Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

Agenda

Thursday, 18th September, 2025
at 5.00 pm

In the Assembly Room
Town Hall
Saturday Market Place
King's Lynn

Available for the public to view on WestNorfolkBC on You Tube

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk

King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1EX
Telephone: 01553 616200

10 September 2025

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend an Extraordinary meeting of the **Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk** which will commence at **5.00 pm** on **Thursday, 18th September, 2025** in the Assembly Room, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn to transact the business shown below.

Yours sincerely

Kate Blakemore
Chief Executive

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

1. PRAYERS

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Page 5)

Please indicate if there are any interests which should be declared. A declaration of an interest should indicate the nature of the interest (if not already declared on the Register of Interests) and the agenda item to which it relates. If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared, the member should withdraw from the room whilst the matter is discussed.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

To receive any items of business which in the opinion of the Mayor are urgent.

5. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 - FINAL PROPOSAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NORFOLK

(Members are reminded this is a debate, not a question and answer session)

To consider the following recommendation to Council from the Cabinet

Meeting held on 16 September 2025.

Final Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk

1) **Recommendation from Cabinet - Final Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk** (To Follow)

Please note that the recommendation from the Cabinet Meeting held on 16 September will be sent to follow.

A copy of the Cabinet Report and Appendices is attached.

2) **Cabinet Report - Final Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk** (Pages 6 - 505)

Kate Blakemore
Chief Executive

Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk

DECLARING AN INTEREST AND MANAGING ANY CONFLICTS FLOWCHART

START

Does the matter directly relate to one of your DPIs?

YES ← Declare the interest. You have a **conflict** and cannot act or remain in the meeting *

→ NO Does the matter directly relate to the finances or wellbeing of one of your ERIs?

YES ↙ Declare the interest. You have a **conflict** and cannot act or remain in the meeting *

↓ NO Does it directly relate to the finances or wellbeing of you, a relative or a close associate?

YES ← Declare the interest. You have a **conflict** and cannot act or remain in the meeting *

↓ NO Does it affect the finances or wellbeing of you, a relative, a close associate or one of my ERIs?

YES ← Declare the interest. Are you or they affected to a greater extent than most people? And would a reasonable person think you are biased because of the interest?

↓ YES You have a **conflict** and cannot act or remain in the meeting *

↓NO Take part as normal

↓ NO Does it relate to a Council Company or outside body to which you are appointed by the Council?

YES ↙ Declare the interest. Do you, or would a reasonable person think there are competing interests between the Council and the company/outside body?

YES ← You can remain the meeting if the Chair agrees, for you to speak in your external capacity only. Do not vote.

NO ← You can take part in discussions but make clear which capacity you are speaking in. Do not vote.

↓ NO Does another interest make you that feel you cannot act in a fair, objective or open manner? Would a reasonable person knowing the same interest think you could not act in a fair, objective or open manner?

NO TO BOTH Declare the interest for the sake of openness and transparency. Then take part as normal.

YES TO ONE ↓ You have a **conflict**. Declare the interest. Do not participate and do not vote.

* without a dispensation

Glossary:
DPI: Disclosable Pecuniary Interest
ERI: Extended Registrable Interest

Other actions to mitigate against identified conflicts:
1. Don't read the papers
2. Tell relevant officers
3. Ask to be removed from any email recipient chain/group

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/~~Exempt~~		Would any decisions proposed: Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide ~~YES~~/NO Need to be recommendations to Council YES/~~NO~~ Is it a Key Decision YES/~~NO~~	
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary		
Lead Member: Cllr Alistair Beales E-mail: cllr.Alistair.Beales@West-Norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Yes Other Members consulted: Yes	
Lead Officer: Kate Blakemore E-mail: Kate.Blakemore@West-Norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial:		Other Officers consulted: S151 Officer Monitoring Officer A range of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from across the six district councils.	
Financial Implications YES/~~NO~~	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/~~NO~~	Statutory Implications YES/~~NO~~	Equality Impact Assessment YES/~~NO~~ If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment
Risk Management Implications YES/~~NO~~	Environmental Considerations ~~YES/~~NO		
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)			

Date of meeting: 16 September 2025

Final Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk

Summary

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, Norfolk's acceptance onto the Devolution Priority Programme early 2025, and the submission of Interim Plan proposals in March 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited Norfolk's councils to submit final proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Norfolk by 26 September 2025.

The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Broadland District Council, Breckland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich City Council have prepared a final proposal for a three-unitary model for LGR in Norfolk, in accordance with the direction of those authorities agreed previously as part of March's interim plan submission.

This report summarises the key milestones and development work to date in preparing our Business Case in relation to the final plan submission and next steps. The final proposal is annexed to this report. It has been developed collaboratively, under the oversight of the respective Leaders and Chief Executives and in line with the Government's guidance and with the support of Inner Circle Consulting, who were jointly procured by these six authorities to support the development of this business case.

Recommendations to Full Council:

1. Notes the content of this report and the '*Future Norfolk: People, Place, Progress – Final Proposal for a Three-Unitary Model for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk'* (**Final Proposal**) annexed to this report.

2. Endorses the Final Proposal for a three-unitary model for local government reorganisation in Norfolk.

3. Delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the authority to make any necessary non-material amendments to the Final Proposal and to submit the Final Proposal to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Reason for Decision

To respond to the statutory invite from the Secretary of State to submit a final proposal for local government reorganisation in Norfolk.

This proposal offers a compelling and credible pathway to reform that is financially sound, strategically aligned, and rooted in local identity. It positions Norfolk to deliver better outcomes for residents, strengthen democratic leadership, and contribute meaningfully to the Government's wider devolution and public service transformation agenda. It is believed that this proposal has the potential to deliver lasting benefits for communities across Norfolk, and to support a model of governance that is fit for the future.

1. Background

1.1 Following the English Devolution White Paper (Dec 2024) and Norfolk's inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme (early 2025), District Councils began assessing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) options, evaluating one, two, and three-unitary models against six government criteria.

1.2 Between 18–20 March 2025, six District Councils (Broadland, Breckland, West Norfolk, Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk, Norwich City) endorsed a three-unitary model. South Norfolk supported a two-unitary model. On 21 March, both proposals were submitted to the Minister.

1.3 Meanwhile, Norfolk County Council submitted its own considerations for a one or two-unitary model, and on 9 June, signalled its intent to pursue a single unitary authority.

1.4 On 7 May 2025, Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) requested that Interim Plans be developed into full business cases, to be submitted by 26 September 2025.

1.5 To support this, six districts jointly procured Inner Circle Consulting to independently develop the final business case for the three-unitary model,

leveraging their expertise in County Council functions (e.g. adult and children's services).

1.6 Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) from each district coordinated input across key service areas to ensure a shared evidence base, as required by government. This included subject matter experts in HR, Finance, and other areas.

1.7 Regular meetings of Council Leaders and Chief Executives provided oversight and strategic input, while also progressing detailed design work at the local level.

2. Current Position

2.1 Each council can only make one final proposal for unitary local government across the whole of Norfolk and final proposals can either be submitted individually by a council or jointly with other councils that were invited.

3. Summary of Submission

3.1 This report and attached appendices set out an overarching proposal for LGR in Norfolk pulled together jointly by us at the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk along with Breckland, Broadland, Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk and Norwich City Councils.

3.2 Along with the overarching proposal it outlines the establishment of three new unitary councils: Greater Norwich, East Norfolk, and West Norfolk. Each proposal for a new Council is designed to deliver more responsive public services, strengthen democratic leadership, and unlock long-term economic and social benefits for communities, but nuanced to consider the uniqueness of each of the three areas.

3.3 Finally, the proposal includes an extensive set of Appendices, designed to provide detailed workings and evidence to support the overall submission.

4. Government Criteria

4.1 Within the English Devolution White Paper the government laid down six criteria for LGR, further emphasised in the feedback letter received after the interim plan submission in March.

4.2 This proposal meets the Government's reorganisation criteria, offering strong alignment across key areas:

- **Improved Local Services**: Creating three distinct unitary councils will enable tailored, place-based service delivery focused on prevention, integration, and local priorities, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach.

- **Strong Leadership & Accountability**: Councils rooted in their communities will enhance democratic representation, rebuild trust, and

ensure decisions reflect local values.

- **Economic Growth**: The new councils will align with the emerging Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Strategic Authority, supporting coordinated investment, local enterprise, and regional competitiveness.

- **Financial Sustainability**: A projected net benefit of £220m over eight years and annual savings of £49m from year four onwards. West Norfolk enters with the strongest financial position, offering resilience and flexibility.

- **Local Identity**: Proposed boundaries reflect existing community identities and economic areas, promoting cohesion and effective governance.

- **Optimal Size and Scale**: Each council will serve 300,000 – 400,000 residents, balancing strategic capacity with local connection.

- **Service Reform & Innovation**: The model prioritises locally designed, integrated services over traditional consolidation, supporting national goals for prevention and citizen-focused delivery.

5. Developing the Case for the West

Boundaries

5.1 In developing our final submission, work needed to be undertaken to understand the boundaries of the new unitaries. To establish these new Councils consideration needs to be given to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and specifically the use of existing district boundaries as building blocks to the new Councils.

5.2 Members are therefore asked to note that ahead of the main submission to government there is an initial section (part 1 – Unmodified boundaries & request for modification, at Appendix 1 of this report) that sets out a three unitary solution based on current district boundaries and seeks to request a modification of existing boundaries to enable our proposal to be as efficient and effective as possible in delivering LGR for our residents and communities along with complying with relevant legislation.

Blueprint for the New West Unitary Council

5.3 The new council will adopt a resident-focused, integrated model, break silos and simplifying access to services. This approach will prioritise growth, inclusion, and health equity, aligned with Marmot principles, prevention and early intervention.

Customer Services

5.4 “Every door is the right door” we’ll get your enquiry to the right place no matter how it comes into the Council. We will ensure residents can access services how and when they need whether digitally, by phone, or in person. Advanced

use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will support 24/7 digital access while enabling personalised support for vulnerable residents.

Children Services

5.5 Services will be localised and aligned with the West's health footprint. This will support early intervention, reduce exclusions, and improve educational outcomes while retaining essential countywide partnerships for safeguarding, fostering, and specialist provision.

Adult Social Care

5.6 Adult services will also be devolved to a local model, focused on early intervention through data-driven insights. The aim is to reduce reliance on high-cost care placements by intervening earlier and more effectively, while maintaining shared arrangements for complex needs and commissioning.

Prevention & Early Intervention

5.7 A dedicated department will focus on proactive support, using predictive analytics to identify and assist at-risk individuals before problems escalate, and statutory interventions are needed. Multi-agency teams will deliver joined-up, community-based services that improve wellbeing and reduce future demand on statutory services.

Financial Modelling for the West

5.8 The proposed West Norfolk unitary authority combining King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Breckland, and part of South Norfolk is projected to start with a £10.69 million budget surplus based on 2025/26 figures, providing a strong platform for investment and transformation.

5.9 Council tax harmonisation is a key variable, with five scenarios modelled. Only the "Weighted Average +5%" scenario delivers a net financial gain. While no recommendation is made as this will be a decision for the new Councils, the analysis highlights the need to balance resident fairness with long-term financial stability.

5.10 Transition costs are estimated at £27 million over 3 years, covering ICT and workforce changes. These will be funded locally through reserves and assets, with no reliance on central government. By Year 4, the authority is expected to break even, achieving £15 million in annual savings by Year 8 through streamlined operations and prevention-led services.

5.11 Risks include low unearmarked reserves, limiting flexibility, though debt levels remain affordable with modest debt servicing costs. Overall, the modelling confirms that West Norfolk is financially viable with the potential for long-term sustainability provided harmonisation is well-managed and reforms are implemented effectively.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

6.1 The main proposal sets out the significant amount of consultation that has been undertaken around this proposal. Including 5,403 survey responses, 2,000 partner engagements, 62,100 website views, and a social media reach of 438,100. With many supporting the three-unitary proposal. Key feedback showed that the public want:

- Strong accountability, local representation, and access to decision-makers.
- Services that reflect community needs, protect local identity and support local economies: and
- Financial sustainability, efficiency and flexibility in future councils.

6.2 Formal consultation will subsequently be undertaken by the MHCLG on any of the proposals that are deemed compliant, following submission on the 26 September 2025.

7. Implementation and Transition

7.1 The outline timetable for implementation and transition post submission of final plan is as follows:

- **Statutory Consultation:** All final proposals for Norfolk, single, two-unitary, and three-unitary models are expected to be included in the statutory consultation process subject to compliant submissions.

- **Decision-Making:** Ministers and Parliament will decide which proposal, if any, is implemented. This decision may include modifications and will require cross-government agreement.

- **Legislation:** The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will draft a Structural Changes Order (SCO) to establish the new unitary system and dissolve predecessor councils.

- **Transition Period:** Existing councils will operate as normal until Vesting Day, while preparing for the transfer of assets, staff, and responsibilities. Shadow authorities will lead implementation planning, including service restructuring and council tax harmonisation.

- **Go-Live Date:** The target vesting day is 1 April 2028. Elections will be held in the transition year to ensure new councils are democratically accountable during the implementation phase

7.2 Work is already underway within the Council to ensure that we are ready for this next period of LGR, aside from whatever number of unitary Council are eventually decided on, with proposals around our “LGR readiness” and next steps likely to be presented to Members before Christmas 2025/early Spring 2026.

8. Options Considered

8.1 Alternative unitary models were considered during the development of the Interim Plan submission and previously considered by full Council, therefore reconsidering the number of unitary Councils is not an applicable option at this time.

8.2 The option to do nothing and not provide a submission to Central Government could be considered, as a submission is not a statutory requirement. However, by deciding not to make a submission, the LGR process will not stop. The Secretary of State will still receive and consider the submissions from other Norfolk Councils.

8.3 If the Final Proposal is not submitted, then this would have the significant impact that King's Lynn and West Norfolk's distinct interests and identity, including our geography, economy rural and district communities, heritage assets and infrastructure needs would not be fully promoted and represented to the Secretary of State. This would not be in the best interest of this Borough's residents and local economy.

8.4 The preferred option is that the Council submits a proposal that it considers will provide the best outcome to its residents and local economy in the event of a structural change to local government in Norfolk.

9. Policy Implications

9.1 The proposal detailed in the final submission will have wide reaching policy implications for the residents of Norfolk, particularly for Early Intervention and Prevention, Children and Adult Services, Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provisions.

9.2 There will be organisational policy implications for all Norfolk District Councils and Norfolk County Council.

9.3 However, given that this report relates to the submission of our final proposal to the MHCLG, and that a decision is still to be made, further consideration on the policy implications will need to be given following the formal decision from the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution. This decision is expected sometime in March 2026.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The MHCLG allocated £321,389 in capacity funding to support the development of LGR submissions in Norfolk. This funding was intended to help cover the costs of preparing the proposal, including analytical work, stakeholder engagement, and coordination across councils involved in the reorganisation process.

10.2 The capacity funding has been allocated across the 3 proposals being submitted for Norfolk with a total of £106k to support the Three Unitary Model

for Norfolk. Each of the 6 district and borough councils supporting the case for the three unitary model is required to contribute a further £24.5k to fund the cost of the proposal.

10.3 The transitional costs for the proposed West Norfolk unitary authority are expected to be funded locally, without reliance on Central Government support. One-off transition costs are estimated at £27 million in the first three years which will cover the setup of the shadow authority as well as ICT migration and workforce restructuring with recurring costs of £2 million per year anticipated due to the disaggregation of countywide services. These costs are expected to be met through existing reserves and realisable assets held by the constituent councils.

10.4 The proposal notes that West Norfolk has sufficient financial capacity to absorb these costs internally, though careful judgement will be needed where assets also generate ongoing revenue income.

11. Personnel Implications

11.1 None at present, as this report relates to the submission of the final LGR proposal. However, it should be noted that during the transition process, councils will need to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to planning and delivering transformation, reviewing business-as-usual activities to create capacity and developing key organisational enablers such as staff structures, operating models and corporate plans. LGR transition requires significant programme management capacity and capability. Once it has been decided what the future of local government in Norfolk will be, the personnel implications will need to be thoroughly considered.

12. Environmental Considerations

None

13. Statutory Considerations

13.1 The LGR process is determined using provisions under section 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.

13.2 The legal process governing local authority restructuring is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Once a decision is taken on which model to implement in Norfolk, MHCLG will prepare the necessary legislation – the Structural Change Order (SCO) – for parliamentary approval. The SCO will establish the new single tier of local government in Norfolk and make provision to abolish the predecessor councils.

13.3 SCOs place on the County Council and district councils a duty to consult and co-operate with each other, take any steps necessary to prepare for the transfer, and provide any information that any of those councils may reasonably request to enable the implementation.

14. Conclusion

14.1 Under the oversight of the Leaders and Chief Executives of Broadland District Council, Breckland District Council, the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich City Council, a compelling, evidence-driven final proposal for a three-unitary model for LGR in Norfolk has been prepared in line with the Government's guidance.

14.2 Members are asked to review and endorse the final proposal set out in the Appendices in principle and delegate to the Leader and Chief Executive Officer the finalisation and submission of the Final Proposal to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution in accordance with the prescribed process.

15 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Pre-screening report template attached

16 Risk Management Implications

16.1 Strategic risks R15 and R16 on the Council's corporate risk register relate to this matter and set out how the organisation is seeking to mitigating and manage them.

16.2 The Secretary of State can decide to take forward proposals that are submitted by areas with or without modification. Furthermore, The English Devolution White Paper notes that the Government has the power to initiate and implement LGR, even if local councils choose not to propose changes.

16.3 It is, therefore, important to submit a compelling, evidence-based vision for LGR to the Government that fully reflects the needs, opportunities and challenges of Norfolk's diverse places and communities.

17. Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

17.1 A dispensation was granted to 'Twin-Hatters' i.e. Members of County Council and this Council, from the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct in relation to their interests and conflict of those interests by virtue of being Members of both Councils.

18 Background Papers

18.1 Cabinet agenda pack and minutes: 19th March 2025 – which set out the Council's Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation and the decisions made around it: Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 19th March, 2025, 10.00 am

Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory

Name of policy/service/function	Final Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk			
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function? *(tick as appropriate)*	New	✓	Existing	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution has invited Norfolk's councils to submit a Final Proposal for local government reorganisation (LGR) in Norfolk by 26 September 2025. The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk in collaboration with five other Norfolk District Councils (Broadland District Council, Breckland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich City Council) have prepared a Final Proposal that responds to the Government's ambitions set out in the English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024. Our proposal for a three-unitary model in Norfolk is based on the three distinct geographies and communities – West, East and Greater Norwich.			
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only *(identify stakeholders consulted with)*	We worked collaboratively with Broadland District Council, Breckland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich City Council to develop our proposal. The district councils procured Inner Circle Consulting to support us in developing our final submission – building on our Interim Plan that was submitted in March 2025. During the development of our proposal, extensive stakeholder engagement was undertaken, including a resident survey, dedicated webpage, bespoke stakeholder events and one to one meetings. Leaders and Chief Executives were extensively involved in the development and oversight of the final submission.			

Question	**Answer**				
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service? Please tick the relevant box for each group.		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age				✓
	Disability				✓
	Sex				✓
	Gender Re-assignment				✓

NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group. ***If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.*** **For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund*	Marriage/civil partnership				✓
	Pregnancy & maternity				✓
	Race				✓
	Religion or belief				✓
	Sexual orientation				✓
	Armed forces community				✓
	Care leavers				✓
	Health inequalities*				✓
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)				✓

Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:

This report relates to the submission of our final LGR proposal to the MHCLG. The Secretary of State will ultimately decide what the future of local government in Norfolk will look like, following receipt of all relevant proposals. This decision is expected in spring 2026. Once this decision has been made and we know which of the proposals has been accepted, we will be more informed on what the potential impacts may be and therefore a full and thorough Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted at this stage.

Question	**Answer**	**Comments**
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	TBC	
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	TBC	
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	TBC	**Actions:** **Actions agreed by EWG member:** **……**

If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:

Decision agreed by EWG member: ……..

5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	TBC	**Please provide brief summary:**

Assessment completed by: Name	Charlotte Marriott		
Job title	Interim Corporate Governance Manager Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for LGR (KL&WN)		
Date completed	28 August 28 2025		
Reviewed by EWG member	Amy Pearce	**Date**	9 September 2025

✓ **Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy** (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)

Submission (Unmodified): Three Unitary Councils in Norfolk

Introduction

In response to the invitation made by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on the 5 February 2025, the partnership of six Norfolk district councils (Breckland, Broadland, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk and Norwich City) jointly and severally submit the following proposals under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

As a partnership we believe the optimal solution for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk is three strong unitaries firmly rooted in place, and reflecting a detailed understanding of both the challenges and opportunities facing Norfolk, its communities and local economies.

Our model acknowledges Norwich's historical and functional status as a major regional city and creates two other distinct unitaries, with a recognisable centre and urban focus, with King's Lynn in the West and Great Yarmouth in the East, and extensive rural hinterlands with their own distinct characters and communities. The model also ensures that other areas – including North Norfolk, the Broads, Brecks and Fens and market towns – retain their identities and spatial interrelationships.

We believe that the three-unitary model creates more opportunity to deliver integrated and inclusive economic growth in support of the Mayoral Strategic Authority than alternative proposals for unitary structures in Norfolk. It reflects the unique characteristics of the key urban centres and the need for tailored approaches to local economies and housing to unlock their potential across a geography of more than 2,000 square miles and a population of over 916,521 people based on 2021 Census data, precited to rise to more than 1.1 million people by 2035, accounting for the latest housing targets (MHCLG 2024). It also recognises the historic status and potential of Norwich as a regional economic powerhouse, with cities delivering a disproportionate contribution to national GVA.

Our proposal also provides the basis for: -

- the transformation of public services to serve the needs of each community, improving outcomes and value for money;
- a strong platform for local voices and democratic representation;
- effective devolution with the optimal balance of leadership and democratic representation within the Strategic Authority (SA); and
- a clear focus from each unitary on the tools needed to unlock local growth.

A vision for change -

Our submission is built from our fundamental belief and understanding that:

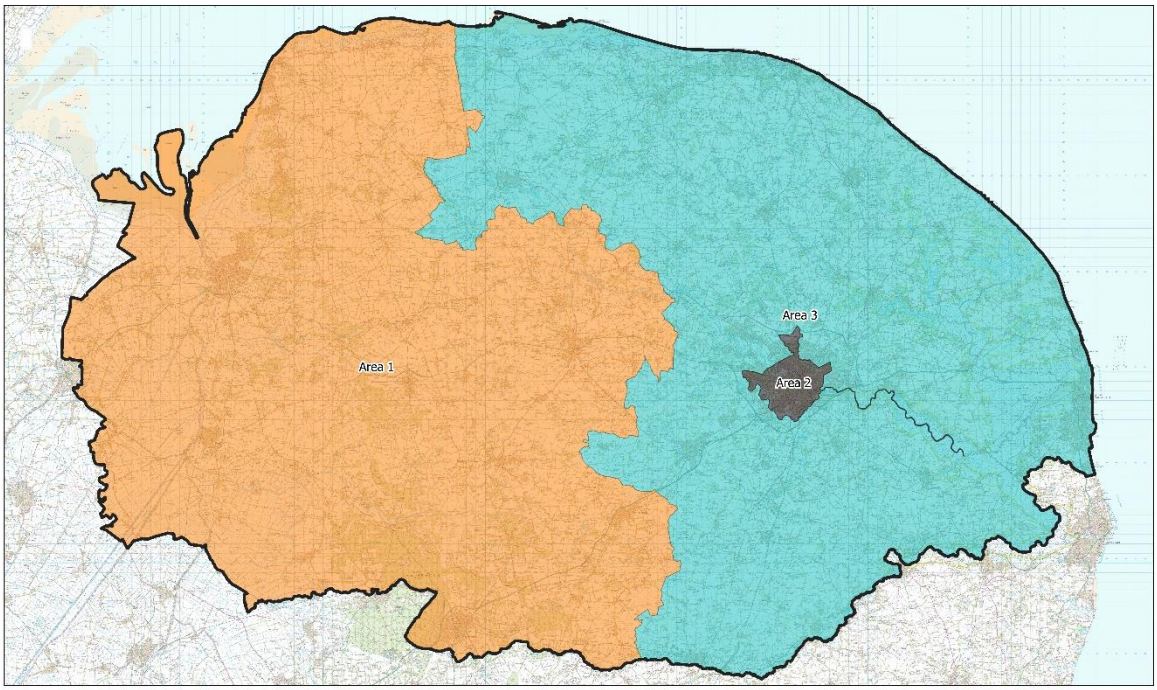
1. Norfolk is not a single homogeneous area. With a population and geographic size vastly greater than almost every other unitary authority in the country, it

does not lend itself to being supported through a large and remote single Council.
2. The City of Norwich is an economic driving force and powerhouse for the wider region, and unitary status focused on Norwich could unlock its significant further potential.
3. There are distinct geographies across the County, based on historic urban centres, coastal and rural identities, and economies. These distinctions help form the basis of natural areas of local government and governance.
4. The cornerstone of effective local government is its locality, and the ability for residents to access local services and democracy locally.
5. Status quo is unsustainable in public service delivery. Effective public service reform is most effectively delivered at a local level, with services tailored to neighbourhood need and focused on partnership and prevention.
6. Devolution, and the success of the future Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk, is best supported by multiple strong unitary Councils aligned to distinct local economic geographies, and working in partnership with the Mayor to provide on the ground delivery for housing and economic growth – as exemplified in successful established Strategic Authorities across the Country.

Proposal

We formally submit the following 'Type B' submission (as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) for three new Norfolk Unitary Councils.

Figure 1. Unmodified Unitary Map – using district boundaries as the building blocks



As set out in the diagram above, our proposal, based on unmodified local government district boundaries, is for three new unitary Councils designed around distinct social, economic and place geographies covering:

New Unitary	Comprised of (full Districts)	Population (2021)	Population Projection (2035)	Council Tax Base 25/26
West (Area 1)	• The Borough of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Council • Breckland District Council	294,677	358,744	104,365
Norwich (Area 2)	• Norwich City Council	144,426	169,856	39,166
East (Area 3)	• Broadland District Council • Great Yarmouth District Council • North Norfolk District Council • South Norfolk District Council	477,418	578,985	180,477

Policy Alignment

We believe our approach represents a strong fit against all criteria set out in the invitation for LGR submissions:

Criteria 1: Establishing of a single tier of local government for the whole area concerned	✓
Our three-unitary model creates a single tier of local government across the whole of Norfolk. Government which is based around real geographies that map closely to existing economic areas: in particular the City of Norwich, Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth, incorporating rural and urban areas and the coast. This design allows for the delivery of responsive economic growth by recognising and capitalising on the specialisms, diversity and challenges of economies across Norfolk, allowing for local policy and strategy formulation based on a deep understanding of both place and the local economy. Norwich requires its own solutions to integrated economic and housing growth, unlocking the potential of the Norwich economy as a GVA powerhouse, but connected to the wider region. A three-unitary model, with a strong city of Norwich at its centre reflects the city's significance and provides scope for the creation of balanced and distinctive arrangements centred around the historic centres of King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth, with respective rural areas and coast across the rest of the County.	

Criteria 2: Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shock	✓

All three proposed authorities are within comparable bounds to other authorities nationally. East Norfolk, with a population of 477,418, would become the eighth largest unitary area in England by population. Norwich, with a population of 144,426, will have a larger population than existing unitary councils such as Kensington and Chelsea, Blackpool and Darlington. West Norfolk, will have a population of 294,677, making it the 39th largest unitary in England with a population larger than Brighton and Hove, Medway and many of the London Boroughs.

All three unitaries will benefit from the agility, through size, to provide sufficient resilience to financial shocks and would be better-placed to deliver more locally-responsive, transformational public services, including the co-creation of preventative services with voluntary and community sector partners that reduces demand – and therefore realise savings – in the longer term.

Criteria 3: prioritising the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens	✓

The design and delivery of public services around specific local needs and demands is central to our three-unitary proposal, especially in areas such as, tackling unemployment and economic inactivity, serving an ageing population and its social care needs, and wider health and wellbeing. A three-unitary arrangement will be implicitly more agile and responsive, directing and prioritising resources to where they are needed most.

Our model is proposed based on a dynamic approach to scaling, and whilst all three unitaries would retain independence and accountability for delivery. In key service areas, such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Housing and Homelessness, delivery models are proposed which enable innovatively aggregating interventions to extend quality and impact with local teams focused on assessment, prevention and intervention such as social prescribing – rooted in local communities working in partnership with the voluntary sector. This represents an optimal balance of the competing requirements to deliver high quality, responsive public services, realise economies of scale and align with existing public service delivery infrastructure – including healthcare, the police and skills providers.

Criteria 4: Showing how councils can work together and support local place identity	✓

Under our model, unitaries will better reflect and extend residents lived experiences and their understanding and sense of 'place' and identity. The three-unitary arrangement consolidates and capitalises upon, rather than subsumes, Norwich's historic and economic status as the major city for the region – as well as its very specific urban challenges – and embraces distinctive civic and cultural identities of King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth. This ensures that councils can focus on local priorities and concerns rather than being spread too thinly in responding to competing interests.

The proposals also reflect the distinct geographies, 'natural' boundaries and identities understood by our residents – the North Norfolk coast, the Broads,

Brecks and Fens, and vibrant, distinctive market towns, small rural villages and coastal resorts.

Consultation with over 5,000 residents has indicated a strong preference for local decision making, local accountability, and the types of approach aligned to three unitary Councils for Norfolk.

Criteria 5: Supporting devolution arrangements	✓

Our three-unitary model can realise and combine the benefits and impact of the Strategic Authority operating in areas such as planning and transport across Norfolk and Suffolk with responsive, locally focused authorities delivering tailored public services, creating a balanced and democratically accountable power dynamic and ensuring a voice for community interests and local voices. The Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority will be strengthened by constituent members which reflect the opportunities for housing delivery, economic growth and an ambitious skills agenda. Our proposal ensures that the only city in the combined authority has a seat at the table and distinct economic interests in the West and the East are fully engaged in realising the promises of English Devolution.

Criteria 6: Stronger community engagement and empowerment	✓

Our three unitary approach maintains locally accessible democratic accountability and decision-making, close to those who benefit and reflective of local needs and opportunities. Ultimately three unitary authorities will strengthen local democracy and engagement with clear representation that is supportive of our smaller towns and communities, improving public service outcomes and unlocking inclusive growth across the whole county.

<u>Request for modification –</u>
The preceding proposals are submitted following the invitation and the terms of section 2 of the Act. They follow a considerable amount of work completed within our partnership and with our partners. Pursuant to the Act, in particular section 7, the Secretary of State can, by order, implement proposals with modifications. Following our extensive workings, local knowledge, and analysis we are requesting that modifications are made to our proposals in order to substantially improve the overall benefits to be gained by reorganisation.

This approach follows the trajectory set out in our Interim Plan submissions and is considered by all partner to be essential to achieve best outcome for residents, communities and businesses through substantial enhancement of the benefit case. The modified proposal delivers a local government structure fit for the next fifty years.

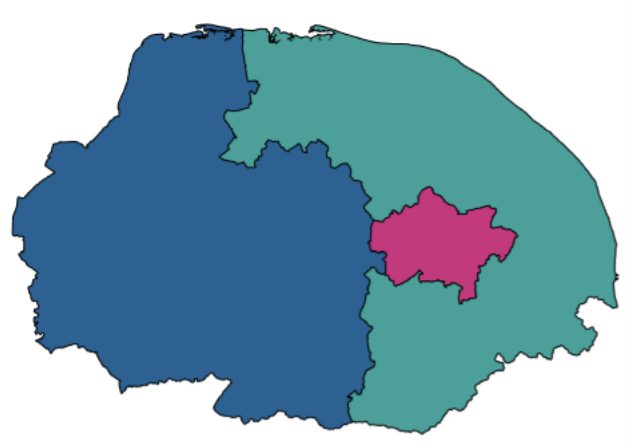
The specific modification we are seeking is that –

- The boundaries of the ‘Norwich’ unitary set out above are extended to encompass the true economic geography of Greater Norwich, Civil Parishes of: Colney, Cringleford, Keswick and Intwood, Easton, Great Melton,Marlingford and Colton, Bawburgh, Hethersett, Little Melton, Costessey, Caistor St

Edmunds & Bixley, Framingham Earl, Framingham Pigot, Poringland, Trowse with Newton, Kirby Bedon, Blofield, Hemblington, Brundall, Postwick with Witton, Drayton North, Drayton South, Honingham, Ringland, Hellesdon, Horsford, Old Catton, Sprowston West, Great & Little Plumbstead, Beeston St Andrew, Horsham & Newton St Faiths, Spixworth, Sprowston Central, Sprowston East, Taverham North, Taverham South, Thorpe St Andrew, Rackheath, and Salhouse.

- The boundaries of the 'West' unitary set out above are extended to encompass the Civil Parishes of: Deopham & Hackford, Hingham, Barford, Barnham Broom, Brandon Parva, Kimberly & Carleton Forehoe, Morley, Wicklewood, and Wramplingham.

Figure 2. Modified Unitary Map -



We request this on the basis that –

- This would allow a substantial enhancement to the proposal set out above, and in particular our ability to better meet the LGR criteria, as set out in our modified submission (attached) and enable the creation of a new Greater Norwich authority.
- There is a very strong public service justification, on the basis that our core service models are rooted in the establishment of new prevention and neighbourhood focused services, aligned around the demographic differences found across the county, which are not considered to be achievable via other means. This modification provides the scale (particularly for Greater Norwich) and focus to achieve this.
- Modifications would see the creation of three similar-sized councils by population compared to the Type B compliant proposals, creating an even more balanced set of unitary authorities within the County of Norfolk.
- There is a very strong financial sustainability justification, on the basis these modified proposals unlock a combined model which achieve £49m recurring net annual savings across the Norfolk Local Government system, and eliminates the existing structural deficit within 8 years of implementation (a level of impact we do not believe attainable under the unmodified proposals)
- Whilst we model a significant reorganisation one-off cost, estimated at around £111m, these are proximate to estimates for other forms of reorganisation

(reflecting the fact that changing 8 Councils is inherently expensive), and still self-financing within 4 years of vesting day.

These boundary changes are –

- The most effective way to deliver a new Greater Norwich Unitary, which addresses the historic under-bounding. Formed of the key areas adjacent to the City where much new housing and economic growth is proposed, thereby supporting its long-term and sustainable growth and eliminating the democratic deficit which sees residents in the suburbs excluded from decisions within the city's current boundaries.
- Minimal in overall impact, with five of our seven Districts contained entirely within the three new unitaries, and only two (Broadland and South Norfolk) split through necessity to achieve the above.
- Through the required rebalancing of areas affected by the creation of Greater Norwich, we are further able to align Unitary Boundaries to Parliamentary Constituencies and ensure each of the three unitaries shares a border and has balanced spread of population.

Discounted options

We do not believe it practical to achieve the same via other means – particularly a future Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR). The significant downside of a PABR approach would be the substantially increased transition and service disruption time, alongside the significantly – and unnecessary – increased costs to implement. In effect, as the size and shape of authorities (particularly Norwich) are materially different a PABR would mean –

- Requiring, effectively, two rounds of reorganisation. Round 1 impacting all 8 authorities, and round 2 impacting all 3 authorities.
- Transition period extended by a further 4 years, with substantial additional disruption for staff and service users.
- Transition costs growing by a further £26m–£38m driven, in particular, by duplication of transformation elements and additional ICT costs accrued.
- Payback being delayed substantially to by over 4 years, and deferring benefits worth a further £80m or more.

On this basis we believe immediate modification to the only practical route forward.

With the support of all authorities, we request this be taken into account, and our modified submission, as attached, be the version presented for consultation.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

A PROPOSAL FOR A THREE UNITARY MODEL FOR NORFOLK

Prepared on behalf of:
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk,
Breckland District Council,
Broadland District Council,
Great Yarmouth Borough Council,
North Norfolk District Council,
and Norwich City Council

[SEPTEMBER 2025]

1. Foreword: Future Norfolk - People, Place Progress

The Government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) agenda represents the biggest opportunity to optimise local service delivery in over 50 years. We are embracing that opportunity as we want to deliver and achieve the best outcome for Norfolk's residents and businesses.

At the heart of our proposal are three guiding / fundamental principles:

- People — Services focused on people's needs, with decisions being made closer to communities, giving a stronger voice for residents and businesses.
- Place — Services shaped by the distinct identities and priorities of our rural, coastal, market town and city communities.
- Progress — A model that is financially sustainable, adaptable and accountable, which looks to the future and involves wider public service reform.

Norfolk, as one of the largest counties in England, covers an area of more than 2,074 square miles with a population of more than 930,000 living in city, coast and countryside communities. Our proposal sets out our collective vision for the future of local government in Norfolk: The Strength of Three, built around creating three new unitary councils. Councils for each of these communities that are big enough to deliver, but close enough to residents and communities to reflect local needs, priorities, ambitions and opportunities in the years ahead and built to deliver sustainable services for the long term.

We have chosen to meet the challenge of LGR with ambition and unity, guided by evidence and shaped by the views of residents, businesses and partners across the county. We have worked collaboratively — across parties, borders, and sectors — to build the strongest possible case.

Our proposal goes beyond structures. It is about councils that are resilient, responsive and accountable. Councils that shift focus and effort towards prevention, reduce avoidable demand and adopt new partnerships where they add value. Councils which can develop a strong place-based, neighbourhood agenda in Norfolk, and help their places and communities become engines for growth as well as positive change.

We have listened, tested options and built a case grounded in evidence and engagement. We will continue to communicate clearly as we move forward so our residents, businesses, partners and staff know what will change, when and why.

We do not underestimate the challenges of change, nor the responsibility to protect vital services. We will manage change carefully, maintain service continuity and support our workforce. We are confident that our proposals present the best way forward and future for Norfolk — through a model that honours the past, meets today's needs and prepares positively for the future.



Cllr Mike Stonard (Labour)
Leader - Norwich City Council



Cllr Tim Adams (Lib Dem)
Leader - North Norfolk District Council



Cllr Alistair Beales (Indep.)
Leader – Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council



Cllr Carl Smith (Con)
Leader – Great Yarmouth Borough Council



Cllr Susan Holland (Lib Dem)
Leader – Broadland District Council



Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen (Con)
Leader - Breckland District Council



Steff Aquarone MP
Member of Parliament for North Norfolk (Lib Dem)



Terry Jermy MP
Member of Parliament for South West Norfolk (Labour)



Alice Macdonald MP
Member of Parliament for Norwich North (Labour and Co-operative)



Clive Lewis MP
Member of Parliament for Norwich South (Labour)



George Freeman MP
Member of Parliament for Mid Norfolk (Conservative)



Rupert Lowe MP
Member of Parliament for Great Yarmouth (Independent)

CONTENTS

1. Foreword: Future Norfolk - People, Place Progress 2
2. Executive summary 5
3. Introduction 16
4. Assessment against government criteria 17
5. Discounted options 30
   - 5.1 Options considered 30
   - 5.2 Appraising the options 36
6. Stakeholder and public engagement 38
   - 6.1 Our reach 39
   - 6.2 Headlines from our survey results 40
   - 6.3 Headlines from partners and stakeholders 42
   - 6.4 How we've used feedback throughout our case 43
7. Public service reform, efficiency & financial sustainability 44
   - 7.1 Public service reform & preventative services 44
   - 7.2 A transparent approach to assessing financial sustainability 45
   - 7.3 Current financial position of Norfolk Local Authorities 47
   - 7.4 Why a three-unitary model is the best financial choice for the future 50
   - 7.5 Aggregation, disaggregation & transition 53
   - 7.6 Moving beyond a baseline to reformed public services 55
   - 7.7 The financial case: costs and benefits over 8 years 58
   - 7.8 Long-term scale & sustainability 61
   - 7.9 Council tax harmonisation 63
8. Devolution 67
   - 8.1 Norfolk and Suffolk devolution 67
   - 8.2 Devolution priorities across Norfolk and Suffolk 68
   - 8.3 Strategic planning with local delivery 69
   - 8.4 Strong decision-making in the strategic authority 70
   - 8.5 Local Government Reorganisation criteria 71
9. Implementation map 76
   - 9.1 Introduction 76
   - 9.2 Approach 77
   - 9.3 Creating the conditions for success 81

2. Executive summary

The reorganisation of local government is a once in a generation opportunity to deliver reform, renewal and innovation in how we serve our communities and create the best path to inclusive growth and prosperity for people across the whole of Norfolk.

We are responding directly to the Government's ambition to reshape local government around local need and opportunity, unlocking a decade of renewal of our public services, economy and society and believe that three unitary councils are the best route to realise this vision and fully unleash the potential of our county.

Three unitary councils serving three distinct geographies and communities across our large and diverse county: a predominantly rural authority in the West, a predominantly rural and coastal authority, with a deep connection to inland market towns and villages in the East, and a vibrant city authority, recognising and unlocking the wider geography, and economic potential of a Greater Norwich.

We have come together as six collaborating authorities, under different political leadership and with distinct local priorities, opportunities and challenges because - together - we are united in our determination to deliver the best future for our communities and our county so that Norfolk can play its fullest part in supporting the Government's Plan for Change and the future growth and success of our country.

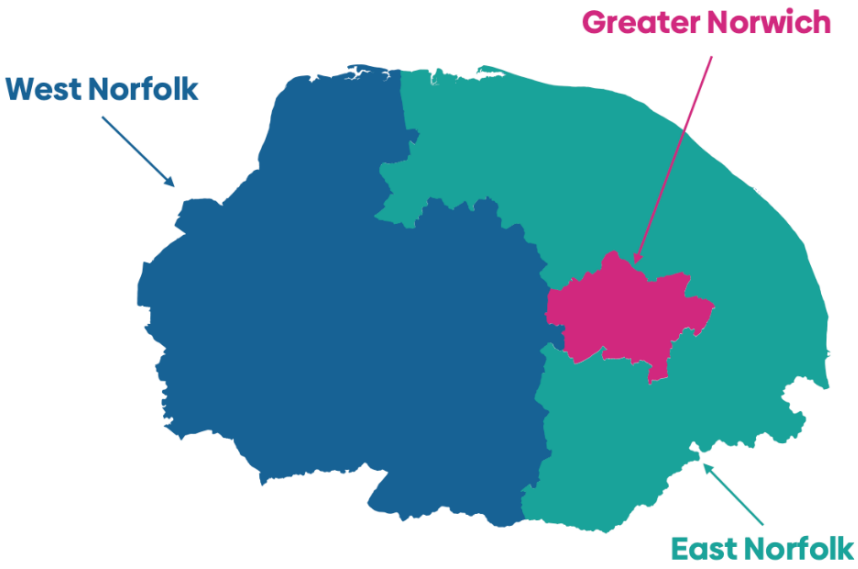


Figure 1: The three unitaries and their boundaries

Our proposal delivers:

- Three local authorities which are of significant size and scale.
- Three authorities which reflect the distinctive and meaningful geographies across our county, from city to coast to countryside.
- Three authorities which are anchored in our historic city and towns of Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.
- Three authorities which have economic opportunities which, partnering with our new Combined Authority, can unlock new homes, new skills and new jobs for local people.
- Three authorities whose communities are different, with distinct needs best served by locally-tailored public services.
- Three authorities which are financially sustainable, safe and legal, with real opportunities to drive efficiencies, savings and local benefit.

Norfolk, to the Power of Three

City, Coast, Countryside. Three distinctive places with different challenges, different demographics, different geographies and different opportunities. Three unitary councils of significant size and scale, each with the ability to bring something unique and important both to innovation in public service reform and to driving economic and housing growth in partnership with the new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). Each new authority would be financially sustainable, each would have a significant and sizeable tax base, and each offers the opportunity to design public services that genuinely meet the different local conditions across our large county.

Our proposal is clear that the 1974 boundaries of existing districts and boroughs in Norfolk do not align to functional economies and the way our residents live their lives in 2025 in a way that would serve as a sensible basis for new authorities. Therefore, while our proposal will see five whole existing districts form the building blocks of new authorities, we have also concluded that the only way to truly engage with the spirit of the Government's approach to LGR is to split the districts of Broadland and South Norfolk. Our proposed boundaries best represent local identity, and realise the full potential of Greater Norwich, and the distinctly different economies of East and West Norfolk. Three unitary authorities create balance for the MSA and present real opportunities for Norfolk to be at the forefront of public service reform, innovation and renewal.

We recognise that the Government will be presented with alternative proposals. We believe our proposal stands apart from these as the best, most positive and optimistic option for the county, reflecting issues as they face our residents, businesses and communities today – with a hopeful outlook to what we can accomplish together in the future.

Discounted Options

We believe a single county unitary with a population close to 1 million would be too large, as the second largest council in the country after Birmingham by population, and to North Yorkshire by area, covering over 2,000 square miles. It would be too distant and remote for some residents and communities being over an hour from County Hall and will just deliver more of what our residents already receive, rather than offering an agile path to better, more preventative, locally responsive public services. Compared to a 'three' model, a single unitary would reduce accountability, create a democratic deficit, and reduce the ability to service the electorate in an effective way.

A two unitary model, based on existing district boundaries has two key weaknesses. Firstly, to create two authorities of broadly similar populations, the boundary of the suggested Western Authority would stretch across the north of the county, to the east of Norwich and just 11 miles from Great Yarmouth, with no respect to local identity, functional economies or the ability to provide services in a way that responds to local distinctiveness and local conditions. Secondly, Norwich, one of England's Fast Growth cities, would be subsumed within a predominantly rural and coastal unitary, creating a tension between competing parts of the new unitary, rather than enabling each area to focus on its own strengths and opportunities.

We have considered a three unitary model based upon existing boundaries, but we do not think this is a viable option because of fundamental shortcomings relating to suitable size, financial resilience and inability to reflect real-world economic and geographic areas in Norfolk. We therefore request to submit a modified proposal for three unitaries, based on existing district and borough boundaries.

This process is an opportunity to design fit-for-purpose authorities which can provide the strongest, most sustainable and purposeful basis for local governance in Norfolk in the twenty-first century. We do not believe that tying today's decision to an arbitrary

set of boundaries from 51 years ago is a logical or appropriate response to the scale of the task.

We therefore ask that the Government recognise that this is a proposal seeking the support of the Secretary of State for a three unitary proposal for Norfolk, that requires some modest boundary changes which our proposal advocates.

Three Unitaries of Sufficient Size and Scale

We are proposing three unitary councils that are of sufficient size and scale to stand the test of time, while also being close to their residents and communities, recognised as genuine places that residents can connect with, and with the bandwidth to genuinely respond to and empower local neighbourhoods as part of the Government's vision for local decision making. We are all proud to be part of a historic county, and our pride is as much rooted in our diversity and the differences across this place, reflecting our long history from the Hanseatic League in King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth's Charter of 1208 and England's historic former second city in Norwich.

Greater Norwich

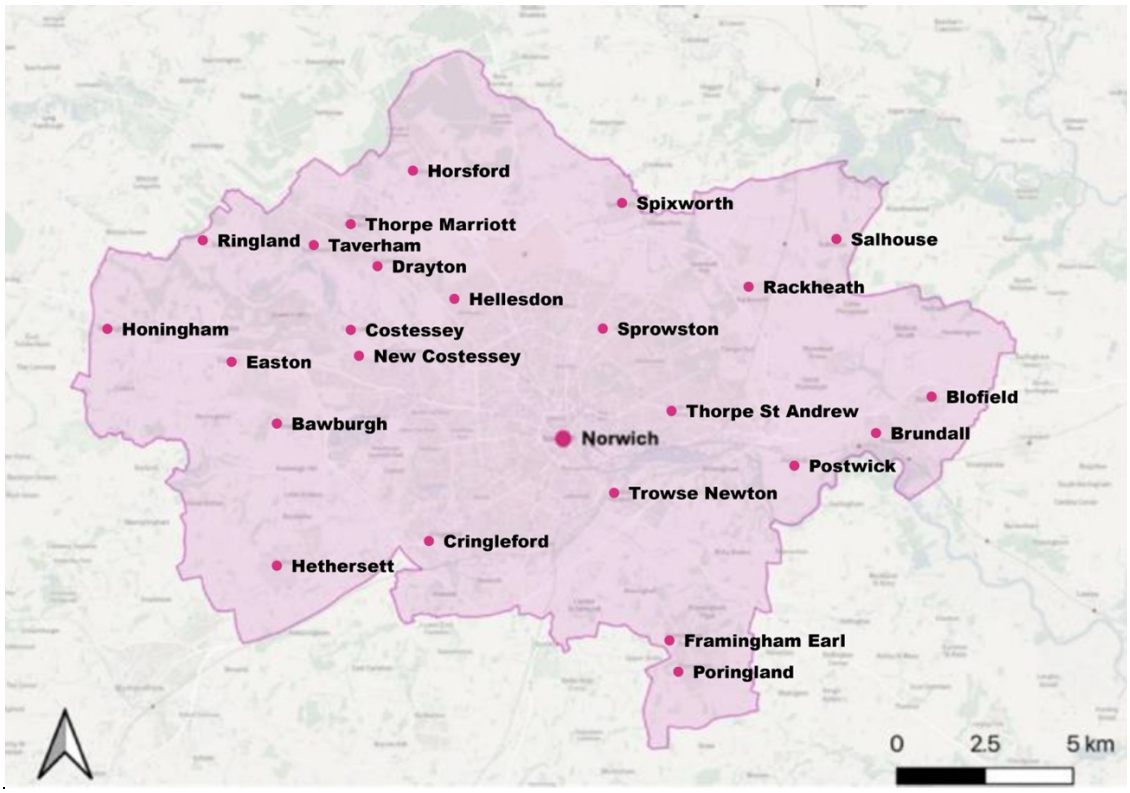


Figure 2: Map of the proposed boundaries of Greater Norwich

Greater Norwich, anchored on the historic city of Norwich, has a population of over 278,000[1] forecast to rise to over 333,000 by 2035. Greater Norwich would be the 23rd largest of the 54 existing unitary councils in the country by population and is already larger than established city unitary councils like Brighton and Hove, Kingston upon Hull, Plymouth, Southampton and York.

East Norfolk

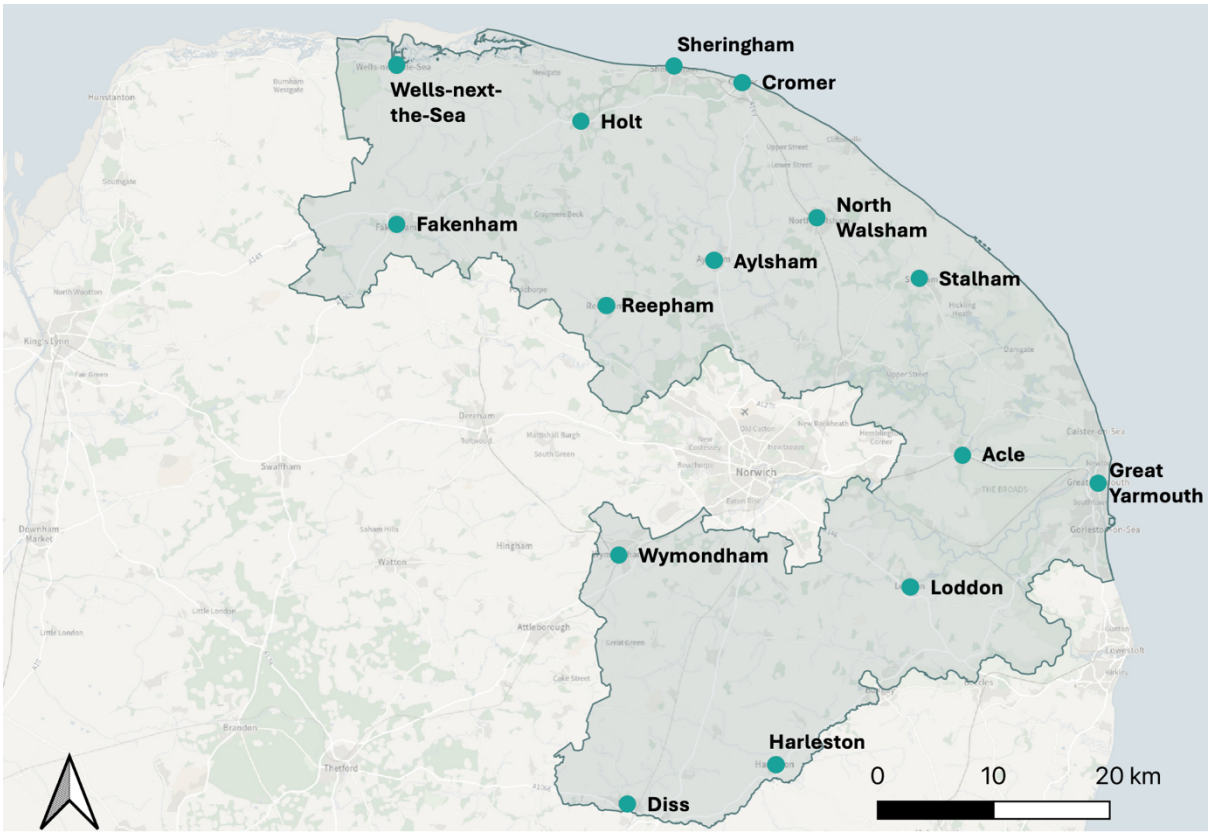


Figure 3: Map of the proposed boundaries of East Norfolk

East Norfolk, anchored in the historic town of Great Yarmouth, has a population of over 336,000 residents, forecast to rise to over 406,000 by 2035. If it was already a unitary council then it would be the 16th largest by population of the 54 unitary councils in England, larger than city unitaries like Nottingham and some single county unitaries like Northumberland and Shropshire.

[1] Based on 2021 census data. The same source applies for East and West Norfolk population figures

9

West Norfolk

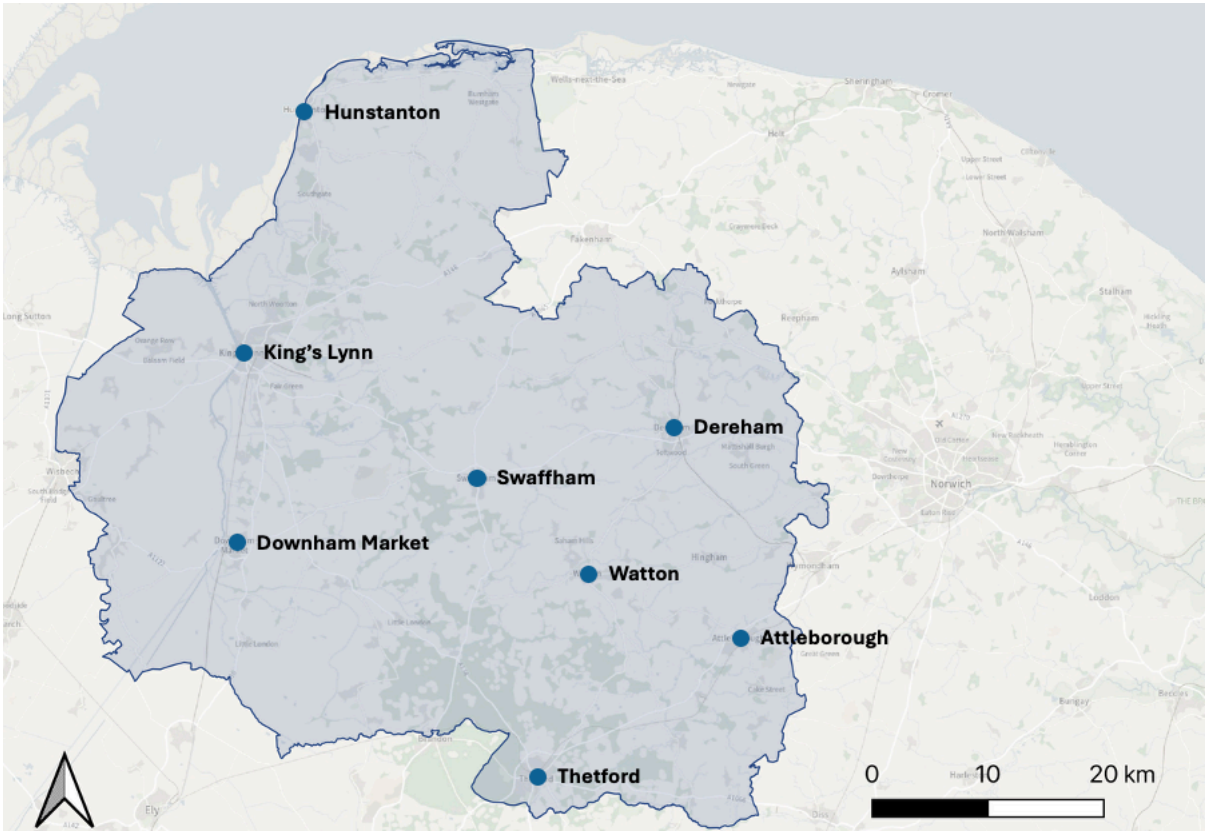


Figure 4: Map of the proposed boundaries of West Norfolk

West Norfolk, anchored in the historic town of King's Lynn has a population of just over 300,000 residents, forecast to rise to over 360,000 by 2035. West Norfolk would be the 19th largest of the 54 existing unitary councils in the country by population and is already larger than existing part-county unitaries like Central Bedfordshire, South Gloucestershire, Medway or either of the two new Cumbria unitaries established in 2023.

Unlocking Growth & Prosperity Across Norfolk

Our proposal ensures that the economic and housing growth opportunities across the county can be unlocked with a degree of local focus and that our new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) across Norfolk and Suffolk has constituent members and partners which can ensure effective delivery of an ambitious agenda at pace.

Three councils, each with distinctive opportunities for economic growth, and already with strong plans for additional housing and regeneration, will be able to partner with 10

the Mayoral Combined County Authority through Mayoral Development Corporations, the development of the Local Growth Plan and the Spatial Development Strategy. This will ensure that every part of Norfolk has a voice and a strong hand in shaping a more prosperous future for all our residents, wherever they live.

A single county unitary would not have the ability to represent the interests of every part of Norfolk within the MSA. A single council would inevitably focus on a small number of “big” projects and initiatives, rather than having more local connections and an ability to respond to opportunity in every community; this would just be "more of the same" where some parts of the county have been overlooked and "left behind". Similarly, a two unitary proposal, with Norwich subsumed in a larger authority will be pulled in competing directions, between the needs of agriculture and manufacturing in more rural areas, nationally significant clean energy along the coast and the potential of a fast-growing, university city. Our three unitary proposal would allow communities across Norfolk to have a voice and play to their greatest strengths in the strongest of partnerships.

Greater Norwich

Greater Norwich has an economy of £9.9bn, supporting 158,000 jobs and over 10,500 businesses. It is the economically dominant urban area within the new Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority. Since 2010 the economy of Greater Norwich has grown by 64%. However, the city economy far exceeds the constrained 1974 boundaries of the City of Norwich, with 54% of Greater Norwich’s GVA and 47% of its jobs being in the neighbouring districts of Broadland and South Norfolk where many residents live but have no say in the future of the city that they identify with. It has an international reputation, with institutions such as the Norwich Research Park and its status as a UNESCO City of Literature.

A Greater Norwich unitary, with boundary changes to bring in adjoining suburbs from Broadland and South Norfolk, but without incorporating large areas of rural Norfolk, will consolidate and unlock further, faster growth in a creative and scientific powerhouse.

East Norfolk

The Norfolk coast is at the forefront of not only an established and vibrant tourist and visitor economy underpinned by strengths in arts and culture, but also an internationally-significant clean energy cluster. Our geography spans nationally significant assets in offshore wind, carbon capture, pan-European energy

transmission, and the potential for significant hydrogen infrastructure, anchored by Great Yarmouth's Energy Coast and the Bacton Energy Hub. The success of East Norfolk is critical to the UK's energy transition and energy security. Inland, our area supports strong supply chains in manufacturing and engineering, including at the Hethel Engineering Centre. It is also characterised by protected landscapes including the Norfolk Broads National Park and North Norfolk coastline, alongside thriving market towns, and significant centres for agricultural production.

Yet these opportunities stand alongside pockets of profound deprivation and exclusion from opportunity - and frontline challenges such as coastal erosion - which could be overlooked within a much larger, more aggregated authority where East Norfolk is merged with Norwich within a single county unitary. We believe a more locally focused authority, with significant scale, can best address underlying structural challenges, unlock the potential for further growth of national importance to the climate transition and energy security agendas and help to foster more inclusive, prosperous futures for our residents.

West Norfolk

As a rural area, West Norfolk's economy is fundamentally different from the city of Norwich or the coast in the East. There is a strong industrial base in manufacturing and engineering around King's Lynn and Thetford, a concentration of Armed Forces activity, and some of England's most productive agricultural areas, enhanced by a growing Agri-Tech sector. From the Brecks and Fens to Sandringham and the coast at Hunstanton, with ancient and historic market towns, there is a strong and growing visitor economy. These economic strengths are balanced by challenges in low pay and low skills in parts of our economy. These are distinct local challenges, which necessitate boundary changes to better reflect the area's geography and economic characteristics, which in delivery will require a local response in partnership with our new Mayor and Combined County Authority.

West Norfolk is the gateway from the rest of Norfolk into Cambridgeshire, the Midlands and Lincolnshire, looking outwards into the country, whilst also connecting back to the rest of the county. This strategic connectivity and the strength of its local economic output risks being overlooked if subsumed into either a single county unitary, or a larger unitary in a two-council model, which would stretch from Thetford and Downham Market round the north of the county to the fringes of Great Yarmouth.

Innovation, Reform & Prevention in Public Services

Norfolk is a large county with a population just shy of a million people. It takes over two hours to travel by train from Great Yarmouth or Cromer to King's Lynn (via Cambridgeshire) and almost two hours from King's Lynn to Norwich via public transport. It should come as no surprise that the lives led by those in coastal communities facing the North Sea are different from those lived by people in the fast-growing city of Norwich or in market towns in the countryside like Downham Market. A one size fits all approach for almost a million people over more than 2000 square miles will always struggle to innovate and operate with agility.

Our proposal recognises the distinct demographic profiles of each area, and that each has different challenges, different opportunities and different local partnerships. Our proposal recognises, given the size of Norfolk, that many other public services and partnerships are already aligned around a place-based approach which could map well onto three new unitaries. We have three acute hospitals and Further Educational Colleges, distributed across our three proposed unitaries and the police are looking to work across three operational areas. We strongly believe that we can secure better integration and partnership through a model of three unitary councils than through any other configuration.

Others are proposing a simplistic consolidation of services – a "lift and shift", with more of the same, as proposed for a single council or two unitary councils in Norfolk. However, we reject this approach. Instead, we are proposing a more radical response to public service reform across Norfolk based on three distinct areas: a fast-growing city – Greater Norwich, coastal and rural communities of East Norfolk, and in the gateway to Norfolk of a Western authority based around the deep countryside of The Brecks and Fens.

Our vision is one that breaks down siloed ways of working and makes the most of this moment – to shape entirely new organisations around the distinct needs of their residents, businesses and communities with Early Intervention and Prevention as a guiding principle, rather than gatekeeping until crises hit. Our detailed approach to design principles for our three proposed authorities has meant that our savings and financial resilience proposals are anchored in a detailed analysis of place, of benchmarking, data analytics and of how we can change the local system to deliver much better outcomes for our residents.

Across Norfolk we are excited, ambitious and committed to take forward a bold reform agenda which embeds a test, learn and grow approach to public services in the design of our three new authorities.

Greater Norwich

Greater Norwich is distinctly different. The population is younger, more diverse and housed more densely than the rest of the county. A sizeable graduate population co-exists with over a third of children in the city living in poverty and a 15-year life expectancy gap across the proposed authority.

As a unitary, Greater Norwich will be able to take a single, coordinated approach to addressing these inequalities – integrating public health, housing and wider resident support into one system of delivery. Decisions can be made with a deep understanding of local communities, whether in urban estates and neighbourhoods facing entrenched deprivation or in expanding suburbs where hidden need may be shaped by limited transport connections.

East Norfolk

While East Norfolk is an area that encompasses prosperous market towns within the countryside, it is an area that also includes coastal communities facing significant deprivation and exclusion. 36.4% of our households are deprived in at least one dimension and in Great Yarmouth, 23% of residents report living with long-term illness or disability.

Our ageing population, rural isolation, low skills base and persistent deprivation require a model that is flexible, preventative and rooted in place. LGR gives us the opportunity to design services that meet these needs through innovation in delivery, digital transformation and data-informed decision-making. This will mean planning flexibly for an ageing society, tackling health inequalities, expanding training and digital access, and aligning housing growth with employment opportunities. This is our growth mission: to unlock productivity, empower communities and deliver better outcomes for residents across East Norfolk.

West Norfolk

West Norfolk has an older population than the English average and overall has poorer health outcomes than the national average and higher levels of isolation and frailty.

These challenges require a bespoke and locally focused response, rather than sharing an approach with areas with very different issues.

Given West Norfolk's pressures from an ageing population, poor health outcomes and distance from acute health support, there is a need to develop an Early Intervention and Prevention offer that places ageing well at its heart. Support will be relational and strengths-based, recognising the whole picture of housing, health, work and family life. Multidisciplinary teams will coordinate responses, so residents only tell their story once, with case leadership shifting seamlessly as needs change.

Financially Sustainable Authorities

Our proposal will deliver three financially sustainable, safe and legal authorities from day one, each with sufficiently strong tax bases, with a focus on maximising the opportunity for sustainable, inclusive growth in each of the three unitaries in Norfolk.

We have taken a robust, evidence-led approach to reviewing financial sustainability, working across the county to review all available financial data and to seek to ensure a fair and equitable analysis. Our baseline 'scenario zero' of what would happen if all three unitary councils had come into being on 1st April 2025, through simple consolidation of existing budgets, without any benefits of rationalisation or public service reform, clearly identifies that all three would be sustainable, with budget surpluses or deficits within reasonable parameters.

However, once we apply the consequences of our blueprints for new operating models for the new councils and key services we are able to generate cumulative net benefits to the balance sheets of the new councils of £220m over eight years with all transition costs fully repaid early in the fourth year of the new authorities and thereafter recurring net benefits of over £49m a year. This is all before Fair Funding and Business Rate Revaluation is taken into account.

3. Introduction

Our proposal for three new unitary councils across Norfolk is set out across four core documents plus a supporting technical appendix:

- A proposal for the three unitary model for Norfolk, setting out why this is the best option, how it meets the Government criteria, the extensive stakeholder engagement exercise that has underpinned it, and how the three unitary councils will deliver public service reform, financial stability, and how they will be implemented.
- Three area proposals for Greater Norfolk, West Norfolk, and East Norfolk, describing their economic and demographic distinctiveness, how democratic representation and engagement will work, the distinct 'target operating model' for service delivery in each area, and how they will create financially resilient authorities.
- An Appendix that gathers together further details and analysis on each element of the proposal.

4. Assessment against government criteria

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OUR APPROACH		
A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	Under this proposal, a single tier of local government is achieved as three new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich. In developing this case for a three unitary Norfolk we have undertaken an options appraisal of the alternatives using the government's Local Government Reorganisation criteria to ensure we are proposing the best option for our region.	*Sections 4 and 5 within the area proposals*
Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage of disadvantage for one part of the area.	Each of the three-unitary areas creates a sensible economic area with balanced tax bases across the three and each is designed to recognises the different economic roles, social needs, and service demands across Norfolk's varied geographies. East Norfolk, West Norfolk and Greater Norwich each bring distinct economic strengths, social needs, and service delivery challenges. Yet,	*Overview in Executive summary* *Sections 2 and 3 in area proposals* *Further details within the Boundaries section within the Appendices*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	they also share a common ambition: to build a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for everyone in Norfolk.	
Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.	The three-unitary model will deliver on the Government's mission to increase housing supply as it can respond to local needs but also act in a coordinated way. Devolution will add value as Growth Plans and Spatial Development Strategies will allow coordinated action, whilst the new unitaries can ensure local needs are met.	*Sections 3 and 4 in area proposals* *Further details within Appendix D - Boundaries.*
Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.	The development of the proposed service delivery models has been informed by a comprehensive engagement exercise including council members, key stakeholders, and residents across Norfolk. We have also assessed the financial implications of reorganisation which estimated the costs, savings, and income implications of the three-unitary model.	*Section 7* *Sections 5 and 6 in area proposals*
Proposals should clearly describe the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the	Our proposal for each area sets out how the new unitary councils will have the powers, capacity and leadership at the	*Sections 4 and 5 in area proposals*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these areas expected to achieve the outcomes described.	optimum spatial scale and proximity to residents to respond to the challenges and opportunities of each place. This will allow people to live better lives of their choosing, reduce demand on services, and contribute to Government priorities around growth and housing.	
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRITERIA		
Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.	Our three-unitary councils are the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks as they deliver the optimal balance between scale and responsiveness. Our model prioritises the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services above all else. It achieves efficiencies, strengthens organisational capacity, and creates financially resilient councils capable of withstanding shocks without importing the county's existing weaknesses into a single point of failure.	*Section 7* *Section 6 within area proposals*
As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 of more.	The total population of the three unitary areas is 916,521. Greater Norwich has 278,285 residents, East Norfolk has	*Overview in Executive Summary*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	336,524 residents and West Norfolk has 301,712 residents.	*Section 3 in area proposals*
There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.	While the populations of our proposed the three unitary model are below the 500,000 figure typically cited in government guidance, our economic, demographic, and service delivery distinctiveness warrant a bespoke governance model. The case for unitarisation should not be built on strict adherence to population size, but on functional need and strategic opportunity, reflecting distinct opportunities and challenges, and the imperative to align services with the real geography of people's lives.	*Overview in Executive Summary* *Sections 2, 3 and 4 in area proposals* *Appendix A - Options appraisal.*
Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.	Our proposal sets out how efficiencies can be achieved through public service reform and redesign, moving to a preventative model of service delivery which creates efficiencies through reducing cost and reducing demand. Our modelling suggests that £16m of savings will be made by year 1, rising to £56m by Year 4, at which point the cumulative savings will outweigh any upfront investment.	*Sections 7.1 and 7.7* *Section 6 within area proposals*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
Proposals should set out how we will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.	Reorganisation creates upfront transition and disaggregation costs, but we believe these are outweighed by the scale of recurrent savings. Our modelling demonstrates that by Year 6 there is projected to be £56m recurring annual savings and a cumulative net impact of around £220m across the three unitaries. Considering the efficiencies that are possible through both reorganisation and public service reform, we expect that we will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.	*Sections 7.5 - 7.8 and 9* *Section 6 within area proposals*
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.	Our three-unitary model is the optimum way to provide high-quality public services to citizens, as this provides the opportunity to design the new councils from first principles to address the distinct challenges and opportunities of each place, while providing a platform for deep transformation that can yield	*Section 7.1* *Section 5 within area proposals*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	optimal savings. This will allow people to live better lives of their choosing (and so reduce demand), as well as maximising the contribution of each area to Government priorities such as prevention, growth and housing.	
Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.	The proposal shows how new structures will improve service delivery, as through developing delivery models for each new unitary we have sought to avoid unnecessary fragmentation or disaggregation of key services where a joined-up approach is the optimum solution. These are set out in Section 1.9 of the proposals for each area.	*Section 5 within area proposals*
Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.	Reorganisation around a three-unitary model offers the best opportunity to deliver real public service reform by addressing the distinct challenges and opportunities in each place and developing distinct operating models that provide a platform for deep transformation and reform as well as yielding optimal savings.	*Section 7.1* *Section 5 in area proposals*
Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as	As part of our proposals, service delivery models have been scoped for each new unitary for	*Section 9*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.	a wide range of public services including adult social care, children's social care and SEND, housing development and management, homelessness, and a community-based early intervention and prevention model. The proposals also consider a range of place-based and enabling services such as planning, economic development, assets, building control and highways.	*Section 5 in area proposals* *Appendix H - detailed Implementation Map* *Appendix I - RAID Log*
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT		
Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.	Six district councils of different political control and with different priorities across Norfolk have worked together and created an engagement programme 'Future Norfolk', that has built an informed understanding of the three-unitary model, with an ambition to strengthen democratic accountability, respect local identity and deliver sustainable, adaptable public services. From the outset, we moved from early awareness-raising and listening around the three pillars— People, Place, Progress - that lead us towards a confident, coordinated presentation of	*Section 6* *Sections 3 and 4 in area proposals*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	views aligned within our proposal that met the Government's criteria.	
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.	Six district councils of different political control came together under the Future Norfolk partnership to engage with our diverse communities of place and interest. A number of methods and strategies were specifically designed to ensure meaningful and constructive engagement, reflecting the mix of urban, rural and coastal areas. These are outlined in full in Section 5.3	*Section 6*
Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.	Issues of local identity and cultural and historical importance are important elements of 'Place', which is one of the three pillars of our engagement strategy to ensure that the proposals actively and meaningfully considered issues of local identity.	*Sections 6.2 - 6.4* *Sections 2 and 3 in area proposals*
Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.	Section 6.4 provides evidence of the outcomes of the engagement programme, which included over 5,000 survey submissions, 17,800 website visitors, and a reach of nearly 500,000 on social media.	*Section 6.4*
BOUNDARY CHANGE		

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.	We considered a three-unitary option that would not involve changing existing council boundaries. In developing this option, it became apparent that it has some critical limitations. This has been discounted in preference of the alternative three-unitary option - involving boundary changes for two of the seven current Norfolk districts. Whilst this would represent a one-off change of boundaries (and the associated extra work) we strongly believe it represents the right long-term LGR decision given the scale and diversity of Norfolk and how our residents live their lives in 2025, compared to 1974. We therefore believe it is worth investing in moving to a model that will be future proof and truly reflects the diverse communities of Norfolk.	*Overview in Executive Summary* *Rationale in section 5* *Sections 2 and 3 in area proposals* *Appendix A – Options appraisal* *Appendix D - Boundaries*
DEVOLUTION SUPPORT		
New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	Our three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside multiple unitary councils proposed in Suffolk, strengthens devolution and engagement with the Mayoral Strategic Authority by combining strategic regional	*Section 8*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	leadership with strong local representation. It enables balanced decision-making, supports shared priorities like infrastructure, skills, and housing, and ensures diverse voices inform regional governance. This structure fosters inclusive growth and operational resilience while maintaining local accountability and effective collaboration across both counties.	
Where no Mayoral Combined County Authority is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.	The three-unitary model for Norfolk strengthens devolution by enabling balanced representation within a Strategic Authority shared with Suffolk. It supports strategic regional planning while preserving local delivery and democratic accountability. With multiple unitaries across the two counties, the model enhances collaboration, aligns with shared economic and infrastructure priorities, and ensures diverse voices inform regional decisions. This structure fosters inclusive growth, operational resilience, and a coherent approach to investment, skills, housing, and	*Section 8*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	transport—unlocking the full potential of Norfolk and Suffolk through coordinated governance.	
Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.	The proposed three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside multiple unitaries in Suffolk, creates a Strategic Authority with balanced constituent councils. This structure ensures proportional representation across diverse urban, rural, and coastal populations, avoiding dominance by any single area. It reduces the current 16 councils to six, striking a balance between scale and democratic accountability. The model builds on existing collaboration and preparatory work, aligning with devolution timelines and priorities to ensure a smooth transition and effective governance from the outset.	*Section 8*
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	Specific structures for community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment have been developed for each unitary area, considering both existing town and parish councils and new democratic	Section 4 in area proposals

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
	models and forms of community representation.	
Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.	The purpose and objectives of the engagement programme aimed to build an informed understanding of the three-unitary model. These included an objective to give residents a clear understanding of the proposal's aims and benefits, with messages tailored to place while maintaining a county-wide Norfolk identity. Feedback was received that residents wanted councils that understood their place and issues and valued a connection with their elected representatives. The nature of small communities, the presence of multiple town and parish councils across large rural areas, and the need for new neighbourhood structures in unparished urban zones led to agreement that a single county-wide unitary model would result in very high councillor-to-elector ratios, which could undermine effective local engagement and democratic representation.	*Section 6*
Where there already arrangements in place it	The proposal for each new unitary sets out how existing	*Section 4 in area proposals*

LGR government criteria	How the three unitaries proposal meets each of the criteria	Relevant section of the proposal
should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.	engagement and democratic arrangements can be retained and complement any new forms of community representation to strengthen community engagement.	

Table 1: Assessment against Government criteria

5. Discounted options

In developing our case for a three-unitary Norfolk we have compared the alternatives to ensure we are proposing the best option for residents, businesses and communities across the county. We have carried out an appraisal of these alternatives, using the Government's Local Government Reorganisation criteria that will guide decisions as to how changes will be made.

5.1 Options considered

As part of the work to develop this proposal we have considered the alternative options which might exist for Local Government Reorganisation for Norfolk. We have considered four potential options. We have defined these as follows:

Single Unitary – merge all councils into a single unitary authority that covers the whole of Norfolk.

Two Unitaries – replace the current two-tier, eight-council system with two unitary councils. A West Norfolk Council would cover the areas of Breckland District Council, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, and North Norfolk District Council. A Norwich & East Norfolk Council would serve the city of Norwich, Broadland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and South Norfolk Council.

Three Unitaries based upon existing boundaries – replace the current local government system with three unitary councils based upon the existing district, borough and city council boundaries. These would be Norwich (existing city council only), East Norfolk and West Norfolk.

Three Unitaries – replace the current local government system with three unitary councils with new boundaries that each cover a distinct area of Norfolk. These would be Greater Norwich, East Norfolk and West Norfolk, and are described in greater detail elsewhere in this proposal.

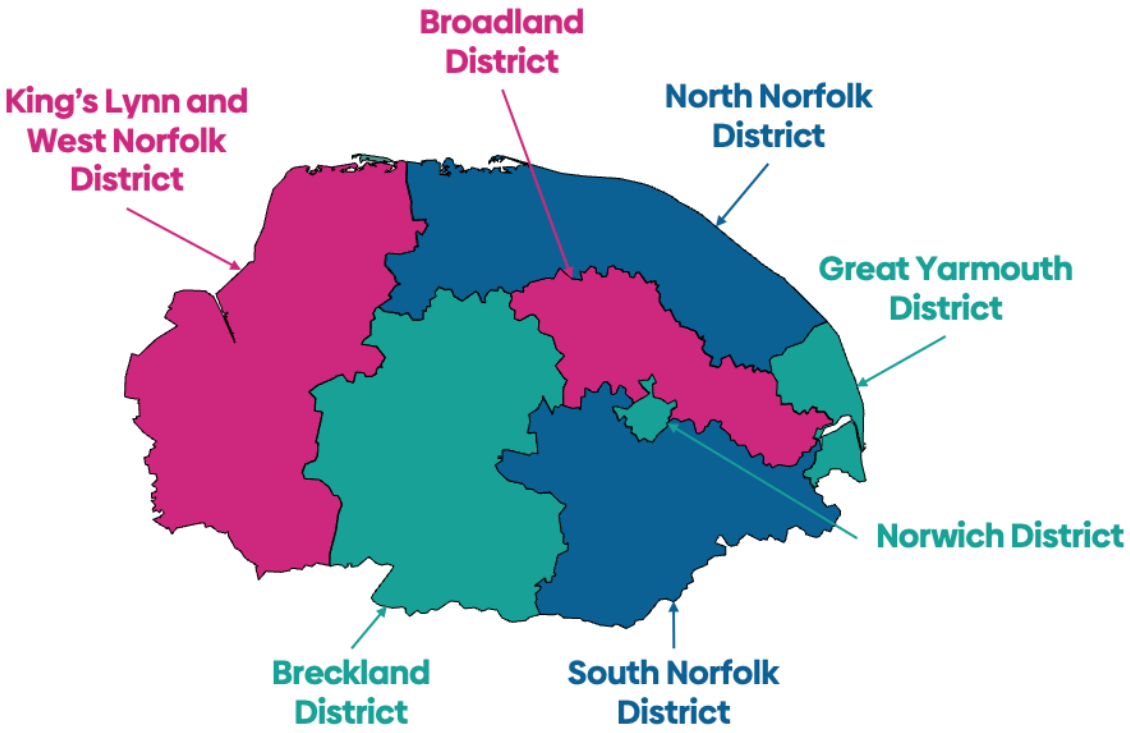


Figure 5: The councils and boundaries before LGR

5.1.1 Single unitary

Under this option the County Council and all seven district councils are amalgamated into a single unitary authority that serves the whole of Norfolk. This option is being explored in isolation, by the County Council, without any input from the seven district councils.

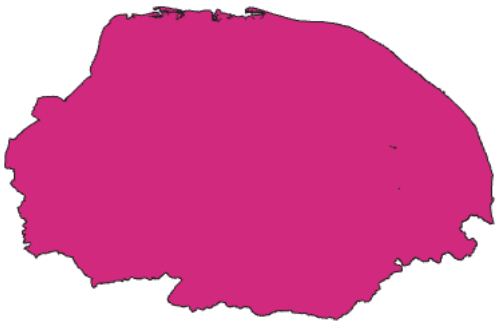


Figure 6: A single unitary covering the whole of Norfolk.

This unitary council would be responsible for delivery of the full range of local government services across a huge geography (over 2,000 square miles and 930,000 population) which has a wide range of very different needs (e.g. the urban centre of

Norwich versus rural and coastal areas). For some services such as planning this scale makes it difficult to deliver in a way which engages and responds to local communities. Although a single unitary might present the greatest opportunity to realise efficiencies through economies of scale and reduced duplication, these are believed to be marginal when considered in the grand context of a projected £200 million budget gap across all the councils – the maximum savings identified for this option is around £30 million, and only public service reform will enable any new authority(s) to stand a chance of closing the gap.

5.1.2 Two unitaries

This option would see the County Council and the seven district councils reorganised into two unitary authorities. A West Norfolk Council would cover the areas of Breckland, King's Lynn & West Norfolk, and North Norfolk. A Norwich & East Norfolk Council would serve the city of Norwich, Broadland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and South Norfolk Council.[2] The County Council's functions would be split between the two new unitaries. This proposal is being actively explored by South Norfolk Council.

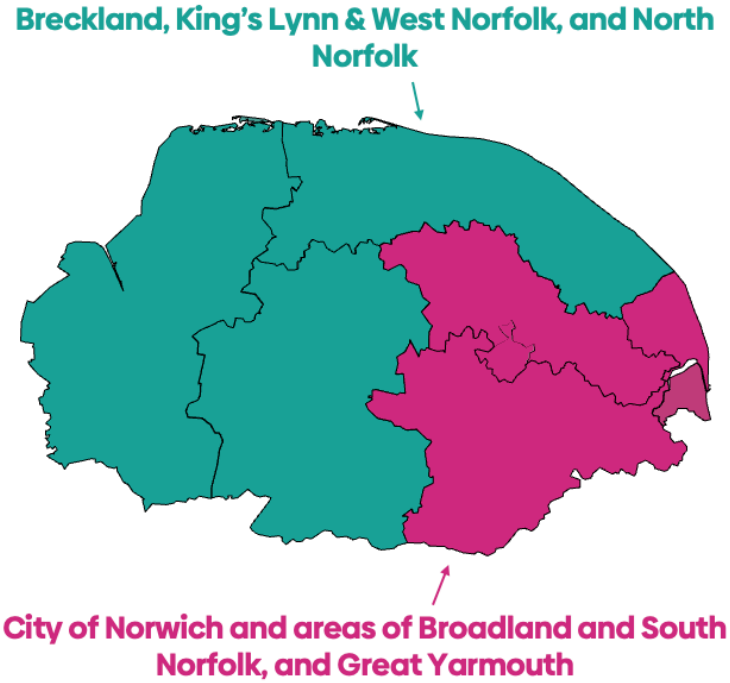


Figure 7: A two unitary council option comprising a West Norfolk and a Norwich & East Norfolk council.

[2] Based upon the interim plan published by South Norfolk Council

32

A two unitary model would have the potential to realise substantial economies of scale, but each council would still have a very broad geography, combining a diverse set of areas with very different demographics, socio-economic profiles and needs. These issues would be particularly acute for some residents and communities of the current North Norfolk district, which would be some considerable distance from decision-making structures of the West authority, when in fact they would be closer to and have a stronger relationship with parts of the East authority.

Norwich, one of England's Fast Growth cities, would be subsumed within a predominantly rural and coastal unitary, creating an inevitable permanent tension between competing parts of the new unitary, rather than enabling each area to focus on its own strengths and opportunities.

Alongside this, the two-unitary proposal also "divides" the Energy Coast sector (Bacton and Great Yarmouth) and the Broads Authority Executive area across the two unitary council areas.

5.1.3 Three unitaries aligned to current boundaries

We have considered a three-unitary option that would not involve changing existing district council boundaries (See Appendix D).

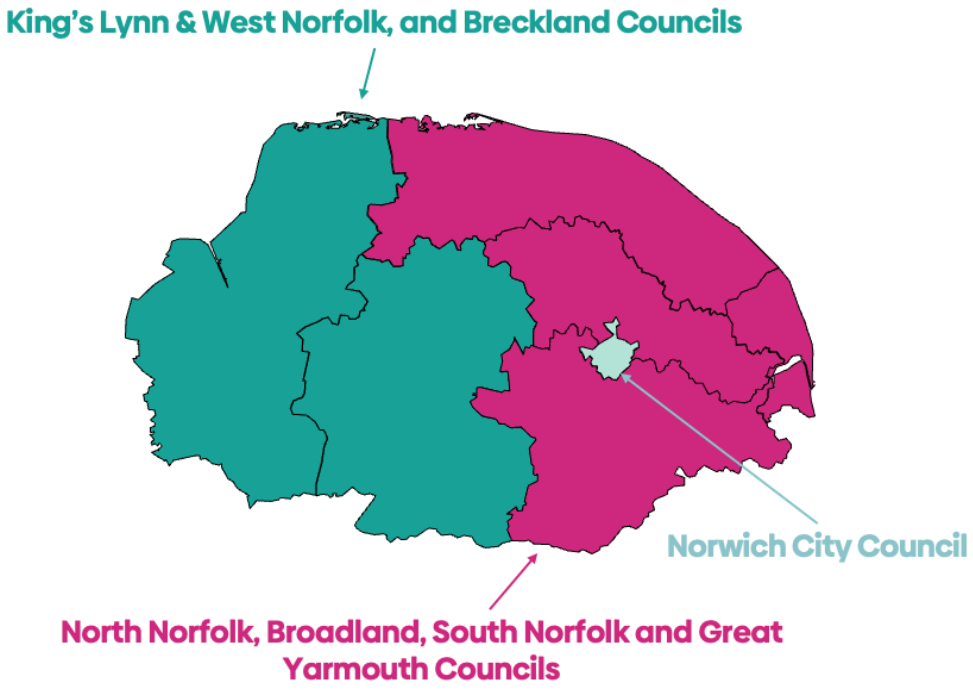


Figure 8: A three unitary option aligned to existing council boundaries.

In this option the West Norfolk unitary would span the areas currently served by King's Lynn and West Norfolk and Breckland councils. East Norfolk would span the Broadland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and South Norfolk Council. Norwich would remain in the existing boundaries of Norwich City Council.

This approach would tie the future of Norfolk in the 21st Century to boundaries agreed in the early 1970s. This would miss a once in a generation opportunity to get the shape of local government right, to unlock the full economic opportunity of the county, to deliver the homes we need, and public services that are preventative, efficient and effective. It would be an expensive and time-consuming process delivering a sub-optimal outcome – we owe it to our residents to strive for an outcome which is fit for purpose and future-facing.

We have therefore explored the approach of starting from the geography of the whole Norfolk, but without being defensive or self-interested in pre-existing structures and authorities as an end in themselves. Rather, we have sought to propose a model which will best meet the needs of future generations across the whole of the county, respecting the diversity of local places, economies and communities of interest. This has led to the final option, which is described below.

5.1.4 Three new unitaries with boundary changes

Our three-unitary proposal would see three new unitary authorities created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich. These unitaries largely align with existing district boundaries (except for the need to split the current Broadland and South Norfolk council areas) so each new unitary would cover areas that share common identities, needs and challenges. The split of Broadland and South Norfolk would help accommodate the growth of Norwich and the surrounding area, as well as incorporating the more rural parts of these two districts into an East Norfolk unitary council with very similar characteristics.

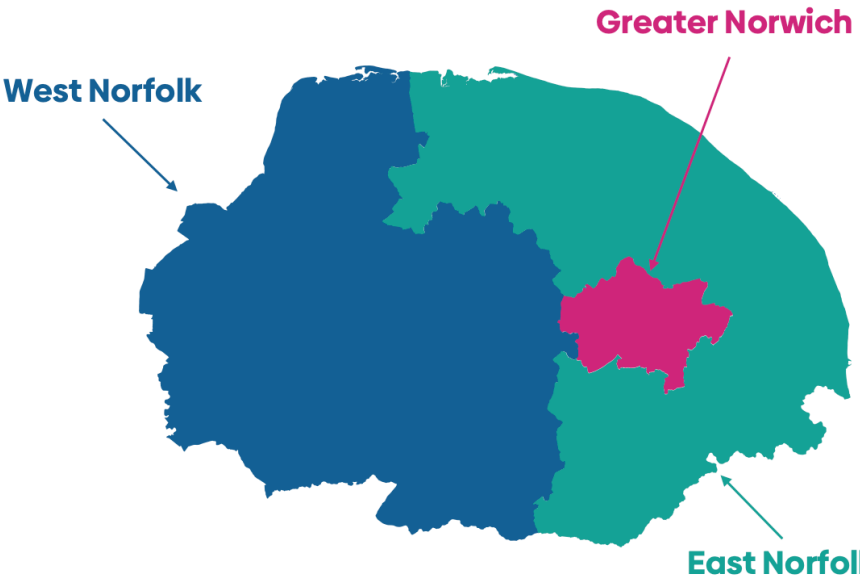


Figure 9: A three unitary drawn along new boundaries to reflect reality of areas with different geographies.

Greater Norwich is Norfolk's economic engine, a city-region with international reach, world-class institutions, and a distinctive blend of creativity, science, and civic ambition. Its influence extends beyond the historic city to include the dynamic urban fringes, incorporating world-class higher education and research institutions, and a growing digital and finance sector. The area is an international leader in life sciences, cultural innovation, the creative industries (it is a UNESCO City of Literature), and knowledge-intensive employment.

East Norfolk is the 'energy coast' with nationally significant assets in offshore wind, carbon capture and pan-European energy transmission that make it uniquely positioned at the frontline of the UK's climate transition. It also has a very strong tourism economy. It is characterised by a network of rural market and coastal towns that play a vital role as service and tourism centres, supporting surrounding communities, reducing isolation, and strengthening the area's social and economic fabric.

West Norfolk is the productive rural heartland that acts as Norfolk's gateway to the rest of the country, with resilient agri-food, advanced manufacturing and tourism sectors. It is characterised by its rural geography, with a network of market towns and an urban centre of King's Lynn.

Our proposal has been developed by six of the district councils in partnership – these are Breckland District Council, Broadland District Council, Borough Council of King's
35

Lynn & West Norfolk, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich City Council.

5.2 Appraising the options

We published a detailed options appraisal in March 2025. Since then, we have built on our initial analysis and used the criteria set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to appraise each of our primary options.

The table below provides the scoring of each option against the criteria. We have used a scale of 0 to 3 where 0 indicates it does not meet the criteria at all and 3 indicates that it fully meets the criteria. This scoring method aligns with the approach taken for the interim plan we published earlier this year.

Criteria	*Single unitary*	*Two unitary*	*Three unitaries on existing boundaries*	*Three unitaries on modified boundaries*
Establishing a single tier of local government	1	2	2	3
Right size councils to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks	3	2	1	2
Delivery of high quality and sustainable public services.	1	2	1	2
Strong local support and supporting local identity	1	2	3	3
Supporting Devolution	1	2	3	3
Community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	1	2	3	3
TOTAL SCORES	8	12	13	16

Table 2: Options Appraisal

A full explanation of the scoring for each option against the government criteria is set out in the appendix.

Based upon our assessment, our three-unitary proposition on modified boundaries represents the option that best meets the government LGR criteria and, most importantly, the needs of the residents and communities of Norfolk.

Our three-unitary model will provide the best balance of local representation, flexibility to tailor services to the needs of communities, and the benefits of size and scale. Greater Norwich, East Norfolk and West Norfolk authorities would represent and serve areas that have their own distinct identities, context and needs. Three unitaries represents a model of councils of a suitable scale and geography to complement, and work with, a Mayoral Combined County Authority as they can represent suitably local needs to the regional scale of an MSA.

Our three-unitary model will realise efficiencies from economies of scale, but LGR will also act as a catalyst for a radical rethink of the role of local government in Norfolk enabling public sector reform to deliver the improvements and savings required to close a substantial budget gap, which a consolidation of authorities into a single (or two) unitaries will not achieve on their own.

The three-unitary proposal has been developed in partnership between the six district councils and in consultation with strategic partners. It represents the proposal with the most support from councils, the most support from local Members of Parliament, and the most cross-party support. It Is the proposal of consensus and of Norfolk, and as such represents the proposal with the strongest chance of successful implementation through broad base buy-in.

6. Stakeholder and public engagement

We ran a comprehensive engagement programme to gather insight from residents and partners ensuring proposals are grounded in evidence and local priorities. The objectives were to:

- Understand key priorities and gather insight on what matters most to communities and stakeholders.
- Provide clear information on what Local Government Reorganisation will mean and explain the aims of the proposal.
- Communicate openly and consistently, inviting feedback and explaining how views would inform proposals.
- Maintain a constructive, forward-looking tone while setting out the principles for future governance.

Our audiences were clearly defined to ensure relevance and reach, and included:

Residents across Norfolk	Messages and images tailored to place while maintaining a single county-wide identity, supported by accessible formats to ensure everyone could take part.
Key stakeholders	Town and parish councils, Members of Parliament, businesses, the voluntary and community sector, health, education, and local community leaders. Engaged on values and outcomes, to build the detail of our submission.
Council members	Engaged early to prepare them for change and build resilient organisations in the lead up to reorganisation. Equipping staff and members to explain the proposal confidently and signpost to more detailed information.

Table 3: Stakeholder and public engagement audience

We worked at two levels. Locality level: we explored how proposals would work in practice for each of the three proposed unitaries through events and partner conversations. Norfolk-wide: we captured system views through a single engagement platform, direct communication to households and a county survey.

Engagement was phased and aligned to the pillars of People, Place and Progress, starting with awareness and listening before using what we heard to shape more detailed discussion locally and across Norfolk.



Direct contact with over **304,500 households** through residents' magazines and existing council channels.



A single shared engagement platform — futurenorfolk.com — providing clear information and a dynamic survey to track views; the site recorded around **70,000 visits**.



More than **100 public and partner events** across Norfolk, from sector-focused workshops to open drop-ins, engaging almost 3,000 individuals.



In-person **engagement with over 1,500 partners** to discuss plans, gather feedback and explore new approaches.



Multi-channel outreach using print, outdoor advertising, social media and traditional media to maximise reach.



Accessible routes used throughout: Easy Read materials, paper surveys and audio-enabled web content so anyone who wished to take part could do so.

6.1 Our reach

- **Public surveys**: 5,403 public responses to surveys, with 56% of the primary Future Norfolk survey including comments—demonstrating breadth and depth of engagement.
- **Partners**: Over 2,000 engaged with, and over 1,500 met individually to discuss the proposals. Coverage includes all key sectors, public agencies, and has included collaboration across borders and with neighbouring councils.
- **Website**: 62.1k page views—sustained attention on authoritative content, including Easy Read and audio options.
- **Social media performance**: aggregate 438,310 reach/views and 4,868 click-throughs to the website.
- **Audience composition**: strongest participation from 45–64 (43%) and 65+ (32%), followed by 25–44 (23%) and under-25 (2%).
- **Geographic coverage**: responses from every district, with particularly strong volumes in key urban areas—evidencing county-wide resonance.

6.2 Headlines from our survey results

Engagement gave us a clear picture of what matters most to residents and stakeholders for the future of local government in Norfolk. The findings reflect thousands of survey responses and comments, grouped under the themes of People, Place and Progress. They show consistent priorities across these themes.

People

The results indicate that people place high importance on accountability and access to decision-makers. A large majority — around 3,600 respondents — said it is "very important" to know who their local councillors are, what they are doing and how to have a say. Fewer than 300 felt this was "not very" or "not at all important". Nearly 3,700 people said that being able to easily contact their councillor and have their concerns listened to is "very important", with around 800 selecting "quite important" and very few saying it was unimportant. Just over 3,600 respondents stressed that decisions should be made by people who know their community, with about 800 rating this as "quite important". These responses show a strong expectation that councils remain visible and approachable, with clear routes for people to raise issues and understand how decisions are made.

Place

Residents placed strong emphasis on councils delivering services that reflect community needs, protect local identity and support the local economy. Meeting community needs was the most emphatic result across the "Place" questions: more than 4,200 respondents said it is "very important" that council services align with what their community currently needs, and only around 100 people felt it was "not very" or "not at all important". Protecting history and culture was rated "very important" by 3,571 respondents, with a further 889 saying it was "quite important" and fewer than 350 saying it was unimportant. Almost 3,700 respondents highlighted that helping local businesses to succeed — including tourism, farming, logistics and local shops — is "very important", with close to 900 more describing it as "quite important". These findings underline that while efficiency matters, it should not come at the expense of what makes each place distinct.

Progress

Financial sustainability emerged as the single strongest concern. Over 4,300 respondents said it is “very important” that any new council can afford to provide and maintain services, with just 400 describing this as “quite important” and virtually no one rating it unimportant. More than 4,100 respondents emphasised that a new council must be run as efficiently as possible while planning for future community needs, with a further 600 saying it was “quite important”. Around 3,700 respondents highlighted flexibility as “very important” — ensuring councils can respond to changing pressures — with another 900 considering it “quite important”. These results show that residents expect councils to manage resources well, plan ahead and remain resilient in the face of change.

Comments and themes

Comments provided further insight into these priorities. Many focused on the quality of frontline services, especially adult social care, children’s services, housing, transport and waste. Service quality and delivery accounted for the largest share of comments (953, about 36%). Efficiency was another strong theme (363 comments, 14%), with repeated calls for leaner management and resources reaching the frontline. Localism and accountability featured prominently (343 comments, 13%), alongside identity and representation (368 comments, 14%), with many stressing the importance of preserving Norfolk’s diversity and avoiding dominance by any one area. A smaller set of comments raised practical risks (64 comments, 2%), such as duplication, complexity and change for its own sake. Some respondents warned that a single large authority could feel too remote, while others saw three councils as a workable compromise that reduces duplication but keeps a local focus.

Summary

Overall, the feedback shows that people value accountability and access to decision-makers, services that reflect local needs and identities, and a structure that can manage resources well, plan ahead and adapt without creating unnecessary complexity.

6.3 Headlines from partners and stakeholders

- **Public sector partners** – Many partners described how they work to geographies and areas similar to those proposed (an exception being Fire & Rescue who work over four localities). They emphasised the importance of strong local government for coordination at locality level and expressed interest in opportunities to strengthen this through reorganisation.

- **Health and care partners** – Many highlighted priorities such as accessibility, collaboration, prevention and long-term investment. Partners also referred to the need for joined-up services and tackling health inequalities. Some raised the importance of continuity during any transition, while others noted potential benefits from local delivery models.

- **Voluntary and Community Sector partners** – VCSE organisations said they want to play an active role in future governance models. They called for councils that are locally rooted, transparent and collaborative, with sustained investment in services and infrastructure to help address inequality, climate change and community needs.

- **Growth partners** – Businesses and economic stakeholders spoke about the value of consistent engagement and clarity in future arrangements. They highlighted the importance of simplicity, collaboration and a pro-development approach to support housing delivery and maintain trust during and after reorganisation.

- **Young people** – Respondents in this group said they want councils that are fair, local and accessible. They asked for clear communication through engaging channels and for investment in transport, inclusive spaces, youth services and support for disadvantaged communities.

- **Skills and education partners** – They focused on investment in young people and lifelong learning, close working with employers and providers, fair access to opportunities and joined-up pathways linking education, training and local economic priorities. There is a desire to think differently and explore new solutions that are more community focussed, particularly in addressing limited

rural transport services and long journeys to post-16 and vocational training providers.

- Town and Parish Councils – These councils emphasised local understanding and proactive engagement. They said they value the role of local councillors and want to retain involvement in planning processes. Some raised concerns about additional responsibilities without financial support as a possible consequence of reorganisation.

Summary

Across these groups, partners asked that existing strengths are protected and that essential services are not disrupted. They also identified opportunities for improvement, including stronger collaboration, clearer accountability and arrangements that reflect local priorities. We will seek to build upon existing strengths and engage partners in the design of new models.

6.4 How we've used feedback throughout our case

Our engagement programme has continued throughout the development of this submission, right from inception and the interim plan stage.

The information we've been receiving has fed into the design and decision making of our initial approach at each new unitary level, and then into the detail of our thinking, council configuration, and service design solutions. Where possible we've sought to test and refine solutions with partners.

7. Public service reform, efficiency & financial sustainability

7.1 Public service reform & preventative services

Local Government Reorganisation will be costly and disruptive in the short-term. Thereafter there is a choice between consolidating the current operating models with marginal gains on operating costs and realising the profound opportunity of change in which not only the structures, but services themselves, can be restructured and redesigned to best serve local communities.

We believe that LGR in Norfolk can be a moment for public service reform where a prevention-focused model can be embedded across three distinct typologies in our city, across our coastal communities and in the countryside.

Our proposed three unitaries have been designed with a view to how each organisation can be focused on prevention, building trust and delivering growth for each authority.

There are distinctive challenges across the county footprint, be that a 15-year life expectancy difference in Greater Norwich, the highest levels of demand for statutory support in East Norfolk or housing instability in West Norfolk. An approach that simply assumes a continuation of the status quo is likely to further entrench deprivation, inequality and demand for acute services – having a negative impact on both the financial sustainability of organisations and the long-term life experiences of residents. Our NHS is changing through the Government's 10 Year Health Plan and our council services must too.

