Executive Summary

Survey Profile

The survey achieved participation from 231 stakeholders representing diverse interests across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The response profile included substantial participation from 83 parish and town councils, 76 businesses across multiple sectors and sizes, voluntary and community organisations, public sector bodies, and individual responses from councillors.

Success of Unitary Councils

Stakeholders identify three fundamental requirements for successful unitary councils: **local councillors with genuine local knowledge**, **operational efficiencies in service delivery,** and **sound financial foundations**. These priorities reflect stakeholder emphasis on maintaining local connection while achieving the administrative simplification that reorganisation promises to deliver.

The primary opportunities for service improvement through unitary councils centre on cost savings, streamlined services, and enhanced coordination between previously separate functions. Stakeholders particularly value the potential for economies of scale in contract negotiation, reduced bureaucratic layers, and single points of contact that eliminate current confusion over service responsibilities across multiple tiers of local government.

However, stakeholders identify significant risks, with over a quarter expressing concern about loss of local voice and representation. Service continuity during transition, financial challenges from inherited debts, and managing competing demands across rural-urban divides emerged as additional major concerns requiring careful management during the reorganisation process.

Organisational Perspectives

Stakeholders demonstrate strong local community identification and express greater concern than the general public about some areas being overlooked in larger unitary structures. Despite this apprehension, they would overwhelmingly support reorganisation if it demonstrably improved service delivery, with support levels remarkably similar to public opinion on this conditional basis.

Trust levels among stakeholders mirror public sentiment, with under half agreeing that they trust local government decisions, indicating significant credibility challenges that reorganisation must address rather than exacerbate. Stakeholders show slightly more confidence than residents that local government decisions reflect community

values, though this remains a minority position requiring attention in new governance arrangements.

The stakeholder community includes substantial numbers who rely on council services, creating direct interest in maintaining service quality and accessibility during and after reorganisation, reinforcing the importance of their engagement in transition planning and implementation processes.

Working Relationships and Governance

Stakeholders prioritise strengthened relationships with new unitary councils, with parish and town councils particularly seeking enhanced roles in local place-shaping and community voice functions. This reflects recognition that successful unitary authorities must maintain and strengthen rather than weaken local democratic engagement and community representation.

Key governance requests include meaningful consultation and engagement mechanisms, clear channels for parish and town council engagement with unitary authorities, robust scrutiny functions, and effective local committees with delegated powers.

Investment priorities focus on health services, transport infrastructure, and local economic development, indicating stakeholder recognition that successful reorganisation must deliver tangible improvements in big ticket items that directly affect community wellbeing and economic prosperity.

New Unitary Councils: What Matters Most

The ability to respond quickly to local needs emerges as the paramount stakeholder concern, aligning closely with public priorities and highlighting expectations that larger authorities should enhance rather than compromise responsiveness. This priority reflects current frustrations with bureaucratic delays and complex decision-making processes across multiple tiers.

Access to funding opportunities and councillors with genuine local area knowledge rank as additional critical factors, emphasising stakeholder expectations that reorganisation should improve both resource availability and local representation quality.

The emphasis on responsiveness suggests that stakeholders view bureaucratic efficiency as wanting without corresponding improvements in the speed and quality of local problem-solving, creating clear performance expectations for new unitary structures.

Future Focus

Stakeholder investment priorities centre on health services, transport infrastructure, and local economic development, reflecting recognition of fundamental service needs that affect quality of life and economic prosperity. These priorities indicate sophisticated understanding of the interconnections between different service areas and their collective impact on community wellbeing.

Business stakeholders specifically prioritise key infrastructure development—transport, connectivity, and digital services—alongside investment in high streets and town centres. They emphasise the importance of straightforward communication and transaction processes with local authorities.

These priorities suggest that stakeholders view reorganisation as an opportunity to address long-standing infrastructure deficits and economic development challenges, creating expectations for strategic investment and improved service coordination that delivers measurable business and community benefits.

New Unitary Size and Boundary Considerations

While a minority of stakeholders favour the Government's suggested 500,000 population size for unitary authorities, almost half prefer smaller authorities of 300,000-400,000 residents. This preference indicates stakeholder concerns about maintaining local connection and responsiveness in very large authorities.

Geographic coherence and existing community identities and connections emerge as the most crucial factors in determining unitary boundaries, prioritising natural community networks over administrative convenience or population targets.

The boundary preferences indicate stakeholder recognition that successful reorganisation requires respect for existing community connections and geographic logic rather than imposing artificial arrangements that cut across natural networks of local life and economic relationship.

Stakeholder Participation and Transition

Three-quarters of stakeholders express willingness to participate actively in shaping future council services, with contact details provided for ongoing engagement. This high participation rate indicates strong stakeholder investment in reorganisation outcomes and readiness to contribute expertise and local knowledge to transition planning.

The substantial stakeholder willingness to engage provides valuable opportunity for transition teams to access local expertise, identify potential problems, and build

support for reorganisation processes through collaborative approach to change management.

Communication with Stakeholders

Over ninety percent of stakeholders request ongoing communication about reorganisation progress, indicating high levels of interest and concern about transition processes and outcomes. This demand for information reflects stakeholder recognition that successful reorganisation requires sustained communication rather than periodic updates.

Preferred communication channels include direct email updates, consultation on specific service changes, and regular stakeholder meetings. The emphasis on specific service consultation indicates stakeholder expectation for meaningful involvement in detailed implementation decisions rather than general information provision.

Further Comments

Stakeholder feedback consistently returns to three core themes: boundary concerns, local representation preservation, and implementation planning. These recurring themes indicate the fundamental issues that reorganisation must address to maintain stakeholder confidence and support.

Boundary concerns emphasise the importance of respecting existing community connections and geographic logic, with particular opposition to arrangements that force together areas with limited natural connection. Local representation concerns reflect fear that larger authorities will become distant and unresponsive to community needs, requiring innovative approaches to maintaining democratic accountability at scale.

Implementation concerns focus on service continuity, financial planning, and change management, indicating stakeholder recognition that good intentions must be supported by competent execution to avoid service disruption and public confidence damage during transition periods.

Conclusion

This stakeholder research reveals an understanding of reorganisation complexities and clear expectations for improved service delivery, maintained local connection, and competent change management. The high levels of engagement willingness, combined with specific concerns about local representation and service continuity, provide clear guidance for reorganisation planning that respects stakeholder

priorities while delivering the efficiency and service improvements that justify structural change.

The convergence between stakeholder and public priorities on responsiveness, local knowledge, and service quality indicates broad consensus on reorganisation success criteria, providing a foundation for transition planning that maintains public and stakeholder confidence while achieving the strategic objectives that drive local government reform.

Introduction

The Government has mandated that all county and district councils in England will be abolished in April 2028 and replaced with unitary authorities. This directive affects Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, where the current two-tier system comprising Cambridgeshire County Council and six district and city councils will be restructured into one or more unitary authorities serving the area's 930,000 residents.

The Government has established six criteria that proposals for new unitary structures must address. These criteria require that proposals should achieve better outcomes and local service delivery for the whole area, ensure unitary local government is the right size to achieve efficiencies and improve capacity, prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services, demonstrate how councils have worked together to meet local needs informed by local views, support devolution arrangements, and enable stronger community engagement with genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment. Additionally, proposals must consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

The affected councils comprise Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, and Peterborough City Council. Peterborough City Council already operates as a unitary authority but will be included in the reorganisation process. The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority will remain unchanged. Town and parish councils are not currently required to change under the Government directive.

This reorganisation represents a fundamental shift in local governance arrangements that have served the area for decades. The current system provides different services through different tiers, with residents accessing county council services for education, social care, and highways, while district and city councils provide housing, planning, and environmental services. The proposed unitary structure will consolidate these functions under single authorities, potentially simplifying access to services while creating larger administrative units.

The Government has indicated that financial savings are expected through the process of reducing the number of councils, while also supporting improvements in service delivery through bringing services together. This creates a complex challenge of achieving efficiency gains while maintaining or improving service quality and democratic representation across diverse communities ranging from the urban centres of Cambridge and Peterborough to extensive rural areas.

The area's population is projected to grow to over one million residents within the next fifteen years, adding demographic pressure to the reorganisation challenge. The Government recommendation suggests unitary authorities should serve

populations of approximately 500,000, and smaller where appropriate, which would indicate the creation of at least two unitary authorities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, though the final structure remains to be determined through the business case development process.

Methodology

This research employed an online survey methodology to gather stakeholder perspectives on local government reorganisation across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The survey was designed as an engagement exercise rather than a formal consultation, with the purpose of providing qualitative and quantitative data to inform the development of business case proposals for submission to Government by November 2025.

Survey Design and Implementation

The survey instrument was developed collaboratively by the seven affected councils working with Archangel to ensure comprehensive coverage of the Government's six criteria for unitary authority proposals. The survey design prioritised brevity and accessibility, limiting the questionnaire to smaller number of core questions to maximise response rates while gathering essential data on stakeholder priorities and preferences.

While designed as an engagement exercise rather than formal consultation, the approach went above and beyond standard engagement requirements by voluntarily aligning with the Gunning principles for fair consultation. This demonstrated a commitment to best practice standards, ensuring that stakeholders were consulted at a time when proposals were still at a formative stage, sufficient information was provided to enable informed responses, adequate time was allowed for consideration and response, and feedback would be conscientiously considered in decision-making processes.

No maps or visual representations of potential boundary options were included in the survey design, in accordance with the engagement rather than consultation approach adopted for this research.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The online survey was supported by targeted communications to key stakeholder groups including businesses, parish and town councils, community organisations, and public sector partners. This multi-channel approach was designed to ensure comprehensive representation across the diverse communities and interests within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Stakeholder lists were developed by the heads of communications from the seven authorities to include representatives from all sectors and geographic areas, with particular attention to ensuring rural communities and smaller organisations had opportunities to participate alongside larger urban centres and major employers. The engagement strategy recognised the importance of reaching stakeholders who might not typically participate in local government consultations but whose perspectives are essential for understanding community needs and priorities.

Data Collection Period

The survey was conducted from 19th June 2025 to 20th July 2025, providing a concentrated four-week period for stakeholder participation while meeting the tight timescales required for business case development. A time extension was provided for paper responses to ensure accessibility for stakeholders who preferred paper survey participation methods. The timing was co-ordinated with broader communications and engagement activities around local government reorganisation to maximise awareness and participation.

Response Profile

The survey achieved participation from 231 stakeholders representing diverse interests across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The response profile included substantial participation from parish and town councils, businesses across multiple sectors and sizes, voluntary and community organisations, public sector bodies, and individual residents responding in various capacities.

Parish and town councils provided the largest single stakeholder group with 83 responses, representing 36% of total participation. This high level of parish council engagement reflects the extensive network of local councils across the area and their direct interest in reorganisation outcomes. Business participation was also substantial, with 76 responses representing 33% of total stakeholders, demonstrating significant engagement from the economic community. A fuller profile of the stakeholder survey is provided in the report.

Analytical Approach

The analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine stakeholder responses across the range of survey questions. Quantitative analysis focused on response distributions and patterns across different stakeholder groups, while qualitative analysis examined open-ended responses and comments to identify key themes and concerns.

With 232 stakeholder responses, the survey achieved a substantial sample size that provides statistically robust insights with a margin of error of ±6.4% at 95%

confidence level. This means that for any percentage reported in the findings, we can be 95% confident that the true value for the broader stakeholder population lies within 6.4 percentage points of the reported figure. For example, if 70% of respondents expressed a particular view, the true proportion among all stakeholders would lie between 63.6% and 76.4%. This enables reliable generalisation of findings to the broader stakeholder community in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough within established confidence intervals.

