Broxtowe Borough COUNCIL

Tuesday, 18 November 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

A meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday, 26 November 2025 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Foster Avenue, Beeston NG9 1AB, commencing at 7.00 pm.

Should you require advice on declaring an interest in any item on the agenda, please contact the Monitoring Officer at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully

Zulfiqar Darr
Interim Chief Executive

To Councillors:

J Couch	D L MacRae
D Bagshaw	R D MacRae
S A Bagshaw	T J Marsh
P J Bales	G Marshall
L A Ball BEM	J W McGrath
M Brown	W Mee
R Bullock	J M Owen
G Bunn	P J Owen
B C Carr	S Paterson
C Carr	D D Pringle
S J Carr	M Radulovic MBE
A Cooper	H E Skinner
H L Crosby	P A Smith
T A Cullen	V C Smith
S Dannheimer	A W G A Stockwell
H J Faccio	C M Tideswell
K A Harlow	D K Watts
S P Jeremiah	S Webb
S Kerry	E Williamson
H G Khaled MBE	E Winfield
A Kingdon	K Woodhead
H Land	

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies for Absence**

   To receive any apologies for absence.

2. **Declarations of Interest**   (Pages 3 - 10)

   Members are requested to declare the existence and nature
   of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest in
   any item on the agenda.

3. **Local Government Reorganisation**   (Pages 11 - 152)

   To provide Full Council the opportunity to debate the
   proposals being submitted to government, on 28 November
   2025, as part of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in
   Nottinghamshire, and recommend to Cabinet on 27
   November 2025 of Broxtowe Borough Council's potential
   preferred option.

Report of the Monitoring Officer

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.   Purpose of Report

Members are requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest in any item on the agenda. The following information is extracted from the Code of Conduct, in addition to advice from the Monitoring Officer which will assist Members to consider any declarations of interest.

Part 2 – Member Code of Conduct
General Obligations:

10. Interest

10.1 You will register and disclose your interests in accordance with the provisions set out in Appendix A.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of Members of the Council. The register is publically available and protects you by demonstrating openness and willingness to be held accountable.
You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting which allows the public, Council employees and fellow Councillors know which of your interests gives rise to a conflict of interest. If in doubt you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as defined in Appendix A of the Code of Conduct, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Advice from the Monitoring Officer:

On reading the agenda it is advised that you:

1. Consider whether you have any form of interest to declare as set out in the Code of Conduct.
2. Consider whether you have a declaration of any bias or predetermination to make as set out at the end of this document
3. Update Democratic Services and the Monitoring Officer and or Deputy Monitoring Officers of any declarations you have to make ahead of the meeting and take advice as required.
4. Use the Member Interest flowchart to consider whether you have an interest to declare and what action to take.
5. Update the Chair at the meeting of any interest declarations as follows:

    'I have an interest in Item xx of the agenda'

'The nature of my interest is …… therefore the type of interest is
DPI/ORI/NRI/BIAS/PREDETEMINATION
'The action I will take is...'

This will help Officer record a more accurate record of the interest being declared and the actions taken. You will also be able to consider whether it is necessary to send a substitute Members in your place and to provide Democratic Services with notice of your substitute Members name.

Note: If at the meeting you recognise one of the speakers and only then become aware of an interest you should declare your interest and take any necessary action

6. Update your Member Interest Register of any registerable interests within 28days of becoming aware of the Interest.

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Ask yourself do you have any of the following interest to declare?

1. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPIs)

A "Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" is any interest described as such in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 and includes an interest of yourself, or of your Spouse/Partner (if you are aware of your Partner's interest) that falls within the following categories: Employment, Trade, Profession, Sponsorship, Contracts, Land, Licences, Tenancies and Securities.

2. OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS (ORIs)

An "Other Registerable Interest" is a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect:

a)   any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority; or
b)   any body
(i)   exercising functions of a public nature
(ii)   anybody directed to charitable purposes or
(iii)   one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)
         of which you are a Member or in a position of general control or management.

3. NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS (NRIs)

"Non-Registrable Interests" are those that you are not required to register but need to be disclosed when a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing or a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate that is not a DPI.

A matter "directly relates" to one of your interests where the matter is directly about that interest. For example, the matter being discussed is an application about a particular property in which you or somebody associated with you has a financial interest.

A matter "affects" your interest where the matter is not directly about that interest but would still have clear implications for the interest. For example, the matter concerns a neighbouring property.

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Declarations and Participation in Meetings

1. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPIs)

1.1   Where a matter arises <u>at a meeting</u> which **directly relates** to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which include both the interests of yourself and your partner then:

Action to be taken

- **you must disclose the nature of the interest** at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent, whether or not such interest is registered in the Council's register of interests of Member and Co-opted Members or for which you have made a pending notification. If it is a sensitive interest you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest

- **you must not participate in any discussion** of that particular business at the meeting, or if you become aware of a disclosable pecuniary interest during the meeting you must not participate further in any discussion of the business, including by speaking as a member of the public

- **you must not participate in any vote** or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting and

- **you must withdraw from the room** at this point to make clear to the public that you are not influencing the meeting in anyway and to protect you from the criminal sanctions that apply should you take part, unless you have been granted a Dispensation.

2. OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS (ORIs)

2.1   Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests i.e. relating to a body you may be involved in:

- **you must disclose** the interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent, whether or not such interest is registered in the Council's register of interests of Member and Co-opted Members or for which you have made a pending notification. If it is a sensitive interest you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest

- **you must not take part in any discussion or vote** on the matter, but may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting

- **you must withdraw from the room** unless you have been granted a Dispensation.

3. NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS (NRIs)

3.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting, which is not registrable but may become relevant when a particular item arises i.e. interests which relate to you and /or other people you are connected with (e.g. friends, relative or close associates) then:

- **you must** disclose the interest; if it is a sensitive interest you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest

- **you must not take part in any discussion or vote,** but may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting; and

- **you must withdraw** from the room unless you have been granted a Dispensation.

Dispensation and Sensitive Interests

A "Dispensation" is agreement that you may continue to participate in the decision-making process notwithstanding your interest as detailed at section 12 of the Code of the Conduct and the Appendix.

A "Sensitive Interest" is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the Member, or a person connected with the Member, being subject to violence or intimidation. In any case where this Code of Conduct requires to you to disclose an interest (subject to the agreement of the Monitoring Officer in accordance with paragraph 2.4 of this Appendix regarding registration of interests), you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, if it is a Sensitive Interest in such circumstances you just have to disclose that you have a Sensitive Interest under S32(2) of the Localism Act 2011. You must update the Monitoring Officer when the interest is no longer sensitive, so that the interest can be recorded, made available for inspection and published.

BIAS and PREDETERMINATION

The following are not explicitly covered in the code of conduct but are important legal concepts to ensure that decisions are taken solely in the public interest and not to further any private interests.

The risk in both cases is that the decision maker does not approach the decision with an objective, open mind.

This makes the local authority's decision challengeable (and may also be a breach of the Code of Conduct by the Councillor).

Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officers, if you need assistance ahead of the meeting.

BIAS

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. If you have been involved in an issue in such a manner or to such an extent that the public are likely to perceive you to be bias in your judgement of the public interest:

a) you should not take part in the decision-making process
b) you should state that your position in this matter prohibits you from taking part
c) you should leave the room.

PREDETERMINATION

Where a decision maker has completely made up his/her mind before the decision is taken or that the public are likely to perceive you to be predetermined due to comments or statements you have made:

a) you should not take part in the decision-making process
b) you should state that your position in this matter prohibits you from taking part
c) you should leave the room.

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Registerable Interests

These are interests that you are required to register in accordance with the Code of Conduct. They are interests that you would know about in advance of an item coming up (e.g. land you own) and you should have included them when filling in your register of interests.

What type of Registerable Interest do you have in this matter?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

These are any interests that are described as DPIs under the Code of Conduct and include both the interests of yourself and of your partner.

Other Registerable Interests

These are personal interests that relate to certain types of bodies that you may be involved in as set out in the Code of Conduct.

Does the matter **directly relate** to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

No

No

Does the matter **directly relate** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests?

Does the matter **affect** a financial interest or the wellbeing of yourself or of a friend, relative or close associate?

No

Yes

Is the financial interest or wellbeing affected to a greater extent than the financial interests or wellbeing of the majority of inhabitants?

No

Yes

Yes

Would a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest?

Yes

No

Yes

You must:

- Disclose the interest;
- Not speak on the matter;
- Not participate in any discussion or vote; and
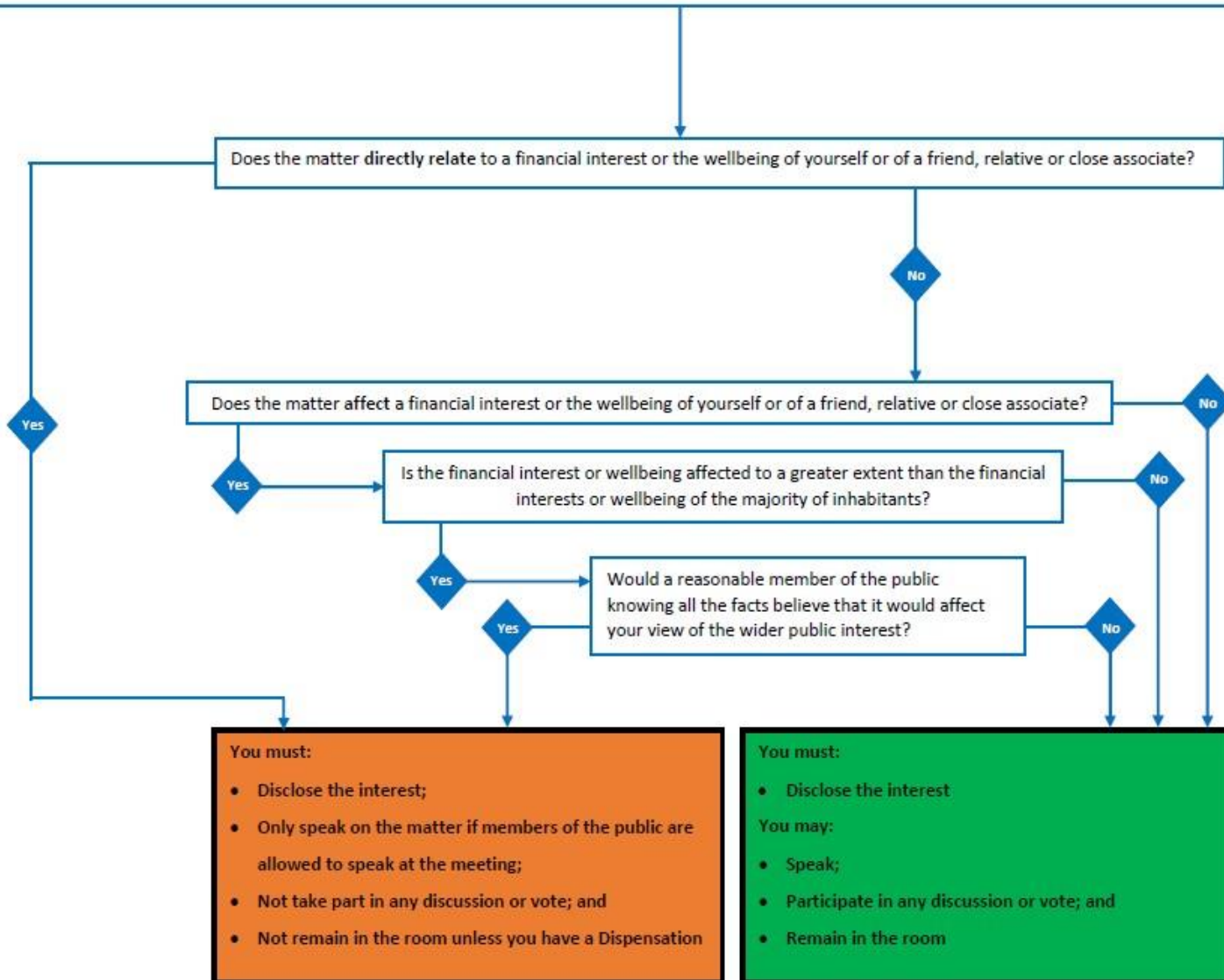- Not remain in the room unless you have a Dispensation

You must:

- Disclose the interest;
- Only speak on the matter if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting;
- Not take part in any discussion or vote; and
- Not remain in the room unless you have a Dispensation

You must:

- Disclose the interest

You may:

- Speak;
- Participate in any discussion or vote; and
- Remain in the room

Non-Registerable Interests

These are interests that you are not required to register but may become relevant when a particular item arises. These are usually interests that relate to other people you are connected with (e.g. friends, relatives or close associates) but can include your own interests where you would not have been expected to register them.

Does the matter **directly relate** to a financial interest or the wellbeing of yourself or of a friend, relative or close associate?

No

Does the matter **affect** a financial interest or the wellbeing of yourself or of a friend, relative or close associate?

No

Yes

Is the financial interest or wellbeing affected to a greater extent than the financial interests or wellbeing of the majority of inhabitants?

No

Yes

Would a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest?

No

Yes

Yes

You must:

- Disclose the interest;
- Only speak on the matter if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting;
- Not take part in any discussion or vote; and
- Not remain in the room unless you have a Dispensation

You must:

- Disclose the interest

You may:

- Speak;
- Participate in any discussion or vote; and
- Remain in the room

Report of the Interim Chief Executive

Local Government Reorganisation

1.   Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide Full Council the opportunity to debate the proposals being submitted to government, on 28 November 2025, as part of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Nottinghamshire, and recommend to Cabinet on 27 November 2025 of Broxtowe Borough Council's potential preferred option.

2.   Recommendation

Council is asked to:

1. **RECOMMEND to Cabinet, for consideration at its meeting on 27 November 2025, on whether to accept or reject Proposals 1b, 1e, and 1bii (Nottingham City expanded boundaries) as Broxtowe Borough Council's preferred option.**
2. **RESOLVE that the Impact Assessment Report, as set out in Appendix D, be submitted by Broxtowe Borough Council as part of this process.**

3.   Detail

The Government's guidance on LGR sets out a clear expectation for how councils should prepare and submit proposals. Councils within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire were expected to work collaboratively to develop evidence-based submissions that covers the whole geography. The focus is on joint working and shared analysis, ensuring that any proposed model will deliver stronger, simpler, and more sustainable local government capable of maintaining high-quality service delivery from vesting day. All submissions must demonstrate robust evidence of financial sustainability and governance showing meaningful engagement with residents, staff, and stakeholders to show how local views have informed proposal development.

In Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, councils have developed three potential proposals for future local government arrangements. The Government does not require each individual council to specify a single preferred option at this stage. All proposals are required to be submitted by 28 November 2025. This report provides Members with the proposed submissions in respect of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. These proposals are:

- Option 1b. This proposal places the current authority boundaries of Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City into one Unitary Authority and the remaining districts and County Council as a further Unitary Authority.

- Option 1e. This proposal places the current authority boundaries of Broxtowe, Rushcliffe and Nottingham City into one Unitary Authority and the remaining districts and County Council as a further Unitary Authority.

- Option 1bii. This proposal, also known as the 'extended city boundary option', places the existing Nottingham City boundary and areas from within Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe without taking in all areas into one Unitary Authority. The remaining areas, districts and County Council will make a further Unitary Authority.

All three proposals can be accessed on the Council's website using the link below. A paper copy of each proposal will be circulated to members with the agenda.

[Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)](#)

Each proposal will be evaluated by the government based upon six key criteria:

1. **Creation of a Single-Tier Authority**
   Proposals must set out a clear model for a single-tier council covering the whole area, based on sensible economic and geographic boundaries, supported by robust evidence, analysis, and engagement.
2. **Scale, Efficiency and Financial Resilience**
   New councils should generally serve populations of around 500,000+, achieve efficiencies, manage transition costs effectively, and demonstrate how reorganisation will strengthen financial sustainability, particularly in areas with Best Value or Exceptional Financial Support issues.
3. **Improved and Sustainable Public Services**
   Proposals must show how the new structure will improve service quality, avoid fragmentation, and support reform, with careful consideration of major services such as children's services, adult social care, SEND and homelessness.
4. **Local Collaboration and Engagement**
   Proposals should be shaped jointly by councils, reflect local identity, and include clear evidence of public and stakeholder engagement, demonstrating how local views have informed the proposal.
5. **Alignment with Devolution**
   New structures must support or unlock devolution arrangements, including how Combined Authorities or Combined County Authorities would adapt, and ensure sensible population relationships between local and strategic authorities.
6. **Stronger Community and Neighbourhood Engagement**
   Proposals must demonstrate how the new unitary arrangements will enable

meaningful community involvement and strengthen neighbourhood-level governance.

To ensure the Council has had adequate representation, Broxtowe Borough Council Officers have been actively engaged with the process providing relevant information and appropriate challenge to the three proposals. This has been with limitations due to the lack of engagement from the authorities leading on the option 1b and 1bii proposals.

Members will also be aware that the Council was actively involved in the Countywide engagement exercise that was produced independently by Public Perspectives. This exercise received 11,483 responses from residents across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The report is detailed in **Appendix A.** In addition, Public Perspectives have provided a methodology and Clarification Report which is detailed in **Appendix B.**

Broxtowe Borough Council conducted a further exercise to establish the views of residents in relation to options 1b and 1e. At the point of consultation, the details around the option 1bii, Nottingham City expanded boundary, was unclear. The exercise was completed by 12,507 residents, with 71% stating they did not support either option. Further details, and a breakdown of the Broxtowe specific aspect of the Countywide engagement can be found in **Appendix C.**

The Council has developed an Impact Assessment Report on the proposals being provided. This report details the potential direct impact to residents living within Broxtowe should the Borough Council be merged with Nottingham City Council. This report can be found in **Appendix D**

4. <u>Financial Implications</u>

The comments from the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer were as follows:

The Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer has worked with the Nottinghamshire Finance Officers Association (NFOA), in supporting with the financial aspects of the options being appraised. This work was completed in conjunction with the consultants, PwC, and supported by CIPFA. The assumptions made by PwC have been challenged and reasonable assurances have been provided as to transition costs and potential financial savings that could be achieved by LGR.

Further details relating to the financial appraisals for each scheme can be found in the respective option proposlas.

5. <u>Legal Implications</u>

The comments from the Head of Legal Services were as follows:

The Council was invited on 5 February 2025 to submit a proposal for unitarisation and local government reorganisation under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") across Nottinghamshire and Nottingham. This power has been actively exercised under the current government's Devolution Priority Programme, as outlined in the English Devolution White Paper published in December 2024, which sets out a renewed commitment to simplifying local government structures to improve service delivery, accountability, and efficiency. These invitations were issued pursuant to the statutory powers under the 2007 Act, supported by ministerial statements and guidance that establish criteria for assessing proposals, including local support, financial sustainability, and service improvement.

Under section 3(6) of the 2007 Act, the Council may respond to the invitation either by a) making its own proposal in accordance with the invitation; or b) making a proposal, in accordance with the invitation, jointly with any of the other authorities. In any event, the proposal will have some sort of impact on Nottinghamshire authorities, when the proposals come to be considered by the Secretary of State as a whole.

There is no statutory requirement on the Councils to consult the members of the public affected by a proposed reorganisation. However, the Secretary of State's invitation and guidance does state that 'It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal' and 'Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed'. Engagement in respect of the Councils' proposed preferred option has been undertaken, and the results of that engagement are set out in this report.

The decision is then to be made by the Secretary of State by way of a Structural Changes Order (SCO) being laid, which is to follow only after a period of consultation to be undertaken by the Secretary of State and any response to a request for review made of the Boundary Commission. The SCO will cover the initial transitional arrangements, pending elections to the new local government areas, as well as matters relating to those elections.

The approval of any proposal under the Act is an executive function in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 Section 9D(2). The Executive will, therefore, be required to make a final decision on approving the Council's proposal for submission, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Council, which is a consultee in relation to this matter.

6.   Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

7.   <u>Union Comments</u>

     Not applicable.

8.   <u>Climate Change Implications</u>

     The climate change implications are contained within the report.

9.   <u>Data Protection Compliance Implications</u>

     This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

10.   <u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>

     Not applicable.

11.   <u>Background Papers</u>

     Nil.

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The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Engagement report

September 2025

LGR | Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

public perspectives P

Research, consultation and evaluation for the public and charitable sectors.

Contents

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Engagement report

Executive Summary

Introduction and background

1.   Nottinghamshire is a two-tier area served by seven district and borough councils and a county council. The city of Nottingham is contained within the boundary of Nottinghamshire, with all council services in the area provided by Nottingham City Council, which is a unitary council. In total, nine different councils provide services across the county.

2.   In February 2025, as part of the Government's local government reorganisation plans, it contacted local councils in areas such as Nottinghamshire to work together to draw up initial proposals to reduce the number of councils by replacing two-tier councils with larger unitary councils.

3.   Following considering key criteria and a range of potential options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal to Government in March 2025. They propose to create two new unitary councils that would be responsible for all council services in their areas and replace the existing nine councils.

4.   An important part of the local government reorganisation process is engaging with residents and stakeholders. This report relates to an engagement exercise about the councils' proposals to replace the nine existing councils with new unitary councils, including different options for the configuration of the future councils. The councils have been supported to conduct the engagement process by independent organisation, Public Perspectives.

5.   The results of the engagement exercise will be used to inform the development of the councils' final proposals for the future of local councils in Nottinghamshire, alongside a range of evidence. This must be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025, and feedback on how any proposal will be taken forward for Nottingham is expected in 2026, and then subject to statutory consultation by Government.

Approach to the engagement

6.   The engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14 September 2025.

7.   The main mechanism for capturing responses was an online questionnaire open to all interested parties, promoted through councils' websites, communication channels and promotional/marketing activity, including a dedicated website (lgrnotts.org), as well as outreach events and engagement with stakeholders.

8.   The questionnaire was also available in alternative formats on request, such as paper copies, alongside e-mail, phone, BSL and translation support. The questionnaire is available at appendix 1.

9.   Relatedly, four focus groups were conducted involving 34 local residents reflecting the diversity of Nottinghamshire and organised by urban and rural areas. These focus groups allowed the emerging findings from the engagement process to be unpacked and views about the proposals to be discussed in-depth, both adding further insight as well as

validating the findings from the engagement survey. The focus group discussion guide is available at appendix 2.

10. In total, the engagement questionnaire received 11,483 responses.

Key findings and points for consideration

Local area

11. **Sense of place and identity is layered** with respondents **anchoring their description to Nottingham City** (e.g. near Nottingham or north of Nottingham), **followed by Nottinghamshire (the county)**, and then **refined by naming specific towns** or local villages (especially for those areas further away from Nottingham City such as Mansfield, Newark and Worksop), or well-known areas/landmarks or **cultural references such as Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood.** There are also **occasional regional references** such as 'the middle of England' or the 'East Midlands'.

12. In more **rural areas**, respondents often emphasised the rurality e.g. 'a small village', 'the countryside'. In more **urban areas** they tended to reference 'the city' or the nearest town. Whilst there is a **tendency to look inwards within the county and towards Nottingham City** (especially for those areas bordering the city), some respondents in **areas that border other counties and major urban areas or landmarks will also make reference to these.** There are also tendencies to draw clear **distinctions between urban and rural areas and those that live in or near the city and those in other areas of Nottingham, while local authority names are not often used as reference points or forms of identity.**

13. Most respondents are **proud of their local area**, with respondents that live in the Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe council areas having higher levels of pride about their local area than other locations. There is a **distinction between being proud of their local areas, and satisfaction and advocacy of their local council**, regardless as to whether they hold positive perceptions or not of their council.

Effectiveness of the current council structure and services

14. **Over half of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery in councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is effective.** Respondents in Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe council areas have the highest ratings of effectiveness, while respondents in Nottingham City have the lowest.

15. Those rating the system **effective** tend to highlight **service reliability, local knowledge and responsiveness, local representation, and a sense that the current system is fit for purpose.** Those who said **neither effective or ineffective** often expressed **mixed experiences.** Those rating the system **ineffective** often emphasised issues related to a two-tier system such as **confusion, duplication, inefficiency, lack of joined-up/partnership working, political distrust, and inequity and inconsistency in services between different local councils**, with some advocating for change and unitary authorities.

Local Government Reorganisation in England

16. Respondents identified several **potential benefits** of the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils, with **efficiency and cost savings being the most common,** particularly through reduced duplication and streamlined services by forming unitary councils. Other perceived advantages included greater geographic and administrative coherence, a simpler and clearer council structure, improved coordination and joined-up working, enhanced service quality and outcomes, and fairer, more consistent access to services. However, around **one in five respondents were sceptical**, seeing no real benefits or expressing doubt about whether the potential benefits could be realised in practice, with slightly higher levels of scepticism in Rushcliffe and Broxtowe council areas.

17. The main **concerns** about the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils **centred on fears of urban–rural imbalance**, particularly that Nottingham City could dominate and rural areas would lose voice, priority, and tailored services. **Financial risks** were also a major worry, with doubts about high reorganisation costs, savings not being realised, or neighbouring areas having to cover Nottingham City's perceived financial struggles.

18. **Other key concerns included loss of local representation, accountability, and knowledge**, potential decline in service quality and disruption during transition, and **doubts about efficiency, with larger councils seen as possibly more bureaucratic.** Smaller proportions mentioned risks of job losses and staff disruption, politicisation and distrust of motives, and argued for reform within the current system or no change at all. Around 5% of respondents expressed no concerns. Concerns were broadly consistent across areas, but stronger in Rushcliffe and Broxtowe council areas, particularly regarding urban–rural imbalance and financial risks.

19. In addition, a few participants in the focus groups **questioned how the proposals align with wider reforms**, noting that the mix of regional devolution, other public bodies/offices, and new governance structures risks creating confusion rather than simplification. They felt the approach adds layers while removing others, leading to disruption, costs, and a system that remains just as complex.

Future councils

20. Respondents said that any new council should **focus on delivering good quality core and universal services/issues** such as roads and pavements, crime and anti-social behaviour, clean streets, and travel and transport, alongside **value for money and meeting local needs.**

21. Relatedly, respondents highlighted the **importance of involving residents in decision-making and local area/neighbourhood working** to ensure that future councils understand and are responsive to the needs of different communities and areas, including urban and rural (this was considered important in general and especially important in the context of larger unitary councils). Consequently, they want to see mechanisms in place to ensure this continues and thrives in future arrangements. This can include local area forums, research and consultation to identify local issues and priorities, engaging with local councillors, and working closely with town and parish councils as well as local community and voluntary groups. They also wanted engagement and consultation to be genuine and meaningful, leading to positive change.

22. Throughout the engagement results, there are differences in experience, perceptions and opinion by different demographic groups. The reasons for this are not unpicked in this report, although it highlights the **importance of understanding local issues and**

priorities and tailoring services and support to different communities (both equality groups, different localities and urban-rural communities) as part of any future arrangements.

Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

23. **Over half disagree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils from the existing nine to two new larger unitary councils**, with a relationship between perceived effectiveness of the current system and levels of agreement i.e. in other words, those that consider the current system ineffective are more likely to state there is a case for change. Respondents in Nottingham City are more likely to agree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two than respondents in other areas. In contrast, respondents in Broxtowe, Rushcliffe and Gedling council areas are less likely to agree.

24. Those that **agreed tended to state that the proposals would reduce duplication, generate efficiencies and consequently lead to cost-savings**, while a smaller number also said that it would lead to a **simplification of the system and therefore improved accessibility.** This said, support was often conditional upon potential benefits being realised, including savings being re-invested into better services or lower council tax.

25. Those that disagreed are **concerned about fairness and equitability, especially in relation to an urban-rural imbalance.** Similarly, they are concerned about a **loss of local representation, knowledge and accountability**, and associated issues around **access to services and responsiveness to local issues.** Some respondents **oppose local government reorganisation in general**, with concerns that implementation will be disruptive, and **improvements and savings will not be achieved in practice.** There is also some **distrust about the motives** behind the proposals and **concern that neighbouring areas will inherit perceived financial and service delivery issues experienced by Nottingham City.** This said, it is **worth noting that the concerns were mainly about larger councils not necessarily moving to a unitary model.**

The Options

Option 1b

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling (known as Option 1b). This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Rushcliffe. The second covering Gedling, Broxtowe, and Nottingham City.

26. Around half of respondents **expressed concerns about Option 1b, particularly that the proposed boundaries are illogical or unfair**, with some urban areas excluded (such as neighbouring urban areas with close links to the city, such as West Brigford) and rural areas included that lack alignment with Nottingham City (such as in some parts of Broxtowe Borough Council area). Many were also concerned about **perceived Nottingham City Council's financial and management issues**, fearing neighbouring areas could be drawn into these perceived problems, face higher council tax, or experience declining services, as well as **rural voices lost within a council dominated by Nottingham City** - concerns especially strong in Broxtowe and Gedling council areas.

27. Nonetheless, around one in ten respondents supported the option, but largely on the condition that it delivers genuine efficiencies, cost savings, and service improvements. This said, **some participants that live in Gedling Borough Council area were more agnostic**

Page 22

about the option, given their proximity and relationship to Nottingham City. Participants living in other parts of Nottinghamshire had less to say about this option (or all the options) because they would not be in a council with Nottingham City. However, there were some concerns about **being in a large council covering such a large and diverse area.**

Option 1e

This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Gedling. The second covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City, and Rushcliffe.

28.   **Option 1e received more support than 1b, with around a third of respondents viewing it positively or as the better of the two, particularly for its clearer North–South split and perceived geographic logic.** Nottingham City and Gedling respondents were more supportive than other respondents, though concerns remained about boundary choices, especially the inclusion of rural areas with little connection to the city (such as in the south of Rushcliffe Borough Council area) and exclusion of closer areas that were seen as more integrated with Nottingham City, such as some parts of Gedling Borough Council and Ashfield District Council.

29.   **Consistent worries included perceptions about Nottingham City's financial challenges and the risk of neighbouring areas 'bailing it out', as well as rural–urban imbalance and loss of local voice**, particularly in Broxtowe and Rushcliffe council areas. Around one-in-ten opposed the option outright, questioning the evidence base and feasibility of benefits. Some respondents also suggested alternative models, such as a single county-wide council, a smaller city-focused unitary alongside a wider county council, or a three-council structure dividing north, south, and city areas.

Other considerations

30.   Respondents often said they wanted **more information** to better understand the reasons for the proposals, the evidence base, and the potential benefits and challenges, highlighting the continued importance of effective communications.

31.   They also want any **changes to be conducted seamlessly and with as little disruption as possible**, so that services and outcomes are not undermined and any potential benefits realised.

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Engagement report

Main report

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction and background

1.1.   Nottinghamshire is a two-tier area served by seven district and borough councils and a county council. The city of Nottingham is contained within the boundary of Nottinghamshire, with all council services in the area provided by Nottingham City Council, which is a unitary council. In total, nine different councils provide services across the county.

1.2.   In February 2025, as part of the Government's local government reorganisation plans, it contacted local councils in areas such as Nottinghamshire to work together to draw up initial proposals to reduce the number of councils by replacing two-tier councils with larger unitary councils.

1.3.   Following considering key criteria and a range of potential options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal to Government in March 2025. They propose to create two new unitary councils that would be responsible for all council services in their areas and replace the existing nine councils.

1.4.   An important part of the local government reorganisation process is engaging with residents and stakeholders. This report relates to an engagement exercise about the councils' proposals to replace the nine existing councils with new unitary councils, including different options for the configuration of the future councils. The councils have been supported to conduct the engagement process by independent organisation, Public Perspectives.

1.5.   The results of the engagement exercise will be used to inform the development of the councils' final proposals for the future of local councils in Nottinghamshire, alongside a range of evidence. This must be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025, and feedback on how any proposal will be taken forward for Nottingham is expected in 2026, and then subject to statutory consultation by Government.

Approach to the engagement

1.6. The engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14 September 2025.

1.7. The main mechanism for capturing responses was an online questionnaire open to all interested parties, promoted through councils' websites, communication channels and promotional/marketing activity, including a dedicated website (lgrnotts.org), and partner toolkits.

1.8. The questionnaire was also available in alternative formats on request, such as paper copies, alongside e-mail, phone, BSL and translation support. The questionnaire is available at appendix 1.

1.9. Local councils also supported some community outreach and engagement events, promoting the engagement exercise with residents and stakeholders, including businesses.

1.10. In addition, local councils drew-up a list of key stakeholders who were directly contacted and invited to participate in the engagement exercise. This included town and parish councils, VCSE organisations and local businesses, as well as strategic and pan-Nottinghamshire organisations.