The Government set out the case for change clearly, saying "*We can continue down our current path, making tweaks to an increasingly unsustainable model - or we can take a new course*"[3]. We agree, and our approach aligns with the Government's view of how services can be reshaped and will work alongside the NHS' move from hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention.

[3] Executive Summary, Ten Year Health Plan

Our proposed model is one that shapes organisations around the needs of residents, rather than one that expects residents to navigate around and between professionals. Services are focused on local root causes of demand, rather than simply treating needs as they arise, supported by meaningful community networks building upon existing collaboration and partnerships.

Outlined in detail in our area proposals, this is a model that places prevention at its heart, moving staff and resources from services currently dispersed across tiers of government into one cross-cutting department that can provide holistic support to residents, from children to older adults, to increase resilience and reduce demand for statutory services. This approach does not stop when a resident requires long-term support, with strengths-based, independence-focused service delivery.

We recognise that resilient communities also require resilient local economies – and core to our future model is a growth function that can deliver on the ambitions that the three unitaries have for their respective areas – from tourism and clean energy in East Norfolk, advanced manufacturing and agriculture in West Norfolk and life sciences and culture in Greater Norwich.

Our model is more than just reorganising the way services are delivered – but one that commits to achieving long-term outcome improvement for residents no matter where in the county they live.

All of this depends on solid foundations for the transition and transformation to new operating models that work with communities, empower neighbourhoods and meet the true potential of this moment of change, reform and renewal for our county.

7.2 A transparent approach to assessing financial sustainability

Our proposal will create three unitary councils which, even without the benefits of rationalisation, reform and renewal will be viable and sustainable on day one and have a pathway to greater efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

We have worked from gold standard sources, incorporated a wide range of evidence on demand, need, demographics, deprivation, and service unit costs, enabling a more

nuanced assessment of income and expenditure pressures. Where such detailed information was not available, population apportionment was used as a consistent fallback.

The methodology has drawn on two principal evidence bases:

- Nationally available datasets, such as Revenue Account (RA) and Revenue Outturn (RO) forms and ONS sources, to ensure comparability with recognised benchmarks and wider sector norms.
- Data provided directly by Norfolk's councils, including revenue budgets, balance sheets, reserves and other returns from finance officers, to ensure accuracy and local relevance.

In addition, we have assessed the scale of the proposed authorities to confirm they are of sufficient size to achieve efficiencies, deliver capacity, and provide resilience. This includes benchmarking against national practice and considering the ability of each unitary to support sustainable service delivery at scale.

The financial analysis has considered the following elements in detail:

- Council tax harmonisation – testing five legally compliant scenarios, balancing affordability with long-term revenue sustainability.
- Expenditure and funding positions – establishing the structural income and cost base of each proposed authority.
- Transition costs and savings – quantifying both the one-off investment needed to establish new organisations and the permanent recurring savings from consolidation and service reform.
- Balance sheet resilience – analysing reserves, debt per capita, debt-to-asset ratios, and debt servicing against established thresholds.

Taken together, these strands provide a comprehensive and robust picture of financial viability. The results show that each of the three proposed unitary authorities would be financially sound from vesting, with capacity to manage transition, deliver structural efficiencies, and strengthen resilience over time.

On this basis, our three-unitary model is not only affordable and deliverable, but also offers the scale, resilience, and reform capacity required to underpin sustainable, high-quality public services for Norfolk.

7.3 Current financial position of Norfolk Local Authorities

To assess the sustainability of future authorities within Norfolk we have started from the financial position of all current authorities.

Authority	Net Revenue Budget (£000s)	Forecast Total Funding (£000s)	Forecast Budget Gap (£000s)	General Fund Unearm-arked Reserves (£000s)	General Fund Earmark-ed Reserves (£000s)	Total Debt (£000s)	Total Assets (£000s)
Norfolk County Council	1,072,404	1,021,603	50,801	28,902	123,233	888,896	2,412,746
Breckland DC	19,711	18,813	898	3,562	14,320	-	137,299
Broadland DC	15,487	15,487	-	5,000	17,643	585	102,528
Great Yarmouth BC	17,099	16,378	721	5,929	10,636	144,495*	490,142
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	26,128	26,128	-	9,709	35,505	19,000	303,578
North Norfolk DC	23,907	23,907	-	2,205	12,363	5,000	124,495
Norwich City Council	24,933	20,850	4,083	8,250	18,420	204,444*	1,346,703
South Norfolk DC	21,152	21,152	-	6,000	25,451	24,500	162,658

Table 4: Current Norfolk Councils Financial Positions 2024/25 and Balances as at 31 March 2025

* Norwich City Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council both operate Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA). The borrowing figures shown therefore include HRA borrowing, which explains the significant variance between their figures and those of the other districts.

Existing council budgets and pressures

Taken together, Norfolk's district councils are experiencing many of the same pressures faced by local authorities nationally — most notably, increasing demand for temporary accommodation and other demand-led services. However, the majority have responded with prudent financial management, delivering in-year underspends, replenishing reserves, and in some cases forecasting surpluses. Several districts have healthy reserve levels, minimal or no borrowing, and are setting balanced budgets for 2025/26 without over-reliance on one-off measures. While audit timeliness remains a sector-wide challenge, the underlying financial health of most districts is sound, with no immediate indicators of instability that would threaten their ability to operate effectively in a reorganised structure.

While Norfolk's district councils demonstrate broadly sound financial management and resilience, in the context of the reorganisation proposals for Norfolk their budgets are dwarfed by the scale of the County Council's.

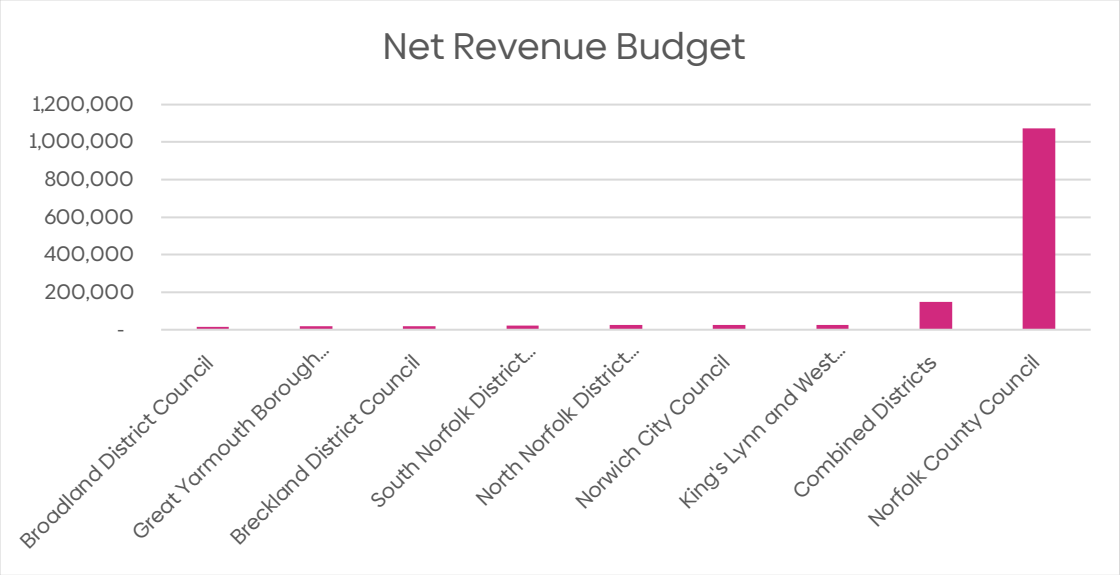


Figure 10: Net Revenue Budget (2025/26)

Given this dominance, it is essential to examine the County Council's current financial position in detail — considering both its underlying health and the significant challenges it faces.

Norfolk County Council serves a population of around 917,000, delivering 85% of all local authority spend in the Norfolk area and employing 80% of the local government

workforce. Its budget covers high-cost, high-risk services such as adult social care, children's services, and highways.

In 2024/25, the County Council faced sustained pressures in demand-driven services, with a combination of price inflation and rising service volumes driving significant overspends. While it reported a balanced outturn for the year, this position was only achieved through the use of £8.351m of reserves to offset the overspend — a measure that is not financially sustainable. The County Council's own outturn report highlights "red" risk ratings in adults', children's, communities, and environment services.

CIPFA's Financial Management Code identifies six indicators of financial stress, several of which apply directly to Norfolk County Council's current position: running down reserves, unplanned overspends, gaps in savings plans, and persistent failure to address underlying financial pressures. The County Council has identified only 34% of the savings required for 2026/27 and just 7% for 2028/29, leaving substantial unfunded gaps in its medium-term plan.

An Expenditure Control Process is in place due to overspends in demand-led services — a measure typically associated with authorities in severe financial distress. Despite significant budget growth in recent years, these overspends persist.

The County Council is forecasting a cumulative budget gap of £120.9m over its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period. Its strategy continues to rely on drawing down earmarked reserves — including one-off resources in 2025/26 — to balance the budget. This approach reduces financial flexibility and is not sustainable in the long term.

Service-level pressures

- **Adult Services**: Overspent by £13.386m in 2024/25, with the Purchase of Care budget under both volume and price pressure. Transformation initiatives have not kept pace with expectations, with the council itself noting that the pace of digital change has fallen short.

- **Children's Services**: High-risk overspending driven by demand pressures and rising unit costs. The July 2025 risk register records a red-rated risk for this service.

- **SEND**: The High Needs Block deficit stood at £55.878m at the end of 2024/25, increasing the negative reserve to £131.891m. The MTFS identifies this as the most significant financial issue facing the council, with escalating costs outstripping available funding. Norfolk is part of the Department for Education's Safety Valve Programme, which is a clear sign of severe financial strain and the inability to manage these pressures within existing resources.

Norfolk County Council is in a significantly more precarious financial position than the district councils. The latest 2025–26 monitoring report projects a £11.25m overspend on the General Fund Revenue Budget. It is running down reserves, operating with large and persistent overspends in key statutory services, and carrying substantial unfunded budget gaps into future years. Its position is unsustainable without fundamental changes — making it the weak link in the Norfolk local government system and a major risk factor in any proposed single-unitary model.

Across Norfolk, all local authorities have received disclaimed audit opinions in recent years, in some cases for multiple consecutive years. Any new unitary authorities will need to work closely with their auditors to restore assurance and rebuild confidence in financial reporting. Most district councils are currently operating with balanced budgets or only small forecast gaps, supported by reasonable reserves and low or manageable levels of debt.

Norfolk County Council is the clear outlier, with a £50.8m in-year forecast budget gap - more than ten times the largest district gap - debt approaching £889m, and a high reliance on earmarked reserves to manage ongoing service pressures. This imbalance means that a single unitary dominated by the County Council's finances would inherit a structural fragility from Day 1, undermining the financial resilience of the whole system.

7.4 Why a three-unitary model is the best financial choice for the future

Our three-unitary model delivers the optimal balance between scale and responsiveness. It prioritises the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services above all else. It achieves efficiencies, strengthens organisational capacity, and

50

creates financially resilient councils capable of withstanding shocks — without importing the County Council's existing weaknesses into a single point of failure.

Experience shows that when very large organisations fail, the consequences are amplified. Norfolk County Council's troubled implementation of the Oracle ERP system in 2022 — which left staff receiving incorrect pay for six months — is a case in point. Birmingham City Council's well-publicised difficulties with its Oracle finance system had similarly severe knock-on effects, with delays to Early Help payments for families. In both cases, sheer organisational scale magnified the problem and extended the harm.

Our case for three unitaries rests on building organisations that are both resilient and responsive. Norfolk's scale and diversity mean that a single county-wide body would concentrate risk in one fragile structure, importing the County Council's existing weaknesses and leaving residents exposed to failure at a single point of control. By contrast, three unitaries distribute responsibility, contain financial risks within smaller systems, and create councils that are closer to their communities and better able to design services around local need. This approach aligns with the Government's wider commitment to fiscal devolution and local accountability, ensuring that decisions about tax, spending, and public service reform are made at the level where they can have the greatest impact.

To test the robustness of this model, we constructed a baseline income and expenditure position for East Norfolk, Greater Norwich, and West Norfolk using the 2025/26 Revenue Account (RA) forms. All major funding and cost lines were analysed in detail across the eight existing councils, with the County Council's budgets subject to particular scrutiny given their materiality. Funding streams were apportioned according to the best available data — including demand, demographics, unit costs, and tax base information — while expenditure was split in line with patterns of need and service use.

Where no reliable data existed, we used a simple population-based approach. In some cases, the County Council's data provision was incomplete or inconsistent, but our methodology ensured that allocations were applied transparently and consistently.

The resulting notional income and expenditure positions are set out below:

£m (2025/26)	East Norfolk	Greater Norwich	West Norfolk
Revenue Expenditure	657.42	531.84	573.36
Revenue Income	(660.60)	(525.46)	(584.05)
Net Position	+3.18	-6.38	+10.69

Table 5: Income and expenditure positions

These figures are not a forecast of what the new authorities would ultimately look like, but a snapshot of what would happen if the current county and district budgets were simply divided between three unitaries, based upon the current year's expenditure. They do not assume any public service reform, efficiencies, or council tax harmonisation — all of which would be central features of the transition.

Despite this, in this baseline both East Norfolk and West Norfolk begin in surplus, with £3m and £10m respectively, providing a relatively strong platform for financial planning. Greater Norwich would see a notional £6m deficit. However, according to NAO and MHCLG guidance, a council is generally considered higher risk when a budget gap exceeds 5% of net expenditure. At just 1.2%, Greater Norwich's budget gap is well below this threshold and would be regarded as low risk, and very much within the normal range for a local authority.

The variation in income and expenditure across the three authorities reflects underlying demographic, social, and economic differences. East Norfolk contains a higher proportion of schools and school-aged children, driving up school-related funding, alongside larger cohorts of working-age and older adult social care users. Greater Norwich records the highest levels of deprivation in the county: 42% of the 76 most deprived LSOAs in Norfolk fall within its boundaries. This is reflected in its relatively higher share of Revenue Support Grant.

Greater Norwich's notional budget gap exemplifies the type of pressure that national reforms such as the Fair Funding Review are designed to address. With the lowest tax base of the three authorities and the highest deprivation, it stands to benefit from a needs-based settlement. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) indicates that urban shire districts such as Norwich are likely to gain significantly under Fair Funding 2.0 once it is introduced.

This reinforces the key point: budget pressures are not unique to Greater Norwich or West Norfolk, nor do they render the three-unitary model unviable. In fact, contrary to the County Council's view, West starts from the strongest relative position. The challenge for all three authorities is to use reorganisation as an opportunity for genuine public service reform — designing fit-for-the-future councils with value for money, efficiency, and sustainability at their core.

7.5 Aggregation, disaggregation & transition

Norfolk currently has eight councils: seven district councils and one county council. Our proposal replaces these with three new unitary councils. To achieve this, two types of structural change need to happen:

1. Aggregation – merging the services of the seven districts into three new unitaries.
2. Disaggregation – splitting the services of the County Council (and, uniquely, also Broadland and South Norfolk, which straddle more than one of the proposed new boundaries) into three.

Alongside these two structural changes is a transition process, which includes setting up programme delivery teams, creating shadow authorities before vesting day, and preparing the groundwork for service and system integration. The shadow authorities will also need to determine a path for council tax harmonisation, so that residents across the new unitaries pay consistent rates.

Aggregation

Aggregation means merging the seven district councils into three. This involves bringing together both frontline resident services and back-office functions.

Frontline services include:

- Waste collection
- Housing and homelessness
- Local planning
- Planning enforcement
- Housing allocation and Housing Standards
- Care and Repair service
- Leisure and cultural services
- Public open spaces
- Beaches and resort services,
- Crematorium and cemeteries
- Electoral services
- Localised economic development

Revenues and Benefits, including council tax
- Licensing
- Environmental health
- Community safety and neighbourhood nuisance
- Careline
- Coast protection and adaptation
- Civil contingencies

Back-office functions include:

- Finance
- HR and workforce planning
- IT systems
- Property
- Procurement
- Governance
- Audit
- Democratic services (Member support and Committee administration)
- Legal services
- Property services
- Communications and media management
- CCTV

The aggregation process creates opportunities to rationalise systems, harmonise terms and conditions, consolidate council-owned companies, and make more efficient use of property and assets.

Disaggregation

Disaggregation means splitting up the services currently provided at the county level so that they can be delivered by the three new councils. It also includes dividing the services of Broadland and South Norfolk across the new unitary boundaries. Disaggregation covers a wide range of functions, including:

- Children's services and SEND
- Adult social care
- Education and youth justice
- Highways, transport and infrastructure
- Libraries, museums, arts and records
- Waste disposal and recycling centres

- Trading standards and public health
- Business support, economic growth, tourism and the visitor economy
- Environmental protection, planning (minerals and waste), and nature recovery

The largest and most complex areas of disaggregation are children's services, adult social care, and education. These are also the areas where demand pressures are driving the biggest budget gaps, which makes it critical to redesign them within fit-for-purpose unitary structures. The three unitary councils will maintain a partnership approach to museums, working together during the implementation phase to agree an approach which best supports our local heritage.

Transition

The transition process ensures that change is managed effectively. It includes:

- Redundancy and early retirement programmes.
- Establishment of programme delivery teams.
- Creation of shadow authorities.
- Closing down existing councils and transferring staff, assets, and services.
- Designing harmonisation plans for council tax.

Significant further detail on the approach to disaggregation, debt, reserves, DSG and council tax harmonisation is set out in the appendices.

7.6 Moving beyond a baseline to reformed public services

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is not just about redrawing boundaries. It involves two distinct but interconnected changes. First, the consolidation of eight existing organisations into three. Second, and more importantly, the transformation of those three new councils into agile, efficient, and future-ready authorities.

Our proposal addresses both challenges head on. It not only creates three new authorities but designs them deliberately as fit-for-purpose organisations, structured around the future needs of Norfolk's residents and communities rather than the legacy of existing arrangements.

This distinction matters because Norfolk is not a homogenous area. It is a county of contrasts: a dynamic urban core in Norwich, extensive rural and coastal areas in East and West, and communities experiencing significant deprivation alongside pockets of economic strength. A single, centralised authority cannot reflect or respond to this diversity with agility. Three unitaries, by contrast, allow for bespoke financial and service strategies: Greater Norwich can leverage population density and growth to generate income; East can prioritise resilience, prevention, and community-based care; West can invest in connectivity and rural service models.

Our modelling started from a "no reform" baseline. This is not the end state, but the starting point from which public service reform would be delivered. Each new authority would be equipped to implement reform programmes tailored to its context, drawing on evidence from other local government reorganisations where smaller unitaries have achieved efficiencies through digital integration, streamlined management, and targeted commissioning. Crucially, this avoids the bureaucracy and inertia that have held back overly large, centralised councils.

Our service design methodology was started with an understanding of the demand for services. This including rigorous analysis of data from local authority and nationally available sources to ensure a detailed understanding of where each unitary will need to target interventions to improve outcomes and reduce cost.

The rare opportunity presented by our proposal to design services afresh enables them to be aligned with national best practice. This includes each authority being designed to have optimised digital pathways, as appropriate to enable accessibility and efficiency. In addition, a new cross-cutting directorate will be established in each authority, responsible for proactive prevention across all demand-led services, including homelessness prevention, adult social care and children's social care, ensuring a whole system approach to reducing avoidable demand.

Once the future service models were developed and agreed, tailored to the unique needs of each unitary as set out in the area proposals and appendices, our focus shifted to implementation and financial sustainability. Close collaboration between workstreams meant that benefits and costs could be allocated appropriately, avoiding duplication and ensuring a robust financial case.

As a result of this work, anticipated financial costs and benefits can be considered across the following categories:

Theme	Description	Total Cost/Benefit (£m)
Delivering unitarisation	A once-in-a-generation opportunity for transformation requires significant investment and resources to deliver planned innovation and savings. These are costs associated with delivering the transition to three unitaries (e.g. project teams, external support, etc.)	33.2
Investment in new capacity	As the unitaries deliver new services, investment in specialist capacity is required to enable statutory service delivery and deliver long-term innovation. These are costs associated with investment in additional staff (both management and specialist) and systems to deliver disaggregated services such as social care.	58.5
Investment in digitally enabled services	Investment in new technologies to ensure effective request resolution for residents and enable staff to spend more time on complex work, and less on administrative activities. These are costs associate with transformation and public service reform programmes.	34.3
Efficient & effective workforce	Establishing new service areas that bring together teams from different organisations and functions, reducing duplication of roles and enabling a more effective service experience for residents without requiring compulsory redundancies through a phased and careful approach to implementation. This includes savings from aggregating services.	(145.5)
Efficient & effective processes	Streamlining processes through consolidation of organisations, reduced duplication of processes and contracts, and the effective use	(122.9)

Theme	Description	Total Cost/Benefit (£m)
	of technology, ensuring value for money for residents.	
Innovation in service delivery	A service model that delivers true public service reform, resulting in fewer residents requiring long-term support from services and those that do being able to receive the least acute form of support, designed in partnership with residents and the authority's partners. This includes savings from improved demand management and early intervention and prevention.	(95.8)

Table 6: Categories of financial costs and benefits over an eight-year period.

Our approach to delivering savings is not based on incremental 'salami slicing' savings which provide short-term benefit to the detriment of long-term resilience. Instead, our focus is on redesigning services to address root causes of demand, adopting council-wide preventative approaches and embedding a 'test, learn, deliver' approach that enables continuous improvement and innovation.

This approach ensures that savings are sustainable and are achieved alongside improved outcomes, as well as equipping the three authorities with the ability to adapt to changing local needs over time.

7.7 The financial case: costs and benefits over 8 years

Reorganisation creates upfront transition and disaggregation costs, but these are outweighed by the scale of recurrent savings.

Costs	
Total one-off investment	£96m
Recurring additional costs	£6m
Benefits	
Total recurring savings	£56m (by 2033/34)
Cumulative savings (over 8 year period)	£220m
Net position	
Net financial impact	£220m
Break-even point	Year 4 (2031/32)

Table 7: Summary of the financial implications for unitarisation and public sector reform of the proposal

Our eight-year profile shows how the new unitary model pays back quickly and delivers a permanent reduction in Norfolk's structural deficit.

Year	Financial Year	One-Off Costs (£m)	Recurring Costs (£m)	Recurring Savings (£m)	Net Impact (per annum) (£m)	Cumulative Net Impact (£m)
0	2026/27 to 2027/28	-34	0	0	-34	-34
1	2028/29	-18	-6	16	-9	-43
2	2029/30	-27	-6	34	+1	-42
3	2030/31	-14	-6	45	+25	-17
4	2031/32	-3	-6	51	+41	+24
5	2032/33	0	-6	53	+47	+71
6	2033/34	0	-6	56	+49	+121
7	2034/35	0	-6	56	+49	+170
8	2035/36	0	-6	56	+49	+220

Table 8: Eight-year unitary costs and savings profile

Our modelling assumes one-off transition costs of around £34m in the two years before vesting, followed by £18m in Year 1, £27m in Year 2, and £14m in Year 3. These costs reflect shadow authority set-up, ICT migration, and redundancy programmes. They also incorporate investment in fundamental organisational redesign, recognising that proactive transformation is required to consolidate functions and modernise service delivery. As before, the approach prioritises natural wastage and vacancy

management in reducing staffing levels, with compulsory redundancies used only where unavoidable.

Considering the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects. These costs would be funded by all councils (including the County Council).

In addition, the model recognises ongoing recurring costs of around £6m per annum from service disaggregation and system duplication.

Savings build progressively. In Year 1, £16m is released from early staffing reductions and service rationalisation. This increases to £34m in Year 2 and £45m in Year 3 as structural efficiencies are realised. These savings are not automatic: they depend on ambitious service consolidation, management delayering, and radical process change. The model therefore assumes a front-loaded pace of transformation that accelerates efficiencies, albeit with higher disruption in the early years. By Year 4, full organisational and staffing savings of £51m are embedded, rising to £56m annually from Year 6 onwards.

On this basis, the payback point is reached in Year 4 (2031/32), when cumulative savings outweigh the upfront investment. By Year 8, the model delivers £49m of recurring annual savings and a cumulative net benefit of around £220m.

When costs and savings are apportioned across the three unitaries, a consistent pattern emerges. All three — Greater Norwich, East Norfolk, and West Norfolk — carry early deficits in Years 1 and 2 as transition costs outweigh savings. From Year 3 onwards, however, the picture shifts decisively. Each authority moves into annual surplus: £7m in Greater Norwich, £10m in East Norfolk, and £8m in West Norfolk. By Year 4, cumulative payback is achieved across the board, with each unitary moving firmly into the black.

From that point forward, surpluses stabilise at recurring levels of £15m in Greater Norwich and West Norfolk and around £19m in East Norfolk. By Year 8 (2035/36), cumulative benefits total £66m, £67m, and £88m respectively — more than £220m combined across the county.

This sharply contrasts with the County Council's "minimal change" model, which assumed £34m of transition costs against just £36m of recurring savings, essentially delivering no meaningful payback. Even their single-unitary "best case" — £36m in annual savings — falls well short of the nearly £60m in combined annual efficiencies delivered by the three-unitary model by Year 3.

In other words, while all three new authorities face an initial period of adjustment, the proposed structure embeds sustainable savings early and generates sufficient recurring surpluses to eliminate Norfolk's structural deficit entirely by Year 7 (2034/35). We do not suggest that reorganisation alone is a panacea — demand pressures will still require further reform. But unlike the "minimal change" approach, the three-unitary model creates a platform for embedding public service reform, delivering sustainable efficiencies, and avoiding reliance on Exceptional Financial Support. In short, it delivers payback within four years locally and closes Norfolk's £200m structural gap within seven years — a far stronger trajectory than the County Council's own assessment.

7.8 Long-term scale & sustainability

Criterion 2 requires that a unitary authority be of sufficient scale to deliver efficiencies, build capacity, and remain resilient to financial shocks. We believe our proposed unitaries are optimally sized for success. Based on a projected 1% annual growth in tax bases from 2025/26, the estimated Band D tax bases for 2028/29 are:

Proposed Authority	Band D Tax Base
East Norfolk	129,789
West Norfolk	109,941
Greater Norwich	94,095

Table 9: Estimated Band D Tax Base in 2028/29

For context, there is clear evidence that existing unitaries are able to operate successfully with tax bases significantly smaller than those we propose. For example, Rutland Council manages with just 16,293 Band D equivalents (2025/26), and Herefordshire Council with 72,816. North Northamptonshire, which was only recently reorganised, operates with 115,847.

Although Greater Norwich is the smallest of our proposed unitaries, its compact, urban nature offers greater revenue potential from parking charges, housing rents, and

61

business rates, with additional upside from planned housing and economic growth, and lower service delivery costs for waste and recycling collection services through urban concentration.

All three proposed authorities exceed 90,000 Band D equivalents, a reasonable lower threshold for long-term financial sustainability. We therefore consider them well-sized to deliver high-quality, sustainable public services while retaining the flexibility to adapt and invest in local priorities.

Capital

The viability of capital investment is not determined by the size of the sponsoring authority but by the quality of planning, governance, and delivery. There is no requirement to fully disaggregate the County Council's capital programme as part of a move to a three-unitary model. The County Council's assertion that disaggregating its capital programme would "hinder ambition" and reduce economies of scale overlooks the reality that many major schemes are already delivered by district councils, often in partnership arrangements. Pooled budgets, combined authority programmes, and joint procurement arrangements enable councils of all sizes to achieve economies of scale without relying on a single, centralised administration.

Our three new unitaries, like every other council with social care responsibilities in the country, will continue to pursue demand management schemes. They will do so with the added advantage of greater agility and the public service reform potential outlined in the Blueprints section of our proposal. There is no barrier to neighbouring unitaries collaborating on major schemes. Indeed, such cooperation can be more agile, with clearly defined project agreements replacing the competing internal priorities that can delay decisions within a single large authority.

The transition to three unitaries would not prevent the continuation of shared projects — whether in highways, schools, or demand management schemes. In fact, neighbouring unitaries could agree targeted project delivery frameworks that retain the benefits of scale while increasing agility and local accountability. Smaller organisations are often better placed to align capital spending with local priorities, unencumbered by competing internal demands from unrelated services.

The County Council's own track record shows that scale does not automatically translate into delivery. In 2024/25, it reported capital programme slippage of £224.5 million — a figure that underlines how even small delays have outsized financial consequences in a programme of this scale. It also set a capital budget of £445.5 million for 2024/25, despite delivering only £244 million in 2023/24 — an 82% increase that was never realistic. Such consistent overprogramming and reprofiling present a misleading picture of delivery capacity; prudent budget setting would align with prior-year outturn. The County Council's own outturn report acknowledges the need to "right size" its capital programme to reflect actual delivery trends.

Smaller, financially sound unitaries can still collaborate on large projects where this makes sense, while maintaining tighter governance over delivery. With focused priorities and direct accountability, they can sequence investment to meet local demand, ensure realism in capital budget setting, and preserve the benefits of joint delivery without the inefficiencies and risks inherent in an oversized authority. Careful transition planning will ensure that current schemes remain viable and that planned benefits are not eroded.

7.9 Council tax harmonisation

In two-tier areas such as Norfolk, the total council tax bill for a household is made up of charges levied by a number of precepting bodies, each with distinct responsibilities and precept-setting powers. The total amount payable reflects the combined precepts of:

- Norfolk County Council
- District or Borough Councils
- Parish or Town Councils (where applicable)
- The Police and Crime Commissioner

These precepts vary by geography. In a reorganisation scenario, the district and county precepts are merged into a single unitary authority precept. This requires *harmonisation* — aligning all residents in the new authority so that they pay the same council tax for the same services. Without harmonisation, households would continue paying different rates for identical services.

To account for this, there are regulations governing council tax harmonisation:

- The authority must ensure that the annual increase in its amount of council tax is not excessive either in each predecessor area or in relation to the average tax across the new area in any year until harmonisation is achieved – for a unitary authority the referendum limit is 5%.
- Council tax harmonisation can be phased over a period not exceeding 7 years from the date of reorganisation (in this case vesting day would be 1 April 2028).

Error! Reference source not found. below sets out the 2025/26 Band D council tax precept and tax base for each billing authority within Norfolk.

Local Authority	Band D (£)	Tax Base
King's Lynn and West Norfolk BC	152.87	56,676
South Norfolk	175.00	54,097
Broadland DC	134.91	49,789
Breckland DC	118.53	47,690
North Norfolk DC	173.52	45,024
Norwich City Council	306.11	39,166
Great Yarmouth BC	192.49	31,567
Norfolk County Council	1,755.63	324,009

Table 10: Band D rate and Tax Base 2025/26

There is clear variation in district-level precepts across the county – reflecting the different priorities and circumstances of each council. In 2025/26, the difference between the lowest district precept (Breckland, £118.53) and the highest (Norwich, £306.11) is £187.58 for a Band D household. These variations reflect historic local policy decisions, differing service demands, and demographic and economic factors within each area.

We have modelled five different council tax harmonisation scenarios to assess the financial impacts. Each scenario represents a different strategy for aligning Band D charges within each proposed unitary authority from vesting day (assumed to be 1 April 2028) through to full convergence by 1 April 2035. We have compared these against a baseline scenario in which no reorganisation occurs. These scenarios are summarised in the table below.

Importantly, this analysis does not make a recommendation. The five scenarios presented are intended to illustrate a range of legally compliant options and their

potential fiscal impact. It will be for each shadow authority, once established, to determine its preferred approach to harmonisation based on its local context, policy priorities, and political judgement.

#	Name	Description
1	Low to Max	All Band D charges within a new unitary are raised to match the highest 2027/28 Band D among its predecessor districts, subject to the statutory 5% cap. Once harmonisation is reached, annual increases continue at the maximum permitted level.
2	High to min	All Band D charges are immediately aligned to the lowest predecessor district rate of 2027/28. This delivers instant uniformity but results in substantial reductions for higher-charging areas. From this reduced base, Band D increases by 5% annually.
3	Weighted Average on Day 1	The initial Band D charge is set to the weighted average of predecessor district rates for 2027/28, adjusted for their respective tax base sizes. This avoids any first-year increase above the statutory 5% cap. From this starting point, Band D then rises annually at 5%.
4	Weighted Average plus 5% on Day 1	Building on the weighted average approach, this method applies a 5% uplift in the first year — the maximum permissible.
5	Harmonisation Within the 5% Predecessor Authority Cap	Band D charges are set in the first year at the lowest predecessor rate plus 5%, ensuring no area exceeds a 5% increase.

Table 11: Council Tax Harmonisation Scenario summaries

We set out the detailed analysis of what each of these scenarios would mean for the three new unitary councils within the appendix.

The modelling demonstrates that council tax harmonisation is a complex but manageable challenge, with different approaches carrying distinct fiscal and political trade-offs. No single pathway is universally optimal, and it will be for each new authority to weigh financial resilience against local priorities when determining its

approach.

What is clearer, however, is the structural dimension. The three-unitary model stands out as the only option in which more than one harmonisation pathway delivers positive revenue outcomes. This provides greater flexibility for future decision-makers, as well as a closer alignment between local tax bases and local accountability. By enabling each unitary to make choices that reflect the circumstances of its communities, the three-unitary model offers Norfolk the best opportunity to balance financial sustainability with democratic responsiveness.

8. Devolution

8.1 Norfolk and Suffolk devolution

Following the Publication of the English Devolution White paper in December 2024 and its invitation for areas across England to express their interest in joining the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) aimed at establishing mayoral combined county authorities in 2026, it was confirmed that Norfolk and Suffolk were part of the DPP in February of this year.

Since then, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have been working to establish the new Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) with a proposed vesting day in Spring 26 (TBC) and mayoral elections in May 26.

This work is overseen by a Sponsoring Board made up of officers and elected Members from both County Councils and includes Norfolk and Suffolk district political and officer representation. Under this sits a Programme Board which includes Norfolk and Suffolk district officer membership and oversees a wide number of thematic working groups which also include officers from Norfolk and Suffolk districts.

This already demonstrates the benefits the districts have brought to establishing the Mayoral Strategic Authority in terms of providing additional capacity and capability at every level of the established governance framework. It also provides context to the level of commitment provided and the collaboration needed to effectively stand up a Mayoral Combined County Authority.

The establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority is a shared priority for both the county and district councils across Norfolk and Suffolk. We are all committed to ensuring its benefits are realised as soon as possible, and the strong collaboration already in place will only enhance and strengthen the opportunities devolution will bring.

Norfolk's Fire and Rescue Service will also move to the new MCCA. Under our model three unitary councils in Norfolk will become constituent members of the authority with a direct and close working relationship with the Fire and Rescue Service. As set out in this proposal, our unitaries will work closely with partners to ensure a prevention-based

approach to public services and will develop these in detail during the implementation phase so that they respond to the needs and requirements of partners.

8.2 Devolution priorities across Norfolk and Suffolk

Both county and district councils across Norfolk and Suffolk are working together for devolution to enhance our regional economic growth and productivity. By collaborating, there is already greater local control over decision-making and priority setting across the two counties. This partnership will continue to unlock the potential of the region by using shared resources and addressing common challenges.

Our approach to Local Government Reorganisation will provide multiple constituent authorities to support the Mayoral Strategic Authority in delivering across Norfolk and Suffolk, ensuring there is a truly connected regional picture with strong anchor institutions that can be both a significant economic influence, but be rooted in the place. This allows for multi-unitary authorities to represent and champion place at a more local level than one single voice representing each county if a single unitary for each was pursued.

Norfolk and Suffolk devolution is focused on:

1. Economic growth and productivity: boosting local economies and attracting investment and working in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk Business Boards to develop comprehensive joint strategies.
2. Logical geographies and economies: a connected set of local geographies with a strong economic identity enabling local delivery and an ability to come together on a proportionate basis to leverage these economic strengths for the benefit of the region.
3. Physical assets and infrastructure: improving transportation networks and infrastructure to enhance connectivity and support growth.
4. Employment and skills: ensuring that residents can use the full potential of their skills in driving productivity and growth.
5. Coherent planning and housing: developing a housing offer that maximises growth, allows logical place-based development and better supports people's health and wellbeing.
6. Action on flood risk: creating a fully integrated approach to flood and coastal management and devolution of flood and coastal erosion risk management.

7. Finance: greater local autonomy creating a system that is more locally self-sufficient.

There is a clear need to drive innovation across the public sector and bring a strong voice for our largest economic centres of Norwich and Ipswich, while also reflecting the role of our other major towns and their economies, our coastal and market towns and rural areas in supporting these seven strategic priorities.

Establishing a mayoral strategic authority between Norfolk and Suffolk will bring economic calibre and clout, creating an economic entity on a similar scale as city regions such as Liverpool City Region (which has 6 constituent authorities) and Greater Manchester (which has 10 constituent authorities) noting the more rural and dispersed population than the predominantly urban nature of these two referenced mayoral combined county authorities. This further underlines the need for a greater local and place-based representation through multi-unitaries as constituent members to ensure a true strategic picture for Norfolk and Suffolk is genuinely understood by the new mayoral combined county authority.

8.3 Strategic planning with local delivery

A mayoral combined county authority across Norfolk and Suffolk will operate across multi-unitaries taking on functions that require a wider strategic regional perspective. These will include management of our growth plan and associated place funding, managing the integrated settlement and the investment fund, transport (including public transport – particularly important within a rural environment) and local infrastructure, strategic and spatial planning including the strategic elements of housing, skills, public safety, environmental management, economic development and regeneration, and health, wellbeing and public service reform.

The role of the mayoral combined county authority will allow unitary authorities to focus on local service delivery, drawing on their deep understanding of local communities' needs and strengths. By working together on joint initiatives and neighbourhood-led schemes, unitary authorities can build upon connection to place and drive health and wellbeing benefits.

8.4 Strong decision-making in the strategic authority

A three-unitary model in Norfolk, balanced with a multi-unitary model in Suffolk under one mayoral combined county authority combines the benefit of strategic regional leadership, local democratic responsiveness and operational resilience.

It provides balanced representation around the combined authority table across diverse areas such as coastal, rural and urban economies, and political perspectives. In addition, this structure offers Norfolk and Suffolk the opportunity to harness complementary strengths of each area and address unique challenges with shared solutions, ultimately delivering balanced and inclusive growth across the whole region.

We currently have 16 councils across Norfolk and Suffolk, the two models presented by Norfolk and Suffolk proposes this is streamlined across the two county boundaries and therefore entails a significant reduction which represents a constructive balance between scale and efficiency and democratic deficit which we believe supports strong decision-making.

Devolution enables the mayoral combined county authority to take responsibility for strategic transport and infrastructure planning and delivery, ensuring that these are developed around economic functionalities and not county administrative boundaries. For example, a rail investment strategy that supports upgrades to Ely junction combined with targeted road infrastructure upgrades on major trunk roads like the A47, A10 and A17 would significantly improve the movement of freight across the region. In addition, the delivery of a regional energy plan that addresses grid infrastructure constraints and transmission challenges could significantly accelerate housing and business growth.

Bringing together the economies of Norfolk and Suffolk under one mayoral combined county authority fosters a shared identity and purpose supporting civic pride, more stable governance and stronger leadership. This structure ensures all types of communities are represented and eliminates policy bias towards only urban, coastal or rural priorities.

We understand what has made some regional authorities successful and these lessons align with our own three unitary model, for Norfolk and the similar three unitary model being proposed by Suffolk district partners.

8.5 Local Government Reorganisation criteria

In terms of the Local Government Reorganisation criteria, Devolution has quite rightly been highlighted as one of the six key criteria and requires any business case to outline how the new unitary structures will support devolution arrangements and where there are no arrangements in place, how the new unitary structures will help unlock devolution.

Proposals should also ensure that there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authorities with timelines that work for both priorities. We believe that the specifics within these criteria are met by our three unitary proposal and support the wider multi unitary proposals when considering Norfolk districts' own Local Government Reorganisation proposals.

The table below provides further evidence of how our proposal meets these criteria and provides additionality in supporting the future success of our mayoral combined county authority.

Strategic Benefits of Multi Unitaries	Opportunity
Representation of Place	The Norfolk & Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority will cover an area of approximately 3,500 square miles with a population of about 1,700,000 residents. The area is predominantly rural, interspersed with urban centres including the city of Norwich, and defined by a rapidly changing coastline presenting significant environmental and infrastructural challenges. It is important the complexities of this combined area can be appropriately represented by the Mayoral Combined County Authority. Multiple constituent authorities will provide strong anchor institutions that can represent and champion place at a

Strategic Benefits of Multi Unitaries	Opportunity
	more local level than one single voice representing each county if a single unitary for each was pursued. It will also mean that smaller businesses will have a better conduit for their views to be heard by the Mayoral Combined County Authority by having a more locally available unitary to engage and build relationships with, and that can then represent their views. The proposed three unitaries in Norfolk will give a voice to a wider range of communities and interests, representing urban, rural and coastal needs, while preventing a dominance in any one single area. Our past achievements and successes through collaboration are grounded in having several voices, constructive challenge, enhanced scrutiny and local stakeholder representation at the table, as evidenced by our previous effective New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. A multi unitary model will ensure this approach is continued.
Capacity and Capability	The Norfolk & Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority will be a commissioning strategic authority; through this model it will have limited resource and capacity to deliver programmes of work without the support of external organisations. Multiple unitaries presents the opportunity to ensure there is capacity, skills and capability in the wider system to deliver the strategic priorities of the Mayoral Combined County Authority responding neatly to this proposed commissioning model. The proposed three unitaries in Norfolk will bring a diverse skill set, local knowledge and capacity to effectively

Strategic Benefits of Multi Unitaries	Opportunity
	support the Mayoral Combined County Authority and enable wider joint investment and coordination on issues such as transport, housing and skills.
Governance, enhanced local representation and democratic legitimacy	The establishment of multi-unitary authorities ensures a broader and more balanced representation of diverse places and populations. With a multi unitary approach being presented by both the Norfolk and Suffolk districts there will be more "voices at the table" creating a distributed leadership and delivery model, increasing the overall capacity in the system to address and manage complex issues. Scrutiny functions are better resourced and diversified which will improve transparency, safeguard against conformity bias, and provide effective and safe challenge. This will also ensure a fair, inclusive and democratic approach to decisions is achieved alongside helping to prevent the risk of consensus driven decision making. Spreading decision making across multiple unitary councils encourages ownership of outcomes and each authority can hold others (and the mayor) to account, further improving transparency.
Scrutiny	A mayoral combined county authority with multiple unitaries enhances the ability of the system to scrutinise policy and performance effectively. Rather than a single scrutiny panel operating at distance, multiple unitary authorities can contribute layered and diverse oversight; each bringing unique perspectives based on local experience. This strengthens transparency, embeds continuous challenge, and ensures decision making at the MCCA level is subject to robust, evidence-based review. It also enables clearer escalation routes, peer accountability and improved public confidence in how power is exercised.

Strategic Benefits of Multi Unitaries	Opportunity
	This reduces the risk of unchecked power concentrated in the hands of the mayor or one or two dominant authorities.
Risk (including Financial)	The more stakeholders involved in decision making are likely to reduce risks associated with poor governance including decision making, lack of oversight and or political bias. Shared scrutiny makes it harder for risky or one-sided decisions to pass unchecked and encourages different perspectives in risk assessment and mitigation planning. Furthermore, multi-unitaries will spread any financial risks that the constitute authorities may have to absorb if there is a lack of financial management within the Mayoral Combined County Authority itself, reducing the risk of severe financial impact if that risk is spread across a multi unitary model.
Trust in Institutions	A more balanced multiple unitary structure within a mayoral combined county authority fosters greater public confidence by ensuring decisions are made closer to the people they affect. When residents see their communities reflected in the make-up of regional governance, and experience services that understand and respond to local context, it builds trust in institutions. Visibility of local leadership, coupled with fairer representation across diverse places, reassures communities that no area is being left behind or overshadowed. Crucially, public confidence is not just a by-product of good governance, it is a prerequisite for long term democratic legitimacy, civic engagement and policy compliance. A model that feels accessible, equitable, and responsive creates the conditions for shared

Strategic Benefits of Multi Unitaries	Opportunity
	ownership of regional priorities and stronger public backing for change.

Table 12: How the new unitary structures will support devolution arrangements

9. Implementation map

9.1 Introduction

Implementing LGR is complex, time-consuming, and challenging. No council within Norfolk has undertaken a transformation programme of this nature in recent history. This implementation plan, which will be refined over time, sets out how we will prepare effectively, resource appropriately, and deliver on schedule to create three distinct unitary authorities, each designed to reflect the unique needs of the communities they will serve.

LGR presents the biggest change that local government in Norfolk will have faced in a generation. It is a massive opportunity for the county, with the potential to realise benefits for our residents and communities and set up three distinct unitary authorities that are better placed to respond to complex challenges at a local, regional and national level.

However, capitalising upon this opportunity needs a considered and realistic approach. We have thought carefully about how we can deliver LGR in a way that safeguards critical services but allows us to bring about the change that will realise the benefits of this programme.

Given the level of ambition and desire to enact radical reform it is imperative that district, borough and city councils manage implementation to ensure this is followed through.

9.2 Approach

Underpinning our approach is a set of guiding principles that are set out in the diagram below.

Service & People

- Continue to deliver accessible, high-quality services
- Place the communities we serve at the heart of decision-making and service design
- Support and empower staff through change

Governance & Control

- Embed strong and transparent governance
- Maintain programme control through a robust PMO
- Identify and manage risks proactively
- Act early and move at pace



Innovation & Improvement

- Be willing to do things differently

Financial Stability

- Undertake early financial due diligence
- Integrate and stabilise financial systems

Figure 11: Guiding Principles

Implementing LGR will involve a great deal of change, more than can be delivered between now and the likely vesting day, in April 2028. Therefore, we have developed an implementation approach that will support us to both ensure we establish three new unitary councils that are 'safe and legal' and set the foundations for ambitious programme of reform that will deliver the benefits of LGR for our residents and communities.

We see this change as falling into one of three categories. Firstly, there is the change that is essential to having three new, functional organisations on day one (a 'safe and legal' council) – this includes their constitutions, safe transfer of social care services, and full staffing structures, amongst others.

Secondly, there are some foundational changes that will set up the new unitaries to hit the ground running with a comprehensive transformation and public service reform programme – this includes setting up the portfolio governance, Programme Management Office (PMO), and other enablers that will help drive change.

Finally, there are the longer-term changes that don't necessarily need to be implemented by vesting day (although it will be desirable and we will endeavour to include as many of these as possible) but will realise the benefits of moving to a three-unitary model. These three types of change are reflected in our implementation approach, with the 'essentials' prioritised for the first two phases of the plan.

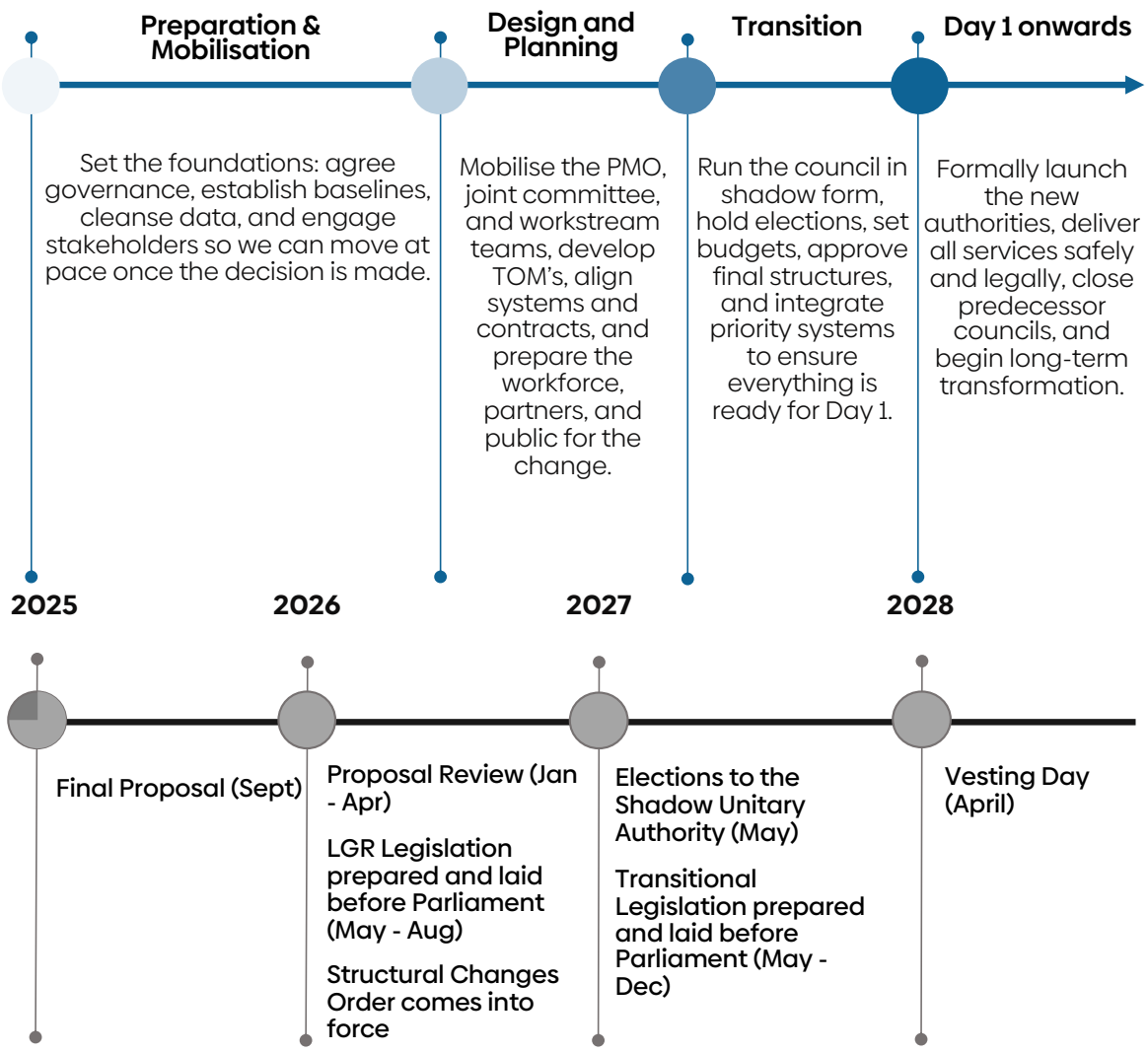


Figure 12: Implementation Approach

We've broken our implementation approach into four phases to account for what we will be able to do at each point in the government timetable, and for the considerations we've outlined above.

- **Phase 1 – Preparation and mobilisation:** The period up until the announcement on the preferred LGR option. This phase focuses on laying the groundwork so that we are ready for day one.
- **Phase 2 – Design and planning:** This is the period immediately after announcement where we set up the infrastructure for the programme and begin detailed design and planning of the transition.
- **Phase 3 – Transition:** Once the Structural Changes Order (SCO) is passed, either Shadow Authorities or Implementation Executives will be established. It will guide the work to prepare the new unitaries for vesting day.
- **Phase 4 – Day 1 onwards:** The new unitaries go live. With the foundations in place to ensure that all services can be delivered safely and legally, each authority will be positioned to deliver a portfolio of transformation to realise the full benefits set out in this proposal.

Within this, alongside the main components of each unitary authority blueprint, there are several cross-cutting elements that are integral to successful transition to the new model.

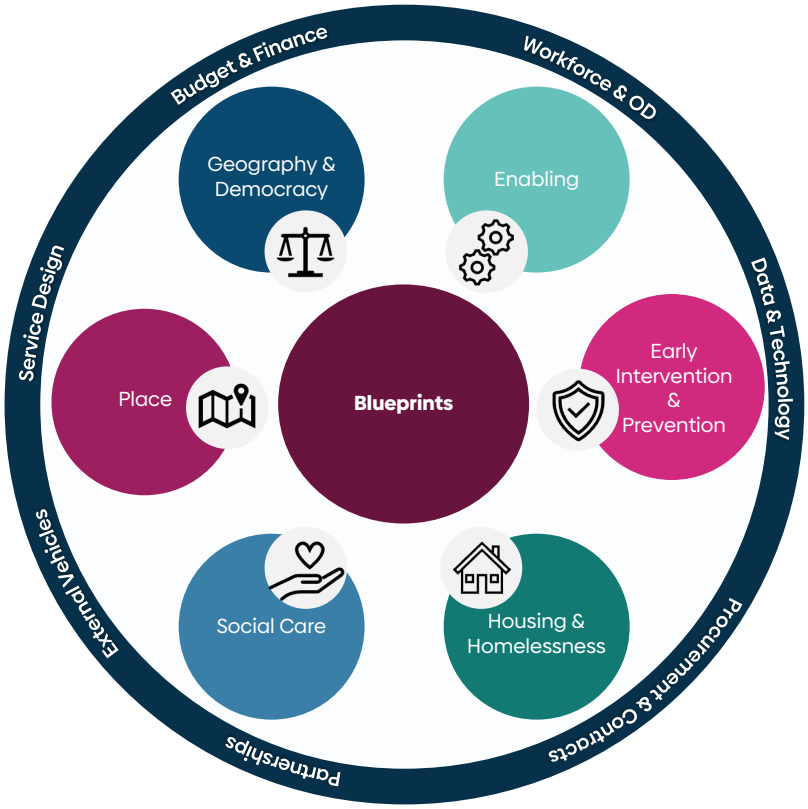


Figure 13: Cross-cutting Themes

These are:

- **Democracy and governance:** Developing the constitutions, establishing the leadership to steward the new organisations and running the elections for new councillors who will govern the unitaries. This also includes setting up shadow council arrangements as part of the transition
- **Service design:** Developing the detailed future operating models that lay out how each service within each new authority will work
- **Budgets and finance:** Apportioning the existing budgets to each new unitary in a fair and transparent way, as well as dealing with other key financial policies such as council tax harmonisation
- **Workforce and organisational change:** Supporting the existing officer workforce with the changes and staff transfer to the new organisations. This will also entail other workforce considerations such as union engagement, staff consultation, redeployment issues, and culture and practice changes
- **Data and technology:** Ensuring that all data we hold is accurate and complete, before it is safely transferred to the correct unitary. Managing the systems which hold this data and support service delivery falls within this element.

- **Procurement and contracts:** Identifying which contracts are novated to each unitary. This may involve contract variations and negotiations with suppliers, as well as preparation for decommissioning and re-procurement.
- **Partnerships:** Ensuring that the strong working relationships with partner organisations are maintained, as well as setting up new arrangements that align with both unitary aspirations and regional goals.
- **External delivery bodies:** Councils have set up a variety of delivery vehicles (arm's length companies and joint ventures) to support strategic objectives. We will need to work through decisions around the future of these vehicles and ownership of them.

9.3 Creating the conditions for success

Successful delivery of LGR depends upon setting up the right conditions for the programme. There are several elements that we will put in place prior to launch. We will set up governance and reporting arrangements that meet MHCLG requirements. We will set up a Programme Management Office (PMO) to develop and implement critical programme infrastructure (methodology, reporting, tools, etc.). We will also invest time in developing a detailed programme plan and resource and assemble teams that have the capabilities and capacity to deliver.

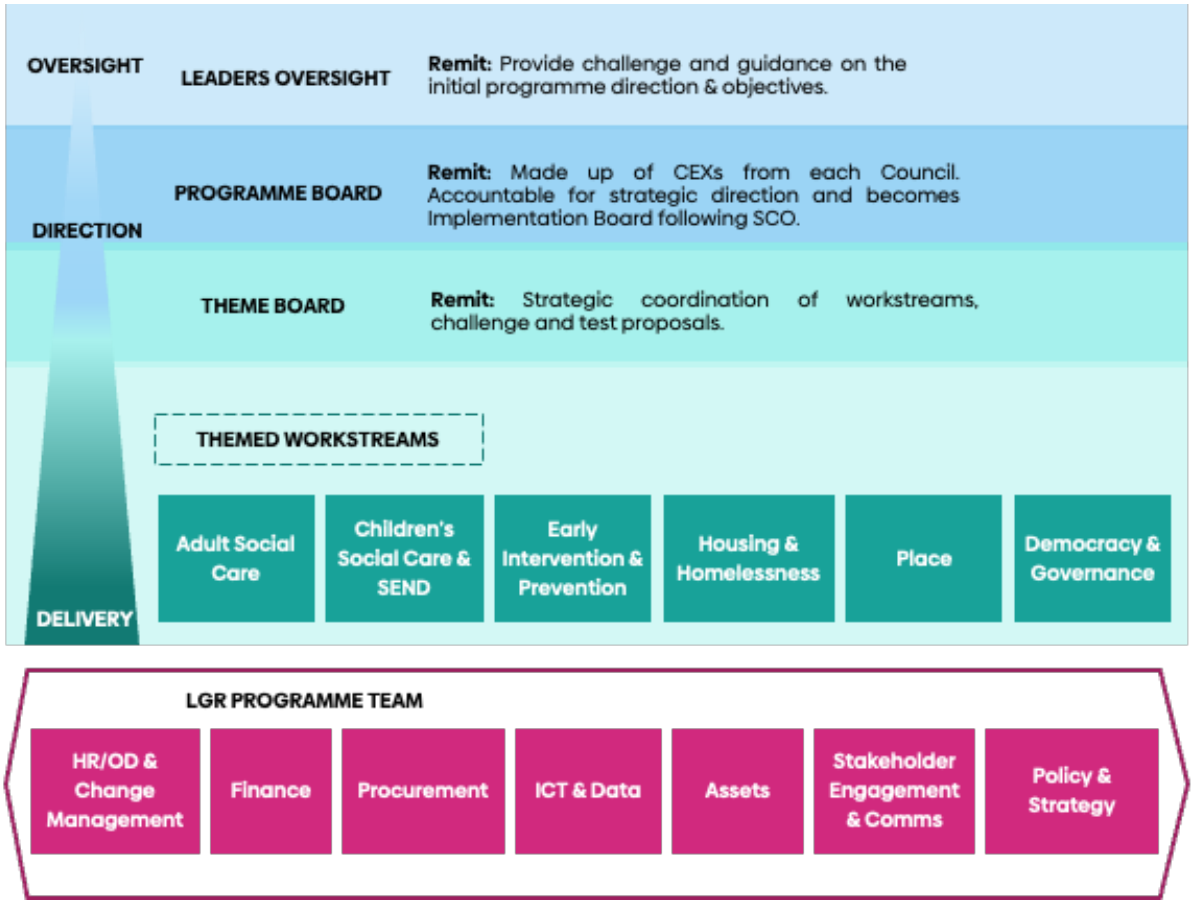


Figure 14: LGR programme governance and structure that we will adopt.

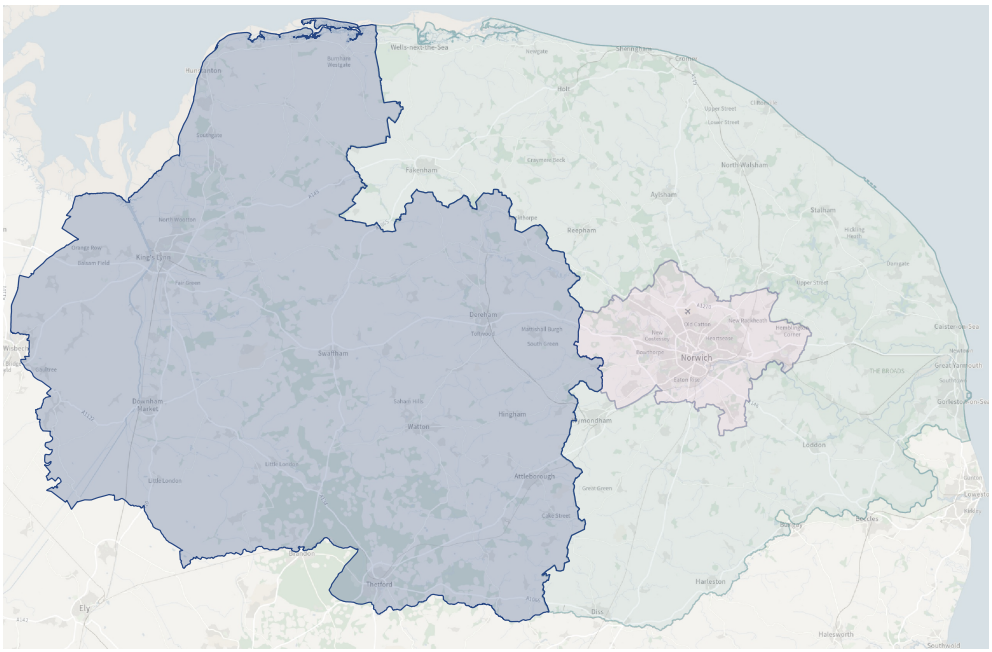
A strong, coherent governance framework will underpin the implementation of the three unitary authorities. Our approach ensures political oversight, strategic leadership, and operational delivery are aligned, with clear roles and responsibilities at each level. Governance will build upon the joint working approach established during the business case development, becoming progressively more formalised through mobilisation, design, and ultimately the Shadow Authority period.

At the top level, a Leaders Oversight Board will provide collective political challenge, direction, and assurance on the programme's overall objectives. Alongside this, a Programme Board, comprised of all current Chief Executives, will hold responsibility for strategic alignment, risk management, and oversight of interdependencies across organisations. Once the SCO takes effect, this body will formally transition into the Implementation Boards / Joint Committees, accountable for driving delivery up to the formation of the Shadow Authorities.

Finally, we've sought to learn from those councils that have recently gone through the process, applying good practice where this has been successful and is likely to work in our local context, and building in lessons of what could have gone better. We have looked to changes elsewhere (particularly the new unitary authorities of Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness in Cumbria, and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole / Dorset, as well as North Yorkshire) to understand what worked, capture lessons learned and identify the key steps to ensure we deliver the changes and realise the benefits of LGR.

As part of the development of both the new unitaries blueprints and this implementation plan, we have carried out risk, assumption, issue and dependency (RAID) assessments. The detailed RAID log can be found in the Appendix.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION



THE PROPOSAL FOR WEST NORFOLK

Prepared on behalf of:
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk,
Breckland District Council,
Broadland District Council,
Great Yarmouth Borough Council,
North Norfolk District Council,
and Norwich City Council

[SEPTEMBER 2025]

CONTENTS

1.	Executive summary	3
2.	Economic distinctiveness	5
3.	Demographic distinctiveness	7
4.	Democratic representation & engagement	9
5.	New council target operating model	12
6.	Financial resilience	31
7.	Assessment against government criteria	46

1. Executive summary

The reorganisation of local government in West Norfolk presents a unique and transformative opportunity to deliver reform, renewal, and innovation in how services are provided to the community. This proposal outlines the creation of a new unitary authority for West Norfolk, which will bring together the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Breckland District Council, and a small part of South Norfolk. This new structure aims to enhance local governance, improve service delivery, and drive economic growth.

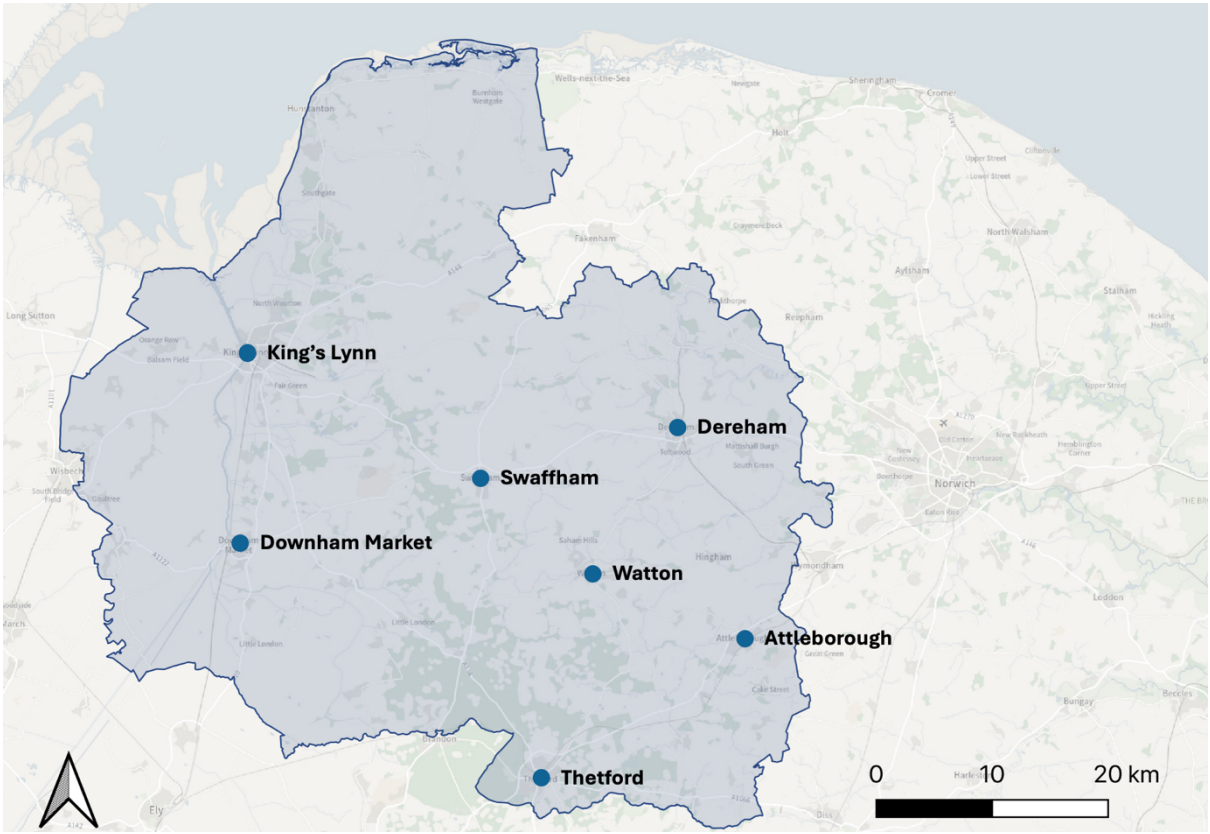


Figure 1: Map of the proposed boundary of West Norfolk

West Norfolk is strategically positioned as Norfolk's gateway to the west, linking the county with the Midlands, Lincolnshire, and Cambridgeshire. The area boasts a resilient agri-food economy, advanced manufacturing expertise, and a strong visitor sector. The proposed unitary authority will leverage these strengths to create a more efficient and responsive local government.

The proposal highlights the distinct economic and demographic characteristics of West Norfolk, including its rural geography, ageing population, and unique housing pressures.

By tailoring services to these specific needs, the new unitary authority will be better equipped to address local challenges and opportunities.

Financial resilience is a key focus of the proposal. West Norfolk enters reorganisation with a structural surplus, providing a strong foundation for future sustainability. The proposal outlines a detailed financial plan, including council tax harmonisation scenarios and transition costs, to ensure long-term viability.

The new unitary authority will prioritise public service reform, integrating social care, education, and public health functions to create a more cohesive and effective service delivery model. This approach will support the area's Marmot Place ambitions, promoting healthier, longer lives for all residents.

Community engagement and democratic representation are central to the proposal. The new authority will build on the existing parish network, ensuring local voices are heard and respected. A new Town Council for King's Lynn will address the current democratic deficit and provide direct, place-based representation.

The reorganisation of local government in West Norfolk offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a more efficient, responsive, and sustainable local government. This proposal sets out a clear vision for the future, rooted in reform, renewal, and growth, and is the best option for delivering the best outcomes for everyone who calls the West home.

2. Economic distinctiveness

We are Norfolk's gateway. We link to the Midlands, Lincolnshire and Cambridge via key transport corridors including the A47, A11, A10 and A17. Via the port of King's Lynn, we act as a gateway to European trade handling approximately 400,000 tonnes of cargo per year and playing a key role in the construction and agricultural sectors across the East of England and the Midlands.

West Norfolk has a rich and long history including medieval market towns, castles, and historic stately homes that are globally recognised, and our historic port town rich in maritime history. Situated in the heart of East Anglia, West Norfolk offers a uniquely powerful mix of strategic connectivity, sector diversity and natural capital, where big Norfolk skies and tourism meets innovative manufacturing, agri-tech and well positioned logistics and distribution. This is not a rural hinterland; it is a productive heartland that contributes a significant 33%[1] share of Norfolk's total Gross Value Added, second only to Greater Norwich, but derived from a fundamentally different economic base.

West Norfolk has a rich economic heritage of embracing growth and innovation. Ongoing regeneration across the area, affordable commercial and industrial spaces, and an open for business approach make the area attractive for inward investment and expansion. Key sector strengths for the area include engineering and manufacturing supported by a strong presence of advanced engineering firms and a skilled workforce, logistics and distribution with a growing presence of supply-chain operators and opportunities for this to grow further supported by its road, rail and port infrastructure along with affordable land values, a vibrant visitor economy driven by its outstanding natural landscape including the Brecks National Character Area, cultural heritage and the Royal Estate of Sandringham, and a resilient agri-food economy.

Urban centres and rural communities

King's Lynn stands ready to be a potential regional powerhouse of growth and innovation and is a thriving hub of employment and housing opportunity. Home to nearly 50,000 residents it serves as one of our region's most vital economic anchors. It is hosts a significant industrial sector specialising in advanced manufacturing and engineering. Global players like Palm Paper, Bespak (formerly Recipharm), and Snap-on

[1] ONS, UK small area gross value-added estimates, 2022

Diagnostics are expanding, innovating, and driving greater opportunities for the people of West Norfolk.

King's Lynn is not only a potential economic engine, it is a cultural anchor, where heritage fuels contemporary opportunity with music festivals and a stunning historic riverfront that enriches the town's identity and visitor appeal.

It is also home to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (which has recently received substantial funding for a rebuild) which is a cornerstone of healthcare for West Norfolk as well as communities across South Lincolnshire and East Cambridgeshire. The hospital will play a pivotal part in shaping social care provision in the future, while simultaneously helping to shape the future workforce of the region. Through its innovative partnership with the College of West Anglia and Anglia Ruskin University and funding from the King's Lynn Neighbourhood Board it is building community resilience by investing in local training to ensure that West Norfolk can meet future healthcare demands with homegrown talent.

In addition to King's Lynn, West Norfolk is home to a growing network of vibrant and dynamic market towns and service centres including Thetford, Dereham, Watton, Downham Market, Attleborough, and Swaffham. These are collectively home to nearly 100,000 people and poised for significant planned housing growth. These towns blend historic charm with forward-looking ambition, delivering essential services, employment, and infrastructure that support a rapidly evolving region. Thetford, in particular, as Norfolk's fourth largest settlement and one of the region's fastest growing towns is already home to leading national and Internal manufacturers and producers, whilst being one of the country's most historic market towns. Beyond our towns lies a vast and diverse network of over 200 villages, spread across 1000 square miles, making us one of the most geographically expansive and community-rich areas in the UK.

Agriculture is not just our heritage, but it is a stepping stone into our future. We are one of the UK's most productive agricultural regions, anchoring national food security with agri-tech innovation. Our region is home to many of the country's largest food producers, positioning us as a leader in sustainable, tech-enabled food systems.

We are proud to be home to RAF Marham, one of the UK's most strategically important RAF bases and a catalyst for regional transformation. It is a major contributor to the local economy and innovation ecosystem. As the defence sector evolves, it will offer a strategic gateway to unlock new growth in aerospace supply chains, advanced manufacturing, and high-tech innovation.

3. Demographic distinctiveness

We are proud of our rich heritage, resilient communities, and the distinctive character of our towns and villages. Shaped by a deeply rural geography, our population stands at 301,712[2] and is projected to rise to 367,467 by 2035.[3] While King's Lynn serves as the principal urban centre, many residents live in market towns such as Downham Market, Dereham and Thetford, which act as key hubs for housing, services and employment. Our demographic profile demands a tailored operating model that reflects the lived realities of our residents and unlocks the full potential of our place.

West Norfolk is home to one of the oldest populations in the county, with more than 25.6% of residents aged over 65, compared with 19.1% in Greater Norwich and 18.6% across England.[4] Poor health outcomes are also more prevalent here, with some of the county's highest shares of people reporting bad or very bad health (5.7% vs. 4.9% in Greater Norfolk and 5.3% England average).[5] This is among the highest proportions in the county and is closely linked to growing demand for adult social care and health services. The challenge is compounded by the geography of health provision, with many residents facing long journeys to acute care. LGR provides a generational opportunity to lead the way in designing services that support independence, wellbeing, and ageing well. Our model must prioritise preventative health and community-led care, delivered through trusted local networks that reflect our dispersed geography.

We also face economic pressures that LGR can help us address. Our area experiences higher levels of economic inactivity, along with lower average disposable income per person and lower qualification rates compared to the national average. More than a third of households (36.8%) are deprived in at least one dimension.[6] Housing pressures compound this picture, with a house-price-to-earnings ratio of 7.7, on par with the England median but above Greater Norwich's 7.3.[7] Together, these factors constrain household incomes and undermine resilience. But they also point to a clear growth mission: health and care provision must shift towards preventative, community-led

[2] Based on 2021 census data.
[3] Population projections based on Person-Per-Household Method, via GeoPlace LLP. Available at: https://www.geoplace.co.uk/case-studies/understanding-local-populations-between-censuses.
[4] ONS, Mid year population estimate, 2022
[5] Census, 2021
[6] Ibid
[7] ONS, House price to residence-based earnings ratio, 2025

models that bring services closer to residents across dispersed geographies. Our education and skills systems need to focus on retaining young people and providing clear pathways into our distinctive sectors, including agri-tech, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, defence and hospitality. Investment in transport and digital infrastructure is essential to reduce rural isolation and support inclusion. This is how we will support better jobs, higher wages, and stronger household incomes.

Our rural infrastructure presents further opportunities for innovation in delivery. Digital exclusion, transport gaps, and limited access to services are real barriers, but they are also solvable through LGR. We can drive digital transformation, test and learn new models of service access, and ensure that no community is left behind.

These demographic conditions demand a tailored approach to service design. A unitary authority for West Norfolk would create the governance flexibility required to deliver this. It could reimagine services around market town hubs, prioritise the needs of an ageing population, and address health inequalities exacerbated by rurality. Crucially, it would allow housing, skills, health and infrastructure policies to be coordinated at the right geographic scale, avoiding a one-size-fits-all model unsuited to West Norfolk's distinctive needs.

This section sets the foundation for the service design that follows. It is grounded in place, driven by insight, and aligned with the government's ambition for empowered local leadership, economic growth through devolution and LGR, and bold reform. West Norfolk is ready to take back control, and we are excited for what comes next.

4. Democratic representation & engagement

Our proposal centres on strengthening local democracy through a locally accountable model of democratic representation rooted in the principles our communities have told us matter most. We are excited by the opportunity to lead reform and rebuild trust in politics as a force for good.

We believe that local identity matters. Residents want governance that reflects their towns, villages, and neighbourhoods, not just administrative boundaries. They want clarity and accountability, to know who represents them and how to engage. That's why our model is simple, visible, and responsive.

Full Parishing as a Governance Model

We are proposing full parishing across West Norfolk, building on the strong civic infrastructure already in place. Every part of West Norfolk is currently covered by town or parish councils except for the town of King's Lynn. LGR presents an opportunity to address this democratic deficit. A new Town Council for King's Lynn will ensure residents have direct, place-based representation and will enable the continuation of the historic Mayoralty.

In rural areas, we will explore parish clustering as a key mechanism for innovation in delivery. This approach enables small communities to retain their local identity while working together to pool resources, strengthen representation, and improve administrative resilience. Clustering creates a direct link between councillors, parish and town councils, and the wider unitary structure, ensuring that neighbourhood voices are meaningfully connected to strategic decision-making. By aligning clusters with ward boundaries and councillor roles, the model reinforces accountability, supports coherent local governance, and delivers on our ambition for stronger, more responsive neighbourhood representation.

West Norfolk's approach builds on the strength of its existing parish network, which already plays a central role in local service delivery and community leadership. Rather than introducing new layers of governance, the proposal enhances and completes the current model, offering a more efficient and trusted framework for local decision-making. The benefits of this approach include:

- Strengthening democratic legitimacy through locally elected parish and town councillors
- Avoiding duplication by using established structures with proven community support
- Enabling tailored service delivery that reflects local priorities
- Supporting civic pride and community identity.

The new Town Council for King's Lynn will be established with a clear remit and governance framework, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with strategic goals.

This is a forward-thinking, citizen-focused model. We will test and learn as we go, detailing our approach to neighbourhood engagement in the autumn through extensive community engagement and embedding it as part of implementation.

Community Engagement and Empowerment

West Norfolk's model is designed to empower communities through structures they already trust. Parish and Town Councils will continue to lead local engagement, supported by the unitary authority where appropriate. This includes:

- Local consultation on the formation and remit of the King's Lynn Town Council
- Mechanisms for residents to influence service design and investment
- Support for inclusive participation and civic renewal
- Alignment with wider strategic priorities and delivery plans

Councillor Numbers and Representation

We are proposing a councillor model that delivers both efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring West Norfolk has the right number of elected representatives to run the new unitary across governance, accountability, and representation.

Currently, Norfolk has 399 councillors across its two-tier system. Our proposal streamlines this to 72 councillors for West Norfolk.

Unitary Area	Proposed Number	Likely Average Cllr: Electorate Ratio*	Electorate
West Norfolk	72	1: 3,298	237,434

Table 1: Councillor numbers

This number supports council functions, including Cabinet, scrutiny, and local governance. It provides the capacity needed to represent West Norfolk on external bodies and partnerships, and to maintain strong local links with communities across both urban and rural areas. Councillors will be expected to lead across multiple domains, from decision-making and scrutiny to partnership working and neighbourhood engagement. The model ensures there is sufficient capacity to populate committees, represent diverse geographies, and manage casework effectively, supported by dedicated member development and support functions.

West Norfolk will cover a large geographic area of approximately 1,095 square miles, considerably larger than the two new neighbouring unitaries, and would place it within the top 10 of existing unitaries in terms of size. The population within the West would also be more dispersed than its neighbouring unitaries, with a population density of approximately 275 residents per square mile, lower than the East (378 per square mile) and Greater Norwich (2,576 per square mile). The proposed number of councillors takes account of West Norfolk's large size, and dispersed population, ensuring that residents remain effectively served by their elected representatives within the new unitary.

Interim warding arrangements are being developed in line with LGBCE principles, including electoral equality, community identity, and effective local government. These will deliver single-member wards in West Norfolk and offer a fair and consistent foundation for future governance.

Protecting Ceremonial Status

We are committed to protecting our historic assets and civic traditions, including the mayoralty, regalia, and ceremonial functions, as part of LGR. These are integral to our local identity and democratic heritage.

The government has confirmed its intention to preserve ceremonial responsibilities through reorganisation. However, this commitment must be reflected explicitly in the Structural Changes Order. This is particularly important for King's Lynn which currently holds ceremonial status but is unparished. The establishment of a new Town Council will provide a democratic foundation for continuing the historic Mayoralty, one of the oldest in the country, dating back to at least 1248. Interim arrangements, such as a Charter Trustee Model, may be needed for the Mayoralty if the Town Council is established post-vesting day, and we will work with local leaders to agree these. This is a moment to reaffirm the value of civic leadership and ensure that our communities retain the traditions that connect them to place, history, and public life.

5. New council target operating model

This section sets out the proposed operating model for West Norfolk, setting out how the overall operating model will bring services together to innovate and achieve better outcomes for residents in the West. It also includes summaries of the core aspects of service delivery – further detail on how functions will work can be found in Appendix G.

5.1. Drivers of change

West Norfolk is a large, predominantly rural area characterised by dispersed communities, strong skilled trades and an economy shaped with roots in agriculture and manufacturing but also influenced by seasonal employment and care work.

There is need for accessible, inclusive services with innovative health and wellbeing support, to tackle health outcomes that tend to be poorer than the national average and support a higher-than-average proportion of people living with disabilities.

There is significant opportunity to identify needs earlier and strengthen support systems, reducing levels of isolation and frailty that may be driving residents into the care system. Reforming services will promote healthier and more resilient communities.

Strengthening educational attainment will improve access to stable employment. Whilst unemployment rates are comparatively low across the area, quality employment and social mobility is low. Through leveraging skills and training pathways, more residents could be supported into long-term quality employment.

Recent increases in the use of special school placements, alongside the highest number of exclusions, highlights an opportunity to work more effectively with school partners to become more inclusive and meet a diverse range of needs.

West Norfolk faces distinct housing pressures, particularly around family homes, which make up a quarter of the housing waiting list and a significant level of rough sleeping. There is however strong development capacity, with the wholly owned council companies, West Norfolk Housing Company, West Norfolk Property and Breckland Bridge, all offer effective routes to housing development.

Pressures across the statutory system, led by decisions made by the county, have pushed the areas that sit within what would be West Norfolk close to breaking point. Without reform, the area risks financial challenge, as rising demand for social care will lead to significantly higher costs. The generational opportunity of LGR will provide West Norfolk with the opportunity to address current needs differently and create more resilient, inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

5.2. Overview of the new unitary

West Norfolk is strategically positioned to take advantage of a wide range of opportunities including agri-tech and advanced manufacturing. Local government reorganisation provides opportunities for greater connectivity, and a reshaping of service delivery to better meet the needs of dispersed communities.

Delivery will be tailored to meet the West's unique geography and needs – rather than being absorbed into a large authority where its complexity will get lost in the scale of organisation, and outcomes will continue to not be as good as they could be. Due to reduced spend on prevention at a county level, districts have already been stepping in to fund services that support the needs of residents – providing a robust basis for future service development.

Parts of West Norfolk are already undertaking a Marmot Place Programme with the aim of tackling health inequalities within its communities, embedding the policy objectives outlined below to improve the conditions of everyday life and reduce socioeconomic inequalities. LGR represents an opportunity to scale this, alongside programmes like Breckland District's "Inspiring Communities" work.

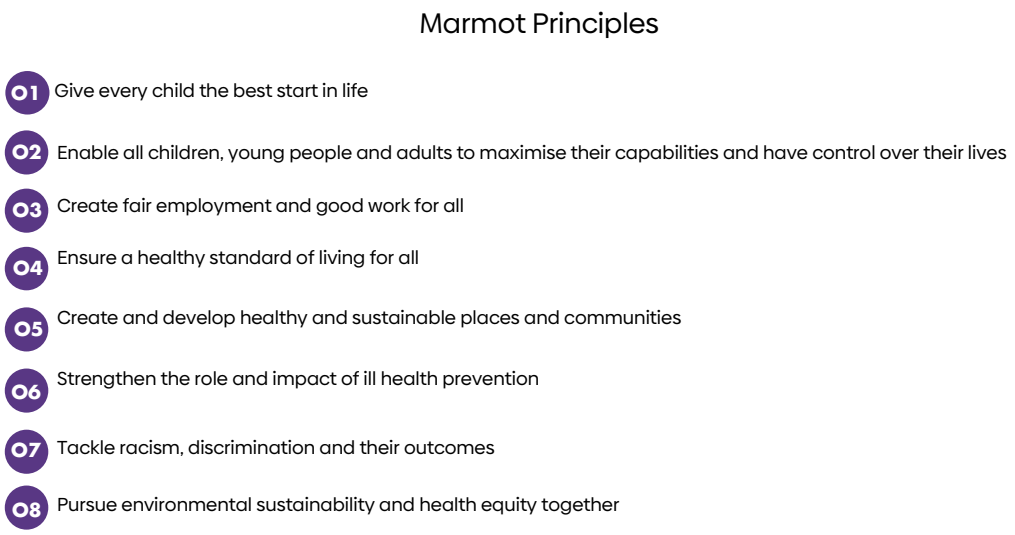


Figure 2: Marmot principles

Being a Marmot place will fundamentally change lives of residents, preventing homelessness, supporting the needs of families in temporary accommodation, improving outcomes for children and families, and supporting people into sustained employment.

Bringing together social care, education and public health functions, alongside effective housing services and experience of place-shaping, will lay the basis for public service reform and will enable West Norfolk to achieve their Marmot Place ambitions across the geography to achieve healthier, longer lives for all.

5.2.1. The target operating model

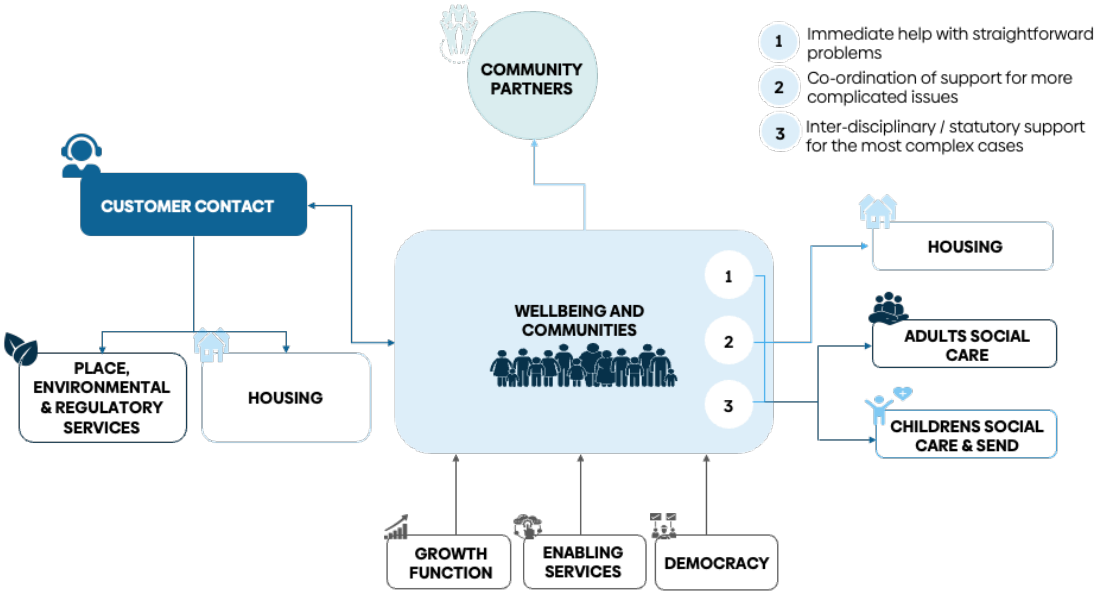


Figure 3: The Target Operating Model

Our vision for public service reform is one that breaks down county-led siloed ways of working, shaping an organisation around the needs of residents, rather than expecting residents to navigate around tiers of government. It is one where each authority can play a greater role in delivering growth that focus on those that need it most, leveraging existing collaboration and partnerships, whilst ensuring broader commercial benefits across the region. It enables fundamental redesign of services that focuses on the root causes of demand, rather than treating a need when it arises, informed by marrying predicative analytics and person-centred approaches to delivery. Finally, it builds trust through utilising community networks that residents recognise and enables each authority to deliver on their ambitions.

To this end, the operating models we are proposing for the three unitaries are structurally similar, rooted in the same design principles. However, their successful implementation is reliant on an approach that deeply understands local needs and is tailored to the specific realities of each of area.

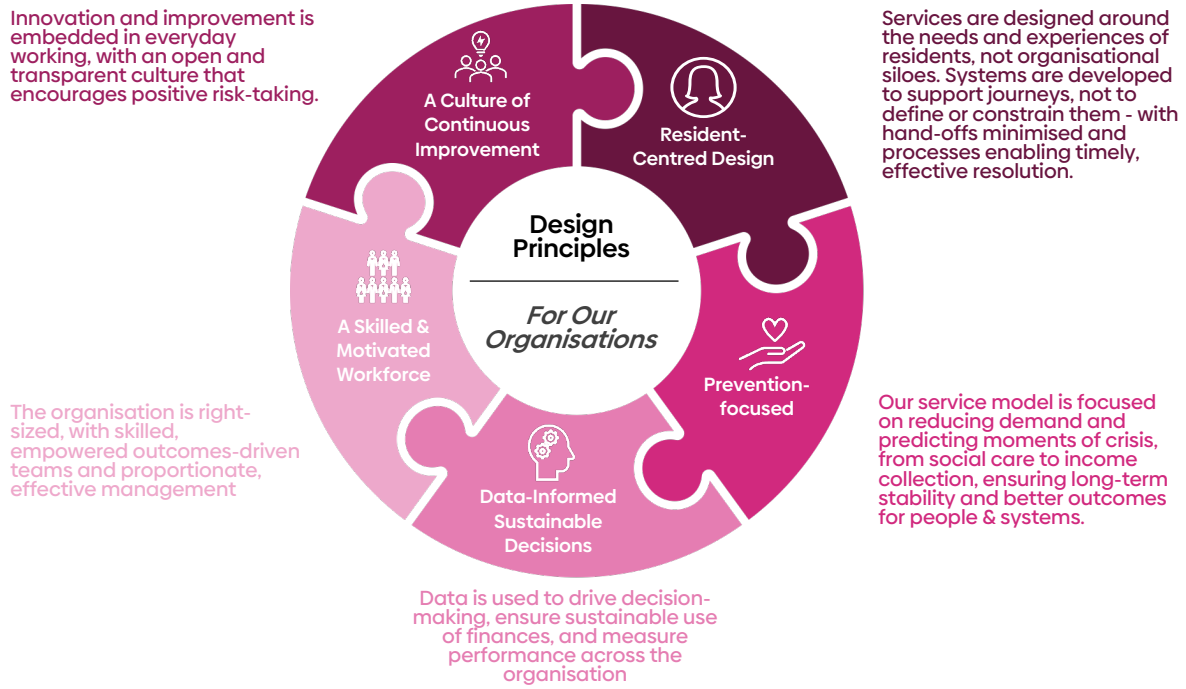


Figure 4: Design principles

Full design principles can be found in Appendix J.

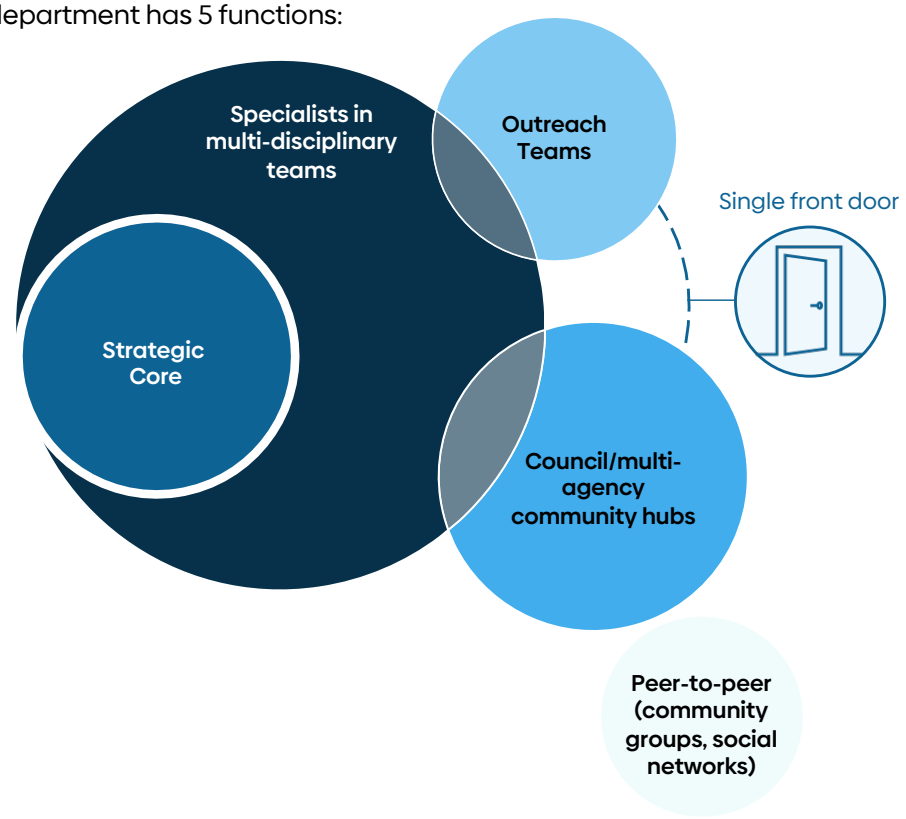
5.2.2. Wellbeing & communities

The early intervention and prevention-led model across Norfolk, delivered through three unitaries with a dedicated department in each called Wellbeing & Communities, creates the conditions to fundamentally reshape how residents are supported. In West Norfolk, this means housing, social care, public health, employment, and VCSE partners working together through hubs in places like King's Lynn, Dereham, Attleborough, Downham Market, Watton, Swaffham and Thetford. Mobile outreach teams extend this support into rural villages and coastal settlements, tackling dispersed geographies and ensuring a clear "no wrong door" offer that makes coordinated help available in familiar local settings. Through this model of provision, we plan to increase the amount of "in person" presence available across West Norfolk, minimising the amount of distance residents will have to travel to interact with Council services.

Support is tailored to the area's unique pressures, including an ageing population, inequitable health outcomes, and long distances from acute health services. By placing "ageing well" at its heart, Wellbeing & Communities ensures older residents receive proactive support to stay safe, healthy, and connected. Services are relational and holistic, recognising the full picture of housing, health, work, and family life. Multidisciplinary teams coordinate responses so residents only tell their story once, with case leadership shifting as needs change.

West Norfolk Wellbeing & Communities Department

Operationally, this early intervention and prevention-focused department has 5 functions:



Strategic Core: Sets strategic direction and ensures the unitary is outcomes focused, prevention led, guided by evidence, effective commissioning, and strong partnerships. Uses data, housing demand forecasts, and health intelligence to spot emerging risks, target investment, and coordinate efforts across the unitary, while tailoring commissioning to the needs of rural villages, market towns, and coastal communities.

Specialists in multi-disciplinary teams: Provide targeted expertise in health, housing adaptations, falls prevention, safeguarding, domestic abuse, community safety, and complex case management for older adults. Work alongside universal and community-based staff to ensure timely and appropriate interventions, often acting as case coordinators for those at risk of crisis or loss of independence.

Outreach Teams: Bring early intervention directly to those with limited access, especially in rural and coastal areas. Provide home visits, wellbeing checks, installation of safety equipment, and proactive outreach in village venues, identifying hidden needs and addressing them before they escalate..

Single front door: A unified access point by phone, online, or email for self referral, referral by partners, or resulting from proactive outreach. Handles routine queries, provides low complexity information, assistance, and guidance, and connects residents to the right support or partner. Staff are trained to identify early signs of decline in independence and to connect residents to targeted services.

Council/multi-agency hubs: Accessible local service points in towns such as King's Lynn, Downham Market, and Thetford, co-locating housing, health, employment, and VCSE services. Offer in person support such as health and wellbeing activities, advice drop ins, digital skills training, and targeted programmes to combat isolation, delivered by trusted local staff and partners.

Figure 5: West Norfolk Wellbeing & Communities department

The Wellbeing & Communities department will operate through five core functions, combining data, people, and services around residents. Predictive analytics will identify individuals and communities at risk 12 to 18 months ahead, enabling timely action such as wellbeing checks for isolated older people, home adaptations to prevent falls, fuel poverty advice, or employment support for those between seasonal jobs.

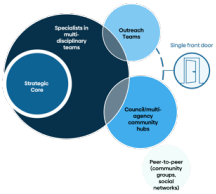
For staff and partners, the model means flexible, multi-agency working with shared data, stronger local intelligence, and less duplication. For residents, it means earlier, connected support that promotes independence, reduces isolation, and improves wellbeing. Over time, this will lessen demand for costly statutory interventions, delivering better outcomes for residents and a more sustainable system in West Norfolk.

Building on Success: The LINK Support Hub

The LINK is an integrated early help support hub based in Dereham. Established through collaboration between Breckland District Council and partners to simplify access to vital services for residents. A one-stop shop, The Link ensures that residents can receive mental health, employment, community and debt advice without having to repeat their story multiple times. This collaborative approach streamlines pathways for residents, helping them navigate complex needs more effectively.

In practice, this will look and feel like:

Resident Journey | ***Wellbeing & Communities in action in West Norfolk***



Strategic Core – Proactive Targeting

The Data and Insights function reviews health, housing, and financial wellbeing data, identifying rural villages in West Norfolk with high numbers of older residents at risk of mobility decline, social isolation, and financial vulnerability. Predictive analytics highlight that without early support, some could face falls, hospital admissions, or loss of independence within 12 to 18 months. In response, the Corporate Core commissions falls-prevention classes and befriending schemes in village halls, strengthens hub staffing with a community health and wellbeing worker, occupational therapist, and revenues and benefits adviser, and directs mobile teams to begin wellbeing outreach.

Strategic Core

Mobile Teams – Proactive Outreach

At a parish hall coffee morning, a mobile team with a VCSE befriending charity, NHS falls-prevention staff, and a revenues and benefits officer meets Margaret, a 78-year-old widow living alone in a small village 15 km from the nearest town. She has begun feeling unsteady on her feet, avoids going out in bad weather, and is struggling with heating bills. In a strengths-based conversation, the team records her needs, books a home visit from an occupational therapist to check for hazards, connects her to a revenues and benefits officer who confirms she is eligible for Attendance Allowance and a warm home discount, and arranges an appointment at the community hub for wider support.

Mobile Outreach Teams

Single front door – System responds without re-entry

Before the occupational therapist's visit takes place, Margaret slips on her front step while bringing in a parcel. She is unhurt but shaken. Because her case is already recorded, the mobile team is alerted immediately, brings forward the occupational therapy visit, installs temporary non-slip mats and grab rails, and confirms her upcoming hub appointment will include falls-prevention and befriending support.

Single front door

Community Hub – Part of the same joined-up plan

At the hub, Margaret meets the community health and wellbeing worker, who already knows her case. Together they review her mobility and safety, enrol her in a falls-prevention class, arrange volunteer transport for trips into town, connect her to a digital skills course so she can video call friends and family, and follow up with the revenues and benefits adviser to ensure her applications are progressing.

Council/multi-agency community hubs

Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Wrap-around

The MDT, including the occupational therapist, social prescriber, VCSE partner, and revenues and benefits adviser, reviews her case. The occupational therapist completes permanent home adaptations, the social prescriber links her to a community choir and weekly exercise, the VCSE partner provides befriending calls until her social network is established, and the revenues and benefits adviser secures entitlements to reduce financial pressure and support with heating costs.

Specialists in multidisciplinary teams

Stepping down to community-led support

Six months later, Margaret's home is safe, and her balance has improved. She regularly attends village activities, has built a wider social circle, and feels financially more secure thanks to new benefits. With this progress, her case is stepped down to community and peer networks, with the reassurance that she can re-enter through the single front door if needs change.

Peer-to-peer

Figure 6: Example West Norfolk Wellbeing & Communities Department pathway

5.2.3. Housing and homelessness

West Norfolk would integrate housing and homelessness teams, commissioned prevention services, and housing management into a prevention-focused model as part of the Wellbeing & Communities department. This will:

- Ensure homelessness services are integrated, with a strengthened focus on prevention and multi-disciplinary working.
- Operate a single choice-based lettings policy suited to West Norfolk's mixed rural, market town, and coastal needs.
- Target development toward one and three bed homes to address identified shortages across the area.

A West Norfolk unitary will offer tailored, place-based delivery not a larger, 'one size fits all' model. Rural and coastal housing pressures differ sharply from those in urban Greater Norwich or coastal East Norfolk; this model preserves strong local partnerships, scales proven prevention work, and focuses investment where it delivers most impact. Strategic collaboration across the three unitaries would retain shared expertise and economies of scale, while giving West Norfolk the autonomy to respond quickly to its unique housing challenges.

Building on Success: SHPS West Norfolk
The Sustainable Housing Pathway Service (SHPS) saved £2.1m across Norfolk in its first year and has continued to deliver strong results in West Norfolk. Success has come from a tailored person-centred approach, building trust with private landlords, supporting people to sustain tenancies, and working in close partnership with the borough council and local agencies. In a new West Norfolk unitary, this kind of service could be tied directly into the wider Early Intervention & Prevention approach, with stronger links to housing and support teams. The funding was cut by the county, despite its delivery of savings, and continued by the districts, indicating that smaller unitaries can understand the impact of services more than a one size fits all approach from a single large authority.

Shadow authorities will consider future opportunities associated with Breckland Bridge, West Norfolk Housing Company and West Norfolk Property to unlock development across the area.

5.2.4. Adult social care

Given the pressures In West Norfolk from an ageing population, a sovereign Adults Social Care department will provide the decision-making responsibilities to facilitate better

management of demand, increased control over costs, and strengthen market sustainability.