The sample demonstrated good representation across stakeholder types, with particularly strong participation from parish and town councils (83 responses, representing an estimated 40% or more of total parish councils in the area) and businesses (76 responses across diverse sectors and sizes). This coverage provides indicatively representative insights into wider stakeholder perspectives across the key groups engaged with local government.

However, several limitations were recognised. As a self-selecting sample, the survey may over-represent more engaged stakeholders who actively choose to participate in local government processes, potentially under-representing less engaged organisations.

The tight timescales for data collection, driven by Government requirements for business case submission, limited the opportunity for extensive iterative engagement that might have deepened understanding of stakeholder perspectives.

Despite these limitations, the sample size, systematic sampling approach, and good representation across stakeholder types provide confidence that the findings offer statistically valid and indicatively representative insights into stakeholder perspectives on local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The base for all the charts is 232 so all respondents except where they are given.

Survey Findings

Success of Unitary Councils

Stakeholders consider that fundamental to the success of the new unitary councils will be local councillors with local knowledge. They believe that for the unitary councils to be successful there will need to be efficiencies in the council services provided and that the unitary councils will need to be on sure financial footing. These views should also be seen in the context of using unitary councils to lever simplicity and reducing the complexity of current structures.
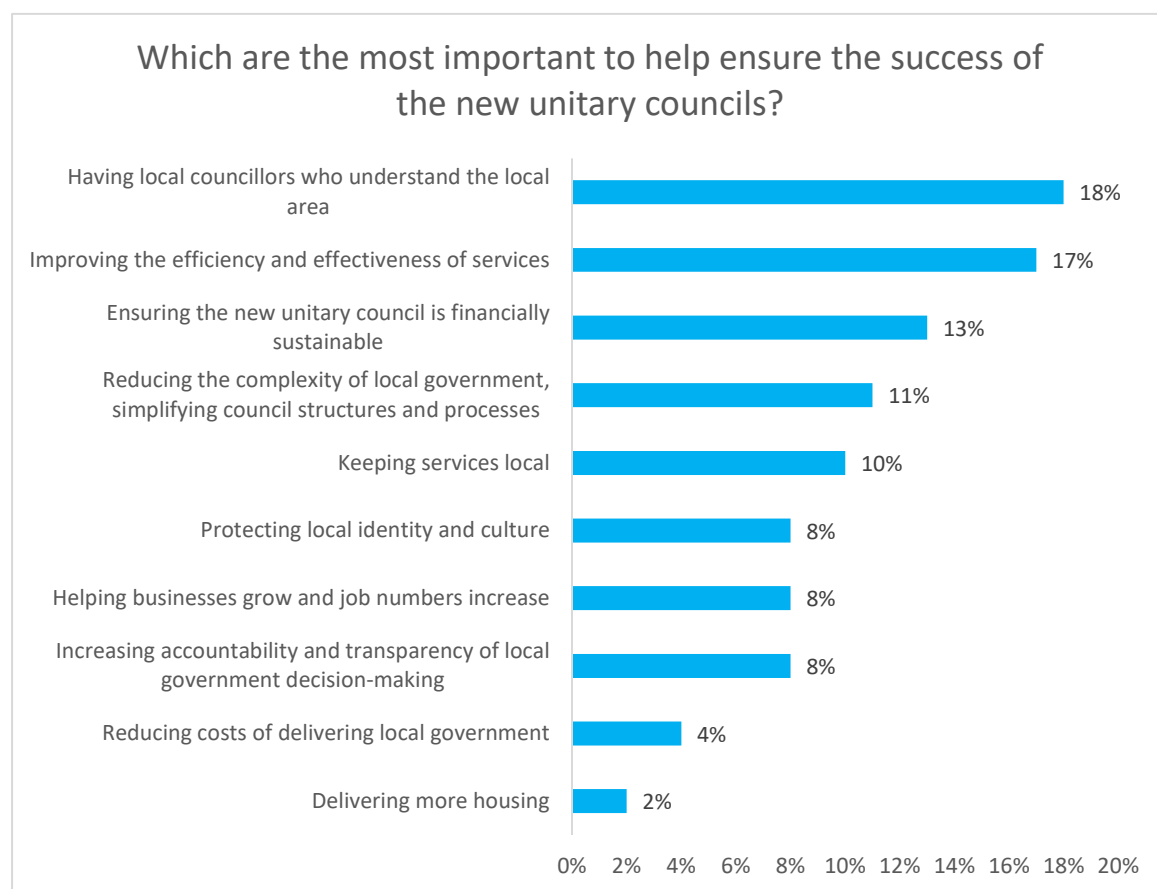
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'which are the most important to help ensure the success of the new unitary councils?'. The information shows:

- 18% selected 'having local councillors who understand the area'

- 17% selected 'improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services'

- 13% selected 'ensuring the new unitary council is financially sustainable'

- 11% selected 'reducing the complexity of local government, simplifying council structures and processes'

- 10% selected 'keeping services local'

- 8% selected 'protecting local identity and culture'

- 8% selected 'helping businesses grow and job numbers increase'

- 8% selected 'Increasing accountability and transparency of local government decision-making'

- 4% selected 'reducing costs of delivering local government'

- 2% selected 'delivering more housing'

From a stakeholder perspective, the main opportunities for improving services through new unitary councils are in terms of cost saving, streamlined services and better co-ordination of services.

What opportunities do you see for improving service delivery or local governance through this reorganisation?

Category	Percentage
Cost Savings/Economies of Scale	31%
Simplified/Streamlined Services	22%
Better Coordination/Joined-up Services	13%
None/No Benefits	12%
Improved Planning/Development	8%
Better Local Engagement/Democracy	6%
Other/Miscellaneous	4%
Reduced Bureaucracy/Red Tape	4%
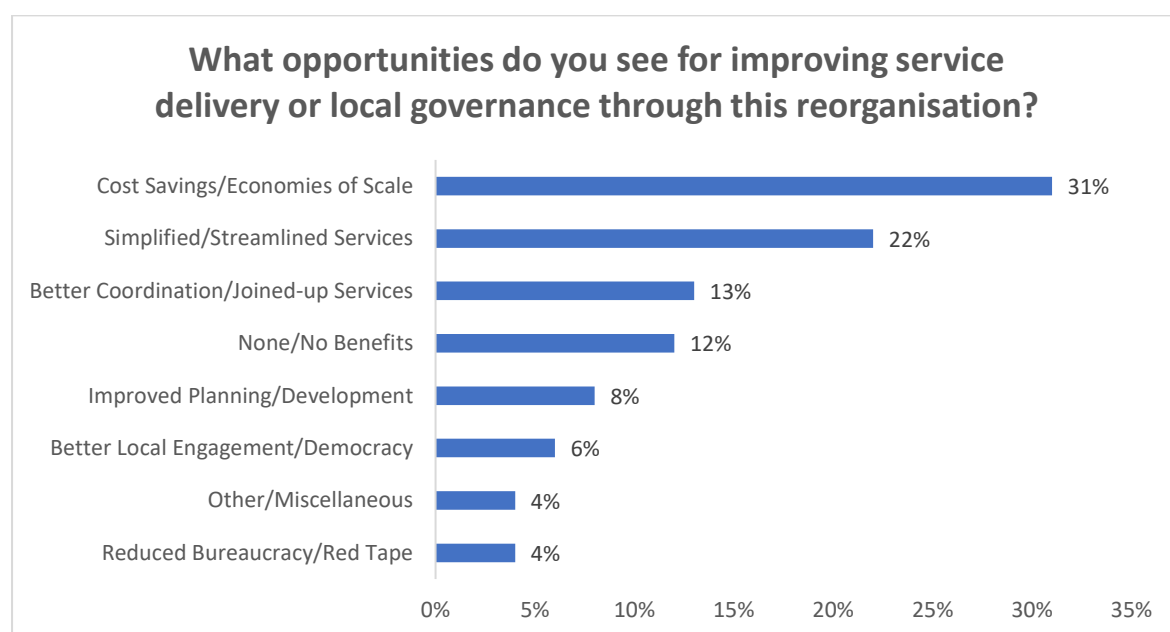
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'what opportunities do you see for improving service delivery or local governance through this reorganisation?'. The information shows:

- 31% selected 'cost savings/economies of scale'

- 22% selected 'simplified/streamlined services'

- 13% selected 'better coordination/joined-up services'

- 12% selected 'none/no benefits'

- 8% selected 'improved planning/development'
- 6% selected 'better local engagement/democracy'
- 4% selected 'other/miscellaneous'
- 4% selected 'reduced bureaucracy/red tape'

This was also a comment question so here is a sample of the feedback relating to the potential for cost saving. Noting that benefits are available if done correctly.

> "There are many opportunities. By working together services can be streamlined, costs reduced, contracts negotiated harder to bring down both internal and external costs. The opportunity exists to completely reorganise to maximise efficiency and minimise costs of services and their delivery overall if managed correctly."
>
> > Owner, Real estate and property

> "Bigger is normally better when negotiating contracts, with efficiency"
>
> > Director, Agriculture, Farm and Environment

> "Having a single unitary council to deliver all services gives scope for economies of scale (if executed carefully)."
>
> > District councillor

Other stakeholders emphasised streamlined services:

> "Stop the layers of bureaucracy and mean people know what services are operated by."
>
> > Director, Hospitality and Leisure

> "Unitary Council as a single point of contact would be beneficial due to the confusion over the current roles of County/District/Parish/CPCA and the GCP."
>
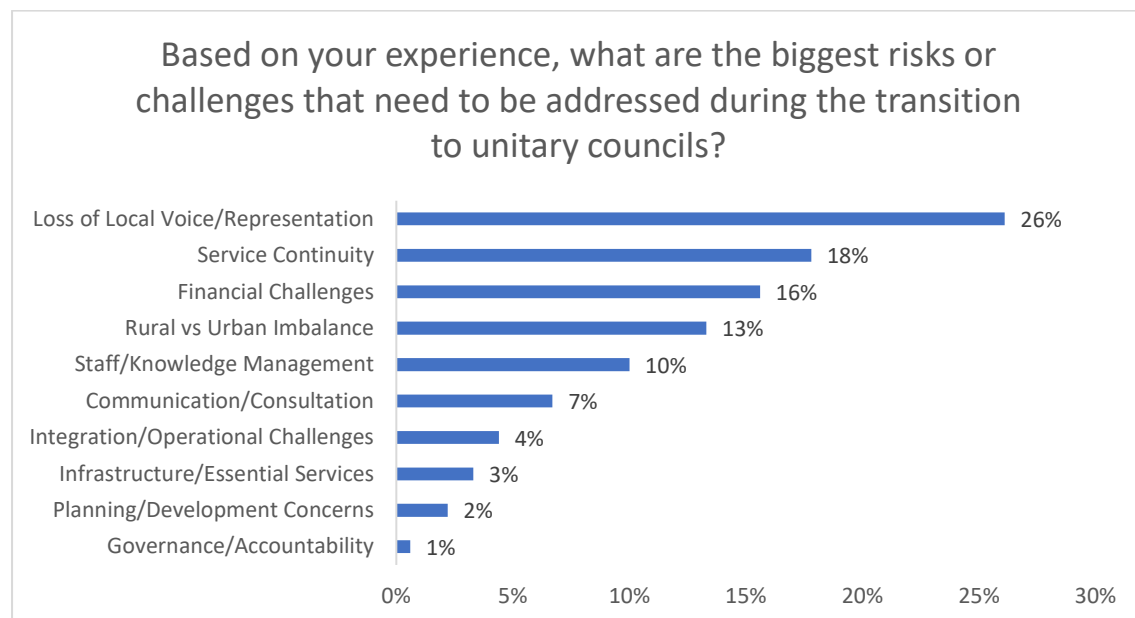> > Parish clerk

Better co-ordination is hoped for:

> "Improved strategic linkages between housing, homelessness provision and adult social care"
>
> > Chief Executive, Public Sector body

> "A joined-up approach where things happen - everything takes too long, discussions take years without any decisions being taken - we need to get on with things"
>
> > General Manager, Leisure and Hospitality

The biggest risk to the transition to unitary councils, mirroring the focus on local councillors with local knowledge, is if these factors are ignored - so a loss of local voice and representation are identified by over a quarter of stakeholders. Stakeholders also recognise issues of service continuity, financial challenges, and the competing demands with a rural/urban mix.