1.11. Relatedly, four focus groups were conducted involving 34 local residents reflecting the diversity of Nottinghamshire and organised by urban and rural areas. These focus groups allowed the emerging findings from the engagement process to be unpacked and views about the proposals to be discussed in-depth, both adding further insight as well as validating the findings from the engagement survey. The focus group discussion guide is available at appendix 2.

1.12. In total, the engagement questionnaire received 11,483 responses.

1.13. The following table summarises the background of respondents:

Figure 1.1: Background of respondent*

A resident living in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire	96%
Someone who works in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire	26%
A voluntary or community organisation	1%
A Town or Parish Council	1%
A District / Borough / City / County Council employee	7%
Another public sector organisation	0%
A local councillor	1%
A business owner or business leader operating in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire	2%
Other	1%

*Respondents could select more than one answer, hence why responses add up to over 100%.

1.14. The following table shows the local council area in which respondents live and compares this to the population sizes in each local council area. As is the nature with self-selecting/open-access questionnaires, the responses are not proportional to the population sizes in each of the local council areas.[1] Consequently, the results are analysed (and in some cases presented) both as they are and also re-weighted to be in-line with the population sizes in each local council area.

Figure 1.2: Location of respondents

Location	Respondents	Population*
Ashfield District Council area	5%	11%
Bassetlaw District Council area	9%	10.3%
Broxtowe Borough Council area	22%	9.7%
Gedling Borough Council area	16%	10.2%
Mansfield District Council area	4%	9.6%
Newark and Sherwood District Council area	7%	10.7%
Nottingham City Council area	10%	28.2%
Rushcliffe Borough Council area	26%	10.4%
Outside of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire	2%	N/A

*Based on Census 2021.

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[1] The level of response is influenced, in part, by the degree to which the proposals and options may affect a local council area.

8

1.15. There is a spread of responses across different demographic groups, albeit a skew towards older and more affluent groups, which is common in self-selecting/open-access questionnaires such as this.

Figure 1.3: Demographic profile of respondents (only asked to those that live in Nottinghamshire)

Sex	
Female	49%
Male	45%
Another term	0%
Prefer not to say	5%
Age	
Under 18	0%
18-24	1%
25-34	7%
35-44	13%
45-54	18%
55-64	23%
65 and over	31%
Prefer not to say	7%
Disability	
Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a lot	6%
Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a little	10%
Yes, but they don't reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities at all	10%
No	64%
Prefer not to say	10%
Ethnicity	
White British-Irish	82%
Non-White British-Irish	7%
Prefer not to say	11%
Housing situation	
Owner-occupier	80%
Privately renting	5%
Renting from the council or housing association	4%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say	9%

Reporting

1.16. The rest of this report presents the key findings from the engagement questionnaire and focus groups. The results have been analysed against all demographic and key variables/questions to identify any important differences in opinion between different groups. In particular, the focus is on geography i.e. the local council area respondents live in.

1.17. In addition, the open-ended comments received in the questionnaire have been reviewed and key themes presented in the report.

1.18. The focus group insights are integrated alongside the engagement questionnaire findings, including exemplifying quotes.

1.19. The report is organised in-keeping with the structure of the engagement questionnaire and focus groups, as follows:

- Section 2: Your local area
- Section 3: The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- Section 4: Local Government Reorganisation in England
- Section 5: Future councils
- Section 6: Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Section 2: Your local area

Introduction

2.1.   This section presents findings about respondents' views on their local area, including movement across the county, sense of place and council services/priorities.

Where is your main place of work or study? by Which council area do you live in?

Respondents tend to work or study in areas closest to where they live, while notable proportions that live outside Nottingham work or study in the city, especially those council areas that border it

2.2.   Respondents tend to work or study in the same council areas they live in, especially those that live in Nottingham City (69%), Bassetlaw (68%) and Newark and Sherwood (61%) council areas.

2.3.   Notable proportions that live outside Nottingham work or study in the city, especially those council areas that border it (Gedling – 33%, Broxtowe – 29%, Rushcliffe – 24% and Ashfield - 23%).

2.4.   In addition, there are also notable proportions that work or study across the county. Similarly, there are notable proportions that work or study outside of the county, especially those council areas that neighbour other counties or urban areas (Bassetlaw – 17%, Broxtowe – 17% and Rushcliffe – 15%).

Figure 2.1: Movement across Nottinghamshire

Main place of work or study	Council area live in							
	Ashfield	**Bassetlaw**	**Broxtowe**	**Gedling**	**Mansfield**	**Newark and Sherwood**	**Notting-ham**	**Rushcliffe**
Ashfield District Council area	**47%**	1%	2%	3%	9%	2%	1%	0%
Bassetlaw District Council area	1%	**68%**	0%	1%	3%	4%	0%	0%
Broxtowe Borough Council area	3%	0%	**43%**	3%	1%	1%	4%	2%
Gedling Borough Council area	3%	1%	2%	**40%**	4%	3%	3%	2%
Mansfield District Council area	9%	3%	1%	2%	**52%**	5%	1%	1%
Newark and Sherwood District Council area	2%	4%	0%	3%	6%	**61%**	1%	2%
Nottingham City Council area	**23%**	**2%**	**29%**	**33%**	**4%**	**8%**	**69%**	**24%**
Rushcliffe Borough Council area	2%	0%	3%	5%	2%	2%	7%	**48%**
Across all of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire	12%	8%	10%	13%	17%	10%	9%	11%
Outside of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire	9%	17%	17%	7%	10%	8%	10%	15%

Number of respondents: 7,658 (excludes respondents that do not study or work currently – 33%).

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

(Non-weighted results i.e. the results have not been changed to reflect the actual population sizes of a local council area. This is the case for all graphs and tables in this report. The weighted results, where presented, are referenced in separate paragraphs and clearly indicated).

How do you describe where you're from when talking to someone who doesn't live nearby? Which names or places do you mention?

Residents tend to anchor their description to Nottingham City and/or Nottinghamshire, with further mention of nearby towns or villages as well as well-known landmarks or cultural references

2.5.   Respondents were asked how they describe where they are from when talking to someone who does not live nearby (only asked to respondents that live in Nottinghamshire – 10,945 responses). In summary, across Nottinghamshire **sense of place and identity is layered** with respondents **anchoring their description to Nottingham City** (e.g. near Nottingham or north of Nottingham), **followed by Nottinghamshire (the county)**, and then **refined by naming specific towns** or local villages (especially for those areas further away from Nottingham City such as Mansfield, Newark and Worksop), or well-known areas/landmarks or **cultural references such as Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood.**

2.6.   There are also **occasional regional references** such as 'the middle of England' or the 'East Midlands'. In more **rural areas**, respondents often emphasis the rurality e.g. 'a small village', 'the countryside'. In more **urban areas** they will tend reference 'the city' or the nearest town. Whilst there is a **tendency to look inwards within the county and towards Nottingham City** (especially for those areas bordering the city), some respondents in **areas that border other counties and major urban areas or landmarks will also make reference to these.**

2.7.   The following summarises the responses by each council area:

Ashfield District Council area
- Anchor to Nottingham plus local towns: Sutton-in-Ashfield, Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Hucknall, and also nearby Mansfield.
- Some wider mention of being part of Nottinghamshire County.
- Strong references to Robin Hood/Sherwood Forest connections.
- Directional framing ("north of Nottingham").

Bassetlaw District Council area
- Reference to key towns such as in or near Worksop or Retford.
- Occasional reference to being part of Nottinghamshire, alongside references to nearby Sheffield and Doncaster (due to proximity to South Yorkshire) (and more likely to reference these areas and look northwards than southwards to Nottingham City).
- Also mentions of Sherwood Forest as a notable local landmark.
- Some occasional mention of 'Bassetlaw' highlighting a sense of identity linked to the local council area.
- Also mentions of rurality and specific villages.

Broxtowe Borough Council area

- Nottingham City is commonly mentioned as an anchor reference point, for example 'near Nottingham'.

- This is accompanied by local identifiers of nearby towns such as Beeston, Eastwood, Kimberley, Stapleford, as well as rural areas, suburban areas and villages such as Bramcote, Chilwell and Nuthall.

- There is also occasional reference to IKEA as a landmark.

Gedling Borough Council area

- A common anchor point is reference to Nottingham, for example 'just north of Nottingham', 'just outside Nottingham' or 'near Nottingham'.

- Local towns and areas are also commonly reference in conjunction with reference to the city, such as Arnold, Carlton and Mapperley.

Mansfield District Council area

- Strong and primary emphasis on Mansfield as the main identifier, given its eponymous nature, history/heritage, and dominance of, and largest town within, the district.

- Some lesser references to Warsop as a smaller town in the district or Woodhouse.

- Frequent associated references to nearby Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood heritage.

- Nottingham City is also occasionally mentioned, but often in a secondary manner. For example, 'I live in Mansfield, a few miles north of Nottingham'.

Newark and Sherwood District Council area

- Newark-on-Trent is often referenced as an anchor point given its relative size, the main town in the area and where the council offices are located.

- Southwell (and sometimes the racecourse) and Ollerton are also mentioned. Depending on location, Mansfield is also sometimes mentioned as too Nottingham City itself, often as secondary markers. There is also occasional secondary mention of 'near Lincoln', depending on proximity.

- Landmark and cultural references are commonly made to Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood.

Nottingham City Council area

- The core reference is unsurprisingly Nottingham itself, with follow-up reference to specific locations within the city.

- There is sometimes secondary mention of wider landmarks, regional and cultural references such as Nottinghamshire, East Midlands or Robin Hood.

Rushcliffe Borough Council area

- Nottingham City is a common anchor reference, often framed as relative to 'the south of Nottingham'.

- There is often follow-up reference to specific towns and areas as a key local identifier, especially West Bridgford as the largest town in the area.

- Other notable areas mentioned include Bingham, Cotgrave, Radcliffe-on-Trent and Ruddington.

- There are also sometimes references to 'Rushcliffe' or near the 'River Trent'.

- Further south in the district into more rural areas such as Keyworth and East Leake there is less reference to Nottingham City and more reference to the wider county and/or rurality, as well as some reference to large nearby towns outside of the county, such as Loughborough.

Focus group insight:

The focus groups validate the points raised through the engagement survey about layered identity and sense of place, with **clear distinctions between urban and rural areas and those that live in or near the city and those in other areas of Nottingham:**

"I say I'm from Nottingham first, which most people have heard about and reflects how I feel about myself. If I need to clarify even further I might say Nottinghamshire, East Midlands or just the middle of England." Urban participant

"I say that I live near Nottingham. I'm on the outskirts and I don't really feel like I live in the city itself, but it's a good reference point and at the end of the day I spend quite a bit of time in Nottingham and I'm happy to be associated with it." Urban participant

"Not everyone has heard of Newark-on-Trent, so I might say that and follow it up by saying Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood, most people have heard of those." Urban participant

"I live in a small village in a rural area. I'm guess I'm not a million miles away from the city, but I definitely don't feel like I come from Nottingham or an urban area. But I do feel like I'm from Nottinghamshire and that's normally what I tell people." Rural participant

Focus group participants tended to say that they **do not specifically identify with their local authority in itself or would not typically use it as a reference point:**

"I live near Mansfield and that's how I'd introduce myself, but I wouldn't go as far as to say I live in Mansfield District." Urban participant

"I pay my council tax to Rushcliffe Borough Council. I'm pretty happy with them. But I don't say to people I'm from Rushcliffe or that I live in Rushcliffe Borough Council area. I only reference them if I'm talking about council stuff, like services, council tax or voting." Rural participant

To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are proud to live in your local area?

Three-quarters of respondents said they are proud to live in their local area with notable variation by council area

2.8.   75% of respondents are proud to live in their local area including 41% that strongly agree. Only 9% disagree.

Figure 2.2: Proud to live in local area
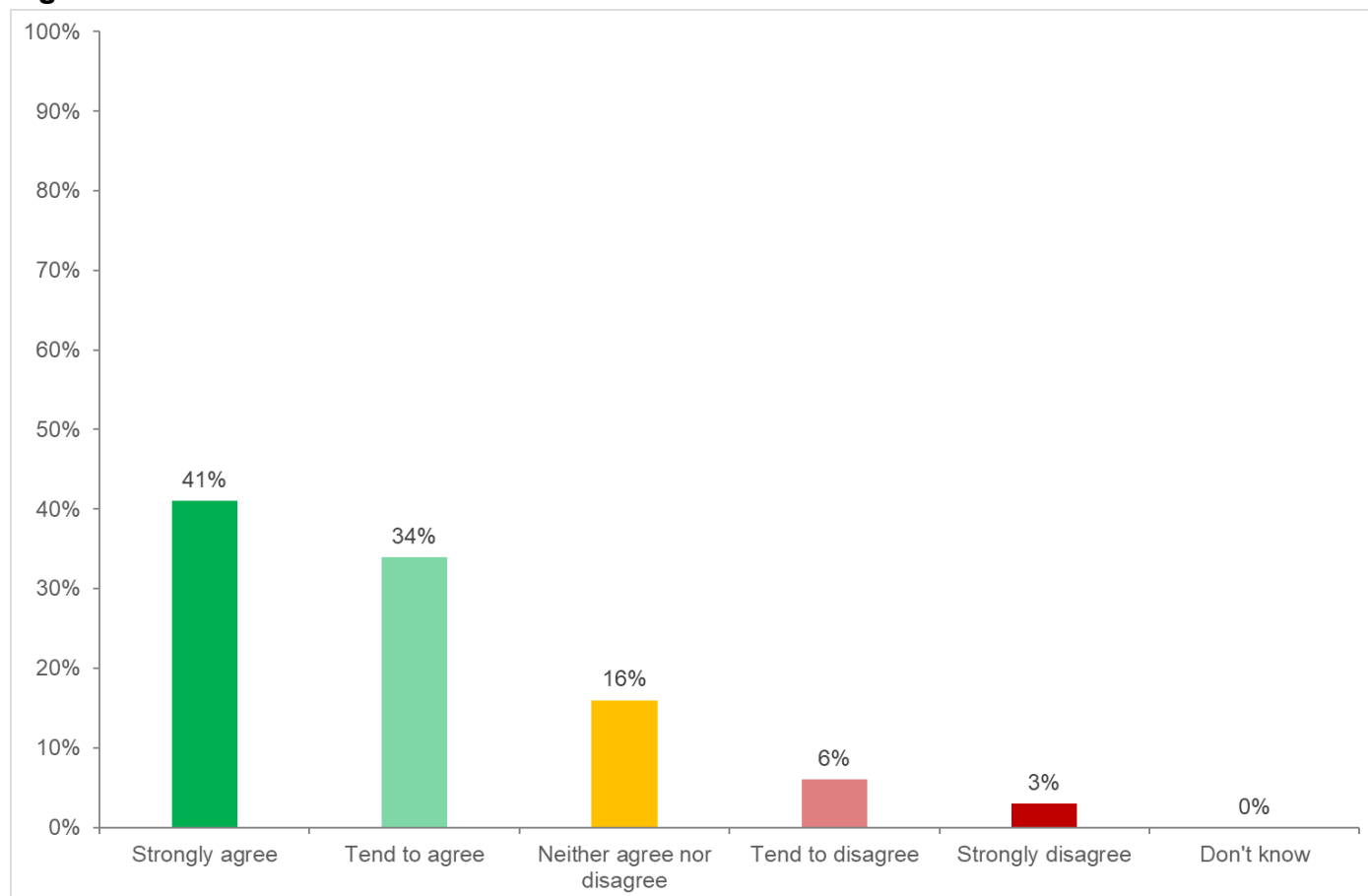
Number of respondents: 11,206 (only asked to respondents that live in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire).

Focus group insight:

The focus group participants highlighted a **distinction between being proud of their local areas and satisfaction and advocacy of their local council**, regardless as to whether they hold positive perceptions or not of their council:

"I like my local area, I like living here, but that's got nothing to do with whether I think my council are doing a good job or not. There's been lots of reported issues about the City Council and there's been issues that we've experienced, but I still enjoy living in the city and I'm proud to say I'm from Nottingham." *Urban participant*

"I think my council does a good job, in general. But when I think about my local area I don't really think about the council. They can affect my enjoyment of living here because if it's well looked after it improves my quality of life. But the reason I like living here is because of lots of other things specific to the area such as the location, ruralness and being close to lots of different places and attractions." *Rural participant*

<center>Page 34</center>

2.9.   Respondents that live in Rushcliffe (91% proud), Gedling (79% proud) and Broxtowe (78% proud) council areas have higher levels of pride about their local area than other locations, especially Mansfield council area (43% proud).

Figure 2.3: Proud to live in local area by council area

	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark and Sherwood	Notting-ham	Rushcliffe
Strongly agree	21%	26%	41%	40%	17%	32%	25%	63%
Tend to agree	33%	32%	37%	39%	26%	38%	35%	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%	24%	16%	17%	30%	20%	20%	7%
Tend to disagree	14%	10%	4%	3%	18%	7%	11%	1%
Strongly disagree	8%	8%	1%	1%	9%	3%	9%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

2.10.   Consequently, when the data is re-weighted by council area to be proportionate to population sizes across Nottinghamshire there is a change in the levels of pride in a downwards direction (as the locations with higher levels of pride have responded in greater numbers relative to their population size). The re-weighted data has 65% of respondents agreeing that they are proud and 15% disagreeing:

- Strongly agree: 31%
- Tend to agree: 34%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 20%
- Tend to disagree: 9%
- Strongly disagree: 6%
- Don't know: 0%

2.11.   Respondents with lower levels of pride are:

- Aged 18-25: 58% proud compared with 75% of older respondents.
- People living with a disability: 70% proud compared with 78% of other respondents.
- Private and social renters: 65% proud compared with 77% of owner-occupiers.

Thinking generally, what would you say are most important in making somewhere a good place to live? And what are your priorities for improvement in the local area?

Core and universal services/issues such as roads and pavements, crime and anti-social behaviour, clean streets, and travel and transport are key priorities

2.12. 71% of respondents said that maintaining roads and pavements are the priority for improvement (and also second top cited as making somewhere a good place to live – cited by 83%).

2.13. 64% of respondents said crime and anti-social behaviour are priorities for improvement (third top cited as making somewhere a good place to live – cited by 81%).

2.14. 57% of respondents said clean streets are a priority, which is top cited as making somewhere a good place to live by 85% of respondents.

2.15. 53% noted public transport, roads and parking as priorities for improvement (also fourth cited as making somewhere a good place to live – cited by 80% of respondents).

2.16. Other core and universal services/issues such as refuse collection and recycling (cited by 40% as a priority for improvement), parks, sports and leisure facilities (42%) and health services (46%) also standout.

Figure 2.4: Important aspects in making somewhere a good place to live and priorities for improvement

	Making somewhere a good place to live (11,173)	Priority for improvement (11,123)
Keeping the streets and public areas clean and tidy	85%	57%
Maintaining roads and pavements	83%	71%
Tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing crime	81%	64%
Public transport, roads and parking	80%	53%
Refuse collection and recycling	77%	40%
Parks, sports and leisure facilities	77%	42%
Health services such as mental health services and promoting healthy lifestyles	68%	46%
Schools and places of learning	67%	32%
Decent and affordable homes	64%	35%
Support and services for older people and vulnerable groups	62%	37%
Activities and facilities for children and young people	61%	30%
Regeneration of town centres / high streets, including shops and markets	59%	41%
Jobs and supporting people into work	58%	32%
Community events and activities and supporting local community groups	58%	25%
Arts and cultural services such as theatres and museums	44%	16%
Supporting residents to reduce their impact on the environment	37%	20%

Numbers in brackets are the number of respondents to each question (only asked to respondents that live in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire). Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

Page 36

2.17.   In the 'other' responses, approximately 2-3% mentioned the importance of 'sense of community', while a similar proportion said a priority is increasing 'community voice' to influence decision-making and an associated improvement in governance of local councils and areas.

2.18.   Whilst there are variations by council area (and also other demographics), these are not notable and the order of importance/priority is similar. Consequently, for succinctness, these are not presented in this report (although they are available in a separate document).

Focus group insight:

The focus groups reiterated the importance of **good quality core services and value for money**, and that these should be the priorities for any future council:

"It isn't rocket science. Councils spend lots of money on lots of things that often don't matter to local people. All I really want my council to do is get the basics right – keep the streets clean, pick up my bins and don't leave a mess when you do it, get rid of potholes and keep me and my family safe. Anything else on top of this is a bonus, but I'd rather pay a lower council tax than see money wasted on vanity projects." *Urban participant*

Page 37

Section 3: The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
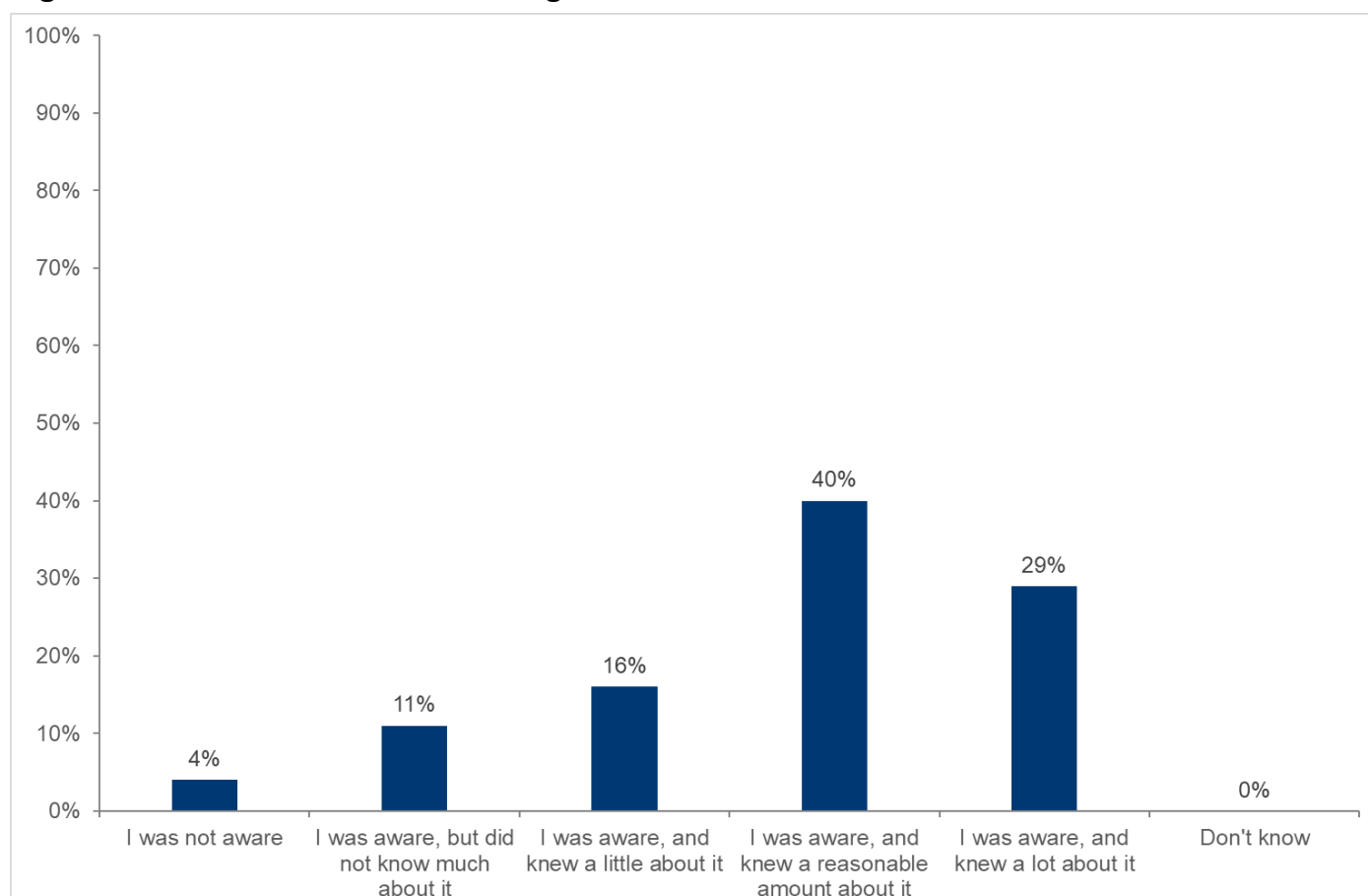
Introduction

3.1.   This section presents findings about the current ways councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including awareness and knowledge, and perceptions of effectiveness.

Before today, how aware were you of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and the services each council provides?

Most respondents were aware of the current structure of councils and the different services delivered, and had varying levels of knowledge

3.2.   96% of respondents were aware of the current structure of councils, including 29% that knew a lot about it, 40% a reasonable amount, 16% a little and 11% not much about it. 4% were not aware of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire before responding to the engagement survey.

Figure 3.1: Awareness and knowledge of the current structure of councils

Number of respondents: 11,424.

3.3.   Respondents in Gedling (98% aware including 75% with at least reasonable knowledge), Rushcliffe (also 98% aware including 74% with at least reasonable knowledge) and Ashfield (96% aware including 72% with at least reasonable knowledge) are most awareness and knowledgeable. Respondents in Bassetlaw are least aware and knowledgeable (92% aware including 56% with at least reasonable knowledge).

Figure 3.2: Awareness and knowledge of the current structure of councils by council area

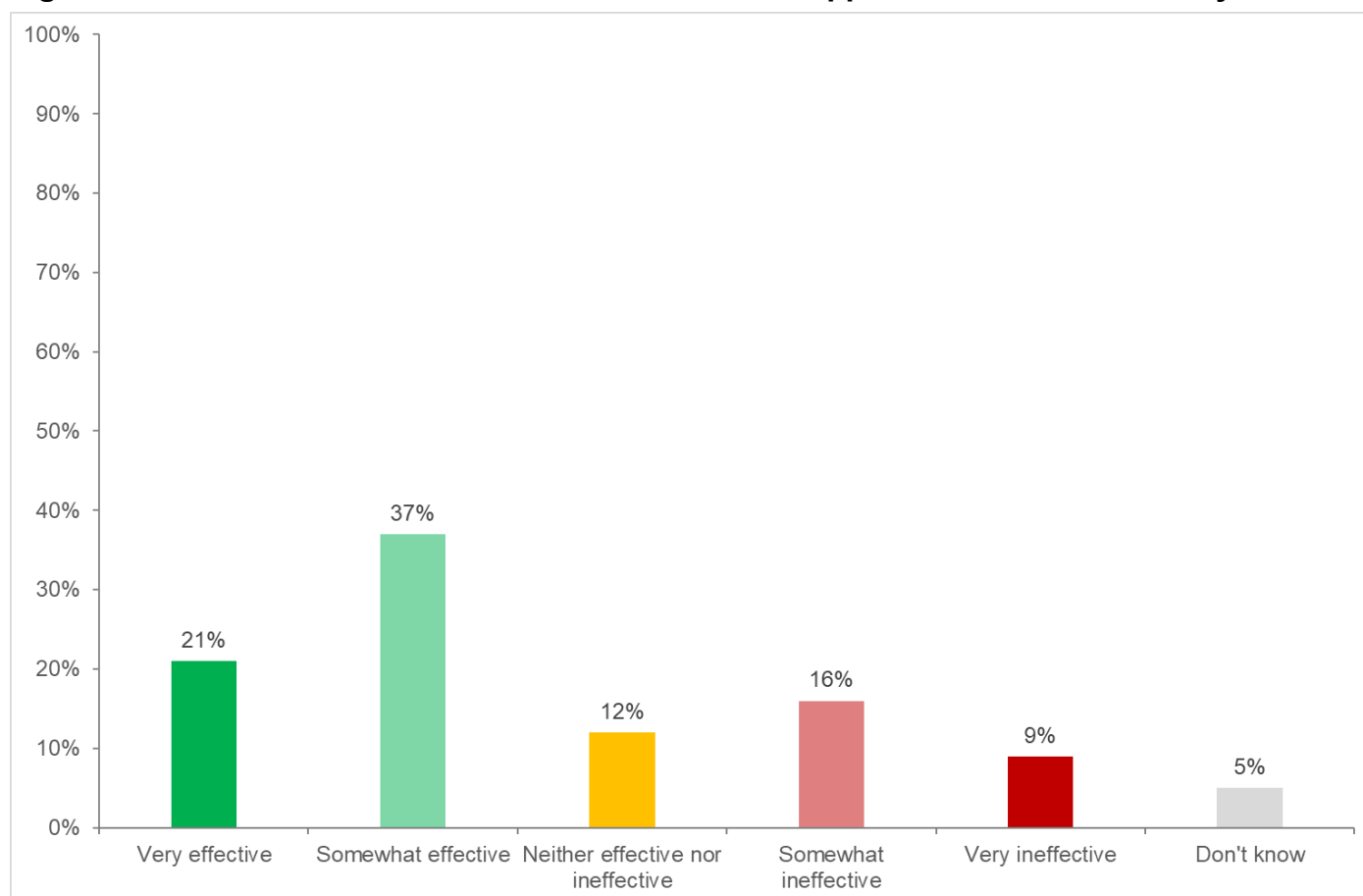|	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark and Sherwood	Notting-ham	Rushcliffe
I was not aware	4%	8%	5%	2%	6%	7%	5%	2%
I was aware, but did not know much about it	9%	17%	12%	7%	11%	11%	12%	9%
I was aware, and knew a little about it	14%	17%	19%	15%	15%	13%	16%	15%
I was aware, and knew a reasonable amount about it	37%	34%	41%	43%	31%	36%	37%	43%
I was aware, and knew a lot about it	35%	22%	23%	32%	36%	33%	30%	31%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

3.4. There are some minor changes when the data is re-weighted by council area to be proportionate to population sizes across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire:

- Not aware: 5%

- Not know much: 11%

- Know a little: 16%

- Know a reasonable amount: 38%

- Know a lot: 30%

- Don't know: 0%

3.5. Respondents with lower levels of awareness and knowledge of the current structure of councils and the different services delivered are:

- Women: 25% know a lot compared with 33% of men.

- Aged under 35: 62% know at least a reasonable amount compared with 69% of older respondents.

- Non-White British-Irish: 57% know at least a reasonable amount compared with 69% of other respondents.

- Private renters and social renters: 61% of private renters and 51% of social renters know at least a reasonable amount compared with 70% of owner-occupiers.

How effective is the current structure of councils and the approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire?

Over half of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery in councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is effective with some variations by area

3.6.   58% of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery is at least somewhat effective, including 21% that said it is very effective. A quarter said it is at least somewhat ineffective, including 9% that said it is very ineffective.

3.7.   Respondents that knew at least a reasonable amount about the current structure and approach to service delivery (63%) are more likely to say that the current system is effective compared to respondents with less awareness or knowledge (48%).

Figure 3.3: Effectiveness of the current structure and approach to service delivery

Number of respondents: 11,413.

3.8.   Respondents in Rushcliffe (72% effective), Gedling (65% effective) and Broxtowe (63% effective) council areas have the highest ratings of effectiveness, while respondents in Nottingham City have the lowest (26% effective).

Figure 3.4: Effectiveness of the current structure and approach to service delivery by council area

	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark and Sherwood	Notting-ham	Rushcliffe
Very effective	14%	11%	24%	22%	10%	15%	5%	31%
Somewhat effective	40%	32%	39%	43%	34%	38%	21%	41%
Neither effective nor ineffective	14%	16%	13%	12%	17%	15%	15%	9%
Somewhat ineffective	16%	21%	12%	14%	20%	20%	33%	11%
Very ineffective	11%	14%	5%	7%	15%	8%	22%	5%
Don't know	4%	6%	6%	3%	5%	5%	5%	4%

3.9.   Consequently, when the data is re-weighted by council area to be proportionate to population sizes across Nottinghamshire there is a change in the results with levels of effectiveness decreasing (as the locations with higher ratings of effectiveness have responded in greater numbers relative to their population size). The re-weighted data is more polarised with 47% of respondents rating the current system as effective and 34% ineffective:

- Very effective: 14%
- Somewhat effective: 33%
- Neither effective nor ineffective: 14%
- Somewhat ineffective: 21%
- Very ineffective: 13%
- Don't know: 5%

3.10.   Respondents that rated lower the effectiveness of the current system are:

- Aged under 25: 46% rate the current system as effective compared with 58% of older respondents.
- Private and social renters: 49% rate the current system as effective compared with 59% of owner-occupiers.