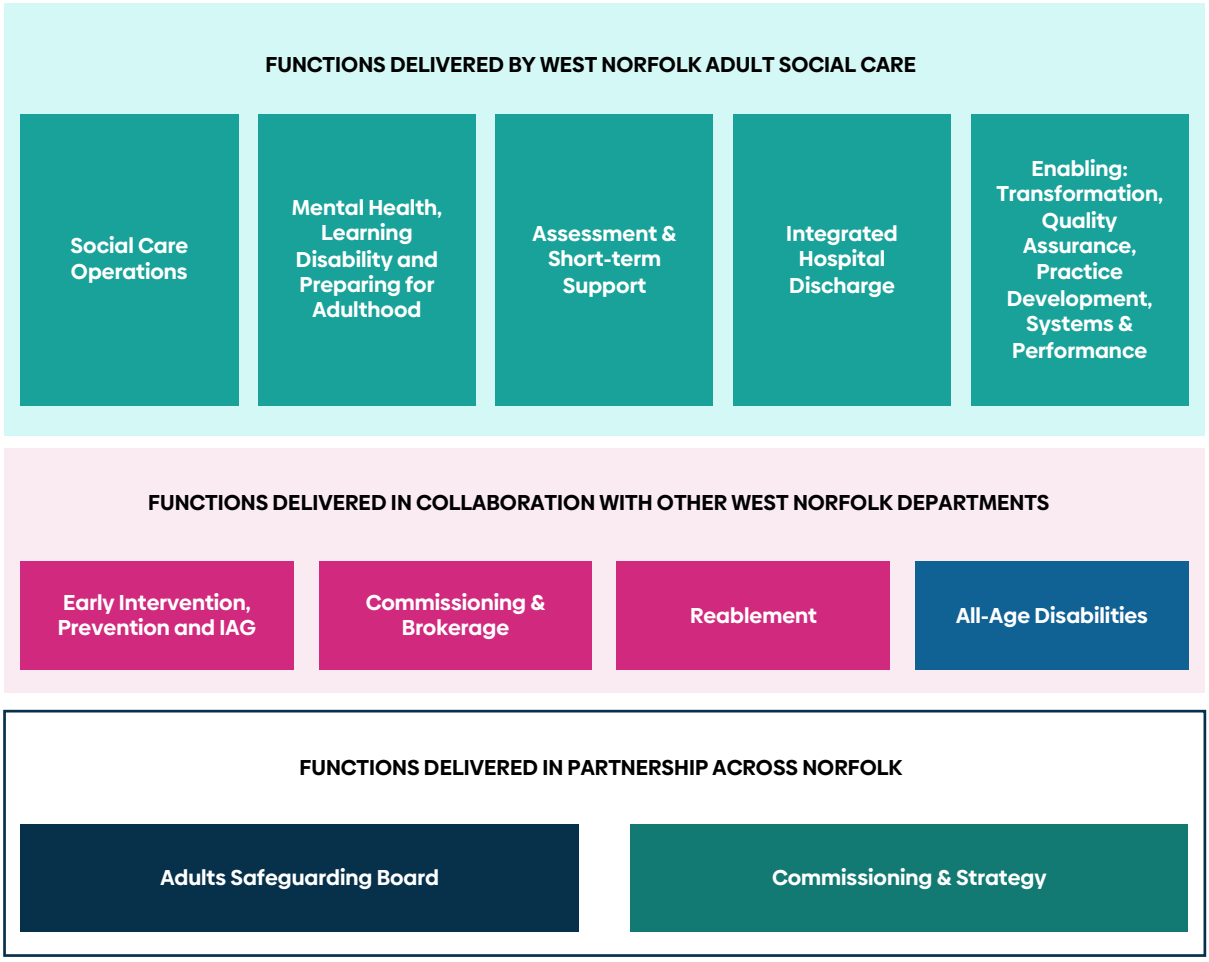


Figure 7: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary

The Wellbeing & Communities offer will provide a community-rooted, prevention-first approach that targets support early, before crisis and statutory intervention enabling people to remain at home and out of nursing and residential care. For this to be effective West Norfolk will implement a person-centred, strength-based approach which builds upon their assets e.g. family and friends networks and what is available in the local community. The new model will have a greater focus on learning disability through the All-Age Disabilities team which will provide smooth transitions, improve independence, and integrate housing, skills, and employment support. Given West Norfolk covers a large geographical area with a mix of communities and many rural areas, several smaller localised multi-agency care networks will be established to serve this area, giving West Norfolk greater flexibility to tailor care delivery locally. Collaboration will remain with East Norfolk and Greater Norwich to commission services that require cross-boundary collaboration.

A unitarized approach will align to the NHS defined West Place Board which is key to having a strengthening a joint approach to meeting local needs and will give West Norfolk a prominent voice for residents in the decision-making around future joint priorities.

Building on Success: Care & Repair in KLWN and Breckland

The districts have a well-established Care & Repair service which promotes independence through adaptations, repairs and equipment within the homes of residents. Close working with Norfolk & Waveney ICS has also enabled the proactive targeting of residents as they leave hospital to ensure their home remains safe, and to prevent the risk of repeat falls and hospital admission. This is supported by a Handyperson service that, in addition to small repairs, can install aids to support residents that have a wide range of care and support needs to remain safely at home.

Existing county wide partnerships where there is a strong case for continuing (e.g. the Norfolk Adults Safeguarding Board) will be retained to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations and support these through their connection to more localised service delivery model. Working closely with health and the Queen Elizabeth, Norwich & Norwich, and West Suffolk Hospitals, will be key to providing coordinated support in both primary care in communities and hospital discharge. West Norfolk has committed to becoming a Marmot Place to create a healthier and fairer environment for everyone, particularly those facing the greatest disadvantages which this model is best placed to help achieve through a stronger partnership with Health.

This model restores the primacy of place, delivering person-centred, sustainable Adult Social Care through an ambition to make the population healthier and thereby deliver savings which is tailored to West Norfolk.

5.2.5. Children's social care

West Norfolk has committed to become a Marmot Place, working in collaboration with county Public Health and the Integrated Care Board to tackle health inequalities, and ensure every child has the best start in life. The new model builds on that ambition, embedding support in communities and integrated service delivery between Children's Social Care, Public Health, Housing and other partners through integrated service design rather than ad hoc partnership. Services will focus on keeping families stable and

children safe within their communities wherever possible, decisions that will wholly rest with West Norfolk as part of their own sovereign service.

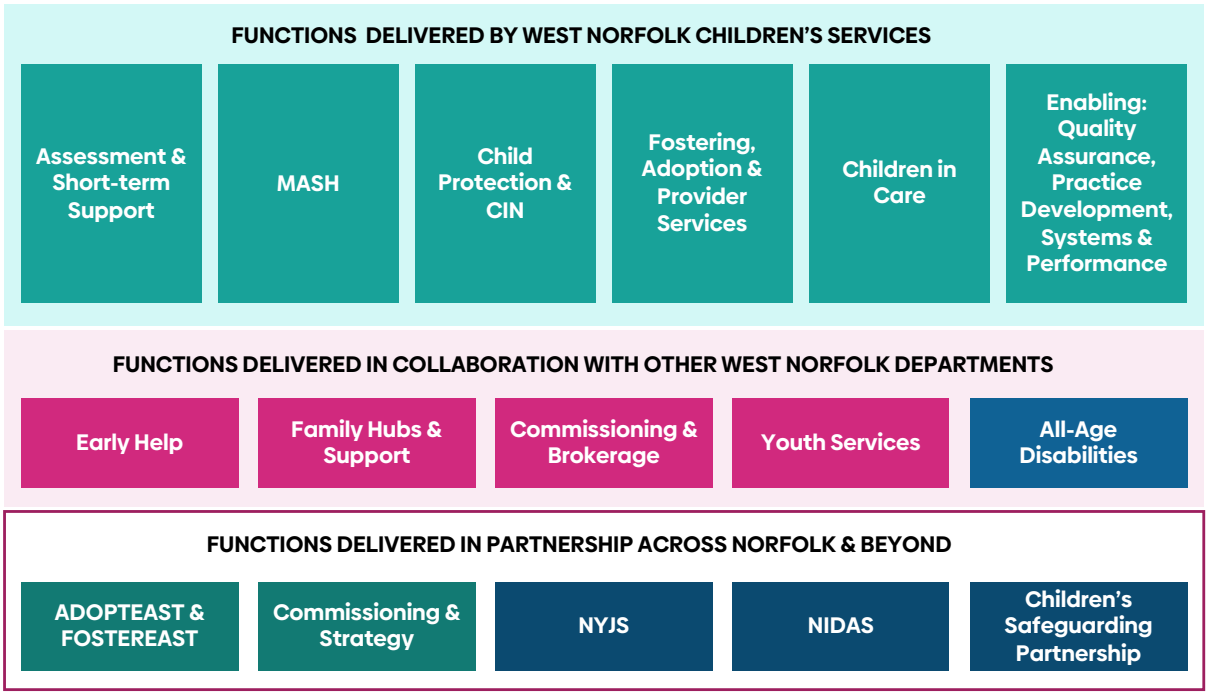


Figure 8: Functional model of Children's Social Care across the unitary

Where children do require support from the council, West Norfolk will be an ambitious corporate parent for the children they care for. This includes ensuring that young people experience permanence within their placements, and that through a strong care leaver offer that they are connected to stable employment opportunities and secure housing as they move-on from being directly supported by the care system. West Norfolk will also invest in the further development of in-house provision for their children, including residential care homes and semi-independent housing, to ensure local assets – avoiding young people travelling outside of West Norfolk access the support they need.

Collaboration across the county is an intrinsic part of our proposal via joint commissioning, market shaping and safeguarding partnerships whilst resources will be allocated and delivered by each unitary, informed by local conditions and needs. This will include cross-county work to recruit foster carers, whilst also exploring the challenges that may be unique to West Norfolk to ensure retention of those recruited and stability of placements for children and young people. Similarly, there is an opportunity for West Norfolk to build capacity in its local market, specifically designing services that consider the experience of children & and young people growing up in rural

areas, embedding effective outreach to families informed by proactive data approaches and enabled by technology where this appropriate.

Building on Success: Inspiring Communities in Breckland
An award-winning programme that brings together the local authority, health and the community sector to tackle health inequalities, domestic abuse and poor mental health, Inspiring Communities is estimated to have saved the local health system £1.8m. It has supported over 3,500 residents and has provided additional capacity to the community sector to deliver this work. Breckland have recently secured a further £1.2m in funding to further expand the programme and continue to improve local

By embedding the Marmot Place approach, strengthening early intervention and foster care capacity, West Norfolk can create a sustainable, community-rooted model that address health inequalities and secures long-term outcomes for children and families.

5.2.6. Education & SEND

West Norfolk can design an education model rooted in local delivery, strengthening relationships with schools and tailoring services to the area's unique geography and population. Early Intervention & Prevention will be central, with Teams Around Schools of multi-disciplinary teams working together to support inclusion, prevent placement breakdown and avoid exclusions given West's comparatively high number of young people leaving the classroom.

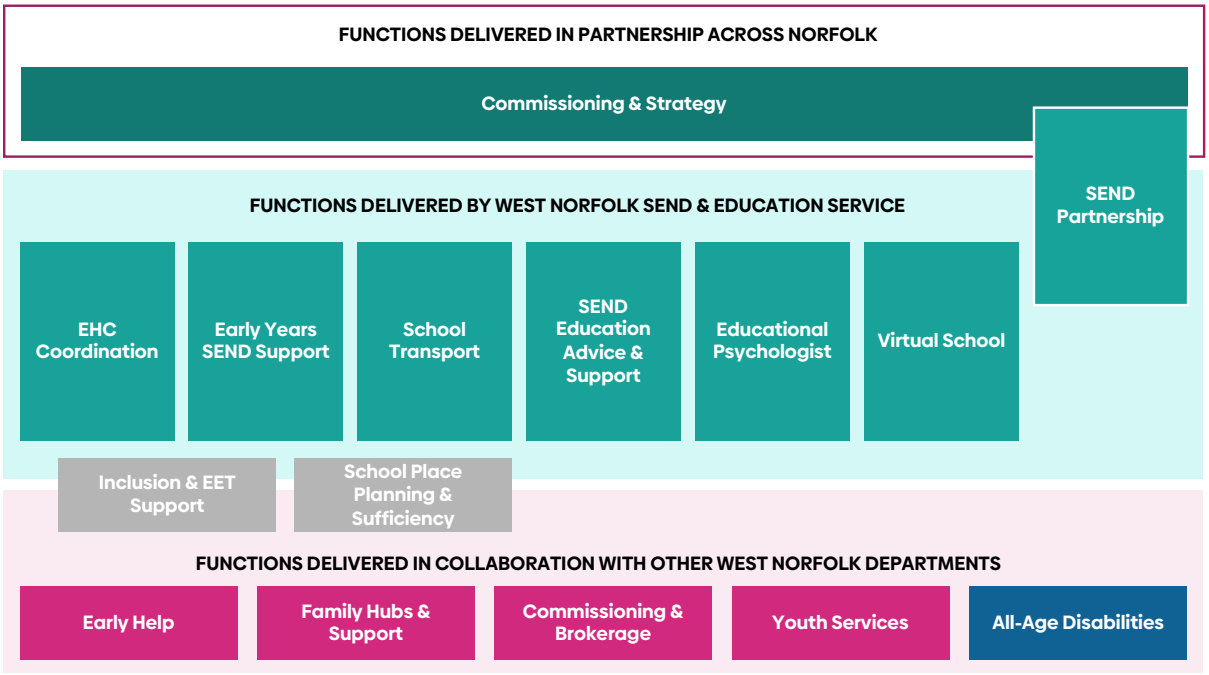


Figure 9: Functional model of Education & SEND across the unitary

SEND case workers will be viewed as trusted professionals, building strong family relationships and ensuring timely Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) processes. They will also play a key role in considered school transport decisions, given West Norfolk's comparative rurality, ensuring young people are enabled to access public transport wherever possible enabling them to live independent adult lives.

Closer links between education and planning will help proactively manage demographic shifts. West Norfolk will also This includes close working with education partners to mitigate of the migration of the younger population, and ensuring young people will be connected to secure employment in growth industries such as advanced manufacturing.

Building on Success: Supporting young people into employment in KLWN and Breckland

The BOOST programme has been running in West Norfolk since 2022, providing targeted support to 18-30 year-olds who are unemployed or not in education, delivered in partnership between the county council, KLWN and Breckland. This has supported over 800 young people to date, connecting them with skills training and into apprenticeships and permanent employment. The programme has expanded as a result of KLWN investing funding from the UKSPF to enable the offer to continue to provide connect young people to roles in the area.

By strengthening inclusion, developing local provision and embedding early intervention, West Norfolk can mitigate pressures on the High Needs Block, avoid costly out-of-area placements and deliver a more sustainable and family focused SEND system.

5.2.7. Environmental & regulatory services

As a unitary, West Norfolk is best placed to serve its rural geography, taking a tailored approach to addressing local challenges and fostering sustainable development.

The delivery model represents a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints but enables a placemaking[8] approach, whilst allowing West Norfolk to invest time in developing and implementing new models in the longer-term.



Figure 10: Place Services

The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. For example, poor public transport acts as a constraint

[8] Placemaking is the process of shaping public spaces and communities. It is a multifaceted approach involving collaboration and design to create spaces that a foster a deeper connection between people and their environment, leading to spaces that people want to visit, live in, and care for.

to growth in the rural dispersed geography of West Norfolk. As a unitary, West Norfolk will be able to develop initiatives that overcome this barrier by leveraging its services and budgets relating to highways and transport (in partnership with any future Mayoral Combined Authority).

Many services such as Planning and Economic Growth will be in-house functions. However, several services are already delivered via long-term contractual arrangements. This includes Waste Collection & Disposal and Highways. West Norfolk will continue to deliver Parking services on behalf of the wider county building on the successful partnership it has led in this area.

West Norfolk will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services) and shared parking services.

Place will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with some of the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

Adopting this Place model means environmental and other services or initiatives (such as economic development, planning, etc.) collaborate closely on specific areas to coordinate service delivery to shape the area. This will enable West Norfolk to develop a tailored and joined up approach to making the neighbourhoods and wider area excellent places for residents, communities and visitors to thrive, addressing challenges such as poor public transport connections.

5.2.8. Growth

West Norfolk will need to deliver tailored support for resilient agri-food and advanced manufacturing sectors, as well as growing the tourism economy around the coast. It will also need to leverage its role as Norfolk's 'gateway' to the rest of the county.

Any ecosystem of support to help grow the local (and regional) economy will need to span all future levels of government. This includes local initiatives (such as Business Improvement Districts, town centre regeneration schemes, growth programmes and skills support), services delivered by the unitaries, regional programmes likely be

delivered by a Mayoral Combined Authority) and national partnerships (such as InnovateUK).

West Norfolk would also need to work closely with these services and partners to remove barriers and create an environment that fosters growth. This will be enabled through better use of data and having a shared picture of local businesses that the council engages with (e.g. shared Customer Relationship Management).

West Norfolk would complement the MCA with an appropriately scaled tailored approach, responsive to local needs and alive to local opportunities. For example, through delivery of initiatives to help improve public transport links, access to education and employment opportunities and foster the large network of small and micro-businesses to increase jobs. West Norfolk would also work closely with West Norfolk Property Limited and West Norfolk Housing Company Limited to address affordable housing shortages and increase commercial office space for businesses.

In the longer term, once any regional combined authority is established, West Norfolk will want to explore the opportunities to work closely in partnership and pool resources to deliver regional inclusive growth for Norfolk and Suffolk. However, this would be after vesting day and once any combined authority was agreed.

This model will set West Norfolk up to deliver tailored economic support to its area and address challenges such as increasing the supply of spaces for small businesses and connecting residents to skills and job opportunities, whilst collaborating with other unitaries and the mayoral combined authority to boost growth in the wider region.

5.2.9. Enabling services

West Norfolk will have a core of enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. These enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. Human Resources & Organisational Development, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke model (Transformation & Portfolio Management Office, Data & Insight[9]) as a means of keeping control of enabling support and maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.

[9] A function separate to the team in Healthy & Thriving but the two would work together.

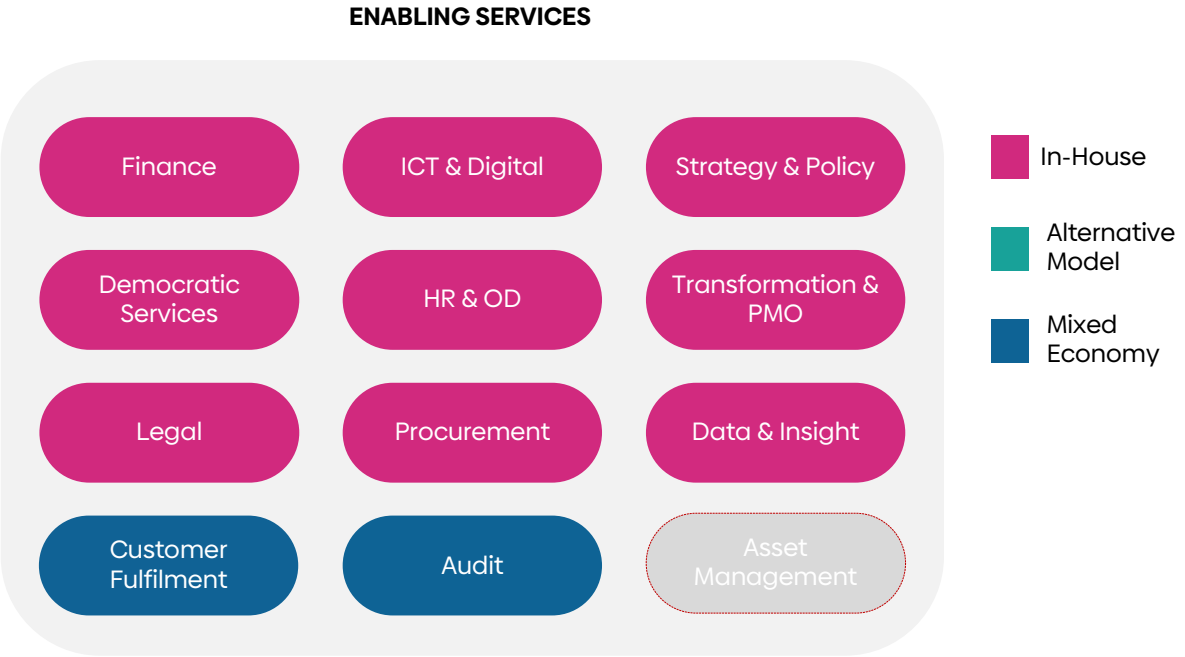


Figure 11: Enabling Services

Wherever possible and appropriate enabling services are delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time, except for Audit where there is a successful partnership across Norfolk to deliver a shared service.

Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a single unitary, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious transformation programme to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.

Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of West Norfolk. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management of a large portfolio of commercial assets.

There are further longer-term opportunities for West Norfolk to collaborate with the two other Norfolk unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power.

The enabling services model will set up West Norfolk in the best possible position to deliver high quality services whilst also driving transformation and public sector reform

that will improve outcomes for residents and communities whilst helping to close the budget gap.

6. Financial resilience

The proposed West Norfolk unitary would combine Breckland, King's Lynn & West Norfolk, and a small part of South Norfolk (around 5% of the population) into a single authority. Together, this creates an authority serving 301,712 residents – placing it in the middle of the three proposed unitaries by population. With a council tax base of 106,328 in 2025/26, West Norfolk also sits mid-range in terms of its revenue-raising capacity.

West Norfolk is Norfolk's gateway to other counties and the west of England, linking Norfolk to the Midlands, Lincolnshire and Cambridge through key transport corridors, while also acting as a productive heartland in its own right. Its economy combines a resilient agri-food base rooted in the Fens, advanced manufacturing in King's Lynn and one of the region's leading visitor sectors, with market towns such as Downham Market, Hunstanton and Thetford providing important service and employment hubs.

This section focuses on the financial resilience and viability of West Norfolk. It examines expenditure and income patterns, council tax harmonisation options, and balance-sheet strength, before assessing the authority's capacity to manage financial risks, absorb shocks, and sustain long-term service delivery in line with its distinctive economic and demographic profile.

6.1. Baseline financial position

Building on the methodology set out in the main report, we have drawn on the 2025/26 Revenue Account (RA) returns to model the funding and expenditure profile of a prospective West Norfolk unitary authority. This analysis provides the following indicative baseline position:

£m (2025/26)	West Norfolk
Revenue Expenditure	573.36
Revenue Income	(584.05)
Net Position	**+10.69**

Table 2: Indicative baseline position for Greater Norwich

West Norfolk enters reorganisation in a comparatively favourable financial position, with income forecast to exceed expenditure by £10.69m in 2025/26. This surplus offers more than just resilience: it provides scope to reinvest in services, support residents, and fund

early transformation activity. Starting from position of strength is unusual in local government reorganisation and should be recognised as an advantage, giving West Norfolk greater flexibility to shape its future.

Expenditure Profile

The starting point was the aggregation of the Revenue Account 2025/26 data across all eight existing Norfolk councils. From there, allocations for the largest service blocks — Adults, Children's, and Education — were derived using demand, capacity, and unit cost data provided by the county at LSOA level. While this dataset was incomplete and inconsistent, it allowed us to map demand patterns against the new West Norfolk boundaries and to allocate expenditure accordingly.

The analysis shows that West Norfolk sits in the middle range of adult social care demand and cost pressures across the three proposed unitaries. It records the highest nursing care demand for both working-age and older adults by originating address, but residential demand is more balanced—lowest for working-age adults, middle for older adults, and 35% of total county demand overall. Domiciliary care demand is similarly mixed, with the lowest share for working-age adults and mid-level for older adults, leaving West Norfolk in an overall middle position.

Unit costs reinforce this picture. West Norfolk records the highest costs for domiciliary care but sits in the middle range for both residential and nursing placements. This combination of moderate demand and mixed unit costs results in the second-highest total adult social care spend across the three areas, with per head spend at £479.53—above Greater Norwich (£421.39) but below East Norfolk (£527.74).

Children's services present less pressure. West Norfolk records the lowest costs for residential placements and fostering, giving it the lowest overall spend on children's services of the three unitaries. In education, the area sits in the middle for both the number of school-aged children and pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), reinforcing its position as a "middle" spender rather than an outlier.

Taken together, these demand and cost patterns mean West Norfolk emerges as the middle authority of the three proposed unitaries. It does not face the extreme demand and high-cost profile of East Norfolk, nor the lighter cost base of Greater Norwich. Instead, it balances between them: higher pressures in adult social care offset by lower children's services costs, resulting in an overall expenditure profile that is significant but manageable.

Funding Profile

Like all unitary authorities, West Norfolk will rely on a combination of council tax, business rates, commercial property income, central government grants, and locally generated income through fees and charges to fund its services. To establish the likely funding position, we obtained the Revenue Account 2025/26 submissions for all eight existing Norfolk councils. County-level income lines—particularly those relating to Aggregate External Finance (AEF)—were further broken down: demand-led grants such as schools funding and social care allocations were apportioned using the expenditure modelling outlined in the previous section, while more general grants were distributed by population or, where appropriate, deprivation indicators.

Although no longer a dominant source of local government funding, Revenue Support Grant (RSG) remains an important part of the overall settlement and is expected to be influenced by the government's proposed Fair Funding 2.0 reforms. These reforms are intended to better reflect local needs by taking deprivation into account and supporting councils with historically weaker tax bases.

Deprivation in West Norfolk is present but more dispersed than in the other proposed unitaries. King's Lynn and West Norfolk falls into the bottom quartile nationally on average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rank, placing it among the 25% most deprived local authorities in England, with persistent pockets in the town and along the coast. Breckland fares slightly better, in the bottom 40% of districts, with around one in ten residents living in highly deprived neighbourhoods. Only a small area of South Norfolk falls within the proposed unitary and its relatively low deprivation profile has little bearing on the overall picture.

Overall, just 11% of West Norfolk's LSOAs are classed as highly deprived—the lowest share of the three new authorities, compared with 13% in East Norfolk and 21% in Greater Norwich. Yet because of its size, West Norfolk still contains 25% of Norfolk's deprived neighbourhoods. This mix—significant in absolute terms but less concentrated than elsewhere—helps explain why West Norfolk receives the lowest Revenue Support Grant allocation in our modelling, with more grant directed toward areas of more widespread deprivation.

Under our apportionment method, West Norfolk accounts for around 35% of Norfolk's overall NNDR. District-level income was allocated on a district basis, with Broadland

and South Norfolk split using LSOA data provided by finance officers, and the county share distributed on a population basis following officer discussions. While this highlights West Norfolk's comparatively strong business rates base, the forthcoming reset of the Business Rates Retention system means current allocations are unlikely to provide a reliable guide to future funding, with deprivation expected to play a more prominent role in the formula.

Taken together, West Norfolk's funding and expenditure profile reflects a broadly balanced, middle position. Its adult social care pressures and unit costs place it above Greater Norwich but below East Norfolk, while lower spending on children's services offsets some of this pressure. On the funding side, West's share of business rates sits between East and Greater Norwich, and its lower levels of deprivation mean it attracts less central government grant. The overall effect is a stable financial platform—neither stretched by extreme demand nor heavily reliant on external support—providing a solid foundation for reorganisation.

Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power (CSP) provides the clearest measure of the resources available to local authorities to deliver services. It combines income from the Settlement Funding Assessment, council tax, and central government grants, as set out in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

West Norfolk records a mid-range Core Spending Power (CSP) position compared to the three proposed unitaries. Its relatively low Revenue Support Grant allocation, reflecting less concentrated deprivation, is offset by the highest share of business rates income and a stable council tax base. This mix places it above Greater Norwich, where weaker tax bases constrain resources, but below East Norfolk, which benefits from higher overall grant funding. The result is that West Norfolk sits in the middle of the three authorities on CSP, with a balanced but reform-sensitive funding profile.

6.2. Council tax harmonisation

Council tax harmonisation presents a particularly complex picture in West Norfolk. In 2025/26, Breckland records the lowest Band D anywhere in Norfolk at £118.53, with a tax base of 47,690. King's Lynn and West Norfolk sits higher at £152.87 with the largest base of 56,676, while South Norfolk stands out with both the highest Band D in the unitary at £175.14 and a substantial tax base of 54,097.

	2025/26	
Local Authority	Band D	Tax Base
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	152.87	56,676
South Norfolk	175.00	54,097
Breckland	118.53	47,690
Norfolk County Council	1,755.63	324,009

Table 3: West Norfolk district councils Band D and Tax Base 2025/26

The council tax profile in West Norfolk reflects a mix of very low charges in Breckland, mid-range levels in King's Lynn, and significantly higher rates in South Norfolk. This uneven landscape creates both complexity and opportunity for harmonisation. With strong bases in King's Lynn and South Norfolk, West Norfolk benefits from solid revenue-raising capacity, but the drag of Breckland's low Band D level tempers the overall average. Taken together, West Norfolk starts with a balanced but uneven position, making harmonisation choices especially important for its long-term financial trajectory.

Our harmonisation modelling explored five different approaches to aligning council tax rates across the new unitary over a ten-year horizon (2025/26 to 2035/36). The results show that outcomes vary significantly depending on the chosen methodology.

Importantly, this analysis does not make a recommendation. The five scenarios presented are intended to illustrate a range of legally compliant options and their potential fiscal impact. It will be for each shadow authority, once established, to determine its preferred approach to harmonisation based on its local context, policy priorities, and political judgement.

Results for West Norfolk:

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	-59.22
High to Min	-121.17
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-100.41
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	13.16
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-9.16

Table 4: West Norfolk Council Tax Harmonisation Results

West Norfolk's fiscal outlook is highly dependent on the chosen harmonisation approach. High to Min is the most damaging, while Weighted Average +5% delivers the strongest outcome. Losses are steep across most scenarios but generally less severe than in East Norfolk, with West seeing the lowest reduction under the 5% predecessor cap. Breckland's very low Band D continues to weigh on revenues, though volatility is more evident in East.

To illustrate what each scenario would mean for residents, we modelled the change in Band D charges under each scenario. These can be found in Appendix C.

Conclusion

West Norfolk starts from an uneven position, with Breckland's very low Band D continuing to weigh heavily on revenues despite stronger bases in King's Lynn and South Norfolk. The modelling shows that most harmonisation scenarios result in revenue losses compared with the baseline, with *High to Min* proving the most damaging. Only *Weighted Average +5%* scenario deliver gains, though this comes with steeper household increases. Compared with East Norfolk, the outcomes are less volatile but still constrained, underlining that West Norfolk's fiscal future will depend on carefully balancing revenue stability with the distributional impacts on residents across very different starting points.

6.3. Transition and reform

For West Norfolk, unitary status offers the chance to build on a position of relative financial strength, beginning with a structural surplus on expenditure and funding. The focus is therefore less about immediate survival and more about how the new authority can consolidate this position through transformation. The prize is to embed a model of growth and prevention, where public service reform is at the heart of financial sustainability.

By reducing duplication, streamlining governance, and aligning housing, health, and community services with adult social care and public health, West can create an organisation designed to manage demand differently. Earlier, more integrated interventions in rural, coastal, and market town communities have the potential not just to generate savings, but to shift resources towards prevention and resilience. In this way, the costs of transition can be turned into an investment in a more efficient and sustainable authority.

Year	Financial Year	One-Off Costs	Recurring Costs	Recurring Savings	Net Impact	Cumulative Net Impact
-	2026/27–2027/28	-11	-0	0	-11	-11
1	2028/29	-6	-2	5	-3	-15
2	2029/30	-9	-2	10	-1	-15
3	2030/31	-4	-2	14	8	-8
4	2031/32	-1	-2	16	13	5
5	2032/33	0	-2	17	15	20
6	2033/34	0	-2	18	15	35
7	2034/35	0	-2	18	15	50
8	2035/36	0	-2	18	15	66

Table 5: Eight Year Profile of Savings and Costs of Transition (figures in £millions).

Transition Costs & Savings

West Norfolk faces around £27m in one-off transition costs across the pre-vesting period and early years of operation, covering shadow authority set-up, ICT migration, and workforce restructuring. Alongside these, permanent recurring costs of £2m per year arise from the disaggregation of county-wide services.

As with other options, the modelling assumes that these transition costs will be funded locally through reserves and realisable assets, avoiding dependence on central government support. While West Norfolk has sufficient capacity to meet these costs internally, careful judgement will be needed where assets also generate ongoing revenue. Costs will be funded by all councils including the County Council.

Savings build steadily over the first three years. In Year 1 (2028/29), efficiencies of £5m are delivered, leaving a net in-year deficit of around £3m. By Year 2 (2029/30), savings rise to £10m, bringing the gap close to balance. In Year 3 (2030/31), structural savings reach £14m, producing a net annual surplus of £8m.

The payback point is achieved in Year 4 (2031/32), when cumulative benefits outweigh upfront investment, generating an annual surplus of £13m and moving the cumulative position into the black at around £5m. From that point forward, recurring annual surpluses of £15m are embedded. By Year 8 (2035/36), the cumulative net benefit reaches approximately £66m.

These efficiencies are driven by workforce consolidation, ICT and systems integration, and prevention-led service redesign. While the disaggregation costs remain a fixed burden, they are modest compared with the scale of recurring savings.

Strategic Conclusion

Costs	
Total one-off investment	£31m
Recurring additional costs	£2m
Benefits	
Total recurring savings	£18m (by 33/34)
Cumulative savings (over 8 year period)	£66m
Net position	
Net financial impact	£66m
Break-even point	Year 4 (31/32)

Table 6: Summary of the financial implications for unitarisation and public sector reform of the proposal

For West Norfolk, the transition requires two years of initial deficits before the benefits of reform are fully realised. Thereafter, the model generates strong recurring surpluses, delivering a cumulative net gain of around £66m by Year 8. The authority's resilience comes both from the scale of savings achieved and from its ability to fund transition costs locally without reliance on central government. This positions West Norfolk to consolidate efficiencies, strengthen its fiscal base, and embed prevention-led services capable of meeting long-term demand pressures.

6.4. The balance sheet

A local authority's balance sheet is a critical measure of its overall financial health and resilience. A strong balance sheet provides stability, enabling councils to invest in infrastructure, manage risk, and respond to shocks without jeopardising service delivery. Conversely, a weak or overextended balance sheet can leave authorities vulnerable, forcing difficult choices about borrowing, asset sales, or service reductions.

In the context of local government reorganisation, balance sheets take on added significance. The process of balance sheet disaggregation — that is, unpicking the existing county and district-level assets, liabilities, and reserves and reallocating them to the new unitary bodies — will shape the starting financial position of each authority. Decisions about how debt, pension liabilities, cash reserves, and fixed assets are split will directly affect each unitary's capacity to invest, its exposure to risk, and the sustainability of its financial strategy.

While our intention was to build a robust and detailed understanding of the balance sheet position for each of the proposed unitary authorities, we were not able to do so in

practice. The County Council did not provide the necessary data on assets, liabilities, and reserves, despite repeated requests. Without this information, it was not possible to model balance sheet disaggregation at the level of rigour we had originally planned.

In the absence of a full dataset, we adopted a pragmatic approach by applying population-based splits to approximate the distribution of county-level balance sheet items across the proposed unitaries. While this method offers a broad indication of scale, it does not capture the geographic variation in asset holdings, service liabilities, or borrowing commitments that would ultimately influence the financial resilience of each new authority.

This limitation should therefore be borne in mind when interpreting the results: the figures presented provide a high-level view rather than a definitive statement of the future balance sheet positions.

West Norfolk Indicative Position (2028/29)

(£000s)	Amount
General Fund Unearmarked Reserves	15,714
General Fund Earmarked Reserves	85,333
Long-Term Borrowing	379,890
Short-Term Borrowing	10,694
Non-Current Assets	1,049,492

Table 7: West Norfolk Indicative Position (2028/29)

To aid understanding of the balance sheet position, we have devised five key financial performance indicators tailored to a local authority context. These indicators move beyond the headline numbers to present a richer picture of financial resilience and sustainability. Each indicator is supported by a RAG rating framework, with thresholds informed by literature reviews and recognised best practice. Sources are cited under each indicator. To ensure comparability, the figures used throughout are based on the 2028/29 financial year.

Indicator: Unearmarked Reserves as % of Net Revenue Expenditure

- **What it is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of unearmarked (unrestricted) general fund reserves a council holds, expressed as a percentage of its annual

net revenue expenditure. It represents the level of financial flexibility the authority has to absorb unexpected pressures.

- **Why it matters:** Unearmarked reserves are the council's most accessible form of financial resilience. They provide a vital buffer against unforeseen events such as sudden drops in income, spikes in demand for services, or inflationary cost increases. A low level of reserves exposes the authority to greater risk of financial instability and can limit its ability to respond effectively to shocks. Maintaining a robust reserve position is therefore widely recognised as fundamental to good financial management.

Rating	Threshold
Green	Greater than 10%
Amber	Between 5% and 10%
Red	Less than 5%

Table 8: Thresholds for ratings for unearmarked reserves as % of net revenue expenditure

Sources: CIPFA Briefing – Resilience in Local Authorities

Finding for West Norfolk: 3% — Red

At 3%, West Norfolk sits firmly in the red category, with even less flexibility than East. On face value, this leaves the authority highly exposed to unexpected pressures and with limited scope to manage sustained or multiple challenges without significant corrective action. However, it should be noted that the low unearmarked figure is partly a matter of classification. West Norfolk, like other councils, holds earmarked reserves that could be repurposed if required, meaning the headline ratio may understate its true resilience (there is also the option to bolster reserves through capital receipts if required). Even so, reliance on re-designating earmarked balances is not a substitute for rebuilding unearmarked reserves over time. This makes the choice of council tax harmonisation scenario and the successful delivery of planned savings especially critical to West Norfolk's long-term stability.

Indicator: Debt Per Capita

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the total level of long- and short-term borrowing held by a council, divided by the population of the prospective unitary authority. It reflects the notional share of debt attributable to each resident.

- **Why it matters:** Debt per capita provides insight into the financial burden being carried on a per-person basis. While borrowing can be an entirely legitimate tool to fund long-term capital investment, higher levels of debt can constrain future financial flexibility. They also bring ongoing obligations in the form of interest payments and repayment costs, which reduce the resources available for frontline services.

Rating	Threshold
Green	Less than £1,000
Amber	Between £1,000 and £2,000
Red	More than £2,000

Table 9: Thresholds for ratings for debt per capita

Sources: NAO report on financial sustainability of local authorities – emphasises affordability relative to taxpayer base

Finding for West Norfolk: £1,295 per capita — Amber

At £1,295 per resident, West Norfolk sits in the middle band of debt exposure. This level of borrowing is manageable but reduces some financial headroom, particularly in a context where reserves are already low. While not excessive, it signals that West Norfolk must balance future capital ambitions with the need to preserve revenue flexibility, ensuring debt servicing costs do not crowd out funding for frontline services.

Indicator: Debt to Non-Current Assets

- **What this is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of a council's non-current asset base that is funded through borrowing. It is calculated by dividing forecast long- and short-term debt by non-current assets. The result provides insight into the council's financial leverage and balance sheet resilience.
- **Why it matters:** A higher debt-to-asset ratio indicates greater reliance on borrowing to support the council's financial position, potentially signalling reduced flexibility and increased vulnerability during periods of financial stress. A lower ratio suggests more conservative borrowing practices and a stronger, more resilient balance sheet.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 30%
🟠 Amber	Between 30% and 50%
🔴 Red	More than 50%

Table 10: Thresholds for ratings for debt to total assets

Sources: CIPFA Capital Risks Metrics, CIPFA Advisory Note: Reinforcing Good Practice in External Borrowing, NAO (2016) Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities

Finding for West Norfolk: 37% — 🟠 Amber

At 37%, West Norfolk sits just above the green threshold, placing it in the amber range. This suggests a moderate reliance on borrowing to underpin its asset base. While not excessively leveraged, the authority's position does mean that further borrowing would push it deeper into the amber zone, narrowing its resilience margin. Coupled with already low reserve levels, this highlights the importance of cautious capital planning to avoid compounding financial vulnerability.

Indicator: Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the ratio of a council's total long- and short-term borrowing to its annual income from council tax. It provides a perspective on how much debt the council is carrying relative to one of its most reliable and locally controlled sources of revenue.
- **Why it matters:** Council tax represents a stable, recurring income stream that underpins financial resilience. A high debt-to-council tax revenue ratio can signal affordability risks, as more of the council's core income would need to be diverted to service debt, leaving less available for frontline services. A lower ratio indicates that the council's debt levels are more proportionate to its recurring revenue base, suggesting stronger affordability and sustainability.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 2x
🟠 Amber	Between 2x and 3x
🔴 Red	More than 3x

Table 11: Thresholds for Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

Sources: Room 151 – is local government debt trajectory sustainable?, Woking Case Study

Finding for West Norfolk: 1.29x — 🟢 Green

On the Weighted Average +5% council tax revenue scenario, West Norfolk's debt stands at 1.29 times annual council tax revenue. This places it comfortably within the green threshold, indicating that borrowing is proportionate to its recurring local tax base and suggesting strong affordability in terms of debt servicing. While the authority's low reserves and moderate leverage on assets create wider financial risks, its debt-to-council tax position demonstrates that borrowing is currently manageable relative to a stable and resilient revenue stream.

Annual Revenue Costs of Debt as % of Net Revenue Budget

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the proportion of a council's net revenue budget spent on servicing debt, including both interest payments and statutory repayments of principal (Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP).
- **Why it matters:** Debt servicing competes directly with frontline spending. As a greater share of the revenue budget is absorbed by debt costs, the council has less flexibility to respond to financial pressures or to invest in services. A lower proportion signals stronger affordability and resilience, whereas higher levels can point to potential sustainability challenges, particularly if income growth is weak or further borrowing is required.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 5%
🟠 Amber	Between 5% and 10%
🔴 Red	More than 10%

Table 12: Thresholds for Annual Revenue Costs of Debt (as % of Net Revenue Budget)

Sources: The Times – Warning of more council bankruptcies as debt doubles

Finding for West Norfolk: 3% — 🟢 Green

West Norfolk's debt servicing ratio of 3% places it comfortably within the green threshold. This indicates that current borrowing costs are modest relative to overall expenditure and do not present an immediate risk to financial sustainability. However, when viewed alongside its very low reserves position (3% of NRE – 🔴 Red), the authority has limited scope to absorb sudden increases in interest rates or additional borrowing needs.

6.5. Conclusion: financial resilience and long-term viability

West Norfolk enters reorganisation from a position of relative financial strength, underpinned by a notional baseline surplus of £10.69m in 2025/26. Its expenditure profile is balanced, with higher adult social care costs offset by lower children's services pressures, leaving it in the "middle" ground between East Norfolk's high-demand profile and Greater Norwich's leaner cost base. On the funding side, West benefits from Norfolk's strongest business rates base but is allocated the lowest share of Revenue Support Grant, reflecting its more dispersed deprivation. This mix places its Core Spending Power in a mid-range position: stronger than Greater Norwich but weaker than East.

The authority's resilience is therefore less about spending pressures and more about its ability to protect and grow its revenue base. The approach to council tax harmonisation is pivotal: only the Weighted Average +5% scenario delivers positive outcomes, albeit with sharper rises for households. Compared with East Norfolk, the results show less volatility but remain constrained — reinforcing that West Norfolk's long-term fiscal outlook hinges on striking a careful balance between revenue certainty and the equity of tax burdens across communities starting from very different baselines.

Transition and reform reinforces this picture. The upfront costs of establishing a new authority—around £11.3m in one-off transition spend and a permanent £2.1m annual disaggregation charge—mean that benefits only begin to outweigh costs in Year 4. From that point, recurring annual surpluses of £12.6m and a cumulative gain of around £66m by Year 8 are achievable, provided savings from consolidation, ICT integration, and prevention-led services are realised. The financial case for West therefore rests on the capacity to absorb early deficits while maintaining the discipline needed to deliver structural reform.

The balance sheet presents both strengths and weaknesses. West's debt servicing burden is modest (3% of the revenue budget) and its debt-to-council tax ratio is comfortably within the green threshold, suggesting affordability. However, unearmarked reserves sit at just 3% of net revenue expenditure, leaving the authority highly exposed to shocks. Combined with a moderate debt-to-non-current-asset ratio (37%), this means West's resilience rests on foundations that require monitoring: its

ability to withstand volatility is constrained, making effective risk management essential.

Overall, West Norfolk is financially viable, but its position cannot be assumed to be secure. Its baseline surplus, solid tax base, and reform potential provide a platform for long-term sustainability. Yet this platform could be undermined quickly if harmonisation is mishandled or if planned savings fail to materialise. The new authority will need to pair bold, revenue-protecting choices on council tax with cautious capital planning and a deliberate strategy to rebuild reserves. In short: West has the means to succeed, but only if its structural advantages are actively defended rather than assumed.

7. Assessment against government criteria

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OUR APPROACH		
A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	Under this proposal a single tier of local government is achieved as three new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich. In developing this case for a three-unitary Norfolk we have undertaken an options appraisal of the alternatives using the government's Local Government Reorganisation criteria to ensure we are proposing the best option for our region.	Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 5 in this proposal
Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage of disadvantage for one part of the area.	The West Norfolk Unitary area has a balanced tax base when compared with the East and Norfolk unitary areas (as outlined in Section 7), with its demand and cost patterns in the middle of the range across the three. Its area represents its functional geography and economic area, as set out in Section 3 and Appendix D .	*Section 3 in this proposal*
Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.	The proposed geography of West Norfolk will increase housing supply through creating a strong partnership that can maximise delivery whilst mitigating risk. Both KL&WN and Breckland have good housing land supplies (c7 yrs each) and previous success with delivery which will make for more sensible geography on which to	*Sections 3, and 5.2.3 in this proposal.* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprints. Section 5.2* *Appendix D - Boundaries*

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	plan and deliver increased housing supply.	
Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.	The development of the proposed service delivery models has been informed by a comprehensive engagement exercise including elected members and council officers, key stakeholders, and residents across Norfolk. We have also assessed the financial implications of reorganisation which estimated the costs, savings, and income implications of the three-unitary model.	*Section 5 in this proposal* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprints*
Proposals should clearly describe the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these areas expected to achieve the outcomes described.	West Norfolk is a large, predominantly rural area characterised by dispersed communities. There is a need for accessible, inclusive services with innovative health and wellbeing support to improve health outcomes. A unitary authority for West Norfolk provides the opportunity for greater connectivity and a reshaping of service delivery to better meet the needs of dispersed communities. Bringing together social care, education and public health services alongside effective housing services will enable the new West Norfolk authority to achieve their Marmot Place ambitions to achieve healthier, longer loves for all.	*Section 5 in this area proposal* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprints.*
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRITERIA		
Unitary local government must be the right size to	West Norfolk's baseline surplus, solid tax base and potential for reform provide a platform for long-term sustainability.	Section 6 in this proposal

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.	Efficiencies will be driven by workforce consolidation, ICT and systems integration, and prevention-led service redesign. The authority's resilience comes both from the scale of savings achieved and from its ability to fund transition costs locally without reliance on central government.	Appendix C - Financial Appraisal
As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 of more.	The total population of West Norfolk is 301,712, which is lower that the principle. However, we believe that there is robust justification – we have outlined this in the row below.	*Section 3 in this proposal*
There may be certain scenarios in which these 500,000 figures does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.	While the population of West Norfolk is below the 500,000 guidance typically cited in government guidance, our economic, demographic, and service delivery distinctiveness warrant a bespoke governance model. The case for unitarisation is built not on strict adherence to population size, but on functional need and strategic opportunity, reflecting distinct opportunities and challenges, and the imperative to align services with the real geography of people's lives.	*Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal* *Appendix D - Boundaries*
Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best	For West Norfolk, unitary status offers the chance to build on a position of relative financial strength, with an opportunity to consolidate through transformation of services by embedding a model of growth and prevention that will reduce long-term demand alongside seeking	*Sections 5.2, 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
possible value for their money.	efficiencies, with savings driven by workforce consolidation, ICT and systems integration that reach £14m by year 3, producing a surplus net annual surplus of £8m.	
Proposals should set out how will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.	West Norfolk will face around £11.3m in one-off transition costs plus a £2.1m annual disaggregation cost. These costs can be met from the Council's own reserves and realisable assets, meaning the programme is not predicated on Government support.	*Sections 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal.* *Section 7 in the main proposal.* *Appendix H – Implementation Plan*
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.	West Norfolk is strategically positioned to take advantage of a wide range of opportunities including agri-tech and advanced manufacturing. Local Government Reorganisation provides opportunities for greater connectivity, and a reshaping of service delivery to better meet the needs of dispersed communities. Delivery will be tailored to meet West Norfolk's unique geography and needs	*Section 5 in this proposal* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprint*

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	– rather than being absorbed in a large authority where its complexity will get lost in the scale of the organisation, and outcomes will continue to not be as good as they could be. Bringing together social care, education and public health functions, alongside effective place-shaping, will lay the basis for public service reform and for West Norfolk to achieve their Marmot Place ambitions to achieve healthier, longer lives for all.	
Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.	In developing the service delivery models for each new unitary area, delivering services at a scale and proximity to better serve citizens have been the key objectives. However, we have also sought to avoid unnecessary fragmentation or disaggregation of key services where a joined-up approach is the optimum solution. For example, each unitary has their own sovereign social care service to deliver local services but collaborate on key areas such as Safeguarding Partnerships and Commissioning through partnership boards.	*Section 5 in this proposal* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprint*
Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to	In West Norfolk the new unitary can unlock public service reform by ensuring local needs are met that may be lost within a large unitary. Local, person-centred support can be delivered to meet the areas unique geography and needs, including integrated early	*Section 5.2 in this proposal* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprint*

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
better value for money.	intervention that can support residents to access stable employment, manage finances and age well. There is an opportunity to bring together social care, education and public health functions to achieve Marmot Place ambitions.	
Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.	The proposals for West Norfolk have considered the impact of a range of crucial public services and how the new unitaries can deliver better public services, including: - A community-based early intervention and prevention model - Integration of housing services, and focus on joined up prevention models with partners - A localised approach for adult social, children's social care and SEND where the West Unitary has its own social care service to deliver to local services, but with collaboration on some key areas with other Norfolk unitaries to avoid unnecessary disaggregation	*Sections 5.2.1 - 5.2.6 in this proposal.* *Section 9 in the main proposal* *Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprints* *Appendix H – Implementation Plan* *Appendix I – RAID Log*
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT		
Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.	The engagement programme for Future Norfolk aimed to build an informed understanding of the three-unitary model, with an ambition to strengthen democratic accountability, respect local identity and deliver sustainable, adaptable public services. Through our engagement we moved from early awareness-raising and listening around	*Section 6 in the main proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	the three pillars—People, Place, Progress - that lead us towards a confident, coordinated presentation of views aligned within our proposal that met the Government's criteria.	
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.	Our engagement approach included extensive engagement specific to the West, with activity and sessions targeted at key stakeholders and partners operating in this geography. This included an expansive programme of community engagement in Towns across the new area, specific workshops around key groups like VCSE, housing and business, as well as series of 1:1 discussions to support. Their views and needs have been reflected in our proposals.	*Section 6 in the main proposal*
Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.	'Place' was one of the key pillars of the engagement strategy to ensure that the proposals actively and meaningfully considered issues of local identity. Respecting local identify and cultural and historic significance was a key part of the engagement programme.	*Sections 2, 3 and 4 in this proposal.* *Section 6 in the main proposal*
Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.	Section 5.4 provides evidence of the outcomes of the engagement programme, which included over 5,000 survey submissions, 17,800 website visitors, and a reach of nearly 500,000 on social media.	*Section 6 in the main proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
BOUNDARY CHANGE		
Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.	We considered a three unitary option that would not involve changing existing council boundaries. In developing this option, it became apparent that it has some critical limitations. This has been discounted in preference of the alternative three unitary option - involving boundary changes for two of the seven current Norfolk districts. Whilst this would represent a one-off change of boundaries (and the associated extra work) we strongly believe it represents the right long-term LGR decision given the scale and diversity of Norfolk and how our residents live their lives in 2025, compared to 1974. We therefore believe it is worth investing in moving to a model that will be future proof and truly reflects the diverse communities of Norfolk.	*Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal* *Appendix A – Options Appraisal* *Appendix D – Boundaries*
DEVOLUTION SUPPORT		
New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	A West Unitary would create an Important partner for devolution In Norfolk and Suffolk and enable the new Mayor to work with a portfolio of local authorities representing the diverse needs of the wider region. For the West this would enable a strong focus, and delivery capability, around the Western economy. It would also create a focal point for rural regeneration and growth expertise to support the Mayor and provide clear focus on Investment needs in areas like Kings Lynn and Thetford.	Section 8 within the main proposal

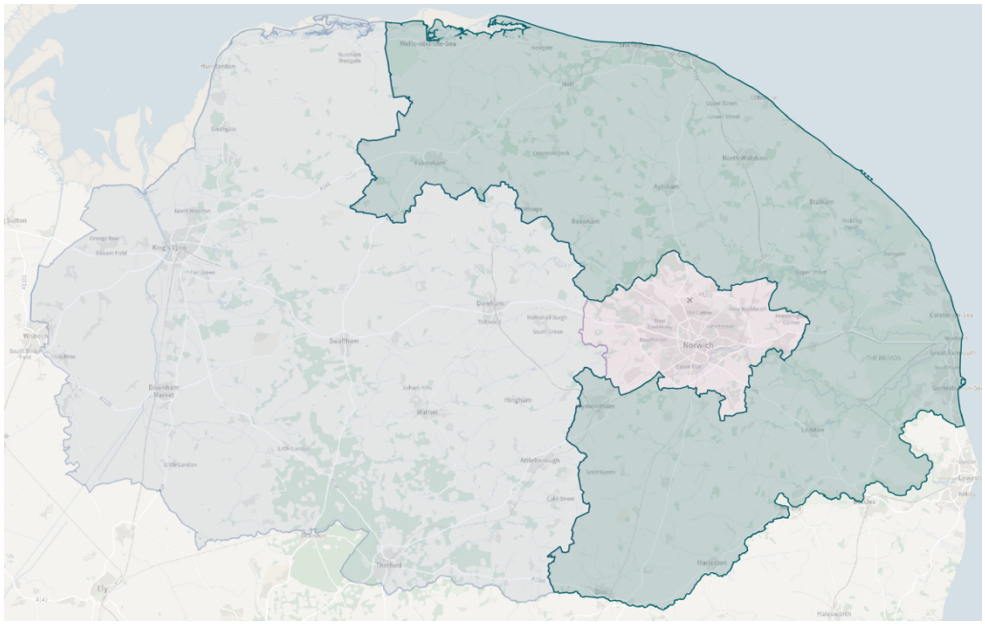
LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.	The three-unitary model for Norfolk strengthens devolution by enabling balanced representation within a Combined Authority shared with Suffolk. It supports strategic regional planning while preserving local delivery and democratic accountability. With multiple unitaries across both counties, the model enhances collaboration, aligns with shared economic and infrastructure priorities, and ensures diverse voices inform regional decisions. This structure fosters inclusive growth, operational resilience, and a coherent approach to investment, skills, housing, and transport—unlocking the full potential of Norfolk and Suffolk through coordinated governance.	Section 8 within the main proposal
Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.	The proposed three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside multiple unitaries in Suffolk, creates a Strategic Authority with multiple, balanced constituent councils. This structure ensures proportional representation across diverse urban, rural, and coastal populations, avoiding dominance by any single area. It reduces the current 16 councils to six, striking a balance between scale and democratic accountability. The model builds on existing collaboration and preparatory work, aligning with devolution timelines and priorities to ensure a smooth	Section 8 within the main proposal

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	transition and effective governance from the outset.	
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	We are proposing full parishing across West Norfolk, building on the strong civic infrastructure already in place. Every part of West Norfolk is currently covered by town or parish councils except King's Lynn. LGR presents an opportunity to address this democratic deficit. A new Town Council for King's Lynn will ensure residents have direct, place-based representation and will enable the continuation of the historic Mayoralty. In rural areas, we will explore parish clustering as a key mechanism for innovation in delivery. This approach enables small communities to retain their local identity while working together to pool resources, strengthen representation, and improve administrative resilience. Clustering creates a direct link between councillors, parish and town councils, and the wider unitary structure, ensuring that neighbourhood voices are meaningfully connected to strategic decision-making. By aligning clusters with ward boundaries and councillor roles, the model reinforces accountability, supports coherent local governance, and delivers on our ambition for	Section 4 within this proposal

LGR government criteria	How the West Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	stronger, more responsive neighbourhood representation.	
Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.	West Norfolk's model is designed to empower communities through structures they already trust. Parish and Town Councils will continue to lead local engagement, supported by the unitary authority where appropriate.	*Section 4 within this proposal*
Where there already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.	West Norfolk's approach builds on the strength of its existing parish network, which already plays a central role in local service delivery and community leadership. Rather than introducing new layers of governance, the proposal enhances and completes the current model, offering a more efficient and trusted framework for local decision-making	*Section 4 within this proposal*

Table 13: Assessment against Government criteria

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION



THE PROPOSAL FOR EAST NORFOLK

Prepared on behalf of:
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk,
Breckland District Council,
Broadland District Council,
Great Yarmouth Borough Council,
North Norfolk District Council,
and Norwich City Council

[SEPTEMBER 2025]

CONTENTS

1.	Executive summary	3
2.	Economic distinctiveness	6
3.	Demographic distinctiveness	9
4.	Democratic representation & engagement	11
5.	New council target operating model	14
6.	Financial resilience	33
7.	Assessment against government criteria	49

1. Executive summary

Our proposal for the reorganisation of local government in East Norfolk presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver reform, renewal, and innovation in how we serve our communities. We propose creating a single unitary authority that will enhance service delivery, improve financial resilience, and support sustainable growth across our area. By aligning services with local needs and opportunities, we can unlock a decade of renewal for our public services, economy, and society.

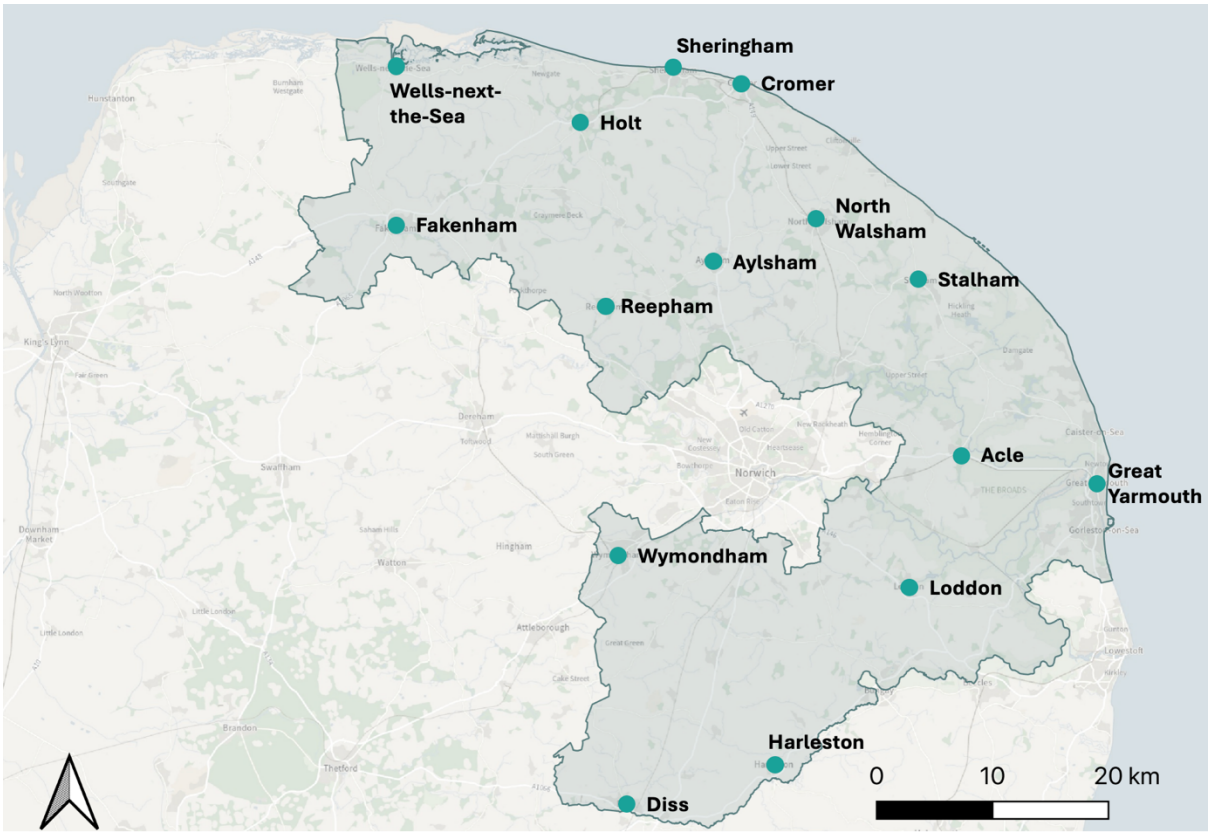


Figure 1: Map of the proposed boundary of East Norfolk

East Norfolk is formed from the entirety of the current North Norfolk district and Great Yarmouth borough, and from parts of both Broadland and South Norfolk. While our geography and communities are defined and constrained profoundly by the coast, its main river catchments and the Broads, it also stretches into the heart of South Norfolk's rural and market towns.

Given our geography and natural assets, we are uniquely positioned to consolidate national leadership in the clean energy transition and green technology, with significant assets and sustained growth and opportunity in offshore wind, carbon capture, and energy transmission and significant potential for hydrogen production. Our area's diverse mix of coastal, rural, and suburban communities presents both

challenges and opportunities that require a specifically local approach. This needs to recognise and reconcile these emerging growth opportunities with distinctive and protected landscapes and attractions that support and sustain a vibrant and broad-based tourism and visitor economy, flourishing market towns and a strong agricultural base. Reorganisation will enable us to address these challenges more effectively with a clear focus on the issues that matter most to people across East Norfolk.

If East Norfolk were already a unitary authority, it would be the 16th largest of the current 54 unitary councils in England. Our size and scale mean that East Norfolk will be a sustainable and stable authority, able to withstand the challenges of delivering public services to hundreds of thousands of residents. Our analysis shows that if all current budgets in Norfolk were consolidated into our three proposed unitaries then East Norfolk would have started this year with a small budget surplus, even before the benefits of consolidation, rationalisation and reform are taken into account.

The coastal and rural communities in East Norfolk are distinct and different to those in Greater Norwich or the West of the county. There are exciting opportunities around the 'energy coast', a strong tourism economy to build upon, and an abundance of natural assets including the Broads. However, we face specific local challenges around deprivation, low skills and poor health outcomes. A one-size fits all approach to public services won't respond to our specific local circumstances, whereas taking a tailored, hyper-local approach will allow for the necessary innovation, reform and optimal resource allocation to early help and prevention for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Our new unitary authority will prioritise the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services. The proposed operating model is designed to break down siloed ways of working and create a more joined-up, preventative, and person-centred approach to service delivery. Key areas of focus include:

- Healthy & Thriving Communities: Integrating housing, health, employment, and skills services to provide proactive, locally rooted support.
- Adult Social Care: Establishing a community-focused, prevention-first approach to reduce demand for acute care and support independence.
- Children's Social Care: Strengthening early intervention and prevention, prioritising family-based placements, and supporting transitions to adulthood.

- Education & SEND*:* Delivering local support to strengthen partnerships with schools, families, and employment hubs, and addressing challenges around inclusion.
- "Place" and Environmental Services**:** Strengthening our approaches to creating vibrant, healthy, and sustainable communities where much of the public realm and tourism assets and infrastructure in our historic market towns, coastal communities and the Broads are provided by existing district authorities with significant discretionary spend supporting our local economy and creating places our residents and communities value.

The transition to our new unitary authority will involve careful planning and coordination to ensure a smooth and effective implementation. Key considerations include:

- Staffing and Workforce*:* Developing shared staffing structures that account for existing partnership arrangements (i.e. Broadland and South Norfolk s113 agreements) and changes to boundaries, whilst ensuring fair and transparent allocation of staff to the new unitary councils.
- Arm's Length Companies and Joint Ventures*:* Assessing the health and strategic alignment of existing entities and (as appropriate) integrating them into the new authority.
- Service Models*:* Managing complex service delivery models, including waste collection, street scene and resort infrastructure, and social housing, to ensure continuity and efficiency during the transition.

Our proposed East Norfolk unitary authority is well-positioned to deliver long-term resilience and high-quality services across its diverse communities. By aligning services with local needs, leveraging our strong financial base, and implementing a preventative and person-centred approach to service delivery, East Norfolk can achieve sustainable growth and improved outcomes for all residents. This is our vision for a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

.

2. Economic distinctiveness

East Norfolk is proud to be at the forefront of the UK's climate transition. This is a place of ambition, innovation and resilience, ready to lead inclusive, place-based economic growth. At the heart of this transformation is Great Yarmouth and our 70-mile coastline, where regeneration around the harbour and a major port expansion announcement are unlocking world-class opportunities in clean energy and trade. From our coastal hubs to inland market towns and rural communities, we are powering growth rooted in clean energy, rural enterprise and environmental stewardship. Alongside this, East Norfolk is the gateway to the Broads, with miles of world-class beaches and internationally significant protected landscapes. Our thriving market towns sustain rural communities with opportunity and services, while a vibrant arts, culture and heritage offer underpins a resilient, broad-based visitor economy. We are home to a strong agricultural sector and pockets of genuine innovation in food and drink, reinforcing our position as a place where natural assets, enterprise and creativity work hand in hand.

Our economy generates over a quarter of Norfolk's total output, with Gross Value Added (GVA) accounting for 28% of the county's total.[1] We have an employment density of 51 jobs for every 100 residents[2], supported by a vibrant business community of 364 enterprises per 10,000 people.[3] Our diverse economy, dominated by small and medium enterprises, is anchored in renewable energy, marine services, tourism, agriculture, and healthcare, and is particularly well placed to lead in clean energy and green technology.

As the scale and pace of growth increases in sectors such as nuclear newbuild, offshore wind, operations and maintenance, hydrocarbon asset decommissioning and Carbon Capture Usage and Storage, our communities are seeing growing demand for skilled workers to fill higher-value jobs. We are also seeing strong potential in solar power, electric vehicle infrastructure, and retrofit innovation. Local businesses and residents are increasingly integrated into offshore energy supply chains and regional clean growth strategies.

Crucially, we have the physical and strategic assets to deliver on this potential. Our geography spans nationally significant assets in offshore wind, natural gas supply,

[1] ONS, UK small area gross value added estimates, 2022
[2] ONS, Job density, 2023
[3] ONS, Business counts, 2024

carbon capture and pan-European energy transmission, anchored by Great Yarmouth's Energy Coast and the Bacton Energy Hub, which currently handles over one third of the UK's natural gas demand, serving both domestic and industrial needs, including electricity generation. This source of energy is likely to remain critical for at least the next two decades, underpinning our national energy security and supporting the transition to cleaner alternatives. The role of gas supply and transmission must therefore be recognised as a foundational element of our energy strategy. Additionally, hydrogen presents an opportunity for the future as our strategic positioning and infrastructure make East Norfolk well-placed to support future development in this area. Crucially, the North Sea energy transition in its widest sense offers the chance to create sustainable, higher-value jobs across construction, maritime and technical sectors, with further opportunities expected from the nearby nuclear new build.

Building on our existing collaboration with East Suffolk, we are also working to position the cluster in international markets, attracting foreign direct investment and strengthening our role as a globally recognised energy hub. To fully realise this potential, we require a governance model that can strategically align skills development, regeneration, and investment with industry needs, ensuring that our energy economy is not only sustained but actively leveraged to secure long-term competitive advantage.

Our distinctiveness, however, reaches far beyond our strengths in clean energy. Market and resort towns including Acle, Aylsham, Cromer, Diss, Fakenham, Harleston, Holt, Loddon, North Walsham, Reepham, Sheringham, Stalham, Wells-next-the-Sea and Wymondham form a dynamic network of local service centres across our extensive rural geography. These towns are centres of local employment and public service provision, reducing isolation and strengthening the social and economic fabric of our communities.

Our inland areas foster strong small business networks and an entrepreneurial culture, reflected in high SME survival rates and significant potential for housing growth. SMEs in manufacturing, construction, and professional services underpin the region's economy but require targeted support to innovate and compete. Hethel Engineering Centre provides a proven blueprint: in just 14 years it has supported the creation of over 1,000 jobs, incubated more than 200 businesses, and supported over 180 start-ups, driving high-value growth in engineering, clean tech, and advanced manufacturing.

We recognise the opportunities LGR presents to address longstanding structural challenges such as inequality and climate change adaptation and resilience. Pockets of deprivation constrain individual opportunities and outcomes with, for example, some wards within Great Yarmouth remaining amongst the most deprived in the UK, facing deep-rooted social and health challenges, while rural areas, particularly in the north, which are attractive to large numbers of retiring incomers, contend with loss of services and poor digital and mobile infrastructure exacerbated by the needs and demands of an aging population. These pressures are reflected in high levels of economic inactivity, particularly among women, and a workforce where many SMEs struggle with attracting, developing and retaining skilled workforces. As a result, productivity is constrained and access to higher-value jobs is limited, keeping household incomes below the national average. We are also on the frontline of coastal erosion, flood risk, and water scarcity.

A new East Norfolk unitary will enable us to accelerate the progress we are making on tackling these interconnected challenges. We are linking skills, educational attainment, investment, regeneration, housing, and health more effectively. Initiatives such as the Coastal Navigators Network are helping to lift people out of poverty and build a workforce equipped to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Strong local authority-led partnerships, through the Coastal Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document and initiatives such as Coastwise, are delivering creative, community-led solutions, ranging from planned relocations to innovative funding schemes. The Broads National Park and the Norfolk Coast National Landscape Area exemplify how environmental stewardship can go hand in hand with sustainable tourism and green economic growth. By aligning new housing with areas of job growth, we can build sustainable, well-connected communities. Coordinated planning will support affordable housing, temporary accommodation, and infrastructure delivery, ensuring growth is inclusive and aligned with employment opportunities.

We are ready to demonstrate, as a national exemplar, how rural and coastal areas can lead in clean growth and climate resilience without eroding their shared and individual identities. Achieving this requires governance at the right scale. A unitary East Norfolk authority, working in combination with a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), would provide the flexibility to address socio-economic challenges such as deprivation, ageing, and poor health, while maximising opportunities in clean energy, agri-food, and tourism.

3. Demographic distinctiveness

We are proud of the people and places that make up East Norfolk. With 336,524 residents, around 37% of Norfolk's population, our communities are not only diverse, resilient, and deeply rooted in place. From our coastal communities to our inland market towns, our demographic profile is distinct from both Greater Norwich and West Norfolk. Looking ahead, our population is projected to grow to 406,714 by 2035[4], reflecting both the vitality of the present and the potential for an even stronger future.

Yet East Norfolk faces significant challenges. Most of our population lives outside Great Yarmouth, in coastal and rural communities where demographic pressures are most acute. What truly distinguishes our area is our age profile: as a popular destination for retirement, we have one of the oldest populations in the country. 28.2% of our residents are aged 65 and over, compared with 19.1% in Greater Norwich and around 18.6% across the England.[5]

Deprivation and poor health are persistent challenges in our area, with 36.4% of households deprived in at least one dimension, exceeding the England average of 33.5%.[6] The town of Great Yarmouth remains among the most deprived areas nationally. Disposable household incomes across large parts of East Norfolk are also below the national average, reflecting the prevalence of lower-paying sectors such as tourism, retail, and care.

Our skills profile also presents a challenge. The 2021 Census found that Great Yarmouth Borough Council and parts of North Norfolk District Council had a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications (26.5%) than Norfolk (20%) and England (18%).[7] By contrast, rural parts of Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council show much higher levels of educational attainment. Addressing these inequalities will be critical to raising aspirations and equipping local people with the skills required by new and emerging sectors of the economy, particularly in renewable energy and the wider energy transition.

[4] Population projections based on Person-Per-Household Method, via GeoPlace LLP. Available at: https://www.geoplace.co.uk/case-studies/understanding-local-populations-between-censuses. Final projections are subject to client sing off.
[5] ONS, Mid year population estimate, 2022
[6] Ibid
[7] Census, 2021

We also face acute and complex housing pressures. While the median house price of £270,000 appears affordable, the house-price-to-earnings ratio of 8.1, the highest in Norfolk, reveals real affordability pressures for local people[8]. However, this headline figure masks deeper issues. High numbers of number of second and holiday homes, particularly in coastal and rural areas, reduces the availability of homes for residents and drives up prices. The private rented sector is shrinking, making it harder for those on lower or unstable incomes to find secure accommodation. Retirement destinations see strong demand from cash buyers, who are often able to outbid local people reliant on average or below-average wages. These factors combine to create a housing market that is increasingly inaccessible for younger people, key workers, and families, and which places additional pressure on social and supported housing, as well as on services for those at risk of homelessness.

Addressing these challenges requires ensuring the supply of the right housing mix — not only affordable and social housing, but also aspirational homes that attract and retain the people and skills needed to grow the economy, supported by wider place-making. In some areas, such as Great Yarmouth, intervention will also be needed to de-risk residential and commercial development where low land values and viability deficits otherwise constrain delivery. These pressures limit opportunity for residents and add to demand on local services, from adult social care and adapted housing to the NHS and workforce participation. They underline the urgent need for integrated, preventative approaches to health, care, and employment support.

A new unitary authority for East Norfolk, working in partnership with a Mayoral Strategic Authority, will give us the tools to turn these challenges into strengths. By bringing together housing, health, skills, transport, and digital infrastructure in a single, locally accountable strategy, we can plan flexibly for an ageing society, tackle health inequalities, expand training and digital access, and align housing growth with employment opportunities. This joined-up approach will allow us to deliver more efficient and effective services which respond to the needs of our distinct communities. We will unlock productivity, empower communities, and create clear pathways for our residents from low qualifications into skilled employment. We will become leaders in designing age-friendly places that meet people's needs, reduce pressure on the NHS, and enable older residents to live well and independently for longer. Our distinct demographic profile will become a platform for resilience and long-term prosperity.

[8] ONS, House price to residence-based earnings ratio, 2025

4. Democratic representation & engagement

East Norfolk's democratic model is designed to ensure that communities have a meaningful voice in shaping decisions. As a unitary authority, it will be led by a single council, working in partnership with existing town and parish councils. This will be supported by a strengthened neighbourhood engagement model that reflects the distinct needs of East Norfolk's towns, villages, and coastal communities.

Councillor Numbers and Representation

We are proposing a councillor model that delivers both efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring East Norfolk has the right number of elected representatives to run the new unitary across issues of governance, accountability, and representation.

Currently, Norfolk has 399 councillors across its two-tier system. Our proposal streamlines this to 200 councillors across Norfolk, with 65 for East Norfolk.

Unitary Area	Proposed Number	Likely Average Cllr: Electorate Ratio*	Electorate
Greater Norwich	63	1: 3,394	213,837
East Norfolk	65	1:4,080	265,188
West Norfolk	72	1: 3,298	237,434
Total:	200		716,459

Table 1: Councillor numbers

This number supports council functions, including Cabinet, scrutiny, regulatory and key service provision, and local governance. It provides the capacity needed to represent East Norfolk on external bodies and partnerships, and to maintain strong local links with communities. Councillors will be expected to lead across multiple domains, from decision-making and scrutiny to partnership working and neighbourhood engagement. The model ensures there is sufficient capacity to populate committees, represent diverse geographies, and manage casework effectively, supported by dedicated member development and support functions.

Interim warding arrangements are being developed in line with LGBCE principles, including electoral equality, community identity, and effective local government.

Developing a neighbourhood representation model with our communities

The three-unitary model enables an innovative, neighbourhood-based approach, with East Norfolk expected to comprise around six neighbourhoods, areas of approximately 50,000-60,000 residents each. This scale allows for close collaboration with communities and for neighbourhood models that are genuinely responsive to local needs and priorities. By working at this level, we can design bespoke approaches that reflect the diversity of our communities and the different ways in which they prefer to engage.

Existing town and parish councils will retain their independence and functions. In unparished areas, neighbourhood engagement will likely be facilitated through informal forums and partnerships with public services and the voluntary sector. These forums, while not part of the formal governance structure, will serve as platforms for community voice and collaboration. We are committed to working with government and partners to ensure neighbourhood models are aligned with wider public service provision, particularly around health, wellbeing, and early intervention.

Our approach is rooted in innovation and continuous improvement. We will work closely with our communities throughout implementation to shape this approach, engaging and listening to develop a model that is tailored, inclusive, and effective. We will draw on best practice from across the UK and beyond, and will test and learn as we go, adapting our approach to what works best for each neighbourhood.

This approach aims to:

- Ensure sustained engagement with under-represented groups
- Create space for bespoke, community-led service design
- Enable innovative partnerships across wider public service provision, including health, education, police, and the voluntary sector
- Support flexible and inclusive formats for participation, reflecting the different needs and preferences of our communities
- Centre health and wellbeing at the heart of local decision-making

Protecting Ceremonial Status

We are committed to protecting our historic assets and civic traditions, including the mayoralty, regalia, and ceremonial functions, as part of LGR. These are integral to our local identity and democratic heritage. The government has confirmed its intention to preserve ceremonial responsibilities through reorganisation. However, this commitment must be reflected explicitly in the Structural Changes Order. This is particularly important for Great Yarmouth and Gorleston which currently hold

ceremonial status but are unparished. We will seek to retain these important functions through the Charter Trustee Model. Charter Trustees will be responsible for upholding ceremonial duties and managing civic assets. This reflects a commitment to place-based civic leadership, ensuring that ceremonial roles remain rooted in the communities they historically represent. This is a moment to reaffirm the value of civic leadership and ensure that our communities retain the traditions that connect them to place, history, and public life, such as twinning arrangements, the freemen of the borough, and other long-standing civic customs.

5. New council target operating model

This section sets out the proposed operating model for East Norfolk, setting out how the overall operating model will bring services together to innovate and achieve better outcomes for residents. It also includes highlights our approaches to service delivery – a detailed summary of our future vision for services can be found in Appendix E.

5.1. Drivers of change

East Norfolk is facing stark challenges, with deep-rooted deprivation in coastal towns, rapid population growth in some market towns, hidden need in rural areas and an ageing population.

With the largest population of the three proposed unitary councils, East Norfolk as a unitary will inherit the highest number of Children in Care, the highest number of Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) and the largest number of adults requiring support from the council. This mix of demand indicates that whilst there are examples of good practice in early intervention across the area, there is a fundamental need to reform how services are delivered to residents to ensure long-term positive outcomes.

More adults in East Norfolk need support from the most acute forms of care than in the other proposed unitaries, indicating a lack of focus within current provision on effective management of care, and with a higher proportion of working age adults needing support from the council – there is a clear need for a change in direction to prevent dependency on support becoming the norm.

For young people in East Norfolk, more children with additional needs are educated somewhere other than a mainstream education setting than in the other two proposed unitaries, which, alongside increasing use of independent specialist schools and exclusions, indicates a local education system which is not connecting all young people to the best possible outcomes. Comparatively high numbers of children requiring support from social care also may indicate that family support is not being consistently used across the area, and a need for better tailoring of support.

There is a high proportion of second homes and holiday lets in some parts of East Norfolk, driving up house prices compared to local earnings, challenges in managing empty homes and landlords exiting the private rental market in favour of holiday lets – all placing further pressure on social housing demand and homelessness services, and

a need for an approach to development that places local people at the heart of decision-making. Ensuring residents can live independently as they age in safe and high-quality homes through integration of housing and care pathways will enable more residents to live independently, reducing the requirement for long-term care away from places people know.

The challenges East Norfolk is facing provides a clear mandate for public service reform. By redesigning services to be more preventative in focus, there is scope to reduce dependency and improve outcomes for residents of all ages. With strong communities and local assets to build on, East Norfolk can turn these pressures into progress, enabling resilience and long-term wellbeing for residents.

5.2. Overview of the new unitary

East Norfolk will combine national leadership in clean energy and green technologies, with diverse economic, and housing growth opportunities. This will be delivered alongside a focus on community wellbeing and climate resilience, enabling growth that leaves no one behind.

As a unitary, East Norfolk will be empowered to make decisions that are rooted in the unique needs and assets of the area, rather than being diluted within a much larger organisation. Services can be designed around the realities of coastal towns, market towns, suburbs and rural communities, being responsive and effective to individual local needs.

Integrated and aligned pathways within unitary council structures enables earlier intervention and outreach so that residents can access support they need before they present at the front door of the local authority for help. The new unitary will build on the deep local understanding and success in delivering effective frontline services to residents – from responding to homelessness needs to delivering support to shielding cohorts during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach will provide the foundation for joined-up, preventative and person-centred approach to public services, one that gives East Norfolk greater control over its future and delivers better outcomes for its residents.

5.2.1. The target operating model

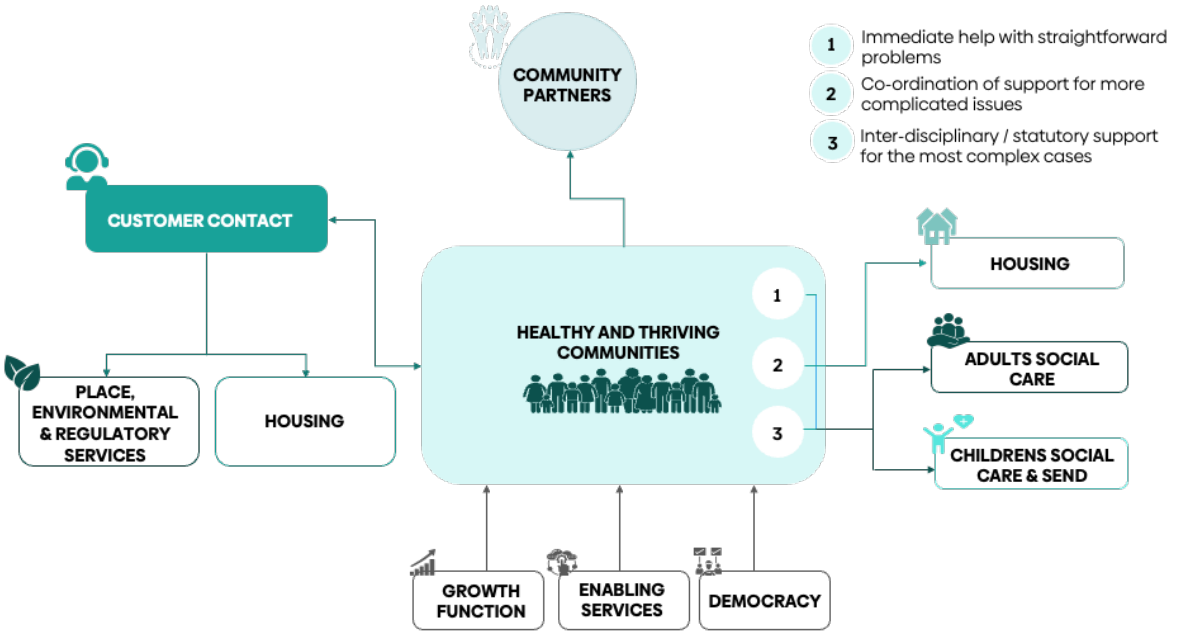


Figure 1: The Target Operating Model

Our vision for public service reform is one that breaks down siloed ways of working, shaping an organisation around the needs of residents, rather than expecting residents to navigate around tiers of government.

Design Principles | ***With Our Residents***



Right Support at the Right Time in the Right Place

Services are provided locally to residents in a way that is proportionate to individual need, reducing long-term demand for services.

Tell Us Once Service Model

Residents share information once and receive coordinated support through a single data view shared cross services.

Enabling Not Duplicating

Support focuses on enabling and empowering residents and communities, rather than providing unnecessary layers of support or repeated interventions.

Experts in Their Own Lives

People are actively engaged in shaping their support and the direction of services that impact them.

Figure 2: Design principles

Full design principles can be found in Appendix J.

The operating models we are proposing for the three unitaries are structurally similar (see Target Operating Model diagram) and rooted in the same design principles, as we believe this is the way to deliver both innovative services and statutory duties. However, their successful implementation is reliant on an approach that deeply understands local needs and is tailored to the specific realities of each area.

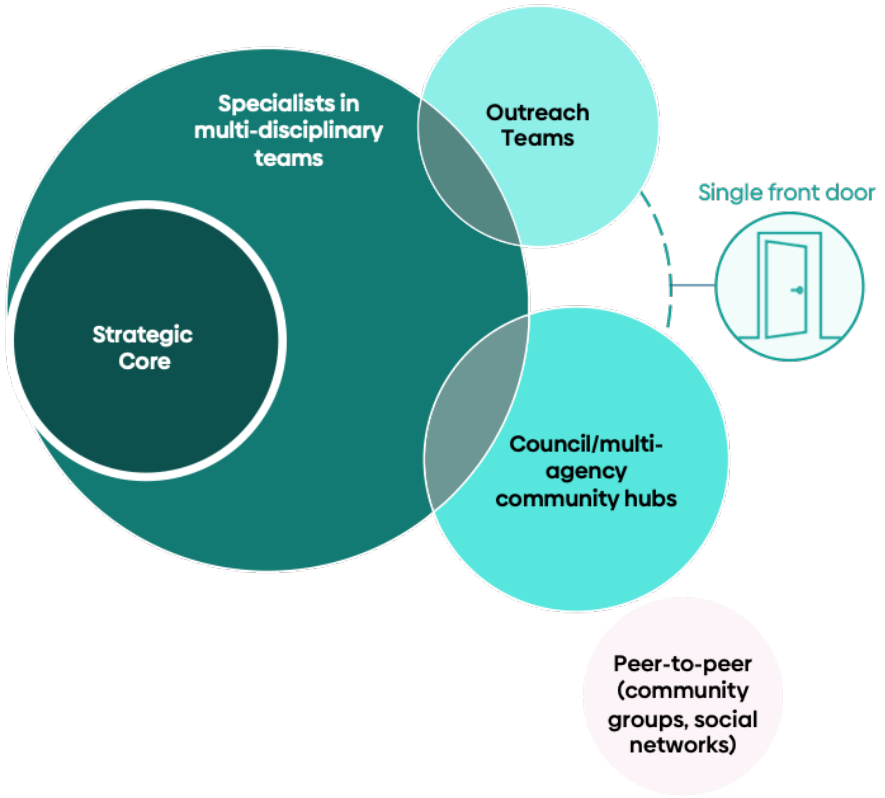
5.2.2. Healthy & thriving communities

The early intervention and prevention-led department creates the conditions to fundamentally reshape how residents are supported. In East Norfolk, services such as housing, health, social care, employment, and skills are brought together to work in lockstep with VCSE partners. Support is organised around hubs in places like Great Yarmouth, Cromer, Diss, and Fakenham with mobile teams extending reach into rural and remote areas. This will ensure equitable access to help and support, closing long-standing gaps in healthy life expectancy, housing, and quality of life for those living in deprived and isolated communities.

Support is tailored to East Norfolk's demand pressures, which span the lifelong complex challenges for children and families, rising need among working-age residents, and high levels of frailty among older adults. By embedding services within communities and focusing on resilience from early years through to ageing well, the approach is proactive and accessible, rooted in the realities of coastal and market town life. A "no wrong door" principle will ensure that residents can access timely support in the places they already know and trust, creating the foundations for people to live, work, retire, and age well.

East Norfolk Healthy & Thriving Communities Department

Operationally, this early intervention and prevention-focused department has 5 functions:



Strategic Core: Sets strategic direction and ensures the unitary is outcomes-focused, prevention-led, guided by evidence, effective commissioning, and strong partnerships. Leverages data to spot emerging risks, target investment, and coordinate efforts across the unitary, while tailoring commissioning to the needs of coastal towns, rural villages, and market towns.

Specialists in multi-disciplinary teams: Provide targeted expertise in housing options, employment support, safeguarding, domestic abuse, and financial inclusion within collaborative case management. Work alongside universal and community-based staff to ensure timely and appropriate interventions for complex or escalating needs, often acting as case coordinators for those at risk of crisis.

Outreach Teams: Bring early intervention directly to those with limited access, especially in rural and coastal areas. Provide home visits, outreach in community venues, and proactive contact with residents at risk of homelessness, unemployment, or social isolation. Identify hidden needs and address them before they escalate.

Single front door: A unified access point by phone, online, email for self referral, referral by partners, or resulting from proactive outreach. Handles routine queries, provides low complexity information, assistance, and guidance, and connects residents to the right support or partner. Maintains accessibility for rural residents and those without reliable digital access..

Council/multi-agency hubs: Accessible local service points in towns such as Great Yarmouth, Cromer, and South Norfolk, co-locating housing, health, skills, employment, and VCSE services. Offer in person support such as parenting programmes, benefits advice, wellbeing activities, and targeted interventions for at risk groups, delivered by trusted local staff working closely with community partners.

Figure 3: East Norfolk Healthy & Thriving Communities department

The Healthy & Thriving Communities department in East Norfolk will operate through five functions that align data, people, and services around residents. Support will be relational and strengths-based, recognising the full picture of housing, work, health, and family life. Multidisciplinary teams will coordinate responses, prevent escalation, and ensure residents only tell their story once. Predictive analytics will guide targeted outreach, identifying people and communities at risk 12–18 months before crisis and enabling early intervention and action, such as debt advice before eviction.

For staff and partners, the model means working in flexible teams with shared data and tools, building trust and reducing duplication. For residents, it means earlier, more connected support that helps them stay well, independent, and economically active. Over time, this will reduce reliance on costly statutory interventions, delivering better outcomes for residents and a more sustainable system in East Norfolk.

An example of what this would look and feel like in practice is set out below:

Resident Journey | *Healthy & Thriving Communities in action in East Norfolk*

Strategic Core – Proactive Targeting

The Data and Insights function analyses housing, health, and employment data and identifies residents in Cromer and Great Yarmouth at risk of unemployment after the summer season. Many already face health issues and low financial resilience. Predictive analytics uncover that some could reach crisis within 12 to 18 months.

In response, the Corporate Core commissions a coastal employment resilience programme into higher paid, year-round sectors (e.g., offshore wind, renewable energy, and health and social care), strengthens hub staffing with financial inclusion, mental health, and careers support, and briefs mobile teams and VCSE partners to begin proactive outreach.

Strategic Core

Mobile Outreach Teams – Proactive Outreach

A mobile team visits seasonal workers at a local community centre with a VCSE mental health partner and an employment adviser. They meet John, a 32-year-old hospitality worker facing unemployment, struggling with low mood and money worries. In a strengths-based conversation, the team identifies his practical skills, interest in technology, and openness to retraining, then explains available support and invites him to the community hub.

Mobile Outreach Teams

Single front door – Accessible First Contact

Two weeks later, John uses the council's online form to ask about training. The triage officer reviews the mobile team's notes in the shared resident record, books him an appointment at the Great Yarmouth hub, and signposts him to local peer groups to help him stay motivated while waiting for enrolment.

Single front door

Community Hub – Holistic Assessment

At the hub, John meets a case worker who reviews his employment, housing, health, and wellbeing in one conversation. He is connected to a financial inclusion officer to address arrears, a VCSE mental health practitioner for group sessions, and a careers adviser who enrols him on a renewable energy training course with guaranteed job interviews.

Council/multi-agency community hubs

Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Wrap-around

The MDT (including housing, employment, health, and VCSE partners) works with John to finalise his plan. A careers adviser leads the case while he trains, the housing officer checks in monthly to prevent arrears, the mental health practitioner continues support sessions, and employment services arrange a short-term winter placement to provide income until his course is complete.

Specialists in multidisciplinary teams

Stepping down to community-led support

Twelve months later, John completes training and secures a permanent role with an offshore wind company, bringing higher pay and year-round stability. He can comfortably pay his bills (avoiding arrears), his mental health improves through a sports club and volunteer mentoring, and with this progress the case steps down to community networks, with the option to re-enter through the single front door if needed.

Peer-to-peer

Figure 4: Example East Norfolk resident journey

5.2.3. Housing and homelessness

The East Norfolk unitary would bring homelessness and housing together in a prevention focused model within Healthy & Thriving Communities. Social Landlord services/ HRA will continue to be a separate and specialist function. This will enable a focus on:

- Prevention and multi-disciplinary working, with housing officers located in community hubs and mobile outreach teams to reach residents earlier and working in the EIP department to support with the needs assessment and triage processes
- A consistent allocations policy across the unitary, directly allocating homes to best use social stock and ease homelessness pressures
- Promoting access to more quality private sector rentals which in turn will ease homelessness and housing register growth
- An expanded HRA and landlord infrastructure to manage and maintain stock across the unitary.
- Targeted development growth in one-bed and 4+ bed homes, including adapted homes for complex requirements.
- Aligned arm's length development companies to deliver housing that matches EN's needs across the new unitary area.
- Commit the Second Homes Council Tax Premium earned through large numbers of second homes on the provision of social housing investment

These opportunities are only possible through unitarisation, bringing together the scale, data, and decision-making authority needed to design housing solutions that reflect East Norfolk's unique pressures and deliver earlier, more effective support.

East Norfolk's profile, from deprivation hotspots to rural isolation and coastal market pressures, needs a local, place-based response. The unitary would join up services through early help hubs, outreach, and existing landlord capacity, keeping delivery close to communities and tailored to local markets, while using integration and scale to improve consistency and efficiency.

Building on Success: The Help Hub (South Norfolk & Broadland)

South Norfolk & Broadland's Help Hub is a multi-agency early intervention model that brings housing, benefits, health, and voluntary sector services together under a "no wrong door" approach, tackling problems well before the statutory prevention duty. By resolving issues such as debt, tenancy sustainment, and wellbeing needs early, it has significantly reduced homelessness rates, improved community outcomes, and delivered measurable cost savings.

5.2.4. Adult social care

Given the high numbers of residents of East Norfolk accessing the most acute forms of Adult Social Care, current service delivery is not meeting local needs. Therefore, we believe that East Norfolk should have its own sovereign Adult Social Care department to enable the shaping of service delivery and care and support available in the area. East Norfolk has a large and growing number of older people who to retire to costal and more rural areas resulting in increasing demand for services for frail elderly people. Our proposed new model will have a greater focus on early intervention and prevention to ensure people can age well and remain as independent as possible for as long as possible, in their own homes. East Norfolk will also shape its future housing strategy to ensure there is appropriate housing particularly in areas such as supported housing and housing with care.

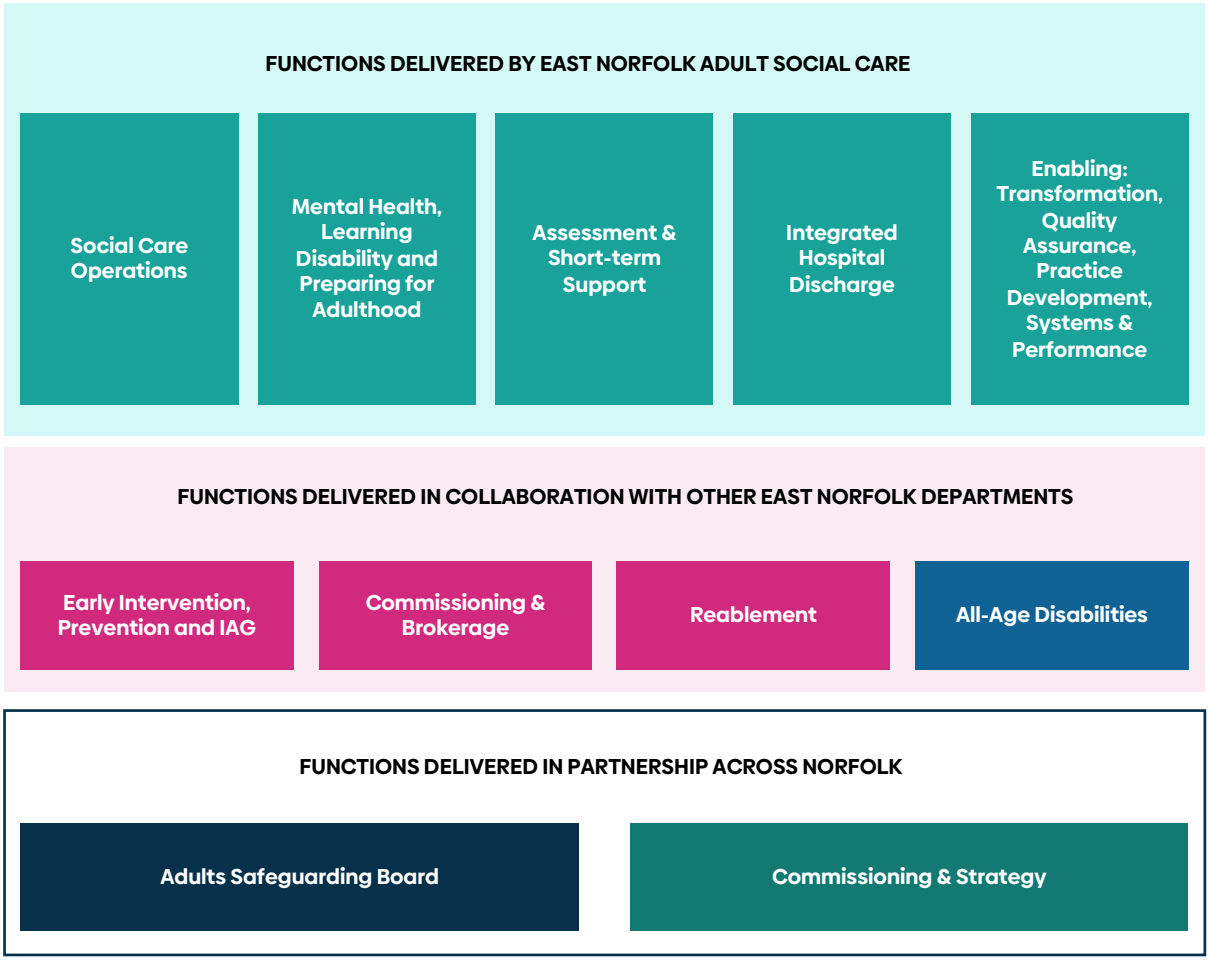


Figure 5: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary.

Given East Norfolk covers a large geographical area with a mix of coastal communities and many rural areas, several smaller localised multi-agency networks will need to be established to serve this area. While collaborating with Great Norwich

and West Norfolk to manage the wider market, East Norfolk will have greater flexibility to tailor care delivery locally across larger towns like Great Yarmouth and Wymondham and coastal areas aligned to the specific needs and challenges. Due to the large geographical coverage, many residents of East Norfolk have a greater distance to travel to acute hospitals for condition management. This is a particular challenge in North Norfolk which has a higher number of older people aged 65+ which this new model will support through greater collaboration with health to develop more innovative community-based solutions for older people's health and wellbeing.

This new model will focus on collaboration with the Integrated Care Board to develop hyper-local responses to the unique characteristics and needs in each of these areas to support the wider NHS 10-year plan. The model will develop prevention-first pathways maximising local community provision and coordinated outreach around hospitals to reduce/delay demand for statutory care building on existing assets and established programmes which are delivering better outcomes.

Building on Success: Tackling Social Isolation in Great Yarmouth

Great Yarmouth have developed localised models for support and commissioned the VCFSE to provide targeted interventions locally to help reduce loneliness and promote people to be more active aligned to the new health neighbourhood model. The impact has been avoiding more costly interventions estimating around 15-20% reduction in costs to support people. These localised initiatives demonstrate the positive impact of joined-up, early help and prevention and show what is possible

Existing county wide partnerships where there is a strong case for continuing (e.g. the Norfolk Adults Safeguarding Board) is something which will be retained to strengthen relationships with statutory and non-statutory organisations and support these through their connection to more localised service delivery models.

The new model builds on local partnerships to strengthen prevention and independence. Working closely with health and hospital partners including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, James Paget Hospital in Great Yarmouth and Norfolk & Norwich Hospital in Norwich, will be key to provide coordinated support and proactive outreach in both primary care in communities and hospital discharge.

A focus on learning disability and an all-age commissioning, care and support service will provide smooth transitions, improve independence, and integrate housing, skills, and employment support. This is vital given East Norfolk's comparatively high numbers of young people receiving support from Children's Social Care in ensuring that only

young people with the most complex needs require long-term care and support from Adult Social Care.

This model restores the primacy of place, delivering person-centred, sustainable Adult Social Care tailored to East Norfolk.

5.2.5. Children's social care

With the highest numbers of Children in Care and Children in Need out of the three unitaries, East Norfolk has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reset service delivery and the delivery of care to children, young people and their families – as existing approaches do not appear to be delivering the outcomes that East Norfolk's young people deserve.

The proposed model is embedded in local communities, strengthening prevention and tailoring support close to home. Early intervention and prevention in East Norfolk will focus on supporting household resilience, linking families to housing, employment, debt management and domestic abuse support. Statutory safeguarding responses will be met through an East Norfolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), co-located with colleagues from the police and health. This builds on existing good practice within the county and retains the valued close working with statutory partners, whilst enabling effective triaging and management of cases at a local level. Existing partnership arrangements across the geographic area of Norfolk, including the Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) and Children's Safeguarding Partnership, will be retained ensuring their benefits will still be felt for the people of East Norfolk.

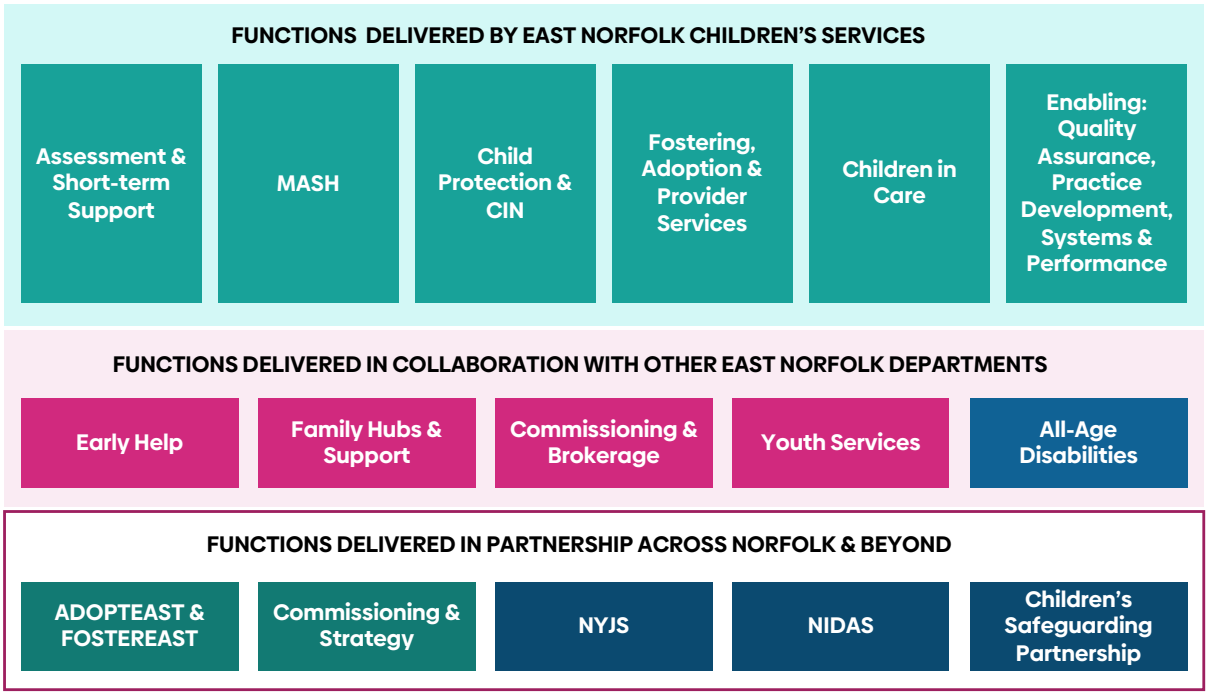


Figure 6: Functional model of Children's Social Care across the unitary.