Based on your experience, what are the biggest risks or challenges that need to be addressed during the transition to unitary councils?

Category	Percentage
Loss of Local Voice/Representation	26%
Service Continuity	18%
Financial Challenges	16%
Rural vs Urban Imbalance	13%
Staff/Knowledge Management	10%
Communication/Consultation	7%
Integration/Operational Challenges	4%
Infrastructure/Essential Services	3%
Planning/Development Concerns	2%
Governance/Accountability	1%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'based on your experience, what are the biggest risks or challenges that need to be addressed during the transition to unitary councils?'. The information shows:

- 26% selected 'loss of local voice/representation'

- 18% selected 'services continuity'

- 16% selected 'financial challenges'

- 13% selected 'rural vs urban imbalance'

- 10% selected 'staff/knowledge management'

- 7% selected 'communication/consultation'

- 4% selected 'integration/operational challenges'

- 3% selected 'infrastructure/essential services'

- 2% selected 'planning/development concerns'

- 1% selected 'governance/accountability'

In terms of losing local voice, here are some quotes from the survey:

"Losing local and personal representation. Avoiding creating a faceless, anonymous council with no understanding of or empathy for local issues. Ensuring local communities have councillors who are known to them, who know them and who are accessible."

Parish Councillor

"The biggest risk is the loss of services to smaller parish councils. Parish councils generally are not able to take on more services, and there is a great risk they will struggle to be supported by the unitary authority. I have found county council much less supportive and responsive than the district council, and I have concerns that this will only get worse with a unitary council."

Chief Executive, Arts, Culture and Entertainment

"There is a general local consensus that a move to a unitary council will increase costs in travelling, slower response to urgent local problems, increase in delay making decisions due to more people having to be involved. Loss of local identity due to size of council and no local representation"

Chair, Voluntary Community Group

Concerns about service continuity are also expressed:

"One of the biggest risks during the transition to unitary councils is the potential disruption to service delivery—particularly in areas like planning, social care, and waste collection—if systems and responsibilities are not seamlessly integrated."

Director, Retail and E-commerce

"There is vast scope for chaos. A detailed, robust plan needs to be in place before the reorganisation goes ahead. The Government seems determined to rush through changes in an unrealistically short time."

Director, Health and social care

On financial challenges:

"Money. Without financial facts how can reasonable budgets be set and met. Additionally, closing offices and selling them is just a quick boost financially that will affect 1 year's accounts, this is not 'Sustainable' income."

Parish councillor

"The biggest risks are undoubtedly financial with some councils struggling, the new unitary area must not start its life with a debt burden inherited from its pre-cursors."

Company secretary, Hospitality and leisure

"Financial burden with debt being taken by its residents when joining an area that has a high borrowing and interest payments"

Director, Agriculture, Farming and Environment

Organisational perspectives

Stakeholders see themselves as being part of their local community and significantly express more concern than the public about 'some areas being overlooked'. This said, they would overwhelmingly support change if, conditionally, it improved services and on this their scores are remarkably similar to the public. Given the mix of stakeholders, there is still a majority that say they rely on council services.
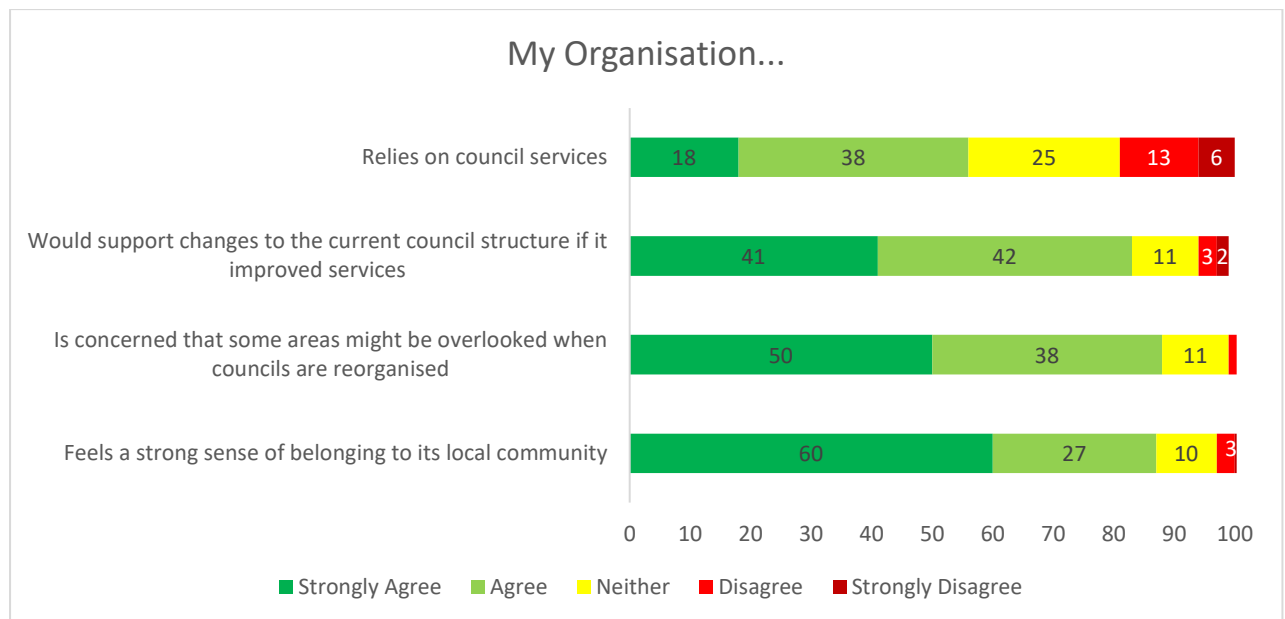
The chart above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'my organisation'. The information shows:

- For the statement 'relies on the council services' – 18% chose strongly agree, 38% chose agree, 25% chose neither, 13% chose disagree and 6% chose strongly disagree.

- For the statement 'would support changes to the current council structure if it improved services' – 41% chose strongly agree, 42% chose agree, 11% chose neither, 3% chose disagree and 2% chose strongly disagree.

- For the statement 'is concerned that some areas might be overlooked when councils are reorganised' – 50% chose strongly agree, 38% chose agree, 11% chose neither and an undefined amount chose disagree and strongly disagree.

- For the statement 'feels a strong sense of belonging to it's local community - 60% chose strongly agree, 27% chose agree, 10% chose neither, 3% chose disagree and an undefined amount chose strongly disagree.

Conversely, stakeholders tend to be more positive about local government decisions reflecting the values of the local community than residents, with just under half agreeing with this statement. On the core value of trust, the levels of agreement are almost exactly the same as the public with under half agreeing with this statement.

My Organisation...

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is satisfied with the quality of services provided by its local council(s)	6	29	30	27	7
Trusts its local council(s) to make decisions in the best interests of the community	10	30	26	26	8
Feels that local government decisions reflect the cultural values of the local community	18	29	36	13	4

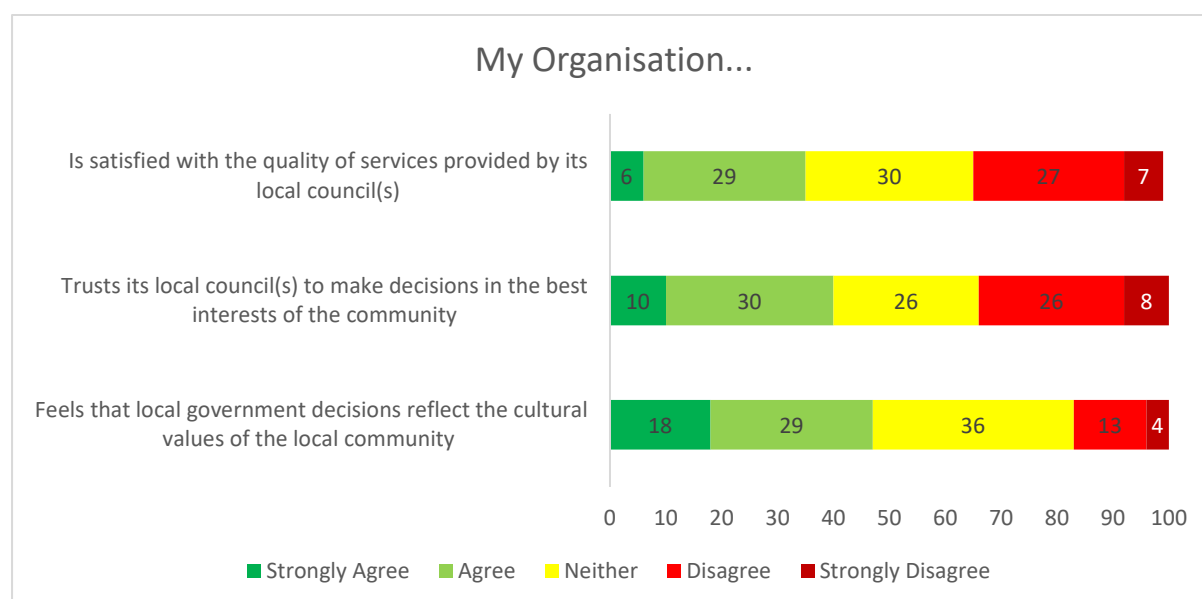The chart above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'my organisation'. The information shows:

- For the statement 'Is satisfied with the quality of services provided by its local council(s)' – 6% chose strongly agree, 29% chose agree, 30% chose neither, 27% chose disagree and 7% chose strongly disagree.

- For the statement 'trusts it's local council(s) to make decisions in the best interests of the community' – 10% chose strongly agree, 30% chose agree, 26% chose neither, 26% chose disagree and 8% chose strongly disagree.

- For the statement 'feels that local government decisions reflect the cultural values of the local community' – 18% chose strongly agree, 29% chose agree, 36% chose neither, 13% chose disagree and 4% chose strongly disagree.

Statistical analysis of survey responses from parish councils (n=83) and business representatives (n=77) reveals three significant differences in attitudes towards local government.

Trust represents the largest divide, with parish councils demonstrating substantially higher confidence in local councils to make decisions in the community's best interests (**75% positive responses vs 38% for businesses**). Service satisfaction shows a similarly pronounced gap, with parish councils expressing considerably

greater satisfaction with the quality of local council services (96% vs 82%). Parish councils also feel significantly more aligned with local government decisions, believing they better reflect community cultural values (93% vs 82%).