3.11. Respondents were asked to explain their answers to help understand the reasons behind their perceptions about effectiveness with 59% of respondents providing further explanation. In summary, those rating the system **effective** tend to highlight **service reliability, local knowledge and responsiveness, local representation, and a sense that the current system is fit for purpose.** Those who said **neither effective or ineffective** often expressed **mixed experiences, or uncertainty/lack of clarity.** Those rating the system **ineffective** emphasised **confusion, duplication, inefficiency, lack of joined-up/partnership working, political distrust, and inequity and inconsistency in services between different local councils**, with some advocating for change and unitary authorities.

3.12. The following provides more detail on the reasons alongside volume of opinion:

Reasons for rating the current system as effective:

- **Satisfaction with services** (cited by approximately 15% of respondents): Service provision is generally considered effective and satisfactory including key services such as bin collections, highways maintenance, and schools working well.
- **Local knowledge and responsiveness** (cited by approximately 10%)**:** Smaller/more localised councils such as District/Borough councils allow services to be tailored to local need and priorities, and be more aware of, and responsive to, issues as they emerge at the neighbourhood level.
- **Representation** (cited by approximately 5%)**:** Councils are closer to their communities and there is greater local accountability and political representation, reflecting local needs/priorities.
- **Familiarity, stability and continuity** (cited by approximately 2-3%): The current approach works sufficiently well and does not need to change, just potentially improved in-situ.

Reasons for rating the current system as neither effective nor ineffective:

- **Mixed experiences and views** (cited by approximately 5% of respondents): Some services/aspects work well and others could be improved. This includes an appreciation that there is scope for change and improvement, allied with concerns that change could be disruptive or not lead to positive benefits in practice.
- **Lack of knowledge, information or understanding of the current structure or approach to services** (cited by approximately 2-3%): This meant that respondents could not form a firm or clear opinion regarding effectiveness.

Reasons for rating the current system as ineffective:

- **Service delivery issues** (cited by approximately 10% of respondents): Mixed experiences of service delivery and quality, with scope for improvement.
- **Duplication and inefficiency** (cited by approximately 5%): The two-tier structure is inefficient with resource duplication between councils, unnecessary tiers of management and staffing resulting in wasted resources, added bureaucracy and negative consequences for service delivery/quality as well as cost-effectiveness.
- **Confusion** (cited by approximately 5%): The two-tier structure makes the system difficult to navigate, as well as creating a lack of accountability between councils.
- **Joined-up/partnership working** (cited by approximately 5%): The current two-tier system makes coordination challenging between councils and partners across the different tiers of local government, with scope to improve partnership working.

- **Political concerns** (cited by approximately 2-3%): Undercurrent of distrust of politics and politicians, surfacing mainly around planning decisions, fairness of service allocation, and perceptions of political agendas overriding residents' needs.
- **Inequity and lack of consistency** (cited by approximately 2-3%): Experiences of inconsistent services depending on location and challenges accessing services in neighbouring areas, as well as some concerns around a bias to service provision in urban areas compared to more rural areas.

Focus group insight:

Focus group participants shared similar views about the effectiveness of the current system to those expressed by respondents in the engagement survey, **driven by their personal experience of the councils and their services.** These views tended to be **dominated by perceived concerns about Nottingham City council's finances and services** and their impact on neighbouring areas. There was also reference to **inconsistent services, parochialism and calls for more joined-up and partnership working:**

"It is confusing about who you should speak with about any given issue, the district council, the city council or the county council or all of them. I've learnt to know who does what and navigate the system, but I think there's scope for change." *Rural participant*

"When you think about Nottingham City Council you can't say that the current approach works. There's been mismanagement, its financially bankrupt and my fear is that there will be a ripple effect on its neighbouring areas, especially if there is local government reorganisation. It's not a good advert for a unitary council or forming a new council with Nottingham City council at its head." *Urban participant*

"I generally feel like my council does a reasonable job, but I've seen it professionally where I've been able to get services for one client from their council, but not for someone else who lives in a neighbouring council. It's a bit like a postcode lottery, so I'd like to see more consistency in service provision and it to be easier to access those services so that you don't have to speak to lots of different people." *Urban participant*

"The day-to-day is fine, but I do question some of the decisions that are made. On one level it is nice to have a local council that feels close to the community, but some of the decisions feel a bit parochial, and possibly even overly self-interested, especially around planning decisions or pet projects of councillors. It feels a bit inward looking and I'd like to see the council be more innovative and outward facing, working closely with other councils and partners." *Rural participant*

One point focus group participants tended to share is that they felt it **important that their council is coherent geographically and focussed on their local community:**

"One thing I like about the current system is that it feels like your council is working for you, is focussed on your area and your issues. Mansfield council is a good example, it is a fairly small council and is focussed on those that live in Mansfield and the surrounding areas." *Urban participant*

Page 44

Section 4: Local Government Reorganisation in England

Introduction

4.1.   This section presents findings about the Government's plans for reorganisation of local government across the country, including awareness and knowledge, and perceptions about these plans.

Before today, how aware were you about the Government's plans to reorganise local councils across England?

Most respondents are aware of the reorganisation of councils across England, including over half that have at least reasonable knowledge about it

4.2.   92% of respondents are aware of the reorganisation of councils across England, including 20% that knew a lot about it, 37% a reasonable amount, 22% a little and 13% not much about it. 8% were not aware at all before responding to the engagement survey.

4.3.   There is a close relationship between awareness and knowledge of the current structure of councils and that of the reorganisation of councils across England. For example, 50% that were not aware of the current structure of councils are also not aware of the reorganisation of councils. Similarly, 54% that were aware and know a lot about the current structure of local councils are also equally aware and knowledgeable about the reorganisation of councils across England.

Figure 4.1: Awareness and knowledge of local government reorganisation across England

Number of respondents: 11,429.

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire: Engagement report
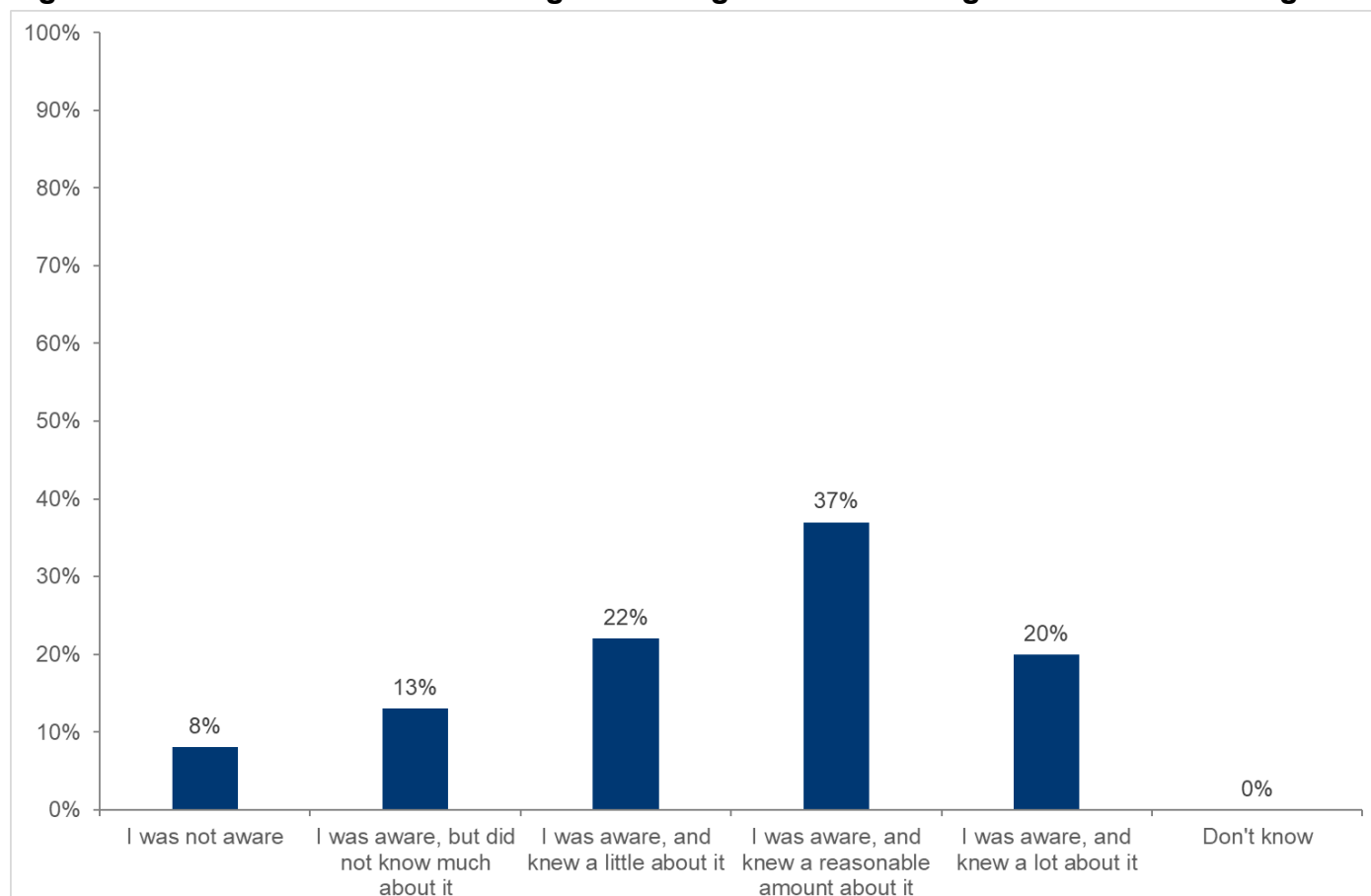
Focus group insight:

The focus group participants had **mixed levels of awareness and knowledge about local government reorganisation in England**, with most awareness and knowledge generated through this engagement process and associated communications. Awareness and knowledge tended to be **greatest amongst participants in areas that are perhaps most affected by the proposals.** Prior awareness was also linked with the wider devolution agenda, including the formation of the East Midlands Combined County Authority:

"I wasn't aware about any of this until you invited me to attend the focus group." *Urban participant*

"I had some awareness, but only really vaguely. I'd seen something on social media about it." *Urban participant*

"I'd heard of devolution and all that previously, but only really found out about local government reorganisation when I heard more about it from my council. Once I heard that we may be joining Nottingham I spent some time getting familiar with the issues as they directly affect me and my family." *Rural participant*

"There was that consultation around the East Midlands regional authority a few years ago, so I was aware of what's going on in general, but I can't say I knew much about these specific plans until just recently." *Rural participant*

4.4. Respondents in Rushcliffe (96% aware including 64% with at least reasonable knowledge) and Gedling (96% aware including 62% with at least reasonable knowledge) are most aware and knowledgeable. Respondents in Bassetlaw are least aware and knowledgeable (78% aware including 37% with at least reasonable knowledge).

Figure 4.2: Awareness and knowledge of local government reorganisation across England by council area

	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark and Sherwood	Notting-ham	Rushcliffe
I was not aware	8%	22%	8%	4%	14%	9%	9%	4%
I was aware, but did not know much about it	15%	19%	15%	12%	13%	16%	14%	10%
I was aware, and knew a little about it	19%	21%	24%	22%	22%	21%	22%	22%
I was aware, and knew a reasonable amount about it	37%	25%	36%	40%	28%	34%	37%	42%
I was aware, and knew a lot about it	20%	12%	17%	22%	22%	21%	18%	22%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

4.5. There are some minor changes when the data is re-weighted by council area to be proportionate to population sizes across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire:

- Not aware: 9%
- Not know much: 14%
- Know a little: 22%
- Know a reasonable amount: 35%
- Know a lot: 19%
- Don't know: 0%

4.6. Respondents with lower levels of awareness and knowledge of local government reorganisation across England are:

- Women: 51% know at least a reasonable amount compared with 62% of men.
- Aged under 25: 79% are aware compared with 92% of older respondents.
- Non-White British-Irish: 49% know at least a reasonable amount compared with 56% of other respondents.
- People living with a disability that affects their day-to-day activities a lot or a little: 49% know at least a reasonable amount compared with 57% of other respondents.
- Private renters and social renters: 49% of private renters and 39% of social renters know at least a reasonable amount compared with 57% of owner-occupiers.

What do you think are the main potential benefits, if any, of the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Potential benefits include efficiency and cost savings, geographic coherence, a simpler and clearer system and more joined-up working

4.7.   Reduced duplication, efficiency and cost savings are the dominant perceived benefits, while scepticism/no benefits form the second largest cluster. Other themes like geographical coherence, simplification, joined-up working, improved services and fairness also stand-out, albeit in lesser numbers:

- **Efficiency and cost savings** (cited by approximately 35% of respondents): Respondents frequently highlighted the potential for reducing duplication, achieving greater efficiencies and consequently saving money by moving to larger unitary councils (although some also questioned whether these savings would be reinvested into local areas, public services or reduced council tax).

- **Geographic / administrative coherence** (cited by approximately 15%): Some respondents noted the opportunity to bring areas under a clearer, more consistent administrative structure, which reflects the way people live and move across the county, by bringing council areas together into larger bodies.

- **Simplification / clarity of councils and access to services** (cited by approximately 10%): These respondents consider benefits in having a single unitary council to contact, resulting in improved access to services, ease of navigation around the council system, and consequently also clearer accountability.

- **Better coordination, joined-up services and partnership working** (cited by approximately 10%): Some see value in larger councils promoting better coordination of services and joined-up decision making and working in areas managed by a single council. Relatedly, some also consider this could lead to better partnership working between the larger unitary councils and other public bodies.

- **Improved services and outcomes** (cited by approximately 5%): A smaller, albeit notable, proportion of respondents felt these changes would lead to improved service quality and delivery, and better social outcomes because of the above noted potential for efficiencies and joined-up decision-making and services, and partnership working, as well as scope for further investment in local areas and services due to cost savings.

- **Fairness and equitability** (cited by approximately 2-3%): A smaller group of respondents suggested that the proposals could lead to a fairer and more equitable system as a single, larger unitary council could result in more consistency around access to, and quality of, services and support. Relatedly, some also said it could result in a more considered and cohesive approach to tackling inequalities across a larger area.

4.8.   However, approximately 20% of respondents were **sceptical about the proposals** for local government reorganisation stating they could see **no real benefits, expressing doubt or outright opposition.**

4.9.   The findings are broadly **consistent across different areas and demographics**, albeit with slightly greater scepticism amongst respondents in Rushcliffe and Broxtowe council areas.

What concerns, if any, do you have about the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Respondents are concerned about urban-rural imbalance and the financial risks of local government reorganisation, as well as loss of local representation, accountability and knowledge

4.10.   Urban–rural imbalance was the biggest single concern amongst respondents with costs/financial risks and loss of representation also consistently high mentions. These issues feed into concerns about service disruption and decline:

- **Geographic / urban–rural imbalance** (cited by approximately 35% of respondents): Strong concerns about Nottingham City in particular as the major urban centre in the county dominating rural locations in neighbouring council areas. This includes a concern that larger councils will not be able to tailor services to suit rural areas and that rural areas will receive inconsistent service provision or be deprioritised (loss of rural voice) compared to urban areas, as well as suffer from some of the challenges in urban areas and councils currently serving those areas. This view is heightened in areas surrounding Nottingham City, especially Broxtowe and Rushcliffe. Relatedly, some respondents suggested that Nottingham City could be a separate council in its own right to avoid some of these concerns and provide services specific to an urban area.

- **Financial risks** (cited by approximately 25%): Worries that reorganisation would be expensive and potentially not achieve the projected savings in the longer-term. Similarly, there are concerns that reorganisation could be used to bail out councils that are perceived to be struggling financially, especially Nottingham City, which in turn could lead to increased council tax and/or worse services in neighbouring areas.

- **Concerns over efficiency and complexity** (cited by approximately 10%): Related, there is scepticism that larger councils will be more efficient, simpler to navigate and improve access to services but rather in practice would add complexity and bureaucracy (and costs due to inefficiencies and waste).

- **Loss of local representation, accountability and knowledge** (cited by approximately 20%): Merging councils could increase the distance between decision-makers and communities, diluting residents' voices and reducing accountability and local connections. This could result in less responsive and tailored services to meet local needs and priorities, as well as a system and services that will be harder to navigate and access.

- **Service quality decline** (cited by approximately 15%): Linked to the above points, specific concerns that bigger councils would stretch services, reduce responsiveness, and worsen frontline delivery. Similarly, some respondents are concerned about the complexity of merging councils, which could lead to confusion and disruption, affecting service quality in the short-term.

- **Job losses / staffing concerns** (cited by approximately 5%): Relatedly, some respondents noted risks of redundancies, loss of experienced staff, and disruption to council workforces, in turn affecting services. This concern was shared between both residents and staff currently working in local councils with the latter explicitly concerned about their own jobs.

- **Politicisation** (cited by approximately 5%): A few respondents questioned whether these proposals are about political parties using reorganisation to consolidate power, or about democracy being weakened.

- **Preference for reform within existing structure** (cited by approximately 2-3%): As a result of the above concerns, some respondents said existing councils should be improved rather than replaced.

- **No need for change** (cited by approximately 2-3%): The system is not broken, so there is not a need to fix it, especially with risk that any changes could lead to less effective councils and services.

4.11. Approximately 5% of respondents said they did **not have any concerns about local government reorganisation and/or saw the risks as minimal.**

4.12. The findings are broadly **consistent across different areas and demographics**, albeit with greater concern amongst respondents in Rushcliffe and Broxtowe council areas especially related to Nottingham City and concerns around urban-rural imbalance and financial risks/costs.

Focus group insight:

Participants in the focus groups echoed the potential benefits and concerns around local government reorganisation, albeit with a **skew towards concerns over benefits.** Most participants could **appreciate the potential efficiencies and cost-savings, although they questioned whether in practice these would be achieved and moreover where they would be invested.** They also could see that there may be opportunities for more joined-up decision-making, working and services, although they also felt these could be **achieved within the current structure:**

"It's all well and good saying there will be these savings and I can see on paper how they may think that's the case, but I'm not entirely convinced. I'd like to see the evidence and calculations because in my experience these things are a lot harder to achieve in practice." *Rural participant*

"Cost-savings are fine, but how will they benefit me? Will I get a lower council tax? Will they be re-invested in services? Or will they just be a way of balancing the books and in effect we're just bailing out the government or failing councils?" *Rural participant*

"I can see that there's room for improvement in the way things are currently. Services could be improved, there could be opportunities to work more strategically and regionally. I guess what I don't fully get is why this can't happen as things are now. Why do we have to rip up everything and start again. It's costly and time consuming to do that and it's not guaranteed to get results. It does feel a bit like a cost-cutting exercise dressed up." *Urban participant*

The two biggest concerns cited by focus group participants (mainly from rural areas) were around the **urban-rural imbalance and associated dominance of Nottingham City, and the loss of local representation and knowledge:**

"The benefit of the current system is that you've got a council focussed on the needs of Nottingham City and another focussed on an area with a completely different set of issues and characteristics, a much more rural area. So you'd be losing that focus by creating larger councils and you risk creating councils that end up having different divisions in them, one to deal with rural issues and one to deal with urban issues because some of the challenges and priorities in these areas will be vastly different, so in the end you're not making any savings. Or what's more likely is that everything will be configured to suit the city because it will dominate any future larger council. It just feels like my voice and that of my community would be lost within the thousands more voices of those that live in the city." *Rural participant*

A few participants also questioned how **local government reorganisation fits with regional devolution and other public bodies and reforms:**

"The whole agenda and governance in local government feels a bit muddled to me. They created the East Midlands regional council, which I felt like was adding an extra tier and now they're saying they want to reduce the tiers. Then you've also got things like the Police and Crime Commissioner who is meant to reflect local issues. You've got all these layers already, so they take some away and then add some more in, and in the end it's no more or less complex, confusing or cost-effective, and in the process you've incurred costs, time and disruption. It just feels messy and like an exercise in job creation and constant unnecessary change." *Urban participant*

Section 5: Future councils

Introduction

5.1.   This section presents findings about the design of the potential future councils, including the most important principles and features of a new council and the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions.

What should be most important when designing a new council?

Quality services, value for money and meeting local needs are the priorities for a future council

5.2.   80% of respondents cited providing good value, reliable services, following by 72% noting meeting local needs and being fair to all parts of the area.

5.3.   64% said saving money and using council tax wisely and the same proportion mentioned ensuring services work together, while 54% said working with local neighbourhoods and communities.

Figure 5.1: Most important for a new council
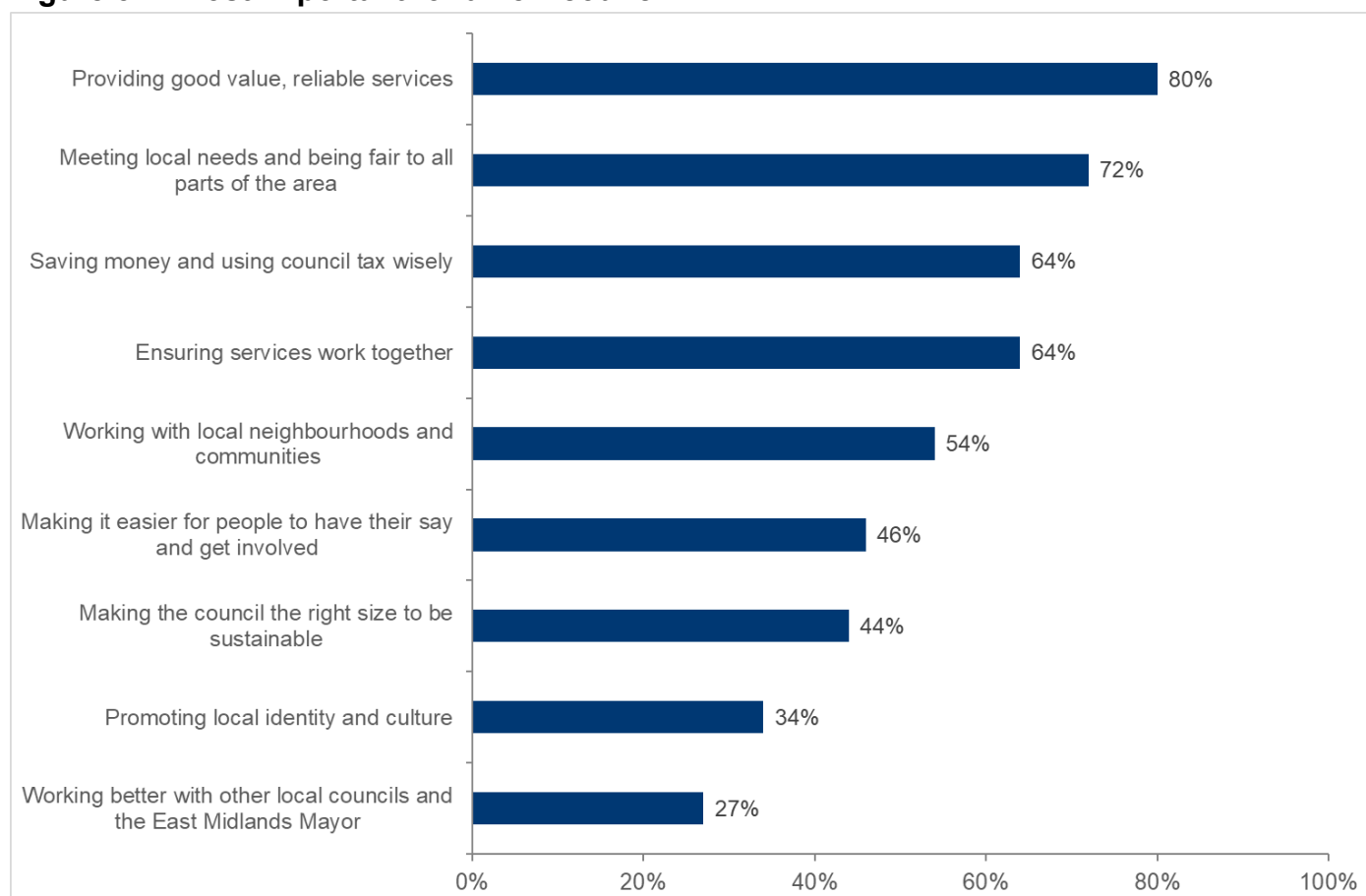
Number of respondents: 11,335.

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

5.4.   In the 'other' responses, approximately 5% of respondents said that new councils should engage effectively and meaningfully with local residents, respond to local concerns and issues and consequently provide representation and accountability.

5.5.   Whilst there are variations by council area (and also other demographics), these are not notable and the order is similar. Consequently, for succinctness, these are not presented in this report (although they are available in a separate document).

Focus group insight:

Discussions in the focus groups reflected the results in the engagement survey with an emphasis on **effective delivery of core services, value for money, competent management and meeting the needs of local residents**, including those in rural and urban areas**:**

"Keep it simple really – good quality services, keep council tax low and manage the council and it services effectively." *Urban participant*

"The role of local councils, local government is to reflect the priorities of local people and meet their needs. Local councillors have an important role in this, as too does effective engagement with local people, communities and neighbourhoods. So any future council needs to preserve this approach, which I think is more difficult to do in a larger council." *Urban participant*
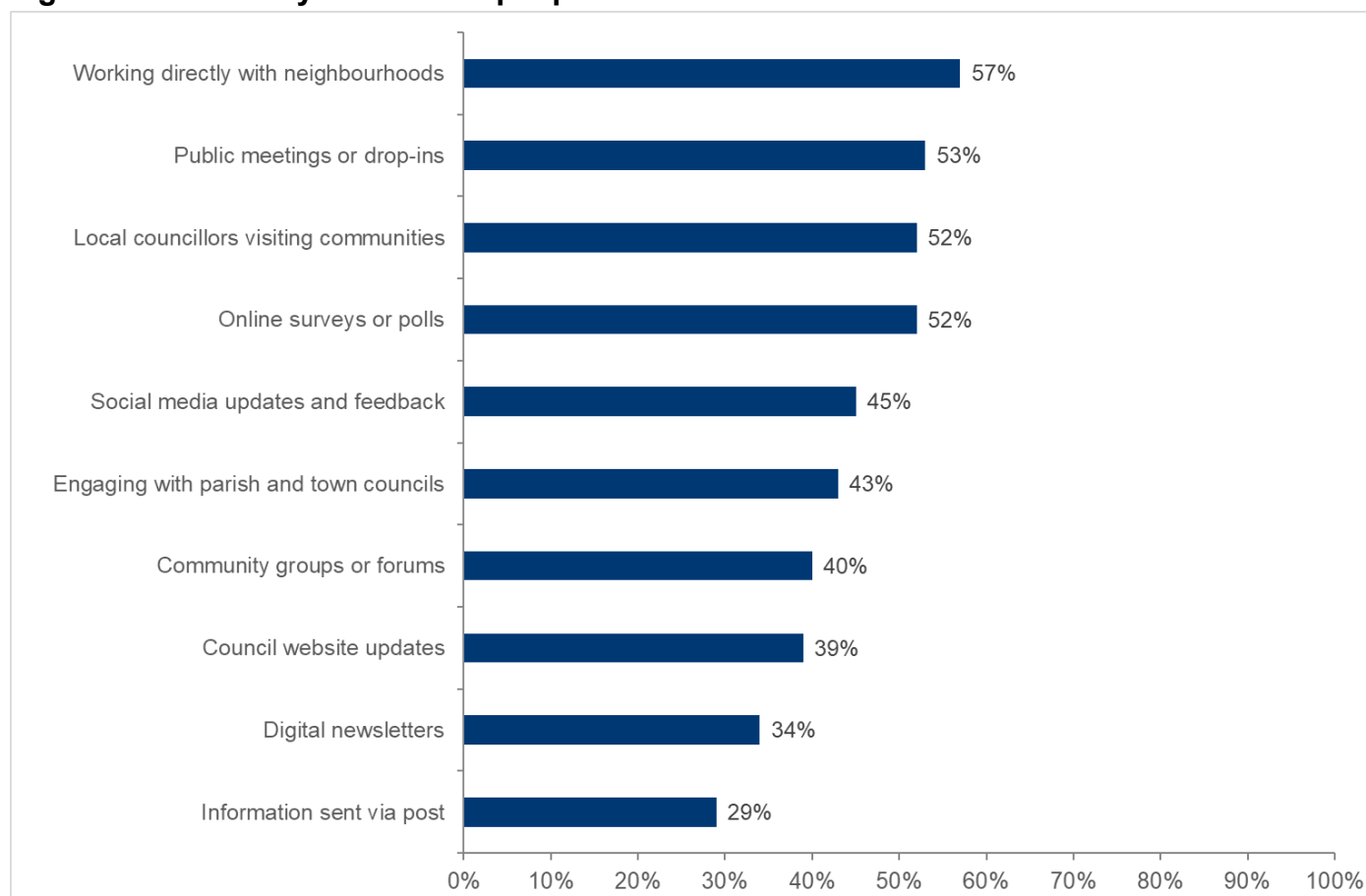
"I'm worried a larger council will be more detached from local people and local areas. How will they make sure that they understand and respond to the specific local concerns, especially of rural areas compared to somewhere like the city? That's something they really need to bottom-out in a new council." *Rural participant*

Page 53

What are the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions?

Neighbourhood working, direct resident engagement, and local councillors along with parish and town councils and community groups are the best way to involve people in local decisions

5.6.   57% of respondents said working directly with neighbourhoods, while several respondents mentioned engaging with local residents through public meetings (53%), online surveys (52%) and social media (45%).

5.7.   52% mentioned local councillors visiting communities, 43% said engaging with parish and town councils, and 40% mentioned community groups or forums.

Figure 5.2: Best ways to involve people in local decisions

Category	Percentage
Working directly with neighbourhoods	57%
Public meetings or drop-ins	53%
Local councillors visiting communities	52%
Online surveys or polls	52%
Social media updates and feedback	45%
Engaging with parish and town councils	43%
Community groups or forums	40%
Council website updates	39%
Digital newsletters	34%
Information sent via post	29%

Number of respondents: 11,262.

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

5.8.   In the 'other' responses, approximately 2-3% of respondents highlighted the importance of engaging with local residents prior to decisions being made and avoiding decisions being 'imposed' on residents. Relatedly, some of these respondents raised concerns that their voices are not heard and will not make a difference. Similarly, some said they are concerned that new and larger councils will lead to less representation and undermine resident voices and democracy as there will be a greater distance between local people and issues, and their decision-makers.

5.9.   Whilst there are variations by council area (and also other demographics), these are not notable and the order is similar. Consequently, for succinctness, these are not presented in this report (although they are available in a separate document).

Focus group insight:

Focus group participants said it is **important that local people are involved in decision-making**, both in principle and especially given the potential changes with concerns that larger councils may be more detached from local people and diverse local areas. They felt that **local councillors, parish councils, community groups and working closely in local neighbourhoods/communities** would be most important. They also wanted **engagement and consultation to be genuine and meaningful**:

"It's really important anyway, in principle, to involve local people, but even more so if these changes go ahead. I've engaged with my local councillor on a few things, so I'd be worried that the changes will take that away. Local councillors, if you get a good one, can be really important. And what is happening with the parish councils? They play an important role on the ground in rural areas like mine." *Rural participant*

"I don't think it really matters how big the council is, they're already quite big now covering lots of people and areas. It's more about how well they know their communities and how well they respond to those issues. You want to see them getting involved at the grassroots level, out and about in their neighbourhoods and communities and delivering services at that more local level to meet specific needs. Council staff and councillors have a role in this, but so too do local community groups and charities because they know their areas and often work at a more individual or local level." *Urban participant*

"You can run as many surveys and focus groups as you want, but it's not worth much if it doesn't change things. I'm worried that this process is a done deal, that these changes we're discussing will happen regardless of what we say. So my main point is that any involvement of local people needs to be done earnestly and with integrity." *Urban participant*

Section 6: Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Introduction

6.1.   This section presents the proposals for reorganisation of local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils and different options for the proposed new councils.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area?

Over half disagree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils, with a relationship between perceived effectiveness of the current system and levels of agreement, as well as variations by area

6.2.   30% of respondents agree with the proposal, including 11% that strongly agree. In contrast, 58% of respondents disagree with the proposal, including 43% that strongly disagree.

6.3.   There is a relationship between perceptions of the effectiveness of the current system and levels of agreement with the proposal. For example, 16% of those that said the current structure of local councils is effective agree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils compared with 60% of those that said the current system is ineffective. i.e. in other words, those that consider the current system ineffective are more likely to state there is a case for change.

