Agenda Item No 13

Executive Board

24 November 2025

Report of the Chief Executive

English Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

1 Summary

1.1 Members are asked to recommend for Council's approval this Council's submission to the Government following the formal invitation for proposals for local government reorganisation.

Recommendation to the Council

a) North Warwickshire Borough Council supports the two-unitary proposal for future local government within Warwickshire made up as follows:

- **North Warwickshire Unitary – based on the current borough council boundaries of North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council and Rugby Borough Council;**
- **South Warwickshire Unitary – based in the current district council boundaries of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council.**

b) That the Deloitte business case at Appendix 9, be approved as the Council's formal response for proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Warwickshire, subject to any amendments;

c) That the Council advises Government that in the event of a decision to support a single unitary Council for Warwickshire, the County Council should not be granted continuing authority status; and

d) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be given delegated powers to make any necessary amendments to the Interim Plan ahead of submission to Government.

2 Background

2.1 On 16th December last year, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper . Whilst the main focus of the White Paper is how the Government was planning to devolve powers to Strategic Authorities, the White Paper identified that Government wished to ensure that all remaining two tier local authority areas be replaced by unitary Councils. There are currently 21 two tier areas remaining which include a total of 164 District/Borough Councils, all of these authorities will be replaced with unitary authorities.

2.2 Initially Coventry and Solihull were involved in the discussions with regard to Warwickshire local government reorganisation however the formal invitation from Government on the 5th February 2025 only invited proposals from the Councils in Warwickshire. The letter, **Appendix 1**, requested proposals for reorganisation in line with six criteria which would be used in determining the most appropriate local government structures for our area, these being:

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
4. 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.
5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

2.3 This letter also required an interim plan to be submitted by 21 March 2025. This was approved by this Council on 17th March 2025 and identified that there were two viable options for the future structure of local government within Warwickshire. These being:

- A single unitary Warwickshire – based on the current County Council boundary;
- A two unitary Warwickshire, made up as follows:
  - North Warwickshire – based on the current borough council boundaries of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby;
  - South Warwickshire – based in the current district council boundaries of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick.

2.4 The interim plan set out that the District and Borough Councils would undertake further analysis on those two options and undertake engagement with stakeholders and residents.

2.5 Further independent analysis was undertaken by Deloitte and Peopletoo which explored each of the six Government criterion and concluded on the

basis of this interim analysis that the two unitary option performed better again those criertion.

2.6 In July 2025 this Board considered the further analysis and resolved, amongst other things, a preference for two unitary Councils for Warwickshire:

a. That the Delotte report assessing each option against the Government's criteria, the Peopletoo report on Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care options, the Government's response to the Council's Interim Plan and the letter from the West Midlands Combined Authority regarding Warwickshire's Strategic Authority options be noted;

b. That the preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation, including the Strategic Authority options, is Option 2 – two-unitary model, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report of the Chief Executive;

c. That Option 2 will be the subject of public and stakeholder consultation as set out in the report of the Chief Executive; and d That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and other Group Leaders, be given delegated authority to take such further steps in the preparation of the final submission to Government as are necessary.

2.7 Following this, additional research and engagement has been undertaken to help inform the final submission by this Council. This work covers four main areas as follows:

- **Engagement and Consultation on Reorganisation** – a requirement from government identified in the original invitation letter is to engage with the public, businesses and other prescribed stakeholders.
- **Peopletoo** – the interim plan identified that the desegregation of Countywide services would need to be addressed in the submission document. Peopletoo, an independent consultation organisation who advise upper tier authorities, were commissioned to consider this issue.
- **DCN** – research by the District Council's Network in relation to whether the great size of unitary authorities leads to lower cost and high performance.
- **Deloitte** – following the initial appraisal of options, Deloitte's were recommissioned to prepare a draft business case/submission document. This work builds upon the previous document, however, is informed by both the engagement and other research including that from the DCN and Peopletoo.

Engagement and Consultation on Reorganisation

2.8 The invitation letter from MHCLG included detailed guidance in relation to the engagement that local authorities were expected to undertake in developing proposals. This guidance included the following:

We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.

2.9 As set out in July 2025, the Council, along with Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Warwick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council, engaged with the public and other stakeholders on the Councils' preferred options.

2.10 Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned to undertake this engagement based on a document developed for this exercise and this is attached as **Appendix 2**.

2.11 The formal engagement period was launched on 7th August 2025 and ended on 14th September 2025. During this period, over 2300 responses were received, well over the number required for the results to be regarded as a statistically valid representation of the views of Warwickshire's residents and stakeholders. A variety of engagement routes were used including:

- An open engagement questionnaire: the questionnaire was available online and paper questionnaires were available on request.
- Six in-depth telephone interviews with the key strategic stakeholders.
- Four focus groups with members of the public (one in each of the Warwickshire districts and boroughs, except Rugby).
- Five focus groups with different stakeholder types (local business representatives, service users, Town and Parish Councils x 2, and Voluntary and Community Sector).

2.12 Most of the responses came from members of the public, however, the responses did include 81 from County, District, Town or Parish Councillors and 184 employees of principal councils in Warwickshire also responded.

2.13 In addition, the responses also contained 22 responses from organisations (these are listed within the report), these ranged from businesses, town & parish councils, and representative bodies, and these results have been analysed separately within the ORS report. The response rate from North Warwickshire was broadly in line with the Borough's proportion of Warwickshire's population.

2.14 The main quantitative findings from the ORS engagement exercise can be summarized as follows with the final report attached as **Appendix 3**:

- Overall, seven-in-ten individual questionnaire respondents (70%) indicated that they feel very or fairly informed about the services provided by councils in their area. The remaining three-in-ten (30%) indicated that they feel either fairly or very uninformed.
- Over fourth fifths (83%) of respondents agreed with the principle that the Councils should pursue opportunities to streamline.
- Just over half (54%) of respondents overall agreed, in principle, with the Government's requirement to replace the current system with a smaller number of unitary councils. A third of respondents (33%), however, disagreed.
- Over seven-in-ten respondents (73%) agreed with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire. Moreover,

nearly half (47%) indicated that they strongly agreed. Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) disagreed.

2.14 Of the 22 organisational responses:

- 16 agreed with the principle that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline services and make efficiencies, while maintaining good services; only one disagreed and two indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed;
- 10 agreed with the government's requirement to replace the current two-tier system with a smaller number of unitary councils, although there were also seven that disagreed and three who answered 'neither';
- 14 agreed with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire - which was more than double the number that disagreed (i.e. six), while one answered 'neither';
- 13 agreed with the areas to be covered by the new Councils, while only two disagreed; however, there were six who indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

2.14.1 The ORS report also includes the feedback which was received through the telephone discussions and the focus groups. The report provides detailed feedback however, some of the main points raised included:

- *Town & Parish councils who were unsupportive of the principle of introducing unitary authorities were concerned about the prospect of T&P councils taking on more roles/responsibilities as a result of the changes, with recruitment already being difficult; how a reduction in councillor numbers would impact representation, especially for less populous areas; and the implications of a new council taking on debts from existing councils.*
- Stakeholders who preferred two or more unitary authorities did so for the following reasons:
  - *One Council for the entire area would be 'too big'.*
  - *Different demands exist across different areas of Warwickshire, and one authority would be poorly placed to deal with this.*
  - *The North would likely be ignored by a council focussed more on the economic/tourism centres in the South.*
  - *Residents would have better access to services in the event of two authorities.*
- Stakeholders who preferred one unitary authority did so for the following reasons:
  - *Warwickshire is not big enough to merit splitting into more than one unitary authority.*
  - *Having one larger authority would largely reflect what already exists at Warwickshire County Council and therefore would be easier to adapt.*
  - *One authority would maximise savings and efficiencies.*
  - *A single unitary authority would allow for equity in service provision across the county and avoid issues associated with disaggregation.*
  -

2.14.2 A total of 184 employees from local authorities within Warwickshire responded

to the engagement exercise. These employees came from the district and borough councils and Warwickshire County Council. There was a clear difference in views between those who indicated they are employed by a district or borough council (of whom, 77% agreed with the two-unitary proposal) and those employed by the County (47% agreed with the two-unitary).

2.14.3 In addition to the above, there has been engagement with the key stakeholders prescribed by MHCLG. This group includes the Warwickshire MPs, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire, the Chief Fire Officer for Warwickshire and the newly appointed Joint Chair of Integrated Care Board Cluster, NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board and the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Board. The responses received to date are attached as **Appendix 4.**

2.14.4 Both of the MPs covering the Borough, Rachel Taylor and Jodie Gosling, have confirmed they support the two unitary proposal and their letters are included in **Appendix 4**. In addition the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority has also indicated his support for the two unitary proposal (albeit, as discussed below, he does not currently support an expansion of the WMCA).

2.14.5 Whilst a number of views were expressed, the conclusion to be reached as a result of the engagement exercise is that residents and other stakeholders in Warwickshire very strongly support a proposal for two unitary Councils in Warwickshire. In respect of North Warwickshire, it is interesting to note that most people do not support local government reorganisation (only 40% in favour) and around two thirds support two unitary Councils.

Peopletoo

2.14.6 A key area which required additional research for the two unitary model relates to the disaggregation of existing County Council functions such as Adult Social Care, and Children's Services SEND. This has been a key risk that MHCLG have identified as needing to be address in reorganisation proposals.

2.14.7 To ensure these are properly considered Peopletoo were jointly commissioned by four of the District and Borough Councils. Peopletoo provide support to local government through the design and implementation of affordable and outcome focused services. They combine comprehensive understanding of frontline council service delivery, with expertise in financial management, demand modelling, cultural change and best practice. Peopletoo provides valuable insight that will help councils manage demand, reduce costs, improve practice and service performance.

2.15 Peopletoo undertook a benchmarking exercise of the existing costs against comparable rural and rural urban authorities. The Peopletoo benchmarking report is attached as **Appendix 5.** Attached at **Appendix 6** is a bespoke Target Operating Model and Implementation Plan for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND for a two unitary Warwickshire outcome, to

provide assurance that the recommendations can be implemented.

2.16 The Peopletoo report identifies that larger authorities do not always provide greater value for money. Their report has identified that on average, those authorities (either existing unitary or county council areas) with a population of 250,000 to 350,000 can deliver services at lower cost per head than larger authorities. This is summarized in the following table:

Peopletoo Benchmarking Summary

Average unit costs	S251 LAC unit cost	S251 residential unit cost	S251 SEN unit cost	Nursing unit cost	Residential unit cost	Residential & Nursing unit cost
Population 500-750k	£1,949	£7,406	£123	£1,087	£1,160	£1,138
Population 350-500k	£1,946	£8,465	£118	£1,151	£1,209	£1,166
Population 250-350k	£1,718	£6,772	£96	£1,006	£1,028	£1,023
Population <250k	£1,759	£7,220	£100	£1,044	£1,059	£1,048

2.17 The above table demonstrates that for all of the types of expense identified, those with a population of between 250,000 to 350,000 have the lowest unit costs.

2.18 Peopletoo have also highlighted the financial opportunities and savings along with improved outcomes that can be achieved through establishing closer relationships with the local market, targeting intervention and ensuring services commissioned support the needs of the local community, are significant, modelled for the purposes of this report annually at £74.8m cost avoidance and £63.5m cashable savings. The main findings from their review are as follows:

- In line with the primary objectives of the devolution paper – the two unitary authority business case needs to build on local identity and agility to deliver change at pace – **achieving financial stability through transformation – reducing the demand and cost for People services in parallel to improving outcomes.**
- A strong emphasis on reducing demand through **localised targeting of prevention and early intervention, working closely with the voluntary and community sector.**
- The benefit of **building closer relationships with schools and developing the local offer to ensure inclusion in mainstream schools**, reducing the expenditure on independent schools and the costs of transitions, ensuring young people remain in their communities through to adulthood.
- **Ability to develop the local market and build micro providers, ensuring the right capacity at the right price and the right quality.**
- Bringing together key services such as Housing, Public Health, Leisure, Green Spaces and Social Care to ensure **maximisation of community assets and a place-based approach to prevention and early intervention.**

- Using rich data sources from across revenues, benefits, social care and health, to develop predictive analytics, **targeting intervention activity to prevent escalation across social care and health.**
- **Reducing Demand/ Cost and Improving Outcomes for citizens.**

2.18.1 The findings from Peopletoo have been fully incorporated into the draft submission document produced by Deloitte. The savings which have been assumed are based on the central case, it is suggested that the best case could deliver even further gains, although for prudence these are not included in the financial analysis.

2.18.2 The Peopletoo report shows that rather than disaggregation being a risk to the delivery of these important services, a two unitary model could be the opportunity for fundament reform, acting as a catalyst for widescale and meaningful transformation of service delivery resulting in better outcomes and cost reductions.

2.18.3 This is a fundamental element of the rationale for two unitaries across the area of public services and the need for reform. Continuing with an existing model of services presents a higher risk that current issues will continue than the theoretical issues of disaggregation. The publication last month of the latest Ofsted inspection report into Warwickshire County Council's children's services reinforces this view. The 2025 report's findings are summarised in the table below:

Judgement	**Grade**
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

which shows a worsening position from the last report in 2021:

Judgement	**Grade**
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

2.18.4 The areas identified for transformation, particularly around permanence stability and market capacity, are now even more pressing, and without structural change, these challenges risk undermining outcomes for our vulnerable children. The draft business case, discussed from paragraph 2.35 onward, will be strengthened with this further analysis from Peopletoo as a result of the 2025 Ofsted inspection. **Appendix 7** provides Peopletoo's analysis of the Ofsted report and the proposed additions to the business case as a result.

2.18.5 The proposed two-unitary model for North and South Warwickshire offers a decisive solution. It creates governance that is closer to communities, enabling faster decision-making, stronger accountability, and targeted investment in early help, permanence pathways and inclusion. This model aligns with national priorities for improving children's services and provides the conditions for the two new unitaries in Warwickshire to move from "requires improvement" to "good" or "outstanding", delivering sustainable improvement across both social care and SEND within a locally accountable framework.

2.18.6 What the two model option proposes is not just a structural change, it is a strategic opportunity to reset the system, strengthen leadership, and ensure that every child in Warwickshire grows up safe, supported, and with the best possible life chances.

District Council Network – Research

2.18.7 The District Council Network (DCN) (part of the Local Government Association) has undertaken research on behalf of its members in relation to the question of new council size and whether this does lead to greater financial resilience and quality in relation to the delivery of services. The results of that research are attached as **Appendix 8** and concludes that "bigger isn't better" in terms of the provision of local government structures.

2.18.8 In coming to this position, the DCN has come to a number of key conclusions which are based on past performance of existing unitary councils:

- There is little or no evidence to support a preference for large unitary councils and no evidence to support the 500k population level.
- The bulk of the data analysed shows a non-existent or faint relationship between a council's population and its outcomes.
- When there is an apparent correlation between population size and outcomes, it more often favours medium sized councils.
- The evidence gives no reason to assume that medium sized unitary councils will be less efficient, sustainable or effective due to their size.

2.19 Other findings from the DCN report are as follows:

- **Total expenditure per resident:**
  - 8 of the 10 lowest spending councils have a population lower than the median population of existing unitary councils.
  - Evidence for a causal link between council size and spend per resident

is very weak. Other factors, such as deprivation, are much more significant in predicting spending efficiency.
    - Correlation between population size and spend per resident is also weak. In the largest 90% of unitary councils (starting at population size of 157k) the relationship is so minimal as to be essentially non-existent.
    - To the extent that there is a correlation, there appears to be a tipping point at around 350k population: the direction of the relationship changes such that councils above this threshold typically spend more per resident than those below it.
- **Financial Sustainability**
    - Larger councils appear to have been more likely to experience financial instability that is sufficiently serious to require Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).
    - Larger councils have required more EFS relative to the size of their budgets than smaller councils.
    - Analysis does not demonstrate that population size is the key driver of this outcome. Equally, there is no evidence that smaller councils are likely to be less financially stable than larger ones.
- **Council Tax**
    - Larger councils charge higher levels of council tax. The average Band D council tax bill for councils larger than 500k population was £250 higher than the average bill for councils smaller than 500k.
    - Analysis does not demonstrate that population size is the key driver.
    - Council tax levels are at best uncorrelated with population size and at worst rise in line with it.
- **Service Performance**
    - Across a wide range of performance measures (covering adult social care, administration and finance, planning, and waste), 10 metrics show no meaningful relationship between population size and performance.
    - For all 10 measures where there is a statistically meaningful relationship, smaller councils perform better on average.
    - Projected outcomes are better at the median population of existing unitary councils (275k) than at 500k.

Draft Submission Document

2.19.1 Pulling all the additional research and engagement together Deloitte have produced a final draft business case, which if approved would be used as the submission document to Government. The District and Borough Councils across Warwickshire (excluding Rugby) have worked together on this report and also worked to coordinate reports such as this to ensure as far as possible a consistent message is given on the two unitary option.

2.19.2 The business case is attached as **Appendix 9** and assesses the options for reorganisation against the Government's criteria and includes a balanced ranking based on the evidence and arguments provided, supporting the rationale for the preferred approach, with a '2' being the better score:

Deloitte Business case ranking – October 2025

Criteria	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
1. Establishment of a single tier of local government	1	2
2. Right size to achieve efficiencies, and withstand financial shocks	2	1
3. Public service delivery	1	2
4. Councils working together and local place identity	1	2
5. Support devolution arrangements	1	2
6. Stronger community engagement	1	2
Overall Score	**2nd Place Score: 7**	**1st Place Score: 11**

2.19.3 The detailed breakdown of ranking justification can be found within the attached appendix but is summarised below:

2.19.4 **Establishment of a single tier of local government (1st):** The two-unitary model supports a strong place-based focus, recognising the distinct populations, economies, and challenges of North and South Warwickshire. It allows each council to set local priorities, integrate housing, planning, and highways policies, and deliver joined-up solutions that drive economic growth. Evidence suggests a North/South split reflects sensible geographies and distinct local identities. In contrast, a single-unitary model risks being too large to respond effectively to local needs, reducing its ability for economic growth.

2.19.5 **Right size to achieve efficiencies and withstand financial shocks (2nd)**: The two-unitary model offers financial benefits, delivering around £55m in net savings by 2029/30. Existing authorities are financially stable, and assets, revenue, and reserves could be allocated to match local demand. Both new councils would have the flexibility to set appropriate council tax levels, avoiding large increases. While the single-unitary model achieves slightly higher net savings and is ranked higher for this criterion, the difference is small, and the two-unitary model could become more financially effective over the long term through targeted service transformation.

Net Savings	27/28	28/29	29/30
Single Unitary	-	£32.7m	£56.8m
Two Unitary	-	£29.1m	£54.8m

2.19.6 In relation to population size there is expected to be strong growth across Warwickshire. The table below demonstrates the governments projections between now and 2047.

Warwickshire Population Projections (ONS)

	Mid-year estimate, 2023	Projection, 2047
North Warwickshire	66,166	77,515
Nuneaton and Bedworth	137,794	156,923
Rugby	118,781	146,704
Sub-total: North Warwickshire	*322,741*	*381,142*
Stratford on Avon	141,929	188,308
Warwick	153,153	179,208
Sub-total: South Warwickshire	*295,082*	*367,516*
Warwickshire	**617,823**	**748,658**

2.40 **Public Service Delivery (1st)**: The two-unitary model is place-focused and locally responsive, enabling services to be tailored to community needs and priorities. It fosters stronger community engagement by adopting a strengths-based, early intervention and prevention approach, supporting the voluntary sector and developing new relationships between residents and the councils. By integrating county and district responsibilities, services can be redesigned around the customer to improve accessibility and efficiency. Risks from disaggregation are minimised through flexible approaches, such as a Joint Safeguarding Board during transition, while building on the strengths of existing borough and district services. In contrast, a single-county unitary may become too large and complex, making it harder to drive transformational change and establish effective relationships with communities and local partners.

2.41 **Councils working together and local place identity (1st):** The two-unitary model is popular with the public, with approximately 73% of respondents supporting the proposal, and is well-positioned to build on existing successful partnerships and collaborative initiatives. It better reflects the county's distinct local identities and community needs, aligning local government structures with where people live, work, and access services, with evidence supporting the North-South split. In contrast, a single-county unitary is less responsive to local place identity, requiring trade-offs in resource allocation between North and South rather than allowing each area to make decisions tailored to its own communities. Indeed Warwickshire County Council's analysis is based on large Council Tax rise particularly in the south of the County and an assumption that a single unitary Council would use that extra money to pay for services in the north. There has been no track record of that behaviour or any evidence that it is likely to be politically acceptable.

2.42 **Support devolution arrangements (1st)**: As discussed in more detail below, local government reorganisation needs, according to the White Paper, to unlock devolution. It follows that there is a need to ensure that reorganisation does not block or reduce the options for devolution. The two-unitary model offers greater flexibility, providing multiple options for devolution, including partnerships to the North and South or the establishment of a single Strategic

Authority for Warwickshire. It supports implementation readiness, allowing for timely delivery of devolution, and enhances the local voice by ensuring strategies are grounded in the specific needs and realities of communities. In contrast, a single-county unitary has limited options for devolution, as discussed whilst an obvious choice for strategic authority would be the West Midlands Combined Authority, where the Mayor has already indicated the probable rejection of Warwickshire if it were a single unitary authority.

2.43 **Stronger community engagement (1st):** The two-unitary model brings decision-making and services closer to communities, with a higher councillor-to-elector ratio facilitating better understanding of local issues, more accessible citizen engagement, and stronger accountability. It also enhances community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment, building on the strengths of existing borough and district arrangements and creating new approaches to ensure community input is fully integrated into governance. In contrast, a single-county unitary may reduce local influence and democratic accountability, with fewer members per elector limiting opportunities for engagement.

2.44 In summary, the rationale for the two-unitary model as Warwickshire's preferred option is that it provides councils that are financially sustainable, able to deliver efficiencies, and sufficiently close to residents to respond effectively to local priorities.

2.45 The model aligns with existing service geographies, including health, policing, and education, and recognises the distinct economic and demographic characteristics of North and South Warwickshire. It creates councils with the clarity, focus, and capacity to deliver improved outcomes across the county and the evidence shows the two unitary option would deliver clear improvements for residents, businesses, and communities, including:

- Driving inclusive economic growth and creating employment opportunities.
- Improving healthy life expectancy.
- Increasing housing supply and affordability, supported by improved infrastructure.
- Raising educational attainment and adult skills.
- Enhancing transport and digital connectivity.
- Accelerating action on climate change.
- Delivering simpler, more accessible, and effective services.
- Strengthening town centres and high streets, fostering greater pride of place.

2.46 The same draft submission document is being considered by Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Warwick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council. It is possible that minor changes to the submission document could be requested by these authorities, therefore, if Council approves the submission document delegation is also sought in order to make any minor changes to the document.

Options for Local Government Reorganisation – Strategic Authority

2.47 The invitation from government to submit proposals for local government reorganisation concentrates on what future councils will look like. However, the document also needs to identify the most appropriate future structures to deliver the government objective of devolution, and as a result economic growth, to the area to a strategic authority.

2.48 It will be for local areas to propose strategic authorities for negotiation with Government. The following principles will be used by government in evaluating the options:

- Scale: The default assumption is for them to have a combined population of 1.5 million or above, but we accept that in some places, smaller authorities may be necessary.
- Economies: Strategic Authorities must cover sensible economic geographies with a particular focus on functional economic areas, reflecting current and potential travel-to-work patterns and local labour markets. It is likely that where travel to work areas are small and fragmented, Strategic Authorities will cover multiple travel to work areas.
- Contiguity: Any proposed geography must be contiguous across its constituent Councils (either now or with a clear plan to ensure continuity in the future through agreed local government reorganisation).
- No 'devolution islands': Geographies must not create devolution 'islands' by leaving areas which are too small to go it alone or which do not have natural partners.
- Delivery: Geographies should ensure the effective delivery of key functions including Spatial Development Strategies, Local Transport Plans and Get Britain Working Plans.
- Alignment: The Government will seek to promote alignment between devolution boundaries and other public sector boundaries.
- Identity: A vital element of successful devolution is the ability for local residents to engage with and hold their devolved institutions to account – and local identity plays a key role in this

2.49 The Interim Plan identified three options for Strategic Authority for the Warwickshire area which were as follows:

- Membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- A standalone Warwickshire Strategic Authority.
- A cluster of other neighbouring county council areas.

2.50 This Council is already a "non-constituent" member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) due to the economic geography of the Borough in terms of jobs, businesses and joint planning features such as common Housing and Employment Market Areas.

2.51 The previously expressed preference of this Council with regard to a Strategic Authority is the WMCA. However, it is also clear that the Mayor of the WMCA has rejected this proposal, at least ahead of the May 2028 elections, his position being:

“My view is clear: the current boundaries of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), aligned with the seven West Midlands Metropolitan Councils, remain the most appropriate structure to meet the needs of our region. This enables the WMCA to focus most effectively on delivering its critical priorities: investment in transport, affordable social housing, skills development, and economic growth”.

2.52 Despite the response from the Mayor the WMCA still remains the favoured option for most councils in Warwickshire, including Warwickshire County Council and Government officials have recommended that our submission re-states what the preferred option in respect of a Strategic Authority is. However it is also appropriate for the other options to be assessed.

2.53 There are no existing neighbouring county areas with strong connections to the whole of the Warwickshire area. For instance, whilst there are close synergies between South Warwickshire and Worcestershire, these are not shared with North Warwickshire. Similarly whilst there are close links between North Warwickshire Borough Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (Leicestershire), these are not shared with Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

2.54 A standalone Warwickshire strategic Authority would be the next best alternative. It should be noted that under a standalone Warwickshire Strategic Authority, it would be necessary to have two-unitary councils for Warwickshire. Under existing legislation, it is not possible to have a strategic authority for a single council area as at least two are required.

2.55 MHCLG officials have confirmed that this option is not ideal and does not confirm fully with a number of the criterion for Strategic Authorities. However that advice also confirmed that the long-term decision about what strategic authority should be implemented locally would not have to be finalised by the point of the submission and therefore the submission document should set out the options. Crucially, as mentioned above, the key issue is to ensure that the chosen option for local government reorganisation does not close off any options for devolution.

2.56 It is clear therefore, that the local government reorganisation option which keeps most options for future a strategic authority open for the area is a two-unitary local government structure for Warwickshire. Indeed, it is only under this structure that a standalone Warwickshire Strategic Authority could be delivered.

2.57 It is also clear that positive work should be undertaken to confirm the close economic, transport and other links with the WMCA area in order to dispel the impression that Warwickshire could become a devolution island, with the risk of it being placed into a solution that makes very little sense to the area. At a recent meeting, the WMCA mayor confirmed that it would not be possible to join at the moment but that arrangements should be explored to maximise the acknowledged links between the areas, including looking at more formal, collaborative governance on areas of interest.

Position of Warwickshire County Council

2.58 Warwickshire County Council met on 14 October to consider their position in relation to local government reorganisation. The decision of the County

Council was to support a single-unitary Warwickshire and this decision was confirmed at a Cabinet meeting on the 6th November.

2.59 Concern has been raised within the County Council business case surrounding the viability of a North Warwickshire unitary authority in a two-unitary scenario. It is suggested that that given there are higher levels of demand for services in the north of the county including Adult Social Care and SEND. The comments at 2.41 above should be noted in this context, that the County Council's solution is largely that finance should be redistributed from the South to the North within a single Council, a solution that stands little prospect of being implemented.

2.60 Whilst the long-term viability of both councils in a two-unitary scenario is extremely important, from experience in other areas such as Cumbria issues surrounding the allocation of government grant is resolved during the implementation phase and is undertaken by negotiation with officials from MHCLG. It is also worth noting that the government is reviewing the method of allocating grants through the Fair Funding 2.0 review. At this stage the government have not issued any worked examples under this review, instead, local authorities have been expected to estimate the potential impacts through their own modelling.

2.61 In addition to the future allocation of grant there would also be the need for the proper split of assets and liabilities from the current authority of the vesting of the new authorities. There would be the need for negotiations with MCHLG on the division of settlements through the Fair Funding 2.0 process and the equitable split of assets and liabilities from the current County Council.

2.62 Even within the limits of what is currently known about the Fair Funding review, it is clear therefore that the Government's review is meant to address specifically the issue that the County Council have raised:

"This up-to-date approach will use the best available evidence to take account of the different needs and costs faced by local authorities in urban and rural areas, and the ability of individual local authorities to raise Council Tax. This is a fairer and simpler approach overall, with fewer formulae, whilst also proposing that in certain high-cost areas like temporary accommodation and home-to-school transport bespoke formulae are justified".

2.63 In addition, the financial review undertaken by Deloitte's have identified that there is a positive financial future for both a North and South Unitary Councils. Whilst the savings are marginally less than a single county unitary the differences are extremely small (less than 1% of the Councils' collective budgets). Moreover the Peopletoo assessment which has clearly identified that those current unitary authorities who are delivering the best financial performance are those with populations greater than 350,000. The conclusions from their review identify that when an authority gets too big, inefficiencies mean that they do not have the flexibility to concentrate on the specific needs of the different communities they represent. This in turn builds in diseconomies of scale along with poorer outcomes for residents. Through

the introduction of the Targeted Operating Model proposed by Peopletoo, significant savings can be delivered in addition to better outcomes in areas such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

Financial Analysis

2.64 The Deloitte report shows that Warwickshire and its six councils are currently in a stable financial position, with debt primarily related to capital and infrastructure investment. Based on available data, both a North and South unitary would be financially sustainable. The North would rely more on government grants and business rates due to higher deprivation, while the South would benefit from a stronger council tax base but face greater demographic pressures from an ageing population. These challenges largely reflect the status quo.

2.65 Based on financial modelling, it is predicted that the single county unitary will generate slightly higher net savings through greater economies of scale and lower costs, though the gap is not significant. However, the business case indicates that the establishment of two unitary authorities, supported by a programme of service transformation, would enable more effective management of demand within high-cost service areas, including Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and SEND. This approach is intended to address the County's principal financial risks.

2.66 As mentioned above, analysis undertaken by PeopleToo consultancy suggests that smaller unitary authorities typically incur lower per capita expenditure on social care. Demand modelling undertaken as part of the business case identifies the potential to achieve additional savings in the region of £30 million over a five-year period. Should these efficiencies be realised, the two-unitary model would represent a more financially sustainable option than a single county-wide unitary arrangement over the longer term.

2.67 The primary financial challenge facing Warwickshire's local authorities arises from the County Council's deficit in service provision (as shown in the table below). This deficit is currently being mitigated through the application of reserves; however, projections indicate a worsening position over the next five years, requiring the identification of significant savings.

2.68 Further due diligence will be required regarding the nature of debt across all six councils as part of the unitarisation process. This exercise will also inform the apportionment of assets and liabilities. Based on the information currently available, the level of debt is not considered to constitute a significant financial risk and would require management under either unitary model.

A summary of the current financial position for each Council

Financial Position as Per 2023/24 Accounts	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
Gross Expenditure	44,295	101,875	62,321	65,684	115,490	1,181,400
Gross Income	-39,800	-67,217	-43,449	-41,202	-76,280	-543,800
Net Expenditure	4,495	34,658	18,872	24,482	39,210	637,600
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of HRA	-8,846	-7,515	1,293	N/A	1,587	N/A
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of General Fund Services	13,873	4,596	6,026	8,304	-2,987	-29,900
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis	0	4,866	0	0	0	18,500
Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	2,081	1,526	2,316	5,039	5,433	10,200
General Fund Increase / (Decrease) in Year	**4,592**	**1,898**	**5,300**	**2,504**	**-1,018**	**0**
Long Term Borrowing	46,229	62,669	83,355	0	238,517	272,400
Fixed Assets	210,768	461,340	315,946	102,424	714,628	1,584,600

2.69 The Deloitte report sets out an indicative financial position for the proposed two-unitary model as follows.

Analysis of Financial Position of Councils (23/24 Accounts) (£'000)	North	South
Gross Expenditure	£799,191	£771,874
Gross Income	- £422,366	-£389,382
Net Expenditure	**£376,825**	**£382,492**
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of HRA	-£15,068	£1,587
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of General Fund Services	£9,545	-£9,633
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis	£14,116	£9,250
Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	£11,023	£15,572
General Fund Increase / (Decrease) in Year	**£11,790**	**£1,486**
Total Useable Reserves	**£269,400**	**£249,381**
Total Unusable Reserves	**£1,153,712**	**£958,552**
Long Term Borrowing	**£328,453**	**£374,717**
Fixed Assets	**£1,780,354**	**£1,609,352**

2.70 As noted above, the single county unitary is expected to generate slightly higher savings through the reorganisation process. The business case outlines how these savings would be achieved, highlighting differences between the two proposed structures across three areas: senior leadership, democratic, and service savings.

2.71 Analysis indicates that the single county unitary model would achieve the highest overall savings for senior leadership posts, although the two-unitary model would also deliver substantial, albeit lower, savings. The difference largely reflects the additional costs of disaggregating existing County Council functions.

2.72 Under the two-unitary model, separate Directors for Adult Social Care and Children's Services would be required in each new authority. Estimated savings for this aspect under the single unitary model are £1.95 million, compared with £1.05 million under the two-unitary model.

2.73 The single unitary model offers the greatest savings for democratic representation, reflecting the lower number of councillors. Estimated savings are £1.77 million under the single unitary model, compared with £1.48 million under the two-unitary model. However, the reduction in councillor numbers, particularly under the single unitary, raises potential concerns regarding a democratic deficit, with fewer elected members available to represent residents and address ward-level issues.

2.74 Both unitary models are expected to achieve service savings through integration and economies of scale. For example, consolidating back-office functions or leveraging greater purchasing power when outsourcing can deliver significant cost reductions. Due to its larger scale, a single county unitary would generally realise higher overall savings. However, as noted in the service savings assumptions section of the business case, certain areas, such as Children's Social Services, could achieve greater efficiencies under a two-unitary model, supported by comparative evidence from authorities of similar size.

2.75 Overall, the financial assessment indicates that the single-unitary model is projected to deliver greater net savings over a three-year period, estimated at £89.5 million compared with £83.9 million for the two-unitary model, per the table at paragraph 2.39 above. This primarily reflects lower transition and disaggregation costs, alongside increased economies of scale achieved through the consolidation of back-office functions and other aggregated services.

2.76 Nonetheless, the two-unitary model is also expected to generate substantial savings, largely through more effective management of demand in high-cost services such as Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, and Home to School Transport. These efficiencies are anticipated to arise from a localised, place-based approach emphasising early intervention and prevention. By contrast, the current county-led model has struggled to influence demand trends in these areas, reinforcing the need for a community-focussed approach.

Next Steps

2.77 MHCLG has published guidance outlining the expected timeline for Local Government Reorganisation in areas, including Warwickshire, where councils are submitting proposals by the end of November. The guidance indicates that new unitary authorities would operate in a 'shadow form' from May 2027, just under one year prior to their official "go-live" date in April 2028, when they would assume full statutory powers, assets, and liabilities.

Indicative timeline for Local Government Reorganisation in Warwickshire

Date	Milestone
28 November 2025	Statutory deadline for submission to Government
Early 2026	Anticipated feedback from Government and consultation period on **all** viable options
Spring 2026	Government consults on Warwickshire proposal(s)
Late spring / Summer 2026	Government decision on local government reorganisation for Warwickshire Start of discussion on implementation issues with Government
Early Autumn 2026	Legislation drafted
Late Autumn/Winter 2026/2027	Structural changes orders submitted for parliamentary approval. Either Implementation Executive formed (in the event of a continuing authority) or Joint Committee formed (for new authority(ies)
May 2027	Elections to Shadow Unitary Councils
May 2027	Shadow Authority operates alongside predecessor Councils
April 2028	Formal 'go live' of new authority(ies)

2.79 With regard to transition arrangements, the DCN have produced a note on the various options and this is attached as **Appendix 10**. As discussed at the Member Working Group earlier this month, one of the options in the event of a single unitary Council is for the County Council to be the 'continuing authority'. Given the need for significant transformation with regard to the important services discussed in the Peopletoo report it is recommended that the submission to Government confirms this Council's position that there should not be a continuing authority in the event of a single unitary Council for Warwickshire.

Analysis of the effects on Equality

2.80 There are no direct equality implications arising from the submission to Government. Given the extensive work undertaken on the Council's behalf by Peopletoo and that improving economic performance, health outcomes and

reducing deprivation are key motivating factors within the bid, the equalities implications and aspects of the submission have been fully considered. Detailed considerations of the service impacts of reorganisation will need to be considered during the transition phase.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (01827 719438).

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

To: Leaders of two-tier councils in Warwickshire
- North Warwickshire Borough Council
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council
- Warwick District Council
- Warwickshire County Council

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders

This Government has been clear on our vision for simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution. We know that councils of all political stripes are in crisis after a decade of decline and instability. Indeed, a record number of councils asked the government for support this year to help them set their budgets.

This new government will not waste this opportunity to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers. Local leaders are central to our mission to deliver change for hard-working people in every corner of the country through our Plan for Change, and our councils are doing everything they can to stay afloat and provide for their communities day in, day out. The Government will work closely with you to deliver these aims to the most ambitious timeline.

I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process. A formal invitation with guidance for the development of your proposals is attached at Annex A. This invitation sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

Developing proposals for reorganisation

We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers' interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities.

The public will rightly expect us to deliver on our shared responsibility to design and implement the best local government structures for efficient and high-quality public service delivery. We therefore expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary local government across the whole of your area. The proposal that is developed for the whole of your area may be for one or more new unitary councils and should be complementary to devolution plans. It is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in this invitation, particularly where this helps those councils to address concerns about their sustainability or limitations arising from their size or boundaries or where you are working together across a wider geography within a strategic authority.

I understand there will be some cases when it is not possible for all councils in an area to jointly develop and submit a proposal, despite their best efforts. This will not be a barrier to progress, and the Government will consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities.

Supporting places through change

It is essential that councils continue to deliver their business-as-usual services and duties, which remain unchanged until reorganisation is complete. This includes progress towards the Government's ambition of universal coverage of up-to-date local plans as quickly as possible. To support with capacity, I intend to provide some funds for preparing to take forward any proposal, and I will share further information later in the process.

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.

The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils, but we acknowledge that there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices. Where that is the case, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation, and Commissioners should be engaged in these discussions. We will continue to discuss the approach that is proposed with the area.

I welcome the partnership approach that is being taken across the sector to respond to the ambitious plans set out in the White Paper. My department will continue to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Councils Network, the County Councils Network and other local government partners to plan how best to support councils through this process. We envisage that practical support will be needed to understand and address the key thematic issues that will arise through reorganisation, including managing service impacts and opportunities for the workforce, digital and IT systems, and leadership support.

Timelines and next steps for interim plans and full proposals
We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals.

I will expect any full proposal to be submitted **by 28 November**. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation.

Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. My officials are available throughout to discuss how your reorganisation and devolution aspirations might work together and what support you think you might need to proceed.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government in your area on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures for your area that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve. As set out in the White Paper, my commitment is that clear leadership locally will be met with an active partner nationally.

I am copying this letter to council Chief Executives. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament and to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

Annex A

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Warwickshire, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

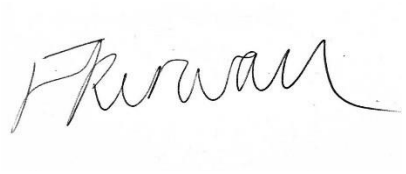
This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **28 November 2025**.
2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.
3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.



F KIRWAN

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025

SCHEDULE

Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.

a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.

b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.

c) 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.

d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.

a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.

b) 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.

c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.

d) Proposals should set out how an area 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.

e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.

f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3. **Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.**

   a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.

   b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.

   c) 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.

4. **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.**

   a) 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.

   b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

   c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. **New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.**

   a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.

   b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.

   c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. **New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.**

   a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.

   b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

a) 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.

b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.

c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.

d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.

e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.

f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on mayoral devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation.

Interim plans

An interim plan should be provided to Government on or before **21 March 2025.** This should set out your progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one interim plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the interim plan describes more than one potential proposal for your area, if there is more than one option under consideration. The interim plan should:

a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.

b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.

c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.

d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.

e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.

f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.

g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.

h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.

Emergency Management Plan

A framework for local authority emergency management across North Warwickshire Borough Council operational footprints

Version Control	
Date Reviewed	November 2025
Review Date	May 2028
Version	v2

Activation

This plan, or sections of, can be activated to a potential or actual major incident. It can also be partially activated to respond to localised incidents that may not be declared as a major incident but would still have an impact on the Council, its residents, or services.

The plan can be activated on notification of the following:

- An internal incident impacting the functionality of North Warwickshire Borough Council, including business continuity incidents.
- An external alert via a partner agency.
- An external alert that a multi-agency Command Group is being called.
- Declaration of a major incident, either internally or externally.
- A business continuity incident affecting North Warwickshire Borough Council.
- Direction from regional or national incidents.

i. Plan Administration

This plan has been developed by the CSW Resilience Team on behalf of North Warwickshire Borough Council and is subject to review at the following intervals:

- Contact check every 6 months
- Full plan review every 3 years
- Following an emergency or business continuity incident requiring activation of the plan
- Following issues identified during an exercise or test activation
- Following an update to national emergency planning guidance.

Any comments, queries or concerns relating to the content contained within this plan should be directed to

Version History

Summary of Changes	Author	Version Number	Date
Full document refresh	Byron L-C	V1	October 25
Revised draft	Byron L-C, S Maxey	V2	November 25

ii. Glossary of Terms

CCA 2004	Civil Contingencies Act 2004
COBR(A)	Cabinet Office Briefing Room
CSWRT	Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience Team
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
EMC	Emergency Management Centre
EMP	Emergency Management Plan
HM Government	His Majesties Government
JDM	Joint Decision Model
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
NBBC	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
NWBC	North Warwickshire Borough Council
RBC	Rugby Borough Council
RCG	Recovery Coordination Group
RED	Resilience and Emergency Division
SCG	Strategic Coordinating Group
SDC	Stratford-Upon-Avon District Council
TCG	Tactical Coordinating Group
UK	United Kingdom
VEMC	Virtual Emergency Management Centre
WCC	Warwickshire County Council
WDC	Warick District Council
WLRF	Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum

iii. Foreword from Chief Executive

“It is almost inevitable that every year many incidents will occur within our area which will disrupt our normal routine. Very occasionally an incident can happen that has a major impact on the local community. The Council recognises that there is a need for effective planning for civil emergencies to ensure the efficient and speedy management of the response to these incidents by our Council and between other responding agencies.

The most important thing is to be prepared to respond quickly to restore order and normality, learn from the experience and instil confidence both within the Council and amongst the general public. This major emergency plan sets out the information, procedures and details required to ensure an effective, flexible and timely response to an emergency by our Council – thus reducing to a minimum, the distress and disruption caused by such an incident.

The key to success is good team-working and an integrated response to an emergency between the Council and partner agencies, which is why it is essential that all of us read the relevant sections of this plan carefully, familiarise ourselves with its contents and recognise our own roles as part of the team responding to the incident.”

Steve Maxey

Chief Executive

North Warwickshire Borough Council

November 2025

Contents

i. Plan Administration ..... 2 **ii.**
Glossary of Terms ..... 3 **iii.**
Foreword from Chief Executive 4
Section A: Preface 8
iv. A1. Aims, Objectives and Audience 8
A1.1. Aim 8
A1.2. Objectives 8
A1.3. Audience 8
A1.4 Scope 8
A1.5 Definitions 9
Section B: Strategic and Tactical Guidance 11
B1. Response Structure 11
B1.1 Strategic and Tactical Team Response Structure 11
B1.2 Operational Cells ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
B2. Activation 12
B3. Briefing 13
B3.1 Briefing for Elected Members 13
B4. Roles and Responsibilities 14
B4.1 Strategic Team 14
B4.2 Strategic Considerations 15
B4.4 Tactical Team 19
B4.5 Tactical Commander Responsibilities 20
B4.6 Other Council Officers and Elected Members 22
B5. Stand Down 23
B5.1 Process 23
B5.2 Record Retention 23
B6. Recovery 24
B6.1 Multi-Agency 24
B7. Debriefing 25
B7.1 Emergency Response Report 25
Section C: Emergency Management Centre 26
C1. Introduction 26

C2. Activation 26
C3. Location 26
C4. Emergency Management Centre Roles 26
C5. Resources and Facilities 27
C6. Logging 28
C7. Welfare 28
C8. Health and Safety 28
C9. Stand Down 28
Section D: The Multi- Agency Response 30
D1. Introduction 30
D2. Further Escalation 31
D2.1 DLUHC Resilience and Emergency Division Team 31
D2.2 Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms 31
D3. Mutual Aid and Offers of Support 31
D3.1 Finance 31
D3.2 Coordination of Material Donations 31
D4. VIP Visits and Involvement 32
D4.1 Responsibility 32
Section E: Additional Supporting Information 33
E1. Civil Contingencies Act 2004 33
E1.1 Category One and Two Responder Roles and Responsibilities 34
E2. Command and Control 36
E2.1 Operational Level (Bronze) 37
E2.2 Tactical Level (Silver) 37
E2.3 Strategic Level (Gold) 37
E3. Multi Agency Response Structure 38
E3.1 Strategic Coordinating Group 38
E3.2 Tactical Coordinating Group 40
E3.3 Operational Command 40
E4. Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme 41
E4.1 M/ETHANE 41
E4.2 Joint Decision Model 42
E4. Bellwin Scheme 43

Section F: Emergency Management Plan Internal Contact List 44

Section G: Appendices 45

Appendix 1. Initial Strategic / Tactical Meeting Agenda 45

Appendix 2. Standard Strategic / Tactical Meeting Agenda 46

Appendix 3. Briefing Template 47

Appendix 4. JESIP M/ETHANE Form 48

Appendix 5. The Role of a Loggist 49

Section A: Preface

A1. Aims, Objectives and Audience

A1.1. Aim

To outline the arrangements within North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) which would be activated in response to an emergency occurring in or affecting the people, place or environment of the Borough, or a significant business interruption affecting the delivery of critical services.

A1.2. Objectives

The aim of this plan will be achieved by:

- Outlining Strategic and Tactical arrangements for responding to an emergency
- Providing generic response procedures that are flexible to meet the requirements of any emergency

A1.3. Audience

All local authorities are responsible for providing their statutory services during an emergency. This document aims to provide guidance on the borough's response structure and procedures and to define the role of the borough council.

This plan is intended for use by any Strategic or Tactical member, or other staff who may have a role in supporting the Councils response to, and recovery from, an emergency or business interruption.

A1.4 Scope

NWBC and the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience Team (CSWRT) maintain an arrangement under the Joint Emergency Planning Officer service to support the council to fulfil its statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As part of this arrangement, the processes for responding to public safety emergencies by NWBC are aligned with the other local authorities in Warwickshire to ensure a harmonious response utilising best practice command and control structures.

Other local authorities who have adopted this framework include:

- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC)
- Rugby Borough Council (RBC)
- Stratford-Upon-Avon District Council (SDC)
- Warwickshire County Council (WCC)
- Warwick District Council (WDC)

A1.5 Definitions

Business Continuity

A holistic management process that identifies potential impacts that threaten an organisation and provides a framework for building resilience.

Business Interruption

A disruption to the delivery of a single or multiple services that have been defined by the local authority as 'critical' to maintain.

Critical Service The classification of a service as 'critical' may be defined from being enshrined in statutory law or a discretionary service where failure to operate at full capacity has implications for reputation, brand, duty of care or income generation.

Category 1 Responders

These organisations are listed in part one of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and are likely to be at the core of the response to most emergencies. As such, they are subject to the full range of civil protection duties in the act.

Category 1 responders include:

- Emergency Services
- Local Authorities
- Health Trusts
- Government Agencies

Category 2 Responders

These organisations are listed in part one of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and are likely to be involved in incidents that have an impact on their own sector. Category 2 responders are subject to fewer civil protection duties (cooperation and sharing relevant information with other Category 1 and 2 responders).

Category 2 responders include:

- Transport Companies
- Utility Companies
- Health and Safety Executives

Emergency

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 defines an "emergency" as an event or situation, which threatens serious damage to:

- Human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom
- The environment of a place in the United Kingdom
- The security of the United Kingdom.

Major Incident

The Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP) define a “major incident” as an ‘event or situation, with a range of serious consequences, which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agencies’.

- A major incident is beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations, and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life or welfare, essential services, the environment or national security.
- ‘Emergency responder agencies’ describes all Category 1 and 2 responders as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and associated guidance.
- A major incident may involve a single-agency response, although it is more likely to require a multi-agency response, which may be in the form of multi-agency support to a lead response agency.
- The severity of consequences associated with a major incident are likely to constrain or complicate the ability of responders to resource and manage the incident, although a major incident is unlikely to affect all responders equally.
- The decision to declare a major incident will always be a judgement made in a specific local / operational context, and there are no precise and universal thresholds or triggers.

A major incident can be declared by any Category 1 or 2 responder which considers any of the criteria outlined above has been satisfied. In certain circumstances (such as flooding), the local authority may declare a major incident. It should be noted that what is a major incident to one responder may not be so to another.

Acts of terrorism included suspected involvement of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear devices are subject to a specific multi-agency response supported by HM Government.

This plan or parts of this plan can be activated in the event of an emergency or major incident, therefore for the purpose of the EMP, the terms ‘emergency’, ‘major incident’ and ‘business interruption’ will be referred singularly as an ‘emergency’.

Recovery

Recovery is defined as the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency, but it is more than the replacement of what has been destroyed and the rehabilitation of those affected. It is a complex, long running social and developmental process rather than just a remedial process. Recovery will certainly be more costly in terms of resources, and will undoubtedly be subject to close scrutiny from the community, the media and politicians alike.

The recovery phase should begin at the earliest opportunity following the onset of an emergency, running in tandem to the response phase. Recovery continues until the disruption has been rectified, demands on services have returned to normal levels, and the needs of those affected (directly and indirectly) have been met. As a result, depending on the severity of the emergency, the recovery phase may last for months, years or even decades.

Section B: Strategic and Tactical Guidance

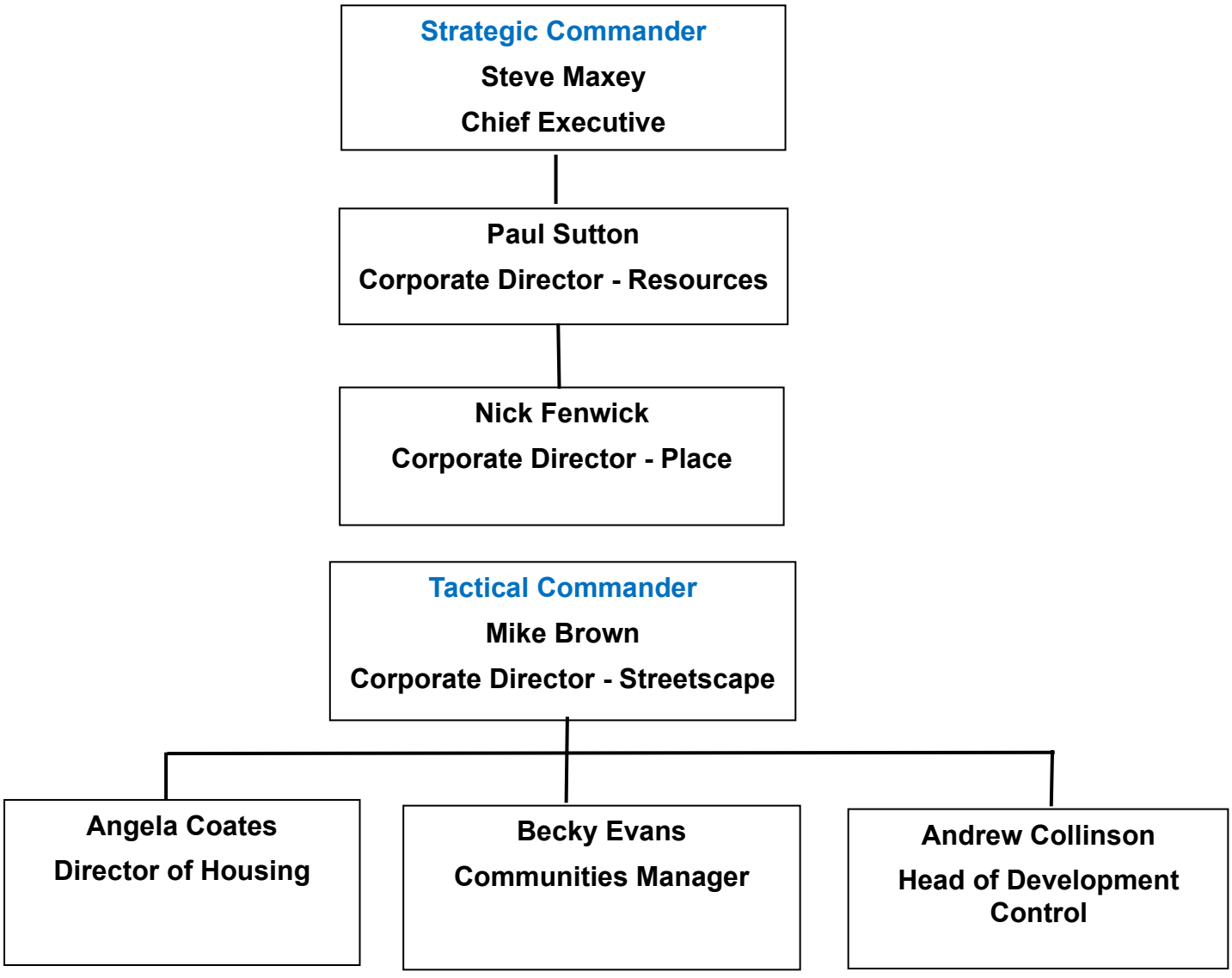
B1. Response Structure

The local authorities command and control structure will be as follows:

- **Strategic** – sets the Strategic framework for Tactical and Operational levels to work within
- **Tactical** – receives the strategic framework and considers available resources to create a Tactical Plan for the Operational teams to deliver.
- **Operational** – delivers the Operational Plan at the direction of the Tactical team

Any issues with the delivery of any aspect of the response can be escalated upwards to Tactical or Strategic for consideration and further advice.

B1.1 Strategic and Tactical Team Response Structure



Sofia Ali **Head of Legal Services**	**Trudi Barnsley** **Head of Corporate Services**	**Sharon Gallagher** **Environmental Health Manager**

Strategic Commander/s Absence: In the absence of Steve Maxey, Paul Sutton or Nick Fenwick would become the Strategic Commander, Mike Brown will be elevated to the Strategic Team and Angela Coates will become the Tactical Commander. A dynamic assessment will take place at the time of the incident to select Angela Coates' replacement if necessary.

B2. Activation

This plan, or sections of, can be activated to a potential or actual emergency. Full or partial activation of the EMP is authorised by the Chief Executive or delegated Senior Officer in their absence. The EMP can be partially activated to respond to localised incidents that may not be declared as a major incident but would still have an impact on the council, its residents or services. Activation may occur on notification of the following:

- An internal incident impacting the functionality of NWBC, including business continuity issues
- An external alert via a partner agency
- An external alert that a multi-agency command group is being called
- Declaration of a major incident, either internally or externally
- Direction from regional or national incidents
- From on-call staff

B3. Briefing

It is vital that all members of staff involved in the response are briefed initially as soon as possible and then at regular intervals throughout the response. If staff are involved at the beginning of the response, then they should be included in the initial briefing at the Emergency Management Centre (EMC).

B3.1 Briefing for Elected Members

Elected Members, in particular portfolio holders, group leaders and members local to the site of the emergency should always be kept informed of the progress of the emergency response. Arrangements should be made to ensure that Councillors are fully informed of the situation and have a single point of contact to liaise with.

As representatives of the community, it is vital that elected members have the correct information readily accessible to ensure they can keep their constituents informed, and to support local people involved. Elected Members also need to be kept informed in case they are approached by the media. It is important that Elected Members who are approached to comment on aspects of the response or Council's policies, should only give interviews or statements after consultation with the Strategic Team. This is vital to ensure continuity of messages via the media to the public.

For more information, see 'A Councillors Guide to Civil Emergencies' (www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-civil-emergencies).

B4. Roles and Responsibilities

B4.1 Strategic Team

Functions of the Strategic Team
The Strategic Team should: • Provide the strategic overview of the situation on behalf of all NWBC services responding to an emergency • Establish a 'Strategic Plan' for NWBC, including prioritised aims and objectives for the emergency response and recovery • Ensure that NWBC mobilises and deploys the most appropriate personnel / resources to the emergency • Ensure that all responding members of staff complete a log to record any actions and decisions • Maintain a critical overview of the response, expenditure and staffing • Establish a meeting schedule (rhythm) and ensure the Tactical Team meeting schedule is aligned accordingly • Ensure that the Tactical Team have the resources to undertake the tactical implementation of the strategic direction • Ensure that liaison is maintained with all responding organisations/ authorities throughout the emergency response and recovery • Ensure that NWBC continues to provide critical services to the public throughout the emergency as per the councils Business Continuity Plans • Ensure elected members are kept up to date on the status of the emergency response • Provide a media spokesperson as required • Consider the authorisations of Armed Forces Support under the terms of 'Military Aid to the Civil Community' request

B4.2 Strategic Considerations

Strategic thinking is:

- Taking into consideration the ‘big picture’ when responding to an emergency
- Thinking ahead, forward planning and thinking through the political, legal, reputational and financial considerations and ramifications
- Ensuring public confidence

The purpose of the strategic level of management is to:

- Establish a framework which the tactical team will work
- Ensure the tactical team have the resources required to achieve the strategic aims and objectives

Levels of Command

Strategic – what needs to be done

Tactical – how it is going to be done

Operational – doing it

Key strategic issues to consider:

- Is the emergency under control or escalating?
- Resource support to the lead responding organisation/ authority
- Support to other councils and other responding organisations via mutual aid
- Prioritising staff activity/ duties to focus efforts on responding to the emergency
- Keeping the public informed / building public confidence
- Overall impact on the community
- Local / Regional/ National/ International impact
- Health impacts (physical and psychosocial)

- Handling the effects of fatalities in your community
- Royal / Ministerial / VIP visits
- Public enquiry and other investigative issues
- Cost / finance of responding to the emergency
- Financial impacts on the local economy such as the potential decline of tourism following an emergency

Business Continuity Considerations

The strategic team should consider how to ensure the council operates at 'business as usual'. This includes the consideration of activating Business Continuity Plans and approving the redirection of resources to either deal with the emergency or maintain the councils' critical services.

Recovery Considerations

There is not a clear line between considerations of strategic issues and recovery. Recovery planning should happen at the earliest opportunity to ensure response actions and decisions compliment long-term recovery objectives.

Financial Arrangements

Strategic Directors and senior managers are empowered to order goods or services in relation to the emergency. All expenditure directly related to the emergency should be specifically coded to one code so that total expenditure can be easily monitored and reported for issues such as any claim under the Bellwin Scheme or other compensation schemes. The Strategic Commander should be notified as soon as practicable of any financial commitments.

B4.3 Strategic Commander Responsibilities

On Notification

Start an Incident Log and maintain it throughout the emergency to record actions and decisions taken on behalf of NWBC.

Ensure the Tactical Commander is available, if not appoint an appropriate deputy (see B1.1 Strategic and Tactical Team Response Structure).

On the basis of information received, (and in consultation with Strategic and Tactical staff) assess the impact of the incident, both actual and potential.

If the incident cannot be dealt with by normal management arrangements, notify the Tactical Team of the decision by the Strategic Commander to:

- Emergency Management Plan placed on stand-by
- Emergency Management Plan partially activated
- Emergency / Major Incident declared and the immediate activation of the Emergency Management Plan

Response

- Assess the emergency duration and establish a shift protocol for the Strategic Team, instruct the Tactical Team and EMC to do the same
- Decide on an appropriate meeting format, e.g. MS teams or physical meetings
- If established, attend the multi-agency Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)
- Carry out initial and periodic briefings with the Tactical Commander
- Consider liaising with other Warwickshire District and Borough Council/Warwickshire County Council/other neighbouring Council Chief Executives to discuss mutual aid, if required
-

Media & Communications

- Liaise with the incident commander to establish who is the lead agency (usually Police led) and establish an agreed media policy
- Ensure messages for the public are released through the Communications Team
- Ensure a single flow of communications through the Tactical Team and EMC – avoid staff members bypassing the communications chain.

