

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT JUNE 2025

One council for Norfolk

One of the major issues that all local authorities in Norfolk are having to deal with is Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as the Government wants to replace existing county and district councils in England with fewer, unitary councils - which will deliver all services in their area. It asked councils to submit options and NCC submitted an initial report in March without, at that time, identifying a preferred option..

Data and evidence on the pros and cons of one, two or three unitary councils for Norfolk were studied and the public were asked what mattered to them about local councils and services. There were also engagement sessions with town and parish councils.

Norfolk County Council has as a result nailed its colours to the mast by issuing a new report that says replacing Norfolk's eight councils with one would save £36.2m per year and deliver the biggest benefits to residents.

NCC's preferred option is one unitary council, covering the whole county: Key reasons for this include:

- Value for money - having one council would save £36.2m per year and repay start-up costs within a year.
- More joined up services - and avoidance of disruption, risks, cost and inefficiencies caused by splitting up county-wide services.
- If there was more than one council, the authority covering the west of Norfolk could be financially unviable from the start.

Evaluation of feedback from Norfolk residents about their top priorities from the Government's criteria for local government reorganisation found that:

- Their top priority (67.2 per cent of respondents) was to ensure Council Taxpayers got value for money from efficient services.
- The second priority (53.3 per cent) was improving local services.
- The third priority (42.6 per cent) was ensuring that services are not unnecessarily fragmented/split up.

The report was considered by the Strategic and Corporate Select Committee on 18 June and comes before a Cabinet meeting on 23 June where it is recommended that the single county option is progressed. Once a preferred option is selected, there will be further engagement. The option will be developed into a detailed proposal, to be submitted to the Government by 26 September. Ministers will then take the final decision on what council structure to adopt.

There is still a long way to go on this although the timescale is short.

For information I have attached the report to Cabinet for 23 June.