Figure 6.1: Level of agreement with proposal to replace nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
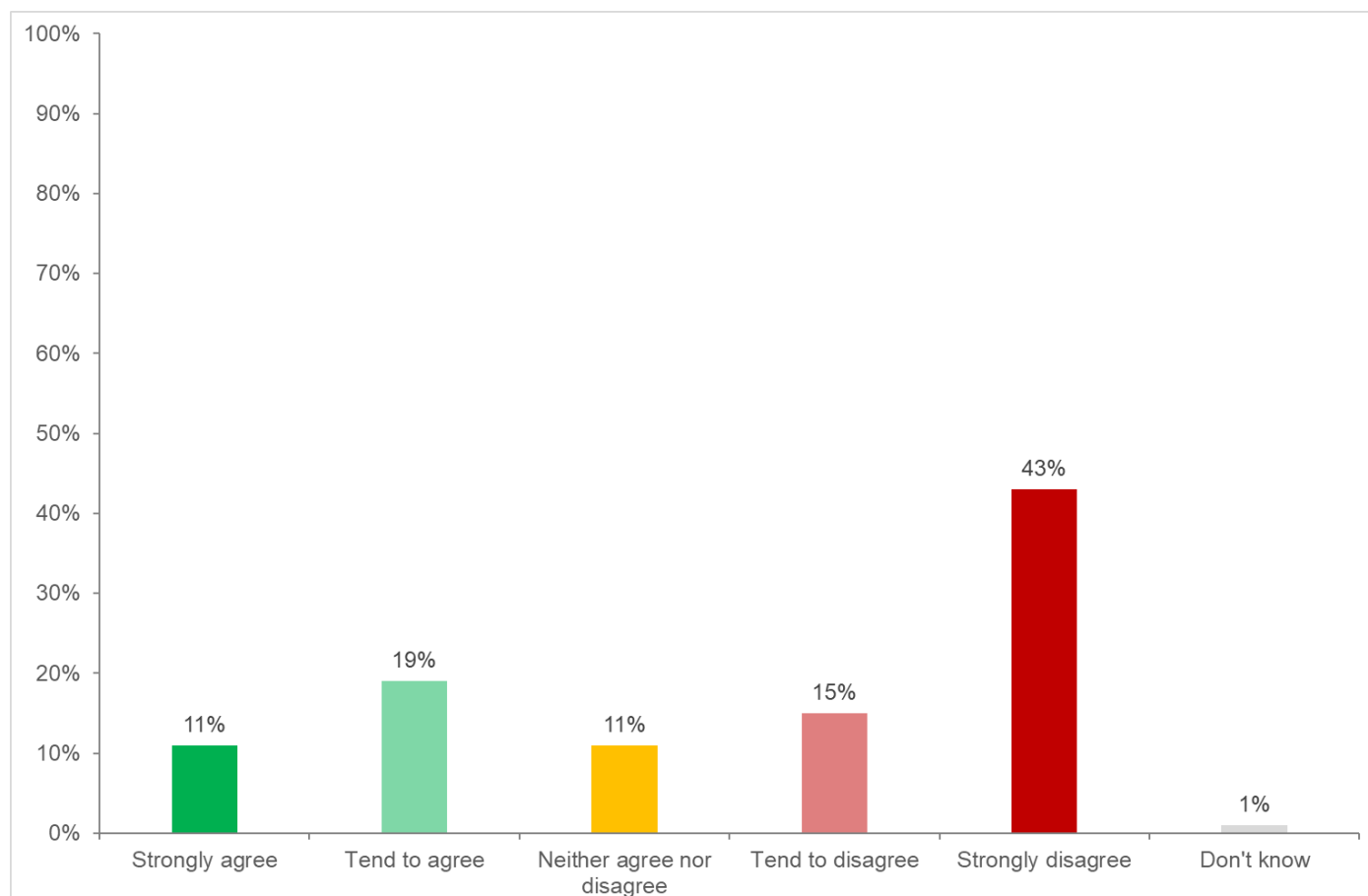
Number of respondents: 11,427.

6.4.   Respondents in Nottingham City are more likely to agree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two (63% agree) than respondents in other areas. In contrast, respondents in Broxtowe (20% agree), Rushcliffe (22% agree) and Gedling (27% agree) council areas are less likely to agree.

Figure 6.2: Level of agreement with proposal to replace nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire by council area

	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark and Sherwood	Notting-ham	Rushcliffe
Strongly agree	11%	10%	7%	9%	14%	12%	31%	8%
Tend to agree	21%	21%	13%	18%	23%	24%	32%	14%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%	18%	8%	11%	16%	17%	15%	7%
Tend to disagree	14%	21%	13%	15%	15%	17%	8%	15%
Strongly disagree	36%	28%	58%	46%	31%	28%	11%	55%
Don't know	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

6.5. Consequently, when the data is re-weighted by council area to be proportionate to population sizes across Nottinghamshire there is a change in the results with levels of agreement increasing (as the locations with lower levels of agreement have responded in greater numbers relative to their population size). The re-weighted data is more polarised with 39% of respondents agreeing compared with 46% that disagree:

- Strongly agree: 16%
- Tend to agree: 23%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 14%
- Tend to disagree: 14%
- Strongly disagree: 32%
- Don't know: 2%

6.6. Respondents that are less likely to agree with the proposal to replace nine existing councils with two are:

- Women: 26% agree compared with 35% of women.
- Aged under 35: 37% agree compared with 30% of older respondents.
- People living with a disability that affects their lives a lot: 25% compared with 32% other respondents.

6.7. Respondents were asked to explain their answers to help understand the levels of agreement for the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with 70% of respondents providing further explanation. Many of these comments reflect the benefits and concerns raised earlier about local government reorganisation in England in general. In summary, those that **agreed tended to state that the proposals would reduce duplication, generate efficiencies and consequently lead to cost-savings**, while a smaller number also said that it would lead to a **simplification of the system and therefore improved accessibility.**

6.8. Those that disagreed are **concerned about fairness and equitability, especially in relation to an urban-rural imbalance.** Similarly, they are concerned about a **loss of local representation, knowledge and accountability**, and associated issues around **access to services and responsiveness to local issues.** Some respondents **oppose local government reorganisation in general and in principle**, with concerns that implementation will be disruptive, and **improvements and savings will not be achieved in practice.** There is also some **distrust about the motives** behind the proposals and at a local level **concern that neighbouring areas will inherit the issues experienced by Nottingham City.**

6.9. The following provides more detail on the reasons alongside volume of opinion:

Reasons for agreement:

- **Efficiencies, streamlining and cost-savings** (cited by approximately 15% of respondents): Fewer councils would reduce duplication and bureaucracy with less waste and administrative layers resulting in cost-savings and potentially improved services.
- **Simplification of system and services** (cited by approximately 5%): Related to the above, a single layer/simplified structure and larger/fewer councils could be easier for residents to navigate and access services, as well as partners to engage with (resulting in more joined-up/partnership working, including between the two new councils).

Reasons for neutrality:

- **Balanced views** (cited by approximately 5% of respondents): Whilst there is an appreciation that changes may have a positive impact, there is also scepticism that these will be realised in practice. Similarly, some respondents said that the current system works satisfactorily and that change is not essential, even if it leads to improvements.

- **Lack of knowledge, information or understanding of the proposals or certainty about the outcomes** (cited by approximately 5%): This meant that respondents could not form a firm or clear opinion regarding agreement with the proposals or were uncertain in practice what the changes would entail and the potential benefits, as well as whether any benefits would be achieved in practice.

Reasons for disagreement:

- **Rural inequality and urban-rural divide** (cited by approximately 25% of respondents): Concern that larger councils will not be able to tailor services to suit rural areas and that rural and smaller areas will lose their voice and receive inconsistent or unfair service provision, resource allocation or be deprioritised compared to urban areas, as well as suffer from some of the challenges in urban areas and councils currently serving those areas. This view is heightened in areas surrounding Nottingham City where a relatively large urban area will be at the centre of the new council, and where some respondents in these areas do not want to take on the problems and challenges experienced by Nottingham City. Relatedly, some respondents suggested that Nottingham City could be a separate council in its own right to avoid some of these concerns and provide services specific to an urban area.

- **Loss of local representation, knowledge and accountability** (cited by approximately 20%): Concern that two councils would be more detached from local communities and not responsive to local issues, needs and priorities. This includes less access to councillors and decision-makers, loss of local identity and diminishing the ability of smaller communities to influence decision, with the concern heightened in more rural areas located away from urban centres.

- **Impact on services and outcomes** (cited by approximately 10%): Related to the above there is a concern that larger, potentially more centralised, councils will become more complex and difficult to navigate, as well as less in touch with local issues and priorities. Consequently, this will undermine access to service, negatively impact on quality and responsiveness of services and lead to reduced social outcomes, especially in rural areas away from the urban centres that may dominate the proposed new larger councils.

- **Concerns about implementation** (cited by approximately 5%): Scepticism that proposed benefits may not be realised and concern that disruption and confusion in making changes may outweigh benefits, at least in the short-term. This includes not realising the potential financial benefits and making it harder to navigate councils and access services.

- **Opposed to local government reorganisation in principle and specifically a two-council model (cited by approximately 5%):** Related to many of the above points, some respondents said they do not agree with local government reorganisation in principle. They either said that changes are not needed as the system is not broken, that improvements should be made to the existing councils in situ or that alternative approaches should be considered such as a whole county model and/or a Nottingham City specific model.

- **Distrust about motives** (cited by approximately 2-3%): A smaller proportion of respondents raised concerns that the proposals are about politicians and political parties seeking to strengthen their positions and power, and/or that it is about neighbouring councils and residents bailing out Nottingham City council for its perceived financial and delivery challenges.

Focus group insight:

Participants in the focus groups shared **similar viewpoints to those in the engagement survey and expressed earlier about Government's local government reorganisation across England.** The main points made were that a **two-council solution and associated larger councils would distance decision-makers from local issues and their communities,** including urban and rural areas, which in turn would lead to less responsive services. Consequently, they tended to feel that any potential efficiency, cost-saving and service improvement benefits would be undermined. This said, it is **worth noting that the concerns were mainly about larger councils not necessarily moving to a unitary model:**

"Big isn't necessarily better. I think it's difficult enough already for councils to engage with their residents and really know the issues in each area, each neighbourhood. This is only going to be more difficult now if they're larger and more distanced from the people they're meant to serve, especially if they have lots of areas within their council that are different, from large cities to small towns and villages." *Rural participant*

"I don't necessarily disagree with the idea of moving to a unitary model. The two-tier system is confusing, complex and bureaucratic. But I think two large councils may not be the answer, especially with one of them having Nottingham City at its heart. Big can sometimes mean that things are more cumbersome and more complex, which means it may make things worse. Have they considered any other solutions, like 3 or 4 councils? Or a city council on its own, with then a larger county one around it. That way at least you avoid the city being mixed in with villages and rural areas." *Urban participant*

The core options

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option (Option 1b)?

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling (known as Option 1b). This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Rushcliffe. The second covering Gedling, Broxtowe, and Nottingham City.

There is concern that the proposed boundaries, especially around Nottingham City, are illogical or unfair, excluding some relevant areas close to the city while including outlining rural areas that do not have much in common with Nottingham City

6.10.   Approximately half of respondents raised **concerns about the way the boundaries are drawn and the associated geography in the proposed new councils.** There is strong concern that the proposed boundaries are illogical or unfair with many respondents highlighting the exclusion of some neighbouring areas such as West Bridgford in Rushcliffe Borough Council and some areas close to the city in Ashfield District Council, which are seen as integral to Nottingham's urban area. At the same time, the **council covering Nottingham City is considered two large in scope, bringing in areas that do not align in terms of identity, characteristics, and access to services with the City**, while under-representing the city compared to its surrounding districts.

6.11.   Relatedly, approximately 20% of respondents are critical of Nottingham City Council, which they perceive to be struggling financially. Consequently, they are **worried that neighbouring areas will be pulled into the city's problems and essentially 'bailing it out'.** In turn, they are concerned that they will have worse services and higher council tax. Respondents in Broxtowe and also some in Gedling particularly expressed these views. In contrast, some respondents that live in Nottingham were concerned that they may be forced to subsidise more rural areas.

6.12.   Similarly, approximately 10% of respondents raised **concerns that rural areas in neighbouring councils will lose their voice within a council dominated by Nottingham City** (this is a particular concern of respondents living in Broxtowe). They said this could lead to less suitable services and/or loss of resources and services in rural areas, the new council not meeting the needs and priorities of rural areas, and rural areas subsidising the city.

6.13.   Approximately 10% of respondents **explicitly supported the option, albeit conditionally.** This was often tied to an acceptance that local government has funding issues and that compromises are necessary if savings are to be made. That said, these respondents tended to say that they only support this option if in practice is leads to efficiencies and cost-reductions, as well as improved services and outcomes.

Focus group insight:

Focus group participants tended to have **negative views about Option 1b**, reflecting those in the engagement survey. Firstly, they were **concerned about Nottingham City dominating the new council** and the neighbouring areas being used to resolve its perceived financial issues, while receiving services that do not suit their local areas. The second reason related to the **exclusion of certain areas that neighbour the city**, such as West Brigford (and also Hucknall in Ashfield District Council area).

"I'm against it. I feel like residents living in Broxtowe are going to have to pay for all the financial mismanagement of Nottingham City Council and subsidise the city and take on its problems. I don't see any benefits to anyone outside the city. Broxtowe is a very different area to the city, with different identity, heritage, character and issues. Are we now going to be treated the same way as those that live in Nottingham and receive the same types of services?" *Rural participant*

"How did they draw up these boundaries. Why do they have Broxtowe and not say West Bridgford which is in Rushcliffe. There are definitely some places that are more like suburbs of Nottingham that you could argue for inclusion, but not some of the more rural areas in Broxtowe. Some of them are just a few miles away, but they feel a world away from the city." *Urban participant*

This said, some participants that **live in Gedling Borough Council area were more agnostic about the option, given their proximity and relationship to Nottingham:**

"I'm fairly relaxed about it to be honest. I do feel like I live in a suburb of Nottingham – that's where I tell people I'm from. I work in Nottingham and we socialise and recreate in Nottingham. I appreciate some of the concerns around finances and management, but changes can be made to improve that. If this is all going ahead, then I can see the benefits of being part of a larger city council than with say the rest of Nottinghamshire that I have a bit less to do with." *Urban participant*

Participants living in other parts of Nottinghamshire had less to say about this option (or all the options) because they would not be in a council with Nottingham City. However, there were **concerns about being in a large council covering such a large area:**

"On one level it doesn't really affect me that much, I'd be more worried if I was in one of the areas proposed for inclusion with Nottingham City. But on another level, this option geographically just doesn't sit well with me. The county-wide council is just so large. I live at the top of it and I'm wondering what I've got in common with areas and communities right at the bottom of it in Rushcliffe. It just feels like there should be three or four councils, not just two – it all fills a bit simplistic, which makes you worry about the thinking and evidence behind it all." *Rural participant*

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option (Option 1e)?

This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Gedling. The second covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City, and Rushcliffe.

Whilst there is more positivity towards this option, notable concerns remain including around the proposed boundaries and inclusion or exclusion of certain areas

6.14. There is **more positivity/support towards this option compared to 1b** with approximately a third of respondents supporting it or at least state that it is the best of two options. This in part is because some respondents say it **makes more sense geographically and/or is a cleaner North-South split** with a better division of populations and resources. Nottingham City respondents are most supportive, although question marks remain about the boundaries not being wholly logical and linked to the urban-suburban connections between the city and areas in its immediate vicinity and the way local residents live and connect with the city. Respondents living in Gedling are also more supportive about option 1e compared to 1b, although some that live closer to the city felt that it is more appropriate that they are part of a city/south council rather than one orientated towards the north.

6.15. This said, many respondents re-assert concerns about the option **joining outlying rural and other areas to the city that have little to no relationship with it, while excluding other areas** that are much closer geographically and more connected to the city (cited by approximately 25% of respondents). These concerns were particularly made by respondents living in Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Council areas.

6.16. Similarly, **concerns about bailing out Nottingham City Council** and inheriting its issues (cited by approximately 20% of respondents) and **rural-urban differences and associated concerns** (cited by approximately 20%) in relation to the city continued to be noted with this option, especially amongst respondents living in Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Council areas that are worried about being 'over-shadowed' or their voice lost with local identity, decision-making and priorities absorbed into the urban and city areas. Some respondents from Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Council areas said that if such an option were to go ahead those councils should take over the running of the new council.

6.17. Approximately 10% of respondents **outright oppose the option**, often citing issues raised earlier about local government reorganisation in general. Some of these respondents also **request more information and question the evidence base**, including around identifying the options and the practical reality of the potential benefits and savings.

6.18. Across both options, some respondents **suggested alternatives** including a one county option, a two-council option involving the city and immediate surrounding areas (but not to the current extent of proposed options) and then a wider county council, or a three-council solution – one in the north, one in the south and then one based around the city and its immediate vicinity.

Focus group insight:

Much of the discussion in the focus groups about Option 1e **reiterated points made about Option 1b, and the results of the engagement survey.** Participants said that whilst they felt **Option 1e was more logical, they also questioned the exclusion of some neighbouring areas to the north of the city and the inclusion of areas at the bottom** of Rushcliffe Borough Council in the option involving the city.

"On the face of it this seems like a more logical and fair option, a more natural split between the north and the south of the county." Urban participant

"This options resolves some of the issues we discussed about the other option like including West Bridgford, but you've now got an option that excludes some areas in Gedling Borough that are on the doorstep of Nottingham and instead includes some areas that are miles away from the city in really rural areas. I don't see how this can work as a coherent council." Urban participant

"I live right at the bottom of Rushcliffe Borough in a small village. It's as rural as you can get. I try to avoid going into Nottingham and if I do, it's only to the outskirts. I have very little to do with it. So it feels strange that I'd then be in a council with Nottingham at its centre. I can't see how that would benefit me or my area in any way." Rural participant

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about the development of this option (Nottingham City specific option)?

Nottingham City Council boundary review option that could include <u>parts</u> of Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, and Gedling as one of the unitary councils. The second council would cover the rest of Nottinghamshire – **only asked to respondents that live or work in Nottingham City.**

This is considered a sensible and logical solution by *Nottingham City respondents*, although concerns remain around fairness, urban-rural imbalance and that this may not resolve perceived deep-seated financial and service issues, while in practice it may be difficult to identify appropriate boundaries

6.19. This approach was often described as the **"most sensible and logical" solution** (cited by approximately half of respondents to this question) by Nottingham City respondents. Respondents that supported it said it is fairer with suburban residents who use city services paying city council tax and having voting rights, essentially creating a **better alignment between service use, taxation, and representation.** Some respondents also perceived it as potentially a **less disruptive and preferable alternative to wider structural reorganisation.** There was also support for the **concept of a city-specific solution and relatedly a strong city at the heart of the county.**

6.20. However, **concerns remain about fairness of boundaries and urban-rural divides**, potentially dragging rural areas into an urban focussed council and an urban area having to deliver and potentially subsidise services to a rural area (cited by approximately 20%). There is also **scepticism as to whether a larger council with new boundaries will solve financial pressures and service delivery issues** with some believing these are deep-seated and underlying in nature (cited by approximately 15%).

6.21. There are also **concerns and debate about the drawing up of new boundaries** – their appropriateness and the areas that would be included/excluded, which is not considered clear-cut or straight-forward (cited by approximately 10%). Relatedly, some respondents said that there is a **risk of disruption or disputes over boundaries, with concern that some of this could be politically motivated** (cited by approximately 5%).

6.22. Some respondents said that a boundary review, whilst potentially sensible, could be **more challenging to deliver as it involved breaking-up existing local councils**, which could undermine some of the potential cost-savings and service improvements (cited by approximately 5%). Similarly, a few respondents said that **existing council boundaries reflected local community connections, heritage and identity and breaking-up these council areas could be divisive**, especially if the boundaries are not identified appropriately (cited by approximately 5%). This was **especially cited in the case of West Bridgford, which is considered linked to the city but also an integral part of the Rushcliffe Borough Council area** and therefore risked undermining ties between the town and neighbouring villages and leaving the rest of the council area 'adrift' (cited by approximately 15%).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Engagement survey

Note: This is an export from an online version of the survey.

Give your views on the future of Local Government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Introduction

The way local councils in England are organised is being fundamentally changed for the first time in 50 years.

All nine local councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are working together to gather views on how local government should work in the future. This includes the city, county, and all district and borough councils. The survey is open to everyone who lives, works, or has an interest in the area. Your feedback will help shape proposals that reflect the needs and priorities of local communities.

The changes being considered are significant. If approved, all nine existing councils would be abolished and replaced with two new, larger councils. These new councils would each be responsible for delivering all local services in their area, bringing everything from housing and social care to waste collection and road maintenance under one organisation.

This would be a major shift from the current system, where responsibilities are split between different councils. The aim is to make services more joined-up, easier to access, and more responsive to local needs. It could also reduce duplication and overheads, helping to save money and make local government more efficient.

The feedback from this survey will help shape the final proposals, which must be submitted to Government by November 2025. The Government will then decide how and when the new arrangements will be introduced.

This questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. **Please complete it by Sunday 14 September 2025.**

The survey is being conducted with support from Public Perspectives, an independent organisation that works with local councils and communities.

Your personal details are managed securely and within data protection laws. Your responses are anonymous and confidential. This means that we will not report your answers alongside your personal details in such a way that you can be identified. Each of the partner council privacy notices will apply and anonymised data will be shared between councils. Please visit the following to read Public Perspectives' privacy notice:

www.publicperspectives.co.uk/data-security-and-privacy/

Information in a different format:
If you need help or support to respond to this questionnaire, or would like it in an alternative format (large print, British Sign Language etc.) or language, please contact Public Perspectives via e-mail on: Nottinghamshire@publicperspectives.co.uk or Freephone: 0800 533 5386 (please leave a message and we will call you back).

Please read the background information before responding: Read background information

Click 'Next' below to begin responding to the questionnaire.

Living, working and studying in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Q1a. Are you responding as . . .?

Please select all relevant answers. These questions help us understand who is responding to the survey.
- ❑ A resident living in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire
- ❑ Someone who works in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire
- ❑ A voluntary or community organisation
- ❑ A Town or Parish Council
- ❑ A District / Borough / City / County Council employee
- ❑ Another public sector organisation
- ❑ A local councillor
- ❑ A business owner or business leader operating in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire
- ❑ Other

If 'Other', please state:
_____

Please state the name of the organisation or business you represent:
_____

To help you answer the following questions, this map shows the boundaries of the local councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire:

Key

1 - Bassetlaw
2 - Mansfield
3 - Newark and Sherwood
4 - Ashfield
5 - Gedling
6 - Broxtowe
7 - Nottingham
8 - Rushcliffe
9 - Nottinghamshire
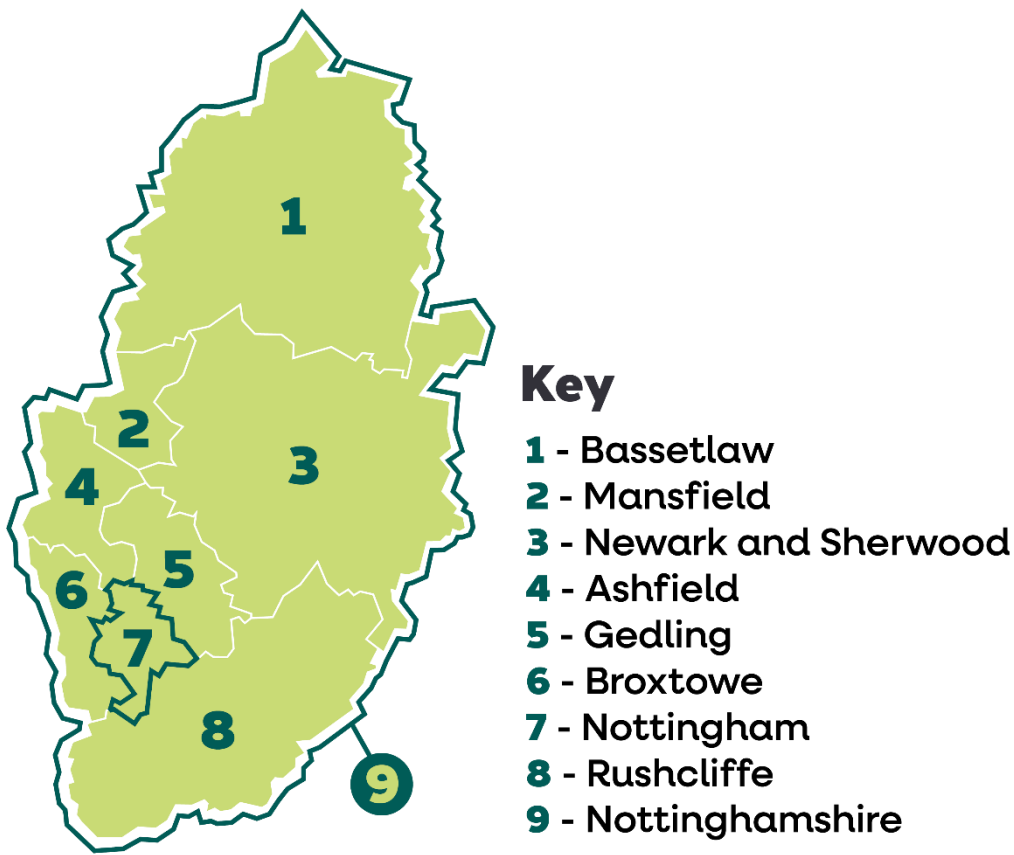
Q1b. Which council area does your organisation mainly operate in?

Please select all relevant answers.
❑ Ashfield District Council area
❑ Bassetlaw District Council area
❑ Broxtowe Borough Council area
❑ Gedling Borough Council area
❑ Mansfield District Council area
❑ Newark and Sherwood District Council area
❑ Nottingham City Council area
❑ Nottinghamshire County Council area
❑ Rushcliffe Borough Council area
❑ Across all of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
❑ Outside of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
❑ Don't know

Q2a. Which council area do you live in?

If you are uncertain which council covers your area, visit the following website and enter your postcode: **www.gov.uk/find-local-council**

Please select one answer only.
- Ashfield District Council area
- Bassetlaw District Council area
- Broxtowe Borough Council area
- Gedling Borough Council area
- Mansfield District Council area
- Newark and Sherwood District Council area
- Nottingham City Council area
- Rushcliffe Borough Council area
- Outside of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- Don't know

Q2b. What is your postcode? (This is asked so we can analyse the results by different areas. We will not be able to identify you personally)

_____

Q3. Where is your main place of work or study?

Please select all relevant answers.
- Ashfield District Council area
- Bassetlaw District Council area
- Broxtowe Borough Council area
- Gedling Borough Council area
- Mansfield District Council area
- Newark and Sherwood District Council area
- Nottingham City Council area
- Nottinghamshire County Council area
- Rushcliffe Borough Council area
- Across all of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- Outside of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- Don't know
- Not applicable - not currently in work / education

If 'Outside of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire', where is your main place of work or study?

_____

Page 69

Your local area

Q3a. **How do you describe where you're from when talking to someone who doesn't live nearby? Which names or places do you mention?**

Please list below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3b. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are proud to live in your local area?**

Please select one answer only.
❑ Strongly agree
❑ Tend to agree
❑ Neither agree nor disagree
❑ Tend to disagree
❑ Strongly disagree
❑ Don't know

Q3c. **Thinking generally, what would you say are most important in making somewhere a good place to live?**

Please select all relevant answers.
❑ Arts and cultural services such as theatres and museums
❑ Activities and facilities for children and young people
❑ Community events and activities and supporting local community groups
❑ Decent and affordable homes
❑ Health services such as mental health services and promoting healthy lifestyles
❑ Jobs and supporting people into work
❑ Keeping the streets and public areas clean and tidy
❑ Maintaining roads and pavements
❑ Parks, sports and leisure facilities
❑ Public transport, roads and parking
❑ Refuse collection and recycling
❑ Regeneration of town centres / high streets, including shops and markets
❑ Schools and places of learning
❑ Support and services for older people and vulnerable groups
❑ Supporting residents to reduce their impact on the environment
❑ Tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing crime
❑ Other
❑ Don't know

If 'Other', please state:

_____

Q3d. And what are your priorities for improvement in the local area?

Please select all relevant answers.
- ❑ Arts and cultural services such as theatres and museums
- ❑ Activities and facilities for children and young people
- ❑ Community events and activities and supporting local community groups
- ❑ Decent and affordable homes
- ❑ Health services such as mental health services and promoting healthy lifestyles
- ❑ Jobs and supporting people into work
- ❑ Keeping the streets and public areas clean and tidy
- ❑ Maintaining roads and pavements
- ❑ Parks, sports and leisure facilities
- ❑ Public transport, roads and parking
- ❑ Refuse collection and recycling
- ❑ Regeneration of town centres / high streets, including shops and markets
- ❑ Schools and places of learning
- ❑ Support and services for older people and vulnerable groups
- ❑ Supporting residents to reduce their impact on the environment
- ❑ Tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing crime
- ❑ Nothing
- ❑ Other
- ❑ Don't know

If 'Other', please state:

_____

The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Currently, council services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are delivered differently, depending on where you live.

In Nottinghamshire, local services are currently delivered under what is known as a 'two-tier' council structure. For example, your local borough or district council will collect your waste, but the county council will dispose of it. You will also be represented by two sets of councillors, borough or district councillors and county councillors.

Nottinghamshire County Council oversees county-wide services such as social care, education, and road maintenance. While several district and borough councils are responsible for services, including waste collection, housing and leisure centres.

Nottingham City Council operates as a 'unitary authority', meaning it provides all council services within the city of Nottingham.

In total, nine different councils provide services across the county (not including town and parish councils and these councils are not included in the reorganisation).

Q4. Before today, how aware were you of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and the services each council provides?

Please select one answer only.
- ❑ I was not aware
- ❑ I was aware, but did not know much about it
- ❑ I was aware, and knew a little about it
- ❑ I was aware, and knew a reasonable amount about it
- ❑ I was aware, and knew a lot about it
- ❑ Don't know

Q5. How effective is the current structure of councils and the approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire?

Please select one answer only.
- ❑ Very effective
- ❑ Somewhat effective
- ❑ Neither effective nor ineffective
- ❑ Somewhat ineffective
- ❑ Very ineffective
- ❑ Don't know

Why have you answered in this way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Local Government Reorganisation

For the first time in 50 years the way local councils are set up in parts of England is being reviewed and modernised. In areas like Nottinghamshire, where there are currently two layers of local government (such as county and district councils), the Government is encouraging a move to a simpler system.

This change, called Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), would replace the current two-tier structure with a single council, known as a unitary authority. Instead of having separate councils responsible for different services, one council would take care of everything from roads and rubbish collection to housing and social care.

The goal is to bring services that are currently split across different councils into one place, with the aim of making them easier to access and more joined-up for residents. It also means fewer councils overall, which could lead to savings by cutting duplication and reducing overheads.

Local councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have been asked to work together on proposals for how this new system could work best in their area. These proposals, which will include evidence and public feedback, need to be submitted by November 2025. The Government will then decide on the final arrangements.

Q6. Before today, how aware were you about the Government's plans to reorganise local councils across England?

Please select one answer only.
- ❑ I was not aware
- ❑ I was aware, but did not know much about it
- ❑ I was aware, and knew a little about it
- ❑ I was aware, and knew a reasonable amount about it
- ❑ I was aware, and knew a lot about it
- ❑ Don't know

Q7. What do you think are the main potential benefits, if any, of the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Please make comments below:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q8. What concerns, if any, do you have about the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Please make comments below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Future councils

Q9.   What should be most important when designing a new council?

Please select all relevant answers.
❑ Ensuring services work together
❑ Making the council the right size to be sustainable
❑ Providing good value, reliable services
❑ Saving money and using council tax wisely
❑ Working better with other local councils and the East Midlands Mayor
❑ Making it easier for people to have their say and get involved
❑ Working with local neighbourhoods and communities
❑ Meeting local needs and being fair to all parts of the area
❑ Promoting local identity and culture
❑ Other
❑ Don't know

If 'Other', please state:

_____

Q10. What are the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions?

Please select all relevant answers.
❑ Working directly with neighbourhoods
❑ Public meetings or drop-ins
❑ Online surveys or polls
❑ Local councillors visiting communities
❑ Community groups or forums
❑ Social media updates and feedback
❑ Council website updates
❑ Digital newsletters
❑ Information sent via post
❑ Engaging with parish and town councils
❑ Other
❑ Don't know

If 'Other', please state:

_____

Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

All councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have been working together on a proposal to restructure how local government services are delivered in the area. An initial proposal was submitted to the Government in March 2025.

Since then, further work has been carried out to explore options in greater detail and gather supporting evidence. In line with government guidance to use existing district areas as the basis for reorganisation, two core options are being proposed. No final decision has been made by all councils on a single option, and some councils could still explore additional proposals alongside the two core options currently being proposed.