B4.4 Tactical Team

Functions of the Tactical Team
On receipt of notification that the Tactical Team is being convened in relation to an emergency, the following actions should be carried out: • Members of the Tactical Team will assemble at the EMC either physically or virtually, or at an alternative agreed location • The chair of the Tactical Team will act as the Tactical Commander. Should they be absent, deputies have been identified in section B1.1 Strategic and Tactical Team Response Structure. If pre-identifed deputies are unavailable, an alternative Tactical Commander will be agreed and appointed by the group • The Tactical Team will mobilise any services required for the emergency response and invite any appropriate managers to join the Tactical Team, if required • A trained loggist will need to be provided for the Tactical Commander. They will act as the log taker and will be responsible for maintaining an accurate record of actions and decisions taken by the Tactical Commander • All officers attending the EMC must maintain their own log of information, actions and decisions made during the emergency • Consider the welfare needs of staff responding to the emergency, both at the EMC and other potential locations

B4.5 Tactical Commander Responsibilities

On Notification
• Start an incident log • On receiving notification of an emergency, the Tactical Commander should define Tactical Team membership and consider the use of shift patterns • Confirm the EMC is ready, resourced and able to operate as desired • Ensure relevant partners are made aware of the situation and confirm how to contact the council • Liaise with the Strategic Commander for initial briefing if the Strategic Group has decided to meet • Identify tactical representatives to sit on the Council's Tactical Cell (if appropriate).
Response
• Take up leadership of the Tactical Team at the EMC and coordinate response teams • Assess the duration of the emergency and establish a shift protocol for the Tactical Team and instruct operational team leaders to do the same • Arrange regular briefings with responding staff • Maintain their incident log and ensure other tactical officers are also completing them (loggist support, if available) • Carry out initial and periodic briefings with the Strategic Commander • Establish a meeting schedule and ensure it coincides with the Strategic meeting schedule

Media and Communications

- Liaise with the Strategic Group to establish the lead agency for contacts with the media. If not established or information not available within the requested time, liaise with the overall Incident Commander (Multi-Agency SCG Chair) to establish the lead agency for contacts with the media and agree a policy – communicate this to the strategic team.
- Ensure regular updates and single message flow occurs – the Communications Team should be involved. Alert elected members as soon as possible.

Multi-Agency Liaison

- Liaise with partner agencies
- Attend / consider sending suitable representation to the multi-agency Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)

B4.6 Other Council Officers and Elected Members

All Borough Council Staff with an Emergency Response Function
• Establish an appropriate level of preparedness for each service and allocate staff to support the Council response and that of partner agencies • Establish liaison with other relevant agencies as appropriate • Maintain a log of actions and decisions taken both during and post-incident response • Submit post-incident reports as required for inclusion in the final report • Consider at an early stage the needs and requirements of recovery • Ensure health and safety risk assessments are undertaken in connection with all operational requirements
Leader of the Council
• Chair formal and informal Member meetings to consider implications of incident and agree priorities • Agree expenditure policy of the Council with financial advisors
• Receive briefings from senior representatives attending Strategic and Tactical meetings • Advise other Elected Members • Act as the Councils spokesperson for media
Other Board/Committee
• Advise on implications in key portfolio areas and at as media spokesperson if required.
Local Elected Members

- Receive regular updates on the incident as it relates to their area
- Support constituents by responding to any local enquires regarding the incident
- For more information, see ‘A Councillors Guide to Civil Emergencies’.

B5. Stand Down

Involvement in an emergency may conclude at different times for different responding agencies, services and individuals.

In a multi-agency response, the emergency services involvement in the emergency response phase will finish when the immediate risks to life have been resolved. At this point, the lead emergency service (typically the Police or Fire Service) will hand over to the Local Authorities as the lead agency for the recovery phase. These longer-term issues related to recovery and restoration of the community means that they may have an active involvement for months, years or potentially decades after the incident.

The decision to stand-down an emergency response needs to be taken jointly by all key agencies involved. Once the decision has been taken, it is imperative that agencies also inform all those that have been dealing with as part of their own response, that the emergency is now closed.

B5.1 Process

When the response is approaching its final stages, the Strategic Team will review the overall position of resources to coordinate the recovery phase and declare a ‘stand down’ order, in liaison with the Tactical Team. The ‘stand down’ order can only be issued when notification has been received that the emergency is over and the risk reduced to an acceptable level, typically by the Police or Fire Service. The order must be issued to all personal and services placed on standby or activated as part of the EMP activation.

Upon the ‘stand down’ order, the Boroughs recovery team will maintain readiness to support the local authority led- recovery phase, as detailed in section B6.

B5.2 Record Retention

At the end of the response phase to any emergency, it is vital that all documents (both physical and electronic) related to the response are collated and kept for a period of at least six years. This includes but is not limited to, all logbooks, meeting minutes of strategic, tactical and work cell meetings and briefings.

B6. Recovery

Recovery is a complex and long running process that will involve many more agencies and participants than the response phase. It will certainly be more costly in terms of resources, and it will undoubtedly be subject to close scrutiny from the community, the media and politicians alike. It is therefore essential for the process to be based on well thought out and tested structures and procedures for it to work in an efficient and orderly manner.

The recovery phase should begin as soon as possible following an emergency, running in tandem with the response. It continues until the disruption has been rectified, demands on services have returned to normal levels, and the needs of those affected (directly and indirectly) have been met. While the response phase to an emergency can be relatively short, the recovery phase may last for months, years or even decades.

For an Internal NWBC emergency, such as relating to business continuity, NWBC will run the recovery process.

B6.1 Multi-Agency

The 'Recovery Phase' following an emergency or major incident in a multi-agency environment is led by the local authority (typically WCC). It can be a complex and long running process that will involve many agencies and participants. It will be costly in terms of resources, and therefore it is essential for the process to be based on an efficient and orderly framework.

NWBC should begin to consider planning to lead or support WCC with recovery early in the response phase and may be led by an assigned Recovery Lead, identified by the Strategic Commander.

The decision on who becomes the lead local authority for recovery will be decided at the multi-agency Strategic Coordination Group (SCG). Warwickshire County Council have designed their response structures with recovery in mind but the lead recovery agency to lead and manage any ongoing recovery efforts will be decided by affected Chief Executives prior to handover from the SCG.

For more guidance on Recovery please see the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum Recovery Protocol.

B7. Debriefing

Following any emergency, a debrief is vital and where possible, should be chaired by trained and impartial debriefers that have not been involved in the emergency response. Emergency response debriefs tend to be a two-part process:

A *hot debrief* should be facilitated as soon as possible after a stand-down notification has been given for the emergency. This provides all staff involved the opportunity to share their thoughts and reflect on what went well and areas for improvement and will consist mainly of verbal reports and discussions.

A *cold debrief* (or sometimes referred to as a structured debrief) takes place a few weeks after the end of the emergency response. This provides an opportunity for staff members to reflect on their own individual roles during the response and any areas for improvement. Lessons identified should be captured to highlight the areas of improvement required.

B7.1 Emergency Response Report

After the hot and cold debriefs, a suitable officer should be appointed by the Strategic Commander to compose a report of NWBCs response to the emergency. The report should include lessons identified and areas for improvement to the EMP, training gaps or missing / desired resources. The appointed office should have full access to all documentation related to the emergency response and all actions or learning from the report should be placed in an Incident Learning Action Tracker (template Appendix X) to ensure that lessons are assigned and actioned.

Section C: Emergency Management Centre

C1. Introduction

During a public safety emergency, an interruption to critical service delivery or both, the local authority can activate an emergency management centre (EMC). The EMC, sometimes referred to as a control room, is the physical or virtual space where the local authority's response to an emergency can be managed and coordinated from.

Any multi-agency response will be led by the Tactical / Strategic Coordination Group, at which NWBC will be represented either physically or virtually.

C2. Activation

The decision to activate either a physical or virtual EMC comes from the Strategic Commander or their nominated deputy.

C3. Location

The physical EMC should be located in the suite of rooms around the Committee Room with the following functions:

EMC Role	Location
Contact Centre	Contact Centre
Emergency Management Team	Chief Executives Office
Tactical Response Team	Committee Room
Communications Team	Committee Room
Meeting Room	Board Room
Rest Room	Kitchen areas open plan
Press Briefing Room	Chamber

The virtual EMC is available on Microsoft Teams.

C4. Emergency Management Centre Roles

To deliver the Borough's response through structure outlined in the EMP, there are a number of roles required in the EMC:

Role	Who will fulfil this role?
EMC Manager	Strategic/Tactical Commanders as identified in section B.1.1, or their nominated representative.
General Support Officer	To be identified at the time by strategic and/or tactical commanders.
Loggists	To be identified at the time by strategic and/or tactical commanders.

C5. Resources and Facilities

The following table breaks down the Councils EMC inventory and locations:

Items for Emergency Room	Location
• Emergency Store • Key to /Emergency Store/First Aid Room	• Independent Group Room cupboards, Council House
• Major Emergency Plan	• All named officers have been issued with 2 copies of the Plan
• Stationery • Spare copies of MEP • Emergency Centre Plan (A3 size) • Information Wall templates (A1 size) • Incoming Call Log Sheets • Copies of information flow process • Roles & Responsibilities sheets • Briefing templates • Plans of Borough (A3 Size) • Fluorescent Jackets • CSWR Contact Numbers (Wall size) • Contact List (Parish Clerks, Officers, internal phone directory etc.) • Telephone Extensions	• Emergency Store
• Internal Telephones • Map of North Warwickshire • Whiteboards • PC & Printer	• Committee Room
• Satellite Phone	• Satellite phone cupboard in the Chief Executive's PA's office
• PC • Additional PC's if required	• Contact Centre • Information Services
• Radio	• Emergency Store
• Television • Microwave	• Kitchen facilities available
• Blankets • Pillows • Air beds	• First Aid Room
• Food provisions	• As required (Welfare Officer to arrange)
• Shower Facilities	• Civic Suite • Depot • Pool

• Sand Bags / Flood Sacks	• Council Depot

C6. Logging

During an emergency it is vital to ensure an accurate record of decisions and actions is carefully logged and retained. There are currently no trained loggists at NWBC, so it is the responsibility of all officers involved in the response to maintain a personal log of decisions and actions. However the Corporate PA Management Team and Civic Support team would be asked to log decisions. Other staff may be seconded into this role as necessary following a dynamic assessment.

For more information on logging see Appendix 5: The Role of a Loggist.

C7. Welfare

Responding to emergencies can be stressful for all staff involved. Directors and Managers should ensure welfare arrangements are in place for staff, making their involvement in the response as comfortable as possible. The EMC Manager will ensure needs of staff working in the EMC are met. This includes refreshments, breaks and creating a suitable shift rota.

C8. Health and Safety

In an emergency, hazards and associated risks may arise which could not have been foreseen. In these circumstances a dynamic risk assessment should be undertaken to ensure that every effort is made to manage and control the risks.

C9. Stand Down

Stand down of the EMC will be declared and implemented in accordance with procedures for standing down the Boroughs response. At this time specific actions should be taken to ensure information is preserved and the centre is returned to its original state.

It is vital that all documents relating to the response be collated and kept for a period of at least six years; this includes all physical and virtual forms of notetaking, emails, logs and handwritten notes of meetings and briefings. Ay standard document destruction policies involving documents relevant to the emergency should be suspended until any enquiry is complete.

C10. Roles and Responsibilities

Role: EMC Manager	**Location:** EMC
Responsibilities	

• Act as the manager of the EMC throughout the period of the emergency or until relieved by a suitable replacement. • Ensure the EMC systems and processes are set up and maintained in accordance with the EMP. • Maintain an overarching EMC Log to include: location, initial set up, shift changes and any accidents or equipment/facility failures (not exhaustive). • Ensure a 'Major Incident Response Log' is maintained by the Tactical Group throughout the incident. • Ensure suitable security measures are in place and understood by all those using the EMC. • Oversee the actions of the EMC response and support staff ensuring effective and efficient running of the EMC, appropriate utilisation of resources and implementation of an appropriate shift pattern. • Ensure the Tactical Group are properly facilitated (resources/ICT/support staff) and able to undertake their roles in the EMC. • Ensure any directives of the Tactical Commander relating to the operation of the EMC are met. • Take overall responsibility for the health, safety, welfare and discipline of all people in the EMC, whether Council staff or not. • Oversee redeployment/expansion to a secondary EMC or workspace if necessary. • Ensure welfare provision for staff working in the EMC.
Role: General Support Officer **Location:** EMC
Responsibilities
Reporting to the EMC Manager, the General Support Officer will assist as required with all functions relating to operation of the EMC including but not limited to: • Assisting with recording, displaying, passing and archiving information (including minuting of meetings). • Providing cover to EMC support staff to enable breaks or fill gaps between shifts. • Ensuring everyone in the EMC has the necessary equipment and resources to fulfil their duties. • Completing ad-hoc tasks as appropriate under the instruction of the EMC Manager

Section D: The Multi- Agency Response

D1. Introduction

Most responses will involve a number of response organisations. There are various documents and procedures that outline the ways in which organisations should work together when responding to emergencies, the basics of which are summarised in this section.

NWBC will be working towards achieving their own responsibilities and objectives during an emergency response and will follow the procedures outlined in this plan, however they will most likely be part of a wider multi-agency response. This plan aims to establish response structures that will align NWBCs response with the wider multi-agency response partnership.

NWBC may wish to send Liaison Officers to the scene and any relevant multi-agency command points or meeting that are set up, to aid the coordination and efficiency of the response and requests for support. Any staff responding to an emergency should be aware of the multi-agency response structure and the common objectives (see section E3 for more information), as well as the objectives set for the local authority by the strategic / tactical team at the start of the response.

It should also be noted that there may also be a multi-agency Recovery Working Group established during the response, which will require NWBCs attendance. NWBC may also decide to identify its own internal recovery lead in the response phase who would liaise and engage with the established multi-agency recovery structures. For further information regarding local knowledge and resources, consider contacting the Parish/ Town councils.

	Multi-Agency	**Warwickshire County Council**	**NWBC**
Strategic (Gold)	Strategic Coordination Group (SCG)	Strategic Cell	Strategic Team
Tactical (Silver)	Tactical Coordination Group (TCG)	Tactical Cell	Tactical Team
Operational (Bronze)	The Scene attended by the Emergency Services	• WCC Liaison Officer • Emergency Assistance Centre • EMC	NWBC Response Services, e.g. • Housing • Streetscape • Environmental Health • Waste Management • EMC

D2. Further Escalation

D2.1 MHCLG Resilience and Emergency Division Team

Should an emergency impact more than one council area, the regions Resilience and Emergency (RED) Team may be called to coordinate the response and make resources available.

D2.2 Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms

If an emergency affects more than one region or may have an impact on the United Kingdom as a whole, the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) - or popularly referred to as COBRA – are used to coordinate the actions of Government bodies in response to a regional, national or overseas crisis with major implications for the UK. COBR will likely be chaired by the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister in their absence.

D3. Mutual Aid and Offers of Support

Successful responses to emergencies in the United Kingdom have demonstrated that joint working and support is the best solution for resolving problems that fall across organisational boundaries. Large scale responses have shown that single organisations acting alone cannot resolve the myriad of problems caused by what might at first sight, appear to be a relatively simple emergency caused by a single source.

Mutual aid can be defined as an arrangement between Category one and two responders and other response organisations not covered by the CCA 2004 (such as the voluntary sector), to aid and support each other during an emergency, which may overwhelm the resources of an individual organisation.

D3.1 Finance

Details on financial implications of mutual aid agreements should be determined between parties and set out within a protocol document, such as a Memorandum of Understanding.

D3.2 Coordination of Material Donations

It is likely that many offers to help will arrive from members of the public, businesses, community groups, charities, voluntary agencies and other, both during the response and recovery phases. Some items may be of practical assistance to responders, other items may be for those directly affected (for example donations of clothes).

Consideration should be given to working with other local partners involved in the response / recovery phases regarding:

- Procedures to register and coordinate offers of help
- Forming a panel to assess the need and the distribution of donated help
- Identifying storage areas
- A disposal or reuse mechanism for unused donations

D4. VIP Visits and Involvement

Following an emergency, it is likely there will be a desire for VIPs to visit the scene and to provide support to the affected community. Such visits may include members of the Royal Family, Minsters and MPs, faith leaders, other dignitaries or celebrities. Visits often take place during and immediately after the response phase but may also continue through the recovery phase to provide continued support to affected communities and to observe progress on recovery. The benefits of such visits include raising and maintaining awareness of the emergency and providing visible support to the community.

Key to the success of any such visit is community engagement with the planning of the visit and the decisions around the program. For example, Faith Leaders may provide significant spiritual support to affected communities and such visits can also provide an important focus for reconciliation and developing community cohesion. However, it is also important to assess the impact of any visit on the community to ensure it does add value. Therefore, early and continuous communication between local and regional partners, the affected community and the potential visitor is vital to ensure the benefits are maximised. Elected members can play a key role in the decision-making process, reflecting the needs of their communities.

D4.1 Responsibility

Where visits are by Ministers, the Lead Government Department would be responsible for arranging the visit. Costs of Ministerial and associated visits are covered by the relevant Government Department.

Visits by members of the Royal Family are coordinated by the Royal Household through the Lord Lieutenant's Office (one per LRF area). For Royal visits, press and media liaison is dealt with by the relevant Royal Household. Security arrangements and costs for Ministerial and Royal visits fall to the police.

Section E: Additional Supporting Information

E1. Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Part One – Outlines the organisations that would be involved in an emergency (before, during and after). The act splits these organisations into two categories. Category one responders are the principal responders and Category two responders are those that would be required to support and communicate with principal responders. The Civil Contingencies Act assigns statutory duties to each category of responder.

Category One Duties:

- Conduct risk assessments to inform contingency planning
- Put in place emergency plans
- Put in place business continuity arrangements
- Inform the public on civil protection matters
- Maintain arrangements to warn and inform the public
- Share information with other responder agencies
- Cooperate with other responder agencies
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only)

Category Two Duties:

- Share information with other responder agencies
- Cooperate with other responder agencies

Part Two – An update of the 1920 Emergency Powers Act and other old legislation. Emergency powers allow the Government to make special temporary legislation (emergency regulations) as a last resort in the most serious emergencies where existing legislation is insufficient to respond in the most effective way.

E1.1 Category One and Two Responder Roles and Responsibilities

The following table gives an abridged outline of the roles and responsibilities of the organisations that are involved before, during and after emergencies. These responsibilities are given to the organisations by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The table also gives information on the capabilities of each organisation and indicates whether they are a category 1 or 2 responder as defined by the CCA.

Category 1 Responders **Police Service**	
Responsibilities	**Capabilities**
• Protect life and property • Co-ordinate the multi-agency response • Protect and preserve the scene and investigate the incident • Prevent crime and disorder • Collate and disseminate casualty information • Manage access to the scene using cordons.	• Traffic/ Road policing • Beat officers and PCSOs – policing the outer cordon and providing traffic control • Public Order & Mounted officers • Firearms units & CBRN capabilities • Surveillance and Forensics • Disaster victim identification – Casualty Bureau
Fire Service	
Responsibilities	**Capabilities**
• Save life • Protect property • Protect the environment • Provide assistance in support of the local communities • Extinguish fires and rescue trapped individuals • Take the lead on incidents that involve hazardous materials • Manage the inner cordon when appropriate	• Fire-fighting • Road traffic collisions • Rescues from height or depth, including water • Environmental protection • Hazardous materials & Mass Decontamination • Canine search – for live bodies • Urban search and rescue (USAR) • Co-ordinate National resources e.g. High Volume Pumps
Ambulance Service	
Responsibilities	**Capabilities**

• Save life and prevent further suffering • Facilitate patient triage • Provide casualty treatment and transport to the most appropriate facility • Co-ordinate all health resources supporting the incident • Act as the primary NHS response and be a gateway to NHS services	• Paramedics and Emergency Care Practitioners • Clinical decontamination • Radiation protection • Community responders & Air Support • Temporary structures (casualty clearing and decontamination

Local Authorities - Responsibilities

Upper Tier

- Provide Emergency Assistance Centres (otherwise known as rest centres) which offer shelter, and refreshments for individuals that have been evacuated & co-ordinate support offered by the voluntary sector, this may include transport
- Support Emergency Mortuary arrangements
- Provide 'Social Services'

- Lead or support the recovery phase

Lower Tier

- Provide refuse collection and disposal, environmental health and housing support
- Support Emergency Mortuary arrangements
- Facilitate the inspection of dangerous structures
- Lead or support the recovery phase

NHS and Health Bodies – Responsibilities

- Manage the 'receiving' hospitals
- Provide specialist support to casualties
- Provide GP's, community nurses, mental health services and pharmacist
- Support casualties with mid and long-term health issues
- Identify and respond to incidents involving hazardous materials
- Provide support during the recovery phase

Environment Agency

- Protect and improve the environment in England and Wales
- Prevent or minimise the impact of an environmental incident
- Investigate the cause of an incident and consider enforcement or action if related to the environment
- Seek remediation, clean-up or restoration of the environment

Category 2 Responders
Utility Companies – Responsibilities

Work with the emergency services and local authority to deliver timely restoration of essential services to help minimise the wider impact on the community.

Transport Operators

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Manage traffic and congestion
• Provide travel information to the public
• Support transport and logistics
• Support any investigation related to the incident</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Health and Safety Executive</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Protect people’s health and safety in the workplace, nuclear installations, mines, factories, farms, schools, hospitals, gas and oil installations

Provide specialist advice on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Uncategorised</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Voluntary Agencies</td></tr>
<tr><td>Responsibilities</td><td>Capabilities</td></tr>
<tr><td>Voluntary Agencies are not categorised by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and therefore have no statutory duty to respond to an emergency. However, although voluntary organisations are not in a category, they can offer valuable support and expertise to emergency planning and response organisations. It is for this</td><td>The voluntary sector can provide support in a number of generic areas:

• Welfare
• Social and psychological aftercare
• Medical support
• Search and rescue
• Transport</td></tr>
<tr><td>reason that the CCA 2004 gives Category 1 responders a duty to include the voluntary sector in any relevant plans or response arrangements.</td><td>• Communications
• Documentation
• Training and exercising</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The Military</td></tr>
<tr><td>Responsibilities</td><td>Capabilities</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Military are not categorised as a Category One or Two responding organisation and have no legal responsibility under the CCA 2004 but may be called upon to support in emergency response. The ‘Joint Doctrine Publication 02

UK Operations: The Defence Contribution to Resilience’ provides more details on the role the military can play in responding to emergencies within the UK.</td><td>The military has considerable resources, personnel, assets, vehicles, communications and medical training which may be available. In peacetime the armed forces may be able to provide assistance to the civil authorities and organisations through a scheme called ‘Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA)’. Each of the three services: Army, Royal Air Force and Navy, has access to a wide range of professions, trades and skills within its ranks, and possesses a variety of versatile equipment, but the ways in which help may be given under MACA are fairly limited. The Military can be requested through the Joint Regional Liaison Officer. Contact can be found on WLRF Contact list.</td></tr>
</table>

E2. Command and Control

The Strategic/ Tactical/ Operational command and control structure is a nationally adopted framework by all emergency response organisations, ensuring a joint concept of responding

to emergencies at various scales (local, regional or national). This framework can be strengthened through joint training and exercising.

Command and Control:

- Is functional, not seniority or rank driven
- Tends to be implemented first at the lowest (operational) level
- Allows each organisation to scale up or down their response to meet the demands of the emergency

E2.1 Operational Level (Bronze)

The level at which immediate 'hands on' work is undertaken at the scene of the incident.

E2.2 Tactical Level (Silver)

Depending on the emergency, a lead agency (typically the police) will be identified, however they do not have the authority to command the personnel or assets of other responder agencies involved.

The tactical level will also:

- Determine priorities for allocating available resources
- Plan and coordinate how and when tasks will be undertaken
- Obtain additional resources if required
- Ensure the health and safety of the public and personnel.

NWBC will host their own tactical meeting usually out of the councils designated V/EMC. NWBC may also be asked to send a representative to the multi-agency TCG which may be hosted physically close to the scene or virtually on Microsoft Teams.

E2.3 Strategic Level (Gold)

The purpose of the strategic level is to consider the emergency in its wider context and any strategic implications.

The strategic level will also:

- Establish a policy framework for the overall management of the incident
- Prioritise the requirements of the tactical tier and allocate personnel and resources
- Formulate and implement media-handling and public communication plans
- Direct planning and operations beyond the immediate response.

The police will usually chair the SCG meeting, either at Police Headquarters or virtually which NWBC may be required to attend, either by the Chief Executive or an assigned senior officer in their absence.

E3. Multi Agency Response Structure

E3.1 Strategic Coordinating Group

The purpose of the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) is to take overall responsibility for the multi-agency management of the declared emergency and to establish the policy and strategic framework within which the Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) will work. The SCG will:

- Determine clear strategic aims and objectives and review them regularly
- Establish a policy framework for the overall management of the event or situation; prioritise the demands of the TCG and allocate personnel and resources to meet those demands
- Consider the recovery aims and objectives

The SCG does not have the collective authority to issue executive orders. Each organisation represented retains its own responsibilities and exercise control of its own operations. Therefore, the SCG must rely on a process of discussion and consensus to reach decisions at this level, and to ensure that the agreed strategic aims and objectives are implemented at the Tactical and Operational levels. Effectiveness at strategic level therefore rests upon every member having a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities and constraints of other responding members of staff.

Common Objectives

The following objectives are common across all responding agencies and generally apply at all levels of the emergency management and response framework. The SCG should consider the long term impact the emergency will have on each objective listed below:

- Save and protect life
- Relieve suffering
- Contain the emergency – prevent escalation or spread
- Provide the public with warnings, advice and information
- Protect the health and safety of personnel
- Safeguard the environment
- Protect property
- Maintain / restore critical services
- Maintain normal services at an appropriate level
- Promote and facilitate self-help in the community
- Facilitate investigation and enquiry
- Facilitate physical, social, economic and psychological recovery
- Evaluate the response and identify lesson learnt

Membership

SCG membership requires strategic level officers because emergencies:

- Place considerable demands on the resources of responding agencies;
- Pose significant business continuity challengers;
- Require complex planning and operations beyond the immediate response phase to facilitate recovery.

Agency representatives on the SCG should be clear on their organisation's strategic priorities; ensure that these are recorded and communicated to all other responders and must have the authority to commit resources on behalf of their organisation. The SCG will typically comprise of senior representatives from the relevant responding category 1 and 2 agencies, including voluntary agencies and military.

E3.2 Tactical Coordinating Group

The structure and workings of a TCG in general reflects that of the SCG but at the tactical level. The location of a multi-agency TCG will vary according to the emergency and will be agreed following consultation between responding agencies. TCGs are typically chaired by a senior Police Officer in charge of their police area.

TCG Activation

The Police will normally initiate the TCG, however any organisation can request a TCG. The Police will notify partners of the establishment of a TCG and will reflect those at the SCG.

TCG Resources

Organisations attending the TCG must initially be self-sufficent unless told otherwise. They should be able to provide their own:

- Communications with own organisation
- Appropriate mapping requirements
- Administration support
- Feeding arrangements for at least six hours Stationary, logs, etc.
- Appropriate protective clothing
- Relief staff

Operation of the TCG

Members of the TCG need to have the authority and experience to provide sound tactical decisions on behalf of their respective agencies, They need to be able to assess the needs of their agency in respect of human resources and equipment to be able to effectively translate strategy into tactical direction.

E3.3 Operational Command

Operational Command is where the strategy and tactics set by the SCG and TCG are respectively put into action. Each agency will appoint its own Operational Commander and will have either geographical or functional responsibilities equivalent to their role within their respective agency.

Although there is no formal meeting structure at SCG and TCG, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles will be used by responders at the scene to ensure that Operational Commanders quickly identify their counterparts in other responding agencies to ensure that they work in harmony with one another. It is only by doing so that the coordination and effective response for which the entire Command Structure has been put in place will be achieved. For more information, see the Joint Decision Model in section E4.2.

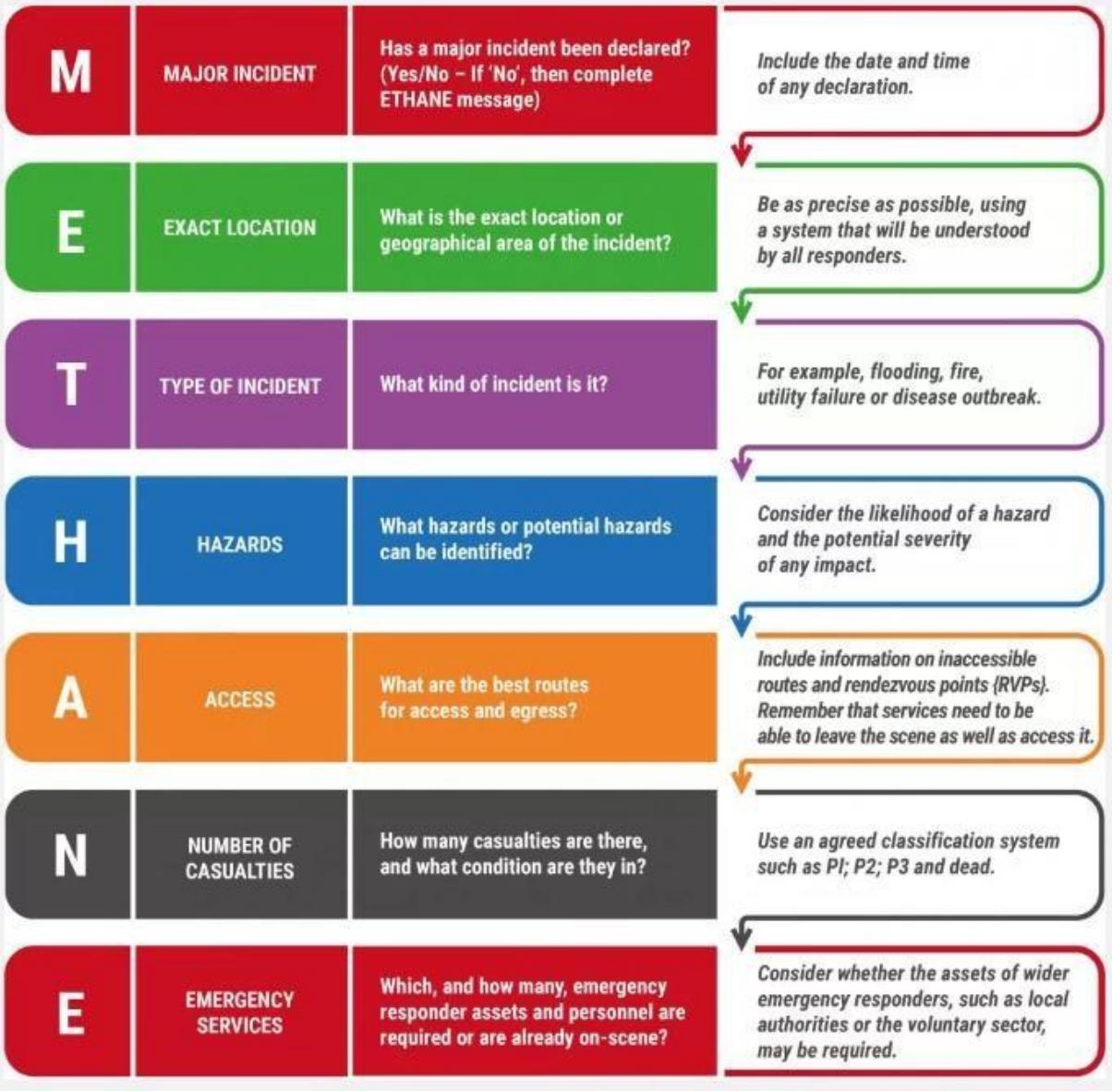
E4. Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme

The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) provides agreed joint working practices to improve the way emergency response organisations work together when responding to emergencies.

For more guidance on these principles of joint working, see *Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework Edition 3* - JESIP-Joint-Doctrine-October-2021.pdf

E4.1 M/ETHANE

The M/ETHANE model is an established reporting framework which provides a common structure for responders and their control rooms to share incident information. It is recommended that this format is used for all incidents and be updated as the incident develops. For incidents falling below the major incident threshold M/ETHANE becomes an 'ETHANE' message.



E4.2 Joint Decision Model

Commanders should use the Joint Decision Model (JDM) to help bring together the available information, reconcile objectives and make effective joint decisions keeping the aim of *Working Together, Saving Lives and Reducing Harm* in mind at all times.



E4. Bellwin Scheme

The Bellwin Scheme provides financial assistance for local authority response activity to an emergency. An emergency under the Bellwin Scheme, is defined as an incident involving destruction or danger to life or property, whilst response activities are defined as the taking of immediate action to safeguard life or property, or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience in the area or amongst its inhabitants.

There is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance from Bellwin. Ministers will review the circumstances of each individual case and decide on whether to accept or reject the bid. An indicator as to whether costs might be eligible is to what extent the response activities benefited the local community.

Before an authority is eligible for a grant, they are required to spent 0.2% of their calculated annual budget on works that have been reported to MHCLG. Depending on the emergency, it may be beneficial for NWBC to take on more of the response activities to full appreciate the Bellwin Scheme.

For further guidance, visit Bellwin scheme of emergency financial assistance to local authorities: guidance notes for claims - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Section F: Emergency Management Plan Internal Contact List

Redacted in the public version

NWBC Strategic Commanders			
Steve Maxey NWBC Chief Executive **Strategic Commander**	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:*	*Email:* stevemaxey@northwarks.gov.uk
Paul Sutton Corporate Director – Resources **Deputy Commander**	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:*	*Email:* paulsutton@northwarks.gov.uk
Nick Fenwick Corporate Director - Place	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:*	
NWBC Strategic Team			
Mike Brown Corporate Director – Streetscape	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:*	*Email:* mikebrown@northwarks.gov.uk

NWBC Tactical Commanders			
Mike Brown As above			
NWBC Tactical Team			
Angela Coates Director of Housing	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:* *Home:*	*Email:* angelacoates@northwarks.gov.uk
Andrew Collinson Head of Development Control	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:* *Home:*	*Email:* andrewcollinson@northwarks.gov.uk
Becky Evans Communities Manager	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:* *Home:*	*Email:* beckyevans@northwarks.gov.uk

Sofia Ali Head of Legal Services	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:* *Home:*	*Email:* *sofiaali@northwarks.gov.uk*
Trudi Barnsley Head of Corporate Services	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:* *Home:*	*Email:* *trudibarnsley@northwarks.gov.uk*
Sharon Gallagher Environmental Health and Licensing Manager	*Work Mobile:* *Office:*	*Personal Mobile:* *Home:*	*Email:* *sharongallagher@northwarks.gov.uk*

Section G: Appendices

Appendix 1. Initial Strategic / Tactical Meeting Agenda

Local Authority Strategic / Tactical Initial Agenda		
No.	**Item**	**Lead**
1	Introductions (by exception and only when deemed necessary)	Chair
2	Declaration of items for urgent attention	Chair
3	Situational briefing	Chair
4	Agree strategy and priorities	Chair
5	Review outstanding actions and their effect	Chair
6	Further Considerations / Horizon Scan • Business Continuity • Resourcing implications • Staff welfare • Communications / Media • Evolving risks	Chair
7	Determine new actions required	Chair
8	Allocate responsibility for agreed actions	Chair
9	Confirm date and time of next meeting and required attendees	Chair
Post Meeting: Distribute record of decisions, ensure decision log is updated and complete		Sec / Chair

Appendix 2. Standard Strategic / Tactical Meeting Agenda

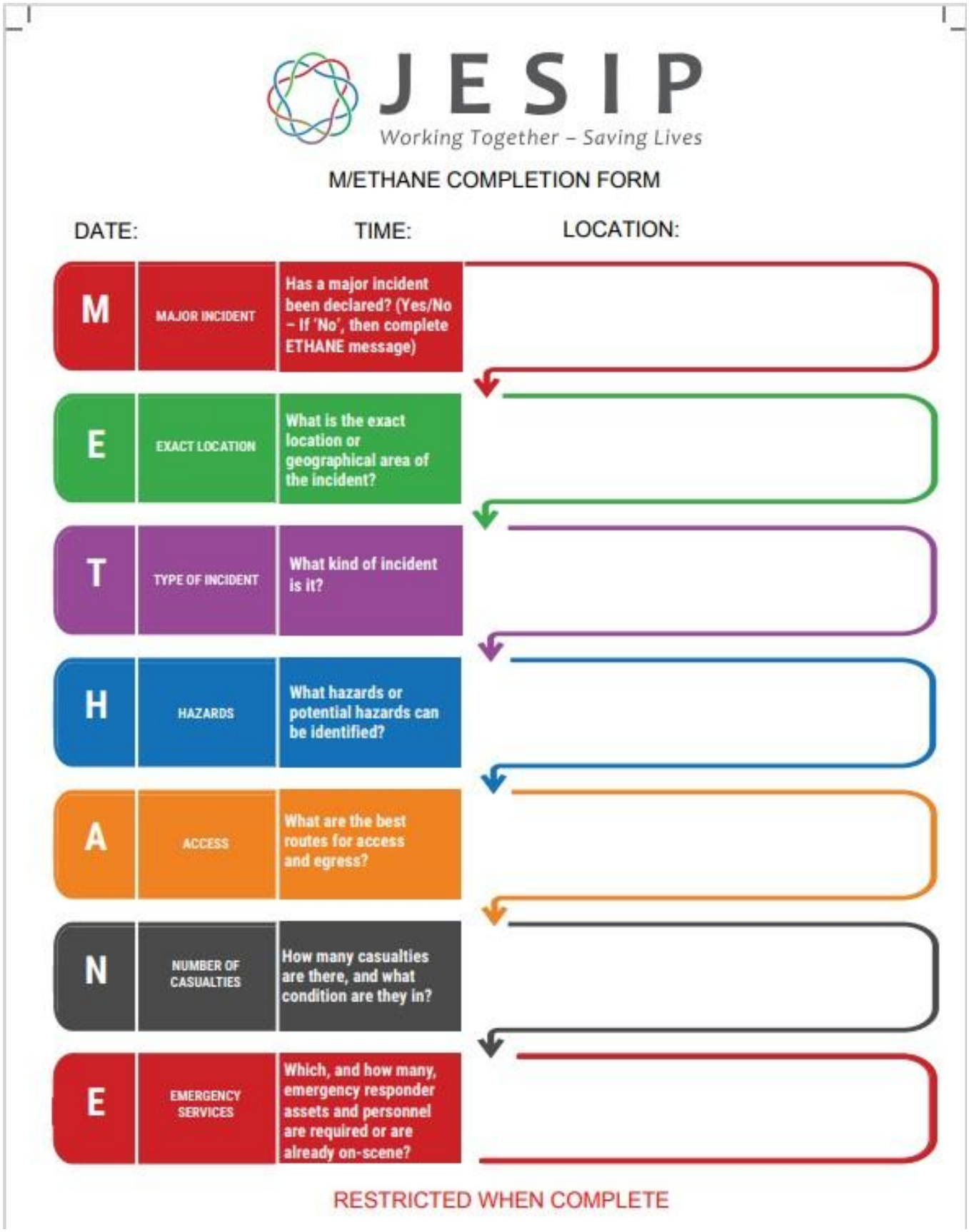
Local Authority Strategic / Tactical Standard Agenda		
No.	**Item**	**Lead**
1	Introductions (by exception and only when deemed necessary)	Chair
2	Declaration of items for urgent attention	Chair
3	Situational briefing including notes from previous meeting	Chair
4	Review and agree strategy and priorities	Chair
5	Review outstanding actions and their effect	Chair
6	Further Considerations / Horizon Scan • Business Continuity • Resourcing implications • Staff welfare • Communications / Media • Evolving risks	Chair
7	Determine new actions required	Chair
8	Allocate responsibility for agreed actions	Chair
9	Confirm date and time of next meeting and required attendees	Chair
Post Meeting: Distribute record of decisions, ensure decision log is updated and complete		Sec / Chair

Appendix 3. Briefing Template

Briefing Template:		**Briefing Number:**	
Time:	**Date:**	**By:**	**To:**

Situation (What the emergency is)	
Location/s (Where the emergency is)	
Aim (What is the aim of your response)	
Main Effort (Where will the council be focusing its efforts)	
Objectives (Identify the areas of response to be addressed)	
Tasks (What has been done/ needs to be done or are you currently just monitoring)	
Staffing (Who will be in the key roles)	
Resources (What resources have and need to be deployed)	
Communication (What Information will be passed on, when and how)	
Any other issues arising	
Recording	**Signature**
Briefer: Provide copy of Briefing to Log Keeper.	
Log Keeper: Briefing received	

Appendix 4. JESIP M/ETHANE Form



JESIP

Working Together – Saving Lives

M/ETHANE COMPLETION FORM

DATE: TIME: LOCATION:

M	MAJOR INCIDENT	Has a major incident been declared? (Yes/No – If 'No', then complete ETHANE message)
E	EXACT LOCATION	What is the exact location or geographical area of the incident?
T	TYPE OF INCIDENT	What kind of incident is it?
H	HAZARDS	What hazards or potential hazards can be identified?
A	ACCESS	What are the best routes for access and egress?
N	NUMBER OF CASUALTIES	How many casualties are there, and what condition are they in?
E	EMERGENCY SERVICES	Which, and how many, emergency responder assets and personnel are required or are already on-scene?

RESTRICTED WHEN COMPLETE

Appendix 5. The Role of a Loggist

What is a Loggist?

The purpose of the loggist is to record all decisions taken or not taken of the group/commander, along with the rationale in each case.

Loggists work alongside the Strategic and Tactical response staff to ensure information is accurately captured, so it can be used, if necessary, in any subsequent enquiry, whether internal or public.

In addition to this role all officers are responsible for maintaining a personal log of decisions and actions.

What a loggist is not:

It is important that the loggist is not seen as a general 'runner' or administrative support.

The log should comply with the following:

- be CIA (Clear Intelligible Accurate)
- be written in black ink/ballpoint pen
- be in chronological order, with the time and date of each entry recorded (using the 24-hour clock)
- have entries numbered consistently and methodically
- record facts, not assumptions/personal comments/opinions
- be complete, continuous, and contemporaneous (i.e. entries should be made at the time the information is received or at the earliest opportunity afterwards)
- include accurate timings of when information is received or sent
- if notes, maps, emails etc. are utilised these must be noted within the log and as otherwise directed by the accountable person
- not include shorthand or abbreviations unless these are recognised terms
- no entry may be erased or obliterated and there must be no overwriting or double entries
- no pages may be removed or inserted
- must contain a signature immediately of the loggist and the commander at the end of each session so that no additions can be made at a later date
- each individual page should be numbered separately and consecutively and be signed-off as an accurate record by the loggist and chair of the meeting along with the date/time

It is important to note:

The log and all associated paperwork become legal documentation and could be used later in a public inquiry or other legal proceedings. The Commander will have overall accountability for the log. At the end of each log the loggist should make sure that the commander has sign off each log to ensure the log is correct. The loggist has responsibility to ensure that they have captured the information accurately.

WARWICKSHIRE North / South



Shaping the future of our Councils

Contents

Introduction	4
How are the local councils organised now?	6
Why are changes being considered?	7
Why is it time for change?	8
What options have been considered by the district and borough councils?	9
Preferred option – Two unitary councils	10
Warwickshire County Council's proposal	12
What does reorganisation mean for you?	12
How would Council Tax be affected?	12
What about accessing council services?	12
What would be the impact on the number of councillors?	13
What would be the impact on existing council staff?	13
What would be the impact on protection and support for the vulnerable?	13
What other benefits could there be?	14
What happens next?	14
How can I join in the debate?	15
Glossary of terms used in this document	16

Introduction

Central government plans to restructure local government. It aims to remove the current two-tiers of county, district and borough councils and replace them with a single tier of councils, called unitary councils. Four of the five local borough and district councils across Warwickshire have united to reach a preferred option: to split the county in half with a single council in the north and a single council in the south of Warwickshire. Rugby Borough Council has yet to make a decision.

Warwickshire currently has six councils which make up the two tier structure:

- **Tier 1**
  - Warwickshire County Council
- **Tier 2**
  - North Warwickshire Borough Council
  - Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
  - Rugby Borough Council
  - Stratford-on-Avon District Council
  - Warwick District Council

These councils are responsible for a wide range of local services from housing, planning, and social care for children and adults; to collecting and disposing of waste and recycling, maintaining roads, and running libraries.

This document explains how the councils have reached their preferred option and will also provide you with the information you need to understand what the changes mean to you, so that you can share your views with us in our questionnaire which will be available from 7 August until 14 September 2025. The information collected will be considered together with the other evidence, to help the councils put together their final recommendation in November 2025.



Alcester

Kingsbury Water Park



All the councils in Warwickshire received a letter from government on 5 February 2025 asking them to submit proposals for restructuring local government.

In response, the five district and borough councils, have reviewed possible options for a smaller number of new unitary authorities to deliver council services across our area. This initial review of options was called an "interim plan", and this was approved in mid-March by all five district and borough councils, the detail for this can be found here. Warwickshire County Council also developed its own "interim plan" which can also be found here.



How are the local councils organised now?

There are currently six councils across Warwickshire, plus many parish and town councils. All the services you receive are divided between the county council, and the five district and borough councils.

Warwickshire County Council provides services for residents across the whole of the county, including education, social care for children and adults, highways, fire services and some environmental services.

The five district and borough councils – North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council – provide services for residents in their local areas including housing, planning, and waste collection.

Each of the six councils is independent, has its own political leadership and senior management team, and sets its own share of the council tax bill. Together, they have 257 councillors.

This map shows the current structure of local government in Warwickshire.



Why are changes being considered?

In December 2024, the government published a "Devolution White Paper" here (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) in which it stated that all two-tier areas in England should be restructured into single-tier unitary authorities. The government believes that change is needed to make local government simpler and more efficient and invited the six councils to work together on a plan to achieve this.

At the same time, the government also wants to create a network of strategic authorities, made up of two or more unitary authorities with each being run by an elected mayor.

Strategic authorities would be responsible for planning things like transport, housing and economic growth over the longer term. They would make decisions on important issues and receive funding direct from government for large scale schemes and projects.

There were two options identified for future unitary authorities in Warwickshire within this plan:

a. A single unitary authority for the whole county of Warwickshire. The latest population estimate for 2024 of this Council would be 632,207.

b. Two unitary authorities in Warwickshire, these being made up as follows:

i. The north: which includes the boroughs of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby. This area would have an estimated population of 331,060.

ii. The south: which includes the districts of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. The population for this area is estimated to be 301,147.

The option for two unitary authorities is favoured by the district and borough councils of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. Rugby Borough Council has yet to decide. Further information on these options can be seen on page 9.



Why is it time for change?

Across the country, there are 21 county council areas, within which there are 164 district and borough councils. Over the last 30 years there have been several changes to the structure of local government nationally and successive governments have supported moves towards unitary councils. This has been the case in Buckinghamshire, Cumbria, Dorset, Northamptonshire, and Somerset which have already moved to unitary structures.

With the prospect of the setting up of strategic authorities across the whole of England, the government believes further change is needed to ensure consistency across the whole country..

While the two-tier system of local government has served communities well for years, Warwickshire councils recognise that the proposals offer an opportunity to make things simpler. Indeed, there is often confusion from residents about which council provides which services.In late 2020, a pre-consultation on options for local government in Warwickshire took place. Two-thirds of residents who were surveyed agreed with the idea of replacing the two-tier system with two single-tier (unitary) councils to run local government services across Warwickshire.

The five district and borough councils of Warwickshire have collaborated on an interim plan that would abolish the existing six councils and create two new unitary councils, which they believe would:

- Ensure our communities stay connected to the council.
- Simplify services and offer clarity on who provides them.
- Balance the size of the council with addressing the diverse needs of residents.
- Build on the strengths of the district and borough councils in working with local people.



What options have been considered by the district and borough councils?

Two options for unitary government in Warwickshire have been considered:

1. A new single county-wide unitary council for Warwickshire
2. Two new unitary councils for north and south Warwickshire

The district and borough councils commissioned external consultants, Deloitte, to review these two options against the six criteria that the government will use for their final decision. New unitary structures should aim to:

- achieve a single tier of local government for the whole area.
- be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial challenges.
- prioritise high quality and sustainable public services.
- show how councils in the area have worked together to meet local needs and are informed by local views.
- support devolution arrangements.
- enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Following this independent evaluation, the report concluded that the option which scored highest was the proposal for two unitary councils. The full report from Deloitte can be found on our website https://shapingourcouncils.co.uk.

Deloitte found that one of the six criteria, around financial savings, favoured the option of a single new unitary authority covering the whole of Warwickshire. However, with a combined turnover of almost £1bn, the difference between the two options was relatively small, around £3m per year.

On the other five criteria, Deloitte concluded that the option of creating two new unitary authorities scored higher. Some benefits supporting this included:

- The north and south of the county have different economies, which would be difficult to merge.
- The approach ensures councils can respond quickly to local needs and build stronger community relationships.
- The two-unitary model maintains a sense of real place and community.
- The current county council area of Warwickshire is not seen as a coherent single place.
- A two-unitary model is best for Warwickshire as it balances size with a focus on responding to local needs.

Preferred option – two unitary councils

The Councils of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick have all determined that their preferred option for future local government structures is the two-unitary option which would divide Warwickshire into two halves, north and south, as the map shows..

This structure would be more suitable for our communities, because it is found to best reflect the way people live and work in the area, it matches housing and service demands, and supports existing strong links between towns in the north and south, and their relationship with the wider economy.

It is expected that the population of our communities will continue to grow. Government has recently published updated forecasts which show that by 2047, both a north and south Warwickshire unitary would have a population larger than most current unitary authorities.



Services provided by our councils

Town & Parish Councils

- local amenities such as footpaths, cemeteries and small parks as well as events

District & Borough Councils

- housing and homelessness
- environmental health
- community protection
- CCTV
- planning
- building control
- waste collections
- car parking
- licensing
- parks and green spaces
- elections
- sports and leisure centres and facilities

County Council

- adult social care
- highways and transport
- libraries
- public health
- fire and rescue
- children's services
- special educational needs and disabilities
- waste disposal

Before final decisions from the district and borough councils, and ahead of the submission to government in November, additional research is needed to understand how existing services which cover the whole county, could instead be delivered by two separate new unitary authorities.

Analysis of adult social care, children's services, special educational needs and disabilities and fire and rescue services by independent consultants has found that there are opportunities to change the way in which they are delivered to reduce cost and demand by using a more local approach. It would be important for the two unitaries to:

- Become more financially stable through this change.
- Reduce demand on these services by targeting prevention and early intervention on a local level.
- Make the best use of our community assets in each area when targeting prevention and early initiatives.

The government is concerned about additional cost and maintaining the quality of these services under a two-unitary option.



Chesterton Windmill, Chesterton

Miners' Welfare Park, Bedworth

Warwickshire County Council's proposal

Warwickshire County Council's interim plan identifies the same two options for future unitary structures. This plan can be found on their website **here**: https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1980322935-3102

The County Council evaluated both options at the interim stage and concluded: ***"It is clear that unitary government will bring benefits; greater accountability, simplified governance, greater efficiencies, improved accessibility and joined up service delivery. It is also clear, as shown in the evidence, that a single unitary authority for Warwickshire delivers the most benefits when assessed against the Government's criteria"***

What does reorganisation mean for you?

How would council tax be affected?

When a new authority is created, the amount paid within each council tax band must (after a period) be equalised across the whole area. This means that your council tax rates may go up or down.

The council tax component for the county council is the same across the whole of the county area, this stands at £1,822.95 (for a typical Band D property). However, the level of council tax for the district and boroughs varies from £169.12 to £271.47 (for a typical Band D property). This is a difference of over £100.

2025/26 Council Tax (Band D)	
North Warwickshire	**£242.75**
Nuneaton	**£271.47**
Rugby	**£223.53**
Stratford	**£169.12**
Warwick	**£187.60**

For the proposed North Warwickshire unitary the difference between the highest and lowest council tax currently paid by a typical Band D property is £47.94, and in the proposed South Warwickshire Unitary the difference is only £18.48.

Under unitary arrangements, the level of council tax would (after a period of time) need to be the same across the whole of the unitary authority area. In the future, the new councils will decide on the council tax levels, however, with the two-unitary structure, council tax levels are not expected to change significantly.

What about accessing Council services?

The two-unitary proposal would mean that for the first time all residents, businesses and organisations would have one council in their area to contact for most services, from bins to social care to planning and roads.

Under the findings of the Deloitte report, whilst a single unitary council is likely to deliver slightly more savings this would cover a very large area and could be seen as being too far away from the communities that it would serve.



Statue of Shakespeare, Stratford-Upon-Avon



Almshouses. Bedworth

What would be the impact on the number of councillors?

To achieve the government's objective of streamlining councils, it is expected that the two new unitary authorities in the north and south would have around 60 councillors each. If the government went ahead with a single unitary council it is expected that there would be around 114 councillors.

Under both proposals the result would be a significant reduction (over 50%) in the number of elected members, from the existing 257 councillors. Currently in district and borough councils there are on average 2,244 residents per councillor, under the new proposals this would increase to almost 4,000.

The new unitary authorities would work closely with parish and town councils. In addition, the new councils would provide new ways of working closely with local communities. This could be through neighbourhood committees, (these provide a link between residents and councils, to discuss local issues and work on improving their local community) which would be held throughout each unitary council. Subject to local views, opportunities would be explored to create new town or parish councils to represent communities where there are none at present.

What would be the impact on existing council staff?

There is likely to be a reduction in the number of senior leadership positions, which will contribute to some of the predicted financial savings. It is expected that the majority of employees will continue to work for the proposed new councils as the level of service for our residents remains the same.

What would be the impact on protection and support for the vulnerable?

We will be liaising with users of these services before we make our final decision on what we believe to be the best structure.

These services are extremely important to our residents, and we have commissioned further research to help decide on the best structure to support our residents most in need. We intend to implement structures which would support stronger partnership working and allow a greater focus on prevention. We expect that a local approach from two unitary councils in Warwickshire would be more responsive and accessible to local needs than a single, larger council covering all of Warwickshire.



Leamington Spa



Coleshill, North Warwickshire

What other benefits could there be?

The two-unitary proposal would require a complete review of the way in which services are delivered across the county area. Such a review would need to be carefully undertaken to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities are protected through a period of change. It is expected that the new councils would work with planning, housing, health and community safety to develop a local multi-agency approach at the heart of the community. This is an approach that a single large council covering the whole area could not achieve.

Our proposed model aims to achieve the right balance: it's large enough to deliver your services effectively, yet close enough to communities to respond quickly and meaningfully. The two-unitary proposal's key strengths are:

- **Local delivery:** councils which are close to their communities understand them better, enabling earlier intervention and personalised support. They can deliver beneficial services, which provide the best value for money.
- **Community partnerships:** services can be better co-designed with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), ensuring relevance and responsiveness. Local people should feel more ownership through this approach.

What happens next?

All councils in Warwickshire have been asked to respond to government in November on what we would like the future unitary arrangements to be.

The councils are in the process of gathering evidence to help us make our decision. At this point North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council all prefer the option of two unitary councils, one in the north and one in the south, as discussed earlier in this document.

To help the councils make our final decision we really want to understand the views of our residents, businesses and partners. Our questionnaire will give you the opportunity to share your views, and help us to make the right decision for everyone in Warwickshire. The government is expected to make a final decision in 2026, with new unitary authorities in place by 2028.

How can I join in the debate?

Public engagement on the proposals for change starts on **7 August 2025** and closes on **14 September 2025**. The engagement is being conducted by an independent and specialist market research company, Opinion Research Services (ORS).

Residents, town and parish councils and other organisations are being asked to share their views on the proposal by completing a questionnaire available online here.

Paper copies are also available at the district and borough council offices.

ORS will also be talking to local residents, from businesses and voluntary organisations, to town and parish councils, to answer any questions they have, explain how the proposals might affect them, and gather their views.

This is an important engagement about the future of your local councils in Warwickshire. No decisions have been taken yet and we want to know your views, whether you agree or disagree with the proposal for two unitary councils for Warwickshire; and you are welcome to suggest other options.

Any information provided to ORS (via the questionnaire or by any other means) will be processed in accordance with the latest data protection regulations. Personal information will be kept for no more than one year after any decisions have been finalised. For further information, please see

https://shapingourcouncils.co.uk/privacy-policy

Members of the public will not be identified in any ORS consultation reports, but where feedback is submitted by a representative on behalf of an organisation, or by an elected representative or someone acting in their official capacity, this may be attributed.

Questionnaires and written responses can be returned FREEPOST to:

ORS,
FREEPOST (SS1018),
PO BOX 530,
Swansea,
SA1 1AF.

Please respond as soon as you can and by 14 September 2025, at the latest.

If you have any queries about completing the questionnaire or need assistance, including a copy in large print, please call ORS on 0800 3247004 or email consultation@ors.org.uk

A glossary of terms used in this document:

Two tiers – two levels of local government, for example where you have a district or borough council AND a county council in your area.

Two unitary model – two single councils for one area.

Two unitary structure – two single councils for one area.

Single tier – one level of local government, for example where there is not a district, borough or county council, but one single council.

Unitary council – a single tier of local government, one council in your area.

Interim plan – not the final plan, but a starting point and needs further work.

North south – where the county of Warwickshire would be split into two halves, one in the north and the other in the south.

Devolution – where the government gives powers of decision making and spending to smaller regions.

Strategic authority – this is made up of a few unitary councils, and is governed by an elected Mayor.

Elected Mayor – an elected political leader with the power of decision making and spending in their strategic authority.

Deloitte – an independent consultant for audit, assurance and tax.

Town and parish councils – sometimes referred to as the third tier of local government, they are local to communities.

Neighbourhood committees – made up of residents and council staff, where they can voice concerns, and work together to improve local communities.

Engagement – being involved in a project, ensuring information is shared.

Opinion Research Services – the social research agency that have been commissioned to collect opinions, attitudes and information from people on an independent basis.

Proposed changes to councils in Warwickshire

Report of Public Engagement: Final

Opinion Research Services

October 2025

Opinion Research Services

The Strand Swansea SA1 1AF
01792 535300 | www.ors.org.uk | info@ors.org.uk

As with all our studies, findings from this report are subject to Opinion Research Services' Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract.

Any press release or publication of the findings of this report requires the advance approval of ORS. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation

This study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2019, ISO 9001:2015, and ISO 27001:2022

© Copyright October 2025

Contents

1. Executive Summary 52
Introduction 52
Devolution and reorganisation 52
The commission 52
The nature of public consultation 52
Key themes: the current two-tier system and the principle of unitary authorities 53
Key themes: number of unitary authorities 54
Key themes: North/South 55
Key themes: additional feedback 56
2. Introduction 57
Overview of the engagement 57
Local government in Warwickshire 57
Devolution and reorganisation 57
The commission 58
Nature of engagement 60
The report 61
3. Engagement Questionnaire 62
The open engagement questionnaire 62
Duplicate and co-ordinated responses 62
Respondent profile 62
Geographical spread of respondents 64
Interpretation of the data 66
Main Findings 67
Awareness of current council services and views on making efficiencies 67
Views on making efficiencies 68
Views on reducing the number of councils 69
Views on the criteria that should inform decision-making 71
Views on the proposal for two unitary councils 72
Views on the areas to be covered by each proposed new council 74
Respondents' comments 75
Engagement Questionnaire: Organisation Responses 86
Overview 86
Main findings 87
Additional comments made by organisations 87
4. Focus Groups with General Residents 90
Overview 90
Main findings from residents' focus groups 90
5. Focus Group with Service Users 98
Overview 98
Main findings 98

6. Town and Parish Council workshops 102
Overview 102
Main Findings from Town & Parish Council workshops 102
7. Business Forum 106
Overview 106
Main findings from Business Representatives' forum 106
8. Voluntary and Community Sector Workshop 109
Overview 109
Main findings from VCS focus group 109
9. Key Stakeholder Interviews 115
Overview 115
Main findings from key stakeholder interviews 115
10. Figures 120

The ORS Project Team

Project Design and management

Kester Holmes
Kelly Lock

Qualitative research delivery

Kelly Lock
Dr Emma Price
Angharad Davies

Fieldwork and data coding management

Max Davies
Ellen Fitzpatrick

Data analysis

Richard Harris
Sheng Yang
Peter Maggs

Reporting

Kelly Lock
Alys Thomas
Matt Lewis-Richards
Dr Emma Price

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

1.1 Warwickshire's councils are currently arranged in a two-tier, with some services provided by Warwickshire County Council and some provided by the five district and borough councils (North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council, Rugby Borough Council, Warwick District Council, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council).

1.2 Each of the councils is independent, has its own political leadership and senior management team, and sets its own share of the council tax bill. Together, they currently have 257 councillors.

Devolution and reorganisation

1.3 In December 2024, the government published a Devolution White Paper, stating that all remaining two-tier areas in England should eventually be restructured into single-tier unitary authorities to make local government more streamlined and sustainable. The government invited all six of the councils across Warwickshire to work together on a plan to achieve this.