However, both groups demonstrate remarkable consensus on three key areas: **concerns about potential oversight during council reorganisation**, **levels of reliance on council services**, and **support for structural changes that would improve service delivery**. These findings suggest that whilst businesses harbour genuine scepticism towards local government effectiveness and representation, there exists substantial common ground for collaborative policy development.

The results indicate that addressing business concerns about trust and representation should be prioritised, whilst leveraging the shared appetite for improvement demonstrated by both constituencies.

Working relationship and governance

Core to the success of the new unitary councils will be the relationship with stakeholders. In response, the leading request from stakeholders is to give parish and town councils more of a role in local place-shaping and acting as a voice for the community followed by more investment in communities and more representation in terms of their own organization in terms of council decision-making.

Working relationship Base: 155

Category	Percentage
Giving more opportunities for parish and town councils to play a role in local place-shaping as a voice for the local community	19%
Increasing investment in communities	12%
Better representation of your organisation in council decision-making	11%
Joint working on local projects and initiatives	11%
Access to council officers	10%
Regular communication and engagement with your organisation with active listening to your feedback	10%
Improving opportunities to bid for funding	10%
Support for neighbourhood planning	6%
Opportunities for devolution of services or assets, with appropriate funding	4%
Easier access to councillors	3%
Opportunities for direct delivery of more council services by your organisation	2%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'working relationship base 155'. The information shows:

- 19% selected 'giving more opportunities for parish and town councils to play a role in local place-shaping as a voice for the local community'
- 12% selected 'increasing investment in communities'

- 11% selected 'better representation of your organisation in council decision making'
- 11% selected 'joint working on local projects and initiatives'
- 10% selected 'access to council officers'
- 10% selected 'regular communication and engagement with your organisation with active listening and feedback'
- 10% selected 'improving opportunities to bid for funding'
- 6% selected 'support for neighbourhood planning'
- 4% selected opportunities for devolution of services or assets with appropriate funding'
- 3% selected 'easier access to councillors'
- 2% selected opportunities for direct delivery of more council services by your organisation

Fitting with their attitudes towards trust, stakeholders are looking for meaningful consultation and engagement and have responded well to further requests for engagement which will be discussed later in the report. There is a desire for clear mechanisms for parish and town councils to engage with the unitary council, robust scrutiny functions and effective local committees with delegated powers.
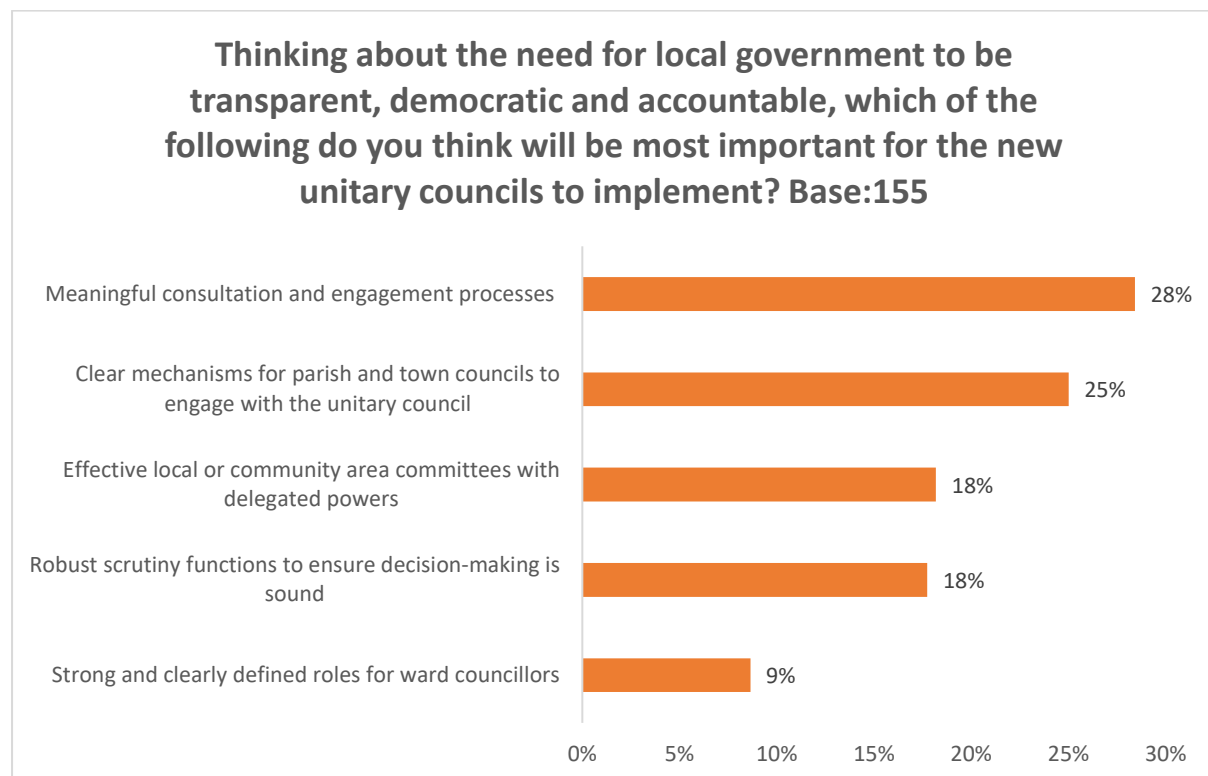
Thinking about the need for local government to be transparent, democratic and accountable, which of the following do you think will be most important for the new unitary councils to implement? Base:155

Meaningful consultation and engagement processes	28%
Clear mechanisms for parish and town councils to engage with the unitary council	25%
Effective local or community area committees with delegated powers	18%
Robust scrutiny functions to ensure decision-making is sound	18%
Strong and clearly defined roles for ward councillors	9%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'thinking about the need for local government to be transparent, democratic and accountable, which of the following do you think will be most important for the new unitary councils to implement? Base:155'. The information shows:

- 28% selected 'meaningful consultation and engagement processes'
- 25% selected 'clear mechanisms for parish and town councils to engage with unitary council'
- 18% selected 'effective local or community area committees with delegated powers'
- 18% selected 'robust scrutiny functions to ensure decision-making is sound'
- 9% selected 'strong and clearly defined roles for ward councillors'

New unitary councils: what matters most?

The 'ability to respond quickly' is what matters most to stakeholders. This is also a top priority for residents and a key perceived benefit of the new unitary councils. Stakeholders hope that this provides access to funding and councillors who know their organisation's local area. Local knowledge again being elevated here.

Thinking about the new unitary council, what matters most to your organisation?

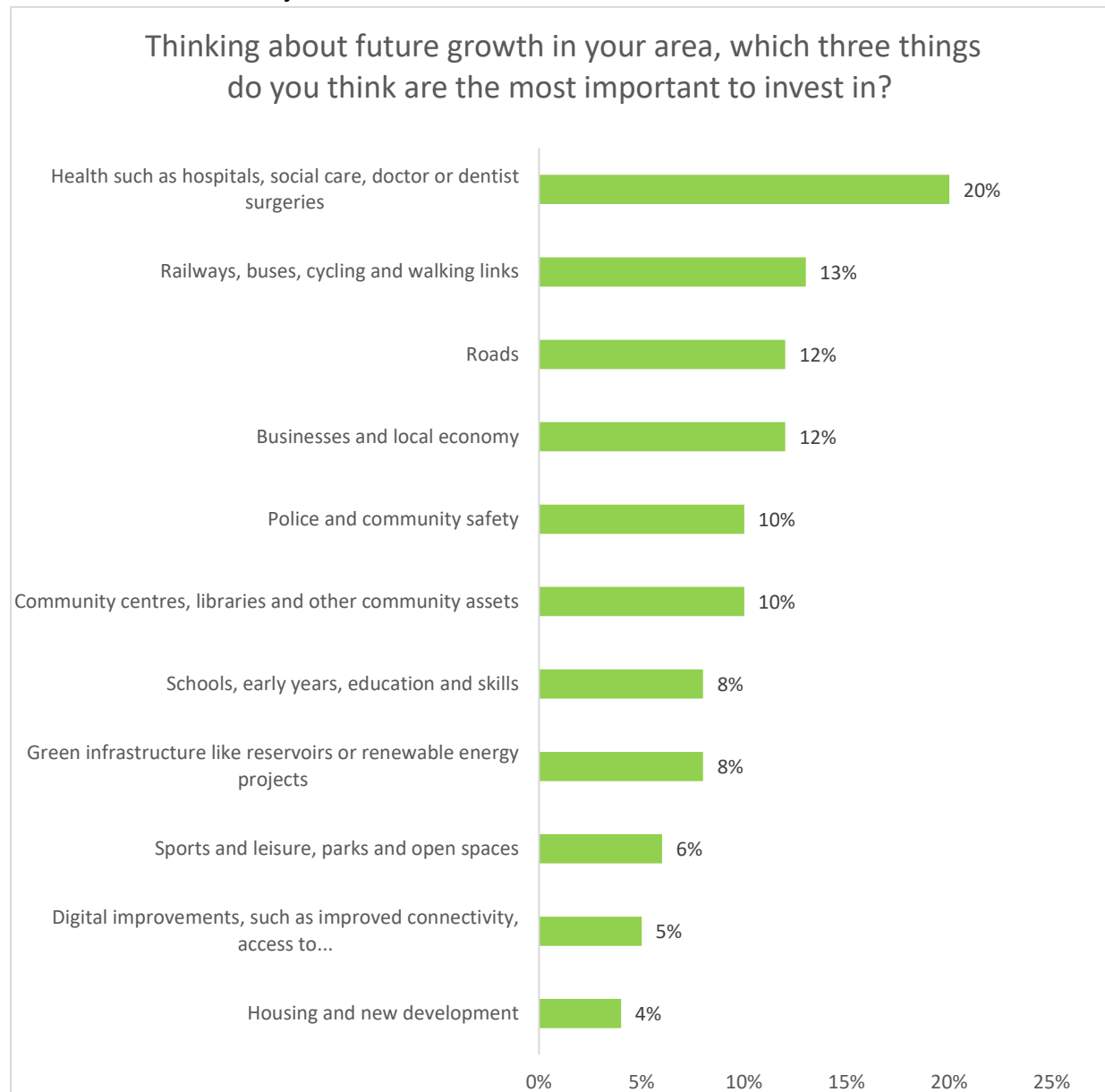| Category	Percentage
Ability to respond quickly to an issue	22%
Access to appropriate funding	20%
Access to councillors who know your organisation's local area	18%
Investing more in council services, such as education, social housing, roads and w...	16%
Having a single council to contact for all services	11%
Investing more in organisations to help them become more environmentally susta...	6%
Promoting equity and inclusion by supporting under-represented groups	4%
Doing most transactions online and only meeting people face-to-face when neces...	2%
Supporting organisations to access new technologies or use AI	1%
Using digital or AI to improve council services	0%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'thinking about the new unitary council, what matters most to your organisation?'. The information shows:

- 22% selected 'ability to respond quickly to an issue'
- 20% selected 'access to appropriate funding'
- 18% selected 'access to councillors who know your organisaiton's local area'

- 16% selected 'investing more in council services, such as education, social housing, roads and..'
- 11% selected 'having a single council contact for all services'
- 6% selected 'investing more in organisations to help them become more environmentally sustainable'
- 4% selected 'promoting equity and inclusion by supporting underrepresented groups'
- 2% selected 'doing most transactions online and online meeting people face to face when necessary'
- 1% selected 'supporting organisations to access new technologies or use AI'
- 0% selected 'using digital or AI to improve council services'

Future Focus

Stakeholders in terms of future investment prioritise health, transport infrastructure, and the local economy.

