wealth generation and greater prosperity is most welcome.”

### **Suffolk County Council**

*"Overall, Suffolk County Council is broadly supportive of the proposal for Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council to merge to form West Suffolk Council. The draft business case communicates clearly the rationale and this is mainly an issue for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councillors....."*

*The challenges and aspirations set out within the document match those of the County Council as described within "Our Priorities 2017 – 21". We share a desire to build on previous joint working and successes achieved with partners, and continue to work together acknowledging the contribution of the wider public sector in West Suffolk.*

*I wish you both, the Councillors and Officers at Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury good luck in the transition to West Suffolk and we look*

*forward to continuing to build on our positive, productive and valued partnership."*

**Cambridge City Council:**

*"...Growth corridors extend out from Cambridge in all compass points, comprising a planning zone from St Neots to St Edmundsbury. This is already a de facto housing market area, and includes the A1307 corridor towards Haverhill, and the A11/A14 corridor past Newmarket to Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds.*

*"With this particular set of opportunities and challenges in mind, we fully support your partnership, and look forward to working ever closer with West Suffolk on ensuring growth is well planned, and supported by appropriate economic, social and environmental infrastructure."*

**Breckland Council**

*"You are to be applauded on this innovation in delivering better local public services whilst reducing costs and strengthening local democracy. Boundaries of organisations are in my view artificial and it's the delivery for the best outcomes for the communities that is of greatest interest.*

*"Your business case appears to be an honest and transparent assessment of the risks and financial outcomes associated with the proposal, alongside the benefits."*

**Town and parish councils**

4.8 Discussions have been held at town and parish forums. Town and parish councils have also been contacted individually and encouraged to comment. Seven responses have been received, four were largely supportive and three raised concerns as summarised below.

- *Lakenheath Parish Council* highlighted eight advantages and four disadvantages, the latter relating to fewer councillors, impact on staff, reduced office space and taking account of rural need.
- *Troston Parish Council* is supportive but want to ensure that services and staff are not overstretched.
- *Horringer-cum-Ickworth Parish Council* are supportive in principle but want to ensure service quality is not compromised and hope that co-ordination with Suffolk County Council Highways team is improved.
- *Kedington Parish Council* is not supportive and has concerns about local needs and local decision making.
- *Haverhill Town Council* is not supportive and has concerns about local decision making, any redundancies, harmonisation of council tax and Local Plan/housing implications.
- *Brandon Town Council* is broadly supportive but raises some questions about service delivery and access.
- *Mildenhall Town Council* – acknowledges the benefits of savings and resilience but has concerns regarding loss of identity for Forest Heath, that a new district would be dominated by Bury St Edmunds, job losses, not wanting to see any loss of

representation and raises a question about how planning would work under new arrangements.

### **Housing providers**

4.9 Housing providers have been contacted, individually and via the Housing Forum with general support expressed. Officers have also spoken to providers explaining the proposals and answering questions. Havebury Homes and Flagship have provided letters of support. They emphasise how a new single council will be better able to help local communities and housing needs, while protecting services.

### **Health stakeholders and third sector organisations**

4.10 Support has been received from the West Suffolk Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group NHS. The West Suffolk Hospital NHS Foundation Trust indicates that the single council proposal aligns well with its own strategy for the integration of health and care as evidenced by the shift in the delivery of community services aligned to the West of Suffolk and the structure of an Integrated Care System for West Suffolk.

Community and voluntary sector partners have been contacted including Community Action Suffolk, the CAB and the Suffolk Disability Forum.

### **West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group NHS**

*"The local NHS is very supportive of the proposal you set out.*

*We are very keen that we continue to build on the transformation work that we are driving together, such as Buurtzorg. In time we think there is possibility for local government in West Suffolk to develop further the community services alliance that launches in October."*

### **Other local stakeholders and opinion formers**

4.11 The Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds is strongly supportive, welcomes the stronger voice and broader influence that a single council would bring and hopes that it would also help it to reach audiences and communities in the current Forest Heath district.

4.12 The Bury Society, whilst acknowledging the benefits of a single council, has concerns about the loss of Borough status for Bury St Edmunds. West Suffolk Councils have replied, addressing these concerns.

4.13 The Right Honourable Lord Tebbit has expressed support.

## **5. Media and Social Media**

5.1 A co-ordinated media and social media campaign was conducted from May and through the June to August engagement period. The aim was to inform people of the proposals and to encourage them to find out more and make their views known if they wished to. ComRes results showed that 50% of the people polled were aware

of the proposals within a month of the councils agreeing to formal engagement. Letters or stories were answered when necessary and readers were signposted to the dedicated web pages and online materials.

- 5.2 There were 52 media stories, local, national and local Government, including print, online, radio, TV and stories sent to Parish Magazines. This followed a series of news releases and briefings on the proposals as well as reminders for people to have their say. Media monitoring shows that 87% of those stories were either neutral or positive.
- 5.3 Social media was used to support the engagement, including the use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as well as a Facebook Advert. Posts were also shared in 45 local Facebook Group pages across west Suffolk which have a combined membership of 71,000 members which has a total reach of 20,000. Over the campaign the Council's messages had a reach of 67,000 through Facebook and 39,000 impressions through Twitter.

The screenshot shows the East Anglian Daily Times website. At the top, there is a weather widget showing 18°C in Bury St Edmunds and 12°C in Felixstowe. The main header features the 'EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES' logo and a navigation menu with links for Home, News, West Suffolk, Business, Sport, What's on, EA life, Jobs, Property, Motoring, and Contact. Below the navigation is a 'HOT TOPICS' section with links for Corrie Mckeague, Ed Sheeran, Ipswich Town, Tour of Britain, and Eat Suffolk. A blue banner below that reads 'Bialkowski, Counago, Keane - Brand new edition of Kings of Anglia can be ordered here'. The main article is titled 'Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils want to form a new single West Suffolk council', published on 08:34 09 May 2017 and updated at 16:13 09 May 2017 by Matt Reason. The article features a photograph of West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds, a modern building with a curved glass facade. Below the photo is a caption: 'West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds. Picture: PHIL MORLEY'. The article text begins: 'With a highly influential and well-funded mayor on their doorstep, two west Suffolk councils are planning to merge in a bid to ensure they are not left behind.' To the right of the article is a social media sharing section with icons for Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Google+. Below that is a search bar. Further down is a 'Don't Miss' section with three featured stories: 1. 'Updated: Lorries urged to avoid Orwell Bridge this evening as winds up to 60mph predicted to hit Suffolk'; 2. 'Ipswich High School for Girls changes name to Ipswich High School and will accept boys from 2018'; 3. 'West Suffolk Hospital apologises after staff operate on wrong patient'.

## **6. Online comments**

- 6.1 Dedicated online pages and materials were publicised to enable the public and other stakeholders to 'have their say' about the single council proposals and pose any questions. It was publicised via the local news media, the Councils' website and social media as well as through letters and e-mails to stakeholders and councillors. A total of 88 comments were left. Some of these were from stakeholder organisations but the majority were from members of the public.
- 6.2 All responses and our replies are provided in full at appendix E. Those respondents who provided an email address in order to receive further updates have been signposted to these responses. Many of our replies reflect information that had already been provided in the business case and in the commonly asked questions on the webpage.
- 6.3 The common themes arising from the survey can be summarised as:
- support for the proposal and its benefits in terms of cost savings, streamlined delivery and a stronger voice;
  - concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages and be locally sensitive, including the need to avoid excessive focus on Bury St Edmunds and a lack of focus on Haverhill;
  - questions about the costs to the taxpayer;
  - queries about council office locations;
  - questions about any impact on service delivery;
  - comments about the planning function;
  - comments about democratic representation and the number of councillors;
  - questions about how savings are to be achieved.

## **7. Engagement with employees**

- 7.1 All employees of both authorities have been informed about the single council proposals via intranet briefings, staff briefings and team meetings and encouraged to comment. Meetings were also held with Unison and the proposals explained.

## Appendix E: Responses to online feedback

The following table sets out the responses made by contributors to the online comments page at [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil). Where respondents gave an email address, they will receive a direct response, and thanked for their comments. Others will be able to view this document on the website where they made their contributions.

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
1	It's a good idea. I would also like a West Suffolk energy company to help generate income for the council and provide cost effective energy supply for residents, businesses and communities.		<p>We keep under review the opportunities that could be created by having our own energy company and are working with others to understand how best to take any opportunities in a changing energy market to the benefit of West Suffolk residents, communities and local businesses.</p> <p>As part of the West Suffolk councils' Community Energy Plan, we have developed a range of services and investments to both improve our own energy performance and help others do the same. We generate over 13.5MW of power which is either used by local businesses or communities or exported to the grid. The derived value helps to support our wider services to the local area as</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			well as helping to offset our carbon emissions.
2	<p>Whilst it appears the merging of the two councils will save costs and allow for better investment, who will this exactly benefit. It would appear to me that the 'new' council' will be Bury-St-Edmunds centric, with Newmarket bolted for good measure. Meaning, that resources will be concentrated on these 'ego driven' towns without any consideration for the surrounding villages. How will the merging of councils benefit areas such as Mildenhall, Brandon and the smaller villages? For example, when RAF Mildenhall eventually closes how can we be sure that the 'new council' spend money ensuring a strong future for this area, rather than milking the ego's and lining the pockets of Bury-St-Edmunds. Currently I have no trust or respect for Forest Heath District councillors. What would make me trust a council ran from Bury-St-Edmunds?? Why should I trust this single council any more than the</p>	<p>Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages and be locally sensitive</p>	<p>A single council would be of a size to more effectively lobby Government and attract businesses to benefit both district areas. It would not mean a reduction in our customer contact points. It would also put the whole area in a stronger financial position and help protect investment in community projects that currently benefit all parts of the area.</p> <p>An important consideration is the need to ensure strong local ward representation, ensuring that all parts of our area are fairly represented and local members have a strong voice and are empowered to make a difference in their communities. This will be reflected in our "Council Size" case that will be considered by Councils in October if the Single Council business case is agreed; nonetheless we do not propose to significantly reduce the number of councillors to ensure strong local representation is preserved. A cross party and cross councils steering group has been looking at issues of how any new single council will operate in the future. One of the issues raised is the need to make sure rural</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	current one??		<p>areas and smaller villages benefit.</p> <p>The future of the RAF Mildenhall site, if the United States Forces cease operations is potentially a very significant opportunity, the benefits of which would more easily be realised for Mildenhall and the surrounding area by a larger and more financially resilient single council.</p>
3	<p>I would only be in favour of this change if the east boundary on the new council went back to the pre 1974 boundary. Bury St Edmunds is the county town for West Suffolk and living in a village in Mid Suffolk DC area which borders with St Edmundsbury is a joke that has cost tax payers millions in duplication and has had a disastrous affect on the village of Thurston where I have lived since 1972. IMO no one in Thurston relates to Needham Market or even Stowmarket. All planning and other LA resources for Thurston should be located in Bury St Edmunds. However realistically I suspect there are too</p>	Disagree with current boundary divisions	<p>A review of the boundaries between local authorities cannot be achieved through the process used to create a Single Council; it would require a principal area boundary review (PABR). The Local Government Boundary Commission for England only undertakes such reviews where they are requested by authorities that may be affected. There are currently no plans for a PABR.</p>



ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	many "vested interests" to allow this to happen in my lifetime so same old duplication and waste will continue.		
4	I work for Addenbrookes hospital in Cambridge my shift pattern is 8am to 8pm and as a non driver I rely on public transport i.e. The bus and train I would like to see the bus service from Cambridge to Newmarket made later and a Sunday service as the last bus from Cambridge to Ely is 7pm which means I have to use the train which I can't catch until 8:45 but still have to get a monthly bus pass to get to work. I work with people from Haverhill and they have a service which runs until 11pm weekdays and 10:30 on Sundays. I have spoken to many nurses and other members of staff who live in the Newmarket and Ely areas who have the same issue Many thanks	Improved transport links	Suffolk County Council manage public transport in St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath with the councils' responsibilities being limited to the maintenance of some bus shelters and bus station buildings. Your concerns regarding bus services in your area will be forwarded to Suffolk County Council. However, a new single council would give us a louder voice to work with other partners and lobby for better transport infrastructure and improvements.
5	Personally I think it would be brilliant to have a more localised council as due to	Costs to the taxpayer	There would be some one-off costs to set up the new, authority it is expected these would be repaid within the first year of becoming a new single council. From

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	<p>our geographical location we (Newmarket) often seem to be an afterthought . My main reservation though is what will it cost the tax payer ? Another question that springs to mind is Where is this new council likely to be based ?</p>	<p>Council office locations</p>	<p>then on £0.35 million of annual cashable savings are anticipated, and £0.35 million non-cashable savings in addition to protecting the annual shared services savings of £4 million plus.</p> <p>The setting of the Council Tax for any new authority would be down to the members of the new single council. The new council would have to have a single level of Council Tax, however, there would be a period of harmonisation to achieve this.</p> <p>Even if a single council was not formed, reduced Government funding means that councils are having to do more with less and councillors are already having to look at Council Tax levels to meet this challenge. It is therefore likely that in the case of Forest Heath that this would need to rise anyway, as it did last year, but this would not be due to becoming a single council. Becoming a single council will not involve any further increases in council tax over and above those already planned in order to ensure a stable and balanced budget. A single council would give the whole of West Suffolk greater financial resilience and lower council tax levels in longer term which would be a positive outcome from the process.</p> <p>We are not anticipating any changes in Council office locations – services will continue to be delivered from</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			current locations and meetings will take place in both Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds.
6	If it's more effective, not the cheapest option, then I'm all for it. Don't go down the cheapest option route because it is not always the right choice.	The impact on service delivery	Whilst savings are an important consideration, a single council would also bring real and lasting benefits to all residents and businesses in the area, as detailed in our business case. A copy of this can be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a>
7	The sooner the better so you can reduce the rates!	Opportunities Council Tax	A single council would give the whole of West Suffolk greater financial resilience and lower council tax levels than would otherwise result in the longer term which would be a positive outcome from the process.
8	As a resident of shaver hill for over 30 years we have often felt as the 'poor relative' of Bury. A town thenaize of Haverhill warrants its own council, under this proposed consolidation I cannot see how things will become better formmytown in particular	Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages and be locally sensitive.	Haverhill benefits from having a Town Council to address local need and the ONE Haverhill Partnership which we work with and brings together the town council, the County Council and a range of other partners to achieve the partnership's aim of <i>improving the quality of life for people in Haverhill</i> . A single council would continue to support the needs of the town. Haverhill is too small in terms of its scale and population size to be a viable as a standalone district council area but as with previous responses, we anticipate that strong local

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			<p>representation will be a key part of the governance of any new Council. Also it means we will be a stronger voice to lobby for much needed infrastructure improvements, such as the A1307. Indeed through the engagement process neighbouring authorities in Cambridgeshire have supported the proposals and indicated wanting to progress transport improvements, including better links to Haverhill (see also questions 2 and 11</p>
9	<p>I dont agree with this merger of the two borough council's. If anything, the maps should be re-drawn, with areas to the North of bury st Edmunds being under control of forest heath and to the South including Newmarket and the a14 corridor being part of st edmundsbury. I dont agree with making a borough council being of the same wards and parameters as the West suffolk constituency bar bury st Edmunds. I therefore suggest you rethink this ridiculous proposal and give the people of west suffolk the services they deserve instead of cheap, half hearted</p>	<p>Disagree with current boundary divisions</p> <p>Protect and improve services</p>	<p>Part of the benefits of the current proposals relate to increasing the size of the council area serving West Suffolk in order to increase financial resilience and make further savings, thereby protecting and improving services. We do not believe that the costs of changing the existing boundaries of the council areas in West Suffolk to form smaller entities would lead to significant benefits and savings for taxpayers.</p> <p>As part of drawing up the business case four options for further transformation in West Suffolk were tested against the Government's criteria for considering changes in local council structures:</p>

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	<p>services after what has already been a brutal 7 years of austerity on households.</p>		<p><b>Options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- do nothing</li> <li>- revert to working as two separate councils (dismantle the shared service partnership)</li> <li>- expand the shared service partnership to include other councils</li> <li>- create a new, single district council for West Suffolk</li> </ul> <p><b>Government criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better local/public services;</li> <li>• significant cost savings;</li> <li>• greater value for money;</li> <li>• stronger and more accountable local leadership; and</li> <li>• sustainability in the medium to long term.</li> </ul> <p>The options appraisal showed that doing nothing or reverting to two separate Councils would have a generally negative outcome. It concluded that a new, single district council for West Suffolk would bring</p>

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			<p>the greatest benefits for local businesses and communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- value for money, financial savings and self-sufficiency;</li> <li>- simplicity;</li> <li>- democratic accountability;</li> <li>- influence; and</li> <li>- resilience.</li> </ul>
10	<p>Put more robust controls in place to stop single Developers getting the monopoly over major planning projects and housing builds. There appears to be a pattern with FHDC awarding contracts to the Same Developer every time. Put a stop to anyone In Planning or in a position of power within the council of being able to benefit from REPEATED building of large housing developments (and/or their families) as a result of inside knowledge of long term housing plans/allocations!!</p>	<p>Planning functions</p>	<p>The councils have no control over who decides to submit a planning application. If anyone from the Council or an elected Member submits a planning application they are required to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct and take no part in the processing and determination of such applications.</p>
11	<p>Haverhill already gets treated unfairly</p>	<p>Concerns that</p>	<p>We are working closely with partners in Haverhill</p>

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	to Bury St Edmunds , adding more places into the mix will only make it worse for us , our services will be depleted even more	future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages	and would continue to do so under a single council. Improvements to Haverhill in recent years include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £22 million invested in the development of the town including the cinema complex and Queen Street enhancement works.</li> <li>• Set-up funding provided for the Haverhill Research Park and help to secure Enterprise Zone status, making it even more attractive to businesses.</li> <li>• Private funding secured for the delivery of the north west relief road.</li> <li>• Community Chest funding provided to projects to strengthen families and communities.</li> </ul> (See also questions 2 and 8)
12	As long it doesn't create yet more bureaucracy and more expense for council tax payers then I see no problem , also , NO council officials to have anything to do with housing developers , conflicts of interest are NOT an option , the merest hint of corruption is NOT acceptable .	Costs to the tax payer  Planning functions	If anyone from the Council or an elected Member has a significant interest in a planning application they are required to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct and take no part in the processing and determination of such applications.

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13	Would the merged council retain the current local offices (for customer queries, etc.)?	Council office locations	Officers are currently based at Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall, Haverhill and Newmarket offices and depots and we do not expect this to change.
14	<p>Concerned that a single council covering west Suffolk will centre on the large towns such as bury st Edmunds and leave out the smaller hamlets and villages. As it is already fhdc place more emphasis on Newmarket and forget that its boundary borders on Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. I live close to Cambridgeshire border and feel more affinity to ecdc and Cambridgeshire county council than fhdc and Suffolk county council which is based in the most easterly part of the region. Suggest that boundary commission need to "square up" the county borders removing Newmarket from Suffolk entirely and place the most westerly villages such as burnt fen and Kenny Hill in Cambridgeshire. Suffolk C C don't know we exist neither does fhdc. Geographically and geologically the "fens" area will do better under</p>	<p>Disagree with current boundary divisions</p> <p>Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages</p>	<p>There are no plans to consider Newmarket moving into Cambridgeshire. This would require a review of the boundaries between local authorities, known as a principal area boundary review (PABR). The Local Government Boundary Commission's policy is to only undertake a PABR where requested by all local authorities affected. There are currently no plans for a PABR.</p> <p>A single council would put the whole area in a stronger financial position and help protect investment in community projects that currently benefit all parts of the area – including rural and village communities. The business case says that while the council will have the benefits of being larger and more resilient with a louder voice it will still be small enough to work with every community to deliver locally tailored initiatives.</p> <p>An important consideration is the need to ensure strong local ward representation, ensuring that all parts of our area are fairly represented and local members have a strong voice and are</p>



<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	<p>Cambridgeshire as they have more understanding of the low land and farming/drainage issues. Whilst I appreciate that back office systems can be shared and money saved, representation and local knowledge of a local area is not something that has a price worth paying.</p>		<p>empowered to make a difference in their communities. This will be reflected in our "Council Size" case that will be considered by Councils in October if the Single Council business case is agreed; nonetheless we do not propose to significantly reduce the number of councillors to ensure strong local representation is preserved. A cross party and cross councils steering group has been looking at issues of how any new single council will operate in the future. One of the issues raised is the need to make sure rural areas and smaller villages benefit.</p>
15	<p>Against when the county councils were merged to form Suffolk County Council west of BSE did not exist in their plans, no infrastructure in Mildenhall just look at the latest scheme of the Hub . yet the bases have grown villages have grown Industrial estate has grown but using the same roads of 50 years or more, villages have become rat runs and likely to remain so in the plans that are discussed putting more lives at risk due to bad planning and not</p>	<p>Lack of infrastructure</p>	<p>This response raises a number of issues about the quality of public services in West Suffolk, including those run by the county council and health services.</p> <p>Against a background of austerity and funding cuts, West Suffolk councils and other public services are continuing to invest in infrastructure and services, aimed at improving the quality of life for all groups. Through our local plans, we are also aiming to shape each of our towns and villages to ensure they a thriving and accessible.</p>

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	<p>listening to the people who live and use the area. BSE councillors have already commented on equal rates for the two councils so are they going to cut their services like no buses on a Sunday, no parks division, and how would their people react if they had to travel to Mildenhall or Newmarket for a service such as CAB or X rays, blood tests, yet we are expected too at our cost with poor transport.</p>		<p>A single council also means we are a greater size to lobby locally and nationally as well as encourage more investment in infrastructure, transport or health measures.</p> <p>The aim of becoming a single council is to enable us to more of this, in spite of continuing funding pressures.</p> <p>On the issue of council tax, a single council would have to have a single level of Council Tax, however, there would be a period of harmonisation to achieve this. Both councils would need to demonstrate that a single level of Council Tax can be achieved over a reasonable period of time. A single council would give the whole of West Suffolk greater financial resilience and lower council tax levels in the longer term which would be a positive outcome from the process. See also response to question 5.</p>
16	It dose not matter what we think you	Concerns that	Your response is important and will be seen by

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	will do what is convenient to the councils not us .in haverhill we seem to be everyones poor relation and seem to be ignored for places that have been deemed to be more pleasant for people to visit .we have concerns over safety can we get anything done no .	future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages	councillors to help inform their debate. See response to questions 8 and 11.
17	Wholeheartedly support this. In fact, why not go the whole hog and do away with a complete tier of local government and let Suffolk County Council do everything?	Support	There are no plans for unitary (single tier) government but as a single council we would continue to work closely with Suffolk County Council.
18	This should not happen, the area is too large and the population too diverse for this to work properly. The current back office staff working as one is working well. However having one elected body would leave people feeling under represented.	Future arrangements to be locally sensitive  Democratic representation and the number of councillors	A Future Governance Steering Group of elected members has been looking at the possible governance for a new single council and will be recommending any future arrangements for representation, to take account of the opportunity for members to play strong roles in and for their localities.  (Also see question 2)
19	I was born in Newmarket and lived in the area nearly all my life for close on 60 years. Newmarket has not prospered	Concerns that future arrangements	We are working hard with partners to continue to improve Newmarket, including via Newmarket Vision, a partnership of public, private and