1.4 North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council, Warwick District Council, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council engaged with thousands of residents, business and stakeholders, and collaborated on an interim plan that would abolish the existing councils and create the 'North/South' model. This model would see the creation of two unitary authorities:

- **North Warwickshire**, covering the areas currently served by North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council, and Rugby Borough Council.
- **South Warwickshire,** covering the areas currently served by Warick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

The commission

1.5 Opinion Research Services (ORS) was appointed by North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council, Warwick District Council, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council (henceforth 'the councils') to advise on and independently manage and report important aspects of the comprehensive public engagement programme.

1.6 The formal engagement period was launched on 7th August and ended on 14th September 2025. During this period, residents and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback through an online engagement questionnaire (open to all); paper and accessible versions of the questionnaire; public focus groups; workshops with various stakeholder types; and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.

The nature of public consultation

1.7 Accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views: they should conduct fair and accessible engagement while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully.

1.8 This does not mean that the majority views should automatically decide public policy; and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions. Above all, public bodies have to consider the relevance and cogency of the arguments put forward during public engagement processes, not just count heads.

1.9 For the public bodies considering the outcomes of public engagement, the key question is not "*Which proposal has most* support*?"* but, "*Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?"* In this context, it was essential that this important engagement programme should include both 'open' and deliberative elements, allowing many people to take part via the open questionnaire and residents' survey while promoting informed engagement via the deliberative focus groups, forums, and the in-depth interviews.

Note on the quantitative activities

1.10 Open questionnaires are important forms of engagement in being inclusive and giving people an opportunity to express their views; but they are not random sample surveys of a given population - so they cannot normally be expected to be representative of the general balance of opinion. For example, younger age groups are usually under-represented while older age groups tend to be over-represented; and more motivated groups or areas are also typically over-represented compared with others.

Key themes: the current two-tier system and the principle of unitary authorities

Quantitative feedback

1.11 Overall, seven-in-ten individual questionnaire respondents (70%) indicated that they feel very or fairly informed about the services provided by councils in their area, and over four-in-five (83%) agreed (i.e. either 'strongly' agreed or 'tended to' agree) with the principle that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline and make efficiencies, while maintaining good services.

1.12 Additionally, just over half (54%) of respondents agreed, in principle, with the Government's requirement to replace the current system with a smaller number of unitary councils; however, a third (33%) disagreed.

1.13 Another question sought feedback on five criteria[1] that are likely to influence decision-making, by asking respondents to give each criterion a score from 0 to 10. When averaged, all five criteria attracted a high overall score, although a little more importance was attached to "quality" and "accountability" (both with an average score of 9.3 out of 10), and a little less to "local identity" (an average score of 8.3 out of 10).

1.14 An open-ended question allowed questionnaire respondents to provide further feedback on the proposals. In relation to the principle of introducing unitary authorities, there was some support for achieving efficiencies and better value for money. Nonetheless, various concerns were expressed around a loss of accountability, the difficulties of managing competing priorities (particularly between urban and rural areas), a loss of local knowledge, and the possibility of services becoming less accessible for residents.

[1] The five criteria were: accountability, quality, local identity, access and value for money

Deliberative feedback

1.15 Residents and Service Users gave mixed views on the principle of the reorganisation and were largely undecided. Most agreed it would create cost savings, reduce duplication, and provide the opportunity to streamline services. Others said it could be an opportunity to share expertise from staff across a wider area than is currently possible. Businesses, VCS, and key stakeholder representatives supported the principle of reorganisation for the aforementioned reasons and to simplify their dealings with the council, though most said their existing relationships with the various councils are already positive.

1.16 Concerns among all groups were that smaller populations would receive less focus from services and councillors, potentially impacting the quality of service that residents receive. One Service User described difficulty obtaining a suitable home in their area through social housing and questioned whether a new council covering a large geography might mean they could in future be expected to accept housing in more distant areas.

1.17 Town and Parish Councillors were concerned that the changes would increase their existing responsibilities. This was a concern to many who said that recruitment for the role is already difficult enough. One councillor sought clarity on how budgeting for the new council(s) would be affected by the reorganisation. They suggested that organising the new budget in a way that is deemed fair and reasonable would be difficult and that the new council would need to ensure transparency around the issue to maintain local trust.

Key themes: number of unitary authorities

Quantitative feedback

1.18 Over seven-in-ten individuals responding to the questionnaire (73%) agreed with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire, while just over a fifth (22%) disagreed.

1.19 Agreement was somewhat higher in the two districts comprising the proposed South Warwickshire unitary council (79% in Stratford-on-Avon and 76% in Warwick) compared to those areas making up the proposed North Warwickshire council (66% in North Warwickshire, 63% in Nuneaton and Bedworth, 35% in Rugby[2]).

1.20 Having two councils (e.g. covering north and south), many respondents suggested, would better reflect differences between areas. Some respondents who had concerns about unitarization and reducing councils in general, felt that having two might be preferable to one and help mitigate some of their concerns. Specific concerns expressed about a single unitary council were that it would be too large and remote, lack accountability and not treat all areas equitably.

1.21 However, other respondents expressed support for a single unitary council, feeling this would minimise duplication and help to achieve greater economies of scale. Some respondents also expressed concern about the potential impacts of disaggregating county-wide services such as social care and education in the event of two councils being created.

1.22 Occasionally, respondents also advocated for a larger number of unitary councils e.g. three.

[2] Although note that this result is based on a low number of responses (31) from Rugby.

Deliberative feedback

1.23 Most participants in all groups preferred to have two unitary authorities, agreeing that it would better cater to the different needs of areas across Warwickshire and ensure that the more local focus from services is retained, improving service quality. One resident argued that having two authorities would give Warwickshire more 'bargaining power' within a strategic authority also.

1.24 Those who preferred to have one authority said it would provide better cost savings and efficiencies; more consistent service delivery; and create a bigger 'pot' of funds to focus on areas with the highest needs. Business representatives added that having one authority could ensure that strategic planning was more consistent.

Key themes: North/South

Quantitative feedback

1.25 Overall, around three quarters (74%) of questionnaire respondents agreed with the areas to be covered by the proposed unitary councils, while just under a fifth (18%) disagreed.

1.26 Again, agreement appeared to be higher in the districts making up the proposed South Warwickshire unitary (80% in Stratford-on-Avon and 79% in Warwick) compared to those making up the proposed North Warwickshire unitary (64% in Nuneaton and Bedworth and 61% in North Warwickshire, and only 23% in Rugby[3]).

1.27 Among respondents who provided further feedback, there was a widespread sense that the North and South of the county do have distinctive characteristics e.g. social, economic and political, which were felt by many to strengthen the case for having two unitary councils.

1.28 Nonetheless, there were some reservations, including concerns that the proposal risks creating an 'affluent council (i.e. in the south) and a 'poor' council (i.e. in the north) which might risk exacerbating inequalities. There was also some feedback that all (or, alternatively, parts) of Rugby might belong better in the proposed South Warwickshire unitary. A few suggested more radical configurations involving neighbouring areas outside Warwickshire.

1.29 A few had specific concerns about the creation of a South Warwickshire unitary council, noting strong urban and rural differences, and citing unsuccessful attempts to combine the two councils in the past.

Deliberative feedback

1.30 Participants across all groups voiced their support for the North/South model to varying degrees. Numerous residents said they would feel more comfortable being represented by a council with the population sizes suggested under the model, rather than under one council with the entire combined population of Warwickshire. Linked with this, North Warwickshire residents felt that the North/South model would best preserve focus on their local areas, benefiting the services they receive.

[3] Although again note that this is based on a low number of responses from Rugby.

1.31 Town and Parish Councillors questioned whether service delivery and quality would vary between North and South if Warwickshire if the North/South model were implemented, and what controls will be in place to ensure service delivery is high quality across both authorities.

Key themes: additional feedback

Quantitative feedback

1.32 The remaining open-ended feedback from questionnaire respondents covered a range of topics. Various concerns were expressed around accessibility, with respondents noting that access can already be challenging for some residents (e.g. those in rural areas, some older people, those with low incomes) and therefore any further reductions in council sites may have a disproportionately negative impact.

1.33 A few respondents expressed strong concerns about possible impacts on the most vulnerable if services such as social care, safeguarding services and SEND (special educational needs) provision were disrupted.

1.34 Other concerns were expressed around: impacts on partnership working (e.g. with the Police and Fire and Resue Service), workforce issues associated with reorganisation (e.g. redundancies), and on council tax levels and the equalisation process.

1.35 Other feedback concerned local decision-making e.g. whether town and parish councils might take on an enhanced role, or some new bodies (e.g. area committees) might be created.

1.36 In terms of service delivery across a wider area, a small number of respondents queried whether two new unitary councils might be able to share some services, or going further, whether some services (e.g. social care and SEND) might be commissioned over a larger area in future, and shared by multiple councils across the region.

1.37 There were also some queries about how the proposal would fit into wider devolution e.g. how it might impact new or existing strategic authorities, and which strategic authorities the new councils might be part of.

Deliberative feedback

1.38 A few residents and Service Users voiced some frustration, and felt that more detail is needed for them to understand the impact of the reduction in councillors; the impacts of disaggregation; and the impacts on council tax. One resident felt that a decision on how the new council(s) would be formed had already been made, whilst another suggested the motivation for the changes was to increase council tax revenue. Concerns around council tax were also briefly raised during one of the Town and Parish council workshops.

1.39 Many participants in the Town and Parish Councillors' group wanted more detail on the potential plans for Warwickshire's place within a strategic authority, but praised the councils for their communication to date regarding the changes. Key stakeholders stressed that they would work closely with any new authorities to deliver the best outcomes for all areas, regardless of local government structures.

2. Introduction

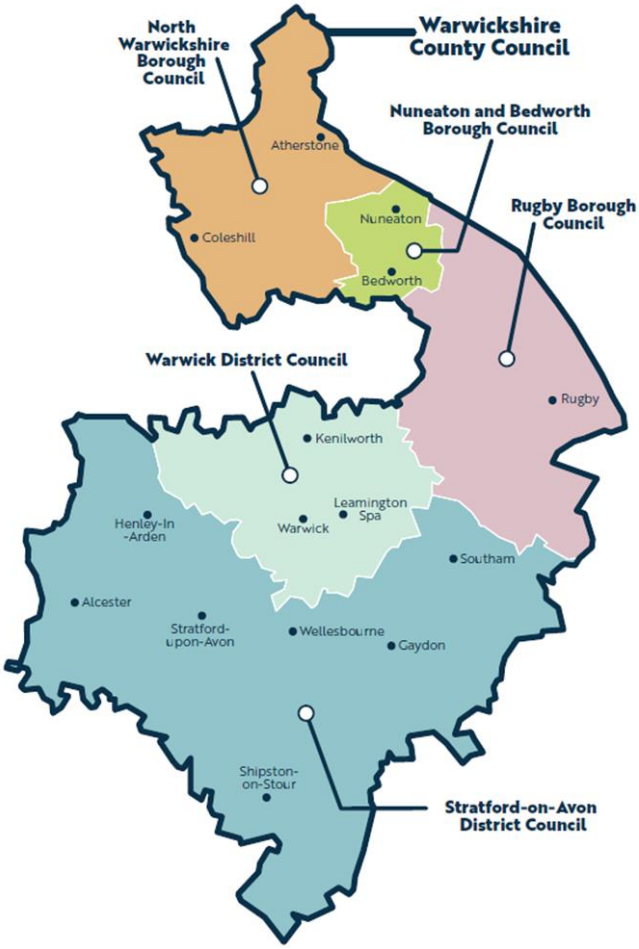
Overview of the engagement

Local government in Warwickshire

2.1 In addition to many local parish and town councils, there are currently six councils providing services across Warwickshire: five district and borough councils, and Warwickshire County Council. These councils are responsible for a range of local services from housing, planning, and social care for children and adults; to collecting waste and recycling, maintaining roads, and running libraries.

2.2 The councils in Warwickshire are currently arranged in a two-tier structure with some services provided by Warwickshire County Council and some provided by the five district and borough councils (North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council, Rugby Borough Council, Warwick District Council, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council). The councils cover an overall population of 632,207.

2.3 Each of the six councils is independent, has its own political leadership and senior management team, and sets its own share of the council tax bill. Together, they currently have 257 councillors.



Devolution and reorganisation

2.4 The government's devolution agenda is about giving more powers and funding to regions. In December 2024, it published the Devolution White Paper[4], in which it stated that all remaining two-tier areas in England should be restructured into single-tier unitary authorities to make local government more streamlined and sustainable. The government invited the six councils across Warwickshire to work on a proposal to achieve this.

2.5 At the same time, the government also wants to create a network of Strategic Authorities, which would comprise two or more unitary authorities and be run by an elected mayor. These Authorities would be empowered to make decisions on strategic issues that cross unitary authority boundaries, such as transport, housing and economic growth, ensuring a more co-ordinated and long-term approach. Strategic Authorities would also receive funding direct from government for large scale schemes and projects.

[4] Available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper

2.6 As a result of this, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council, Warwick District Council, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council (henceforth 'the councils') engaged with thousands of residents, businesses and stakeholders, and collaborated on an interim plan that would abolish the existing councils and create the 'North/South' model. This model would see the creation of two unitary authorities:

- **North Warwickshire**, covering the areas currently served by North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council and Rugby Borough Council.
- **South Warwickshire**, covering the areas currently served by Warwick District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

2.7 At the same time, different proposals for this area are separately being put forward by Warwickshire County Council[5] and Rugby Borough Council had not decided on a preferred option at the time of this study. The eventual make-up of unitary authorities in the area will be the decision of the government.

2.8 Prior to finalising and submitting their full proposal to government in November 2025, the councils have undertaken the comprehensive public engagement exercise reported here to gather more data and evidence; and help ensure that the right decision is made for everyone in Warwickshire.

The commission

2.9 Opinion Research Services (ORS) is a spin-out company from Swansea University with a UK-wide reputation for social research, particularly major statutory consultations (including on local government reorganisations in Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire) and engagement processes. ORS was appointed by the councils to advise on and independently manage and report important aspects of the comprehensive public engagement programme.

2.10 The formal engagement period was launched on 7th August 2025 and ended on 14th September 2025. During this period, residents and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback through a wide range of routes, including all the following:

- An engagement questionnaire: the questionnaire was available online and paper questionnaires were available on request
- Six in-depth telephone interviews with the key strategic stakeholders
- Four focus groups with members of the public (one in each of the Warwickshire districts and boroughs, except Rugby)
- Five workshops and forums with external stakeholders: local business representatives, vulnerable service users, Town and Parish Councils x2, and Voluntary and Community Sector representatives

Open engagement questionnaire

2.11 The primary form of quantitative engagement was the open engagement questionnaire, which was available for anyone to complete - reached via a dedicated website (https://shapingourcouncils.co.uk) promoted via the councils' individual website, or by completing a paper version. The questionnaire included questions about the principle of reducing the number of existing councils, the criteria that ought to be considered as

[5] Warwickshire County Council has put forward a proposal for one unitary authority representing the whole of Warwickshire. See: Update on Local Government Reorganisation - Warwickshire County Council and Final proposal

part of any reorganisation, support or opposition to the North/South Warwickshire proposal, and alternative suggestions and further comments.

2.12 Open questionnaires are important forms of engagement in being inclusive and giving people an opportunity to express their views; but they are not random sample surveys of a given population - so they cannot normally be expected to be representative of the general balance of opinion. For example, younger age groups are usually under-represented while older age groups tend to be over-represented; and more motivated groups or areas are also typically over-represented compared with others. For example, the proportion of responses from respondents in districts in the south of Warwickshire (around 83%) was far greater than the actual proportion of the population (48%); and conversely respondents from the districts and boroughs in the north of Warwickshire (around 17% of questionnaire responses), were generally underrepresented, relative to the size of their populations (52% combined). These differences should be borne in mind when reviewing the findings.

2.13 In total, 2,334 responses were received, including 2,312 individual responses and 22 on behalf of organisations.

Deliberative engagement

2.14 The engagement meetings reported here used a 'deliberative' approach, whereby focus group/forum/workshop participants were presented with the relevant contextual information; and given the opportunity to 'deliberate' the issues in question before their considered opinions were sought. Sessions like this offer opportunities for clear presentations of the proposals and evidence; questions and clarification of any ambiguous or difficult points; and for participants to think through their responses while having an opportunity to listen to the evidence and the views of others.

2.15 All focus groups and forums lasted for between 1.5 and 2 hours and began with an ORS presentation to provide standardised information about: the current council set-up across Warwickshire; the need for change; and the North/South model and its implications. Participants were encouraged to ask questions throughout, and the meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

Focus groups with residents

2.16 Four online focus groups were held with 35 randomly selected residents: one in each of the Warwickshire boroughs/districts except for Rugby Borough Council. The schedule of meetings and attendance levels are shown below.

Table 1: Resident focus groups (area, time and date, and number of attendees)

Group	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Stratford-on-Avon	Tuesday 2nd September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	7
Warwick	Wednesday 3rd September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	10
Nuneaton and Bedworth	Tuesday 9th September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	8
North Warwickshire	Wednesday 11th September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	10
	TOTAL	**35**

2.17 The borough/district-based groups were recruited by Acumen Field Ltd, a specialist recruitment agency, who initially sent out a screening questionnaire to a database of contacts and, more widely, on social media

platforms, targeting the relevant areas. The list of potential contacts was then further refined to establish an initial pool of plausible recruits. The possible recruits were contacted by telephone, asked to complete a more detailed screening questionnaire, and where they matched the required quota targets and other requirements, were recruited to attend the relevant focus group. All necessary details were provided in a confirmation email, and all recruits were telephoned in the days immediately prior to the events, to confirm their attendance (with replacements sought for any late drop-outs).

2.18 Although, like all other forms of qualitative engagement, deliberative focus groups and forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse members of the public the opportunity to participate actively. Because the meetings were inclusive, the outcomes are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline, if similar discussions were undertaken with the overall population.

Forums and workshops with stakeholders

2.19 For most of the forums and workshops, initial invitations were issued by the council, and subsequent attendance arrangements organised by ORS. However, participants at the Service User group were recruited directly by ORS based on indicating use of relevant services within the engagement questionnaire. A fifth participant for the Service Users group was unable to attend on the day, and instead took part in a 1-1 telephone interview with an ORS researcher. Therefore, although the table below shows that four people took part in the Service Users group, five service users were spoken to in total.

2.20 The schedule of events and attendance levels can be seen in the table below.

Table 2: Stakeholder focus groups (area, time and date, and number of attendees)

Group	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Voluntary and Community Sector	Wednesday 3rd September 2025, 10am – 12pm	5
Town and Parish Council Forum (1)	Thursday 4th September 2025, 4pm – 6pm	13
Business representatives	Wednesday 10th September 2025, 9:30am – 11am	3
Town and Parish Council Forum (2)	Thursday 11th September 2025, 4pm – 6pm	14
Service Users	Thursday 11th September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	4
	TOTAL	**39**

2.21 Attendance levels were reasonable, and the well-informed parish and town council representatives took a very active interest in the issues and asked many questions. In fact, most of them were familiar with the general local government reorganisation debate and had formed opinions on the issues before attending the workshops.

Nature of engagement

Proportional and fair

2.22 The key good practice requirements for proper engagement programmes (as with formal engagement programmes) are that they should:

- Be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken

- Allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond
- Provide the public and stakeholders with enough background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically
- Be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

2.23 As a well-established and specialist social research practice with wide-ranging experience of controversial statutory consultations and engagement processes across the UK, ORS is able to certify that the process undertaken by the councils meets these standards. Overall, ORS has no doubt that the engagement programme has been conscientious, competent and comprehensive in eliciting opinions. It was open, accessible and fair to all stakeholders across Warwickshire; and it conforms with 'best practice' in both its scale and the balance of elements and methods used. The engagement was also proportional to the importance of the issues.

Nature of engagement

2.24 Accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views: they should conduct fair and accessible engagement while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully.

2.25 This does not mean that the majority views should automatically decide public policy; and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions. Above all, public bodies have to consider the relevance and cogency of the arguments put forward during public engagement processes, not just count heads.

2.26 For the public bodies considering the outcomes of public engagement, the key question is not "*Which proposal has most support?"* but "*Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?"* In this context, it was essential that this important engagement programme should include both 'open' and deliberative elements to allow many people to take part via the open questionnaire and residents' survey while promoting informed engagement via the deliberative focus groups and forums, and the in-depth interviews.

The report

2.27 This report reviews the sentiments and judgements of respondents and participants on the councils' North/South model and on the local government reorganisation generally. Verbatim quotations are used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them - but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse any opinions, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. The report is an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants.

2.28 ORS is clear that its role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of the many different interests participating in the engagement, but not to 'make a case' for any option or variant. In this report, we seek to profile the opinions and arguments of those who have responded to the engagement, but not to make any recommendations as to how the reported results should be used.

3. Engagement Questionnaire

The open engagement questionnaire

3.1 The four Warwickshire councils (i.e. North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick) developed an engagement document outlining the background to the proposed changes, along with details of the councils' proposals for two new unitary authorities covering North and South Warwickshire. To obtain feedback around the various issues outlined in this document, an engagement questionnaire was then designed by ORS in conjunction with the councils.

3.2 The questionnaire included questions intended to examine views on the case for change, unitary councils in principle, and the criteria that ought to be considered as part of any reorganisation. It also asked respondents' views about the potential introduction of two new unitary councils (i.e. the proposed North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire) and the areas that would be covered by each of these. Additional sections allowed respondents to make further comments or any alternative suggestions, and captured information about the type of response being submitted and respondents' demographics.

3.3 The engagement document and questionnaire were available throughout the entire engagement period, from 7th August until 14th September 2025. The councils produced a dedicated website (www.shapingourcouncils.co.uk) to host information about the proposals and to link to the online version of the questionnaire. Paper versions were also provided to the councils to distribute to those who might be unable to fill in the questionnaire online.

3.4 The engagement questionnaire could be completed by individuals and on behalf of organisations. In total, 2,334 responses were received, including 2,312 individual responses and 22 on behalf of organisations.

Duplicate and co-ordinated responses

3.5 It is important that engagement questionnaires are open and accessible to all, while being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the survey online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which surveys are completed. A similar analysis of "cookies" was also undertaken – where responses originated from users on the same computer using the same browser and the same credentials (e.g. user account). None were considered to be identical responses attempting to skew the results. A small number of partially complete responses were duplicates of other fully completed responses, and therefore after careful study of these, 19 partial responses were excluded (where it was clear that respondents had subsequently returned to the questionnaire to submit a full response, which superseded the initial partial response). Similarly, no paper copies of questionnaires returned to ORS were considered to be duplicated responses.

Respondent profile

3.6 Table 1 provides a breakdown of the respondent profile from the 2,312 individuals who responded either online or by post to the open engagement questionnaire. Where available, figures for the overall population of Warwickshire are also provided for comparison. These are based on ONS Census 2021 data and are used as a comparator to give some general indication of how well the response profile of the questionnaire matches the wider population. An asterisk has been used to denote percentages greater than zero, but less than half of one percent.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics for the open questionnaire and population of Warwickshire aged 18+ (Note: Percentages may not sum due to rounding)

Characteristic		All responses		Population aged 18+
		Number of Responses	% of Valid Responses	
BY AGE	Under 25	19	1	9
	25 to 34	123	6	16
	35 to 44	238	12	16
	45 to 54	327	17	17
	55 to 64	478	25	16
	65 to 74	455	24	13
	75 and over[6]	265	14	12
	Total valid responses	**1,905**	**100**	**100**
	Not known	*407*	-	-
BY GENDER	Male	941	50	51
	Female	940	50	49
	Prefer to self-describe	10	1	-
	Total valid responses	**1,891**	**100**	**100**
	Not known	*421*	-	-
BY ETHNIC GROUP	White	1,765	96	90
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	20	1	1
	Asian or Asian British	35	2	6
	Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	5	*	1
	Any other ethnic group	8	*	1
	Total valid responses	**1,833**	**100**	**100**
	Not known	*479*	-	-
BY DISABILITY	Has a disability	211	11	19
	No disability	1,658	89	81
	Total valid responses	**1,869**	**100**	**100**
	Not known	*443*	-	-

Table 3: Breakdown of individual responses to the open questionnaire by whether respondents identified as councillors or employees of a local authority in Warwickshire or a neighbouring area (Note: Percentages may not sum due to rounding)

Characteristic		All Responses	
		Number of Responses	% of Valid Responses
BY COUNCILLOR	County/District/Town/Parish councillor	81	4
	Not a councillor	1,856	96
	Total valid responses	**1,937**	**100**
	Not known	*375*	-
BY LOCAL AUTHORITY EMPLOYEE	Employed by a local authority in Warks or neighbouring area	184	10
	Not employed by a local authority in Warks or neighbouring area	1663	90
	Total valid responses	**1,847**	**100**
	Not known	*465*	-

[6] This includes 245 individuals aged 75 to 84 and 20 individuals aged 85 and over

3.7 Of the 81 councillors responding to the engagement, 5 were county councillors, 19 were district or borough councillors, and 68 were town/parish councillors[7].

3.8 Of the 184 local authority employees who responded, most (109) were employees of the district or borough councils in Warwickshire, although 32 were County Council employees and 38 worked for other organisations.

Geographical spread of respondents

3.9 Table 3 below provides a breakdown of individual responses to the questionnaire by district/borough, where known (i.e. where a postcode was provided). Figures for the adult population (aged 18+) of Warwickshire are also outlined for comparison, based on ONS Census 2021 data.

3.10 As can be seen in the table above, more than three-fifths (62%) of responses from within Warwickshire were submitted by respondents from Stratford-on-Avon, despite its actual population comprising only a quarter (25%) of the overall Warwickshire total. The proportion of responses originating from Warwick district (21%) was broadly in line with the population figure (23%).

3.11 Respondents from the districts and boroughs making up the proposed North Warwickshire unitary council, on the other hand, were generally underrepresented in the questionnaire response, relative to the size of their populations. Collectively, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, and Rugby make up just over half of Warwickshire's overall population; however, only around 17% of the questionnaire responses originated from these areas.

3.12 Nuneaton and Bedworth (8% of questionnaire responses) and Rugby (2% of responses) were particularly underrepresented relative to the sizes of their populations (22% and 19% respectively), although it is worth noting that Rugby council did not promote the engagement as they had not decided a formal position on local government reorganisation.

Table 4: Breakdown of individual responses to the open questionnaire by local authority area and comparison to the population of Warwickshire aged 18+ (Note: Percentages may not sum due to rounding)

Characteristic		All Responses		Population aged 18+
		Number of Responses	% of Valid Responses	
BY LOCAL AUTHORITY	North Warwickshire	161	8	11
	Nuneaton and Bedworth	135	7	22
	Rugby	32	2	19
	Warwick	395	21	23
	Stratford-on-Avon	1,174	62	25
	Total Warks responses	**1,897**	**100**	**100**
	Other	*19*	-	-
	Not known	*396*	-	-

3.13 Table 4 below presents a breakdown of questionnaire responses by whether respondents live rural or urban areas and also by IMD quintile. These are compared to the population using relevant secondary data (Census 2021 for urban and rural, and 2020 Mid-Year Population Estimates for IMD).

[7] A small number indicated they were more than one type of councillor; hence the sum of these numbers is greater than 81.

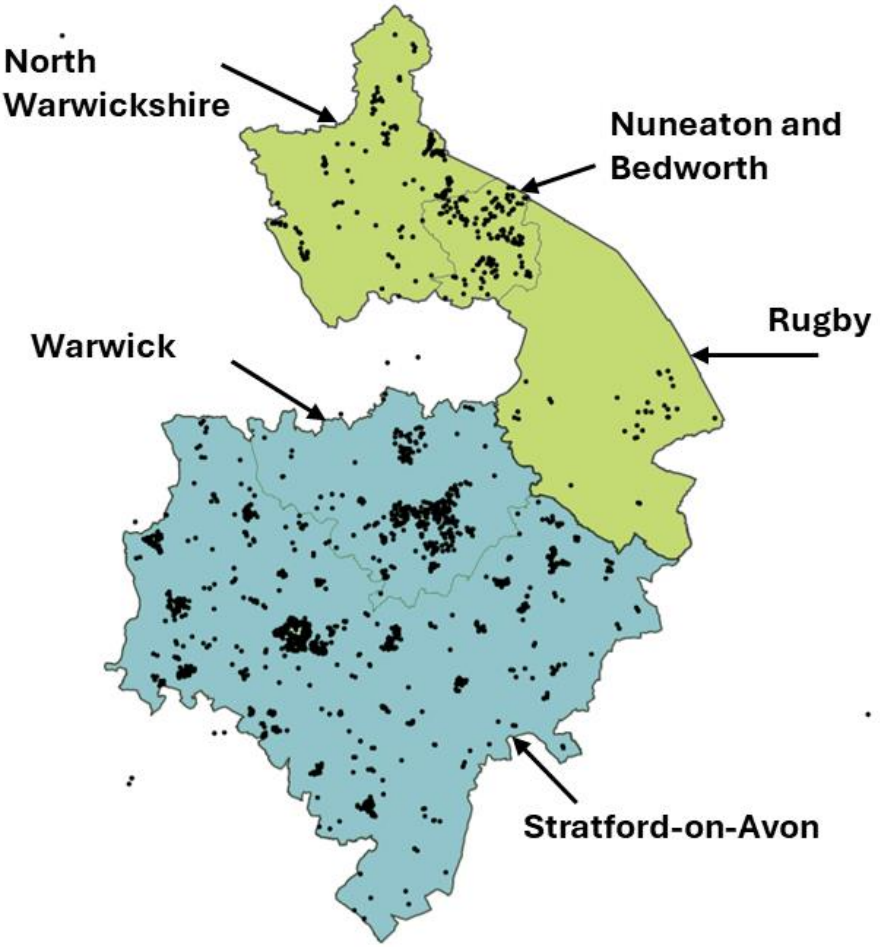
Table 5: Breakdown of individual responses to the open questionnaire by urban or rural and IMD quintile (calculated using Indices of Multiple Deprivation) for those providing postcodes in Warwickshire (NB: Percentages may not sum due to rounding)

Characteristic		All Responses		Population 18+
		Number of Responses	% of Valid Responses	
BY URBAN OR RURAL (IN WARKS)	Urban	945	50	69
	Rural	952	50	31
	Total valid responses	**1,897**	**100**	**100**
	Outside Warks	*19*	-	-
	Not known	*396*	-	-
IMD quintile (IN WARKS)	1 – most deprived	304	16	18
	2	386	20	21
	3	367	19	22
	4	391	21	20
	5 – least deprived	449	24	19
	Total valid responses	**1,897**	**100**	**100**
	Outside Warks	*19*	-	-
	Not known	*396*	-	-

3.14 Figure 1 below shows the number of responses that were received for the open engagement questionnaire (based on respondents who provided their postcode).

Figure 1: Map showing distribution of responses (for questionnaire responses where a postcode was provided)

The area shaded in green indicates the areas included in the councils' proposed North Warwickshire unitary area, while the areas shaded in blue are included in the proposed South Warwickshire unitary area.



3.15 An additional question provided a list of council services and asked respondents to indicate which of these they or their household had used in the previous twelve months. Table 6 below provides a summary of these responses.

Table 6: Summary of services used by individuals responding to the engagement questionnaire

	All Responses	
	Number of Responses	% of Valid Responses
Leisure and recreation (e.g. libraries, parks, open spaces, leisure centres)	1,560	83
Environmental (e.g. recycling centres, environmental protection, pest control)	1,560	83
Road, transport, and infrastructure (e.g. reporting repairs, public toilets, car parks)	1,053	56
Regulatory functions (e.g. trading standards, council tax and benefits enquiries, using the Registrar)	418	22
Planning and building (e.g. planning applications, building control/safety)	405	22
Education (e.g. school admissions/transport, special educational needs)	377	20
Social care and support (e.g. adult social care, children's social services, support for the vulnerable)	182	10
Public health (e.g. drug/alcohol dependency support, sexual health services, health programmes)	148	8
Housing (e.g. homelessness prevention, affordable/council housing, waiting lists, repairs, etc)	116	6
Total respondent count	**1,871**	**100**
Not answered	*441*	-

Interpretation of the data

3.16 The results for the open engagement questionnaire are presented in a largely graphical format. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a 'traffic light' system in which:

- green shades represent positive responses
- yellow shades represent neutral responses
- red shades represent negative responses
- bolder shades highlight responses at the 'extremes', for example, strongly agree or strongly disagree

3.17 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the report an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than half of one per cent. In some cases figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs to avoid potential identification of individual responses.

3.18 Individual percentages, such as those for 'strongly agree/disagree' or 'tend to agree/disagree', and grouped percentages showing overall levels of agreement and disagreement are presented here rounded to the nearest whole number. Because of this, the sum of the rounded individual percentages may not equal the percentage shown for overall agreement and disagreement.

3.19 The number of valid responses recorded for each question (base size) are reported throughout. As not all respondents answered every question, the valid responses vary between questions. Every response to every question has been taken into consideration.

Main Findings

Awareness of current council services and views on making efficiencies

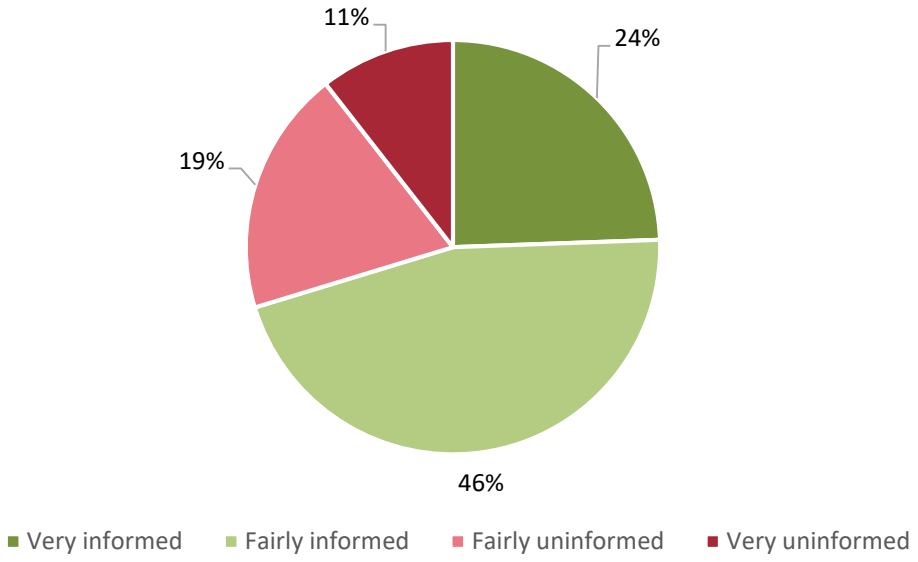
3.20 The questionnaire provided a brief explanation of the structure of local government that currently operates in Warwickshire, followed by an explanation of how UK government wishes to reduce the number of councils nationally by creating a smaller number of unitary councils, intended to make local government more streamlined and sustainable.

3.21 This preamble was followed by two questions: one aimed at understanding the extent to which respondents feel informed about the existing structure, and another aimed at understanding the extent to which they agree or disagree with the principle that councils should pursue opportunities to streamline and make efficiencies.

> *How informed or uninformed do you feel about which services are provided by your borough/district council and which are provided by the county council?*

3.22 Overall, seven-in-ten individual questionnaire respondents (70%) indicated that they feel very or fairly informed about the services provided by councils in their area. The remaining three-in-ten (30%) indicated that they feel either fairly or very uninformed (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: How informed or uninformed do you feel about which services are provided by your borough/district council and which are provided by the county council?



Base: All individual respondents (2,296)

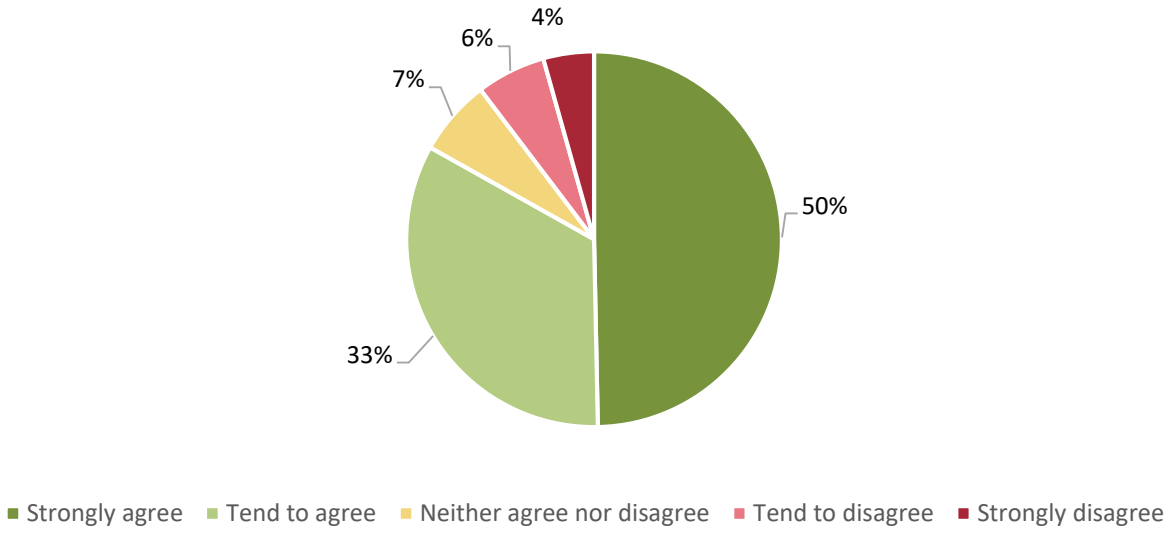
Views on making efficiencies

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline services and make efficiencies, while maintaining good services?

3.23 Over fourth fifths (83%) of respondents agreed with the principle that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline: half (50%) strongly agreed, with a further third (33%) tending to agree (see Figure 3).

3.24 Only a tenth (10%) of respondents disagreed (i.e. tended to disagree or strongly disagreed).

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline services and make efficiencies, while maintaining good services? OVERALL (individual respondents only)



Base: All individuals (2,293)

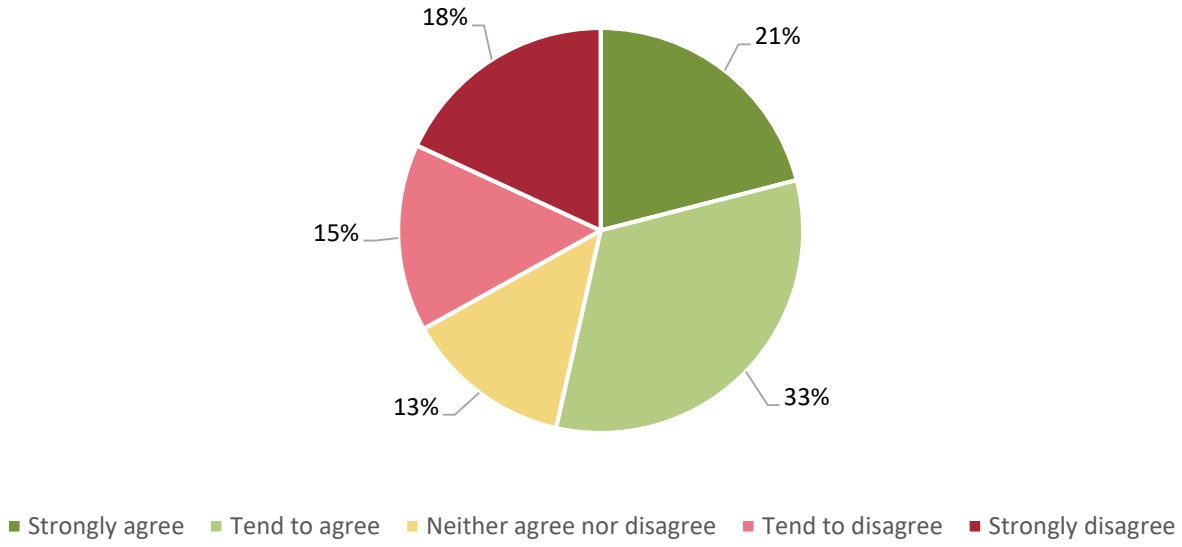
Views on reducing the number of councils

3.25 The questionnaire included a brief explanation of how the councils have collaborated on a plan to create a smaller number of new unitary councils. Respondents were then asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the councils doing this, in line with the Government's requirements.

> *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the government's requirement to replace the current two-tier system with a smaller number of unitary councils to run local government across the whole of Warwickshire?*

3.26 Just over half (54%) of respondents overall agreed, in principle, with the Government's requirement to replace the current system with a smaller number of unitary councils. A third of respondents (33%), however, disagreed (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the government's requirement to replace the current two-tier system with a smaller number of unitary councils to run local government across the whole of Warwickshire?



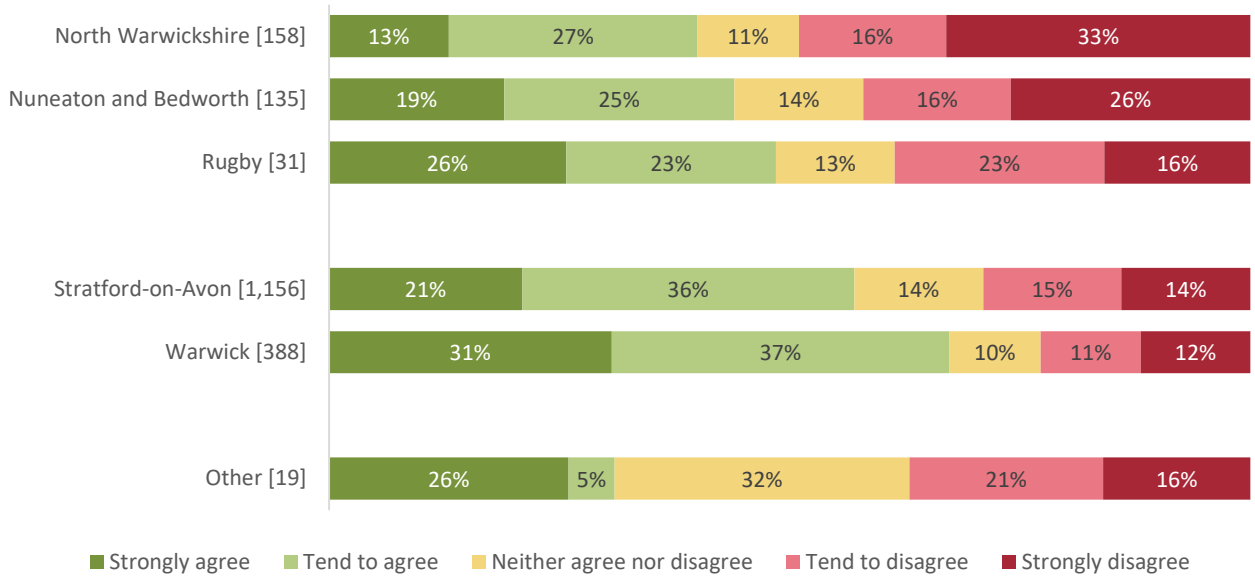
Base: All Individuals (2,271)

3.27 Figure 5 below summarises differences in views by respondents' district/borough (based on postcode where this was provided).

3.28 Around two thirds of respondents (68%) in Warwick agreed with the principle of introducing a smaller number of unitary councils, as did over half (57%) in Stratford-on-Avon. In the remaining districts, however, under half of respondents agreed: 48% in Rugby, 44% in Nuneaton and Bedworth, and 40% in North Warwickshire.

3.29 Levels of agreement were therefore somewhat higher in those districts forming the proposed South Warwickshire unitary, compared with those making up the proposed North Warwickshire unitary council.

Figure 5: Views on the principle of reducing the number of councils, by local authority



Base: Number of respondents shown in brackets

3.30 It is also worth noting the views of those who indicated that they were responding as a local authority employee. The numbers who responded were limited; nonetheless it is possible to observe a clear difference in views between those who indicated they are employed by the County Council (63% agreeing with the principle of reducing the number of councils) and those employed by the Districts or Borough Councils (35% agreeing).

Views on the criteria that should inform decision-making

3.31 The questionnaire outlined five different factors that the councils must consider when thinking about the future arrangements for local government in the area. To help the councils achieve the right balance between these different criteria, respondents were invited to give each a score out of 10, where "10" indicates that it is of critical importance and "0" indicates that it is of no importance. The five criteria, along with their definitions, are outlined below:

- **Accountability**: democratic decision making that can be locally influenced and ensuring residents know how to raise issues to their local councillor and how to have a say on future service delivery
- **Quality**: frontline services that are sustainable, cost-effective and equipped to deliver good local services in the long-term
- **Local Identity**: boundaries that reflects how residents live their lives and how businesses operate
- **Access**: keeping services as local as possible for as many residents as possible
- **Value For Money**: cutting out duplication, increasing economies of scale and improving efficiencies

Please rate how important you think each of these criteria are using a whole number between 0 and 10, where "10" means that the criteria is critically important and "0" means the criteria is of no importance.

3.32 The average scores given to each of the criteria were calculated and are displayed in Figure 6 below.

3.33 As can be seen, all five criteria attracted a high average score; however, on average, a little more importance was attached to quality and accountability (both scoring 9.3), and a little less to local identity (scoring 8.3).

Figure 6: average scores attached to the five criteria that councils must consider when thinking about future arrangements for local government, based on a 0 to 10 scale where 10 indicates highest importance



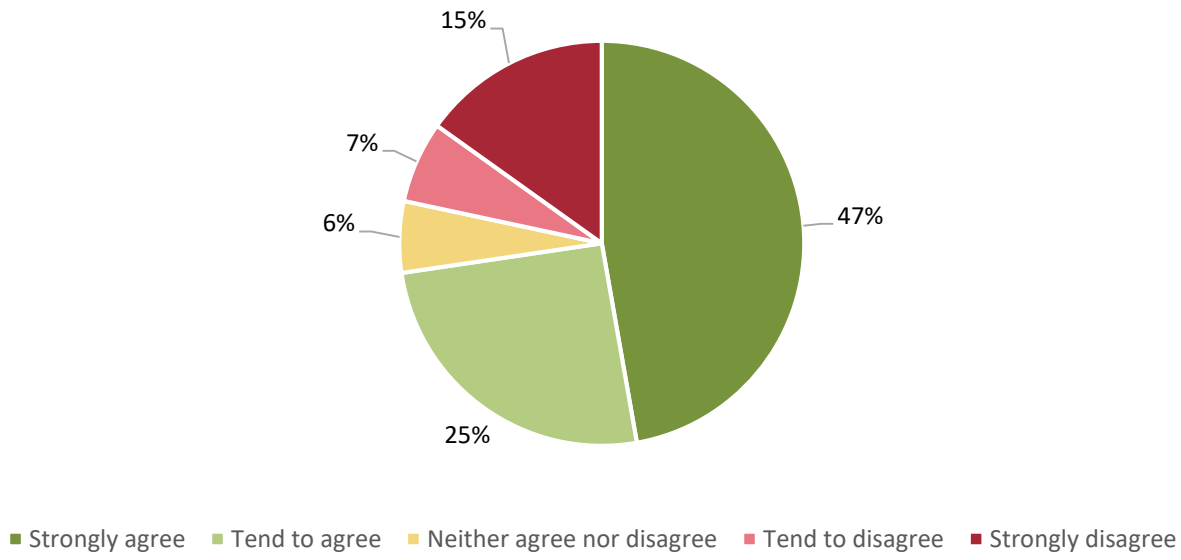
Views on the proposal for two unitary councils

3.34 It was explained that the councils considered options for either a single unitary covering the whole of Warwickshire, or for two unitary councils covering the north and south. It was explained that the two unitary option was preferred, with a brief outline of the main reasons for this.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire?

3.35 Over seven-in-ten respondents (73%[8]) agreed with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire. Moreover, nearly half (47%) indicated that they strongly agreed. Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) disagreed (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire?



Base: All Individuals (2,088)

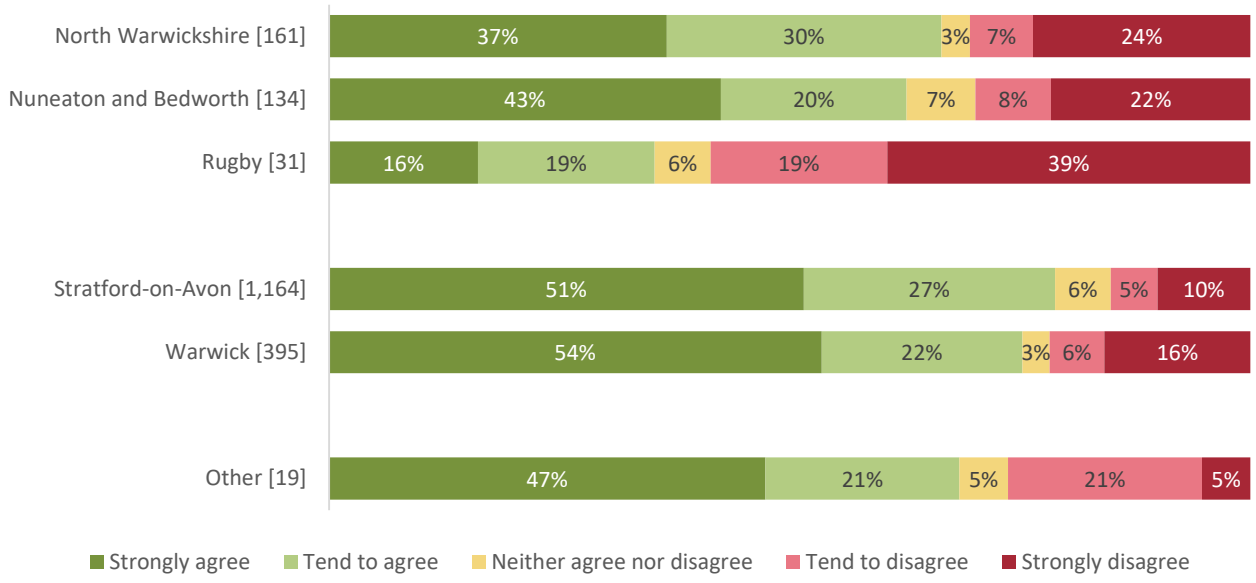
3.36 As shown in Figure 8 below, agreement was somewhat higher in those districts comprising the proposed South Warwickshire unitary council. More than three quarters of respondents in Stratford-on-Avon (79%) and Warwick (76%) agreed.

3.37 Agreement was lower in the areas comprising the proposed North Warwickshire unitary; nonetheless, it is worth noting that more than three-in-five respondents in North Warwickshire (66%) and Nuneaton and Bedworth (63%) agreed.

3.38 Among the small number of respondents in Rugby, however, the level of agreement was noticeably lower (35%).

[8] Figures presented in commentary and on chart are rounded to nearest whole number for convenience. Actual results are 47.22% strongly agree, and 25.43% tend to agree, hence overall grouped agreement is 72.65%.

Figure 8: Views on the proposal for two unitary councils, by local authority



3.39 Again, it is worth briefly noting the views of those who indicated that they were responding as a local authority employee. There was a clear difference in views between those who indicated they are employed by a District or Borough council (of whom, 77% agreed) and those employed by the County (47% agreed).

Views on the areas to be covered by each proposed new council

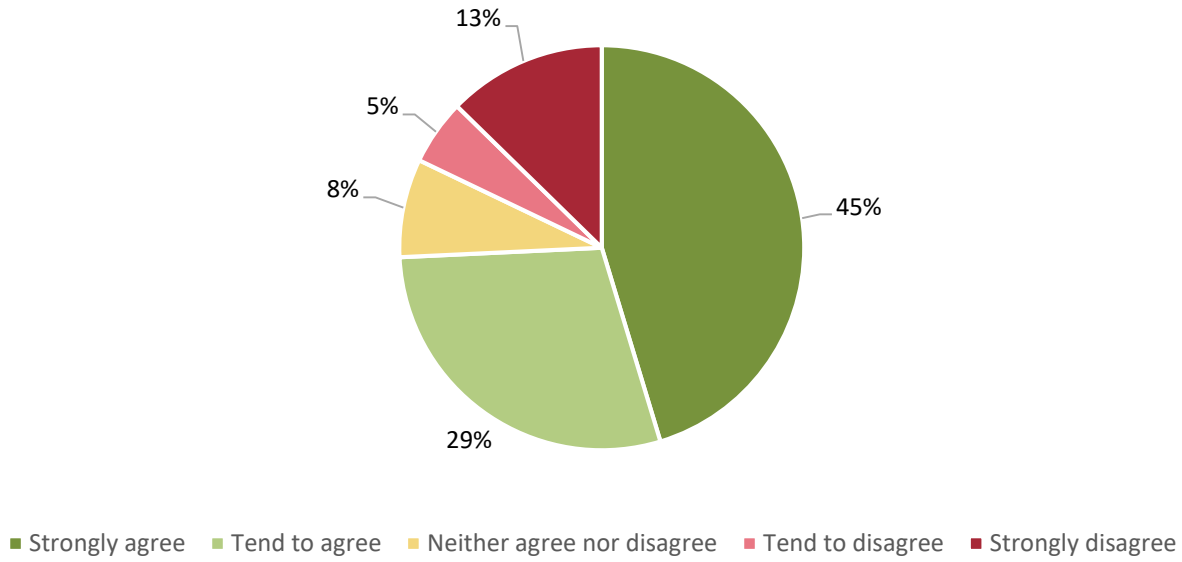
3.40 The questionnaire briefly outlined the areas to be covered by the proposed North and South Warwickshire unitary councils, before asking respondents about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with this proposal.

> *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the areas covered by the proposed two unitary councils?*

3.41 As shown in Figure 9, overall, around three quarters (74%) of questionnaire respondents agreed with the areas covered by the proposed unitary councils, with nearly half of all respondents (45%) strongly agreeing (see Figure 9).

3.42 However, just under a fifth (18%) of respondents disagreed with the areas to be covered by the proposed new councils.

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the areas covered by the proposed two unitary councils?

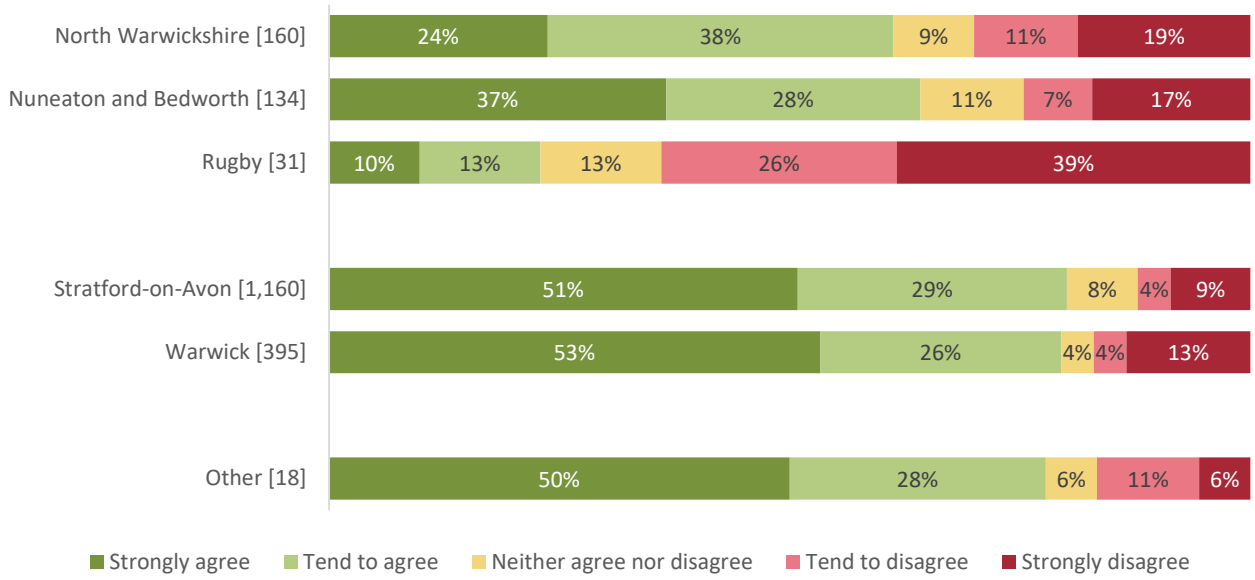


Base: All Individuals (2,078)

3.43 Once again, agreement appeared to be higher in the districts making up the proposed South Warwickshire unitary: around four-fifths of respondents in Stratford-on-Avon (80%) and Warwick (79%) agreed.

3.44 Among those areas that make up the proposed North Warwickshire unitary council: just over three-fifths of respondents in Nuneaton and Bedworth (64%) and North Warwickshire (61%) agreed with the proposed areas to be covered, while far fewer in Rugby (23%) agreed [although note that this is based on a very low number of responses].

Figure 10: Views on the areas to be covered by the proposed new councils, by local authority



Base: Number of respondents shown in brackets

3.45 More than four-in-five of the District and Borough council employees agreed with the areas to be covered (83%), compared with just over half of those employed by the County (53%).

Respondents' comments

3.46 In addition to the structured questions, respondents were given the opportunity to share any additional views about the proposals and any alternative options that meet the government's criteria for local government reorganisation. They were also encouraged to share any potential positive or negative impacts of the proposals related to equalities or human rights that should be considered. In total, 848 individual respondents provided an additional comment.

3.47 All responses provided to the open-ended question have been read and then classified (coded) using a standardised approach (code frame). This approach helps ensure consistency when classifying different comments and the resulting codes represent themes that have been repeatedly mentioned in a quantifiable manner. The responses provided by a respondent to a single text question may present a number of different points or arguments, therefore in many cases the overall number of coded comments counted in a particular question may be higher than the number of people responding to that open-ended question (i.e. many respondents may have made comments about two or more different topics, so percentages will not sum to 100%).

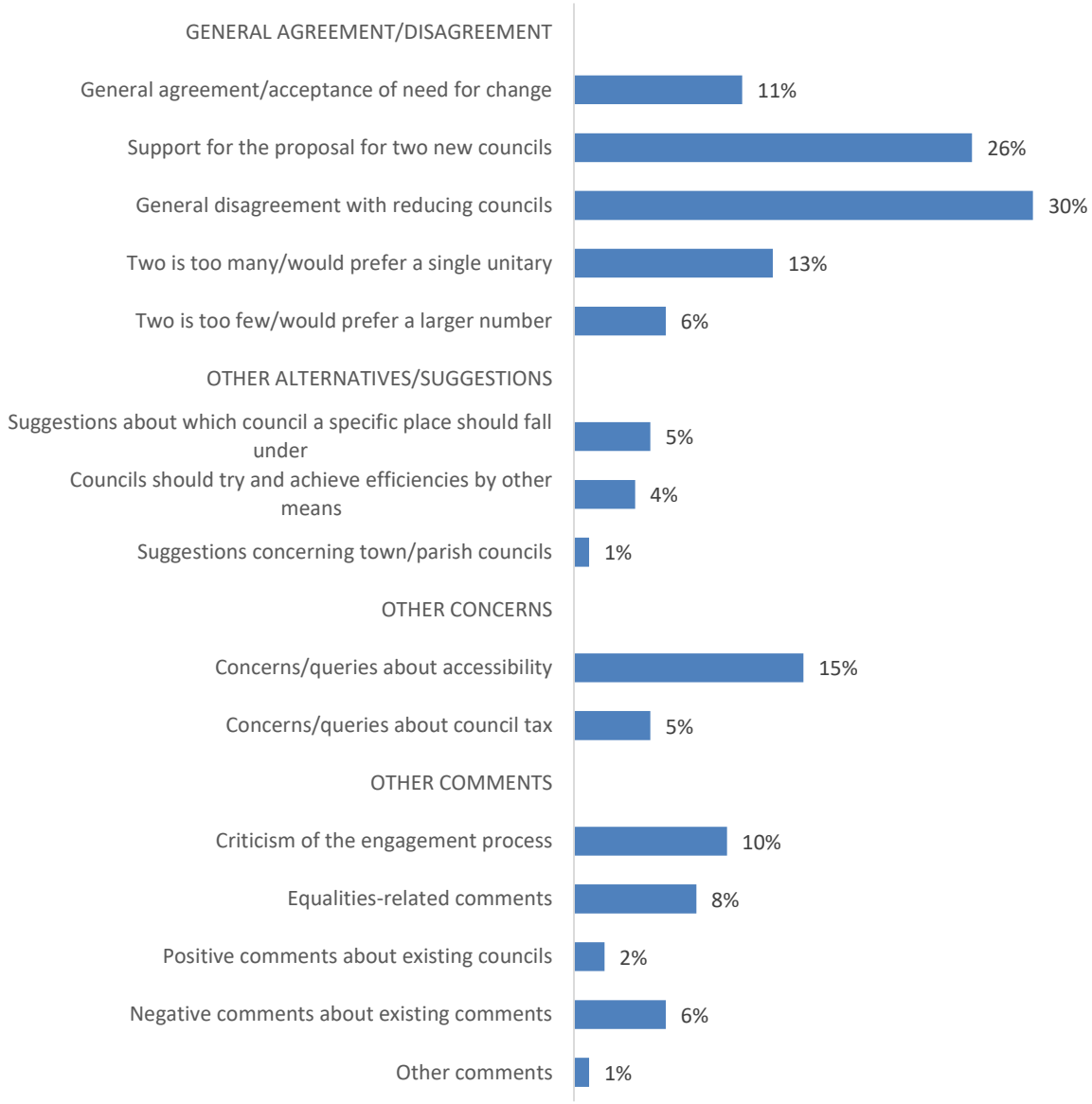
3.48 Figure 11 overleaf highlights the key themes emerging from text comments, with a more detailed breakdown provided in the subsequent tables. The following themes were raised by at least a tenth of those who provided comments:

- Disagreement/concern in general about a reduction in the number of councils (30%)
- Support for the proposal for two unitary councils – either agreement in general, or merely in the sense of this being preferable to a single unitary council (26%)
- Queries or concerns about accessibility in the event of there being fewer councils in future (15%)

» Concern that two councils is too many or that a single unitary would be preferable (13%)

» Agreement/acceptance in general around the need for change (11%).

