

# SURREY LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

*Please explain your answer, including any comments on whether this proposal suggests sensible economic areas (for example reflect economic geography/travel to work areas/functioning economies) for councils with an appropriate tax base that does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area, and a sensible geography that will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.*

Yes. The proposal recommends three new councils – East Surrey, North Surrey, and West Surrey – based on real economic areas and travel-to-work patterns. These areas reflect how people live, work, and access services and each has a strong and cohesive local economy and tax base.

This structure avoids splitting up communities or creating artificial boundaries, and it supports better planning for housing, transport, and jobs. It's a practical and well-evidenced approach that makes sense for Surrey.

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

*Please explain your answer, including any specific comments on the evidence and analysis to support the proposals.*

Yes. The three unitary council proposal clearly shows how three new councils in Surrey would deliver better services, stronger local leadership, and long-term financial sustainability. It is backed by strong evidence, a clear plan for managing change and public support.

This structure reflects real communities and is designed to meet the government's goals for simpler, more effective local government.

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

*Please explain your answer, including any specific comments on the efficiencies identified to help improve the councils' finances, how it will manage transition costs and any future service transformation opportunities identified.*

Yes. The proposed three unitary councils are large enough to deliver savings and resilience, while still reflecting real communities. Each has a strong economy and tax base, and the proposal shows how they will save over £60 million by year four.

The Government has said 500,000 is a guide, not a rule, and the slightly smaller size is justified in Surrey to ensure local identity and effective service delivery.

**4. The proposal covers an area in which there are councils in Best Value intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support. Do you agree the proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing?**

*Councils in Best Value intervention are Spelthorne Borough Council and Woking Borough Council.*

*The councils in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support is Woking Borough Council.*

*Please explain your answer, including any specific comments on the area-specific arrangements necessary to make new structures viable.*

Yes, the three unitary council proposal provides a credible and well-evidenced path to strengthening local government across Surrey, including for areas currently facing financial challenges. It acknowledges the scale of issues in Woking and Spelthorne and sets out a realistic plan for long-term sustainability, including the need for national support to address Woking's stranded debt.

This proposal includes detailed financial modelling, a phased transformation plan, and area-specific arrangements to ensure stability from day one. With the right support, it offers a strong foundation for more resilient, accountable, and financially sustainable local government.

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

*Please explain your answer, including any comments on the public service reform opportunities within the proposal, including social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and wider public services, including public safety.*

Yes, the three unitary council proposal prioritises high-quality, sustainable public services by replacing the current two-tier system with three unitary councils, enabling more joined-up, accessible, and efficient service delivery. It includes a phased approach to transformation, ensuring continuity in critical services like social care and SEND, while creating space for innovation and local tailoring.

This proposal also outlines plans for integrated neighbourhood teams, shared commissioning, and strong coordination with partners such as the NHS and emergency services. Overall, it offers a practical and well-evidenced route to more responsive services and a more resilient local government system for Surrey.

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

*Please explain your answer, including any comments on the local engagement activity undertaken on the proposal and how it is proposed that any local concerns will be addressed.*

Yes, the three unitary council proposal has been clearly shaped by local views and gives strong weight to local identity, culture, and history. It draws on engagement with over 3,000 residents, 63% of whom preferred a three-unitary model, and reflects priorities such as local decision-making and

understanding of community needs. The proposed councils align with Surrey's real economic and social geographies, helping preserve identity and improve service responsiveness.

The 3 council unitary proposal also addresses concerns about losing local connection by rejecting top-down models like area boards in favour of more participatory approaches.

## **7. Does the proposal support devolution arrangements?**

*Do you have any comments on the proposed devolution arrangements?*

Yes, this proposal strongly supports devolution by creating three new councils aligned with Surrey's distinct economic areas, laying the foundation for a Mayoral Strategic Authority covering the whole county. This structure enables a joined-up approach to planning, transport, skills, and infrastructure, with a clear timeline for implementation and elections by 2027.

The three unitary council proposal also avoids the fragmentation risks of a two-unitary model and ensures strong local leadership, strategic coordination, and the right conditions for long-term growth—meeting the government's criteria and making devolution work in practice.

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

*Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to community engagement?*

Yes, three unitary council proposal will enable stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment by creating three new councils that are rooted in recognisable parts of Surrey. It prioritises local decision-making, reflects strong public support for more responsive governance, and avoids top-down models that have failed elsewhere. Instead, it builds on existing local strengths and commits to inclusive approaches like participatory budgeting and co-designed services.

By aligning council boundaries with real communities and embedding engagement into service delivery, the proposal offers a practical and democratic model that puts residents at the heart of local government.