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	<p>under Forest Heath and the services have been downgraded. The Forest Heath council over the decades destroyed Newmarket and favoured Mildenhall. The Police station, courts and Council offices were unjustifiably moved to the Mildenhall area. The very successful recycling depot was also moved to Mildenhall and the Newmarket Hospital downgraded. We are treated like the poor relations to Mildenhall and now you are proposing to absorb us into the Bury St Edmunds where in all probability we will be pushed further down the priority list and rob Newmarket even more of its once proud identity. I remember a time when people preferred to shop in Newmarket rather than Bury St Edmunds. Bury has prospered since the Arc shopping precinct was built. Something Newmarket failed to do Under Forest Heath DC because of a total lack of vision and mismanagement. Boundary wise on a</p>	<p>should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages</p> <p>Disagree with current boundary divisions</p>	<p>voluntary sector groups working to improve the town centre, tourism and educational opportunities, traffic and community planning. Recent investments in the town include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £50k into the feasibility of the District Council or other partners investing in a cinema complex</li> <li>• National Heritage Centre for Horseracing and Sporting Art established</li> <li>• Start of leg of Men's Tour of Britain next month – FHDC underwrote £20k to secure it for Newmarket</li> <li>• Investment into business units (Sam Alper Court)</li> <li>• Investment into Newmarket Leisure Centre</li> <li>• Representation on the Newmarket Business Improvement District Board</li> <li>• Recently announced investment into Newmarket Hospital</li> <li>• Recently announced proposals to re-site the Market to secure its future.</li> </ul> <p>There are no plans to consider Newmarket moving into Cambridgeshire. This would require a review of the boundaries between local</p>

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	<p>map Newmarket is like an unwanted pimple on the west side of the Suffolk county border and treated as such. There had been talk several times over the years of moving Newmarket into Cambridgeshire. Looking at the boundaries on a map you could easily see why logistically why but would Newmarket be treated any better under Cambridgeshire even though parts of it are already in East Cambs DC area? The Boundary Commission should be looking to either move all of Newmarket into East Cambs or moving the parts of Newmarket and surrounding area already in East Cambs completely in to Suffolk. I am against Newmarket being under Bury St Edmunds and Forest Heath I can not envisage any advantages for Newmarket. The powerbase and services should be returned to Newmarket and Forest Heath DC abolished or renamed because it reminds people of my age of how it has systematically failed the</p>		<p>authorities, known as a principal area boundary review (PABR). The Local Government Boundary Commission's policy is to only undertake a PABR where requested by all local authorities affected. There are currently no plans for a PABR.</p> <p>In addition, through the engagement process neighbouring authorities in Cambridgeshire have supported the single council proposals and indicated wanting to work more closely on initiatives that could help bring improvements to communities in West Suffolk, and especially those near the County border.</p> <p>The new single council proposals are designed to bring benefits to the whole West Suffolk area rather than one town or area over another. A single council would be of a size to more effectively lobby Government and attract businesses to benefit both district areas. It would not mean a reduction in our customer contact points. It would also put the whole area in a stronger financial position and help protect services. As detailed in our business case. A copy of this can be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a></p>

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	people of Newmarket.		
20	the two bodies have been working side by side. a single body seems logical.	Support	No responses required.
21	Simply put. If it aint broke, no need to fix it! Its frustrating when you call what you think is Forest heath Mildenhall to find BSE picking the phone up only to be transferred back to mildenhall that you thought you were calling in the first place!	Content with current structure	<p>We have staff based in offices in Newmarket, Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall, all of whom are able to pick up incoming calls, regardless of which district the call is made from, and access the necessary information to respond to callers. This enables us to maximise the efficiency of our staff during quiet periods and breaks.</p> <p>It is not usually necessary to transfer a caller unless they are being transferred from one service to another.</p> <p>(See answer to question 9 on negative impact of remaining two separate councils)</p>
22	If the present successful sharing of services saves money I have no objection to sharing all services under one umbrella, as long as there is no deterioration and the present access to info and councillors remains the same.	The impact on service delivery	Under a single council our aim would be to continue the shared service working that has saved millions and deliver even better value and savings to invest back into high quality services and local community initiatives. Whilst the detail of the ward arrangements would change, a key

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			factor in determining the future arrangements would be the need to ensure that councillors can effectively represent their ward areas.
23	I fully support the proposal to create a new single district level council for West Suffolk bedside of the expected business efficiencies this venture will bring to the region.	Opportunities	No response required.
24	It would all depend on where and how such a proposal was based and implemented. On the face of it it seems like a way for st eds to cede more control by way of a coup de tete. In my experience, West Suffolk are traditionally very self centred towards bury st edmunds and not good at paying attention to the needs of other areas under their care. Let alone releasing funding that is owed. In addition I have found st eds staff to be largely laing in basic customer service, human compassion or empathy when interacting with the public. A situation that I doubt would be improved by doubling their workload and halving the	Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages and be locally sensitive  The impact on service delivery	The councils already have a fully shared service arrangement, with a single staff team serving both authorities. The current proposals relate to the constitutional and democratic arrangements for the councils, so there would be no change to the arrangements for customer service.  The new single council proposals are designed to bring benefits to the whole West Suffolk area rather than one town or area over another. A single council would be of a size to more effectively lobby Government and attract businesses to benefit both district areas. It would not mean a reduction in our customer contact points. It would also put the whole area in a stronger financial position and help protect services. As detailed in our business case. A copy

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	staff under the guise of 'efficiency savings' therefore I would have grave concerns about the quality of service and care that both boroughs would be provided with.		of this can be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a>
25	Excellent idea	Support	No response required.
26	I personally cannot see any advantage in combining the two. Much like the EU smaller individual areas are better for everyone.	Future arrangements to be locally sensitive	The aim of the proposals is to retain local connections at the neighbourhood and ward level, but to benefit from economies of scale and increasing influence at the organisational level.  (See answer to question 9 on negative impact of remaining two separate councils)
27	No we should stay as a single council because when haverhill was taken over by bury st eds the villages suffered so I would like to see some updates in villages as to my option most of the money was spent in bury and very little on villages	Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages	Whilst some services and infrastructure are inevitably focused in the most populated areas, the councils have, and will continue to invest heavily in rural areas . Our Families and Communities Strategy is focused on working with local people in their communities, enabling them to spot, prevent and address emerging problems, rather than waiting until they become serious and manifest in problems such as worklessness, anti-social behaviour or poor health. This is supported by funding from Locality budgets, the



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			Community Chest and the Rural Initiatives Grant (SEBC only) as well as support from a wide range of officers.
28	As most of Haverhill has had the street lights changed to led. Lights can I suggest that we put back the lights on past 00:00 for safety. As a cab driver I have to sit in the dark waiting for the public. Some of these members of public are now attacking taxi drivers as it is dark. And when dropping people off they should be able to see where there going without having to use there phones as a torch. I say this to stop people getting items stolen from them.		Your comments will be passed to the Community Safety Partnership and Suffolk County Council for further investigation.
29	I believe having one Council for West Suffolk could work quite well, and if it could make the claimed savings and still deliver the present level of services, it should be welcomed by all. The only problem I can see is that sometimes these organisations grow larger and less focused, and standards start to fall. If the said Council made the savings stated per year, would this then mean a	The impact on service delivery  Savings  Opportunities	Government funding to local authorities is changing, with the gradual withdrawal of central government grant and a greater reliance on income from business rates, council tax and housing growth. It is therefore all the more important for councils to be as financially resilient as possible and a single council would help to achieve this.

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	cut in funds from Central Government, as I believe we in this area are underfunded already.		
30	Excellent way to save money by pooling resources and reducing the management burden. Need to ensure that the number of councillors is not unwieldy, as too many people on a committee can make decision making more difficult. Also need to ensure that councillors do represent their constituents and that local concerns are not railroaded - for example, the development of noerth Haverhill towards Kedington, where the development is three times the size of Kedington, but local concerns over access and services haven't been addressed by the council or the proposed developers.	Democratic representation and the number of councillors	Regarding ensuring adequate local representation see the response to question 2.  As explained in the response to question 10. Our local plan undertakes a robust development process, which includes public engagement and independent examination. Individual planning applications are required to follow statutory consultation processes. As set out in the response to question 2 above, a new Council would aim to ensure strong local representation within its governance structures.
31	I think it is a good idea. I would prefer if the new council could be called a Borough to help with tourism. About time it was done. I think one lot of councillors will mean things can move	Opportunities	We recognise the importance of the 'borough brand' and status for west Suffolk as well as its heritage and continuity. There is potentially a strong case to be made for a new borough that also covers former Forest Heath areas, for

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	faster and we get the expertise of those from across the area. I wouldn't want to see a larger council than the one suggested though as that would be too far away from local decision making.		<p>example reflecting the royal connections with Newmarket.</p> <p>The designation of borough status is, however, not made by the council itself but by royal charter. A single council could apply to the Privy Council for borough status.</p>
32	<p>Hi, I would like to know if this goes ahead, and we have one council (for west Suffolk), could this change the boundaries with regard to social housing. At the moment in Forest Heath/West Suffolk, we come under homechoice. This means any cross partner properties that may be available can be in Cambridge, huntingdon, east Peterborough area etc. Would the new council of West Suffolk join the gateway bidding system? Gateway cover all of Suffolk - except the west. It would make sense to on the basis that any cross partner properties would also be in Suffolk as opposed to areas of Cambridgeshire. I can see people like me downsizing and freeing up much</p>		<p>We have no plans to move from Home-Link to Gateway to Home Choice at this time. However, the change to a single council would mean that people with a local connection will have a wider area of choice across the West Suffolk area, although the Council would remain as part of the Cambridge sub-region for housing purposes.</p>

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	needed family sized homes from one Suffolk area to another, but I wouldn't move to the other side of Cambridgeshire!		
33	If this could lead to taking powers back from the county council it sounds a positive step, but otherwise I fear that local services would become more remote & less accessible	Opportunities	<p>We work closely with Suffolk County Council and would continue to do so, exploring new opportunities, such as joint ventures. West Suffolk Councils recently set up Verse Facilities Management Limited with Suffolk County Council. Verse has enabled the partners to consolidate facilities management services into one company, saving more than £40,000 a year. It also enables the partner councils to offer commercial services to other organisations and businesses to generate revenue which will contribute to the cost of running vital public services.</p> <p>In designing the arrangements for the new council, a central issue will be ensuring that residents are able to access democratic decision making and representation easily, and in a similar way to now.</p>
34	Theoretically a sensible way to reduce duplication and reap savings. How	Democratic representation	As the councils already operate a fully shared officer structure, with all staff working across the