East Norfolk has the highest number of residential care placements, and there is an opportunity within the new unitary to ensure these are genuinely meeting needs and providing value for money – and ensuring an ongoing emphasis on family-based placements wherever possible through continued investment in foster carer recruitment and retention.

There will also be an emphasis on exploring opportunities for reunification, enabling children to return from their care placements to their family homes. This will be delivered in close partnership with the Healthy & Thriving Communities function, ensuring families are enabled to be resilient and welcoming of children to enable them to remain out of the care system. As young people leave care, they will be supported through effective integration with skills and employment pathways and will be connected to opportunities in local growth sectors including construction, engineering and clean energy.

Through effective community-rooted support and strengthened partnerships more sustainable care pathways will be in place to better meet the needs of East Norfolk residents and reduce costs.

5.2.6. Education & SEND

To address challenges around inclusion, East Norfolk's proposed model will be community-rooted focused on delivering local support to strengthen partnerships with schools, families and employment hubs. An Early Intervention offer built around schools, will bring together multi-disciplinary teams to provide holistic support and connect families and young people to wider services.

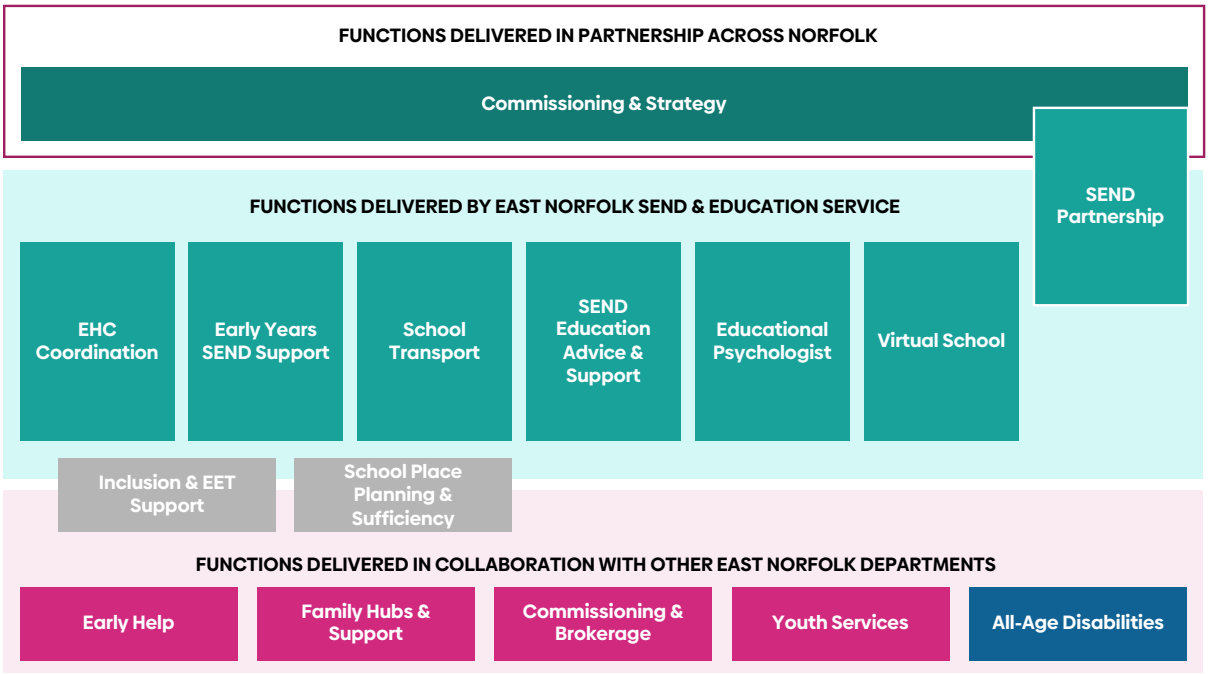


Figure 7: Functional model of Education & SEND across the unitary.

The service will also be closely aligned with the All-Age Disability Service within Adult Social Care, to support transitions into independence and adulthood. Where young people may not meet the statutory thresholds for Adult Social Care, the Healthy & Thriving Communities function will provide community-based support to connect them to peer support, and the wider community offer to enable resilience into adulthood.

Integrated within the service, school transport decisions will be considered alongside SEND case work – in recognition of its impact on independence and costs. Through effective reset relationships with families and the development of a local special school sufficiency strategy, a wider range of travel options will be considered – including personal travel budgets, greater use of shared transport and travel training. The financial benefits unlocked from this approach can then be reinvested to further strengthen early intervention within SEND in East Norfolk.

Working with the Economic Growth and wider skills and employment teams will connect young people to opportunities from the 'energy coast' and wider business growth sectors, creating pathways to skills and employment so growth genuinely benefits young people in the area.

Leveraging the experience that East Norfolk has in planning will enable the unitary to better forward plan for education needs, including collaborating with education providers to explore opportunities to expand maintained provision within the unitary area, as well as mainstream education opportunities linked to housing development.

By stepping children down from high-cost placements, reducing exclusions and building family resilience - East Norfolk will have a system that delivers financial benefits and improves outcomes.

5.2.7. Place, environmental & regulatory services

East Norfolk will serve urban, market town, rural, and coastal communities with several areas of high landscape designation / protection. Protecting these natural assets and supporting a sustainability agenda will be integral to the new unitary council services. The delivery model is described below, and represents a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints while allowing the investment of time in developing and implementing a new model in the longer-term.



Figure 8: Place Services

The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. It may also work closely with existing arm's length companies and joint ventures, including Big Sky Group Ltd, Equinox Enterprises, Equinox Property Holdings and Great Yarmouth Services to shape place[9]. With Greater Norwich taking on a broader area around the city, East Norfolk can now focus on a strategic approach to sustainable development and economic growth in the more rural and coastal areas of the county. There will need to be particular focus on the tourism infrastructure and assets (e.g. seafronts, piers, leisure centres and countryside, amongst others) that help drive the visitor economy, and on coastal protection, which is very important to East Norfolk.

Given the constraints of long-term contracts already in place for waste collection and disposal, street scene and highways, services within Place will be a mixed economy, at least in the short- to medium-term. Although several will be run in-house as standalone services, others will take the form of either shared services, outsourced or a mix of both. Specifically Waste Collection & Disposal, Street Scene, Highways, Building Control, Parking, Leisure and Parks & Green Spaces will be delivered through a combination of in-house services, arm's length companies, shared services and outsourced suppliers.

"Place" will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services), shared parking services and CNC Building Control.

"Place" will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with some of the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

Adopting this Place model whereby all environmental and place-based services can collaborate closely will enable East Norfolk to develop a stronger and more joined up approach to making neighbourhoods and the wider area excellent places for residents, communities and visitors to enjoy. It will further strengthen the tourism economy and employment opportunities, whilst addressing challenges such as promoting sustainable development in the area.

[9] Pending any review of these arm's length bodies

Transformation and optimisation of place-based services

East Norfolk's character and quality is intrinsic to Its 'offer' to residents and visitors, attracting and retaining people and investment and underpinning a diverse, high-value tourism economy. Discretionary council spend on place-based and place-focused services is, therefore, important – the operation, cleansing and maintenance of public and green spaces, concessions, leisure and wellbeing facilities, beach equipment and infrastructure - alongside major heritage and culture attractions such as Great Yarmouth's landmark Waterways and Cromer's historic pier. In addition, the existing council's commission or provide a range of enabling services – for example, car parking and public toilets.

Whilst some tourism and cultural infrastructure is revenue-generating – for example, lease income and car parking – there are competing priorities for discretionary expenditure and sustained funding for these services is increasingly challenging. Unitarisation presents significant collaborative opportunities for the co-ordination and transformation of place-based services across the wider East area – streamlining and consolidating coverage and contracting in areas like grounds maintenance and highways, estates and asset management.

5.2.8. Growth

East Norfolk has a crucial role to play in fostering growth. It will need to deliver support that will help sustain the important tourism economy, accelerate its expanding clean energy sector and foster growth and entrepreneurship amongst its high number of SMEs.

Any ecosystem of support to help grow the local (and regional) economy will need to span all future levels of government. This includes local initiatives (such as Business Improvement Districts and town centre regeneration schemes, growth programmes and skills support), services delivered by the unitaries, regional programmes (that will likely be delivered by a Mayoral Combined Authority) and national partnerships (such as Innovate UK).

East Norfolk would also need to work closely with partners to remove barriers and create an environment that fosters business growth. There are opportunities to

support this through better use of data and having a shared picture of local businesses that the council engages with (e.g. shared Customer Relationship Management).

East Norfolk would complement the MCA with an appropriately scaled tailored approach, responsive to local needs and alive to local opportunities. For example, it would focus on support to local micro businesses and SMEs, which constitute a significant portion of the economy, as well as addressing skills mismatches that could constrain growth in its emerging clean energy sectors, and growth of sector specific clusters (e.g. energy, culture, etc.). It would also work closely with its joint ventures Equinox Enterprises, Equinox Property Holdings and Big Sky Living to address affordable housing shortages. East Norfolk would seek to maximise brownfield development and seek opportunities for new housing growth to be accommodated alongside established market and coastal towns. These are places where health and education facilities already exist, with some existing capacity to accommodate growth and with established public transport services and infrastructure.

In the longer term, once any Mayoral Combined Authority is established, new unitary councils might wish to explore the opportunities to work closely in partnership and pool resources to deliver regional inclusive growth for Norfolk and Suffolk. However, this would be after vesting day and once the priorities of the Mayoral Combined Authority were agreed.

In the context of East Norfolk, we believe that there will be opportunities to share some work with East Suffolk around clean energy developments, coastal management and coastal adaptation.

5.2.9. Enabling services

East Norfolk will have a core of enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. The diagram below shows what enabling services it will run and what models will be adopted.

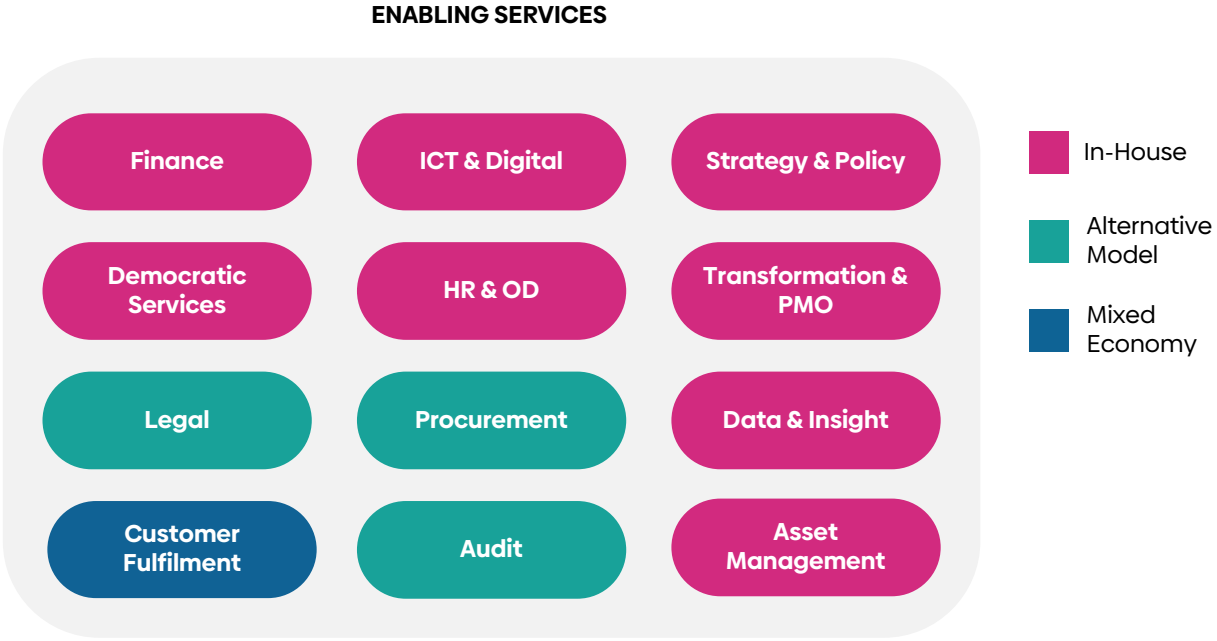


Figure 9: Enabling Services

Enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. HR & OD, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke model (Transformation & PMO, Data & Insight[10]) as a means of keeping control of enabling support and maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.

Wherever possible enabling services will be delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time. However, there are some exceptions where a mix of models is currently in place, including Legal, Procurement, Audit and Customer Services (where some elements of Waste customer contact is delivered by suppliers).

The services would seek to continue the best practice from the existing services within councils, whilst also using the redesign of enabling functions as an opportunity to innovate. Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a unitary council model, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious innovation programme through the implementation of LGR to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.

Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of East Norfolk. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management

[10] Separate to any EI&P / Healthy & Thriving function, but the two will work together

of its extensive portfolio of coastal and tourism assets including coast defences, piers and seaside amenities.

There are further longer-term opportunities for East Norfolk to collaborate with the two other proposed Norfolk unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power (for example procuring joint ICT systems or expertise and audit services). These will be explored as part of the transition so that we can build these into the future design of services.

The enabling services model will set up East Norfolk to be in the best possible position to deliver high quality services whilst also driving transformation and public sector reform that will improve outcomes for residents and communities whilst helping to close the budget gap.

6. Financial resilience

The proposed East Norfolk unitary would combine the existing districts of Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk, 30% of Broadland, and 66% of South Norfolk into a single authority. If East Norfolk were a unitary today, it would have a financially resilient position with a small surplus of c.£3m on a £657m budget. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) requires c.£32m of one-off transition costs, but these are capable of being fully funded from local reserves and assets. The programme delivers recurring savings of around £19m a year from Year 4 onwards, generating a cumulative benefit of nearly £90m by Year 8. In the long term, East Norfolk sustains recurring surpluses, underpinned by structural efficiencies and a strong tax base, positioning it to deliver financially sustainable services across its diverse communities.

East Norfolk is distinctive in its composition. It encompasses two coastal districts—Great Yarmouth Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council—both of which face significant challenges linked to urban deprivation, rural isolation, loss of services, seasonal economies, an ageing population, spend on discretionary services which underpin the local economy (coastal assets, Blue Flag beaches, public conveniences) and climate change risks such as coastal erosion and flooding. Alongside these sit parts of Broadland and South Norfolk, bringing in more market towns and rural communities. This mix of coastal deprivation, dispersed rurality, and varied economic drivers provides context to the financial challenges facing the authority.

This section focuses on the financial resilience and viability of East Norfolk. It examines expenditure patterns, income generation, council tax harmonisation, and the balance sheet, before assessing the authority's ability to withstand financial shocks and deliver sustainable services over time.

6.1. Baseline financial position

Building on the methodology set out in the main report, we have drawn on the 2025/26 Revenue Account (RA) returns to model the funding and expenditure profile of a prospective East Norfolk unitary authority. This analysis provides the following indicative baseline position:

£m (2025/26)	East Norfolk
Revenue Expenditure	657.42
Revenue Income	(660.60)
Net Position	**+3.18**

Table 2: Indicative baseline position for East Norfolk

East Norfolk enters reorganisation with forecast income slightly exceeding expenditure, producing a modest £3.2m surplus in 2025/26. While relatively small in the context of its £657m budget, this positive position offers a degree of flexibility at the outset and avoids the immediate need for corrective savings. The challenge will be to sustain this balance over time as demand and cost pressures continue to grow.

Expenditure Profile

The starting point was the aggregation of the RA 2025/26 data across all eight existing Norfolk councils. From there, allocations for the largest service blocks — Adults, Children's, and Education — were derived using demand, capacity, and unit cost data provided by the County Council at LSOA level. While this dataset was incomplete and inconsistent, it allowed us to map demand patterns against the new East Norfolk boundaries and to allocate expenditure accordingly.

The analysis highlights that East Norfolk faces the highest adult social care demand and cost pressures of the three proposed unitaries. It records the highest overall demand for residential care, accounting for 42% of Norfolk's requirement for older adults — more than double Greater Norwich's share. It also registers the highest demand for working-age residential placements and the highest demand for domiciliary care across both working-age and older adults. Nursing care demand sits in the middle range, but East Norfolk's unit costs for residential and nursing care are the highest in the county, with residential care costs particularly standing out above the other two proposed unitaries.

This combination of higher demand and higher unit costs drives a disproportionate share of Norfolk's adult social care spending into East Norfolk. The area absorbs 40% of total adult social care costs and records the highest spend per head at £527.74, significantly above Greater Norwich (£421.39) and West Norfolk (£479.53).
Children's Services add a further layer of pressure. East Norfolk records the highest costs for residential placements and fostering, giving it the highest overall spend on children's services of the three proposed unitaries.

Education demand also runs higher in East Norfolk than elsewhere. It has the largest number of primary and secondary school-aged children in Norfolk, coupled with the highest total number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Interestingly, it records the lowest number of 16+ pupils, but overall East Norfolk still carries the largest school-aged population of the three unitaries, and therefore the highest education expenditure allocation.

Taken together, these demand and cost patterns mean East Norfolk emerges with the highest overall expenditure profile of the three proposed unitaries. Its costs are structurally driven by high demand and high unit prices in both adults' and children's social care, alongside a large school-aged population with elevated levels of need associated with urban and rural deprivation. This creates a baseline position that is considerably more challenging than that faced by Greater Norwich or West Norfolk.

Funding Profile

East Norfolk's income base is drawn from the standard sources available to all local authorities: council tax, business rates, central government grants (both general and service-specific), and a range of fees, charges and other locally generated income. To establish the likely funding position, we obtained the RA 2025/26 submissions for all eight existing Norfolk councils. County-level income lines—particularly those relating to Aggregate External Finance (AEF)—were further broken down: demand-led grants such as schools funding and social care allocations were apportioned using the expenditure modelling outlined in the previous section, while more general grants were distributed by population or, where appropriate, deprivation indicators.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was a particular focus of our modelling. Although no longer a dominant source of local government funding, RSG remains an important part of the overall settlement and is expected to be influenced by the Government's proposed Fair Funding 2.0 reforms. These reforms are intended to better reflect local needs by taking deprivation into account and supporting councils with historically weaker tax bases.

Deprivation within East Norfolk is highly uneven. For example, some urban wards within Great Yarmouth Borough Council are amongst the most deprived districts in England, with 21 out of the town's 62 neighbourhoods ranked among the 20% most income-deprived in the country—and 18.66% of local areas falling within the 10% most deprived nationally. At the other end of the spectrum, Broadland is among the least deprived districts in the country, ranking in the top 20% nationally, with no neighbourhoods in the most deprived decile and very few residents living in deprivation. North Norfolk also

records very low deprivation, with no LSOAs in the bottom 10% nationally, while the majority of South Norfolk sits in the upper middle range, with very few areas in significant deprivation.

Taken together, this produces a mixed profile: East Norfolk has pockets of extreme deprivation concentrated in Great Yarmouth but balanced by relatively affluent and low-need areas in Broadland, North Norfolk and South Norfolk. This places East Norfolk in the middle range of the three proposed unitaries: 13% of its LSOAs are highly deprived (compared with 21% in Greater Norwich and 11% in West Norfolk), but overall, it contains around one-third of Norfolk's deprived neighbourhoods. On this basis, East Norfolk received a middle share of RSG in our allocation.

East Norfolk secures the largest share of business rates income among the three proposed unitaries, accounting for around 36% of Norfolk's overall National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) under our apportionment method. District-level income was allocated on a district basis, with Broadland and South Norfolk split using Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) data provided by finance officers, and the county share distributed on a population basis following officer discussions. While this gives East Norfolk a comparatively strong position at the outset, the forthcoming reset of the Business Rates Retention system means that current allocations are unlikely to provide a reliable guide to future funding, with deprivation expected to play a more prominent role in the formula.

Overall, East Norfolk begins from the strongest tax base of the three unitaries, giving it a clear advantage in locally raised income. At the same time, deprivation will continue to play a central role in shaping government support, meaning East Norfolk's financial outlook will ultimately depend on the balance struck in future national funding reforms.

Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power (CSP) provides the clearest measure of the resources available to local authorities to deliver services. It combines income from the Settlement Funding Assessment, council tax, and central government grants, as set out in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

On this measure, East Norfolk records the highest CSP of the three proposed unitaries. This stems from its comparatively large tax base — the strongest of the three — which enables greater income generation through council tax, as well as a steady contribution from business rates. While East Norfolk does not attract as much Revenue Support Grant as Greater Norwich, its deprivation profile is still significant enough to secure a higher share than West Norfolk.

The result is that East Norfolk begins from a stronger financial footing than either of its counterparts, with greater resources available both in absolute terms and per head. CSP therefore underlines East Norfolk's relative advantage: a broad and resilient income base, supplemented by targeted grant funding, that places it in a more sustainable starting position. Its challenge will be to ensure that these resources are managed effectively against the backdrop of high demand pressures, particularly in adult and children's social care.

6.2. Council tax harmonisation

A key financial consideration for East Norfolk is the variation in council tax levels inherited from its constituent districts. In 2025/26, Broadland has the lowest Band D in the unitary area at £134.91, with a tax base of 49,789. Great Yarmouth Borough Council shows the highest Band D at £192.49, though it has the smallest tax base at 31,567. South Norfolk (£175.14) and North Norfolk (£173.52) both sit in the middle range, with South Norfolk's tax base of 54,097 notably larger than North Norfolk's 45,024.

	2025/26	
Local Authority	**Band D**	**Tax Base**
South Norfolk	175.00	54,097
Broadland	134.91	49,789
North Norfolk	173.52	45,024
Great Yarmouth	192.49	31,567
Norfolk County Council	1,755.63	324,009

Table 3: East Norfolk district councils Band D and Tax Base 2025/26

The council tax position in East Norfolk reflects a mix of contrasting starting points. Great Yarmouth Borough Council has the highest Band D level but the smallest tax base, limiting the overall scale of its revenues. By contrast, South Norfolk and Broadland both have much larger tax bases, though their mid-to-lower Band D levels moderate the yield. Of these, only 28% of Broadland District Council's base and 66% of South Norfolk Council's transfer into East. North Norfolk District Council sits between these positions, with a mid-range Band D and a smaller but still significant base. Taken together, East Norfolk enters the reorganisation with the strongest overall council tax revenues of the three proposed unitaries.

Our harmonisation modelling explored five different approaches to aligning council tax rates across the new unitary over a ten-year horizon (2025/26 to 2035/36). The results show that outcomes vary significantly depending on the chosen methodology.

Importantly, this analysis does not make a recommendation. The five scenarios presented are intended to illustrate a range of legally compliant options and their potential fiscal impact. It will be for each shadow authority, once established, to determine its preferred approach to harmonisation based on its local context, policy priorities, and political judgement.

Results for East Norfolk:

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	-90.37
High to Min	-166.68
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-114.78
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	21.69
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-32.81

Table 4: East Norfolk Council Tax Harmonisation Results

East Norfolk inherits relatively strong tax bases and higher Band D levels, but most harmonisation scenarios still result in income foregone compared to the baseline. The only exception is the Weighted Average +5% scenario, which sets Band D at the maximum allowable level from day one and delivers sustained gains through 2035/36.

To illustrate what each scenario would mean for residents, we modelled the change in Band D charges under each scenario. These can be found in the Appendix.

Conclusion

Overall, East Norfolk enters reorganisation from a relatively strong financial starting position, with higher Band D levels and solid tax bases compared to other parts of the county. However, harmonisation outcomes diverge sharply depending on the chosen methodology. Most scenarios reduce revenues against the baseline, often by significant margins, with the exception of the *Weighted Average +5%* model, which generates sustained gains but at the cost of steeper upfront rises for households. The comparison with single- and two-unitary options underlines the sensitivity of results to where the 5% cap is applied, reinforcing that distributional impacts across districts vary as much as the aggregate financial outcomes.

6.3. Building an organisation fit for the future

For East Norfolk, the move to unitary status offers the chance to bring coherence to services across a diverse mix of coastal, rural, and suburban communities. With the largest overall population and tax base of the three proposed authorities, East begins from a position of relative financial strength. But this scale also brings higher demand pressures — from concentrated deprivation in Great Yarmouth to dispersed service needs in North and South Norfolk — which must be managed efficiently if the authority is to remain sustainable.

The task for East Norfolk is therefore less about survival and more about optimisation: reducing duplication, building a single prevention-led system, and using its stronger fiscal base to invest in predictive, early-intervention models that cut long-term costs. Done well, the transition can both contain expenditure and embed a more resilient, prevention-first approach across the county's most populous unitary.

Year	Financial Year	One-Off Costs	Recurring Costs	Recurring Savings	Net Impact	Cumulative Net Impact
0	2026/27–2027/28	-11	-0	0	-11	-11
1	2028/29	-6	-2	6	-2	-14
2	2029/30	-9	-2	12	-1	-13
3	2030/31	-5	-2	17	10	-2
4	2031/32	-1	-2	19	16	14
5	2032/33	0.0	-2	20	18	31
6	2033/34	0.0	-2	21	19	50
7	2034/35	0.0	-2	21	19	69
8	2035/36	0.0	-2	21	19	88

Table 5: Eight Year Profile of Savings and Costs of Transition (£ms)

Transition Costs & Savings

East Norfolk faces around £32m in one-off transition costs across the pre-vesting period and the first three years of operation. These cover shadow authority set-up, ICT migration, and workforce restructuring. Alongside this, a permanent £2m recurring annual cost arises from the disaggregation of county-wide services.

As with other proposed unitaries, it is assumed that these one-off costs will be funded locally through reserves and realisable assets. It is believed that East Norfolk has sufficient capacity to cover this requirement without central government support, although caution is needed where some commercial assets are concerned, given their role in generating ongoing revenue.

Savings build gradually but become significant from Year 2. In Year 1 (2028/29), efficiencies of £6m are realised, leaving a net deficit of £2m. By Year 2 (2029/30), savings rise to £12m, but with £11m of costs the year still closes in a small deficit of £1m. In Year 3 (2030/31), structural savings grow to £17m, delivering an annual surplus of £10m.

The payback point is reached in Year 4 (2031/32), when cumulative savings overtake upfront costs and generate a positive net impact of £16m, moving the cumulative position to around £14m in the black. From that point onwards, East Norfolk sustains recurring surpluses of around £18–19m annually. By Year 8 (2035/36), the cumulative net benefit reaches approximately £88m.

These gains are achieved through workforce consolidation, ICT and systems integration, and prevention-led service reform. While disaggregation costs remain a permanent feature, they are modest compared to the efficiencies secured.

Strategic Conclusion

Costs	
Total one-off investment	£32m
Recurring additional costs	£2m
Benefits	
Total recurring savings	£21m (by 33/34)
Cumulative savings (over 8 year period)	£88m
Net position	
Net financial impact	£88m
Break-even point	Year 4 (31/32)

Table 6: Summary of the financial implications for unitarisation and public sector reform of the proposal

For East Norfolk, the transition requires only two years of deficits before generating sustained annual surpluses. By Year 4, cumulative payback is achieved, and by Year 8 the authority has delivered a cumulative gain of around £88m. With transition fully funded from local sources rather than central government support, East Norfolk is positioned to consolidate efficiencies, strengthen its fiscal base, and reinvest in service transformation. This provides confidence that reorganisation can be delivered sustainably while building capacity to manage long-term demand pressures.

6.4. The balance sheet

A local authority's balance sheet is a critical measure of its overall financial health and resilience. A strong balance sheet provides stability, enabling councils to invest in infrastructure, manage risk, and respond to shocks without jeopardising service delivery. Conversely, a weak or overextended balance sheet can leave authorities vulnerable, forcing difficult choices about borrowing, asset sales, or service reductions.

In the context of local government reorganisation, balance sheets take on added significance. The process of balance sheet disaggregation — that is, unpicking the existing county and district-level assets, liabilities, and reserves and reallocating them to the new unitary bodies — will shape the starting financial position of each authority. Decisions about how debt, pension liabilities, cash reserves, and fixed assets are split will directly affect each unitary's capacity to invest, its exposure to risk, and the sustainability of its financial strategy.

While our intention was to build a robust and detailed understanding of the balance sheet position for each of the proposed unitary authorities, we could not do so in practice. The County Council provided limited data on assets, liabilities, and reserves, despite repeated requests. Without this information, it was not possible to model balance sheet disaggregation at the level of rigour we had originally planned.

In the absence of a full dataset, we adopted a pragmatic approach by applying population-based splits to approximate the distribution of county-level balance sheet items across the proposed unitaries. While this method offers a broad indication of scale, it does not capture the geographic variation in asset holdings, service liabilities, or borrowing commitments that would ultimately influence the financial resilience of each new authority.

This limitation should therefore be borne in mind when interpreting the results: the figures presented provide a high-level view rather than a definitive statement of the future balance sheet positions.

East Norfolk Indicative Position (2028/29)

(£000s)	Amount
General Fund Unearmarked Reserves	20,730
General Fund Earmarked Reserves	80,228
Long-Term Borrowing*	485,821
Short-Term Borrowing*	68,842
Non-Current Assets	1,380,595

Table 7: East Norfolk Indicative Position (2028/29)

**Includes HRA borrowing*

To aid understanding of the balance sheet position, we have devised five key financial performance indicators tailored to a local authority context. These indicators move

beyond the headline numbers to present a richer picture of financial resilience and sustainability. Each indicator is supported by a RAG rating framework, with thresholds informed by literature reviews and recognised best practice. Sources are cited under each indicator. To ensure comparability, the figures used throughout are based on the 2028/29 financial year.

Indicator: Unearmarked Reserves as % of Net Revenue Expenditure

- **What it is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of unearmarked (unrestricted) general fund reserves a council holds, expressed as a percentage of its annual net revenue expenditure. It represents the level of financial flexibility the authority has to absorb unexpected pressures.

- **Why it matters:** Unearmarked reserves are the council's most accessible form of financial resilience. They provide a vital buffer against unforeseen events such as sudden drops in income, spikes in demand for services, or inflationary cost increases. A low level of reserves exposes the authority to greater risk of financial instability and can limit its ability to respond effectively to shocks. Maintaining a robust reserve position is therefore widely recognised as fundamental to good financial management.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Greater than 10%
🟠 Amber	Between 5% and 10%
🔴 Red	Less than 5%

Table 8: Thresholds for ratings for unearmarked reserves as % of net revenue expenditure

Sources: CIPFA Briefing – Resilience in Local Authorities

Finding for East Norfolk: 4% — 🔴 Red

At 4%, East Norfolk sits below the prudent threshold, giving it very limited flexibility to manage unforeseen financial shocks. While the authority may be able to absorb a small, one-off pressure, it lacks the resilience to cope with sustained or multiple challenges without taking rapid corrective action, such as drawing on earmarked reserves, cutting services, or seeking external support.

Indicator: Debt Per Capita

- What it is: This indicator measures the total level of long- and short-term borrowing held by a council, divided by the population of the prospective unitary authority. It reflects the notional share of debt attributable to each resident. *This includes HRA borrowing.

- Why it matters: Debt per capita provides insight into the financial burden being carried on a per-person basis. While borrowing can be an entirely legitimate tool to fund long-term capital investment, higher levels of debt can constrain future financial flexibility. They also bring ongoing obligations in the form of interest payments and repayment costs, which reduce the resources available for frontline services.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than £1,000
🟠 Amber	Between £1,000 and £2,000
🔴 Red	More than £2,000

Table 9: Thresholds for ratings for debt per capita

Sources: NAO report on financial sustainability of local authorities – emphasises affordability relative to taxpayer base

Finding for East Norfolk: £1,648 — 🟠 Amber

At £1,648 per resident, East Norfolk sits comfortably within the amber range. This level of debt suggests that while the authority is not overextended, it does carry a moderate borrowing burden relative to its population. The commitment of resources to debt servicing will need to be managed carefully, but it does not present an immediate risk to financial sustainability.

Indicator: Debt to Non-Current Assets

- What this is: This indicator assesses the proportion of a council's non-current asset base that is funded through borrowing. It is calculated by dividing forecast long- and short-term debt by a forecast of non-current assets. The result provides insight into the council's financial leverage and balance sheet resilience.
- Why it matters: A higher debt-to-asset ratio indicates greater reliance on borrowing to support the council's financial position, potentially signalling

reduced flexibility and increased vulnerability during periods of financial stress. A lower ratio suggests more conservative borrowing practices and a stronger, more resilient balance sheet.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 30%
🟠 Amber	Between 30% and 50%
🔴 Red	More than 50%

Table 10: Thresholds for ratings for debt to total assets

Sources: CIPFA Capital Risks Metrics, CIPFA Advisory Note: Reinforcing Good Practice in External Borrowing, NAO (2016) Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities

Finding for East Norfolk: 40% — 🟠 Amber

At 40%, East Norfolk sits within the amber threshold, indicating a moderate reliance on borrowing relative to its asset base. While this level does not suggest immediate financial stress, it highlights the need for careful monitoring to ensure that borrowing remains sustainable and that debt servicing does not restrict flexibility in future years.

Indicator: Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the ratio of a council's total long- and short-term borrowing to its annual income from council tax. It provides a perspective on how much debt the council is carrying relative to one of its most reliable and locally controlled sources of revenue.
- **Why it matters:** Council tax represents a stable, recurring income stream that underpins financial resilience. A high debt-to-council tax revenue ratio can signal affordability risks, as more of the council's core income would need to be diverted to service debt, leaving less available for frontline services. A lower ratio indicates that the council's debt levels are more proportionate to its recurring revenue base, suggesting stronger affordability and sustainability.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 2x
🟠 Amber	Between 2x and 3x
🔴 Red	More than 3x

Table 11: Thresholds for Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

Sources: Room 151 – is local government debt trajectory sustainable?, Woking Case Study

Finding for East Norfolk: 1.92x — 🟢 Green

At 1.92 times annual council tax revenue, East Norfolk sits within the green threshold. This indicates that the authority's debt levels are proportionate to its most dependable revenue source and remain affordable. While ongoing vigilance is still required to ensure debt servicing does not erode future flexibility, the ratio suggests East Norfolk is well within prudent levels compared with sector benchmarks. This scenario assumes council tax harmonisation to the highest-yielding model for 2028/29, in this case the Weighted Average + 5% approach, which strengthens the recurring revenue base against which debt is assessed.

Annual Revenue Costs of Debt as % of Net Revenue Budget

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the proportion of a council's net revenue budget spent on servicing debt, including both interest payments and statutory repayments of principal (Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP).
- **Why it matters:** Debt servicing competes directly with frontline spending. As a greater share of the revenue budget is absorbed by debt costs, the council has less flexibility to respond to financial pressures or to invest in services. A lower proportion signals stronger affordability and resilience, whereas higher levels can point to potential sustainability challenges, particularly if income growth is weak or further borrowing is required.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 5%
🟠 Amber	Between 5% and 10%
🔴 Red	More than 10%

Table 12: Thresholds for Annual Revenue Costs of Debt (as % of Net Revenue Budget)

Sources: The Times – Warning of more council bankruptcies as debt doubles

Finding for East Norfolk: 3% — 🟢 Green

At just 3% of net revenue budget in 2028/29, East Norfolk's debt servicing burden is firmly within the green category. This indicates a manageable level of ongoing cost, with borrowing commitments unlikely to constrain frontline services or broader financial flexibility.

6.5. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA), established under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, is a ring-fenced account dedicated to the ownership and management of council housing. It records both income — primarily tenant rents, service charges, and subsidies — and expenditure, including housing management, day-to-day repairs, major stock improvements, and debt servicing for housing-related borrowing. As such, it is both a financial mechanism and a policy tool, shaping the way local authorities maintain existing stock, meet housing standards and sustainability targets, and invest in new homes.

For East Norfolk, the assumption is that Great Yarmouth Borough Council's HRA will be wholly subsumed into the new unitary authority, since no boundary changes are proposed for the borough. From vesting day, the HRA will therefore form an integral part of East Norfolk's housing and financial strategy.

Great Yarmouth's draft HRA accounts for 2024/25 report income of £29.72m against expenditure of £29.07m, alongside borrowing of £1.74m. The net deficit of £1.26m illustrates the fine margins within which the HRA operates, where even modest shifts in income or costs can tip the account into deficit. The authority currently owns and manages around 5,762 homes and provides landlord services to 377 leaseholders, making the scale significant within the East Norfolk housing market.

The council maintains a minimum reserve balance of £2m — broadly consistent with sector expectations — but this is tight relative to the size of the account. Forecasts for 2025/26 show a small surplus of £0.11m, but the medium-term plan requires savings of £1m in 2026/27 and £2.8m in 2027/28 simply to preserve reserves at that minimum threshold. This indicates limited headroom, with little margin for unexpected shocks. Borrowing is expected to increase further, both to accelerate affordable housing delivery and to fund energy efficiency and decarbonisation works. Rent setting has been carried out in line with government policy, but the ongoing legacy of national rent controls continues to constrain income growth.

The trajectory highlights both risks and opportunities. On one hand, the need for additional borrowing and recurring savings suggests long-term affordability pressures. On the other, the existence of a dedicated HRA provides East Norfolk with a structured mechanism to invest in new homes, regenerate existing stock, and align landlord services with wider social and environmental goals. The ending of Great Yarmouth's

joint venture with Norse Group has also given the council more direct control of its repairs and maintenance functions, creating scope for future efficiencies.

In short, Great Yarmouth's HRA brings both vulnerability and potential into the new East Norfolk authority. While its reserve base is thin and affordability challenges loom in the medium term, it embeds a significant stock of council housing within the unitary's remit and provides a platform for growth. With prudent management, a focus on decarbonisation and compliance (including preparation for Awaab's Law), and careful balancing of borrowing with affordability, the HRA can be leveraged as a core driver of East Norfolk's housing strategy and wider regeneration agenda.

6.6. Conclusion: financial resilience and long-term viability

East Norfolk begins from a more balanced position. Its baseline surplus of £3m reflecting a steadier cost profile and relatively contained social care pressures. While it does not benefit from the same deprivation-led grant upside as Greater Norwich, East Norfolk's income base is relatively stable. However, harmonisation does not consistently drive revenue growth: most scenarios actually result in income foregone compared to the baseline. The exception is *Weighted Average +5%*, which delivers the strongest and still legally compliant outcome. The key feature here is stability rather than volatility—East Norfolk's districts start from comparatively close positions, meaning household impacts are moderate, but the overall fiscal headroom from harmonisation is limited.

The transformation pathway strengthens that foundation. Though transition costs peak in the first three years, the programme reaches payback in Year 4 and then sustains an annual net benefit of around £18m. By Year 8, East Norfolk achieves a cumulative surplus of almost £90m, underpinned by permanent efficiencies in workforce, systems, and demand management. These are structural gains, not temporary savings, embedding resilience against future shocks.

On the balance sheet, the picture is mixed but manageable. Unearmarked reserves at ~4% of NRE fall into the red threshold, requiring early attention to rebuild resilience. Debt per capita sits in the amber range at ~£1,648 per resident, but the leverage is proportionate: the debt-to-non-current asset ratio of 40% is within the amber

threshold and debt-to-council tax revenue is firmly green at 1.92×, assuming harmonisation under the "Weighted Average + 5%" scenario. Debt servicing at ~3% of the revenue budget remains within green limits, leaving capacity for service spend.

Taken together, these factors point to a unitary that is financially sound. East Norfolk combines a modest baseline surplus, a stable revenue trajectory, and transformation savings that deliver a material and lasting uplift. While rebuilding reserves remains essential, borrowing levels are affordable, harmonisation choices are straightforward, and structural efficiencies are embedded early. With careful financial management, the proposed East Norfolk authority would not only be viable from vesting but also positioned to deliver long-term resilience and high-quality services across its communities.

7. Assessment against government criteria

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OUR APPROACH		
A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	Under this proposal a single tier of local government is achieved in Norfolk as three new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich. In developing this case for a three-unitary Norfolk we have undertaken an options appraisal of the alternatives using the government's Local Government Reorganisation criteria to ensure we are proposing the best option for our region.	*Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 5 in this proposal*
Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage of disadvantage for one part of the area.	Our proposal for East Norfolk makes up a sensible economic area, as it is uniquely positioned at the frontline of the UK's climate transition and stands as a driver of inclusive, place-based economic growth, anchored in renewable energy, marine services, tourism, agriculture and healthcare. Its geography includes the Energy Coast at Great Yarmouth and Bacton Energy Hub, as well as a dynamic network of market towns and rural communities. East Norfolk can be a national exemplar of how rural and coastal areas lead in clean	*Section 3 in this proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the East Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	growth and climate resilience without losing their identity.	
Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.	A new unitary council for East Norfolk will aim to increase housing supply as it will offer significant opportunities for development as well as be able to respond to its specific housing needs and affordability challenges. Linking housing development to economic development opportunities in the clean energy sector is key to the area's success. By gaining oversight of functions such as highways, transport and strategic infrastructure and linking housing needs (distribution and mix) to economic growth locations will put the new unitary in a strong position to respond to its specific housing requirements and support the region in its growth ambitions.	*Sections 3, and 5.2.3 in this proposal.* *Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints. Section 5.2* *Appendix D - Boundaries*
Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.	The development of the proposed service delivery models has been informed by an engagement exercise including council members and officer representatives, key stakeholders, and key partners across Norfolk. We have also assessed the financial implications of reorganisation which estimated the costs, savings, and income	*Section 5 in this proposal* *Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints*

LGR government criteria	How the East Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	implications of the three-unitary model.	
Proposals should clearly describe the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these areas expected to achieve the outcomes described.	The proposal sets out how the new operating model for East Norfolk will bring services together to achieve better outcomes for its residents. It will do this by making decisions that are rooted in the very specific needs, demands and opportunities of the area, and redesigning services around the realities of its coastal areas, market towns and rural communities. Earlier interventions and outreach provide the foundation for a more joined-up, preventative and person-centred approach to public services, delivering better outcomes for its residents.	*Section 5 in this area proposal* *Appendix E - East Norfolk Blueprints.*
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRITERIA		
Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.	*A new unitary for East Norfolk will be the right size and presents an opportunity to achieve efficiencies and withstand financial shocks as it will bring coherence to services across a diverse mix of coastal, rural and urban communities. With the* largest population and tax base of the three proposed authorities, East Norfolk begins from a position of relative financial strength, but with some concentrated demand pressures. There is an opportunity to use the strong fiscal base to invest in a	*Section 6 in this proposal* *Appendix C - Financial Appraisal*

LGR government criteria	How the East Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	predictive, early-intervention model to cut long-term costs and turn this early investment into sustained financial gains.	
As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.	The total population of East Norfolk is 336,524 but this will rise to 406,714 by 2035.[11]	*Section 3 in this proposal*
There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.	While the population of our East Norfolk unitary is below the 500,000 figure typically cited in government guidance, we strongly believe that our economic, demographic, and service delivery distinctiveness warrant a bespoke approach. The case for unitarisation should not be built on strict adherence to population size, but on functional need and strategic opportunity, *reflecting distinct challenges and opportunities,* and the potential to develop place-based delivery of local government services, which will align services with the real geography of people's lives.	*Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal* *Appendix D - Boundaries*
Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.	Our proposal sets out how the three-unitary model delivers the optimal balance between scale and responsiveness. It achieves efficiencies through public service reform and redesign moving to a preventative model of service delivery which creates efficiencies	*Sections 5.2, 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal*

[11] Based on 2021 census data.

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
	through reducing cost and reducing demand, resulting in savings growing to £17m by year 3,	
Proposals should set out how will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.	Reorganisation creates upfront transition and disaggregation costs (£32m in total – see the Public Sector Reform, Efficiency & Financial Sustainability section chapter in the main report), but these are outweighed by the scale of recurrent savings (growing to £17m in year 3). Our eight-year profile shows how the new unitary model reaches a payback point in year 4 and delivers a permanent reduction in Norfolk's structural deficit.	*Sections 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal.* *Section 7 in the main proposal.* *Appendix H – Implementation Plan*
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.	As a unitary, East Norfolk will be able to deliver high quality public services as it will be empowered to make decisions that are rooted in the unique needs and assets of the area, rather than being diluted within a much larger organisation. Services will be designed around the demands and opportunities of coastal and market towns, suburbs and rural communities, being responsive to individual local needs. Together, these changes provide the foundation for a more joined-up, preventative and person-centred approach to public service provision in parts of the county which have previously	*Section 5 in this proposal*

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
	been overlooked and left behind. Our proposal for an East Norfolk unitary authority is ambitious and aspirational for the future of this area and will deliver better outcomes for our residents, local businesses and communities.	
Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.	In developing our service delivery models for each new unitary area, delivering services at a scale and proximity to better serve citizens have been the key objectives. However, we have also sought to avoid unnecessary fragmentation or disaggregation of key services where a joined-up approach is the optimum solution. For example, while it is proposed that each unitary would have their own sovereign adult social care meeting local needs and circumstances service to deliver local services they would collaborate on key issues such as Safeguarding Partnerships and Commissioning through partnership boards.	*Section 5 in this proposal*
Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.	The proposed East Norfolk unitary council offers the opportunity to deliver public service reform through the provision of locally provided, person-centred support. This will mean that decisions are made tailored to the unique needs, assets and pressures in East rather than being lost within	*Section 5.2 in this proposal*

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
	a much larger and remote organisation. Education, social care, public health and housing will be integrated in order to undertake intervention and outreach activities and identify vulnerable residents before they present to the council, leading to better outcomes for individuals as well as better value for money.	
Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.	The proposals for East Norfolk have considered the impact of a range of crucial public services and how the new unitaries can deliver better public services, including: - A community-based early intervention and prevention model - A single housing management infrastructure and consolidation of existing ALOs to unlock housing development - A localised approach for adult social, children's social care and SEND where each unitary has their own social care service to deliver to local services with collaboration on some key areas to avoid unnecessary disaggregation	*Sections 5.2.1 - 5.2.6 in this proposal.* *Section 9 in the main proposal* *Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints* *Appendix H – Implementation Plan* *Appendix I – RAID Log*
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT		
Proposals should show how councils in the area have	Six councils across Norfolk have worked together and created an	*Section 6 in the main proposal*

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.	engagement platform 'Future Norfolk', that has built an informed understanding of the three-unitary model, with an ambition to strengthen democratic accountability, respect local identity and deliver sustainable, adaptable public services. From the outset, we moved from early awareness-raising and listening around the three pillars—People, Place, Progress - that lead us towards a confident, coordinated presentation of views, aligned within our proposal that met the Government's criteria.	
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.	A number of methods and strategies were specifically designed to ensure meaningful and constructive engagement which are outlined in full in section 6 within the main proposal.	*Section 6 within the main proposal*
Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.	'Place' was one of the key pillars of the engagement strategy to ensure that the proposals actively and meaningfully considered issues of local identity. Respecting local identity and cultural and historic significance and shared heritage was a key message coming through the engagement programme and was seen as particularly important in terms of coastal management	*Sections 2, 3 and 4 in this proposal.* *Section 6 in the main proposal*

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
	and adaptation and the provision of much resort / tourism infrastructure / public realm provided by the existing Great Yarmouth Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council as assets which supported a strong tourism economy.	
Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.	Section 5.4 provides evidence of the outcomes of the engagement programme, which included over 5,000 survey submissions, 17,800 website visitors, and a reach of nearly 500,000 on social media.	*Section 6 within the main proposal.*
BOUNDARY CHANGE		
Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.	We considered a three unitary option that would not involve changing existing council boundaries. In developing this option, it became apparent that it has some critical limitations. This has been discounted in preference of the alternative three unitary option - involving boundary changes for two of the seven current Norfolk districts. Whilst this would represent a one-off change of boundaries (and the associated extra work) we strongly believe it represents the right long-term LGR decision given the scale and diversity of Norfolk and how our residents live their lives in 2025, compared to 1974. We therefore	*Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal* *Appendix A – Options Appraisal* *Appendix D – Boundaries*

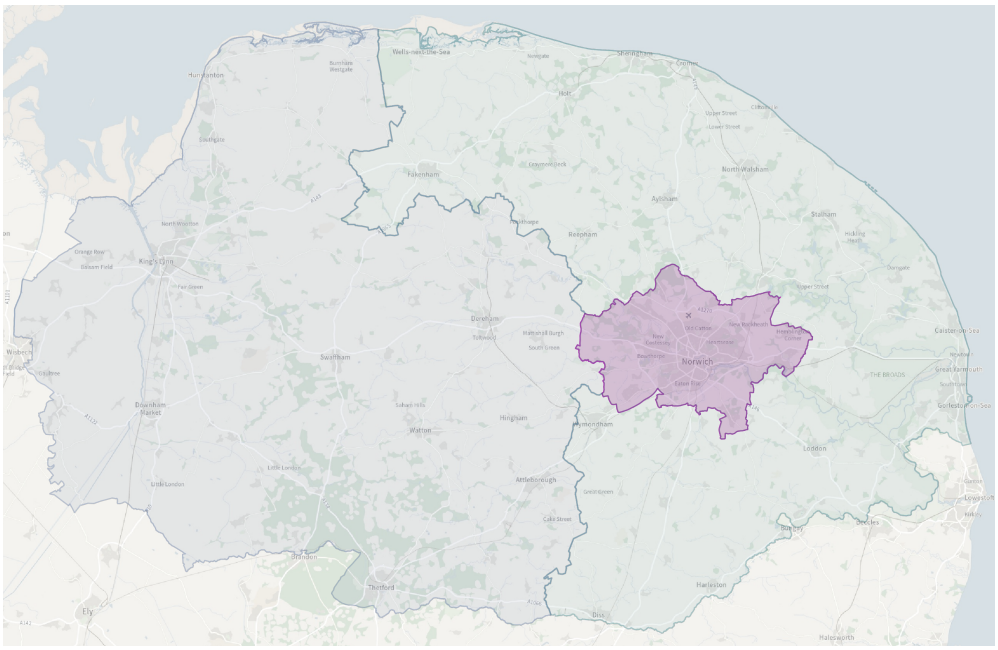
LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
	believe it is worth investing in moving to a model that will be future proof and truly reflects the diverse communities of Norfolk.	
DEVOLUTION SUPPORT		
New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	The three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside three in Suffolk, strengthens devolution by combining strategic regional leadership with strong local representation. It enables balanced decision-making, supports shared priorities like infrastructure, skills, and housing, and ensures diverse voices inform regional governance. This structure fosters inclusive growth and operational resilience while maintaining local accountability and effective collaboration across both counties.	*Section 8 within the main proposal*
Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.	The three-unitary model for Norfolk strengthens devolution by enabling balanced representation within a Strategic Authority shared with Suffolk. It supports strategic regional planning while preserving local delivery and democratic accountability. With six unitaries across both counties, the model enhances collaboration, aligns with shared economic and infrastructure priorities, and ensures diverse voices inform regional decisions. This structure fosters inclusive growth,	*Section 8 within the main proposal*

LGR government criteria	*How the East Norfolk proposal meets it*	*Relevant section of the proposal*
	operational resilience, and a coherent approach to investment, skills, housing, and transport—unlocking the full potential of Norfolk and Suffolk through coordinated governance.	
Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.	The proposed three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside three in Suffolk, creates a Strategic Authority with six distinctive but balanced constituent councils. This structure ensures proportional representation across diverse urban, rural, and coastal populations, avoiding dominance by any single area. It reduces the current 16 councils to six, striking a balance between scale and democratic accountability. The model builds on existing collaboration and preparatory work, aligning with devolution timelines and priorities to ensure a smooth transition and effective governance from the outset.	*Section 8 within the main proposal*
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	East Norfolk's democratic model is designed to ensure that local communities have a structured and meaningful voice in shaping decisions. The preferred approach centres on the establishment of Area Committees, led by elected members, which will feed into the Cabinet on an advisory basis. This	Section 4 within this proposal

LGR government criteria	How the East Norfolk proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	structure provides a clear mechanism for local input while maintaining strategic oversight at the unitary level. Informal forums and partnerships will feed into formal governance, enabling proportionate place-based governance that reflects the distinct needs of East Norfolk's towns, villages, and coastal communities.	
Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.	East Norfolk is committed to embedding community voice within its governance structures. The Area Committee model will be supported by a broader engagement strategy, including informal networks, participatory tools, and co-designed session and existing parish councils.	*Section 4 within this proposal*
Where there already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.	In parished areas, existing town and parish councils will retain their independence and functions. Informal forums and partnerships will provide a complementary platform for collaboration, without duplicating responsibilities. In unparished areas, these informal forums will serve as the primary vehicle for neighbourhood-level engagement.	*Section 4 within this proposal*

Table 13: Assessment against government criteria summary

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION



THE PROPOSAL FOR GREATER NORWICH

Prepared on behalf of:
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk,
Breckland District Council,
Broadland District Council,
Great Yarmouth Borough Council,
North Norfolk District Council,
and Norwich City Council

[SEPTEMBER 2025]

CONTENTS

1.	Executive summary	1
2.	Economic distinctiveness	3
3.	Demographic distinctiveness	5
4.	Democratic representation & engagement	7
5.	New council target operating model	9
6.	Financial resilience	24
7.	Assessment against government criteria	40

1. Executive summary

Greater Norwich is Norfolk's economic engine, a city-region with international reach, world-class institutions, and a distinctive blend of creativity, science, and civic ambition. Its influence extends beyond the historic city to the dynamic urban fringes of East Norfolk, encompassing the Norwich Research Park, the University of East Anglia, Norwich University of the Arts, and a growing digital and finance sector. The area is a national leader in life sciences, cultural innovation, the creative industries, and knowledge-intensive employment.

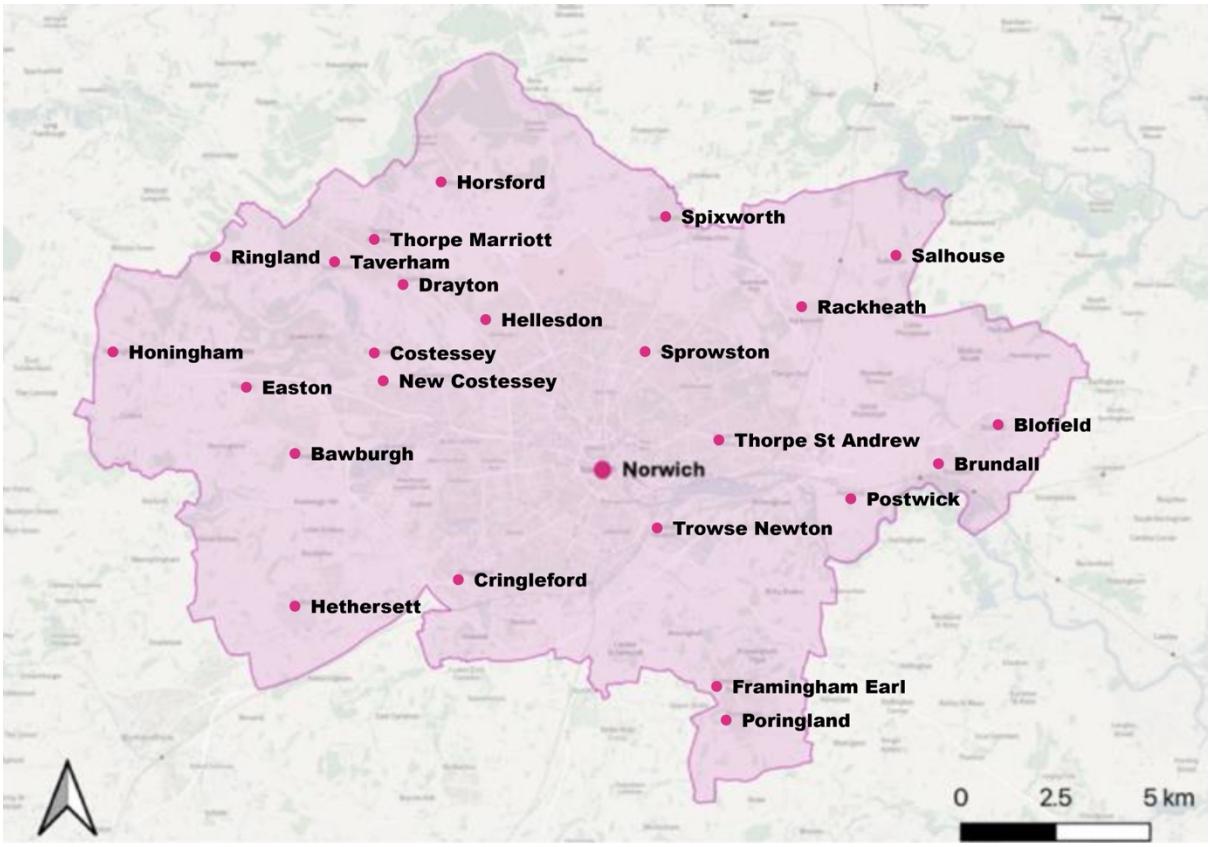


Figure 1: Map of the proposed boundary of Greater Norwich

Yet parts of Greater Norwich also experience some of Norfolk's deepest and most persistent deprivation. The area has high concentrations of social housing, limited access to affordable new homes, and significant health and social care challenges. Infrastructure and services have not kept pace with population growth, especially in fast-expanding fringe communities. The under bounded nature of the city restricts its planning powers and constrains efforts to manage growth in a strategic, integrated way, creating democratic deficits from residents who live within the urban area but who are excluded from decisions about the city under current structures.

Greater Norwich's opportunity is clear: to become a globally connected, inclusive city-region that drives both innovation and social progress. This means planning regeneration not just for economic value, but for wellbeing, mobility, and equity. Local services must be able to meet complex urban needs across housing, health, social care, early years, and education through coordinated neighbourhood-level delivery.

Creativity is central to this vision. It is not only a major contributor to the local economy, but also a driver of regeneration and identity. Norwich's cultural infrastructure, from the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Norwich Theatre, The Forum and The Halls, anchors post-retail city centre renewal and supports creative-tech and arts-in-health initiatives. These assets support inclusive job creation and position Greater Norwich as a cultural leader within the wider East of England.

Critically, Greater Norwich complements the wider Norfolk system. Its research, creative, and professional services ecosystem supports the clean energy economy of East Norfolk and the agri-food and manufacturing base of the west. Labour markets, public services, and infrastructure are shared across district boundaries, reinforcing the need for governance reform that matches the real geography of people's lives.

With the right leadership and devolved powers, Greater Norwich can become a model for how a city-region drives local, regional and national prosperity while narrowing social inequalities. The city does not just need to grow; it needs to grow with purpose, and this structure unlocks that future.

2. Economic distinctiveness

Greater Norwich: Norfolk's economic engine, a city-region with international reach, world-class institutions, and a distinctive blend of creativity, science, and civic ambition. Our influence extends beyond the historic city into the dynamic urban fringes of East Norfolk, bringing together the Norwich Research Park, the University of East Anglia, Norwich University of the Arts, and a thriving digital and finance sector. The area leads nationally in life sciences, the creative industries, and knowledge-intensive employment.

Greater Norwich generates close to 40% of Norfolk's Gross Value Added[1] and sustains the county's highest employment density, with 566 jobs for every 100 residents.[2] Almost 60% of the population of the proposed Greater Norwich area is economically active. Yet despite this strength, average disposable household income here remains just £20,287 per head, lower than in both West and East Norfolk. Growth has not yet translated into inclusive prosperity.

Alongside these strengths lie some of Norfolk's deepest challenges. Over a fifth of our neighbourhoods are in the top 20% most deprived nationally.[3] More than one in five households live in the social rented sector, while access to affordable homes is limited. A third of households face deprivation in at least one dimension, with health and social care under acute pressure.[4] Infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth, particularly in our fast-expanding fringe communities.

The functional economic area extends well beyond current administrative boundaries. Increasingly, economic activity takes place across a wider area, with growth in suburbs and surrounding communities, while some central areas face challenges. This pattern mirrors other English city-regions rather than rural Norfolk and underlines the need for a whole-place approach to growth and public service reform. Establishing a new Greater Norwich Unitary Authority, shaped around how people actually live and work, is essential to unlocking the strategic investment required to deliver long-term growth ambitions. Doing so would also align with Norwich's wider city strategy and the national fast-growth cities agenda, ensuring Greater Norwich is positioned alongside its peers in attracting talent, investment, and innovation.

Our ambition is clear. We want Greater Norwich to be a globally connected, inclusive city-region that drives both innovation and social progress. That means regeneration shaped not only by economic value but by wellbeing, mobility, and equity. It means

[1] ONS, UK small area gross value added estimates, 2022
[2] ONS, Job density, 2023
[3] Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019
[4] Census, 2021

services that are integrated, citizen-focused, and delivered at the neighbourhood level, joined up across housing, health, social care, early years, and education.

We place creativity at the heart of this vision. Our cultural infrastructure, the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Norwich Theatre, The Halls, anchors city-centre renewal and drives innovation in creative tech and arts-in-health. These assets are not just symbols of civic identity; they are engines of inclusive job creation and growth.

We also recognise our role in strengthening the wider Norfolk economy. Our research, creative, and professional services ecosystem underpins East Norfolk's clean energy strengths and West Norfolk's agri-food and manufacturing base. Labour markets, public services, and infrastructure already cross district boundaries. That is why we believe governance reform must be based on constitutional autonomy, mutual respect, and a relationship of equals.

With devolved powers and the right leadership, through a unitary authority aligned with a Mayoral Combined Authority, we are ready to deliver on our growth mission. We want the tools to plan and invest strategically across our urban core and fringes, to integrate housing, health, and education, and to ensure regeneration is purposeful and citizen-centred. A joined-up growth plan, covering economic development, sustainable transport, and affordable housing, would meet the needs of both the city and surrounding towns, while close collaboration with the Mayoral Combined Authority would secure regional priorities such as transport infrastructure and inward investment.

We have the ambition and the partnerships. With devolved powers, we will show how Greater Norwich can become a model city-region, driving productivity, narrowing inequalities, and proving that growth must not only continue, but do so with purpose, delivering outcomes felt in the lives and pockets of our residents.

3. Demographic distinctiveness

We are home to 278,285 residents[5], projected to grow to 333,403 by 2035.[6] Our population is younger, more diverse, and more densely concentrated than anywhere else in Norfolk. With a median age of 34.9 and over 20,000 students at the University of East Anglia and Norwich University of the Arts, we sustain a strong graduate base that supports high levels of participation in the labour market. We are a city-region defined by energy, creativity and potential.

This demographic profile is a strategic opportunity. Our younger, mobile population fuels innovation, supports high-value sectors like life sciences and digital, and sustains a vibrant cultural economy. But it also demands a different kind of public service model: one that is agile, preventative, and designed for urban complexity. LGR gives us the chance to design services that reflect this reality, and a new Greater Norwich Unitary Authority is the governance structure that can deliver it.

Yet this dynamism coexists with challenges that are concentrated and persistent. Twenty-one per cent of our neighbourhoods rank among the most deprived 20% nationally, and we account for 42% of all Norfolk neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10%.[7] More than a third of children in the area grow up in poverty, even though 58% have at least one employed parent. These conditions limit opportunity and place sustained pressure on public services.

Health inequalities are stark. Greater Norwich has one of the highest rates of preventable mortality in the region, and the life expectancy gap between women in the most and least deprived areas has widened from 2.2 to 8.4 years between 2010 and 2018. Twelve per cent of our residents experience frequent loneliness, compared to a national average of 7%, and economic inactivity due to long-term illness is above the Norfolk average.[8]

Educational outcomes mirror these divides. Norwich ranks as the tenth most unequal local authority in England for educational attainment. Disadvantaged children start school behind their peers and fall further behind through primary education. By the end of Key Stage 2, they are 13.6 months behind, one of the widest gaps in the country. These inequalities are structural and will not be addressed through incremental service

[5] Based on 2021 census data.
[6] Population projections based on Person-Per-Household Method, via GeoPlace LLP. Available at: https://www.geoplace.co.uk/case-studies/understanding-local-populations-between-censuses.
[7] Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019
[8] The economic case for a Greater Norwich Unitary Authority, 2025

adjustments; they demand coordinated leadership, strategic investment, and devolved powers.[9]

This is why a Greater Norwich Unitary Authority is essential, built on new boundaries which accurately reflect the geography of need and opportunity. Over half of Greater Norwich's GVA and nearly half of its jobs now lie outside the City Council area.[10] A new unitary would allow us to plan for growth, align housing and infrastructure with population trends, and deliver services that are tailored to the needs of our urban communities.

With devolved powers and the right leadership, we can deliver targeted neighbourhood services while managing growth strategically. We can design a system that is locally accountable, data-informed, and built around the lived realities of our residents. This is our opportunity to lead reform, unlock productivity, and deliver growth that is felt in the lives and pockets of working people.

[9] Ibid
[10] Ibid

4. Democratic representation & engagement

Greater Norwich's approach to democratic representation will be co-designed with our residents to ensure that communities have a meaningful voice in shaping decisions. It will consist of a single council for the unitary authority, supported by an engagement model rooted in the principle that governance must reflect the diversity of our communities and empower residents to shape decisions that affect their lives.

Councillor Numbers and Representation

We are proposing a councillor model that delivers both efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring Greater Norwich has the right number of elected representatives to run the new unitary across governance, accountability, and representation.

Currently, Norfolk has 399 councillors across its two-tier system. Our proposal streamlines this to 200 councillors across Norfolk, with 63 for Greater Norwich.

Unitary Area	Proposed Number	Likely Average Cllr: Electorate Ratio*	Electorate
Greater Norwich	63	1: 3,394	213,837
East Norfolk	65	1:4,080	265,188
West Norfolk	72	1: 3,298	237,434
Total:	200		716,459

Table 1: Councillor numbers Councillor Numbers

This number supports council functions, including Cabinet, scrutiny, and local governance. It provides the capacity needed to represent Greater Norwich on external bodies and partnerships, and to maintain strong local links with communities. Councillors will be expected to lead across multiple domains, from decision-making and scrutiny to partnership working and neighbourhood engagement. The model ensures there is sufficient capacity to populate committees, represent diverse geographies, and manage casework effectively, supported by dedicated member development and support functions.

Interim warding arrangements are being developed in line with LGBCE principles, including electoral equality, community identity, and effective local government.

Developing a neighbourhood representation model with our communities

The three-unitary model enables a neighbourhood-based approach at a scale which allows for close collaboration with communities and for neighbourhood models that are genuinely responsive to local needs and priorities. By working at this level, we can design bespoke approaches that reflect the diversity of our communities and the different ways in which they prefer to engage.

Existing town and parish councils will retain their independence and functions. In unparished areas Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) will operate as formal sub-committees of the new unitary council, led by ward councillors and open to participation from residents, community organisations, and service partners. Their remit could include local oversight, neighbourhood investment planning and community engagement.

Our approach is rooted in innovation and continuous improvement. We will work closely with our communities throughout implementation to shape this approach, engaging and listening to develop a model that is tailored, inclusive, and effective. We will draw on best practice from across the UK and beyond, and will test and learn as we go, adapting our approach to what works best for each neighbourhood.

This approach aims to:

- Ensure sustained engagement with underrepresented groups
- Create space for bespoke, community-led design
- Enable innovative partnerships across wider public service provision, including health, police, and the voluntary sector
- Support flexible and inclusive formats for participation, reflecting the different needs and preferences of our communities
- Centre health and wellbeing at the heart of local decision-making

Ceremonial and Civic Functions

We are committed to protecting our historic assets and civic traditions, including the mayoralty, regalia, and ceremonial functions, as part of LGR. This includes the preservation of historic assets, traditions and ceremonial roles - such as the mayoralty, civic regalia and formal functions - which are deeply embedded in our local identity and democratic culture. The government has confirmed its intention to preserve ceremonial responsibilities through reorganisation. However, this commitment must be reflected explicitly in the Structural Changes Order. This is particularly important for Norwich city which currently holds ceremonial status but is unparished.

To preserve these functions, we will seek to use a Charter Trustee Model. This will enable the continuation of civic traditions within the city boundaries even as governance transitions to the new Greater Norwich Unitary Authority. Charter Trustees will be responsible for upholding ceremonial duties and maintaining civic assets. While the new Greater Norwich Unitary Authority will encompass a wider geography, we will not seek to extend the mayoralty beyond the city itself. This is a moment to reaffirm the value of civic leadership and ensure that our communities retain the traditions that connect them to place, history, and public life.

5. New council target operating model

This section sets out the proposed operating model for Greater Norwich, outlining how the overall operating model will bring services together to innovate and achieve better outcomes for residents of Greater Norwich. It also includes highlights of our approaches to service delivery – a detailed summary of our future vision for services can be found in Appendix F.

5.1 Drivers of change

Greater Norwich's ambition to unlock local growth must be balanced with tackling the complex challenges the expanding city region will face, with deep-rooted deprivation resulting in a 15-year gap in life expectancy across the region. Demand for support from statutory services is rising across all cohorts, and with the highest proportion of unpaid carers and the risk of hidden need in the suburbs, there is an urgent need to ensure services are provided in a timely and localised way.

Demographic changes are accelerating the need for statutory support – with fast growth in both the older adult and working age populations reinforcing the need for preventative, community-based models of support. Greater Norwich records the highest demand for Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) plans, with rising costs creating an immediate need to embed prevention-focused practice. Young people do have access to good education links, providing a strong foundation to build upon in connecting them to growth opportunities. More children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) are educated in mainstream settings which indicates, despite rapid growth in Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs), there is a bedrock of inclusive practice.

Housing pressures are also particularly acute. Greater Norwich has the largest Private Rented Sector (PRS) in the county, with a particular concentration of one-bed home demand and unique pressures as a gateway city in safely housing asylum seekers and refugees. Whilst strong initiatives already exist across the area, they are fragmented between district and county responsibilities, leading to duplication and inconsistent outcomes for residents.

These drivers underline the seismic opportunity Greater Norwich has to reshape how services are delivered. There is genuine potential to reduce duplication, improve outcomes and create more resilient communities. Building on existing inclusive practice in local schools, a strong voluntary and community sector and the area's role as an economic and cultural hub, Greater Norwich can genuinely shift from crisis management to service reform.

5.2 Overview of the new unitary

Greater Norwich will be a globally connected, inclusive city-region that drives both innovation and social progress, aligning growth ambitions with coordinated neighbourhood-level delivery across education and housing.

As a unitary, Greater Norwich will be able to take a single, coordinated approach to addressing inequality – integrating public health, housing and wider resident support into one system of delivery. Decisions can be made with a deep understanding of local communities, whether in urban centres facing entrenched deprivation or in expanding suburbs where hidden need may be shaped by limited transport connections.

Through an integrated model, rising demand can be met with services that work in partnership with communities, with greater collaboration between services and partners to deliver more effective interventions.

Unitarisation for Greater Norwich will create the conditions for consistent, person centred and sustainable public services, improving outcomes for residents and enabling a thriving place.

5.2.1 The target operating model

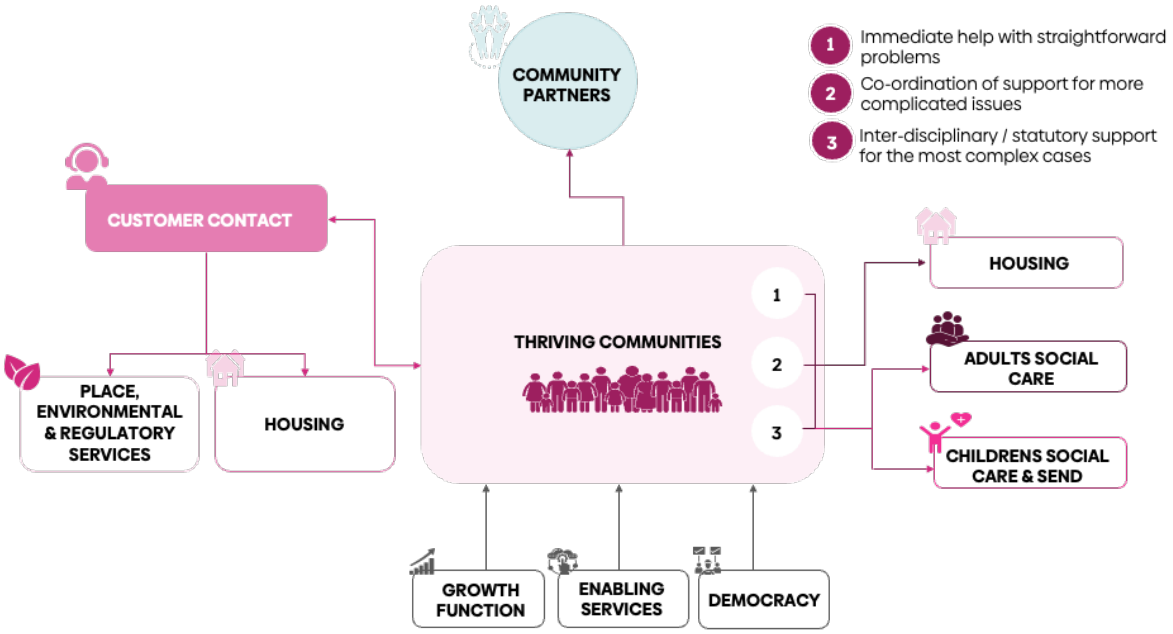


Figure 2: The Target Operating Model

Our vision for public service reform is one that breaks down siloed ways of working, shaping an organisation around the needs of residents, rather than expecting residents to navigate around tiers of government. It is one where each authority can play a greater role in delivering growth that focuses on those that need it most, whilst feeling the broader commercial benefits of this across the region. It enables fundamental redesign of services that focuses on the root causes of demand, rather than treating a need when it arises, informed by marrying predictive analytics and person-centred approaches to delivery. Finally, it builds trust through utilising community networks that residents recognise and it enables each authority to deliver on its ambitions.

To this end, the operating models we are proposing for the three unitaries are structurally similar, rooted in the same design principles. However, their successful implementation is reliant on an approach that deeply understands local needs and is tailored to the specific realities of each of area.

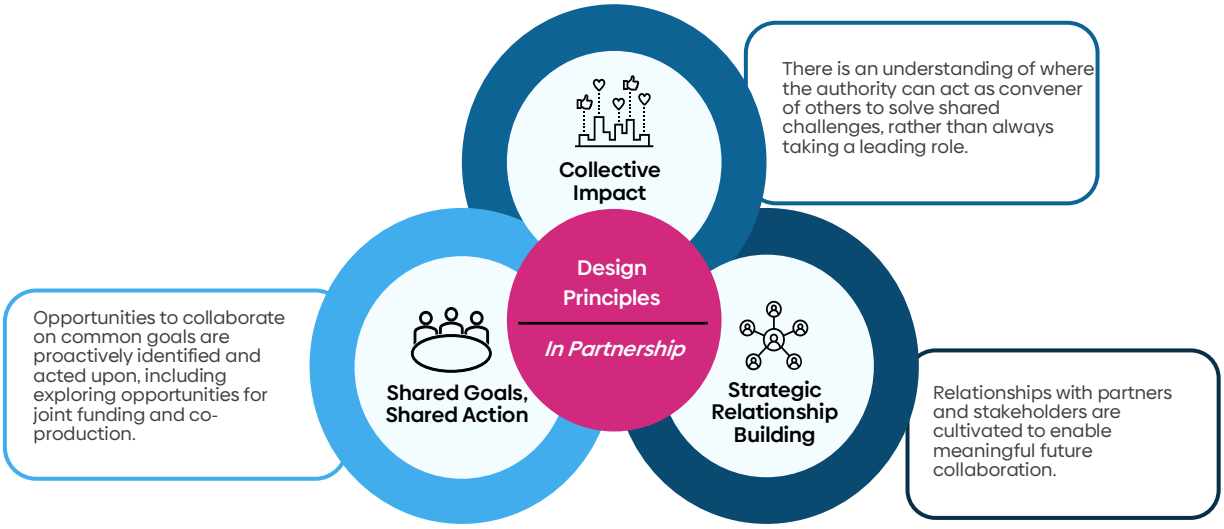


Figure 3: Design principles

Full design principles can be found in Appendix J.

5.2.2 Thriving communities

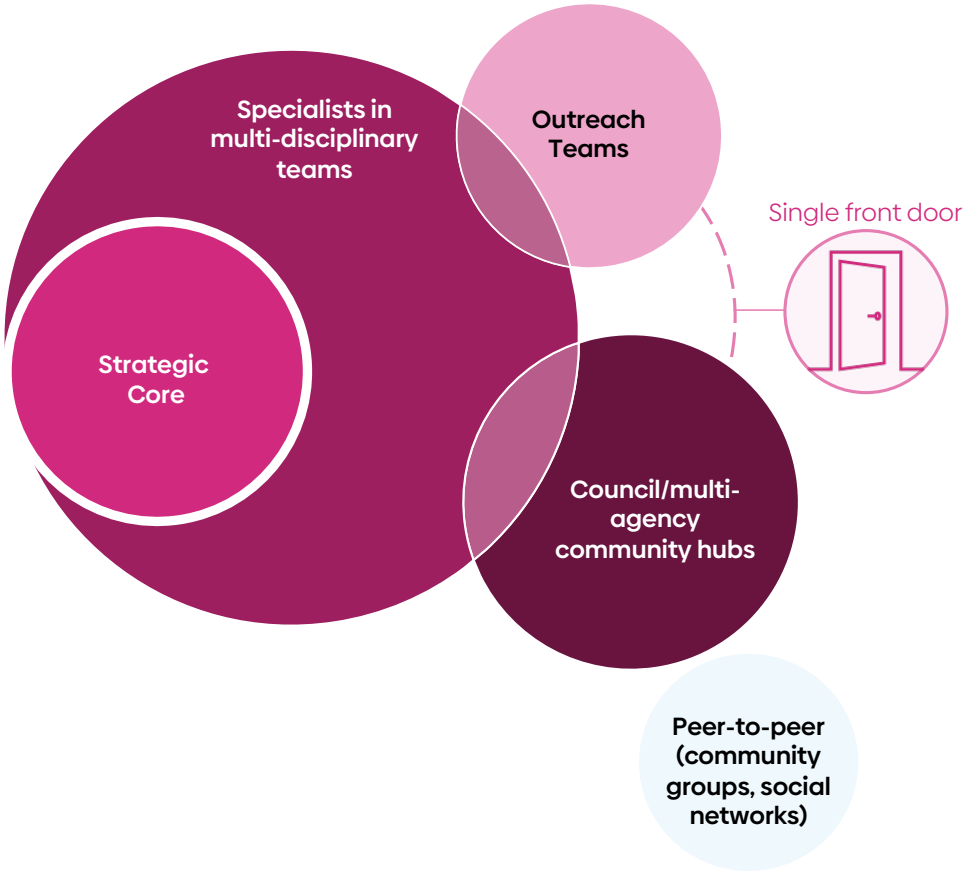
In Greater Norwich, the Thriving Communities department will bring together core services such as housing, social care, education, health, and work in lockstep with VCSE partners to unlock better outcomes for residents. This approach will co-locate services in community-based hubs where appropriate and work closely with NHS neighbourhood teams, schools, and voluntary groups. Outreach in rural areas, alongside digital and phone access, ensures all residents benefit from a clear "no wrong door" offer, with earlier, joined-up support available in trusted local settings.

The department delivers locally tailored support directly responding to the diverse pressures facing Greater Norwich, including safeguarding concerns, hidden need in rural communities, and growing demand on carers. Support is relational and strengths-based[11], taking account of the whole picture of housing, health, work, and family life. Multidisciplinary teams will coordinate responses so residents only tell their story once, with case leadership shifting seamlessly as needs change.

[11] An approach that focuses on an individual's existing strengths, assets, and potential to achieve their desired outcomes, rather than solely on their deficits or needs

Greater Norwich Thriving Communities Department

Operationally, this early intervention and prevention-focused department has 5 functions:



Strategic Core: Sets strategic direction and ensures the unitary is outcomes-focused, prevention-led, guided by evidence, effective commissioning, and strong partnerships. Leverages data to spot emerging risks, target investment, and coordinate efforts across the unitary, while tailoring commissioning to the needs of rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Specialists in multi-disciplinary teams: Provide targeted expertise, from safeguarding and mental health to housing and school engagement, within collaborative case management. Work alongside universal and community-based staff to ensure timely, appropriate interventions for complex or escalating needs.

Outreach Teams: Bring early intervention directly to those with limited access, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Provide home visits, school-based programmes, and proactive outreach to identify hidden needs and address them before they escalate.

Single front door: A unified access point by phone, online, email for self referral, referral by partners, or as a result of proactive outreach. Handles routine queries, provides low-complexity information, assistance and guidance, and connects residents to the right support or partner, ensuring people get support quickly without navigating complex systems.

Council/multi-agency hubs: Local, integrated service points in neighbourhoods and schools offering in-person support such as parenting programmes, benefits advice, and wellbeing initiatives. Trusted local staff work closely with schools, health professionals, and community partners.

Figure 4: Greater Norwich Thriving Communities department

The department will operate through five core functions that align data, people, and services around residents. Predictive analytics, supported by AI, will identify households, streets, and communities at risk 12 to 18 months before crisis, guiding timely interventions such as stabilising family life under safeguarding pressures or supporting carers before they reach breaking point.

For staff and partners, the model enables flexible team working with shared data, stronger collaboration, and less duplication. For residents, it means earlier, more connected help that strengthens families, supports carers, and improves wellbeing. Over time, this will reduce demand for costly statutory interventions, delivering better outcomes for residents and a more sustainable system for Greater Norwich.

In practice, this will look and feel like:

Resident Journey | *Thriving Communities in action in Greater Norwich*



Strategic Core – Intelligence and Targeting

The Data and Insights function identifies streets where families are showing early signs of stress, such as rising school absences, housing instability, and repeated GP visits for stress-related illness. Predictive analytics indicate some households are at risk of compounding needs within 12 to 18 months. In response, the Corporate Core directs mobile teams and VCSE partners to begin outreach, strengthens staffing in the nearest hub with a housing adviser and family support worker, and engages schools, health visitors, and the local police in planning a coordinated response.

Strategic Core

Mobile Outreach Teams – Proactive Outreach

A mobile team visits the identified streets with a Community Connector and a local charity worker. They knock on doors, join a school coffee morning, and host a drop-in at the church hall. Conversations focus on what is working as well as what is challenging.
Through this, they meet the Smith family: two parents and three children. Dad has recently lost his job, Mum works part-time, rent arrears are building, the eldest child is disengaging from school, the youngest has asthma, and the middle child is showing signs of anxiety.

Mobile Outreach Teams

Community Hub – Holistic Conversation

A week later, Mrs Smith goes online to request help with school transport costs and arrears advice. The triage officer reviews her case in the shared resident record, including notes from the mobile team, books a follow-up at the community hub, and invites a local VCSE parenting support facilitator to join, ensuring early links to wider community support.

Council/multi-agency community hubs

Single Front Door – First formal contact

At the hub, a case worker meets the Smiths to review their situation in the round. They discuss rent arrears, the children's school attendance, Mum's wish to increase her hours but needing childcare, and Dad's job search and confidence. Because all services share the same case management system, the case worker can immediately bring in a housing adviser, a school attendance officer linked to the children's schools, and a VCSE mental health worker for the middle child.

Single front door

Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Wrap-around

That week, the MDT meets virtually to finalise the family's plan. The housing team leads on arrears and landlord liaison, the school liaison arranges attendance support for the eldest and links them to an after-school club, a VCSE mental health partner begins weekly anxiety workshops for the middle child, and an employment adviser supports Dad with CV and interview skills. Case leadership follows the family's needs, starting with housing and later shifting to wellbeing once stability is achieved.

Specialists in multidisciplinary teams

Stepping down to community-led support

Over the following months, the Smiths' situation improves. Rent arrears are cleared, school attendance rises, Mum increases her work hours, Dad secures a part-time job, and the children join local sports and activities. With this progress, the family no longer needs formal MDT support. Their case is stepped down to community networks such as sports clubs, a parents' group, and the church hall café, with the assurance they can return for help if challenges arise.

Peer-to-peer

Figure 5: Thriving Communities department functions

5.2.3 Housing and homelessness

The proposed model of service delivery would bring together homelessness, housing teams and commissioned services into a prevention-focused model while preserving the HRA and social landlord function within its own specialist function.

This service would:

- Integrate homelessness and housing services into the Thriving Communities department with a greater focus on prevention and multi-disciplinary working. This will reduce the level of homelessness, the number of residents being placed in temporary accommodation and reduce the number of people waiting for permanent accommodation.
- Utilise Greater Norwich's HRA and landlord infrastructure to manage, maintained increase stock across the unitary, including much needed additional one-bed homes.
- Strengthen private rental sector (PRS) influence and enforcement through selective and additional HMO licensing.
- Use a blended development approach: in house, arms-length (for example using Big Sky Living and Broadland Living), and partnership delivery to meet need and stimulate growth, especially in fringe urban areas.

Greater Norwich's position as Norfolk's economic hub, gateway city, and university centre provides the platform to lead on housing reform, combining urban growth, targeted affordable housing delivery, and homelessness prevention. By becoming a unitary, Greater Norwich will have all the connectors needed between transport, skills, health and social care to become truly preventative. Ultimately connecting the services to people in a way that is personal and tailored to the unique needs of Greater Norwich without being swept up in simple austerity design for efficiency.

Building on Success: Pathways Norwich

Pathways is a multi-agency service in Norwich that brings together outreach, advice, and tailored support for people who are at risk of or are rough sleeping. It operates on a "no wrong door" approach, meaning people can get help from any of the partner organisations and be linked into the right support without having to navigate many complex services. Partners include local charities, health services, and the council. This effectively provides multiple front doors into support services and is a great example of work that would scale with the new unitary and is at risk

5.2.4 Adult social care

Greater Norwich must have its own sovereign Adult Social Care department to have the decision-making responsibilities to enable this new model of service delivery which will facilitate better management of demand, increased control of costs, and strengthened market sustainability.

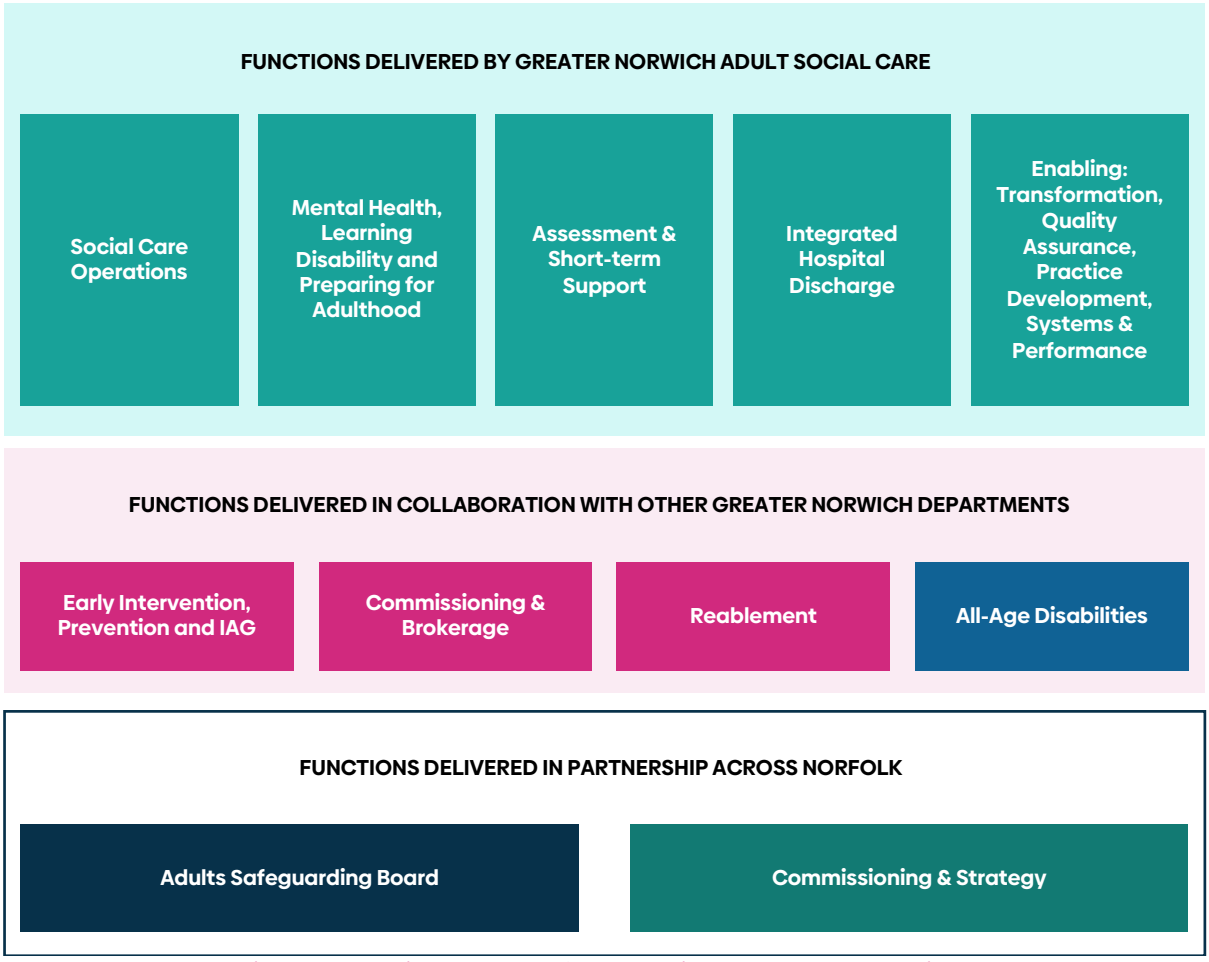


Figure 6: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary

For this to be effective Greater Norwich will implement a person-centred, strength-based approach which builds upon existing assets e.g. family and friends' networks and what is available in the local community. Given Greater Norwich will have the largest urban centre, localised multi-agency networks will deliver targeted proactive outreach in the most deprived areas. While collaborating with East and West Norfolk to manage the wider market, Greater Norwich will have greater flexibility to tailor care delivery locally, focused on urban areas and rural areas aligned to the local needs and community assets.

Coordinated working with health partners, including the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital, will ensure joined-up care in communities and support timely discharge. Greater Norwich

will also work with the Integrated Care System to deliver future models of neighbourhood health, to work together to prevent the need for long-term health and care support. Prevention-first pathways will maximise local community provision to reduce/delay demand for statutory care.

Existing county wide partnerships where there is a strong case for continuing (e.g. the Adults Safeguarding Board) will be retained to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations and support these through their connection to a more localised service delivery model. Market sustainability will be addressed through a joint commissioning function, working with providers like Norse Care. The new model will have a greater focus on learning disability through the All-Age Disabilities team which will provide smooth transitions, improve independence, and integrate housing, skills, and employment support.

This model restores the primacy of place, delivering person-centred, sustainable Adult Social Care tailored to Greater Norwich.

Building on Success: Community Connectors in South Norfolk & Broadland
Community Connectors are currently based in GP surgeries across the area who build trusted relationships with residents and can support them to meet their needs through signposting. This may be through the local leisure offer or to other community groups. They also have regular meetings with GPs to discuss cases and agree both medical and non-medical solutions to support residents to manage their needs to avoid the need for other types of care. These localised initiatives demonstrate the positive impact of joined-up, early help and prevention and show what is possible when a range of partners work well together. The new model will build upon existing good practice and what is working well in Greater Norwich.

5.2.5 Children's social care

With a younger population and a need to focus on family support, Greater Norwich must have its own individual Children's Social Care service, which will be closely integrated with the Thriving Communities department. The service will deliver Early Help, informed by an understanding of whole household needs, to provide holistic community-rooted support for the whole family. This will align with the government's requirement for Family Hubs and will take this further by providing targeted support aligned with offers from across the council.

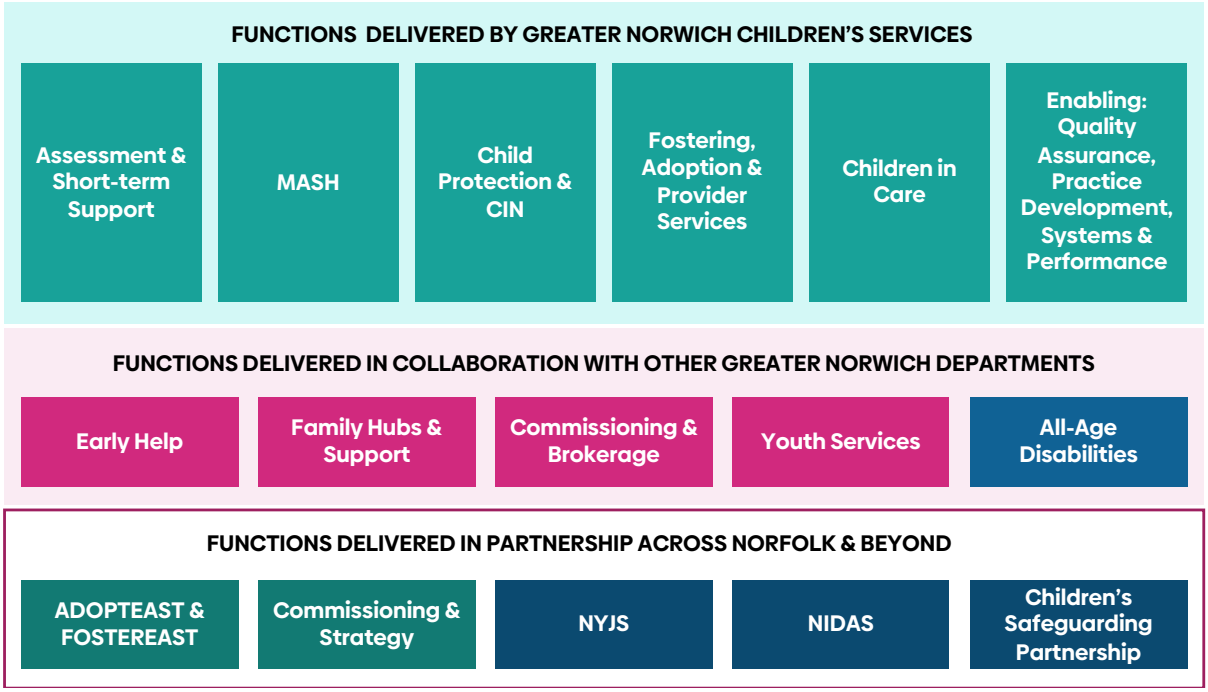


Figure 7: Functional model of Children's Social Care across the unitary.

The model prioritises family-based care through kinship care (where extended family or close family friends provide a family home for children), retaining foster carers and a step-down from residential home placements where that is in the best interest of the child. Through collaboration and integration with Housing, Greater Norwich will be able to leverage their assets and relationship with the rented sector to deliver stronger housing pathways to those leaving care – and connect them to the economic opportunities the city is cultivating – preventing young people falling through gaps between organisations.

Whilst Greater Norwich has a compelling case to deliver innovative local services, partnership working will be retained to tackle those issues that transcend unitary boundaries. This includes retaining a county-wide Children's Safeguarding Partnership, collaborating with East and West Norfolk on strategy with local implementation. Unitarisation provides Greater Norwich with the opportunity to develop its own local community provision, building capacity in the local market. This will be supported by partnership commissioning boards to manage competitive markets (such as residential care and agency staff costs) and to collaborate on the future of in-house provision and out of area placements with East and West Norfolk.

Greater Norwich's integrated, prevention-focused model will enhance outcomes, sustain the care market and ensure that children, young people and families receive timely and connected support.

5.2.6 Education & SEND

SEND & Education will be integrated into the Social Care and Thriving Communities departments. This holistic approach supports families at risk of exclusion or becoming Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET), and connects them to mental health, housing and employment support. Planning for independence, including any required transitions to Adult Social Care and between education settings, will begin early.

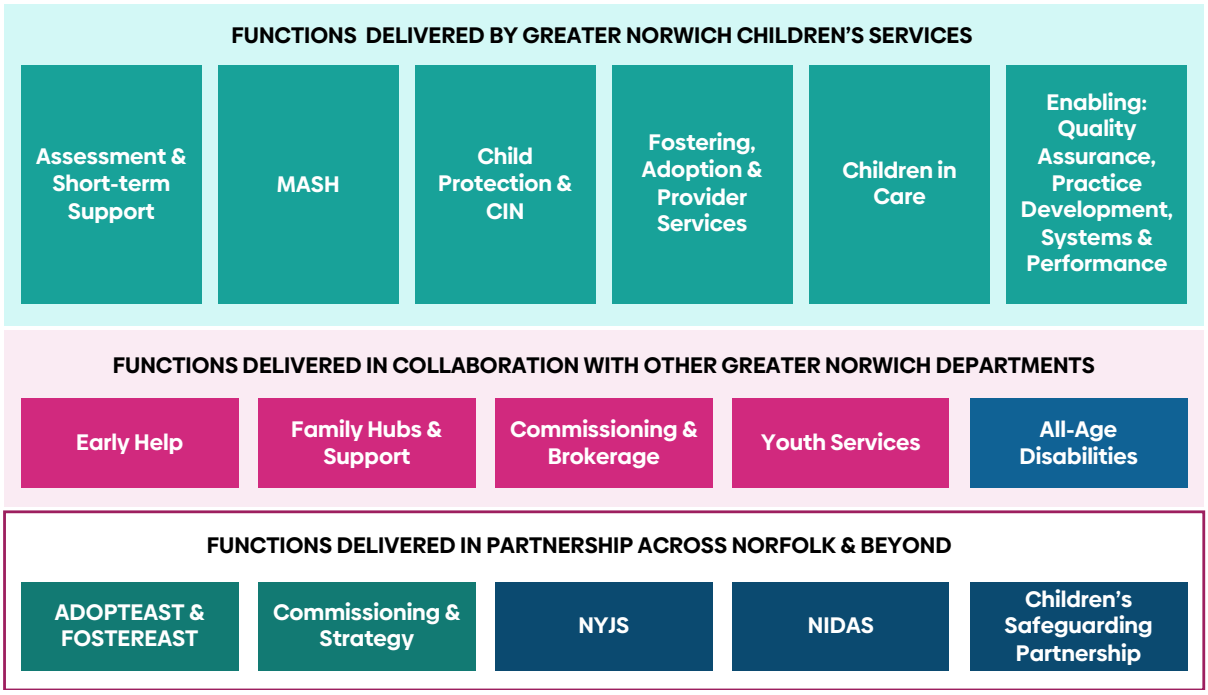


Figure 8: Functional model of Education & SEND across the unitary.

The model will be rooted in local schools and communities, delivered by multi-disciplinary teams including educational specialists and family practitioners. Family and Community Hubs will support families before statutory processes begin, whilst SEND case workers will play a central role in building long-term relationships with families. 'Teams Around Schools' will provide inclusion support, prevent school placement breakdown and reduce exclusions. Cross-county collaboration will continue in areas like recruiting specialist roles and managing provider markets, whilst ensuring local services remain responsive – including close collaboration with place planning to understand the education needs of new populations targeted through Greater Norwich's growth ambitions.

A local approach to SEND services will enable deepened relationships with schools, health and, most importantly, families, offering the opportunity to reset and deliver co-produced, community-driven services in Greater Norwich.

5.2.7 Environmental & regulatory services

The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. The model will enable this urban centre to develop, overcoming barriers that have previously impeded growth.

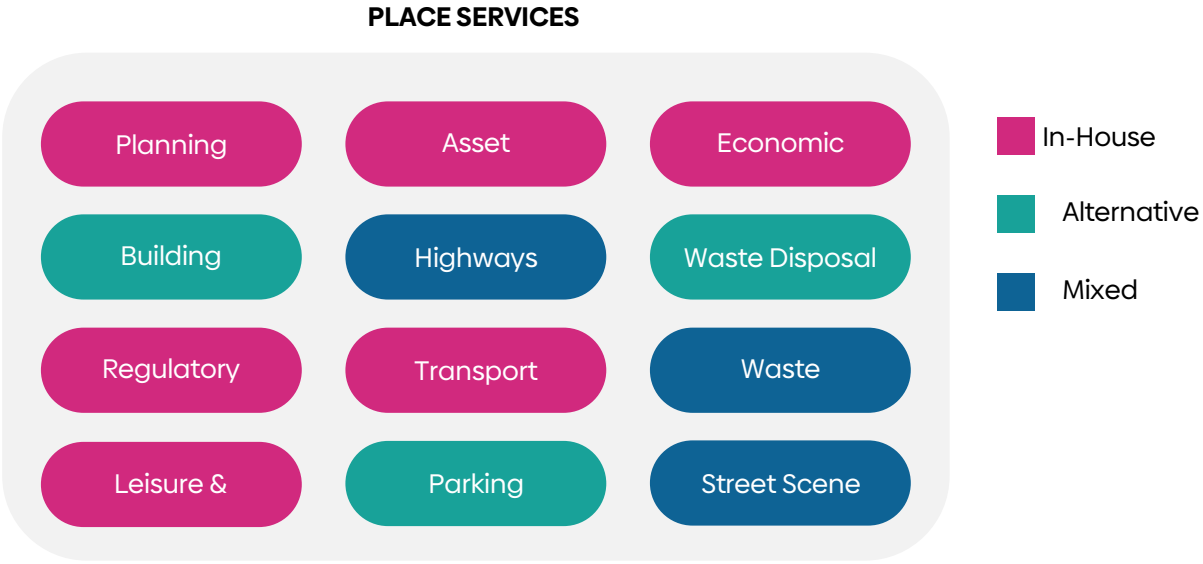


Figure 9: Place Services

The proposed model is a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints but enables a placemaking[12] approach, whilst allowing Greater Norwich to invest time in developing and implementing a new model in the longer-term.