Thinking about future growth in your area, which three things do you think are the most important to invest in?

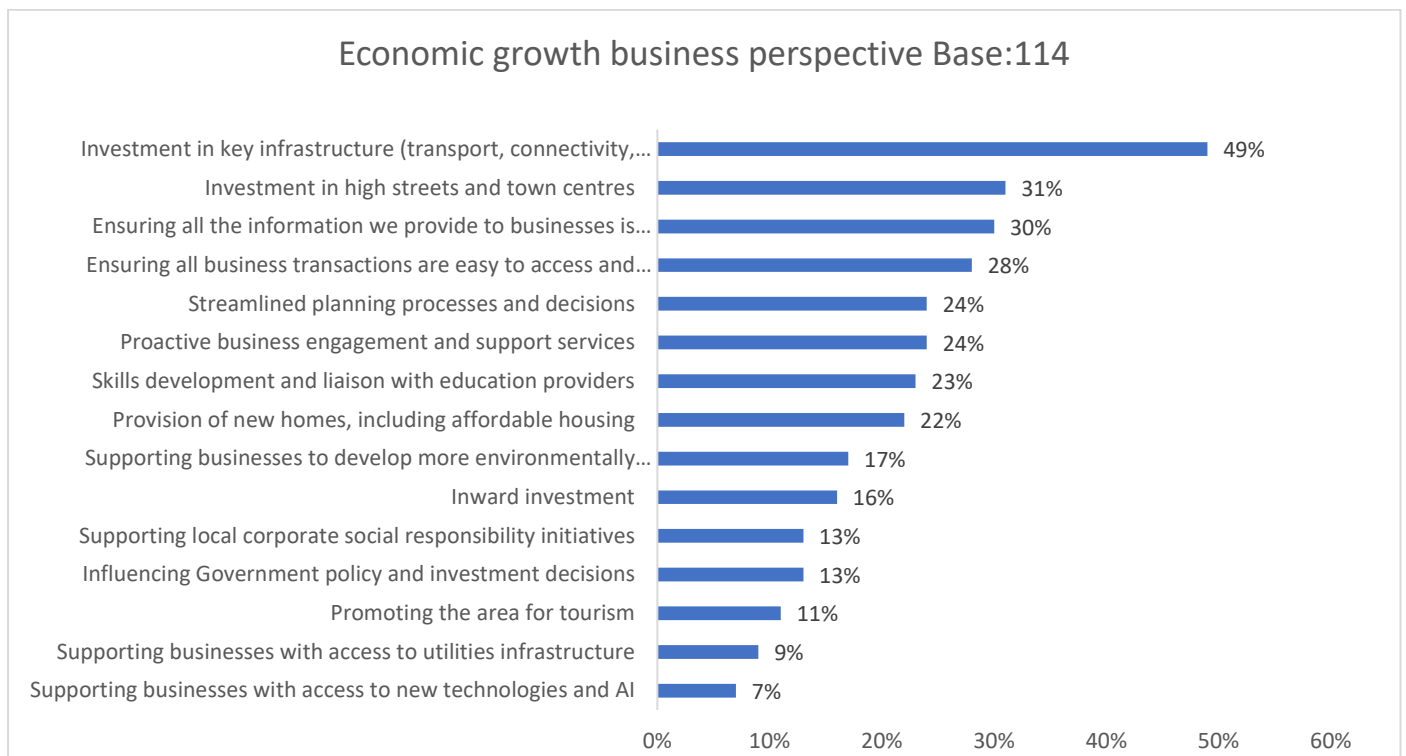| Category	Percentage
Health such as hospitals, social care, doctor or dentist surgeries	20%
Railways, buses, cycling and walking links	13%
Roads	12%
Businesses and local economy	12%
Police and community safety	10%
Community centres, libraries and other community assets	10%
Schools, early years, education and skills	8%
Green infrastructure like reservoirs or renewable energy projects	8%
Sports and leisure, parks and open spaces	6%
Digital improvements, such as improved connectivity, access to...	5%
Housing and new development	4%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'thinking about future growth in your area, which three things do you think are most important to invest in?'. The information shows:

- 20% selected 'health such as hospitals, social care, doctor or dentist surgeries'
- 13% selected 'railways, buses, cycling and walking links'
- 12% selected 'roads'
- 12% selected businesses and local economy'

- 10% selected 'police and community safety'

- 10% selected 'community centres, libraries and other community assets'

- 8% selected 'schools, early years, education and skills'

- 8% selected 'green infrastructure like reservoirs or renewable energy projects'

- 6% selected 'sports and leisure, parks and open spaces'

- 5% selected 'digital improvements, such as improved connectivity, access to…'

- 4% selected 'housing and new development'

Businesses and others were also asked where the new unitary councils should be focusing in terms of economic growth. They overwhelmingly said key infrastructure – transport, connectivity and digital and investing in high streets and town centres, and that interacting with them is straight forwardly communicated and transacted.

Economic growth business perspective Base:114

| Category	Percentage
Investment in key infrastructure (transport, connectivity,…	49%
Investment in high streets and town centres	31%
Ensuring all the information we provide to businesses is…	30%
Ensuring all business transactions are easy to access and…	28%
Streamlined planning processes and decisions	24%
Proactive business engagement and support services	24%
Skills development and liaison with education providers	23%
Provision of new homes, including affordable housing	22%
Supporting businesses to develop more environmentally…	17%
Inward investment	16%
Supporting local corporate social responsibility initiatives	13%
Influencing Government policy and investment decisions	13%
Promoting the area for tourism	11%
Supporting businesses with access to utilities infrastructure	9%
Supporting businesses with access to new technologies and AI	7%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'economic growth business perspective base 114'. The information shows:

- 49% selected 'investment in key infrastructure'

- 31% selected 'investment in high streets and town centres'

- 30% selected 'ensuring all information we provide to businesses is…'

- 28% selected 'ensuring all business transactions are easy to access and…'

- 24% selected 'streamlined planning processes and decisions'
- 24% selected 'proactive business engagement and support services'
- 23% selected 'skills development and liaison with education providers'
- 22% selected 'provision of new homes including affordable housing'
- 17% selected 'supporting businesses to develop more environmentally…'
- 16% selected 'inward investment'
- 13% selected 'supporting local corporate social responsibility initiatives'
- 13% selected 'influencing government policy and investment decisions'
- 11% selected 'promoting the area for tourism'
- 9% selected 'supporting businesses with access to utilities infrastructure'
- 7% selected 'supporting businesses with access to new technologies and AI'

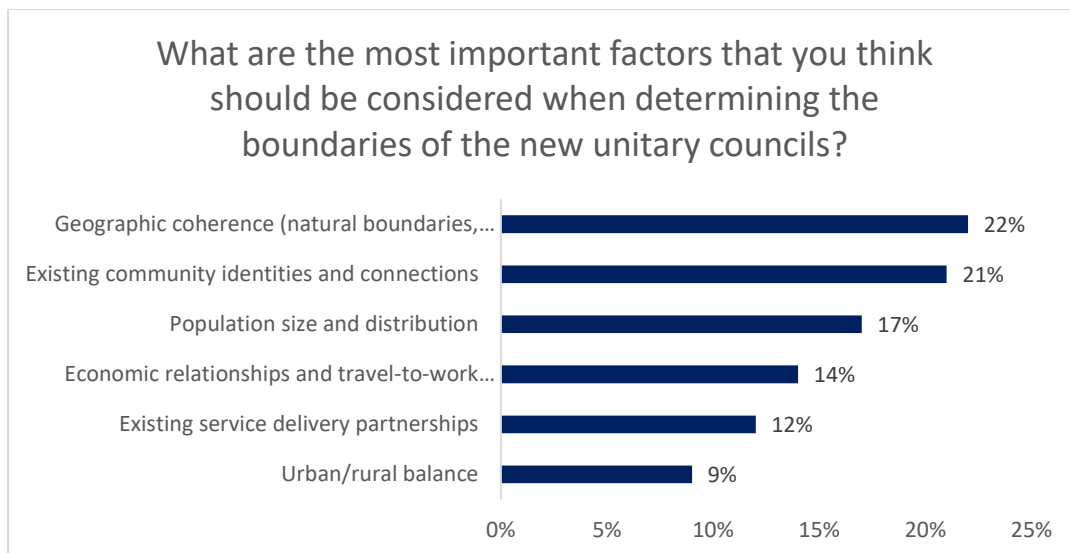# New unitary size and boundary considerations

The minority of stakeholders opt for the 500,000 size option. However, it is worth noting that almost half give three or four hundred thousand. There is much less appetite for any larger unitary of six or seven thousand people.
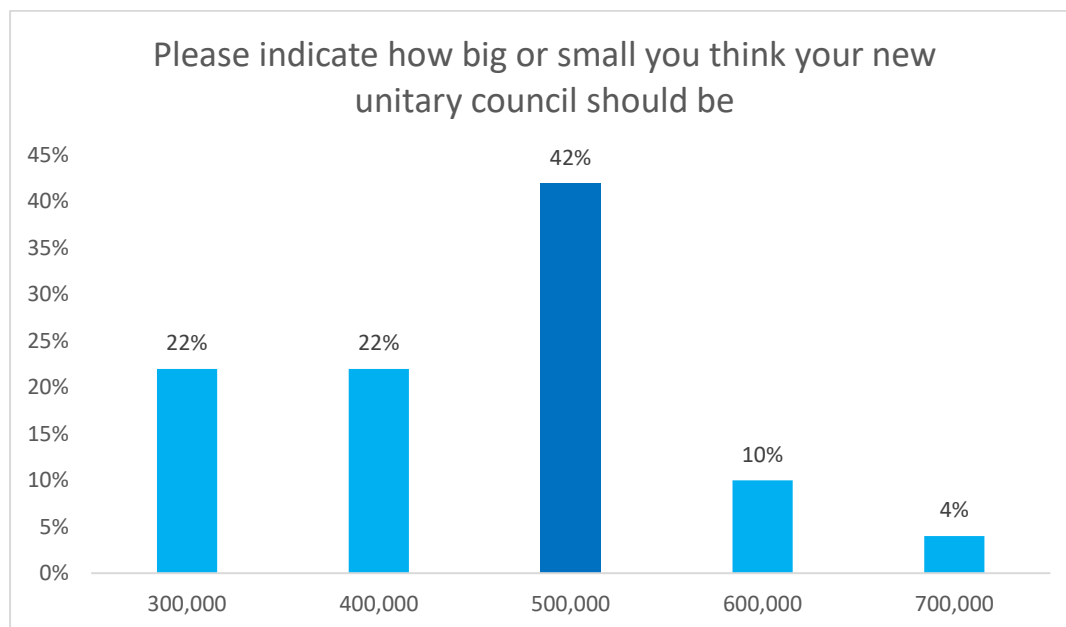
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'please indicate how big or small you think your new unitary council should be'. The information shows:

- 22% selected '300,000'
- 22% selected '400,000'
- 42% selected '500,000'
- 10% selected '600,000'
- 4% selected '700,000'

Stakeholders give primacy to geographic coherence and existing community identities and connections in terms of the most crucial factor in determining a new unitary council.

What are the most important factors that you think should be considered when determining the boundaries of the new unitary councils?