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>much will the union cost and what's the payback time to realise actual savings? How many job losses will there be to create the savings and at what level? What are the contingency plans during the merger to guarantee continuity of service?</p>	<p>and the number of councillors</p> <p>Savings</p> <p>Redundancies</p>	<p>two councils, there will be only minimal changes to staffing and operational activity. Services will continue as usual.</p> <p>The business case says payback of transitional costs is expected well within one year (assuming a 2019 implementation).</p> <p>We do not anticipate job losses as a result of becoming a single council. The proposals relate primarily to constitutional and democratic issues.</p>
35	<p>I feel that whilst the single council could provide some extra cost savings, they would not be enough to counter the reduction in democracy handed out to the people. At present there are 44 councillors which means that anything our few councillors try to do is easily counteracted by the others, especially as most are of a single political party controlled by a very few people. Adding more districts to this and, presumably, reducing the overall number of councillors will do nothing to improve our district councillor's chances of</p>	<p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p>	<p>In designing new democratic arrangements for the council, we would work with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, to ensure fairness in representation and access to democracy for local electors. Under the new arrangements, the committees would continue to be politically balanced, as currently required in legislation.</p> <p>(See Question 2 for more on the role of the councillor and local accountability)</p> <p>(See answer to question 9 on negative impact of remaining two separate councils)</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>achieving what their electors want. As shown by the County Council, these organisations can become too large. Using the cabinet method of working, things can quite easily be temporarily hidden from some parties enabling a part of an authority to control the rest. Money can also quite easily disappear in a larger organisation. (See the EU!) I congratulate the two councils for the attitude of co-operation in order to save money and improve services but I think it has probably reached it's limits in this direction. I don't suppose there will be any choice but I would certainly be against any combination of the two district level councils. If you were returning to West Suffolk County Council and Urban and Rural districts, that would be another matter!</p>		
36	<p>What guarantees are in place to ensure that St Edmundsbury Tax payers will not be expected to subsidise Forest Heath? Not too sure how costs would be reduced. Would there be a reduction</p>	<p>Costs to the taxpayer  Redundancies</p>	<p>The new council has to have a single level of council tax, however, there would be a period of harmonisation to achieve this. Even if a single council was not formed forecasts over reduced Government funding shows councils are having</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	<p>in the number of Councillors and staff serving St Edmundsbury Borough Council, sharing one local government building, resulting in further redundancies ? Would such a move further distance borough Councillors from the electorate, as has been the case with representatives serving on SCC? All decision making concerning St Edmundsbury Borough Council, should be left to those Councillors representing the electorate of the local area.</p>		<p>to do more with less. So it is likely in the case of Forest Heath that this would need to rise anyway, as it did last year, but this would not be due to becoming a single council. Becoming a single council will not involve any further increases in council tax over and above those already planned in order to achieve a stable and balanced budgetary position.</p> <p>We estimate that a new single council would be able to make future additional savings and efficiencies of around £800,000 a year, as outlined in our business case, in addition to protecting the savings already made to date, such as the £4 million every year from currently sharing services. We do not envisage job losses as a result of a single council. The creation of a single council means we have a better opportunity from the beginning to help set numbers and describe the role councillors will play, including the opportunity to drive real improvements for their localities.</p>
37	<p>I do not agree with this at all and any advertised cost savings never seem to actually be realised and is just pie in</p>	<p>Future arrangements need to be</p>	<p>We believe that that estimated savings are robust and achievable, and have a track record of achieving or exceeding projected savings, as</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	the sky. Local Councils need to be just that "LOCAL" and any final decision should be carried out by a local referendum and not by a select few!!!	locally sensitive Savings	happened during our period of shared services which has produced ongoing savings of £4 million.  (See answer to question 9 on negative impact of remaining two separate councils) There are no plans for a local referendum as this is a decision for locally elected politicians.
38	1) How much of the £800,000 in savings will be saved by having only one of the following, John Griffiths or James Waters, all or part? 2) St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath would both be out and the new council would be named? 3) St Edmundsbury Council has reserves of the following: 67 million reserve unusable 36.5 million reserve unusable 3 million general usable. How much has Forest? Please reply to the above in a letter. Thank you. I have no email please reply by letter: <i>(address removed to ensure anonymity)</i>	Savings	A letter, as requested, was provided, response as below:  Savings would arise from a number of changes, as set out in the draft business case, including member allowances, corporate and efficiency savings.  With regards to the contribution to the savings total that would be made with only one council leader, the following figures give the combined allowances and expenses data for the leaders of St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath (2015/16):  Cllr John Griffiths - £17,526 Cllr James Waters - £17,844



ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			<p>If a decision is taken to proceed with the creation of a new single council for west Suffolk, it would entirely replace Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council, which would no longer exist. The name of the new council will be put forward by councillors, subject to approval by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The latest reserve figures for St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council are listed below:</p> <p>At 31 March 2017 (unaudited)</p> <p><b>St Edmundsbury Borough Council</b>  Unusable reserves £81,771,000  Usable reserves £36,518,000  General fund reserve £3,000,000</p> <p><b>Forest Heath District Council</b>  Unusable reserves £42,770,000  Usable reserves £15,014,000  General fund reserve £2,000,000</p> <p>It should also be noted that the population of Forest Heath is just over half the size of St</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			Edmundsbury's.
39	I would like a more local approach being taken not widening the net. My local issues from haverhill are going to be listened to and decided on by people not from my local area. I don't care how much money is being saved, decisions must be made locally.	Future arrangements need to be locally sensitive	Local areas such as Haverhill will continue to have strong representation from local, democratically elected Councillors, and residents will continue to have access to them via the democratic process We are committed to ensuring that Haverhill's voice and needs are effectively represented in single council arrangements. See response to question 8 and 11.
40	I live in Haverhill and think it is a good idea if it means we have a louder voice to fight our corner and argue for more money for roads like the A1307. As long as we still get the services we have now. If it means we save money then I think you should have done it ages ago.	Opportunities	We agree that improvements to the A1307 are an important priority for West Suffolk. A new single council would be around the 8th largest district/borough council in the country when combined – a big voice among our peers and central Government. We believe that this larger scale and greater influence would be helpful in addressing a range of Haverhill's infrastructure needs.
41	I think it's a good idea. I live Forest Heath and think rural areas get a bad deal from Government. This new council could mean we can club together with	Opportunities	No response required

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	other parts of Bury but also in East Anglia to campaign for more money to go to us in villages rather than the towns.		
42	<i>(Text removed as comments were not relevant to the consultation)</i>		
43	Coming from a commercial background I would suggest that should the councils merge then any "duplicated" roles should be recognised and the people in those roles should be got rid of instead of creating roles for them to fill. Only this way would any savings and efficiencies be achieved. Initially there would be a hit on having to pay people off but over time as it is not always the best policy to simply keep people employed simply because they have been in post for a long time that would give the savings. I would be interested to see where the actual savings are to be achieved without such job losses.	Savings  Redundancies	As the councils already operate a fully shared officer structure, with all staff working across the two councils, there will be only minimal changes to staffing and operational activity. We do not anticipate job losses as a result of becoming a single council. However, significant gains in efficiency and capacity will be released, particularly at senior management team level. Serving two authorities generates a considerable level of activity, especially in attending committee meetings, briefing councillors, report writing, etc. In these areas, a single council would create a high level of efficiency savings that, whilst not immediately cashable, would create increased effectiveness of management and productivity. This would free up capacity for greater focus on growing business areas (to generate new income to support services) and investing in communities. To express this in financial terms, a 20% efficiency gain for leadership team, and a 10% efficiency gain for service managers is estimated to be equivalent to

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			<p>around £0.35 million per annum.</p> <p>(See answer to question 9 on negative impact of remaining two separate councils)</p>
44	<p>Join the business together but NOT the councillors. Savings can be made by moving into a single building without destroying local democracy just because the CEO and dominant political party wants it. Sure, some committees can be made joint as many are today, but we need local knowledge particularly when it comes to planning and growth. Reduce the number of Councillors down - several fail to attend meetings or training courses anyway. Hopefully the Boundary Commission review will identify that in its own consultation. Use of technology and other modern processes commonly used in the private sector would make even more savings not identified in the business plan. And where is the ComRes poll for online users and those</p>	<p>Future arrangements need to be locally sensitive</p>	<p>A shared service arrangement has been in place since 2013, enabling the business of the authorities to be delivered by a single staff team. In terms of officers, they would be based, as now, where the work needs them to be (Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall, Haverhill or Newmarket offices, operational sites, working remotely or alongside partners). Indeed some residents have highlighted through the engagement process a need to keep buildings and services local.</p> <p>A key benefit of the single council proposal is the establishment of a single set of elected members and governance arrangements and the efficiencies that can be achieved (see also reply to question 43). The overall councillor numbers are linked to the LGBCE review, however the creation of a single council would mean we have a better opportunity from the beginning to help set numbers and describe the role councillors will</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	not contacted in the 1000 "random" calls going out? How dare this Council ignore the direct wishes of the people?		play.  The ComRes opinion poll is separate to this opportunity to engage with us online. The opinion poll was carried out by a specialist independent research company who ensured that those called were a representative sample rather than just random of all of the adult population across the two districts who are eligible to vote. The findings from all forms of engagement will be used to inform local, democratically elected councillors as they reach their decision on the way forward.
45	I am fully in favour of the merger of the two existing councils provides it generates the cost savings and other financial benefits set out in the consultation document. I am particularly concerned that that the alignment of the current council tax rates charged by the two councils does not lead to higher tax for FHDC residents.	Costs to the taxpayer  Opportunities	See answer to questions 5 and 36.
46	The economic case makes sense. However, on the local democracy front it would be a retrograde step and a grave mistake to reduce the number of	Planning functions  Democratic	See reply to questions 2, 9 and 35.

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>councillors especially in view of the proposed increase in population proposed for both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. How would local democracy work on planning applications and other related matters. You could have councillors from one area deciding on contentious matters in another area where they do not have the local knowledge or experience. Power is concentrated in two few hands at the moment under the Cabinet System with councillors being mere ciphers of their particular party with very few exceptions. Those in power tend to follow national guidelines and policies irrespective of whether the decision or policy will benefit their local area and authority. There is also far too much attention paid to austerity and cuts. Big is not necessarily beautiful, it concentrating power in too few hands and surely the aim must be to devolve power to the lowest level not concentrating it at the top. A committee</p>	<p>representation and the number of councillors</p>	

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>system would be a much better way or governing than all councillors rather than the few privileged members could have their say and influence policy. West Suffolk Councils together does seem to work well and in view of this and the difference in the various geographical areas and current council tax regime between SEBC and FHDC is a merger a wise decision. One particular party dominates the area and is this necessarily a good thing for democracy.? My view would be no as the savings would be minimal as you have one set of directors and staff now. I remain to be convinced</p>		
47	<p>Totally support the proposal, which appears to me to a natural progression from the joint working at officer level across the two council areas that has been ongoing for a while now. One set of councillors should reduce costs and inefficiencies and hopefully lead to quicker decision making processes and structures. With so many changes and</p>	<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p>	No response required

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>challenges facing the Country and businesses in the next few years it's imperative that our partners are able to be fleet of foot when opportunities arise. The issue of the level of Councillor representation is a matter for yourselves and I suspect initially it might be appropriate to retain the status quo but with possible boundary changes, technological opportunities and further efficiency saving pressures I suspect the overall number of Councillors covering West Suffolk may well reduce but hopefully the level and quality of representation won't. One of those relatively rare occasions where I suspect there won't be too many opposing voices to what seems to me to be a very sensible proposal. Just hope I am not tempting fate with this last comment.</p>		
48	<p>If it means services get delivered and we have a better chance of the A1307 improved then you should create one council. I'd rather have that than</p>	Opportunities	See answer to question 40.



ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	Government impose changes.		
49	<p>Hi I've been in bury st edmunds for 28 years and I think it's gotten wears through the years. Building and building more houses and making our roads wears. Not enough shop more ***** cafes. You not keeping it a historic town keep want to modernise it leave it as a historic town. I've seen the plans for the town sinter and it look horrible where are the cars going to park and where's the market gonna go. Breeze buses are rubbish why don't you keep the mulleys or bring back first at least they are on time yes I'm talking about Wesley estate and that's where I live. You getting reed of Lola Berry roller bury is wrong so why get reed of something that' history my mum went there when she was a kid I even went there when I was a kid. My mum is not liking bury any more too and she lived in bury st edmunds a lot longer than I was. I thought the ark was going to be a big shopping mall. You getting reed of</p>		<p>Earlier this year we asked residents, workers, shoppers and visitors for their views on the challenges that face Bury St Edmunds town centre over the next decade and how these could be addressed. This public engagement led to nearly 6000 comments and suggestions which we have used shape a draft masterplan (the MAP) outlining aspirations for the town centre. From 31 July to 8 September, we asked local people to complete a survey to let us know if we have got these right. The feedback that we receive during this consultation will shape the final version of the masterplan that will come before councillors for adoption later in the year.</p> <p>We have therefore been keen to hear local views about the future of the town and note the points that you make.</p> <p>One of the key objectives from the initial work was <i>Maintaining a strong, historic heart for Bury St Edmunds</i>, supported by 97% of residents. Other objectives with high levels of support included <i>Encouraging vibrant, well-designed</i></p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	the small one near McDonalds you should of put Primark in there. Your bringing in to many people in a small town. PS. . Where the old Lloyds bank was out front of wilko why don't you put a little Morrisons in there		<i>streets and spaces and Accommodating and supporting growth.</i>
50	I support the proposals - saves costs and streamlines services for better delivery. A root and branch review is needed to ensure if the merger goes ahead that staff costs decrease not increase, tendering of services is exploited to get better value (economies of scale) and better customer led outcomes. Most importantly senior staff should not be given pay increases in the new organisation under the auspices that they have more responsibility. Redundant buildings as a result of the merger should be sold off and the income reinvested in local services. Customer contact offices should be relocated in other public buildings to ensure savings whilst maintaining a	Opportunities	<p>We do not anticipate any increase in staff costs and are forecasting efficiencies that will free up staff time, enabling it to be focused on achieving priorities such as better outcomes for communities.</p> <p>There would be no pay rises for senior staff associated with the establishment of a single council. We already have shared services and a single staff team so there would be no additional responsibilities.</p> <p>As we have already significantly reduced the office space used by the councils through bringing together our staffing arrangements, there would be no redundant buildings as a result of a single council. Future accommodation will be determined by our office accommodation plan. We agree about the benefits of co-location</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	customer focussed approach to council service delivery. The reserves each council have need to be pooled and equitably invested/spent on local services. The key is service outcomes not which organisation delivers it.		with other organisations and that is reflected in our plans for the Mildenhall Hub.
51	Good thinking especially as it saves money	Opportunities	
52	I think it is the only sensible way forward. The savings and economy's of scale are a fantastic thing. Hurry up and make it happen before people change there minds.	Opportunities	
53	Hi, Great idea. My main points are: 1. Job and department titles need to be short and easily understood. 2. Be honest about your ability to provide services and react to circumstances. Remember Grenfell and what lead to it. Tell the Government if resources are not enough to provide 'safe' services. I may be cynical but the Government appears to have plenty of money to spend on its own little projects like bombing Syria! 3. Get Parish Councils	Ability to lobby	<p>We will pass your comments on local transport issues to Suffolk County Council who are responsible for these matters.</p> <p>We believe a single council will enable us to better argue our case with Government and other funding providers as well as working more closely locally with organisations such as Parish Councils.</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	<p>to effectively share residents concerns. I feel that Ixworth and Pakenham exist in their own little bubbles. 4. Too many of our local roads are 'rat runs' with national speed limits. 40 mph would be more suitable. 5. Be realistic about population and traffic growth. Many road junctions are outdated and need modernising to enable a smooth flow of traffic. 6. Discourage unnecessary car use by providing more pavements and off-road cycle paths. In my area between Ixworth and Stanton and between Ixworth and Bury St Edmunds. Likewise look for opportunities of enhancing the country path network. Some places have a good network of paths yet others have few or none.</p>		
54	<p>We think the proposal to have one council is an excellent idea noting the advantages raised in the letter of 21st July from Jill Korwin, and the attached summary of information. We also think the unification to one council will provide the opportunity to have</p>	<p>Opportunities  Savings</p>	<p>The savings that we have calculated are £500k annual cashable savings and £350K non cashable efficiency savings eg officer time freed up. In response to questions about savings we will be providing a more detailed breakdown in our revised business case.</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	<p>consistency in all decisions across the two current districts, particularly in planning and services. Furthermore, the fact that the new council will be the 8th largest in England is a major benefit, and will surely provide considerable strength to the council when engaged in discussions regarding any future decisions made by central government. A key element of the single council will be the leader and the successful long term integration of the two councils will be dependent upon this appointment. As part of the review into merging the two councils it would be useful to have a breakdown on the proposed annual saving of £800,000 and also an indication of the amounts involved with funding from central government i.e. how much will the government funding reduce in 2020 when the revenue grant is stopped? One aspect the review does not appear to address is the boundary division in Newmarket, with part of the town</p>		<p>Around 2020, it is anticipated that the business rates system may be completely re-set when the Government moves towards 100% retention of business rates by local government. This reset will also be accompanied by the transfer of additional responsibilities to local government, which could include a requirement to part-fund areas such as housing benefits. At this stage, it is therefore not possible to predict the financial positions of both authorities under the new arrangements from 2020/21 onwards.</p> <p>We note your point about the Newmarket boundary. However that it not currently under review. See answer to question 3.</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>sitting within East Cambridgeshire. The advantages highlighted within the proposed merger of FHDC and St. Edmundsbury must also apply, if, all of Newmarket town is within one council. It is hoped that within time the boundary will be changed to allow unification in all decisions affecting the town, including housing, highways and service provision. But in conclusion on behalf of Tattersalls Ltd, the proposal to create a new single council is fully supported.</p>		
55	<p>From everything I have read this statement only highlights the positives of a single council and if there are any negative points they are soon glossed over! Can someone tell me why all these wonderful things are only possible as a single council?</p>		<p>We agree that much can be achieved as two authorities. The councils have already saved £4 million a year by sharing services. We are however at the point where we are maximising what we can achieve through collaboration. We are therefore looking to achieve further benefits, such as a stronger voice for the area, increased financial resilience and even better value and savings to invest back into high quality services, as detailed in our business case for a single council.</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			<p>See answers to question 9 about the other proposals looked at and why a single council was thought to be the best way of bringing the most benefits. More information on the business case as well as issues raised by creating a new single council can also be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a></p>
56	<p>The village were i live having the highest band D council tax if Forest Heath and higher the Bury how is this merger going to improve are community and services . All i can see is that the large town,s will get more money to look nice . Will we have to have new district council election to equal out members for the area. Please explain where the £800.000 saving's are coming from and how much from each council.</p>	<p>Savings</p> <p>Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages</p>	<p>See answer to question 2 regarding council tax changes.</p> <p>In any event the Councils will not be undertaking a boundary review - whether or not the single Council proposals were to proceed.</p> <p>The proposed savings comprise £500K annual financial savings and efficiencies that are cashable and £350K non cashable, efficiency savings, mainly from “freed up” officer time. In response to questions about savings we will be providing a more detailed breakdown in our revised business case.</p> <p>The new single council proposals are designed to bring benefits to the whole West Suffolk area rather than one town or area over another. A</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
			<p>single council would be of a size to more effectively lobby Government and attract businesses to benefit both district areas. It would not mean a reduction in our customer contact points. It would also put the whole area in a stronger financial position and help protect services. As detailed in our business case. A copy of this can be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a></p>
57	<p>While I broadly welcome the proposal for a unitary district Council for West Suffolk, I have some reservations about the impact on the town of Brandon. 1. Many Brandonians are elderly and find it difficult and challenging to travel. If they need to consult with FHDC on any matter they are able to travel to Mildenhall with reasonable ease: Bury would be more of a problem. The FHDC desk in the Brandon centre was very useful - until it closed down. The creation of West Suffolk would only increase the need for local support:</p>	<p>Council office locations</p>	<p>We currently have no plans for a helpdesk at Brandon. However, there will be no need to travel to Bury St Edmunds as services would still be accessible at Mildenhall.</p> <p>No decisions have been made about allowances for district councillors under a single council arrangement. However, we are clear that the focus for financial savings arising from a single council would be to continue to deliver the shared service working that has saved millions and deliver even better value and savings to invest back into high quality services and local community initiatives.</p>



ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>perhaps a helpdesk within Brandon Town Hall. 2. The proposal predicts a financial saving of some considerable size, though I would guess that the allowances for district councillors will rise overall. Perhaps instead of promising a slightly smaller council tax bill, you might like to promise that any reductions caused by more efficient working will be invested in the communities of West Suffolk for the benefit of all. 3. Here in Brandon many people complain about the state of the drains. Brandon is seriously affected by sand, which blocks drains quite efficiently. At present, our drains are cleared once a year, which is simply not enough. I hope that a future West Suffolk might address different local concerns: one town may need drain clearing annually, while Brandon, for example, needs action every three months. I hope you will bear these, and other, comments in mind as you move towards the creation of West Suffolk.</p>		<p>Ongoing problems with drains can be reported to Suffolk County Council Highways team which has the responsibility for dealing with drainage. See <a href="https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/highway-drainage/report-a-blocked-drain/">https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/highway-drainage/report-a-blocked-drain/</a></p> <p>The main responsibility of West Suffolk Councils in respect of drainage is via the Local Planning process and liaison with infrastructure providers to ensure that there is adequate provision to support any new development. A Joint Local Plan will be developed and we would hope that this would enable us to have greater influence over any future infrastructure provision.</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
58	<p>The proposal seems sound and Newmarket BID would be in support of a merger to create a new single district-level council. Given that there is to be limited government funding from 2020, a single council that can achieve greater efficiency and an expected saving of £800,000 should be welcomed. Furthermore, a streamlined Local Authority that can drive investment into the town centre of Newmarket will be a positive step forward.</p>	Opportunities	No response required
59	<p>Suffolk County Council and Suffolk's districts have proven intransigent at reforming themselves, and now we face some districts making piecemeal mergers. Meantime, the Local Government Association has issued a fresh plea for extra funds amid warnings that town halls face a £5.8bn black hole by 2020. NOW is clearly the time to initiate a fair and reasonable debate on local government reform. Our innovative proposal Suffolk could lead the way. <a href="http://OrwellAhead.co.uk">OrwellAhead.co.uk</a> has</p>		<p>Our plans are as outlined in our business case. We do however note your proposals and agree with the assertion that any future governance arrangements should seek to be cost effective, streamlined and accountable.</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	<p>unveiled a radical and bold initiative for local government reform in Suffolk to ensure that our local elected politicians, taxpayers and voters are equipped with better structure, direction and accountability for the 21st century. This is a totally new proposal and idea which we believe is a win win win for county, districts and voters. Details are available online at <a href="http://www.orwellahead.co.uk/reform-suffolk/">http://www.orwellahead.co.uk/reform-suffolk/</a>. We believe that taxpayers and voters will want to see and consider sensible counter proposals for local government (and certainly before SCDC and Waveney and now Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury proceed).</p>		
60	<p>Why.....it is obvious that Mildenhall being the smaller council will be absorbed by the larger Bury St Edmunds council just like the USSR annexed their nearby states. No vote given again to the residents, it all being decided by the 'councillors '. Palm greasing again no doubt. No mentions</p>	<p>Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages</p>	<p>Our business case provides detailed information about council tax proposals. See also answer to question 5.</p> <p>The new single council proposals are designed to bring benefits to the whole West Suffolk area rather than one town or area over another. A single council would be of a size to more</p>