Many services will be in-house but given the constraints of long-term contracts already in place for waste collection and disposal, street scene and highways, there will be a mixed economy. This includes the services mentioned above, and Building Control and Parking. The County Council is in the process of procuring a long-term contract with a supplier for a range of highways services which will likely commit the unitary to an outsourced model for the immediate future.

Environmental Services will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services), shared parking services, CNC Building Control and Norse. In addition, Greater Norwich will work closely with the Mayoral Combined Authority on strategic, regional transport initiatives.

[12] Placemaking is the process of shaping public spaces and communities. It is a multifaceted approach involving collaboration and design to create spaces that a foster a deeper connection between people and their environment, leading to spaces that people want to visit, live in, and care for.

Greater Norwich will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

Adopting this Place model, whereby environmental and place-based services can collaborate closely, will enable Greater Norwich to develop a tailored and joined up approach to making the neighbourhoods and wider area excellent places for residents, communities and visitors to thrive, whilst addressing challenges such as safeguarding its parks and increasing the supply of affordable homes.

5.2.8 Growth

Greater Norwich will have a central role to play in fostering inclusive growth within the area.

Any ecosystem of support to help grow the local (and regional) economy will need to span all future levels of government. This includes local initiatives (such as Business Improvement Districts and town centre regeneration schemes, growth programmes and skills support), services delivered by the unitaries, regional programmes (that will likely be delivered by a Mayoral Combined Authority) and national partnerships (such as Innovate UK).

Economic Development would also need to work closely with these services and partners to remove barriers and create an environment that fosters growth. There are opportunities to support this through better use of data and having a shared picture of local businesses that the council engages with (e.g. shared Customer Relationship Management).

Greater Norwich would complement the MCA with an appropriately scaled tailored approach, responsive to local needs and alive to local opportunities. For example, through delivery of initiatives to rejuvenate the city centre, and support working age adults in areas of high deprivation to overcome barriers to employment and secure well-paying jobs.

In the longer term, once any Mayoral Combined Authority is established, unitaries may wish to explore the opportunities to work closely in partnership and pool resources to deliver regional inclusive growth for Norfolk and Suffolk. However, this would be after vesting day and once any Mayoral Combined Authority was agreed.

This model will set Greater Norwich up to deliver tailored economic support to its area and address challenges such as rejuvenating its city centre and ensuring everyone

feels the benefits of growth, whilst collaborating with other unitaries and the Mayoral Combined Authority to boost growth in the wider region.

5.2.9 Enabling services

Greater Norwich will have core enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. These enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. HR & OD, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke model (Transformation & PMO, Data & Insight) as a means of keeping control of scarce resources and maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.

Wherever possible enabling services are delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time. There are some exceptions where a mix of models is in place – this includes Legal, Procurement and Audit.

Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a single unitary, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious transformation programme to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.

Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of Greater Norwich. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management of a large portfolio of commercial assets and linking with the housing portfolio.

There are further longer-term opportunities for Greater Norwich to collaborate with the two other unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power.

The enabling services model will set up Greater Norwich in the best possible position to deliver high quality services whilst also driving transformation and public sector reform that will improve outcomes for residents and communities whilst helping to close the budget gap.

6. Financial resilience

The proposed Greater Norwich unitary would combine Norwich City and parts of Broadland, and parts of South Norfolk into a single authority. It would take in 100% of Norwich's population, alongside 70% of Broadland and 29% of South Norfolk, creating a total population of 278,285 – the lowest population of the three proposed unitaries. With a tax base of 91,328 in 2025/26, Greater Norwich also begins from the smallest revenue-raising platform.

Despite its scale, Greater Norwich is distinctive. It encompasses Norfolk's only major urban centre, Norwich, with its concentrated deprivation and complex social needs, while also drawing on more suburban and rural areas in Broadland and South Norfolk. This contrast between a smaller, deprived core and broader, lower-deprivation surroundings defines the financial challenges facing the authority.

This section focuses on the financial resilience and viability of Greater Norwich. It examines expenditure patterns, income generation, council tax harmonisation, and the balance sheet, before assessing the authority's ability to withstand financial shocks and deliver sustainable services over time.

6.1Baseline financial position

Building on the methodology set out in the main report, we have drawn on the 2025/26 Revenue Account (RA) returns to model the funding and expenditure profile of a prospective Greater Norwich unitary authority. This analysis provides the following indicative baseline position:

£m (2025/26)	Greater Norwich
Revenue Expenditure	531.84
Revenue Income	(525.46)
Net Position	**-6.38**

Table 2: Indicative baseline position for Greater Norwich

This baseline position shows that Greater Norwich begins with a modest deficit of around £6.4m based on 2025/26 assumptions and data. While the shortfall would still require attention, it is relatively small in the context of local government and can be addressed through routine financial management measures, alongside council tax harmonisation and wider resilience planning.

The analysis shows that Greater Norwich can stand as a viable unitary authority. Greater Norwich has the potential not just to manage its starting position, but to build a financially stable platform for innovative and preventative local government.

Expenditure Profile

The starting point was the aggregation of the RA 2025/26 data across all eight existing Norfolk councils. From there, allocations for the largest service blocks — Adults, Children's, and Education — were derived using demand, capacity, and unit cost data provided by the county at LSOA level. While this dataset was incomplete and inconsistent, it allowed us to map demand patterns against the new Greater Norwich boundaries and to allocate expenditure accordingly.

The analysis revealed that Greater Norwich consistently carries the lowest demand pressures of the three proposed unitaries. In education, it has the smallest school-aged population, with the lowest proportion of both primary and secondary pupils and the lowest share of children with Education, Health and Care Plans. Although it has the highest number of post-16 pupils, overall demand is relatively light, and this results in the lowest education expenditure allocation.

A similar pattern is seen in adult social care, where Greater Norwich records the lowest demand for nursing care across both working-age and older adults, and the lowest demand for residential care for older adults—just 22 per cent of Norfolk's total. Domiciliary care demand is also comparatively modest, particularly among older residents, and unit costs across all types of care are the lowest in the county. As a result, Greater Norwich accounts for only a quarter of Norfolk's total adult social care expenditure, markedly less than the other proposed unitaries. Its adult social care spend per head is just £421.39, comfortably the lowest in Norfolk.

Children's services present a more balanced picture, with Greater Norwich sitting broadly in the middle range for costs associated with residential placements, internal fostering and IFRA arrangements.

The combination of lower demand in education and adult social care — alongside relatively modest children's costs — means Greater Norwich records the lowest overall expenditure of the three proposed unitaries.

Funding Profile

Greater Norwich's income base is drawn from the familiar sources available to all local authorities: council tax, business rates, commercial property income, central government grants (both general and service-specific), and a range of fees, charges and other locally generated income. To calculate the likely income position, we disaggregated the RA 2025/26 submissions for all eight existing councils. County-level income lines, particularly those relating to Aggregate External Finance (AEF), required

further breakdown: schools and social care-related grants were split according to the demand patterns previously established in our expenditure modelling, while more general grants were apportioned using population or, where relevant, deprivation indicators. In cases where reserves or appropriations could be linked to specific functions (for example, schools reserves), we aligned them with the relevant demand data.

A particular focus was placed on the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). Here, deprivation data was used to allocate funding, reflecting the approach taken in the government's Fair Funding Review consultation. The most recent Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) from 2019 show Norwich to be among the most deprived areas nationally: one in five neighbourhoods falls within the bottom decile, and over a third of residents live in some of the most deprived LSOAs in England. When these indicators are mapped onto the Greater Norwich boundaries, they reveal that 21% of its neighbourhoods are highly deprived, compared with 13% in East Norfolk and 11 per cent in West Norfolk. Indeed, Greater Norwich alone accounts for 42% of all Norfolk's most deprived LSOAs. This explains why more RSG was apportioned to Greater Norwich than to the other two authorities and aligns with recent analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), which suggests that urban authorities such as Norwich are likely to benefit from the eventual implementation of Fair Funding 2.0.

For business rates, we apportioned district-level income on a district basis, with only Broadland and South Norfolk requiring a split. This was achieved using LSOA data provided by finance officers. At the county level, income was divided on a population basis, following agreement among finance officers that this was the most representative method given the available data. On this basis, Greater Norwich accounts for 29% of business rates in the Norfolk area.

It is important to note, however, that the forthcoming reset of the Business Rates Retention system is likely to significantly alter future distributions. Deprivation is expected to play a greater role in apportionment, which would be favourable for Greater Norwich.

This financial modelling exercise highlighted the volatility of different assumptions used for splitting expenditure and income in a reorganisation scenario. Whether Greater Norwich begins in deficit or surplus depends less on its underlying demand profile—which is relatively favourable—and more on how government ultimately reshapes the funding system. What can be said with confidence is that deprivation is likely to carry greater weight in future settlements, placing Greater Norwich in a strong position to secure additional central government support.

Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power (CSP) provides the clearest measure of the resources available to local authorities to deliver services, bringing together the Settlement Funding Assessment, council tax, and central government grants as set out in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

On this measure, Greater Norwich records the lowest CSP of the three proposed unitaries. This reflects a smaller tax base, which naturally limits the scale of locally raised income, alongside a modest level of central government grant. However, deprivation ensures that Greater Norwich attracts a greater share of Revenue Support Grant than East or West Norfolk, partially balancing these factors.

Overall, CSP suggests that Greater Norwich starts with slightly fewer resources per head than its counterparts, but the difference is not significant. Its long-term position will depend less on this starting point and more on future reforms—such as Fair Funding 2.0—which will be central to securing a sustainable and fair settlement.

6.2 Council tax harmonisation

A defining financial challenge for Greater Norwich lies in the very different council tax levels inherited from its constituent authorities. In 2025/26, Norwich City's Band D council tax stands at £306.11, by far the highest in Norfolk and more than double the rates in South Norfolk (£175.14) and Broadland (£134.91). Yet despite being the county's main urban centre, Norwich has the smallest tax base of the three, with only 39,166 Band D equivalent properties compared with 54,097 in South Norfolk and 49,789 in Broadland. This reflects a housing stock with fewer large properties and a higher proportion of flats, student housing and lower-band dwellings.

	2025/26	
Local Authority	**Band D**	**Tax Base**
South Norfolk	175.00	54,097
Broadland	134.91	49,789
Norwich	306.11	39,166
Norfolk County Council	1,755.63	324,009

Table 3: Greater Norwich district councils Band D and Tax Base 2025/26

The combination of a high precept but a relatively narrow base means that Norwich's overall yield is not as strong as might be expected. Conversely, South Norfolk and Broadland each benefit from much larger tax bases, but their lower Band D rates hold

back overall revenue. When brought together into a single unitary, Greater Norwich therefore begins with the lowest council tax revenues of the three new authorities.

Our harmonisation modelling explored five different approaches to aligning council tax rates across the new unitary over a ten-year horizon. The results show that outcomes vary significantly depending on the chosen methodology.

Importantly, this analysis does not make a recommendation. The five scenarios presented are intended to illustrate a range of legally compliant options and their potential fiscal impact. It will be for each shadow authority, once established, to determine its preferred approach to harmonisation based on its local context, policy priorities, and political judgement.

Results for Greater Norwich:

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	7.19
High to Min	-160.60
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-81.86
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	19.13
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-63.54

Table 4: Greater Norwich Council Tax Harmonisation Results

Greater Norwich is the only one of the three proposed unitaries to generate positive outcomes under two scenarios: Low to Max and Weighted Average plus 5%. Under the Low to Max pathway, all districts align to Norwich's very high Band D. For most areas this represents a substantial uplift compared with the baseline, though Norwich itself sees an effective freeze. The benefits are not immediate: the scenario only begins to outperform the baseline in 2031/32, when the 5% referendum cap applied to the new unitary overtakes the 3% district cap in the baseline. This explains why the overall gain is relatively modest.

To illustrate what each scenario would mean for residents, we modelled the change in Band D charges under each scenario. These can be found in Appendix C.

Conclusion

Council tax harmonisation presents one of the most complex financial challenges for Greater Norwich. With Norwich City starting from the highest Band D in Norfolk but the smallest tax base, and Broadland and South Norfolk offering larger bases but much lower rates, any convergence produces sharp distributional impacts.

The modelling shows that only two scenarios — Low to Max and Weighted Average +5% — deliver positive revenue gains, though these come at the cost of steep increases for Broadland and South Norfolk households. By contrast, High to Min, Weighted Average, and Fastest Harmonisation all reduce resources, in some cases substantially, weakening Greater Norwich's already fragile fiscal base.

The authority therefore faces a delicate balance: while harmonisation offers the opportunity to stabilise revenues, it also risks placing significant burdens on residents depending on the chosen pathway. This underlines that Greater Norwich's fiscal sustainability will depend less on cost reductions and more on difficult choices about its revenue strategy and how equitably it distributes the impact of harmonisation across very different starting positions.

6.3 Building an organisation fit for the future

For Greater Norwich, the transition to unitary status is not simply a structural exercise, but a fundamental opportunity to reshape how services are delivered for a smaller, more urban population base. With the lowest population and tax base of the three proposed authorities, and the lowest overall Core Spending Power, Greater Norwich must build an organisation that is financially resilient, efficient, and innovative if it is to remain sustainable in the long term.

This requires creating a council that is leaner, more agile, and better able to meet residents' needs in a rapidly changing social and financial environment. The balance for Greater Norwich is particularly delicate: it must generate sufficient efficiencies from consolidation while also investing in new capacity, digital capability, and innovative service models to underpin long-term viability.

The picture for Greater Norwich:

Year	Financial Year	One-Off Costs	Recurring Costs	Recurring Savings	Net Impact	Cumulative Net Impact
0	2026/27 - 2027/28	-11	0	0	-11	-11
1	2028/29	-6	-2	5	-3	-14
2	2029/30	-9	-2	11	0	-14
3	2030/31	-5	-2	14	7	-7
4	2031/32	-1	-2	16	13	6
5	2032/33	0	-2	17	15	20
6	2033/34	0	-2	17	15	36
7	2034/35	0	-2	17	15	51
8	2035/36	0	-2	17	15	67

Table 5: Eight Year Profile of Savings and Costs of Transition

Transition costs & savings

Greater Norwich faces around £11m in one-off transition costs across the pre-vesting period (2026/27–2027/28), covering shadow authority set-up, ICT migration, and workforce restructuring. In addition, there is a permanent £2m per annum disaggregation cost from splitting county-wide services and South Norfolk and Broadland's services.

Recurring savings build progressively:

- Year 1 (2028/29): modest efficiencies of £5m are achieved, leaving a net deficit of around £3m.
- Year 2 (2029/30): savings increase to £11m, with the authority almost in balance, carrying forward only a small residual deficit.
- Year 3 (2030/31): structural savings of £14m outweigh costs, generating a net in-year surplus of £7m, reducing the cumulative deficit close to zero.
- Year 4 (2031/32): recurring savings of £16m are fully embedded, moving the cumulative position into surplus.
- From Year 5 onwards: annual savings stabilise at £17m, creating a steady recurring benefit.

On this trajectory, the payback point is reached in Year 4 (2031/32), when cumulative benefits outweigh the upfront investment. By Year 8 (2035/36), Greater Norwich achieves a recurring annual net benefit of around £15m and a cumulative surplus of £67m.

These savings are driven by workforce consolidation, system integration, and investment in digital capability, supported by prevention-led service models to reduce long-term demand. However, disaggregation costs remain a structural burden, particularly given Greater Norwich's relatively smaller resource base.

Strategic Conclusion

Costs	
Total one-off investment	£32m
Recurring additional costs	£2m
Benefits	
Total recurring savings	£17m (by 33/34)
Cumulative savings (over 8 year period)	£67m
Net position	
Net financial impact	£67m
Break-even point	Year 4 (31/32)

Table 6: Summary of the financial implications for unitarisation and public sector reform of the proposal

For Greater Norwich, the case for reorganisation is about converting significant upfront costs into long-term resilience. Although early years see deficits, the modelling demonstrates that once efficiencies are embedded, the authority can deliver a sustained net annual benefit of £15–17m and a cumulative surplus of nearly £70m by Year 8. Crucially, these reforms create a financially viable authority able to reinvest in innovation and preventative service delivery.

6.4 Balance sheet position

A local authority's balance sheet is a critical measure of its overall financial health and resilience. A strong balance sheet provides stability, enabling councils to invest in infrastructure, manage risk, and respond to shocks without jeopardising service delivery. Conversely, a weak or overextended balance sheet can leave authorities vulnerable, forcing difficult choices about borrowing, asset sales, or service reductions.

In the context of local government reorganisation, balance sheets take on added significance. The process of balance sheet disaggregation — that is, unpicking the existing county and district-level assets, liabilities, and reserves and reallocating them to the new unitary bodies — will shape the starting financial position of each authority. Decisions about how debt, pension liabilities, cash reserves, and fixed assets are split will directly affect each unitary's capacity to invest, its exposure to risk, and the sustainability of its financial strategy.

While our intention was to build a robust and detailed understanding of the balance sheet position for each of the proposed unitary authorities, we were not able to do so in practice. The County Council did not provide the necessary data on assets, liabilities, and reserves, despite repeated requests. Without this information, it was not possible to model balance sheet disaggregation at the level of rigour we had originally planned.

In the absence of a full dataset, we adopted a pragmatic approach by applying population-based splits to approximate the distribution of county-level balance sheet items across the proposed unitaries. While this method offers a broad indication of scale, it does not capture the geographic variation in asset holdings, service liabilities, or borrowing commitments that would ultimately influence the financial resilience of each new authority. For clarity this analysis includes HRA borrowing.

This limitation should therefore be borne in mind when interpreting the results: the figures presented provide a high-level view rather than a definitive statement of the future balance sheet positions.

Greater Norwich Indicative Position (2028/29)

(£000s)	Amount
General Fund Unearmarked Reserves	21,357
General Fund Earmarked Reserves	64,541
Long-Term Borrowing*	485,434
Short-Term Borrowing*	9,863
Non-Current Assets	1,882,731

Table 7: Greater Norwich Indicative Position (2028/29)

**Includes HRA borrowing*

To aid understanding of the balance sheet position, we have devised five key financial performance indicators tailored to a local authority context. These indicators move beyond the headline numbers to present a richer picture of financial resilience and sustainability. Each indicator is supported by a RAG rating framework, with thresholds informed by literature reviews and recognised best practice. Sources are cited under each indicator. To ensure comparability, the figures used throughout are based on the 2028/29 financial year.

Indicator: Unearmarked Reserves as % of Net Revenue Budget

- **What it is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of unearmarked (unrestricted) general fund reserves a council holds, expressed as a percentage of its annual net revenue expenditure. It represents the level of financial flexibility the authority has to absorb unexpected pressures.
- **Why it matters:** Unearmarked reserves are the council's most accessible form of financial resilience. They provide a vital buffer against unforeseen events such as sudden drops in income, spikes in demand for services, or inflationary cost increases. A low level of reserves exposes the authority to greater risk of financial instability and can limit its ability to respond effectively to shocks. Maintaining a robust reserve position is therefore widely recognised as fundamental to good financial management.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Greater than 10%
🟠 Amber	Between 5% and 10%
🔴 Red	Less than 5%

Table 8: Thresholds for ratings for unearmarked reserves as % of net revenue expenditure

Sources: CIPFA Briefing – Resilience in Local Authorities

Finding for Greater Norwich: 5% — 🟠 Amber

At 5%, Greater Norwich sits at the amber threshold, meaning it has some capacity to withstand financial shocks but is at the lower end of prudent practice. This suggests that while the authority could absorb a limited one-off pressure, it would have far less resilience in the face of sustained or multiple shocks and would need to take corrective action more quickly than councils with stronger reserves.

Debt per Capita

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the total level of long- and short-term borrowing held by a council, divided by the population of the prospective unitary authority. It reflects the notional share of debt attributable to each resident. *This includes HRA borrowing.

- **Why it matters:** Debt per capita provides insight into the financial burden being carried on a per-person basis. While borrowing can be an entirely legitimate tool to fund long-term capital investment, higher levels of debt can constrain future financial flexibility. They also bring ongoing obligations in the form of interest

payments and repayment costs, which reduce the resources available for frontline services.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than £1,000
🟠 Amber	Between £1,000 and £2,000
🔴 Red	More than £2,000

Table 9: Thresholds for ratings for debt per capita

Sources: NAO report on financial sustainability of local authorities – emphasises affordability relative to taxpayer base

Finding for Greater Norwich: £1,780 — 🟠 Amber

At £1,780 per resident, Greater Norwich falls within the amber category. This level of debt is not excessive compared with some other authorities and reflects borrowing to support a strong asset base. However, it does indicate a moderate financial burden on residents and signals that future borrowing capacity may be somewhat constrained. While manageable, the position will require careful monitoring to ensure affordability is maintained as wider financial pressures increase.

Indicator: Debt to Non-Current Assets

- **What this is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of a council's non-current asset base that is funded through borrowing. It is calculated by dividing forecast long- and short-term debt by forecast non-current assets. The result provides insight into the council's financial leverage and balance sheet resilience.
- **Why it matters:** A higher debt-to-asset ratio indicates greater reliance on borrowing to support the council's financial position, potentially signalling reduced flexibility and increased vulnerability during periods of financial stress. A lower ratio suggests more conservative borrowing practices and a stronger, more resilient balance sheet.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 30%
🟠 Amber	Between 30% and 50%
🔴 Red	More than 50%

Table 10: Thresholds for ratings for debt to total assets

Sources: CIPFA Capital Risks Metrics, CIPFA Advisory Note: Reinforcing Good Practice in External Borrowing, NAO (2016) Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities

Finding for Greater Norwich: 26% — 🟢 Green

With debt equivalent to 26% of its total assets, Greater Norwich is firmly within the green range. This indicates that the authority's borrowing is modest relative to the scale of its asset base, reflecting a prudent and sustainable approach to leverage. The low ratio provides reassurance that the council has substantial asset backing against its liabilities, offering balance sheet resilience and scope to withstand future challenges without becoming over-reliant on debt.

Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the ratio of a council's total long- and short-term borrowing to its annual income from council tax. It provides a perspective on how much debt the council is carrying relative to one of its most reliable and locally controlled sources of revenue.
- **Why it matters:** Council tax represents a stable, recurring income stream that underpins financial resilience. A high debt-to-council tax revenue ratio can signal affordability risks, as more of the council's core income would need to be diverted to service debt, leaving less available for frontline services. A lower ratio indicates that the council's debt levels are more proportionate to its recurring revenue base, suggesting stronger affordability and sustainability.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 2x
🟠 Amber	Between 2x and 3x
🔴 Red	More than 3x

Table 11: Thresholds for Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

Sources: Room 151 – is local government debt trajectory sustainable?, Woking Case Study

Finding for Greater Norwich: 2.32x — 🟠 Amber

At 1.62 times annual council tax revenue, Greater Norwich falls within the amber category. This indicates that while borrowing remains broadly affordable, the level of debt is material and requires careful management. The indicator highlights a moderate risk that debt repayments could place some pressure on the authority's financial flexibility, potentially constraining choices on future service funding. This scenario assumes council tax harmonisation to the highest-yielding model — the Weighted Average + 5% approach — which strengthens the recurring revenue base but does not eliminate the need for close monitoring of debt sustainability.

Annual Revenue Costs of Debt as % of Net Revenue Budget

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the proportion of a council's net revenue budget spent on servicing debt, including both interest payments and statutory repayments of principal (Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP).
- **Why it matters:** Debt servicing competes directly with frontline spending. As a greater share of the revenue budget is absorbed by debt costs, the council has less flexibility to respond to financial pressures or to invest in services. A lower proportion signals stronger affordability and resilience, whereas higher levels can point to potential sustainability challenges, particularly if income growth is weak or further borrowing is required.

Rating	Threshold
🟢 Green	Less than 5%
🟠 Amber	Between 5% and 10%
🔴 Red	More than 10%

Table 12: Thresholds for Annual Revenue Costs of Debt (as % of Net Revenue Budget)

Sources: The Times – Warning of more council bankruptcies as debt doubles

Finding for Greater Norwich: 5% — 🟠 Amber

At 5%, Greater Norwich sits exactly on the amber threshold. This suggests that while debt remains broadly affordable, it already absorbs a material share of the revenue budget. The position is not yet critical, but it highlights the importance of careful treasury management and of avoiding additional borrowing pressures which could push the ratio further into amber or red territory.

6.5 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was established under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as a ring-fenced account, separate from the General Fund. It records all income and expenditure relating to the ownership and management of a council's social housing stock. Typical income streams include rents from tenants, service charges, and government grants or subsidies. Expenditure covers housing management costs, repairs and maintenance, capital investment in the stock, and the servicing of housing-related borrowing. The HRA plays a central role in delivering local housing strategies: maintaining and improving existing homes, ensuring compliance

with housing standards and decarbonisation targets, and in some cases funding the development of new council housing.

For Greater Norwich, the assumption is that Norwich City Council's HRA will be wholly subsumed into the new unitary authority, since no boundary changes are proposed for the city. This means the HRA, and its financial trajectory, will directly underpin the new authority's housing strategy from vesting day.

Norwich City Council's HRA accounts for 2023/24 record income of £74.87m against expenditure of £73.96m, alongside loan charges of £6.54m. The reported deficit of £2.52m highlights a structural pressure within the HRA: debt servicing is already consuming a material proportion of resources (around 9% of income), constraining the ability to reinvest. With the council managing around 14,150 homes and services for 3,400 leaseholders, the scale of operations is significant, but so too are the pressures.

Part of this strain reflects the legacy of national policy. The government's enforced four-year rent reduction policy under the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, followed by the rent cap in April 2023, has eroded the council's rental income base. These interventions, combined with rising inflation, the costs of decarbonisation, and new regulatory obligations, have forced Norwich to rely more heavily on borrowing to sustain investment. The risks are compounded by external factors such as the cost-of-living crisis, the ongoing roll-out of Universal Credit, and the continuation of Right-to-Buy legislation — all of which could depress future rental streams.

Although the HRA was forecast to deliver a £5.53m surplus of income over expenditure in 2023/24, the council had already earmarked this, alongside £1.21m of existing reserves, to fund capital investment in new social housing. Importantly, the HRA also held a reserves balance of £42m as at 31 March 2024. This provides a significant buffer that can be drawn upon to support capital programmes, manage shocks, or smooth the trajectory of borrowing over the business plan period.

The financial strategy for the HRA is based on a long-term business planning framework that models revenue and capital costs over 30 years. This provides resilience but also highlights a sobering trajectory: debt levels are expected to rise rather than fall across the plan period, with affordability deteriorating unless mitigating actions are continually pursued.

Despite these challenges, Norwich's HRA retains strengths. The lifting of the national HRA debt cap has created headroom for further borrowing, and the council's business plan demonstrates that, within prudential limits, there is capacity to expand the housing programme. Combined with a developed Housing Strategy and recent practical experience in new build delivery, the council is positioning the HRA as both a landlord function and a growth tool. In principle, significant earmarked reserves could

be deployed for new stock acquisition or development, while ensuring compliance, decency standards, and preparation for Awaab's Law remain the overriding priorities.

In short, the Norwich HRA represents both an opportunity and a risk for the new Greater Norwich unitary. It brings with it a substantial income base, a large housing stock, and strategic capacity for new build. Yet it also carries an inherited legacy of suppressed rents, rising debt, and growing cost pressures. Its long-term sustainability will depend on tight financial management, careful balancing of borrowing and investment, and the success of ongoing mitigating actions. With this discipline, however, the HRA could underpin not just the city's housing offer but also the wider growth and regeneration strategy of the new authority.

6.6 Conclusion: financial resilience and long-term viability

Greater Norwich begins life with a forecast deficit of £6.38m in 2025/26, but this should be seen in context: budget gaps of this kind are common across the sector, and the new authority would have the means to address it. Its relatively modest demand pressures in adults and education provide a more favourable cost base than its peers, while its high levels of deprivation position it strongly to benefit from the government's next phase of Fair Funding reforms. On current assumptions, Greater Norwich could move from deficit into surplus if resources are redistributed more in line with need — a prospect supported by national analysis suggesting urban authorities such as Norwich stand to gain.

Council tax harmonisation remains the most significant financial lever available. While some scenarios entail sharp impacts on residents, others — particularly Weighted Average +5% — show Greater Norwich capable of generating additional revenues of nearly £20m over ten years. The challenge for the shadow authority will be to select an approach that secures long-term sustainability while distributing impacts fairly across communities.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) adds further weight to Greater Norwich's position. Norwich City Council's HRA — which will be fully subsumed into the new authority — manages over 14,000 homes and generated income of nearly £75m in 2023/24. With £42m of reserves and significant borrowing headroom, the HRA provides both a buffer and an opportunity: a mechanism to invest in housing growth, decarbonisation, and improved standards. Yet it also brings risks, as the long-term affordability of the account is under pressure from historic rent caps, rising debt, and the costs of maintaining and upgrading stock. Managing the HRA prudently will be critical to balancing immediate landlord obligations with the chance to expand affordable housing supply.

On the balance sheet, Greater Norwich enters with a manageable debt profile, strong asset coverage, and affordable borrowing relative to its council tax base. While reserves are lean, this is not unusual in today's local government environment. With careful management and early efficiency gains, the authority would be able to strengthen its financial resilience over time.

Taken together, the analysis shows that Greater Norwich can stand as a viable unitary authority. Its path to sustainability rests not simply on cost control but on a transformative plan grounded in growth, prevention, and public service reform. With these reforms, and with the prospect of fairer national funding settlements, Greater Norwich has the potential not just to manage its starting position, but to build a financially sustainable platform for innovative and preventative local government.

7. Assessment against government criteria

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OUR APPROACH		
A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	Under this proposal a single tier of local government is achieved as three new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich. In developing this case for a three-unitary Norfolk, an options appraisal has been undertaken of the alternatives using the government's Local Government Reorganisation criteria to ensure the best option is proposed for the region.	*Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 5 in this proposal*
Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage of disadvantage for one part of the area.	The proposal presents a sensible economic area for the new Greater Norwich unitary, as the area is Norfolk's economic engine, a city-region with international reach, world-class institutions, and a distinctive blend of creativity, science, and civic ambition. Its influence extends beyond the historic city and includes the University of East Anglia, Norwich University of the Arts. Norwich is a member of the 'Fast Growth Cities' programme, members of which are recognised for their exceptional economic performance, innovation capacity and growth potential. Yet the under bounded nature of the existing city council area restricts its	*Section 3 in this proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	planning powers and constrains efforts to manage growth in a strategic, integrated way. Whilst it will have the smallest tax base of the three areas, this is off-set by benefits from deprivation-led funding formulas through Fair Funding 2.0 and business-rates reset.	
Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.	A new unitary which reflects the urban area of Norwich will help to increase housing supply as the additional land proposed to be included in Greater Norwich will unlock areas on the urban fringe for new development to meet local need. In planning terms, the three unitary model solidifies the current partnership with South Norfolk & Broadland developed through the joint Local Plan with new powers over infrastructure such as highways and education which the current districts do not have.	Sections 3, and 5.2.3 in this proposal. Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprints. Section 5.2 Appendix D - Boundaries
Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.	The development of the proposed has been informed by a comprehensive engagement exercise including council members and staff, key stakeholders, and residents across Norfolk, resulting in the proposed new council target operating model with associated benefits. An assessment has also been made on the financial implications of reorganisation which estimated the costs, savings, and income implications of the three-unitary model and is set out in the financial resilience section.	Section 5 in this proposal Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprints

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
Proposals should clearly describe the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these areas expected to achieve the outcomes described.	Greater Norwich's ambition to unlock local growth must be balanced with tackling the complex challenges the expanding city region will face. A new unitary council provides the opportunity to shift from crisis management to service reform, building on existing inclusive practice in local schools and a strong voluntary and community sector which can reduce duplication by bringing together core services and lead to better outcomes for residents.	Section 5 in this area proposal Appendix F - Greater Norwich Blueprints.
UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRITERIA		
Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.	A new unitary for Greater Norwich presents an opportunity to reshape how services are offered for predominantly urban population base which is smaller than those in the West and East. This requires a council which will be leaner, more agile, and better able to meet residents' needs. It will achieve this by creating sufficient efficiencies from consolidation while also investing in new capacity, digital capability, and innovative service models to underpin long-term viability.	Section 6 in this proposal Appendix C - Financial Appraisal
As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 of more.	The total population of Greater Norwich is 278,285 residents.	*Section 3 in this proposal*
There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area,	While the population of the unitary is below the 500,000 figure typically cited in government guidance, our economic,	*Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.	demographic, and service delivery distinctiveness warrant a bespoke governance model. The case for unitarisation is built not on strict adherence to population size, but on functional need and strategic opportunity, reflecting distinct opportunities and challenges, and the imperative to align services with the real geography of people's lives	*Appendix D - Boundaries*
Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.	The proposal for Greater Norwich provides an opportunity to reshape how services are delivered to a smaller, urban population base than in the West and East and so means creating a council that is leaner, more agile, and better able to meet residents' needs. Efficiencies can be made through workforce consolidation, system integration, and investment in digital capability, supported by the Early Intervention and Prevention model to reduce long-term service demand. Once these efficiencies are embedded, Greater Norwich can deliver a sustained net annual benefit of £15m and a cumulative surplus approaching £70m.	*Sections 5.2, 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal*
Proposals should set out how will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward	Greater Norwich faces around £35m in transition costs spread across the first three years of operation. Through workforce consolidation, system integration, and investment in digital capability, supported by the Early Intervention and Prevention model to reduce long-term service demand, the cumulative benefits will outweigh the upfront investment by year 5,	*Sections 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal.* *Section 7 in the main proposal.* *Appendix H – Implementation Plan*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
transformation and invest-to-save projects.	and by year 8 will achieve an annual net benefit of £15m.	
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.	As a unitary, Greater Norwich will be able to take a single, coordinated approach to addressing inequality – integrating public health, housing and wider resident support into one system of delivery. Decisions can be made with a deep understanding of local communities. Through an integrated model, rising demand can be met with services that work in partnership with communities with greater collaboration between services and partners to deliver more effective interventions. Unitarisation for Greater Norwich will create the conditions for consistent, person centred and sustainable public services, improving outcomes for residents and enabling a thriving place.	*Section 5 in this proposal* *Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprint*
Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.	In developing the service delivery models for each new unitary area, delivering services at a scale and proximity to better serve citizens have been the key objectives. However, considerations have been made to avoid unnecessary fragmentation or disaggregation of key services where a joined-up approach is the optimum solution. For example, each unitary has their own sovereign social care service to deliver local services but collaborate on key areas such as Safeguarding Partnerships and	*Section 5 in this proposal* *Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprint*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	Commissioning through partnership boards.	
Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.	A new unitary for Greater Norwich provides a unique opportunity to deliver public service reform through locally-defined, person centred services, for example through a single body and approach to tackle the challenges of inequality by bringing together public health, housing and support for people; and an integrated early intervention approach that joins up statutory services to provide targeted preventative support.	*Section 5.2 in this proposal* *Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprint*
Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.	The proposals for Greater Norwich have considered the impact on a range of crucial public services and how the new unitaries can deliver better public services, including: • A community-based early intervention and prevention model • Consolidated management & maintenance functions, expanding the HRA as capacity allows, and a blended approach of in-house and Arm's Length Organisation (ALO) delivery. • A localised approach for adult social, children's social care and SEND where each unitary has their own social care service to deliver to local services with collaboration on some key areas to avoid unnecessary disaggregation.	*Sections 5.2.1 - 5.2.6 in this proposal.* *Section 9 in the main proposal* *Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprints* *Appendix H – Implementation Plan* *Appendix I – RAID Log*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT		
Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.	The engagement programme for Future Norfolk aimed to build an informed understanding of the three-unitary model, with an ambition to strengthen democratic accountability, respect local identity and deliver sustainable, adaptable public services. From the outset, we moved from early awareness-raising and listening around the three pillars—People, Place, Progress - that lead us towards a confident, coordinated presentation of views aligned within our proposal that met the Government's criteria.	*Section 6 in the main proposal*
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.	A number of methods and strategies were specifically designed to ensure meaningful and constructive engagement which are outlined in full in section 6 of the main proposal.	*Section 6 within the main proposal*
Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.	'Place' was one of the key pillars of the engagement strategy to ensure that the proposals actively and meaningfully considered issues of local identity. Respecting local identify and cultural and historic significance was a key part of the engagement programme.	*Sections 2, 3 and 4 in this proposal.* *Section 6 in the main proposal*
Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put	Section 6 of the main proposal provides evidence of the outcomes of the engagement programme, which included over 5,000 survey submissions, 17,800 website visitors,	*Section 6 within the main proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
forward and how concerns will be addressed.	and a reach of nearly 500,000 on social media.	
BOUNDARY CHANGE		
Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.	Our current boundaries do not reflect the true geography of our functional economy. A growing share of economic activity has shifted to the outskirts, fuelling suburban expansion while leaving parts of our city centre stagnating. This makes us more like other English city-regions than rural Norfolk, and it calls for a whole-place approach to growth and public service reform. Creating the new Greater Norwich Unitary Authority is essential to reflect how people live and work and to unlock the strategic investment needed to deliver our growth ambitions.	*Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal* *Appendix A – Options Appraisal* *Appendix D – Boundaries*
DEVOLUTION SUPPORT		
New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	The three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside three in Suffolk, strengthens devolution by combining strategic regional leadership with strong local representation. It enables balanced decision-making, supports shared priorities like infrastructure, skills, and housing, and ensures diverse voices inform regional governance. This structure fosters inclusive growth and operational resilience while maintaining local accountability and effective collaboration across both counties.	Section 8 within the main proposal

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.	The three-unitary model for Norfolk strengthens devolution by enabling balanced representation within a Mayoral Combined Authority shared with Suffolk. It supports strategic regional planning while preserving local delivery and democratic accountability. With six unitaries across both counties, the model enhances collaboration, aligns with shared economic and infrastructure priorities, and ensures diverse voices inform regional decisions. This structure fosters inclusive growth, operational resilience, and a coherent approach to investment, skills, housing, and transport—unlocking the full potential of Norfolk and Suffolk through coordinated governance.	Section 8 within the main proposal
Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.	The proposed three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside three in Suffolk, creates a Mayoral Combined Authority with six balanced constituent councils. This structure ensures proportional representation across diverse urban, rural, and coastal populations, avoiding dominance by any single area. It reduces the current 16 councils to six, striking a balance between scale and democratic accountability. The model builds on existing collaboration and preparatory work, aligning with devolution timelines and priorities to ensure a smooth transition and effective governance from the outset.	Section 8 within the main proposal

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	In response to government guidance and local aspirations, Greater Norwich endorses a hybrid governance model that integrates Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) with existing Parish and Town Councils. NACs will operate as formal sub-committees of the new unitary council, led by ward councillors and open to participation from residents, community organisations, and service partners. Their remit could include local oversight, neighbourhood investment planning and community engagement. In parished areas NAC's will work in partnership with Parish and Town Councils representing their statutory roles and ensuring alignment of priorities. In unparished areas, NACs will serve as the primary vehicle for neighbourhood-level engagement and decision-making, providing a structured forum for the co-production of solutions with the council and partners.	Section 4 within this proposal
Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.	The Neighbourhood Governance Strategy will set out a layered approach to engagement, combining formal NACs with informal networks and participatory tools. This likely includes community assemblies, youth voice platforms, and co-designed sessions that reflect the lived experience of residents. The strategy will be	*Section 4 within this proposal*

LGR government criteria	How the Greater Norwich proposal meets it	Relevant section of the proposal
	engaged upon and piloted ahead of wider rollout. Methods for engagement will be tailored to each area, reflecting the different approaches required across urban and rural areas.	
Where there already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.	Parish and Town Councils will retain their independence and functions. Where present, they will be invited to participate in NACs as co-opted members, ensuring coordination without compromising autonomy. The strategy allows for future community governance reviews to explore new parish creation, particularly in urban areas, but this will not be the default solution.	*Section 4 within this proposal*

Table 13: Assessment against Government criteria



LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

A PROPOSAL FOR A THREE UNITARY MODEL FOR NORFOLK

Prepared on behalf of:
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk,
Breckland District Council,
Broadland District Council,
Great Yarmouth Borough Council,
North Norfolk District Council,
and Norwich City Council

[SEPTEMBER 2025]

Appendices

1

CONTENTS

1. Appendix A – Options Appraisal 4

1.1 Single unitary 4
1.2 Two unitaries 10
1.3 Three unitaries based upon existing boundaries 15
1.4 Three unitaries on new boundaries 19

2. Appendix B – Engagement 24

2.1 Introduction 24
2.2 Approach 25
2.3 Engagement analysis 27

3. Appendix C – Financial Appraisal 29

3.1 Current financial position of district councils 29
3.2 Council tax harmonisation analysis 31
3.3 Council tax harmonisation analysis by area 40
3.4 Balance sheet disaggregation 68
3.5 Reserves 70
3.6 Debt 73
3.7 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and its impact on council finances 76

4. Appendix D - Boundaries 78

5. Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints 86

5.1 Early Intervention and Prevention via a Healthy & Thriving Communities Department 86
5.2 Housing & Homelessness 91
5.3 Adult Social Care 97
5.4 Children's Social Care 102
5.5 SEND & Education 107
5.6 Enabling Services 110
5.7 Place 115
5.8 Implementation considerations 122

6. Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprints 124

6.1 Early Intervention and Prevention via a Thriving Communities Department 124
6.2 Housing & Homelessness 130
6.3 Adult Social Care 136
6.4 Children's Social Care 141
6.5 SEND & Education 146

6.6 Enabling Services 149
6.7 Place 154
6.8 Implementation considerations 159
7. Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprints 161
7.1 Early Intervention and Prevention via a Wellbeing & Communities Department 161
7.2 Housing & Homelessness 167
7.3 Adult Social Care 172
7.4 Children's Social Care 177
7.5 SEND & Education 182
7.6 Enabling Services 186
7.7 Place 189
7.8 Implementation considerations 195
8. Appendix H – Implementation Plan 198
8.1 Future state 198
8.2 Implementation roadmap 200
9. Appendix I – RAID Log 220
10. Appendix J: Overarching Design Principles 229

1. Appendix A – Options Appraisal

This appendix provides a more detailed rationale for our scoring of each of the LGR options against the government criteria. We set out our scoring for each option and the factors we have considered in assigning that score in the tables below.

We have scored each of the options using the six government criteria that has been published and shared with all councils.

We have used a 0 – 3 scale, where 0 doesn't meet government criteria at all, and 3 is a complete match. This aligns with the scoring system that we used for our interim plan that was submitted earlier this year.

1.1 Single unitary

The table below sets out our scoring for the single unitary option whereby the current two-tier, eight authority system amalgamated into a single council covering all of Norfolk. We have based this appraisal on the provisional LGR business case that has been developed by the county council, in isolation of other authorities[1].

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
Proposal establishes a single tier of government that covers all local government functions and has a realistic delivery plan	1	This option would see a single unitary covering a diverse area of over 2,000 square miles and a total population of around 918,000. A single unitary would serve a population of around 918,000 which would make it the largest in England outside of a city. It would be far bigger (by population) than any unitaries that had been recently established such as North Yorkshire or Somerset, and second only to North Yorkshire by geographical area. Although this would represent the 'simplest' option for a single tier of local government, it does not account for the complexities of what is a very large and varied region.

[1] Interim Plan, Norfolk County Council 17 March 2025: https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/media/40522/Local-Government---Reorganisation-in-Norfolk/pdf/52Interim_Plan_2025-03-17.pdf?m=1742469031500

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		It would span the very different areas including the urban, economic engine of Norwich, the energy and tourism coast of East Norfolk, and deep rural West Norfolk. Each of these areas have very different geographical, demographic, social, economic and housing circumstances. For example: Geography – East Norfolk, West Norfolk and Greater Norwich have radically different geographies. East Norfolk comprises coastal communities and deep rural countryside with a network of market towns. West Norfolk is also a deeply rural area with market towns, however it also has better connectivity with the rest of the UK. Greater Norwich is very different, and shares a lot more in common with other UK city regions. However, each has a primary urban centre in Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Norwich. Demography – as an example, both West and East Norfolk have substantially older populations than Greater Norwich (25.6% and 28.2% compared to 19.1%) which brings very specific challenges around supporting residents to age well and manage demand for social care services. Social – each area has very distinct social challenges and opportunities. Greater Norwich faces specific challenges around deprivation with over a fifth of neighbourhoods in the top 20% most deprived nationally, and associated issues of access to affordable housing and poor health outcomes. West Norfolk faces also faces some challenges around deprivation but also low levels of qualifications and higher levels of economic activity. East Norfolk faces challenges around low household incomes, high prevalence of poor health, and pockets of very high levels of deprivation within certain wards in Great Yarmouth.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		Economic – each area has a very different economic characteristics, strengths and challenges. Greater Norwich has thriving digital, finance and creative sectors, amongst others. East Norfolk has a very strong tourism sector, and an increasingly important energy industry. West Norfolk has strong and resilient agribusiness, defence and manufacturing sectors. All three face very different challenges and constraints upon growth. Housing – each area faces different challenges around housing. There are acute and complex housing pressures in East Norfolk that includes very high house-price-to-earnings ratio (8.1 times annual household earnings) and high numbers of second and holiday homes that reduces availability for local residents. In Greater Norwich, although 20% of residents live in social housing, there is still limited access to affordable homes. In West Norfolk there is a particular shortage of family homes. A single unitary council would find it difficult to develop and deliver the strategies that would meet the very different needs of these areas. Therefore it is less likely to address the key challenges that we have summarised above. A two- or three-unitary model would be much better placed to develop the develop and implement the local strategies and plans, based upon real understanding of place, local economy and needs.
New unitary councils should deliver short term financial savings but also be able to respond to the future needs of their	3	A single unitary would have a council tax base of 324,008 and estimated total revenue budget of over £1.2 billion which would be substantially higher than the other two options. This would allow it to be substantially more resilient to financial shocks through size. A single unitary would be able to realise the highest financial benefits from economy of scale and

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
communities and ensure they are resilient in the longer-term		rationalising things such as management structures. The claimed £36.2 million revenue savings identified in the alternative proposal for a single unitary supports this[2]. However, it is important to note that collectively, councils in Norfolk face a projected £200 million budget gap in future years. Savings from economies of scale alone will be nowhere near sufficient to close a gap of this size, therefore fundamental public sector reform will be required. This will likely involve the development of more preventative, responsive services that are tailored to local needs, that can better manage demand and reduce cost of service delivery. A single unitary is much less well placed to do this given the size, very broad geographical area and highly diverse range of communities it would serve. Firstly, the size is likely to make it less agile in terms of delivering transformational change required. Secondly, as noted in the criteria above it is less well placed than a two- or three-unitary model to develop tailored services that meet very specific local needs that will be crucial to managing demand, due to the sheer diversity of local communities. It should also be noted that a single unitary consolidates all financial risks into one single point of failure and doesn't necessarily make for a better mitigation against financial risks.
Unitary councils should support the development and delivery of	1	A key benefit of a single unitary would be that important, statutory services including Adults and Children's Social Care would likely face least disruption through a move to this model. Conversely, other key local services linked to

[2] Local Government Reorganisation, Report to Strategic and Corporate Select Committee, Norfolk County Council (18 June 2025):
7

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
public services that provide the best possible outcomes for residents and communities in the long-term		housing and homelessness could face the greatest disruption from moving to a single unitary model. We believe that LGR presents a huge opportunity to deliver high quality and sustainable services, but this relies upon: Deep understanding of the circumstances and needs of local communities Ability to deliver transformation in an agile and rapid manner Flexibility to join up and tailor services to meet local needs such as social care, health, housing, benefits, education and employment In the long term, a single unitary is the option that is least well placed to meet this criteria as it has very broad reach, size and complexity, and is furthest removed from the neighbourhoods it serves – which make it less able to respond to local need.
The proposal should be a genuine collaboration between councils, underpinned by transparent and meaningful community engagement, and have public support	1	As outlined in the earlier criteria, a single unitary council would span a very large geographical area of over 2,000 square miles, making it second only to North Yorkshire in size. Given the rurality of a large portion of Norfolk, and travel times (for example the journey from King's Lynn to Great Yarmouth takes 90 minutes by car and over 2 ½ hours by public transport), it would be very difficult for councillors and staff to travel across a single unitary – and therefore build relationships and collaborate in person. Although communities in Norfolk to share some common elements of identify, there is diversity across the county. A single unitary would cover three very different major urban centres in Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth – in particular for Norwich, which is significantly larger and urban as a key UK city. It would also need to serve the coastal communities in the East and North, and

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		a variety of deep rural areas across the Norfolk. We have already set out how these differ across all aspects in the first criteria (e.g. demography, socioeconomics, etc.). A single unitary would dilute the wide variety of local identities across Norfolk and be unable to represent the varied needs of the communities. This option is being pursued by the County Council in isolation. We are aware that the County Council has carried out consultation and engagement (under the brand 'Ambitious for Norfolk'), However, the seven district, borough and city councils have not played an active role in shaping the proposal. The key consideration is that this option is being driven by the County Council alone. It does not have the backing of any of the district, borough and city councils within Norfolk, who all believe that an alternative option would best serve the county. Furthermore, it is not supported by local MPs who serve their constituencies and know them best. This option does not demonstrate that councils have worked together on a view of what is best for Norfolk.
New unitary councils should be compatible with a Mayoral Combined Authority and support the region's devolution ambitions	1	A new Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) spanning Norfolk and Suffolk is being consulted upon by the Government. This MCA is likely to cover a region of around 3,500 square miles and serve a population of over 1.5 million. A single unitary would be too close in size to the MCA given that it would account for nearly two thirds of the total population – therefore would not represent a clear differentiation between local and regional government. Given that Suffolk District Councils are investigating a three unitary model, a single Norfolk unitary county would

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		be much bigger than its Suffolk counterparts and risk dominating discussions and decisions around regional strategies and initiatives.
New unitary councils should reflect local places and identities, as well as embedding arrangements that promote local decision-making and responding to local needs	1	As set out in earlier criteria, a single unitary will cover a very broad geography and high numbers of communities with diverse range of needs. This will naturally make it harder to engage at a local level. There is a risk that a single unitary would be too remote from communities it serves and unable to represent the diverse communities across Norfolk. Based upon the interim proposal we are aware that a unitary proposal would rely on strengthening existing local partnerships (e.g. Highways Parish Partnership Scheme, Local Member Fund, etc.) and increase the role of parish and town councils to address this gap. However, it is unlikely to offer the scale and flexibility to co-design services to meet local needs in a way that the other two options would be able to.
Total	8	

Table 1: Scoring for the single unitary option

1.2 Two unitaries

The table below sets out our scoring for the two unitary option whereby two new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – one covering the East and the other covering the West. We have based this appraisal upon the boundaries for a two-unitary model in the interim proposal that has been published by South Norfolk Council[3].

[3] A Vision for Norwich & East Norfolk and West Norfolk Unitaries, South Norfolk and Broadland Councils: https://southnorfolkandbroadland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s10483/App%20C.pdf

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
Proposal establishes a single tier of government that covers all local government functions and has a realistic delivery plan	2	A two unitary model, based upon the proposed Norwich & East Norfolk and West Norfolk Councils would serve populations of 533,000 and 408,000 respectively. This would make them both within the top five biggest unitaries in terms of population. East Norfolk and West Norfolk would also cover geographies of approximately 890 and 1,100 square miles respectively, again putting them within the top ten biggest unitaries by area size. Although smaller than the single unitary option, both councils would still serve large geographies and a wide variety of communities. A Norwich & East Norfolk unitary would both serve a major city in Norwich, coastal communities such Great Yarmouth, and deeply rural areas including the Norfolk Broads. As laid out in our appraisal for the single unitary it would mean the unitaries would be serving areas with highly varied, geography, demographics, socioeconomics and housing needs. Some specific examples of the differences across a Norwich & East Norfolk unitary are as follows: • Geography – Norwich is a major city with very urban geography, whereas the east is a mix of coastal communities and very rural towns and villages. • Demographics – the Norwich area has substantially different population profiles to areas such as Great Yarmouth, where there is a significantly high proportion of people aged 65 years or older • Economy – the east is dominated by tourism and growing (clean) energy sectors, whereas Norwich has very strong financial, creative and life science sectors

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		In addition, the two unitary option would split the 'energy coast' (e.g. offshore wind generation, carbon capture and natural gas) upon which there is a very strong and growing economic sector and is hugely important to the UK's energy security and transition to carbon neutral economy. This split may pose additional barriers and complications to supporting the sector to grow.
New unitary councils should deliver short term financial savings but also be able to respond to the future needs of their communities and ensure they are resilient in the longer-term	2	The Norwich & East Norfolk and West Norfolk unitary councils would have council tax bases of 174,619 and 149,390 respectively. They would have consolidated revenue budgets of in the region of £550 – 700 million which would put them is a strong position to withstand financial shocks. A two unitary council model would be able to make substantial savings from the economies of scale of streamlining management structures, systems and staffing, though not as much as a single unitary. This is supported by the interim proposal put forward by South Norfolk Council which has identified around £30 million in savings. It should also be noted that there is no reason why the two unitaries could not partner to deliver shared services and leverage economies of scale at a county-wide level, where it makes sense to do so. This is already happening at a district council level with Eastern Internal Audit Services and Norfolk Parking Partnership. However, this should be seen within a larger context of the £200 million budget gap that current councils in Norfolk face. Savings from rationalisation will only contribute a fraction of what is required, and the rest will need to be realised through public sector reform.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		Though smaller than a single unitary, the two-council model will still face similar challenges in being able to develop services that meet the varied and unique circumstances and needs of the different communities they serve – for example balancing Norwich city with the rural communities of the Norfolk Broads. They are unlikely to be as well placed as a three unitary model to achieve this. However, they may be more flexible and agile than a single unitary to deliver transformation and public sector reform.
Unitary councils should support the development and delivery of public services that provide the best possible outcomes for residents and communities in the long-term	2	A two unitary model would not benefit from minimising disruption to key statutory services such as Adults and Children's Social Care. In fact, it may be the most disruptive because it could be more complex to disaggregate these services given that they are currently based upon three localities. At the same time lower tier services would undergo equivalent change through aggregating functions across districts. As we have set out elsewhere in our proposal, LGR should be seen as a big opportunity for public sector reform, and delivery of high quality, sustainable services. This relies upon: • Deep understanding of the circumstances and needs of local communities • Ability to deliver transformation in an agile and rapid manner • Flexibility to join up and tailor services to meet local needs such as social care, health, housing, benefits, education and employment

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		Although better than a single unitary, the two-council model will still find it difficult to tailor services to meet what will be very large geographies with highly varied communities. However, they are likely to be more agile and flexible than a single council.
The proposal should be a genuine collaboration between councils, underpinned by transparent and meaningful community engagement, and have public support	2	A Norwich & East Norfolk Council and West Norfolk Council model would provide better, more representative unitaries tied to areas with different characteristics and identities. However, each unitary would still serve a very large geography and highly varied communities. This is particularly apparent in Norwich & East Norfolk – the unitary would need to be able to balance the needs of a major city (Norwich), with coastal communities (such as Great Yarmouth) and highly rural areas (such as the Norfolk Broads). The two unitary proposal of Norwich & East Norfolk and West Norfolk Councils has been developed in isolation by South Norfolk Council.
New unitary councils should be compatible with a Mayoral Combined Authority and support the region's devolution ambitions	2	Given an MCA would cover a region of around 3,500 square miles and serve a population of over 1.5 million, the relative size of the proposed Norwich & East Norfolk and West Norfolk Councils (533,000 and 408,000 respectively) would represent a better approach to a single unitary. The two unitaries would be more in keeping with the multi-authority model that is being proposed by Suffolk, and therefore provide a more balanced dynamic across the region. However, the same challenges around ability to cater for, and represent what will be very large geographical

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		areas and highly diverse communities may also affect the two unitaries ability to advocate for their residents.
New unitary councils should reflect local places and identities, as well as embedding arrangements that promote local decision-making and responding to local needs	2	The two unitary councils option is likely to offer better structures for enabling community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment than a single unitary. The two unitaries would still span wide geographies and a wide range of communities (e.g. Norwich, Norfolk Broads and Great Yarmouth) with very different needs – better than a single unitary but not as good as three which provide better representation of the very different communities within Norfolk. Two unitary councils would have a more appropriate scale and flexibility to co-design services to meet local needs but the geographical size, range and number of communities may still present a barrier to achieving this.
Total	12	

Table 2: Scoring for the two unitaries option

1.3 Three unitaries based upon existing boundaries

The appraisal below is specific to the option whereby three unitary authorities are created, using the existing council boundaries. A more rounded appraisal of a three unitary option is provided in 1.4. This appraisal focuses on considerations specific to use of existing boundaries for a three unitary model.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
Proposal establishes a single tier of government that covers all local government functions and	2	A three unitary proposal based upon existing boundaries would result in West Norfolk, East Norfolk and Greater Norwich Councils. This option does partially reflect local needs. It establishes unitary councils that represent and serve three very distinct areas of Norfolk – the major city of Norwich, the coast and countryside of East Norfolk, and

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
has a realistic delivery plan		the deep rural area with a network of market towns within West Norfolk. This option creates unitaries that are largely able to respond to the unique local contexts and needs of their communities. However, the Norwich unitary would be substantially underbounded as it would not encompass very much of the travel-to-work economic area around the city. By not including the surrounding suburbia and network of countryside communities to that have strong links this option does not represent a coherent or complete distinct area.
New unitary councils should deliver short term financial savings but also be able to respond to the future needs of their communities and ensure they are resilient in the longer-term	1	A three unitary option set along existing boundaries would result in a very unbalanced set of councils. West Norfolk, Greater Norwich and East Norfolk would serve 294,677, 144,426, and 477,418 residents respectively. This is a clear imbalance and would leave one authority at a major disadvantage. Greater Norwich would be substantially smaller than the two other councils, both in terms of council tax base (40,353 in 2028/29) and likely revenue budget (Ca. £180 million). This would leave Greater Norwich a lot more vulnerable to financial shocks. Unlike East and West Norfolk Councils, Greater Norwich would not be able to realise any economies of scale, so would be doubly at risk of financial failure. Greater Norwich could attempt to mitigate this through partnering with the other two unitaries on shared services to realise economies of scale, however this is unlikely to be adequate response to the likely financial challenges it faces.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
Unitary councils should support the development and delivery of public services that provide the best possible outcomes for residents and communities in the long-term	1	A three unitary model along existing boundaries faces the same challenges around the need to mitigate potential disruption to key social care services as the two-unitary option. In addition, the existing boundaries may make it very difficult to disaggregate social care services – the unbalanced boundaries of the three unitaries will likely require substantial changes to align the three-locality model currently used by the County Council to this new arrangement. At the same time, Greater Norwich would be limited in meeting the needs of the wider are due to being underbounded. It would require neighbouring unitary councils to take key policy decisions and run projects that would support growth in the city. As three unitaries are of smaller size they may be more agile and flexible in delivering the transformation and public sector reform rapidly. However, the financial risks associated with a Greater Norwich may constrain its ability to raise funds for any transformation programme that would allow it to improve public services and realise savings.
The proposal should be a genuine collaboration between councils, underpinned by transparent and meaningful community engagement,	3	This option is based upon a whole-Norfolk assessment of the communities across the county, including geographies, demography, socioeconomics and several other factors. The three unitaries option offers the most appropriate representation of the diverse and unique communities within the county. This option uses current council geographies as a constraint which means that the three new unitaries would be a poor reflection of local needs, where changes to the boundaries would offer better representation.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
and have public support		It is not viewed as a viable alternative to a three unitary model based upon fresh boundaries. This option has not been consulted upon because it was not considered viable at the time we were conducting our programme of engagement (given that MHCLG guidance on this matter was only published at the end of August). This option would also undermine some of the key local partnerships and collaboration such as the Greater Norwich Plan.
New unitary councils should be compatible with a Mayoral Combined Authority and support the region's devolution ambitions	3	This three unitary option would be similar to the other three-unitary option. It would establish three councils of an appropriate size relative to an MCA for Norfolk and Suffolk. However, as a 'junior' partner representing a smaller population and area, Greater Norwich could lose out in any regional dynamics with an MCA.
New unitary councils should reflect local places and identities, as well as embedding arrangements that promote local decision-making and responding to local needs	3	As with the other three unitary option, this could offer the closest and strongest ties to local communities. However, this is partially undermined by Greater Norwich not serving the area immediately around the city, to which it is closely linked.
Total	13	

Table 3: Three unitaries based on existing boundaries

1.4 Three unitaries on new boundaries

The table below sets out our scoring for the three unitary option whereby three new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
Proposal establishes a single tier of government that covers all local government functions and has a realistic delivery plan	3	Our three-unitary proposal would see balanced West Norfolk, East Norfolk and Greater Norwich Councils. They would serve populations of 301,712, 336,524 and 278,285 residents respectively. This represents a more natural fit with the geographies within Norfolk, and will see communities that share similar characteristics, needs and challenges represented by the same council. As with the two-unitary model, his option allows for local authority representation of the very different East (coastal and countryside) and West (deep rural) Norfolk. However, in contrast to the two-unitary model this option accommodates the very different and unique circumstances of Norwich which is a major city and a driver of economic growth in the region. It has significantly different characteristics and needs to other areas. Under the other two options Norwich would be subsumed within a wider area with very different, competing demographic, social and economic needs. It should be noted that the Greater Norwich Council would split the very large home-to-work economic area. This would need to be carefully managed to minimise the disadvantages to communities within this area that aren't directly served by a Greater Norwich Council.
New unitary councils should	2	Our three unitary option would see the new East Norfolk, West Norfolk and Greater Norwich Councils with

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
deliver short term financial savings but also be able to respond to the future needs of their communities and ensure they are resilient in the longer-term		projected tax bases in 2028/29 of 129,789, 109,941, and 94,095 respectively. The three unitaries would hold revenue budgets of between £532 million and £657 million. This represents a big increase upon the current budgets and tax bases of the seven district, borough and city councils, therefore equip each unitary to be in a substantially better position to withstand financial shocks. Although this option wouldn't benefit from the same economies of scale as a single or two-unitary option, there are still substantial savings to be realised through consolidation of management, systems, third party spend and staffing. We have identified over £20 million in savings from moving to a unitary alone in our proposal. As with the two-unitary option, there is no reason why new councils in a multi-unitary model could not partner to realise similar economies of scale, where it makes sense to do so. This is already in evidence through joint services such as Eastern Internal Audit Services, Parking Services and CNC Building Control. In fact, in our proposal we highlight some specific areas where three unitaries could leverage partnerships to realise savings – including social care commissioning which will account for a very large portion of any future budgets for councils. This will realise further efficiencies, that we have not accounted for here. However, within larger context of the £200 million budget gap all Norfolk councils face, the three unitary option presents the greatest opportunity to realise long term savings through public sector reform – which is the only any future council(s) will close this gap.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
		As we have set out in this proposal we see LGR as the catalyst for public sector reform. Our three unitary option incorporates an ambitious plan of transformation to capitalise upon any changes to deliver the efficiencies required.
Unitary councils should support the development and delivery of public services that provide the best possible outcomes for residents and communities in the long-term	2	The three unitary model faces the same challenges around disruption to services as the two-unitary option. This would need to be managed carefully as part of any transition – our implementation plan includes a specific priority around maintaining 'safe and legal' services to mitigate against this risk. However, as each of the three unitaries represents a more local and distinct area of Norfolk, they are better placed to develop high quality and sustainable public services to their communities. This is because they are likely to have a better, deeper understanding of the needs of their local communities. Similarly, because they are closer to these communities they are better placed to co-design services that meet resident needs. The three unitaries are of a smaller size and therefore are likely to be more agile and flexible in delivering the transformation and public sector reform rapidly, where a larger, less nimble organisation with greater layers of management may face greater bureaucracy and inertia.
The proposal should be a genuine collaboration between councils, underpinned by transparent and meaningful	3	This option is based upon a whole-Norfolk assessment of the communities across the county, including geographies, demography, socioeconomics and several other factors. The three unitaries option offers the most appropriate representation of the diverse and unique communities within the county.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
community engagement, and have public support		This has been a genuine joint endeavour by most of the existing districts, who have co-owned the development of this proposal. Our partnership has run a thorough and comprehensive engagement campaign under the brand 'Future Norfolk'. A wide range of local stakeholders including the general public, members of parliament and statutory and voluntary partners have been engaged to shape this proposal. Further details of the engagement programme can be found in the wider proposal. Rather than discarding existing partnership working and collaboration, this option builds upon them, accommodating joint initiatives such as shared services (e.g. CNC building Control) and joint strategies (e.g. Greater Norwich Plan). This option truly represents an approach where councils have worked together and developed a proposal that is shaped by local needs and views.
New unitary councils should be compatible with a Mayoral Combined Authority and support the region's devolution ambitions	3	Our three unitary option would establish three councils of an appropriate size relative to an MCA for Norfolk and Suffolk. Populations of 301,712, 336,524 and 278,285 residents would be complementary to the MCA's estimated population of 1.5 million. The three unitaries would be more in keeping with the multi-authority model that is being proposed by Suffolk, and therefore provide a more balanced dynamic across the region. However, in addition to this three unitaries would provide better representation at a local level, for any regional strategies and initiatives that are delivered in partnership with an MCA.

LGR Criteria	Score	Rationale
New unitary councils should reflect local places and identities, as well as embedding arrangements that promote local decision-making and responding to local needs	3	Three unitaries represents the option with the closest and strongest ties to their local communities. They do not experience the same level of challenges around competing demands of highly diverse areas, or the barriers of travelling across their areas, as the single or two unitary options. Because of this each unitary better placed to co-develop services with local communities (of 50,000 residents) that meet the unique circumstances and needs. A three unitary model offers councils of the most relatable scales and that are best placed for local community engagement. The geographies for each of the three new unitaries has been developed so that they are compliant with Boundary Commission advice. In addition to this, we have set out detailed proposals for how councillors and wards will support community democracy and engagement. We have included arrangements for those areas that currently are not represented by a parish or town council. We will review existing community forums and partnerships to ensure that the good practice around community engagement is not lost.
Total	16	

Table 4: Scoring for the three unitaries option

2. Appendix B – Engagement

2.1 Introduction

We developed a comprehensive communications and engagement plan under the banner of "Future Norfolk" to build an informed understanding of the three-unitary model, with an ambition to strengthen democratic accountability, respect local identity and deliver sustainable, adaptable public services.

From the outset, we moved from early awareness-raising and listening around the three pillars — People, Place, Progress - that lead us towards a confident, coordinated presentation of views aligned within our proposal that met the Government's criteria.

Our objectives were to:

- give residents and stakeholders a clear understanding of the proposal's aims and benefits.
- engage and communicate positively about our proposal rather than react to alternatives.
- demonstrate legitimacy by evidencing engagement and aligning with due process.
- maintain a constructive, forward-looking tone, avoiding premature technical debate ahead of formal submission.

A single, memorable narrative spine—People, Place, Progress—anchored everything we produced. The core engagement line "Your council is changing" signalled simply that local government in Norfolk would be different in future, so people understood what they were being asked to consider.

Our audiences were clearly defined to ensure relevance and reach. We had three main groups of stakeholders that we aimed to engage:

- Residents across Norfolk: messages and images tailored to place while maintaining a single county-wide identity, supported by accessible formats to ensure everyone could take part.
- Elected members and staff: equipped to explain the proposal confidently and signpost to more detailed information.

- MPs and key stakeholders (business, voluntary and community sector, health, education): engaged on values and outcomes to build visible credibility ahead of submission.

2.2 Approach

We ran a focused programme of communications and engagement over a six-month period running alongside the development of our three unitary proposal so that we could incorporate what we had learned from the work.

We used a consistent narrative to underpin all engagement activities. Everything flowed from the three pillars — People (Accountability), Place (Local identity), Progress (Future-readiness) — creating a shared language for leaders, officers and partners.

We set up a dedicated website to act as a single source of truth in communicating our proposal. The engagement hub www.futurenorfolk.com was the primary destination for information, FAQs, visual assets, updates and engagement tools. All promotional activity drove back to this hub, concentrating analytics and ensuring quality control. From day one the hub offered accessible formats — Easy Read, audio, translation and paper surveys on request — to enable everyone to participate.

We communicated through a variety of formats to make our programme as accessible to everyone as possible. We used plain-English explainers, FAQs and a short animation to explain complex concepts simply, with a further explainer planned post-submission to support the next phase. The site featured videos, infographics and downloadable toolkits to support local advocacy and storytelling. Search discoverability was prioritised through targeted Search Engine Optimisation on relevant terms, complemented by regular content updates.

We developed a consistent look and feel to all our communications. All outputs were built from a central Future Norfolk pack—master artwork, co-brandable templates and tone/visual guidelines—so the six councils could tailor for place while remaining consistent. Every execution carried one clear call to action back to the hub via short URL or QR code.

We built in inclusivity and accessibility from the start. We published Easy Read versions of communications material on the website and made printed Easy Read copies

available at every event. We sent paper survey forms to those preferring offline participation. Alternative formats were provided on request; and, in selected areas, SMS messages with a clear call to action extended reach to residents less active online.

All Media, marketing and digital engaged using a clear narrative around each of the three pillars, using targeted channels, disciplined timing and prepared materials with a proactive, positive tone. We used a variety of channels to communicate:

- Digital: A steady cadence across Facebook, X and Instagram opened with the three pillars and the survey call to action, then moved to weekly deep dives, supported by animation and infographics, with selective boosting for priority key moments.
- Out-of-home: Bus rears and insides and petrol-station/shop forecourt screens and posters widened reach beyond digital users, using high-contrast creative aligned to the three pillars and pointing back to the website via QR codes.
- Owned/local assets: Posters and leaflets in council and community venues kept information visible at point of need
- Media: Co-ordinated media handling and member/stakeholder briefings sustained message discipline and credibility.
- Events: each council ran or hosted a series of community events or roadshows to engage with stakeholders and members of the public using business cards and leaflets to direct people to the survey.
- Coalition-building: MPs were invited to endorse the values underpinning the model rather than unpublished specifics, building momentum and providing constructive, high-level support ahead of submission and into the Government-led consultation.

Clear sign-off routes, escalation protocols and agreed holding lines underpinned all activity. Our approach to misinformation was not to rise to negative narratives, but to stick to facts, positive logic and the agreed code of conduct, maintaining trust and focus on what matters for residents.

The survey strategy was inclusive, non-prescriptive and audience-led, with a tone that was conversational, empathetic and locally grounded. Reading age was set at 11 to maximise understanding and participation. We used a mix of baseline, bi-weekly pulse and final post-campaign surveys to track perceptions over time, asking open prompts such as “What makes your area unique?”, “How important is local representation to

you?", "What services do you value most?" and "What would you like to see improved in your local council?" Free-text comments were encouraged to capture nuance.

The engagement complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty and UK GDPR. Only anonymous free-text comments were analysed—no personal or identifying data was used; no profiling or automated decision-making was undertaken; analysis estimated tone only. The lawful basis was Public Task (Article 6(1)(e)), supporting service improvement through public consultation. All processing was conducted securely and locally, and no data was sent externally.

2.3 Engagement analysis

We have provided a summary of the reach and breadth of engagement in the main document. Our surveys were the primary mechanism through which we engaged residents and other stakeholders remotely.

We attracted over 5,000 responses from the public. The tables and diagrams below provide details of who responded.

Council	Under 25	25 - 44	45 - 64	65 or over	Total
Breckland DC	7	74	197	199	477
Broadland DC	6	88	147	72	313
Great Yarmouth BC	7	64	168	107	346
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	31	129	344	328	832
North Norfolk DC	3	29	108	105	245
Norwich City Council	46	634	1,008	646	2,334
South Norfolk Council	8	72	109	57	246
Unknown / Outside	2	9	17	8	36
Total	110	1,099	2,098	1522	5,000+[4]

Table 5: Breakdown of survey responses

[4] Incorporates the responses to a smaller, additional survey carried out as part of the engagement programme.

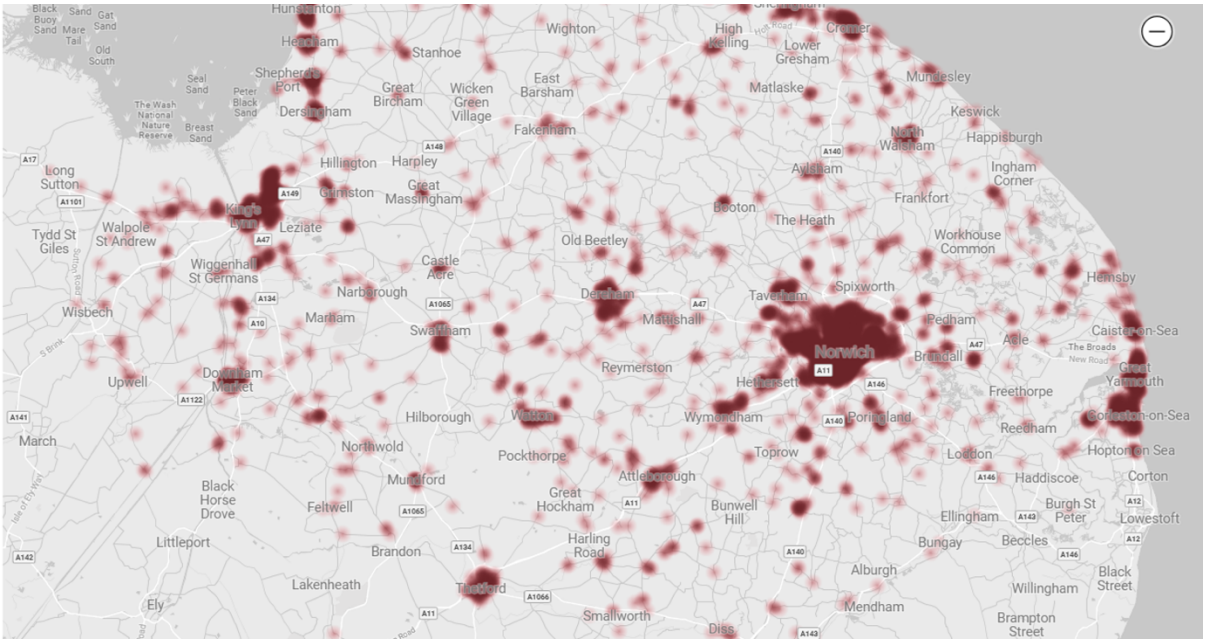


Figure 1: Heatmap of survey responses

Survey respondents were of all ages, with those aged 45-64 and 65 or over particularly well represented. The survey respondents were from across Norfolk – broadly reflecting the main population centres of the county (i.e. Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth having high numbers) but also responses from those in more rural areas too.

3. Appendix C – Financial Appraisal

3.1 Current financial position of district councils

Breckland District Council

Breckland District Council concluded the 2024/25 financial year with an underspend of £562k against budget. While the Council experienced overspends in waste services, temporary accommodation costs due to rising homelessness demand, and reduced planning and building control fee income, these were offset by additional treasury income, lower housing benefit claims with higher overpayment recoveries, stronger garden waste subscription performance, and increased commercial property income. Breckland achieved 93% of its savings target and increased its minimum General Fund reserve from £2.5m to over £3m. The absence of plans to replenish usable reserves amid budgetary pressures poses a medium-term risk. The Council's accounts carry disclaimed audit opinion for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Broadland District Council

Broadland District Council reported a £306k underspend in 2024/25, driven primarily by stronger-than-forecast investment income. The Council was able to transfer £605k into General Reserves, reinforcing its already strong financial position. For 2025/26, Broadland set a net revenue budget requirement of £15.487m, while continuing to face significant homelessness pressures resulting in costly temporary accommodation placements. The authority remains debt-free and is projecting a General Revenue Reserve of £4.644m by March 2026. Audit opinions for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 are disclaimed.

South Norfolk Council

South Norfolk Council's net expenditure for 2024/25 was £17.142m, £459k below the original budget and £1.13m below the revised budget, despite a range of cost pressures. These were offset by better-than-expected investment income and other savings. The Council was able to transfer funds to reserves, including £600k earmarked for a new nature restoration project. Homelessness demand continues to

exert pressure. For 2025/26, the Council has set a net budget requirement of £21.152m. Audit opinions for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 are disclaimed.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council recorded a £526k underspend against the approved budget of £26.9m of which £2.1m was supported by planned use of the General Fund reserve. The council had cost pressures driven by inflationary pressures on supplies and lower-than-estimated planning fee income, however, these were offset by increased car parking revenue and other income. The Council also increased its General Fund reserve during the year and subsequently agreed to transfer some to an earmarked reserve to fund economic initiatives. The 2025/26 budget is balanced without any reliance on reserves, with the Council aiming to maintain minimum reserves and improve them over time. Audit opinions are disclaimed for 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Great Yarmouth Borough Council set its 2024/25 budget anticipating the use of reserves; outturn figures show reserve usage exceeded forecasts due to shortfalls in income from planning, crematoria, and car parking, lower-than-budgeted business rates, and higher costs in demand-led services. These were partially offset by improved treasury management returns. The General Fund ended the year £601k in deficit. The Housing Revenue Account, however, recorded a £281k surplus. The 2025/26 budget is predicated on further reserve usage. Audit opinions for 2021/22, 2022/23 an 2023/24 are disclaimed.

North Norfolk District Council

North Norfolk District Council reported a £622k underspend in 2024/25, transferring the surplus to reserves. Retained business rates were above budget, and the General Reserve balance at 31 March 2025 stood at £2.825m — comfortably above the recommended minimum. The Council's reserves remain healthy, exceeding 10% of net operating expenditure. In February 2025, it set a budget projecting a £1m surplus for the year, also planned for reserve transfer. Audit opinions are disclaimed for 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24.

Norwich City Council

Norwich City Council reported a £769k underspend on the General Fund revenue account and a windfall surplus of £8.3m arising from a change in national guidance around the use of retained capital receipts on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) during 2024/25. Higher-than-anticipated interest rates generated additional income for the General Fund, while savings were also achieved due to the 2024 pay award being slightly lower than budgeted. The General Fund reserve remains well above the Council's prudent minimum balance, with the 2024/25 underspend transferred to earmarked reserves. In February 2025, the Council set a net budget requirement of £20.85m for 2025/26. Audit opinions for 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24 were disclaimed.

3.2 Council tax harmonisation analysis

3.2.1 Introduction

To evaluate the financial implications of council tax harmonisation, five scenarios were modelled. Each represents a different strategy for aligning Band D charges within each proposed unitary authority from vesting day (assumed to be 1 April 2028) through to full convergence by 1 April 2035. The outcomes are assessed against a baseline scenario in which no reorganisation occurs, and the existing county and district councils continue to set council tax independently, applying the maximum permitted annual increases.

Importantly, this analysis does not make a recommendation. The five scenarios presented are intended to illustrate a range of legally compliant options and their potential fiscal impact. It will be for each shadow authority, once established, to determine its preferred approach to harmonisation based on its local context, policy priorities, and political judgement.

Scenario 1 – Low to Max

All Band D charges within a new unitary are raised to match the highest 2027/28 Band D among its predecessor districts, subject to the statutory 5% cap. Once harmonisation is reached, annual increases continue at the maximum permitted level.

Scenario 2 – High to Min

All Band D charges are immediately aligned to the lowest predecessor district rate of 2027/28. This delivers instant uniformity but results in substantial reductions for higher-charging areas. From this reduced base, Band D increases by 5% annually.

Scenario 3 – Weighted Average on Day 1

The initial Band D charge is set to the weighted average of predecessor district rates for 2027/28, adjusted for their respective tax base sizes. This avoids any first-year increase above the statutory 5% cap. From this starting point, Band D then rises annually at 5%.

Scenario 4 – Weighted Average plus 5% on Day 1

Building on the weighted average approach, this method applies a 5% uplift in the first year — the maximum permissible.

Scenario 5 – Harmonisation Within the 5% Predecessor Authority Cap

Band D charges are set in the first year at the lowest predecessor rate plus 5%, ensuring no area exceeds a 5% increase.

3.2.2 Harmonisation Outcomes

The financial implications of harmonisation vary significantly depending on both the structural model (single, two, or three unitary authorities) and the chosen harmonisation pathway. The table below summarises the cumulative revenue impact from 2025/26 to 2035/36 compared with the baseline (no reorganisation). Negative figures represent foregone revenue, while positive figures reflect a gain.

2025/26–2035/36	Low to Max	High to Min	Weighted Average on Day 1	Weighted Average plus 5% on Day 1	5% Predecessor Authority Cap
Three Unitary Model					
East Norfolk	(90,367,033)	(166, 683,126)	(114,777,603)	21,686,101	(32,814,698)
West Norfolk	(59,382,999)	(121,163,749)	(100,408,283)	13,158,830	(9,153,164)
Greater Norwich	7,191,101	(160,597,725)	(81,860,156)	19,129,449	(63,544,998)
Two Unitary Model					
West Norfolk	(99,900,934)	(184,688,085)	(139,252,196)	20,523,624	(27,184,059)
East Norfolk	N/A	(271,392,525)	(157,793,846)	33,450,757	(85,827,855)
Single Unitary Model					
County-wide	N/A	(485,300,132)	(297,046,043)	53,974,381	(143,692,414)

Table 6. Council Tax Harmonisation Scenarios Under Different Structural Models.

The modelling results show a broadly consistent pattern across Norfolk under all five harmonisation scenarios. In reality, only a few of the modelled scenarios deliver additional revenue. The Weighted Average plus 5% scenario is the only pathway that generates a revenue gain across every structural model. By contrast, the Low to Max scenario delivers a positive outcome only for Greater Norwich within the three-unitary model. This reflects Norwich's comparatively high Band D precept, which significantly raises the starting point for its neighbouring districts.

All other approaches — High to Min, Weighted Average Day 1, and Fastest Harmonisation within the 5% cap — result in revenue losses across every model and geography over the period. This reinforces the need to select a harmonisation pathway that minimises fiscal damage and safeguards the long-term budget position.

Examining the results by structural model reinforces this picture. Under the three-unitary model, all three areas achieve gains under the Weighted Average plus 5% scenario, while

Greater Norwich also records a gain under the Low to Max pathway. It is therefore the only geography in Norfolk with two scenarios that deliver positive revenue. The two-unitary model is more restricted: gains are realised only under Weighted Average plus 5%, with Low to Max ruled out for East Norfolk by referendum limits. The single county-wide unitary shows the same profile, generating gains only under Weighted Average plus 5% and with Low to Max again infeasible.

Overall, there is no single harmonisation strategy that is optimal across all three unitary areas. Instead, each authority will need to weigh political feasibility, fairness to residents, and long-term financial sustainability when determining its preferred path to council tax harmonisation.

3.2.3 Weighted Average: What is it and what does it look like in Norfolk?

The weighted average is a type of mean where each value in the dataset contributes proportionally according to a pre-assigned weight.

$$Weighted\ Average = \frac{\Sigma(x_i \times w_i)}{\Sigma\, w_i}$$

Where:

- x_i = each value
- w_i = its corresponding weight

Unlike a simple average, where all data points are treated equally, a weighted average provides a more accurate reflection of the whole when some values carry greater significance. In the case of council tax harmonisation, for example, a district with a larger tax base exerts a stronger influence on the county-wide picture.

The calculation works by taking the Band D rates of the relevant districts and county, multiplying them by the tax base to determine revenue for each area, then dividing the total revenue by the total tax base.

In 2027/28, the year before vesting day on 1 April 2028, the unitaries would have the following weighted average Band D rates under different structural models:

Structural Model	Area	Weighted Average Band D (£)
Three Unitary Model	East Norfolk	2,120.83
	West Norfolk	2,083.61
	Greater Norwich	2,164.89
Two Unitary Model	West Norfolk	2,093.88
	East Norfolk	2,144.17
One Unitary Model	County-wide Unitary	2,120.99

Table 7. Weighted Average Band D Council Tax by Structural Model (2027/28)

When comparing the different reorganisation options, the three-unitary model offers a fairer and more responsive outcome for Norfolk residents. Under both the single and two-unitary models, households in East and West Norfolk would face higher Band D bills than under the three-unitary option. In effect, two-thirds of Norfolk's geographic area would be subsidising Greater Norwich, which is neither equitable nor justifiable. The three-unitary model avoids this imbalance, ensuring that residents are not asked to shoulder costs driven by circumstances outside their local communities.

Equally important, council tax is a political decision that should reflect local priorities. A single or two-unitary structure binds very different communities together, forcing elected members to make compromises that risk serving no area particularly well. By contrast, three unitaries would allow each authority to set tax levels that align with the realities of their residents—whether that means the challenges of rural service delivery in East and West Norfolk or the pressures of growth and change in Greater Norwich.

Norwich residents, too, are not disadvantaged in this scenario. Under the baseline projection with no reorganisation, the Band D rate for Greater Norwich is expected to reach £2,260.33 by 2027/28. Against this backdrop, the weighted average of £2,164.91 under the three-unitary model is hardly surprising, and represents a reasonable contribution given where the city was already heading.

Ultimately, the three-unitary option balances financial reality with democratic accountability. It protects fairness for East and West Norfolk, provides agility for councils to respond to local needs, and ensures that Greater Norwich pays at a level consistent with its baseline trajectory. Far from being a weakness, the variation between the three areas is a strength—it recognises the diversity of Norfolk and empowers each community to shape its own future.

3.2.4 East, West and Greater Norwich: Scenario Analysis

The financial impact of each harmonisation approach was modelled over the period from vesting day (1 April 2028) to full convergence (1 April 2035). The table below presents the cumulative net revenue effect for each proposed unitary authority under the five scenarios described above under a three unitary model. Positive figures represent additional cumulative revenue compared to the baseline (no reorganisation), while negative figures indicate cumulative revenue foregone.

Scenario	East Norfolk	West Norfolk	Greater Norwich
Low to Max	(90.37)	(59.38)	7.19
High to Min	(166.68)	(121.16)	(160.60)
Weighted Average on Day 1	(114.78)	(100.41)	(81.86)
Weighted Average + 5% on Day 1	21.69	13.16	19.13
Fastest Harmonisation Within 5% Cap	(32.81)	(9.15)	(63.54)

Table 8. Cumulative Net Revenue Impact of Harmonisation Scenarios, 2025/26 to 2035/36 (£m).

The heat map above demonstrates that, under most harmonisation scenarios, all three proposed unitaries would experience revenue reductions compared to the baseline, with only the "Weighted Average +5%" approach delivering positive outcomes across the board. East Norfolk is hit particularly hard under "High to Min" and "Weighted Average," with revenue losses of over £100m in both cases, though it sees a sizeable gain of £21.7m under "Weighted Average +5%" – the highest gain seen in all unitaries in all scenarios. West Norfolk shows a similar pattern, with sizeable losses under three scenarios but a net gain of £13.2m only under "Weighted Average +5%." Greater Norwich also faces deep losses in most cases, dropping as low as £160.6m under "High to Min," but achieves a strong relative gain of £19.1m under "Weighted Average +5%."

These results reinforce two points. First, the fiscal risks of poorly chosen harmonisation strategies are significant: all three authorities suffer substantial long-term revenue losses, especially under "High to Min," with Greater Norwich hardest hit. Second, the "Weighted Average +5%" scenario emerges as the only approach that generates higher revenue across all three authorities simultaneously. The evidence underlines the

importance of harmonisation being guided by financial resilience, rather than short-term political preference, if the new unitaries are to begin life on stable footing.

As the proposed model for Norfolk is based on three unitaries, it is important to examine the performance of this option in greater detail:

East Norfolk

East Norfolk inherits both South Norfolk and Broadland's relatively high tax bases, alongside the comparatively high Band D levels in Great Yarmouth Borough Council and South Norfolk Council. It also receives the largest share of South Norfolk's tax base, which is divided across all three unitaries under the proposed boundaries.

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	-90.37
High to Min	-166.68
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-114.78
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	21.69
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-32.81

Table 9. East Norfolk Council Tax Harmonisation Results.

Under the Low to Max scenario, East Norfolk's Band D is set to Great Yarmouth Borough Council's rate (the highest in the new unitary) before rising by 5% annually. However, this trajectory grows more slowly than under the baseline, meaning the authority never closes the gap, and revenue losses accumulate over time. As expected, the High to Min pathway also results in significant losses, as all districts are pulled down to the lowest common rate.

The Weighted Average (Day 1) produces a starting Band D of £2,120.83 in 2028/29. This results in a modest gain for Broadland District Council and a small reduction for Great Yarmouth Borough Council, while North Norfolk District Council and South Norfolk Council remain largely unaffected in the first year. However, because the rate of increase is lower than under the baseline, the unitary still suffers a compounded revenue loss over the period.

By contrast, the Weighted Average plus 5% option allows the new unitary to set its Band D at the highest permissible level in Year 1, delivering a sustained revenue gain relative

to the baseline. This is the only scenario that produces a positive outcome for East Norfolk over the modelling horizon.

Finally, the Fastest Harmonisation within the 5% Cap scenario restricts annual increases to ensure no predecessor area rises by more than 5%. In practice, this means Broadland can rise by the full 5%, but other districts are limited to lower increases—3% in some cases and only 2% in Great Yarmouth Borough Council. As a result, East Norfolk's revenue falls short of the baseline and produces a net loss by 2035/36.

West Norfolk

West Norfolk combines Breckland, which has the lowest Band D charge in Norfolk, with King's Lynn and West Norfolk, which has the largest tax base of all the districts. This creates a distinctive profile in the modelling, balancing a very low starting precept with a comparatively broad revenue base.

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	-59.38
High to Min	-121.16
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-100.41
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	13.16
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-9.15

Table 10. West Norfolk Council Tax Harmonisation Results.

Under the Low to Max scenario, all districts are harmonised to South Norfolk's Band D (the highest within the unitary). From there, the precept rises by 5% annually. However, the initial gap to the baseline—around £7 million in 2028/29—is never recovered, resulting in a sustained loss over the period. As expected, the High to Min scenario produces further losses, with all districts drawn down to Breckland's exceptionally low Band D.

The Weighted Average (Day 1) for 2027/28 produces a starting Band D of £2,083.61. This represents an uplift for Breckland, but a reduction for both King's Lynn and South Norfolk. Because the progression thereafter remains below the baseline, the unitary records an overall net loss.

By contrast, the Weighted Average plus 5% pathway delivers a positive result, generating modest revenue gains across the unitary. In practice, this equates to a 4% increase for King's Lynn, 6% for Breckland, and 3% for South Norfolk in the first year. The

uplift compounds in subsequent years, making this the only scenario that yields a revenue gain.

The Fastest Harmonisation within the 5% Cap scenario restricts annual increases to ensure no district rises by more than 5%. Here, Breckland acts as the limiting factor. While Breckland rises by its full 5%, this translates to only a 3% increase for King's Lynn and 2% for South Norfolk, leaving the unitary behind the baseline and generating losses by 2035/36.

Greater Norwich

Greater Norwich incorporates the city of Norwich, with some areas of the two lower-precept districts. Norwich has a much higher Band D charge than others – reflecting the civic responsibilities, high number of tourist visitors and night-time economy and choices of service provision in the city compared to certainly Broadland Council which for example provides no sports or leisure centre facilities. It also inherits the majority of Broadland's tax base, which is divided between East Norfolk and Greater Norwich under the proposed boundaries.

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	7.19
High to Min	-160.60
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-81.86
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	19.13
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-63.54

Table 11. Greater Norwich Council Tax Harmonisation Results.

Greater Norwich is the only one of the three proposed unitaries to generate positive outcomes under two scenarios: Low to Max and Weighted Average plus 5%. Under the Low to Max pathway, all districts align to Norwich's very high Band D. For most areas this represents a substantial uplift compared with the baseline, though Norwich itself sees an effective freeze. The benefits are not immediate: the scenario only begins to outperform the baseline in 2031/32, when the 5% referendum cap applied to the new unitary overtakes the 3% district and 5% county cap in the baseline.

The High to Min scenario produces significant revenue losses as all districts are brought down to the lowest common rate, although these losses are smaller in scale than those experienced in East Norfolk under the same approach. The Weighted Average (Day 1)

scenario also leads to an overall loss. Norwich faces a 4% reduction in the first year, while Broadland and South Norfolk record modest gains, but the lower overall starting point results in revenue falling short of the baseline over time.

By contrast, the Weighted Average plus 5% scenario generates gains across the board. Norwich itself benefits only slightly, with an increase of around 1%, but the impact is far greater for Broadland (around 9%) and South Norfolk (around 7%), producing a sustained positive outcome for the unitary as a whole.

Finally, under the Fastest Harmonisation within the 5% Cap scenario, Broadland's 5% ceiling constrains the other districts. Norwich sees a reduction in its Band D, while South Norfolk records only a modest uplift. This results in an overall loss against the baseline by the end of the period.

3.2.5 Conclusion

The modelling demonstrates that council tax harmonisation is a complex but manageable challenge, with different approaches carrying distinct fiscal and political trade-offs. No single pathway is universally optimal, and it will be for each new authority to weigh financial resilience against local priorities when determining its approach.

What is clearer, however, is the structural dimension. The three-unitary model stands out as the only option in which more than one harmonisation pathway delivers positive revenue outcomes. This provides greater flexibility for future decision-makers, as well as a closer alignment between local tax bases and local accountability. By enabling each unitary to make choices that reflect the circumstances of its communities, the three-unitary model offers Norfolk the best opportunity to balance financial sustainability with democratic responsiveness.

3.3 Council tax harmonisation analysis by area

3.3.1 Greater Norwich

Scenario 1 – Low to Max

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Norwich City	2,260.33	2,260.33	–	0%
Broadland	2,080.49	2,260.33	179.84	9%
South Norfolk	2,121.39	2,260.33	138.95	7%

Table 12: Low to Max' scenario results for Greater Norwich – resident experience 2027/28 to 2028/29

Under the Low to Max scenario, council tax rates across Greater Norwich are brought up to the current highest level – that of Norwich City. For Norwich residents, this means no change at all: their Band D charge remains at £2,260.33. However, for Broadland and South Norfolk residents the effect is significant. Broadland sees the sharpest rise, with Band D increasing by almost £180 (a 9% increase), while South Norfolk faces an increase of nearly £140 (7%).

This scenario therefore delivers a major boost to Greater Norwich's council tax revenue base — an additional £7.7m over the ten-year period — but it does so at the expense of steep and immediate increases for households in Broadland and South Norfolk.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

N/A - Not feasible, as moving straight to Norwich's Band D would breach the 5% referendum cap.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn	£2,098.45	£2,119.67	£21.22	1%
Breckland	£2,064.11	£2,119.67	£55.56	3%
North Norfolk	£2,119.67	£2,119.67	–	0%

Table 13: West Norfolk under a two unitary model – Low to Max Scenario results

- None of the councils making up West Norfolk in the two-unitary model overlap with those in Greater Norwich under the three-unitary model, so a direct comparison between the two areas is not meaningful.

East Norfolk

N/A - Not feasible, as moving straight to Norwich's Band D would breach the 5% referendum cap.

Scenario 2 – High to Min

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Norwich City	2,260.33	2,080.49	(179.84)	-8%
Broadland	2,080.49	2,080.49	-	0%
South Norfolk	2,121.39	2,080.49	(40.90)	-2%

Table 14: High to Min' scenario results for East Norfolk – resident experience 2027/28 to 2028/29

In the High to Min scenario, all three areas move downwards to align with Broadland's current Band D rate of £2,080.49. For Broadland residents, this means no change at all. However, for Norwich City, the impact is stark: Band D charges fall by almost £180, an 8% reduction. South Norfolk also sees a modest cut of around £41 (2%).

While this approach may appear attractive to residents facing lower bills, it creates a significant funding shortfall for the new Greater Norwich authority. Over ten years, the model shows a £160.6m reduction in revenue compared to baseline. Given that Greater Norwich already starts from a weaker financial position than East or West, this scenario would deepen the authority's budget pressures and undermine its financial sustainability.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,064.11	(16.38)	-1%
North Norfolk DC	2,119.67	2,064.11	(55.56)	-3%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,064.11	(57.28)	-3%
Great Yarmouth BC	2,139.79	2,064.11	(75.68)	-4%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	2,098.45	2,064.11	(34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	2,064.11	2,064.11	-	0%
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,064.11	(196.22)	-9%

Table 15: Single unitary under High to Min scenario results

- In a single unitary under this scenario, all councils converge at Breckland's lower Band D, whereas in the three-unitary model Greater Norwich converges at Broadland's slightly higher level.
- As a result, the reductions are sharper: Norwich's Band D falls by 9% under the single unitary compared with 8% in the three-unitary, while South Norfolk drops by 3% in the single unitary versus 2% in the three-unitary model.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	2,098.45	2,064.11	(34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	2,064.11	2,064.11	-	0%
North Norfolk DC	2,119.67	2,064.11	(55.56)	-3%

Table 16: West Norfolk under a two unitary model - High to Min Scenario results

East Norfolk

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	2,139.79	2,080.49	(59.30)	-3%
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,080.49	(179.84)	-8%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,080.49	(40.90)	-2%
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,080.49	-	0%

Table 17: East Norfolk under a two unitary model - High to Min scenario results

- Under the two-unitary model, the East Norfolk authority also converges at Broadland's Band D, the same as in the three-unitary model. As a result, the outcomes are identical across both structures.

Scenario 3 - Weighted Average

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,164.91	(£95.42)	-4%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,164.91	£84.42	4%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,164.91	£43.52	2%

Table 18: Scenario 3 - Weighted Average

In the Weighted Average scenario, council tax rates converge towards the middle point of the three predecessor districts. Norwich City residents see a reduction of £95.42 (-4%),

43

while Broadland residents face an increase of £84.42 (+4%) and South Norfolk residents an increase of £43.52 (+2%). This balanced approach spreads the adjustment more evenly, limiting sharp swings for any single group of residents. Financially, it delivers a dramatic revenue gain of £19.13m compared to baseline which is one of the largest gains seen across all unitaries in all scenarios.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,121.01	£40.52	2%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,121.01	£1.34	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,121.01	(£0.38)	0%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,121.01	(£18.78)	-1%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,121.01	£22.56	1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,121.01	£56.90	3%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,121.01	(£139.32)	-6%

Table 19: Weighted Average scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under a single unitary, the weighted average Band D is lower than in the Greater Norwich authority, largely due to Norwich's high starting Band D rate.
- Norwich households therefore face a sharper reduction under the single unitary (-6%) compared with the three-unitary model (-4%).
- Broadland records a smaller increase, rising by 2% under the single unitary compared with 4% in the three-unitary.
- South Norfolk follows the same pattern, with a modest cut under the single unitary rather than the 2% rise seen in the three-unitary model.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,093.88	(£4.57)	0%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,093.88	£29.77	1%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,093.88	(£25.79)	-1%

Table 20: Weighted Average scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,144.22	£4.42	0%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,144.22	(£116.11)	5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,144.22	£22.83	1%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,144.22	£63.73	3%

Table 21: Weighted Average scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- Under a two-unitary model, the weighted average in East Norfolk is lower than in the three-unitary's Greater Norwich.
- As a result, Norwich households face a 5% cut, compared with 4% under the three-unitary.
- South Norfolk sees a smaller uplift, rising by 1% instead of 2%.
- Broadland's increase is also reduced, at 3% rather than 4%.

Scenario 4 – Weighted Average + 5%

	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Norwich City	2,260.33	2,273.16	12.82	1%
Broadland	2,080.49	2,273.16	192.67	9%
South Norfolk	2,121.39	2,273.16	151.77	7%

Table 22: Scenario 4 – Weighted Average + 5%

In the Weighted Average + 5% scenario, council tax rates are set at the maximum level permitted for harmonisation, representing the most ambitious option available. For Greater Norwich, this generates the largest gain of all five scenarios—around £19.1m above the baseline over ten years. Norwich City residents face only a small increase of £12.82 (+1%), while Broadland and South Norfolk residents experience much steeper uplifts of £192.67 (+9%) and £151.77 (+7%) respectively. This scenario therefore delivers the greatest financial return, but at the cost of pushing households to the highest feasible council tax levels.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,227.06	£146.57	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,227.06	£107.39	5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,227.06	£105.67	5%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,227.06	£87.27	4%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,227.06	£128.61	6%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,227.06	£162.95	8%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,227.06	(£33.27)	-1%

Table 23: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under a single unitary, the weighted average Band D +5% is lower than in Greater Norwich.
- As a result, Norwich City, Broadland, and South Norfolk all face smaller increases under this model compared with the three-unitary option.

- In Norwich, residents would actually see a 1% tax cut, compared with a 1% rise under the three-unitary scenario.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,198.58	£100.13	5%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,198.58	£134.47	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,198.58	£78.91	4%

Table 24: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,251.43	£111.64	5%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,251.43	(£8.90)	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,251.43	£130.04	6%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,251.43	£170.94	8%

Table 25: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- In the two-unitary model, the weighted average Band D +5% is lower than in the three-unitary model.
- Norwich residents therefore see a small tax cut in the two-unitary, compared with a 1% rise in the three-unitary.
- By contrast, South Norfolk and Broadland residents face 1% higher rises under the three-unitary than in the two-unitary model.

Scenario 5 – Fastest Harmonisation (5% Predecessor Cap)

	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,184.52	(75.82)	-3%
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,184.52	104.02	5%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,184.52	63.13	3%

Table 26: Scenario 5 – Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap)

The Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap) scenario illustrates how quickly council tax levels could converge if all predecessor authorities were constrained to annual increases of no more than 5%. In this case, Norwich City residents actually experience a reduction of £75.82 (–3%) as the city's Band D charge moves down towards the harmonised level. By contrast, Broadland residents see the steepest increase of £104.02 (+5%), with South Norfolk residents facing a more modest uplift of £63.13 (+3%).
It produces a divergent impact: households in Norwich benefit from a cut, while those in Broadland and South Norfolk bear notable increases. From a financial perspective, there is an overall loss of £63m over the ten-year period.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,167.32	£86.83	4%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,167.32	£47.65	2%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,167.32	£45.93	2%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,167.32	£27.52	1%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,167.32	(£93.02)	–4%

Table 27: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) Scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under a single unitary, convergence occurs at a lower 2028/29 Band D because of Breckland's inclusion. As a result, Norwich residents face a steeper cut than under the three-unitary model, while South Norfolk and Broadland residents see smaller increases.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,167.32	£47.65	2%

Table 28: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,184.52	£44.72	2%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,184.52	(£75.82)	-3%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,184.52	£63.13	3%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,184.52	£104.02	5%

Table 29: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- Under a two-unitary model, the East Norfolk authority converges at the same Band D level as Greater Norwich in the three-unitary model. As a result, the increases and the reduction for Norwich residents are identical across both options.