Under these proposals, the nine existing councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire would be replaced by two new unitary councils. Each new council would be responsible for delivering all local government services in its area.

You can see a map showing the geography of the two proposals later in this questionnaire.

Q11. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area?**

Please select one answer only.
❑Strongly agree
❑Tend to agree
❑Neither agree nor disagree
❑Tend to disagree
❑Strongly disagree
❑Don't know

Why have you answered in this way?
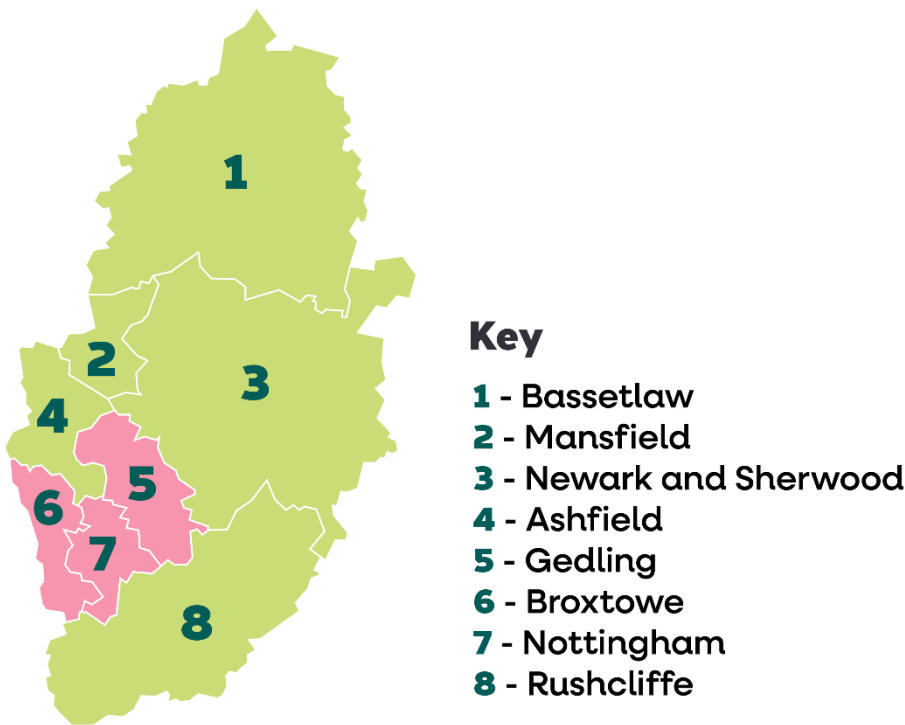
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_____
_____
_____

The core options

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling (known as Option 1b)

This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Rushcliffe. The second covering Gedling, Broxtowe, and Nottingham City.

1b Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling

Key

1 - Bassetlaw
2 - Mansfield
3 - Newark and Sherwood
4 - Ashfield
5 - Gedling
6 - Broxtowe
7 - Nottingham
8 - Rushcliffe

Q12. Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option?

Please make comments below:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Rushcliffe (known as Option 1e)

This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Gedling. The second covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City, and Rushcliffe.

1e Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Rushcliffe
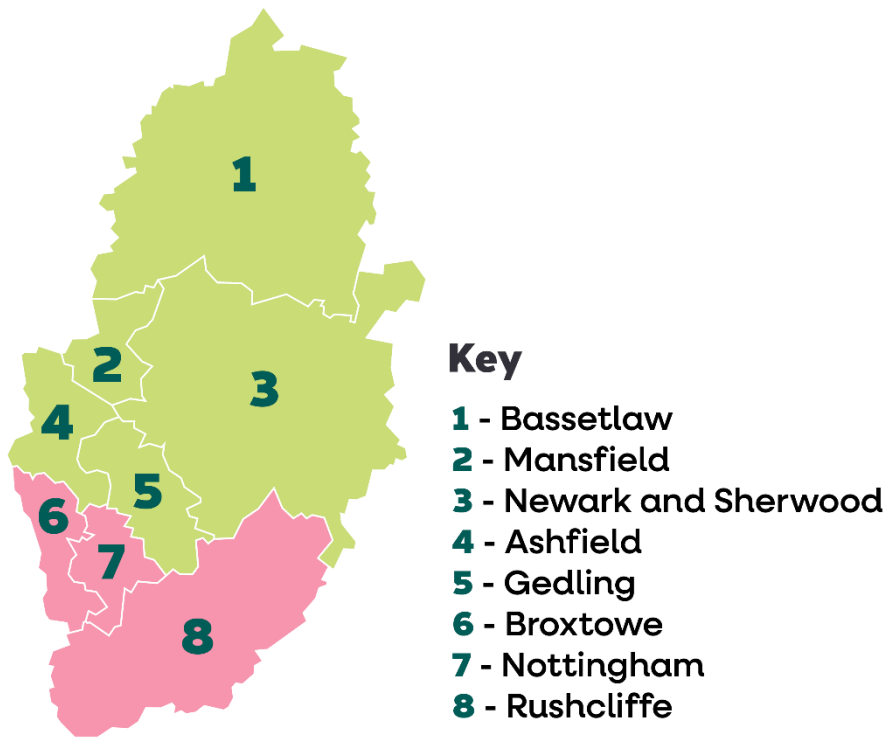
Key

1 - Bassetlaw
2 - Mansfield
3 - Newark and Sherwood
4 - Ashfield
5 - Gedling
6 - Broxtowe
7 - Nottingham
8 - Rushcliffe

Q13. Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option?

Please make comments below:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Nottingham City Council boundary review option

This option is being presented to anyone living or working in the Nottingham City Council area.

The Government has suggested that there may be an opportunity for a boundary review, where strong justification exists. A boundary review looks at the current local council boundaries, the communities within them and the services they access to see if they work well or whether new boundaries may work better. A boundary review could allow councils to look at options outside of their existing boundaries.

Nottingham City Council is currently exploring a boundary review option that may include parts of Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, and Gedling as one of the unitary councils. The second council would cover the rest of Nottinghamshire.

The rationale is that while the official population of Nottingham is 328,000, the built-up area of the city is much greater, and there are people who live in the suburbs, work in the city, and use Nottingham City services, but who can't vote in city elections and don't contribute to city council tax because of the current council boundaries.

A map is included below to indicate what this could look like, however Nottingham City Council would like to understand people's views in order to develop the option further.

Example of city's boundary review option

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham + parts of Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, and Gedling

Key

1 - Bassetlaw
2 - Mansfield
3 - Newark and Sherwood
4 - Ashfield
5 - Gedling
6 - Broxtowe
7 - Nottingham
8 - Rushcliffe
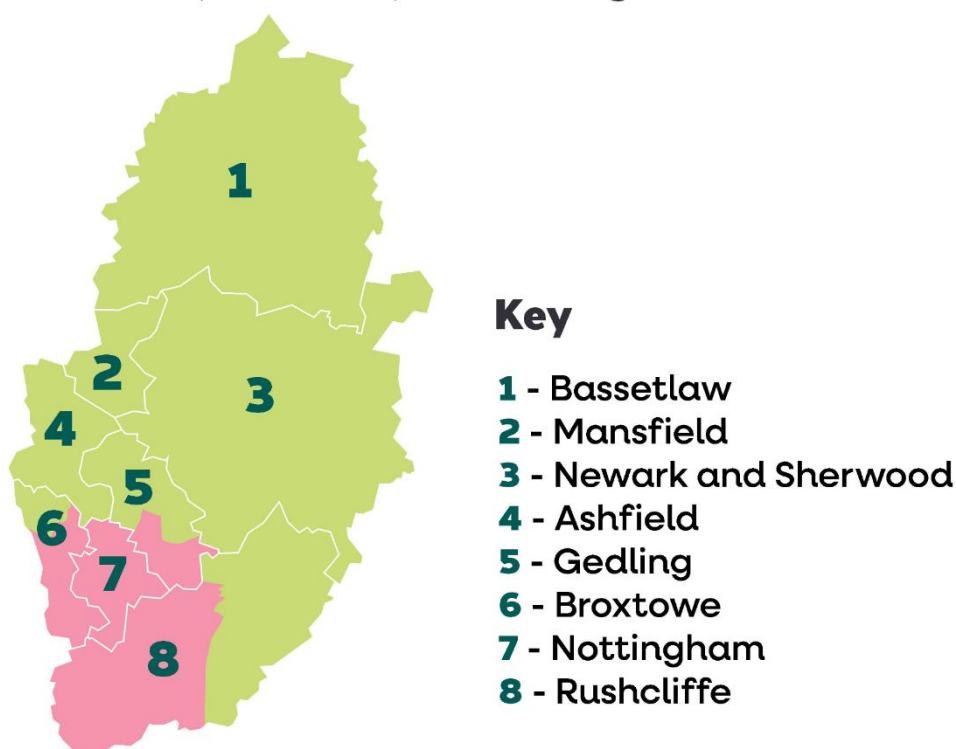
Q13a. **Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about the development of this option?**

Please make comments below:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Other comments

Q14. **Do you have any other comments, concerns or suggestions about the proposals for the reorganisation of local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire?**

Please make comments below:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q15. **How did you hear about this survey?**

Please select all relevant answers.
❑Council website
❑Council e-mail or newsletter
❑Other council communication or event
❑Council social media
❑Other social media
❑Via a local councillor
❑Via a local organisation
❑Poster or flyer
❑Direct e-mail or letter
❑An advert in a local newspaper
❑A relative or a friend
❑Other
❑Don't know

If 'Other', please state:

_____

Page 79

About you

We would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your household. This will help councils understand the opinions and impact of the proposals on different groups of people that live or work in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Please be assured that your answers are confidential and will be treated anonymously. This means that we will not report your answers alongside your personal details in such a way that you can be identified. All your answers and personal information will be managed securely and in accordance with data protection laws.

This information is **optional**. If you do not wish to complete this section, you can skip these questions and then submit your responses.

Q16. Are you . . .?

Please select one answer only.
❑ Female
❑ Male
❑ Another term
❑ Prefer not to say

Q17. What is your age group?

Please select one answer only.
❑ Under 18
❑ 18-24
❑ 25-34
❑ 35-44
❑ 45-54
❑ 55-64
❑ 65 and over
❑ Prefer not to say

Q18. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

Please select one answer only.
❑ Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a lot
❑ Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a little
❑ Yes, but they don't reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities at all
❑ No
❑ Prefer not to say

Q19. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group or background?

Please select one answer only.
❑ White British or Irish
❑ Central or Eastern European
❑ Other White background
❑ Asian or Asian British
❑ Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
❑ Mixed background
❑ Other ethnic group
❑ Prefer not to say

Page 80

Q20. Which of the following best describes your current housing situation?

Please select one answer only.
- ❑ Owner-occupier
- ❑ Privately renting
- ❑ Renting from the council or housing association
- ❑ Other
- ❑ Prefer not to say

Next steps

You're nearly finished – thank you for taking part so far.

Before you submit your response, please take a moment to read the information below about what happens next.

Following the close of the survey on Sunday 14 September 2025, we will be collating and analysing all of the responses received from across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to understand the views of everyone who has taken part.

The views of people shared in this survey will feed into the development of final proposals, which must be submitted to government by 28 November 2025. Your local council will keep you updated as things progress.

Click 'Submit' below to send us your responses.

Once submitted, you will be redirected to the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Government Reorganisation website.

Appendix 2: Stakeholder in-depth interview discussion guide

Key aims and approach

Four on-line focus groups are being conducted with residents to provide further insight, complementing the findings from the questionnaire. The aims of these are:

- Opportunity for an informed and in-depth discussion with residents about living in the county and future local government proposals. These discussions will explicitly explore:
    - Sense of place and identity
    - Understanding of local government reorganisation and high-level perceptions about change, including potential benefits, concerns and mitigations
    - Future local council priorities and design
    - Views on changing from nine councils to two, including opportunities, concerns and mitigations
    - Views on each of the specific core options, including opportunities, concerns and mitigations

In essence, the focus groups will explore in-depth the ground covered in the questionnaire, and consequently the discussion guide is built around this.

9 participants will be recruited for each group (with 6-8 participating in practice per group because there will always be one to two drop-outs, despite best efforts to maximise participation – 6 or 7 participants tends to be the optimum number for an on-line discussion allowing sufficient opportunity for each participant to share their views).

As discussed, two groups will be with residents living in urban areas and two living in rural areas (these will be both self-defined and also validated against their postcode). This approach both allows us to explore the differences and similarities in perception between residents living in these different types of locations as well as reach a broad diversity of residents across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Each group will include a mix of key demographics such as location, sex, age and ethnicity so that the groups broadly reflect the profile of residents living in urban and rural areas.

The groups will take place on-line, via Zoom, on Thursday 4th September and Monday 8th September (these are provisional dates currently, and all groups will be completed by the close of the engagement exercise):

- 5.50pm to 7.30pm
- 7.50pm to 9.30pm

Participants will be offered a £50 thank you gift (incentive) for taking part and to maximise participation.

In advance of the discussions, the link to the engagement website will be shared and participants will be asked to review, although we will not rely on this and will be feeding participants with information throughout the discussions.

Discussion Guide

Please note: This is a discussion <u>guide</u> and will be used flexibly depending on the flow of discussion. This means that not every question will necessarily be asked in the way or order outlined below. However, we will make sure that all the key issues are explored fully.

On log-in:

- Participants will be held in a virtual waiting room and invited into the main forum at the start of the discussion.
- On joining the main room, participants will be asked to check that their audio and visual works and name labels changed to first names only (for ease and anonymity).

Introduction (c2-3 mins)

Key points to note:

- Background – why we're here and some of the things we plan to discuss [i.e. living in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and proposed changes to local councils in the area].
- Introduce facilitator.
- Introduce observers (if present).
- Ask to record the interview.
- Stress anonymity and confidentiality.
- Set ground rules – no right or wrong answers, honest and open, range of views encouraged.
- Respect different opinions.
- Encourage disagreement, agreement and debate – do it politely.
- One voice at a time.
- Allow others the space and time to share their views.
- Introduce key features of Zoom such as chat function and emoticons, and encourage use.
- Stress important that patient and flexible given challenges of technology and conducting on-line discussions.
- Stress that important people participate and input as much as they might in a face-to-face group – we can be relaxed and informal, but we want to make sure we cover the ground and use the time as effectively as possible.
- What happens to the information? [i.e. feed into decision-making process, along with a range of other information and evidence].
- Any questions?

Key lines of questioning

Warm-up, context and headline perceptions (c10 mins)

- Just so we can get to know each other a little bit, can I ask each of you to say <u>briefly:</u>
  – Your name?
  – Roughly, where you live?
  – What do you think about the area you live in? Why – what's good and what could be improved?

Your local area – sense of place and local identity (c15 mins)

- How do you describe where you're from when talking to someone who doesn't live nearby? Which names or places do you mention? Why do you use those names or places?

  Prompt/probe:
  – Do you see yourself as living in an urban, suburban, semi-rural or rural area – why?
  – Do you consider yourself as living in Nottinghamshire? Why?
  – What do you consider you nearest town? Why?
  – What is your association or link with Nottingham? Why?
  – Do you feel like you are part of your local authority area? Why?

Local government reorganisation (c20 mins)

[Note: Facilitator to share screen and read out information about the way councils are currently organised as per the questionnaire]

- What do you think about the current structure of councils and the approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire? Why?

  Prompt/probe:
  – Before today, how aware were you of the current structure?
  – What's good about it/what works well? Why?
  – What's not good about it/could be improved? Why?
  – How well do the current arrangements suit an area such as yours (i.e. urban/rural)? Why?

[Note: Facilitator to share screen and read out information about local government reorganisation as per the questionnaire]

- What do you think about the Government's plans to reorganise local councils across England? Why?

  Prompt/probe:
  – Before today, how aware were you of these plans?
  – What do you think are the potential benefits of this, if any? Why?
  – What concerns, if any, do you have about the plans to reorganise local councils? Why?

Future local council design and priorities (c20 mins)

- What should be most important when designing a new council (e.g. what should be the key principles that it adopts or it is built around or tries to achieve)? Why?

  Prompt/probe:
  − Ensuring services work together
  − Making the council the right size to be sustainable
  − Providing good value, reliable services
  − Saving money and using council tax wisely
  − Working better with other local councils and the East Midlands Mayor
  − Making it easier for people to have their say and get involved
  − Working with local neighbourhoods and communities
  − Meeting local needs and being fair to all parts of the area
  − Promoting local identity and culture
  − Other

- What are the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions? Why?
- How well is this done now? Why?
- And does this matter to you? Why?

  Prompt/probe:
  − Working directly with neighbourhoods
  − Public meetings or drop-ins
  − Online surveys or polls
  − Local councillors visiting communities
  − Community groups or forums
  − Social media updates and feedback
  − Council website updates
  − Digital newsletters
  − Information sent via post
  − Engaging with parish and town councils
  − Other

- What do you think should be the priorities for any new council to improve your local area? Why?

  Prompt/probe:
  − What's important to you? Why?
  − What's currently working well, and that you would like to continue working well? Why?
  − What's not working well and is important to change/improve? Why?

Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including core options (c20-25 mins)

[Note: Facilitator to share screen and read out information about the proposal to move from 9 to 2 councils as per the questionnaire]

- What do you think about the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area?

   Prompt/probe:
   − What do you think are the potential benefits of this, if any? Why?
   − What concerns, if any, do you have about this proposal? Why?
   − How may it impact you and your family? Why?
   − How may it impact your area? Why?
   − Is there anything you would like considered to help promote any potential benefits and/or mitigate/reduce any potential negative impacts?

[Note: Facilitator to share screen and read out information about the core option 1b as per the questionnaire]

- What do you think about this option? Why?

   Prompt/probe:
   − What do you think are the potential benefits of this, if any? Why?
   − What concerns, if any, do you have about this option? Why?
   − How may it impact you and your family? Why?
   − How may it impact your area? Why?
   − Is there anything you would like considered to help promote any potential benefits and/or mitigate/reduce any potential negative impacts?

[Note: Facilitator to share screen and read out information about the core option 1e as per the questionnaire]

- What do you think about this option? Why?

   Prompt/probe:
   − What do you think are the potential benefits of this, if any? Why?
   − What concerns, if any, do you have about this option? Why?
   − How may it impact you and your family? Why?
   − How may it impact your area? Why?
   − Is there anything you would like considered to help promote any potential benefits and/or mitigate/reduce any potential negative impacts?

Summing up (c5 mins)
- Overall, what do you think about the proposals and options?
- Are there any alternatives you would like considered?
- Is there anything else you would like to say this subject?
- Facilitator to sum up the key messages identified from the discussion to sense check that understood correctly.

- Facilitator to outline next steps – what will happen to the information.
- Sign-post to on-line consultation, if not already participated.
- Any final points or questions?
- Outline how thank you gifts will be provided.
- Thank and close.

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Engagement report: Methodology and clarification report - October 2025

Introduction

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Nottinghamshire currently has a two-tier system, with seven district and borough councils and a county council. Nottingham City, within the county boundary, is served separately by its own unitary council—making nine councils in total.

In February 2025, the Government invited local councils, including those in Nottinghamshire, to develop proposals to replace two-tier systems with larger unitary councils.

After reviewing options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal in March 2025 to create two new unitary councils to replace the existing nine.

The main report summarises the findings of an engagement exercise with residents and stakeholders on these proposals. This was supported independently by Public Perspectives, specialists in public sector research and consultation since 2008.

Public Perspectives

Public Perspectives is a Market Research Society (MRS) company partner and member of the Social Research Association (the industry bodies in the UK) and holds Cyber Essentials certification.

The project was led and managed by Public Perspectives' Director of Research and Engagement, Mark Yeadon. Mark Yeadon has over 25 years of research, evaluation and consultation experience in the public and charitable sectors, including working for two local authorities and Central Government. Mark has a 1st class degree in Politics, a Masters (Distinction) in Applied Social and Market Research and is a RICS trained property and built environment surveyor (with a Masters in Real Estate at distinction from the University College of Estate Management). He is a full certified

member of the Market Research Society (CMRS) and a former trustee of the Social Research Association.

Public Perspectives had no prior professional, commercial or personal affiliation with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire or its partner councils. Public Perspectives has acted with independence and objectivity in the design, data collection, analysis and reporting of the engagement exercise and to reflect effectively the views of respondents.

Throughout this process, Public Perspectives has worked with the nominated project leads representing the council partners and through the agreed partner/LGR governance processes.

Methodology and clarification

This document is supplementary to the main report, published on the 1st October 2025, following requests of clarification from two councils.

Throughout the engagement process, interim headline findings were shared with partner councils on a weekly basis. A draft of the final report was made available to council partners on Tuesday 23rd September 2025 and subject to an initial review process involving representatives from all partner councils. This included a presentation to communication leads from each partner council on Wednesday 24th September 2025 and subsequent sharing of the draft report to the same group. A similar offer of a presentation was also made to Chief Executives, but the opportunity was not taken up. This document is produced in response to subsequent review and comments, following publication by council partners of the main report on Wednesday 1st October 2025.

The document provides further detail about the methodology, including examples of the analysis and selected comments/quotes from respondents to the engagement exercise, providing further detail and insight. It also includes clarity about some of the key findings.

The document should be read alongside the main report and also published alongside it or at least included as an appendix to the main report when submitted to Government as part of the final proposals.

The report authors ask that any readers refer directly to Public Perspectives where further clarity may be required about the findings of the engagement exercise.

Methodology

Context

- The engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14th September 2025.
- The aims of the engagement exercise established and agreed by council partners were:
    - Make it as easy as possible for residents to understand and share views.
    - Improve public awareness and understanding of LGR.
    - Gather public opinion and understand what's important to people [to shape future organisations].
    - Ensure representation across the geography.
    - Demonstrate to Government that criteria on engagement has been met.

- The main mechanism for capturing responses was an online questionnaire open to all interested parties, promoted through councils' websites, communication channels and promotional/marketing activity, including a dedicated website (lgrnotts.org), as well as outreach events and engagement with stakeholders.
- The questionnaire was also available in alternative formats on request, such as paper copies, alongside e-mail, phone, BSL and translation support.
- Relatedly, four focus groups were conducted involving 34 local residents reflecting the diversity of Nottinghamshire and organised by urban and rural areas. These focus groups allowed the emerging findings from the engagement process to be unpacked and views about the proposals to be discussed in-depth, both adding further insight as well as validating the findings from the engagement survey.
- In total, the engagement questionnaire received 11,483 responses.
- This level of response compares well to other similar exercises conducted in the region or across the country.

Key points to note

- This is an 'engagement' exercise. It is not a formal or statutory consultation or a referendum.
- The engagement exercise is not a representative sample research survey, as per the aims of the process established and agreed by all partner councils. It is designed to provide valuable information and insight. However, the findings should not be treated as conclusive as may be the case with a robust research survey. This includes the results not being suitable for statistical tests of significance, although notable differences between council areas or other demographics are likely to be meaningful.
- Whilst the findings of the engagement help shape proposals on the future of local councils in Nottinghamshire, they are to be considered alongside other information and evidence including detailed options appraisals about the viability and suitability of different options.
- This is not a one-off exercise. Engagement with key and strategic stakeholders preceded this engagement exercise and there is on-going engagement.
- The final proposals from councils must be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025, and feedback on how any proposal will be taken forward for Nottinghamshire is expected in 2026. This will then be subject to statutory consultation by Government.
- Alongside the focus groups, a number of the questions in the engagement questionnaire are open-ended text questions or qualitative in nature. This approach was agreed with all partner

councils. It was designed to capture comments and insight about the benefits and concerns relating to LGR, the proposals and options.

- Council partners requested the inclusion of open-ended questions, especially for options 1b and 1e, noting at the time the limitations of such question types. Whilst analysis of qualitative data is conducted robustly and independently, the findings should be treated as valuable insight and indicative rather than as conclusive, especially given the exercise was an engagement process rather than a research-based exercise.
- Responses to the engagement exercise were based on available and known information at the time. The engagement questionnaire was designed to have a stand-alone quality i.e. that respondents could answer it without reference to further information. This included brief descriptions and information about LGR, the proposals and options, including maps. In addition, respondents were encouraged to read further background information on the lgrnotts.org website, including the options appraisal and interim proposals submitted to Government in March 2025.
- The report authors ask that these points are noted by all parties when using the findings of the engagement exercise in developing proposals and in public statements or press releases. This is so that the findings are presented appropriately and not mis-represented.

Approach to quantitative data analysis

- Quantitative data captured through the questionnaire has been analysed using specialist survey software – SNAP XMP (www.snapsurveys.com). This is one of the longest established and widely used specialist survey software amongst the public sector and local authorities in the UK.
- Each quantitative question has been analysed and reported overall and by local council area. As is the nature with self-selecting/open-access questionnaires, the responses are not proportional to the population sizes in each of the local council areas. Consequently, the results are analysed and reported both as they are (i.e. non-weighted) and also re-weighted to be in-line with the population sizes in each local council area, given the importance of local council areas as building blocks in any future local government arrangement for Nottinghamshire.
- The quantitative data has also been analysed by other demographics such as sex, age, ethnicity, disability and housing status. Notable differences in responses related to these demographics are reported.

Approach to qualitative data analysis

- The open-ended comments from the engagement questionnaire and the focus groups have been subject to thematic analysis – an established and widely used qualitative analysis technique. This approach aims to systematically identify key themes from the data, alongside an indication of volume and strength of opinion, and presenting exemplifying quotes.
- This process is iterative and both manual and automated, included using AI tools, especially important given the volume of responses.
- It is also worth noting that whilst each individual qualitative/open-ended question is analysed specifically, the themes/findings are identified, contextualised and considered in light of all responses made by a respondent and those of other respondents. In other words, comments are not just analysed in isolation – the use of automated and AI software allows such holistic analysis to be conducted across a large data-set.

- The steps adopted are as follows:
  - Open-ended comments and focus group transcripts are initially reviewed manually by two researchers independently of one another. This provides an initial gauge of the parameters of the data and the key emerging themes.
  - The comments and transcripts are then subject to further analysis using specialist qualitative data analysis software. This is primarily NVivo 15 (www.lumivero.com/products/nvivo), which is one of the leading and longest established qualitative data analysis software. NVivo 15 also includes in-built AI to assist in identifying key themes.
  - This begins with sentiment analysis to assess the levels of positive, neutral/mixed and negative responses.
  - This is then followed by further thematic analysis, identifying and describing key themes, as well as volume/strength of opinion, relationships between themes and relationships with other variables such as demographics. It also allows for the organisation of the data into these key themes and therefore identification of key quotes to exemplify the themes.
  - This work is predominantly conducted by a lead researcher with a second researcher reviewing the analysis and associated key themes/findings and acting as a critical friend.
  - In addition, as a final sense-check, anonymised data is interrogated through open-source AI platforms (such as Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT 5).

- The themes and findings are presented including approximated percentages/numbers of respondents (rounded up or down). This is reasonable given that the qualitative comments were made as part of a questionnaire and there have been thousands of such responses (i.e. there is a large sample rather than just a few respondents). This is to help provide an indication of relative importance of the themes/findings. These should be treated as such (i.e. approximations) rather than conclusive percentages, given the qualitative nature of the data. Further quantification beyond key themes is resisted to avoid 'over-quantification' of qualitative data, which is methodologically not good practice.
- Summaries of thematic analysis and a selection of exemplifying quotes for options 1b and 1e have been made available to council partners. These are provided as examples of the method and to provide further detail and insight. Please note that these are only summaries reflecting the final output of a thematic analysis. The actual thematic analysis is more detailed and essentially a working document/process with detail and notes held within the qualitative data analysis software and on paper.

Clarification of key findings relating to options 1b and 1e

- The engagement questionnaire included open-ended questions relating to options 1b and 1e – two short-listed options following the options appraisal process included in interim proposals to Government in March 2025:

  - Option 1b is: Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling (known as Option 1b). This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Rushcliffe. The second covering Gedling, Broxtowe, and Nottingham City.
  - Option 1e is: Two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Gedling. The second covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City, and Rushcliffe.

- Some council partners have asked for further clarity about these findings and their communication within the main report. Findings relating specifically to these two options can be found at paragraphs 26 to 29 inclusive in the Executive Summary and 6.10 to 6.18 inclusive in the main body of the report (pages 43 to 46 inclusive).
- The specific findings in the main report relating to these options should be read alongside wider findings relating to other questions asked in the engagement exercise, including perceptions about the effectiveness of the current structure of local councils, views about local government reorganisation in general, and responses about the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Not only are these findings relevant for each option, respondents themselves sometimes referred back to points previously made and commented on each option in light of their responses to other questions.
- Likewise, the report authors are keen that the detail related to options 1b and 1e does not distract from key findings and concerns relating to these options and the approach/design of any new councils. This is so that any future configuration of options and the subsequent councils reflect the concerns and expectations of respondents. This includes focusing on delivering good quality core and universal services/issues, alongside value for money and meeting local needs. Relatedly, respondents highlighted the importance of involving residents in decision-making and local area/neighbourhood working. This includes understanding local issues and priorities and tailoring services and support to different communities (both equality groups, different localities and urban-rural communities) as part of any future arrangements.
- Please also note points made earlier about the methodology, analysis of qualitative data and use of approximated percentages to indicate relative importance of key themes/findings.
- At the risk of being reductionist and the danger of re-writing a published report that could lead to differing interpretation, below is a bullet-point summary of the headline findings relating to options 1b and 1e. These are presented in such a way to reduce the risk of misinterpretation based on the reader's background or sentiment towards either of the options. This clarification should be used positively to increase understanding and insight, and not used to undermine the main report:

  - The majority of respondents had concerns about both options 1b and 1e.
  - The nature of many of these concerns are similar for each option to lesser or greater degrees. These include:

- concerns about the inclusion and exclusion of surrounding areas of Nottingham City i.e. boundary concerns;
- being included in a council with Nottingham City that could inherent some of the perceived issues experienced by the city and its council; and
- rural areas being dominated by the city including lack of rural voice, representation and inappropriate services to meet local need.

– Regarding boundary concerns and specifically option 1b, approximately half of respondents raised concerns that the proposed boundaries are illogical or unfair with the exclusion of some neighbouring areas such as West Bridgford in Rushcliffe Borough Council and some areas close to the city in Ashfield District Council, which are seen as integral to Nottingham's urban area. At the same time, the council covering Nottingham City is considered too large in scope, bringing in areas that do not align in terms of identity, characteristics, and access to services with the city, including rural areas.

– Regarding 1e, concerns were also raised about boundaries with some respondents stating that the option excluded locations surrounding the city in council areas including Gedling Borough Council and Ashfield District Council area. Similarly, there were specific concerns about joining outlying rural and other areas to the city that have little to no relationship with it.

– Despite concerns, approximately a third of respondents either explicitly supported option 1e or said they preferred it compared to option 1b as the best of the two options or least worst option (approximately half of this third explicitly supported the option and the other half were positive towards it in the context of comparing it against option 1b). This support or positivity to option 1e was often due to respondents stating that they considered 1e to be more geographically coherent and/or is a cleaner North-South split with a better division of populations and resources. That said, some support/positivity (about half of those that supported 1e) was caveated by continued concerns around boundaries or urban-rural imbalance and/or conditional upon benefits being realised.

– This compares to approximately a tenth of respondents that explicitly supported option 1b. This is because they believe it is the most suitable option in terms of geography with Nottingham City at the heart of the new council and combining areas with common links (and a wider county-wide council drawing in other parts of Nottinghamshire). As with option 1e, support for 1b was often cited on the condition of realising the benefits of LGR.

• In short, with both options notable concerns exist and dominate the responses i.e. a majority of respondents have concerns about either or both of the options, including concerns about LGR in general. Option1e does receive greater positivity and support than option 1b based on qualitative comments, but this is from a minority of respondents, in some cases is a preference rather than outright support, and with both options positivity/support is sometimes caveated by concerns or conditional on achieving the potential benefits of LGR and/or minimising disruption to residents and services.

• It is also helpful to note that respondents tended to consider and respond to questions about options 1b and 1e collectively. Consequently, many of the points are common across both options and respondents compared and contrasted each option, which in part accounts for the marginal preference for option 1e over 1b by a minority of respondents.

• The report authors ask that all parties seek to utilise these findings in a constructive way to inform their final proposals and that findings are used appropriately and not misrepresented in proposals and in public statements or press releases.

Page 95

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The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Household survey report: Broxtowe Borough Council

October 2025

public perspectives

Research, consultation and evaluation for the public and charitable sectors.