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	of the council tax differentials between Bury, Newmarket and surrounds and Mildenhall. Monies are the main given reason for this 'joining' but if the expenditures of each council were to be examined I am sure that enough could be saved to forstall this takeover, for that is what it is, and keep Mildenhall in charge of its self. Or is it sod the peasant residents they can't do for themselves and we must 'lead' them.	Costs to the taxpayer	effectively lobby Government and attract businesses to benefit both district areas. It would not mean a reduction in our customer contact points. It would also put the whole area in a stronger financial position and help protect services. As detailed in our business case. A copy of this can be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a>
61	As a Haverhill resident I am concerned that with fewer local councillors how can there be any guarantee that the needs of our community will be adequately met. Haverhill already struggles to get the necessary funding, we are certainly the poor relation to Bury St Edmunds and if the 'family' is enlarged will our voice even be heard?	Democratic representation  Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages	We are keen to ensure that the voices of Haverhill residents continue to be heard. See answers to questions 8 and 11.
62	This will not benefit people. If it ain't broke.... Why fix it		Please see the answer to question 9 which outlines how the options appraisal showed that doing nothing or reverting to two separate

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			<p>Councils would have a generally negative outcome. It concluded that a new, single district council for West Suffolk would bring the greatest benefits for local businesses and communities</p> <p>Our business case outlines a range of benefits that could be achieved that would protect local services for local people in the face of funding pressures. While sharing of services has achieved significant savings, we have now reached the limits of what is possible without becoming a single organisation. Without doing this, there are risks to existing levels of service provision.</p>
63	<p>I would like to object to the forming of one authority part of which is currently starving funds from Haverhill, in forming one council there would be even less inclination to support a growing town on the edge of the region. A more reasonable suggestion would be to devolve more funding and responsibility to the town council who have the best interest of the town at heart. In rolling together these two</p>	<p>Future arrangements to be locally sensitive</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. We believe that the establishment of a single council would enable a stronger voice for the entire area, This could potentially be of particular benefit of areas such as Haverhill where a stronger voice when negotiating with partners could help make the case for improvements to infrastructure.</p> <p>(Please see answers to question 8 and 11)</p>

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	<p>districts you would be promoting the forming of an authority that seeks to feed and promote itself by investing inwardly and not looking forward to the new opportunities and investment being made in the outer reaches of the area. I am sure that this comment will get no further than the postbox but should you wish to include me in the phone poll please call <i>(number removed to ensure anonymity)</i></p>		
64	<p>I think this will not be of benefit to Haverhill residents. Our voice is very small as it is. Now it will all be but drowned out entirely. We feel that this 'proposal' isn't taking into account our opinions about this matter. Doesn't all parties (towns &amp; villages) need to be consulted and in agreeance? This does not sound like democracy, but rather - dictatorship. You are dictating to us what is in our best interests, actually what is in the best interests for all, but the wider you make the governing body, the more diluted will be voice and</p>	<p>Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages</p> <p>Democratic representation</p>	<p>In a new single district council for west Suffolk, Haverhill residents would be represented on a fair and equal basis to all other parts of the area. This would be in addition to the representation through the town council and ONE Haverhill Partnership.</p> <p>The decision to create a single council rests with the democratically elected representatives across the whole of west Suffolk, who have access to the views expressed in this engagement exercise, as well as the phone poll carried out by ComRes.</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
	<p>opinions and possibly less of a share of the care and courtesy already enjoyed by places like Bury St Edmunds. We feel entirely neglected here, not least by Matthew Hancock, our so-called member of parliament who we only ever see or here of during election times. Our doctors are at breaking point, our parking rules are in chaos. Where are our parking wardens? We feel like the poor relation, the 'problem' town. But we are not. We are intelligent, we use our services and shops well, we are very community orientated. We love our town and would appreciate some similar respect back. Out of sight shouldn't mean out of mind. We are very much here. Only, we worry with the council merger, we will get pushed further away in terms of inclusion and respected as an up and coming excellent town within our own right. We need further debate and terms in place. Thanks.</p>		<p>See also answers to questions 8 and 11</p>
65	Creation of a single West Suffolk	Impact on	The move to a single council would mean a single

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	<p>Council is a step backwards as far as delivering local services for local communities - agreed savings can be made due to the economies of scale but the underlying Departmental inefficiencies will remain. The primary issue with all Councils is the lack of accountability to those who ultimately fund their activities; it's all too easy to blame 'central government', a change in 'political direction' etc. when fundamentally the services being provided are poorly managed and ineffectively use the available [limited] resource - I can provide evidence of such, if required. Creating a single, large entity, dilutes this accountability even further; together with the inevitable reduction in local representation - the needs of a rural community are somewhat different from those of a major urban centre, such as Bury St.Edmunds and these require appropriate representation. If immediate cost savings need to be</p>	<p>service delivery</p> <p>Democratic representation</p>	<p>governance arrangement, therefore a reduction in the costs of supporting two sets of committees. We will continue to look at the ways that we can use technology to achieve further efficiencies.</p> <p>The only external consultancy commissioned in relation to the single council engagement was the opinion polling. ComRes, a specialist polling company. It was commissioned to carry out a survey of 1000 residents across the districts to ensure that we gained truly representative and independent feedback. All of the costs relating to the process of developing the proposals for a single council have been included in the analysis of costs and savings in the business case. The business case says payback of transitional costs is expected well within one year (assuming a 2019 implementation).</p> <p>Please see the answer to question 9 about the impact of remaining two separate councils.</p>



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	<p>made, take a long hard look at the 'costs' associated with the endless 'meetings' held in the name of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees, Reviews etc., - room hire, attendance expenses, catering etc. all expenses that could be negated by using available technology The Council, as always, seems to lack basic operational management skills and the ability to look at what will make an immediate impact in delivery of it's services - too much time is spent speculating and formulating proposals for a future which will undoubtedly meet with opposition as the political landscape changes every 4-5 years - if the Council was run as a business, in it's current form, it would go under in it's first year ! The primary responsibility of the Council, in my view, is to delivery services on behalf of the local communities it serves - focus on delivering such and using available resources to best effect and you might actually achieve something positive</p>		

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	...be interesting to learn how much this 'consultancy' exercise and associated self-promotion is costing the local tax-payers ?		
66	Its hard to be positive if you are a Haverhill citizen when you analyse this proposal - I know there are facts and figures that would back up the St Eds B.C. rhetoric that it treats Haverhill fairly but whenever I travel to the Sudburys - Safron Waldens - Thetfords - Elys and the like i find well thought out and appealing town centres with bustling life within them, by watering down our representation this can only make our plight worse!	Concerns that future arrangements should take full account of the needs of all towns and villages	See answer to question 8 and 11.
67	The proposals should be discussed with our local counsellors & those who voted for them. Many are probably not even aware of them. Being represented by a combined council with no idea of local issues & the impact of what their sections will mean is just not right in a democratic society.	Democratic representation  Future arrangements to be locally sensitive	The single council proposals have been shared and discussed with all our councillors and parish as well as town councils. In addition a Future Governance Steering Group of councillors is playing a vital role in informing and shaping the developing proposals. The issue has been debated by meetings of both full councils, with full public access.
68	With Haverhill being the second largest	Disagree with	The forthcoming review by the LGBCE will look in

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	<p>Town and expanding to to the size of Bury St Edmunds the boundary review must take this into account when it reviews the number of Councillors. With 71 Councillors West Suffolk will be too large. The amount of Councillors should be cut to 50. Savings means less staff, less staffing leads to longer waiting times and more mistakes. This new West Suffolk Council is not going to save money as mistakes and deficiencies will be a disaster in the long term for democracy, as larger councils spread over a large area never works in the long term.</p>	<p>current boundary divisions</p> <p>Future arrangements to be locally sensitive</p> <p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p> <p>Redundancies</p> <p>Impact on service delivery</p>	<p>detail at the number of councillors required to serve a growing area.</p>
69	<p>In some ways I may be for the shrinking of the number of chiefs in favour of saving public money, though I'd expect that (as seems to be fairly standard at district and County level) the first points raised would be wages. What I am against though is the</p>	<p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p>	<p>As we already have shared service delivery and a single Chief Executive we do not anticipate staff changes directly related to the single council proposal.</p> <p>New single democratic arrangements would be developed and we would be keen to ensure that</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	diluting of local knowledge and representation. The public vote for local people to represent them at a local level. The wants and needs of a town like Bury or newmarket may be totally different to the likes of Haverhill or Mildenhall. I think overall I am disheartened by the proposal and would like to be able to vote against it given the chance.		they enable the council to be both strategic <i>and</i> sensitive and responsive to the needs of its towns and villages.
70	Its a no brainer isn't it. Lets get on and do it!		No response required
71	I support the creation of a new single council for West Suffolk. The existing councils each already cover a diverse range of communities, and there should be no problem in a single council covering the combined area. As a resident of Haverhill, I have no qualms about being in the same council as, for example, Mildenhall, Brandon and Newmarket, especially as we already receive services from the same county council. Consultations like this often	Opportunities	We agree that the factors that result in people feeling remote from or not engaged in democracy are complex and do not necessarily relate directly to the actual arrangements that are in place. The development of a single council would however give us the opportunity to look again at ways of working and roles, including those of ward members.

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	<p>bring out concerns about the "remoteness" of a suggested new council. However, St Edmundsbury BC already covers a large area, and I suspect this feeling of remoteness would be found across the existing borough. "Remoteness" usually stems from a lack of engagement by both the citizen and their representatives, rather than the size of the council in question. Recent events have shown us that citizens close to the centre of political power in the UK (i.e. central London) still feel as distant from their elected representatives as those much further away. I would suggest that concerns about a new West Suffolk DC have far more complex roots, and these concerns should not stand in the way of change. A larger council, with presumably a larger number of electors per councillor could well improve the level of engagement by ensuring that the better qualified candidates for elected office are selected by political</p>		

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	<p>parties (the problems in Anglesey a few years ago were caused, according to reports at the time, at least in part by having too many councillors). It is notable that the county councillors, who represent far more voters, tend to be more visible in the wider community. Given the level of co-operation that exists between SEBC and FHDC, I believe the time is right to "bite the bullet" and proceed with the complete merger.</p>		
72	<p>It makes perfect sense to have one Council. The size of the combined joint Council is manageable and the current and potential costs savings persuasive. I particularly like the concept of a stronger West Suffolk grouping. Cambridge is only 30 minutes away from Haverhill, but we don't necessarily have shared interests in everything with Cambridge. Ipswich is 1.25 hours from Haverhill, and once again, the shared interests are absolute. So West Suffolk</p>	Opportunities	No response required

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	has to be strong enough to ensure that it is not left off any important Agenda's. A single Council will give West Suffolk a single voice.		
73	I personally don't have a beef about the two Councils merging into one leaner fitter Council. However, I've seen these mergers before. After the event they make grim reading. Where redundancy packages are in the offing, they're grabbed by managers at all levels, who 6 weeks after the event are rehired as Self Employed Consultants at double the wage. What assurances will the new Super Council give the person on the street that this won't be happening?	Redundancies	The councils already have shared services and a single staff team and we do not anticipate any redundancies arising from the establishment of a single council.
74	Most of the savings of a joint council have already been made through joint working. This is a direct attack on local democracy Haverhill already has a democratic deficit at district council level, the proposed larger council will make this much worse in part due to the councillors that make decisions coming from a much larger	Democratic representation and the number of councillors	We are keen to ensure that the voices of Haverhill residents continue to be heard. See answers to questions 8 and 11.