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'what are the most important factors that you think should be considered when determining the boundaries of a new unitary council?'. The information shows:

- 22% selected 'geographic coherence'
- 21% selected 'existing community identities and connections'
- 17% selected 'population sizes and distribution'
- 14% selected 'economic relationships and travel-to-work'
- 12% selected 'existing service delivery partnerships'
- 9% selected 'urban/rural balance'

Stakeholder participation and transition

Three-quarters of stakeholders are keen to participate in sharing and shaping future council services and have provided their details.
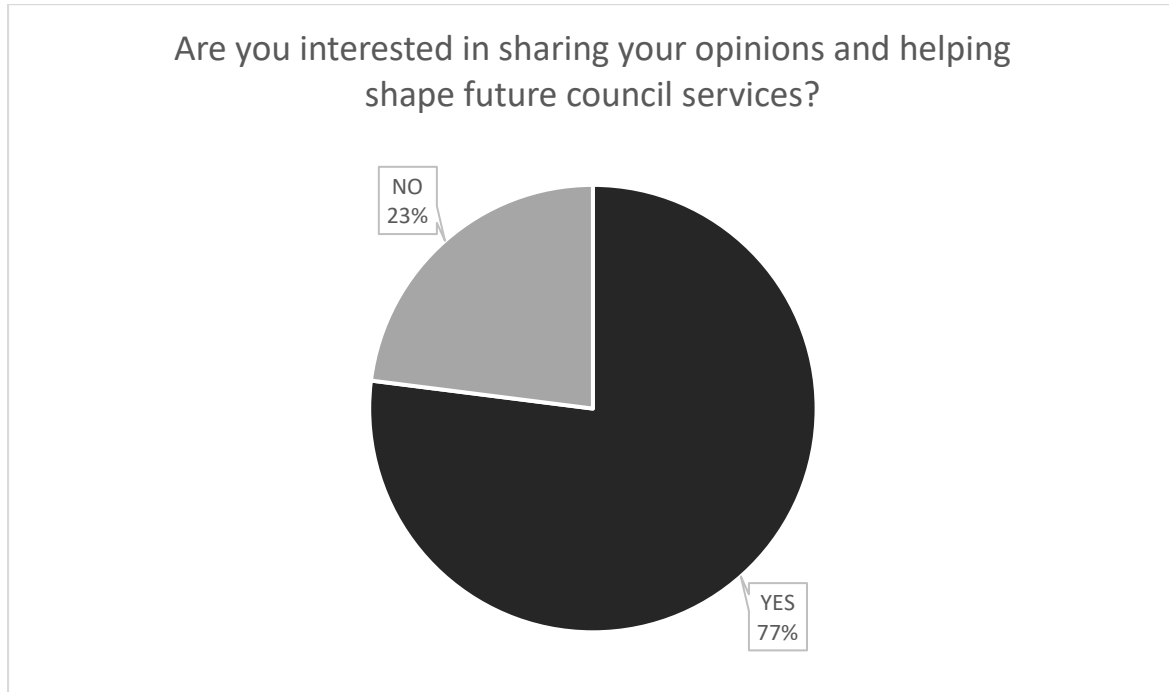
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'are you interested in sharing your council opinions and helping shape future council services?'. The information shows:

- 23% selected 'no'
- 77% selected 'yes'

Stakeholders are most responsive to focus groups or workshops and sector-specific consultation events as a means of participating in the local government reorganisation. A smaller number would like one-to-one meetings with the transition team and again we have details of all those who would like this level of engagement.
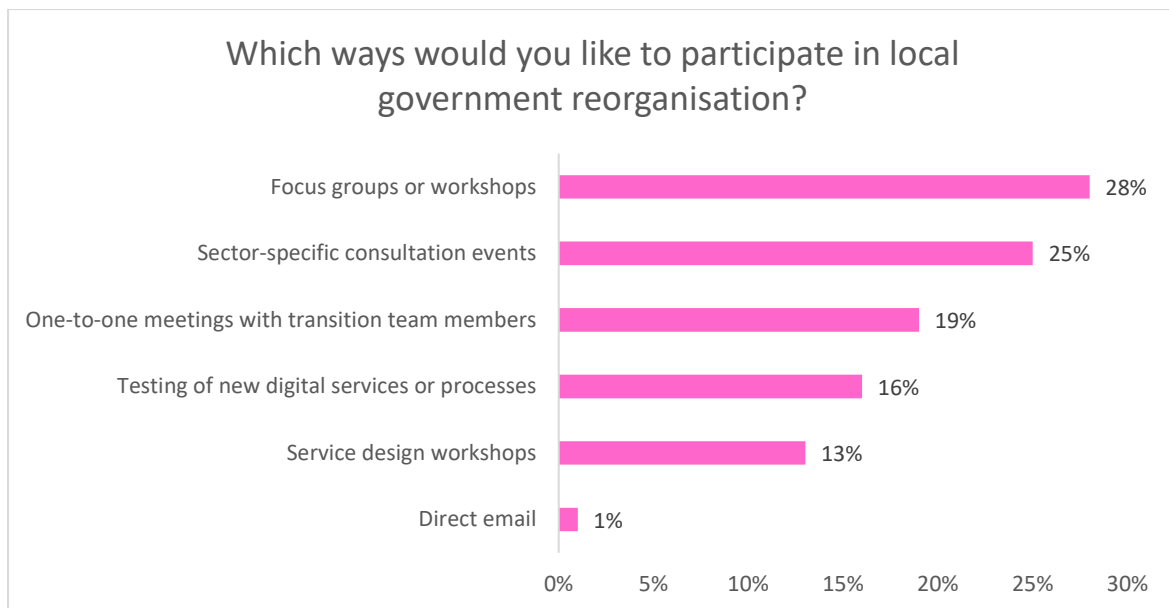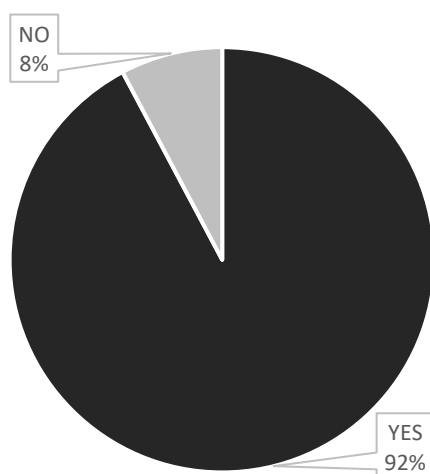
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'which ways would you like to participate in local government reorganisation?'. The information shows:

- 28% selected 'focus groups and workshops'
- 25% selected 'sector specific consultation events'
- 19% selected 'one to one meetings with transition team members'
- 16% selected 'testing of new digital services or processes'
- 13% selected 'service design workshops'
- 1% selected 'direct email'

Communication with stakeholders

Positively, over 90% of stakeholders would like to receive communication about local government reorganization.

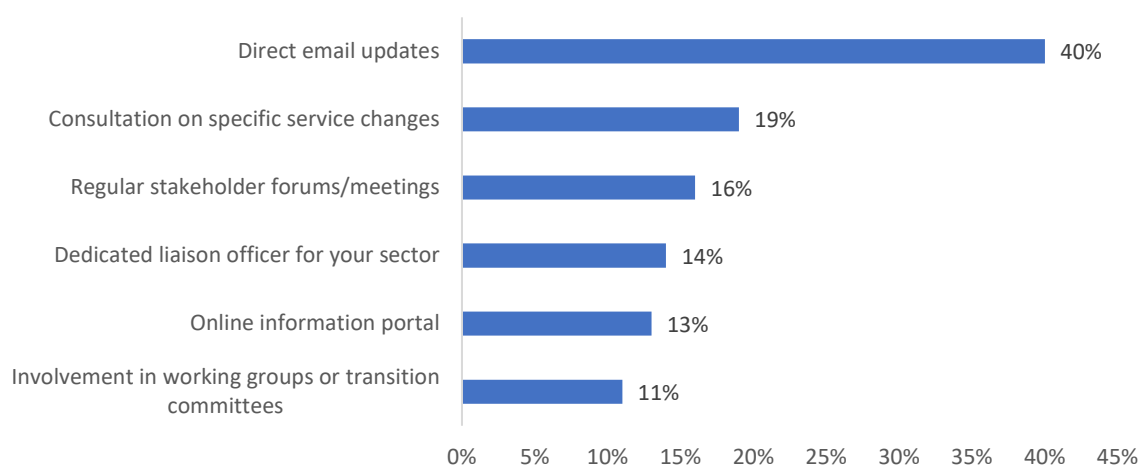The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'would you like to receive communications about the transitions to unitary councils?'. The information shows:

- 8% selected 'no'
- 92% selected 'yes'

Stakeholders would prefer direct email updates and have provided their contact details, as well as consultation on specific service changes and a smaller group would like regular stakeholder meetings.

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'how would your organisation prefer to be communicated with during the transition to unitary councils?'. The information shows:

- 40% selected 'direct email updates'
- 19% selected 'consultation on specific service changes'
- 16% selected regular stakeholder meetings/forums'
- 14% selected 'dedicated liaison officer for your sector'
- 13% selected 'online information portal'
- 11% selected 'involvement in working groups or transition committees'

Further comments

Stakeholders in further comments return to key themes – boundary concerns, local representation and the how it the reorganization will actually happen.

Further comments

Category	Percentage
Boundary/Geographic Concerns	21%
Local Representation/Voice Preservation	18%
Process/Implementation Concerns	16%
No Comments/None	13%
Financial/Cost Concerns	11%
Service Delivery/Access Concerns	9%
Political/Democratic Process Issues	7%
Other/Miscellaneous	5%
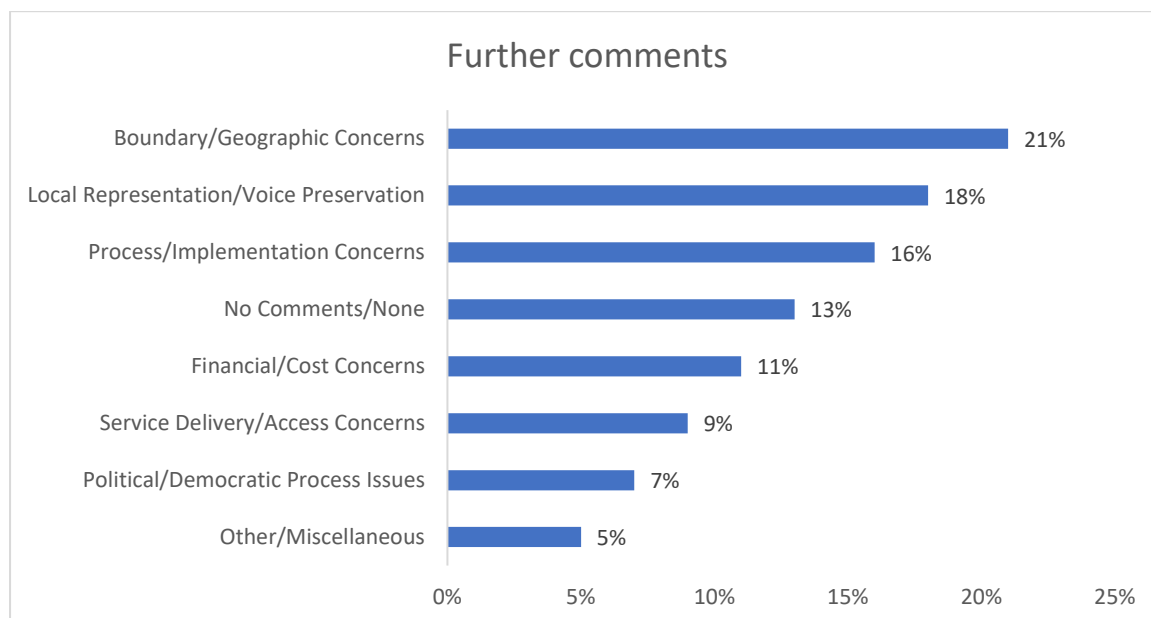
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'further comments'. The information shows:

- 21% selected 'boundary/geographic concerns'

- 18% selected 'local representation/voice preservation'

- 13% selected 'no comment'

- 11% selected 'financial/cost concerns'

- 9% selected 'service delivery/access concerns'

- 7% selected 'political/democratic process issues'

- 5% selected 'miscellaneous'

On boundary concerns, here are a sample of quotes:

"We are currently undertaking a multi-parish Neighbourhood Plan which crosses local authority boundaries—reflecting the real-life connections, development pressures, and shared opportunities centred around St Neots."