3.3.2 West Norfolk

Scenario 1 – Low to Max

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,121.39	£22.94	1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,121.39	£57.28	3%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,121.39	-	0%

Table 30: Low to Max' scenario results for West Norfolk – resident experience 2027/28 to 2028/29

Under the Low to Max scenario, council tax rates across West Norfolk are harmonised up to South Norfolk Council's Band D level of £2,121.39. For South Norfolk residents, this means no change, while King's Lynn households see a modest rise of £23 (1%). Breckland District Council faces the steepest adjustment, with Band D increasing by £57 (3%) to align with the higher rate. While the household-level uplifts are relatively limited in scale, the overall effect for the authority is negative, with the scenario reducing resources by around £44m compared to the baseline over the ten-year period.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

N/A - Not feasible, as moving straight to Norwich's Band D would breach the 5% referendum cap.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,119.67	£21.22	1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,119.67	£55.56	3%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,119.67	-	0%

Table 31: West Norfolk under a two unitary model – Low to Max Scenario results

- Under this scenario in the three-unitary model, districts converge at South Norfolk's Band D. In West Norfolk under the two-unitary model, convergence instead occurs at North Norfolk Council's (a lower level than South Norfolk's). As a result, residents in King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council and Breckland District Council see slightly smaller increases—though the difference is minimal, around £1–£2.

East Norfolk

N/A - Not feasible, as moving straight to Norwich's Band D would breach the 5% referendum cap.

Scenario 2 – High to Min

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,064.11	(£34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,064.11	-	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,064.11	(£57.28)	-3%

Table 32: High to Min' scenario results for East Norfolk – resident experience 2027/28 to 2028/29

Under the High to Min scenario, council tax rates across West Norfolk are harmonised down to Breckland District Council's Band D level of £2,064.11. For Breckland residents, this means no change, but households elsewhere see reductions: King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council falls by £34 (-2%) and South Norfolk Council by £57 (-3%). While these cuts may be welcomed by residents in the short term, they significantly weaken the council tax base, removing £121m of potential revenue over the ten-year period and leaving West Norfolk in a far more constrained financial position.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,064.11	(16.38)	-1%
North Norfolk DC	2,119.67	2,064.11	(55.56)	-3%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,064.11	(57.28)	-3%
Great Yarmouth BC	2,139.79	2,064.11	(75.68)	-4%

King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	2,098.45	2,064.11	(34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	2,064.11	2,064.11	-	0%
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,064.11	(196.22)	-9%

Table 33: Single unitary under High to Min scenario results

- Under a single county unitary, the results are identical to the three-unitary model in this scenario as all converge at Breckland's Band D.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	2,098.45	2,064.11	(34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	2,064.11	2,064.11	-	0%
North Norfolk DC	2,119.67	2,064.11	(55.56)	-3%

Table 34: West Norfolk under a two unitary model - High to Min Scenario results

East Norfolk

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	2,139.79	2,080.49	(59.30)	-3%
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,080.49	(179.84)	-8%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,080.49	(40.90)	-2%
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,080.49	-	0%

Table 35: East Norfolk under a two unitary model - High to Min scenario results

- Under a two unitary model, results are broadly similar to the three-unitary scenario.
- The main difference is for South Norfolk Council residents, who would see a steeper drop of -3% in the West unitary in the three-unitary model compared to -2% under the two-unitary model.

Scenario 3 – Weighted Average

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,083.61	(£14.84)	-1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,083.61	£19.50	1%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,083.61	(£37.78)	-2%

Table 36: Scenario 3 – Weighted Average

Under the Weighted Average scenario, council tax rates across West Norfolk converge at £2,083.61. This produces a mixed impact: Breckland households see a modest rise of £20 (1%), while King's Lynn residents experience a small reduction of £15 (-1%). South Norfolk faces the largest cut, with Band D falling by £38 (-2%). Although the percentage shifts are relatively limited, the downward adjustments in King's Lynn and South Norfolk outweigh the uplift in Breckland, leaving West Norfolk with a weaker overall revenue position compared to the baseline (£85.6m decrease).

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,121.01	£40.52	2%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,121.01	£1.34	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,121.01	(£0.38)	0%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,121.01	(£18.78)	-1%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,121.01	£22.56	1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,121.01	£56.90	3%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,121.01	(£139.32)	-6%

Table 37: Weighted Average scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under a single unitary, the weighted average is higher, meaning residents in King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council see a tax increase, whereas under the three-unitary model they experience a cut.
- In Breckland District Council, residents face only a 1% rise under the three-unitary, but this rises to 3% under a single unitary.

- In South Norfolk, residents see cuts under both models, though the reduction is larger under the three-unitary model.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,093.88	(£4.57)	0%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,093.88	£29.77	1%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,093.88	(£25.79)	-1%

Table 38: Weighted Average scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,144.22	£4.42	0%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,144.22	(£116.11)	-5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,144.22	£22.83	1%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,144.22	£63.73	3%

Table 39: Weighted Average scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- The weighted average in West Norfolk under the three-unitary model is lower than in the two-unitary West.
- King's Lynn residents see a small cut under the two-unitary, but a larger cut under the three-unitary.
- Breckland residents experience a modest increase of 1% in both models.
- South Norfolk residents face a 2% cut under the three-unitary but a 1% increase under the two-unitary.

Scenario 4 – Weighted Average + 5%

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,187.79	£89.34	4%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,187.79	£123.68	6%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,187.79	£66.40	3%

Table 40: Scenario 4 – Weighted Average + 5%

In the Weighted Average +5% scenario, council tax rates in West Norfolk are harmonised upwards to £2,187.79. This delivers clear increases across all three districts, though the scale varies: Breckland District Council sees the largest uplift of £124 (6%), reflecting its very low starting point, while King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council rises by £89 (4%) and South Norfolk Council by £66 (3%). These rises are more pronounced than in other scenarios, but the result is a much stronger and more sustainable council tax base. The scenario generates a positive revenue impact, leaving West Norfolk £13.2m better off than the baseline over the ten-year period – the best performing of all scenarios modelled for West.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,227.06	£146.57	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,227.06	£107.39	5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,227.06	£105.67	5%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,227.06	£87.27	4%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,227.06	£128.61	6%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,227.06	£162.95	8%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,227.06	(£33.27)	-1%

Table 41: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under a single unitary, the Band D plus 5% level is higher than in the three-unitary model, resulting in larger increases for residents in King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Breckland and South Norfolk.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,198.58	£100.13	5%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,198.58	£134.47	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,198.58	£78.91	4%

Table 42: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,251.43	£111.64	5%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,251.43	(£8.90)	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,251.43	£130.04	6%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,251.43	£170.94	8%

Table 43: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- The Weighted Average +5% for West Norfolk under the two-unitary model is higher than under the three-unitary. As a result, residents in King's Lynn and Breckland face steeper increases in the two-unitary scenario.
- For South Norfolk, the contrast is especially stark: under the two-unitary model the council tax rise is almost double that of the three-unitary (£130.04 vs £66.40).

Scenario 5 – Fastest Harmonisation (5% Predecessor Cap)

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,167.32	£45.93	2%

Table 44: Scenario 5 – Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap)

Under the Fastest Harmonisation scenario, Band D rates across West Norfolk are aligned at £2,167.32, representing the lowest predecessor rate uplifted by 5%. Breckland sees the steepest rise of £103 (5%), with King's Lynn also increasing by £69 (3%) and South Norfolk by £46 (2%). These changes are moderate compared to Weighted Average +5%, but they still represent meaningful adjustments for residents. From a fiscal perspective, this approach generates a modest net gain, leaving West Norfolk £5.6m better off than the baseline over ten years but balances this with ensuring no resident experiences more than a 5% rise.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,167.32	£86.83	4%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,167.32	£47.65	2%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,167.32	£45.93	2%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,167.32	£27.52	1%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,167.32	(£93.02)	-4%

Table 45: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) Scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under this scenario, all districts in West Norfolk under the three-unitary model converge at Breckland's Band D +5%. The single unitary follows the same approach, so the increases are identical.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,167.32	£47.65	2%

Table 46: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

- In West Norfolk under the two-unitary model, Band D is also capped at Breckland's +5%, the same as in the single unitary. This means residents in North Norfolk face a smaller rise than they would under the three-unitary model.

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,184.52	£44.72	2%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,184.52	(£75.82)	-3%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,184.52	£63.13	3%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,184.52	£104.02	5%

Table 47: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- In the two-unitary model, West Norfolk again converges at Breckland +5%, matching the three-unitary outcome. However, in the East Norfolk of the two-unitary model, residents in South Norfolk face a sharper rise of 3%, compared with a smaller 2% increase under the three-unitary model.

3.3.3 East Norfolk

Scenario 1 – Low to Max

	Band D 2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,139.79	£59.30	3%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,139.79	£20.13	1%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,139.79	£18.41	1%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,139.79	-	0%

Table 48: Low to Max' scenario results for East Norfolk – resident experience 2027/28 to 2028/29

Under the Low to Max scenario, council tax rates across East Norfolk are brought up to Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Band D level of £2,139.79. For Great Yarmouth residents, this means no change, while the increases elsewhere are relatively modest: Broadland faces the largest rise of £59 (3%), with North Norfolk and South Norfolk seeing smaller uplifts of £20 (1%) and £18 (1%) respectively. Despite the limited household impacts, this harmonisation scenario results in foregone revenue, with council tax income falling £90.4m below the baseline over the ten-year period.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

N/A - Not feasible, as moving straight to Norwich's Band D would breach the 5% referendum cap.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,119.67	£21.22	1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,119.67	£55.56	3%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,119.67	-	0%

Table 49: West Norfolk under a two unitary model – Low to Max Scenario results

- In West Norfolk under the two-unitary model, all authorities converge at North Norfolk's Band D of £2,119.67. This is lower than the Band D level reached in East Norfolk under the three-unitary model, meaning that North Norfolk residents face a small increase of £20.13 in the three-unitary scenario but experience a freeze under the two-unitary West.

East Norfolk

N/A - Not feasible, as moving straight to Norwich's Band D would breach the 5% referendum cap.

Scenario 2 – High to Min

	Band D			
	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,080.49	-	0%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,080.49	(£39.18)	-2%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,080.49	(£40.90)	-2%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,080.49	(£59.30)	-3%

Table 50: High to Min' scenario results for Greater Norwich – resident experience 2027/28 to 2028/29

Under the High to Min scenario, council tax rates across East Norfolk are brought down to Broadland District Council's Band D level of £2,080.49. For Broadland residents, this results in no change, but the reductions elsewhere are more noticeable: North Norfolk's Band D falls by £39 (-2%), South Norfolk by £41 (-2%), and Great Yarmouth Borough Council by £59 (-3%). While households benefit from lower bills, this scenario substantially reduces the council's fiscal capacity, delivering only a £56.4m net revenue gain compared to baseline — the weakest outcome of the five harmonisation approaches

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,064.11	(16.38)	-1%
North Norfolk DC	2,119.67	2,064.11	(55.56)	-3%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,064.11	(57.28)	-3%
Great Yarmouth BC	2,139.79	2,064.11	(75.68)	-4%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	2,098.45	2,064.11	(34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	2,064.11	2,064.11	-	0%
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,064.11	(196.22)	-9%

Table 51: Single unitary under High to Min scenario results

- Under a single county unitary, reductions are deeper than in the three-unitary model. For example, Great Yarmouth Borough Council falls by -4% compared to -3%, with North Norfolk District Council and South Norfolk Council also facing steeper cuts.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	2,098.45	2,064.11	(34.34)	-2%
Breckland DC	2,064.11	2,064.11	-	0%
North Norfolk DC	2,119.67	2,064.11	(55.56)	-3%

Table 52: West Norfolk under a two unitary model - High to Min Scenario results

East Norfolk

Band D	2027/28	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	2,139.79	2,080.49	(59.30)	-3%
Norwich City Council	2,260.33	2,080.49	(179.84)	-8%
South Norfolk Council	2,121.39	2,080.49	(40.90)	-2%
Broadland DC	2,080.49	2,080.49	-	0%

Table 53: East Norfolk under a two unitary model - High to Min scenario results

- Under a two unitary model, results are broadly similar to the three-unitary scenario.
- The main difference is for North Norfolk residents, who would see a steeper drop of -3% in the West unitary of the two-unitary model compared to -2% under the three-unitary model.

Scenario 3 – Weighted Average

	2027/28	2028/29		
	Band D		Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,120.87	£40.38	2%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,120.87	£1.28	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,120.87	(£0.44)	0%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,120.87	(£18.85)	-1%

Table 54: Scenario 3 - Weighted Average

The Weighted Average scenario brings council tax rates in East Norfolk to a blended midpoint across districts. Broadland records the largest increase, with Band D rising by just over £40 (2%). North Norfolk experiences only a negligible uplift of £1, while South Norfolk remains effectively unchanged. Great Yarmouth Borough Council, by contrast, sees a modest reduction of £19 (–1%). This balanced approach avoids sharp swings for households while still strengthening revenues, adding £108.5m over the ten-year period compared with the baseline.

62

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,121.01	£40.52	2%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,121.01	£1.34	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,121.01	(£0.38)	0%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,121.01	(£18.78)	-1%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,121.01	£22.56	1%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,121.01	£56.90	3%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,121.01	(£139.32)	-6%

Table 55: Weighted Average scenario under the single county unitary model

Under a single unitary, the weighted average is slightly higher, leading to marginally larger increases for residents in Broadland District Council and North Norfolk District Council compared with the three-unitary model. Conversely, residents in Great Yarmouth Borough Council and South Norfolk Council experience slightly deeper reductions under the three-unitary model than under the single unitary.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,093.88	(£4.57)	0%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,093.88	£29.77	1%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,093.88	(£25.79)	-1%

Table 56: Weighted Average scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

- Under a two-unitary model, residents in North Norfolk would face a small reduction in Band D due to the lower weighted average, whereas under a three-unitary model they would instead see a slight increase.

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,144.22	£4.42	0%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,144.22	(£116.11)	-5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,144.22	£22.83	1%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,144.22	£63.73	3%

Table 57: Weighted Average scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- Residents in Broadland would face a larger increase under the two-unitary model (+£63.73) compared with the three-unitary model (+£40.38), reflecting a higher weighted average Band D.
- In South Norfolk, residents would see an increase of £22.83 under the two-unitary model, whereas under the three-unitary model they would experience a small reduction (-£0.44). A similar pattern applies in Great Yarmouth, where the two-unitary model delivers a slight increase while the three-unitary model results in a modest cut.

Scenario 4 – Weighted Average + 5%

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,226.91	£146.42	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,226.91	£107.24	5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,226.91	£105.52	5%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,226.91	£87.12	4%

Table 58: Scenario 4 – Weighted Average + 5%

The Weighted Average +5% scenario lifts all districts in East Norfolk to a harmonised rate above the blended midpoint, delivering the sharpest increases across the area. Broadland residents face the largest rise, with Band D jumping by £146 (7%). North Norfolk and South Norfolk follow closely, each seeing uplifts of just over £105–107 (5%). Even Great Yarmouth Borough Council, which already has the highest precept in the area, records an increase of £87 (4%). While the approach generates substantial additional revenue — £21.7m over ten years compared with the baseline—it does so at the cost of relatively steep upfront increases for households across all districts.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,227.06	£146.57	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,227.06	£107.39	5%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,227.06	£105.67	5%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,227.06	£87.27	4%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,227.06	£128.61	6%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,227.06	£162.95	8%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,227.06	(£33.27)	-1%

Table 59: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the single county unitary model

- Under a single unitary, the Band D plus 5% level is higher than in the three-unitary model, resulting in larger increases for residents.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,198.58	£100.13	5%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,198.58	£134.47	7%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,198.58	£78.91	4%

Table 60: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

- North Norfolk District Council residents see a smaller rise under the two-unitary model compared with the three-unitary (4% vs 5%).

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,251.43	£111.64	5%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,251.43	(£8.90)	0%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,251.43	£130.04	6%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,251.43	£170.94	8%

Table 61: Weighted Average + 5% scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- In East Norfolk, the weighted average Band D plus 5% is higher under the two-unitary model than under the three-unitary, resulting in larger increases across the board. For example, Great Yarmouth Borough Council rises by 5% under the two-unitary compared with 4% under the three-unitary in this scenario.

Scenario 5 – Fastest Harmonisation (5% Predecessor Cap)

	2027/28	2028/29		
	Band D	Lowest Band D plus 5%	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,184.52	£104.02	5%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,184.52	£64.85	3%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,184.52	£63.13	3%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,184.52	£44.72	2%

Table 62: Scenario 5 – Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap)

In this scenario, all districts in East Norfolk converge at a rate set 5% above the current lowest Band D (Broadland). Broadland households see the sharpest increase, with Band D rising by £104 (5%). North Norfolk and South Norfolk experience more moderate uplifts of around £63-65 (3%), while Great Yarmouth Borough Council faces the smallest change, an increase of £45 (2%). The approach delivers a loss in revenue of £32.9m over the ten-year period relative to the baseline.

Comparison to other structural options

Single county unitary

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,167.32	£86.83	4%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,167.32	£47.65	2%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,167.32	£45.93	2%
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,167.32	£27.52	1%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,167.32	(£93.02)	-4%

Table 63: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) Scenario under the single county unitary model

- East Norfolk under a three unitary model ends up at a higher Band D than the single unitary under this scenario. This is because under the three-unitary, Broadland's higher Band D is increased by 5% and all districts converge at that level, whereas under the single unitary, the cap is applied to Breckland's lower Band D, producing less steep results overall.

Two unitary model

West Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
King's Lynn & West Norfolk BC	£2,098.45	£2,167.32	£68.87	3%
Breckland DC	£2,064.11	£2,167.32	£103.21	5%
North Norfolk DC	£2,119.67	£2,167.32	£47.65	2%

Table 64: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) scenario under the two unitary model for West Norfolk

- In West Norfolk under the two-unitary model, Band D is also capped at Breckland's +5%, the same as in the single unitary. This means residents in North Norfolk face a smaller rise than they would under the three-unitary model.

East Norfolk

	2027/28 Band D	2028/29 Band D	Difference	Difference (%)
Great Yarmouth BC	£2,139.79	£2,184.52	£44.72	2%
Norwich City Council	£2,260.33	£2,184.52	(£75.82)	-3%
South Norfolk Council	£2,121.39	£2,184.52	£63.13	3%
Broadland DC	£2,080.49	£2,184.52	£104.02	5%

Table 65: Fastest Harmonisation (5%% Predecessor Cap) scenario under the two unitary model for East Norfolk

- In East Norfolk under the two-unitary model, Band D is capped at Broadland's +5%, identical to the three-unitary approach. As a result, increases are the same under both models.

3.4 Balance sheet disaggregation

A critical element of local government reorganisation is the disaggregation of the closing balance sheets of the abolished authorities and the preparation of opening balance sheets for the successor unitaries. This is not simply an accounting exercise: the way in which assets, liabilities and reserves are apportioned will have a direct bearing

on the financial sustainability of each new council and will need to withstand public, political and audit scrutiny.

With our proposal, the disaggregation will cover:

- Norfolk County Council – including all county-level service assets, reserves, and liabilities.
- Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council – which, under our proposals would be split between the successor unitaries. Their balance sheets must therefore be divided as well as absorbed.
- The Collection Fund balances – specific to the billing authorities (districts) and requiring allocation to the relevant new billing areas.

Each outgoing authority will prepare a closing balance sheet as at 31 March. A comprehensive disaggregation schedule will then map each line item to one of the three new unitaries.

Experience from other reorganisations demonstrates the value of agreeing an estimated balance sheet disaggregation well before vesting day. This enables shadow authorities to understand their capital finance requirements, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) obligations, reserves positions and overall indebtedness. In Cumberland, for example, early MRP calculations were based on provisional disaggregation work across multiple legacy councils, helping the new authority to prepare for its financing needs.

The County Council's balance sheet is of particular significance given its sheer scale. Norfolk must ensure that the successor councils inherit a sufficiently strong balance sheet, with adequate reserves and manageable debt portfolios, to maintain financial sustainability.

There is no standardised model for dividing County balance sheet items between new authorities. Instead, the process relies on local negotiation, professional judgement and clear documentation. The bases of allocation will differ depending on the nature of the item:

- **Service responsibility** – assets, liabilities and earmarked reserves linked to particular services (e.g. schools, highways, adult social care) will follow the service to the unitary that inherits it.
- **Geography** – site-specific assets (land, buildings, heritage assets) will transfer according to location.
- **Functional metrics** – highways assets and related borrowing by road miles; schools by pupil numbers; adult social care provisions by client base.
- **Financial proxies** – general borrowing, cash, and debtors/creditors will normally be apportioned by tax base or population, unless clearly attributable to a service or project.
- **Contractual obligations** – PFI schemes, leases and other long-term commitments will be novated wholesale to the unitary inheriting the asset or service.
- **Reserves** – earmarked reserves will follow the purpose for which they were established; general fund balances will be split on a neutral basis (typically tax base).
- **Unusable reserves** – such as the Revaluation Reserve, Capital Adjustment Account, and Pensions Reserve must be aligned with the associated assets and liabilities.

3.5 Reserves

Reserves are a critical component of financial resilience, providing councils with the capacity to absorb unexpected shocks, manage cash flow pressures, and fund investment in public service reform. In the context of local government reorganisation, the treatment and distribution of reserves will be central to ensuring that each new unitary authority begins on a sound and sustainable footing.

The key distinction is between earmarked reserves, which are set aside for specific purposes (such as capital programmes, transformation funds, or risk management), and unearmarked reserves, which provide general flexibility to support unforeseen spending needs. Both play an important role, but only unearmarked reserves offer full discretion to meet new pressures.

Across Norfolk, reserves are unevenly distributed. Norfolk County Council holds by far the largest balances, with over £35 million unearmarked reserves and £124 million

earmarked reserves projected by 2028/29. At the district level, there is significant variation. King's Lynn and West Norfolk holds earmarked reserves of £35.5 million (although this is projected to reduce), more than double those of any other district council, while Broadland and Breckland are projected to hold under £9 million each. Levels of unearmarked reserves are more modest across the districts, with Norwich City holding the highest at £8.25 million, but others, including South Norfolk, North Norfolk, and King's Lynn and West Norfolk, have lower balances (under £2.5 million).

The chart below illustrates the composition of earmarked and unearmarked reserves across the Norfolk authorities, highlighting both the concentration of balances in the County Council and the scale of variation between districts.

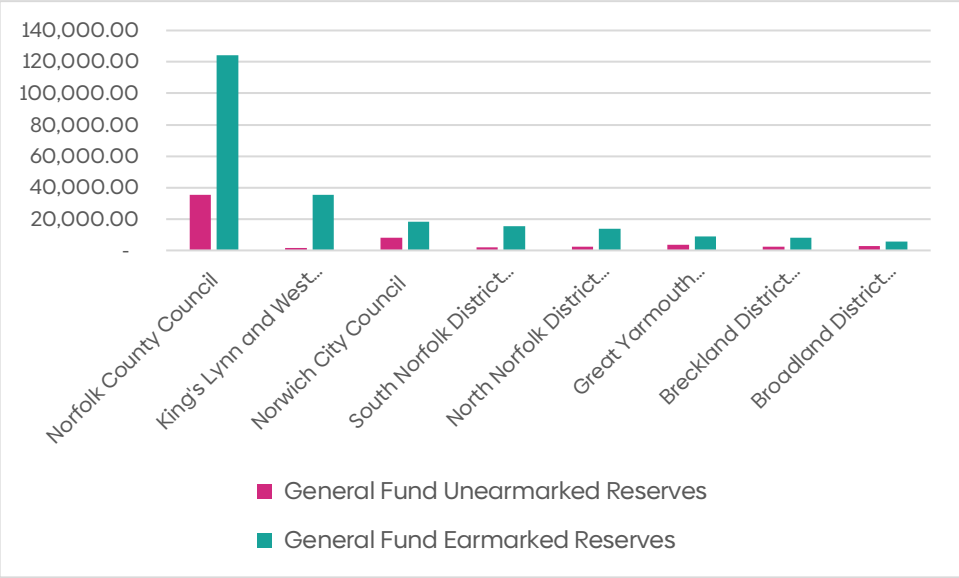


Figure 2: Composition of earmarked and unearmarked reserves across the Norfolk authorities (2028/29)

The table below shows the projected reserves position of each Norfolk authority in 2028/29.

Authority	General Fund Unearmarked Reserves	General Fund Earmarked Reserves
Norfolk County Council	35,403	124,051
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	1,467	35,505
Norwich City Council	8,250	18,420
South Norfolk Council	1,886	15,229
North Norfolk District Council	2,204	13,991
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	3,500	8,909
Breckland District Council	2,500	8,239
Broadland District Council	2,593	5,759

Table 66: Projected reserves position of each Norfolk authority in 2028/29

Experience from elsewhere demonstrates why this matters. In Cumberland, for example, legacy councils relied heavily on reserves to balance budgets in the years immediately preceding reorganisation. The combined General Fund Balance for 2023/24 fell from an estimated £37.7m to £7.9m, covering just 2.55% of net budget. This sharp deterioration meant that the new council entered its first year under-resourced and financially vulnerable, with limited scope to manage shocks. Norfolk must avoid this pattern: ensuring that reserves are not depleted in the run-up to vesting day is critical to safeguarding the financial resilience of the successor authorities.

Importantly, reserves also have a role to play in supporting the transition to new unitary governance. Experience shows that transition costs — covering redundancy, systems integration, estates rationalisation, and programme management — can be significant and often need to be met upfront. In Norfolk, the scale of available reserves across the County and district councils is sufficient to absorb these costs without undermining long-term sustainability. This provides reassurance that reorganisation can be funded in a responsible way, without imposing unsustainable short-term pressures on the new councils' revenue budgets.

The treatment of reserves will therefore need to be approached with the same care as debt and assets, with transparent principles agreed in advance of vesting day. This will

provide confidence that the new authorities will inherit a balanced and sustainable position, capable of managing both short-term transition pressures and long-term financial risk.

3.6 Debt

The treatment of debt and borrowing is one of the most complex aspects of balance sheet disaggregation. Norfolk County Council currently holds substantial borrowing, primarily to finance its capital programme, and this will need to be allocated fairly and transparently across the successor unitary authorities. The way in which debt is divided will have long-term implications for each council's capital financing requirement, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges, and overall financial sustainability.

Disaggregation of debt directly affects MRP calculations, as each new authority will need to make annual revenue provision for the repayment of its share of the capital financing requirement. Early modelling is therefore essential to estimate the impact on ongoing revenue budgets. In Cumberland, for example, provisional MRP calculations were prepared in advance of vesting day based on disaggregation schedules, giving the new council visibility of its financing costs.

A key objective is to ensure that no new council inherits a disproportionate debt burden that undermines its financial resilience. Decisions will need to reflect both the scale of debt transferred and the income and reserves position of each authority. Transparency over how indebtedness is supported by the inherited asset base and loan portfolio will be central to demonstrating financial sustainability.

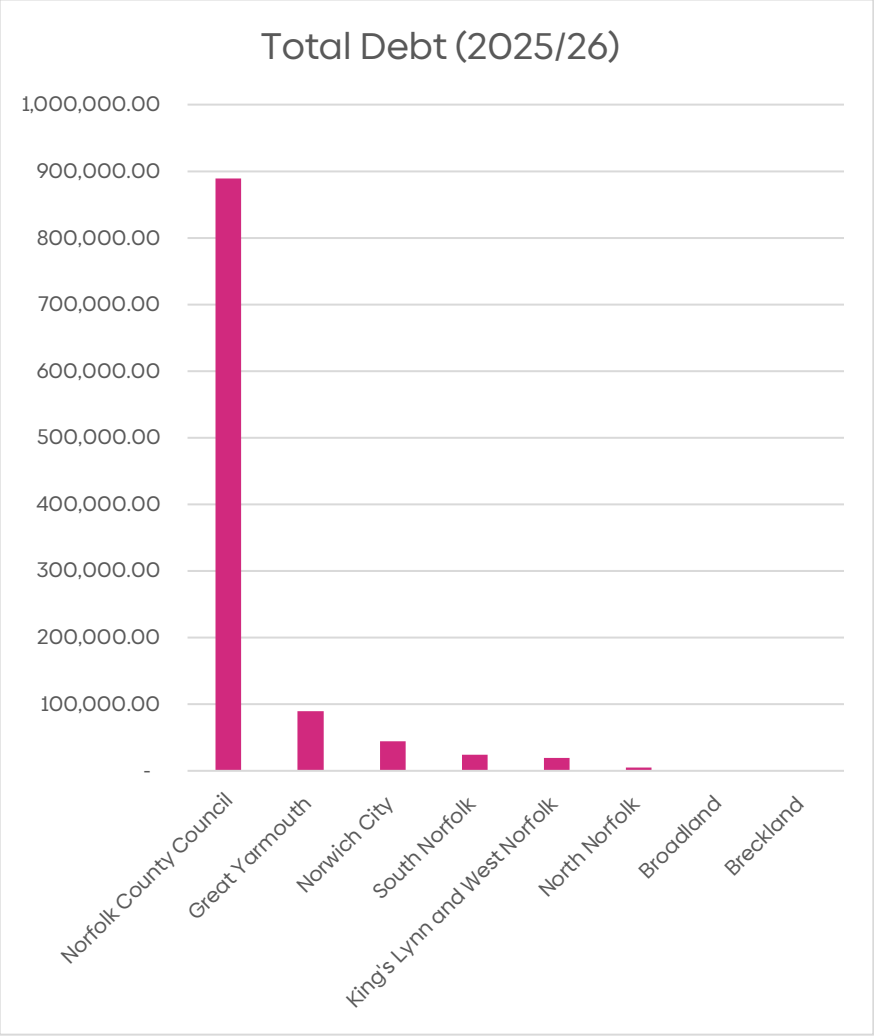


Figure 3: Total Debt (2025/26)

Norfolk County Council is by far the most indebted of the local authorities in the county. Its Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) has risen steadily over the past decade, increasing by around £335 million since 2016/17 to stand at just over £1 billion by 2024/25. This growth reflects the scale of the council's capital investment programme, alongside exceptional financial pressures such as the deficit in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) programme, which forced the authority to borrow sooner than originally planned. Forecast net borrowing at 31 March 2026 is expected to be £907 million, with annual interest payable of £31.8 million.

Year	Opening CFR (£000s)	Increase in CFR (£000s)	Closing CFR (£000s)
2016/17	673,444	24,273	697,717
2017/18	697,717	40,291	738,008
2018/19	738,008	39,838	777,846
2019/20	777,846	49,919	827,765
2020/21	827,765	59,280	887,045
2021/22	887,045	83,712	970,757
2022/23	970,757	25,700	996,457
2023/24	996,457	12,248	1,008,705
2024/25	1,008,705	–	–

Table 67: Opening, Increase and Closing CFR by year

Total increase in indebtedness (2016/17–2024/25): £335.3m

The County Council has maintained an under-borrowed position in recent years, using cash balances, reserves and working capital to support elements of its capital financing need rather than fully drawing down on external loans. While this has temporarily contained borrowing costs, it does not remove the underlying financing requirement, which will ultimately fall to the successor unitaries.

At the district level, borrowing positions vary considerably. Norwich City Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council both carry significant housing-related debt, linked to the 2012 self-financing settlement for council housing stock. Norwich has borrowing of £45 million and Great Yarmouth Borough Council £110 million, much of which is secured against retained housing assets and serviced through rental income. King's Lynn and West Norfolk (£19 million) and South Norfolk (£25 million) hold more modest levels of debt, while North Norfolk (£5 million) carries small balances. Breckland and Broadland remain debt-free. Relative to the national picture, Norfolk County Council ranks as the twenty-fifth most indebted authority in absolute terms, but only one-hundred and eighty-fifth when measured per capita, reflecting its large population base.

The disaggregation of debt raises several risks which must be carefully managed if the new councils are to be established on a stable footing. The foremost is the risk of concentration: the scale of the County Council's borrowing means that, unless allocations are carefully structured, one of the successor unitaries could inherit a disproportionate share of the debt burden. Given that annual debt servicing costs

already exceed £30 million, even relatively small differences in allocation could have material consequences for revenue budgets.

Further risks arise from the pressures linked to the SEND deficit, which may require additional borrowing beyond current forecasts. Housing-related borrowing at Norwich City Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council also presents a constraint, as these loans are tied to housing revenue accounts and must remain aligned with the management of retained stock. There is also a structural risk in the County Council's current under-borrowed position: reliance on cash balances has deferred the need to borrow externally, but this is not a permanent solution. Successor councils will ultimately need to meet the full financing requirement, and there is a danger that the true scale of indebtedness is understated if this is not explicitly recognised.

Finally, differences in the way predecessor councils have calculated Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) could lead to inconsistencies in the ongoing cost of servicing debt unless a common methodology is adopted. This was highlighted in Cumberland, where harmonisation of MRP policies was necessary following reorganisation. Unless addressed, such inconsistencies could undermine comparability between the new councils' financial positions and weaken confidence in their governance.

3.7 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and its impact on council finances

Schools funding in Norfolk, covering both locally maintained schools and academies, is provided primarily through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This ring-fenced grant is allocated to local authorities, who then distribute it to schools in line with the locally agreed formula. The DSG itself is divided into four funding blocks: the Schools Block, High Needs Block, Early Years Block, and Central School Services Block.

Norfolk County Council is one of just 38 councils nationally to be subject to a Safety Valve agreement, placing it under enhanced monitoring and support from the Department for Education (DfE) because of the scale of its financial pressures. Despite these arrangements, the County Council is carrying a substantial DSG deficit, with the cumulative shortfall forecast to reach £127.8 million by the end of 2024/25.

In principle, the statutory override means that the DSG deficit does not legally have to be taken into account when assessing the sufficiency of a council's general reserves. However, in practice the deficit has grown so large that it is beginning to undermine the Council's overall financial position. The scale of the shortfall is putting acute pressure on cash balances and eroding the authority's financial resilience.

The County Council has already implemented a significant programme of capital investment and service transformation aimed at stabilising the High Needs Block. Yet, despite these efforts, demand pressures have far outpaced available resources, leaving the DSG position unsustainable.
As the deficit has accumulated, Norfolk has relied heavily on internal borrowing — drawing down reserves, balances, and cash to meet day-to-day expenditure within the High Needs Block. This has left the authority in an under-borrowed position and facing a severe cash shortage. Medium-term forecasts now point to the risk of a negative cash balance, raising the prospect of a genuine financial emergency.

This situation underlines why concentrating risk in a single county-wide unitary is so problematic. A DSG deficit of this scale, if held centrally, creates systemic vulnerability. By contrast, a three-unitary model distributes responsibility more effectively, containing financial risk within smaller, more accountable organisations and avoiding a single point of failure.

4. Appendix D - Boundaries

4.1.1 Background

As set out elsewhere in our proposals, geography and place - alongside the creation of councils that local people identify with - are central to our approach. We believe that a three-unitary model based on the boundaries outlined in this proposal will deliver:

- A true 'Greater Norwich' – an urban authority which represents the city's status as a major regional city, tackles historic under-bounding and unlocks Norwich's economic growth potential, based on its wider, functional and recognised footprint
- Two further authorities which are strong in their own rights, and reflective of the population and area characteristics in the East and West of the county, enabling them to also respond to their local challenges.
- A balance of authorities across the region, which provides an equal footing and approach to new unitary governance and best supports effective devolution across Norfolk and Suffolk

This Appendix sets out in greater detail the approach, evidence and rationale for our proposed new unitary boundaries, considering the guidance and requirements set out by MHCLG.

The starting point for this process was to use the existing districts as building blocks for our proposals. We set out below the steps taken from this to arrive at the optimal solution considering the socioeconomics, demographics and geographies across the region, as well as to allow for the transformation of public services to serve the distinct needs of the communities across the region, and create financially, sustainable new unitaries.

We have engaged with data, partners, and worked with guidance including Local Government Boundary Commission for England, to assist in identifying the most optimal approach to boundary setting, and subsequent workshops with relevant officers and members, alongside additional analysis informed by evidence, to arrive at the optimal solution based on MHCLG criteria.

The Appendix set out:

- The rationale for the proposed geography for each area
- A summary of the evidence to support this position.

4.1.2 Specific rationale for our new unitaries

Greater Norwich

We carried out a comprehensive exercise to appraise the geographical options for what a Greater Norwich unitary council could serve. This involved detailed analysis of the demographics, local socio-economics, and a range of other factors.

The boundary for Greater Norwich has been drawn to reflect the city's status as Norfolk's economic engine and as a functional economic area in its own right, considering factors such as its Travel to Work Area, housing market area, economic clusters and potential for growth. This proposal creates a new unitary that brings together the historic city, its urban fringes, and key growth areas. These new boundaries will enable Greater Norwich to ensure democratic representation for those living within the city's functional economic and social geography. At present, many residents and businesses who are functionally part of Norwich have no say over its governance, creating a democratic deficit. Creating a Greater Norwich unitary authority based on the built-up area would strengthen community identity by aligning governance with the city's natural geographic and social footprint.

This option would reflect the lived experience of residents who identify with the city and share common needs, challenges, and services. By governing within the true functional urban area, local decisions would be more representative, cohesive, and rooted in the shared identity of the wider Norwich community. Whilst simultaneously supporting the same for residents who identify with a non-city geography.

Norwich functions as a dense urban centre with unique governance, infrastructure, and service needs that differ significantly from the surrounding rural areas. Greater Norwich provides more inclusive governance by ensuring that the people in wider urban area and fringe parishes have representation from the authority delivering the services they most use.

Greater Norwich provides for a stronger financial base expanding the tax base to include more residents and businesses and could improve the authority's financial sustainability and creates a more balanced taxbase across the 3 unitaries.

The Greater Norwich area keeps the largest settlements in the wider Greater Norwich area within the East and West unitaries, which better reflects the geography and community identity. It would also support two large East / West Unitaries either side with a core shared set of characteristics.

The Greater Norwich area allows for a more balanced development by including growth areas just outside the city for more coherent and strategic development planning, reducing pressure on the urban core, and increasing impact in the new Strategic Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk.

By including major growth areas and areas with high potential for development, the Greater Norwich boundary enables the city to grow as a globally connected, inclusive city-region. It also allows the new authority to better address embedded socio-economic challenges while unlocking development opportunities. This boundary is designed to reflect the real geography of economic activity and social need, supporting a service delivery model that is responsive, strategic, and fit for the future.

East Norfolk

The boundary for East Norfolk has been drawn to better represent a functional economic and social geography, aligned closely to existing district boundaries. The area shares an economic identity, anchored in clean energy, marine services, tourism, agriculture and healthcare, as well as a dynamic network of market towns and rural communities.

The rationale for the East Norfolk boundary is to create a unitary that can lead, through its sector strengths, while also addressing the area's specific challenges. By aligning the boundary with the real geography of economic activity and social need, the new authority will be able to design and deliver services that are tailored to the distinct characteristics of coastal, rural and market town communities. Market towns have their own historical, cultural, and economic identities that evidence shows, differs markedly from the Greater Norwich urban area.

The area also has shared environmental characteristics and issues, such as those associated with coastal erosion, and protection and enhancement of the Broads and Norfolk Coast. In addition, the significant Norfolk parts of The Broads National Park are all within one Unitary providing a clean landscape distinction between East and West.

West Norfolk

The West Norfolk boundary has been drawn to reflect the area's role as Norfolk's gateway to the Midlands, Lincolnshire, and Cambridgeshire, characterised by a resilient agri-food economy, advanced manufacturing, and a strong visitor sector. The boundary brings together the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Breckland District Council, and a small part of South Norfolk, creating a unitary that is both economically and demographically distinct (see previous economic and social distinctiveness sections). This boundary enables West Norfolk to build on its strengths and design a service delivery model that is accessible, inclusive, and tailored to local needs.

The rationale for the West Norfolk boundary is clear. The area generates 33% of Norfolk's total Gross Value Added, second only to Greater Norwich, from a fundamentally different base of agriculture, food production, logistics, advanced manufacturing, and tourism. Anchored by the Port of King's Lynn, and key transport corridors including the A47, A10, A11, and A17, West Norfolk plays a pivotal role in linking the county to national and international markets.

Settlement patterns reinforce this case. King's Lynn, with nearly 50,000 residents and a thriving industrial and cultural economy, acts as the principal urban anchor, while Thetford, Dereham, Downham Market, and Swaffham provide strong market-town hubs. Together with over 200 villages across 1,000 square miles, this network forms one of the most geographically extensive and community-rich areas in the UK. Aligning them within a single unitary allows services to be planned coherently around real communities, reducing duplication and ensuring inclusive access across dispersed geographies.

The distinctiveness of West Norfolk is also cultural and environmental. From the Brecks to the Fens and a historic coastline, the landscape underpins both the visitor economy and a strong sense of identity.

A unitary authority for West Norfolk therefore provides clarity, coherence, and strategic purpose. It creates a geography that reflects how the area works, supports sustainable growth in its core sectors, and enables services to be designed for both urban and rural communities. Distinct from Greater Norwich and East Norfolk, West Norfolk offers a

strong, balanced unitary identity, rooted in economic productivity, connectivity, and community resilience.

4.1.3 Summary of the evidence used

A summary of the evidence that has supported the development of the boundaries for the three-unitary model, which considered factors such as economic activity, Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs), deprivation levels, and spatial planning, is listed below.

- **Census data on rates of economic activity** highlight that areas around the Norwich urban centre have higher rates of economically active individuals. As you move away from the urban centre, these rates become lower. Mapping shows that economically active individuals are concentrated in built-up areas, supporting a boundary option that reflects this pattern. This spatial distribution is significant when considering a boundary change for Greater Norwich. Aligning boundaries with areas of higher economic activity ensures that governance structures, service delivery, and strategic planning are better tailored to the needs of the population driving the local economy. A boundary that reflects the concentration of economically active individuals allows for more effective resource allocation, infrastructure investment, and policy development. It also strengthens the case for integrated transport, housing, and employment strategies that support sustainable growth across the wider urban area. Ultimately, a boundary change that captures this economic geography helps create a more coherent and responsive framework for managing growth and delivering public services across Greater Norwich.

- **Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs)** for the County clearly show that Norwich stands out as a dominant employment hub, with the Norwich TTWA covering a large part of the central and eastern regions. This emphasises the economic importance of Norwich and the impact it will have on commuting trends within a unitary framework. Whilst the three unitary model would not match the TTWAs, the Greater Norwich model does stay within the Norwich TTWA. People living around the Norwich urban area generally have shorter commuting distances compared to those in more rural or suburban areas. This suggests that many residents in Norwich likely work within the city or nearby, benefiting from the city's compact layout and efficient transport options. Shortening commuting distances in a new unitary authority around urban Norwich is important because it boosts productivity,

promotes sustainability, improves quality of life, enhances local governance, and supports urban planning.

- **Levels of deprivation** from the Census 2021 data show that levels are higher in certain areas within Norwich city centre. In contrast, the surrounding rural areas generally have lower levels of deprivation and therefore better socio-economic conditions. When drawing boundaries for Greater Norwich, we considered both deprivation levels and economic activity rates. Including areas with higher deprivation ensures targeted resource allocation, while integrating economically active areas promotes growth and stability.

- **Map and data taken from Local Plans.** (GNLP) highlights how the urban area beyond the city of Norwich is set to grow in all directions, and to various degrees – much of it beyond the current city council boundary. With a sufficient area for growth, Greater Norwich has a better opportunity to accommodate national housing targets independently, reducing the risk of neighbouring authorities having to assist to meet those targets and the risk that future local plans are rejected by the Government (as has recently happened for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, and Oxford City Council).

- Norwich and the fringe parishes will be the area's major focus for **jobs, homes, and service developmen**t. This will enhance Greater Norwich's role as a regional centre and promote major regeneration, the growth of strategic and smaller scale extensions and redevelopment , supporting neighbourhood renewal. The area will provide 27,960 additional homes and sites for a significant increase in jobs. This includes around 257 hectares of undeveloped land allocated for employment use. To achieve this, development sites are focussed on the city centre, in strategic regeneration areas in East Norwich and the northern city centre and at strategic urban extensions in the north-east and west alongside a other locations across the urban area.

- **Partner and other geography mapping** - We have worked with partners (health, police, VCSE, business, public agencies) to understand the geographical focus of their approaches to try and align synergies. Whilst there is no single approach for Norfolk, and many entities work at a County or Regional level, our proposals represent the best fit alignment and reflect many agencies seek to work on smaller footprints that County level. We have sought to align proposals with new and

emerging plans around neighbourhoods, and neighbourhood level activity. We have also considered existing public boundaries, including parliamentary constituencies.

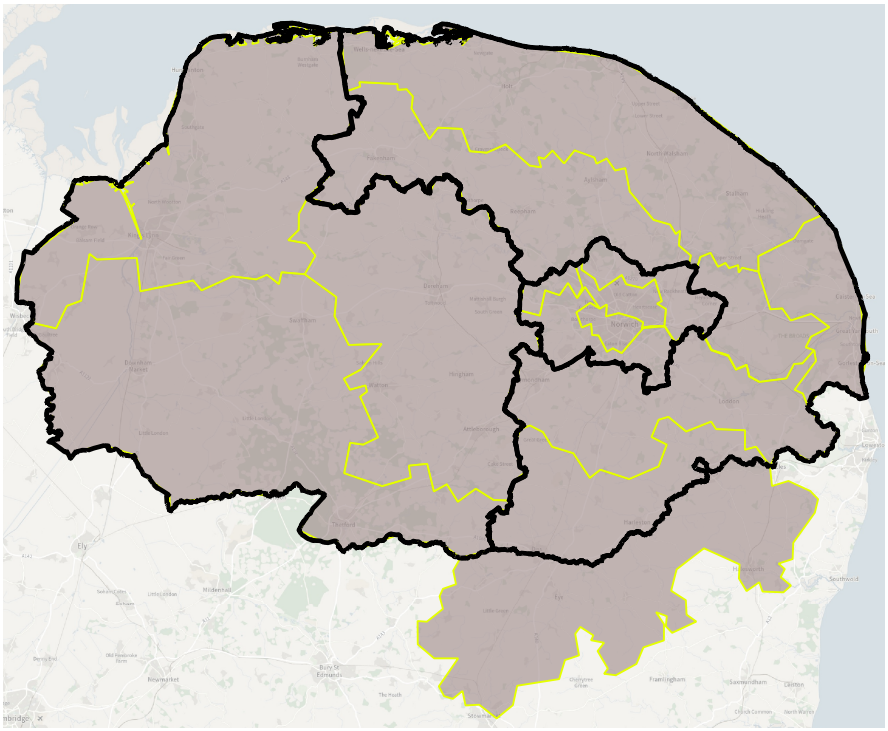


Figure 4: Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

4.1.4 Measuring financial resilience and achievability

To ensure any new unitary authority is financially sustainable, we have modelled the financial resilience and achievability of each boundary option. This analysis is essential to demonstrate that proposed structures can not only deliver effective services but also meet government criteria for reorganisation.

As outlined in our wider proposals, we have developed financial models that assess both the revenue-generating potential and the cost implications of different areas. The "income" potential considers factors such as council tax base and business rates, while the "cost" potential estimates service delivery expenses using Super Output Area and population data-tracking, and, where possible, the spatial origins of service demand and expenditure.

Through this modelling we have been able to stress test shortlisted boundary configurations, to ensure sufficient confidence in their achievability. The detailed outcomes of this financial assessment for our final chosen model are set out in Chapter 7 of the Area Proposals.

5. Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints

5.1 Early Intervention and Prevention via a Healthy & Thriving Communities Department

5.1.1 Context & constraints

East Norfolk presents a uniquely complex landscape, spanning coastal towns, rural villages, and large market towns. This diverse geography distinctly shapes the lived experience of its residents and contributes to persistent challenges in health, housing stability, and economic security. Healthy life expectancy is significantly below the national average, with some of the widest disparities in Norfolk between its most and least deprived communities. The area also has the highest proportion of residents disabled under the Equality Act, elevated rates of preventable long-term conditions, and a rapidly growing older population, many of whom face isolation, frailty, and barriers to timely care.

Residents must navigate multiple entry points across district, county, health, and VCSE services, often encountering inconsistent pathways and thresholds. Yet, there are pockets of good practice—integrated hubs, strong parish and community anchor networks, and targeted health programmes—that, while promising, remain unevenly distributed and insufficiently scaled to deliver consistent, whole-system impact.

National policy creates both a distinct opportunity and a pressing urgency for transformation. Initiatives such as the Government's Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, NHS neighbourhood models, and the broader Public Service Reform agenda all point towards a prevention-first, integrated, place-based approach. For East Norfolk, the Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) programme offers an opportunity to move beyond short-term pilots and towards a coordinated, sustainable offer - designed to tackle root causes, support older residents to live independently, reduce health inequalities, and improve stability and self-sufficiency for working-age residents

5.1.2 Recommended delivery model

In East Norfolk, this will be delivered via a dedicated department called Healthy & Thriving Communities. The model will be tailored to local needs, bringing together

housing, health, employment, skills, and VCSE partners through hubs in urban areas, and supported by mobile teams serving rural areas, ensuring coverage across the full geography.

This integrated model is uniquely designed to respond to East Norfolk's demographic pressures: high levels of need among older adults, increasing demand from working-age residents, and complex challenges facing children and families. By offering joined-up, proactive services that are locally rooted and easy to access, the department ensures support is tailored to the realities of life across coastal, rural, and market town communities. Teams will operate a "no wrong door" approach, making it distinctly easier for residents to receive timely support in familiar, trusted places.

Operationally, this department has five functions:

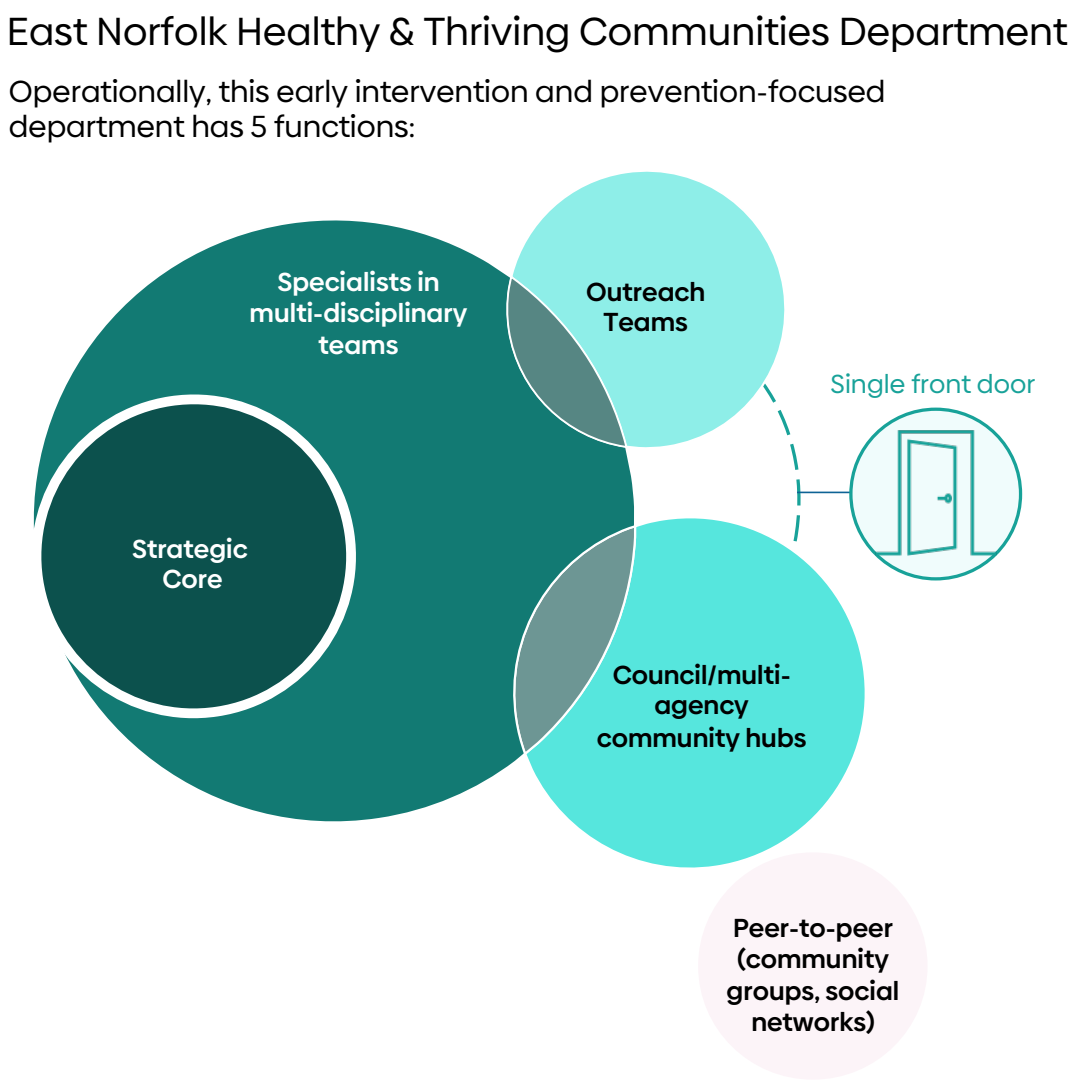


Figure 5: East Norfolk Healthy & Thriving Communities Department functions

Function 1: Strategic Core

This function sets the strategic direction for the department. It uses population health data, labour market insights, and housing demand forecasts to shape commissioning. The corporate core also ensures alignment between health, housing, and employment services to maximise impact in coastal, rural, and urban contexts.

Function 2: Specialists / experts in multidisciplinary teams

Specialist practitioners work in integrated teams to support individuals, families, and elderly residents facing multiple barriers, from insecure housing to unemployment, poor health, or debt. They bring deep expertise in housing options, employment support, domestic abuse, financial inclusion, and community safety. These specialists often act as case coordinators for those at risk of crisis.

Function 3: Front door

The front door is the single access point for residents to seek support. Staff here resolve simpler queries immediately, connect residents to local support, and flag more complex cases for coordinated intervention. They maintain a strong focus on accessibility for rural residents and those without digital access.

Function 4: Community hubs

Community hubs are accessible local spaces where residents can find integrated advice on housing, employment, skills development, and wellbeing. They also host group activities, outreach sessions from health services, and targeted support for at-risk groups.

Function 5: Outreach teams

Mobile teams bring support to residents who cannot easily access hub locations, especially in rural villages and coastal communities. They provide home visits, outreach in community venues, and proactive contact with people at risk of homelessness or unemployment.

5.1.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Resident Journey | ***Healthy & Thriving Communities in action in East Norfolk***

Strategic Core – Proactive Targeting

The Data and Insights function analyses housing, health, and employment data and identifies residents in Cromer and Great Yarmouth at risk of unemployment after the summer season. Many already face health issues and low financial resilience. Predictive analytics uncover that some could reach crisis within 12 to 18 months.

In response, the Corporate Core commissions a coastal employment resilience programme into higher paid, year-round sectors (e.g., offshore wind, renewable energy, and health and social care), strengthens hub staffing with financial inclusion, mental health, and careers support, and briefs mobile teams and VCSE partners to begin proactive outreach.

Strategic Core

Mobile Outreach Teams – Proactive Outreach

A mobile team visits seasonal workers at a local community centre with a VCSE mental health partner and an employment adviser. They meet John, a 32-year-old hospitality worker facing unemployment, struggling with low mood and money worries. In a strengths-based conversation, the team identifies his practical skills, interest in technology, and openness to retraining, then explains available support and invites him to the community hub.

Mobile Outreach Teams

Single front door – Accessible First Contact

Two weeks later, John uses the council's online form to ask about training. The triage officer reviews the mobile team's notes in the shared resident record, books him an appointment at the Great Yarmouth hub, and signposts him to local peer groups to help him stay motivated while waiting for enrolment.

Single front door

Community Hub – Holistic Assessment

At the hub, John meets a case worker who reviews his employment, housing, health, and wellbeing in one conversation. He is connected to a financial inclusion officer to address arrears, a VCSE mental health practitioner for group sessions, and a careers adviser who enrols him on a renewable energy training course with guaranteed job interviews.

Council/multi-agency community hubs

Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Wrap-around

The MDT (including housing, employment, health, and VCSE partners) works with John to finalise his plan. A careers adviser leads the case while he trains, the housing officer checks in monthly to prevent arrears, the mental health practitioner continues support sessions, and employment services arrange a short-term winter placement to provide income until his course is complete.

Specialists in multidisciplinary teams

Stepping down to community-led support

Twelve months later, John completes training and secures a permanent role with an offshore wind company, bringing higher pay and year-round stability. He can comfortably pay his bills (avoiding arrears), his mental health improves through a sports club and volunteer mentoring, and with this progress the case steps down to community networks, with the option to re-enter through the single front door if needed.

Peer-to-peer

Figure 6: Example East Norfolk resident journey

The East Norfolk Healthy & Thriving Communities department's is designed around the principle that the right support should come from the right place at the right time, with no wrong door for residents. Physical hubs across the geography will enable drop ins for advice, skills workshops, and health and wellbeing activities. Along the coast and in rural villages, mobile and pop-up sessions ensure that distance and poor transport are never barriers to help.

When a resident makes contact, whether in person, by phone, online, or via referral from a partner, they meet someone who listens and takes the time to understand their whole situation. Conversations explore the full picture of housing, health, work, and family relationships, and recognising the assets each resident and their community already have. The combination and urgency of needs determine who is best placed to lead a case.

From that first interaction, the lead professional works with a multidisciplinary team that can draw on health, housing, employment, skills, family support, and VCSE partners to wrap the right mix of support around the resident. This could mean resolving an immediate problem, such as rent arrears, while also addressing linked challenges like job insecurity or loneliness. Support is coordinated so that residents experience it as one connected service rather than a set of disconnected interventions.

For multi-agency partners, the model creates a more coordinated and proactive way of working in an area where challenges can be highly localised. Health providers, housing teams, employment services, training organisations, and VCSE groups share space in hubs and outreach venues, building trust and making joint decisions based on a shared understanding of local priorities. Predictive analytics use securely shared data from housing, health, schools, and community partners to identify residents and communities at risk of crisis 12–18 months ahead. This insight guides targeted outreach, such as job readiness programmes in coastal areas before the off-season or wellbeing checks in rural villages with high rates of isolation.

For staff, the model means working in flexible multidisciplinary teams that reflect the diversity of East Norfolk's communities. They have the tools, shared information, and relationships to act quickly, spend less time duplicating assessments, and more time building trust and delivering solutions that last.

5.1.4 Unlocking financial benefits

The East Norfolk EIP department is designed to deliver a shift in public service demand. By acting earlier and in more coordinated ways, it will reduce the number of people who reach crisis, meaning less spend on high-cost interventions and more people staying well, independent, and economically active.

Savings will be driven by reducing duplication between services, replacing siloed working, multiple access points, and repeated assessments with a consolidated prevention-led front door and multidisciplinary teams. This streamlined approach means issues are resolved earlier and more effectively, avoiding escalation into costly interventions.

Predictive analytics will identify residents and communities at risk 12 to 18 months ahead of crisis. These interventions deliver both financial and social returns.

Upfront investment will be needed in ICT, governance, and workforce development, alongside the disaggregation of county-delivered services and aggregation of district functions such as housing, homelessness, early help, public health, reablement, customer contact, and commissioning.

5.2 Housing & Homelessness

5.2.1 Context & constraints

There are difficult market conditions in East Norfolk for housing and homelessness services, including areas of challenging development conditions with value of land not exceeding anticipated revenue profits for development, pockets of high house prices (10.8x earnings in 2022) and a retreat of landlords from the rented sector.

East Norfolk has the second highest proportion of LSOAs in the highest 20% of deprivation in England, (the second highest in Norfolk). Conversely it also has a disproportionately high amount of second homes and holiday let ownership. This highlights the diverse nature of the housing market in East Norfolk and challenges across the area - without a nuanced and tailored approach to service delivery, symptoms of these conditions will only get worse. A three unitary model that achieves

the necessary scale while still being close enough to residents to link housing, development and homelessness services to well understood need, is the best solution.

As of 24/25 and compared to the other unitary areas, EN has the largest allocated budget for homelessness services (£5.5m for 25/26), the second highest number of assessments (1,965) and the highest proportion of assessments converting to a prevention or relief duty (84%). High conversion rates also indicate that aligning with EI&P functions would help to reduce the amount of people reaching crisis and requiring statutory or relief duties.

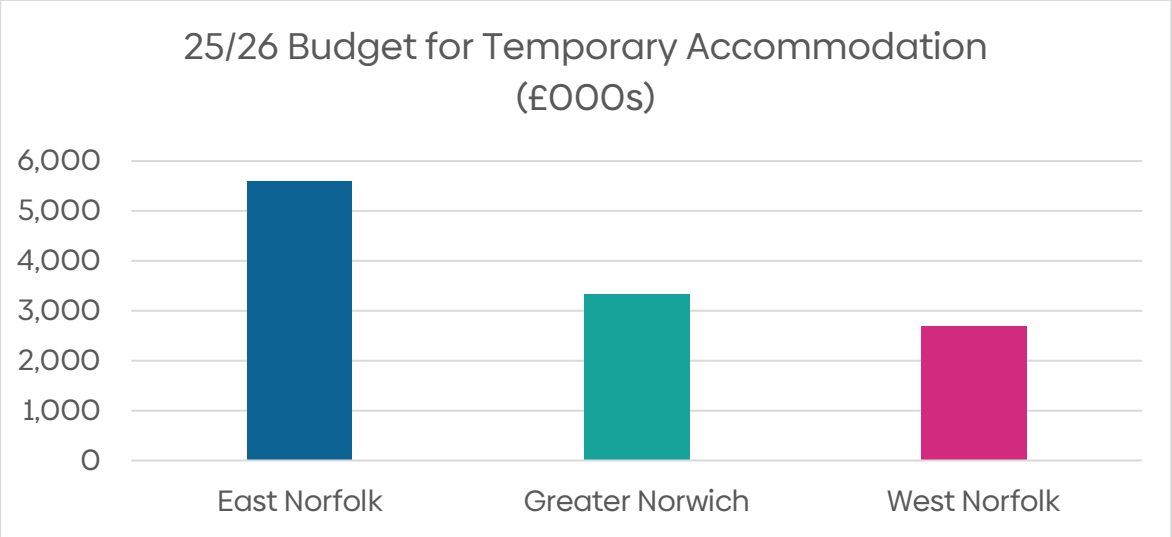


Figure 7: 2025/26 Budget for Temporary Accommodation

The housing register in East Norfolk clearly shows a need for one bed homes, accounting for 54% of total households on the register. It also shows that there is the highest need for 4+ bed homes in Norfolk (8%), and an increase in accessible properties.

5.2.2 Recommended delivery model

Homelessness

Consolidate homelessness (and housing) within the Healthy & Thriving Communities department to provide a joined-up approach that tackles the root causes of homelessness. Rough sleeping outreach services will ensure that rough sleeping across all areas is identified.

Housing

Housing Services will be moved within the Healthy & Thriving Communities function to better capitalise on opportunities for collaboration and intervention. The HRA management and maintenance infrastructure should maintain its existing structure outside of EI&P.

Different approaches to allocations currently exist across the footprint of the new unitary; Great Yarmouth Borough Council previously operated a choice-based lettings policy and has now moved to direct allocation with success, North Norfolk, South Norfolk & Broadlands operate hybrid-based lettings favouring homelessness flow. Considering the differences and history, East Norfolk should adopt a single direct lettings policy across the unitary. This policy should be developed with the intention to reduce homelessness and make best use of social homes.

East Norfolk should expand the existing social landlord/ HRA infrastructure to provide the management and maintenance of council owned housing across East Norfolk and to merge all current functions providing this service. Through this approach there is an opportunity to ensure all services are resident-centred to respond to new regulation requirements, including Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Development

Great Yarmouth Borough Council is the sole shareholder of two arm's length organisations that support development and regeneration:

- Equinox Enterprises – A development company.
- Equinox Property Holdings – offers good quality rental homes, driving up local standards and generating income.

Similarly South Norfolk & Broadland operate similar companies (Big Sky Ventures Ltd, Broadland Living and Broadland Growth). Shadow authorities must consider how best to proceed with these organisations to best stimulate housing supply, and private rental sector improvements. Repton Homes, who are wholly owned by the county, will also need consideration and assessment.

Company Name	Ownership	Ambition
Repton Homes	100% (Norfolk County Council)	Develops private homes for sale.
Equinox Enterprises	100% (Great Yarmouth BC)	Development company, delivering new homes to buy throughout the borough
Equinox Property Holdings	100% (Great Yarmouth BC)	Property management company, offering quality rental homes to the local market, aiming to enhance the range of market ready properties and improve PRS standards.
Broadland Living	100% (Broadland)	Offers below market rental homes in the private rental market.
Broadland Growth	100% (Broadland)	Housing development company offers delivery options to the council and returns profits
Big Sky Group		
Big Sky Ventures Ltd	100% (South Norfolk	Builds and sells market and affordable housing.
Big Sky Property Management	100% (South Norfolk)	Sells asset management services and rents properties - profits returned to the council.

Table 68: ALOS that need to be considered by shadow authorities

5.2.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Homelessness

East Norfolk has the highest number of households needing prevention or relief. Through more effective tackling of root causes, we believe there will be a reduction in the demand for this support. This will be enabled through outreach teams that can meet coastal and rural needs, as well as more effective information sharing.

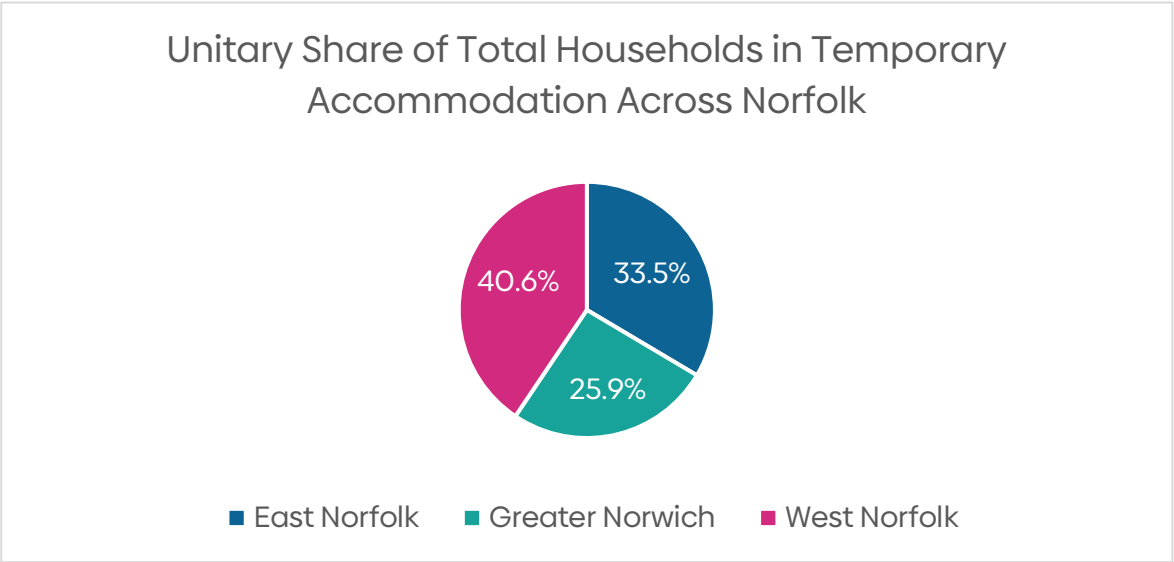


Figure 8: Unitary share of total households in Temporary Accommodation across Norfolk

Unitarisation will also support East Norfolk to have better access to affordable quality housing which will better tackle local housing needs and reduce the demand on homelessness services.

Housing

East Norfolk will inherit an established HRA (5,754 homes) which will enable the authority to purchase homes for social rent to increase their housing supply. This is positive but should be focused on ensuring the increase in supply of one bed homes and three bed homes to meet the needs in the unitary.

There are some nontraditional build types in across East Norfolk (Middlegate Estate, in particular) that may be at risk of not meeting any new decency standards. A unitary will be able to access funds to help regenerate these homes and support central government growth ambitions. Consistent housing management and maintenance quality can be achieved by extending the existing social landlord function in and the associated infrastructure to support any stock owned across the new unitary.

There is an opportunity with the acquisition of supported housing services (currently commissioned by the county) to be integrated into the wider service team to create a more joined up and preventative enabled service. Working in collaboration with Adult Social Care, development can target the increase in housing suitable for care in the community helping to prevent more expensive social care interventions and enable more independent living for residents.

Development

The new unitary boundaries offer a significant opportunity for development. Whilst much of the obvious development land has already been built on, new packaged development opportunities may be more appealing to developers who require scale. By also gaining oversight of other functions (like highways and transport and strategic infrastructure) it puts the East unitary in a strong position to respond to its specific coast requirements and support the region in its growth ambitions.

East Norfolk is well placed to benefit from the UK's shift to clean energy. The Sizewell C Nuclear power stations and Norfolk Offshore Wind Zone, along with the supporting operations in Great Yarmouth will bring skilled jobs - backed by Enterprise Zone status and targeted port investment. If unmanaged, growth on this scale could put further strain on the housing market, particularly the already stretched PRS.

In a unitary model that is close to the opportunity, economic expansion can be directly linked to affordable housing delivery, stronger PRS oversight, and homelessness prevention. In a larger, one size fits all model, these connections are harder to make, risks exacerbated, and opportunities missed.

5.2.4 Unlocking financial benefits

Cost Considerations

The forthcoming social rent settlement of up to CPI +1% will help to ease service strain and increase income within the HRA, however there will be forthcoming challenges to both the HRA and wider development capacity between aging social housing stock, non-traditional builds and the forthcoming Awaab's Law.

Potential Savings

Through the amalgamation and rationalisation of homelessness, housing and development teams, it's expected that savings will be made. Staff savings will predominantly be at senior management level as the demand on officers and services will initially remain the same.

Embedding homelessness and housing into the EI&P function will also realise savings. A conservative saving estimate on non-staffing costs of 10% can be achieved, among other things this would also include an expected saving on temporary accommodation spend and EI&P activities prevent worsening and crisis situations.

While there are no major savings to be made within the HRA – there are opportunities for income maximisation in the effort towards more EI&P working:

- Reduce relet times for properties; and
- Reduce current tenant arrears which would increase in year rental income.

Cost neutral assumptions

While there may be economies of scale achieved through contract renegotiation costs for technology licences for H&H these costs are often based on a per head fee. This means that while there may be some savings due to staff reductions – there are no material savings expected from this.

A neighbourhood model for housing growth (aligned with EI&P) means development is designed around the reality of each place, not a single county wide blueprint. While this isn't a cost saving as such, it does translate government growth ambitions to local need while creating a single attractive partner for housing delivery in the three unitary model.

5.3 Adult Social Care

5.3.1 Context & constraints

East Norfolk covers a large geographical area with coastal, semi-rural and rural communities, with the highest percentage of the population aged over 65. More older adults are in nursing and residential care in comparison to the other unitaries, indicating a lack of focus on independence. Demand also increased for working-age adults, with East Norfolk having the highest number of 18–64-year-olds accessing services out of the three unitaries.

Alongside this, costs are increasing for all types of support, evidencing a need for change in the model of support and an opportunity to redesign the approach to market management.

5.3.2 Recommended delivery model

There are several delivery models to consider for the implementation of Adults Social Care within the new unitary. Some have been summarised in an options appraisal below:

Model	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Shared Services Model	A single unitary is appointed to deliver Adults Services on behalf of all or some of the new authorities. This is carried out under a formal shared services agreement or delegation.	• Economies of scale and reduced duplication • Reduces transition risk as staff and structures can remain in place in short term • Consistency of approach across unitaries	• Diluted accountability and complex governance • Compromises over operational and strategic priorities • Still requires core service (DAS) in each unitary • Dependency on an external organisation
Separate Services	The disaggregated model - the new unitaries each establish their own Adults Service structure and workforce, with local leadership and systems. Examples include Cumberland and Bedfordshire	• Locally accountable • Decisions making and services delivered closest to communities • Can reflect local needs • Retains option to run some services jointly	• Duplication of teams and staff across three unitaries • Challenge of recruiting high quality staff from other councils • Higher risk transition that could impact day-to-day services
Central Leadership – Diffused Delivery	The new authority operates a single Adult Services directorate. Delivery is decentralised into locality-based teams aligned to former council areas or other geographies	• Combines strategic leadership with place-based delivery • Easier to maintain partner relationships • Retains local responsiveness • Enables phased integration	• Blurred lines of accountability if not clearly defined • Potential inconsistencies between areas • Requires strong central oversight and performance management

Table 69: Types of delivery models for implementing Adults Social Care

Following engagement with Leaders, Chief Executives and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), our recommended delivery model for East Norfolk is to establish a single Adults Social Care service.

The creation of a dedicated East Norfolk Adult Social service will enable a greater focus on the local needs, assets, and challenges. The model will provide the opportunity to have a greater focus on the local context and challenges and support a move to a person-centred approach to Social Care. In urban centres and towns such as Great Yarmouth, neighbourhood hubs will be closely connected to multi-agency networks, with targeted proactive outreach in the most deprived wards. Elsewhere, the model will adapt to coastal communities which have a higher percentage of older adults and making greater use of mobile and digital services such as Technology Enable Care to support rural communities. A new local delivery model and front door will be closely

aligned to community assets and inform priorities for what is commissioned locally and in collaboration with partners to avoid duplication.

Whilst partners such as the Police and Health will have to service three unitaries, their movement to three footprints across the Norfolk geographies aligns with this recommended option and will allow for closer working relationships to develop between staff within the new unitary function.

There are positive examples of joint working that exist across the county footprint currently and would not seek to unpick these where they provide positive outcomes for residents. These will be managed through partnership boards to ensure there is appropriate governance in place. The Adults Safeguarding Board is also something which will be retained to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations and supported through their connection to more localised service delivery model.

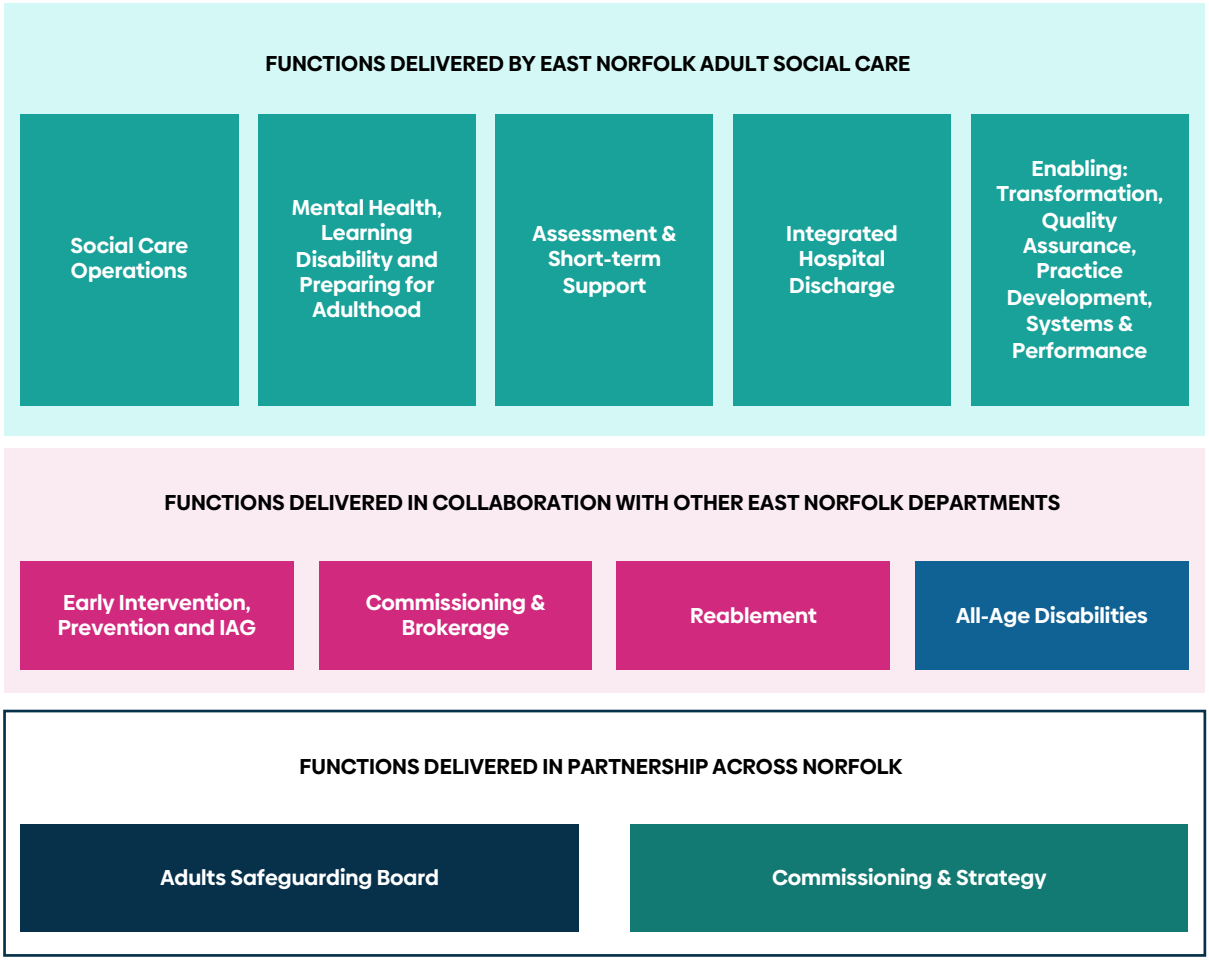


Figure 9: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary.

Our analysis has indicated that the Norfolk care market has seen increased costs across supported living, home care and residential care and there is a need to ensure the provider market remains sustainable. East Norfolk will have its own commissioning & partnerships function – but will come together with Greater Norwich and West Norfolk through partnership boards to commission support like residential care placements and to develop a market management approach.

This new model will shift East Norfolk from a county wide one size fits all approach. to a person-centred approach where communities and the VCFSE sector have a greater role to help keep people as independent as possible in their own homes with lower levels of support. Where there is a need for additional support and a care package this will put the person at the heart of this to support them to be as independent as possible and focused on improving their outcomes. This model with reestablish the primacy of place to ensure commissioned services are tailored to local needs with the right level of support at the right time and help reduce demand for statutory interventions.

5.3.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

The Early Intervention & Prevention offer in East Norfolk is critical to the new model to help keep people as independent as possible and prevent and delay the need for social care support. A key element of this is approach with Adults is for East Norfolk to have a focus on maximising reablement to support be to be as independent as possible given this area has the largest percentage of the population 65+. The reablement service will be moved into the EI&P service and assigned the most appropriate lead based on their needs who will oversee their case and track progress. There are strong foundations to build a more focused local prevention-based approach to Adults Social Care which further develops the strength-based approach to help maintain greater independence.

There is significant potential to scale what already works based on local knowledge of communities the challenges they face and the most appropriate interventions. With East Norfolk having a growing number of older people 65+ due to people wanting to retire to a costal / rural setting this is resulting in an increase in demand in services for frail elderly people. The new model will build upon what is working well in East Norfolk and ensure that locally based commissioned services and plans for facilities e.g. Benjamin Court are made locally and have improved financial security on a longer-term basis which was an issue raised in the localised initiatives in Great Yarmouth. Having

agreed priorities across agencies at a neighbourhoods level will enable commissioned services to be aligned to local needs and better coordination of what gets commission by each organisation to avoid duplication.

Working closely with health and hospital partners including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in West Norfolk, James Paget Hospital in East Norfolk and Norfolk & Norwich Hospital in Greater Norwich, will be key to provide coordinated support and outreach in both primary care in communities and hospital discharge. Given East Norfolk covers a large geographical area many residents have a greater distance to travel to acute hospitals for condition management. This is a particular challenge in North Norfolk which has a higher number of older people 65+ which this new model will support through greater collaboration with health to develop more innovative community-based solutions for older people's health and wellbeing. Developing the local offer building on existing partnerships at a neighbourhood level will support NHS England's 10-Year Plan to introduce an integrated neighbourhood model with a multi-agency front door by 2028. The three unitary model will support the implementation of this through statutory partners working together on localised geographies to deliver services based on local needs – based on deep relationships, mitigating risks of disaggregation.

This model will introduce an All-Age Disability Service for Learning Disabilities with a greater focus on increasing independence, providing secure appropriate housing, skills and employment. With East Norfolk having the highest number of working-age adults this new model will identify and support cases from 14 years of age working with Children's Social Care to agree the most appropriate commissioned services, skills to help them gain employment and secure the most appropriate housing. This will enable a person-centred approach to help the individual to be an independent as possible with the appropriate level of support. This will help East Norfolk to provide targeted support to those who need it most and align with local service provision.

5.3.4 Achieving financial benefits

The key to achieving financial benefits of the new model and creating long term financial sustainability is through the early identification of needs and putting in place lower levels of support through local community provision or technology. Helping to maintain people's independence and supporting them to live in their own home in the

communities they know is a better outcome for the individual and helps avoid residential care which in East Norfolk costs an average of £615 a week.

A holistic approach to case reviews to establish if a reduced level of support e.g. a move from residential to a supported living provision may be possible. This would equate to a saving of £478 per week demonstrating that in East Norfolk, a small reduction in numbers could have a significant impact. This may also enable older adults to have improved independence in an environment that they feel safe and secure and have an improved quality of life.

Focusing services on early intervention and prevention allows for staff to be reorganised around community hubs. Specialist skills can be allocated at the initial stage to ensure effective triage. Cases needing social care intervention will be led by a social worker, who completes the Care Act Assessment and coordinates EIP support if appropriate. This approach ensures cases are managed based on required support levels and individual needs, with minimal transfers.

5.4 Children's Social Care

5.4.1 Context & constraints

East Norfolk will inherit the highest proportion of Children in Care in the county. Unlike trends in the other two unitaries, demand for has slightly increased over the past three years, indicating a need for more effective family support and early intervention within thew new unitary. Numbers of Children in Need (CIN) are also high, and whilst Child Protection Plans (CP) are lower than elsewhere, this may be a result of young people tipping into the threshold for becoming looked after as opposed to effective early intervention. Should this trend continue, there would be a significant demand pressure on East Norfolk.

The area has also seen higher increases in costs compared to the other unitaries and notably has the highest cost residential care placements out of the three areas – indicating a need to use this opportunity to reset market relationships to ensure effective market management.

5.4.2 Recommended delivery model

There are several delivery models to consider for the implementation of Children's Social Care within the new unitary. Some have been summarised in an options appraisal below:

Service Model	Strengths	Risks
Disaggregation & Integration: Each unitary establishes their own Children's Services	• Strong local control of the service operation and spend • Tailored services for the local community • Can retain partnership arrangements during implementation and beyond where appropriate	• Recruitment and retention of key staff if a HR strategy is not well considered • Data security and retention could be at risk if not carefully managed through transition • Duplication of processes, roles and contracts may increase costs • Transition may introduce significant risk that will need to considered and managed
Shared Services: One authority hosts Children's Services on behalf of other authorities via a Shared Services agreement	• May be easier to manage workforce challenges & contracts in the short-term • Enables the achievement of economies of scale • Provides some continuity for staff and care provision	• There are distinct needs across the three unitaries that this model may not address • May introduce challenges when it comes to OFSTED inspections and ensuring all areas are meeting required responsibilities • Dilutes accountability for service success • May introduce complexity should a member organisation wish to leave the arrangement
Joint Children's Trust: Authorities create or commission a trust, which operates independently with a shared governance board	• There have been indications that the introduction of a trust can drive practice improvements	• Central government has been clear that this is not their preferred option for social care delivery • Requires significant investment to set up • May introduce complexity should a member organisation wish to leave the arrangement • Dilutes accountability for improvement work

Table 70: Types of delivery models for implementing Children's Social Care

Following engagement with Leaders, Chief Executives and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), our recommended delivery model for East Norfolk is to establish a single Children's Service.

This option provides the greatest opportunity for each unitary to build a genuinely local and community connected service, that leverages local community assets to deliver positive outcomes for residents. Given the demand challenges that East Norfolk is facing and has faced as part of a large single unitary there is a risk that remaining in a larger organisational structure will just further exacerbate these pressures.

Whilst partners such as the Police and Health systems will have to service three unitaries, their movement to three footprints across the Norfolk geographies aligns with this recommended option and will allow for closer working relationships to develop between staff within the new unitary function.

There are positive examples of joint working that exist across the county footprint currently and would not seek to unpick these where they provide positive outcomes for

residents. Partnership arrangements that should be retained include the Norfolk Children's Safeguarding Partnership which could be served by a joint administrative function and retain its local community safeguarding groups which will be strengthened through their connection to more localised service delivery.

Finally, our analysis has indicated that the Norfolk care market has seen increased costs in placement types and there is a need to ensure the placement market remains sustainable. Positioned within EI&P, East Norfolk will have its own Commissioning & Partnerships function, that will commission service across the council. However, they will come together with Greater Norwich and West through partnership boards to commission support like residential care placements and will continue involvement within regional care collaboratives such as Adopt East and Foster East to work in partnership with other authorities and sector specialists to provide support for children and young people.

These organisations already span organisational boundaries beyond Norfolk, so refining membership should not have the destabilising impact that has been suggested. Retaining a sovereign commissioning service will also enable East Norfolk to develop hyper-local relationships with providers and the community sector to meet needs – ensuring there is not a risk of a 'postcode lottery' in provision but that residents have access to provision that is right for their needs.

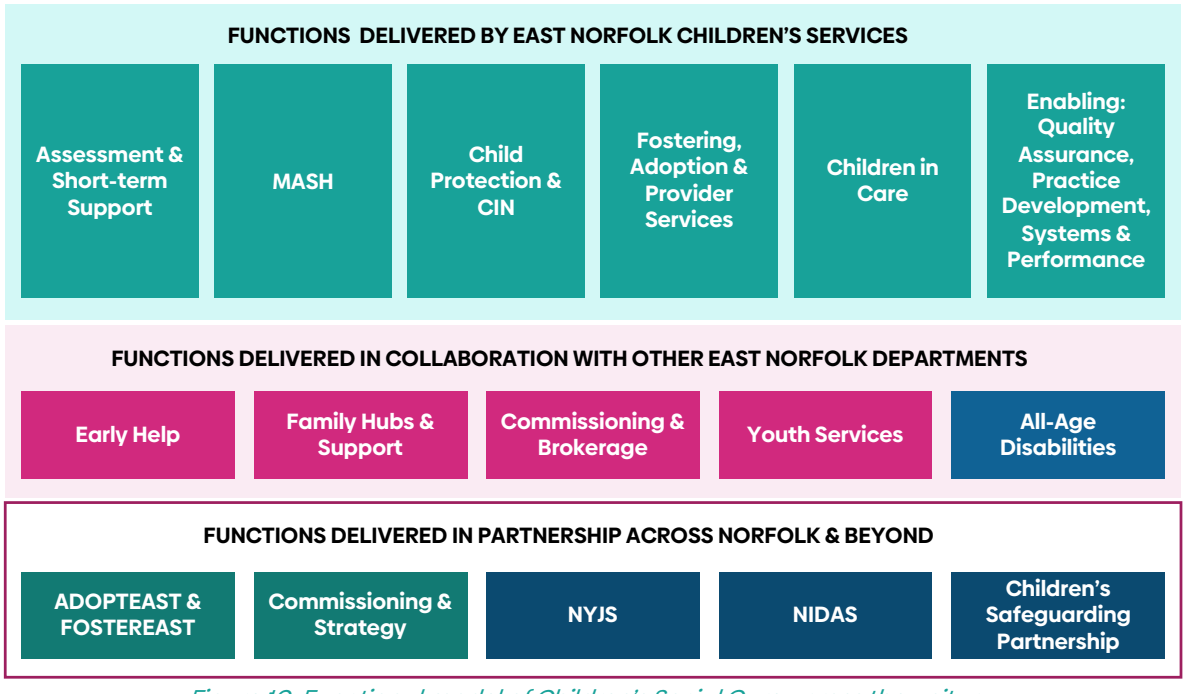


Figure 10: Functional model of Children's Social Care across the unitary.

5.4.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Children, young people and their families in East Norfolk will benefit from a service offer that is rooted in their local communities and needs. It is clear from the current context in East Norfolk that the current method of service delivery is not delivering the outcomes that are needed for families and young people. We believe that the best way to manage the challenges facing East Norfolk is a service response that is deeply rooted in the local community, that builds upon (not over) good practice and relationships that exist currently to be able to more effective target support at residents before a crisis emerges.

The Early Intervention & Prevention offer in East Norfolk will be primarily focused on ensuring the stability and resilience of adults across the area, connecting them to employment, housing, as well as proactively support debt management and the risk of domestic abuse. More resilient households will result in less demand for services.

Where there is a need for a statutory intervention – or concern about safety of a child or young person – a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be located within Children's Services which will bring together statutory partners from police, health and other partners, building on existing strong safeguarding arrangements to identify and respond to need quickly. The three unitary model aligns with the move of statutory partners to more localised geographies of service delivery – enabling the development of deep relationships and mitigating risks of disaggregation.

For children who do enter the care system, the emphasis on family-based placements will be retained, exploring kinship and then wider fostering arrangements. East Norfolk has the highest number of residential care placements, and there is an opportunity within the new unitary to ensure these are genuinely meeting needs and providing value for money – or whether young people can be stepped down into family-based placements.

As young people leave care, East Norfolk as a unitary will connect them to local housing and employment opportunities. Through close partnership with housing colleagues, suitable accommodation will be accessed with support for independence skills where that is needed. East Norfolk has a strong ambition linked manufacturing, construction, engineering and clean energy, there is therefore an opportunity to link this to East

Norfolk's corporate parenting role and connect care leavers to apprenticeships, training and employment within these sectors.

For those children and young people who require support due to a disability, an all-age disability approach will be in place. This will enable effective management of transition between Children's Social Care and Adults Social Care, as well as a focus on preparing for independence from as early as possible by bringing together staff with expertise and experience from across the age spectrum. This service will work closely with Health colleagues to support service delivery and transition between services, and with SEND teams to support transition where that is appropriate. This will provide families with consistency of approach and reduce the experience of a 'cliff edge' between Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

5.4.4 Achieving financial benefits

Where needs arise, it will be identified earlier and members of the family can be supported across a range of service. For example, where an adult in a family is experiencing mental health challenges resulting in unemployment, support can be provided that address those issues rather than funnelling a family into statutory supporting – saving on average £26,500 per package of support and having immeasurable impact on the outcomes of a child who avoids going into care.

A holistic approach to case management can also enable families to welcome children in care back home, with around 354 children in care, a small reduction in numbers could have a significant impact. This may also enable more young people to move into safe and appropriate accommodation as they leave family placements, increasing their independence and reducing spend on high-cost semi-independent living.

A structuring of services that focuses on early intervention and prevention also enables the reorganisation of staff around community hubs and early intervention. There is also an opportunity to revisit the structure of case working staff, so they are better aligned with demand across East Norfolk.

5.5 SEND & Education

5.5.1 Context & constraints

In addition to significant demand for Children's Social Care, East Norfolk will also inherit the highest number of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) out of the three unitaries. More children are placed in 'other' types of provision than mainstream settings, and East also has a higher proportion of children and young people being educated in specialist settings than elsewhere in the county. This, alongside 37% of exclusions in the county, speaks to an education system that is not as inclusive as it could be.

East Norfolk also has the lowest number of special school placements out of the three areas, which is likely contributing to spend on home to school transport. This may also be the reason behind this area being the area with the highest number of children attending independent special schools, the highest cost provision. More children are also home educated than elsewhere in the county – again, contributing to a sense that education institutions are not consistently meeting young people's needs.

As a unitary, East Norfolk will be managing a range of both new schools over the next five years, but also areas where pupil numbers are declining or where parental preference for certain settings is driving down numbers in others.

In addition to sixth forms attached to schools, young people in East Norfolk also have access to studying opportunities at East Norfolk Sixth Form, Paston College and East Coast College. Whilst young people will continue to travel beyond the unitary boundaries to attend colleges and sixth forms, ensuring local colleges continue to build deep relationships with local employers will enable young people to access employment opportunities within the area, and benefit from the potential of the energy coast.

5.5.2 Recommended delivery model

SEND and Education will be part of the Children's Social Care management structure, and as outlined in 1.1 this will be a disaggregated service model, providing opportunities to build services that are tied in the requirements of local areas – whilst enabling

collaboration across the county footprint where that is required, for instance, in the recruitment of specialist roles (e.g. Educational Psychologists).

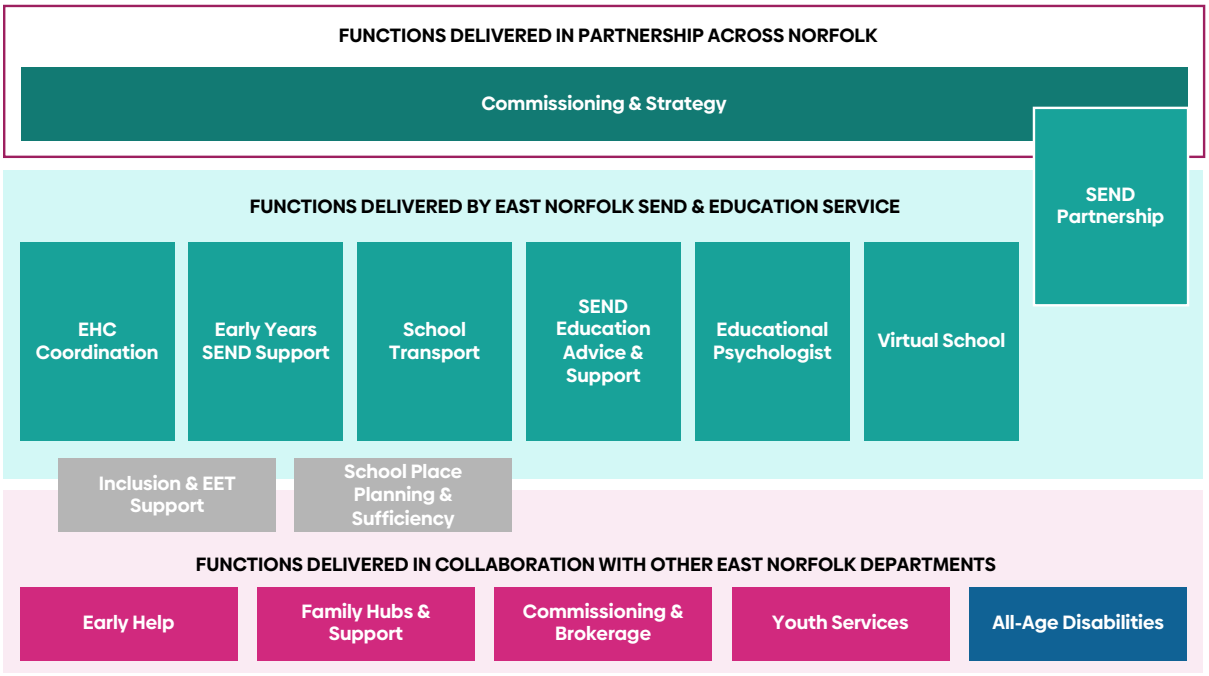


Figure 11: Functional model of SEND & Education across the unitary.

5.5.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

As with Children's Social Care, it is apparent that the current model of delivery in Norfolk is not meeting the needs of the young people of East Norfolk consistently enough, with not enough young people being able to access education within mainstream or other school settings. With a focus on more local service delivery, East Norfolk is positioned to deepen existing partnership working around local schools, and with partners to deliver a truly inclusive response to young people's needs.

Families and young people will benefit from an integrated approach with Early Intervention & Prevention as families will be able to access holistic support close to them to enable families to be connected to peers and community support to build resilience around a child's needs. This offer will also support young people who may be at risk of exclusion or at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), preventing a risk of entrenching unemployment within communities.

Where children and young people do need additional support to access education, EHC coordinators will be supported through workforce development to build closer working

relationships with families to support them through the timely development of EHCPs and regular review and updates of these plans, aligned to a young person's needs. Teams Around the School will be developed on a patch basis around local schools to provide effective inclusion support – and intervene to prevent education placements breaking down or young people being suspended or excluded.

Planning for independence and transition will be considered throughout a young person's pathway. Where a young person may need support from Adult Social Care, support will be accessed alongside the All-Age Disability service to enable early planning for independence. If a young person is not eligible for future support, the service will connect them to the Early Intervention & Prevention to enable them to access support across housing and employment.

We would place school transport decision making alongside both place planning and EHCP coordination, to ensure its central role to enabling independence and the significant role it can play in additional cost is considered alongside decision making on school placements.

The new model will also leverage the deep understanding of communities and planning, alongside considerations for school place planning. With the development and growth opportunity that devolution presents – we would see this function working together with colleagues in planning and development to ensure we are designing an education system that is fit for future demand across mainstream and specialist education. Tying together place planning and school teams will also enable intervention where parental preference may be driving pupil numbers to intervene quickly to understand root causes.

Our vision for East Norfolk is as an area that celebrates innovation and new technology – developing a compelling skills offer that connects young people to these opportunities will be key to ensuring truly inclusive growth.

5.5.4 Achieving financial benefits

Working to reset and strengthen our approach to SEND will provide the opportunity to unlock reduced spend against the High Needs Block, which currently carries a significant deficit.

Through effective deployment of Early Intervention & Prevention and Teams Around Schools, we will be able to reduce the amount of plans to young people – with a rough cost of £8,000 per year for each child who has a mainstream plan, increasing to over £23,000 where a child may be in a special school.

Exploring opportunities to step children down from placements based on a deeper understanding of their needs and outcomes will also release savings, through more effective relationships between staff and families, and patch-based working, families can have greater confidence in support.

Norfolk also has a higher-than-average rate of exclusions, which typically lead to detrimental life outcomes for children and young people. There is an opportunity to continue to avoid additional exclusions through both school-based support, and effective engagement with young people and their families to understand and support wider complexities.

5.6 Enabling Services

5.6.1 Context & constraints

Enabling services set up the environment in which frontline services and partners can work together to serve local communities. Therefore, they need to provide efficient support at the lowest possible cost.

They will need to support East Norfolk as a larger scale organisation, to serve a broader area, whist delivering a more complex range of services (e.g. social care, education, highways, etc.).

Predecessor Councils in East Norfolk have adopted some different delivery models for their enabling support services, which will impact upon the new unitary blueprint. The diagram below illustrates where each district has moved away from a standalone, in-house service to adopt a different delivery model:

	Broadland	South Norfolk	Great Yarmouth	North Norfolk
Most Enabling Services	Shared Service			
ICT & Digital	Shared Service		Partially outsourced to Norfolk CC	
Procurement	Outsourced to East Suffolk			
Legal	Outsourced to NPLAW (Norfolk CC)		Outsourced to EIAS	Traded Service (EastLaw)
Audit	Outsourced to EIAS	Host EIAS	Outsourced to EIAS	Outsourced to EIAS

Figure 12: Current delivery models for Enabling Services in predecessor East Norfolk councils

The primary benefit of moving to a three-authority model is around being able to tailor frontline services, support and wider partnerships to the very different needs of each area. However, there are some challenges and opportunities that East Norfolk faces in relation to providing enabling services that can support the wider organisation.

The small size of districts has meant that councils have had to operate small functions to provide enabling support. A large unitary allows each organisation to scale up its services to realise economies of scale, build in resilience and mitigate the risks of single points of failure.

Moving from five councils and four management structures, to three unitaries also poses an opportunity to realise efficiencies through streamlining senior officer posts, reducing the financial pressure on the frontline services that will benefit residents and communities.

A move to three unitaries also represents an opportunity to 'reset' enabling services so that they can adopt best practice operating models that can deliver greatest value for money to the organisation and taxpayers. The district councils already have mature, high-performing services that could be adopted in the new organisation.

Because the boundary of East Norfolk is not coterminous with the existing district councils, portions of Broadland and South Norfolk sit in the new authority. At the same time these two councils have successfully run a shared service. These two factors will

make it complex to disaggregate the shared budgets, contracts, policies, systems and staff to migrate to the new unitary.

The new authority will also inherit a broad range of arm's length companies and shared services, which its enabling services may also need to support so that they can continue to thrive. This **includes** the following:

- Big Sky Group (comprising a range of ltd companies)
- Broadland Living Company
- CNC Building Control
- Great Yarmouth Services Ltd
- Eastern Internal Audit Services
- Norfolk Environment Credits Ltd
- Broadland Growth Ltd
- Equinox Enterprises Ltd
- Equinox Property Holdings Ltd

East Norfolk will also inherit a share of the county council's arm's length traded company, Norse Group which delivers a range of asset management and place-based services. It may also take on Repton Property Development.

5.6.2 Recommended delivery model

East Norfolk will have a core of enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. The diagram below shows what enabling services it will run and what models will be adopted.