Contents

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Broxtowe household survey report

Executive Summary

Introduction and background

1. Nottinghamshire is a two-tier area served by seven district and borough councils and a county council. The city of Nottingham is contained within the boundary of Nottinghamshire, with all council services in the area provided by Nottingham City Council, which is a unitary council. In total, nine different councils provide services across the county, including Broxtowe Borough Council.

2. In February 2025, as part of the Government's local government reorganisation plans, it contacted local councils in areas such as Nottinghamshire to work together to draw up initial proposals to reduce the number of councils by replacing two-tier councils with larger unitary councils.

3. Following considering key criteria and a range of potential options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal to Government in March 2025, which included proposals to create two new unitary councils that would be responsible for all council services in their areas and replace the existing nine councils.

4. An important part of the local government reorganisation process is engaging with residents and stakeholders. Consequently, the councils undertook an engagement exercise about the proposals, including different options for the configuration of the future councils. This engagement exercise is subject to a separate report.

5. In addition, Broxtowe Borough Council commissioned independent organisation, Public Perspectives, to conduct a separate postal survey of all households in the council area. **This report analyses and presents the results of the survey of households in Broxtowe Borough Council.**

Approach

6. The county-wide engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14 September 2025. Broxtowe Borough Council's specific household survey was administered during this period.

7. The same questionnaire developed as part of the county-wide engagement process was sent to all 52,292 households in the Broxtowe Borough Council area along with a freepost envelope to facilitate return of the paper questionnaire.[1] In addition, the council developed a postcard with additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the proposed options for future councils in the county. Households were given the opportunity to respond to this online or return via post along with the paper questionnaire.

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[1] The paper questionnaire and postcard included UIDs to manage the process and link responses to postcodes and wards at the analysis stage.

8. In total there were 12,507 responses,[2] representing a 22% response rate to the household survey:

    - 11,287 paper responses.[3]

    - 1,220 on-line responses to the three additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the options.

Key findings

9. Most respondents are proud of their local area (74%) and over half said the current structure of councils and approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is effective (54%).

10. Only 20% agree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area (and 64% disagree).

11. Over seven-in-ten respondents (71%) do not support either of the proposed options for configuring future councils in the county.

Figure 1: Summary of key findings

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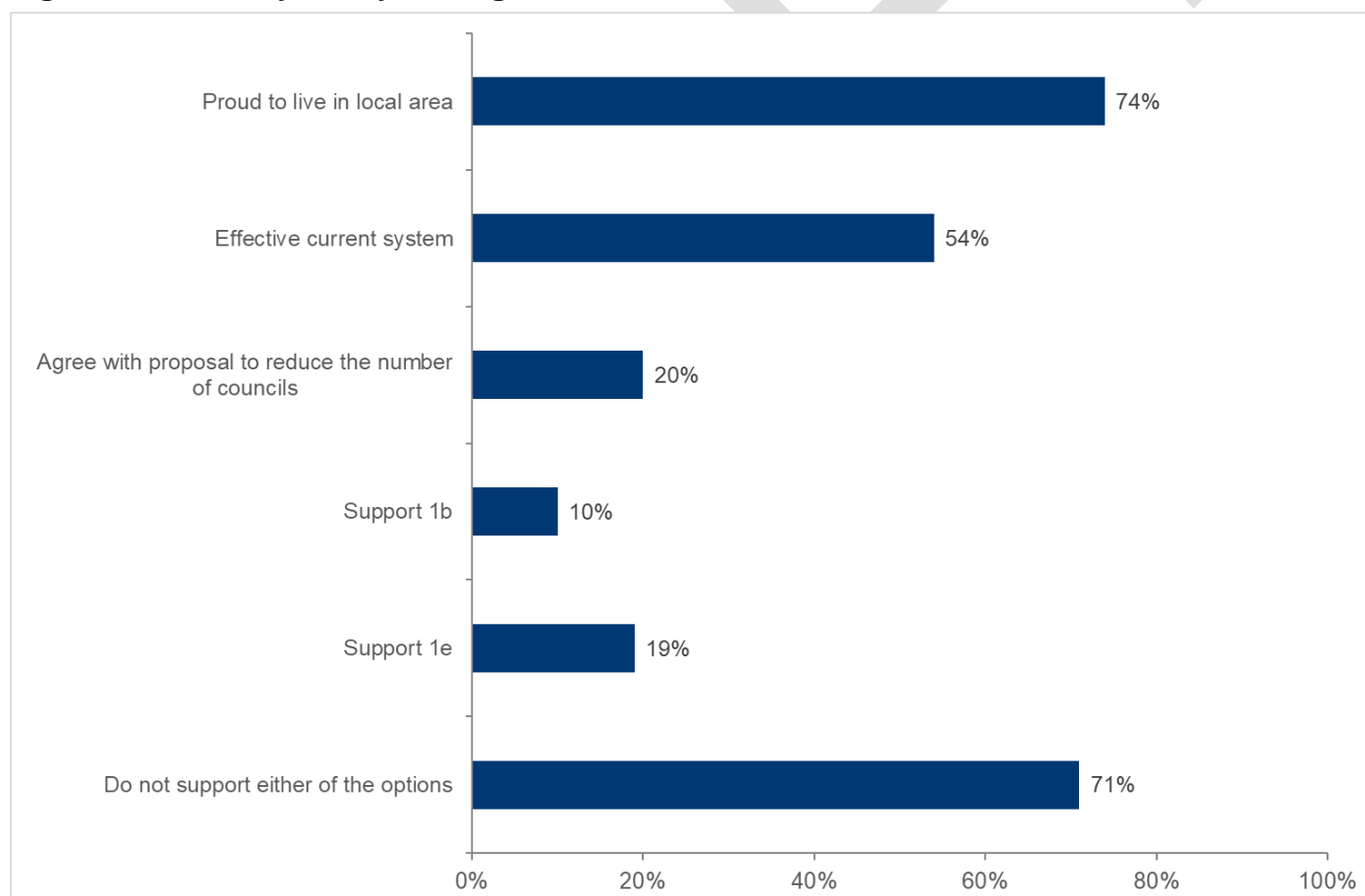
[2] This is in addition to the 2,480 Broxtowe respondents to the separate county-wide engagement process. These are not included in this report (partly to avoid the risk of double counting), which covers responses to the household survey only.

[3] Of these, 9,817 responded to the full questionnaire and 12,025 to the postcard/additional Broxtowe specific questions. Those that did not respond to the full questionnaire either decided to return the postcard only or had previously completed the full questionnaire online via the county-wide engagement process. Similarly, those that decided not to return the postcard may have done this online via the council's website.

2

12. **Concerns about merging with Nottingham City and its council dominate the responses.** Many respondents strongly opposed such a merger, citing perceived financial and service delivery problems, poor management, and fears that an urban Nottingham City would dominate any new authority. They felt this could undermine local voice, representation, identity, and services.

13. **There was also criticism of the proposed boundaries**, particularly the inclusion of rural or outlying areas with the city and the exclusion of areas with stronger connections to it. In addition, some respondents **expressed broader opposition to local government reorganisation itself**, highlighting worries about disruption, costs, limited efficiencies, and a preference for a district-based system that is closer and more responsive to its local areas and communities.

14. Respondents who were more **supportive of local government reorganisation and the proposed options generally referred to potential benefits** such as increased efficiency, cost savings, and improved access to services and outcomes. However, this **support was often qualified**, with some noting that their backing depended on these benefits being achieved in practice.

15. Some respondents expressed the view that the **decision had already been made, and were dissatisfied that all the options presented involved joining Nottingham City.** They felt there should have been options for Broxtowe to remain as it is and/or to form part of a wider county-based arrangement.

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Broxtowe household survey report

Main report

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction and background

1.1. Nottinghamshire is a two-tier area served by seven district and borough councils and a county council. The city of Nottingham is contained within the boundary of Nottinghamshire, with all council services in the area provided by Nottingham City Council, which is a unitary council. In total, nine different councils provide services across the county, including Broxtowe Borough Council.

1.2. In February 2025, as part of the Government's local government reorganisation plans, it contacted local councils in areas such as Nottinghamshire to work together to draw up initial proposals to reduce the number of councils by replacing two-tier councils with larger unitary councils.

1.3. Following considering key criteria and a range of potential options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal to Government in March 2025, which included proposals to create two new unitary councils that would be responsible for all council services in their areas and replace the existing nine councils.

1.4. An important part of the local government reorganisation process is engaging with residents and stakeholders. Consequently, the councils undertook an engagement exercise about the proposals, including different options for the configuration of the future councils. This engagement exercise is subject to a separate report.[4]

1.5. In addition, Broxtowe Borough Council commissioned independent organisation, Public Perspectives, to conduct a separate postal survey of all households in the council area. **This report analyses and presents the results of the survey of households in Broxtowe Borough Council.**

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[4] There were 2,480 Broxtowe respondents to this engagement process. These are not included in this report of the separate postal survey of Broxtowe households. Page 102

Approach

1.6.   The county-wide engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14 September 2025. Broxtowe Borough Council's specific household survey was administered during this period.

1.7.   The same questionnaire developed as part of the county-wide engagement process was sent to all 52,292 households in the Broxtowe Borough Council area along with a freepost envelope to facilitate return of the paper questionnaire.[5] In addition, the council developed a postcard with additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the proposed options for future councils in the county. Households were given the opportunity to respond to this online or return via post along with the paper questionnaire.

1.8.   In total there were 12,507 responses,[6] representing a 22% response rate to the household survey:

- 11,287 paper responses.[7]
- 1,220 on-line responses to the three additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the options.

1.9.   There is a spread of responses across different demographic groups, albeit a skew towards older groups, which is common in self-selecting/open-access questionnaires such as this.[8]

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[5] The paper questionnaire and postcard included UIDs to manage the process and link responses to postcodes and wards at the analysis stage.

[6] This is in addition to the 2,480 Broxtowe respondents to the separate county-wide engagement process. These are not included in this report (partly to avoid the risk of double counting), which covers responses to the household survey only.

[7] Of these, 9,817 responded to the full questionnaire and 12,025 to the postcard/additional Broxtowe specific questions. Those that did not respond to the full questionnaire either decided to return the postcard only or had previously completed the full questionnaire online via the county-wide engagement process. Similarly, those that decided not to return the postcard may have done this online via the council's website.

[8] The results have been kept 'as they are' and not re-weighted at the analysis stage to bring them into line with the latest population estimates.

Figure 1.1: Demographic profile of respondents

Sex	
Female	48%
Male	47%
Another term	0%
Prefer not to say	5%
Age	
Under 18	0%
18-24	1%
25-34	5%
35-44	9%
45-54	11%
55-64	19%
65 and over	50%
Prefer not to say	6%
Disability	
Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a lot	8%
Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a little	11%
Yes, but they don't reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities at all	11%
No	61%
Prefer not to say	9%
Ethnicity	
White British-Irish	87%
Non-White British-Irish	7%
Prefer not to say	6%
Housing situation	
Owner-occupier	83%
Privately renting	5%
Renting from the council or housing association	6%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	5%

Note: Not all figures add up to 100% due to rounding.

Reporting

1.10. The report is organised in-keeping with the structure of the questionnaire, as follows:

- Section 2: Your local area
- Section 3: The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- Section 4: Local Government Reorganisation in England
- Section 5: Future councils
- Section 6: Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (including the additional Broxtowe specific questions)

Page 105

Section 2: Your local area

Introduction

2.1.   This section presents findings about respondents' views on their local area, including movement across the county, sense of place and council services/priorities.
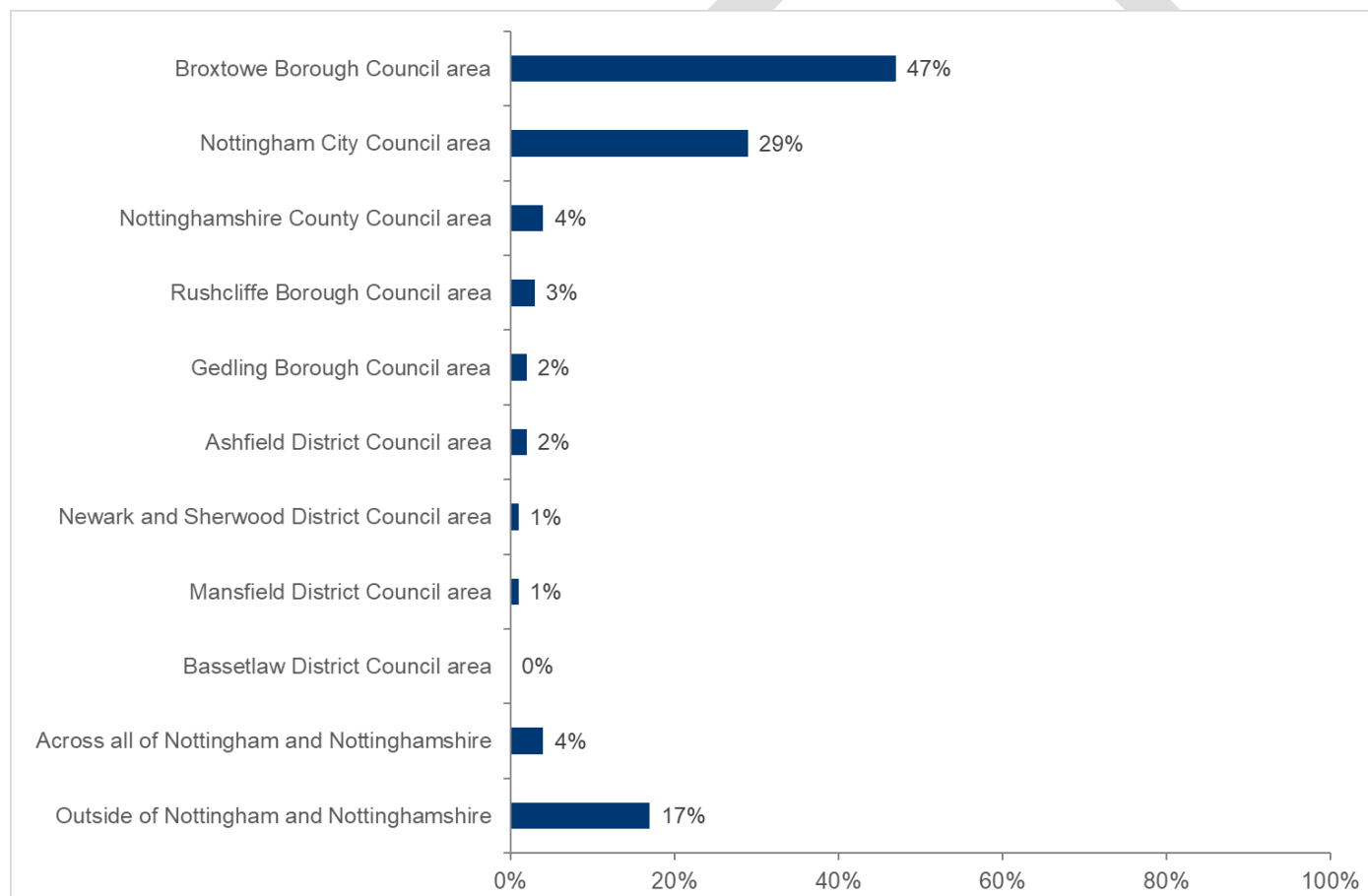
Where is your main place of work or study?

Broxtowe respondents tend to work or study locally, in Nottingham City or outside of the county

2.2.   Almost half of Broxtowe respondents work or study in the area (47%).

2.3.   29% work or study in Nottingham City, and 17% work or study outside of the county.

Figure 2.1: Movement across Nottinghamshire

Number of respondents: 4,301 (excludes respondents that do not study or work currently – 52%). Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

How do you describe where you're from when talking to someone who doesn't live nearby? Which names or places do you mention?

Respondents explain where they are from through a mix of local identity and regional anchor points or landmarks

2.4. 8,926 respondents described where they're from to someone who doesn't live nearby. The majority of these respondents (approximately three-quarters)[9] referenced named local towns or villages within Broxtowe such as Beeston, Eastwood, Kimberley, Stapleford, as well as rural areas, suburban areas and villages such as Bramcote, Chilwell, Nuthall and Toton.

2.5. About two-fifths locate themselves in relation to Nottingham City, for example 'Near Nottingham' or 'West of Nottingham'.

2.6. About a fifth refer to Nottinghamshire itself or 'Broxtowe, Nottingham'.

2.7. About a fifth identify their area through well-known landmarks like Ikea, Wollaton Park, or Attenborough Nature Reserve, while a similar proportion use proximity-based descriptions such as "near Ilkeston" or "between Derby and Nottingham."

2.8. A smaller proportion (approximately 5%) express local pride or community sentiment, describing Broxtowe as a pleasant or friendly place to live.

2.9. In several cases, respondents provide multiple answers and reference points, highlighting a multi-layered sense of place.


[9] The themes and findings of text-based questions are presented including approximated percentages/numbers of respondents (rounded up or down) as part of a thematic analysis. This is to help provide an indication of relative importance of the themes/findings. These should be treated as such (i.e. approximations) rather than conclusive percentages, given the qualitative nature of the data.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are proud to live in your local area?

Three-quarters of respondents overall said they are proud to live in their local area

2.10. Overall, 74% of Broxtowe respondents are proud to live in their local area and only 6% disagree with this question.

Figure 2.2: Proud to live in local area
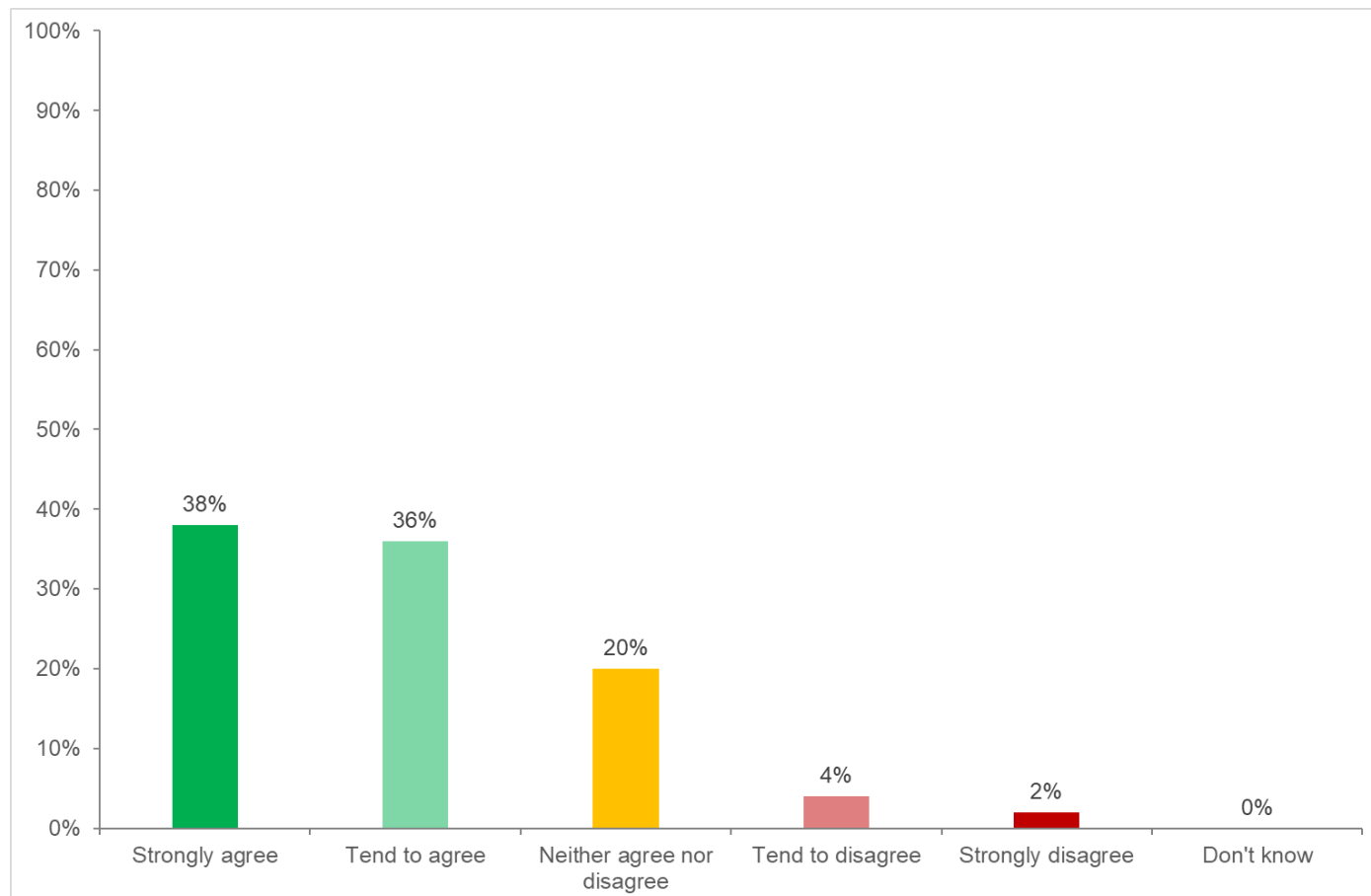
Number of respondents: 9,454.

Thinking generally, what would you say are most important in making somewhere a good place to live? And what are your priorities for improvement in the local area?

Core and universal services/issues such as roads and pavements, crime and anti-social behaviour, clean streets, and travel and transport are key priorities

2.11. 79% of respondents said that maintaining roads and pavements are the priority for improvement (and also joint top cited as making somewhere a good place to live – cited by 87%).

2.12. 70% of respondents said crime and anti-social behaviour are priorities for improvement (third top cited as making somewhere a good place to live – noted by 86%).

2.13. 63% of respondents said clean streets are a priority, which is joint top cited as making somewhere a good place to live by 87% of respondents.

2.14. 59% noted public transport, roads and parking as priorities for improvement (also fourth cited as making somewhere a good place to live – mentioned by 83% of respondents).

2.15. Other core and universal services/issues such as refuse collection and recycling (cited by 48% as a priority for improvement), health services (45%), and parks, sports and leisure facilities (43%) also standout, along with regeneration of town centres/high streets (45%) and support and services for older people and vulnerable groups (43%).

Figure 2.3: Important aspects in making somewhere a good place to live and priorities for improvement

	Making somewhere a good place to live (9,362)	Priority for improvement (9,267)
Maintaining roads and pavements	87%	79%
Keeping the streets and public areas clean and tidy	87%	63%
Tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing crime	86%	70%
Public transport, roads and parking	83%	59%
Refuse collection and recycling	81%	48%
Parks, sports and leisure facilities	73%	43%
Health services such as mental health services and promoting healthy lifestyles	64%	45%
Support and services for older people and vulnerable groups	64%	43%
Decent and affordable homes	63%	37%
Schools and places of learning	61%	31%
Regeneration of town centres / high streets, including shops and markets	60%	45%
Activities and facilities for children and young people	57%	31%
Jobs and supporting people into work	52%	32%
Community events and activities and supporting local community groups	50%	24%
Arts and cultural services such as theatres and museums	34%	13%
Supporting residents to reduce their impact on the environment	34%	19%

Numbers in brackets are the number of respondents to each question. Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

Section 3: The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Introduction

3.1.   This section presents findings about the current ways councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including awareness and knowledge, and perceptions of effectiveness.

Before today, how aware were you of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and the services each council provides?

Most respondents were aware of the current structure of councils and the different services delivered, and had varying levels of knowledge

3.2.   Overall, 88% of respondents were aware of the current structure of councils, including 11% that knew a lot about it, 31% a reasonable amount, 23% a little and 22% not much about it. 12% were not aware of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire before responding to the questionnaire.

Figure 3.1: Awareness and knowledge of the current structure of councils
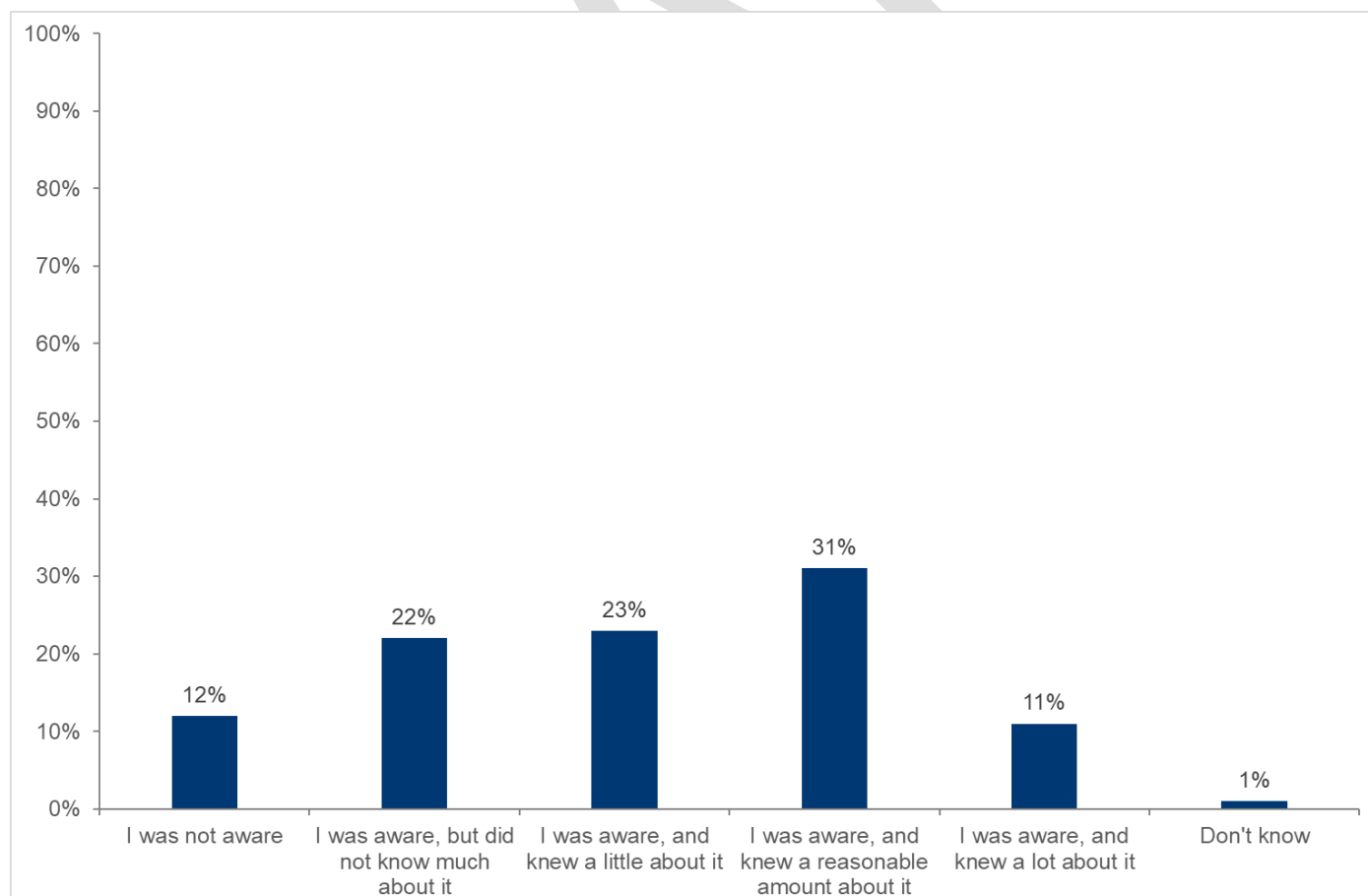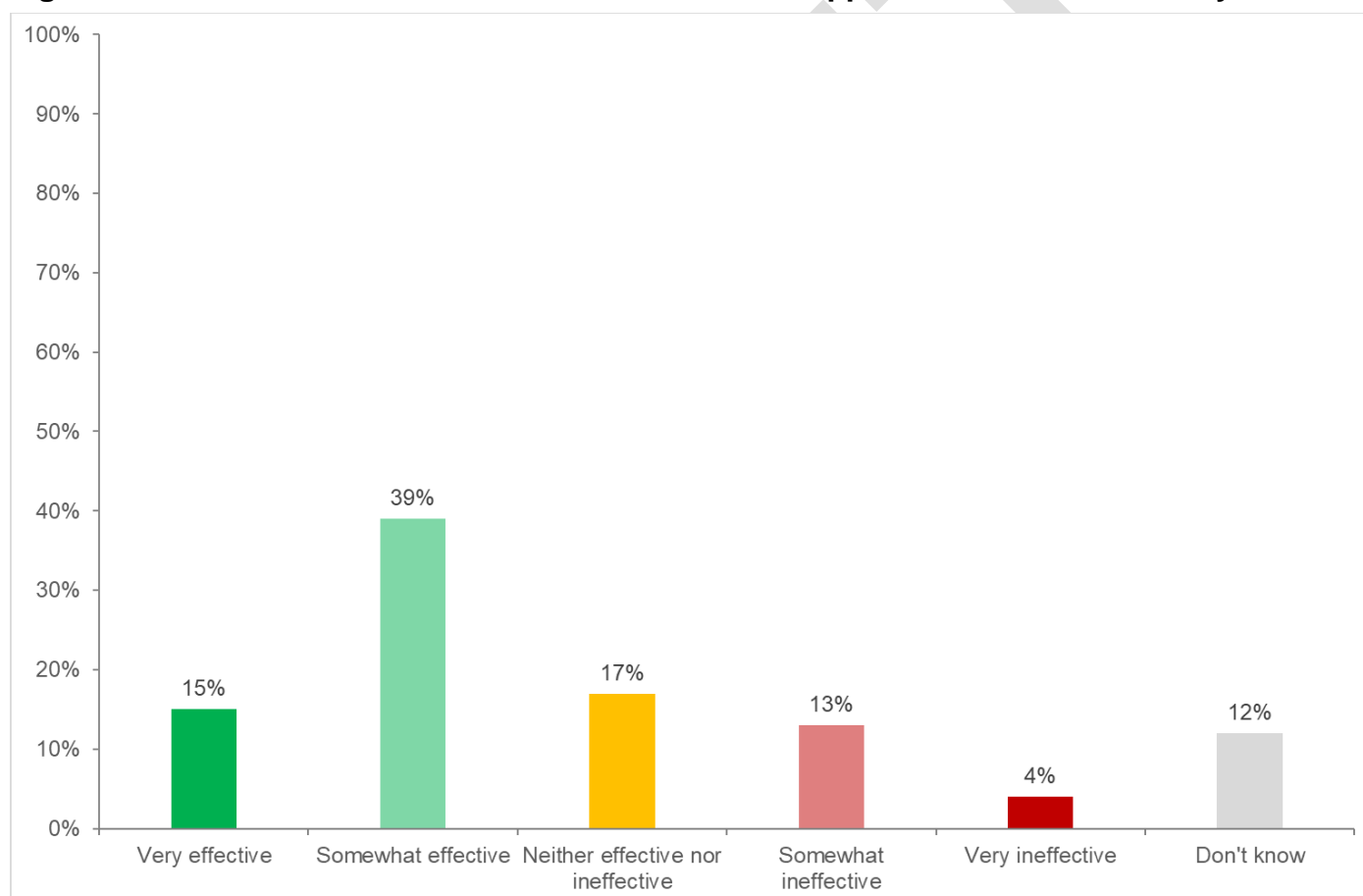

Number of respondents: 9,563.

How effective is the current structure of councils and the approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire?

Over half of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery in councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is effective

3.3.   Overall, 54% of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery is at least somewhat effective. 17% said it is at least somewhat ineffective.

3.4.   There is a relationship between awareness of the current system and effectiveness. For example, 67% of respondents that had at least reasonable levels of awareness of the current system said it is effective. This compares with 35% of respondents that were not aware of the current system stating it is effective.

Figure 3.2: Effectiveness of the current structure and approach to service delivery

Number of respondents: 9,466.

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire: Broxtowe household survey report

3.5.   Respondents were asked to explain their answers to help understand the reasons behind their perceptions about effectiveness with 5,865 respondents providing further explanation. Approximately a quarter of these respondents said the **current system is effective** because they are **satisfied with core council services and the overall performance of the council:**

> "Services provided by Broxtowe are mainly very good."[10]

> "Bins are collected on time and parks are well maintained."

> "Compared to other parts of the country I have lived in, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire generally do a good job of providing services for the people and community."

> "Everything seems to work reasonably well at a local level."

> "Day-to-day services run smoothly, and that's what matters to residents."

3.6.   Approximately a fifth of these respondents appreciated the **local knowledge, representation and responsiveness** of the council to their area and local needs:

> "Understand who does what — the council knows the needs of residents in our area."

> "Broxtowe understands local people and issues."

> "Local councils feel more in touch with what residents want."

> "There is more accountability in local councils."

> "Local councils feel more in touch with what residents want."