Town clerk

"If this change of councils must go ahead, Cheveley Parish Council choose option A which is a merger with Cambs City Council, Cambs County Council

and South Cambs. We have no links with Peterborough, Huntingdon or Fenland."

Parish councillor

"Peterborough is a very distinct place to the rest of Cambridgeshire. It would make no sense to create a unitary authority with them."

Business Owner, Retail and E-commerce

On loss of local representation:

"Smaller rural areas are concerned that their needs and priorities will go unrecognised. There needs to be a level of local representation and budget to support these communities rather than funds all going to large projects in city centres."

Parish councillor

"Fenland becomes an amorphous mass being managed by a large disinterested civil authority."

Chair, Voluntary Community Group

On implementation concerns:

"Don't let too many juggling balls slip whilst passing them from one set of hands to another! Make sure all the key things continue to work!"
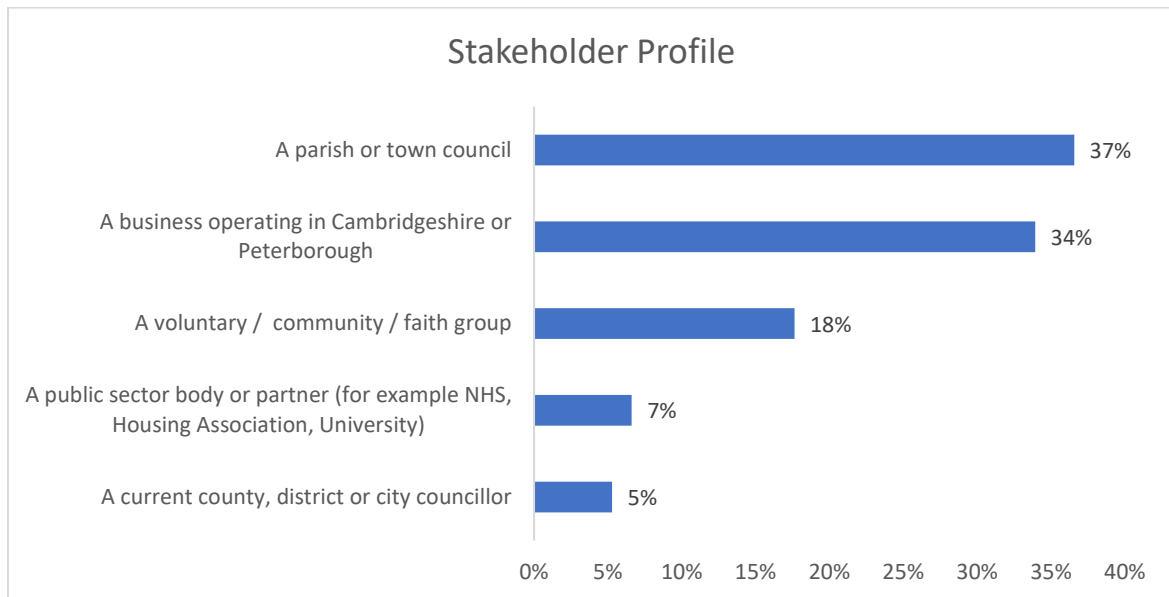
Chair, Voluntary Community Group

"Has this reorganisation been costed out locally and nationally? Do we have this money available, or will it come from central government?"

Parish councillor

Sample Profile

The stakeholders are largely composed of parish councils and businesses.

Stakeholder Profile

Category	Percentage
A parish or town council	37%
A business operating in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough	34%
A voluntary / community / faith group	18%
A public sector body or partner (for example NHS, Housing Association, University)	7%
A current county, district or city councillor	5%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'stakeholder profile'. The information shows:

- 37% selected 'a parish or town council'
- 34% selected 'a business operating in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough'
- 18% selected 'a voluntary/community/faith group'
- 7% selected 'a public sector body or partner'
- 5% selected 'a current county, district or city councillor'

There is a wide range of expertise across the stakeholders.

Stakeholder Position

Position	Percentage
Director	14%
Chair	10%
Manager	8%
Clerk	8%
CEO	8%
Parish Councillor	6%
Parish Clerk	5%
Owner	5%
Councillor	5%
Managing Director	3%
Town Councillor	3%
Treasurer	2%
Town Clerk	2%
District Councillor	2%
Vice Chair	1%
Partner	1%
Proprietor	1%
Officer	1%
Office manager	1%
Farmer	1%
Other	15%
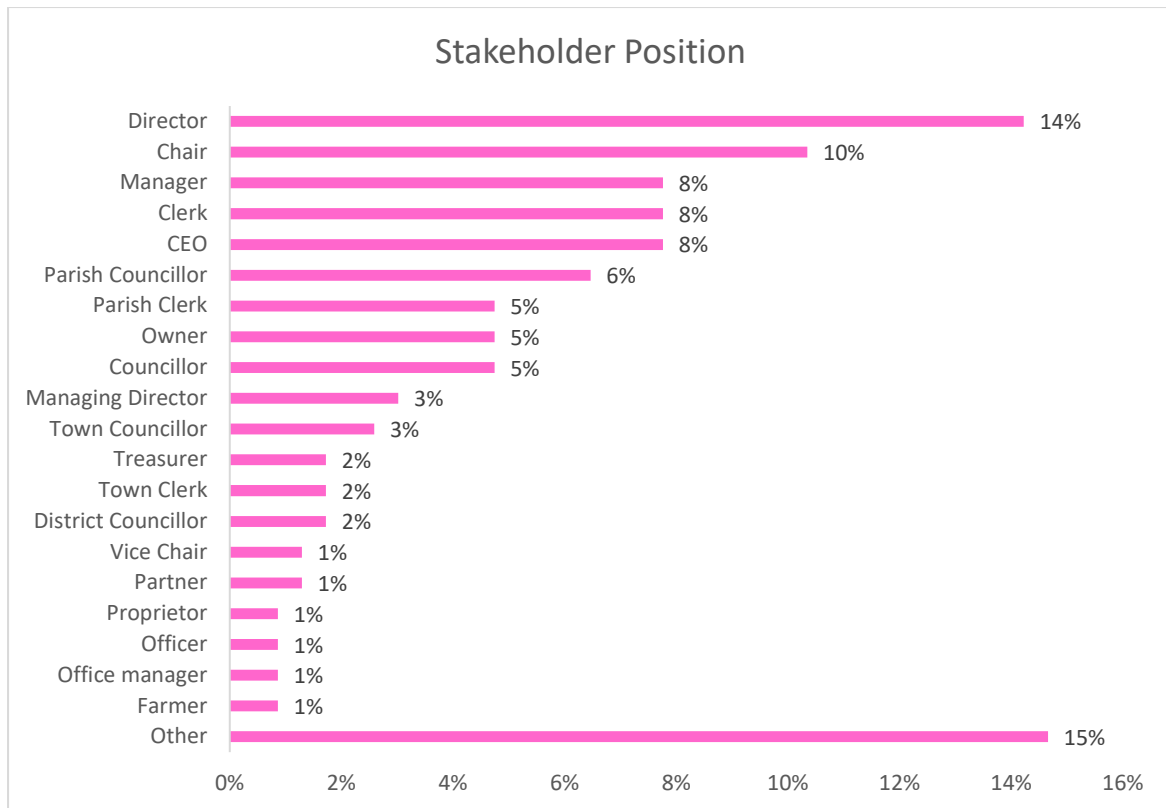
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'stakeholder position. The information shows:

- 14% selected 'director
- 10% selected 'chair'
- 8% selected 'manager'
- 8% selected 'clerk'
- 8% selected 'CEO'
- 6% selected 'parish councillor'
- 5% selected 'parish clerk'
- 5% selected 'owner'
- 5% selected 'councillor'
- 3% selected 'managing director'
- 3% selected 'town councillor'
- 2% selected 'treasurer'
- 2% selected 'town clerk'
- 2% selected 'district councillor'
- 1% selected 'vice chair'
- 1% selected 'partner'

- 1% selected 'proprietor'
- 1% selected 'officer'
- 1% selected 'office manager'
- 1% selected 'farmer'
- 15% selected 'other'

There is a wide range of expertise across the stakeholders.

The businesses come from a full range of sectors with hospitality and leisure prominent amongst them.