Figure 11: Themes arising in text comments (individual respondents)



Base: All individuals who gave comments (848)

Agreement and disagreement with the proposals

3.49 Some respondents used the open-ended question to make comments generally expressing support for the principle of moving to unitary councils, citing (for example) opportunities to achieve efficiencies and value for money.

> *"A timely opportunity for change and create better value-added decision making."*
>
> *"If this leads to streamlining services, greater efficiency and removal of duplicated roles then this would be a good thing."*

"Every time I contact the council I get told "that's not town. That's district, or county". So I am thrilled that from now on there will be only one point of contact for my area."

3.50 Other respondents, on the other hand, opposed the principle of introducing a smaller number of unitary councils which, it was suggested, would be more remote and less understanding of their local areas. Some expressed a few that "bigger is not necessarily better" or that the councils "should not fix what isn't broken", while others commented positively about their experience of dealing with their local district or borough council. There were concerns that councillors would be less accessible, leading to a reduction in accountability.

"Why change what works well? Local authorities are better for the communities they serve, they understand their areas and residents, if they are to become part of a larger entity, the personal touch will be lost."

"Warwickshire's 'two-tier' system has worked well for numerous years, so why change a system that is working? Bigger institutions are often no better and not necessarily simpler or more efficient. Communication is often lost or non-existent between departments. Smaller organisations can be far more efficient and economic. The existing 'two-tier' council could be streamlined for more efficiency…"

"The district council at Stratford seems largely efficient and successful in dealing with local matters. My preference is for this to continue."

3.51 Those who expressed support for the proposal for two unitary councils often did so on the basis that a single unitary might be too remote or inaccessible, lack accountability, and not treat all areas equitably. While many respondents were wary of any change, some felt that having two unitary councils (i.e. as opposed to one) might mitigate some of their concerns or end up being 'the lesser of two evils'.

"A single authority for Warwickshire, whilst appearing an obvious choice, would weaken local accountability."

"Would prefer no change to current structure. However, if change has to happen then a north/south split is better than one authority covering all of Warwickshire."

"Strongly against the option for only one unitary authority. This would be too far removed from residents, too unwieldy, and not able to respond to the vastly differing needs of residents in the north and south of the county."

3.52 It was also suggested that having two councils would better reflect demographic and economic differences between the north and south of the county.

"I agree that north v south is a good split. People who live in Warwick making decisions for Nuneaton and Bedworth, with very different demographics and needs, makes little sense."

"The two areas proposed are significantly different in terms of culture with the north being more developed and industrial; the south is far more rural and tourist centre (edge of Cotswolds); the requirements of each area are fundamentally different."

> *"Warwickshire itself is a poorly constructed 'county', lacking the centre of gravity that would be provided by a dominant city: e.g. Coventry. There is little synergy between the mainly rural southern and more industrial northern districts. Therefore, the proposed 2-unitary solution will better match the needs and likely future development of the two regions."*

3.53 Specifically, a few commented on political differences between the north and south, which they felt had become more apparent based on the results of the May 2025 council elections.

> *"The proposed split is good because the voting demographics across the two proposed areas are clear in the County Council election, so by splitting them there would be two separate councils which could pursue policies which more of their residents approve of."*
>
> *"The makeup of the cabinet and portfolio holders in the current County Council show strongly why South Warwickshire needs its own unitary authority. The south of the county is unrepresented at County level in senior positions."*

3.54 On the other hand, several respondents indicated that two new councils might be too many. They suggested that – if the purpose of local government reform is to simplify and streamline services – then having a single unitary council would be the most rational and sustainable solution. It was also occasionally suggested that two councils might lack influence or struggle to attract investment, or that they may fail the Government's criteria around population size.

3.55 A single unitary council, on the other hand, was said by these respondents to be more viable, likely to achieve better economies of scale and to be more able to support strategic decision-making across a wide area (e.g. in areas such as climate/sustainability, public transport and infrastructure).

> *"This will be a colossal and painful transition so if it is to be done it should be for maximum benefit which would be a single council. The savings of moving to two councils are not worth the effort and would squander an opportunity to do this properly."*
>
> *"Why pay double the number of salaries for duplicate services provided by two unitary authorities?"*
>
> *"Strange that you are not even proposing the single unitary model, which would clearly be the most appropriate and effective model for Warwickshire and would maintain vital services across a county-wide footprint rather than artificially creating a split system, creating risk and extra cost for no reason."*
>
> *"Proposing North and South Warwickshire councils is self-indulgent, lacks strategic thinking and [they] will be insignificant [compared] to… larger neighbouring authorities. I also don't believe you'll meet the criteria for unitary authorities or attract funding leading to underinvestment in an area that desperately needs government attention. Working on a Warwickshire-wide basis has built-in structural advantages in terms of essential services, partner relationships and regional influence."*

3.56 Another concern expressed by proponents of a single unitary council was in terms of the impact on county-wide council services such as education and social care, which would need to be disaggregated in the event of a two-unitary proposal moving forward. In contrast, it was also suggested that a single unitary might

generally be better placed to promote a joined-up approach in areas such as social care, housing and planning.

> *"It is illogical to move to two unitary councils… it would be madness to split services like adult social care, children's social care, education, send, public transport etc - losing all economies of scale and creating twice as much management."*
>
> *"How are services which are common to both proposed new unitary authorities going to be managed i.e. library services, social care, roads/highways, streetlights? Currently these are managed by WCC, are they going to be split into two and processes duplicated for each new authority?"*
>
> *"Two authorities gives very little consideration to the massive budget issues such as adult social care and education, along with legislation requiring in-area placements for children under sufficiency duty (as an example). How will any social care services be commissioned? Double the staff? How are they to work with health partners? How will joint working arrangements such as s106 and s117 be managed by two? Streamlining into one would save on staffing particularly at higher level with directors and chief execs. Merging into one would allow for joined up processes across social care and housing which can be incredibly difficult now."*

3.57 Reflecting on differences between areas, there were some concerns that the two-unitary proposal would divide the county on socioeconomic lines, with a risk that this might exacerbate existing inequalities and create, in the words of one respondent, "a 'poor council' and a more 'affluent council'."

> *"The proposed split is clearly based on economic grounds with the bulk of the services needed in the new north and the bulk of the funding coming from the south. The new split will reduce funding for the area which needs it the most and increase it for the area which needs it less."*
>
> *"I believe one unitary authority would be better to ensure that areas of deprivation are targeted and money is shared equally."*
>
> *"A North Warks council will have less revenue from council tax and business rates, with greater levels of need, impacting on service quality and exacerbating social and economic inequality."*

3.58 On the other hand, not all agreed with this point of view, as it was also suggested that dividing the county on north-south lines could have a positive impact e.g. in terms of safeguarding the interests of the north of the county:

> *"Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has been out of touch with the needs of the north of the county for years. In addition, WCC has provided poorer services in the north of the county compared with the south of the county- the money has gone south. in my view this will continue if Warwickshire becomes a single unitary authority."*
>
> *"It has to be a two unitary council system not a one unitary council, as Leamington Spa and Stratford would get all the resources."*

"As a resident in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area in north Warwickshire, I know we have been let down by the conservative county council… the north of the county in my eyes, would be better off on its own, along with Rugby."

3.59 A few respondents were concerned that the areas making up the proposed southern unitary also have diverse needs and characteristics (e.g. urban and rural differences), which would not easily be reconciled under a single council. It was also stated that previous efforts to combine the councils had not come to fruition, or that the new council was likely to inherit significant debts from Warwick District Council.

"I do not think that a single council for south Warwickshire is a reasonable solution. The council will be too big, of necessity it will focus on the major population centres (Warwick, Leamington and Stratford) and ignore the needs of the rural areas."

"Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick district councils were looking to merge two years ago but they didn't because of the level of Warwick District Council's debt against the healthy financial position of Stratford District Council…Therefore, I feel that a south Warwickshire unitary authority would be ridden with debts which would seriously burden the new south unitary authority…"

Other comments on the areas to be covered, and possible alternatives

3.60 In terms of Rugby, some respondents felt that it might fit better within the proposed southern Warwickshire unitary, rather than the northern one.

"Not sure about Rugby being part of "North Warwickshire" as connection [with] Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire seems weak."

"Residents of much of Rugby Borough identify with the south of the county rather than the north."

3.61 There were also a small number of suggestions that the boundary between the proposed north and south unitary councils should be reconsidered, with the existing Rugby borough being broken up and specific localities redistributed between the two new unitary council areas.

"North-south divide should be moved further north based on the route of A45 with residents of Ryton, Stretton, Thurlaston, Dunchurch etc having a vote on whether to be in north or south."

"Depending on what Rugby Council decide, one possible amendment could be to split existing Rugby Borough so that the parishes to the north and west of Rugby [form] part of North Warwickshire and the south of Rugby [go] into South Warwickshire. Having worked at the council I think the southern parishes are more closely aligned to Warwick than the northern ones."

3.62 There were also occasional suggestions for a slightly larger number of unitary councils, such as three.

"I think there's more merit in reducing it to three councils: North, Mid and South-West, with Kenilworth, Leamington, Warwick and Southam in the middle; Nuneaton and Rugby to the north; and Stratford and villages to the south and west. Each would then be able to focus more on their specific environment."

"Three areas aligned on urban density… 1. North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth 2. Stratford and Rugby - featuring many smaller rural communities 3. Warwick Leamington & Kenilworth."

3.63 Others suggested cross-boundary alternatives involving areas outside of Warwickshire e.g. Coventry and parts of Oxfordshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

"I do not believe the size of the population for the proposed north & south councils makes them viable - you would be better merging north with Coventry due to the geographical aspect and then south with Oxfordshire."

"A more innovative approach would be to look across current county boundaries and for north Warks to look to Leicestershire. There is already a strong track record of North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth working closely with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and there is much common sense of place and use of services."

"My belief is that North Warwickshire would be better served with a unitary which encompasses Lichfield and Tamworth in Staffordshire, and Nuneaton and Bedworth. These boroughs have a greater affinity with each other…"

"Transfer south-west Warwickshire to Worcestershire."

Other concerns, queries and suggestions

3.64 Occasionally, respondents made suggestions about sharing services. Some were referring to the existing councils (i.e. suggesting the districts and boroughs might share some functions to achieve savings while maintaining the current configuration).

3.65 However, others suggested that the proposed two, new unitary councils might also share services. It was also suggested that current countywide functions (e.g. social care) could be commissioned over a larger area in future and used by several councils. In a couple of cases, respondents who lived on the periphery of Warwickshire noted that they might benefit from being able to use services in a neighbouring authority if agreements were put in place.

"I would agree with the two unitary councils, however budgetary considerations would need to be taken into account and shared services considered especially in terms of HR, finance and IT systems being shared so cost is not incurred for different disparate systems for both councils."

"There should be some sharing of the services it will be harder to disaggregate, such as SEND."

"It has always been my view that South Warwickshire is best served by a council that strikes the right balance of local and accessible vs size. Two unitaries achieves that aim. However, that doesn't mean each council should do everything on its own, there is scope for sharing the load across multiple councils. Adult social care and SEND provision can be run by one system used by multiple councils across the Midlands, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire."

"Encourage collaboration with neighbouring authorities and shared working arrangements to minimise the impact and improve service access for those that live on borders."

3.66 Some respondents commented on a town and country divide in the county, suggesting that many rural communities already struggle with access to services and/or feel more remote from local government decision-makers, particularly when they lie close to the Warwickshire boundary. There was some concern that this could be exacerbated if there are fewer councils in future.

> *"With North Warwickshire being rural, taking away the smaller brough council and replacing it with a lot larger one, probably somewhere miles away, will mean residents have little or no say or contact with their local services."*
>
> *"I'd like to see a greater focus on, and help for, rural communities who currently feel under siege from developers and simultaneously ignored from a provision of services standpoint."*

3.67 Several comments were made relating to town and parish councils, or potentially new bodies such as "area committees". Some queried why there had not been more discussion of town and parish councils in the engagement document and were often in favour of giving them an enhanced role to maintain local accountability and decision-making, particularly in areas such as planning. There was also some support for creating new town councils and neighbourhood forums. However, a few did express concern that any additional demands placed on town and parish councils might prove to be too onerous.

> *"Parish and town councils may feel disempowered if decision-making becomes more centralised - their role should be strengthened in regard to shaping local priorities."*
>
> *"There should also be encouragement to form slim town councils, to ensure that local decisions, such as planning are properly considered by people who are the most informed and each town retains its own identity."*
>
> *"I worry that unitary councils will attempt to 'palm off' certain services and accountability to parish councils who simply cannot facilitate these services and community engagement with no paid staff."*

3.68 The following concerns and considerations were also noted by some respondents:

- Concerns around access to services in general, and a potential reduction in council sites and offices specifically, noting that:
  - access is already challenging for some residents (e.g. those in more rural areas, those relying on public transport, some older people) and reducing it further may disproportionately affect those with low incomes and other vulnerabilities
  - not all residents have good digital access or skills and therefore some might struggle if they were unable to attend a council site in person (e.g. some elderly people)
  - maintaining face-to-face contact with service users might be particularly important in some service areas (e.g. housing intervention) or where service users are more vulnerable, lack literacy etc
  - maintaining offices in some towns and strengthening public transport provision might help to mitigate some of these impacts.
- Concerns about impacts on partnership working if moving to two unitary councils (particularly if these other bodies continue to be organised on a pan-Warwickshire basis e.g. Warwickshire Police and the Fire and Rescue Service).

- Potential job losses and redundancies due to reorganisation, and other possible workforce issues.
- Concerns about the potential disruption and costs associated with transition, the impacts on service provision and the timescales involved.
- Concerns about council tax and the equalisation process, specifically:
  - the prospect of increases at a time when council tax is already perceived to be high and many households are struggling with the costs of living,
  - concerns that the process might be unfair to some areas (e.g. concerns that rural areas will continue to have poorer access to services, while also being required to contribute more to subsidise the better provision in larger towns).
- Concerns about potential impacts on council housing tenants if areas are amalgamated e.g. rent increases, changes to repair service, longer housing waiting lists etc.
- Criticism of the engagement process, typically
  - concern that the proposals are a 'fait accompli' and residents' views may have little impact
  - claims that the materials are biased, including complaints that the questionnaire provides less opportunity to express support for a single unitary council or the status quo, than it does for the preferred two-council option
  - concerns about a lack of information provided, with some suggestion that further details (e.g. on cost savings, service area budgets, senior leadership teams, etc) would have helped to better inform respondents' views on the proposals.
- Concerns that those living near the boundary between the proposed new unitary councils may lose access to some local services or facilities, where these are currently provided by the County Council (e.g. residents in the south of Rugby borough who use the recycling centre in Southam, Stratford-on-Avon district).
- Disappointment at the potential loss of "Warwickshire" as a local government entity, which "would be a shame".
- Consideration should be given as to the best way to promote the new areas' identities e.g. coats of arms, insignia.

3.69 A limited number of comments raised additional equalities concerns, primarily around the risks of a deterioration in services provided to vulnerable people, if services such as social care, safeguarding services, special educational needs provision, and so on, were to be disrupted. It was also suggested that vulnerable people might be left confused by the possible changes in provision.

"Careful consideration will need to be given to how children's services, safeguarding services and early help/intervention (including youth crime prevention) services are still delivered to ensure outreach and awareness isn't reduced given the expanded geographic footprint. It's also important the new councils still have the resources to develop localised approaches - needs and priorities in Leamington will by different to those in Stratford."

"I just think the change needs to be managed carefully so that vulnerable people aren't left confused by any changes in service providers, and particularly that vulnerable children don't slip though the net during the change."

3.70 Concern was also expressed that insufficient research has been undertaken, or that little evidence has been presented, to understand the likelihood of possible impacts of the proposal on health and social care provision in the county, and therefore on some of its most vulnerable residents, including those with disabilities.

> *"Careful consideration will need to be given to how children's services, safeguarding services and early help/intervention (including youth crime prevention) services are still delivered to ensure outreach and awareness isn't reduced given the expanded geographic footprint. It's also important the new councils still have the resources to develop localised approaches - needs and priorities in Leamington will by different to those in Stratford."*
>
> *"I have a significant concern over the provision of essential services as there is no evidence presented that services will not be degraded, especially for the most needy and vulnerable."*

3.71 One comment made by a school governor expressed concerns that schools may be disadvantaged if there are disruptions or changes to any of the various support services currently provided at county level / by the County Council.

> *"Each council will need complex systems and high-level staff to support things like cloud services, software support, accounting systems, advisory services, welfare services such as attendance advisors, safeguarding including the provision of software and advisory solutions. There are also things like governor services offering reading and support and things like HR, MIS, bursarial support and many other areas that are currently provided at county level and the economies of scale that can bring. Would splitting all these services diminish the levels of support and indeed possibly increase costs to schools?"*

3.72 Finally, it is worth noting comments from a small number of respondents who queried how the proposed new unitary councils might fit into wider devolution arrangements for England. A couple of these respondents commented on an apparent lack of reference to strategic authorities covering all or parts of Warwickshire in the engagement materials.

3.73 A couple of respondents felt that having two councils might be preferable if it helped advance the case for creating a strategic authority based on the county of Warwickshire; on the other hand, a few instead advocated building closer links with neighbouring areas such the West Midlands or Oxfordshire.

> *"There's no mention of a strategic authority in this consultation, isn't this key to determining the success of the South and North Warks proposal?"*
>
> *"There has been no information about what strategic authority South Warwickshire would fall within - this is important for spatial planning and devolution. Would South Warwickshire simply fall into a Warwickshire strategic authority? Would it be mayoral? This is not clear."*
>
> *"I agree that two authorities is much better… but serious consideration of coming under the West Midlands Combined Authority at the next opportunity should be considered."*
>
> *"Regarding a potential strategic area with elected mayor, south Warwickshire and north Oxfordshire would probably be a more natural 'fit'."*

"The West Midlands should be split; Coventry and Solihull should join with Warwickshire to become a strategic authority. The geography works; industries and businesses would work; transport links make sense; education would be better, including further education and universities. If the West Midlands can't be split up, we should seek a strategic partnership with Worcester or Chilterns."

Engagement Questionnaire: Organisation Responses

Overview

3.74 Of the 2,334 open questionnaire responses, 22 indicated that they had been submitted on behalf of an organisation. Each organisational response typically represents the views of many individuals, and feedback from these organisations has therefore been reported separately in this report.

3.75 Responding organisations were informed that their views may be published in full, and were asked for details about their organisation, including what it represents; the specific group or department; the area it covers; and how the views of members were gathered. Not all organisations supplied this information, but their names have been included in the report where provided.

3.76 Additionally, two Members of Parliament responded via the questionnaire. Give that these are individuals responding in their official capacity, and representing the interests of their wider constituents, they are included in this section alongside the organisational responses.

3.77 Table 7 below provides a full list of the organisations responding to the engagement (who provided a name).

Table 7: List of organisations responding to the questionnaire

Abbey Theatre
Action21
Barford, Sherbourne and Wasperton Joint Parish Council
Citizens Advice Bureau, North Warwickshire
Hatton Parish Council
HR-ZN Group Ltd
Kingsbury “Good Neighbour” volunteer group
NHS Coventry and Warwickshire
Ramblers, Warwickshire area
Rockinghams (Motor)Cycle Shop, Southam
Royal Leamington Spa Town Council
Shrewley Parish Council
Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council
Tredington Parish Council
Unnamed business in Stratford-on-Avon
Warwick Chamber of Trade
Whitchurch Parish Meeting
Wormleighton Parish Meeting
Plus two Members of Parliament: Manuela Perteghella (MP for Stratford-on-Avon) and Matt Western (MP for Warwick and Leamington)

3.78 Given the relatively low number of organisations that responded to the questionnaire, the appropriateness of percentages in quantifying views is limited. Therefore, the percentages presented here are intended to be indicative only: they have been displayed at an overall level only to provide a contrast between views from organisations and individuals.

Main findings

3.79 Of the 22 organisational responses[9]:

- 16 agreed with the principle that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline services and make efficiencies, while maintaining good services; only 1 disagreed and 2 indicated that they 'neither' agreed nor disagreed;
- 10 agreed with the government's requirement to replace the current two-tier system with a smaller number of unitary councils, although there were also 7 that disagreed and 3 who answered 'neither';
- 14 agreed with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire - which was more than double the number that disagreed (i.e. 6), while 1 answered 'neither';
- 13 agreed with the areas to be covered by the new councils, while only 2 disagreed; however, there were 6 who indicated that they 'neither' agreed nor disagreed.

Additional comments made by organisations

3.80 Some of the comments made by organisations raised similar themes to those in comments expressed by individuals.

3.81 For example, there was some acknowledgement that the north and south are different in character, and there might therefore be benefits in having two unitary councils to represent their respective interests.

> *"Shrewley Parish Council are in agreement with the proposal structure put forward by Warwick District Council as there is a practical distinction between north and south being rural and not as rural."* **Shrewley Parish Council**
>
> *"North and South Warwickshire are very different in needs and priorities. South Warks is mainly… semi-rural or rural, and rural areas could be neglected as they have different priorities."* **Wormleighton Parish Meeting**

3.82 Both Members of Parliament who submitted questionnaire responses (both representing constituencies in the proposed South Warwickshire unitary council area) also supported the proposals:

[9] Please note that not all organisations answered every question; therefore the numbers agreeing, disagreeing or answering 'neither' will not necessarily sum to 22.

> *"Given that the County is bisected by Coventry, which represents its own council area, there is already a geographical split between north and south, which lends itself to such a division. Equally, a two-unitary approach guarantees greater local democratic representation - were a single unitary model to be adopted, this would be a concern. Regarding the areas covered by the two proposed unitary councils, I agree in principle, however it's important that Rugby Borough is allowed the discretion to choose whether to be part of North or South Warwickshire."* **Matt Western, MP for Warwick and Leamington**
>
> *"[The proposed South Warwickshire unitary council], which is contained within the boundaries of the south Warwickshire NHS trust, and of the emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan, would ensure local government remains anchored in the communities it serves, providing more responsive decision-making than a large, remote unitary ever could, and offering an efficient structure for healthcare and social care. Further, Stratford and Warwick district councils work already closely together with several shared services…."* **Manuela Perteghella, MP for Stratford-on-Avon**

3.83 However, there was some preference for a single unitary council, expressed by one local company which identified the main benefits of a single unitary as being: cost efficiencies and the optimisation of resources; unified strategic planning; a stronger regional voice; equity and consistency of services; and ability to pursue enhanced digital services and make better use of data.

3.84 Similarly, the response purporting to be on behalf of the local NHS felt that a single unitary suggested that a single unitary would achieve better economies of scale and better match the footprint across which health services are commissioned.

> *"Dividing Warwickshire into two councils risks duplicating bureaucracy, weakening strategic coherence, and reducing efficiency — all while missing the opportunity to create a stronger, unified voice that can deliver better services and unlock investment at scale."* **HR-ZN Group Ltd**
>
> *"One unitary authority would make more sense from a health perspective. Matches the population we commission to, has the scale to reduce cost and deliver services and play an active part in economic development."* **NHS Coventry and Warwickshire**

3.85 One of the parish councils also expressed scepticism about the proposed benefits of having two unitary authorities; but ultimately it was felt that more information would need to be provided for it to be able to express a clear preference in either direction.

> *"We tend to feel that splitting to two authorities of approx. 300,000 people undermines the objectives of the unitary project and fails to give sufficient population numbers to support the collective bargaining and population diversity which would give these benefits. The current proposals lack depth and detail sufficient to endorse or otherwise this position, and for us as a parish council, we feel uninformed to make decisions in either direction."* **Barford, Sherbourne and Wasperton Joint Parish Council**

3.86 There was some concern about a possible weakening of the links between town and parish councils and the other tiers of local government. One parish council highlighted its good working relationships with existing

councillors at both District and County level and queried whether these could be replicated under a unitary council, given it is anticipated that there would be fewer councillors overall.

3.87 Similarly, a local charity highlighted positive working relationships with current district councillors.

> *"We currently have either a district or county councillor, or both, attend our meetings which we see as a valuable contribution. We are unclear how many unitary councillors would be elected but believe they may be as little as one third of the current district/county councillors. This is likely to mean that any councillor would have within their area a significant number of PCs and the regular participation link would be impossible. We see this as a great concern which could be addressed either by each unitary councillor having one or more deputies or (preferred) council employees having an area link which would make them more aligned with local issues and the PC better briefed on county issues."* **Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council**
>
> *"As a local charity we work with all three levels of council (including the Town Council) and the district councillors have a greater understanding of and engagement with the local issues."* **Action 21**

3.88 There was also a query about the possibility of future increases to town and parish council precepts, in the event that they are required to take on any additional responsibilities from the district and borough councils.

3.89 There was some support for new bodies such as area committees, to help maintain local accountability and provide some balance between localism and the more centralised approach suggested by unitarisation.

> *"We would propose a single Warwickshire unitary authority with: sub-local delivery areas (e.g. regional hubs or service areas) to retain local identity; area-based committees or boards for community-level engagement and democratic oversight; central strategic leadership to guide growth, sustainability, and economic recovery. This model delivers both economies of scale and localism, avoiding the binary choice between centralisation and fragmentation."* **HR-ZN Group Ltd**
>
> *"We need accountability by way of area committees with the councillors on them."* **Whitchurch Parish Meeting**

3.90 One comment was made in support of the proposed two new unitary councils together forming a strategic authority, possibly in conjunction with at least one other neighbouring unitary authority.

> *"The two Warwickshire Unitary Authorities should form a Strategic Authority, possibly incorporating a neighbouring UA in e.g. Leicestershire".* **Hatton Parish Council**

4. Focus Groups with General Residents

Overview

4.1 Four deliberative focus groups were held with a broad cross-section of randomly selected Warwickshire residents: one in each Warwickshire district/borough except Rugby Borough Council. ORS worked in collaboration with the councils to prepare informative/stimulus material for the groups, before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

4.2 The focus groups were designed to inform and engage participants with the issues under discussion. This was undertaken using a 'deliberative' approach to encourage people to question and reflect on the issues in detail. The meetings were attended as below in Table 3.

Table3: Focus groups (area, time, date and number of attendees)

Focus group location	Time/date	Number of attendees
Stratford-on-Avon	Tuesday 2nd September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	7
Warwick	Wednesday 3rd September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	10
Nuneaton and Bedworth	Tuesday 9th September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	8
North Warwickshire	Wednesday 11th September 2025, 6:30pm – 8:15pm	10
	Total	**35**

4.3 The focus groups were independently facilitated by ORS. Each meeting began with the ORS presentation (to ensure that standardised information was provided to each of the sessions) which outlined the current council configuration across Warwickshire; the devolution and local government reorganisation agenda underpinning the reasons for change; the options for change, and importance of particular factors; and the rationale for and potential impacts of the North/South model. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to, and responding openly to, a wide range of evidence and issues.

Main findings from residents' focus groups

Most people felt attached to their local areas, but less so to Warwickshire as a whole

4.4 Participants were initially asked to reflect on how they felt about their area and how attached they were to both their specific district or borough, and to Warwickshire in general.

4.5 Most participants spoke of being attached to their area, both those who had lived there for all or most of their lives, and those who were relatively new residents. In terms of what helps form those attachments, historical bonds; having family and friends nearby; good community spirit; community events; and clean, safe, green neighbourhoods were most prevalent.

> *"It's a great environment to bring your children up in. I think, generally speaking, it's a safe area. Absolutely." – Warwick Resident*

"It is such a nice place to live. I feel really privileged to live somewhere so nice." – Warwick Resident

4.6 Others added that they feel attached to their borough or district area because of it is rural or semi-rural surrounding. Having good connections from these less urban areas to cities like Manchester, Birmingham and London were also seen to be a benefit of living there.

"I love living in the village and I really take pleasure every day in arriving home and seeing the countryside." – North Warwickshire Resident

"The positive thing is the connections to Manchester, to London, to Birmingham. It's so easy to get to all of these places." – Nuneaton and Bedworth Resident

4.7 Those who felt less attached to their local area tended to feel this way because they had not been living in the area long enough to develop an emotional connection. However, these participants still expressed their fondness of their local areas, regardless of their lack of emotional attachment. Those who did feel attachment to Warwickshire as a whole, praised it as a 'leafy', 'green', and 'pleasant' place to live.

"I wouldn't say I'm particularly attached to Stratford as such as I grew up outside Stratford. But as others have said, it's very lovely place to be around. I think it's quite expensive [but] the green scenery and the sort of small villages, - it's a really lovely place." – Stratford-on-Avon

"I think if you compare it with other counties, Warwickshire probably is quite well regarded and sort of seen as quite a nice, you know, affluent and green, pleasant area in the country." – Stratford-on-Avon Resident

4.8 Finally, some residents raised concerns around social and economic degradation across their areas. Some felt less connection to their local areas as a result, whilst others said they still felt those connections but found it difficult to see these issues there.

"I think it's a lost town. It's lost its identity. It's lost its direction… If things aren't looked after then it's just managed decline… We're asked to pay more council tax every year… but services continue to get cut and then so people think: 'Well, why am I investing in?'" – Nuneaton & Bedworth Resident

Awareness of current local government structures was mixed

4.9 While most residents were aware of the two-tier structure across Warwickshire, when asked exactly how many councils there are in Warwickshire (not including parish and town councils), knowledge was mixed: estimates ranged from 3 to 26.

4.10 Residents tended to have some awareness that the County Council provides one set of services whilst the District and Borough Councils provide another. Residents generally suggested that their District and Borough Councils provide what they feel to be 'more local' services such as waste and recycling collection whilst the County Council provides 'wider' services such as education. Others, meanwhile, appeared to have a more detailed understanding of what services are provided by each council. Some however, admitted to having no knowledge of what services are provided by which council. Some said this was down to a lack of interest and

trust in their councils, whilst others said they would only research which council is responsible for a service when they need to know.

4.11 In all the meetings, following the initial awareness questions, the facilitator's presentation explained the current local government structure for Warwickshire clearly - to ensure that everyone had a common level of understanding as the basis for the detailed discussions.

Residents were largely undecided on the principle of unitary authorities, recognising potential positives and negative impacts

4.12 Following the opening questions on awareness of current local government structures, and the explanatory presentation outlining current local government structures and the government requirement to change to unitary authorities, participants were asked for their initial or immediate views on whether the number of councils (not counting parish and town councils) in Warwickshire should be reduced to an, as yet, unspecified number of unitary authorities (each providing all council services in its area).

4.13 Initial views on reducing the number of councils were generally balanced, with residents readily considering potential benefits and drawbacks equally. There were also, naturally, some who leaned in favour of the changes and those who felt opposed.

4.14 Most residents agreed the changes would likely provide opportunities for cost savings; streamlining services; reducing duplication; and making service provision easier. Some expressed concerns around bureaucracy which they believed to be causing difficulties for service provision and saw this as an opportunity to remove that barrier.

> *"I guess the advantage of it obviously is everything's under in one box. It's going to help everything providing it makes it easier." – North Warwickshire*
>
> *"Everything takes far too long. There's too much bureaucracy. I think any anything that would streamline that process would be of benefit to the area." – Stratford-on-Avon Resident*

4.15 Others said the changes would be an opportunity to share expertise from staff across a wider area than is currently possible with the two-tier structure.

> *"It feels like a positive change because of what's been done in the north, and I think they're able to have much more say in terms of say the local transportation and look towards that long term." – Nuneaton & Bedworth Resident*

4.16 Whilst residents were largely undecided on the changes, numerous concerns were raised from both those who were undecided and those opposed. The most commonly shared concern was that the changes would result in a loss of local voice and representation for residents – especially in areas that are less populated or that have smaller economies.

4.17 Access was also a concern for numerous residents, who felt that reducing the number of councils would reduce accessibility to council services. This included a concern that a larger council could result in having to speak to more people before reaching the specific service you require, and a less widespread concern that the changes would mean closing council offices, removing physical access for those in more rural areas.

"If someone is elected probably from Warwick or Leamington, there's going to be that bias to focus on the areas that currently are bringing in the money and leave the vulnerable areas such as Nuneaton and other areas behind. So that's just my worry really." – Nuneaton & Bedworth Resident

"I just wonder whether there's a danger of particularly, maybe people who are older or people who are in a more rural setting, that they might end up just sort of falling off the radar, because they're not in such a position to state their needs." – Stratford-on-Avon Resident

"I think one of my main concerns would be... the loss of councillors… Which will then dilute the service again. It all comes back down to that accountability. Are we going to see a reduction in services across the board because of that?– North Warwickshire Resident

4.18 Questions and concerns were raised during most of the groups around how a new council would be funded. One question was whether any of the existing District or Borough Councils have any existing debt and, if so, how that would be factored in when creating a new council. Another question was how areas perceived to have better services or lower levels of need would be impacted if they were expected to provide more for areas that are currently perceived to have poorer quality services or higher levels of need.

4.19 The final concern was around how budgeting and service delivery would be considered for areas with different needs generally. For example, Stratford-on-Avon was said to likely have more income from council tax than some other areas, but also more anti-social behaviour (ASB). Therefore, it was questioned whether using some of its budget for the benefit of other areas might impact on services around crime and ASB prevention in Stratford-on-Avon. Whether or not issues like these would lead to an increase in residents' council tax bills was a concern raised in most groups.

"Does it mean that for the areas that are more affluent or have more services available to them, that we're going to have to share those out more with people?" – North Warwickshire Resident

"I think there's never going to be enough money going into these budgets and therefore there's going to be some hard decisions to make. And if you're covering a larger area with very different needs, then how is that is going to be divvied up and is it going to be fair?" – Stratford-on-Avon Resident

4.20 There was at least some level of opposition to a change to unitary councils in all groups based on general scepticism and misgivings regarding local government, or government in general. These participants argued that the changes would be unlikely to create any tangible benefit for residents, and may also result in increased costs.

4.21 Overall, residents were largely divided between those in support, in opposition, and undecided on the principle of a smaller number of unitary authorities. Notably, those who were either in support or opposition were generally willing to give considered arguments for either side.

4.22 There were also those who said that whilst they might lean in favour of the changes, they would appreciate having more detail on the changes before firming up their views. Meanwhile, other residents said they could appreciate the potential benefits of the changes, but that it would have to be a priority of the new council to ensure that areas with smaller populations do not 'lose out'.

"I would say it's probably a positive starting point, but I think there's a lot of clarification needed to give comfort." – Warwick Resident

Residents rated quality as their main priority for a new council

4.23 During the groups, participants were asked how they would rank the following five factors in order of importance to them for a new council: quality, value for money, accountability, accessibility, and local identity (accompanied by a brief description of what was meant by each). During these discussions, participants gave varied orders of priority but generally agreed that all five factors were important to consider during any future local government reorganisation.

4.24 Of all the factors, quality was most often rated as the greatest priority as it was seen as the most fundamental aspect of the services residents pay for and receive. Some added that if quality of service is achieved, then the other priorities are more likely to be achieved also. Some placed value alongside quality, suggesting that in order to feel that they are receiving value for money, then they need to perceive their services as being high quality. Residents also felt it would be particularly important for a new council to consider accountability, given their concerns about a lack of local voice and representation in less populated areas

"Looking at them, they're so incredibly intertwined, but my initial response was to think quality. Ultimately, I think what most people, at least what I want from my counsel, is that." – North Warwickshire Resident

"Ultimately, if people are paying a lot of money into the Council, it needs to be reflected. So, I would probably say value for money and quality kind of go hand in hand, and I would probably put those at the top of the list." – Stratford-on-Avon Resident

"Quality stood out to me because I think we want a quality service that's giving us what we need in our area, and accountability because we want to know where things are going and what they're going to do about issues that are raised by residents." – North Warwickshire Resident

4.25 Accessibility was lower on most residents' lists of priorities. However, it was prioritised by some. Those who felt it should be a priority said that a move to one council could mean that a smaller team within the council would be responsible for taking calls from a larger number of residents. As a result, they felt it would be important to mitigate for this. Local identity was largely believed to be the least important of the five priorities, with many believing that it is a matter for residents rather than the council. In one case, transparency of spending was put forward as an additional priority, with a resident suggesting that any new council should provide a breakdown of how residents' council tax is spent.

Residents argued that having two or more unitary authorities would ensure better service delivery and focus across more areas

4.26 After covering the priorities for any new councils, discussion moved on to the available options, notably the preference for having either one unitary authority covering the whole of Warwickshire, or having two or more new unitary authorities. Most residents agreed that in future they would prefer to have two or more unitary authorities in Warwickshire rather than one covering the entire area. By far the most common reason for this was the belief that different areas of Warwickshire have different needs, and that having two or more authorities would allow for those needs to be better met.

4.27 Much of this was based on concerns about a loss of voice and focus on smaller, more rural areas, with residents feeling this issue would be less of a concern if more than one authority were to exist. Residents stressed that if councillors are responsible for areas that are too wide, smaller, more rural areas would see much less focus. The population of Warwickshire was also said to be too large for one authority, making it preferable to introduce two or more.

> *"Nuneaton is very different to an area like Kenilworth. So at least in terms of that split, the people representing it hopefully would have more knowledge of the north of Warwickshire as opposed to the south of Warwickshire." – Warwick Resident*
>
> *"[It is a] terrible idea for one unitary authority. It's already breaching the guidelines from the government [regarding recommended population size], so they shouldn't be entertaining that." – Warwick Resident*

4.28 Residents also agreed that the quality of council services would likely be better if there was more than one new authority within Warwickshire. It was said that the workload of the entire area would be too much for one authority, likely making it stressful for staff and negatively impacting services.

> *"I feel like when it's smaller, the workload is a lot less and the jobs that people have to do are less… I feel like the quality would definitely be better with two authorities, because… Warwickshire is big." – North Warwickshire Resident*

4.29 Concerns were also raised around the potential for councils to face significant financial challenges, or even become bankrupt, and how that could impact areas. It was argued that if one council were to be responsible for the whole of Warwickshire, then the risks of bankruptcy would be greater since they would represent a larger area. One resident explained that having a larger authority does not guarantee better spending and efficiencies, and drew on Birmingham as an example of a larger authority that has faced financial struggles.

> *"The example of Birmingham… larger does not mean better spending of money or necessarily more efficiency within local authorities." – Warwick Resident*

4.30 One resident argued that having two authorities would give areas more 'bargaining power' within a strategic authority to ensure they receive sufficient focus on strategic planning for their economies and transport.

> *"I think having the two… gives us that bargaining power. We're our own entity. Then we can create our own identity as an area." – Nuneaton & Bedworth Resident*

4.31 Although most residents favoured having two or more authorities, there was a minority who favoured having only one. Those who argued in favour of one authority for the whole of Warwickshire said it would ensure more consistent service delivery; maximise potential for streamlining, cost savings and efficiency; and create a bigger 'pot' of funds to focus on areas with the highest needs. Some residents who argued in favour of having two or more authorities also agreed that these could be potential benefits of having just one single authority, but felt they did not outweigh the benefits of having two or more. A small number of residents who prioritised access, and whose preference was for two or more authorities, said they would be willing to

consider one authority for Warwickshire, provided that council could be guaranteed to be sufficiently accessible to residents from across the entire area.

> *"[Having one authority could create] financial savings and therefore being able to spend more on some of the places that perhaps aren't getting what they need, for example areas that are particularly poverty stricken or rural areas." – Startford-on-Avon Resident*

Most residents supported the North/South model as the best option available, given the need for change

4.32 Finally, facilitators of the groups explained the proposal for the North/South model using the presentation slides, before opening up discussion from the group to hear their thoughts.

4.33 Some residents had limited enthusiasm for the North/South model, due to their opposition to, or scepticism around, the introduction of unitary authorities. Most however, expressed their support for the model as the best approach, given the need for change.

4.34 The main benefit of the North/South model was said to be that it would give both authorities an ideal population size. Numerous residents said they would feel more comfortable being represented by a council with the population sizes suggested under the model, rather than under one council with the entire combined population of Warwickshire. Linked with this, North Warwickshire residents felt that the North/South model would best ensure focus on their local areas, benefiting the services they receive.

> *"I can see the definite benefits to that plan, and having the two would definitely be better in terms of population size as well." – Warwick Resident*
>
> *"Looking at the amount of people… I would feel safer with the two [authorities]… I would hope that I would get a better service." – North Warwickshire Resident*

4.35 In addition to these perceived benefits, one resident from Nuneaton & Bedworth said the model could benefit residents in the North Warwickshire authority by allowing them access to grammar schools in Rugby. Another said it could allow a council to focus on the economic potential of North Warwickshire, building businesses and infrastructure in the area instead of focussing on existing opportunities in the south.

4.36 The main concern about the North/South model was the economic disparity between the two areas, which could exacerbate over time. It was felt by many residents that dividing the area into North and South would disadvantage the North, which might stagnate economically whilst the South grows. Residents from across districts and boroughs in the north and the south shared these concerns, and felt it is something that would need mitigation if the proposal did go ahead.

> *"I can't see the advantage to the north of splitting away from the south because any wealth in Warwickshire is down in the South, or it seems to be so. They've lost all the industry in the north. There isn't much in terms of employment there. So, I think the fairest thing would be a single council for the whole county." – Stratford-on-Avon Resident*

> *"I'm convinced that in 10 years' time that divide is only going to get bigger and the South are just going to get further and further away from the North… You've only got to look at that map to see where all the money is and where everything's going." – Nuneaton & Bedworth Resident*

4.37 Disaggregation of County Council services that are currently provided across the whole area, was a concern for some residents, who questioned how the North/South model would impact service provision. Residents were concerned about the funding of different services following disaggregation, and whether the quality could be impacted, and potentially vary across both areas.

4.38 Some residents were unable to fully support or oppose the North/South model, recognising the range of potential advantages and disadvantages in relation to each of the authorities that would be created. Many felt that its success would considerably depend on the work done by Councillors following implementation.

> *"I think both [authorities] will have their own advantages and disadvantages. It's sort of how you lean into it is the main thing and the implementation." – Nuneaton & Bedworth Resident*

4.39 Multiple residents voiced their frustration with the situation, and felt that more detail is needed for them to understand the impact of the likely reduction in the number of councillors; the impacts of disaggregation; and the impacts on council tax. One resident feared that a decision of how the new council(s) would be formed had already been made, whilst another suggested the motivation for the changes was to increase council tax revenue. Another felt that a breakdown of the cost of the reorganisation should be made available to residents.

Summary

4.40 Residents were not wholly decided on the principle of the reorganisation, recognising potential benefits as well as negative impacts. Most agreed the reorganisation would provide cost savings, reductions in duplication and potential to streamline services. Others said it could be an opportunity to share expertise from staff across a wider area than is currently possible with the two-tier structure. Others were concerned that areas with smaller populations would receive less focus and would lose access to quality services as a result.

4.41 Quality of services was rated as residents' highest priority, closely followed by value for money. Accessibility was listed as a lower priority for some, whilst others rated it as their main concern.

4.42 Residents largely agreed that if a decision to create unitary councils was taken, it would be better to have two authorities for Warwickshire to ensure that focus remained on local issues and councils were accessible to residents. Participants agreed that the needs of areas such as Nuneaton and Bedworth in the North are different to those such as Kenilworth in the South. As a result, the North/South model was supported as the preferred option. There was however, a minority favouring having just one new authority covering the whole of Warwickshire, believing that as well as maximising potential for cost savings and efficiencies, it might provide more consistent service delivery across the County.

5. Focus Group with Service Users

Overview

5.1 A focus group was convened with users of particular council services that might potentially be impacted by possible changes. Participants were primarily recruited from engagement questionnaire respondents who had indicated that they (or someone else in their household that they care for) used Housing Services (including affordable and council housing, waiting lists, housing repairs and homelessness prevention) or Social Care Services (including for adults and children, and support for vulnerable people).

5.2 ORS facilitated an online focus group with these services users, who lived across Warwickshire. The group was attended by four people. As with the other residents' focus groups, the aim was to inform participants of the need for change and the potential options, including the North/South model, and to encourage deliberative discussion and feedback.

5.3 One telephone interview was carried out by an ORS facilitator with a fifth participant who had been unable to attend the group. This interview lasted around 30 minutes and included the facilitator covering the same information as in the workshop to ensure the participant had the opportunity to provide more informed feedback.

Main findings

Participants explained their connection to their local areas and highlighted differences across the county

5.4 Service users were asked about their connection to their local areas, and to Warwickshire as a whole. During the discussion, participants expressed their affection to their local areas and suggested it extends to Warwickshire as a whole, although to a lesser extent. They explained that Warwickshire is a diverse county with its urban, industrious towns and also rural towns and villages in the countryside.

> *"It's a very beautiful county and it's got very extreme differences. So, you've got the big cities and the very industrial areas, but you've also got then the beautiful countryside and smaller towns like Stratford. And then you've got the villages and the small communities." – Service User*
>
> *"I think Stratford first and foremost, but Warwickshire as well. But… You can just see how separate it is geographically in terms of the reason north and south. Quite clearly, different parts of it. And I guess when I think of Warwickshire, I do tend to think of Stratford and Warwick." – Service User*

Service Users worried that larger councils would be less accessible

5.5 Service Users were concerned with the potential move to a smaller number of new unitary councils. Loss of access and local voice were the biggest concerns, with residents worrying that larger councils would be more removed from service users. One resident described difficulty obtaining a suitable home in their area through social housing, and questioned whether a new council covering a large geography might mean they could in future be expected to accept housing in more distant areas.

5.6 The importance your local council being comprised of members of your community was highlighted, and retaining local knowledge with a focus on local areas was also mentioned, with participants believing the introduction of one or more unitary authorities could diminish this. The principle of reducing the number of councillors representing residents was also a concern.

> *"I do think it's important that it's got localism at its heart. That's the thing. It has to be your council. It has to be people from your community who are making the decisions." – Service User*

5.7 Although the conversation largely focussed on the potential negative impacts of reorganisation, one participant, who was concerned about the possible changes, did agree that it could in future reduce confusion around which council provides which services.

> *"There is confusion about who's responsible and so on. So, I see the sense in having a single unitary layer where you know, that's your council?" – Service User*

Service Users felt that accountability and accessibility should be prioritised by a new council

5.8 Potential priorities for any new Warwickshire councils were discussed. As in the other general residents' focus groups, the factors put forward for consideration were quality, accessibility, accountability, local identity, and value for money, and participants were encouraged to rank these in order of importance.

5.9 Accountability was agreed to be the most important priority for a new council. It widely felt by the group that a larger council would be more 'faceless' and have less accountability for the decisions it makes. Recent issues faced by Birmingham City Council were put forward as an example of a larger council lacking accountability for its decisions.

> *"… If you look at Birmingham, big council, and they can't even collect bins. And how ridiculous is that and what accountability has there been for getting in that position?... There's been no accountability. There's nobody that's held their hands up. There's nobody that's made it right." – Service User*
>
> *"That's my biggest concern, with the bigger the organisation, the less accountability there is, because the big boys are at the top." – Service User*
>
> *"My biggest concern with this proposal is there will be even less accountability and there is a bigger risk for misspending and finances going in the wrong areas. And the service not being provided that should be." – Service User*

5.10 Access was of similarly high priority for this group, with participants worrying that councillors and service providers would become more difficult to reach if larger councils were introduced. One participant praised their local councillor for being so available to residents who have concerns and issues, and questioned whether this might become less common if things were to change. Another suggested that a reduction in the accessibility of the council could impact older residents in particular, who often have less access to transport and lower digital literacy.

5.11 Quality, local identity and value for money were discussed less, and felt to be slightly less of a priority for these participants.

Service Users all preferred to have two or more councils for Warwickshire

5.12 When the appropriate number of councils for Warwickshire was discussed, all of the participants expressed complete support for having more than one council in future, i.e. wanting two or more authorities.

5.13 Mostly, participants based this on the belief that it would prevent services and councillors from becoming too removed from their local communities. Warwickshire was also said to be too large – both in population and geographical size – to have only one council, and fears that the workload would be too great for its staff.

5.14 Participants also agreed that the North and South of Warwickshire have different needs, with one participant explaining how areas in the south rely on tourism, whilst those in the north do not.

> *"If you look at the map, it doesn't make sense to be one authority… I mean Stratford, Warwick, Cotswolds and to Shipstone, it's all about tourism primarily and a large rural area. Whereas if you go up into the Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby, tourism isn't by any means such a big deal. So, it's different conflicting issues in the different areas." – Service User*

5.15 After considering these points, one resident said that having two authorities would 'tick all the boxes' by ensuring that services and focus remain localised; population sizes remain manageable between authorities; and that the needs of communities are better met.

> *"[Having] two authorities seems to tick all the boxes. It's big enough to be able to do the job, but small enough to have local accountability [and] be rooted in the area that it's governing…I think it's a good idea." – Service User*

Service Users supported the North/South model for catering to the differences between the two areas

5.16 While participants largely remained opposed to the principle of replacing the existing two-tier system, *if* new unitary councils were to be created, they unanimously supported the North/South model as their preferred option. Drawing on their previous comments, the group agreed that the northern and southern regions of Warwickshire have their own distinct needs and therefore felt this model best catered to that.

> *"Obviously, the physical area of Stratford and Warwick combined is much larger than North Warwickshire. And yet North Warwickshire has the larger population. It just sort of indicates just the difference in terms of population density…" – Service User*

5.17 Participants were interested whether the two new councils would continue to use all of the existing district and borough council offices, and therefore maintain accessibility for residents, or if they would have only one office each. The latter would be a concern, as it could mean significantly longer journeys for many residents.

5.18 The group again expressed concerns around the current two-tier council system being replaced, and the general lack of clarity around what the changes would actually mean for service provision.

"I was wondering whether these offices were going to be new offices put in more central places or whether they will still work from the different [existing] offices because… if you live in Studley or Alcester, it'd be quite a long trek to go to the other side of South Warwickshire to go and visit." – Service User

"It's all the unknown, isn't it? We're going into the unknown and we don't know how it's all going to work out. That's what worries people, isn't it? That we don't know, and we've just got to wait and see and be told: 'we're doing this and we're doing that, and you won't really have a say in it.'" – Service User

Summary

5.19 Service Users were largely opposed to any reorganisation due to concerns about loss of access and local voice and focus, believing that larger councils would make services and councillors more removed from smaller communities. However, one participant conceded that whilst they disagreed with the reorganisation, it would serve as an opportunity to reduce confusion for residents around who provides which services.

5.20 Participants agreed that accountability was their biggest priority for a new council, due to fears that a larger authority would be more 'faceless' and take less accountability for its decisions. Access was given similar priority, with participants worried it would be reduced following any reorganisation.

5.21 Service Users preferred to have two authorities for Warwickshire rather than one, and supported the North/South model. Participants preferred this option, believing it would avoid services and councillors from becoming too removed from local communities. They also agreed that the North and South have the most distinctly different needs of any areas in Warwickshire, making it the most logical way of dividing the county.

6. Town and Parish Council workshops

Overview

6.1 Two online workshops were scheduled, and the district and borough councils invited representatives from town and parish councils, and clerks, across Warwickshire to attend whichever event was most convenient. The schedule of events and attendance levels can be seen in the table below.

Table 8: Stakeholder focus groups dates and attendees

Group	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Town and Parish Council workshops (1)	Thursday 4th September 2025, 4pm – 6pm	13
Town and Parish Council workshops (2)	Thursday 11th September 2025, 4pm – 6pm	14
	Total	**27**

6.2 The well-informed participants took a very active interest in the discussions. In fact, most of them were already familiar with the general local government reorganisation debate and had formed opinions on the issues under consideration before attending the workshops[10].

6.3 In the two meetings, the issues were presented and the discussions facilitated and reported by ORS. The meetings lasted for two hours, and the ORS presentation outlined the current council configuration across Warwickshire; the devolution and local government reorganisation agenda underpinning the proposals; the options for change, and importance of particular factors; and the rational and potential impacts of the North/South model. Participants were encouraged to ask questions throughout, and the meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

Main Findings from Town & Parish Council workshops

Town and Parish Councillors were concerned about how the changes could impact on their existing responsibilities

6.4 When discussing the principle of local government reorganisation, the group gave considered responses, agreeing that the changes could make it simpler for residents and businesses to access the relevant council and its services, and that efficiencies and cost savings could be achieved. However, the group had numerous concerns about the changes and wanted to better understand the implications.

> *"I think there's some clear potential benefits, not least financial efficiencies."*
>
> *"It would certainly be simpler to have unitary authorities and then parishioners at least would know where they have to go for something. Whereas at the moment so many people have no concept of what's organised by county or borough."*

[10] Please note that while some attendees were presenting the views of their town and parish councils as a whole, others stated that their councils had yet to discuss and form a collective view on the proposals and so they were expressing their personal views as a councillor.

6.5 The potential impact the changes could have on access and representation was a concern; it was questioned whether councillors would be less accessible and accountable, and whether services would become less localised. It was questioned whether councillors might be less invested in and engaged with smaller communities that were less local to them. One participant explained that their Parish Council has struggled to get their local district/borough/county councillors engaged with them, and was concerned that the situation could become even worse.

6.6 One councillor sought clarity on how funding for the new council(s) would be affected by the reorganisation. They suggested that organising new budgets in a way that is deemed fair and reasonable by all might prove difficult, and that any new council(s) would need to be transparent around the issue to maintain local trust.

> *"Just to say on budgets, they are really hard to disaggregate and it's really hard to do it fairly and it's really important that there's a way of that being transparent to show that one area isn't benefiting over another…"*

6.7 A persistent concern for the group was whether the changes would lead to increased responsibilities for Town and Parish Councils. Mostly, participants were unsure of what these additional responsibilities might be but were concerned they could be placed on them. It was widely felt across both groups that recruiting T&P councillors is already difficult, and that increasing their responsibilities would make is even more difficult, or even unfeasible.

6.8 Whilst most concerns around increased responsibilities were general, one participant raised a specific concern about the potential for T&P Council responsibilities around housing allocations to be increased. They said that it had been suggested to them that following the reduction in councillors across Warwickshire, T&P Councillors might be expected to take on more of a role in housing allocation. They said that the role is too much responsibility for people in a T&P Council role and that many are not qualified for such work. As a result, they said there would be significant reluctance from T&P Councillors to accept this role and that many could stand down as a result. Many participants shared concerns that other responsibilities could be handed from district and borough councillors to T&P Councillors following the reduction.

> *"Given the difficulty many of us have in recruiting Parish Councillors as it is, I think that Parish Councils will become non-viable if that recruitment is further complicated by the by a requirement that any prospective councillor has to undergo training and to carry a greater burden of responsibility."*
>
> *"…Extra housing allocations… It takes us a hell of a lot of time to go through them. We probably aren't as qualified as we should be, and if we're going to get more responsibility, my fear is that a lot of people are just going to go. I don't want to take part in that. It's too much responsibility…"*

Town and Parish Councillors preferred to have two authorities and supported the North/South Model as the ideal version of doing so

6.9 When discussing the prospect of having either one authority for the whole of Warwickshire or having two or more authorities, Town and Parish councillors again gave considered responses, weighing up the positives and negatives of each option.

6.10 Many participants agreed that one single authority could yield the biggest cost savings and efficiencies, and that having two or more authorities could create additional costs. Some also felt that the North could be disadvantaged if the county were split into two, and that the differences between North and South are not significant enough to warrant them having their own separate authorities.

6.11 Others who were less supportive of a single authority, suggested that they could potentially support the option if it meant that services became more effective. However, it was felt that currently there is not enough detail available about exactly how, it would improve services.

> *"There's no demonstrative information that this is going to reduce costs, and people just don't want increased costs. Having these two North and South ones could be more expensive in the long term."*
>
> *"I don't see there is a massive difference between the North and South of Warwickshire… I don't like the idea of Warwickshire becoming two separate councils. I think Warwickshire and my councillors believe the same thing as well. "They don't want it to be a county of haves and have-nots" is what one of my councillors did say to me."*
>
> *"The single unitary authority might be the answer if all the services were really, really good, but we've no way of knowing until it's decided."*

6.12 Though some participants preferred to have a single authority, and most were willing to consider the potential benefits, most leaned in favour of creating two new councils. The most common reasons for this were the perception that the needs of the North and South are different enough to merit having two separate councils; and that the area is too large in terms of size and population to have one authority. Participants also emphasised that keeping services and councillors more local would benefit services and residents, hence their support for two authorities over one.

> *"It's 60 miles from top to bottom and the requirements and the geographical differences is quite wide, and the needs are different in in the north to the South and the demands are different…"*

6.13 One participant argued that if Warwickshire were in future to become a single authority, it ought to be part of a strategic authority with Coventry. They went on to explain that Coventry and West Midlands already make up a strategic authority together, and that it is unlikely that Warwickshire would be able to join. A question was raised about what other areas Warwickshire would be likely to join with, in a strategic authority.

6.14 If two unitary authorities were created, there was general support for dividing the county based on North and South, although some questions about the scenario were raised. One question was whether service delivery and quality would vary between north and south if Warwickshire has two unitary authorities, and what controls will be in place to ensure service delivery is sufficiently high quality across both authorities? Another was that if Warwickshire is split into two unitary authorities, will they be together in a strategic authority and would any other authorities be a part of it? If so, how might this impact large scale and long-term developments in Warwickshire, such as highways? Many participants in both groups felt that more detailed information is needed about how any future authorities will operate in relation to service delivery, funding, and the makeup of strategic authorities.

6.15 Whilst participants sought clarity on these issues, they also praised the district and borough councils for their communication, with both Town and Parish Councillors and with residents.

Summary

6.16 Both groups of Town and Parish Councillors were well informed and gave considered, well-rounded feedback and questions. Participants agreed that the changes could make things simpler for residents and businesses to access the Council and its services, and yield cost savings and efficiencies. However, councillors were concerned about the potential impact on access and representation following any reduction in the number of councillors, and whether councillors and services might have less local investment when covering a larger area. Participants also sought clarity on what strategic authority Warwickshire would be a part of under either option.

6.17 Most participants preferred the North/South model to maximise the local focus and maintain engagement of councillors and services, believing the differences between the North and South of Warwickshire to be the most pronounced. However, opinions were mixed with some councillors preferring to have just one council for Warwickshire to maximise cost savings and efficiencies, and reduce the risk of the North being potentially disadvantaged as its own authority, given its smaller economy.

6.18 Mostly, Town and Parish Councillors sought more detailed information on the changes and the proposals, especially around how any future authorities will operate in regard to service delivery, budgeting, and the makeup of strategic authorities.

7. Business Forum

Overview

7.1 Invitations to attend an online forum were issued by the councils to representatives of businesses across Warwickshire. The session was held on 10th September 2025 at 9:30am. The group was attended by only three participants (although this level of attendance is not uncommon in relation to local government reorganisation, as many businesses perceive that the changes will have limited impact on them).

7.2 In the meeting, the issues were presented and the discussions facilitated by ORS. The meeting lasted one and a half hours, and the ORS presentation outlined the current council configuration across Warwickshire; the devolution and local government reorganisation agenda underpinning the proposals; the options for change; and the rational and potential impacts of the North/South model. Participants were encouraged to ask questions throughout, and the meeting was thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

Main findings from Business Representatives' forum

Business representatives agreed that replacing the two-tier system would reduce confusion and duplication, and improve consistency of service delivery

7.3 Following an explanation of current local government in Warwickshire, participants were asked for their thoughts on the principle of replacing the existing two-tier councils with a number of new unitary authorities (based on the government requirement). Participants were supportive of the change, agreeing that it would simplify businesses dealings with the council.