3.7.   A similar proportion of these respondents felt that the **two-tier system works well**, is fit for purpose, and relatedly that they valued **stability and continuity** over change:

> "The split works quite well - local council deal with local issues, county with bigger ones."

> "County and Borough council structures provide a reasonably effective approach, balancing scale and democratic accountability."

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[10] Quotes should be used responsibly and not presented out of context.

"It has worked well for years - Broxtowe is very well run. I know who to contact both on a local and county level."

"It seems to operate effectively as it is."

"Works well for Broxtowe. Don't have any reason to complain. If it's not broken, don't try to fix it."

3.8.   Those who said **neither effective or ineffective** often expressed mixed experiences of council services (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this follow-up question) or were not fully aware of, or knowledgeable about, the current system (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this question).

3.9.   Those rating the **system ineffective** either said that they are unsatisfied with services (cited by approximately a tenth of respondents that answered this follow-up question) and/or that the current two-tier system is confusing to access (cited by about 5% of respondents to this question), and inefficient with duplication (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this question) and lack of joined-up working between councils (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this question).

# Section 4: Local Government Reorganisation in England

Introduction

4.1.   This section presents findings about the Government's plans for reorganisation of local government across the country, including awareness and knowledge, and perceptions about these plans.

Before today, how aware were you about the Government's plans to reorganise local councils across England?

Most respondents are aware of the reorganisation of councils across England, although awareness tends to be at the lower end of the spectrum

4.2.   Overall, 84% of respondents are aware of the reorganisation of councils across England, including 7% that knew a lot about it, 24% a reasonable amount, 25% a little and 27% not much about it. 16% were not aware at all before responding to the questionnaire.

4.3.   There is a close relationship between awareness of the current council system and awareness of local government reorganisation. For example, 61% that are at least reasonably knowledgeable about the current system are also reasonably knowledgeable about local government reorganisation.

Figure 4.1: Awareness and knowledge of local government reorganisation across England
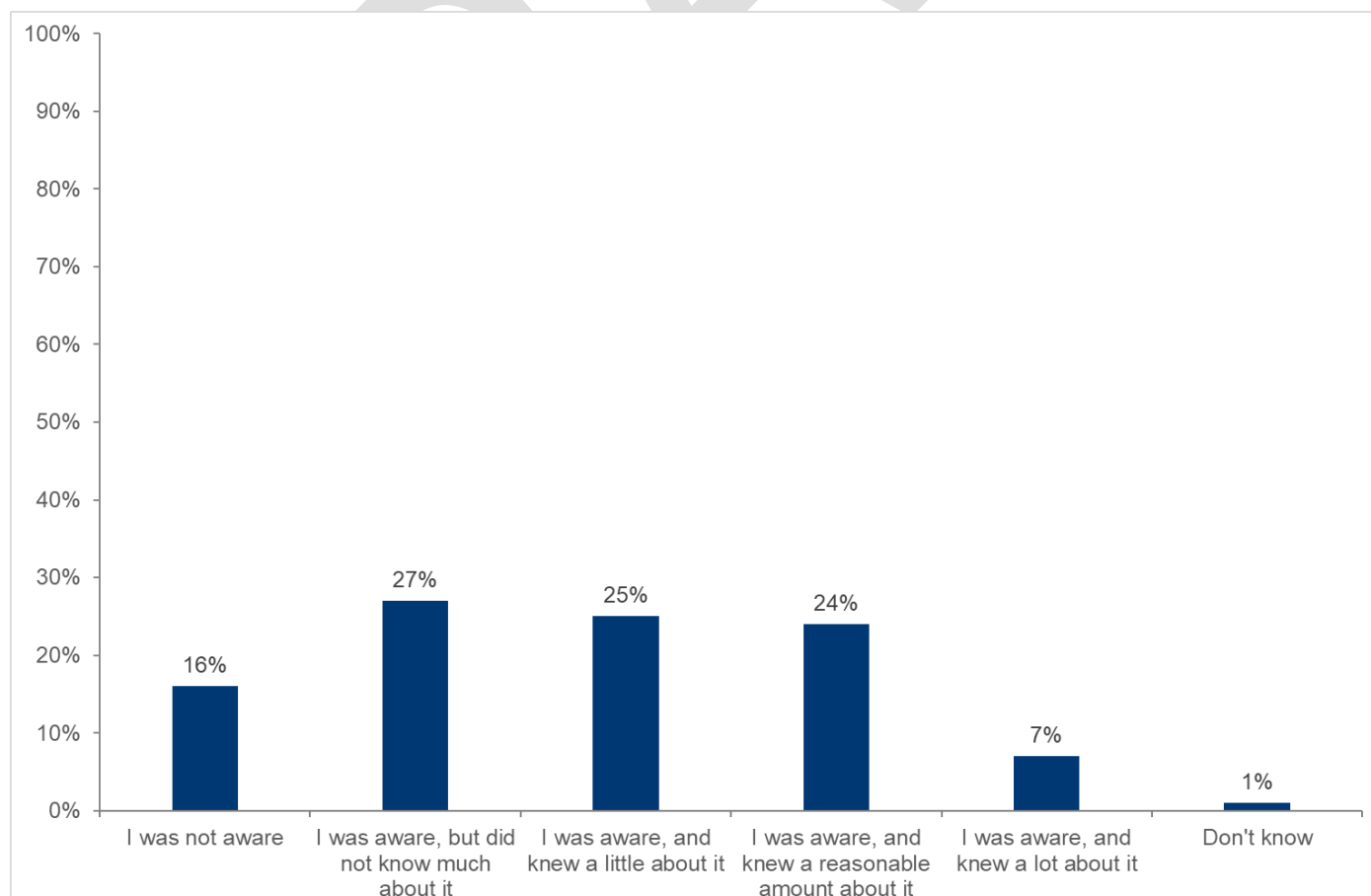
Number of respondents: 9,598.

What do you think are the main potential benefits, if any, of the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Potential benefits include efficiency and cost savings, and improved access, services and outcomes, although a notable proportion are sceptical about benefits being achieved

4.4.   7,838 respondents commented on the potential benefits of local government reorganisation. Approximately two-fifths of these respondents said that local government reorganisation could **reduce duplication, generate efficiencies and consequently save money**, of which a sub-set of these respondents said could lead to lower council tax and/or more value for money services (approximately a fifth):

> "Efficiency, reduced cost and duplication - councils as unitaries will be more connected for residents."

> "Cut out the duplication and save a lot of money; should be under one roof. Hopefully savings should help social care and the NHS."

> "Value for money 'enabled': less duplication, improved effectiveness and efficiency (this is the theory!)."

> "More effective and streamlined and hopefully cheaper services."

> "Hopefully a reduction in headcount and overhead leading to a reduction in council tax or investment in local needs."

4.5.   Relatedly, approximately a fifth of those that responded to this question said that there could be **service improvements** due to better coordination and joined-up working, economies of scale and cost-savings that could be reinvested into improved services, resulting in **better outcomes:**

> "Better coordination, less fragmentation, clearer focus."

> "Joined-up approach and sharing information - sharing best practice and implementing this."

> "More streamlined service, financial savings, less 'passing the buck' to other departments - more clarity on who is responsible for different services."

> "Less authorities, reduction of bureaucracy leading to savings and a clearer focus on important issues."

> "More equality in access to services and outcomes across different localities."

4.6. Approximately a tenth of respondents to this question said that local government reorganisation could **simplify the structure and make it easier to navigate the system and access services:**

> "Streamlining processes should make it easier for people to access support and understand responsibilities."

> "There is potential to streamline systems and processes, resulting in cost savings and simpler access to care and services."

> "It could make access to services simpler - with only one council to deal with, it could save money and ensure equality and uniformity of standards."

4.7. In contrast, approximately a fifth of respondents to this question were **sceptical about potential benefits** either in principle or realised in practice:

> "I see no benefits. The two largest unitary authorities — Birmingham City and Nottingham City - are both bankrupt."

> "No benefits to anyone other than the city council, who see surrounding areas as a cash cow - they've bankrupted themselves."

> "No benefits at all. None of these changes are about improving services - it's about doing the same or less at lower cost."

> "Can't see any positives - it will just create a bigger, less efficient bureaucracy."

> "None - the bigger an organisation, the more 'top heavy' it becomes. Money is spent on managers, not on doing the work."

What concerns, if any, do you have about the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Concerns about joining with Nottingham City Council, inheriting its perceived financial and services issues, and associated loss of voice, lack of responsiveness to local issues, and worries about cost, disruption and service provision

4.8.   8,069 respondents provided comments or concerns about the proposed reorganisation of local government. Approximately half of these respondents raised concerns about an urban-rural imbalance, including **concern about being absorbed into an urban Nottingham City dominated council**, and associated concerns about **loss of local voice, representation, accountability and identity, and associated lack of responsiveness to local issues and concerns:**

> "I am worried that we will be classed as part of Nottingham City when we live 12 miles from the centre!"

> "Being sucked into an urban council when we are rural or suburban in nature."

> "Rural areas being swallowed into city laws. Being made to pay for services that are irrelevant to me."

> "Broxtowe will be subsumed into the city, increasing local taxes on the community and reducing standards and resources."

> "We run the risk of losing the 'personal touch'. We currently have councillors who live in the area they represent — they care about it and have passion for it. Would we get the same representation under the new system?"

> "Too remote and bureaucratic. Less accountability. Less community identification, less neighbourhood approaches and commitment, more feelings of lack of engagement locally."

> "Reduced support in local areas, money invested elsewhere, lack of understanding of specific local issues."

> "That this is being railroaded through with no option to stay as we are - we would lose autonomy and local decision-making."

> "Less local accountability. More remote management, so less informed council making decisions."

> "More impersonal service. Loss of local identity. Potential for greater bureaucracy, and money spent on that rather than services."

Page 117

4.9. Approximately a third of those that responded to this question were **concerned about being merged with Nottingham City Council and inheriting its debt or perceived financial mismanagement and/or service delivery issues:**

"Broxtowe provides a great service, but Notts County Council do not. To lose Broxtowe to Nottingham City and other boroughs would only make services delivered worse. So no thank you."

"The council we are in (Broxtowe) is a very well run council. For the proposals we would be joined with the City of Nottingham which has an inability to run properly, provide the services they should, or even just balance their budget."

"Nottingham City Council is pretty poor at financial management, so I feel joining up with them will result in the whole county being mismanaged."

"Nottingham City is very close to bankruptcy. I would be concerned that funding from suburban councils will go to fill the hole that Nottingham City has created."

"Nottingham City is riddled with debt. Will residents of Broxtowe take on this burden with higher taxes?"

"Nottingham City are bankrupt. If they join us in Broxtowe they will take all our money to bail themselves out. Nottingham City have a bad track record of wasting money on projects that fail, e.g. Robin Hood Energy."

"The incompetent Nottingham City Council will attempt to take money from borough council tax payers to balance their books."

"Do not want to be joined with Nottingham City Council: their mismanagement and lack of financial acumen over many years = bankrupt."

"It is blatant gerrymandering pulling representation and funds away from local areas into an uncaring and bankrupt city council which shows no concern for the suburbs and towns."

"Nottingham City Council is less efficient and more poorly run than Broxtowe, Rushcliffe and Gedling. Major concern we will receive a lower quality service."

4.10. In addition, approximately a tenth of respondents to this question raised general worries about the **cost of reorganisation, inefficiency of larger councils, or waste of public money** undertaking the reorganisation, including some advocating for stability and continuity:

> "I don't think there has been a proper analysis of any suggested cost savings - will this reorganisation actually save money?"

> "Having doubts whether any cost savings will exceed the cost of reorganisation."

> "A lot of money will be wasted in the process. Things started will be stopped and go back to square one."

> "A larger merged council cannot target the needs of a smaller area. The savings from reducing overheads could well be cancelled out by the money wasted from allocating funds to the wrong services."

> "At Broxtowe we get good services now. We have concerns this might change in the reorganisation."

4.11. Relatedly, a similar proportion raised concerns about **potential disruption in the short-term and/or a reduction in service quality or provision in the longer-term due to inefficiencies and lack of local responsiveness.** A sub-set of these respondents indicated that improvements to services are important, but felt these could be best achieved in-situ within the current structure:

> "The settling-in period will likely be messy and impact severely on residents and services. This is being done purely for cost-cutting measures."

> "This exercise could be a significant upheaval, put jobs at risk, and lead to change for the sake of it."

> "Reduced capacity of services, cuts to services, less accountability to local residents."

> "Centralized control doesn't mean more efficiencies; it means less, more bureaucracy, less local connection, and the chaos and disorder of change."

> "The cost of reorganisation would be better spent on improving services."

4.12. A minority (approximately 5% that responded to this question) **expressed no concerns or conditional support for change** if it improved efficiency and/or reduced costs:

> "If the new structure means better coordination and less duplication, then it's a good idea."

> "Fine with change, as long as it's managed well and benefits residents."

> "No concerns, providing the reorganisation actually improves local services."

> "Could lead to savings - this exercise could be a significant upheaval, but if it improves services, then restructure is fine."

> "None. The reorganisation will cost millions of pounds and take many years to implement, so any perceived savings will take time, but if it works in the long term, fine."

Section 5: Future councils

Introduction

5.1.   This section presents findings about the design of the potential future councils, including the most important principles and features of a new council and the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions.

What should be most important when designing a new council?

Quality services, value for money and meeting local needs are the priorities for a future council, along with ensuring services work well together

5.2.   Overall, 76% of respondents cited providing good value, reliable services.

5.3.   This is followed by 68% saving money and using council tax wisely, 67% meeting local needs and being fair to all parts of the area, and 64% ensuring services work together.

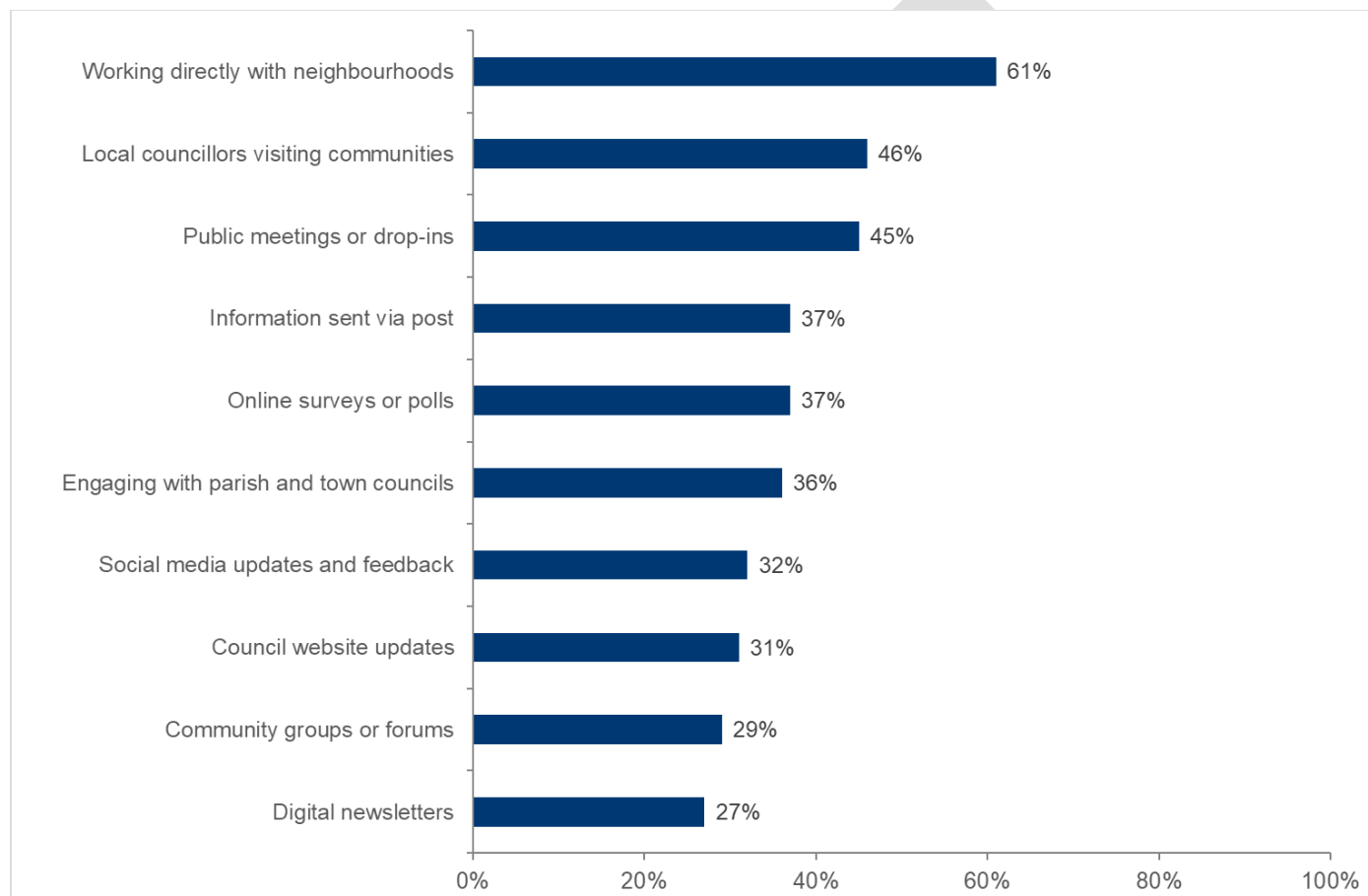**Figure 5.1: Most important for a new council**
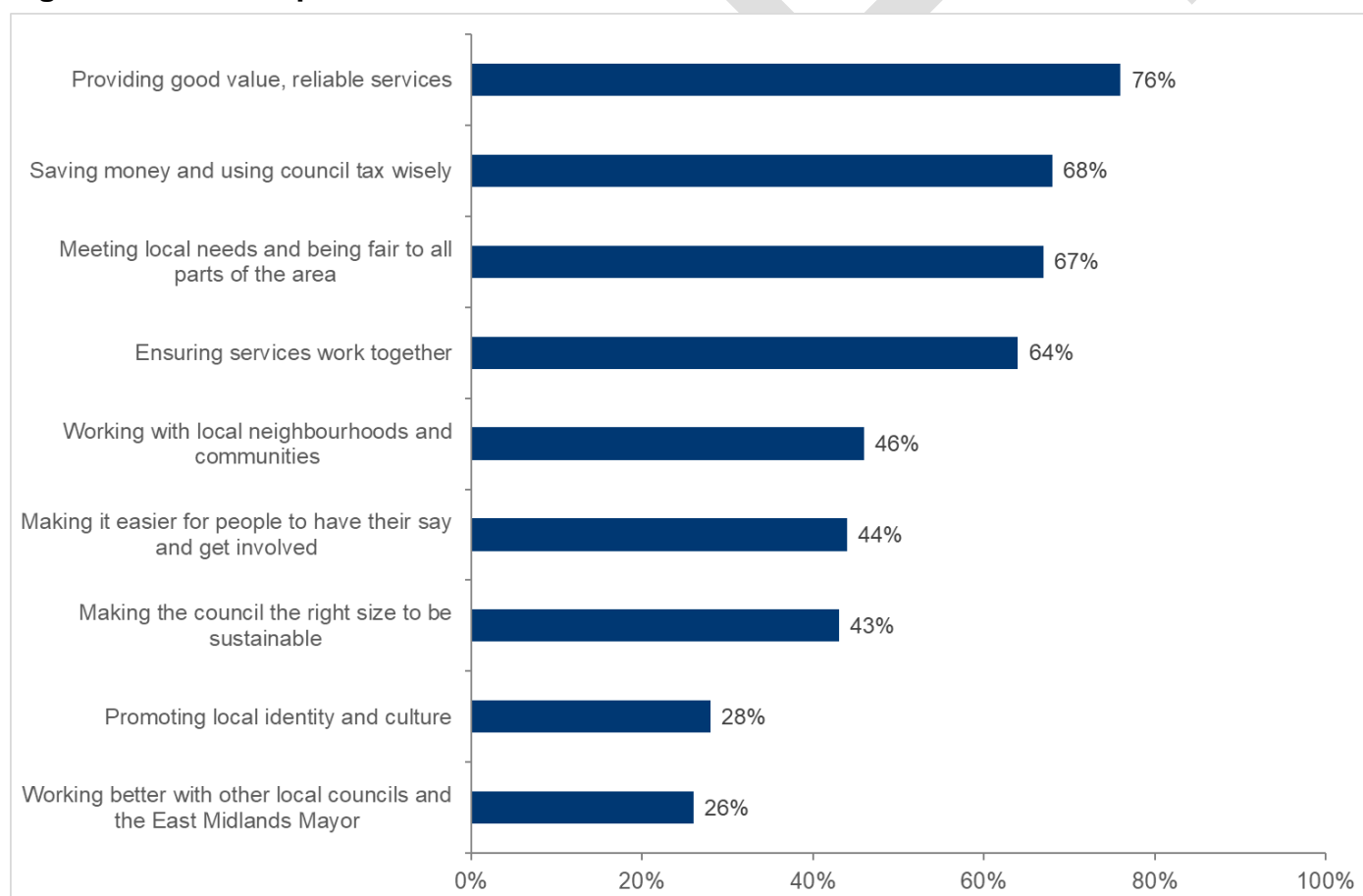
Number of respondents: 9,378. Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

What are the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions?

Neighbourhood working, local councillors and public forums are the best way to involve people in local decisions

5.4.   Overall, 61% of respondents said working directly with neighbourhoods is the best way to involve people in local decisions.

5.5.   This is followed by 46% that mentioned local councillors and 45% public meetings, along with a mixed economy of other approaches.

Figure 5.2: Best ways to involve people in local decisions

Category	Percentage
Working directly with neighbourhoods	61%
Local councillors visiting communities	46%
Public meetings or drop-ins	45%
Information sent via post	37%
Online surveys or polls	37%
Engaging with parish and town councils	36%
Social media updates and feedback	32%
Council website updates	31%
Community groups or forums	29%
Digital newsletters	27%

Number of respondents: 9,282.

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

Section 6: Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
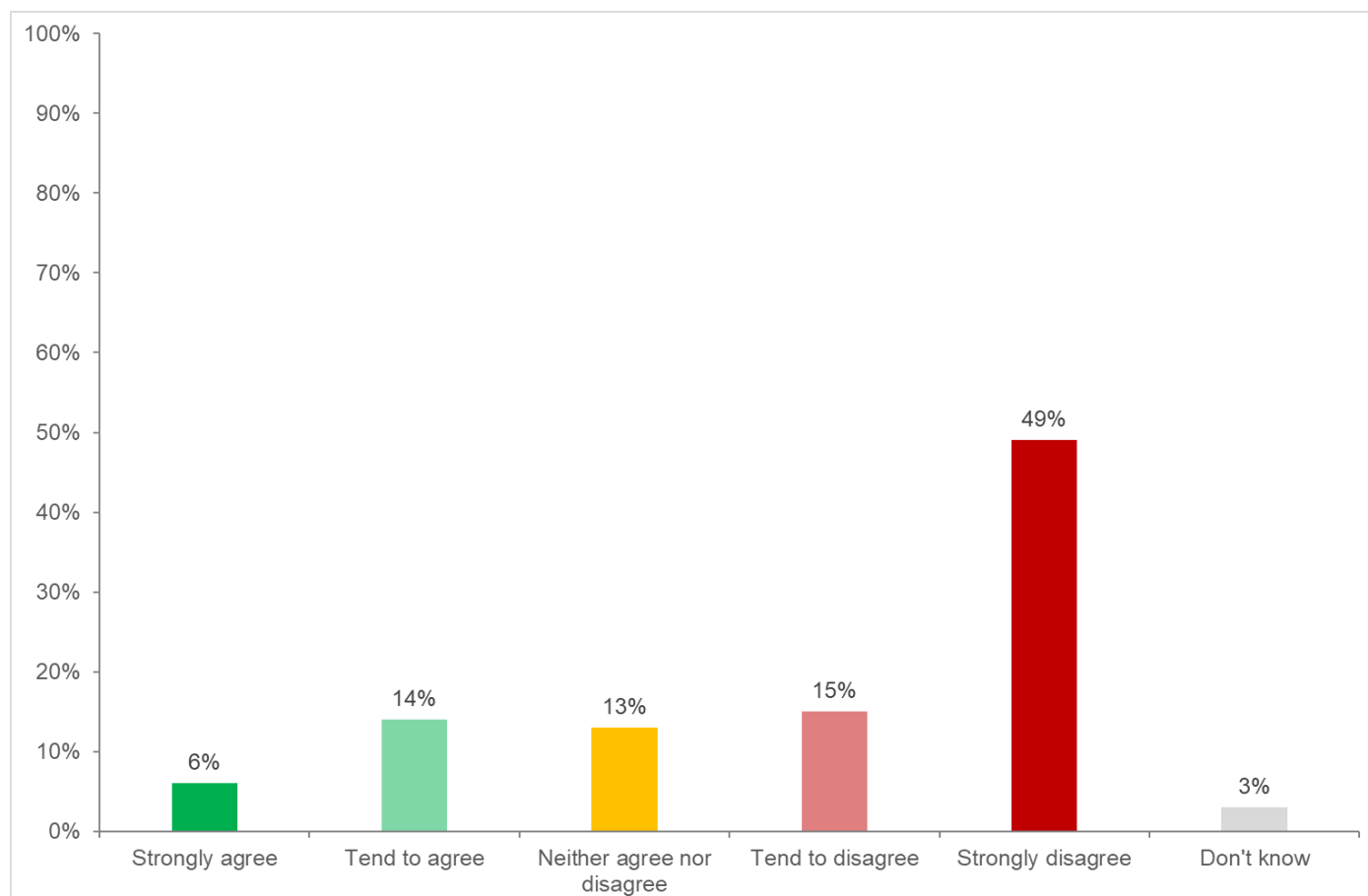
Introduction

6.1.   This section presents the proposals for reorganisation of local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils and different options for the proposed new councils.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area?

Almost two-thirds of respondents disagree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils across the county, with a fifth agreeing with the proposal

6.2.   Overall, 20% of respondents agree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils. In contrast, 64% of respondents disagree with the proposal, including 49% that strongly disagree.

6.3.   There is a relationship between perceptions of the effectiveness of the current system and levels of agreement with the proposal to reduce the number of councils. For example, 14% of those that said the current structure of local councils is effective agree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils compared with 39% of those that said the current system is ineffective. i.e. in other words, those that consider the current system ineffective are more likely to state there is a case for change, although this is only a minority position.

Figure 6.1: Level of agreement with proposal to replace nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Number of respondents: 9,488.

6.4.   Respondents were asked to explain their answers to help understand the levels of agreement for the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with 7,213 respondents providing further explanation. The **comments echoed the benefits and concerns raised earlier about local government reorganisation in England in general.**

6.5.   In summary, those that **agreed** tended to state that the proposals would reduce duplication, generate efficiencies and consequently lead to cost-savings, while a smaller number also said that it would lead to a simplification of the system and therefore improved accessibility.

6.6.   Those that **disagreed** are particularly concerned about joining in a council that they believe would be dominated by Nottingham City with implications for loss of local voice, representation, accountability and identity, and associated lack of responsiveness to local issues and concerns. Similarly, there are related concerns about inheriting Nottingham City Council's perceived financial and service issues. In addition, there is scepticism that the proposed benefits will be achieved in practice, with concerns that these will be outweighed by costs of reorganisation and disruption, with related impacts on services and outcomes.

6.7.   Some of those respondents that are **neutral** emphasised the need for transparency and evidence before supporting such a significant shift and/or that they would only support such a proposal if it demonstrably led to cost-savings and/or service improvements.

Page 124

The core options

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option (Option 1b)?

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling (known as Option 1b). This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Rushcliffe. The second covering Gedling, Broxtowe, and Nottingham City.

Concerns about joining with Nottingham City dominate responses, along with criticism of the logic of the boundaries and the inclusion and exclusion of certain areas

6.8.   The dominant theme are concerns about being grouped in a new council with Nottingham City, mentioned by approximately a third of respondents to this question (6,503 respondents provided comments to this question). These respondents tended to **strongly oppose being merged with Nottingham City (and its council)**, citing concerns over perceived financial and service delivery issues, and poor management:

> "My main concern is that this proposal lumps my local authority in with Nottingham City. I don't want to be saddled with all of the city's problems and debts."

> "Nottingham City Council cannot manage their own finances and now need additional money and support from other areas."

> "Yes Nottingham City Council is bankrupt - how would it benefit Broxtowe?"

> "Broxtowe gains nothing from linking with the city, only taking on part of their enormous debt."

> "By and large, the system seems to work fairly well — why should we support Nottingham City Council who waste money?"

> "Concerned that I would pay extra council tax to pay off the debt of Nottingham City Council."

> "Gedling and Broxtowe will be bailing out Nottingham City and helping them pay off their debts."

> "Will only reduce already struggling services as Nottingham do not have best record at balancing their books!!"

> "I do not want to be included with Nottingham City Council in any way. Very poorly run and has wasted millions of pounds in schemes which they were told wouldn't work from the start."

Page 125

"Do not want to join with Nottingham City Council - debt ridden and poor administration."

"I have deep reservations about being grouped with Nottingham City Council, judging by their past inadequacies and money problems."

"My concern is Broxtowe and Gedling will take on the city's debt leading to higher council taxes, poorer services and cuts to services."

6.9.   Approximately a fifth of respondents to this question said they are concerned about an **urban Nottingham City dominating the new council, and undermining local voice, representation, identity and local services:**

"With Nottingham having a higher concentration of homes, businesses, and population, the new authority needs to guard against decisions being made that benefit the city and adversely impact Gedling and Broxtowe."

"Issues affecting Broxtowe are not the same as those affecting Nottingham."

"Concern Broxtowe and Gedling will be neglected in favour of Nottingham City."

"Any area with Nottingham City Council would lose their identity."

"This would effectively subsume Beeston into Nottingham and leave Stapleford and Nuthall out of the loop. We'd be ignored by a council focused on the city."

"A bad idea. Broxtowe is a well-run council dedicated to good services for its community. Unification would be detrimental to Broxtowe residents."

"I'd rather keep local councils that know our area than be part of a large authority."

"We need decision-making to stay close to residents, not in a distant office."

6.10.   Approximately a fifth of respondents to this question **criticise the logic of the boundaries and the inclusion and exclusion of certain areas.** This includes the inclusion of Broxtowe in general, especially its more rural and/or outlying areas away from the city, and the exclusion of Rushcliffe amongst other areas:

Page 126

"Why split it like this? It doesn't make sense."

"It seems random how the areas are divided."

"The groupings don't reflect communities or how people live their lives."

"Who decided these boundaries? They ignore geography and travel patterns."

"Keep the city and rural areas separate."

"The proposed lines don't follow natural boundaries or local ties."

"Option 1b seems to ignore how people actually move around the county."

"We are part of Nottinghamshire, not Nottingham. I feel like we're closer to Derbyshire than the city."

"Rushcliffe should be included – it makes more sense geographically."

"Ashfield shouldn't be lumped in with Mansfield and Newark; it's too different."

6.11. About a fifth of respondents to this question said they are **generally opposed to the concept of local government reorganisation** whether it be due to concerns over disruption, costs, efficiencies or favouring a district-based system:

"I'm against all these plans, it will cause disruption, cost more than it saves and create two big and cumbersome councils that will not be any better."

"I think it's a political move with no thought for the residents at all — waste of money!"

"Unitary councils will be too big and remote – the two-tier system works."

"Merging everything won't save money; it will just create bureaucracy."

"Local councils already know their communities and priorities – a big unitary won't."

"Too large and complicated; local accountability would be lost. It would cause a democratic deficit."

"Two-tier system works well – local for day-to-day issues, county for the bigger stuff."

"Current structure is fine; it provides local access and accountability."

"District councils already work well together – there's no need to change."

6.12. In contrast, **approximately a tenth of respondents expressed support for Option 1b**, albeit often caveated as a relative preference, such as the 'least bad' or most practical structure that separates city and county. Similarly, some of this support is also conditional on achieving the potential benefits:

"I think this is the best compromise if we must move to unitaries."

"1b makes sense; Broxtowe and Gedling are near the city but not part of it."

"This is the preferred option as Broxtowe and Gedling are similar in demographic."

"Better of the two, but still undesirable."

"On paper this looks okay - it might simplify things if managed well."

"If the new council delivers better joined-up services, I'd support it."

"It could work if funding is fair and local input is kept."

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option (Option 1e)?

This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Gedling. The second covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City, and Rushcliffe.