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	<p>geographical area and having little or no local knowledge Why was not such a fundamental change to local democracy not on the Conservative administrations manifesto in 2015, there is no mandate for such a huge erosion of Haverhill's say in its future The consultation on this proposal is shameful, just the bare minimum as compared to the consultation for the Bury town centre master plan There is a feeling in the community that this proposal is a done deal and is just waiting to be rubber stamped.</p>		
75	<p>Over the last few years BSE has evolved from a slightly shabby market town into high profile tourist area, with prestigious shopping, the Apex, and a booming Christmas market. On the other hand, Haverhill, despite its rapidly expanding population, pales in comparison. We received a Cineworld and a few fast food restaurants and a few not very prestigious shops. There are no evening buses to and from BSE</p>	<p>Future arrangements to be locally sensitive</p>	<p>The creation of a single council is designed to bring benefits to the whole of West Suffolk. See answers to question 8 and 11 for further details about how it would help benefit Haverhill.</p>



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	<p>allowing us to sample a night out in BSE, and no buses at all to West Suffolk Hospital. We have an enterprise zone, although not a lot of interest taken to date. So how can you expect us to believe that this new council would be Haverhill's interests. We will simply become an even smaller cog in a bigger more faceless machine. Your business plan discusses 'democratic accountability', and yet the council leaders have not visited us to consult on this highly important merger, you even assume the questions we would ask! I would suggest that your 'democratically sound model' has fallen at the first hurdle. Why hasn't there been open and fair discussion? What are you scared of? You hide behind closed doors and webpages, and expect us to believe that you have Haverhill's interests at heart. I am far from convinced, and reject your business plan for a West Suffolk Council. Local councils are the way forward with</p>	<p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p>	<p>The forthcoming review by the LGBCE will ensure that Haverhill electors are fairly and equally represented on any new council, in line with the size of the population.</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	councillors who live in the area, know their constituents and are accountable.		
76	<p>One of the issues with local government in recent years has been the relentless pursuit of financial economies without concern for the wider aspects of Civic life and the heritage which our forefathers have passed onto us. There now seems little value apportioned to Public Service or to the nature and inheritance represented by our civic leaders. As someone who has worked in both the Private and Public sectors this is profoundly disappointing to me. The continued erosion of status has demeaned the public service and left many viewing it as dispensable. This means that when questions are raised as to the future of public bodies rational analysis of why local government has evolved the way it has is largely ignored in the pursuit of short term financial advantages. This exercise seems to bear all the hallmarks of such a blind short term approach. There are those</p>	<p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p>	<p>No decisions have been made about a mayor or borough status. Councillors will discuss the options going forward and this will form part of the work of the cross member group.</p> <p>The designation of borough status is however not made by the Council, itself but by royal charter, but the new Council will be able to apply for borough status if it wishes to do so.</p> <p>See answer to question 9 about the possible negative consequences of remaining as separate councils and the greater benefits which include investing in supporting our communities rather than pure financial savings.</p>

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	<p>who might argue that having the two authorities as a single one would restore some of the regretted loss of the former West Suffolk local government authority lost in the earlier 20th C when Ipswich was adopted as the county town for a single authority of Suffolk. But of course this is not in question. The intention would not result in such a Unitary authority but only the loss of the Borough status of St Edmundsbury. This loss would be the sacrifice of a hard won historic status bequeathed to us by the forefathers (and mothers) of Bury St Edmunds. In addition the proposed merger would be a marriage of an unsuited couple. St Edmundsbury has little in common with Forest Heath and vice versa, and while as a pair living together to share costs this might have advantages the watering down of the democratic process and representation would be keenly felt. I oppose this proposal both in principle and for practical reasons.</p>		

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77	The proposed merger is a forward looking proposal and I very much agree it would be a big saving for the tax payer. THERE IS REALLY NO NEED FOR ALL THE DUPLICATION.	Opportunities	No response required
78	As stated, St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath councils currently share various services. While I understand why this has been done I am concerned at the number of posts that have been lost in an area where jobs are scarce, and just appears to be another example of the current administration's dogma of reducing the tax burden on those who are the most fortunate, and can most able to bear a heavier load. The proposed saving of £800,000 is, quite frankly, chicken feed and a small price to pay for democracy at a local level. In St Edmundsbury there are 43 borough councillors, of which 10 "represent" the residents of Haverhill. I use that term loosely, as the majority are members of the Party that run the council, and rarely, if ever, vote against the party	Democratic representation and the number of councillors  Future arrangements to be locally sensitive	As we already have shared service delivery and a single Chief Executive we do not anticipate staff changers directly related to the single council proposal.  New single democratic arrangements would be developed and we would be keen to ensure that they enable the council to be both strategic <i>and</i> sensitive and responsive to the needs of its towns and villages.  Please see answers to questions 8 and 11 about how a single council would benefit the whole of West Suffolk, including Haverhill.

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	<p>whip. Haverhill will never get a fair share of the funding all the time this situation remains, and we are fed up with being robbed off with second best and Jury's hand-me-downs. Mr Griffiths recent letter in the local press was an insult to the intelligence of the residents of Haverhill, and just contained a list of items in the town which had little to do with things provided specifically for the town, and were mainly services that were available to the whole of the county/borough. Adding the councillors for Forest Heath brings the number of representatives up to 70. I do not see how maintaining that number would bring about the desired savings, and would inevitably result in a reduction in councillors and the increase in number of residents in each ward that followed. Haverhill residents already struggle to get their voices heard over that of Bury St Edmunds, and with fewer representatives to speak on their behalf in an expanded council that voice will</p>		

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	<p>be completely drowned out. What do the people of Brandon and Middlehall know or care about what goes on in Haverhill and Kedington. The horse racing community of Newmarket live in their own little cocoon, denying others in the town any hope of improving their lives if it affects their precious industry. I have friends and colleagues who live in that town who would welcome the merger as their own council is completely ineffective against such people, but that would be to miss the bigger picture. So, in conclusion, I cannot see how this move would benefit the localisation of services and representation, and is just another example of the empire building that the current administration at SEBC are so fond of doing, and I am against the proposal to merge the two authorities.</p>		
79	<p>Moreton Hall Residents Association can see the economic sense in the merger of St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council.</p>	<p>Democratic representation and the number of</p>	<p>See response to 35. As explained there is the opportunity to review governance arrangements to ensure they are sensitive to local needs, whilst enabling strong, empowered, efficient decision</p>

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	<p>However we feel that an enlarged organisation with as suggested fewer councillors will be less democratic with less accountability especially bearing in mind the proposed population increase for both Councils. There is the issue of the wide divergence in Council Tax between the two authorities to be addressed. The system of governance needs to very carefully considered. If the new council adopt the Cabinet System then there is even less democracy as power will be concentrated in the hands of a few members of one political party with councillors having no real input unlike where there is a Committee System of government that previously used to exist certainly in St Edmundsbury. Our other concern is how will development control and planning work bearing in mind the enlarged area and the possibilities of councillors making decision where they are not familiar with the locality. Is large necessarily</p>	<p>councillors</p> <p>Planning functions</p>	<p>making with a single council and reduce duplication. Regarding council tax harmonisation please see response to 5.</p>

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	better ? On balance we would prefer the status quo to be maintained on the grounds of local democracy.		
80	I feel this will have a negative impact on most towns and villages that will be within the new council area. Towns and villages already feel under-represented with local councilors currently having very little influence. Part politics makes it very easy for Councillors from other towns to join together to either stop or pass proposals even if they will have a negative effect, particularly notable when it comes to planning applications. We often see planning applications come up that towns don't want to be passed, despite local Councillors campaigning and voting against them they got passed anyway by people not living in the area. This will only get worse with a larger council. With more towns coming together to create a single council there will be more Councillors, making it increasingly difficult for each town to feel	Democratic representation and the number of councillors  Planning functions	Please see response to 2- ensuring local representation is an important consideration in our proposals as to how a new council would operate.  As we already have shared service delivery and a single Chief Executive we do not anticipate staff changes directly related to the single council proposal.



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	<p>represented, and important decisions will increasingly come down to party politics and not the local impact. Maybe more powers could be passed on to Parish councils to stop this from happening. The idea of sharing services is a good one, as long as it doesn't become top heavy with managers. Will some of the saving come from job losses? If so will some of these be managerial positions?</p>	<p>Redundancies</p>	
81	<p>I am concerned that there would be a reduction in councillors. We would be relying on our representatives more not less if this proposal goes ahead. I wonder why we are joining with Forrest Heath when we seem to have more in common with Cambridgeshire? We are a wealthier council than Forrest Heath. Would this mean St Edmundsbury would be propping up Forrest Heath? Who gets to say where our money is spent? Will there be more affordable/council houses and better bus services in the St Edmundsbury</p>	<p>Democratic representation and the number of councillors</p> <p>Future arrangements to be locally sensitive</p>	<p>See question 2 regarding the number of councillors.</p> <p>Shared services and a single staff team are already in place across St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath, the creation of a single council is therefore a sensible progression. There are however many common interests with Cambridgeshire, which a stronger voice for west Suffolk could help to progress. Through the engagement process Cambridgeshire authorities have also expressed an interest to work more closely with the new single council.</p>

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	area if this goes ahead? Is there a plan to do more for the homeless and to keep their facilities open in both areas?		
82	While the people in charge in Bury might do a good job for Bury. Haverhill and it's leaders are continually over ruled by these same people , dispute the Bury leaders not living in Haverhill they belive they know what is best for Haverhill , consistently changing decisions made by people in Haverhill which invariably benefits Bury in the long run for this and other reasons I object	Future arrangements to be locally sensitive	The forthcoming review by the LGBCE will ensure that Haverhill electors are fairly and equally represented on any new council, in line with the size of the population. Please see answers to questions 8 and 11 about how a single council would benefit the whole of West Suffolk, including Haverhill.
83	Please can you get on with it. I was disgusted to see residents in Haverhill encouraged to have their say but given negative things by certain people to put. It seems there are some in the town looking after themselves rather than what is best for us all. I have seen too many people injured on the A1307 or held up on that road. A new, larger council, may have a better chance of getting improvements done so the town	Opportunities	No response required

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	<p>can benefit and businesses grow here. I fully support a single council if it preserves services. I think having ideas from other councillors are a good idea. I have heard comments like it's Bury taking over but actually with people from Forest Heath it's even more of a check on that. I can only see this as a good thing.</p>		
84	<p>This seems to be a good idea and I support it if it means government won't impact the area as much. I live in Haverhill and are as close to Newmarket as we are to some parts of St Edmundsbury so probably have more in common. I would be concerned if this hit services but you say it shouldn't.</p>	<p>Opportunities  The impact on service delivery</p>	<p>No response required</p>
85	<p>St Edmundsbury will lose its unique identity, borough status, mayor etc. It doesn't deliver much more savings. Pointless empire building from councillors. It will water down democracy and see less attention given to towns like Haverhill. There is more to</p>	<p>Future arrangements to be locally sensitive  Democratic</p>	<p>No decisions have been made about a mayor or borough status. Councillors will discuss the options going forward and this will form part of the work of the cross member group.  Whilst savings are an important consideration, a single council would also bring real and lasting</p>