7.4 One participant said that currently the work they do with councils is often duplicated when working across multiple district and borough areas, and so they would welcome the change if this was simplified in future. Another said the changes could lead to better and more consistent service delivery across wider areas, including services for housing, health and social care, and more local facilities such as parking.

> *"If there isn't good partnership working across services that are jointly delivered, whether it's parking or housing and social care and so on, then I think that it does make sense that the organisations are kind of brought closer into one."*

7.5 Whilst participants all supported the principle of the changes, some suggested mitigations that might need to be in place. One participant stressed the importance of maintaining appropriate staff levels to meet demand, following a reduction in the number of councils. Another questioned whether staff would be working from home or from an office (if they are more remote from council offices), suggesting it could be harder to contact staff if many were working from home.

Business representatives gave balanced views when considering the number of unitary authorities, but preferred the option to have two

7.6 When asked for their thoughts on the potential benefits and drawbacks of having either one, or two or more authorities, participants reflected on the positives and negatives of each option. When discussing the

proposal to have one single authority, arguments in favour were that it more closely reflects the existing County Council, and could therefore be easier for businesses who already have a good relationship with them; a single Warwickshire council might have a 'bigger' voice on a national scale; it would maximise cost savings and reduce duplication; and it could improve strategic planning and ensure consistency of services across Warwickshire, potentially making it easier for businesses to operate.

> *"Having a single authority, [there's] less in the way of administration. So, then we get into our cost savings [and] reducing the duplication to save money."*
>
> *"In terms of strategic planning, countywide infrastructure… you've got the potential for uniformity of policies, service standards, etc."*

7.7 The main argument for considering more than one new council was that Warwickshire is too large and diverse to have only one authority. The group agreed that the north and south of Warwickshire have different needs and that a single authority would be less capable of representing residents and catering to their needs across the entire area. One added that many residents in the north of Warwickshire feel that the area is disadvantaged relative to the south, and that a single authority might impact the north by focussing more on the South.

> *"I do think that probably something on the scale of Warwickshire County Council is going to be too big… [because of] the diversity and the real sort of differences between the areas within Warwickshire."*
>
> *"North Warwickshire is very different to South Warwickshire. The communities that make up those parts of Warwickshire are very different. I suppose if it was a single authority then… that's a negative because they're not truly representing all of those separate parts of the authority."*
>
> *"They are two different communities, North and South. There's absolutely no doubt about that. And historically, the North has always felt slightly disadvantaged."*

7.8 Other arguments in favour of having two or more authorities were that it would maintain local focus from councillors and on more tailored service delivery; and that service quality would likely benefit as a result.

7.9 After considering the arguments for both options, by the end of the discussion, participants expressed a preference for two new unitary authorities.

> *"It does feel like the two unitary authority option for Warwickshire would give us the best chance of not losing all of the great work that happens at a local level."*

Business representatives supported the North/South model

7.10 After explaining the North/South model, the group expressed their general support for it. Having already discussed their views that the north and south of Warwickshire have different needs, the group felt the model was appropriate. The group agreed that it would allow for services to be better tailored to the needs of residents, and that individual needs of smaller areas would receive more focus. One participant questioned how existing partnerships between the County Council and businesses in Warwickshire would be impacted

by the disaggregation of services between north and south. Whilst maintaining support for the model, they still felt this was a concern that would need explaining and addressing.

> *"The voices that will be heard will be slightly different and hopefully you would get better engagement between the communities and the authorities, so the communities might feel better connected."*
>
> *"The north and the south is a much simpler split. It's a clearer split... I think they've justified it in a much better way compared to a single authority."*
>
> *"It's a difficult but my feeling is that a North/South split should be more advantageous…"*

Summary

7.11 Business representatives supported the reorganisation to unitary authorities, believing it would simplify their dealings with the council and reduce duplication. Although the group supported this change, they stressed that a new council would need to be sufficiently staffed to meet the demand of residents across a larger area.

7.12 Business representatives expressed arguments for both options: one single council, or two new unitary councils for Warwickshire.

7.13 Having one council for the whole area was said to be beneficial by more closely reflecting the existing County Council, with whom many businesses have a good working relationship; by giving Warwickshire a 'bigger' voice on a national scale; maximising cost savings, improving strategic planning and ensuring consistency of services across Warwickshire.

7.14 Arguments in favour of having two authorities were that a single authority might not be best placed to cater to the needs of different areas across Warwickshire; that residents in the North of Warwickshire might receive less focus than those in the South if they shared a single unitary authority; and that the quality of service delivery across both areas might be better, given the more local focus if two new authorities were created.

7.15 Participants voiced general support for the North/South model, believing it to be the optimum way of splitting the area, based on different needs. The group felt the North/South model would allow for services to focus on the needs of each area more effectively, benefiting residents.

8. Voluntary and Community Sector Workshop

Overview

8.1 A deliberative workshop with five Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) representatives from across Warwickshire was held virtually on 3 September 2025. ORS worked in collaboration with the councils to prepare informative stimulus material for the groups before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

8.2 The group was independently facilitated by ORS. It began with a presentation outlining the council set-up across Warwickshire; the devolution agenda and reasons for change; the options for change; and the rationale for and potential impacts of the North/South model. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

Main findings from VCS focus group

Views were largely positive on current local government structures across Warwickshire

8.3 Views on the current local government structure in Warwickshire were largely positive. Some participants described the two-tier system as effective and efficient and questioned the need to replace it, despite understanding the principles underpinning the change.

> *"Although I can understand the principle of replacing a two-tier system, we actually have an effective locally- run system of two tiers, which already works really well from the point of view of me as a resident and also actually in terms of the organisation I work in and the funding that we have."*

8.4 In addition, VCS representatives referred to the positive relationships that they have built up over time hold with local councils, with some expressing concern over the loss of these relationships on the adoption of a unitary system.

> *"My most pressing concern is that the process of moving from the system we have now to the one that we may well get... It's going to [mean] a degree of upheaval in people's minds... The history that we have with local authorities could be lost."*

Some VCS representatives supported the principle of unitary authorities, but were uncertain around realising the proposed benefits of doing so

8.5 VCS representatives ultimately supported the principle of replacing the current two-tier system with unitary authorities to increase efficiency, cut duplication and cost, better streamline services, and reduce bureaucracy.

"My hope is that by saving money at a senior level, perhaps there will be more money that's coming to the frontline so that we can provide better services."

8.6 Participants also acknowledged the advantages associated with having fewer councils to interact with, noting that unitarisation could streamline communication and decision-making processes. Additionally, it was seen as a potential opportunity for larger county-wide contracts, enabling improved service delivery across the region.

"I wonder whether it's actually going to mean less conversations for us and bigger contracts for us in terms of, 'We want to provide services across the whole of Warwickshire and make sure that everybody is getting that same service in in their postcode.'"

8.7 However, there was some uncertainty around whether these potential benefits would be realised in practice. In particular, it was suggested that, historically, mergers have not resulted in predicted savings being realised.

"I think the principle, if it's around economy of scale and financial efficiency, that feels good… But at the moment the uncertainty is outweighing the potential… and once we've gone quite a long way down that track there's no coming back from that. So, I understand the principle."

"I'm very sceptical about these financial efficiencies. There isn't a lot of history about with financial efficiencies, in mergers and I've been responsible for some very large mergers."

VCS representatives raised concerns about the potential loss of funding and local voice

8.8 Participants expressed concern that the move to unitary authorities would have a major impact on the VCS in Warwickshire. Concerns were expressed around the practical implications of moving to unitary authorities, again raising the prospect of losing good working relationships (developed over many years) between councils, VCS organisations, and communities, which could result in less local expertise and poorer service quality. It was felt that unitarisation would alter these relationships and impact their ability to secure funding in future.

"I'm obviously worried about the fact that we do have relationships with different individuals and we have the go to people that we can talk to about funding and that will all change when you reorganise. It's such a long process that we could lose some of that history and some of those relationships that we have. So, so that bit of me is concerned."

8.9 Participants felt that local councils would need to be inwardly focused during the transition, and as a result would sideline external priorities like development opportunities for VCS organisations. This shift of focus could, it was felt, disrupt established VCS relationships with local authorities, especially where previous contacts move posts; and lead to reductions in current support for both councils and residents.

> *"For local authorities it will all be about what's happening to them and therefore the outside organisations and development and opportunities… goes off the boil. Everyone's focus shifts and the history that we have with local authorities, could be lost as people that we've worked with for many years move on. The upheaval and the impact on smaller charities, organisations… it's going to have a massive impact on the support that lots of us offer to councils, tenants, and residents in the area for the non-statutory services that we all provide."*

8.10 Furthermore, it was argued that the way in which funding is allocated would be different and more complex within a unitary structure; and that regardless of the chosen configuration, funding would probably not match current allocations.

> *"My concerns would be the impact of funding, certainly for the charity sector, and what that looks like in the longer term because there's a strong possibility that that's going to get much more difficult."*
>
> *"Whatever comes out of this consultation, whether it's one authority or two authorities, we're really concerned about the funding that we would receive. It's very unlikely whether we go to one or two that either new organisation will make up the funding that we currently get from districts."*

8.11 Participants expressed concern that potential funding cuts could negatively affect how resources are allocated, and funding is distributed, putting pressure on organisations to make contingency plans and potentially harming the voluntary sector as a whole.

> *"Just listening to colleagues around the table and …if they're already scenario planning for the worst possible outcome and concern about what that means in terms of cuts to non-statutory funding, …that then passes down the chain… So, [there is] only a certain amount of money every year … that means that's a concern for us if we're going to be under more pressure."*

8.12 Concerns were also raised about reduced political representation through unitarisation. Participants felt that expecting Town and Parish councils to address the anticipated democratic deficit is unrealistic, as they are already overstretched and unable to take on additional responsibilities.

> *"… My greatest worry about some of this is the lack of democracy in it. Some of this has been justified on the basis that parish councils will be able to take over... Well, that's just not going to happen... With greatest respect to parish councils, they're struggling as it is, to do the little jobs that they currently have to do."*

Most of the VCS representatives considered access to be the most important priority for a new council or councils

8.13 When asked to rank important criteria for future local government arrangements, most VCS representatives chose access as their top priority, followed by value for money/sustainability and quality. Their rationale was that quality and cost-effectiveness are irrelevant if services are not accessible to users.

"… It's the accessibility that's really that's important. I mean, it's already difficult enough for people to access councils and local authorities and services."

"I think access is really important. If I'm going to access a service, I want to make sure it's a quality service when I do access that service and [that quality] is determined by where I live, whether I'm living rurally or whether I'm living in urban conurbation."

Most VCS representatives supported a two-unitary authority structure over a single-authority structure

8.14 A few participants explicitly stated they would prefer no changes to current local government structures but accepted that change is inevitable. They expressed a clear preference for a two-unitary authority structure over a single unitary; despite acknowledging that they currently enjoy a good working relationship with the existing County Council which, in their view, already operates in a manner that closely resembles a single unitary model.

"It actually works pretty well the way it is, but we're not allowed to have what we have [now]. I see the first option, the single unitary as really, really difficult for us all actually, although we have really good relationships with Warwickshire County Council and we work well with them."

8.15 This preference was largely based on participants' belief that a two-unitary authority structure would mitigate their concerns about smaller, local VCS organisations getting lost in the system, losing the 'local voice,' and access to services.

"So much of the work that happens and is so positive locally could get swallowed up and lost, which maybe it stands a better chance of remaining intact if there's two unitary authorities."

"So, given the two [choices], it does feel like the two unitary authority option for Warwickshire would give us the best chance of not losing all of the great work that happens at a local level."

"As an organisation, we have very good relationships with the County Council. But we don't have quite as much interaction and engagement with them as we do with, say, the borough councils. And some of that no doubt will be lost if it's one larger authority."

8.16 Concerns were also expressed that should a single authority be chosen, the distinct economic, social, and cultural differences between north and south Warwickshire could be overlooked, potentially leading to decision-making that does not reflect the specific needs, priorities, and identities of different localities. Participants felt that some communities could have inadequate representation and a diminished voice in county-wide matters as a result.

"North Warwickshire is very different to south Warwickshire. The communities that make up those parts of Warwickshire are very, very different. If you're having discussions as a single authority, [then] they're not truly representing all of those separate parts of the authority."

"They are two different communities, north and south. There's absolutely no doubt about that. And historically, the north has always felt slightly disadvantaged ..."

The North/South proposal was said to be the best option for Warwickshire

8.17 VCS representatives generally agreed that the North/South proposal would be the most advantageous for Warwickshire as a whole, as it considers the differing economies and communities across the county. The proposal also addresses the issue of population distribution, ensuring each new authority falls within central government's suggested population guidelines, with allowing for ample room for future growth.

> *"The advantage of the North South proposal, so the two unitaries rather than single, is you are making decision making more local. You wouldn't get that with the single authority, so there are lots of pros and cons… It's difficult but my feeling is that a North/South split should be more advantageous than a single unitary authority."*

8.18 Moreover, the North/South proposal was seen as a step toward addressing the disparities between north and south Warwickshire, helping to ensure that local needs remain a priority and that community voices are heard within the decision-making process.

> *"We have raised the fact that it's quite different North to South. So, you can tailor those services, and the policies for the differences between the North and the South."*
>
> *"The voices that will be heard will be slightly different and hopefully you would get better engagement between the communities, the authorities and the officers. So actually, the communities might feel better connected, if you've got the two as is being proposed."*

Suggested mitigations included forward planning and contingency plans

8.19 Some participants said they had started forward planning for whatever local government reorganisation brings, setting in motion contingency plans to mitigate for either eventuality (i.e., a two-unitary authority or single unitary authority structure). The impetus for this was again fear that the changes could affect future funding and impact on their organisation.

> *"We're already working on a crash plan. We worked out how much we get from here and there and what happens if that disappears."*
>
> *"I'm already starting to think, "What roles can I do without?" And that sounds dreadful, but how can we double up? How can we do this? [Even] do they need me? Can I manage with a bit less of me, so we can keep that [department] going? All kinds of different things!"*

Summary

8.20 VCS representatives generally agreed that their working relationships with district and borough councils and the County Council were good, and that the current two-tier system in Warwickshire is both effective and efficient.

8.21 VCS representatives understand the principles underpinning the change and supported reorganising into unitary authorities as an opportunity to improve efficiencies, cut duplication and cost, better streamline services, and reduce bureaucracy (providing these benefits can be realised); while also raising concerns around losing local identity and voices, and funding and contract allocation.

8.22 VCS representatives generally favoured a two-unitary authority model, believing it would better reflect the distinct needs, priorities, and identities within Warwickshire, preserve local voices, and maintain well-established existing relationships between councils and communities at a local level.

8.23 In the event of a two-unitary solution, the North/South proposal was felt to ensure the most appropriate division of Warwickshire and VCS organisations agreed that of the interim plans submitted to government, the North/South proposal provides the best opportunity for the county to maintain its identity and continue to provide good quality services.

9. Key Stakeholder Interviews

Overview

9.1 Sixteen key stakeholder organisations were invited to take part in an in-depth interview with ORS to discuss their views on the proposals. Despite extensive attempts at engaging stakeholders, only six of those contacted were able to take part. Interviews took place remotely on Microsoft Teams and lasted an average of 30 minutes. During the interviews, ORS staff outlined the current council set-up across Warwickshire; the devolution agenda and reasons for change; the options for change; and the rationale for and potential impacts of the North/South model. Participants were asked for their thoughts and opinions and each topic in turn.

9.2 Stakeholders had a good overarching knowledge of local government reorganisation and the various interim plans submitted to the government. However, we would note that some were hesitant to give definitive feedback, stressing that they work for apolitical organisations and that they will endeavour to work with any new authorities to provide the best services possible for residents.

9.3 In addition, participants requested that any direct quotations they provided either not be used or not be attributed to them. As a result, quotations in this section are limited to those who gave permission for their use and are not attributed.

Main findings from key stakeholder interviews

The current two-tier system in Warwickshire was said to be confusing, but also to have advantages when working locally

9.4 Most stakeholders agreed that the current two-tier local government structure is complicated, as it is not always immediately clear which council needs to be contacted for which issue.

> *"… When you're looking at devolution and how we [currently] engage with the various different authorities or even [the] combined authorities that exist, there's a lot of layers that we have to deal with."*
>
> *"There are so many times things fall between the gaps of who's actually owning the projects and how they're linking together and where there's obvious synergies."*

9.5 Despite this, stakeholders felt they had established good working relationships with local council at both county and district and borough levels, which they were keen to maintain.

> *"We engage positively. I'd like to think that we've got those good relationships with all the districts and boroughs and the county."*

9.6 A few key stakeholders felt that the decision on future structures is something of a 'fait accompli,' and stressed that they would embrace change regardless of what these structures look like, working closely with any new authorities to deliver the best outcomes for all areas. In this context, several said they were less

concerned about council configurations than ensuring service delivery and relationships between delivery partners are as effective as possible.

> *"So, I think there's a little bit of fait accompli. Whatever that looks like remains to be seen of course …and nobody is surprised this is happening."*
>
> *"I think the decision has been made, so it's irrelevant what anybody thinks, the decision has been made, government is doing this and it's happening. So …all we can do is try and embrace, look at the opportunities rather than the negativities, make sure that we are communicating very well with those people that it's going to impact."*

9.7 Stakeholders also highlighted that as a unitary county, regardless of exact configuration, Warwickshire would have more political weight in Westminster. This, several felt, would be advantageous.

> *"When the authorities do become unified, they [will] have a lot more punch and power to set their plans and to have a lot more influence on Westminster as well, who clearly hold a lot of the power in a lot of these issues."*

Stakeholders were largely in favour of reorganisation, but there were concerns about communication, potential disruption, and a loss of local focus

9.8 Half of the stakeholders were willing to discuss the principle of replacing the two-tier system with unitary authorities and said they were in favour of it and accepted the principle of change as a positive that will bring about the potential for efficiencies, cost-savings and streamlining.

> *"I think the simplification of decision-making processes, and a smaller amount of local government organisations to deal with, most people would agree with …. So, broadly the principles of what they're trying to do, we would completely agree with."*

9.9 However, clear communication was highlighted as crucial for change, along with the need to maintain and build on existing positive relationships.

> *"[It needs] clear communication to organisations about what is happening and a general way of making it smoother in terms of the contact points [that allow] maintaining those relationships going forward."*

9.10 One stakeholder was more cautious about the prospect of reorganisation and expressed concerns around uncertainty and potential disruption.

> *"The disruption and uncertainty … is a concern in itself in that [we] have been through an awful lot of change … Then to [have to] face a period of uncertainty and further disruption … it would have some impact around the costs of the changes [in general] and how that might impact in terms of things like support programmes being provided."*

9.11 Indeed, another stakeholder noted that while the reorganisation has been presented as a way to achieve savings and efficiencies, all change incurs costs. They also felt that the current lack of detail on how savings would be achieved has made it difficult to assess cost versus value and requested more clarity around this in future.

> *"One of the pros put forward [within the proposal] is that it is about cost savings. But actually, in the short-term, any kind of restructure is going to cost."*

9.12 Concerns were raised by three stakeholders around the potential loss of local focus and community representation within unitary authorities. These stakeholders feared that consolidating power into a larger, centralised body or bodies could weaken the connection between decision-makers and the communities they serve.

> *"It's a large and very rural county, with lots of hidden deprivation. So, it's about how we would make sure the communities are still heard in shaping services through all of this, they don't get lost along the way."*

9.13 As a result, stakeholders stressed the importance of maintaining a degree of local autonomy (especially at town and parish council level) to ensure decisions continue to reflect the unique character and needs of individual communities.

> *"I think … that there should be some local autonomy at town council level to keep the sense of local pride and local matters that actually are just small issues being dealt with by a local town or parish council."*

9.14 In addition, smaller businesses, charities and tourism organisations were especially worried that reduced local representation might negatively affect how funding is distributed, potentially overlooking the specific needs and priorities of their areas.

> *"… Whatever happens, we will be seriously affected … from a funding perspective because [when] we go unitary, we can't for one moment assume that Warwickshire Council, if it is unitary, will suddenly just put what our existing income is from all of those districts and boroughs into one pot."*

The two-unitary authority model was preferred by most stakeholders, while support for a single unitary authority was minimal

9.15 Two participants felt they could not give an opinion on this issue, preferring to remain neutral. Of those who did, all preferred the option of two unitary authorities over one, arguing that the population and geographical area of Warwickshire is too large to be run effectively by a single council. Having a population of under 500,000 in each authority was also considered advantageous in placing less stress on services and allowing some headroom for growth; as was the prospect that smaller councils would be more local and less remote. Overall, this model was described by those in favour of it as the more balanced of the two.

"[We] support the split of south and north entirely. It's not only the most geographically logical, it's demographically logical and also economically logical."

9.16 Stakeholders also felt that creating two unitary authorities instead of one would preserve local identities, ensuring community needs are better understood. They believed this approach would better retain local knowledge and ensure service delivery and decision-making is more responsive to local priorities.

9.17 The North/South model was also thought to offer a better population balance than the single unitary option. Indeed, the general feeling was that one unitary authority would cover too large a population to adequately provide for local needs.

9.18 However, one stakeholder acknowledged the potential benefits of moving to a single unitary authority, recognising that this could further reduce service duplication and streamline decision-making processes. Fully consolidating responsibilities could also, it was felt, lead to financial savings and improved efficiency; and having a single point of contact was seen as a way to simplify communication and access to support, negating the need for service users and partners to navigate multiple layers of local government.

"From our point of view, it would be much easier to have one single point of contact from an authority perspective."

"… If we were to go [to one] unitary, the pros of that would be a reduction of duplication, the number of meetings we sit in where we see repeated presentations and repeated discussions."

Those who supported the North/South proposal considered it the most logical approach to improving efficiency without losing local focus

9.19 Those who favoured a two-unitary authority model generally felt that the North/South proposal divides the county across logical boundaries given the socio-economic differences between north and south Warwickshire. Indeed, it was said that the distinct needs of each area would be more effectively supported by two separate unitary authorities, allowing for a more tailored and responsive service delivery across the county.

"South Warwickshire is a largely tourism … whereas in the north it's a very different economy, so I think the rationale … is really clear and I strongly support that."

9.20 The disaggregation of services was a concern for half the stakeholders, especially considering the differing economic and political situations in the north and south of the county. In particular, stakeholders expressed uncertainty around how funds and resources would be allocated across the two areas.

"I think [with] having one larger authority … there's still a chance that political differences between the north and south would mean an imbalance in areas of focus and development. Whereas if you are very clear that the south is a separate authority then the chance of a large political difference between the areas … is less likely."

Summary

9.21 While stakeholders commended the existing councils for their local knowledge and expertise, and their working relationships with partners, the two-tier system itself was agreed to be complicated, and duplicative. There was an appetite for change as a result, but also some caution around losing local focus and realising potential benefits.

9.22 Of those prepared to give a view, more stakeholders supported a two-unitary authority model over a single-unitary model. Those who favoured the former felt it would allow for efficiencies and cost savings while also maintaining local expertise and focus. Those who supported the latter felt it would maximise efficiencies and cost savings; and allow stakeholder organisations to function more easily, since there would be fewer relationships to maintain with different local authorities.

9.23 Those who favoured a two-unitary authority model generally felt that the North/South proposal offers a good population balance and best caters for the differences between north and south Warwickshire.

9.24 Finally, stakeholders stressed that they would work closely with any new authorities to deliver the best outcomes for all areas, regardless of local government structures.

10. Figures

Figure 1: Map showing distribution of responses (for questionnaire responses where a postcode was provided) 65
Figure 2: How informed or uninformed do you feel about which services are provided by your borough/district council and which are provided by the county council? 67
Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the councils should pursue opportunities to streamline services and make efficiencies, while maintaining good services? OVERALL (individual respondents only) 68
Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the government's requirement to replace the current two-tier system with a smaller number of unitary councils to run local government across the whole of Warwickshire? 69
Figure 5: Views on the principle of reducing the number of councils, by local authority 70
Figure 6: average scores attached to the five criteria that councils must consider when thinking about future arrangements for local government, based on a 0 to 10 scale where 10 indicates highest importance.....71
Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for two unitary councils to run local government across Warwickshire? 72
Figure 8: Views on the proposal for two unitary councils, by local authority.....73
Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the areas covered by the proposed two unitary councils? 74
Figure 10: Views on the areas to be covered by the proposed new councils, by local authority 75
Figure 11: Themes arising in text comments (individual respondents) 76

Jodie Gosling
Member of Parliament for Nuneaton
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

13th November 2025

Statement of support for a two-unitary model in Warwickshire

I am writing to reaffirm my support for the two-unitary model of Local Government Reorganisation proposed by four out of five district councils in Warwickshire.

My continued engagement with stakeholders and citizens has demonstrated the clear need to create two new unitary authorities – one for North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, and Rugby, and another for Warwick and Stratford districts. This approach reflects the overwhelming feedback from local people, with 73% of respondents surveyed favouring two councils over a single county-wide authority.

The current challenges faced by Nuneaton demonstrate that one central local authority is not working. For children and families with SEND in Nuneaton, 62.9% of EHCP's are not issued within the statutory timeframe whilst just 31% of parent's approve of Warwickshire's support networks.

Educational attainment in our town continues to remain well below the national average, with the Nuneaton Education Strategy failing to properly address the inequalities in provision and leaving behind Nuneaton's children.

Our local GVA is half the Warwickshire average, and the Strategic Economic Plan fails to name Nuneaton in any of its proposals, despite being identified as the top town for opportunity in the UK Vitality Index. Life expectancies in Nuneaton have fallen since 2010 but have increased in the South of Warwickshire over the same period.

As a single unitary in Warwickshire would effectively become England's fourth largest council, I fail to see how the people of Nuneaton would benefit.

As the Member of Parliament for Nuneaton, I have a duty to ensure residents in Nuneaton receive the best service provision and value for money possible, and we have not seen this under a single County Council.

I am firmly in favour of a two-unitary solution, backed by the majority of Warwickshire's district councils and residents.

Jodie.Gosling.MP@Parliament.uk
020 72192421

Jodie Gosling
Member of Parliament for Nuneaton
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Yours faithfully,



Jodie Gosling
Member of Parliament for Nuneaton

Jodie.Gosling.MP@Parliament.uk
020 72192421

RACHEL TAYLOR MP
Member of Parliament for North Warwickshire and Bedworth

13 November 2025

Mr Tom Shardlow, Chief Executive Officer - Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Mr Steve Maxey, Chief Executive - North Warwickshire Borough Council
By email

Dear Mr Shardlow and Mr Maxey,

Local Government Reorganisation – Support for a North Warwickshire Unitary

I am writing to express my support for the proposal put forward in the business case for two separate unitary authorities covering North and South Warwickshire.

In Nuneaton and North Warwickshire and Bedworth, residents face shorter life expectancies and poorer health outcomes. Our children leave school with lower grades and are more likely to be excluded. Our roads are in disrepair, and congestion contributes to dangerous levels of pollution. These challenges are part of a legacy of underinvestment and inequality that has persisted under the current governance model.

A unitary authority for north Warwickshire would be able to address the challenges and circumstances that are specific to it, with the unitary authority for the rest of Warwickshire also better placed to serve its population.

For consideration, here is a summary of the key arguments for two unitary councils in Warwickshire:

1. Stronger Local Identity and Place Based Governance
The two unitary model reflects the distinct identities, economies, and needs of North and South Warwickshire. It enables councils to tailor services and priorities to local communities, fostering more responsive and effective governance. Public consultation shows strong support: 73% of respondents backed the two unitary proposals.

2. Improved Public Service Delivery
Smaller, locally focused councils can redesign services around community needs, improving accessibility and outcomes. Early intervention and prevention strategies are better supported, particularly in high-cost areas like social care and children's services. Whilst joint safeguarding boards and shared services will ensure continuity and efficiency during transition.

3. Financial Sustainability and Efficiency
The two unitary model is projected to deliver substantial saving (£83.9 million by 2029/30). This is slightly lower estimated net savings than the single countywide unitary model (£89.5 million). This difference is primarily due to higher transition and disaggregation costs and reduced economies of scale.
However, the two unitary model compensates for this with significant non-financial benefits, including improved service responsiveness, stronger community engagement, and better alignment with local priorities. These advantages are particularly important in high-cost service areas such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), where demand management and early intervention strategies are more effective when delivered at a local level.
Importantly, the model aligns with recent research by the District Councils' Network (DCN), which suggests that councils with populations around 300,000 represent the optimal size for balancing efficiency, accountability, and service quality. The proposed North and South Warwickshire unitaries would each fall within this range, supporting the case for sustainable and effective governance. They would be similar in size to Coventry, already a Unitary authority which geographically is located between the north and south of Warwickshire.

4. Enhanced Democratic Representation and Community Engagement
Higher councillor to elector ratios improve accountability and citizen engagement. Area Committees and strengthened parish/town councils ensure decisions remain close to communities. The two unitary model supports neighbourhood empowerment and safeguards local civic traditions.

5. Greater Flexibility for Devolution and Strategic Partnerships
Two unitaries offer multiple options for devolution, including alignment with different Strategic Authorities. Smaller councils can better advocate for local interests and tailor economic development strategies. A single county unitary risks rejection from the West Midlands Combined Authority and may dilute Warwickshire's voice and lead to residents in the North feeling disengaged and left out of plans formed by a Strategic Authority based many miles away.

6. Better Alignment with Service Geographies
The model aligns with existing patterns in health, policing, education, and transport. North Warwickshire can focus on regeneration and deprivation; South Warwickshire can address rural ageing and connectivity. Tailored approaches to housing, homelessness, SEND, and adult social care improve outcomes and reduce costs.

7. Practical Implementation and Transition Planning
The proposal includes detailed workstreams for council tax harmonisation, digital infrastructure, HR, legal frameworks, and service continuity. In line with the government timelines shadow authorities can be elected in 2027, with full transition by April 2028. A coordinated communications strategy will support staff, residents, and stakeholders throughout the process.

In summary, a North Warwickshire Authority model offers a more manageable council size, better reflecting the shared sense of place and community across Nuneaton, Bedworth, and North Warwickshire. While a single unitary may appear marginally more cost-effective, the benefits of a North Unitary in terms of cultural alignment and local understanding are far more compelling.
A North Warwickshire Unitary would also allow for easier potential alignment to the West Midlands Combined Authority, which is essential for unlocking the economic potential of our area and ensuring strategic alignment with regional growth initiatives supported by the government.

I urge the long-term benefits of this proposal and the opportunities it presents for my constituents to be considered as part of plans for Local Government Reorganisation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else I can do to support on this matter.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Taylor MP
Member of Parliament for North Warwickshire and Bedworth

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
email: rachel.taylor.mp@parliament.uk

11 Congreve Walk
Bedworth
CV12 8LX
tel: 024 7630 9901
website: www.rachel-taylor.co.uk

facebook: Rachel Taylor MP
instagram: @rachel.taylor.mp
x: @RachelTaylorMP

Matt Western MP
Warwick & Leamington

Council Leaders
North Warwickshire District Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council,
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, and Warwick District Council.

6th November 2025

Dear Council Leaders,

Re: Local government re-organisation

Thank you for writing to me on 22nd September to outline the position on local government reorganisation in Warwickshire. Apologies for not having responded to you until now.

As I know you are all aware, this is a generational moment for our county. Done well, this reorganisation will strengthen local government, improve accountability, and deliver services more effectively. But it must be approached carefully and with a clear focus on what works best for our communities.

I support the proposal for two new unitary authorities, one for the north and one for the south of Warwickshire. This option appears to strike the right balance between scale and local representation. It reflects the distinct economic and social profiles of the two areas, and it would enable tailored approaches to local issues, such as SEND provision and adult social care. These are services in which local knowledge and flexibility have proven to be essential, whereby an accountable and nearby council would be best placed to deliver them.

While a single unitary might offer marginally higher financial savings, the difference is small compared to the benefits of maintaining local identity and democratic accountability. I believe that a two-unitary authority would still deliver significant efficiencies while ensuring residents feel connected to decision-making. It also provides a stronger foundation for future devolution, enabling Warwickshire to bring powers and resources closer to communities. The prospect of two unitary authorities, I believe, would stand a better chance of receiving the specific, targeted funding that may be needed by their respective communities.

As many of you know, I fought hard to prevent Warwickshire County Council from being absorbed into the West Midlands Combined Authority. I remain firmly committed to the principle that decisions affecting our communities should be made by those closest to them. Therefore, it remains the case that the two-unitary authority model will be the most effective way to deliver this.

It is my understanding that it is for local authorities to submit their final proposals to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government by 28th November 2025. I would strongly encourage each of your councils to engage with the Government at every available opportunity ahead of this deadline and in the run-up to new local authorities going live from from 1st April 2028.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Western
MP for Warwick and Leamington

Town Hall, Parade, Leamington Spa, CV32 4AT
Tel: 01926 882006

NHS
Coventry and Warwickshire
Integrated Care Board

Sent via email to:
Mo
c/o David.buckland@stratford-dc.gov.uk

24th October 2025

Headquarters: Shire Hall
Market Place
Warwick CV34 4RL
Tel: 02476 324399
www.happyhealthylives.uk

Dear all,

Re: Local Government reorganisation in Warwickshire

Thank you for your letter to Crishni Waring dated 13th October 2025 and I am looking forward to meeting you next week. Crishni asked me to reply on our behalf, and we have discussed the detail of this letter. We are also involved in the same work taking place in Worcestershire, with many of the same differences of opinion as to the best proposed course of action, so we do understand some of the issues being discussed here. It is clear that there are a range of views across the District and Borough Councils and the County Council and that the final decision will be one for Ministers to take This is also clearly an extremely important piece of work for Warwickshire, and whilst this is not something the NHS has direct involvement in, I am happy to offer some further views, on behalf of the Integrated Care Board and the wider health and care system that I represent.

I think that in very simple terms there is a clear view from local health organisations that a single unitary Council covering all of Warwickshire would be our preference. However, if the decision was taken to support two unitary authorities, we believe there is an opportunity to work together on some issues across the whole of Warwickshire, if both authorities supported this approach. This is particularly relevant for a series of health and local authority interfaces, where working together at scale adds value if things are done once at a Warwickshire level.

As the proposals and plans develop it would be helpful to discuss some of this in more detail, but specifically I would highlight the following:

- **Better Care Fund**
  The Better Care Fund is £78.57 million (25/26 budget) of funding that sits mainly within local NHS budgets but is in essence used jointly between the Integrated Care Board and the County Council to deliver a range of jointly commissioned services, mostly focused on the interfaces between health and social care. The services that are funded through this arrangement include Community Recovery Service (CRS), all the Discharge to Assess pathways that facilitate a timely discharge from hospital for thousands of patients a year, Community equipment and a range of specific support for local social care and domiciliary care services. It would be extremely complicated to unpick those long established and highly functioning services and would probably result in a lot of disruption and service change if two unitary Councils wished to pursue different strategies.

- **Discharge to Assess pathways**
  As mentioned, the Better Care Fund provides resources that commission the range of 'Discharge to Assess pathways that support people to leave hospital promptly. These patients do require some ongoing care or rehabilitation input, but the decision is taken that this can be delivered at home, in a Community Hospital or in a Nursing or Residential Care

setting. There is a team of people working across the four NHS Trusts in Coventry and Warwickshire and Warwickshire County Council who assess patients' needs and arrange the appropriate discharge pathway. For many years Warwickshire has had amongst the lowest levels of delayed transfers of care in the country, and this is mainly because of the well-established Discharge to Assess pathways. Any significant changes to this, or a requirement for hospital-based staff in any of the hospital trusts that serve Coventry and Warwickshire to work to two different systems for North and South would complicate a process that currently works very effectively.

- **Public Health Ring Fenced Grant and wider prevention work**
  Warwickshire County Council receives £27.38 million (25/26 budget) of funding each year from the Department of Health and Social Care and is required to use this money for public health functions as defined in the various relevant legislation. This includes a range of health promotion and prevention services, as well as core public health services such as support for patients with drug and alcohol addictions, health visiting and school nursing. The current package of services that are commissioned are included within local budgets held by NHS Trusts in some cases, as well as other providers. The referral pathways and interfaces with core NHS services are well established and effective. Dividing the Grant in two and the associated development of different thinking across North and South Warwickshire would add complexity to another relationship that works extremely well.

  The NHS is also working in partnership with Warwickshire County Council to deliver the Workwell programme on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. This programme of work is targeted at health interventions that can improve employment prospects of people currently out of the workforce because of health reasons and is going to be extended across all of Warwickshire, so will require countywide co-ordination. The wider contribution that health services can make to the economic growth agenda that will be so integral to the future devolution plans is significant, and the Integrated Care Board will be keen to work with you and colleagues to further develop this.

- **Children's Services improvement work and joint commissioning**
  Demand pressures for SEND services and wider support for Children continue to be a major pressure for both the NHS and Warwickshire County Council. There are also a range of regulatory inspections and interventions that involve both the NHS and the County Council which we need to respond to jointly, in an integrated way. As such there is a real need to work jointly on a range of activity to deliver the required improvements for local young people and increasingly, to jointly commission some services and pathways in a more integrated manner. It would be a significant risk if a single improvement plan was then replicated for two unitary areas, both in terms of the resource required to service the different plans as well as the potential for some of the more recent improvements being jeopardised if the teams are distracted from delivery of the current plan.

- **Adult social care**
  Demand continues to rise for adult social care and for the range of associated NHS services that are required to support people in receipt of care. The marketplace is volatile, and the NHS approach to commissioning packages of care for people in receipt of Continuing Health Care and Funded Nursing Care (both funded by the NHS) needs to be ever more closely aligned with the Council's commissioning. We need to co-operate on setting fair pricing and managing quality assurance, and we need to work together to develop a marketplace that can respond to what we both need to commission for our patients and residents. As such, we believe it should be a priority that work continues to be joint work across the whole of the county.

The above examples are not exhaustive as there is a lot of other joint NHS and local authority work that we need to progress and in doing so develop our partnerships. Much of this work falls under the remit of the Warwickshire Health and Well-Being Board, including a single approach to population health data and understanding of population need, developing the local housing offer and supporting sustainable infrastructure investment to facilitate the required levels of housing growth and the work on prevention.

Collectively we do face significant challenges right across public services and the next decade will clearly be an era of change and renewal, as we try and rebalance our capacity to meet the exponential growth in demand for some services. Achieving this will require us to work differently, remove duplication and increase productivity, as well as work alongside communities to understand how we can evolve the right thresholds for access to services and levels of support. From a health and care perspective, my view is that the ability to do that at the most strategic level and across a whole county such as Warwickshire will be important in ensuring consistency and equity. If that is not the outcome, I do hope that a single approach can be considered for some of the issues that I have highlighted above.

I hope these views are helpful and can inform the final position and plans for any consideration. The NHS locally will work with whatever structures emerge from this process and will continue to place great emphasis and value on our partnerships and joint working with local Government. Once the local reorganisation plans are finalised and have been approved by Ministers, I look forward to working with you and colleagues to develop the thinking in respect of the Strategic Mayoral Authority footprint, as this will also be very relevant and significant for future health footprints and configurations.

Yours sincerely



Simon Trickett
Chief Executive
NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board and
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board

Cc Crishni Waring, Chair

Police & Crime Commissioner Warwickshire

27 October 2025

CEX David Buckland
Stratford on Avon District Council

Delivered by Email: David.Buckland@stratford-dc-gov.uk

Dear David,

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation

Thank you for your letter regarding the ongoing discussions around local government reorganisation in Warwickshire. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important process and appreciate the commitment shown by all parties to ensuring that residents remain at the heart of future arrangements.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, my focus remains on ensuring that any changes to local government structures continue to support strong partnership working, community safety, and the delivery of policing services that reflect local priorities. I note the rationale behind the proposal from North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Stratford-on-Avon, and Warwick to create two new unitary councils—one serving the north and one the south of the county.

From a policing perspective, it is essential that any future arrangements continue to enable effective, joined-up working across the county. Warwickshire Police, operating as a single force, has a strong local identity and a proven track record of delivering responsive, community-focused policing. Its current structure supports:

- **Localised decision-making** that reflects the priorities of Warwickshire's towns, villages and rural areas.
- **Direct democratic accountability** through the elected PCC.
- **Strong partnership working** with local authorities, health services and voluntary organisations.
- **Operational agility** that allows the force to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues.

These features are critical to maintaining public confidence and ensuring that policing remains rooted in the communities it serves. Any reorganisation must safeguard the ability of Warwickshire Police to operate independently and in close alignment with local needs. It is also important to consider how to maintain the close working arrangements in place between Warwickshire Police and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service – any overall changes to the local authority landscape will necessarily have an impact on these emergency services, and consideration should be given to a single, local governance arrangement for both.

Should any future councils seek full constituent membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), this could open the door to changes in police oversight—particularly if Government were to grant the West Midlands Mayor responsibility for policing. Such a shift could

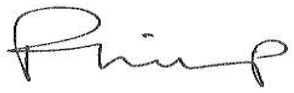
have significant long-term implications for Warwickshire Police's status as a standalone force and could erode the current strong position outlined above.

I believe that preserving Warwickshire Police's independence is essential. While regional collaboration has its place, the force's current structure allows for a level of responsiveness, accountability and community engagement that would be difficult to replicate under a broader governance model. The distinct policing needs of Warwickshire—particularly in rural areas—must not be diluted.

As reorganisation plans develop, I would welcome further dialogue on how policing and community safety can be protected and enhanced. This includes exploring how new councils can continue to support crime reduction partnerships, share intelligence, and work collaboratively with the OPCC to address emerging challenges.

I would be pleased to meet in the coming weeks to discuss these matters further and to ensure that the voice of policing is considered as part of the wider reorganisation process. Please do contact my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Seccombe TD
Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire

27th October 2025

Ben Brook
Chief Fire Officer
Service Headquarters
Warwick Street
Leamington Spa
CV32 5LH

Tel; 01926 466233
benbrook@warwickshire.gov.uk

Dear Leaders,

Thank you for your letter dated the 13th October 2025 regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

You have asked for my assessment and view on LGR for Warwickshire and any impacts or considerations for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS).

I hope you understand that in my role as Chief Fire Officer (CFO) I must remain politically neutral. I am therefore not able comment on any political elements of the LGR arrangements or any future governance model which is a matter for political decision. Should you wish to receive a view on this from a Fire and Rescue Service perspective I would advise you to contact either the Leader of Warwickshire County Council, Cllr George Finch or the Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue, Cllr Dale Bridgewater.

Once the Government has decided what arrangements will be put in place for Warwickshire, the arrangements for WFRS will be further discussed and agreed. The options for Fire and Rescue Service governance, once any LGR arrangements are agreed, are already set out in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. As the CFO for WFRS, I will work hard in whatever governance arrangement is decided upon by Government, to continue to provide the best possible service to the communities of Warwickshire. This will, of course, include maintaining relationships with key partners and our communities.

Yours sincerely

Ben Brook
Chief Fire Officer

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Warwickshire LGR Support

ASC and Children Services Analysis to Inform the Two Unitary Decision

June 2025

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Content:

Two Unitary Proposal
1) Warwickshire Demographics
2) Warwickshire CC Current Performance
3) The Local Market
4) The Financial Case
5) The Opportunity
6) Appendix A – Data Sources and Definitions

Two Unitary Proposal

The case for two unitaries in Warwickshire as opposed to one is strong. Whilst the demographics between the south and north of the county cannot be ignored, and are a major factor in considering the establishment of two unitaries, there is also huge variation in the capacity, cost and quality of commissioned services, supporting the most vulnerable citizens across the County.

As highlighted in the financial opportunities, the savings along with improved outcomes that can be achieved through establishing closer relationships with the local market, targeting intervention and ensuring services commissioned support the needs of the local community, are significant, modelled for the purposes of this report annually at £74.8m cost avoidance and £63.5m cashable savings.

National benchmark data indicates that unitary authorities with a population of 350k and below, perform better in terms of key areas of expenditure across Adult Social Care and Children's Social care, as depicted in the table below. The proposed geography for the two new unitaries will be the North with a population of approx. 313,600 and South 283,200. Warwickshire County has a population according to ONS figures 2022, of 607,604, which would place the proposed one unitary model in the upper bracket for expenditure.

Average unit costs	S251 LAC unit cost	S251 residential unit cost	S251 SEN unit cost	Nursing unit cost	Residential unit cost	Residential & Nursing unit cost
Population 500-750k	**£1,949**	**£7,406**	**£123**	**£1,087**	**£1,160**	**£1,138**
Population 350-500k	**£1,946**	**£8,465**	**£118**	**£1,151**	**£1,209**	**£1,166**
Population 250-350k	**£1,718**	**£6,772**	**£96**	**£1,006**	**£1,028**	**£1,023**
Population <250k	**£1,759**	**£7,220**	**£100**	**£1,044**	**£1,059**	**£1,048**

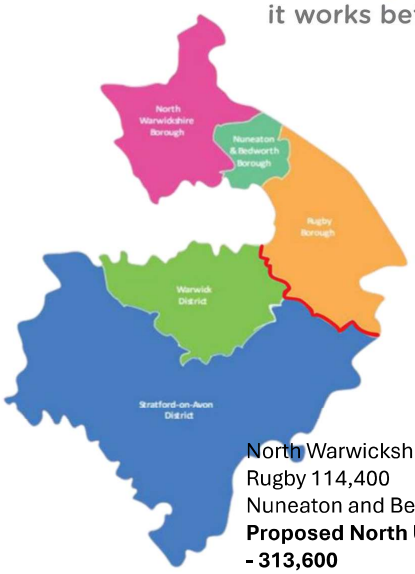
**Data source 2023/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) and ASCFR (Adult Social Care Financial Returns refer to Appendix A)*

Two Unitary Proposal

But it is not just the financial case. We know from the data supplied by the County Council, that currently there are major challenges in areas such as SEND (special educational needs and disabilities). According to the written Statement of Action following its Joint Area SEND inspection in Sept '21, there is a real need to rebuild the trust of parents/ carers and schools. With expenditure on high needs in significant deficit and growing, it is essential that the right provision and services exist locally to keep Warwickshire's young people within their communities. This is a similar case for the County's looked after children, if you consider 44% (according to data provided by the County Council), are placed outside of the County.

In relation to adult social care (ASC), we know from benchmark data that the County Council are higher users of residential services in comparison to their nearest NHS neighbours (ASCFR recognised benchmark grouping), and that there appear to be capacity issues in relation to the provision of domiciliary care and extra care services, both crucial to keeping vulnerable older people within their own homes and communities.

The risk with one unitary, is that adults and children's services continue as they are. The system needs real transformation, which only the establishment of two new unitary authorities can provide.



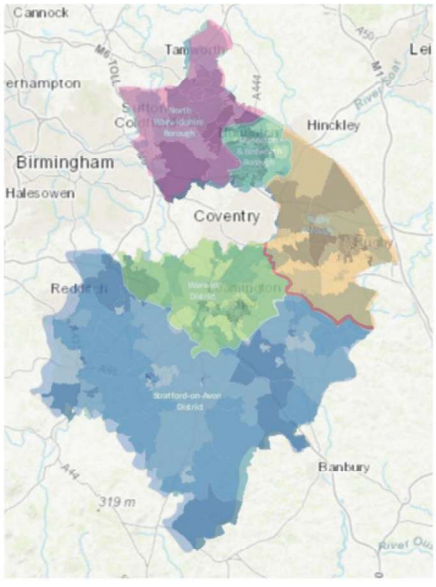
North Warwickshire 65,000
Rugby 114,400
Nuneaton and Bedworth 134,200
Proposed North Unitary population - 313,600

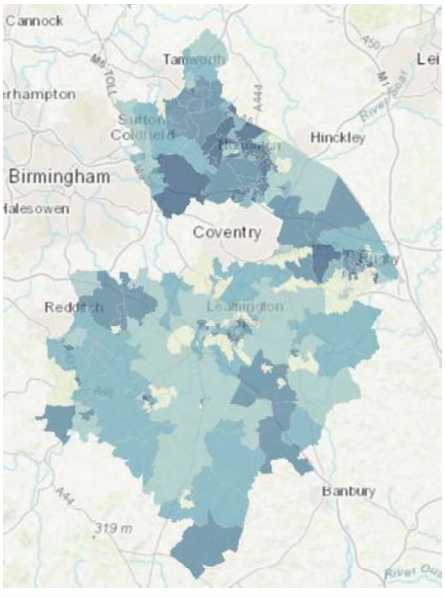
Warwick 148,500
Stratford 134,700
Proposed South Unitary population – 283,200

1) Warwickshire Demographics

Deprivation in Warwickshire

The map to the left combines the county boundaries map to visualise where areas of deprivation are concentrated across Warwickshire. These are more prevalent in North Warwickshire, Nuneaton, Rugby, and in Eastern areas of South Warwickshire.





LSOA

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Score|2019

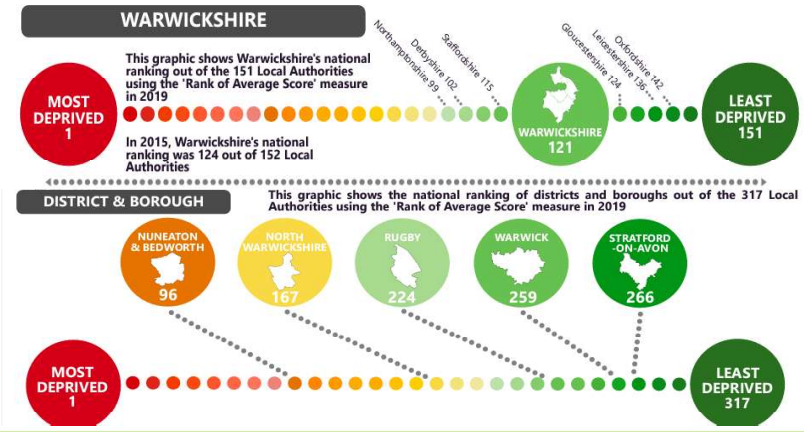
- > 22.7 - 63
- > 15.2 - 22.7
- > 11 - 15.2
- > 7.3 - 11
- 1 - 7.3

Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) *are small geographical units created for statistical purposes, primarily for the Census. They are designed to provide consistent and comparable data across the country, making them valuable for analysing social, economic, and demographic information.*

Warwickshire Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

Peopletoo
it works better with you

- In 2019, Warwickshire ranked 121 out of 151, placing as one of the less deprived councils in England. In terms of individual domains of deprivation, the county ranked 126 in income deprivation and 123 in income deprivation affecting children. The lowest scores were with regards to barriers to housing and services where it ranked 74 and living environment deprivation where it ranked 87.
- Further, while Warwickshire had two fewer Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the 10% most deprived nationally compared to 2015, these numbers increased for both 20% and 30% most deprived deciles.
- The least deprived districts and boroughs in Warwickshire were Stratford-on-Avon (266), Warwick (259) and Rugby (224), while among the more deprived areas were North Warwickshire (167) and Nuneaton and Bedworth (96).
- It should be noted that these figures are all from 2019 and current data may provide a different picture of deprivation in Warwickshire.



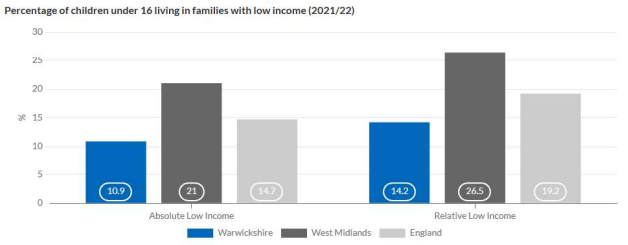
Index of Multiple Deprivation
Number of LSOAs in Warwickshire by deprivation decile over time

Decile	2019	2015	Change
10% most deprived nationally	6	8	-2
20% most deprived nationally	16	10	6
30% most deprived nationally	26	24	2
Sum of 10% - 30%	48	42	6
40%-100%	291	297	-6

Warwickshire Number of Children Living in Families with Absolute Low-Income Map 2019-2020

Peopletoo
it works better with you

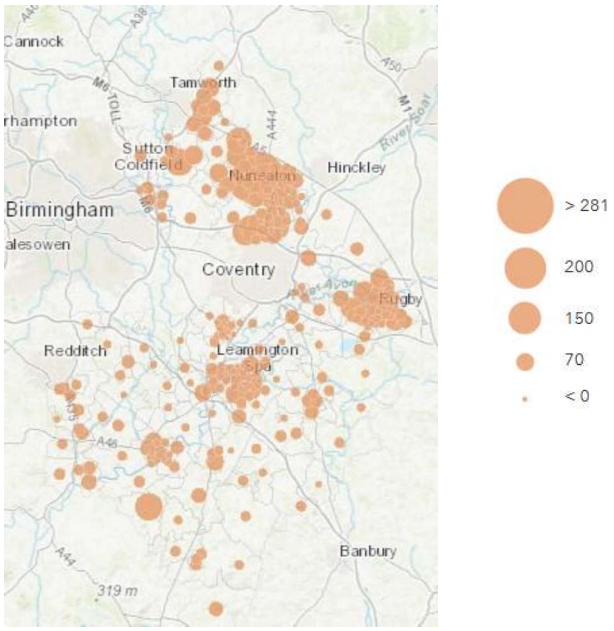
The map on the right pinpoints the areas that have the greatest number of children living in families with absolute low income, being Tamworth, Sutton Coldfield, Nuneaton, Rugby, and Leamington Spa.



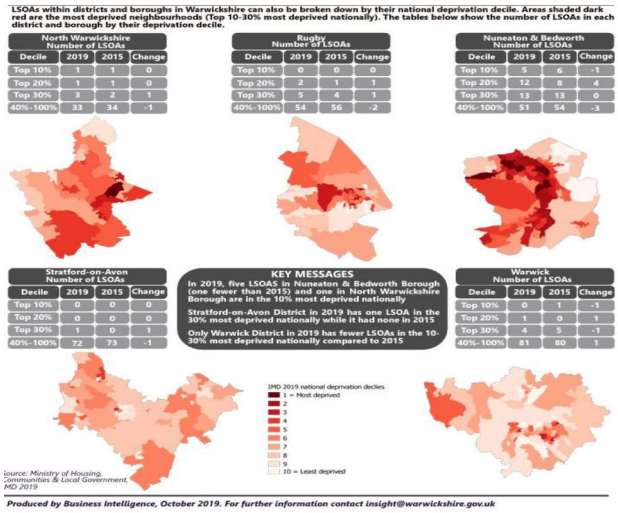
Source: DWP

	Warwickshire	West Midlands	England
Number of children under 16 living in families with Absolute Low Income	11,670	245,978	1,599,579
Percentage of children under 16 living in families with Absolute Low Income	10.9	21	14.7
Number of children under 16 living in families with Relative Low Income	15,141	310,243	2,087,495
Percentage of children under 16 living in families with Relative Low Income	14.2	26.5	19.2

Date: 2021/22 Source: DWP

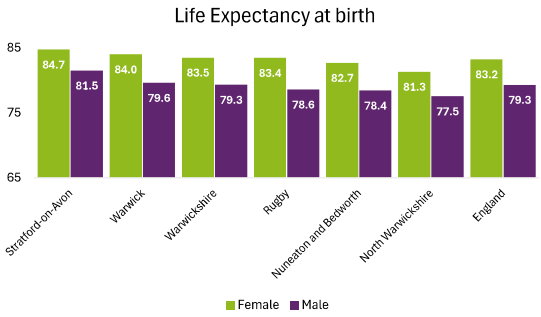


Warwickshire LSOAs by District



- In 2019, research done by Business Intelligence shows that the LSOAs with higher levels of deprivation align with the areas where children are living in families with absolute low income. These areas include; North Warwickshire, Rugby, Nuneaton & Bedworth, and parts of Warwick.

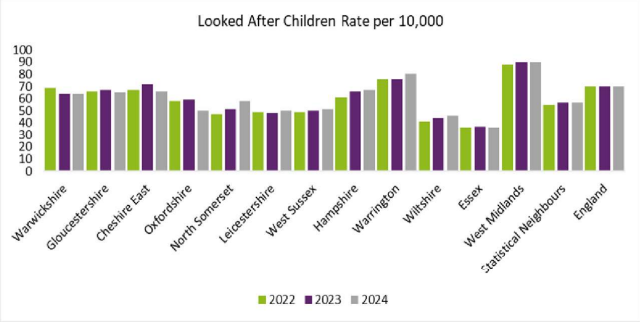
- Unsurprisingly life Expectancy at birth is higher in the lesser deprived areas of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick, than in the more deprived areas of Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire



2) Current Performance – Warwickshire CC

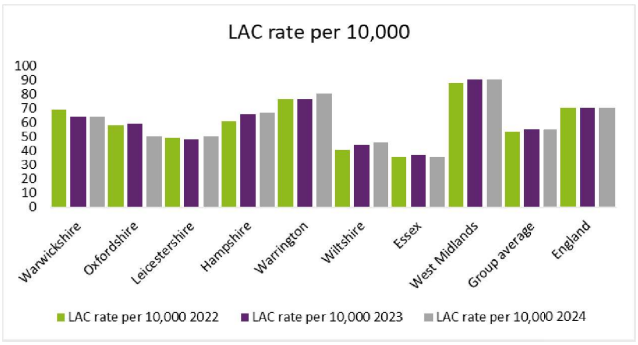
Children's Social Care

Children's Social Care has an Ofsted rating of "Good" following a full inspection Feb '22 and further endorsed at Focused Visit May '23.



Looked After Children (LAC) Rates are above Statistical Neighbours (SN) at 64 per 10,000 (actual number 805 a rise from 778 in '23), in WCC compared to 57 SN average.

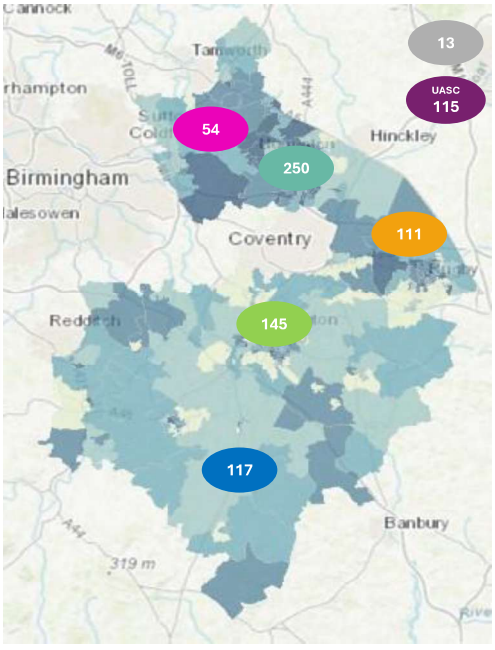
If we analyse the LAs within the SN group rated as either Good or Outstanding, Warwickshire CC (WCC) are at 64 and the average of the group is 55 per 10,000.