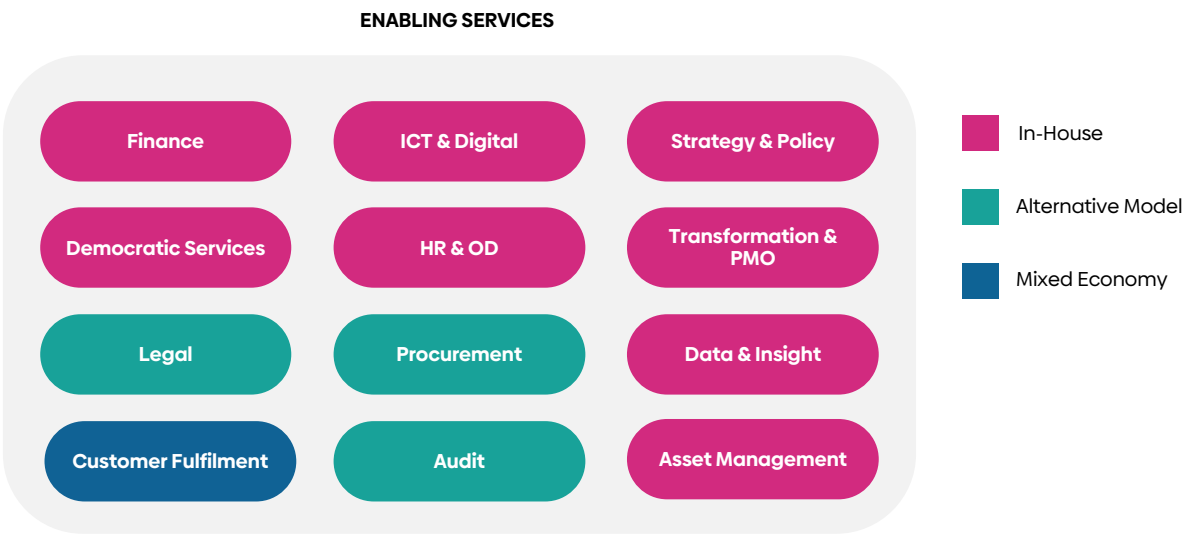


Figure 13: East Norfolk Enabling Services

The key features of this service are summarised below.

Control and coordination	Enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. HR & OD, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke mode[5]l (Transformation & PMO, Data & Insight[6]) as a means of keeping control of scarce resources and maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.
Mixed economy	Wherever possible enabling services are delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time. There are some exceptions where a mix of models is in place: • Legal – The aspiration will be to either in-source the service or consolidate into a shared service. • Procurement The aim is to adopt a single model for the unitary • Audit – East Norfolk would be the natural home (seeing as one of the current authorities host this service already) for the shared Eastern Internal Audit Services and would

[5] A hub and spoke model is where there is a larger corporate function but also a network of smaller pockets of capacity. They work together and form a community of practice for the organisation.

[6] The Data & Insight function proposed within the EI&P model will form a "large' spoke within the hub and spoke model

	continue to offer this function to Greater Norwich and West Norfolk.
Best practice	The services would seek to continue the best practice from the existing services within councils, whilst also using the redesign of enabling functions as an opportunity to innovate.
Appropriate scale and capacity	Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a single unitary, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious transformation programme to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.
Tailored to local needs and services	Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of East Norfolk. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management of its extensive portfolio of coastal assets including defences, piers and seaside amenities.
Ability to select the best opportunities to scale up	There are further longer-term opportunities for East Norfolk to collaborate with the two other unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power.

5.6.3 Achieving financial benefits

As one of three unitaries, East Norfolk is of the right scale to both tailor services to the unique needs and circumstances of the area but also benefit from being of a size to realise the benefits of combining the previous councils. The main financial benefits of the model would come from the following changes:

- Streamlining duplicated management structures
- Gaining economies of scale for those enabling services that currently operate on a small scale
- Removing duplication of processes and functions
- Rationalising key systems such as the multiple Enterprise Resource Planning, Finance and HR & Payroll systems used across the organisations

5.7 Place

5.7.1 Context & constraints

East Norfolk is a rural area with market towns and a large coastline, including Great Yarmouth and Cromer. The region has a strong tourism economy and growing clean energy sectors, with assets, established clusters and emerging opportunities in offshore wind, hydrogen, and carbon capture. The coast is a vital natural asset with protected landscapes like the Broads National Park and Norfolk Coast National Landscape, though coastal erosion is a concern.

The economy is diverse, spanning ports, market towns, and rural communities. The Broads and Norfolk Coast are key tourism destinations with potential for year-round growth. Clean energy businesses, including offshore wind and energy transmission, present significant opportunities for high-value jobs and skills development. Key assets include Bacton, Great Yarmouth Energy Park, Hethel Engineering Centre, and Sizewell power station.

Market towns and rural areas have strong small business networks, high SME survival rates, and housing growth potential. However, challenges include high deprivation rates in specific wards within Great Yarmouth and a skills mismatch that needs addressing to ensure inclusive growth.

East Norfolk will also have to work closely with the Broads Authority which manages the Norfolk Broads and has planning powers within the park.

The East Norfolk coast is impacted by coastal erosion with recent national coastal erosion assessments identifying 2097 residential properties, other assets and infrastructure identified at risk of loss from erosion by 2105. The East Norfolk unitary will become the Risk Management Authority for coastal erosion which includes management of sea defences and preparing for the wider impacts of coastal change.

In both the existing Great Yarmouth Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council local authority areas, place based discretionary service spend on place-based services is important in maintaining of sense of character and place – particularly in coastal resort towns and villages, underpinning the tourism and day visitor economy. Both of these authorities have ownership of, and maintenance responsibilities for, significant

tourism infrastructure assets such as promenades; beach huts, chalets and concessions; public gardens; woodlands, leisure centres, Pier and Pavilion Theatre; Blue Flag beach infrastructure and life-saving equipment; and significant numbers of public conveniences – all of which support the tourism economy.

Whilst some of these assets can generate income, the seasonal nature of seaside tourism means that management, repair and maintenance costs etc. exceed income, even where a commercial approach to lettings is applied. Both authorities seek to recover / meet the costs of the provision of many of these discretionary services through the levying of car park charges, but the discretionary nature of such services means that planned repairs and maintenance and investment in new facilities is challenging given the increased demand for statutory services and wider financial pressures.

In the more rural parts of the proposed East Norfolk unitary authority, particularly in communities within the Broads Executive area, market towns and the pilgrimage village of Walsingham, the existing district authorities also provide public toilets and have joint or shared responsibilities with the County Council for maintaining public realm assets – including pedestrian areas, public seating and street furniture, historic environment, travel hubs etc which serve to create a sense of community and place, and where the predominance of small businesses (and lack of large scale investments in town centre retail and leisure schemes) means that responsibilities for the provision of such services rests with the local authorities.

All of these services and facilities are greatly valued by our local residents and tourist visitors and form essential elements of our local communities, economy and "place" – which could be safeguarded and strengthened by scale through LGR.

East Norfolk councils have adopted some different delivery models for place-based services, which will impact upon the new unitary blueprint. The diagram below illustrates where each district has adopted a different delivery model, where the table shows as empty this is indicative of an existing in-house service.

	Broadland	South Norfolk	Great Yarmouth	North Norfolk
Planning	Shared Service and Greater Norwich Partnership			
Building Control	Shared Service – CNC Building Control	Host Shared Service – CNC Building Control		
Regulatory Services				
Parking	Shared Service – West Norfolk			
Waste & Recycling Collection	Outsourced – Veolia (2032)		Arm's Length Co – Great Yarmouth Services Ltd	Joint Outsource Contract – Serco (2030)
Street Scene	Outsourced – Veolia (2032)		Arm's Length Co – Great Yarmouth Services Ltd	Joint Outsource Contract – Serco (2030)
Economic Growth	Shared Service and Greater Norwich Growth Board			
Leisure				Outsourced – Everyone Active (2029)
Parks & Green Spaces			Arm's Length Co – Great Yarmouth Services Ltd	
Norfolk				
Highways	Procuring a new supplier – 14-year contract			
Waste & Recycling Disposal	Outsourced –Veolia (2029)			

Figure 14: Current delivery models for East Norfolk councils.

The county council has also just gone out to market for a highways maintenance and professional services contract lasting 14 years. It also has a contract with Veolia for waste transfer and disposal that runs until end of March 2029. East Norfolk is likely to take on responsibility for part of these contracts.

In addition to this mixed economy of services, East Norfolk will inherit all or a portion of the following arm's length delivery vehicles[7] that have a role in shaping place within the area:

- Big Sky Ventures Ltd – an arm's length property developer of affordable homes and is a property management company
- Broadland Living – an arm's length company that offers below market rental homes in the private market
- Equinox Enterprises – an arm's length company that develops new homes to buy across Great Yarmouth Borough
- Equinox Property Holdings - an arm's length company that offers below market rental homes in the private market

[7] There are some other arm's length bodies sat with current district councils, however we are proposing these will sit with other unitaries

- Great Yarmouth Services Ltd – a wholly-owned company that delivers environmental services including waste collection and street scene
- Norse Group – a wholly owned trading company offering a broad range of services
- Repton Homes – an arm's length development company owned by the County Council.
- Norfolk Environmental Waste Services (NEWS) – a joint venture with all councils that operates recycling and waste transfer stations for the reprocessing and sale of recycling material which generates income.

East Norfolk would take on a range of 'place-based' services including Highways & Transport, Waste Disposal, Cultural Services, further Planning responsibilities, and Trading Standards.

Placemaking requires a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces and this will require unitaries to exercise a wide range of levers to shape places. Bringing in Economic Development, Highways & Transport, Cultural services, Waste Disposal and other functions will help East Norfolk coordinate these services to deliver a truly joined up approach to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. East Norfolk will also need to work closely with the Mayoral Combined Authority to those initiatives (e.g. infrastructure, attracting inwards investment, etc.) but can complement this with interventions tailored to local needs.

Local government reorganisation and a move to establish unitary authorities therefore presents opportunities for the greater co-ordination, reform and transformation of place-based services across the proposed East Norfolk unitary authority, through streamlining strategic management – highways, public transport, historic environment in traditional "highways / public realm" areas and realising economies of scale, critical mass and specialisms, across a wider geography.

Such opportunities are believed to exist around estates and asset management, in-house property services repairs and maintenance teams and outsourced contracts; larger scale contracts for grounds maintenance, street, beach and amenity cleansing and litter bin emptying; public convenience servicing; and the provision of beach and lifeguard services.

East Norfolk is ideally placed to take a placemaking approach that addresses the local needs and context of the area. It is of a suitable size and scale to be able to tailor services at a neighbourhood level and represent efficient use of resources.

There are opportunities to realise efficiencies from streamlining management structures and rationalising systems. Increased scale will also support greater resilience for services such as Planning.

However, the mix of long-term contracts, in-house and arm's length company delivery for Waste collection and Street Scene poses a challenge for the new unitary. The council will need to take a long-term approach to rationalising waste collection and disposal services – but it can unlock benefits from coordination of operations, rationalising depots and optimised route planning.

In addition, regulatory changes for Planning and Building Control will result in major changes for services, and some uncertainty around what responsibilities local authorities will retain.

5.7.2 Recommended delivery model

East Norfolk is best placed to service the area with its own unique identity, communities, demography, geography, and economy. The delivery model is described below, and represents a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints while allowing East Norfolk to invest time in developing and implementing a new model in the longer-term.



Figure 15: East Norfolk Place Services

Placemaking	The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community.
Shift to East Norfolk	With Greater Norwich taking on a broader area around the city, East Norfolk can now focus on a strategic approach to sustainable development and economic growth in the more rural, coastal area of the county.
Mixed economy	Given the constraints of long-term contracts already in place for waste collection and disposal, street scene and highways, services within Place will be mixed economy. Although several will be run in-house as standalone services, others will take the form of either shared services, outsourced or a mix of both. • Waste collection, disposal & street scene – Collection will be delivered by a combination of in-house, outsourced and arm's length models until contracts expire. East Norfolk will work in partnership with the across the county on waste disposal. • Highways – anticipated to be delivered through a mix of in-house expertise and the new supplier being procured by the county

	• Building Control – consolidation to take place once there is clarity on a on regulatory changes • Parking – the unitary will inherit and continue to operate the shared parking service • Leisure – will continue to be delivered through a mix of in-house and outsourced models across the unitary • Parks & Green Spaces – will be delivered through in-house services and an arm's length company
Leverage new and existing partnerships	Place will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services), shared parking services and CNC Building Control.
Long-term approach	Place will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with some of the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

This model will bring placemaking services together so that they can provide a multifaceted approach to fostering neighbourhoods. For example, the potential growth in green sectors and associated jobs could place further strains on the local housing market. As a unitary with housing powers, it can adopt a joined-up approach to mitigate the risks of shortfall of affordable housing and use it as an enabler of growth.

5.7.3 Achieving financial benefits

In the longer-term East Norfolk will seek to consolidate those services that are currently delivered through a range of models to benefit from economies of scale and break down service silos to join up delivery. This will realise greater value for money for local taxpayers and further enable a total placemaking approach for local neighbourhoods.

In the short-term the new model will allow benefits to be realised through the following means:

- Streamlining duplicated senior management structures
- Some reductions in duplication across similar functions (e.g. Planning Policy) or from joining up services (e.g. green spaces and management of highways verges)

121

- Harnessing economies of scale for some services (e.g. Development Management)
- Rationalising key systems for Planning, Environmental Services and other functions

In the longer-term there will be benefits from coordinating services and further reducing duplications. There may also be benefits from consolidation of assets such as depots and fleet management.

5.8 Implementation considerations

A more detailed plan for implementation can be found in Appendix H, however considerations specific to implementing the blueprints can be found below.

Workforce & Service Delivery

The operating model is rooted in neighbourhood-level service delivery, and as part of implementation the shadow unitaries will decide on the scale and size of these areas to inform the appropriate location of community buildings and development of outreach teams between coastal, urban and rural areas.

Where East Norfolk is inheriting functions which are currently delivered in a variety of ways – change will not occur from Day One, rather the shadow and new authorities will review and consolidate arrangements as appropriate supported by a phased transformation programme to embed design new systems and unlock new ways of working.

The establishment of a new functions, and the bringing together of many others, will require a focused recruitment & retention strategy alongside investment in workforce development. For staff who are working in the new EI&P function, they will need to be trained in person-centred models of practice and be equipped with the skills they need to work across several service areas. In statutory functions, in addition to the roles of the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Director of Children's Service (DCS), consideration will need to be given to the management of shifting existing locality teams and therefore not losing local knowledge and ensuring a strategy is in place to attract and retain specialist staff. This may include ensuring there are 'grow your own' pathways within East Norfolk to grow and develop a sustainable workforce.

Partnerships

As set out across the blueprints, partnership working within and outside of East Norfolk is central to effective delivery of our ambitions. This includes develop closer relationships with registered housing providers to drive growth and expanding housing options. East Norfolk will be able to develop closer locality working relationships with Health, enabling collaboration on the 10 Year Neighbourhood Health plan as well as meeting immediate needs around hospital discharge and joint funding. Strong partnerships with schools and importantly families and children and young people will ensure services are designed collaboratively as part of implementation.

Data & Technology

Technology and data will be central enablers to delivery of the new services. A single resident record and integrated case management will replace fragmented arrangements, allowing teams to share information and respond to resident needs. This will include reviewing and rationalising current housing systems to enable effective case management and data sharing. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers opportunities to detect risks earlier and ease the administrative burden on frontline staff, enabling them to focus on building relationships with residents.

6. Appendix F – Greater Norwich Blueprints

6.1 Early Intervention and Prevention via a Thriving Communities Department

6.1.1 Context & constraints

Greater Norwich is distinctly characterised by a dense urban core surrounded by suburban and semi-rural communities. It faces some of the most acute pressures in Norfolk, including high children's social care costs and the largest share of unpaid carers. These figures reflect the complex needs of families which remain unaddressed until they escalate into crisis. Across Greater Norwich, the gap in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived wards is more than 15 years.

Despite these challenges, Greater Norwich has strong foundations for prevention. Help Hubs, which coordinate housing, social care, police, health and VCSE support, are already active across both urban and rural areas. Community anchor organisations are also well-established. These initiatives are distinctly local and demonstrate the tangible impact of joined-up, early help when local partners collaborate effectively.

However, these promising efforts are not yet part of a consistent, system-wide offer. VCSE partners in Greater Norwich are frequently constrained by short-term funding, limiting their ability to play a sustained role. Residents continue to navigate a fragmented system where responsibilities for children's social care, public health and housing are split between county and district councils. This fragmentation results in duplicated processes, multiple access points and no single view of a resident. The consequences are not only financial inefficiencies but also missed opportunities for early intervention and improved outcomes.

Local Government Reform presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to align these national priorities from the NHS 10 Year Plan prioritising neighbourhood models to the Family Hub programme, with the specific strengths of Greater Norwich. The new unitary authority could act as a place leader, aligning its EIP model with NHS neighbourhood footprints and fostering a sustainable system of support across public services, the VCSE sector and communities. This would enable a decisive shift from fragmented, reactive provision to a distinctly Greater Norwich prevention-first system. It would be

designed to keep residents well, resilient and connected, while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

6.1.2 Recommended delivery model

In Greater Norwich the prevention model will be delivered via a dedicated department called Thriving Communities. It will unite housing, social care, education, health and VCSE partners around neighbourhood hubs in Norwich. These hubs will co-locate (where and as appropriate) and work alongside partner organisations and voluntary groups, complemented by outreach in rural areas and accessible digital and phone options. This ensures the offer is inclusive and distinctly responsive to local needs. For residents this means a clear, “no wrong door” offer, with earlier, joined-up support in trusted local settings.

Support will be tailored to the full picture of housing, health, work and family life specific to each resident. Multidisciplinary teams will coordinate responses so that residents only tell their story once, with case leadership shifting seamlessly as needs evolve. Predictive analytics, supported by AI, will identify households, streets and communities at risk 12 to 18 months ahead. This will guide targeted interventions such as stabilising family life where safeguarding pressures emerge or supporting carers before they reach crisis.

Operationally, the department has five functions:

Greater Norwich Thriving Communities Department

Operationally, this early intervention and prevention-focused department has 5 functions:

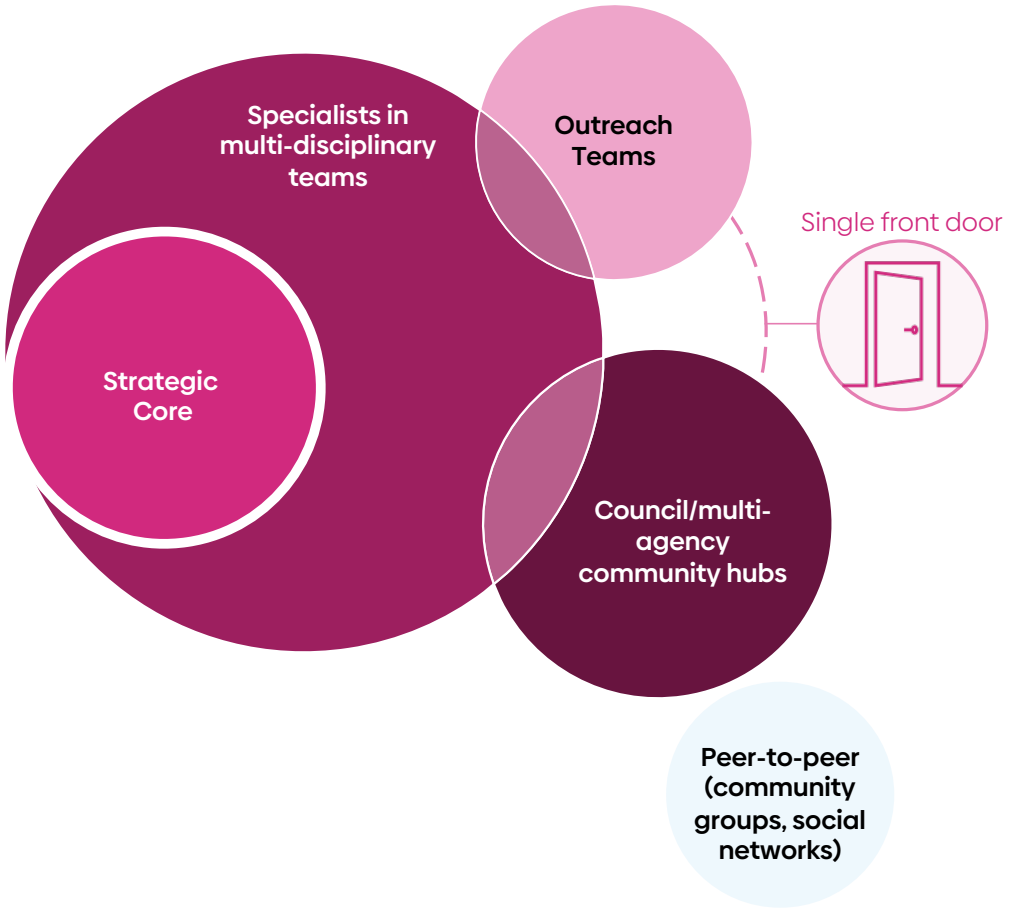


Figure 16: Functions of the Greater Norwich Early Intervention and Prevention Department

Function 1: Strategic Core

This sets the strategic ambition for the prevention-led department, ensuring it is guided by evidence. This will enable effective investment to strengthen early years and family resilience and facilitating coordinated activity across Greater Norwich. Additionally, it ensures that commissioning practices harness economies of scale while remaining responsive to the distinct needs of suburban, and urban communities.

Function 2: Specialists/experts in multidisciplinary teams

Specialist practitioners contribute targeted expertise to collaborative case management involving complex family and early years requirements. Working in partnership with both universal and community-based staff, they ensure that families

experiencing crisis or facing escalating needs receive timely and appropriate interventions. These professionals may offer specialisations in areas such as safeguarding, family therapy, mental health, domestic abuse, housing, or school engagement.

Function 3: Front door

The front door offers a unified and accessible point of contact for residents – whether by telephone, online platforms, or email – to obtain early assistance, information, and guidance on issues including childcare, school attendance and parenting. Staff at this entry point address routine inquiries, assess and direct more complex cases, and connect residents with appropriate specialist or community-based support services.

Function 4: Community hubs

Community hubs function as integrated service points within local neighbourhoods, delivering in-person support focused on early years development and family resilience. They facilitate access to a comprehensive range of services, including parenting programmes, benefits support, housing assistance, and wellbeing activities. Staff working in these hubs are recognised and trusted members of the community, collaborating closely with schools and health professionals.

Function 5: Outreach teams

Mobile teams deliver early intervention services directly to families who may otherwise have limited access, particularly in locations with limited transport infrastructure. These professionals conduct home visits, facilitate school-based programs, and proactively identify needs that may not be immediately visible. Frequently, they are the first to recognise safeguarding concerns or indications of family stress within underserved communities.

For staff and partners, the model enables flexible team working with shared data, stronger collaboration and less duplication. For residents, it means earlier, more connected help that strengthens families, supports carers and improves wellbeing. Over time, this will reduce reliance on costly statutory interventions, delivering better outcomes for residents and a more sustainable system for Greater Norwich.

6.1.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

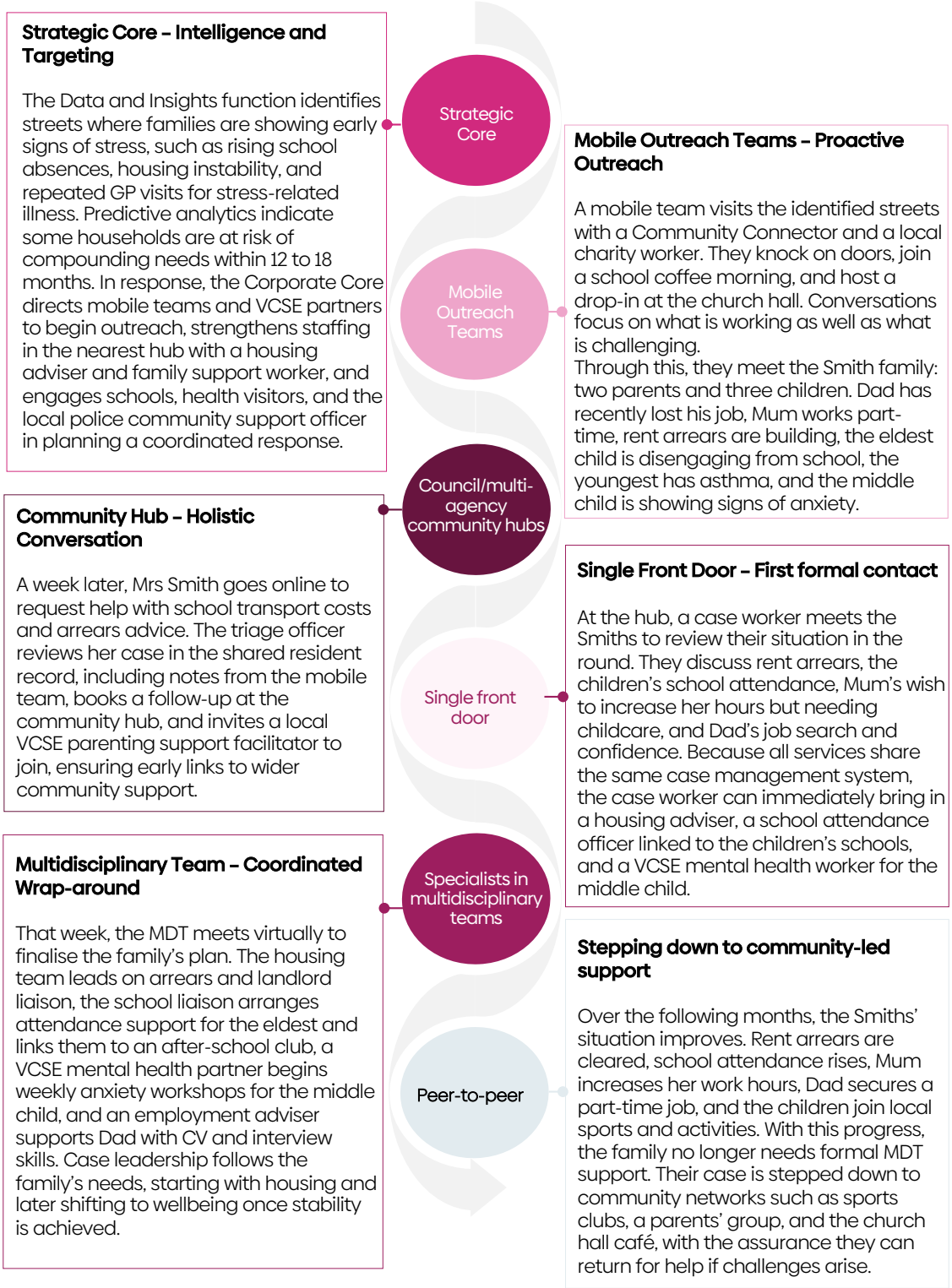


Figure 17: Greater Norwich resident journey

In Greater Norwich, neighbourhood hubs, which will be designed as part of the service redesign, will be a single, visible access point for early help, bringing together local government services that were previously dislocated between county and borough councils.

Support will be delivered by multidisciplinary and multi-agency teams combining housing, social care, public health, education, and community partners. The combination and complexity of a resident's needs determines who is best placed to take the lead. As needs change, for example, when a housing crisis is resolved but mental health support is still required, leadership within the team shifts seamlessly, ensuring residents experience one connected system rather than a series of hand-offs.

Predictive analytics, using shared data, will identify residents, streets, or communities at risk of crisis 12–18 months ahead, enabling targeted, preventative action, for example, strengthening family resilience where safeguarding pressures are emerging, or directing early help to carers before they reach breaking point. By aligning with NHS neighbourhood footprints and the Government's Family Hub programme, the model will bring coherence to existing initiatives, building them into a sustainable, prevention-first system of support.

6.1.4 Unlocking financial benefits

The Greater Norwich EIP model is designed to manage demand by enhancing family resilience, safeguarding early childhood growth, and proactively tackling the root causes of crises before escalation. By deploy effective early intervention enhanced by predicative analytics, the level of spend on high-cost child protection, housing and health will reduce.

Financial efficiencies will be realised by reducing staffing duplication and fragmentation; this is achieved by replacing isolated referrals between education, health, and social care sectors with an integrated, prevention-focused intake and multidisciplinary early support teams.

Initial investment will be required for reallocating resources to prevention, streamlining functions, advanced ICT systems facilitating shared case oversight, and unification of education, health, and housing information infrastructures.

By reinforcing community assets, fostering parental wellbeing, and advancing school preparedness, the demand for costly statutory children's services is anticipated to decline, thus cementing the shift from reactive crisis response to a robust, preventative approach to family resilience.

6.2 Housing & Homelessness

6.2.1 Context & constraints

Like all the unitary areas, Greater Norwich (GN) is distinct and diverse in the needs of its population. There is a high risk that without a place-based approach only achievable through a three unitary model, GN risks losing the opportunities afforded to it by its uniqueness.

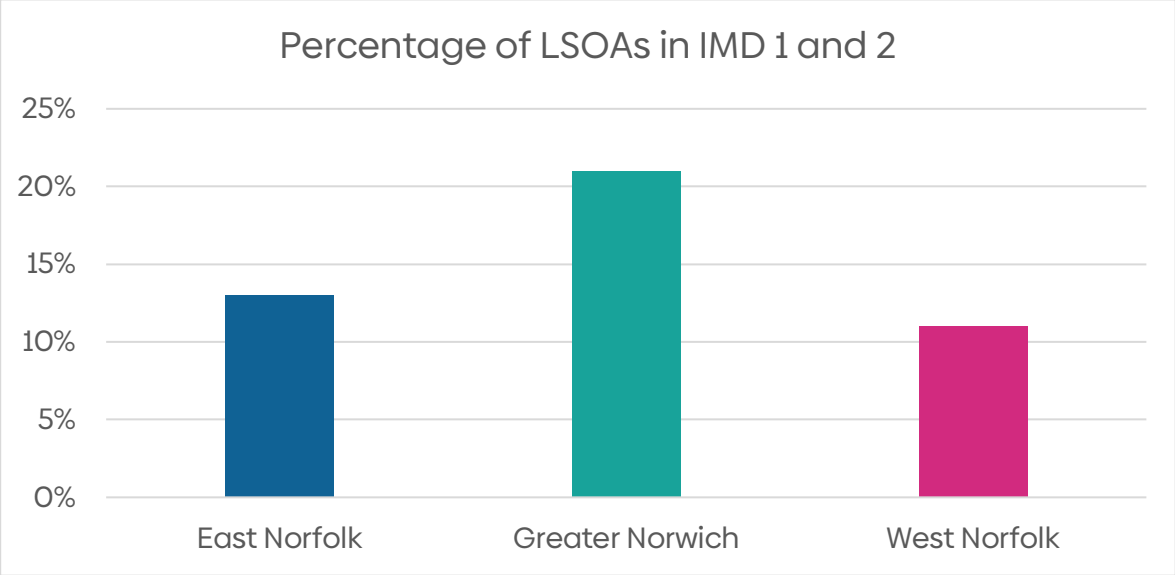


Figure 18: Percentage of LSOAs in IMD 1 & 2

GN has a high proportion of private and social rented homes, and the highest average private sector rents in Norfolk. This concentration increases the need for regulation and enforcement than in other areas. The city's large student population (about 20,500) further raises demand for Housing of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). The area also accommodates more refugees and asylum seekers. Additionally, 21% of LSOAs in GN are among England's 20% most deprived.

Rough sleeping is the lowest of the three proposed unitaries, around 23% of Norfolk's total, but there were still 134 households in temporary accommodation in December 2024, most of them single people. This cohort is also represented within the housing register, with 59% of applicants are looking for one-bed homes, more than in East or West Norfolk.

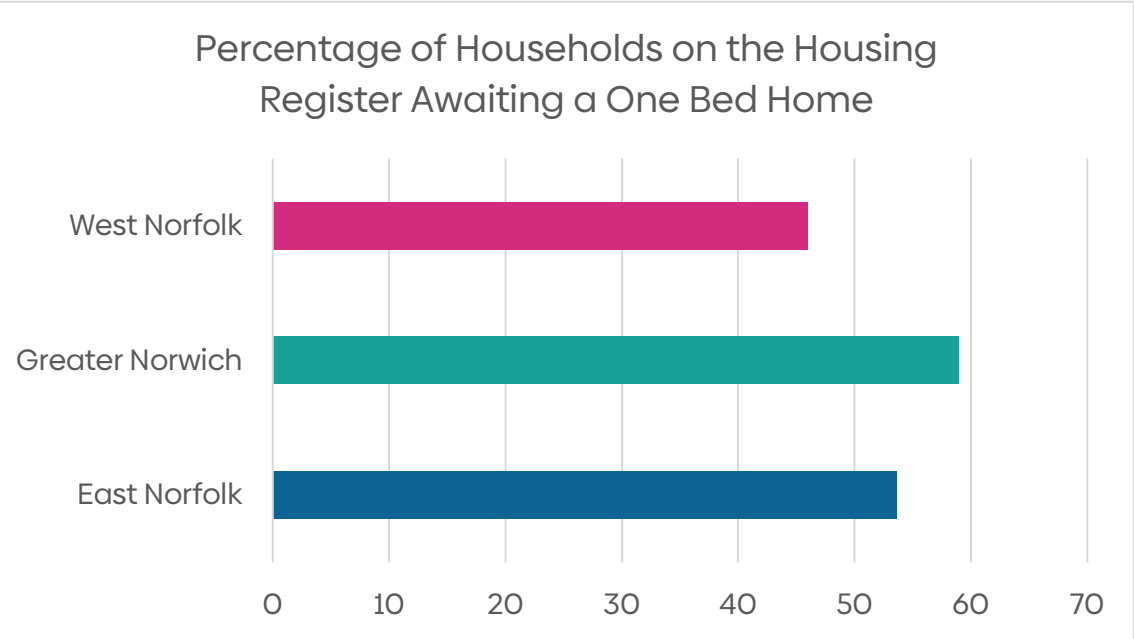


Figure 19: Percentage of households on the Housing Register awaiting a one bed home

6.2.2 Recommended delivery model

Homelessness

Aligning with the unitary's EI&P model, the homelessness function should be integrated and align with wider EI&P services. This means teams from across Greater Norwich and their commissioning will be merged, streamlined and become part of the Early Intervention & Prevention function.

An increased focus on early intervention supported by joined up working within multidisciplinary teams will offer opportunities for predictive interventions and holistic support packages. This in turn will prevent more people from reaching crisis and requiring more intensive support. This will be supported by existing hubs and partnerships should be broadened into the new unitary areas, supported by proactive outreach.

Housing

GN should establish with a choice based letting policy, ensuring residents have fair and transparent access to homes in the area.

Housing management and maintenance functions across the unitary should be brought together to create a consistent housing service, overseen by a dedicated Director of Housing. Considering the specialist nature of the HRA the existing structure should be maintained with current senior management outside of EI&P.

The HRA should be established across the GN region to manage and maintain new homes that are developed/acquired as appropriate, as when HRA capacity allows, noting landlord function, compliance and preparation for Awaab's Law will take precedence.

Development

With the access to development opportunities in the urban fringes, the new unitary would be able to leverage existing partnerships and enable growth tailored to Greater Norwich. It is recommended that a blended approach is adopted i.e. in house, arm's length (Big Sky Ventures Ltd, Broadway Living and Broadland growth) and partnership delivery to enable the delivery of small, medium and large-scale growth.

To orient the approach to housing in line with early intervention and prevention, greater consideration should be given to the development of other community facilities through S106 as part of opportunities to reset planning policy, that will bring services closer to communities and encourage third sector partners to expand EI&P services.

Considering the arm's length organisations around the rest of the Norfolk footprint (Equinox in East Norfolk and West Norfolk Property/ Housing in WN), ALOs provide an opportunity to deliver efficiently (due to scale) and effectively; existing ALOs could be deployed within GN as a first step and then reset to deliver even more benefit in the future. These ALOs along with Repton Homes (100% owned by Norfolk County Council) should be fully considered by shadow organisations prior to final decisions on their future.

Company Name	Ownership	Purpose
Repton Homes	100% (Norfolk County Council)	Develops private homes for sale.
Broadland Living	100% (Broadland)	Offers below market rental homes in the private rental market.
Broadland Growth	100% (Broadland)	Housing development company offers delivery options to the council and returns profits
Big Sky Group		
Big Sky Ventures Ltd	100% (South Norfolk)	Builds and sells market and affordable housing.
Big Sky Property Management	100% (South Norfolk)	Sells asset management services and rents properties - profits returned to the council.

Table 71: ALOs that needs to be considered by shadow authorities

6.2.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Homelessness

Access to homelessness and temporary accommodation support will be through the Early Intervention & Prevention front door. This will enable a joint set of services to address root causes demand. This new way of working will build upon existing good practice already in effect within Greater Norwich.

Domestic abuse is a significant driver of homelessness, and Greater Norwich will carry forward current commitments to DAHA accreditation, in addition to this being a core focus on the EI&P model.

Demand from asylum seekers, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, poses a particular challenge for Greater Norwich. Building on existing good practice at county level, a single entity and a single team can be established to provide specialist

support. A collaborative model between the Home Office, Children's Social Care and Housing will help identify demand sooner through easier access and to the 'pipeline' of young people who will need accommodation and joined up opportunities to address their needs e.g. care leavers. By having direct responsibility for children services and housing together allows for a better response to these challenges.

Housing

Greater Norwich will inherit a large stock of owned social homes (14,211 + c3,500 leaseholders). This offers an opportunity to help manage the flow through homelessness, TA and into long term housing for a broader (but manageable) population.

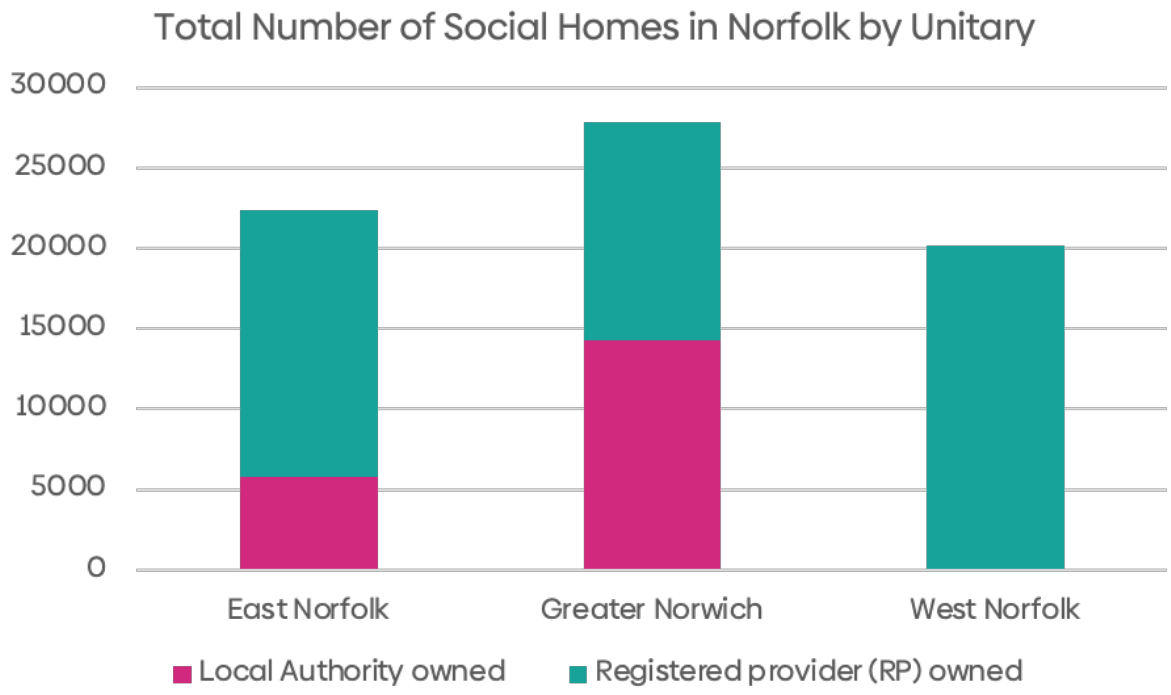


Figure 20: total number of social homes in Norfolk by Unitary

Having a HRA enables GN to build or purchase homes for social rent to increase their housing supply as and when the HRA allows. This is positive but, should be monitored to ensure accessibility for more vulnerable groups and to help tackle specific housing need e.g. 1 bed across the GN area and accessible properties.

Recent improvements in collecting tenant arrears and new policies have improved income collection and will improve expectations in the future. Working with the new EI&P

134

model means that integrated set of predictive and real-time indicators can be developed, acted on by the right service much earlier, resulting in proactive interventions which ultimately are more cost-effective for the Council as it reduces the risk of rent loss and outstanding debt, as well as enabling long-term financial health for individuals.

Development

Greater Norwich has a strong development and planning function with established partnerships that would benefit from access to urban fringes to drive urban growth and housing development. This potential for a concentrated and urban focus will benefit Greater Norwich and the wider region.

By unifying planning, housing, and infrastructure delivery, the GN unitary offers Homes England and other partners a single accountable partner. This will enable the ability to move sites from concept to completion without the delay and complexity of multi-tier negotiations and ensuring that plans and developments are relevant to (and joined up with) the people who they serve, including addressing housing demand more effectively. This streamlined approach accelerates delivery, increases the proportion of affordable homes, and supports the creation of sustainable communities

The current use of ALOs will need consideration by shadow organisations to assess the opportunities and risks associated with future delivery, however, there is a clear opportunity to expand current operations and unlock new development opportunities through a flexible approach to GN development.

6.2.4 Unlocking financial benefits

Cost implications

- Aging social home stock and the introduction of Awaab's Law will mean a focus on investment in current social housing stock – this will reduce the development capability of the HRA in GN for the immediate future.
- The new rent settlement for social housing of up to CPI +1% will help to ease service strain and increase income.
- Norwich currently carries a lot of tenant debt (both former and current tenants). Efforts are already underway to reduce this down and standardise an approach to former tenant arears – both of which are promising.

- TA budget is often overspent and this has been reflected in the following year's budget. Between 24/25 and 25/26 this led to a 28% increase across all councils.

Potential Savings

Through the amalgamation and rationalisation of housing and development teams, it is expected that savings will be made. This will predominantly be at senior management level as the demand on officers and services will initially remain the same.

Embedding H&H into the EI&P function will support savings both in H&H services and in other downstream services. For example, MHCLG's analysis of a housing first approach (inherently in line with EI&P working) shows a 2:1 cost benefit.
A conservative saving estimate on non-staffing costs within H&H budgets of 10% can be achieved.

While there are no savings to be made within the HRA – there are opportunities for income maximisation

- Reduce relet times for properties – as an example, a 10% reduction in current relet times equates to c£90,000 in rental income.
- Further reducing tenant arrears would increase in year rental income. Focus should be on current tenant arrears.

Cost Neutral Assumptions

While there may be economies of scale achieved through contract renegotiation, costs for technology licences in H&H are often based on a per head fee. This means that while there may be some savings due to staff reductions – there are no material savings expected from this.

6.3 Adult Social Care

6.3.1 Context & constraints

Greater Norwich is home to a dense urban core surrounded by suburban and semi-rural communities which is a different profile from the other areas across Norfolk. Whilst Greater Norwich has the lowest percentage of older adults, this area has seen the highest growth in demand which provides a strong justification for the need for an improved preventative offer to help manage this.

Increases in demand across both working age and older adults are resulting in increasing pressures in service delivery and are forecast to continue to grow. Alongside this, costs are increasing for all types of support, evidencing a further need for change in the model of support and an opportunity to redesign the approach to market management.

6.3.2 Recommended delivery model

There are several delivery models to consider for the implementation of Adults Social Care within the new unitary. Some have been summarised in an options appraisal below:

Model	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Shared Services Model	A single unitary is appointed to deliver Adults Services on behalf of all or some of the new authorities. This is carried out under a formal shared services agreement or delegation.	• Economies of scale and reduced duplication • Reduces transition risk as staff and structures can remain in place in short term • Consistency of approach across unitaries	• Diluted accountability and complex governance • Compromises over operational and strategic priorities • Still requires core service (DAS) in each unitary • Dependency on an external organisation
Separate Services	The disaggregated model - the new unitaries each establish their own Adults Service structure and workforce, with local leadership and systems. Examples include Cumberland and Bedfordshire	• Locally accountable • Decisions making and services delivered closest to communities • Can reflect local needs • Retains option to run some services jointly	• Duplication of teams and staff across three unitaries • Challenge of recruiting high quality staff from other councils • Higher risk transition that could impact day-to-day services
Central Leadership – Diffused Delivery	The new authority operates a single Adult Services directorate. Delivery is decentralised into locality-based teams aligned to former council areas or other geographies	• Combines strategic leadership with place-based delivery • Easier to maintain partner relationships • Retains local responsiveness • Enables phased integration	• Blurred lines of accountability if not clearly defined • Potential inconsistencies between areas • Requires strong central oversight and performance management

Table 72: Types of delivery models for Adult Social Care

Following engagement with Leaders, Chief Executives and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), our recommended delivery model for Greater Norwich, and the three unitaries, is to establish a single Adults Social Care service.

The creation of a dedicated Greater Norwich Adult Social service will enable a greater focus on the local needs, assets, and challenges. The model will provide the opportunity to have a greater focus on the local context and challenges and support a move to a

person-centred approach to Social Care. In urban centres, neighbourhood hubs will be closely connected to dense, multi-agency networks, with targeted proactive outreach in the most deprived wards. Elsewhere, the model will adapt to rural realities, making greater use of mobile and digital services such as Technology Enable Care, community venues and assets. All areas will have a prevention-first approach to maximise independence and strengths. A new local delivery model and front door will be closely aligned to community assets and inform priorities for what is commissioned locally and in collaboration with partners to avoid duplication.

Whilst partners such as the Police and Health will have to service three unitaries, their movement to three footprints across the Norfolk geographies aligns with this recommended option and will allow for closer working relationships to develop between staff within the new unitary function.

There are positive examples of joint working that exist across the county footprint currently and would not seek to unpick these where they provide positive outcomes for residents. These will be managed through partnership boards to ensure there is appropriate governance in place. The Adults Safeguarding Board is also something which will be retained to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations and supported through their connection to more localised service delivery model.

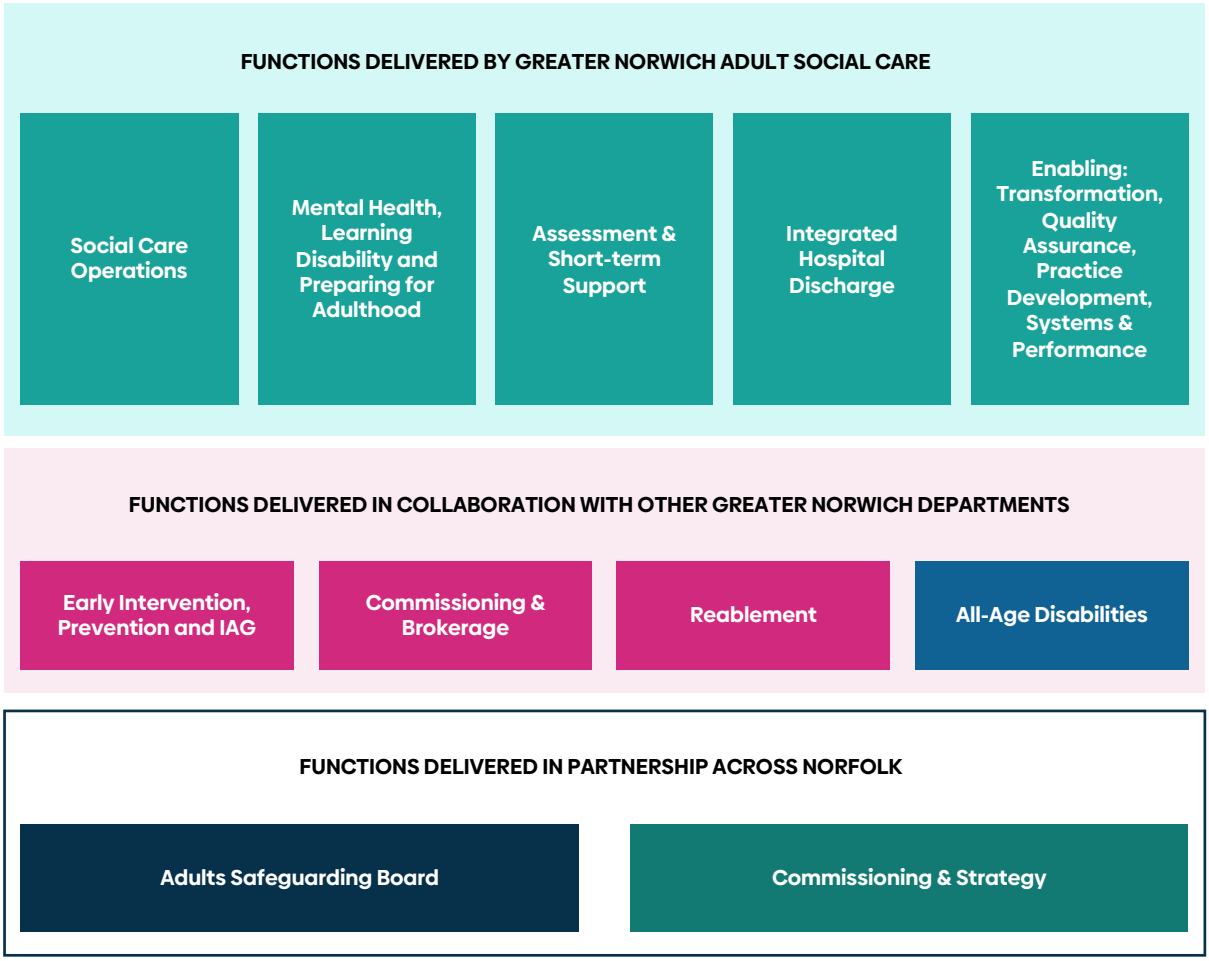


Figure 21: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary.

Our analysis has indicated that the Norfolk care market has seen increased costs across supported living, home care and residential care and there is a need to ensure the provider market remains sustainable. Greater Norwich will have its own commissioning & partnerships function – which will be located within Early Intervention & Prevention and service Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care as well as wider prevention activity– but will come together with West and East through partnership boards to commission support like residential care placements working with large providers such as Norse Care and developing a market management approach.

This new model will shift Greater Norwich from a county wide one size fits all approach. to a person-centred approach where communities and the VCFSE sector have a greater role to help keep people as independent as possible in their own homes with lower levels of support. Where there is a need for additional support and a care package this will put the person at the heart of this to support them to be as independent as possible. This model with reestablish the primacy of place to ensure commissioned services are

tailored to local needs with the right level of support at the right time and help reduce demand for statutory interventions.

6.3.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

The Early Intervention & Prevention service in Greater Norwich is critical to the new model to help keep people as independent as possible and prevent and delay the need for social care support. There are strong foundations to build a more focused local prevention-based approach to Adults Social Care which further develops the strength-based approach to help maintain greater independence.

Developing the local offer building on existing partnerships at a neighbourhood level will support NHS England's 10-Year Plan to introduce an integrated neighbourhood model with a multi-agency front door by 2028. The new model should align to the health neighbourhoods in Greater Norwich to ensure community-based services across health, public health, and social care are all working in the same footprints and have a shared understanding of the local needs and priorities.

Working closely with health and the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital will be key to provide coordinated support in both primary care in communities and hospital discharge. The three unitary model aligns with the move of statutory partners to more localised geographies of service delivery – enabling the development of deep relationships and mitigating risks of disaggregation.

Key areas of focus for the new model for Adults Social Care include having a different approach to working with health, commissioning and learning disability which is an area with complex cases and high costs. This will enable a more localised approach to working with health on a neighbourhood basis to ensure that decisions are made as close as possible to the neighbourhood based on the local needs. The new model will have a Commissioning Director across both Adults and Children's, which will sit in EIP, to ensure that what is commissioned supports people throughout their life and helps avoid the challenges in transitioning from Children's to Adults Social care to support better outcomes. In addition, this will introduce an All-Age Service Disabilities Service with a greater focus on increasing independence, providing secure appropriate housing, skills and employment. This will help Greater Norwich to provide targeted support to those who need it most and align with local service provision.

6.3.4 Achieving financial benefits

The key to achieving financial benefits of the new model and creating long term financial sustainability is through the early identification of needs and putting in place lower levels of support through local community provision or technology. Helping to maintain people's independence and supporting them to live in their own home in the communities they know is a better outcome for the individual and helps avoid residential care which in Greater Norwich costs an average of £490 a week.

A holistic approach to case reviews to establish if a reduced level of support e.g. a move from residential to a supported living provision may be possible. This may also enable older adults to have improved independence in an environment that they feel safe and secure and have an improved quality of life.

A structuring of services that focuses on early intervention and prevention also enables the reorganisation of staff around community hubs and early intervention. There is also an opportunity to consider the level of specialist skills and experience required at the front door to ensure cases can be triaged effectively. Where cases require specialist social care intervention a social worker will take the lead on the case and complete the Care Act Assessment. They will also coordinate any support which can be provided by the EIP service so that cases are not being transferred and the key difference is who leads the case depending on the level of support required and individual needs.

6.4 Children's Social Care

6.4.1 Context & constraints

Greater Norwich will inherit the highest demand for support within Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) cohorts in the county. Whilst this may speak to positive practice in the county, as recognised via the service having a 'Good' OFSTED rating, this also highlights a need for Greater Norwich to design a local prevention model to prevent escalation of need through the system. Alongside this, costs are increasing for all types of support, evidencing a further need for change in the model of support and an opportunity to redesign the approach to market management.

6.4.2 Chosen delivery model

There are several delivery models to consider for the implementation of Children's Social Care within the new unitary. Some have been summarised in an options appraisal below:

Service Model	Strengths	Risks
Disaggregation & Integration: Each unitary establishes their own Children's Services	• Strong local control of the service operation and spend • Tailored services for the local community • Can retain partnership arrangements during implementation and beyond where appropriate	• Recruitment and retention of key staff if a HR strategy is not well considered • Data security and retention could be at risk if not carefully managed through transition • Duplication of processes, roles and contracts may increase costs • Transition may introduce significant risk that will need to considered and managed
Shared Services: One authority hosts Children's Services on behalf of other authorities via a Shared Services agreement	• May be easier to manage workforce challenges & contracts in the short-term • Enables the achievement of economies of scale • Provides some continuity for staff and care provision	• There are distinct needs across the three unitaries that this model may not address • May introduce challenges when it comes to OFSTED inspections and ensuring all areas are meeting required responsibilities • Dilutes accountability for service success • May introduce complexity should a member organisation wish to leave the arrangement
Joint Children's Trust: Authorities create or commission a trust, which operates independently with a shared governance board	• There have been indications that the introduction of a trust can drive practice improvements	• Central government has been clear that this is not their preferred option for social care delivery • Requires significant investment to set up • May introduce complexity should a member organisation wish to leave the arrangement • Dilutes accountability for improvement work

Table 73: Types of delivery models for implementing Children's Social Care

Following engagement with Leaders, Chief Executives and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), our recommended delivery model for Greater Norwich, and the three unitaries, is to establish a single Children's Service.

This option provides the greatest opportunity for each unitary to build a genuinely local and community connected service, that leverages local community assets to deliver positive outcomes for residents. Greater Norwich will have the highest proportion of children in touch with the council in the new unitary structure, and the largest proportion of Children in Need and Child Protection Plans – which placing into a larger structure could limit the impact of interventions and risk increasing numbers of children coming into the care system.

Whilst partners such as the Police and Health systems will have to service three unitaries, their movement to three footprints across the Norfolk geographies aligns with this recommended option and will allow for closer working relationships to develop between staff within the new unitary function.

There are positive examples of joint working that exist across the county footprint currently and would not seek to unpick these where they provide positive outcomes for residents. Partnership arrangements that should be retained include the Norfolk Children's Safeguarding Partnership which could be served by a joint administrative function and retain its local community safeguarding groups which will be strengthened through their connection to more localised service delivery. NIDAS (Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service) provides valuable personalised support for residents and will be retained as part of reorganisation.

Finally, our analysis has indicated that the Norfolk care market has seen increased costs in placement types and there is a need to ensure the placement market remains sustainable. Greater Norwich will have its own Commissioning & Partnerships function, located within Early Intervention & Prevention, which will work across services but will come together with West and East through partnership boards to commission support like residential care placements, and will continue involvement within regional care collaboratives such as Adopt East and Foster East to work in partnership with other authorities and sector specialists to provide support for children and young people. These organisations already span organisational boundaries beyond Norfolk, so refining membership should not have the destabilising impact that has been suggested.

Retaining a sovereign commissioning service will also enable Greater Norwich to develop hyper-local relationships with providers and the community sector to meet needs – ensuring there is not a risk of a 'postcode lottery' in provision but that residents of Greater Norwich have access to provision that is right for their needs.

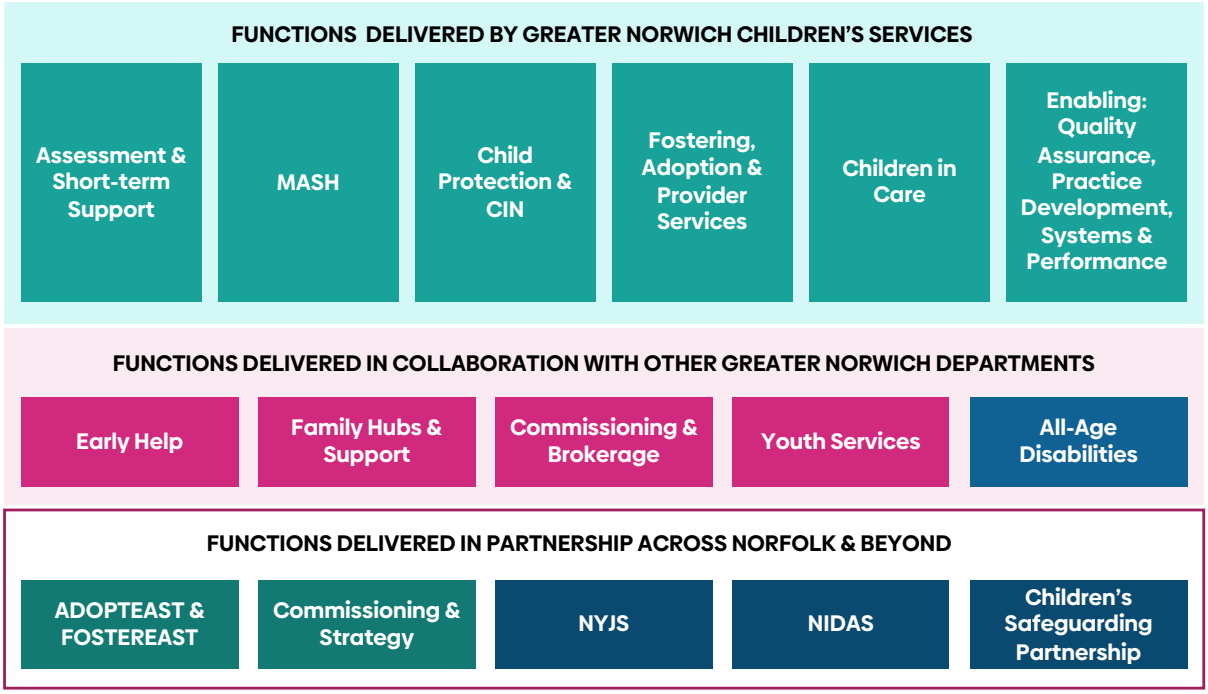


Figure 22: Functional model of Children's Social Care across the unitary.

6.4.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Children, young people and their families in Greater Norwich will benefit from a service offer that is rooted in their local communities and needs.

The Early Intervention & Prevention offer in Greater Norwich will play a pivotal role in ensuring families are enabled to receive support prior to a crisis occurring. Families will be supported through accessing hubs that are local to them and supported by staff who can build trusted relationships that connect residents not just to statutory organisations, but to a wider community offer. Building family resilience will further reduce demand on Children's Social Care, and the cost of complex forms of support. This enables Greater Norwich to build upon existing good practice that exists in the area, now being able to leverage the decision-making responsibilities and powers that come with running Children's Social Care. It also builds upon the government commitments to Family Hubs and the introducing of Family Group Decision-Making being located alongside communities, bringing together multi-disciplinary staff to support parents and families.

Where there is a need for a statutory intervention – or concern about safety of a child or young person – a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be located within

Children's Services which will bring together statutory partners from police, health and other partners, building on existing strong safeguarding arrangements to identify and respond to need quickly. The three unitary model aligns with the move of statutory partners to more localised geographies of service delivery – enabling the development of deep relationships and mitigating risks of disaggregation.

For children who do enter the care system, the emphasis on family-based placements will be retained, exploring kinship and then wider fostering arrangements. Greater Norwich has seen a decrease in fostering placements with local authority carers and increasing costs in the independent market. There is an opportunity to ensure that the retention offer for foster carers is appealing to residents and that foster carers are well supported in their local area through training and peer-to-peer support. Where more acute support is needed for a child or young person, residential care will either be commissioned in partnership or in-house provision will be used where that is available and meets the need of young person. At all stages in a child's journey, where appropriate for their outcomes and the experience of parents, opportunities will be explored for reunification or step-down of from residential into fostering placements.

As young people leave care, Greater Norwich as a unitary will be rooted in its corporate parenting duties. Greater collaboration between social care and housing colleagues will more effectively enable young people to move into tenancies and independence – as it becomes designed into process rather than reliant on relationships between personal assistants and housing providers. This is particularly a strength in Greater Norwich in how relationships can be developed with the PRS, and existing assets could be transformed to meet the needs of this cohort of young people.

For those children and young people who require support due to a disability, an all-age disability approach will be in place. This will enable effective management of transition between Children's Social Care and Adults Social Care, as well as a focus on preparing for independence from as early as possible by bringing together staff with expertise and experience from across the age spectrum. This service will work closely with Health colleagues to support service delivery and transition between services, and with SEND teams to support transition where that is appropriate. This will provide families with consistency of approach and reduce the experience of a 'cliff edge' between Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

6.4.4 Achieving financial benefits

Where needs arise, it will be identified sooner, and members of the family can be supported across a range of service. For example, where an adult in a family is experiencing mental health challenges resulting in unemployment, support can be provided that address those issues rather than funnelling a family into statutory supporting – saving on average £27,000 per package of support and having immeasurable impact on the outcomes of a child who avoids going into care.

A holistic approach to case management can also enable families to welcome children in care back to their family home. This may also enable more young people to move into safe and appropriate accommodation as they leave family placements, increasing their independence and reducing spend on high-cost semi-independent living.

A structuring of services that focuses on early intervention and prevention also enables the reorganisation of staff around community hubs and early intervention. There is also an opportunity to revisit the structure of case working staff, so they are better aligned with demand across Greater Norwich.

6.5 SEND & Education

6.5.1 Context & constraints

Whilst Greater Norwich will inherit the lowest total number of current EHCPs out of the three new unitaries, growth in this area is the highest with numbers climbing by 49% since 2021. Most young people with an EHCP attend mainstream schools, indicating that there is a good base of inclusion that can be built upon within the new service unitary model of delivery.

Greater Norwich has the highest number of maintained special school provision across the county footprint – which may be mitigating its comparatively low spend on transport. The management of the potential importing of young people into these schools will have to be carefully considered as part of implementation planning.

It is also a unitary that benefits from proximity to a range of post-16 options for young people in the area – including sixth forms attached to secondary schools, two Further

Education colleges and the University of East Anglia (UEA). This is reflected in it being the area with the highest level of qualification out of the three unitaries.

6.5.2 Chosen delivery model

SEND and Education will be part of the Children's Social Care management structure, and as outlined in 1.4 this will be a disaggregated service model, providing opportunities to build services that are tied in the requirements of local areas – whilst enabling collaboration across the county footprint where that is required, for instance, in the recruitment of specialist roles (e.g. Educational Psychologists).

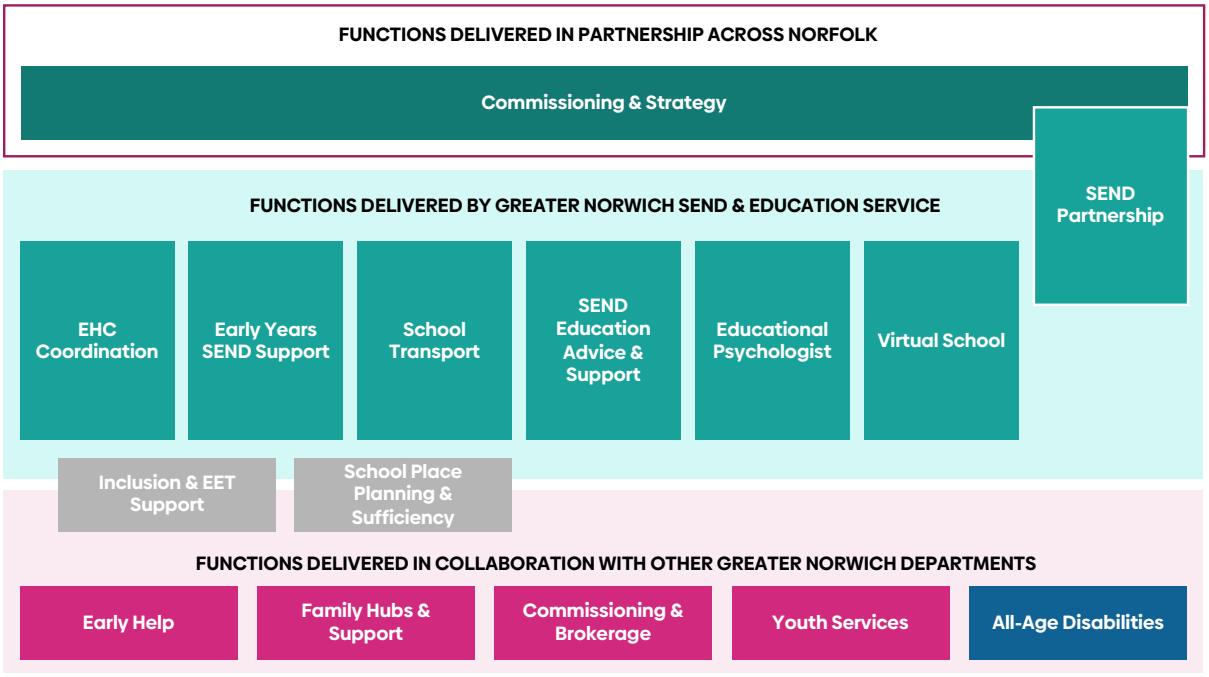


Figure 23: Functional model of SEND & Education across the unitary.

6.5.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

As with the Children's Social Care model, families and young people will benefit from an integrated approach with Early Intervention & Prevention as families will be able to access holistic support close to them – whilst this would not necessarily start the assessment process for an EHCP, it will enable families to be connected to peers and community support to build resilience around a child's needs. This includes signposting to existing effective interventions, such as Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) delivered by the ICB within Norfolk. This offer will also support young people who may be

at risk of exclusion or at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Where children and young people do need additional support to access education, EHC coordinators will be supported through workforce development to build closer working relationships with families to support them through the timely development of EHCPs and regular review and updates of these plans, aligned to a young person's needs. Teams Around the School will be developed on a patch basis around local schools to provide effective inclusion support – and intervene to prevent education placements breaking down or young people being suspended or excluded.

Planning for independence and transition will be considered throughout a young person's pathway. Where a young person may need support from Adult Social Care, support will be accessed alongside the All-Age Disability service to enable early planning for independence. If a young person is not eligible for future support, the service will connect them to the Early Intervention & Prevention to enable them to access support across housing and employment.

We would place school transport decision making alongside both place planning and EHCP coordination, to ensure its central role to enabling independence and the significant role it can play in additional cost is considered alongside decision making on school placements.

The new model will also leverage the deep understanding of communities and planning, alongside considerations for school place planning. With the development and growth opportunity that devolution presents – we would see this function working together with colleagues in planning and development to ensure we are designing an education system that is fit for future demand across mainstream and specialist education.

Our vision for Greater Norwich is as an area that unlocks both growth and innovation – and our inclusion work will be focused on enabling that this holds relevance to all our young people – developing a compelling skills offer that connects young people to opportunities.

6.5.4 Achieving financial benefits

Working to reset and strengthen our approach to SEND will provide the opportunity to unlock reduced spend against the High Needs Block, which currently carries a significant deficit.

Through effective deployment of Early Intervention & Prevention and Teams Around Schools, we will be able to reduce the amount of plans to young people – with a rough cost of £8,000 per year for each child who has a mainstream plan, increasing to over £23,000 where a child may be in a special school.

Exploring opportunities to step children down from placements based on a deeper understanding of their needs and outcomes will also release savings, through more effective relationships between staff and families, and patch-based working, families can have greater confidence in support.

Norfolk also has a higher-than-average rate of exclusions, which typically lead to detrimental life outcomes for children and young people. Whilst Greater Norwich has a lower proportion of these (again suggesting strong inclusive practice that can be built on within school settings), there is an opportunity to continue to avoid additional exclusions through both school-based support, and effective engagement with young people and their families to understand and support wider complexities.

6.6 Enabling Services

6.6.1 Context & constraints

Enabling services set up the environment in which frontline services and partners can work together to serve local communities. Therefore, they need to provide efficient support at the lowest possible cost.

They will need to support Greater Norwich as a larger scale organisation, to serve a broader area, whist delivering a more complex range of services (e.g. social care, education, highways, etc.).

Greater Norwich councils have adopted some different delivery models for their enabling support services, which will impact upon the new unitary blueprint. The diagram below illustrates where each district has moved away from a standalone, in-house service to adopt different delivery models.

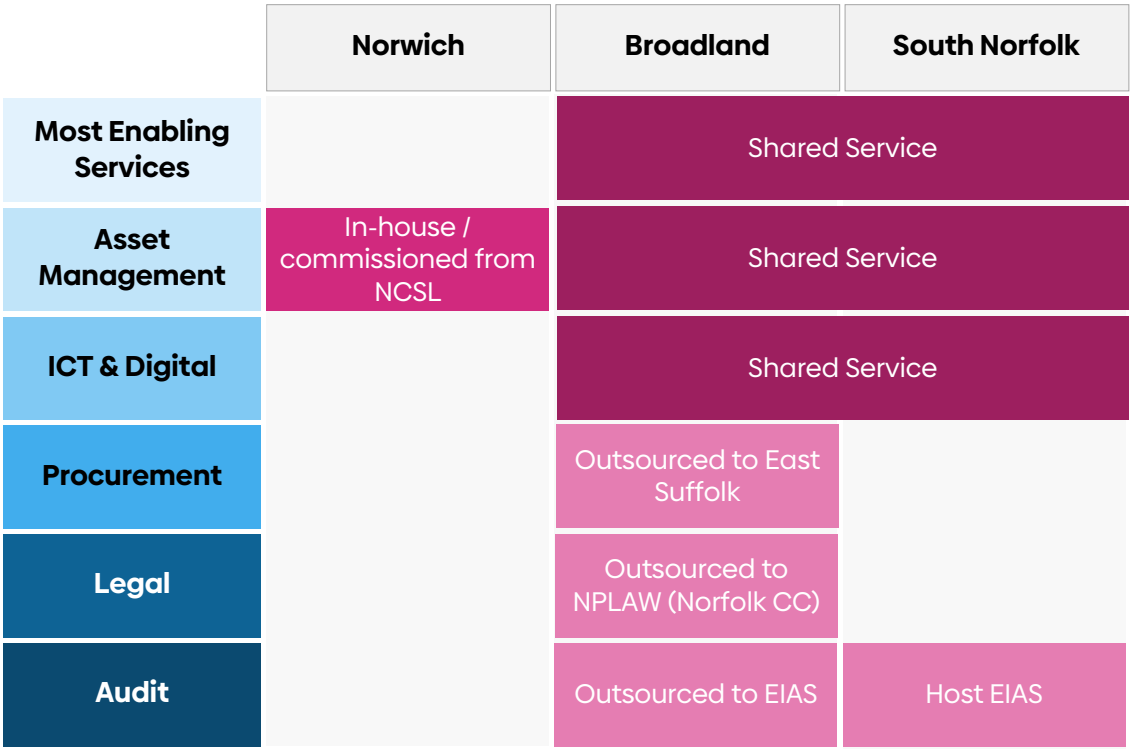


Figure 24: Current delivery models for Enabling Services for East Norfolk councils.

However, given that a minority of South Norfolk will sit within the new unitary area, the Eastern Internal Audit Service will likely move across to be hosted by East Norfolk – although this will be determined through implementation.

The primary benefit of moving to a three-authority model is around being able to tailor frontline services, support and wider partnerships to the very different needs of each area. However, there are some challenges and opportunities that Greater Norwich faces in relation to providing enabling services that can support the wider organisation.

Moving to a larger, single unitary council will allow Greater Norwich to scale up its enabling services to realise economies of scale, build in resilience and mitigate the risks of single points of failure.

Moving from four councils (and three management structures) to a single unitary provides an opportunity to realise efficiencies through streamlining senior officer posts, 150

reducing the financial pressure on the frontline services that will benefit residents and communities.

The move to a single unitary also represents an opportunity to 'reset' enabling services so that they can adopt best practice operating models that can deliver greatest value for money to the organisation and taxpayers. There are examples of mature, high-performing services that could be adopted in the new organisation.

The new authority will also inherit a broad range of arm's length companies and shared services, which its enabling services may also need to support so that they can continue to thrive. This includes the following:

- Broadland Living – a small arm's length property developer and management company
- Norwich City Services Ltd - a wholly owned company that delivers some FM services and wider place-based services
- ThreeScore OpenSpace
- Legislator - a joint venture to develop land north of the city

Greater Norwich will also inherit a share of the county council's arm's length traded company, Norse Group, and the housing development company, Repton Homes.

6.6.2 Recommended service model

Greater Norwich will have a core of enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. The diagram below shows what enabling services it will run and what models will be adopted.

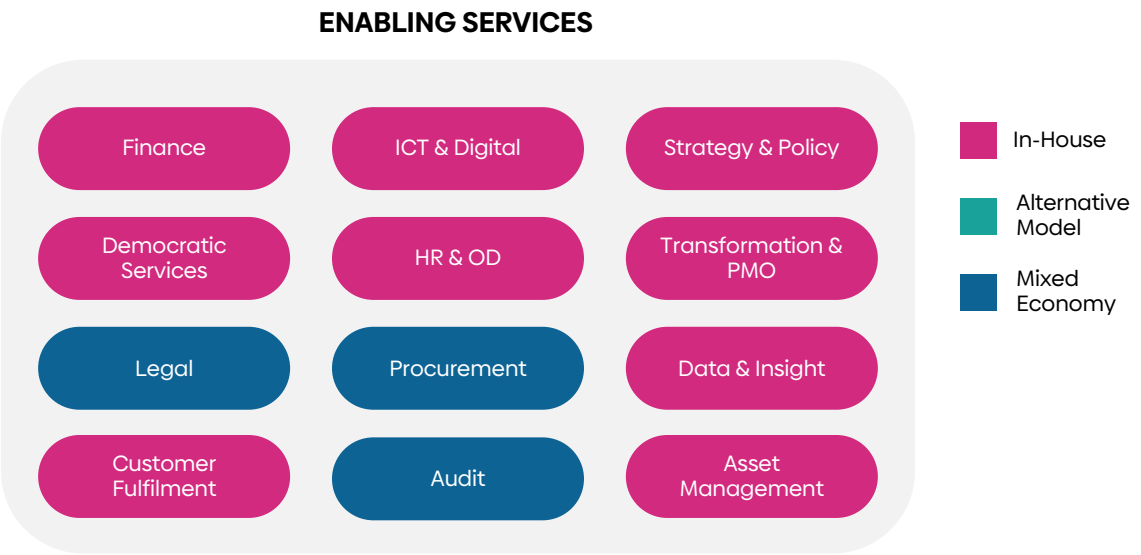


Figure 25: Greater Norwich Enabling Services

The key features of this service are summarised below.

Control and coordination	Enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. HR & OD, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke model[8] (Transformation & PMO, Data & Insight[9]) as a means of keeping control of enabling support and maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.
Mixed economy	Wherever possible enabling services are delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time. There are some exceptions where a mix of models is in place: • Procurement – the council will largely take on an in-house function, but may have some commitments to the outsourced, shared procurement service that is currently hosted by East Suffolk.

[8] Hub and spoke model – there is a primary, central corporate resource but a network of smaller, distinct teams sat within other areas of the council. All teams work together and form a community of practice.

[9] This is separate to any Data & Insight function within an EI&P model – but the two would work together

	• Audit – the council will inherit an in-house function and a shared service arrangement in the form of Eastern Internal Audit Services, which will be hosted by East Norfolk.
Best practice	The services would seek to continue the best practice from the existing services within councils, whilst also using the redesign of enabling functions as an opportunity to innovate.
Appropriate scale and capacity	Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a single unitary, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious transformation programme to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.
Tailored to local needs and services	Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of Greater Norwich. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management of a large portfolio of commercial assets and include links with its housing portfolio.
Ability to select the best opportunities to scale up	There are further longer-term opportunities for Greater Norwich to collaborate with the two other unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power.

6.6.3 Achieving financial benefits

As one of three unitaries, Greater Norwich is of the right scale to both tailor services to the unique needs and circumstances of the area but also benefit from being of a size to realise the benefits of combining the previous councils. The main financial benefits of the model would come from the following changes:

- Streamlining duplicated management structures
- Gaining economies of scale for those enabling services that currently operate on a small scale
- Removing duplication of processes and functions
- Rationalising key systems such as the multiple Enterprise Resource Planning, Finance and HR & Payroll systems used across the organisations

6.7 Place

6.7.1 Context & constraints

Greater Norwich is the main urban centre in the county, boasting a growing population and a vibrant economy. It has a strong creative and knowledge-intensive economy and serves as a hub for key growth sectors like FinTech, Digital, and environmental science. The city is rich in heritage, with two cathedrals, over 5,800 listed assets, and 90 conservation areas. Despite being an urban centre, it also has natural assets including nature reserves and areas of special conservation.

Historically, the area has faced challenges due to poor transport infrastructure, but planned investments aim to boost growth. Greater Norwich is a significant economic powerhouse for Norfolk and one of the largest employment centres in the Greater South-East, with 143,000 jobs, 10,000 businesses, and a contribution of over £3 billion to the national economy. The presence of key educational institutions like Norwich University of the Arts and the University of East Anglia supports its dynamic and productive economy.

However, there are challenges that need to be addressed, such as a considerable proportion of the working-age population having entry-level or no qualifications, and poor health outcomes in deprived communities leading to economic inactivity and other social issues. Additionally, a significant portion of the city's economic activity has shifted to the outskirts, causing some stagnation in the city centre.

Greater Norwich councils have adopted some different delivery models for place-based services, which will impact upon the new unitary blueprint. The diagram below illustrates where each district has moved away from a standalone, in-house service to adopt a different delivery model.

	Norwich	Broadland	South Norfolk
Planning	Partnership to deliver Greater Norwich Plan	Shared Service and Greater Norwich Partnership	
Building Control	Shared Service – CNC Building Control		Host Shared Service – CNC Building Control
Regulatory Services			
Parking	Shared Service – West Norfolk		
Waste & Recycling Collection	Outsourced – Biffa (2031)	Outsourced – Veolia (2032)	
Street Scene	Arm's Length Co – Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL)	Outsourced – Veolia (2032)	
Economic Growth	Partnership - Greater Norwich Growth Board		
Leisure			
Parks & Green Spaces			
Norfolk			
Highways	Procuring a new supplier – 14-year contract		
Waste & Recycling Disposal	Outsourced –Veolia (2029)		

Figure 26: Current delivery models for Greater Norwich councils. NOTE: the Norwich Growth Board is a joint initiative, but each council retains their own economic development function.

The county council has also just gone out to market for a highways maintenance and professional services contract lasting 14 years. It also has a contract with Veolia for waste transfer and disposal that runs until end of March 2029. Greater Norwich is likely to take on responsibility for part of these contracts.

In addition to this mixed economy of services, Greater Norwich will inherit all or a portion of the following arm's length delivery vehicles that have a role in shaping place within the area:

- Big Sky Ventures Ltd – an arm's length property developer of affordable homes and is a property management company
- Broadland Living – an arm's length company that offers below market rental homes in the private market

- Norwich City Services Ltd - a wholly owned company that delivers some FM services and wider place-based services
- ThreeScore OpenSpace - an arm's length company set up to manage open space at Three Score Bowthorpe
- Legislator - a joint venture to develop land north of the city
- Norfolk Environmental Waste Services (NEWS) – a joint venture with all councils that operates recycling and waste transfer stations for the reprocessing and sale of recycling material which generates income.
- Norse Group – wholly owned company of the County Council
- Repton Homes - wholly owned development company of the County Council
- Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd – a jointly owned company that provides services to developers and businesses for sustainability

Greater Norwich would take on a range of 'place-based' services including Highways & Transport, Waste Disposal, Cultural Services, further Planning responsibilities, and Trading Standards.

Placemaking requires a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces and this will require unitaries to exercise a wide range of levers to shape places. Bringing in Highways & Transport, Cultural services, Waste Disposal and other functions will help Greater Norwich coordinate these services to deliver a truly joined up approach to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community.

Greater Norwich is ideally placed to take a placemaking approach that serves the urban hub and surrounding area to deliver inclusive, sustainable growth. It is of a suitable size and scale to be able to tailor services at a neighbourhood level and represent efficient use of resources.

There are opportunities to realise efficiencies from streamlining management structures and rationalising systems. Increased scale will also support greater resilience for services such as Planning.

However, the mix of long-term contracts (Biffa, Veolia), in-house (South Norfolk) and arm's length company (Norwich City Services Limited) delivery for Waste collection and Street Scene poses a challenge for the new unitary. The fact that some of the contracts cross the new boundaries will require close partnership working with East Norfolk to

ensure continuity of services. The council will need to take a long-term approach to rationalising waste collection and disposal, and street scene services – but it can unlock benefits from coordination of operations, rationalising depots and optimised route planning.

In addition, regulatory changes for Planning and Building Control will result in major changes for services, and some uncertainty around what responsibilities local authorities will retain, that will need to be reflected in the council's operating model.

6.7.2 Recommended service model

Greater Norwich is best placed to serve the growing, vibrant urban city of Norwich and surrounding area to deliver the inclusive growth and help shape local neighbourhoods into places communities can thrive.

The delivery model is described below, and represents a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints but enables a placemaking approach, whilst allowing Greater Norwich to invest time in developing and implementing a new model in the longer-term.

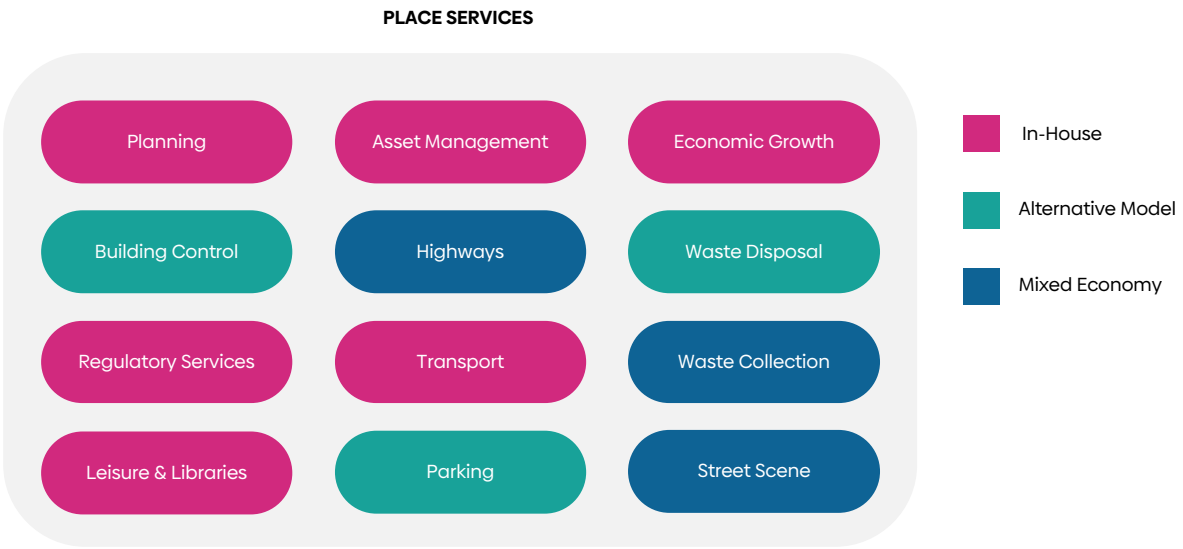


Figure 27: Greater Norwich Place Services

The key features of the place-based service models are described below.

Placemaking[10]	The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. It should be noted that this will also require close partnership working with the Mayoral Combined Authority
Shift to Greater Norwich	Greater Norwich serves the city, and surrounding areas so can focus on the support that will enable this city to grow and develop its suburbs, overcoming barriers that had previously impeded growth.
Mixed economy	Many services will be in-house but given the constraints of long-term contracts already in place for waste collection and disposal, street scene and highways, there will be a mixed economy. The following services will be • Waste collection, disposal and street scene – collection will be delivered by a combination of in-house and outsourced models until contracts expire. Greater Norwich will work in partnership with the other two unitaries on waste disposal • Highways – anticipated to be delivered through a mix of in-house expertise brought in from the county and the new supplier being procured. • Building Control – continue to be delivered through the shared service CNC function. • Parking – continue to be delivered through the shared parking service hosted by East Norfolk.
Leverage new and existing partnerships	Place will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services), shared parking services and CNC Building Control.
Long-term approach	Place will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with some of the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

[10] Placemaking is the process of shaping public spaces and communities. It is a multifaceted approach involving collaboration and design to create spaces that a foster a deeper connection between people and their environment, leading to spaces that people want to visit, live in, and care for.

158

6.7.3 Achieving financial benefits

In the longer-term Greater Norwich will seek to consolidate those services that are currently delivered through a range of models to benefit from economies of scale and break down service silos to join up delivery. This will realise greater value for money for local taxpayers and further enable a total placemaking approach for local neighbourhoods.

In the short-term the new model will allow benefits to be realised through the following means:

- Streamlining duplicated senior management structures
- Some reductions in duplication across similar functions (e.g. Planning Policy) or from joining up services (e.g. green spaces and management of highways verges)
- Harnessing economies of scale for some services (e.g. Development Management)
- Rationalising key systems for Planning, Environmental Services and other functions

In the longer-term there will be benefits from coordinating services and further reducing duplications. There may also be benefits from consolidation of assets such as depots and fleet management.

6.8 Implementation considerations

A more detailed plan for implementation can be found in Appendix H, however considerations specific to implementing the blueprints can be found below.

Workforce & Service Delivery

The operating model is rooted in neighbourhood-level service delivery, and as part of implementation the shadow unitaries will decide on the scale and size of these areas to inform the appropriate location of community buildings and development of outreach teams between urban and suburban areas.

Where Greater Norwich is inheriting functions which are currently delivered in a variety of ways – change will not occur from Day One, rather the shadow and new authorities

will review and consolidate arrangements as appropriate supported by a phased transformation programme to embed design new systems and unlock new ways of working. This includes agreeing the ways in which organisations owned by districts whose boundaries are not conterminous with the Greater Norwich boundaries will be owned and managed.

The establishment of a new functions, and the bringing together of many others, will require a focused recruitment & retention strategy alongside investment in workforce development. For staff who are working in the new EI&P function, they will need to be trained in person-centred models of practice and be equipped with the skills they need to work across several service areas. In statutory functions, in addition to the roles of the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Director of Children's Service (DCS), consideration will need to be given to the management of shifting existing locality teams and therefore not losing local knowledge and ensuring a strategy is in place to attract and retain specialist staff. This may include ensuring there are 'grow your own' pathways within Greater Norwich to grow and develop a sustainable workforce.

Partnerships

As set out across the blueprints, partnership working within and outside of Greater Norwich is central to effective delivery of our ambitions. This includes further leveraging relationships with housing providers, Homes England and Investment Partnerships to drive further growth and housing delivery. Greater Norwich will be able to develop closer locality working relationships with Health, enabling collaboration on the 10 Year Neighbourhood Health plan as well as meeting immediate needs around hospital discharge and joint funding. Strong partnerships with schools and importantly families and children and young people will ensure services are designed collaboratively as part of implementation.

Data & Technology

Technology and data will be central enablers to delivery of the new services. A single resident record and integrated case management will replace fragmented arrangements, allowing teams to share information and respond to resident needs. This will include reviewing and rationalising current housing systems to enable effective case management and data sharing. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers opportunities to detect risks earlier and ease the administrative burden on frontline staff, enabling them to focus on building relationships with residents.

7. Appendix G – West Norfolk Blueprints

7.1 Early Intervention and Prevention via a Wellbeing & Communities Department

7.1.1 Context & constraints

West Norfolk is a large and predominantly rural area with dispersed communities, a high percentage of older people, and a local economy shaped by seasonal work, skilled trades, and care-related occupations. Many residents live in villages and market towns that are physically distant from each other and from the main service centres. While most households own at least one vehicle, public transport is limited, creating barriers to accessing timely help for those without personal transport. Fewer residents report being in very good health than the national average, and the area has higher-than-average rates of disability under the Equality Act.

The population profile means that West Norfolk faces distinctive pressures. Older residents are at increased risk of isolation, frailty, and long-term care needs. At the same time, educational attainment is lower than in the rest of Norfolk, with the highest proportion of the population with no qualifications across the three unitaries. This limits access to stable employment and can contribute to cycles of economic inactivity. More residents are in the most acute forms of social care, indicating that issues are going undetected until they escalate to more acute and expensive interventions.

Current service delivery is constrained by its geography and structure. Visible points of early help are fewer, and services are harder to navigate. Many community-based initiatives operate on short-term funding, limiting their ability to form part of a sustained, system-wide prevention offer. Over the years, the district councils have increasingly stepped in to provide preventative support to residents, often filling gaps left by reductions in County Council funding for non-statutory services. Where funding is still available, such as through grant schemes, it is typically time-limited and subject to annual reductions, making long-term planning and sustained impact more challenging.

Despite these challenges, there are important strengths to build on. The ambition to become a recognised 'Marmot Place', existing social prescriber networks and platforms like Lily, which provide locality-based signposting and community information tailored

to West Norfolk's rural and coastal context, all provide a strong basis on which to build a more integrated approach

Local Government Reform offers the chance to move from a reactive, council-by-default system to one where the unitary acts as a place leader, fostering a sustainable system of support that keeps residents well, independent, and connected for longer. In West Norfolk, this means shifting towards earlier, joined-up intervention that supports ageing well, reduces isolation, and promotes health and resilience across rural and coastal communities. By scaling what works, embedding multi-agency collaboration, and investing in the right enabling infrastructure, the new model can improve outcomes for residents while ensuring public services remain financially sustainable.

7.1.2 Recommended delivery model

West Norfolk will establish a Wellbeing & Communities department which will bring together local government services previously dislocated between county and borough councils, creating a single, coordinated route into early help that is better for residents and more effective for service delivery. This will bring housing, social care, public health, employment and VCSE partners together around hubs in e.g., King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton. These will be supported by mobile outreach teams covering rural villages and coastal areas, creating a clear "no wrong door" offer that makes it easier for residents to access coordinated help in familiar, local settings.

Operationally, this department has five functions:

West Norfolk Wellbeing & Communities Department

Operationally, this early intervention and prevention-focused department has 5 functions:

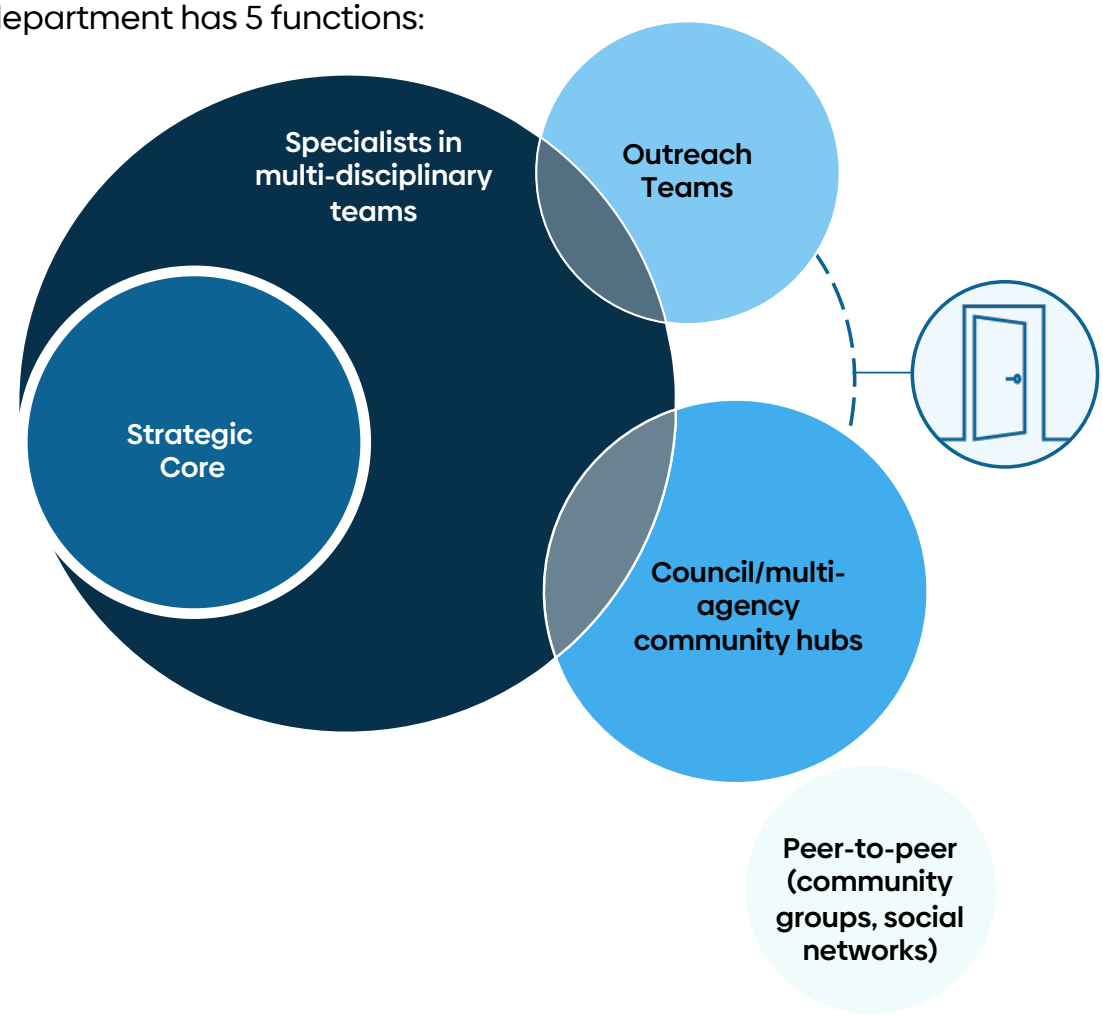


Figure 28: Functions of the West Norfolk Early Intervention and Prevention Department

Function 1: Strategic Core

The strategic core ensures the department delivers a coherent, data-driven approach to supporting ageing well and promoting independence. It coordinates strategy, commissioning, and partnerships with health services, voluntary groups, and housing providers. The focus is on aligning housing, health, and community safety plans to address rural isolation, poor transport, and health inequalities.

Function 2: Specialists/Experts in Multidisciplinary Teams

Specialist staff bring deep expertise in health, housing adaptations, falls prevention, community safety, and complex case management for older adults. They support

those with chronic conditions, mobility challenges, or at risk of isolation, and work closely with health partners to prevent hospital admissions and enable safe discharge.

Function 3: Front Door

The front door offers residents and carers a single point of contact for information, advice, and referrals — covering social care, housing adaptations, wellbeing activities, and community safety. Staff are trained to identify early signs of decline in independence and resilience to connect callers to targeted services.

Function 4: Community Hubs

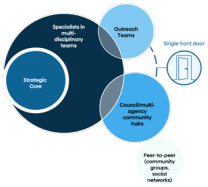
Community hubs, including libraries, provide localised, face-to-face support to older residents and their families. They host health and wellbeing activities, advice drop-ins, digital skills training, and social programmes to combat isolation. They also act as venues for partner services such as NHS clinics and housing advice sessions.

Function 5: Outreach teams

Outreach teams take services directly to people who cannot access hubs due to mobility, transport, or health barriers. They carry out home visits, deliver wellbeing checks, install safety equipment, and facilitate social activities in small village venues.

7.1.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Resident Journey | ***Wellbeing & Communities in action in West Norfolk***



Strategic Core – Proactive Targeting

The Data and Insights function reviews health, housing, and financial wellbeing data, identifying rural villages in West Norfolk with high numbers of older residents at risk of mobility decline, social isolation, and financial vulnerability. Predictive analytics highlight that without early support, some could face falls, hospital admissions, or loss of independence within 12 to 18 months. In response, the Corporate Core commissions falls-prevention classes and befriending schemes in village halls, strengthens hub staffing with a community health and wellbeing worker, occupational therapist, and revenues and benefits adviser, and directs mobile teams to begin wellbeing outreach.

Strategic Core

Mobile Teams – Proactive Outreach

At a parish hall coffee morning, a mobile team with a VCSE befriending charity, NHS falls-prevention staff, and a revenues and benefits officer meets Margaret, a 78-year-old widow living alone in a small village 15 km from the nearest town. She has begun feeling unsteady on her feet, avoids going out in bad weather, and is struggling with heating bills. In a strengths-based conversation, the team records her needs, books a home visit from an occupational therapist to check for hazards, connects her to a revenues and benefits officer who confirms she is eligible for Attendance Allowance and a warm home discount, and arranges an appointment at the community hub for wider support.

Mobile Outreach Teams

Single front door – System responds without re-entry

Before the occupational therapist's visit takes place, Margaret slips on her front step while bringing in a parcel. She is unhurt but shaken. Because her case is already recorded, the mobile team is alerted immediately, brings forward the occupational therapy visit, installs temporary non-slip mats and grab rails, and confirms her upcoming hub appointment will include falls-prevention and befriending support.

Single front door

Community Hub – Part of the same joined-up plan

At the hub, Margaret meets the community health and wellbeing worker, who already knows her case. Together they review her mobility and safety, enrol her in a falls-prevention class, arrange volunteer transport for trips into town, connect her to a digital skills course so she can video call friends and family, and follow up with the revenues and benefits adviser to ensure her applications are progressing.

Council/multi-agency community hubs

Multidisciplinary Team – Coordinated Wrap-around

The MDT, including the occupational therapist, social prescriber, VCSE partner, and revenues and benefits adviser, reviews her case. The occupational therapist completes permanent home adaptations, the social prescriber links her to a community choir and weekly exercise, the VCSE partner provides befriending calls until her social network is established, and the revenues and benefits adviser secures entitlements to reduce financial pressure and support with heating costs.

Specialists in multidisciplinary teams

Stepping down to community-led support

Six months later, Margaret's home is safe, and her balance has improved. She regularly attends village activities, has built a wider social circle, and feels financially more secure thanks to new benefits. With this progress, her case is stepped down to community and peer networks, with the reassurance that she can re-enter through the single front door if needs change.

Peer-to-peer

Figure 29: West Norfolk resident journey

Residents tell their story once, and the right mix of support is wrapped around them, from practical help such as a volunteer driver, to tenancy advice, a mental health check-in, or access to local skills and employment programmes. Mobile outreach teams can carry out home visits, deliver wellbeing checks, install safety equipment, and facilitate social activities in small village venues to support those with accessibility and mobility barriers. As needs reduce, residents are stepped down to community-based support that keeps them independent and connected to their communities.

For multi-agency partners, the model creates a shared purpose, a single version of the truth, and better intelligence about where to focus resources. Secure data-sharing arrangements allow information to flow between partners, while predictive analytics identify residents, streets, and communities at risk of crisis up to 18 months ahead. This could mean targeting coastal communities before seasonal unemployment hits, providing wellbeing checks for isolated older people, or stepping in early with households in rent arrears.

Over time, this approach will not only resolve issues earlier but also strengthen community capacity, reduce reliance on costly statutory interventions, and improve the overall wellbeing and resilience of West Norfolk's residents.

7.1.4 Achieving financial benefits

By implementing earlier and more integrated interventions, especially within rural, coastal, and market town communities, the approach seeks to lower instances of crisis, such as residential care admissions, strengthening the sustainability of adult social care and public health frameworks, delivering better results without escalating costs. Financial efficiencies will also be achieved by reducing duplication and fragmentation.

By employing predictive analytics and harnessing community insights, the model will pinpoint individuals and neighbourhoods at risk up to 12–18 months before crises may arise, preventing spend on crisis being required.

To implement this model, initial investments will be necessary in digital care infrastructure, data consolidation, and expanding a mobile workforce, alongside integrating district-level community services, housing, health, safety, wellbeing, and commissioning into a unitary system aligned with adult social care, public health, and

NHS operations. Over time, greater community capacity, improved management of chronic conditions, and diminished reliance on statutory services are anticipated to reduce the demand for acute and residential care, thereby cementing the shift from crisis-driven responses to a proactive, independence-focused framework.

7.2 Housing & Homelessness

7.2.1 Context & constraints

West Norfolk (WN) faces a complex mix of housing challenges and development opportunities.

It records the highest level of rough sleeping in Norfolk, accounting for around 34% of Norfolk's total, yet has the lowest budget to address the issue, with £2.6m allocated for 2025/26. In December 2024 there were 210 households in temporary accommodation, the highest figure among the three proposed new unitary areas.