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	representative democracy than economies of scale. The public are tired of countless attempts at reorganisation, just get on with the job and stop wasting money feeding your egos.	representation and the number of councillors	<p>benefits to all residents and businesses in the area, as detailed in our business case. A copy of this can be found at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a></p> <p>We are keen to ensure that the voices of Haverhill residents continue to be heard. See answers to questions 8 and 11.</p>
86	Needs guarantees that services will be increased if the named 'savings' are met instead of 'streamlining' services and making staff redundant to save actual money. Additional information on what things are to be guaranteed if these savings are made, what infrastructure/new services or collaborative ventures would happen if £4 million+ is available. People in Forest Heath might like to by how much their council tax will be going up by as a result of the single council as they are on lower rates than St Edmundsbury and they have to be brought into line. That could be a massive difference for no percieveable benefits.	Redundancies	<p>There will be no redundancies as a result of single council plans as we already have shared services and a single staff team. The £4m savings already achieved now form part of our budget and are supporting ongoing service delivery.</p> <p>See question 5 regarding council tax.</p>

<b>ID No</b>	<b>Response from participant</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Response from West Suffolk</b>
87	<p>I fully support the proposals to create a new single district-level council for West Suffolk in order to continue to drive forward changes already started, thus bringing closer together the work of StEdsBC and FHBC. The results of sharing services since 2011 are a useful guide to what has been achieved and my belief is more efficiency and savings can be driven by the move. The business case informs the base of this decision and doing nothing and staying as we are is not an option I favour. Arguably, in a dynamic area such as we are in St Eds and to the East of Cambridge, it is important we look to improve resilience to future changes and new challenges we will meet such as localism and devolution, changes in funding, technological changes etc. There is also the chance to shape the places we live in a constructive way. The release of capacity, currently absorbed by two councils must be optimised so areas that are in need of</p>	Opportunities	No response required

ID No	Response from participant	Themes	Response from West Suffolk
	greater delivery, can be supported, in order to make us self-sufficient whilst ensuring democratic accountability. Ultimately, it is the pragmatic, next step approach.		
88	Given the changes which have already taken place in terms of service delivery, provision of a single West Suffolk authority would appear to be the next logical step, avoiding duplication in administration of the two separate authorities. As a St Edmundsbury resident, my only slight concern is fear of the unhealthy influence of the horse racing industry in Newmarket which has stifled growth in the whole of Forest Heath due to its own internal bickering. I would not wish to see this adversely affect the economy of West Suffolk as a whole. Although not within the remit of this stage of the process, I would like to see Borough status sought for the new authority.	Opportunities	As you indicate it would be possible for borough status to be sought for a new single council area.

**Comments received by email:**

<p>Please note my comments regarding the potential merger of Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.</p> <p>I am against the merger as I feel it will not be of benefit to residents of Forest Heath. I don't see why we need to pay more Council tax to "catch up with St Edmundsbury" I don't feel we will have local issues prioritised as the council will be too big! I don't feel there will be a good democratic balance and expect our priorities in Forest Heath will be low on the new authorities agenda!</p> <p>I don't expect an improvement in services! Cheers n fact I predict a reduction in FHDC! If big is better why stop at merging the two councils why not bring on board Mid Suffolk and Babergh? In fact why not pass all responsibility to SCC? What ever happened to Localism??</p>	<p>Other options</p> <p>Council Tax</p>	<p>The business case looks at the options of not progressing a single council. It shows that there would be negative effects if the councils were to remain the same or further split. See also answers to question 9. For further information on council tax harmonisation, see question 5. The role of councillors in representing residents over a larger area is dealt with in question 14.</p>
<p>I would welcome the creation of a new single council for west Suffolk and believe it to be long overdue.</p>		<p>No response required</p>

I am strongly in favour of the formal creation of West Suffolk comprising the District Councils of St. Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. The working arrangements between these existing councils have proved very successful with significant savings to the tax payer and the delivery of cost effective and efficient services. It is great pity that the other parishes outwith the boundaries of the two district councils cannot and formally part of the old West Suffolk County Council cannot be combined with the new Council area. The new arrangements will enable a strengthened council to develop a future economy based on the opportunities in Cambridgeshire.

The proposal has my full support.

No response required



**APPENDIX F – Equalities Impact Assessment – screening assessment**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
Q1) Name of the strategy, policy, programme or project being assessed.	Proposal for the creation of a single council at district level for the area currently covered by Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)
Q2) In no more than five lines and using Plain English, summarise the purpose of the policy or proposal, and its desired outcomes.	A business case from the Leaders of FHDC and SEBC to test the proposal of a new, single council at district level for West Suffolk from September 2019. The business case tests whether this proposal is the best possible way to for the councils to continue to support residents, business and communities in the future.
Q3) Who should benefit from the proposal and in what way?	<p>The following groups are likely to benefit from the creation of a single council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all residents living in the two districts (including all electors)</li> <li>• all staff employed by the two existing councils</li> <li>• all staff employed by organisations commissioned to carry out services/functions on their behalf by one (or more) of the two councils.</li> <li>• all Councillors in the two districts (27 – Forest Heath and 45 – St Edmundsbury)</li> <li>• partner organisations working with FHDC and SEBC (e.g. parish councils, VCSE organisations, community groups)</li> <li>• businesses operating in the two districts</li> <li>• businesses contracting with the councils</li> </ul>
Q4) Is there any evidence or reason to believe that in relation to this proposal,	The demographic characteristics of residents of West Suffolk are broadly similar to those of the population of England, as follows:

<p>there may be a difference in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels of participation</li> <li>Uptake by different groups</li> <li>Needs or experiences of different groups</li> <li>Priorities</li> <li>Other areas?</li> </ul>	<b>Protected characteristic</b>	<b>West Suffolk (%)</b>		<b>England and Wales* (%)</b>	
	Age	<b>Under 18</b> 20.9%	<b>Aged 65+</b> 20.1%	<b>Under 18</b> 21.3%	<b>Aged 65+</b> 17.9%
	Disability (those living with a long-term illness or disability)	15.9%		17.9%	
	Gender reassignment	Data not available		Prevalence estimates 0.1% to 0.6% of all adults.	
	Marriage and civil partnership	Married: 51% Civil partnership: 0%		Married: 46.6% Civil partnership: 0.2%	
	Pregnancy and maternity	Data not available		Data not available	
	Race	<b>White:</b> 94.6% <b>Mixed/multiple ethnic group:</b> 2% <b>Asian/Asian British:</b> 1.8% <b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British:</b> 1.1% <b>Other ethnic group:</b> 0.5%		<b>White:</b> 86.0% <b>Mixed/multiple ethnic group:</b> 2.2% <b>Asian/Asian British:</b> 7.5% <b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British:</b> 3.3% <b>Other ethnic group:</b> 1.0%	
	Religion or belief	Has a religion: 64.5% No religion: 28.1%		Has a religion: 67.7% No religion: 25.1%	
	Sex	<b>Males</b> 50.2%	<b>Females</b> 49.8%	<b>Males</b> 49.2%	<b>Females</b> 50.8%

	Sexual orientation	Data not available for West Suffolk.	ONS 2015 data – 1.7% of UK population identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)
<p>*local government is devolved to England, but data are mostly available for England and Wales.</p> <p>We would therefore not expect the proposal to impact differently on any particular group when compared to the population of England as a whole. One exception to this is that a large number of residents of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury are members or dependents of the US Armed Forces, based at RAF Lakenheath or Mildenhall. The proposals will have less impact on these people as they do not vote in local elections or pay council tax, but they do benefit from the services provided by the councils.</p>			
<p>Q5) Using the evidence listed above, fill in the table below to highlight the groups you think this policy or proposal has the potential to impact upon:</p> <p>(i) Is there any potential for negative impact? Yes or No</p> <p>(ii) Are there opportunities for positive impact or to</p>	<p>i) No negative impacts have so far been identified. This will be reviewed following a period of public consultation and engagement. The proposals will not directly affect service delivery, or customer access.</p> <p>ii) A small beneficial impact on all groups is anticipated. Becoming a single council is estimated to generate a further £0.5 million of annual cashable savings, on top of the annual shared services savings of £4 million.</p> <p>Becoming a single council would also release some capacity as a result of a more simple and effective way of working, allowing the councils to focus on the delivery of key projects and invest in communities. There is also potential for all residents to benefit from a renewed democratic relationship with a new body, complementing the opportunity of forging new relationships with communities.</p>		

promote  
equality of  
opportunity?

A single West Suffolk council with a larger population, local economy and GVA would bring the councils from being 86<sup>th</sup> and 189<sup>th</sup> largest district/borough councils in England (out of 202) to one of the top 10 largest district/borough council when combined. Having a larger council will mean having a bigger voice within the sector and with central Government.

The creation of a new single council would also help develop new ways of working that the councils have been moving towards in recent years. This includes an emphasis on prevention, not crisis interventions, thus benefitting everyone who uses the councils' services, particularly the most vulnerable in society.

As part of the single council programme of engagement specialist polling organisation ComRes were commissioned to carry out telephone interviews (between 30 June and 24 July 2017) with adults aged 18+ living in West Suffolk. All respondents were eligible to vote in Council elections in either Forest Heath District Council or St Edmundsbury Borough Council areas. ComRes set quotas by Council area and surveyed 400 adults in Forest Heath and 600 in St Edmundsbury, ensuring that samples were balanced in terms of age, gender, ward, socio-economic grade and ethnicity. This gave a 95% confidence level and margin of error of plus or minus 3.09%.

The telephone poll included a question about the impact of the single council proposal on particular demographic groups. The groups cited were young people including children and teenagers, disabled people, retired people/pensioners, people on low incomes, those living in rural areas and people from minority religions or ethnic groups. In response to this

	<p>question local adults are more likely to say the impact would be positive rather than negative upon each group. In addition, at least a third say that the impact of the proposal will make no difference to any of the demographic groups tested. These results suggest that the changes to the Council are generally seen to have a largely positive or neutral impact on these different demographic groups.</p> <p>A majority of residents say that the proposal will not have a negative impact on any of the groups tested (63% say none of the groups tested will be negatively impacted by the creation of a single District-level Council for West Suffolk). However, it should also be noted that just less than half say the same about the proposal having a positive impact (at least 45% say each of the groups tested will not be positively impacted by the creation of a single District-level Council for West Suffolk). The full breakdown of the results from this question are available in the summary of the results from the opinion polling at <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil">www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/singlecouncil</a></p>
<p>Q6) Considering your answers to questions 1-5, do you believe a Full Equality Impact Assessment is needed?</p>	<p>Not at this time as no negative impacts have been identified.</p>
<p>Q7) Considering our duty to proactively tackle disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity, list the actions required.</p>	<p>No actions required as no adverse impact identified.</p>

Impacts Table				
	Is there potential for negative impact? YES or NO	Are there opportunities for positive impact? YES or NO	If YES, please provide details of the impact below	
			Positive Impact	Negative Impact
<b>All groups or society generally</b>	NO	YES	The opportunities for positive impact are listed above.	
<b>Age</b> - Older or younger people	NO	YES		
<b>Disability</b> - People with a disability	NO	YES		
<b>Sex</b> - Women or men	NO	YES		
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b> - including expectant or new parents i.e. pregnancy and maternity	NO	YES		
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b> – including same sex couples	NO	YES		
<b>Race</b> - People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME)	NO	YES		
<b>Religion</b> - People with a religion or belief (or who	NO	YES		

choose not to have a religion or belief)				
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> - People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) or in a Civil Partnership	NO	YES		
<b>Gender Reassignment</b> - People who are transitioning from one gender to another	NO	YES		
<i>Families and those with parenting or caring responsibilities (The Families Test)</i>	NO	YES		
<i>Individuals on low income</i>	NO	YES		
<i>Those suffering rural isolation</i>	NO	YES		
<i>Those who do not have English as a first language</i>	NO	YES		