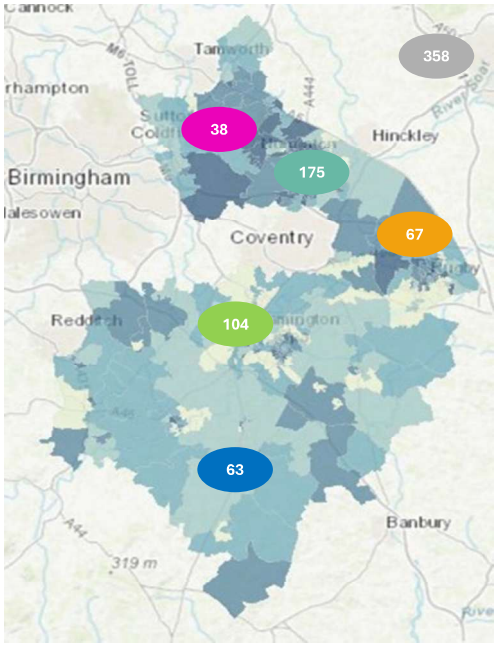
**Data source 2023/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) for children's services, built on local authority financial returns, refer to Appendix A.*

Children in Care

Children in care 2023-24 by originating postcode



Children in care 2023-24 by placement postcode



The darker areas are those with higher levels of deprivation

- In 2023-24 there were 805 children in care
- 31% originated in Nuneaton and Bedworth
- 2% originated out of county and at end of year 44% of placements were out of county

**data provided by WCC*

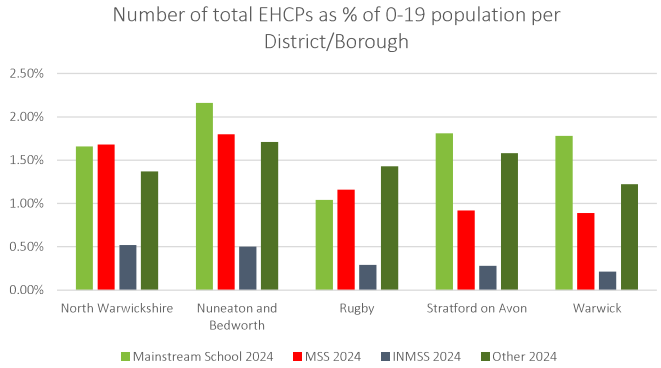
	Area	Originating area	Placement area at end of year
	North Warwickshire	7%	5%
	Nuneaton and Bedworth	31%	22%
	Rugby	14%	8%
	Warwick	18%	13%
	Stratford-on-Avon	15%	8%
	Out of County	2%	44%
	UASC	14%	

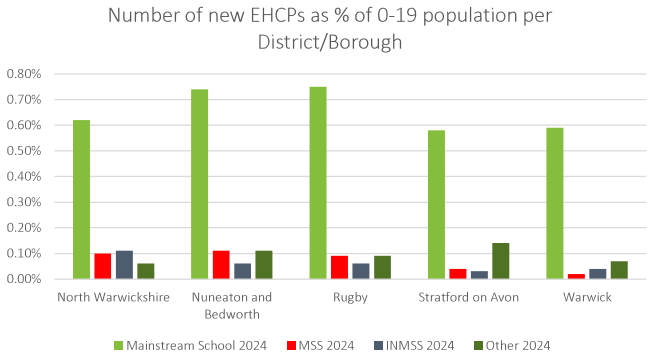
> 22.7 - 63
> 15.2 - 22.7
> 11 - 15.2
> 7.3 - 11
1 - 7.3

Children's Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Demand

Total & New Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as % of 0-19 Population per District/Borough

Peopletoo
it works better with you



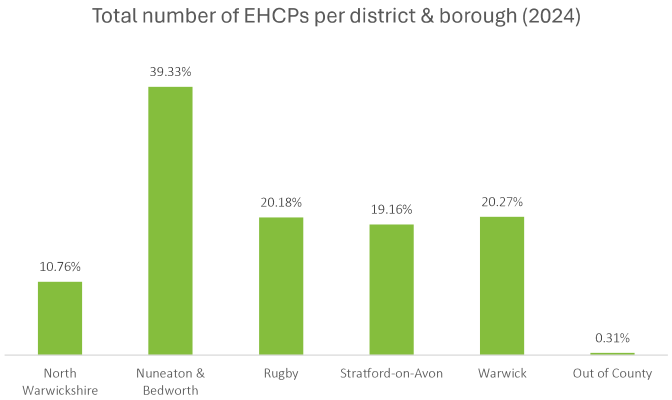


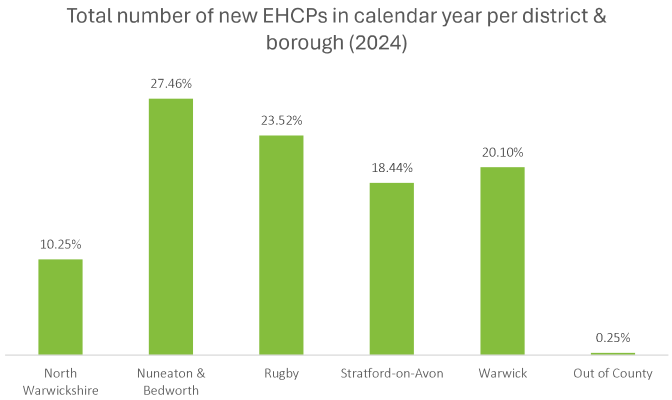
- The highest percentage of total EHCPs by district/borough population were typically for Mainstream schools or MSS (maintained special school), with the lowest EHCP percentages being for INMSS (independent non maintained special school).
- Encouragingly the highest percentage of new EHCPs by district/borough population were for Mainstream schools, with the lowest EHCP percentages varying across areas and type of provision. Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby had the highest percentages of new EHCPs, while Warwick had the lowest.

Children's SEND Demand

Total & New EHCPs as % of all per District & Borough

Peopletoo
it works better with you





- The highest number of total EHCPs were in Nuneaton & Bedworth with nearly double the numbers seen in other areas. The numbers are consistently around 20% for Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick.
- The highest number of new EHCPs in 2024 were again in Nuneaton & Bedworth, however, numbers were more consistent in comparison to other areas. Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick were again quite similar around the 20% mark.

Warwickshire SEND Services Map



The map on the left-hand side depicts the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score of different areas within Warwickshire (2019). The darker areas are those with higher levels of deprivation. The map on the right-hand side depicts a variety of SEND services available for children across Warwickshire. It is interesting to note that quite a few of the SEND services available are outside of Warwickshire county in and around Coventry. Furthermore, services appear to concentrate around cities such as Warwick, Rugby, Bedworth and Stratford-upon-Avon, with few options in between for families in rural areas of the county. Areas that appear to be more deprived but benefit from fewer services include North Warwickshire, towns surrounding Warwick, and South Warwickshire. The map on the right-hand side cuts off as there are no further services below the ones pinpointed on the map.

Warwickshire CC SEND Service

In summary it would appear that **SEND is failing currently in Warwickshire CC**, although they are due for another inspection, the previous inspection was quite challenging in terms of headlines.

Warwickshire CC, written Statement of Action following its Joint Area SEND inspection in Sept '21 Ofsted headlines:

- The inspection raises significant concerns about the effectiveness of the local area.
- The local area is required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted that explains how the local area will tackle the following areas of significant weakness:
  - The waiting times for ASD assessments, and weaknesses in the support for children and young people awaiting assessment and following diagnosis of ASD
  - The fractured relationships with parents and carers and lack of clear communication and co-production at a strategic level
  - The incorrect placement of some children and young people with EHC plans in specialist settings, and mainstream school leaders' understanding of why this needs to be addressed
  - The lack of uptake of staff training for mainstream primary and secondary school staff to help them understand and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND
  - The quality of the online local offer.

We also know that the Dedicated Schools Grant is in deficit. Extract from April '25 Cabinet Report.....*The 2024/25 in-year deficit is now forecast at £48.245m which is an increase of £3.028m since Q3, giving a forecast cumulative High Needs DSG deficit of £87.733m at the end of this financial year. Financial projections per the 2025 30 MTFS anticipate further rapid increases to the in-year deficit in 2025/26, growing to £64.0m (73.6% higher than the 2025/26 High Needs Block DSG Grant allocation) giving a forecast cumulative deficit by 31 March 2026 (the currently scheduled end of the DSG Statutory Override) of £151.733m.*

Schools in Warwickshire

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Overview

- There are a total of 266 state-funded schools in Warwickshire, comprising 196 primary schools, 37 secondary schools, and 4 sixth form schools. Warwickshire currently has no Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) places and no schools offering specific provision for teenage mothers. There are 2 schools in the county under Special Measures.
- The total pupil population across all schools is 85,318, with a median pupil-to-teacher ratio of 20.62, which is *the highest in the West Midlands and third highest in England*. The median *percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 16%, which ranks Warwickshire as 18th lowest in England for this measure*.

Primary Schools

- There are 196 primary schools in the county. Of these, 10% have been rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and 68% are rated 'Good'. Attainment across primary schools is mixed, with 19% considered low and 16% considered good, though attainment data is missing for around 28% of primary schools. The most common pupil-teacher ratio in primary settings is considered very high.
- Primary schools represent the largest proportion of schools in Warwickshire. Despite a high number of 'Good' ratings, a relatively small percentage are rated 'Outstanding'. The high pupil-teacher ratios may be putting pressure on teaching resources and could contribute to the relatively mixed attainment levels seen across the county.

It should be noted that the data available for CS was limited and the following source was used for the information above: Schools and Education in Warwickshire | SchoolRun

Geographic Distribution

The towns with the most schools in Warwickshire are:

- **Nuneaton**: 36 schools (22 primary, 6 secondary, 2 sixth forms)
- **Rugby**: 33 schools (23 primary, 7 secondary)
- **Royal Leamington Spa**: 16 schools (13 primary, 1 secondary, 1 sixth form)
- **Bedworth**: 13 schools
- **Stratford-upon-Avon** and **Warwick**: 12 schools each

Nuneaton and Rugby are the two most significant hubs for education in the county, reflecting their larger populations and urban profiles. Smaller towns typically have one or two primary schools, with very limited or no secondary or sixth form provision.

Schools in Warwickshire

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Secondary Schools

- Warwickshire has 37 secondary schools, 19% of which have achieved 'Outstanding' ratings, while 54% are rated 'Good'. Attainment levels are split quite evenly between high (22%) and low (19%), with 14% of schools lacking attainment data. Secondary schools in Warwickshire generally have a low pupil-to-teacher ratio, indicating smaller class sizes compared to primary schools.
- Secondary schools in Warwickshire are performing slightly better than primary schools in terms of 'Outstanding' ratings. The lower pupil-teacher ratio suggests more manageable class sizes, which may support the stronger attainment distribution observed in this sector.

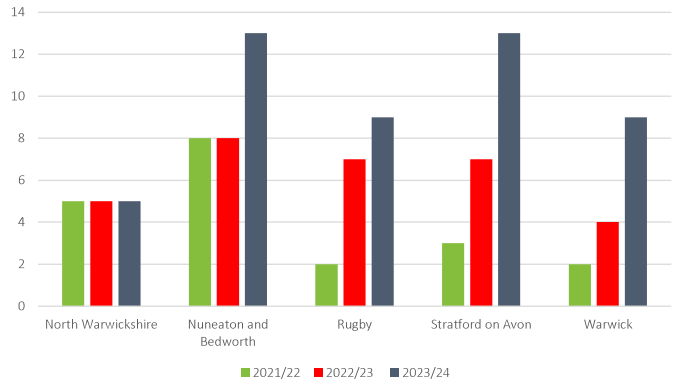
Sixth Form Schools

- There are 4 schools serving sixth-form education in Warwickshire. All four are rated 'Good', with 0% rated 'Outstanding'. In terms of attainment, data is quite limited with only 1 school being classified as good and data is missing for the other 3 schools. Sixth form schools typically have a low pupil-teacher ratio.
- While the sixth form provision is limited in number, it is consistent in quality, with all institutions rated Good by Ofsted. The small class sizes are a strength, though the lack of comprehensive attainment data makes it difficult to assess performance trends fully.

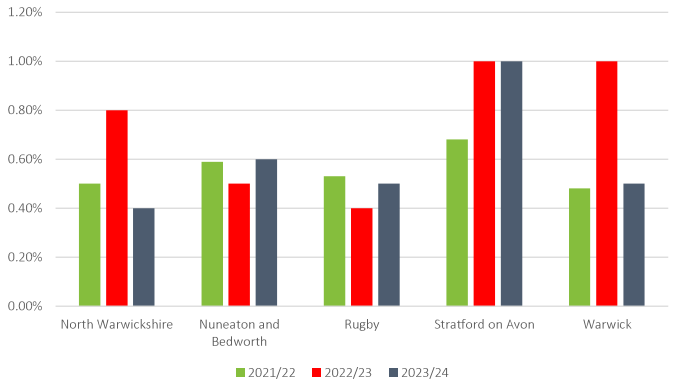
Schools in Warwickshire
Permanent Exclusions in Primary

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Total Number of Permanent Exclusions in Primary Schools (Recorded on Synergy)



Permanent exclusion rate via Synergy in Primary Schools (as a % of pupils on roll)

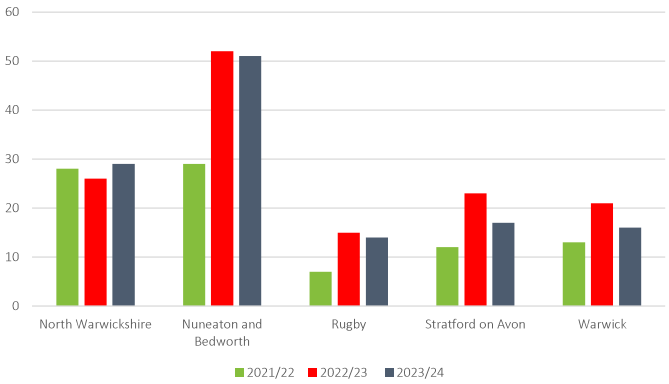


- The percentage of permanent exclusions in primary schools whilst low are increasing, having doubled in Stratford on Avon and Warwick Primary Schools.

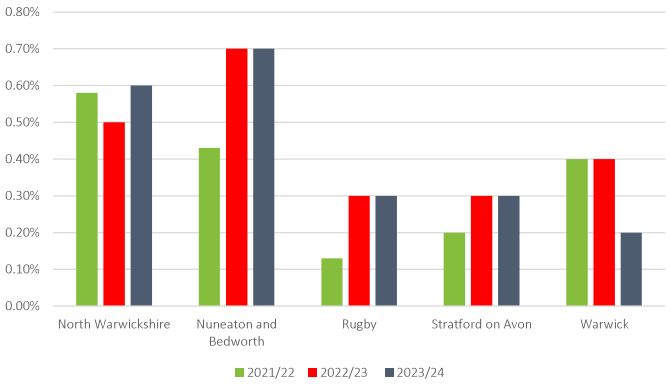
Schools in Warwickshire
Permanent Exclusions in Secondary

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Total Number of Permanent Exclusions in Secondary Schools (Recorded on Synergy)

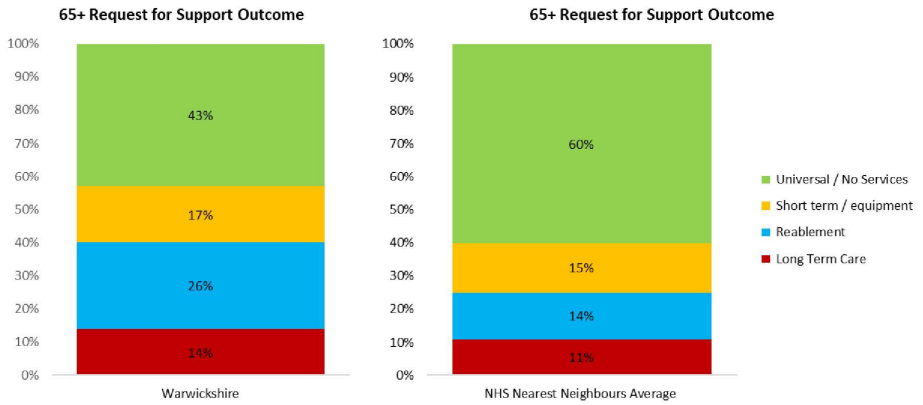


Permanent exclusion rate via Synergy in Secondary Schools (as a % of pupils on roll)



- Encouragingly permanent exclusions are static or reducing across Warwickshire's secondary schools, although Nuneaton & Bedworth saw a significant increase in 2022/23.

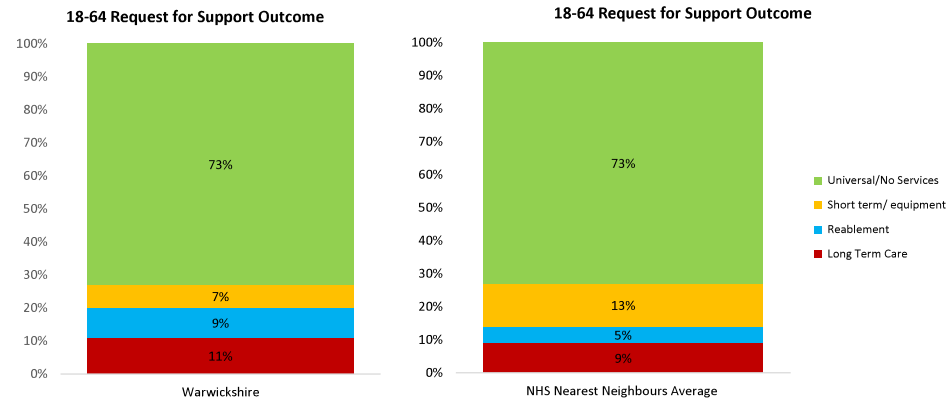
Adult Social Care Demand – Older People 65+



Data source 2023/24 ASCFR

- A lower number are diverted away at the front door to ASC compared to WCC's NHS Nearest Neighbour. However, Peopletoo best practice would strive for 80% diverted to universal services or information and advice.
- WCC is offering a higher number of short term intervention services including Reablement which is positive, but questionable whether an intense Reablement service would have always been required or could people have been signposted to other short term community support.
- WCC do have a higher number in Long Term Support.

Adult Social Care Demand – Working Age Adults

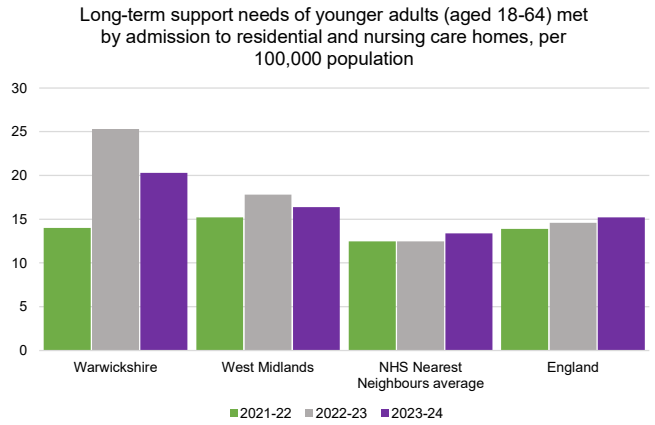


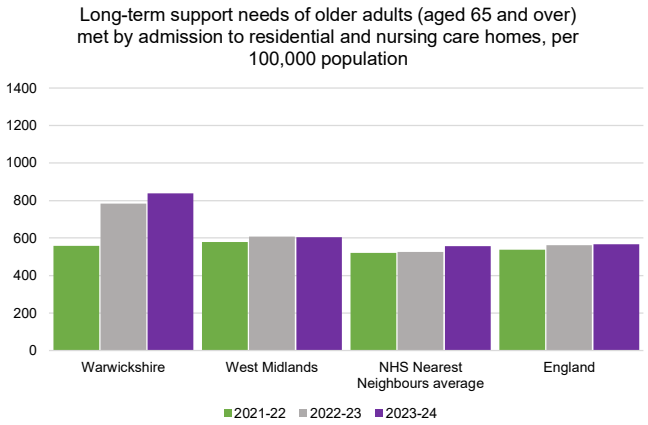
data source 2023/24 ASCFR

- WCC are in line with its NHS nearest neighbours in relation to numbers diverted away at the front door to ASC. However, Peopletoo best practice would strive for 80% diverted to universal services or information and advice.
- WCC is offering a lower number of short term intervention services including Reablement.
- WCC do have a higher number in Long Term Support.

Adult Social Care Outcomes

Peopletoo
it works better with you



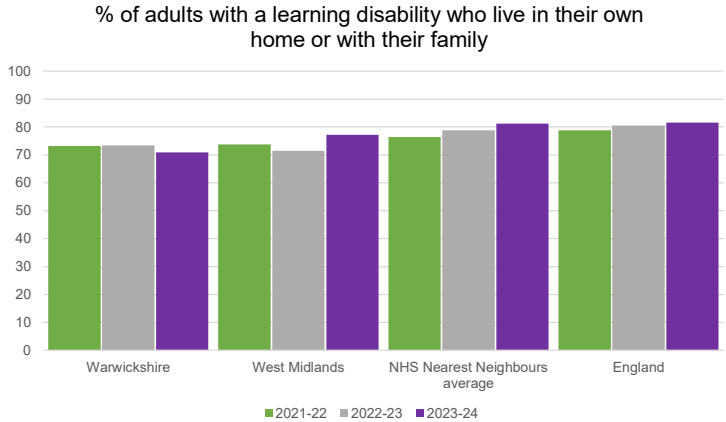


- In 2023-24 at 20.3 per 100,000 population, a larger proportion of younger adults' long-term support needs were met by admission to residential and nursing care homes in Warwickshire than regional (16.4), NHS Nearest Neighbours (13.4) and England (15.2).
- In 2023-24 at 838.1 per 100,000 population, a far larger proportion of older adults' long-term support needs were met by admission to residential and nursing care homes in Warwickshire than regional (603.8), NHS Nearest Neighbours (555.9) and England (566).

**Data source 2023/24 ASCFR*

Adult Social Care Outcomes

Peopletoo
it works better with you



- In 2023-24 a lower proportion of adults (70.9%) in Warwickshire with a learning disability lived in their own home or with family than regional (77.2%), NHS Nearest Neighbours (recognised benchmarking group) (81.2%) and England (81.6%). This correlates with the previous slide showing Warwickshire CC having a larger proportion than comparators of adults in residential and nursing placements.

**Data source 2023/24 ASCFR*

3) The Local Market

Warwickshire County Map



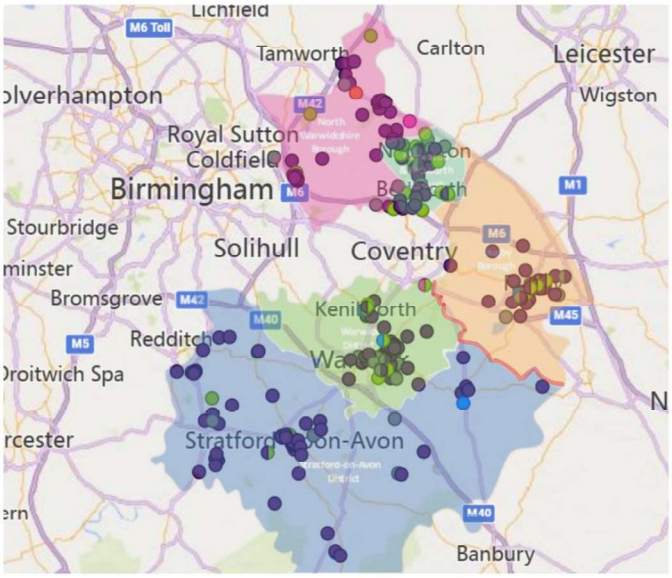
This map of county boundaries in Warwickshire was utilised to visualise the number of providers across counties which have been rated by Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The 5 areas comprising Warwickshire include:

- North Warwickshire Borough
- Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough
- Rugby Borough
- Warwick District
- Stratford-on-Avon District

The red line across the map indicates the proposed split in a 2-unitary model.

Warwickshire-Wide Providers & CQC Ratings



Location Latest Overall Rating (Blank) Good Inadequate Not Rated Outstanding Requires improvement

- This map depicts the CQC rated providers across Warwickshire, with ratings being colour coordinated. This map also visualises where providers can be accessed by residents.
- There is a clear cluster of providers around certain cities and towns, including Nuneaton, Bedworth, Rugby, Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon.
- While there are dispersions of providers throughout Warwickshire, there do seem to be fewer providers in more rural areas. These include parts of Rugby Borough, Stratford-on-Avon District and North Warwickshire Borough. It should also be noted that the providers in Warwick District seem quite concentrated near larger population areas, with few in the Northwest of the district.
- This distribution of providers can present opportunities to potentially develop the micro provider market, to support areas where capacity/ access is an issue.

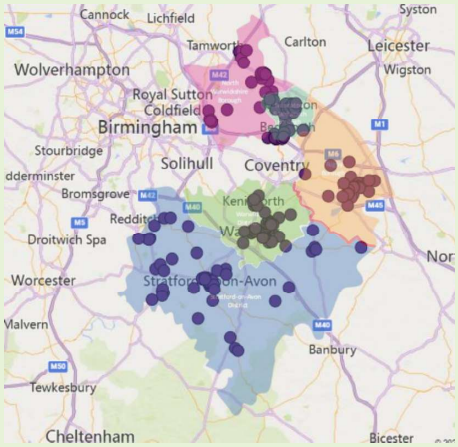
CQC Rated 'Outstanding' & 'Good' Providers

'Outstanding' Providers



The 'outstanding' rated providers in Warwickshire are concentrated in Mid-Warwickshire, with only one situated in the South. North-Warwickshire seems to have no 'outstanding' providers.

'Good' Providers

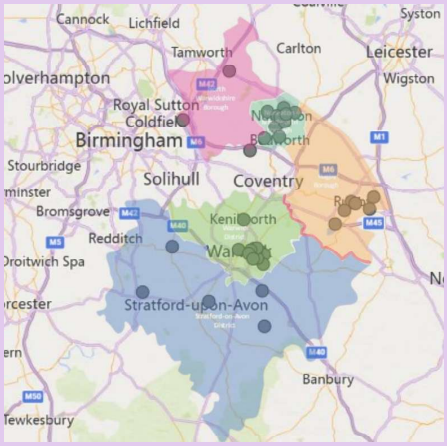


'Good' CQC rated providers are well-dispersed across the districts and boroughs, with each containing multiple to choose from and making access easier for residents. It should be noted that the South does seem to have fewer providers, potentially making it harder for residents to access services in the South/Southeast.

CQC Rated 'Requires Improvement' & 'Inadequate' Providers

Peopletoo
it works better with you

'Requires Improvement' Providers



Providers rated as 'requiring improvement' appear to be concentrated in Nuneaton & Bedworth, Warwick and Rugby. These are also the areas that have received higher scores for deprivation, particularly in North Warwickshire. This presents an opportunity to work with local providers to improve outcomes.

'Inadequate' Providers

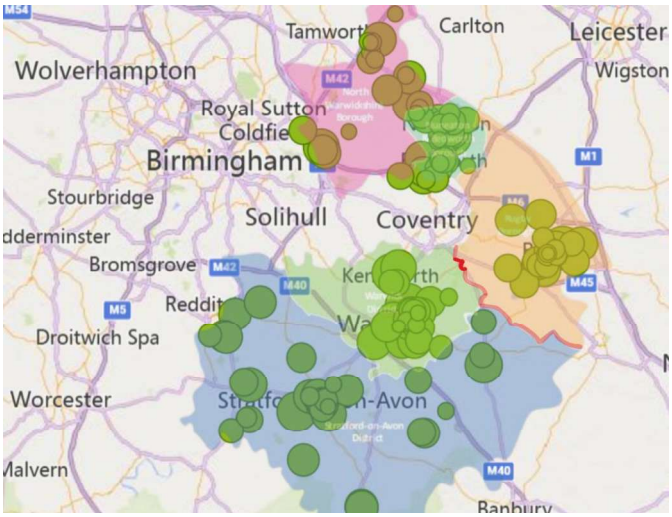


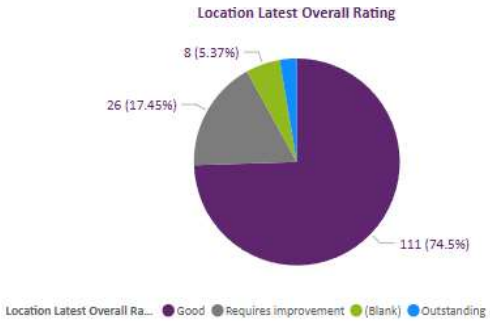
There is only one 'inadequate' rated provider in Warwickshire which is situated in North Warwickshire Borough. There are also two RI rated providers in this area with no 'outstanding' providers in the nearby boroughs. There are some 'good' rated providers, however, this does limit the quality of services accessible to residents in a more deprived area.

Residential Care Providers

Older People (65+)

Peopletoo
it works better with you



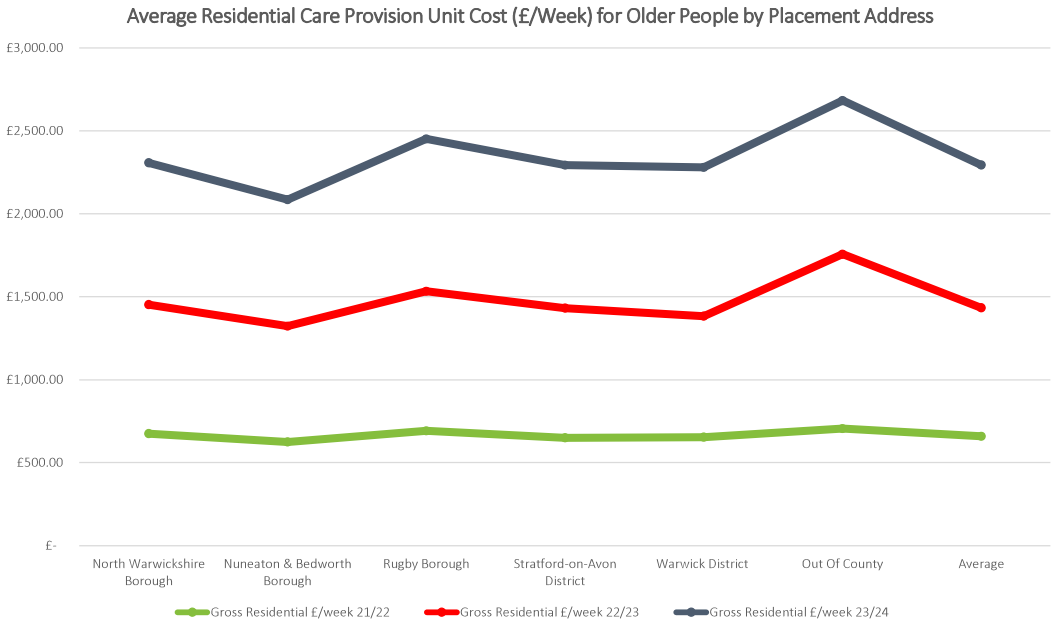


Older People:

- There re 87 providers registered with CQC as providing residential care for older people in 149 locations across Warwickshire, 74% of which are rated as Good and only 3% Outstanding.

Average Residential Care Unit Costs (2021/22 – 2023/24)

Older People (by Placement Address)



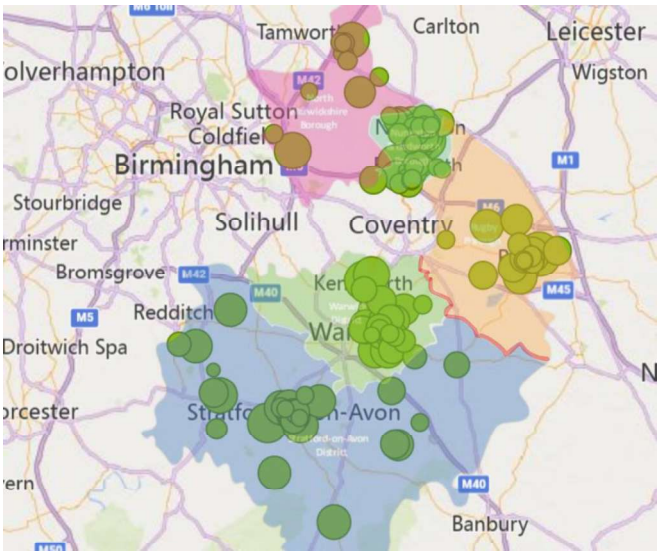
Older People Residential Care:

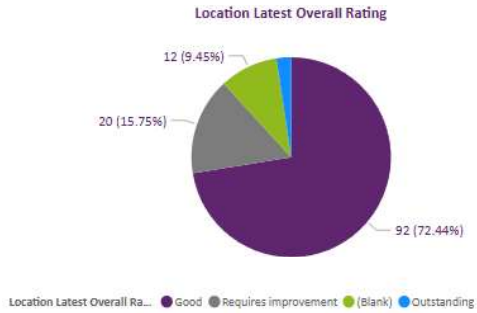
- Unit costs are higher in Rugby and out of county.
- The data also shows that weekly unit costs have been rising significantly year on year across the County, with the largest increases in 2023/24.

**Data provided by WCC*

Residential Care Providers

Working Age Adults (18-64)



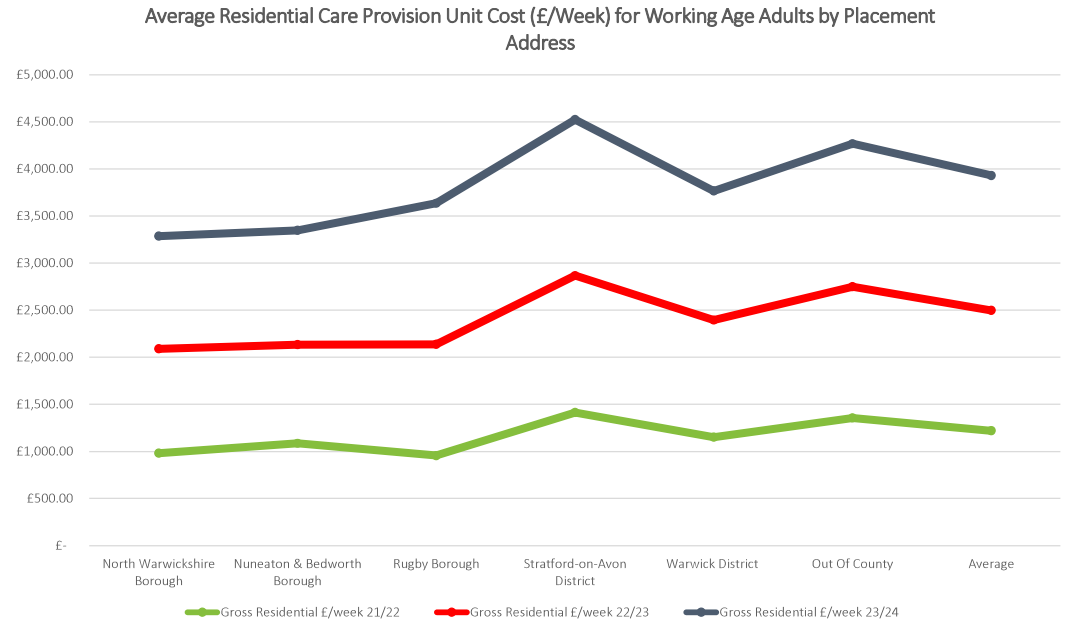


Working Age Adults

- There re 74 providers registered with CQC as providing residential care for working age adults in 127 locations across Warwickshire. 72% of which are rated as Good with only 2.5% Outstanding.

Average Residential Care Unit Costs (2021/22 – 2023/24)
Working Age Adults (by Placement Address)

Peopletoo
it works better with you



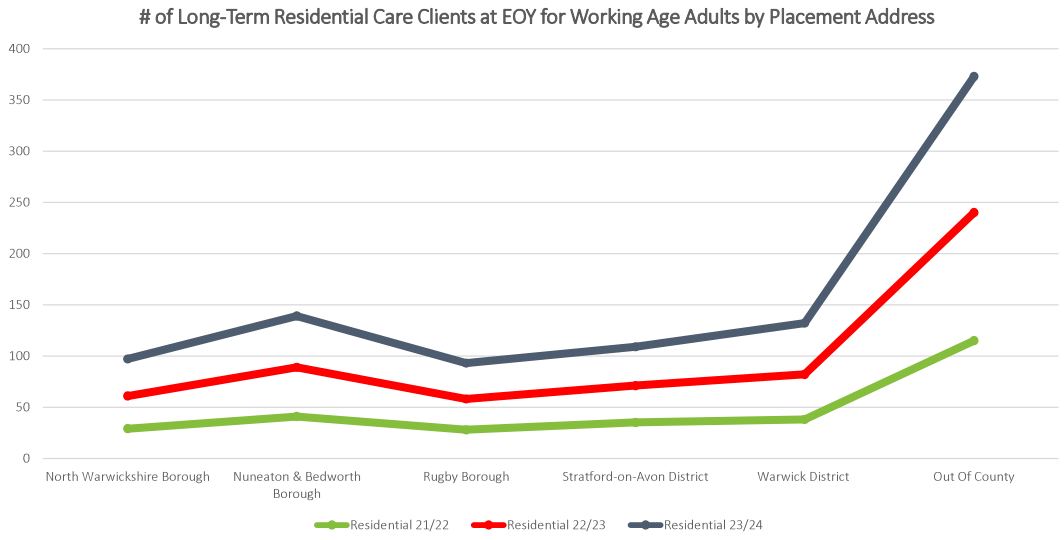
Working Age Adults Residential Care:

- Unit costs vary, the highest being in Stratford on Avon and Out of County.
- The data shows that weekly unit costs have been rising significantly year on year across the County, but with higher increases in 2023/24.

** Data provided by WCC*

Clients Accessing Long-Term Residential Care at EOY (2021/22 – 2023/24) – Working Age Adults (by Placement Address)

Peopletoo
it works better with you

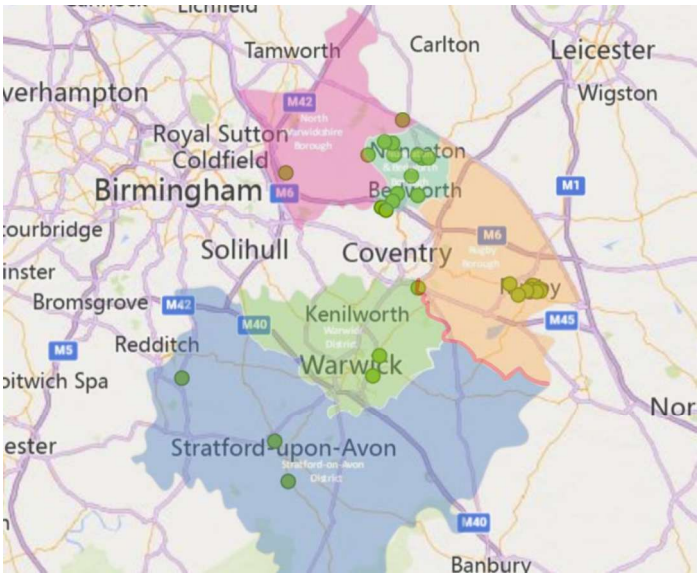


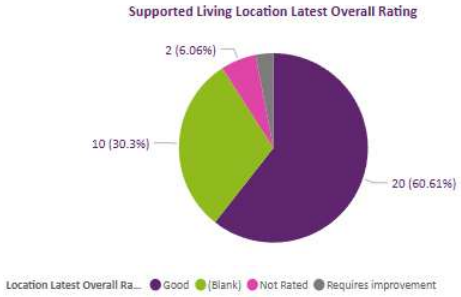
Working Age Adults Residential Care Placements:

- The highest number of working age residential placements are "out of county", which given there would appear to be capacity in the County, and these are on average higher unit costs than placements in the County, would indicate that currently commissioning of the right quality provision in the County may be challenging.

** Data provided by WCC*

Supported Living Providers
Working Age Adults (18-64)

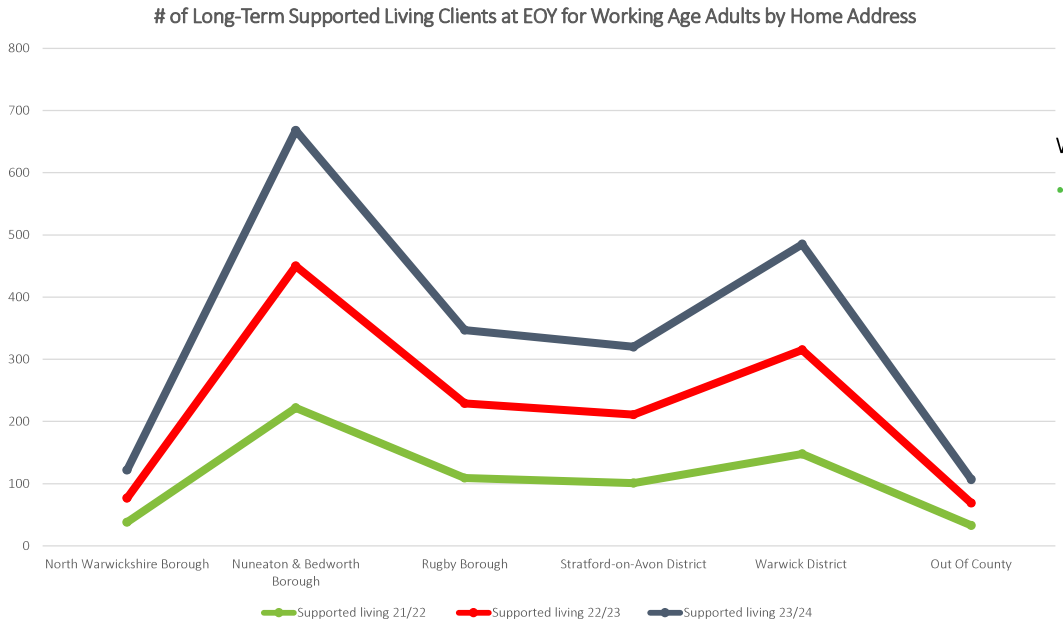




Working Age Adults:

- In relation to Supported Living, there are 30 providers across 33 locations in Warwickshire, the majority of which are located in Nuneaton and Bedworth, with very little provision located in Stratford or Warwick.

Clients Accessing Long-Term Supported Living at EOY (2021/22 – 2023/24) – Working Age Adults (by Home Address)



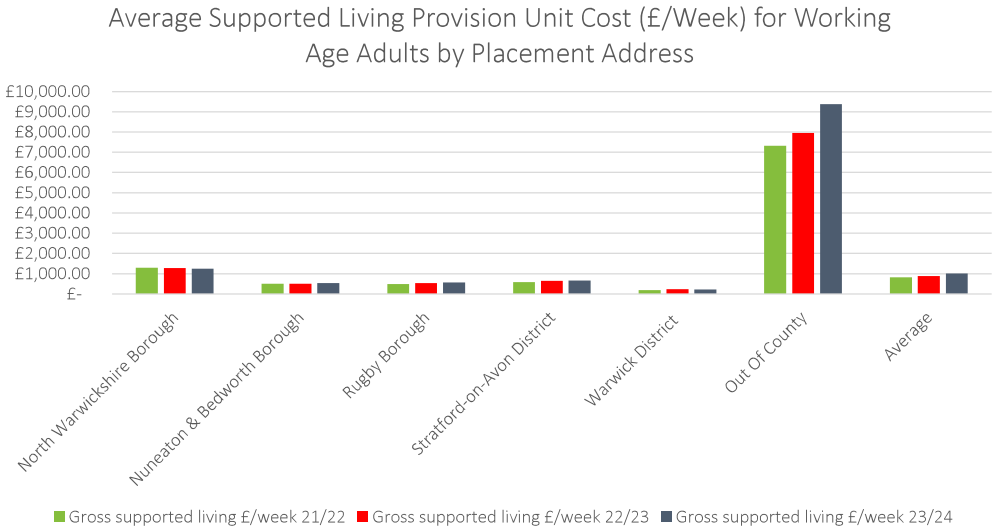
Working Age Adults:

- The highest areas of demand for supported living are Nuneaton & Bedworth and Warwick.

** Data provided by WCC*

Average Supported Living Unit Costs (2021/22 – 2023/24)

Working Age Adults (by Placement Address)



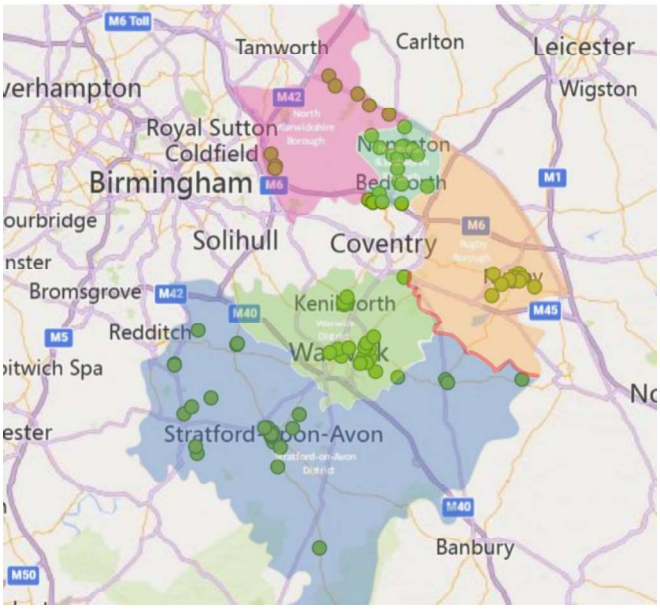
Working Age Adults:

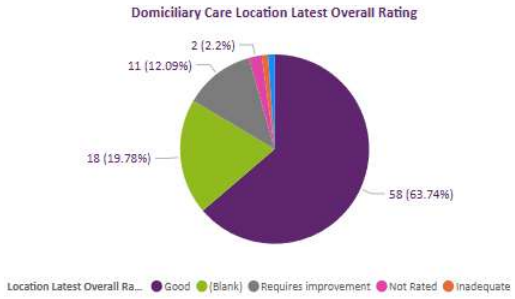
- Unit costs are variable, with the highest rates being out of county, and within county being North Warwickshire. Higher rates in the North are no doubt linked to capacity, with the CQC data identifying only one provider in North Warwickshire.

** Data provided by WCC*

Domiciliary Care

Domiciliary Care Providers
Older People (65+)

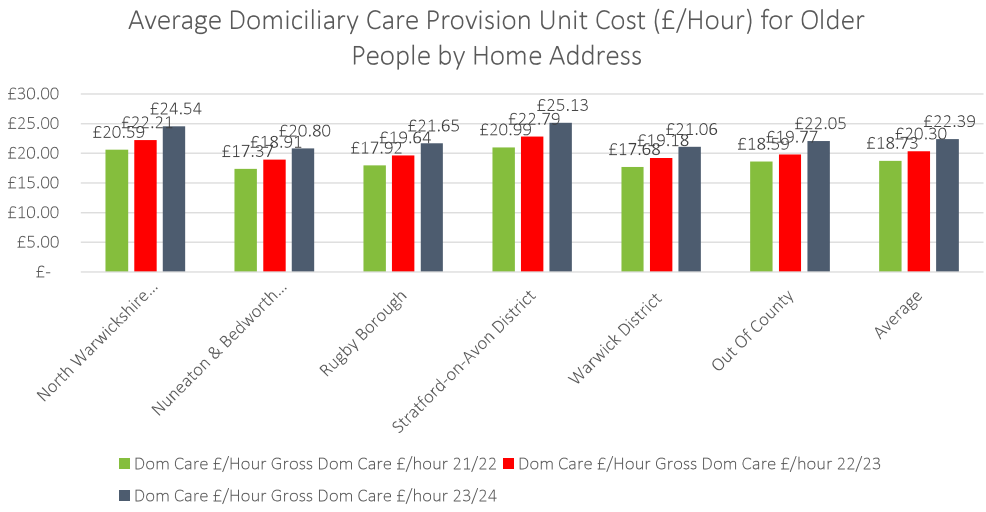




Older People

- There re 84 providers registered with CQC as providing domiciliary care for older people, based in 96 locations across Warwickshire, 64% of which are rated as Good, with very few Outstanding.
- The map indicates that there are fewer providers with office locations in North Warwickshire and Stratford upon Avon, which may impact capacity.

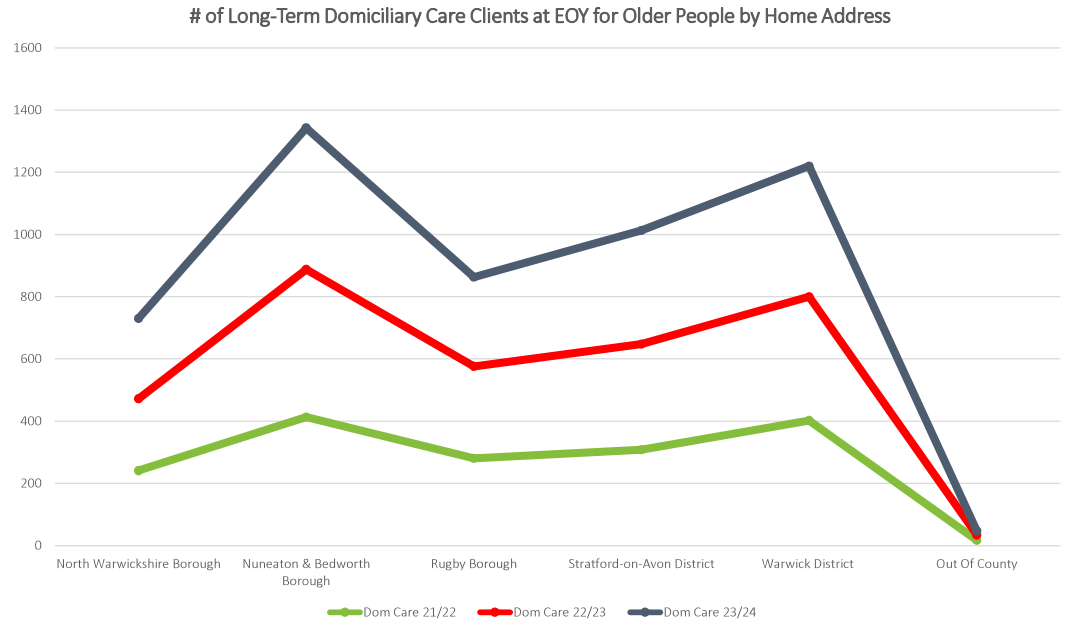
Average Domiciliary Care Unit Costs £ per Hour (2021/22 – 2023/24) – Older People (by Home Address)



- Rates seem to vary across the County. Unsurprisingly given the amount of potential self funders and challenges with capacity, the highest rate is in Stratford on Avon, which has also seen the steepest increase. The next highest average rate is in North Warwickshire, which again may be due to issues with capacity, but also less demand.

** Data provided by WCC*

Clients Accessing Long-Term Domiciliary Care at End of Year (EOY) (2021/22 – 2023/24) – Older People (by Home Address)

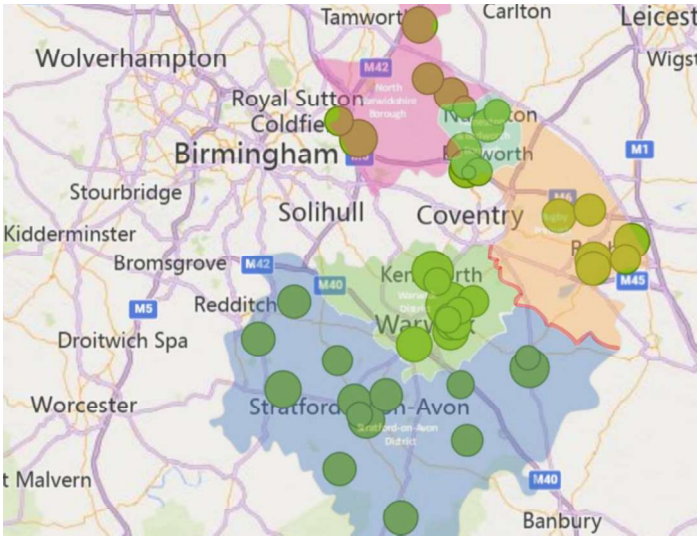


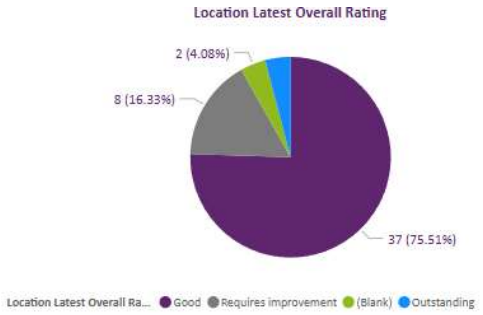
- Given populations sizes and demographics, unsurprisingly the area with the most demand for social care commissioned domiciliary care is Nuneaton & Bedworth, although closely followed by Warwick.

** Data provided by WCC*

Nursing Care

Nursing Care Providers
Older People (65+)

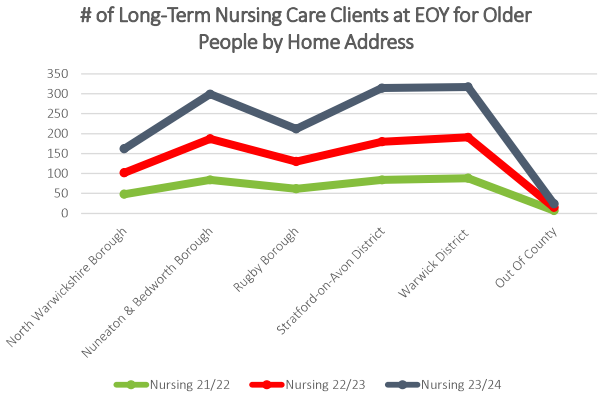




Nursing Care Older People

- There are 42 providers registered with CQC as providing nursing care for older people, in 49 locations across Warwickshire, 75% of which are rated as Good.

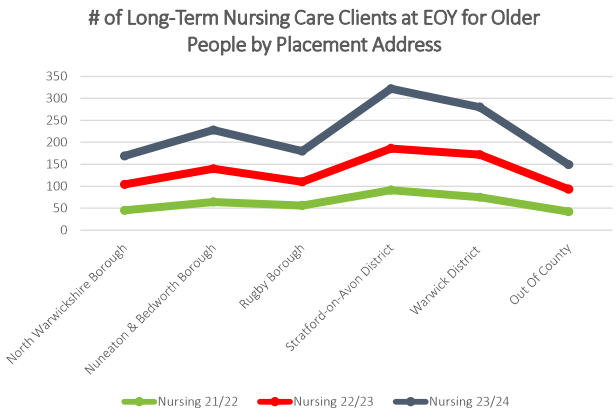
of Clients Accessing Long-Term Nursing Care at EOY (2021/22 – 2023/24) – Older People (by Home & Placement Address)



** Data provided by WCC*

Nursing Care Older People

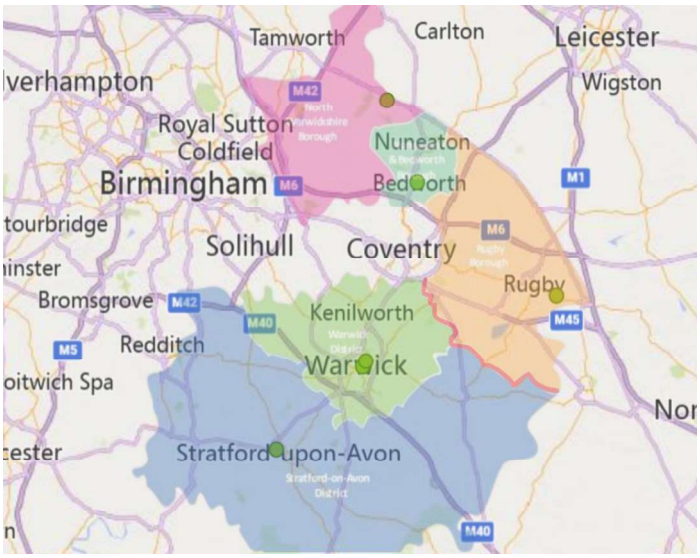
- Looking at where the demand is for nursing in Warwickshire this would seem to match placements, which would indicate that most people are being placed near to where they live.

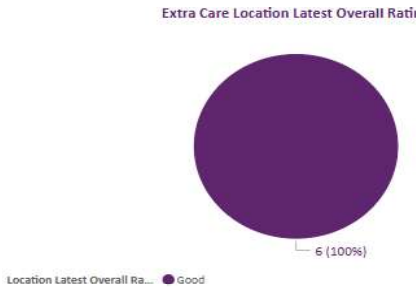


Peopletoo
it works better with you

Extra Care

Extra Care Providers





- CQC data would indicate that there is limited Extra Care Provision, across Warwickshire, with only 2 providers across 6 locations registered.
- Extra Care when commissioned and utilised correctly can prevent or delay an older person having to go into residential care, enabling them to remain in their own tenancy, living with their partner, within a community ideally near where they were living.
- This is not only a better outcome for the individual and their families, but also a lower cost, important given the pressure on residential care rates depicted in the previous slide.

4) Financial Case – Achieving Financial Sustainability

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

[Warwickshire County Council approves budget for 2025/26 to support vulnerable residents amid financial challenges – Warwickshire County Council]

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy includes significant investment over the next five years in key areas such as:

- £46.8m to support vulnerable adults and elderly citizens, meeting increasing demand and managing placement costs while progressing with the integration of health and social care. Such are the pressures on social care, this allocation is nearly six times higher than the £7.9m funds generated by taking the 2% adult social care precept.
- £8.1m for children's social care services, including £5.5m to address rising costs and demand for children's placements.
- £7.4m in home-to-school transport, ensuring services meet demand, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

ASC MTFS

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Permanent Revenue Allocations 2025/26 to 2029/30

Description	2025/26	Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years 2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of price increases across the Service.	3,308	3,375	3,442	3,511	3,580	17,216
Cost of care (General) - An allocation to manage the additional cost of care.	1,700	1,693	1,799	1,835	0	7,027
Cost of care (National Living Wage) - An allocation to manage the additional cost of inflation, mainly reflecting the impact of the increase in the National Living Wage.	9,442	422	430	439	448	11,181
Cost of care (Employer NICs) - An allocation to manage the additional cost of inflation, mainly reflecting the impact of the increase in the Employer National Insurance Contributions.	6,023	0	0	0	0	6,023
Ongoing impact of Adult Social Care Demand from 24/25 - An allocation to rightsize the recurring Adult Social Care budget as a result of pressures arising in 2024/25 which are expected to continue into future years.	15,067	0	0	0	0	15,067
Future Adult Social Care demand - An allocation to meet the cost of increased demand due to population growth, the length and intensity of care need as a result of increased life expectancy and the estimated reduction in people who can fund their own care.	11,309	13,164	13,987	14,854	15,764	69,078
Social Care and Support sub-total	46,849	18,654	19,658	20,639	19,792	125,597
Social Care & Health Directorate	47,794	19,210	20,225	21,217	20,381	128,827

- If further transformation work is not undertaken to reduce both demand and cost over an above that already identified of which £29m is based on increased client contributions, the budget gap in ASC and Support will be £77.4m by 2030.

/26 to 2029/30

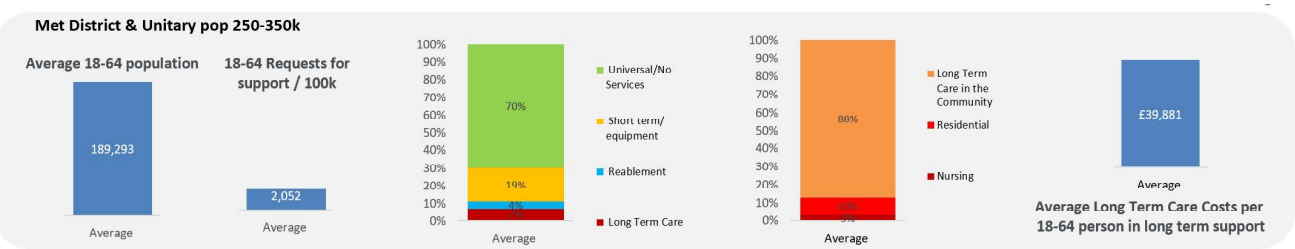
	Type	Annual Saving 2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total Saving
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
er decommissioning of the housing related support service offer.	Service Reduction	(1,000)	0	0	0	0	(1,000)
f additional 5% vacancy factor/turnover allowance and increasing rmissioning roles.	Right-sizing	(175)	0	(160)	(160)	(75)	(570)
ment Partnership - Increase income through the approach to velopment offer.	Income Generation	0	0	(55)	0	0	(55)
Mental Health Employment Support - reduction in the contribution from WCC to this service.	Right-sizing	0	(40)	0	0	0	(40)
Director's budget - restructure of responsibilities within commissioning, which has released savings within the budget during 2024/25.	Right-sizing	(83)	0	0	0	0	(83)
Health and Care Commissioning for People sub-total		(1,308)	(80)	(265)	(220)	(75)	(1,948)
Management of cost of adults service provision - Management of the budgeted cost increases of externally commissioned care.	Demand Management	(1,000)	(1,064)	0	0	0	(2,064)
Prevention and self-care - Deliver a prevention and self care strategy implementing the service change and transformation activities underway across adult social care, including an improved early intervention and prevention offer, further refinement of the in-house reablement offer, further development of assistive technology and investment in programmes, projects and services that reduce people's reliance on care and support.	Demand Management	(935)	0	0	0	0	(935)
Integrated commissioning with Health - Efficiencies through joint working and increased purchasing power for externally commissioned care. Arrangements will form part of the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Health and Care Partnership and associated system plan.	Service redesign	(267)	0	0	0	0	(267)
Management of care demand - Rephasing the demand and cost pressures for adults social care based on expected growth as informed by national and local data.	Demand Management	(1,622)	(2,072)	(5,222)	(5,756)	0	(14,672)
Income to offset against Adult Social Care demand 25/26 - Increase in customer contributions through the increase in inflation and growth in the number of people supported, the calculation is based on 28.9% of additional spend	Income Generation	(8,694)	(4,902)	(5,161)	(5,434)	(5,720)	(29,911)
Social Care and Support sub-total		(12,518)	(8,038)	(10,383)	(11,190)	(5,720)	(47,849)
Social Care and Health Directorate		(14,185)	(8,573)	(11,131)	(11,564)	(5,891)	(51,344)
Vacancy factor - Application of a 2% vacancy factor/turnover allowance where not already applied.	Right-sizing	(25)	0	0	0	0	(25)

Adult Social Care Expenditure – Working Age Adults

Peopletoo
it works better with you

In summary **ASC does present some real opportunities** to drive down cost and demand from a more localised approach. The long term cost per person for those in receipt of ASC services are higher than their nearest NHS neighbour for 18-64 year olds, and considerably higher than the average unitary and those with a population of 250-350k, which would be the population banding for the two proposed unitaries in Warwickshire, North Unitary - 313,600 and South Unitary – 283,200.