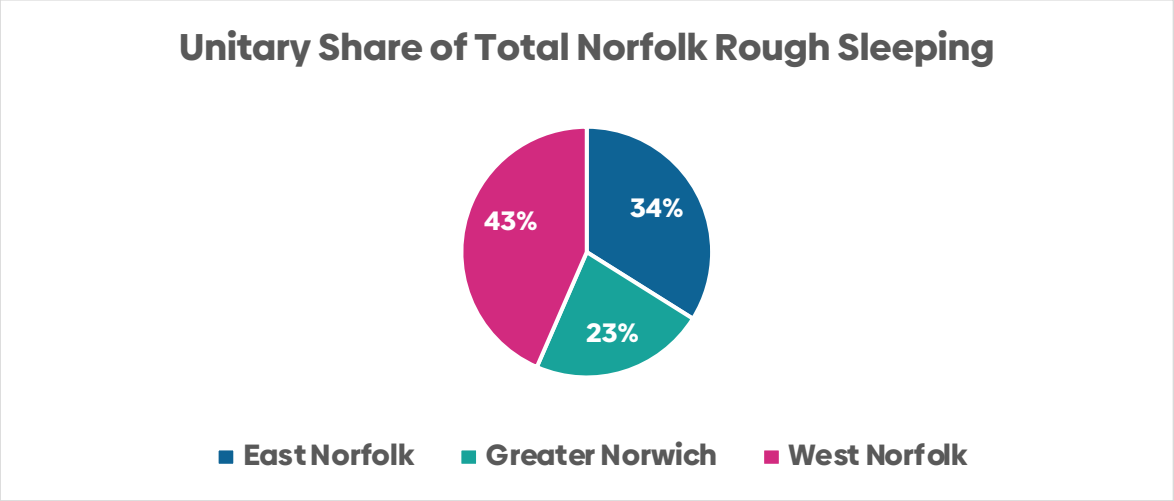


Figure 30: Share of rough sleeping across the three unitary areas.

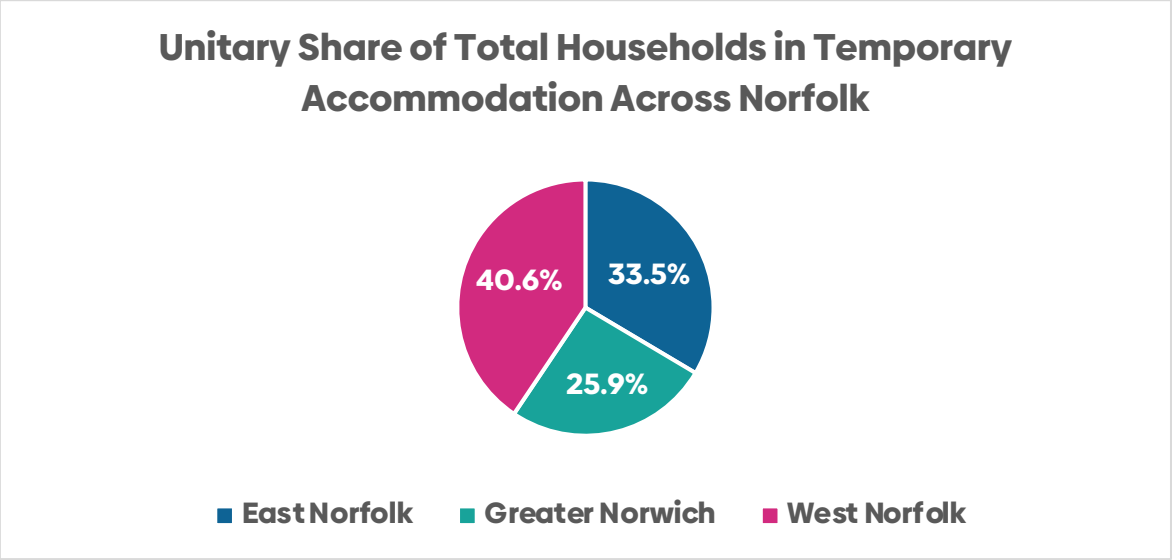


Figure 31: Households in temporary accommodation across the three unitary areas

Housing demand is weighted towards one-bedroom homes, much like other parts of Norfolk, but there is a marked difference in West Norfolk's need for larger family properties. Around 23% of applicants on the housing register require a three-bedroom home, a far higher proportion than in Greater Norwich or East Norfolk.

On the development side, the area benefits from a strong five-year housing land supply and significant delivery capacity.

7.2.2 Recommended delivery model

Homelessness

Homelessness support will be consolidated into the EI&P approach, building on successful models of current support and established early intervention pathways. This will enable the tackling of underlying challenges, such as debt, mental health and domestic abuse. This enables a more preventative, coordinated response to homelessness across the unitary area.

Housing

A choice-based lettings approach should be delivered through a unified policy across the unitary.

KL&WN have a 100% stake in West Norfolk Housing Company. The organisation is a registered provider of social homes and acts as a dynamic option for social housing management and growth in the unitary.

With the inclusion of LA-owned homes in West Norfolk Housing Company, there is no requirement to set up an HRA. Shadow authorities should consider how WN and current Arms-Length Organisations (ALOs) work together to manage social housing expansion as part of the set-up of the new organisations. This consideration should also factor in and include key partnerships within WN. for example, with other registered providers like Freebridge and Broadland Housing association.

Development

West Norfolk has high levels of home ownership. While the area is predominantly rural, it also includes market towns and coastal communities with distinct housing pressures such as access to transport and a lack of affordable one bed homes. This further supports the case for a 3 unitary approach that better tailors services to the needs of the people living in the unitary.

The new unitary will inherit stakes in two house building organisations – Breckland Bridge (part owned with The Land Group) and West Norfolk Property Ltd, a home development and rental company. Both KL&WN and Breckland both have house building organisations. Considering the duplication of purpose, operations and the difference in shareholdings, it is recommended that the West Unitary exists its partnership with Breckland Bridge. Directing future opportunities towards West Norfolk Property Limited – where 100% of benefits can be realised. There are ongoing financial and development commitments that must be considered through a transition – such as the relationship with Lovells. This will need to be carefully considered by shadow authorities for any opportunities and implications.

Company name	Ownership	Purpose/ notes
Repton Homes	NCC - 100%	Develops private homes for sale.
West Norfolk Housing Company	KL&WN - 100%	A registered provider with the regulator for social housing. Rents social homes and sells shared ownership. Partnership with Broadland housing association.
West Norfolk Property Company	KL&WN - 100%	Holds private rentals and develop new homes. aims to improve private rental options and raise funds for the council.
Breckland Bridge	Breckland - 50% The Land Group – 50%	Joint venture with The Land Group to deliver housing and regeneration projects.

Table 74: West Norfolk housing companies and home ownership

7.2.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Homelessness

WN has the highest temporary accommodation and rough sleeping numbers of the three unitaries. This is partly driven by a mismatch between available accommodation and need. The new model can, through EI&P, identify need earlier and provide support around individuals and households to address root causes which currently sits across a range of professional areas (e.g. debt, mental health issues and domestic abuse).

Combining teams will provide opportunities to target areas and issues (e.g. rough sleeping in rural Breckland) and learn good practice from each other. It's acknowledged that temporary accommodation and rough sleeping numbers are not equally split across the authority, so the design of services and the way they are accessed needs to be considered – for example contributing to and utilising EI&P's outreach programme within Breckland's rural areas. Using a person-centred approach to service delivery and

adapting to the different needs of each area is a key strength of the three unitary model that is lost at a larger scale.

There are existing commissioning and partnership working across the area, this offers an opportunity to build on good practice that compliments the EI&P agenda. By connecting closely with the wider EI&P offer there is an opportunity to address the root causes of homelessness at an early stage. Additionally, the new scale of the unitary makes commissioning opportunities more appealing to partners and enable them to design outreach that tackles rural and dispersed challenges – this is great opportunity for WN as there are great partnerships already in place that could be built upon.

Housing

West Norfolk will not inherit a HRA but will be building upon close working relationships with registered providers in the area. The arms-length organisation, West Norfolk Housing, means that the area will have access to some social stock and by combining resources, the unitary will be able to unlock quicker growth.

Development

There is an opportunity to expand activity further through arms-length organisations and work to find efficiencies in both development and social housing functions e.g. making s106 acquisitions more and making one-bed homes more feasible for HAs.

Shadow authorities should consider the consolidation of the three organisations in West Norfolk to make the most of opportunities and bring efficiencies among these organisations.

7.2.4 Achieving financial benefits

Through the amalgamation and rationalisation of housing and homelessness teams, it's expected that savings will be made. This will predominantly be at senior management level as the demand on officers and services will initially remain the same.

Embedding housing and homelessness into the EI&P function will also realise savings. A conservative saving estimate on non-staffing costs of 10% can be achieved. Among other things this will also include temporary accommodation costs.

With the increase in scale and the high use of commissioning within homelessness services in WN, there is an opportunity to offer new opportunities to partners. This could also drive costs savings as contracts are larger. There is also the opportunity to attract new partners (both local and national) who may not have previously been interested in the scale offered.

7.3 Adult Social Care

7.3.1 Context & constraints

West Norfolk covers a large geographical area with some larger communities such as King's Lynn and many semi-rural and rural communities, with the second highest percentage of the population aged 65+ at 25.6%. More older adults are in nursing and residential care, and fewer are in supported living indicating a lack of focus on independence. Demand also increased significantly in working-age adults, with West Norfolk having an increasing number of 18-64 year olds requiring nursing / residential care provision.

Increases in demand across both working age and older adults are resulting in increasing pressures in service delivery and are forecast to continue to grow. Alongside this, costs are increasing for all types of support, evidencing a need for change in the model of support and an opportunity to redesign the approach to market management.

7.3.2 Recommended service model

There are several delivery models to consider for the implementation of Adults Social Care within the new unitary. Some have been summarised in an options appraisal below:

Model	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Shared Services Model	A single unitary is appointed to deliver Adults Services on behalf of all or some of the new authorities. This is carried out under a formal shared services agreement or delegation.	• Economies of scale and reduced duplication • Reduces transition risk as staff and structures can remain in place in short term • Consistency of approach across unitaries	• Diluted accountability and complex governance • Compromises over operational and strategic priorities • Still requires core service (DAS) in each unitary • Dependency on an external organisation
Separate Services	The disaggregated model - the new unitaries each establish their own Adults Service structure and workforce, with local leadership and systems. Examples include Cumberland and Bedfordshire	• Locally accountable • Decisions making and services delivered closest to communities • Can reflect local needs • Retains option to run some services jointly	• Duplication of teams and staff across three unitaries • Challenge of recruiting high quality staff from other councils • Higher risk transition that could impact day-to-day services
Central Leadership – Diffused Delivery	The new authority operates a single Adult Services directorate. Delivery is decentralised into locality-based teams aligned to former council areas or other geographies	• Combines strategic leadership with place-based delivery • Easier to maintain partner relationships • Retains local responsiveness • Enables phased integration	• Blurred lines of accountability if not clearly defined • Potential inconsistencies between areas • Requires strong central oversight and performance management

Table 75: Types of delivery models for Adult Social Care

Following engagement with Leaders, Chief Executives and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), our recommended delivery model is to establish a single Adults Social Care service for West Norfolk.

The creation of a dedicated West Norfolk Adult Social service will enable a greater focus on the local needs, assets, and challenges. The model will provide the opportunity to have a greater focus on the local context and challenges and support a move to a person-centred approach to Social Care. For urban centres in towns such as King's Lynn, neighbourhood hubs will be closely connected to multi-agency networks, with targeted proactive outreach in the most deprived wards. Elsewhere given the large geographical area of West Norfolk, the model will adapt to rural communities and making greater use of mobile services and digital such as Technology Enable Care to help connect residents and help them feel safe in their own homes for as long as possible. A new local delivery model and front door will be closely aligned to community assets and inform priorities for what is commissioned locally and in collaboration with partners to avoid duplication.

Whilst partners such as the Police and Health will have to service three unitaries, their movement to three footprints across the Norfolk geographies aligns with this

recommended option and will allow for closer working relationships to develop between staff within the new unitary function.

There are positive examples of joint working that exist across the county footprint currently and would not seek to unpick these where they provide positive outcomes for residents. These will be managed through partnership boards to ensure there is appropriate governance in place. The Adults Safeguarding Board is also something which will be retained to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations and supported through their connection to more localised service delivery model.

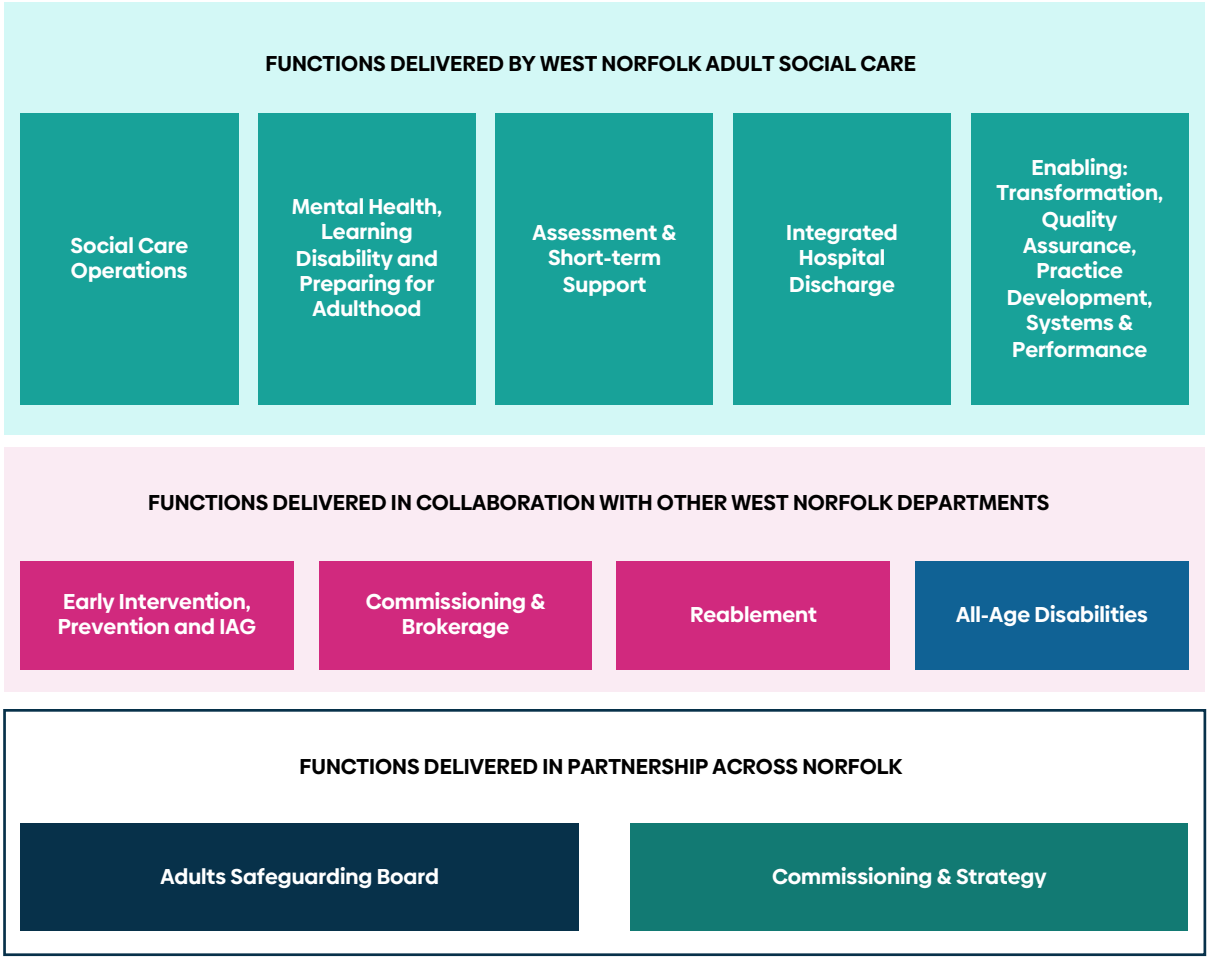


Figure 32: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary

Our analysis has indicated that the Norfolk care market has seen increased costs across supported living, home care and residential care and there is a need to ensure the provider market remains sustainable. West Norfolk will have its own commissioning & partnerships function within EIP – which will work across Early Intervention & Prevention, Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care – but will come together with Greater

Norwich and East Norfolk through partnership boards to commission support like residential care placements working with large providers such as Norse Care and developing a market management approach.

This new model will shift West Norfolk from a county wide one size fits all approach. to a person-centred approach where communities and the VCFSE sector have a greater role to help keep people as independent as possible in their own homes with lower levels of support. This model with reestablish the primacy of place to ensure commissioned services are tailored to local needs with the right level of support at the right time and help reduce demand for statutory interventions.

7.3.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

The key area of focus for West Norfolk is maximising reablement to support be to be as independent as possible e.g. in cases where the person has a fall. The reablement service will be moved into the EI&P service and assigned the most appropriate lead based on their needs who will oversee their case and track progress.

There is significant potential to scale what already works based on local knowledge of communities the challenges they face and the most appropriate interventions. Developing the local offer building on existing partnerships at a neighbourhood level will support NHS England's 10-Year Plan to introduce an integrated neighbourhood model with a multi-agency front door by 2028. The new model should align to the health neighbourhoods in West Norfolk to ensure community-based services across health, public health, police and social care are all working in the same footprints and have a shared understanding of the local needs and priorities.

Where there is a need for additional support and a care package this will put the person at the heart of this to support them to be as independent as possible and focused on improving their outcomes. Working closely with health and the James Paget University Hospital and the St Edmunds Hospital, will be key to provide coordinated support in both primary care in communities and hospital discharge. The new model will support improved discharge pathways through closer working between occupational therapists and social care teams focused on reablement and maximising local community provision. The three unitary model aligns with the move of statutory partners to more localised geographies of service delivery – enabling the development

of deep relationships and mitigating risks of disaggregation. West Norfolk has committed to becoming a Marmot Place creating a healthier and fairer environment for everyone, particularly those facing the greatest disadvantages which this model is best placed to help achieve this through a stronger partnership with Health.

Key areas of focus for the new model for Adults Social Care include having a different approach to working with health, commissioning and learning disability which is an area with complex cases and high costs. With West Norfolk having the highest growth in working-age adults this new model will identify and support cases from 14 years of age working with Children's Social Care to agree the most appropriate commissioned services, skills to help them gain employment and the most appropriate housing. This will enable a person-centred approach to help the individual to be an independent as possible and help reduce the growing numbers of 18–64-year-olds needing residential / nursing provision.

The new model will have a Commissioning function across Adults, Children's and Prevention to ensure that what is commissioned supports people throughout their life and helps avoid the challenges in transitioning from Children's to Adults. This will benefit West Norfolk through closer working with local providers based on the current and future needs of the area and where appropriate the use of very acute placements. In addition, this will introduce an All-Age Disability Service for Learning Disabilities with a greater focus on increasing independence, providing secure appropriate housing, skills and employment.

7.3.4 Achieving financial benefits

The key to achieving financial benefits of the new model and creating long term financial sustainability is through the early identification of needs and putting in place lower levels of support through local community provision or technology. Helping to maintain people's independence and supporting them to live in their own home in the communities they know is a better outcome for the individual and helps avoid residential care which in West Norfolk costs an average of £627 a week.

A holistic approach to case reviews to establish if a reduced level of support e.g. a move from residential to a supported living provision may be possible. This would equate to a saving of £517 per week demonstrating that in West Norfolk, a small reduction in

numbers could have a significant impact. Given that West Norfolk has the lowest number of older adults in supported living provision this is a key area to grow this provision to help address the service delivery challenges and improve longer term financial sustainability. This may also enable older adults to have improved independence in an environment that they feel safe and secure and have an improved quality of life.

Focusing services on early intervention and prevention allows for staff to be reorganised around community hubs. Specialist skills can be allocated at the initial stage to ensure effective triage. Cases needing social care intervention will be led by a social worker, who completes the Care Act Assessment and coordinates EIP support if appropriate. This approach ensures cases are managed based on required support levels and individual needs, with minimal transfers.

7.4 Children's Social Care

7.4.1 Context & constraints

Children's Social Care in West Norfolk will service the lowest number of children across the three unitaries, with numbers declining over the past three years. This may indicate that there is existing good early intervention practice in place in this area.

Numbers of children and young people placed with in-house foster carers have declined over the past three years, with numbers placed in independent fostering placements has increased. This may indicate that foster carers are either leaving the sector or are not being supported to be able to support needs and/or are being appropriately matched. As West Norfolk has the highest cost IFA placements, addressing this challenge will be key to enabling sustainability within the new service model.

Demand for support at the Child in Need (CIN) level has slightly increased over the past three years, indicating a need for effective early intervention and family support – to ensure that demand for acute support remains stable.

The unitary has already begun on its journey to become a 'Marmot Place' in collaboration with Public Health and the ICB to address the significant health inequalities across the area. Principles behind becoming a Marmot Place include giving

every child the best start in life, which provides a clear ambition and direction to a new service.

7.4.2 Recommended delivery model

There are several delivery models to consider for the implementation of Children's Social Care within the new unitary. Some have been summarised in an options appraisal below:

Service Model	Strengths	Risks
Disaggregation & Integration: Each unitary establishes their own Children's Services	• Strong local control of the service operation and spend • Tailored services for the local community • Can retain partnership arrangements during implementation and beyond where appropriate	• Recruitment and retention of key staff if a HR strategy is not well considered • Data security and retention could be at risk if not carefully managed through transition • Duplication of processes, roles and contracts may increase costs • Transition may introduce significant risk that will need to considered and managed
Shared Services: One authority hosts Children's Services on behalf of other authorities via a Shared Services agreement	• May be easier to manage workforce challenges & contracts in the short-term • Enables the achievement of economies of scale • Provides some continuity for staff and care provision	• There are distinct needs across the three unitaries that this model may not address • May introduce challenges when it comes to OFSTED inspections and ensuring all areas are meeting required responsibilities • Dilutes accountability for service success • May introduce complexity should a member organisation wish to leave the arrangement
Joint Children's Trust: Authorities create or commission a trust, which operates independently with a shared governance board	• There have been indications that the introduction of a trust can drive practice improvements	• Central government has been clear that this is not their preferred option for social care delivery • Requires significant investment to set up • May introduce complexity should a member organisation wish to leave the arrangement • Dilutes accountability for improvement work

Table 76: Service models for Children's Social Care

Following engagement with Leaders, Chief Executives and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), our recommended delivery model is for a singular Children's service for West Norfolk.

This option provides the greatest opportunity for each unitary to build a genuinely local and community connected service, that leverages local community assets to deliver positive outcomes for residents. The fluctuating demand for Children's Social Care in West Norfolk may get lost within a larger organisation.

Whilst partners such as the Police and Health systems will have to service three unitaries, their movement to three footprints across the Norfolk geographies aligns with this

recommended option and will allow for closer working relationships to develop between staff within the new unitary function.

There are positive examples of joint working that exist across the county footprint currently and would not seek to unpick these where they provide positive outcomes for residents. Partnership arrangements that should be retained include the Norfolk Children's Safeguarding Partnership which could be served by a joint administrative function and retain its local community safeguarding groups which will be strengthened through their connection to more localised service delivery.

Finally, our analysis has indicated that the Norfolk care market has seen increased costs in placement types and there is a need to ensure the placement market remains sustainable. West Norfolk will have its own Commissioning & Partnerships function within the EI&P department but will come together with Greater Norwich and East Norfolk through partnership boards to commission support like residential care placements and will continue involvement within regional care collaboratives such as Adopt East and Foster East to work in partnership with other authorities and sector specialists to provide support for children and young people.

These organisations already span organisational boundaries beyond Norfolk, so refining membership should not have the destabilising impact that has been suggested. Retaining a sovereign commissioning service will also enable West Norfolk to develop hyper-local relationships with providers and the community sector to meet needs – ensuring there is not a risk of a 'postcode lottery' in provision but that residents have access to provision that is right for their needs.

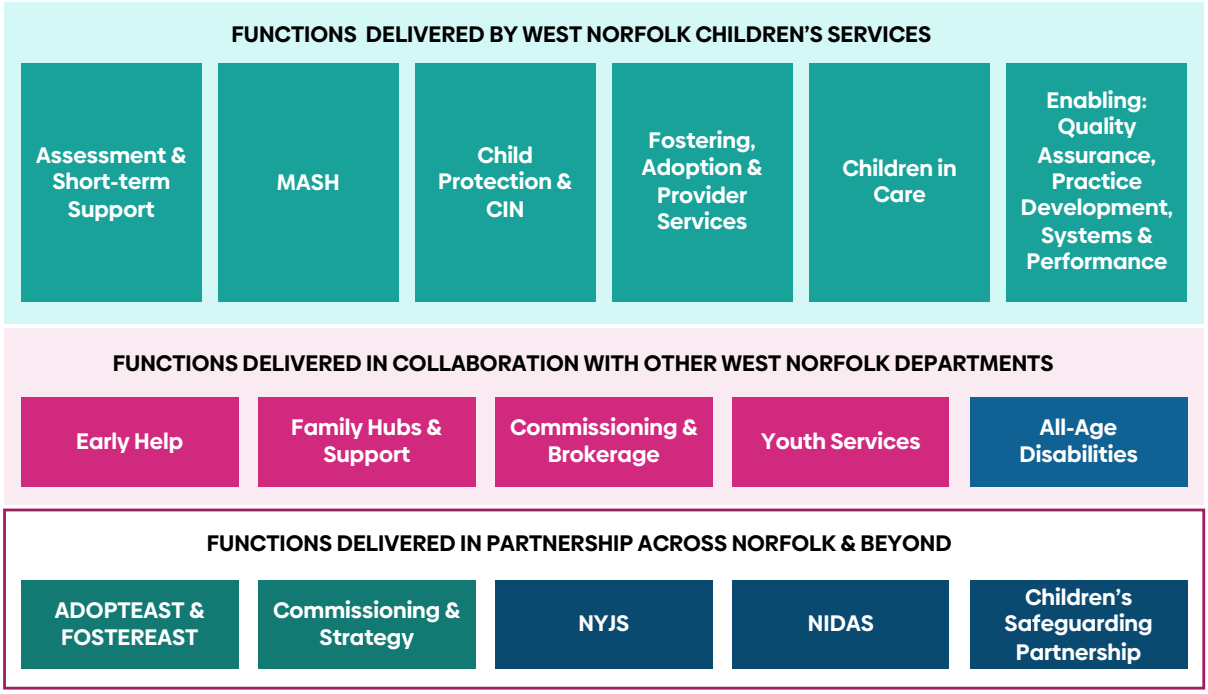


Figure 33. Functional model of Children's Services for the unitary.

7.4.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

Given the ambition already present in West Norfolk to tackle deprivation and tackle the root causes of demand for Children's Services, it follows that a new model of service delivery should be in place to formalise relationships, strengthen decision-making and enable close working between social care, public health and other service areas.

The Early Intervention & Prevention offer in West Norfolk will be the first point for engagement with family support. Family Hubs will be developed as part of the government reforms, building upon existing sites in King's Lynn which will connect residents not just to statutory services but to a wider community offer, including peer to peer support. Families will be supported by the most appropriate lead professionals which may not always be a staff member from Children's Social Care.

Where there is a need for a statutory intervention – or concern about safety of a child or young person – a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be located within Children's Services which will bring together statutory partners from police, health and other partners, building on existing strong safeguarding arrangements to identify and respond to need quickly. The three unitary model aligns with the move of statutory

partners to more localised geographies of service delivery – enabling the development of deep relationships and mitigating risks of disaggregation.

For children who do enter the care system, the emphasis on family-based placements will be retained, exploring kinship and then wider fostering arrangements. Given the fluctuation in numbers of foster carers within the unitary, there may be a need to ensure there is a targeted recruitment campaign linked to community partners and a focus on ensuring the retention offer meets the needs of local children.

As young people leave care, West Norfolk as a unitary will connect them to local housing and employment opportunities, as an ambitious corporate parent. Through close partnership with housing colleagues, suitable accommodation will be provided with support for independence skills where that is needed. West Norfolk sees growth within its agri-tech and advanced manufacturing sectors, and there will be a need for the development of a strong care workforce to meet future needs. Care leavers should be connected to opportunities within these sectors through pathway planning and connections with local education institutions.

For those children and young people who require support due to a disability, an all-age disability approach will be in place. This will enable effective management of transition between Children's Social Care and Adults Social Care, as well as a focus on preparing for independence from as early as possible by bringing together staff with expertise and experience from across the age spectrum. This service will work closely with Health colleagues to support service delivery and transition between services, and with SEND teams to support transition where that is appropriate. This will provide families with consistency of approach and reduce the experience of a 'cliff edge' between Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

7.4.4 Achieving financial benefits

Early identification of needs will allow for timely support across services. For instance, when an adult faces mental health challenges leading to unemployment, targeted assistance can be offered, avoiding statutory interventions. This approach saves around £26,500 per support package and greatly improves outcomes for children who avoid entering care.

A holistic approach to case management can also enable families to welcome children in care back home, with a small reduction in numbers could have a significant impact. This may also enable more young people to move into safe and appropriate accommodation as they leave family placements, increasing their independence and reducing spend on high-cost semi-independent living.

A structuring of services that focuses on early intervention and prevention also enables the reorganisation of staff around community hubs and early intervention. There is also an opportunity to revisit the structure of case working staff, so they are better aligned with demand across West Norfolk.

7.5 SEND & Education

7.5.1 Context & constraints

West Norfolk has experienced EHCP growth of 43% over the past three years. The largest growth area has been within Independent Special School placements, indicating that more local population is not meeting the needs of children and young people. West Norfolk also has the highest proportion of exclusions in the county, suggesting that settings are not as inclusive as they could be.

Given its rural nature, it is perhaps unsurprising that West Norfolk has the highest spend on school transport, for children in both mainstream and special placements. Without being managed carefully this could be a significant cost pressure for the new authority.

The new unitary will be overseeing a number of exciting housing development opportunities over the coming years and leveraging planning and growth experience with an approach to managing declining pupil numbers elsewhere in the unitary footprint will be key to ensuring development is right-sized to the changing demographics of the area – and the West is able to afford the costs associated with statutory transport to schools.

In addition to sixth forms attached to schools, young people in West Norfolk also have access to studying opportunities at the College of West Anglia, which offers degree-level qualifications and a specialist nursing school – alongside City College East, Otley College and West Suffolk College providing cross boundary support. Given the shifting

population demographics towards older adults in this unitary, ensuring young people are connected to local employment opportunities that are sustainable will prevent risks of young people migrated to other areas of the county or outside of Norfolk all together.

7.5.2 Recommended delivery model

SEND and Education will be part of the Children's Social Care management structure, and as outlined in 1.1 this will be a disaggregated service model, providing opportunities to build services that are tied in the requirements of local areas – whilst enabling collaboration across the county footprint where that is required, for instance, in the recruitment of specialist roles (e.g. Educational Psychologists).

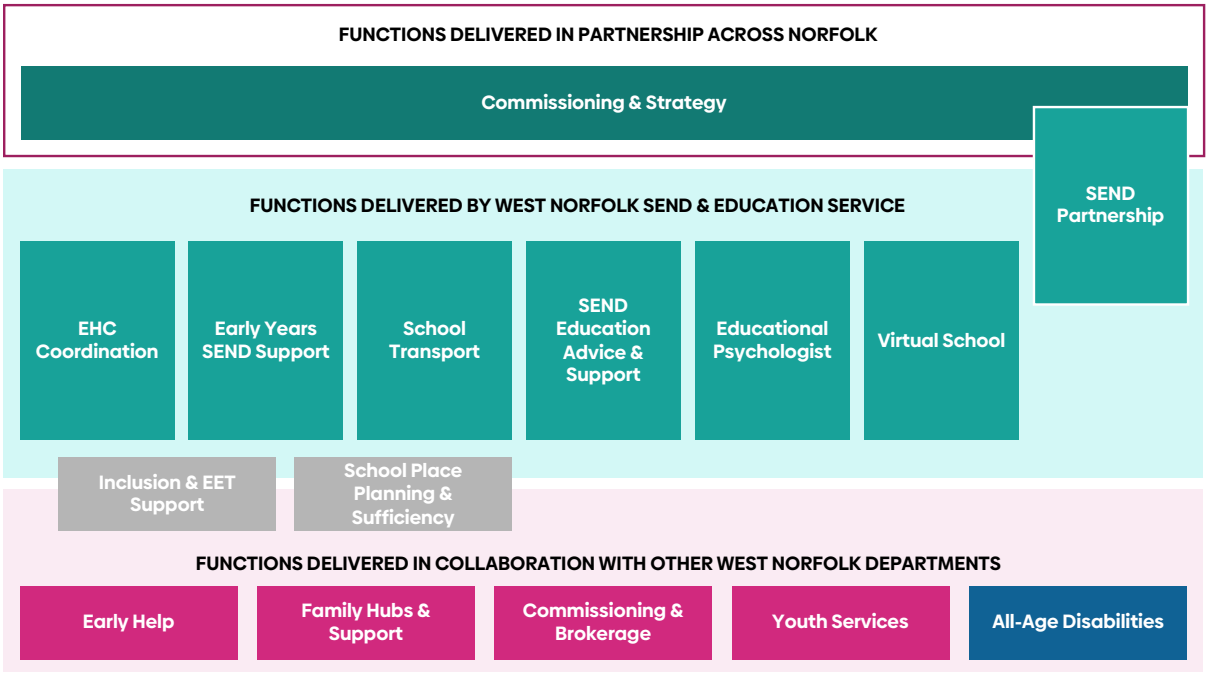


Figure 34: Functional model of SEND & Education across the unitary.

7.5.3 Improving outcomes, unlocking innovation

With a focus on more local service delivery, West Norfolk is positioned to deepen existing partnership working around local schools, and with partners to deliver a truly inclusive response to young people's needs. Its relatively unique population and geography make-up compared to the other unitaries risks getting lost in a large authority – where demands elsewhere may conceal the needs of this area.

Families and young people will benefit from an integrated approach with Early Intervention & Prevention as families will be able to access holistic support close to them to enable families to be connected to peers and community support to build resilience around a child's needs. Given the rurality of West Norfolk, whilst support will be available within urban hub centres, a mobile support offer will wrap around areas located in areas that families are likely to visit – including building the offer into mobile libraries, health locations and community events. This model also speaks to embedding the Marmot Principles with all children and young people in the area, enabling young people to have the best start in life.

Where children and young people do need additional support to access education, EHC coordinators will be supported through workforce development to build closer working relationships with families to support them through the timely development of EHCPs and regular review and updates of these plans, aligned to a young person's needs. Teams Around the School will be developed on a patch basis around local schools to provide effective inclusion support – and intervene to prevent education placements breaking down or young people being suspended or excluded.

Given this particular challenge around exclusions in West Norfolk, as a single unitary they will also benefit from developing Schools Forum relationships with maintained and academy schools in the area, enabling close working to understand the reasons behind a higher proportion of exclusions and to explore opportunities to develop a wider range of alternative provision to ensure young people are not distanced from learning for too long.

Planning for independence and transition will be considered throughout a young person's pathway. Where a young person may need support from Adult Social Care, support will be accessed alongside the All-Age Disability service to enable early planning for independence. If a young person is not eligible for future support, the service will connect them to the Early Intervention & Prevention to enable them to access support across housing and employment.

We would place school transport decision making alongside both place planning and EHCP coordination, to ensure its central role to enabling independence and the significant role it can play in additional cost is considered alongside decision making on school placements.

The new model will also leverage the deep understanding of communities and planning, alongside considerations for school place planning. With the development and growth opportunity that devolution presents – we would see this function working together with colleagues in planning and development to ensure we are designing an education system that is fit for future demand across mainstream and specialist education. Tying together place planning and school teams will also enable intervention where declining populations may introduce challenges to the sustainability of the sector.

Our vision for West Norfolk is as an area that takes full advantage of its unique geography and range of industries from tourism to advanced manufacturing – developing a compelling skills offer that connects young people to these opportunities will be key to ensuring truly inclusive growth, ensuring they feel as though they have control over their lives and preventing the movement away of the working age population.

7.5.4 Achieving financial benefits

Working to reset and strengthen our approach to SEND will provide the opportunity to unlock reduced spend against the High Needs Block, which currently carries a significant deficit.

Through effective deployment of Early Intervention & Prevention and Teams Around Schools, we will be able to reduce the amount of plans to young people – with a rough cost of £8,000 per year for each child who has a mainstream plan, increasing to over £23,000 where a child may be in a special school.

Exploring opportunities to step children down from placements based on a deeper understanding of their needs and outcomes will also release savings, through more effective relationships between staff and families, and patch-based working, families can have greater confidence in support.

Norfolk also has a higher-than-average rate of exclusions, which typically lead to detrimental life outcomes for children and young people. West Norfolk has the highest proportion of these, and there is an opportunity to continue to avoid additional exclusions through both school-based support, and effective engagement with young people and their families to understand and support wider complexities.

7.6 Enabling Services

7.6.1 Context & constraints

Enabling services set up the environment in which frontline services and partners can work together to serve local communities. Therefore they need to provide efficient support at the lowest possible cost.

They will need to support West Norfolk as a larger scale organisation, to serve a broader area, whist delivering a more complex range of services (e.g. social care, education, highways, etc.).

West Norfolk councils have tended to run their enabling services as in-house functions, with some exceptions:

- HR & OD – the majority of HR functions are delivered in-house; however King's Lynn & West Norfolk have outsourced their payroll to Bedfordshire Council
- Audit – Breckland is a partner in the shared Eastern Internal Audit shared service (EIAS) that will likely be hosted by East Norfolk.

The primary benefit of moving to a three-authority model is around being able to tailor frontline services, support and wider partnerships to the very different needs of each area. However, there are some particular challenges and opportunities that West Norfolk faces in relation to providing enabling services that can support the wider organisation. As a large unitary with a broader range of services and budgets, West Norfolk is able to scale up its services to realise economies of scale, build in resilience and mitigate the risks of single points of failure.

Moving to a single unitary also poses an opportunity to realise efficiencies through streamlining senior officer posts, reducing the financial pressure on the frontline services that will benefit residents and communities.

The move to a West Norfolk unitary is an opportunity to 'reset' enabling services so that they can adopt best practice operating models that can deliver greatest value for money to the organisation and taxpayers. This would build upon some of the existing strong practices and processes that already exist in the services.

The new authority will also inherit the arm's length companies, Breckland Bridge, West Norfolk Property Limited and West Norfolk Housing Company Limited, which its enabling services may also need to support so that they can continue to thrive. It will also inherit a share of the county council's arm's length traded company, Norse Group which delivers a range of asset management and place-based services.

7.6.2 Recommended service model

West Norfolk will have a core of enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. The diagram below shows what enabling services it will run and what models will be adopted.

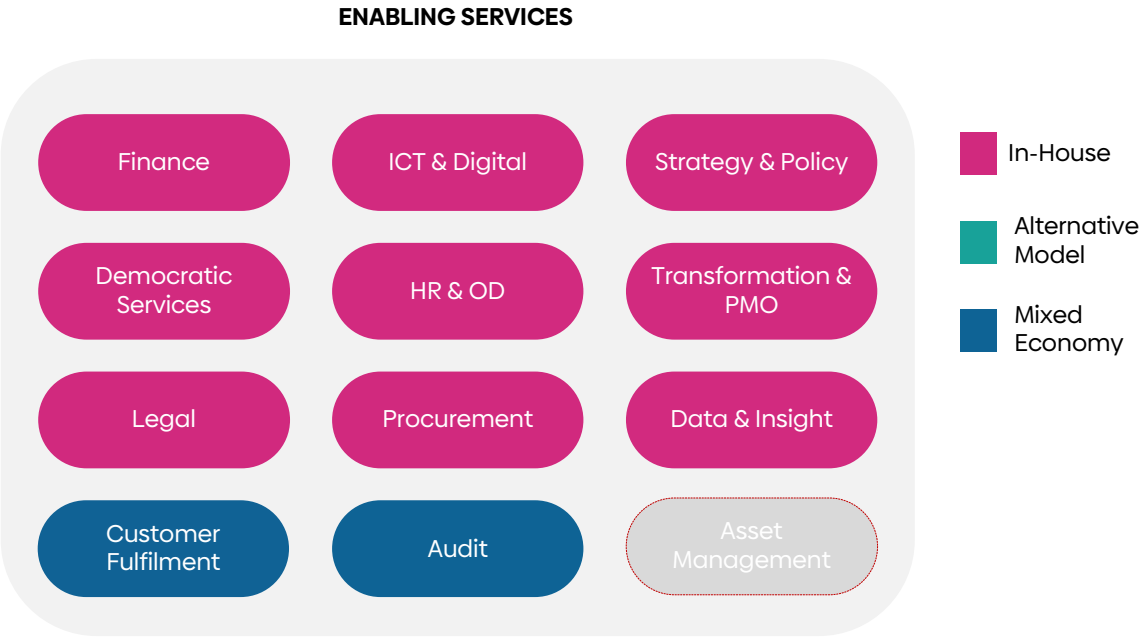


Figure 35. Functional model of Enabling Services for the unitary.

The key features of this service are summarised below.

Control and coordination	Enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. HR & OD, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke model[11] (Transformation & PMO, Data & Insight[12]) as a means of keeping control of enabling support and

[11] Hub and spoke model – there is a primary, central corporate resource but a network of smaller, distinct teams sat within other areas of the council. All teams work together and form a community of practice.

[12] This is separate to any Data & Insight function within an EI&P model – but the two would work together

	maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.
Mixed economy	Wherever possible enabling services are delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time. There are exceptions to this. For Audit the council will run a combination of in-house supplemented with the shared service but would aim to either fully participate in the EIAS shared service or bring back fully in-house. In addition, elements of customer service relating to waste collection are outsourced to Serco which will continue until the contract expires. West Norfolk would seek to bring payroll back in-house to deliver as part of a consolidated HR & OD service.
Best practice	The services would seek to continue the best practice from the existing services within councils, whilst also using the redesign of enabling functions as an opportunity to innovate.
Appropriate scale and capacity	Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a single unitary, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious transformation programme to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.
Tailored to local needs and services	Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of West Norfolk. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management of what we envisage will be a large portfolio of commercial assets.
Ability to select the best opportunities to scale up	There are further longer-term opportunities for West Norfolk to collaborate with the two other unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power. Examples of this include carrying out joint procurements and jointly funding specialist ICT roles and functions.

7.6.3 Achieving financial benefits

As one of three unitaries, West Norfolk is of the right scale to both tailor services to the unique needs and circumstances of the area but also benefit from being of a size to realise the benefits of combining the previous councils. The main financial benefits of the model would come from the following changes:

- Streamlining duplicated management structures
- Gaining economies of scale for those enabling services that currently operate on a small scale
- Removing duplication of processes and functions
- Rationalising key systems such as the multiple Enterprise Resource Planning, Finance and HR & Payroll systems used across the organisations

7.7 Place

7.7.1 Context & constraints

West Norfolk serves as a crucial gateway to the west, connecting Norfolk with the Midlands, Lincolnshire, and Cambridge through key transport corridors, rail links, and nearby airports. The area has key transport routes like the A47, A17 and A10, and rail links to Cambridge, Ely and London, with the Cambridge-Norwich Technology corridor running through it along the A11.

The region's rural nature shapes its strengths and constraints. While King's Lynn is the urban centre, smaller towns like Downham Market, Swaffham and Thetford have the potential to further develop their position as established economic and service hubs. There are many small and micro-businesses that need support to expand and create jobs, but growth is hindered by poor public transport connections, lack of dedicated spaces for small businesses, and a constrained commercial property market. The area boasts a resilient agri-food economy, defence and advanced manufacturing/engineering expertise with tourism driving the economy in the north of the proposed geography, especially around the coast.

King's Lynn is a key economic centre with a strong industrial base in manufacturing and engineering, and high growth potential in these sectors. It also hosts a major hospital which is scheduled for a significant development by 2030 and plays a vital role in

education through the College of West Anglia's partnership with Anglia Ruskin University and the dedicated school of nursing. There is significant funding aligned with King's Lynn and Thetford developments.

Environmental constraints include Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and a large MoD training ground. The Norfolk Coast National Landscape is a protected national asset, and flood risk is a significant issue. Currently across the proposed geography there are number of internal drainage boards, a unitary council would provide a strong focus and relationship with managing flood risk and better improve water manage across the area. Major growth plans include a sustainable urban extension in West Winch, Thetford and Attleborough and a new government-funded road to support development.

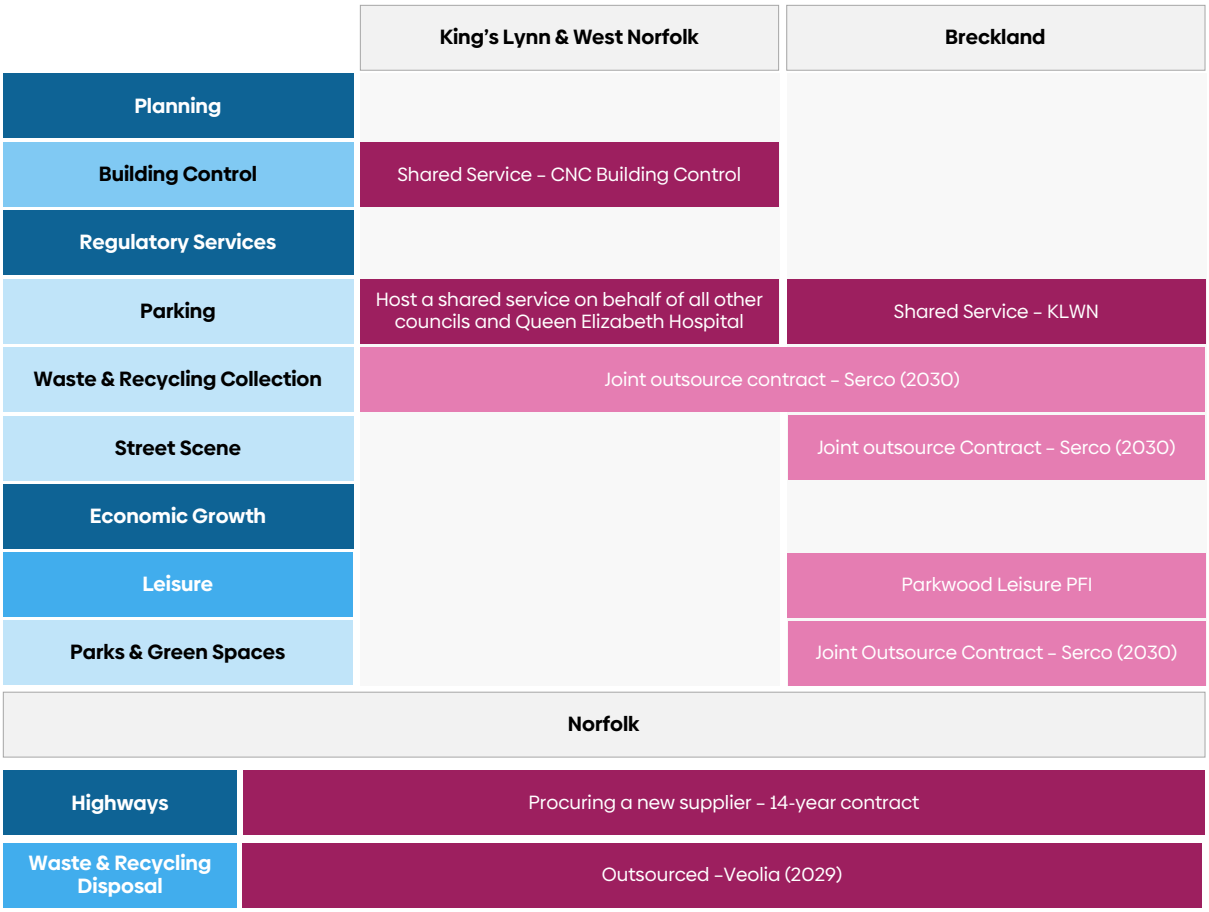


Figure 36. Current delivery models for West Norfolk councils.

The county council has also just gone out to market for a highways maintenance and professional services contract lasting 14 years. It also has a contract with Veolia for

waste transfer and disposal that runs until end of March 2029. West Norfolk is likely to take on responsibility for part of these contracts.

In addition to this mixed economy of services, West Norfolk will inherit all or a portion of the following arm's length delivery vehicles that have a role in shaping place within the area1:

- West Norfolk Property Limited – a joint venture that develops and manages private rental homes with the intention of improving the private rental sector
- West Norfolk Housing Company Limited – a registered social housing provider that rents social homes and sells shared ownership properties

These delivery vehicles have to potential to drive both economic growth and reduce pressures on affordable housing for West Norfolk.

West Norfolk would take on a range of 'place-based' services including Highways & Transport, Waste Disposal, Cultural Services, further Planning responsibilities, and Trading Standards.

Placemaking requires a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces and this will require unitaries to exercise a wide range of levers to shape places. Bringing in Highways & Transport, Cultural services, Waste Disposal and other functions will help West Norfolk coordinate these services to deliver a truly joined up approach to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community.

West Norfolk is ideally placed to take a placemaking approach that serves the rural area with a network of towns and villages, and centre of King's Lynn. It can support the region to grow by taking a tailored approach to harnessing its strengths such as its connectivity whilst overcoming barriers such as constrained commercial property markets and poor public transport. It is of a suitable size and scale to be able to tailor services at a neighbourhood level and represent efficient use of resources.

There are opportunities to realise efficiencies from streamlining management structures and rationalising systems. Increased scale will also support greater resilience for services such as Planning.

West Norfolk is in the enviable position as the current councils have already worked closely together to run a joint outsourcing exercise for Waste collection (Serco). However, there are some additional complexities that will require working through:

- Breckland has also outsourced Street Scene to the same supplier
- The joint outsourced waste collection arrangement covers part of East Norfolk also.
- A small portion of households in West Norfolk are currently served by an in-house waste collection service.

These factors will require West Norfolk to work closely with East Norfolk to carefully manage the current arrangements and any changes with suppliers. Given the long-term contractual commitment, the council will need to take a long-term approach to rationalising waste collection and disposal, and street scene services – but it can unlock further benefits from coordination of operations, rationalising depots and optimised route planning.

In addition, regulatory changes for Planning and Building Control will result in major changes for services, and some uncertainty around what responsibilities local authorities will retain, that will need to be reflected in the council's operating model.

7.7.2 Recommended delivery model

West Norfolk is best placed to serve the rural geography with a network of small towns and urban centre of King's Lynn to take a tailored approach to addressing local challenges and fostering economic growth.

The delivery model is described below, and represents a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints but enables a placemaking approach, whilst allowing West Norfolk to invest time in developing and implementing new models for Place in the longer-term.



Figure 37. Functional model of Place services within the new unitary.

The key features of the place-based service models are described below.

Placemaking[13]	The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. It should be noted that this will also require close partnership working with the Mayoral Combined Authority
Focus on West Norfolk	West Norfolk has access to all the services and serves an area with unique and distinct needs, contexts and constraints that allow it to tailor the support it provides to tackle local issues such as public transport and harness strengths such as connectivity and strong agri-business sector.

[13] Placemaking is the process of shaping public spaces and communities. It is a multifaceted approach involving collaboration and design to create spaces that a foster a deeper connection between people and their environment, leading to spaces that people want to visit, live in, and care for.

193

Mixed economy	Many services such as Planning and Economic Development will be in-house. However several services have already entered into long-term contractual arrangements so will adopt different delivery models: • Building Control – the council will have an in-house function but also inherit an existing commissioned service from CNC Building Control (that will be hosted by East Norfolk). Depending upon the regulatory changes it may seek to fully move to the shared service. • Parking – the council will continue to host and deliver the shared service that has successfully been rolled out across the other councils. • Waste collection and disposal – the council is committed to an outsourced waste collection contract until 2030 and will take on an outsourced waste disposal service that terminates March 2029. In addition, existing councils have committed to the NEWS joint venture in the long term. The new authority will aim to design a new delivery model and transition to this as these contracts end. • Street scene – one area of the council is committed to an outsourced service whereas the other runs an in-house service. The shadow authority will seek to bring together service provision when current contracts expire. • Highways - anticipated to be delivered through a mix of in-house expertise brought in from the county and the new supplier being procured. • Leisure – some is outsourced currently.
Leverage new and existing partnerships	Place will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services), shared parking services and CNC Building Control.
Long-term approach	Place will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with some of the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

This model will bring placemaking services together so that they can provide a multifaceted approach to fostering neighbourhoods. For example, poor public transport acts as a constraint to growth in the rural dispersed geography of West Norfolk. As a unitary West Norfolk will be able to develop initiatives that overcome this barrier leveraging its services and budgets relating to highways and transport (in partnership with any future Mayoral Combined Authority).

7.7.3 Achieving financial benefits

In the longer-term West Norfolk will seek to consolidate those services that are currently delivered through a range of models to benefit from economies of scale and break down service silos to join up delivery, once existing commitments and contracts have ended. This will realise greater value for money for local taxpayers and further enable a total placemaking approach for local neighbourhoods.

In the short-term the new model will allow benefits to be realised through the following means:

- Streamlining duplicated senior management structures
- Some reductions in duplication across similar functions (e.g. Planning Policy) or from joining up services (e.g. green spaces and management of highways verges)
- Harnessing economies of scale for some services (e.g. Development Management)
- Rationalising key systems for Planning, Environmental Services and other functions

In the longer-term there will be benefits from coordinating services and further reducing duplication. There may also be benefits from consolidation of assets such as depots and fleet management.

7.8 Implementation considerations

A more detailed plan for implementation can be found in Appendix H, however considerations specific to implementing the blueprints can be found below.

Workforce & Service Delivery

The operating model is rooted in neighbourhood-level service delivery, and as part of implementation the shadow unitaries will decide on the scale and size of these areas to inform the appropriate location of community buildings and development of outreach teams across rural areas to ensure residents are not isolated or excluded from service delivery.

Where West Norfolk is inheriting functions which are currently delivered in a variety of ways – change will not occur from Day One, rather the shadow and new authorities will review and consolidate arrangements as appropriate supported by a phased transformation programme to embed design new systems and unlock new ways of working.

The establishment of a new functions, and the bringing together of many others, will require a focused recruitment & retention strategy alongside investment in workforce development. For staff who are working in the new EI&P function, they will need to be trained in person-centred models of practice and be equipped with the skills they need to work across several service areas. In statutory functions, in addition to the roles of the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Director of Children's Service (DCS), consideration will need to be given to the management of shifting existing locality teams and therefore not losing local knowledge and ensuring a strategy is in place to attract and retain specialist staff. This may include ensuring there are 'grow your own' pathways within West Norfolk to grow and develop a sustainable workforce.

Partnerships

As set out across the blueprints, partnership working within and outside of West Norfolk is central to effective delivery of our ambitions. This includes continuing to deepen locality working relationships with Health to deliver Marmot Place principle ambitions, and close collaboration with voluntary sector partners to develop community connections. Strong partnerships with schools and importantly families and children and young people will ensure services are designed collaboratively as part of implementation.

Data & Technology

Technology and data will be central enablers to delivery of the new services, especially given West Norfolk's rurality. A single resident record and integrated case management will replace fragmented arrangements, allowing teams to share information and

respond to resident needs. This will include reviewing and rationalising current housing systems to enable effective case management and data sharing. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers opportunities to detect risks earlier and ease the administrative burden on frontline staff, enabling them to focus on building relationships with residents.

8. Appendix H – Implementation Plan

In this section we provide a more detailed proposal for implementation of both transitioning to three unitaries and delivering transformation and public sector reform.

8.1 Future state

For all three unitaries there will be fundamental changes to the way services are delivered, although each new council will have slightly different circumstances. The diagram below articulates some of the main changes between the present and the new unitaries.

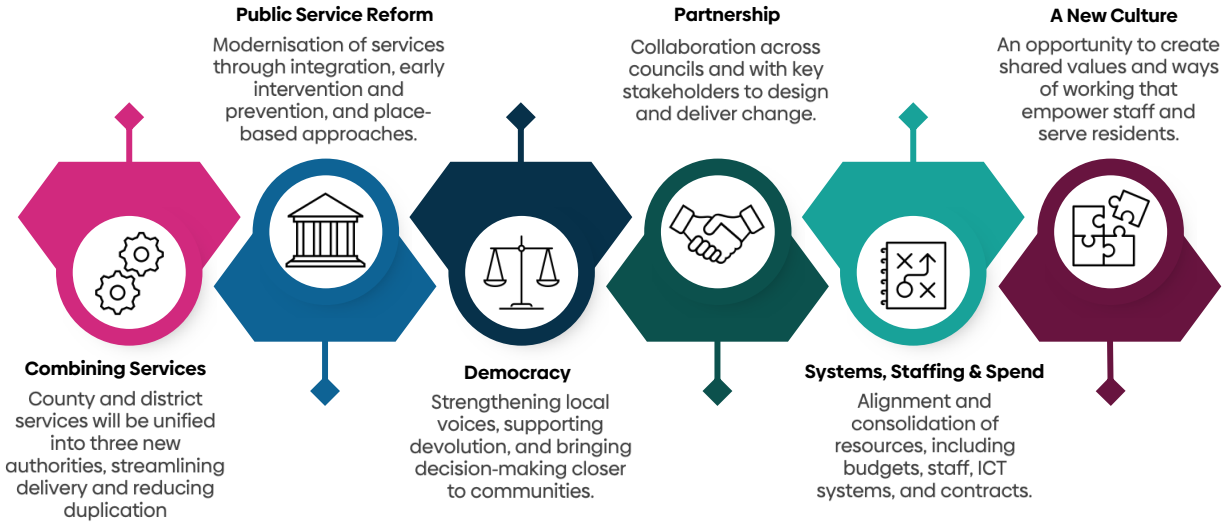


Figure 38: Key changes to service delivery

The main changes in the three unitaries model are as follows.

8.1.1 Combining services

Each new unitary will bring together both county and district services within its geography, creating a single organisation for its area that is responsible for the full range of local government functions. This means large-scale county services such as social care, education and highways will sit alongside existing district services like housing, planning and waste. At the same time, district services that are currently delivered by seven councils will be consolidated into three, ensuring simpler, more joined-up delivery and reducing duplication across boundaries.

8.1.2 Public service reform

We see LGR as a catalyst for fundamental reform of services to meet the challenges we face.

- Integration of services (e.g. Housing & Homelessness with Social Care)
- Adoption of Early Intervention & Prevention (EI&P)
- A multi-faceted approach to place whereby council services (and partners) will work together to shape places to live, work and visit (e.g. seaside resorts)

Although these changes won't necessarily be delivered from day one of the new authorities, we anticipate that the work to implement these will start on day one.

8.1.3 Democracy

The creation of three new unitaries provides a unique opportunity to strengthen local democracy in Norfolk. Each authority will provide clearer accountability, reduce fragmentation, and bring decision-making closer to residents. This will support the devolution agenda, empower local voices, and ensure councillors are able to represent their communities more effectively without the confusion of services delivered between County and District councils.

8.1.4 Partnerships

The new unitaries will be in a stronger position to work closely with local partners, including community groups, voluntary organisations, businesses, health services, and government. Each council will provide a clear, single and unified voice for its area, making it easier to agree priorities and deliver change together. By working side by side with partners, the new councils can design better services and make sure transformation reflects the needs of local people.

8.1.5 Systems, staffing and spend

The transition to three new unitaries means aligning and consolidating resources so that each new council can deliver its responsibilities. Budgets, staff, systems and contracts will need to be thoroughly mapped out and transferred to the new authorities, whilst minimising the risks to continuity of service.

It should be noted that there is the potential for the new unitaries to incur substantial redundancy costs, if the transition does not take a strategic approach. The three unitaries should seek to avoid any unnecessary redundancies through:

Recruitment freezes on any posts that are not an absolute priority (e.g. exceptions being social workers, statutory functions, key leadership roles)

Use of fixed term contracts for any posts that might be rationalised with the move to three unitary councils

Harnessing any natural turnover in those areas where there could be economies of scale and therefore reductions in posts.

8.1.6 A new culture

LGR is a chance to reset. Each unitary can shape a modern, open culture that values collaboration, empowers staff, and puts residents at the centre of everything they do. This means breaking away from the old divides between county and districts, creating a shared identity, and building a "one team" ethos across each new unitary. By setting clear values, modelling inclusive leadership, and embedding behaviours that support innovation and accountability, the new councils will be able to deliver services in a way that feels joined-up and responsive to residents. Culture will be a key enabler of transformation, shaping how staff work together, how decisions are made, and how residents experience their councils from Day One.

8.2 Implementation roadmap

Our implementation roadmap will support us to deliver the main changes through LGR. It will need to cover the key activities around workforce, systems, data, finance, democracy and engagement as part of this work.

We have scoped the programme of work using two lenses:

- **Prioritising the change** – we have set out an ambitious programme of transformation within this proposal, which aims to capitalise upon the significant opportunity which exists through LGR to fundamentally redesign local government services in Norfolk so that they meet the needs of our residents and communities for at least the next thirty years. It would be unrealistic for us to plan for the all the details of such significant change prior to the launch of the three new unitaries. However, we have broken our implementation plan into the

prioritised 'essentials' and those elements which can be delivered after vesting day.

- Alignment to the LGR timeline – our implementation will be constrained by the LGR timetable. For example, we will need to wait until a formal government announcement on the preferred option before we can deliver any of the changes required. However, we can plan to be ready on day one. Therefore, we have broken our implementation plan into phases that correspond to key events in the timetable.

8.2.1 Prioritising the change

We propose using LGR as a catalyst for systemic transformation however the scale of the task means that we won't be able to deliver everything we want for vesting day. Consequently, we need to prioritise what do now versus what we plan to deliver once the three unitaries are set up. However, our joint aspiration is to front-load as much of the transformation and public sector reform work as possible during the transition period.

Given the fundamental changes of moving from a two-tier, eight council system to a set of three unitary authorities, there is high risk of disruption to services and function that could negatively impact upon residents, communities and our staff, unless planned carefully. Our priority for vesting day has to be ensuring that the three new organisations are able to function with minimal disruption and have the foundations that will enable them to deliver transformational change that lasts. Consequently, our focus until vesting day will therefore be establishing 'safe and legal' councils with the enabling services and conditions to start delivery of ambitious portfolios of transformation.

8.2.2 Safe and legal Day One – requirements by service area

When we say 'safe and legal' we mean the essentials for each unitary to fulfil its legal duties, deliver critical services without disruption and meet obligations to staff and suppliers. The table below lays out a summary of some of the key requirements.

Requirement	*Description*	*Basis*
Corporate Governance / Statutory Officers	Key leadership roles filled (finance, legal, adult services, children's services, public health) and a clear constitution in place.	Strong leadership, accountability, and confidence

201

Requirement	Description	Basis
		in decision-making.
Finance (Budget, Council Tax, Collection Fund)	Budgets agreed, council tax set, and systems ready to collect and manage money fairly.	Financial stability and continuity of services.
Adult Social Care (ASC)	Support for older people and adults with care needs in place from day one, including advice, assessments, and safeguarding.	Protecting vulnerable adults and ensuring continuity of care.
Children's Services & SEND	Children's services leadership in place, safeguarding working, support for children with special needs, and school admissions process ready.	Safeguarding and protecting children, fair access to education.
Housing & Homelessness	Housing services live from day one – managing council homes, allocations, and homelessness support.	Supporting residents in housing need and preventing homelessness.
Regulatory / Place	Licensing, planning, and food safety systems running to protect communities and support local businesses.	Public safety.
Emergency Planning	Emergency response plans ready so the council can deal with incidents and keep residents safe.	Resilience and protection of communities.
People / Workforce (Transfers)	Staff and services transfer smoothly so residents see no disruption.	Workforce continuity and uninterrupted service delivery.
Assets, Contracts & Continuity	Council property, contracts and responsibilities securely transferred.	Smooth handover of responsibilities and service continuity.

Requirement	Description	Basis
Information Governance / Data	Data, records and information handled safely and responsibly across the new organisation.	Protecting residents' information and ensuring compliance.
Digital & Cyber Readiness	IT systems and cyber security in place so staff can work securely, and services run smoothly.	Secure and reliable systems for staff and residents.
Transitions / Controls	Any restrictions on contracts or spending carefully followed.	Good governance and financial protection.

Table 77: Requirements by service area

Part of a 'safe and legal' council is having the right data and systems in place on day one. In this regard we will prioritise executing this in as simple and straightforward way as possible given the complexity of the work to be ready for day one.

8.2.3 Laying the foundations for transformational change

We don't want to limit our ambition to 'safe and legal' unitaries. We also want to equip them to deliver portfolios of ambitious transformation from day one. Therefore, we will seek to prioritise the design and implementation of key functions and processes that will enable them to do this. We believe the foundations are as follows:

Governance mechanisms

Setting up the constitutions and officer governance mechanisms that will allow the new councils to coordinate and drive effective transformation programmes. This will require consistency and standards of governance at project, programme and portfolio level, overseen by the senior leadership team.

Frameworks and methodology

Supporting approaches, tools and processes that allow for a consistent, robust and proportionate approach to developing initiatives and delivering projects and

programmes. This will comprise a methodology, a minimum viable toolset, templates and guidance.

Stable enabling services

The new unitaries will rely on a set of enabling services to coordinate, advise and implement transformational projects – this includes HR & OD, ICT & Digital, Assets, Procurement, Transformation & PMO amongst others. It is imperative that these services are designed and launched as early as possible to avoid valuable capacity being diverted from the public reform work post-vesting day.

Fostering the right cultures and capabilities

Although culture can't be fully set until the new organisations are established, there is preparatory work that can be done with any interim leadership to start shaping the new culture and feeding in the best elements from the existing authorities.

8.2.4 Transformation

Wherever possible we will front-load the work to design transformational change during the transition period. This will allow us to hit the ground running come vesting day by having the foundations in place to consult and implement public sector reform changes that will deliver the benefits.

Some specific areas of focus will be:

- Development of Early Intervention & Prevention models for each new unitary
- Starting the work to develop and review options for waste & recycling collections and disposal service models, to be implemented once existing contracts expire
- Detailed design and preparation of enabling services that will support the wider unitaries in the delivery of services and adapting to new challenges

8.2.5 Alignment to the LGR timeline

We have linked the phases in our implementation plan to the key milestones of the wider LGR timeline, as these will dictate what we are able to carry out. We have broken our plan into four phases:

- **Phase 1 – Preparation & Mobilisation** – the period leading up to your decision on the LGR option to be taken forward in Norfolk. The focus is this phase will be

'getting our house in order', laying the groundwork so we can move at pace once the decision is announced – mapping the governance, establishing baselines, identifying Day 1 requirements, cleansing data, and engaging with key stakeholders.

- Phase 2 – Design & Planning - once there is a mandate to proceed, we will move into detailed design and planning. This will involve mobilising the PMO, joint committee, and workstream teams, developing target operating models, aligning systems, contracts and assets, preparing the workforce for change, and working with partners, anchor institutions, and residents to shape services.
- Phase 3 – Transition - as set out in the SCO, either Shadow Authorities (typically formed via elections) or Implementation Executives (appointed from predecessor councils) will be established. At their first meetings, the bodies will appoint a Leader and Executive, and take over responsibility for the implementation plan, budget-setting, council tax, staffing structures, and finalising the new councils' constitutions. The priority here will be to ensure we have completed the transition to three unitaries that are able to deliver statutory services on day one. This includes setting up the foundational enabling services and processes that will support the organisations to grow and transform, such as the Programme Management Office and Data & Insight functions. Capacity permitting, we will also aim to deliver some of the transformational change that will realise the benefits set out in the wider business case.
- Phase 4 – Day 1 onwards - the new unitaries are live. With the foundations in place to ensure that all services can be delivered safely and legally, each authority will be positioned to deliver a portfolio of transformation to realise the full benefits set out in the proposal

A more detailed roadmap with key activities for each phase is set out in section 8.2.7.

8.2.6 Implementation governance

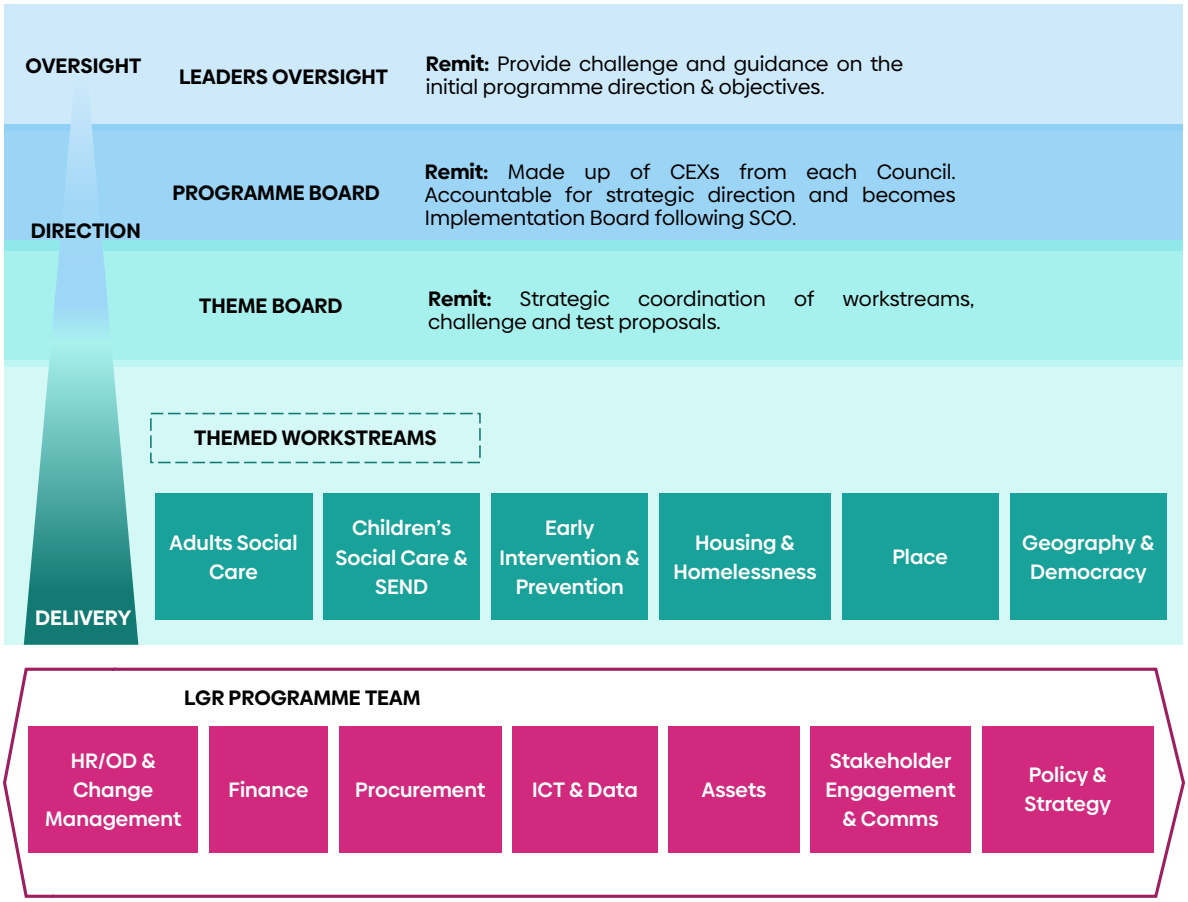


Figure 39: Governance structure

A strong, coherent governance framework will underpin the implementation of the three unitary authorities. Our approach ensures political oversight, strategic leadership, and operational delivery are aligned, with clear roles and responsibilities at each level. Governance will build upon the joint working approach established during the business case development, becoming progressively more formalised through mobilisation, design, and ultimately the Shadow Authority period.

At the top level, a Leaders Oversight Board will provide collective political challenge, direction, and assurance on the programme's overall objectives. Alongside this, a Programme Board, comprised of all current Chief Executives, will hold responsibility for strategic alignment, risk management, and oversight of interdependencies across organisations. Once the SCO takes effect, this body will formally transition into the Implementation Board / Joint Committee, accountable for driving delivery up to the formation of the Shadow Authorities.
206

Beneath this, Theme Boards will coordinate the work of enabling and service workstreams, testing and challenging proposals, managing cross-cutting issues, and sequencing activity to ensure continuity for residents and businesses. Delivery will be driven by a series of Themed Workstreams, bringing together senior officers from across councils to develop Target Operating Models (TOMs), plan the aggregation and disaggregation of services, and secure the safe transfer of functions for Day One.

Once the Shadow Authorities are established, they will take on formal responsibility for the programme, including setting budgets, approving constitutions, and overseeing delivery against Day One priorities.

This governance framework will be supported by a dedicated programme team (PMO), providing coordination, reporting, and assurance across the tiers of governance, with appropriate scrutiny and audit mechanisms in place to ensure transparency and accountability throughout.

8.2.7 Detailed roadmap

A detailed roadmap, broken down into each of the four phases is set out below.

8.2.8 Phase 1 – Preparation (Pre-announcement groundwork)

Learning from other local government reorganisations, we know that getting as much of the groundwork done as early as possible is key to being able to move forward efficiently once your decision is made. This early work helps avoid delays later, ensures our plans are based on accurate and complete information, and creates opportunities for teams from across all councils to collaborate, build trust, and work jointly on shaping the transition. By putting strong foundations in place early, building understanding across councils, securing essential baseline information, and setting up the required structures and resources, we can move forward efficiently and with confidence one the decision is made.

Key Activities

Establish Programme Governance

- Agree early governance principles and the intended structure for the future PMO and service workstreams.
- Identify potential officer and member leads for each workstream, including cross-cutting areas such as finance, data, legal, and procurement, to guide later appointments.

Build a Robust Baseline

- Expand on the data gathered in the business case, covering service structures, budgets, statutory duties, key contracts, reserves, debt, assets, ICT systems, workforce profiles, vacancies, and skills gaps.
- Identify missing or inconsistent data that must be addressed before design work begins.

Neighbourhood Consultation

Run consultations on area committees and local democratic structures that have been set out as part of this LGR proposal. We would engage the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) at the earliest opportunity to agree a timeline for review of these. We anticipate that LGBCE will want to carry out a high-level review in advance of elections, then a full review during the first term of the new authorities

Legacy Arrangements

- Compile an initial inventory of council-owned arms-length organisations (ALOs), subsidiaries, and joint ventures.
- Map legacy assets, including properties, ICT systems, heritage assets, and other holdings not expected to transfer.
- Begin high-level review of legacy reserves, debts, and liabilities.
- Identify statutory, contractual, or governance obligations that may require early planning for closure or transfer.

Day 1 Requirements Framework

Draft a long list of what must be in place for the new authority to be safe, legal, and operational on Vesting Day. Highlight areas that present high complexity or risk so they can be prioritised in the next phase.

Data and Systems Readiness

- Audit critical datasets such as finance, HR, property, and contracts to understand current quality and compatibility. Where quick fixes are possible, begin cleansing data.
- Map out existing systems architecture
- Document known issues (e.g. non-compatible systems, missing data fields) so they can be addressed early in the design phase.
- Agree some key principles and a broad strategy for how systems (and supported processes) will be selected, how data will be migrated, and staff trained in how to use them.
- Identify those systems that are business critical for the council such as social care, finance, payroll, and web
- Begin the discussion amongst services around the preferred systems and processes to adopt in the new unitaries on day 1 – with the principle that an existing one will be used wherever possible

Resource and Capacity Planning

- Identify the resources needed to deliver the Implementation Plan while maintaining business-as-usual, using this to determine where additional capacity is required through external expertise, officer secondments, and backfilling. We have set out an indicative programme team in the sections below.
- We have assumed that given the magnitude of the change we will need external support. We will spend time assessing what external support will be required and how this will be procured with appropriate lead-in times.

Funding

Secure the funding required for the transition and transformation, based upon the detailed resource and capacity planning work.

Community Engagement

Develop a clear plan for engagement during the design phase with anchor institutions, key partners, businesses, residents, staff, and trade unions. This plan will guide how we gather input, co-develop services, and maintain clear communications throughout the transition.

Risks & Mitigations

Review risks identified in the business case and refine them with input from across the existing councils. Begin putting early mitigations in place where practical.

Detailed Programme & Governance arrangements

- Develop a detailed programme plan.
- Map the structure for Joint Committee and implementation team

Ongoing liaison with government

Maintain active dialogue with Government on matters such as debt, funding stability, capacity support, and opportunities to unlock devolution powers.

8.2.9 Phase 2 – Mobilisation (Post-announcement, Pre-Structural Changes Order)

The Mobilisation Phase begins once the Government announces its decision on the future structure of local government for Norfolk. At this stage, the focus will shift from informal preparation to actively putting in place the early governance, resourcing, and planning arrangements needed to be ready for the Structural Changes Order (SCO) coming into force.

This phase builds on the groundwork from Phase 1, using the draft Implementation Plan to stand up initial governance structures, confirm the resources required, and start coordinated cross-council work so that the transition programme can move at pace once the SCO takes effect.

Key Activities:

Formalise Governance Foundations

- Begin forming the Joint Committees ahead of them being formally required by the SCO. Agree their draft terms of reference and early priorities, including oversight of transitional planning.
- Map council officers to the roles set out in Phase 1 for the implementation team and workstreams.

Mobilise Programme Management Arrangements

- Stand up the interim PMO capacity to coordinate activity across councils, supported by officers seconded from each authority.
- Ensure there is clear political and executive oversight through a Leaders' Oversight Group or equivalent.

Confirm and Refine Baseline Information

Use this period to improve the quality and completeness of service, finance, asset, and workforce data gathered in Phase 1. This will help reduce delays later and support early design activity.

Legacy Arrangements

- Conduct due diligence on Arm's Length Organisations (ALOs), including financial health, contractual obligations, and legal structures.
- Begin engagement with ALO boards and leadership to assess preferred transition or closure options.
- Further refine the asset inventory and legacy reserves position, closing data gaps identified in Phase 1.
- Identify any "time critical" contractual or statutory obligations that will require early action before SCO comes into force.

Begin Joint Working

Convene officer groups aligned to priority enabling workstreams (e.g. finance, legal/governance, HR/OD, ICT/data, assets, procurement/contracts, service delivery). Focus initially on information sharing, identifying dependencies, and mapping early actions required on or before Vesting Day.

Develop Change Management Plan

- Develop comprehensive change management plans covering communication, engagement, and staff wellbeing.
- Identify staff groups and services most impacted by the reorganisation and agree guiding principles for supporting staff through change, in partnership with unions and HR leads.
- Map out timelines for engagement, training, and transition activities.

Organisational Design

Refine and build upon the high-level 'blueprints' for the three unitaries set out within the proposal through design and consultation exercises with staff and union representatives to shape the detailed Target Operating Models (TOMs) for each authority.

Data and systems

1. Agree the processes and systems that will be used on day one for each service or function
2. Develop systems architecture for the new authorities that incorporates chosen systems
3. Plan the procurement / configuration / migration to the new systems
4. Negotiate any changes in terms with existing system suppliers

Day 1 Readiness Planning

Refine the "safe and legal" Day 1 requirements, mapping them to their appropriate workstreams.

Identify which activities can be progressed pre-SCO (e.g. contract reviews, ICT compatibility assessments) and those that must wait.

Resource and Capacity Confirmation

- Finalise the resource plan to deliver the Implementation Plan alongside maintaining business-as-usual.
- Begin securing additional capacity, including secondment of officers from predecessor councils, procurement of external expertise, and backfilling critical posts.

Stakeholder Engagement

Building on the engagement planning in Phase 1, begin engagement with residents, anchor institutions, staff, and key partners to collaboratively shape and co-develop the future service models, ensuring their insights directly inform the detailed design work.

8.2.10 Phase 2.5 – Design (Post-Structural Changes Order, Pre-Shadow Authority)

The design phase begins once the SCO comes into force. At this stage, statutory governance arrangements are formally established, including the Joint Committees, Implementation Teams, and service workstreams, to lead the programme through the Shadow Authority period and prepare for Vesting Day.

This phase builds on the mobilisation work from Phase 2, moving from early coordination to detailed design and planning. The focus is on finalising the SCO-compliant Implementation Plans, developing detailed Target Operating Models for each new authority, and putting in place the structures, resourcing, and change management approaches needed for delivery in the Shadow period.

Key Activities

Standup Governance and Workstreams

- Establish the Joint Committees and Implementation Teams in line with SCO requirements, ensuring clarity of remit, membership, and reporting lines.
- Confirm workstream leads and membership based on the mapping work from Phase 2, including cross-cutting functions such as finance, legal, procurement, ICT, and HR.

Mobilise the full PMOs

- Transition from interim arrangements into the formal PMOs, with clear roles for monitoring delivery, managing interdependencies, and reporting to the Joint Committees.
- Embed robust programme governance and decision-making processes to drive pace and maintain oversight.

Refine and Finalise the Implementation Plan

Develop the outline plans from earlier phases into fully detailed, SCO-compliant Implementation Plans. This should include sequencing and dependencies for key transition tasks such as contract transfers, ICT/data migration, budget setting, and drafting the new constitution, ensuring these are ready to implement in Phase 3.

Legacy Arrangements

- Agree the approach for each ALO (transfer, merge, dissolve, or retain) and map the legal/financial steps required.
- Prepare asset transfer or disposal plans for properties not moving to the new authorities.
- Develop detailed financial closure plans for legacy reserves and liabilities.
- Ensure all legacy contractual obligations are logged, with responsibility for their transfer, novation, or termination clearly assigned in the Implementation Plan.

Implement Change Management Plans

- Begin delivering change management activities, including regular briefings, drop-in sessions, and targeted engagement with affected teams.
- Launch early training and development to prepare staff for new roles and structures.
- Provide wellbeing and support measures, including access to HR and counselling services where appropriate.
- Monitor and respond to morale, retention, and recruitment risks as changes are developed.

Detailed Organisational Design

- Progress from high-level blueprints into fully costed, detailed TOMs for each service, mapping service interdependencies and confirming the resource needed to support them.
- Begin detailed planning for safe and legal Day 1 arrangements (final delivery in Phase 3).
- This includes development of long-term service models for waste collection & disposal and street scene services where a long lead-in time will be required to transition to new arrangements.

Resource and Capacity Deployment

Deploy seconded officers and any procured external expertise secured in Phase 2 to workstreams.

8.2.11 Phase 3 – Transition (Shadow Authority to Vesting Day)

The Transition Phase begins once the Shadow Authorities are in place. This is the most intensive delivery period, focused on completing all activities required to ensure the new unitaries are safe, legal, and operational on Vesting Day.

During this phase, the Implementation Plans will move into full execution. Governance structures, staffing, systems, contracts, and statutory services are transferred, tested, and readied for Day 1 operation. At the same time, foundational enabling services are embedded, and any early transformation projects identified in earlier phases are progressed where capacity allows.

Key Activities

Transfer of governance to Shadow Authorities / Implementation Executives
Transition programme oversight to the Shadow Authority Executives or Implementation Executives in line with SCO requirements. Maintain clear decision-making processes to approve policies, budgets, and key service arrangements ahead of Vesting Day.

Deliver Implementation Plan

- Progress all workstream activities to ensure safe and legal operations from Day 1.
- Oversee the legal transfer of property, rights, liabilities, and contracts to the new councils.
- Complete the recruitment and appointment of statutory officers, senior leadership teams, and other key roles.

Recruitment of Statutory Officers
Appoint the Chief Executives, Monitoring Officers, Section 151 Officers, and any other statutory posts set out in the SCO.

Finalise Target Operating Models (TOMs)

- Complete detailed service design, organisational structures, and staffing allocations.
- Ensure interdependencies between services are fully addressed.
- Sign-off final TOMs through Shadow Authority governance.

Systems, Data, and ICT Readiness

- Implement and test ICT systems for Day 1 operation.
- Complete data migration and validation to ensure accuracy and accessibility.
- Put in place interim workarounds where full integration will follow post-Vesting Day.

Contracts, Procurement, and Assets

- Transfer or novate contracts to the new authorities.
- Align procurement processes and priorities.
- Confirm operational readiness of property and other physical assets.

Legacy Arrangements

- Implement agreed actions for ALOs, including legal steps for closure or transfer.
- Execute property transfers or disposals according to agreed plans.
- Complete financial closure activities, including finalising reserves and settling outstanding debts.
- Close or novate all contractual arrangements as required for Vesting Day readiness.
- Ensure all statutory and civic obligations of predecessor councils are fulfilled before dissolution.

Change Management and Workforce Transition

- Communicate confirmed TOMs, structures, and role allocations to staff.
- Deliver training, induction, and team building for staff moving into new roles.
- Continue wellbeing and engagement activity to support morale and retention.

Testing of Day 1 Assurance

- Carry out readiness reviews and service-level testing to ensure all critical functions are in place.
- Agree and sign off Day 1 Assurance Reports for each workstream.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- Prepare and deliver communications to residents, partners, and stakeholders outlining what to expect on Vesting Day.
- Engage key partners in any changes to service access or delivery arrangements.

Elections
Prepare to hold elections for new councillors, based upon the wards and representation arrangements that have been set out as part of the SCOs.

8.2.12 Phase 4 – Day One onwards

From Vesting Day, the new unitary authorities take full responsibility for all services, assets, staff, and statutory duties. The initial focus is on stabilising service delivery, embedding the new operating models, and maintaining public confidence, while also beginning the transformation programmes that deliver the benefits set out in the business case.

Key Activities

Legal Closure of Predecessor Councils
Finalise the dissolution of county, district, borough and city councils, including preparing final accounts, completing audits, and concluding statutory reporting.

Stabilise Service Delivery
Monitor all frontline services closely, enforce contingency plans where necessary, and fix teething problems that may arise immediately after go-live.
This is particularly important for social care as these need to be stable to avoid compromising safeguarding duties before any transformation can be delivered in these services.

Begin Implementing New TOMs
Implement new operating models in phases, starting with critical services and enablers, to ensure stability while unlocking efficiencies.

Transformation and Benefits Realisation Programme
Launch a structured transformation programme designed to deliver the long-term benefits projected in the business case.

Financial Consolidation & Sustainability
Realign budgets to the new structures, implement efficiencies, and systematically track cost savings against targets.

Cultural Integration

The new unitaries will not exist until vesting day, therefore this is the earliest point at which a new culture and values of the organisations can be set and instilled. However, as part of the transition, design and consultation there will be an opportunity to set expectations of what the culture and values of the new unitaries will be. This work will need to be done with the people who will be moving to the new organisations. Most of the councils will already have values and behaviours in place so this work needs to recognise that.

Enhanced Communications & Public Engagement

Maintain proactive engagement with communities, reinforcing clarity about transformations and service improvements, and preserving local democratic legitimacy.

Carry out reviews with Boundary Commission

Given the timescales associated with a review (up to 1½ years) we will engage the Boundary Commission early on to agree when these should take place. Further detail on the process and timelines for boundary reviews is set out in the Boundary Commission review guidance[14].

8.2.13 Resourcing and team

To enable the governance structure, a dedicate programme team will be set up for each unitary which will provide the full range of programme management and support. The teams will comprise the following expertise, as full-time roles:

- Programme Manager – a programme manager to plan, coordinate and manage the transition to a new unitary
- Workforce / HR & OD – an expert to shape the workforce plan and coordinate its delivery
- Finance – to support the work of attributing council budgets, external funding streams, liabilities, assets and debt to the new unitaries
- Procurement – review of existing contracts to identify where they will novate or where they should be decommissioned or reprocured, advice of any negotiations with suppliers and contract variations

[14] Electoral Reviews: Technical Guidance, The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Updated June 2023):
218

- ICT & Data – coordination and advice on the data and systems work that will be required to safely move to a new unitary
- Assets – assistance with attributing assets to the new authority and understanding commercial, legal, compliance, and maintenance issues
- Legal – support with all legal aspects of LGR
- Communications – coordination of a comms and engagement programme to support the transition

We will second existing staff from the councils to form these teams and backfill their substantive posts. This will allow us to leverage the corporate knowledge and relationships that exist. There also needs to be key people back in the organisations who will feed this team with intel etc. otherwise BAU will use all the resource and make it difficult for this team to work.

These teams will need to have the capacity to support whole organisation design, engagement and implementation, which should not be underestimated. For reference, the most recent 'One Team' initiative delivered by Broadland and South Norfolk required a team of 20 officers to deliver the changes.

For this reason, we have assumed that each group of councils and unitary / shadow authority will require the support of a transformation partner or allocate a substantial budget to secure temporary external support. The scoping and procurement of such partners has been built into the implementation plan above.

9. Appendix I – RAID Log

A full risk, assumptions, issues and dependency log based upon engagement across organisations is set out below. It sets out the following:

- Type – whether it is a risk, issue, assumption or dependency
- Description – what it is and the implications
- Rating – how important it might be
- Mitigation – any activities that could help reduce a negative impact upon LGR

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Risk	**Knowledge retention**: the high levels of organisational change and uncertainty impacts upon staff morale resulting in the loss of key officers who have been with councils a long time and consequently deep institutional knowledge	M	Thorough communications and engagement plan with workforce.
Risk	**Payroll:** Ensuring all staff in the new authorities are paid accurately and on time from the first payroll, Changes to payroll systems and migration of data risk errors and therefore employees not being paid.	H	Thorough data migration and testing in advance of first payroll after vesting day.
Risk	**Employment law:** The single biggest changes to employment law in a number of years. All HR teams pre the new unitaries will need to be working on and implementing the changes in their respective councils, as well as the new unitaries	M	To be owned by the designated HR reps within the Transition enabling team.

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	needing to ensure that they are compliant with the new legislation.		
Risk	**Culture:** High levels of change and disruption combined with forming new groups of workforce results in loss of the strong cultures built up by authorities.	M	Programme of culture change to be run as part of the transition, with shadow council leadership to own.
Risk	**Management capability & capacity:** Some managers may lack the capabilities and/or capacity to lead on the changes that are required to move to a three unitary model, leading to additional strain on HR functions, delays in implementation and reduced success	M	Assessment of manager capabilities in advance of government decision to aid in detailed transition planning.
Risk	**Workforce allocation:** Complexities in splitting shared staff and services (e.g., Section 113 agreements, externally funded posts) could lead to inaccurate allocation of staff, and consequent under-resourcing leading to operational and financial issues	H	Thorough establishment data cleansing exercise and JDs for all relevant posts to be carried out prior to government announcement in April.
Risk	**HR Capacity:** HR functions do not have the capacity to support the organisation with key activities required to successfully implement the	M	Second HR reps from current teams to provide dedicated capacity, and backfill vacant posts with fixed term contracts.

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	transformation (i.e. workforce analysis, staff consultation and engagement, organisational development).		
Risk	**HR stress:** HR teams will face increased workloads managing both organizational transformation and their own restructuring, leading to staff burnout and reduced effectiveness, and retention and recruitment issues	M	See above
Risk	**HR retention:** Uncertainties for staff cause loss of HR officers, leading to reduced capacity and therefore disruption to both implementation and operations during the transition	M	HR reps in transition enabling team to own this risk.
Risk	**Workforce alignment:** Multiple sets of terms, policies, and redundancy multipliers across councils complicate harmonization and cost calculations, increasing the risk of errors and unforeseen costs.	M	Approach to handling T&Cs to be developed by the HR lead (s) within the transition enabling teams.
Risk	**Union engagement:** the variety of different unions that will need to be engaged and consulted with around the LGR proposals could result in inconsistent or	H	Programme of comms & engagement will build in an approach to union engagement. The HR reps within transition enabling teams to feed into this.

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	conflicting approaches therefore undermining credibility and overall workforce relations.		
Risk	**Guidance clarity:** Lack of up-to-date government guidance on redundancy and TUPE principles leads to unforeseen changes in timescales, resources and costs	M	Use of the most recent MHCLG guidance as a backstop. Ongoing dialogue with the MHCLG regional representative.
Risk	**Workforce data:** Different HR and payroll systems, and inaccuracies/gaps in workforce data hinder effective planning and implementation	M	Thorough establishment data cleansing exercise in advance of Government decision.
Risk	**Asset data:** Incomplete or inaccurate baseline data risks comparing inconsistent approach to assets and incorrect decisions over transfer and planning	M	Thorough asset data gathering / cleansing exercise prior to government announcement.
Risk	**Evolving Asset Portfolios:** Ongoing asset disposals, acquisitions, and portfolio changes by councils before LGR could result in a moving target for asset allocation and planning, complicating the split across new unitaries.	L	Asset rep within the transition enabling team to own this risk.
Risk	**Unexpected liabilities:** in transferring assets new authorities might find that there isn't adequate budget provision for asset	M	Asset rep within transition enabling team to own this risk.

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	maintenance, leading to unexpected financial commitments or pressures.		
Risk	**Asset System and Data Migration:** Different councils use various asset management and GIS systems, which may pose challenges for integration, data quality, and migration in the new unitary structure.	H	Asset rep within transition enabling team to own this risk.
Risk	**Changes in applications:** councils will need to replace some systems as they become unsupported which may make it difficult to plan any consolidation of applications	M	Exercise to map out systems and contract end dates, involving services, ICT and Procurement reps in the transition enabling team.
Risk	**Data migration:** identifying data across multiple systems and assigning it to the right unitary authority may be difficult and inaccuracies could lead to loss of service or data breaches	H	Data cleansing and mapping exercise across all systems.
Risk	**Planning policy:** Changes in Planning could cause disruption to services and uncertainty in the market – leading to a slowdown in development and associated economic growth including missed housing targets	L	Ongoing monitoring of policy developments.
Risk	**Waste contracts:** Current long-term waste collection	H	Formation of working groups to develop detailed

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	contracts will constrain councils from either making changes to align with LGR changes or prevent extension to give adequate time to plan a long-term solution.		interim plan and longer-term strategy as soon as possible.
Risk	**Collaboration of waste:** New authorities are unable to reach any agreement on managing waste collection in the short-term resulting in potential inconsistent services, disruptions or substantial additional costs for services	M	See above.
Risk	**Social care system**: three new systems will need to be set up. The provider(s) may not be able to implement it in time for vesting day	M	To be addressed once government decision is announced.
Risk	**Social care data disaggregation:** service user data will need to be split across the unitary areas. This will be sensitive data so inaccuracies or errors in the process could result in service disruption, breaches of confidentiality, or risks to safeguarding.	M	Provisional approach to data management to be developed by the ICT rep within the transition enabling team.
Risk	**Social care service migration:** the transition to the unitaries may disrupt key safeguarding services and therefore critical cases may	H	Approach to prioritise 'safe and legal' services as part of transition.

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	be missed or interventions delayed leading to risk for service users		
Risk	**Social care workforce:** the disruption combined with a national workforce shortage may prevent the unitaries recruiting to social care roles including statutory roles	M	Targeted communications and engagement to social workers about changes.
Risk	**Changes locality teams:** boundary changes will require locality team geographies to change, leading to potential disruption	M	To be addressed as part of any planning and design work post-government announcement.
Risk	**Telecare:** current service commissioned at a county-wide level. It will need to be transferred to the three unitaries	M	To be addressed as part of contracts and commissioning work during transition.
Risk	**Electoral boundaries**: The changes will require additional work and consultation	M	We have developed a proposal that is compliant with Boundary Commission criteria to help expedite this work
Risk	**EI&P culture**: the workforce finds it difficult to adopt the mindset and way of working to support an EI&P approach therefore reducing its impact and associated benefits	M	This should form part of both the design approach and cultural change work during transition.
Risk	Legislation around family hubs and NHS reform is not aligned with any EI&P so it undermines it or	H	Role of Public Health will be integrated in the EI&P model

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
	opportunities to join up services are missed		
Risk	**EI&P data sharing**: EI&P requires multi-agency data sharing and if the barriers are not addressed then it may delay or reduce integrated working and impact	H	To be addressed as prt of the design approach during transition. Will require input from the ICT lead within enabling teams.
Risk	**Financial priorities**: pressures discourage the new unitaries from investing in EI&P (which isn't statutory) and therefore benefits aren't realised	H	Secure buy-in from shadow authority leadership from the outset
Risk	**Capacity**: The work to both deliver the transition and transformation will be too much for the unitaries to accomplish in time to be ready for vesting day	H	We have budgeted for external support to be delivered throughout the transition period and beyond to provide additional capacity
Risk	Misalignment between pre-cepting and non-precepting neighbourhood structures may create democratic imbalance or perceptions of unfairness. A solution must be identified during community engagement and implementation phases.	H	Targeted engagement strategies and governance design workshops to align structures and ensure smooth implementation.
Issue	**NHS boundaries:** NHS boundaries do not align with new unitaries. We will need to develop a suitable way of working together to overcome this. This is potentially a bigger issue in the East.	M	Ongoing dialogue with NHS partners.

227

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Dependency	Implementation of EI&P model will be dependent upon Adults and Children's Social Care being set up, stable, and 'safe and legal' before any elements of these can be incorporated into the model	H	Ongoing monitoring of social care services during transition and immediately after vesting day.
Dependency	**Integration with finance:** any social care system will include a financial management component which will need to integrate with the corporate ERP / finance system	L	To be addressed as part of ICT and social care transition planning.
Dependency	A radical EI&P approach will require full backing of the incoming CEX, DAS, DCS and councillors	H	Incorporate as part of any advertisement and recruitment for shadow authority posts.
Dependency	The devolution deal and new Mayoral Combined Authority will influence the design and role for each unitary, in particular around economic development, transport and housing	H	Ongoing dialogue with government and subsequent MCA.

Table 78: RAID log

10. Appendix J: Overarching Design Principles

To inform the development of the blueprints for each new unitary (as seen in Appendices E-G), Leaders and Chief Executives of the district councils agreed to the following design principles.

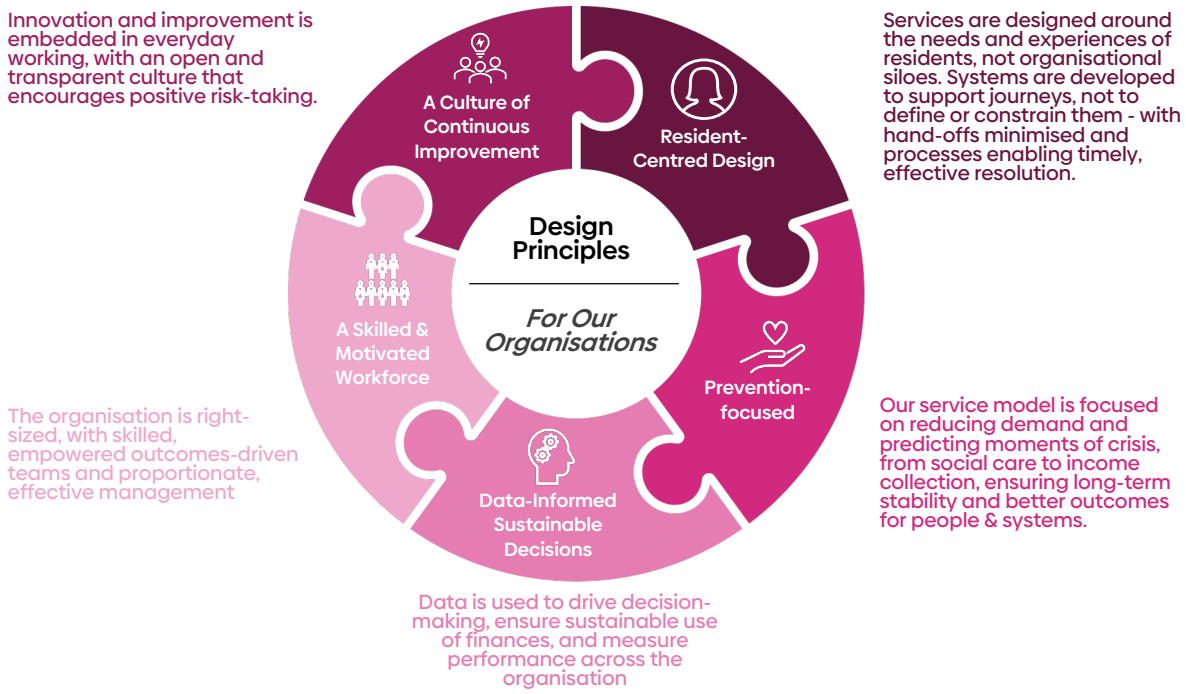


Figure 40: Design principles for our organisations

Design Principles | *With Our Residents*



Right Support at the Right Time in the Right Place

Services are provided locally to residents in a way that is proportionate to individual need, reducing long-term demand for services.

Tell Us Once Service Model

Residents share information once and receive coordinated support through a single data view shared cross services.

Enabling Not Duplicating

Support focuses on enabling and empowering residents and communities, rather than providing unnecessary layers of support or repeated interventions.

Experts in Their Own Lives

People are actively engaged in shaping their support and the direction of services that impact them .

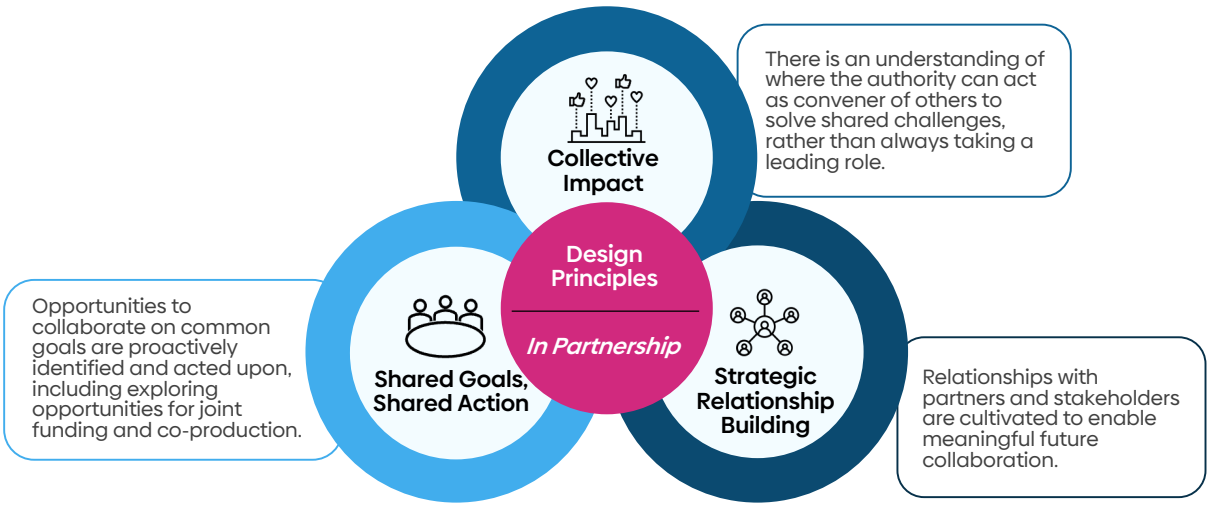


Figure 41: Design principles for our residents