Respondents reiterated concerns about being merged with Nottingham City Council, becoming part of an urban-dominated authority, and the proposed boundary, although Option 1e attracted slightly more positivity than Option 1b, albeit conditionally and by a minority

6.13. As with Option 1b, concerns about being grouped in a new council with Nottingham City are most commonly cited, mentioned by approximately a third of respondents to this question (6,476 respondents provided comments to this question). **Respondents reiterated their opposition to being merged with Nottingham City Council**, re-asserting concerns over perceived financial and service delivery issues, and poor management, with implications for council tax and service delivery:

> "Nottingham City Council is bankrupt. Why would we want to join them? Our council tax would probably increase!"

> "Again Nottingham City Council is bankrupt, unfair to Broxtowe and Rushcliffe taking on the debt."

> "Clever idea it is not put together 2 councils who are successful to shield the poor administration of Nottingham City – another ploy to put money into Nottingham City."

> "Exactly the same problems/issues: a dominant Nottingham City will waste more money and Broxtowe yet again a successful council broken up."

> "Yes, I do not want Nottingham City Council. They cannot manage their own finances and now need additional money and support from other areas."

> "See earlier comments. The city council isn't interested in Broxtowe residents and will just suck up our council tax and give nothing back."

> "Again, Nottingham City Council would like to take over Broxtowe and Rushcliffe to give themselves more money. There are no benefits financially for Broxtowe or Rushcliffe."

> "There is no reason why Broxtowe and Rushcliffe should be part of the City of Nottingham… No doubt the city wants the council tax and business rates, but there is no guarantee they would be used for local residents."

"Broxtowe is well-run. Nottingham City is not. Don't drag us into their mess."

"My council tax will go up to benefit those in the city and pay for their services, not mine."

6.14. Similarly, approximately a fifth of respondents to this question **re-stated their concerns about an urban Nottingham City dominating the new council**, and undermining local voice, representation, identity and local services:

"Broxtowe has its own identity and has a better understanding of local needs - getting bigger is not the answer. Nottingham City has proven it is in a mess already!"

"Parts of Broxtowe and Rushcliffe are quite rural and very different to parts of Nottingham City, with different priorities and needs."

"As a Broxtowe resident, my primary concern is that the area has significant differences to Nottingham City, local specificities will not be taken into account."

"Broxtowe would lose its voice and end up being run by Nottingham City's priorities."

"Broxtowe has a clear identity and good local services that would be lost if merged with Nottingham City."

"We'd lose local control, local understanding, and be ruled by a council that doesn't know us."

"It will become Greater Nottingham in name and in governance, and Broxtowe's needs will be secondary."

"There is no guarantee that Broxtowe residents would get fair representation - city priorities would always come first."

"Rushcliffe and Broxtowe have many rural settlements, we'd be overlooked in a city-led structure."

"Nottingham City has no understanding of rural issues like transport, farming, or small villages."

6.15. As with Option 1b, **boundary concerns are cited**, albeit in less volume (cited by approximately a tenth of respondents to this question). This includes the inclusion of Broxtowe in general, especially its more rural and/or outlying areas away from the city. Whilst there is some acknowledgement of the appropriateness of including Rushcliffe (at least some parts of it), this is contrasted by questions about the exclusion of Gedling in Option 1e and other areas surrounding the city:

> "These boundaries make no sense - areas that work together are being split apart."

> "The proposed councils are unbalanced — one covers far more people and geography than the other."

> "We shouldn't be grouped with Nottingham - it's not where our services naturally connect."

> "Broxtowe and Rushcliffe have more in common [with each other] than with the city. Boundaries should reflect community links."

> "Merging rural areas with an urban authority will lead to neglect of smaller communities."

> "Urban and rural areas need different kinds of governance and priorities."

> "Rushcliffe areas are much closer to the city than Beeston is, so we shouldn't be part of it."

> "We'd be better joining with Ashfield as it impacts road boundaries, bins and planning in our village."

> "Areas such as Arnold, Gedling, Mapperley etc. should be included."

6.16. Approximately a fifth of respondents to this question **reiterated their opposition to the concept of local government reorganisation**, highlighting concerns over disruption, costs, efficiencies or supporting a district-based system:

> "Every change like this costs more money and causes disruption."

> "Why change and combine councils that are losing money? The best-performing ones should stay put."

> "Councils will be too large to effectively work."

Page 131

"There is no clear efficiency, just higher costs and less democracy."

"No benefits - a bigger council just means money goes away from our area into the city."

"Local councils work well for local people - stop wasting money on reorganisation."

"Happy with current offering, don't see an improvement, just less representation and more distance from services."

"Keep district councils; they know their communities best."

"Reorganisation is not needed - focus on improving existing services."

"The government should support local councils, not replace them."

6.17. This said, there is **more positivity towards this option compared with Option 1b** with approximately a fifth of respondents to this question positive about the proposal either in absolute terms or as a preference compared to alternative options. As with Option 1b, some of this support is caveated or conditional:

"If this is a decision already made, I would prefer this option."

"This is the preferable option because it is a better balance of numbers and similar areas working together."

"In favour of [Option 1e] as it keeps neighbouring communities together – not disjointed."

"Seems more logical than Option 1B [South Nottingham]."

"Sensible geographical spread – one region for the North and the other for the South."

"This is probably the better option – but again I think the City Council should remain separate."

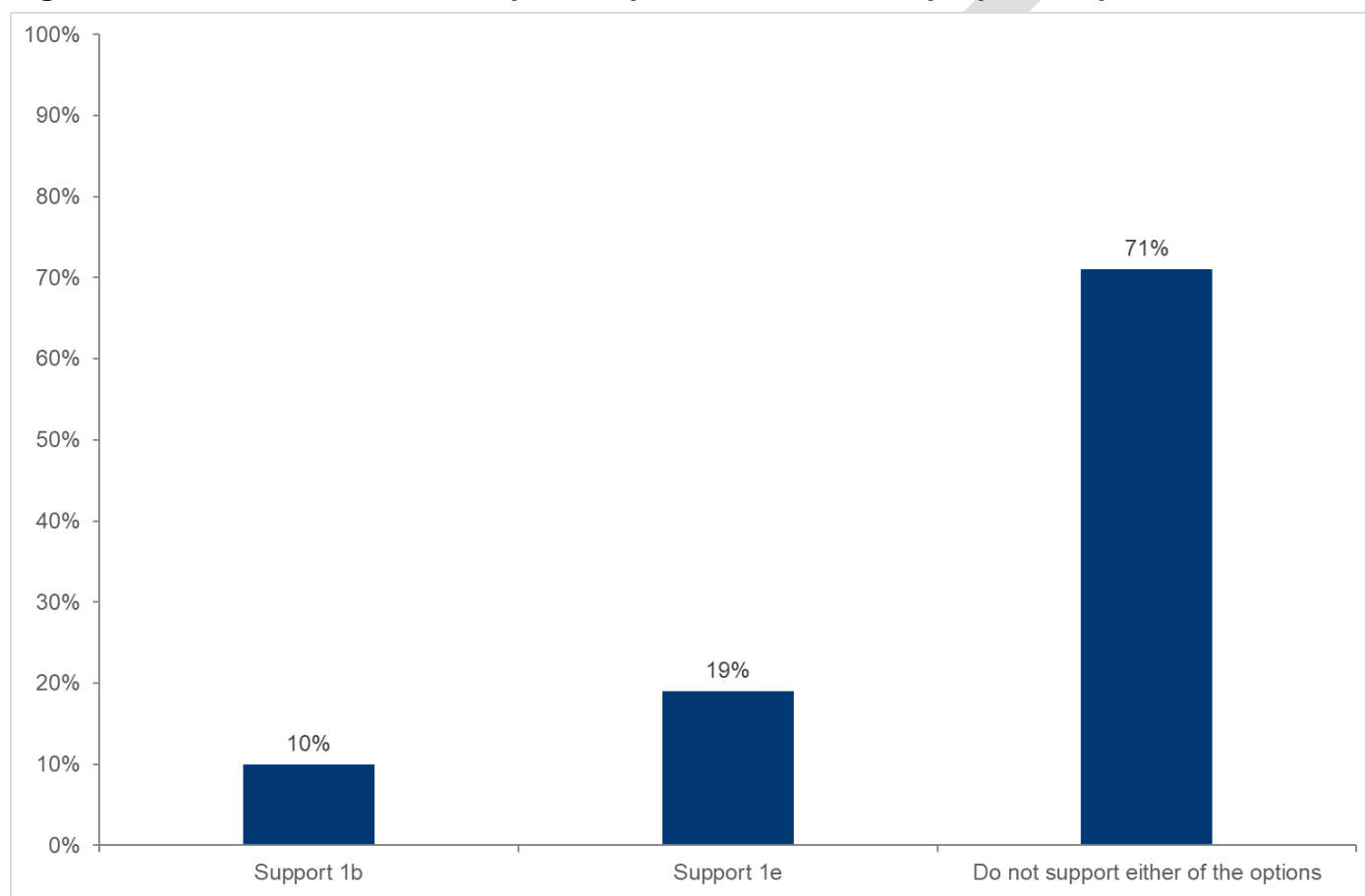"This is better than Option 1B but still makes us a part of Nottingham City."

"This would be a better option and could work quite well, assuming it delivers positive benefits for the area."

Additional Broxtowe specific questions

6.18.   The council asked additional questions as part of its separate survey of households in Broxtowe about support for each of the options:

- 10% support option 1b (of these 5% support both Ib and Ie).
- 19% support option 1e (of these 5% support both Ib and Ie).
- 71% do not support either of the options.

Figure 6.2: Additional Broxtowe specific questions about the proposed options

Number of respondents: 12,025.

Impact Assessment
Report

Potential Impacts of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on Broxtowe Borough Council and Its Residents

www.broxtowe.gov.uk

Contents

Page 136

Executive Summary

This report assesses the potential impacts of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on Broxtowe Borough Council and its residents, with a particular focus on the implications of proposals that would align the Borough with Nottingham City Council. While national policymakers present LGR as an opportunity to improve efficiency, coherence, and strategic capacity, the local analysis and resident feedback highlight substantial fiscal, social, and governance risks for Broxtowe.

Key Findings

Strong Local Identity and Opposition to Merger

The Broxtowe Borough Household Survey conducted by Public Perspectives demonstrates overwhelming community resistance to reorganisation proposals. The clear majority of residents (71%), who responded to the questionnaire, do not support either of the two options, that were consulted on. Respondents emphasised Broxtowe's distinct local identity, community responsiveness and effective service delivery under the existing two-tier system.

Fiscal Risk and Regressive Impact

Aligning Broxtowe with Nottingham City Council would likely trigger upward council tax harmonisation and less generous Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) arrangements. Average Band D households would face annual increases of around £175, while low-income residents and households could lose significant levels of relief. These changes would disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, contradicting the Government's principle of equitable service delivery.

Financial Instability and Cross-Subsidisation

Concerns regarding Nottingham City Council's financial position, marked by a long-standing Section 114 notice and ongoing fiscal recovery, creates a significant risk that Broxtowe's assets and reserves could be redirected to address City Council financial deficits. Evidence from the District Councils' Network indicates that larger unitary authorities do not demonstrate greater efficiency or resilience, rather, they are more likely to require exceptional financial support.

Cultural, Community, and Identity Impacts

Broxtowe's strong record of cultural investment, community grants, and civic participation could be eroded within a larger, centralised structure. Reductions in discretionary spending would likely affect local events, heritage programmes, and voluntary sector grants, diminishing community cohesion and wellbeing. Residents have expressed particular concern about the loss of local accountability and visibility in decision-making.

Environmental and Spatial Pressures

Under a City-led planning framework, Broxtowe's Green Belt coverage (61%) will likely come under increased development pressure as Nottingham City seeks to expand housing supply. This will risk undermining environmental sustainability, local planning autonomy and the distinct character of Broxtowe's towns and villages.

Introduction

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has been positioned by central and regional policymakers as a means of achieving greater efficiency, simplification and strategic coherence across local authorities. However, beneath these intended benefits lie potential complex risks for Broxtowe Borough Council residents, particularly under proposals aligning the Borough with Nottingham City Council. This report highlights the everyday implications of the current proposals being submitted for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, all of which raise fundamental questions about fiscal responsibility, service equity, and the preservation of local identity and priorities.

The proposed changes carry significant potential consequences across several key areas of local governance. Harmonisation of Council Tax and Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) schemes could increase financial burdens on Broxtowe residents, given the Borough's current lower tax rates compared to those in the City. Similarly, adjustments to social housing and rent levels will risk exacerbating inequalities and undermining affordability. Beyond the fiscal sphere, there are wider social and cultural implications. The City's historical and ongoing financial constraints could result in reductions to discretionary spending, affecting local events, cultural programmes, and grants to voluntary and community organisations that are central to Broxtowe's civic life.

All the proposals present potential pressures on Broxtowe's green spaces, as future housing development may extend beyond the current City boundaries to meet urban growth targets. This could undermine long-term environmental and community objectives, eroding the distinct character and sustainability of the area.

This report provides a critical analysis of the potential adverse consequences arising from the LGR proposals being developed in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, which could see Broxtowe integrated with Nottingham City Council. The analysis is based on current assumptions and existing levels of local charges, recognising the differences between the councils. It takes into account the likelihood that, over time, Broxtowe residents, currently subject to lower charges, may be harmonised upwards to align with Nottingham City Council's higher rates. The report also draws on findings from the District Councils' Network and the report published on 20 October 2025 concerning the size of new councils.

Page 138

Resident Perspectives and Local Impact
(Broxtowe Household Survey Findings)

The Council undertook a dedicated household survey across Broxtowe in summer 2025. In addition to this, all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire authorities completed a standard engagement process. The details in this report focus on the responses provided by Broxtowe residents to both surveys.

Community Identity and Local Pride

Broxtowe residents display a strong sense of belonging to their Borough. The standard engagement survey found that 74% of respondents are proud to live in their local area, identifying primarily with local towns and villages such as Beeston, Eastwood, Kimberley, and Stapleford rather than towards Nottingham City. This deep-rooted local identity underpins residents' scepticism towards reorganisation and reinforces the value placed on community-based decision-making.

Satisfaction with the Current System

More than half of respondents (54%) consider the current two-tier system of local government to be effective. Many highlighted the responsiveness, accessibility and reliability of Broxtowe Borough Council, citing the efficient refuse collection service, well-maintained parks and visible local councillors as evidence that the current structure serves residents well. Respondents generally viewed Broxtowe as well-managed and attuned to local priorities. Where dissatisfaction was expressed, it typically related to wider financial pressures on local authorities or concerns about Nottingham City Council's fiscal position, rather than Broxtowe itself.

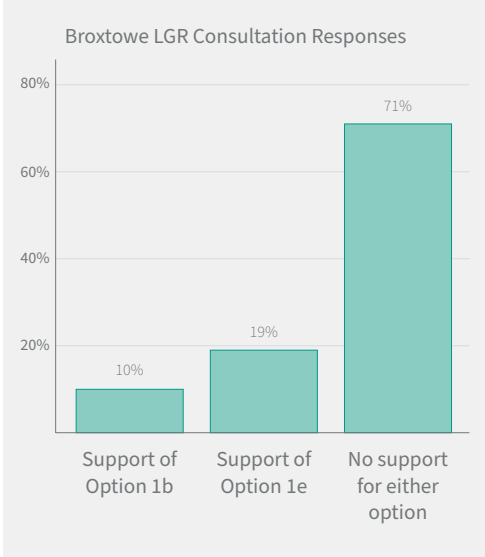## Concerns About Reorganisation

Concerns about LGR are dominated by fears of being merged with Nottingham City Council. Respondents repeatedly cited the City's financial instability and perceived record of poor management as major risks. Many expressed concern that Broxtowe's own resources could be diverted to address City Council deficits, leading to higher Council Tax and declining service quality. Others feared that a unitary authority, including the City, would dilute local representation and make governance more remote.

The survey revealed strong opposition to the idea of being absorbed into a larger, urban-focused authority. Residents emphasised that Broxtowe's suburban and semi-rural character is distinct from Nottingham City's and that local decision-making should remain rooted in Borough-level governance.

Support for the Proposed Options

The Broxtowe-specific survey concluded with three direct questions on support for the two main options under consideration. The results were unequivocal:

Qualitative responses provide further context. Many residents felt constrained by a lack of alternatives, noting that both options involved joining Nottingham City. Respondents expressed a preference for retaining the status quo or exploring a county-wide model that would maintain Broxtowe's identity within Nottinghamshire, rather than merging with the city. Those who did support reorganisation did so conditionally, citing potential efficiency gains or service integration benefits, but emphasised that such outcomes were uncertain.

Broxtowe LGR Consultation Responses

Support of Option 1b	10%
Support of Option 1e	19%
No support for either option	71%

(Source: The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Household survey report: Broxtowe Borough Council October 2025)

The survey findings demonstrate that Broxtowe residents anticipate negative impacts from LGR, particularly on representation, service quality and community identity. While some acknowledge theoretical efficiencies, most doubt these would materialise in practice. Instead, residents foresee higher costs, weakened local accountability, and reduced influence over decisions affecting their neighbourhoods.

Policy and Financial Context

Central government is framing LGR as a tool for improving efficiency, reducing duplication and strengthening local leadership. Within the Levelling Up and Devolution agenda, unitary authorities are expected to provide clearer accountability and strategic capacity over areas of roughly 500,000 people.

However, the District Councils' Network (DCN)'s independent analysis (October 2025) challenges this rationale. Its findings show:

Key Finding (DCN 2025)	Summary
No evidence that larger councils are more efficient	Most data show no positive correlation between population size and outcomes.
Financial instability more common in large councils	Larger unitaries are more likely to require Exceptional Financial Support.
Larger councils charge higher council tax	Average Band D bills £250 higher in councils > 500k population.
Smaller councils perform better on service delivery	On 10 measurable metrics, smaller councils outperform larger ones.

(Source: DCN 2025 – Summary of Analysis on Council Size and Performance)

These findings undermine the assumption that merging Broxtowe (population ≈ 115,000) with Nottingham City (population ≈ 320,000) would produce efficiencies. In practice, merging a financially prudent district council with a Section 114-restricted City introduces risk rather than resilience.

Nottingham City's Financial Position

Nottingham City Council issued a Section 114 notice in 2023, effectively declaring itself unable to set a balanced budget. This triggered central oversight, spending controls and an obligation to prioritise statutory duties. A merged authority inheriting these pressures would inevitably place fiscal recovery ahead of local investment priorities.

Broxtowe's Financial Position

Broxtowe has maintained a stable financial outlook with moderate reserves, low levels of taxation and a balanced budget over successive years. Integrating with a financially stressed partner could lead to reallocation of Broxtowe's assets and reserves to stabilise wider deficits.

Fiscal Impact Analysis

The fiscal dimension of LGR is the most visible and immediate for residents. Two mechanisms including Council Tax harmonisation and LCTS alignment will have direct effects on household budgets.

Council Tax Harmonisation

Under reorganisation, all residents of the new unitary authority will eventually pay a single harmonised Council Tax rate. Given Nottingham City's higher tax rates, harmonisation would likely result in an upward adjustment for Broxtowe residents.

Table 1: Council Tax Harmonisation – Annual Impact based on 2025/26

Band	Broxtowe £	Nottingham £	Annual Difference £
A	1,653.86	1,770.80	116.94
B	1,929.50	2,065.93	136.43
C	2,205.14	2,361.06	155.92
D	2,480.78	2,656.19	175.41
E	3,032.06	3,246.45	214.39
F	3,583.35	3,836.71	253.36
G	4,134.64	4,426.99	292.35
H	4,961.56	5,312.38	350.82

(Source: Broxtowe Borough Council)

For example, a Band D household would therefore pay around £175 more per year. Across the Borough's Band D equivalent tax base, this represents approximately £6.9million in additional annual taxation transferred from residents to the new authority. This calculation is based on the Band D equivalent Broxtowe Borough Council Tax Base multiplied by the Band D charge differential between the two Councils.

The DCN analysis shows that larger unitary councils already charge higher Council Tax per resident, undermining claims that scale yields savings.

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Harmonisation

Broxtowe's LCTS scheme currently provides up to 100% relief for eligible low-income households. Nottingham City caps support at 80% of Band B liability, requiring all claimants to contribute at least 20%.

Table 2: Comparison of Local Council Tax Support Schemes

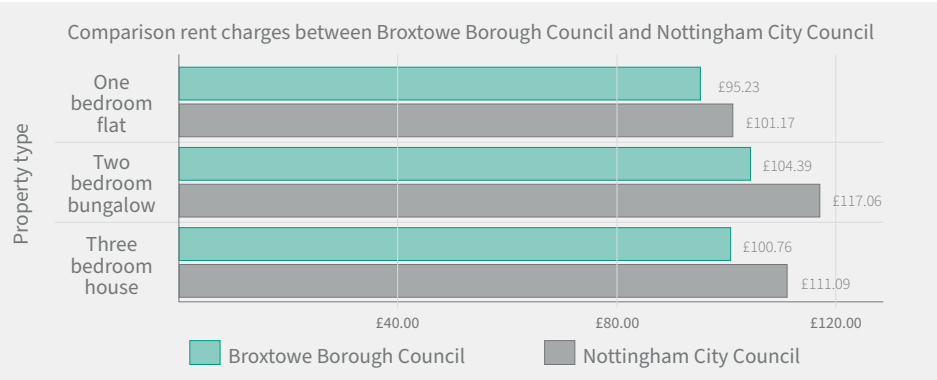| Feature	Broxtowe Borough Council	Nottingham City Council
Maximum entitlement	Up to 100 % of liability	80 % of Band B liability
Minimum payment	None	All claimants pay ≥ 20 %
Property band limits	No limit	Capped at Band B
Minimum award	No minimum (1p/week)	£5/week minimum entitlement

(Source: Broxtowe Borough Council)

The potential adoption of Nottingham City's scheme would impose new annual liabilities of between £600 to £800 for some low-income households. Around 186 households could lose eligibility altogether as they fall under the £5 minimum entitlement.

Page 142

This impact runs counter to central government's principle of equitable service delivery. It would also increase the likelihood of arrears, enforcement action and demand on discretionary hardship funds.

Rent Harmonisation

Both Council's must set their rent annually in accordance with the formula set out in the in both the MHCLG Rent Policy Statement and the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard. Currently, annual rent increases would only be allowed to continue in line with this guidance. However, it is anticipated that guidance will be amended to allow further rent increases to align rents charged. This is in addition to the current proposals for rent convergence between social landlords, which could also increase tenants' rents. Therefore, tenants may see rents increase significantly, and demand for financial inclusion service support could increase. Broxtowe Borough Council has a dedicated Financial Inclusion team. Nottingham City does not offer the same service.

Comparison between rents charged, shows that Nottingham City Rents are significantly higher than Broxtowe Borough Council, for example:

Comparison rent charges between Broxtowe Borough Council and Nottingham City Council

Property type	Broxtowe Borough Council	Nottingham City Council
One bedroom flat	£95.23	£101.17
Two bedroom bungalow	£104.39	£117.06
Three bedroom house	£100.76	£111.09

(Source: Broxtowe Borough Council)

The key difference between the approach to rent collection, is the number of chargeable weeks. Tenants of Broxtowe Borough Council benefit from four 'rent free' weeks, two at Christmas and two in March. Nottingham City Council only have two 'rent free' weeks. Feedback from tenants is in support of Broxtowe Borough Council's approach to this, and many tenants would be concerned if 'rent free' weeks were reduced or removed.

Risks to partners

Nottingham City Council published the Option Bii (Composite Proposal) Comparative Analysis. This work, with PwC highlights:

"there may be additional financial complexities for the wider public service delivery system where partners currently organise or deliver services aligned to a district footprint."

None of these financial complexities are evidenced or exampled within the report, leading to significant questions over the potential risks. Many public sector partners, including health, police, fire, housing providers and voluntary sector organisations, currently base their locality structures, joint-commissioning arrangements and pooled budgets on existing district geographies. Changes to these boundaries under an LGR proposal may require partners to reorganise services, realign funding streams and absorb additional transition costs, creating a risk of inefficiencies.

Page 143

Cultural and Community Impacts

Broxtowe has built a reputation for its creative, inclusive cultural services that support wellbeing, learning, and civic pride. These programmes depend on discretionary funding, which typically suffers first under fiscal cost-cutting.

Cultural Events and Heritage Services

Broxtowe delivers around 12 core cultural events annually, attracting over 35,000 attendees in 2024/25. The Borough also manages the D. H. Lawrence Birthplace Museum and a successful international cultural exchange programme through the C-City Charter.

Table 3: Cultural Event Attendance and Subsidy Trends

Year	Total Event Attendees	Subsidy per Head £
2019/20	16,427	4.86
2022/23	24,624	3.92
2023/24	30,993	2.94
2024/25	35,886	2.80

(Source: Broxtowe Borough Council Key Performance Data)

This trend shows rising participation and improving cost-efficiency. Under a single unitary authority constrained by statutory priorities, such discretionary investment would likely diminish.

Table 4: D. H. Lawrence Birthplace Museum Performance

Year	Visitors	Subsidy per Visitor £	Volunteer Hours
2019/20	5,116	18.23	774
2022/23	3,497	31.07	348
2023/24	4,428	16.17	273
2024/25	4,544	15.10	392

(Source: Broxtowe Borough Council Key Performance Data)

The Museum's reach and educational role have expanded significantly through outreach, university partnerships and international collaboration. These community-based benefits will be difficult to replicate in a large, centralised structure.

The risks identified include the potential downgrading or merging of local events, which could result in a loss of distinctive community identity. There is also a risk of volunteers and sponsors withdrawing their engagement if they perceive that local services are being undervalued. In addition, the capacity for local heritage interpretation and outreach could be reduced, limiting opportunities for community engagement and education. Collectively, these factors may lead to diminished wellbeing, learning, and civic participation outcomes across the affected areas.

Page 144

Beyond social and cultural impacts, there are also important economic considerations. Local events and heritage activities play a significant role in supporting town centre economies by attracting visitors who spend money in shops, cafés, and other local businesses. Similarly, museums and cultural venues contribute to tourism by drawing in both local and regional audiences, supporting employment and investment in the area. If such activities were reduced or centralised as part of reorganisation, the loss of footfall could negatively affect high street vitality and local business confidence. Maintaining a strong programme of community and cultural events is therefore not only a social priority but a key driver of local economic development and resilience.

Grant Aid to Voluntary and Community Organisations

Broxtowe's Grant Aid Scheme sustains a thriving voluntary and community sector by supporting more than 20 local organisations each year, including Citizens Advice, Hope Nottingham, The Helpful Bureau, and Age Concern Eastwood.

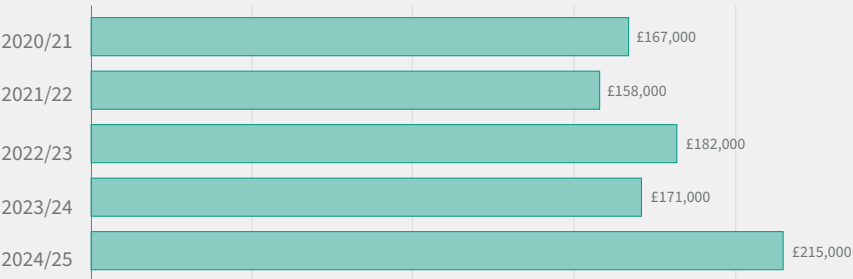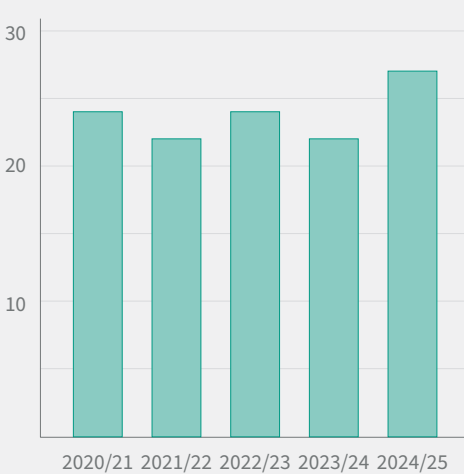**Table 5: Revenue Grant Support (2020/21 – 2024/25): Total amount used to support organisations in Broxtowe.**

Year	Amount
2020/21	£167,000
2021/22	£158,000
2022/23	£182,000
2023/24	£171,000
2024/25	£215,000

Table 6: Groups Supported (2020/21 – 2024/25): Total amount of groups supported by Broxtowe Borough Council.

Year	Groups
2020/21	24
2021/22	22
2022/23	24
2023/24	22
2024/25	27

The scheme's increasing investment and participation reflect Broxtowe's commitment to social resilience. In a reorganised authority, there is no guarantee this locally ringfenced funding would continue. The result could be the closure or contraction of critical services such as foodbanks, debt advice, and youth programmes.

(Source: Broxtowe Borough Council)

Page 145

Citizens Advice

Broxtowe Borough Council has maintained a long-standing partnership with Citizens Advice Central Nottinghamshire, providing residents with independent advice on benefits, debt, housing, employment, and consumer rights. In 2025/26, the Council allocated £73,750 to support the service, including £10,000 towards accommodation at the Beeston office. This local office not only reduces operational costs but also ensures residents have a visible and accessible point of contact within the borough. This arrangement is potentially vulnerable under an LGR merger with Nottingham City Council. Changes to funding priorities or centralisation of services could threaten the dedicated grant aid, and potential relocation should the Beeston office close. This could reduce the local visibility and accessibility that residents currently rely upon.

In 2024/25, Citizens Advice assisted 7,589 Broxtowe residents, handled 19,078 enquiries, facilitated £4.3 million in additional benefits, and achieved £0.85 million in debt write-offs. The scale and impact of this support demonstrate the critical role the service plays in the borough, and the strength of a partnership built over many years. Disruption to these arrangements through service consolidation, funding shifts, or loss of local office space could weaken outcomes for vulnerable households, reduce timely access to advice, and undermine the continuity of support that is central to community resilience.

Page 146

Environmental and Spatial Impacts
Development Pressure and Green Belt Integrity

Broxtowe's Local Plan identifies sufficient sites to meet its housing requirement of 649 dwellings per year up to 2041, maintaining 61 percent Green Belt coverage. Nottingham City, by contrast, faces severe land constraints and has relied heavily on brownfield and student accommodation developments. To meet city-driven housing growth, Broxtowe's Green Belt could be targeted for development.

Key Environmental Risks:

- Loss of protected open space and biodiversity.
- Increased traffic and infrastructure strain.
- Erosion of local character and sustainability commitments.

The DCN (2025) notes that smaller councils tend to outperform larger ones on planning efficiency and environmental responsiveness, due to proximity to local communities and better understanding of spatial context.

Synthesis and Discussion

The cumulative evidence suggests that the proposed merger would likely produce net disbenefits for Broxtowe residents in several domains:

Dimension	Likely Impact on Broxtowe Residents
Fiscal	Increased council tax and reduced LCTS; regressive effects on low-income households.
Cultural	Loss or dilution of local programmes; reduced discretionary funding.
Community	Curtailment of voluntary grants; weakened civic participation.
Environmental	Greater development pressure on Green Belt; diminished local control.
Housing	Risk of rent inflation; affordability and arrears pressures.

Each of these impacts arises not from inefficiency within Broxtowe but from systemic imbalance in the proposed partnership.

Page 148

Risk Mitigation and Transitional Measures

If LGR proceeds with Broxtowe merging with Nottingham City Council, a series of mitigations should be embedded in the Implementation Plan to protect residents and local services.

- **Phased Council Tax Harmonisation (2–3 years):** Smooths adjustment for residents and mirrors previous precedents.

- **Temporary Retention of Broxtowe LCTS Scheme (1 year):** Maintains protection for low-income households during the transition.

- **Local Hardship Fund:** Provides targeted relief and reduces the risk of arrears.

- **Ringfenced Cultural and Grant Aid Budgets (3 years):** Preserves community assets while new frameworks are developed.

- **Broxtowe Area Committee or Charter:** Retains local representation and advisory input.

- **Environmental Safeguard Policy:** Protects the Green Belt and sustainability targets.

- **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA):** Ensures compliance and identifies vulnerable groups.

Implementation of these measures would not remove all risks but could moderate the pace and severity of disruption to households and community infrastructure.

Conclusions

This impact assessment concludes that the proposed reorganisation, particularly the alignment with Nottingham City Council, presents significant risks to Broxtowe Borough Council's residents, finances, and identity.

- Fiscal harmonisation would shift costs upward for residents and reduce protection for those on low incomes.

- Cultural, voluntary, and environmental assets, hallmarks of Broxtowe's quality of life, could be deprioritised.

- Although mitigation measures may lessen the impact on Broxtowe residents, the process of local government reorganisation is still likely to have negative effects.

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