Source of data ASCFR '23/'24:
18-64 long term care cost per person for Warwickshire CC £49,802 (nearest NHS neighbour £45,750) average unitary population 250k-350k £39,881, numbers in receipt of LTS at the end of the year in Warwickshire CC (1895 x £9921 (difference WCC £49,802 and average unitary 250-350 £39,881) = **£18.8m gross cost reduction if expenditure was brought in line with an average unitary with a population of 250k to 350k**



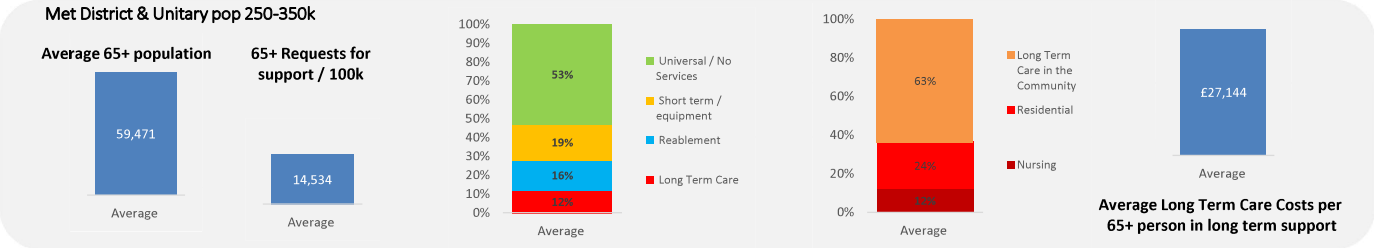
*Note average long term care cost per person for a Working Age Adult for a unitary 500-700k population (one unitary size):



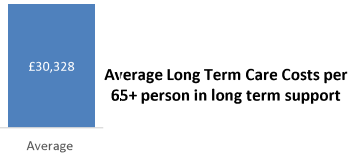
* Gross Current Expenditure on long term care (ASCFR tables 43 and 44: Gross Current Expenditure on long term care for clients by support setting, 2023-24)

Adult Social Care Expenditure - Older People

Older People 65+ long term care cost per person £33,996 (NHS nearest neighbour £32,065) average unitary population 250k-350k £27,144, numbers in receipt at the end of the year 3765 x £6852 (difference WCC £33,996 and average unitary 250k-350k £27,144) = **£25.8m gross cost reduction if expenditure was brought in line with an average unitary with a population of 250k to 350k**

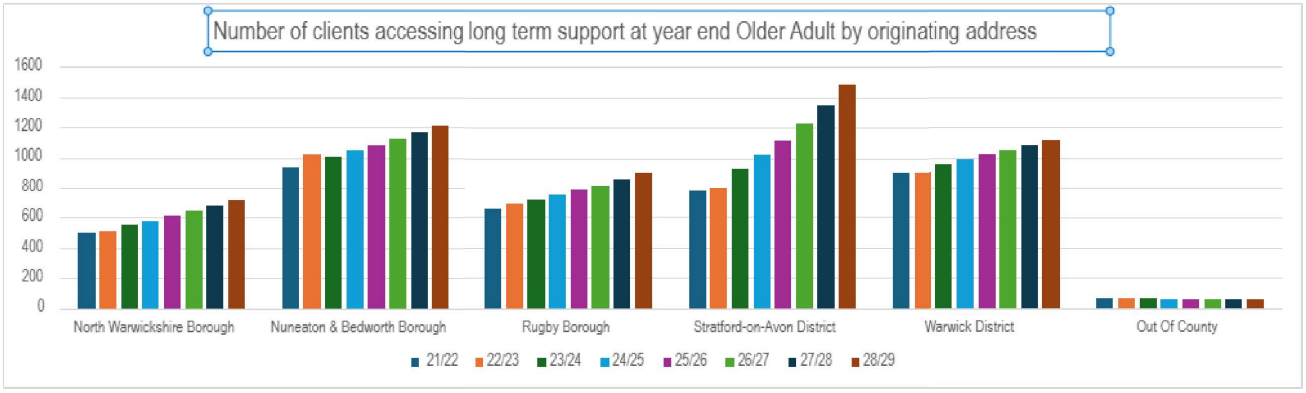


*Note average long term care cost per person OP 65+ for a unitary 500-700k population one unitary size:



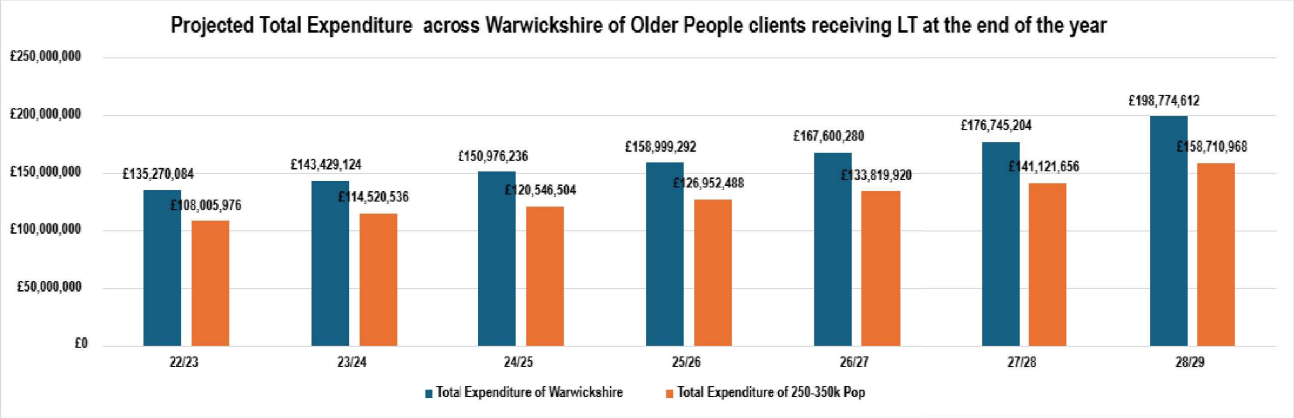
* Gross Current Expenditure on long term care (ASCFR tables 43 and 44: Gross Current Expenditure on long term care for clients by support setting, 2023-24)

Older People Demand Projections – ASC by District



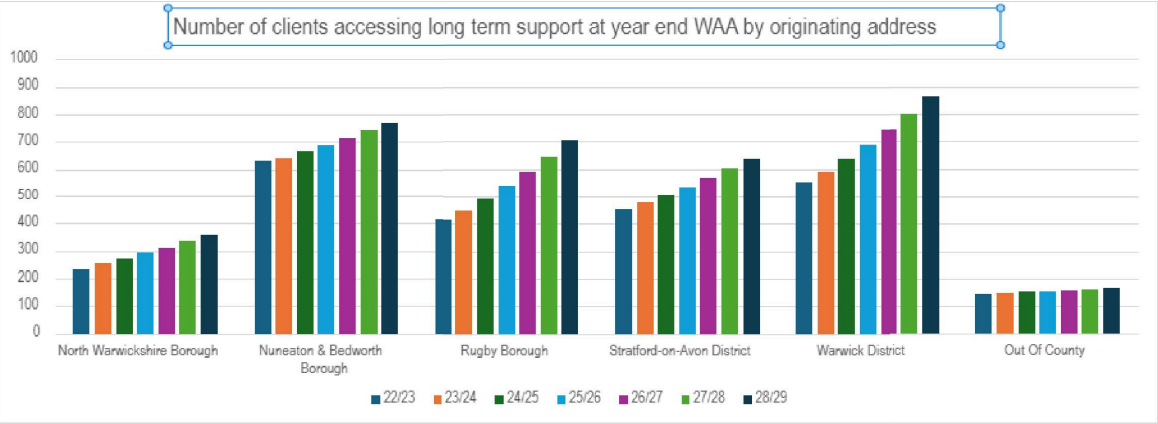
- Peopletoo have used historic data provided by WCC to model demand for Older People (OP) accessing Long Term Support (LTS) through to 2028-29.

Projected Total Expenditure on Older People Long Term Support



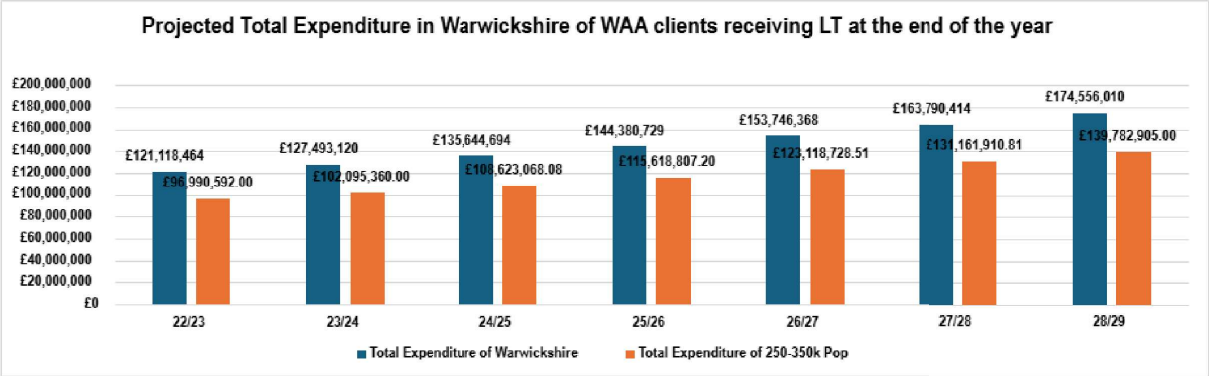
- Using the projections from the previous slide, Peopletoo have calculated the annual expenditure on Long Term Support (LTS) not allowing for inflation, using current WCC average spend on LTS for Older People (OP), compared to the average expenditure on LTS for OP for a unitary with a population of 250-350k.
- By the time the new unitaries potentially go Live in April 2028, WCC (excl. increases in inflation and significant changes in demand), will potentially be spending £198.7m on LTS for OP. Whilst a new unitary which has undertaken key activities in line with those outlined in this report in preparation for go live, would be look to be spending £158.7m, **a difference of £40m** for that financial year.

Working Age Adults Demand Projections – ASC by District



- Peopletoo have used historic data provided by WCC to model demand for Working Age Adults accessing Long Term Support through to 2028-29.

Projected Total Expenditure on Working Age Adults Long Term Support



- Using the projections from the previous slide, Peopletoo have calculated the annual expenditure on LTS (not allowing for inflation), using current WCC average spend on LTS for Working Age Adults (WAA), compared to the average expenditure on LTS for WAA for a unitary with a population of 250-350k.
- By the time the new unitaries potentially go Live in April 2028, WCC (excl increases in inflation and significant changes in demand), will potentially be spending £174.5m on LTS for WAA. Whilst a new unitary which has undertaken key activities in line with those outlined in this report in preparation for go live, would be look to be spending £139.7m, **a difference of £34.8m** for that financial year.

Warwickshire CC Medium Term Financial Plan Children's Social Care

Budget Reductions 2025/26 to 2029/30

Description	Type	Annual Saving 2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	Total Saving £'000
Reduce spend on residential care - Reduce the cost of care/services including the increased use of our internal children's homes, boarding schools, increasing number of internal foster carers and residential schools, to achieve better outcomes while reducing cost through more local and cost-effective placements.	Better Procurement	(1,000)	(100)	(1,381)	(1,831)	(1,642)	(5,954)
Grant income - More effective use of grant income to support the core activity of the service and contribute to the service overheads.	Income Generation	(100)	0	0	0	0	(100)
Third-party contributions - Maximise contributions from other agencies for care packages for children in care.	Income Generation	(300)	(200)	0	0	0	(500)
House project - Reduce the cost of 16 plus supported accommodation through the expansion of the House project, delivering financial benefits through this innovative approach.	Service redesign	0	(100)	0	(200)	0	(300)
Reduction in staff costs - Reduction in workforce costs following the implementation of the Families First Programme, inlcuding staffing, training and development costs over a three year period.	Service redesign	(53)	(1,126)	(656)	0	0	(1,835)
Youth and Community Centres - Increase income from third party use of centres.	Income Generation	0	(20)	(50)	(50)	0	(120)
Children & Families Building Maintenance - Zero base the budget after meeting current commitments.	Right-sizing	0	(103)	0	0	0	(103)
Director Budget - Rightsizing of budget following zero-based review and reset of Director's budget.	Right-sizing	(139)	0	0	0	0	(139)
Children & Family Centres - strategic review and repurposing of provision of Children and Families centres including through synergies with libraries and other council services/buildings where appropriate.	Service Reduction	0	0	0	(900)	0	(900)
Children and Families sub-total		(1,592)	(1,649)	(2,087)	(2,981)	(1,642)	(9,951)
Team Restructure - Permanent Saving within the Education Sufficiency and Capital Team	Service redesign	(14)	(35)	0	0	0	(49)
Savings to third party contract - Improved Value for Money through benefits of re-procurement with a reduction in contract value	Better procurement	0	(70)	0	0	0	(70)
SEND Mediation - Retender of mediation to reduce costs	Better procurement	(49)	0	0	0	0	(49)
Director Budget - Rightsizing of budget following zero-based review and reset of Director's budget.	Service redesign	(96)	0	0	0	0	(96)
Legal Fees - Overall reduction in use of internal Legal services.	Right-sizing	(10)	0	0	0	0	(10)
Education sub-total		(229)	(105)	0	0	0	(334)
Children and Young People Directorate		(1,821)	(1,754)	(2,087)	(2,981)	(1,642)	(10,285)

- The current Medium Term Financial Plan identifies efficiencies within Children's Social Care (CSC) of £10.2m, the majority of which is modelled around savings on residential costs and staffing reductions.

MTFP Children's Social Care

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Permanent Revenue Allocations 2025/26 to 2029/30

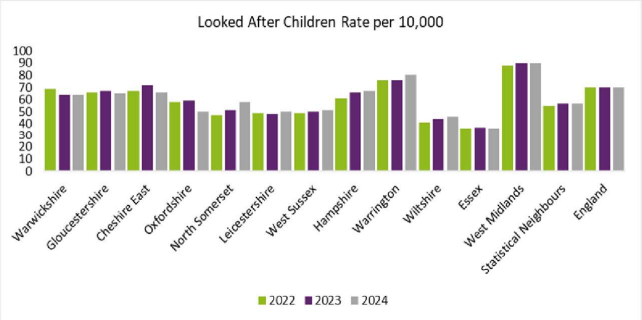
Description		Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years				Total
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	1,356	1,383	1,411	1,440	1,469	7,059
Child allowances demand - An allocation to meet the increased demand for specialist care orders to support children to leave or avoid care through allowances for extended family members caring for children.	38	69	40	58	44	249
Children's placements (exc. children with disabilities) - An allocation to meet the impact of fostering/placements framework contracts and changes to the placement mix on costs.	5,478	155	159	944	974	7,710
Direct Payments - Increase above the normal 2% pay inflation to account for the increase in Employer National Insurance and the National Living Wage	122	0	0	0	0	122
Third Party Providers - Increase in costs of care due to impact of National Living Wage and Employer National Insurance on third party providers	740	0	0	0	0	740
Children and family centres - An allocation to meet the shortfall in funding to deliver the current service offer as a result of inflationary increases in costs	400	0	0	0	0	400
Children and Families sub-total	8,134	1,607	1,610	2,442	2,487	16,280
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	36	37	38	39	40	190
Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service (SENDAR) - Staffing - Additional permanent cost due to inflation over and above corporate inflation provision	685	229	0	0	0	914
Education sub-total	721	266	38	39	40	1,104
Children & Young People Directorate	8,855	1,873	1,648	2,481	2,527	17,384

- If further transformation work is not undertaken to reduce both demand and cost over an above that already identified, the budget gap in CSC and Support will be £7m over the 5 years.
- This is coupled with the DSG forecast cumulative deficit by 31 March 2026 of £151.7m.

Children's Social Care

Peopletoo
it works better with you

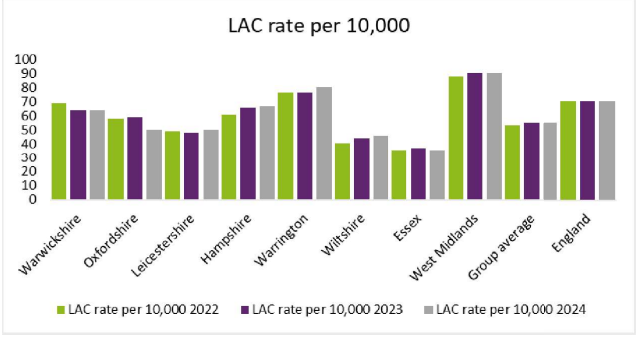
Children's Social Care has an Ofsted rating of "Good" following a full inspection Feb '22 and further endorsed at Focused Visit May '23.



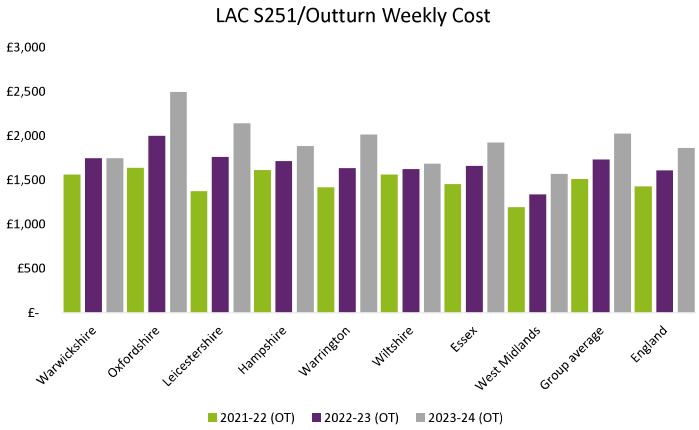
- If we analyse the LAs within the SN group rated as either Good or Outstanding, WCC are at 64 and the average of the group is 55 per 10,000.
- **Reducing the LAC rate in line with ILAC Outstanding or Good SN would deliver a reduction in expenditure of £11.4m per annum.**

**Data source 2023/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) for children's services built on local authority financial returns, refer to Appendix A.*

- However, Looked After Children (LAC) Rates are above Statistical Neighbours (SN) at 64 per 10,000 (actual number 805 a rise from 778 in '23), in WCC compared to 57 SN average.
- **Reducing the LAC rate in line with SN (717) would deliver a reduction in expenditure of £8m per annum,** based on S251 weekly outturn costs for LAC '23 £1750



Children's Social Care



- In addition to reducing demand, whilst LAC S251 outturn weekly costs are lower than Statistical Neighbours, if we consider the West Midlands average of £1,570 per week compared to current WCC figure of £1,750 per week, bringing this more in line with other LAs in the region **would deliver an annual saving of £7.53m.**
- The opportunity from establishing 2 smaller sized unitaries provides opportunity to get closer to the local market and the needs of the local community and commission accordingly.

**Data source 2023/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) for children's services built on local authority financial returns, refer to Appendix A.*

5) The Opportunity

Opportunity to Better Manage Demand, Cost and Improve Outcomes - Targeted Prevention & Intervention

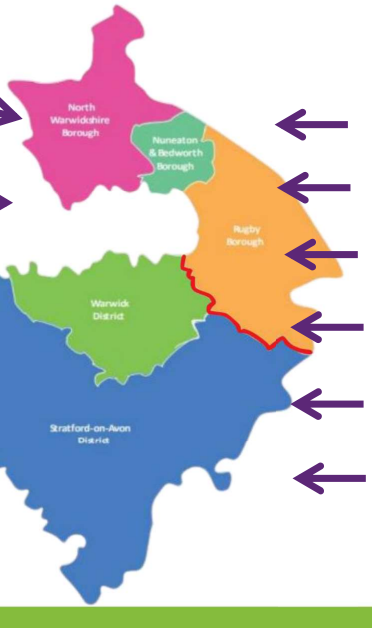
Peopletoo
it works better with you

What do the two new unitaries need to do differently to deliver **£63.5m annual savings and £74.8m cost avoidance year one**, ensuring financial sustainability along with improved outcome for citizens in Warwickshire.

Reduce demand for CSC and ASC, through targeted prevention and early intervention

Work with the provider market to improve quality of provision and outcomes for vulnerable people

Develop the micro provider market to build capacity and support self funders and prevent/ delay admission to residential care



- Work with the market to develop more extra care provision across the County to support Older People within their communities
- Work with the market to develop more of the right provision for working age adults, keeping people within the County and out of residential care
- Work closely with Schools and Parents to improve and build confidence in mainstream offer for children with SEN
- Review SEND support services to meet demand and need within the local area.
- Work with the market and partners to develop the right support to keep children in care (where applicable) closer to their communities
- Develop the online offer for Children's and Adult Services, ensuring better information and signposting pre and at contact with the new unitary authority

The Business Case for Two Unitaries

Peopletoo
it works better with you

- In line with the primary objectives of the devolution paper – the 2UA business case needs to build on local identity and agility to deliver change at pace – **achieving financial stability through transformation – reducing the demand and cost for People services in parallel to improving outcomes.**
- A strong emphasis on reducing demand through **localised targeting of prevention and early intervention, working closely with the voluntary and community sector**
- The benefit of **building closer relationships with schools and developing the local offer to ensure inclusion in mainstream schools**, reducing the expenditure on independent schools and the costs of transitions, ensuring young people remain in their communities through to adulthood
- **Ability to develop the local market and build micro providers, ensuring the right capacity at the right price and the right quality**
- Bringing together key services such as Housing, Public Health, Leisure, Green Spaces and Social Care to ensure **maximisation of community assets and a place-based approach to prevention and early intervention**
- Using rich data sources from across revenues, benefits, social care and health, to develop predictive analytics, **targeting intervention activity to prevent escalation across social care and health**
- **Reducing Demand/ Cost and Improving Outcomes for citizens**



Appendix A – Data Sources for Financial Modelling

S251 LAC Outturn (*taken directly from LAIT*): ***Statistics: local authority and school finance*** *last published September 2024)*

Description - Funding line includes:

1) Special guardianship support - financial support paid to Special Guardianship families under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and other staff and overhead costs associated with Special Guardianship Orders.
2) Other children in looked after services - support to looked after young people
3) Short breaks (respite) for looked after disabled children - all provision for short-breaks (respite) services for disabled children who are deemed "looked after". Data excludes any break exceeding 28 days continuous care and costs associated with providing disabled children's access to residential universal services.
4) Children placed with family and friends - Where looked after children do not live with their birth parents, it is not uncommon for them to be placed with family and friend foster carers. This Includes expenditure on the authority's functions in relation to looked after children placed with family and friends foster carers under the Children Act 1989.
5) Education of looked after children. This includes expenditure on the services provided to promote the education of the children looked after by your local authority (e.g. looked after children education service teams and training for designated teachers). This excludes any spend delegated to schools for looked after children.
6) Leaving care support services - This Includes local authority's "leaving care" support services functions under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Methodology:

(x/y)/365 * 7 where:
x = Total funding on Looked after children recorded on outturn
y = Total number of Looked after children as at 31 March

ASCFR LTS

Gross Current Expenditure on long term care (ASCFR tables 43 and 44: Gross Current Expenditure on long term care for clients by support setting, 2023-24) includes:

- Nursing
- Residential
- Supported Accommodation
- Community: Direct Payments
- Community: Home Care
- Community: Supported Living
- Community: Other Long Term are

Our methodology is to then divide the GCE on long term care by the '**Total number of clients accessing long term support at the end of the year'** (ASCFR table 37)

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Warwickshire LGR Support

Target Operating Model (TOM) and Implementation Plan for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND

September 2025

Contents

Peopletoo
it works better with you

1. Overview
2. Target Operating Model (TOM)
    a) Adults Social Care
    b) Children's Services Warwickshire
    c) Localities, Neighbourhoods and Communities
    d) Regional Working
3. Implementation Plan
4. Appendix – Warwickshire Implementation Plan

Peopletoo
it works better with you

1. Overview

Overview: Purpose and Implementation Phases

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Purpose
This summary outlines how Warwickshire can safely and legally transition Adult Social Care (ASC), Children's Services, and SEND into **two new unitary councils**. It demonstrates continuity of statutory services, financial sustainability, and stronger local accountability for MHCLG, DfE, and DHSC.

Why Change?
- High ASC costs: Reliance on residential care well above comparators.
- Children's Services: 44% of LAC placed out-of-county.
- SEND pressures: £151m DSG deficit risk; delays and weak parental trust.
- Opportunity: Two unitaries (313k North, 283k South) aligned to NHS "place" footprints enable local, responsive services.

Target Operating Model (TOM)
- Adults: Local front doors, targeted prevention, stronger reablement, assistive tech, micro-commissioning for rural areas.
- Children's: Family Help hubs, kinship-first placements, in-house fostering, joint commissioning of high-cost cases.
- SEND: More local specialist places, mainstream inclusion, transparent Local Offer, co-production with parents.

Implementation Phases

Foundations (2025/26) – essentials, officers, vision, governance, mapping and engagement.

→ **Design (2026)** – frameworks, constitution, transition plan, alignment, co-design and comms.

→ **Mobilisation (Shadow Year, 2026/27)** – workforce, training, systems, leadership, teams, contracts and pilots.

→ **Go Live (April 2028)** – pathways, locality model, safeguarding, placements, services and continuity.

→ **Optimisation (Post-2028)** – QA, resilience, review, refinement, contracts and prevention.

Peopletoo
it works better with you

2. Target Operating Model

Target Operating Model (TOM) – Warwickshire Adult Social Care, Children's Services & SEND

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Principles (specific to Warwickshire context)

- **Locality-based delivery**: Two new unitaries (North 313k / South 283k) aligning with NHS "place" footprints and PCNs.
- **Safe & legal transition**: No disruption to safeguarding, statutory assessments or placements during disaggregation.
- **Closer to community**: Local commissioning and family hubs, micro-provider market development, reducing out-of-county placements.
- **Financial sustainability**: Align long-term care costs to benchmark for 250–350k population unitaries (potential £40m ASC + £34m WAA savings).
- **SEND transformation**: Address Written Statement of Action weaknesses (parental trust, ASD wait times, placement appropriateness, mainstream inclusion).
- **Inspection readiness**: Continuous Ofsted/CQC compliance, single improvement plans.

Adult Social Care TOM Core Features

- **Front Door**: Multi-disciplinary triage with ICB partners, digital "care account" for residents.
- **Community & Prevention**: Stronger reablement, assistive tech, carer support networks.
- **Market & Commissioning**: Shift from residential to extra care/domiciliary; micro-provider growth in rural Warwickshire.
- **Integration**: Section 75 agreements with ICB for discharge and intermediate care.

Children's Services TOM Core Features

- **Early Help**: Family hubs and kinship-first models to reduce LAC entries (target: closer to statistical neighbour (SN) average of 55/10k vs Warwickshire's 64).
- **Safeguarding**: Local Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs).
- **Placements**: Joint regional commissioning for high-cost residential; expand in-house fostering.
- **Improvement**: Single plan addressing Ofsted ILACS recommendations.

SEND TOM Core Features

- **Financial discipline**: Stabilise £151m DSG deficit risk through local sufficiency.
- **Inclusion**: Graduated approach; mainstream inclusion expectations embedded.
- **Capacity**: Specialist school investment, reduced reliance on INMSS (Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools), Home-to-School transport re-modelling incl. alternative provision.
- **Co-production**: Rebuild parental trust via transparent local offer, clear comms, active parent forums.

Building Blocks for the Operating Model

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Pillars	Enablers	Risks
Governance & Accountability	• Appointment of DCS/DASS and statutory officers • Safeguarding Boards operational • "Single accountable body" principle for statutory duties • Locality boards co-chaired with schools/health	• Blurred accountability during disaggregation • Inspection readiness gaps (Ofsted/CQC) • Fractured local governance undermining trust
Service Integration	• Alignment with NHS "place" footprints and PCNs • Section 75 agreements for discharge and reablement • Family Help hubs and MACPTs co-located with partners • Regional commissioning for high-cost placements & SEND	• Fragmentation between North/South unitaries • Delays in joint commissioning with ICB • Rural access gaps if neighbourhood delivery not in place
Workforce & Skills	• Local recruitment pipelines & Workforce Academy • Standardised practice model (trauma-informed/strength-based) • Digital tools (AI-assisted triage, automation)	• Heavy reliance on agency staff • Training gaps in mainstream schools for SEND inclusion • Workforce instability during TUPE transition
Finance & Commissioning	• Budgets disaggregated by need not just population • Regional frameworks for high-cost placements • Micro-commissioning for rural & hyper-local services • Outcome-based contracts driving prevention	• £151m DSG deficit risk (SEND) • ASC residential reliance driving high costs • Contract novation delays; fragile rural provider market
Data, Systems & Business Insights	• Dual ICT running & safe case data migration • Resident care accounts & digital Local Offer • Predictive analytics for early intervention • Common BI dashboards across localities	• Data loss or handling failures at transition • Fragmented data-sharing across agencies • Limited analytics capacity in early years

Day 1 Priority: To Be Safe and Legal

Peopletoo
it works better with you

In practice, when councils negotiate a devolution deal or a structural change order (e.g. moving to unitary status, or transferring functions to a Combined Authority), the "safe and legal" test is the gateway: government won't sign off unless it's clear that adult and children's statutory services remain legally compliant, safe for service users, and financially sustainable during and after the transition.

What "safe and legal" means in this context:

Statutory compliance (legal test)

- The new arrangements must comply fully with all relevant legislation (e.g. Children Act 1989, Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014, Education Acts, Health and Social Care Act 2012).
- Duties to safeguard and promote welfare of children, and to meet eligible needs of adults, must remain clear and enforceable.
- The "single accountable body" principle applies: there must be a clear legal entity responsible for delivering each statutory function (no gaps or duplication).

Safety of service delivery (safe test)

- Services must continue without interruption through the transition (no gaps in provision for vulnerable children/adults).
- Safeguarding arrangements must remain robust:
  - Local Safeguarding Partnerships (for children) and Safeguarding Adults Boards must still function effectively.
  - Clear escalation and accountability for risk and protection.
- Workforce, data, and systems must remain aligned so statutory timescales and thresholds are met (e.g. assessments, reviews, casework).
- The DfE and DHSC require formal assurance before approving restructuring/devolution orders.

Governance and accountability

- Local authorities must be able to show that political and professional leadership is clear — e.g. a Director of Children's Services (DCS) and a Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) are still appointed and legally responsible (as required in statutory guidance Children Act 2004, s18 and Local Authority Social Services Act 1970).
- Decision-making and financial accountability must not be blurred when services are split or shared.

Financial sustainability

- Budgets for adult and children's social care must be ring-fenced or transparently allocated so that statutory duties can be met.
- Risk-sharing mechanisms must be in place if pooled or delegated budgets are used (e.g. in Combined Authority or joint commissioning models).

Inspection and regulation

- Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) expect councils to demonstrate "safe and legal" operation when disaggregating/reaggregating services.
- The DfE and DHSC require formal assurance before approving restructuring/devolution orders.

Peopletoo
it works better with you

2a. Adult Social Care TOM

Overview of Adults for Warwickshire

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Top Priorities

- **Shift from residential to community-based support**: Warwickshire has significantly higher reliance on residential/nursing placements vs. comparators.
- **Expand domiciliary and extra care capacity** to reduce demand for residential placements.
- **Strengthen prevention & reablement** – embed "Home First" pathways, better triage, community networks.
- **Develop micro-provider markets** in rural areas to address capacity/access gaps.
- **Digital-first services**: resident care accounts, online assessments, AI-enabled triage.
- **Carer support** – respite, training, carer navigators.
- **Workforce sustainability** – reduce agency reliance, build local recruitment pipelines, embed strength-based practice.
- **Integration with NHS** – Section 75 agreements for hospital discharge, reablement, intermediate care.

Key Lines of Enquiry for the TOM

- Why is Warwickshire's residential reliance so high, and how quickly can community alternatives be scaled?
- Can micro-commissioning realistically meet rural Warwickshire's needs at pace?
- Is the workforce pipeline (recruitment, retention, training) sufficient to deliver new prevention and reablement models?
- Are digital solutions accessible to all residents, particularly older adults and those in deprived areas?
- How to balance local commissioning with regional commissioning for specialist/high-cost needs?

Specific Warwickshire Considerations

- **Financial gap**: without transformation, ASC will face a £77.4m budget gap by 2030.
- **Deprivation & health inequality**: particularly acute in Nuneaton, Rugby and North Warwickshire.
- **Provider market fragility**: shortages in domiciliary care (Stratford, North Warks) and lack of extra care provision.
- **Inspection readiness**: CQC assurance requires strong governance, safe transitions, and consistent quality oversight.

Core Features of the ASC Operating Model

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Our operating model for ASC will be community-based, preventative, and digitally enabled, consistent with the Government's 10-Year Health Plan.

Neighbourhood / Integrated Teams

Aligned to PCN/ICS footprints, co-locating social workers, OTs, NHS staff, and voluntary sector partners. Designed around the strengths and needs of each local population.

Multi-Disciplinary Triage

At the front door, ensuring people are directed to universal or short-term solutions before long-term care is considered.

Home First

Embedded as the default pathway, supported by expanded reablement services, assistive technology, and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) now devolved to the new unitary.

Strategic Commissioning & Market Management

At a unitary or locality scale, with outcome-based contracts, micro-care ecosystems, strong joint commissioning with NHS/public health and local resilient markets.

Digital-First Solutions

Including resident care accounts, online self-assessment, AI-enabled triage, and assistive technologies to support independence.

Workforce Transformation

Embedding strength-based practice, standardising ways of working, building local recruitment pipelines, and improving retention.

Prevention

Working with partners, VCS, and community assets to deliver targeted prevention and early intervention tailored to neighbourhood needs.

Carer Support & Co-Production

Structured engagement with unpaid carers and service users, with expanded access to respite, training, and peer networks.

Key Features of the ASC Warwickshire Model

Peopletoo
it works better with you

1

Community & Partnership Working

Strengthens the ability to build place-based partnerships:

- Natural alignment with ICB footprints and NHS neighbourhood models.
- Expanded collaboration with housing, welfare, and voluntary sectors to deliver holistic support.
- Each unitary will organise ASC delivery around recognised localities (PCNs or community clusters), ensuring services are relatable and accessible.
- Smaller footprint strengthens democratic accountability, enabling elected members to engage directly with communities.
- Brings decision / strategy making closer to communities.

2

Workforce Transformation

The ASC workforce is central to sustainability. Provides the platform to:

- Develop localised recruitment and training pipelines linked to further education and local employers.
- Embed strength-based practice consistently across both authorities.
- Improve productivity through digital tools (AI-assisted note-taking, automated workflows, decision support).
- Build a workforce that reflects local communities, improving trust and cultural competence.

3

Strategic Commissioning & Market Management

Allows two authorities to build upon strengths where they exist, whilst retaining local responsiveness. Opportunities include:

- Embedding prevention and enabling outcomes in contracts.
- Prioritising local and VCSE providers to strengthen community resilience.
- Developing micro-commissioning approaches to grow hyper-local and personalised services, particularly in rural areas or where capacity gaps exist.
- Joint commissioning with NHS to reduce duplication and support shared outcomes.

4

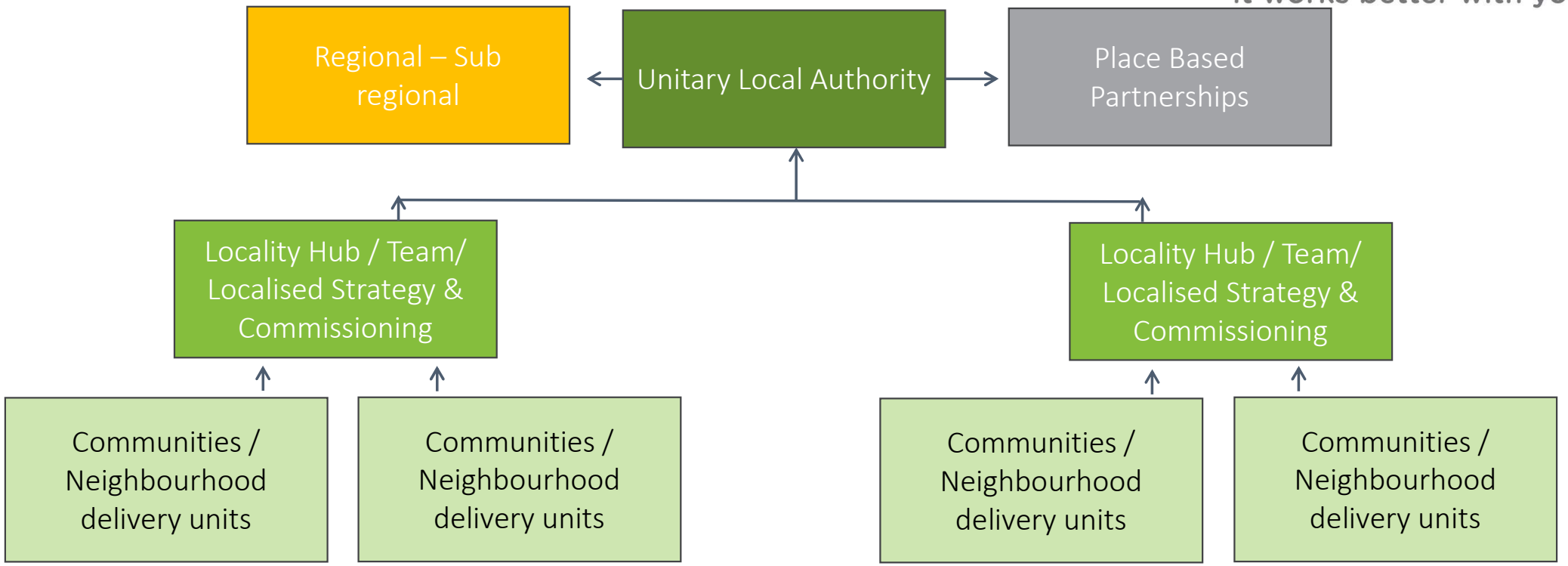
Digital Innovation

Unitaries will implement a service innovation agenda including:

- Resident care accounts (“one stop” portals).
- Online assessment and review tools.
- Assistive technology and predictive analytics for early intervention.
- AI-driven triage and chatbots at the front door.
- Automated workflows to improve workforce efficiency.

ASC Governance Example

Peopletoo
it works better with you



Peopletoo
it works better with you

2b. Children's Services TOM

Overview of Children's Servies for Warwickshire Children's Social Care

Peopletoo
it works better with you

1. Children's Social Care: Top Priorities

- **Reduce Children Looked After (CLA) rate**: Warwickshire at 64/10k vs. Statistical Neighbour average 55/10k.
- **Cut out-of-county placements**: currently 44% of CLA placed outside Warwickshire.
- **Family Help / Kinship-first model**: develop Family Help hubs, prioritise kinship placements.
- **In-house fostering expansion:** reduce reliance on high-cost external placements.
- **Safeguarding capacity**: robust local MACPTs.
- **Inspection improvement**: align with ILACS recommendations, maintain Ofsted "Good" progress.

Specific Warwickshire Considerations

Key Lines of Enquiry

- What interventions can realistically reduce children looked after (CLA) entries to Statistical Neighbour levels (savings of £8–11m per year)?
- How quickly can Warwickshire recruit/retain foster carers locally?
- What commissioning partnerships (e.g. Regional Care Cooperatives) are needed for high-cost placements?
- How to ensure consistent practice models across different localities?

Specific Warwickshire Considerations

- **Budget pressure**: CSC faces £7m gap over 5 years without deeper transformation.
- **Placement costs**: CLA weekly costs higher than regional average (£1,750 vs £1,570).
- **Geographic inequality**: Nuneaton & Bedworth accounts for 31% of children in care.

Overview of Children's Servies for Warwickshire: Special Educational Needs

Peopletoo
it works better with you

2. SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities): Top Priorities

- **Financial stability**: DSG deficit projected at £151.7m by 2026.
- **Local sufficiency**: more local specialist places, reduced reliance on INMSS (independent/non-maintained schools).
- **Mainstream inclusion**: embed graduated approach, ensure staff training uptake in mainstream schools.
- **Rebuild parental trust**: clear communication, co-production, improved online Local Offer.
- **Address inspection failings**: ASD assessment delays, poor post-diagnosis support, inappropriate placements.
- **Transport pressures**: sustainable Home-to-School Transport solutions needed.

Key Lines of Enquiry for the TOM

- How to stabilise and reduce the DSG deficit trajectory?
- Can Warwickshire deliver sufficient local provision by 2028 to avoid escalation of out-of-county placements?
- What governance changes are needed to meet the next Local Area SEND inspection requirements?
- How to restore parental confidence and deliver visible improvements quickly?

Specific Warwickshire Considerations

- **Inspection history**: Ofsted raised significant weaknesses in 2021; a Written Statement of Action is in place.
- **Geographic gaps**: deprived/rural areas (esp. North Warks) have limited access to SEND services.
- **Financial volatility**: SEND remains the single largest risk to Warwickshire's medium-term financial plan.

Core Features of the Operating Model

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Children's Social Care: focus on reducing Children Looked After numbers and costs through Family Help hubs, kinship-first, and stronger local fostering.
SEND: financial rescue and trust rebuilding are paramount, requiring rapid expansion of local sufficiency, mainstream inclusion, and parental engagement.

Family Hubs and Early Intervention

Creation of Family Help hubs across localities, offering early support to families before escalation; kinship-first approach to reduce children entering care.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding

Local MACPTs ensuring swift, joined-up responses to safeguarding risks, aligned to statutory thresholds.

Placements & Permanence

Kinship, fostering and adoption prioritised; expand in-house fostering; joint regional commissioning of high-cost residential placements; stability and permanence planning from the outset.

Education & Inclusion

Strong partnership with schools and health; embed inclusion in mainstream schools; align Family Hubs and SEND support to improve outcomes locally.

Digital-First & Data-Driven

Including AI-enabled solutions for information, advice and certain assessment points e.g. SEND; and assistive technologies to support independence.

Workforce & Practice Development

Single practice model across localities (e.g. strengths-based, trauma-informed); improve recruitment/retention of social workers and foster carers; shared training and standards.

Prevention & Community Partnerships

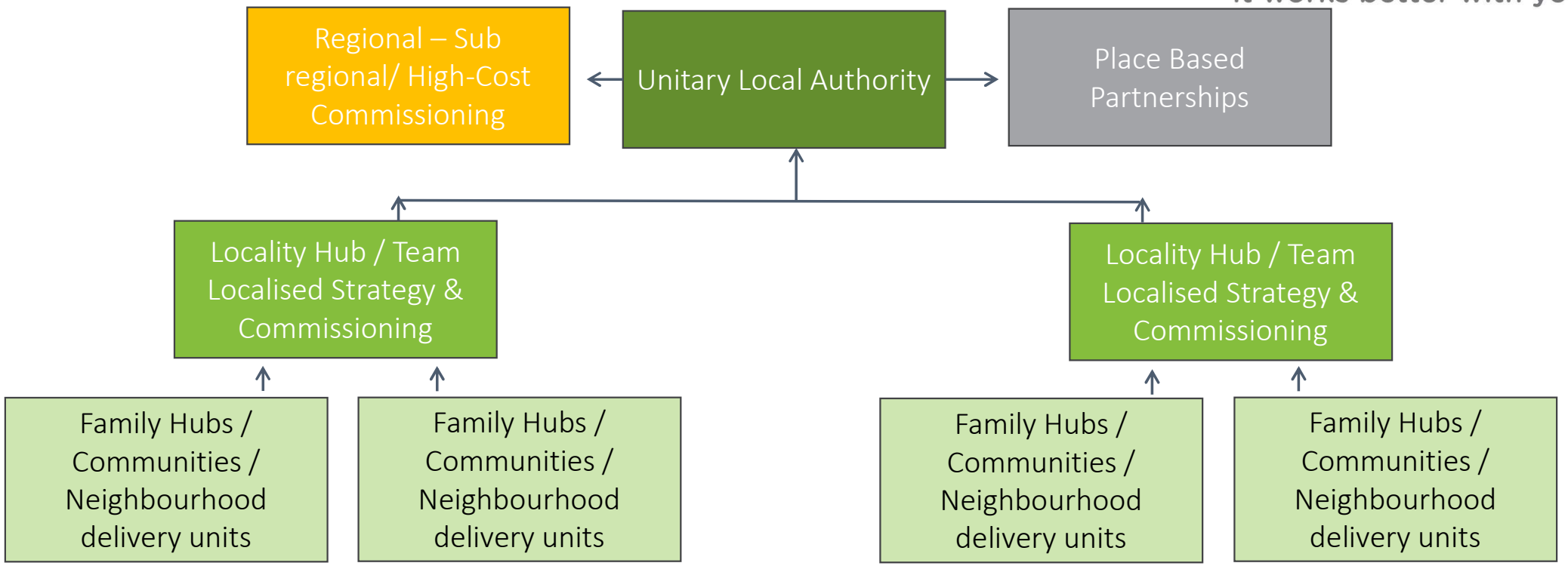
Place-based working with VCS, schools, housing, and health partners; locally commissioned early help and edge-of-care services; focus on reducing demand for statutory intervention.

Children, Families & Carer Voice

Structured co-production with children, young people and families; clear Local Offer; transparent communication to rebuild trust, especially with SEND parents.

Children's Services Governance Example

Peopletoo
it works better with you



Safe & Legal (Day 1)

Continuity Governance
Statutory Duties

Stabilisation (Year 1)
Workforce ICT
Demand Management

Transformation (Year 2-3)
Prevention Regionalisation
Innovation

Peopletoo
it works better with you

2c. Localities, Neighbourhoods and Communities

Definitions

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Key Difference

- Localities = system integration, statutory assurance, larger commissioning, safeguarding infrastructure.
- Communities/Neighbourhoods = day-to-day prevention, personalised delivery, direct relationship with families/residents.

Locality Level (approx. 125k-150k population)

- **Scale**: Matches NHS "place" footprint (4–8 Primary Care Networks).
- **Function**:
  - Owns the *front door* (Children's MASH / Family Help hubs, Adults' triage and reablement).
  - Runs local commissioning for *lower-value, high-volume* services.
  - Co-located, multi-agency teams (social care, health, schools, police, housing, VCSE).
- **Purpose**:
  - Large enough to sustain statutory functions (child protection, safeguarding, reablement).
  - Ensures consistent thresholds, practice model, and performance monitoring across services.
  - Provides leadership and governance (e.g. Locality Boards, Children's Trust arrangements).
- **Analogy**: The "engine room" for integrated delivery.

Community / Neighbourhood Level (approx. 30–50k population)

- **Scale**: Mirrors a Primary Care Network footprint, secondary school catchment, or natural town community.
- **Function**:
  - Delivery of *prevention, early help, carers' support*.
  - Strong VCSE role, housing links, Disabled Facilities Grants.
  - Micro-commissioning for hyper-local personalised services (esp. rural areas).
- **Purpose**:
  - Brings services as close to residents as possible.
  - Builds trusted relationships with families, carers, and communities.
  - Reduces escalation into statutory services by responding earlier.
- **Analogy**: The "front line" where families and residents experience services in their community.

Base for Locality Working

Peopletoo
it works better with you

"Do locally what benefits from place-knowledge and relationships; do centre/regional what needs scale, resilience or scarce skills."

This aligns to reform directions on Family Help, kinship emphasis, MACPTs (children), workforce, and community-first prevention (adults).

For a 313k and 283k unitary with two localities of 100k - 150k, each locality hub is a co-located, multi-agency unit that:

- ✓ Owns Family Help + CIN (children) and reablement + short-term care (adults),
- ✓ Convenes schools, PCNs/ICB community teams, police, housing & VCSE,
- ✓ Runs local commissioning (lower-value, high-volume), while the centre/regional level holds specialist/high-cost markets.

Good Practice: ***North Yorkshire Locality Boards*** (0–25): five boards co-governing inclusion & outcomes; formalised membership/decision-making; published impact examples. Great governance pattern for your hubs.

Home - Locality Boards

Core building blocks at locality level
Unified front door with rapid triage to Family Help (children) and to reablement / community independence (adults).
Family Hubs network (0–19/25 SEND), integrated with schools and early help partners.
MACPT capacity available to the locality with clear hand-offs from Family Help.
Reablement & intermediate care team (OT, physio, SW, support workers) linked to same-day equipment/adaptations and care tech.
Local commissioning cell for home care, extra care, supported living, short breaks, parenting, inclusion support, etc., with routes to centre/regional frameworks for high-cost/low-volume needs.
Data & insight mini-cell in each hub to run caseload dashboards, demand forecasts, and spot "hot streets."
Practice development & supervision (restorative/strengths-based) embedded in hub routines.

Case Studies Locality Working

Children's Services – Locality Blueprint (Reform-aligned)		
Family Help Team	FH lead practitioner + social workers + family support + embedded partners (school inclusion, health, youth). Single family plan; routine **family network/kinship exploration** from day one. Leeds runs **23–25 "clusters"** pooling school & partner funding for early help—useful for design of your hub partnership and devolved spend.	EVALUATION OF THE EARLY HELP SERVICES PROVIDED AS A PART OF THE CLUSTER COLLABORATIVE IN LEEDS
MACPT / LCPP	Dedicated multi-agency child protection resource (SW, health, police, education) that handles s47/investigations and conferences; stays tightly coupled to Family Help to preserve relationships. (Model feature in national reform programme.)	The implementation of family hubs: Emerging strategies for success | Local Government Association
Kinship & Permanence	A locality-based kinship team to assess, train and support family networks, with centre/regional sufficiency planning for fostering/residential. Hertfordshire's Family Safeguarding shows multi-disciplinary teaming around adult factors (DA, MH, substance use) improving outcomes—adapt its routines inside your hub.	A Guide to Family Safeguarding
Family Hubs	Locality-wide umbrella for 0–19/25 SEND. Surrey's family hub approach and recent **LGA/Coram case studies** are practical playbooks for space, staffing and commissioning models.	Annex 4.3 - Developing Family Hubs Paper.pdf
Adult Social Care		
Reablement & Intermediate Care	Rapid start (≤48h), goal-oriented episodes, strong link to PCNs/hospital discharge. Torbay's integrated neighbourhood model (with pooled budgets and co-located MDTs) evidences faster flow and independence—lift their co-location + MDT + shared leadership features.	Impact of 'Enhanced' Intermediate Care Integrating Acute, Primary and Community Care and the Voluntary Sector in Torbay and South Devon, UK - PubMed
Adaptations & Care Tech	Embedded OT and home independence cell; Wigan's digital ASC case study shows workforce support & care-tech mainstreaming in local teams.	Wigan Council: a whole system approach to digital in its adult social care service | Local Government Association
Carers	Visible "carer offer" in hub; Essex's All-Age Carers redesign is a good template for navigation + offer + digital support.	Essex County Council: unpaid carers support redesign | Local Government Association

Peopletoo
it works better with you

2d. Regional Working

A shared tier across 2+ councils (and aligned to the ICS footprint) that handles the high-cost / low-volume / scarce-skills pieces you don't want fragmented locally: specialist placements, complex packages, market oversight, workforce pipelines, shared procurement, quality & risk. This mirrors current direction on integrated "place" partnerships and multi-council collaboratives.

Key Reading:
A new operating model for health and care | NHS Confederation

Regional Models – Core Building Blocks

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Core Building Blocks		
Regional Commissioning Hub	Hosted by one LA. Category management, procurement, analytics, brokerage for specialist/complex demand; leads joint tenders and frameworks.	
Market Stewardship & Intervention	Sufficiency plans, market shaping, price/quality oversight, escalation with regulators; aligns to DfE's market interventions work and new advisory structures (MIAG).	Children's social care market interventions advisory group - GOV.UK
Sufficiency Programmes (Children)	Regional pipeline of in-house homes, IFA/fostering campaigns, and secure/step-down capacity; proto-RCC functions where established. (Live examples: **West Midlands**, **White Rose/Yorkshire & Humber**, **North East ADCS** regional sufficiency collaboration, and **Pan-London** programmes.)	COV - West Midlands Children's Regional Residential Care Framework (2025) - Find a Tender
Complex Adults Commissioning	Regional lots for complex LD/ASD, MH rehab/forensic step-down, EBD/PD specialist supported living, and pan-area care-home frameworks (e.g., **Pan-London nursing homes AQP**).	Pan-London Nursing Homes AQP - Contract introduction for providers - Care England
Workforce & Practice Academy	Shared training/OD (e.g., delegated healthcare tasks into care roles per ADASS guidance), supervision standards, agency reduction initiatives.	
Data, Digital & Brokerage	Regional data room; dashboards for price/volume/quality; shared brokerage for hard-to-place cases; aligns to Ofsted ILACS/SEND and CQC assurance regimes.	
NHS/ICS Integration	Interfaces with provider collaboratives and specialised commissioning delegation to ICBs (useful for secure estate/complex health pathways).	NHS England » Specialised commissioning 2024/25 – next steps with delegation to integrated care boards

Regional Working – Children's Services & Adult Social Care

Children's Services

Categories: Residential & secure, complex solo/2:1, step-down therapeutic, independent fostering frameworks, specialist education packages linked to care, regional sufficiency capital pipeline.

- Demand & sufficiency: rolling 3-yr forecast; capacity pipeline with DfE capital routes; market heat-maps.
- Commissioning & procurement: regional frameworks, dynamic purchasing for edge cases, common Ts&Cs, shared QA; "price corridor" and escalation.
- Brokerage: single regional team for hard-to-place; localities retain mainstream fostering/kinship; time-bound brokerage SLAs.
- Market oversight: contract performance, unannounced checks with LA QA leads; dovetail with DfE Market Interventions Advisory Group signals.
- Workforce: regional recruitment campaigns (foster carers, residential staff), practice standards, and shared training.

Adult Social Care

Complex LD/ASD with PBS, forensic/MH rehab step-down, specialist dementia/nursing blocks, NHS-adjacent discharge capacity, workforce academies, and pan-area AQP frameworks. (E.g., Pan-London nursing homes AQP; NW ADASS market-shaping networks.) How it runs:

- Pooled category strategies: joint fee setting, shared risk/void cover for step-down beds, Better Care Fund linkage as policy evolves.
    - New reforms and independent commission to transform social care - GOV.UK
- Delegated healthcare tasks: joint protocols, training and indemnity (ADASS guidance), opening headroom in home support/reablement models.
    - Adult social care and delegated healthcare activities - ADASS
- Regional QA & market resilience: early-warning on provider failure, improvement support, and cross-border contingency placements.
- NHS interface: MAP with ICBs and specialised commissioning for secure/complex cohorts and discharge pathways.

Peopletoo
it works better with you

3. Implementation Plan

Assurance to MHCLG, DfE, and DHSC

Peopletoo
it works better with you

This TOM and Implementation Plan provide:

- Continuity of care: Statutory assurance that vulnerable people remain protected.
- Financial case: Robust evidence of achievable savings and cost avoidance.
- Localism benefits: Smaller, more responsive unitaries aligned to NHS and communities.
- Inspection readiness: Clear focus on improvement and assurance frameworks.

Key Enablers	Risks	Governance & Oversight
Governance: Clear accountability (separate DCS/DASS per UA), risk-share for joint services.	SEND DSG deficit (£151m) - risk of escalated DfE intervention if recovery not credible.	Programme Board: Chairs of Shadow Authorities + DCS/DASS.
Workforce: Local pipelines with FE colleges; digital upskilling; practice academies.	Provider fragility in rural South - early market development essential.	Locality Boards: co-chaired by schools & NHS partners.
ICT/Digital: Resident care accounts, online assessments, predictive analytics, dual running until stable.	Agency social worker reliance (esp. children's) - risk to improvement momentum.	Regional Hub: high-cost placements, workforce academy, brokerage.
Commissioning: Local micro-commissioning for volume; regional hub for high-cost/low-volume.	ICT migration delays - dual running costs/risks.	Inspection Readiness Group: aligned to ILACS, Area SEND, CQC frameworks.
Partnerships: Co-location with PCNs, schools, VCS; formal locality boards.	Inspection windows - likely Ofsted/CQC visits within 12–18 months of Vesting Day.	
Inspection Readiness: Single improvement plans; routine dry-runs against Ofsted/CQC frameworks.		

Project Plan Overview

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Phase	Level of Delivery	Key Actions	Source/Requirement
Phase 1 Foundations (2025/26)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Identify "Day 1 Essentials" (continuity of care, safeguarding, ICT dual running)	DfE regional sufficiency programme
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Appoint statutory officers (DCS/DASS) Establish integrated programme and single business case (governance, budget, scope, benefits)	DfE/DHSC requirement
	Locality Hubs	Agree vision, principles and outcomes of locality working Agree scope for regional commissioning hub	Best practice
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Map current demand, budgets and workforce capacity (by ward where relevant) Initial engagement with schools, GPs, providers, VCSE, ICS and partners	LGA guidance
Phase 2 Design (2026)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Design shared frameworks for residential & SEND placements	DfE/DHSC policy
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Draft constitution & scheme of delegation Build draft transition plan with risk and benefit analysis, including shared/transactional services Align with MTFP, SEND and social care reforms	LGR statutory process
	Locality Hubs	Co-design operating model for family hubs & reablement	Family Help reforms
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Pilot micro-commissioning with VCSE Communication plan – staff, members, families, partners	Good practice

Project Plan Overview

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Phase	Level of Delivery	Key Actions	Source/Requirement
Phase 3 Mobilisation (2026/27)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Mobilise regional workforce academy	ADASS workforce guidance
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	TUPE workforce transfers; workforce training, induction and cultural alignment Implement system and data transition (case management, BI, reporting); data migration testing Secure leadership and retain critical expertise to vesting day	TUPE Regs / GDPR
	Locality hubs	Establish locality teams/structures and co-located MDTs (ASC front door, Family Help) Novate/renegotiate contracts "Day 1 Readiness Review" – dry run of key processes	Working Together 2023
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Launch early help & reablement pilots	Best practice
Phase 4 Go Live (April 2028)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Broker high-cost placements; regional market oversight	DfE MIAG / CQC assurance
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Submit statutory returns; monitor safeguarding continuity	Legal duty
	Locality hubs	Operate new front door pathways (FH + ASC triage) Launch locality operating model Implement contingency measures for risks identified earlier	Care Act / Children Act
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Ensure community-level services accessible (family hubs, carers) Maintain provider and community reassurance through ongoing comms	SEND reforms
Phase 5 Optimisation (Post-2028)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Sustain regional QA and market resilience programmes Plan financial resilience and interim shared service hosting	DfE/DHSC policy
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Review outcomes and financial performance vs benchmark; adjust MTFP	CIPFA duty
	Locality hubs	Refine commissioning, sufficiency planning and service pathways based on learning Consolidate contracts and embed VFM approach Embed prevention and early help as a core operating principle	Best practice
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Continuous improvement of early help, kinship, carer offers and wider partnerships (ICS, QA, market resilience programmes)	Ofsted inspection

Gantt Chart Overview

Peopletoo

Full implementation plan Gantt chart available in Appendix

Phases	Key Actions	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029-30
Phase 1: Foundations	Set up Day 1 essentials (care continuity, safeguarding, ICT), appoint statutory officers, and agree vision, outcomes, and governance.					
	Map demand, budgets, and workforce; define commissioning scope; and engage with schools, GPs, providers, and partners.					
Phase 2: Design	Develop shared frameworks, draft constitution, and transition plan with risk/benefit analysis.					
	Align with reforms and MTFP, co-design family hubs/reablement, pilot micro-commissioning, and plan communications.					
Phase 3: Mobilisation	Launch workforce academy, TUPE transfers, training, and cultural alignment; test data migration and system transitions.					
	Secure leadership, set up locality teams and MDTs, manage contracts, conduct readiness reviews, and pilot early help/reablement.					
Phase 4: Go Live	Operate new pathways (FH + ASC triage), launch locality model, and oversee high-cost placements with market oversight.				April 2028	
	Submit statutory returns, ensure safeguarding, maintain accessible services, and apply contingency measures.				April 2028	
Phase 5: Optimisation	Sustain QA and market resilience, review outcomes vs benchmarks, and refine commissioning and financial planning.					
	Consolidate contracts, embed prevention/early help, and drive continuous improvement with carers, kinship, and wider partnerships.					