Business sector Base:74

Sector	Percentage
Hospitality and Leisure	20%
Manufacturing and Industrial	14%
Real Estate and Property	12%
Retail and E-commerce	11%
Agriculture, Farming and Environment	11%
Education and Training	9%
Construction and Engineering	5%
Transport and Logistics	4%
Technology, IT or Digital	4%
Health and Social Care	4%
Arts, Culture and Entertainment	3%
Recruitment and HR Services	1%
Advertising, Marketing and PR	1%
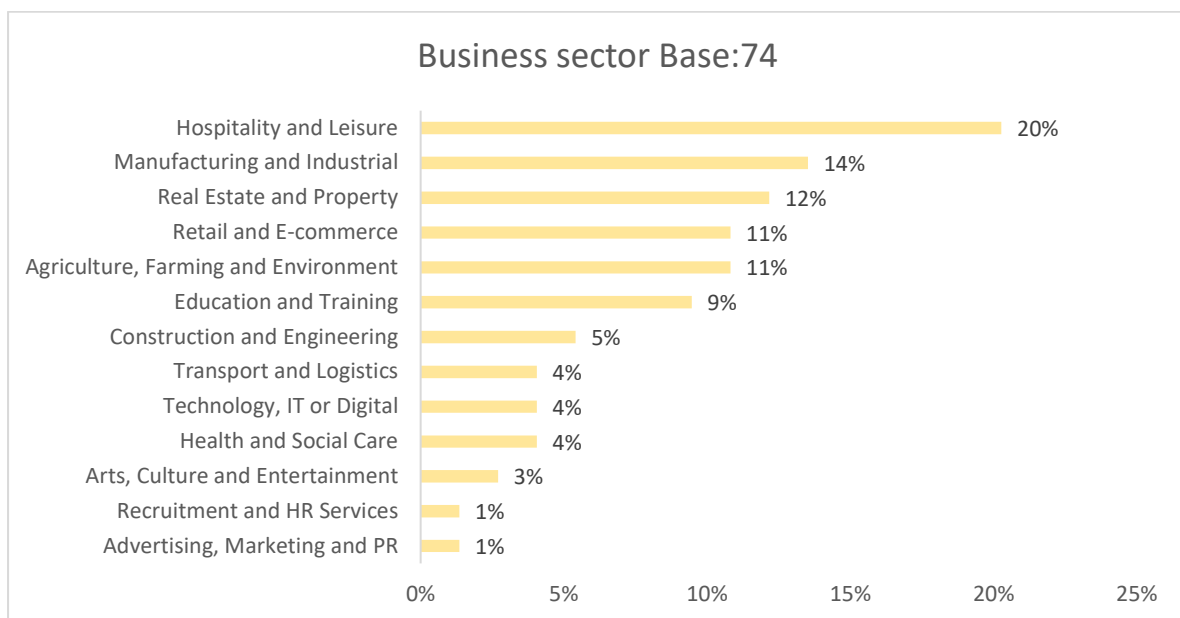
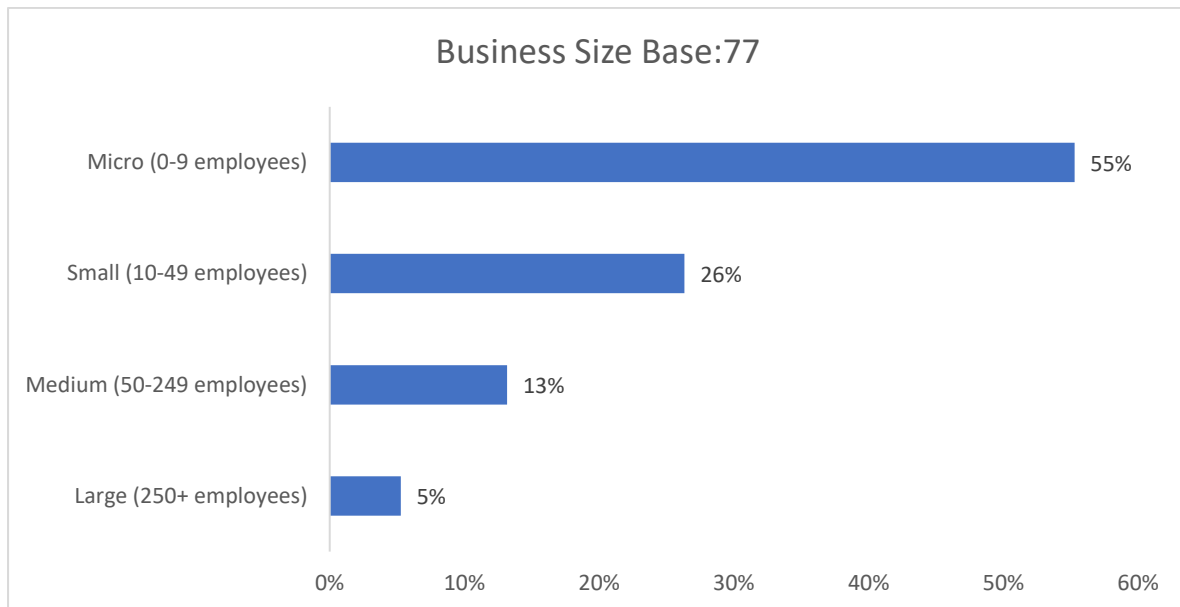The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'business sector base 74'. The information shows:

- 20% selected 'hospitality and leisure'
- 14% selected 'manufacturing and industrial'
- 12% selected 'real estate and property'
- 11% selected 'retail and ecommerce'
- 11% selected 'agriculture, farming and environment'
- 9% selected 'education and training'
- 5% selected 'construction and engineering'
- 4% selected 'transport and logistics'

- 4% selected 'technology, IT or digital'

- 4% selected 'health and social care'

- 3% selected 'arts, culture and entertainment'

- 1% selected 'recruitment and HR services'

- 1% selected 'advertising, marketing and PR'

Businesses range in size with the majority from small businesses.

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'business size base 77'. The information shows:

- 55% selected 'micro (0 to 9 employees)'

- 26% selected 'small (10 to 49 employees)'

- 13% selected 'medium (50 to 249 employees)'

- 5% selected 'large (250+ employees)'

Survey responses are broadly representative with more from East Cambridgeshire and fewer from Peterborough.

Stakeholders Area

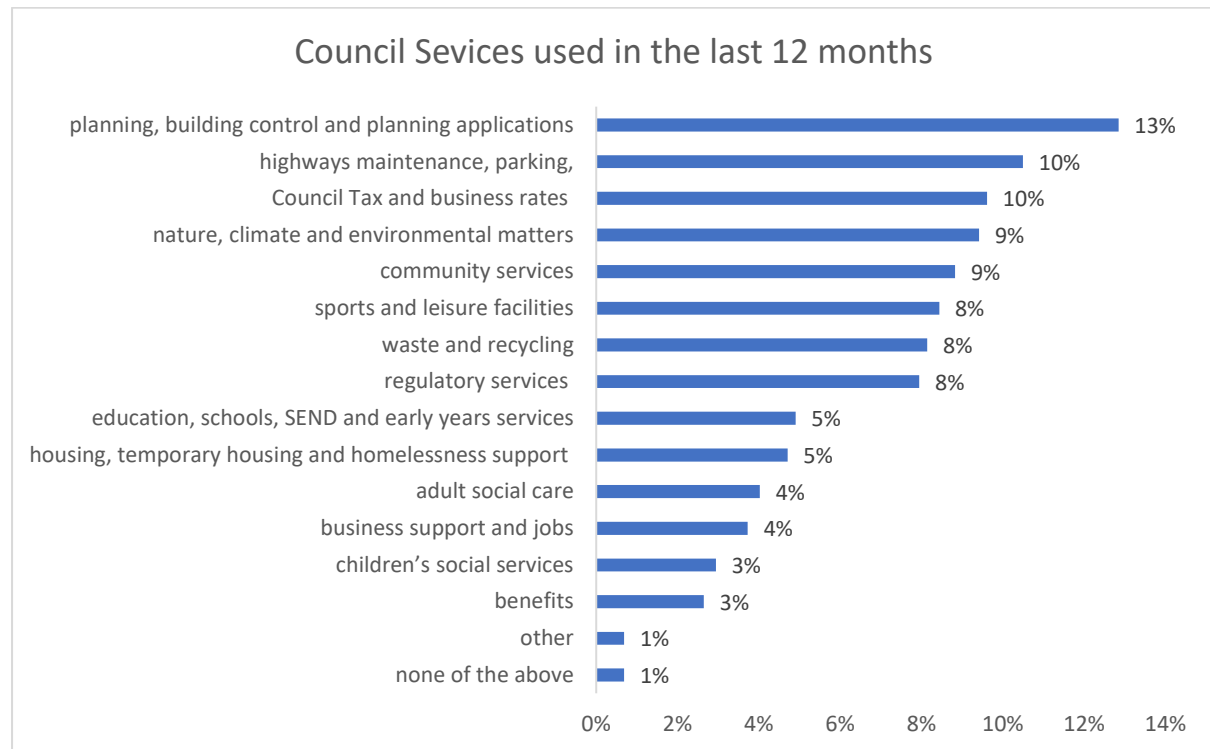| Stakeholder Area	Percentage
East Cambridgeshire District including Bottisham, Ely, Littleport and Soham	27%
Cambridge City	19%
South Cambridgeshire District including Cambourne, Histon, Sawston and Waterbeach	18%
Fenland District including Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech	16%
Huntingdonshire District including Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots	15%
Peterborough	6%
None of the above	1%
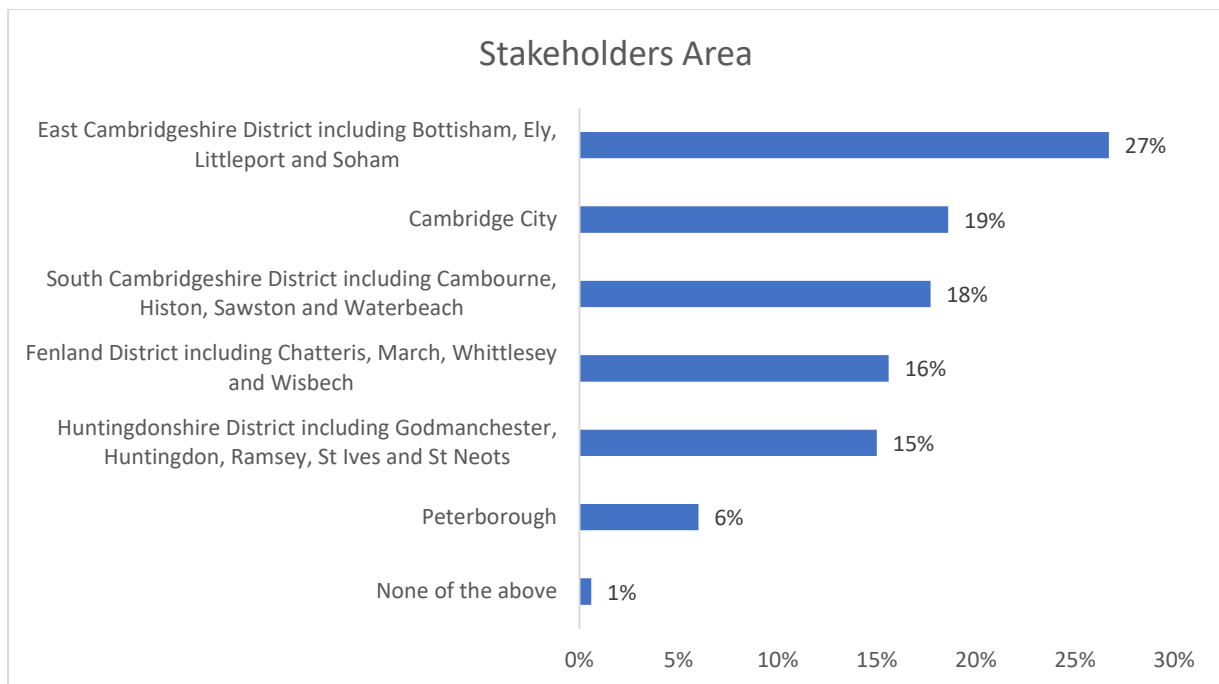
The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'stakeholder area'. The information shows:

- 27% selected 'East Cambridgeshire District including Bottisham, Ely, Littleport and Soham'

- 19% selected 'Cambridge City'

- 18% selected 'South Cambridgeshire District including Cambourne, Histon, Sawston and Waterbeach'

- 16% selected 'Fenland District including Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots'

- 1% selected 'none of the above'

Survey responses are broadly representative with more from East Cambridgeshire and fewer from Peterborough.

The most common council services used by stakeholders were planning, highways and Council Tax and business rates.

Council Sevices used in the last 12 months

Service	Percentage
planning, building control and planning applications	13%
highways maintenance, parking,	10%
Council Tax and business rates	10%
nature, climate and environmental matters	9%
community services	9%
sports and leisure facilities	8%
waste and recycling	8%
regulatory services	8%
education, schools, SEND and early years services	5%
housing, temporary housing and homelessness support	5%
adult social care	4%
business support and jobs	4%
children's social services	3%
benefits	3%
other	1%
none of the above	1%

The graph above shows the information collected regarding the statement 'council services used in the last 12 months'. The information shows:

- 13% selected 'planning, building control and planning applications'
- 10% selected 'highways maintenance, parking'
- 10% selected 'council tax and business rates'
- 9% selected 'nature, climate and environmental matters'
- 9% selected 'community services'
- 8% selected 'waste and recycling'
- 8% selected 'regulatory services'
- 5% selected 'education, schools, SEND and early years services'
- 4% selected 'adult social care'
- 4% selected 'business support and jobs'
- 3% selected 'children's social services'
- 3% selected 'benefits'
- 1% selected 'other
- 1% selected 'none of the above'