Phase 1: Foundations

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Cross-Cutting Actions

- Agree vision, principles and outcomes of locality working.
- Map current demand, budgets and workforce capacity (forensic analysis across potential/agreeing footprints, including demographic data).
- Identify “Day 1 essentials” (continuity of care, safeguarding, ICT dual running — case management, billing and payment systems).
- Early engagement with providers, VCS, ICS/ICB, schools and partners.
- Review existing governance and statutory boards; review recent inspection findings (CQC / Ofsted) and identify key areas of action.
- Establish integrated programme and single business case (governance, budget, scope, benefits).
- Agree scope for regional commissioning hub.

Adult Social Care Actions

- Maintain continuity of care for residents during the transition.
- Redesign services to reflect priorities and demographics of the new unitaries using forensic, ward-level analysis.
- Ensure budgets transferred reflect need (not purely population numbers); analyse current MTFP and savings initiatives to inform new budget.
- Early assessment of workforce capacity and capability; consider operating models, caseloads and opportunities to address backlogs in assessments and reviews prior to going live.
- Detailed assessment of contracts to prioritise de/re-commissioning, identify those suitable for joint commissioning and those needing further VFM assessment.
- Early conversations with the ICS/ICB to review and agree Better Care Fund informed by forensic demand analysis.

Children’s Services Actions

- Maintain continuity of care and support for children, young people, parents/carers, families and wider networks during transition.
- Forensic analysis of current demand and future projections across the new footprint and demography (General Fund and DSG spend commitments).
- Establish a current and medium-term baseline budget requirement; identify underlying pressures in existing budget commitments.
- Early assessment of workforce capacity and capability; review operating models, caseloads and backlogs.
- Detailed contract assessment: which require novation / de/re-commissioning, which remain jointly commissioned, which require VFM review.
- Analyse recent Ofsted reports and ILACS / Local Area SEND recommendations to inform single improvement plans.

SEND Actions

- Forensic analysis of DSG across all Blocks and identification of strategic financial pressures; ensure budgets transferred reflect need.
- Readiness review for Local Area SEND inspection and development of single improvement plan for Local Area SEND.
- Early consideration of sufficiency needs for EHCPs and Home to School Transport demand and market implications.

Phase 2: Design

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Cross-Cutting Actions

- Co-design the operating model (governance, integration, workforce, commissioning) aligned to the new strategic outcomes.
- Develop options appraisals for service pathways and in-house delivery (detailed assessment of in-house services; options appraisals to be produced for consideration).
- Build draft transition plan including risk/benefit analysis and alignment to the MTFP and known reforms.
- Communication plan – staff, members, families, partners, providers (including website content going live pre-implementation).
- ICT & system architecture mapping, requirements gathering for integration or transitionary dual running (case management, billing/payment, BI, reporting).
- Draft constitution and scheme of delegation.

Adult Social Care Actions

- Produce forensic ward-level service redesign options and options appraisals for in-house versus market delivery.
- Design performance management and statutory return requirement gathering, and integration plans.
- Design Section 75 and other partnership agreement transfer approaches; identify CQC actions that influence design.
- Identify capability building needs in commissioning, governance and performance management; design training/induction.

Children's Services Actions

- Co-design new children's social care operating model aligned to national social care and SEND reforms.
- Produce single improvement plans for ILACS and Local Area SEND as part of design.
- Design pathway and operational process maps and associated guidance/protocols for statutory processes.
- Consider regional collaborations (Regional Care Cooperatives, regional foster recruitment) in commissioning/design options.
- Design shared frameworks for residential and SEND placements.

SEND Actions

- Design graduated approach and inclusion expectations for the revised school community; incorporate EHCP sufficiency into pathways.
- Design Home to School Transport and policy, develop alternative provision, model route optimisation options to inform budgets.
- Ensure DSG analysis and medium-term financial planning are embedded in design options.

Phase 3: Mobilisation

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Cross-Cutting Actions

- Establish locality teams/structures and implement workforce training, induction and cultural alignment.
- Implement system and data transition: case management, BI, reporting; carry out data migration, reconfiguration and integration planning.
- Novate / renegotiate contracts as identified; launch early commissioning pilots where appropriate.
- "Day 1 Readiness Review" — dry runs of key processes, business continuity and safeguarding pathways.
- Detailed communications and transition plans shared with providers; websites and key public information go live pre-implementation.
- Mobilise regional workforce academy.
- Secure leadership and retain critical expertise through to vesting day.

Adult Social Care Actions

- Implement Section 75, Section 117 and Continuing Healthcare arrangement transfers to the new authority.
- Deliver detailed implementation plans for each service area, jointly with Health, to support Hospital Discharge pathways and integrated services.
- Mobilise performance management frameworks and statutory return processes; test flows and reporting.
- Deliver workforce initiatives to build capability in commissioning, governance and performance management.
- Prioritise case reviews, observation programmes and case review workshops where strength-based practice embedding is required.

Children's Services Actions

- Mobilise single improvement plans for ILACS and Local Area SEND; test operational protocols for statutory processes.
- Implement provider engagement and contract novation plans; mobilise revised commissioning arrangements for placements and fostering.
- Mobilise regional collaborations (e.g., foster carer recruitment) and early help/prevention models in pilot localities.
- Configure case management and payment systems; migrate data and test statutory return submissions.

SEND Actions

- Deliver EHCP sufficiency planning measures and ensure systems capture demand for EHCPs and transport.
- Mobilise Home to School Transport arrangements and route optimisation pilots where ready.
- Test graduated approach operationalisation in schools and inclusion protocols with partners.

Phase 4: Go Live

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Cross-Cutting Actions

- Launch locality operating model; maintain active communications to reassure providers, communities and staff.
- Monitor safeguarding and continuity of care closely; operate contingency measures for risks identified earlier.
- Confirm continuity of statutory returns and reporting; validate performance management dashboards and BI.
- Maintain provider & community reassurance through ongoing comms; ensure websites and public guidance are live and accurate.
- Broker high-cost placements and establish regional market oversight.

Adult Social Care Actions

- Ensure safe delivery from Day 1 for the most vulnerable residents and their families/carers through close operational oversight.
- Continue Hospital Discharge/health integration work and monitor Section 75/CHC/Section 117 transitions.
- Undertake immediate review of front door — is the service strength-based; is information, advice and guidance effectively utilised?
- Activate contingency plans for any contract or market instability identified during mobilisation.

Children's Services Actions

- Ensure continuity for children, young people and families: test statutory pathways, safeguarding and review processes in live operations.
- Validate novated contracts and placement arrangements; monitor sufficiency pressures.
- Implement revised partnership governance arrangements and maintain ongoing engagement with regional partners.
- Ensure performance and statutory returns for children's services are operating as designed.

SEND Actions

- Monitor EHCP processing times and placement sufficiency; prioritise cases at risk.
- Monitor Home to School Transport arrangements and escalate any service continuity or demand issues.
- Provide targeted communications to families about how SEND processes operate under the new authority.

Phase 5: Optimisation

Peopletoo
it works better with you

Cross-Cutting Actions

- Review outcomes and financial performance; refine pathways and commissioning based on learning.
- Consolidate contracts and embed a VFM approach in commissioning and contract management.
- Embed prevention and early help as core operating principle and maintain continuous improvement cycles with ICS and wider partnerships.
- Review inherited policies for alignment, communication and application.
- Plan financial resilience measures and interim shared service hosting.

Adult Social Care Actions

- Early assessment of inherited contracts to determine VFM and outcome focus — identify opportunities to consolidate, renegotiate or decommission.
- Review in-house services against Stage 1 recommendations and strategic objectives; decide on retention/reconfiguration.
- Assess strength-based practice embedding through observations, guided conversations and case review workshops.
- Review income arrangements including charging, grants and health income; update MTFP as required.
- Continue to strengthen partnership working with VCS and Health to support market development and sustainability.

Children's Services Actions

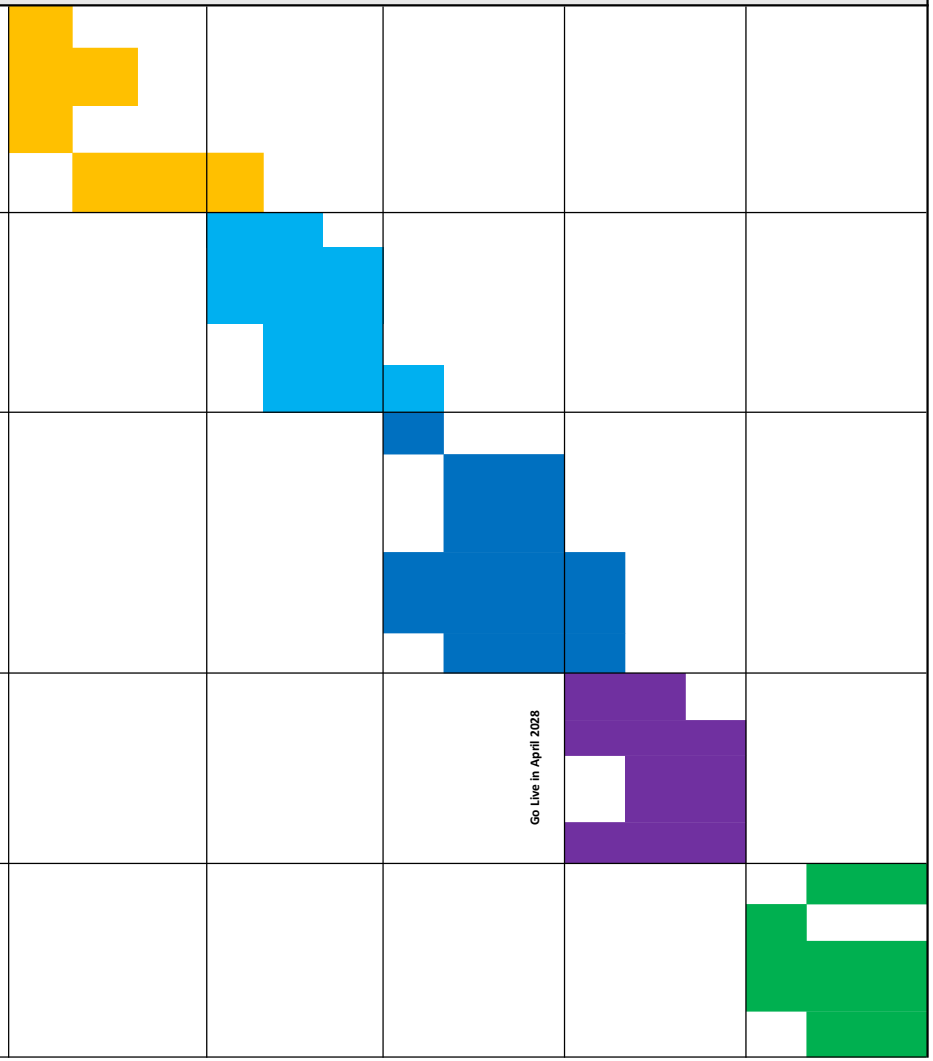
- Undertake assessment of novated contracts and providers for quality and VFM; plan consolidation or market shaping where required.
- Assess medium-to-long-term sufficiency needs (placements and EHCPs) and work with providers to shape the market.
- Review effectiveness of early help/prevention model (aligned to Family Help reforms).Review foster carer recruitment approaches and regional collaborations; adjust recruitment strategy.
- Review Home to School Transport delivery and value for money; implement route optimisation and market interventions.

SEND Actions

- Review embedding of inclusion and the graduated approach across the revised school community; identify further support needs.
- Reassess EHCP sufficiency and demand forecasting; refine commissioning and placement strategies.
- Review Local Area SEND improvement plan progress and adjust priorities based on outcomes and inspection readiness.

Implementation Plan

	Levels of Delivery	Phase & Timeline	Source/Requirement
Phase 1: Foundations	Regional (West Midlands/ICT footprint)	Identify "Day 1 Essentials" (continuity of care, safeguarding, ICT dual running)	DfE/DHSC requirement
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Appoint statutory officers (DCS/DASS) Establish integrated programme and single business case (governance, budget, scope, benefits)	Best practice
	Locality hubs	Agree vision, principles and outcomes of locality working Agree scope for regional commissioning hub	LGA guidance
	Community/Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Map current demand, budgets and workforce capacity (by ward where relevant) Initial engagement with schools, GPs, providers, VCSE, ICS and partners	DfE regional sufficiency programme
Phase 2: Design	Regional (West Midlands/ICT footprint)	Design shared frameworks for residential and SEND placements	DfE/DHSC policy
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Draft constitution & scheme of delegation Build draft transition plan with risk and benefit analysis, including shared/transactional services Align with MTFP, SEND and social care reforms	LGR statutory process
	Locality hubs	Co-design operating model (family hubs, reablement, governance, integration, workforce, commissioning)	Family Help reforms
	Community/Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Pilot early commissioning approaches (including micro-commissioning with VCSE) Communication plan – staff, members, families, partners	Good practice
Phase 3: Mobilisation	Regional (West Midlands/ICT footprint)	Mobilise regional workforce academy	ADASS workforce guidance
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	TUPE workforce transfers; workforce training, induction and cultural alignment Implement system and data transition (case management, BI, reporting); data migration testing Secure leadership and retain critical expertise to vesting day	TUPE Regs/GDPR
	Locality hubs	Establish locality teams/structures and co-located MDTs (ASC front door, Family Help) Novate/renegotiate contracts Day 1 Readiness Review – dry run of key processes	Working Together 2023
	Community/Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Launch early help and reablement pilots	Best practice
Phase 4: Go Live	Regional (West Midlands/ICT footprint)	Broker high-cost placements; maintain regional market oversight	DfE MIAG/CQC assurance
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Submit statutory returns; monitor safeguarding and continuity of care	Legal duty
	Locality hubs	Operate new front door pathways (FH + ASC triage) Launch locality operating model Implement contingency measures for risks identified earlier	Care Act/Children Act
	Community/Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Ensure community-level services are accessible (family hubs, carers) Maintain provider and community reassurance through ongoing comms	SEND reforms
Phase 5: Optimisation	Regional (West Midlands/ICT footprint)	Sustain regional QA and market resilience programmes Plan financial resilience and interim shared service hosting	DfE/DHSC policy
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Review outcomes and financial performance vs benchmark; adjust MTFP	CIPFA duty
	Locality hubs	Refine commissioning, sufficiency planning and service pathways based on learning Consolidate contracts and embed VFM approach Embed prevention and early help as a core operating principle	Best practice
	Community/Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Continuous improvement of early help, kinship, carer offers and wider partnerships (ICS, QA, market resilience programmes)	Ofsted inspection



Addendum to the June 2025 Peopletoo Report

- In October 2025, following our analysis in June, Ofsted published its full inspection report on Warwickshire County Council's children's services, rating overall effectiveness as **"Requires improvement to be good."** The inspection acknowledged several positive developments, including the introduction of the new Family Connect front door, the establishment of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT), improvements in services for disabled children and those at risk of extra-familial harm, and a clear culture of relational practice supported by a committed workforce.
- However, inspectors highlighted ongoing challenges: inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of assessments, variable supervision and management oversight, delays in permanence planning for children in care, and concerns regarding the use of unregistered provision.
- These findings do not alter the conclusions of our June analysis. In fact, they reinforce the areas identified for transformation and service improvement, particularly around unregistered placements and permanence instability, which link directly to market quality and capacity.
- The proposed two-unitary model for North and South Warwickshire offers a more locally focused approach to drive improvement through proximity, accountability, and strong local partnerships. Creating two unitary authorities will enable more agile decision-making, strengthen leadership and governance, and allow targeted investment in early help and permanence pathways tailored to local needs, creating the conditions for Warwickshire's children's services to progress from "requires improvement" to "good" or "outstanding" within a sustainable, locally accountable model.

Revised Paragraph 1.22
In relation to Children's Services the strength of the two unitary model would not only enable targeted prevention and intervention to reduce demand for Children's Social Care, but also further develop the local market to ensure the right capacity and support is available more locally. This in turn will not only reduce expenditure but keep young people, where it is safe to do so, closer to their communities, improving outcomes for young people and their families whilst also supporting reunification. *(add as a footnote the definition of reunification in this context being "returning a young person who has been in care back to their birth family or primary caregivers, once it is assessed as safe and in the child's best interests").*

Whilst the Peopletoo report also flags issues with the current SEND system with Ofsted reporting widespread/ systemic failing in their last inspection back in 2021, post Peopletoo's work in June 2025, Ofsted published in October 2025 its full inspection of the County Council's children's services, rating overall effectiveness as "Requires improvement to be good". While the inspection acknowledged progress, it also exposed persistent weaknesses, which include inconsistent assessments, variable supervision, delays in permanence planning, and concerning reliance on unregistered provision.

These findings do not diminish the validity of the Peopletoo analysis in June; they strengthen it. The areas identified for transformation, particularly around permanence stability and market capacity, are now even more pressing, and without structural change, these challenges risk undermining outcomes for our vulnerable children.

The proposed two-unitary model for North and South Warwickshire offers a decisive solution. It creates governance that is closer to communities, enabling faster decision-making, stronger accountability, and targeted investment in early help, permanence pathways and inclusion. This model aligns with national priorities for improving children's services and provides the conditions for the two new unitaries in Warwickshire to move from "requires improvement" to "good" or "outstanding", delivering sustainable improvement across both social care and SEND within a locally accountable framework.

This is not just a structural change, it is a strategic opportunity to reset the system, strengthen leadership, and ensure that every child in Warwickshire grows up safe, supported, and with the best possible life chances.
Issues with SEND…….

Revised Paragraph 5.10:
It is not just the financial case. Warwickshire County Council itself acknowledges major challenges in critical service areas, notably SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). The Written Statement of Action following the Joint Area SEND inspection in September 2021 highlighted a pressing need to rebuild trust with parents, carers, and schools—a fundamental issue that continues to impact outcomes for children and young people.

Similar concerns exist for looked-after children. According to data provided by the County Council, 44% of Warwickshire's looked-after children are placed outside the county, raising serious questions about stability, continuity of care, and the sufficiency of local provision.

Ofsted’s full inspection of children’s services, published in October 2025, rated overall effectiveness as “Requires improvement to be good.” While progress was acknowledged, the inspection exposed persistent weaknesses: inconsistent assessments, variable supervision and management oversight, delays in permanence planning, and a concerning reliance on unregistered provision.

Revised Paragraph 5.12
The risk with one unitary, is that adults and children’s services continue as they are. These findings underscore the urgency for structural reform. The proposed two-unitary model offers a credible solution, creating governance that is closer to communities, enabling faster and more aligned decision-making, targeted investment and local capacity building.

DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

Local Government Reorganisation

DCN analysis of existing unitary councils: bigger isn't better

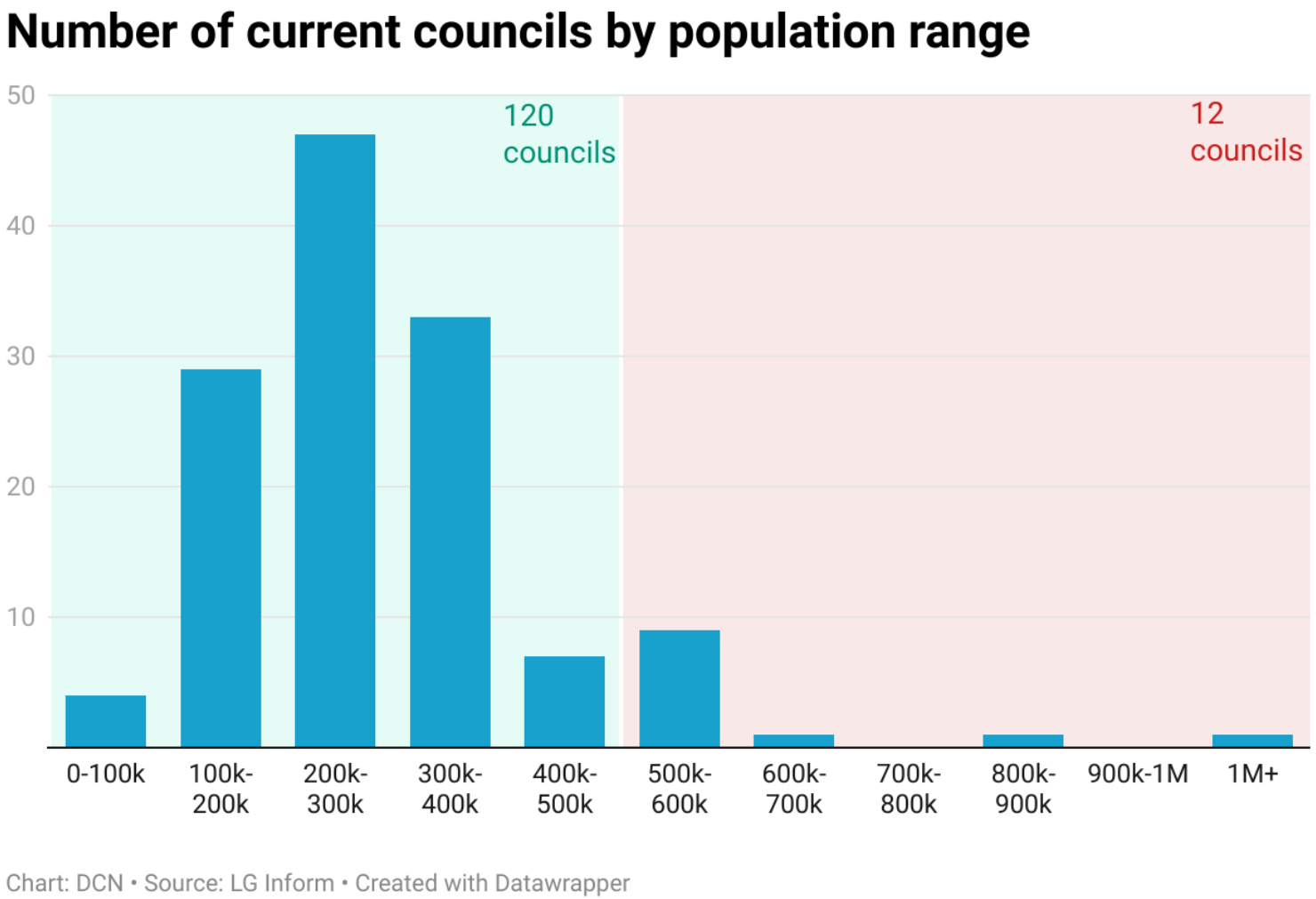
October 2025

1. Summary

Context

- Much of the rationale for LGR in the English Devolution White Paper rested on the assumption that bigger councils benefit from economies of scale and hence are more financially stable, efficient and effective.
- Financial effectiveness is one of the six assessment criteria for final LGR proposals: "*Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks*".
- MHCLG has indicated that 500k population will be a guideline for new unitary councils. It is not a minimum threshold. But the expectation is that the new unitary councils created in 2027 and 2028 will have an average population size of around 500k and that some new councils will be larger.
- DCN has carried out new analysis to examine whether population size is linked to value for money and whether there is a sound basis for setting 500k as the guideline population level.

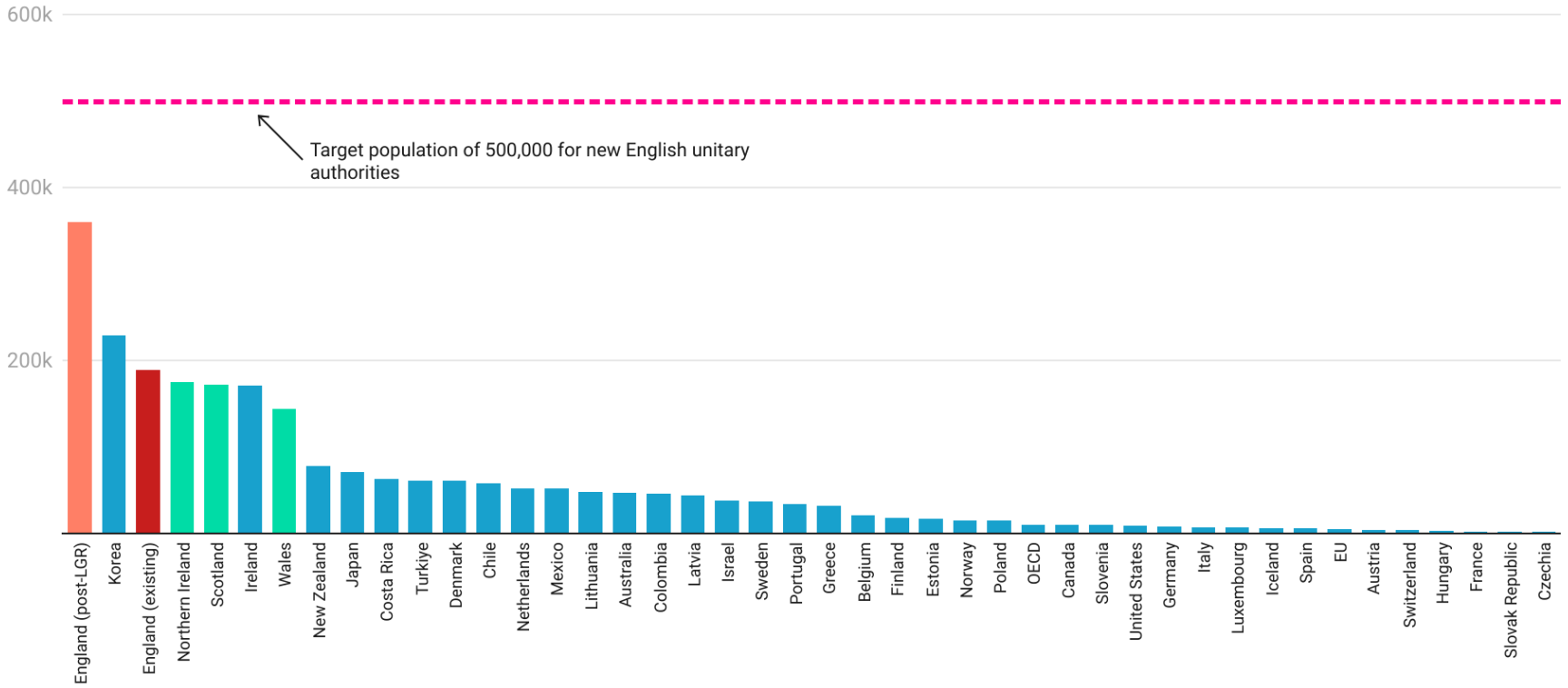
National context: the guideline size of new councils is well above the typical size of existing unitary councils



International context: England already has unusually large councils by international standards

Average municipal size by number of inhabitants - OECD countries

Creating councils of at least 500,000 residents in areas covered by local reorganisation would make England a notable outlier amongst rich countries



The figures for the UK were calculated by the DCN using figures from the OECD and ONS. The post-LGR figures are based on there being 161 remaining municipalities in England.

Chart: DCN • Source: OECD • Created with Datawrapper

Hypothesis

If larger councils benefited from economies of scale – which substantially outweigh any diseconomies - up to and beyond a population of 500k, we would expect to see some combination of the following effects:

- Larger councils spend less per resident
- Larger councils are more financially stable
- Larger councils charge lower council tax
- Larger councils deliver better services

Our analysis tests each of these four aspects to establish whether the evidence supports the hypothesis

Methodology

- The analysis compares all 132 unitary local authorities in England. It excludes county councils and district councils. It uses published data, primarily taken from LG Inform Plus, the local area benchmarking tool from the Local Government Association.
- Data is the latest available data as of 30 September 2025.
- Analysis is based purely on real-world historic data rather than making assumptions about future spending and performance.
- Population data is for number of people ordinarily resident in the local authority area.
- The analysis controls for factors other than population where possible to test whether any apparent correlation between population size and outcomes is causal.

- *Note: for the remainder of this briefing, "council" refers to unitary councils unless otherwise stated.*

Headline conclusions

1. There is little or no evidence to support the Government's preference for large unitary councils and no evidence to support the 500k population level.
2. The bulk of the data analysed show a non-existent or faint relationship between a council's population and its outcomes.
3. When there is an apparent link between population size and outcomes, it more often favours smaller councils.
4. The evidence gives no reason to assume that smaller unitary councils will be less efficient, sustainable or effective due to their size.

Detailed conclusions

1 Total expenditure per resident

- 8 of the 10 lowest spending councils have a population lower than the median population of existing unitary councils.
- Evidence for a causal link between council size and spend per resident is very weak. Other factors, such as deprivation, are much more significant in predicting spending efficiency.
- Correlation between population size and spend per resident is weak. In the largest 90% of unitary councils (starting at population size of 157k) the relationship is so minimal as to be essentially non-existent.
- To the extent that there is a correlation, there appears to be a tipping point at around 350k population: the direction of the relationship changes such that councils above this threshold typically spend more per resident than those below it.

2 Financial sustainability

- Larger councils appear to have been more likely to experience financial instability that is sufficiently serious to require Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).
- Larger councils have required more EFS relative to the size of their budgets than smaller councils.
- Analysis does not demonstrate that population size is the key driver of this outcome. Equally, there is no evidence that smaller councils are likely to be less financially stable than larger ones.

Detailed conclusions

3 Council tax

- Larger councils charge higher levels of council tax. The average Band D council tax bill for councils larger than 500k population was £250 higher than the average bill for councils smaller than 500k.
- Analysis does not demonstrate that population size is the key driver.
- Council tax levels are at best uncorrelated with population size and at worst rise in line with it.

4 Service performance

- Across a wide range of performance measures (covering adult social care, administration and finance, planning, and waste), 10 metrics show no meaningful relationship between population size and performance.
- For all 10 measures where there is a statistically meaningful relationship, smaller councils perform better on average.
- Projected outcomes are better at the median population of existing unitary councils (275k) than at 500k.

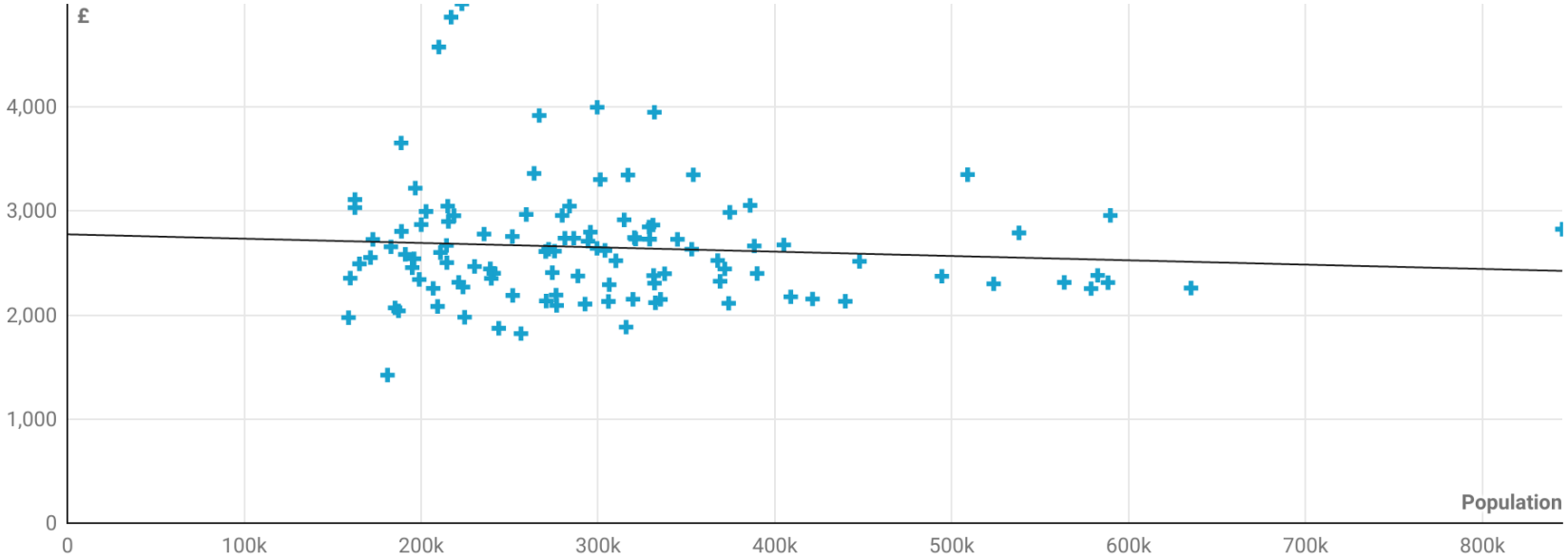
2. Detailed Analysis

A. Total spend per resident

Among the largest 90% of councils the relationship is so minimal as to be essentially non-existent

Total revenue expenditure on all services per head of population (£)

Covering councils with populations over ~157,000. This range covers all the proposed new councils being created under LGR.

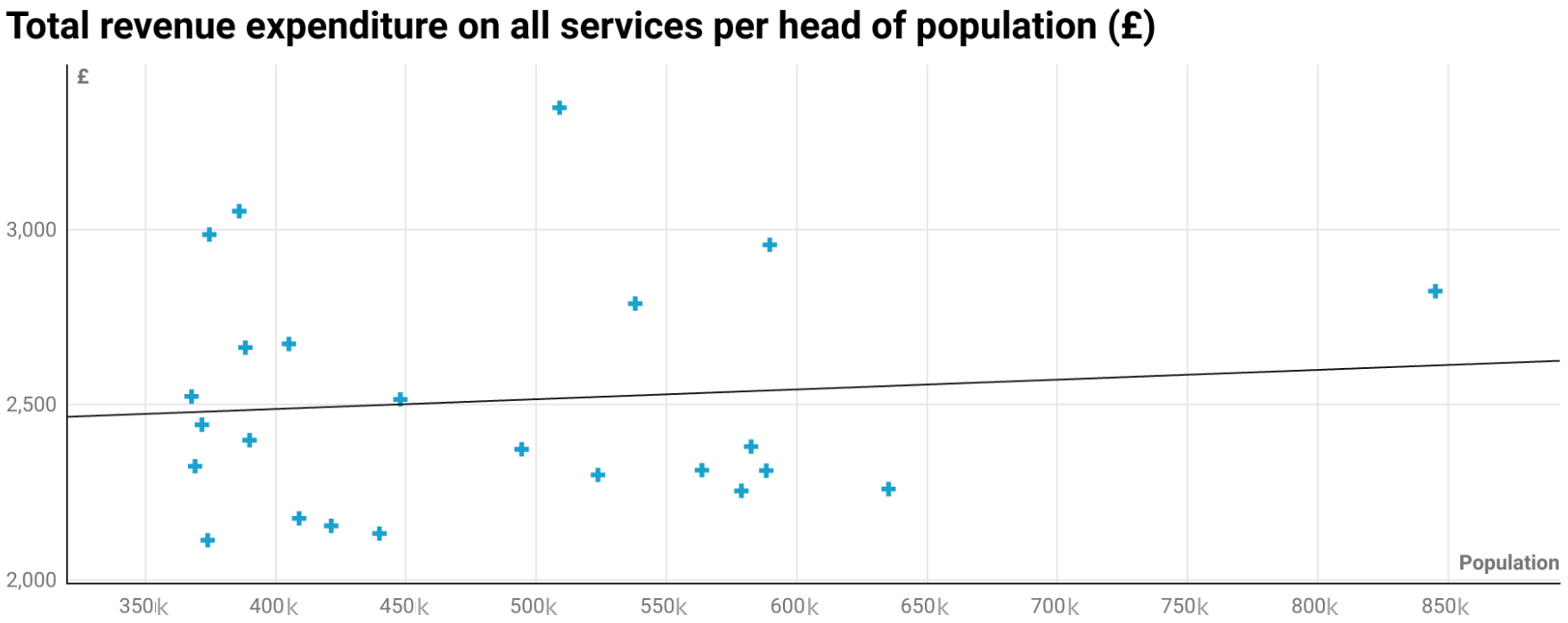


Total revenue expenditure is spending on all services, per head of population, including employee costs and running expenses | Data is missing from 7 councils | Technical definition: Adjusted R^2 < 0 | p = 0.369 and R^2 = 0.007

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

The trendline of this chart is less predictive than guessing median spend regardless of population. It also does not pass the statistical significance test used by most social science academic journals.

There is a tipping point just above 350k population where the trend changes



Technical definition: Estimated coefficient of population variable > 0 | Councils with population > 360,000 included | Data is missing from 5 councils | P = 0.646 and R^2 = 0.001

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Beyond 350k population, a larger population is associated with higher expenditure per person. But the link is not statistically strong.

8 of the 10 councils with lowest spend per resident have a population below the median (275k)

Rank	Council	Population	Expenditure per Head (£)	Above or below the median population?
116th	Rotherham	276,595	2,092	Above
117th	York	209,301	2,083	Below
118th	Southend-on-Sea	185,256	2,069	Below
119th	Wokingham	187,200	2,040	Below
120th	North Somerset	224,578	1,979	Below
121st	Windsor and Maidenhead	158,943	1,975	Below
122nd	Central Bedfordshire	315,877	1,884	Above
123rd	Swindon	243,875	1,872	Below
124th	Bexley	256,434	1,821	Below
125th	Thurrock	180,989	1,423	Below

Data for 7 councils is unavailable

Table: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

None of these councils are close to the guideline 500k population level for new unitary councils

Controlling for other factors that potentially affect expenditure per resident

- To analyse the impact of population size in the context of the wide range of factors that potentially impact service spending per resident, we controlled for 22 other variables. These were based on factors accounted for in recent government funding proposals and academic research.
- Our analysis applied a stepwise regression to identify which of these factors contributed most to explaining the variation in spend per resident.
- This identified the following factors as most important:

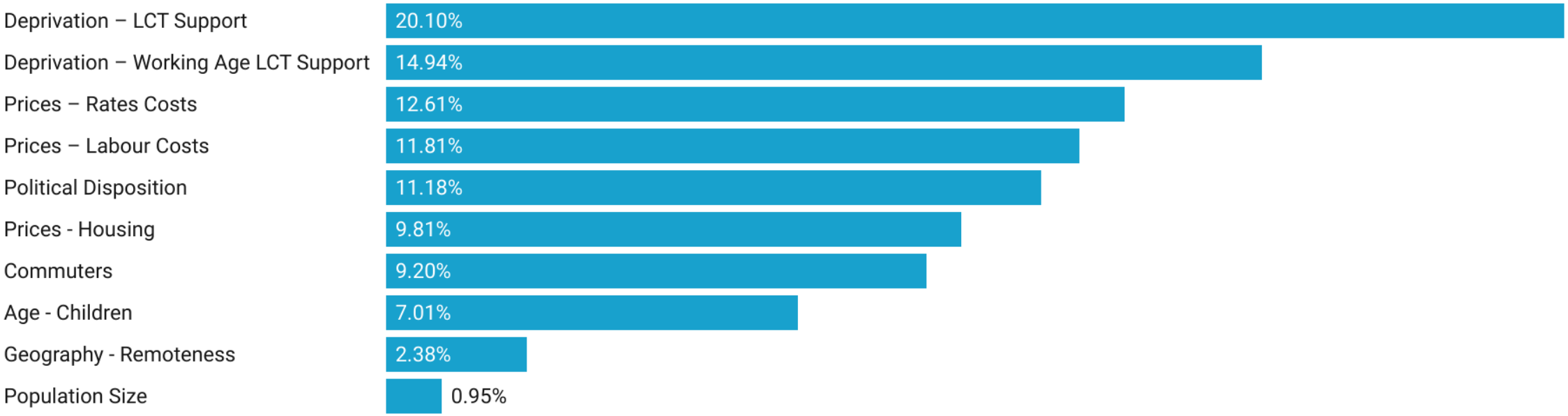
  - Deprivation – LCT support recipients
  - Deprivation – Working Age LCT support recipients
  - Rates costs
  - Labour costs
  - House prices
  - Commuters – net inflows
  - % of children in local population
  - Geographic remoteness
  - Political disposition

- **Population was not one of these factors**

Population size predicts far less about spend per resident than other factors

The contribution of different input variables to the predictive performance of our model

Based on these results, it is about as plausible as not that population size has no real effect on expenditure per resident, once other variables are accounted for.

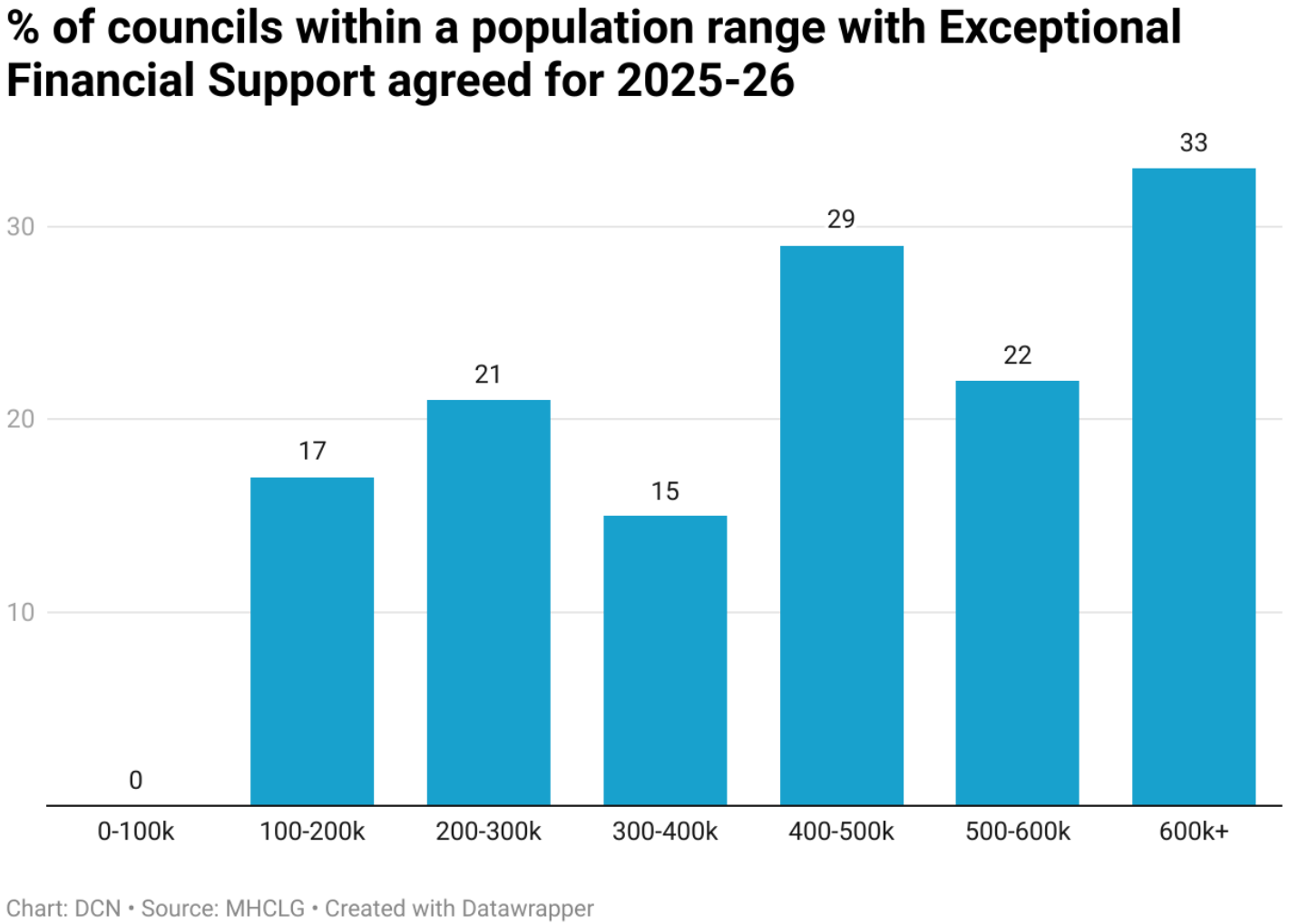


Relative importance metrics calculated for a multi-linear regression model | City of London and the Isles of Scilly excluded | Model statistics: P = <0.001 and R^2 = 0.747 | Population variable: P=0.411

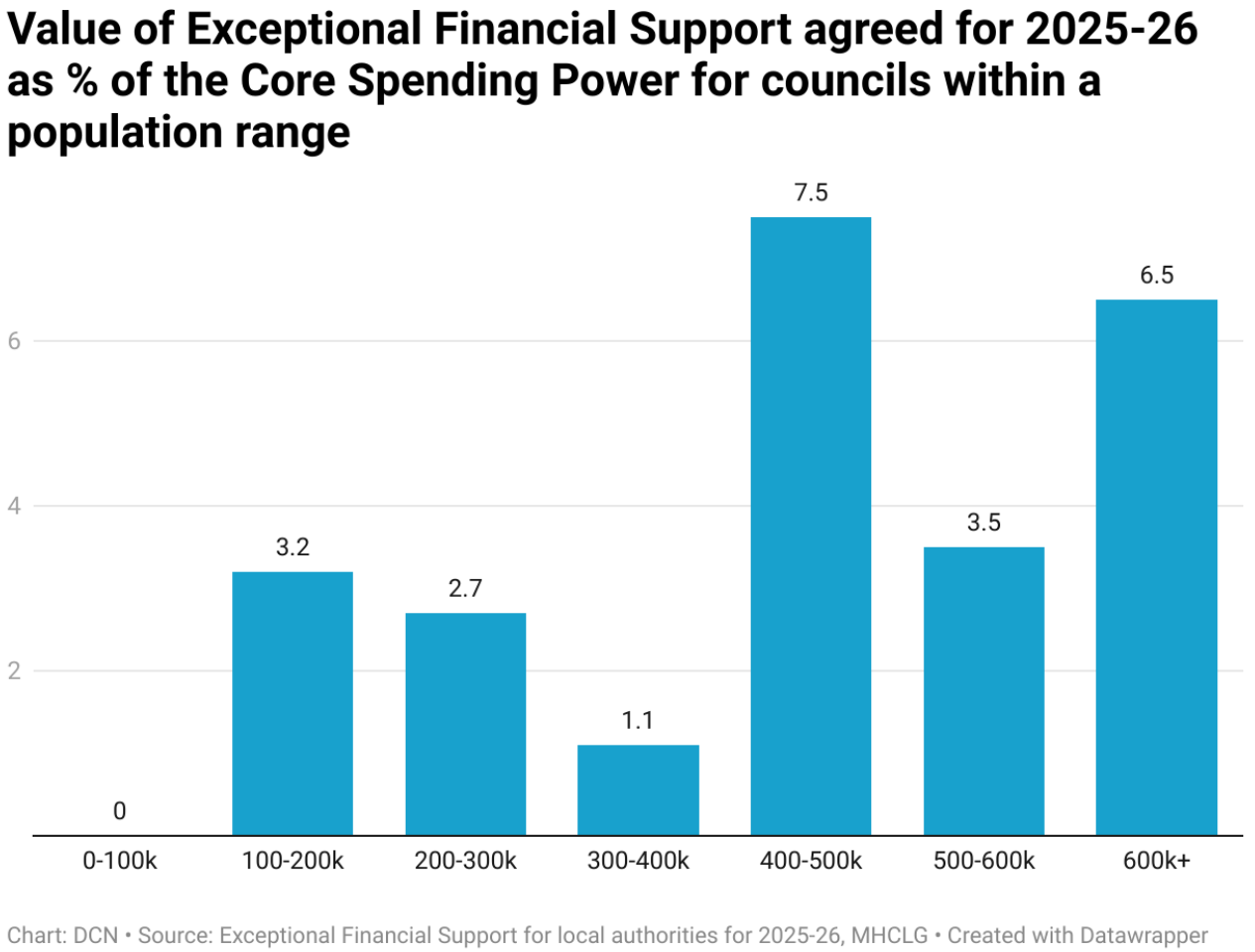
Chart: DCN • Source: Various • Created with Datawrapper

B. Financial sustainability

Larger councils have been more likely to need Exceptional Financial Support



Larger councils also required more EFS relative to the size of their budgets

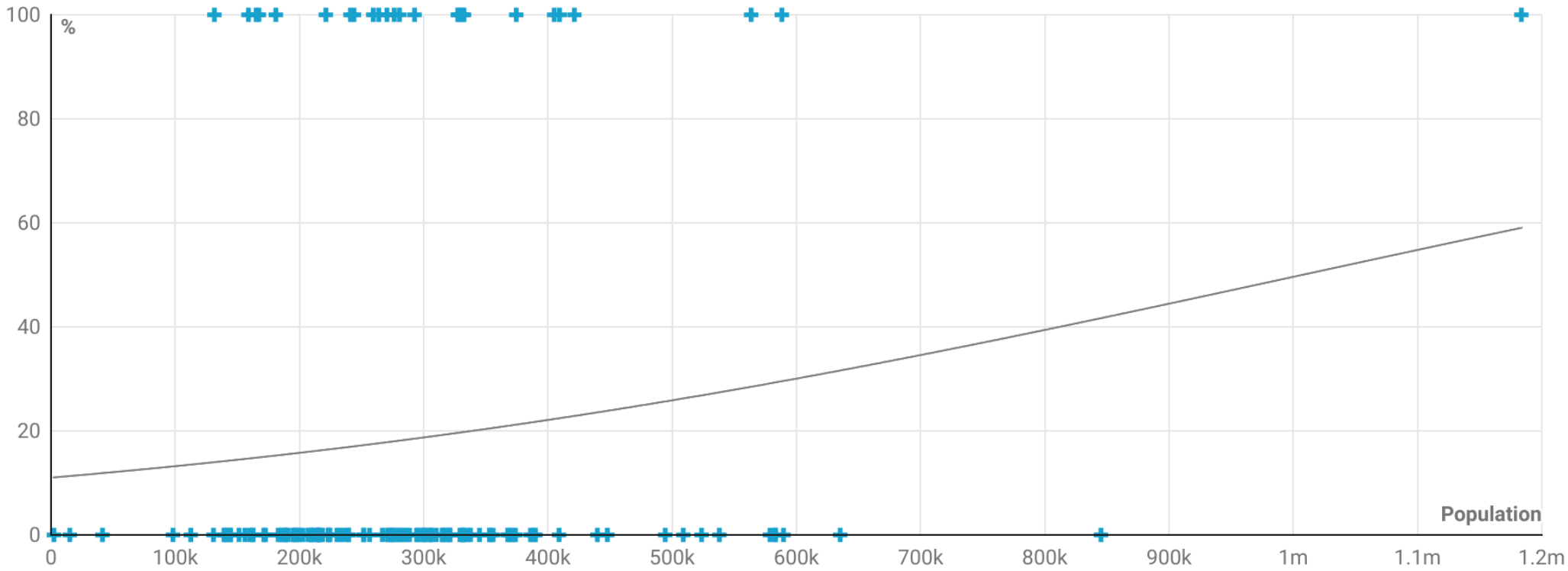


DCN DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

Regression analysis suggests that larger councils are more likely to need EFS

The estimated and actual % probability that councils required EFS in 2025-26 by population

This indicates there is a relationship but we cannot confirm the robustness of the effect



Technical note: probabilities estimated using a logistic regression model | P=0.12

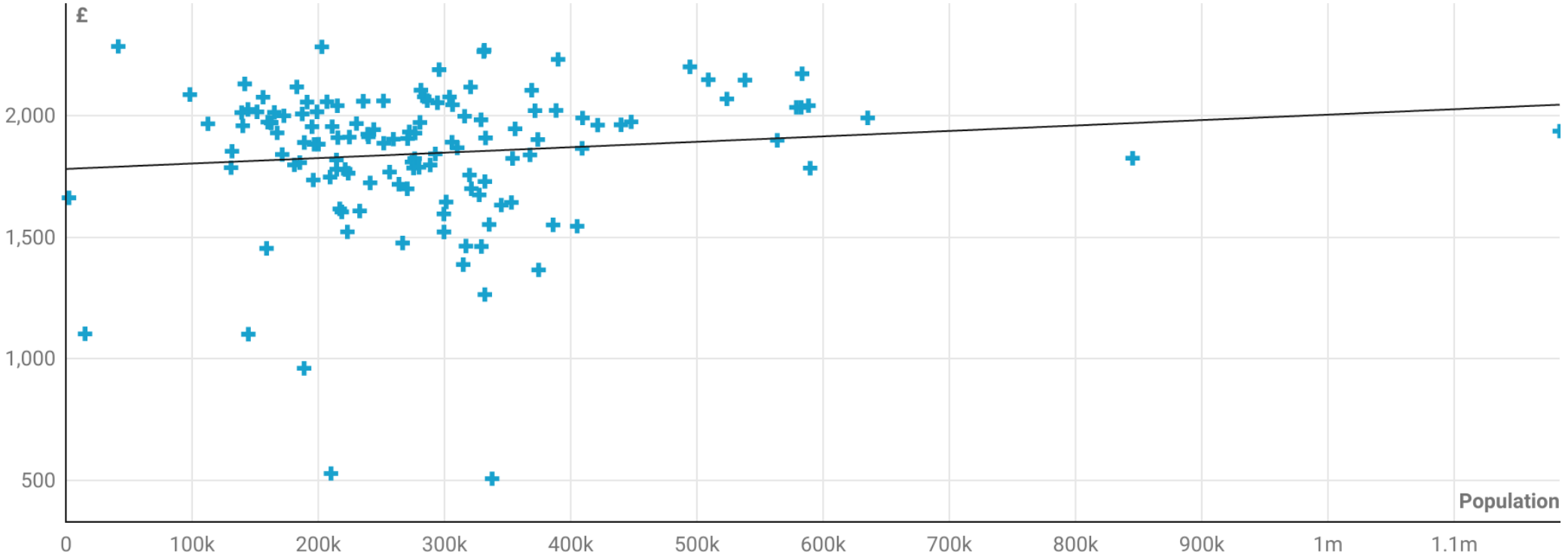
Chart: DCN • Source: "Exceptional Financial Support for local authorities for 2025-26", MHCLG • Created with Datawrapper

C. Council tax

There is a correlation between larger councils and higher council tax but it is not strong

Level of Band D Council Tax (£) by population

The Band D council tax requirement that is attributable (where relevant) to local services, including those provided by parish councils |

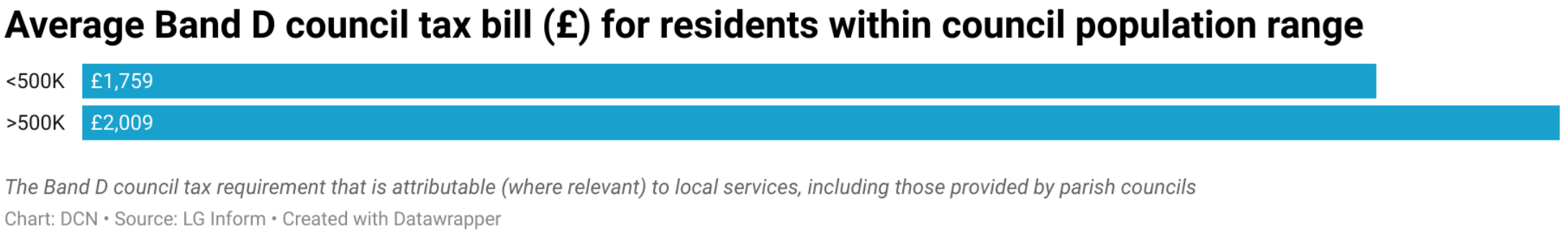


P = 0.183 and R^2 = 0.014

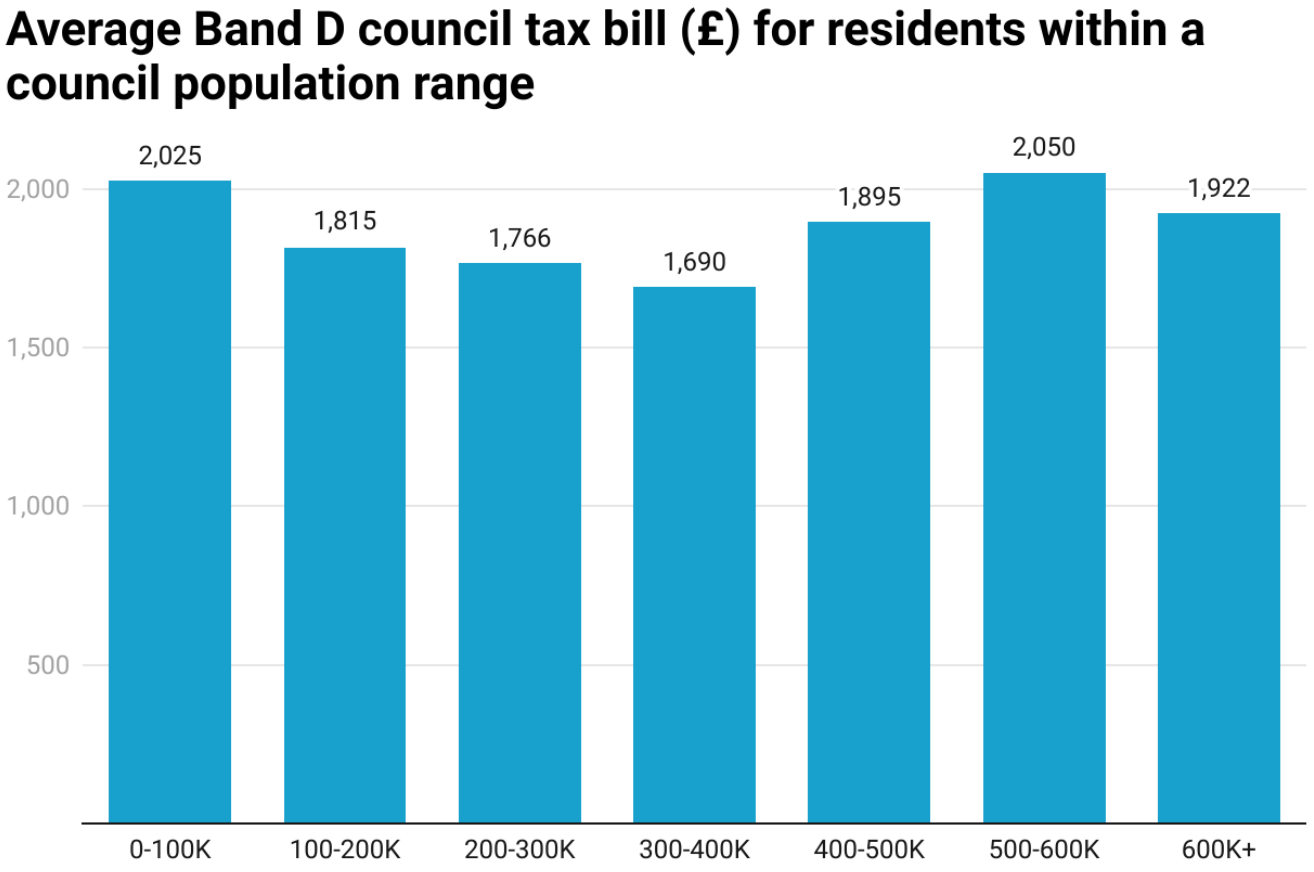
Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

DCN
DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

The average council tax bill is higher in councils above the 500k population guideline than those below it



Councils with populations under 100k and over 500k set the highest council tax



The Band D council tax requirement that is attributable (where relevant) to local services, including those provided by parish councils

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

DCN DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

D. Service performance

Approach for analysing performance metrics

We analysed 20 performance metrics previously used in the OfLog Local Data Explorer (now closed)

1 Administration and Finance

- No. of upheld ombudsman complaints per 100k people
- Council tax collection rate
- Business rates collection rate
- Debt servicing costs as % of core spending power
- Reserves as % of service spend
- Unringfenced reserves as % of net revenue expenditure
- Total debt as % of core spending power

2 Adult Social Care (ASC)

- Carers who find it easy to find information about support (%)
- Clients who find it easy to find information about support (%)
- Clients receiving short term service where sequel was lower-level support or none (%)
- Carer-reported quality of life for carers

3 Waste

- Household waste recycled (%)
- Household waste rejected (%)
- Residual waste per household (Kg)

4 Highways

- % of B and C roads where maintenance should be considered
- % of A roads and motorways where maintenance should be considered

5 Planning

- Major planning apps decided on time (%)
- Minor planning apps decided on time (%)
- Major planning apps overturned on appeal (%)
- Minor planning apps overturned on appeal (%)

Supporting data and outcomes where it is not clear if a higher or lower value is preferable (e.g. Core Spending Power per dwelling and Council Tax Revenue per Dwelling) were not included. The level of Band D council tax was also excluded as this had been separately addressed in the previous section.

Approach to analysing performance (continued)

- We conducted a regression analysis to determine which performance measures were meaningfully correlated with the population size of councils.
- For those measures, we estimated the most likely outcome for a given population based on this data.
- This was then used to compare whether a preferable outcome was likely to be achieved at the Government's guidelines population of 500,000 or the median population of current councils (274,775).

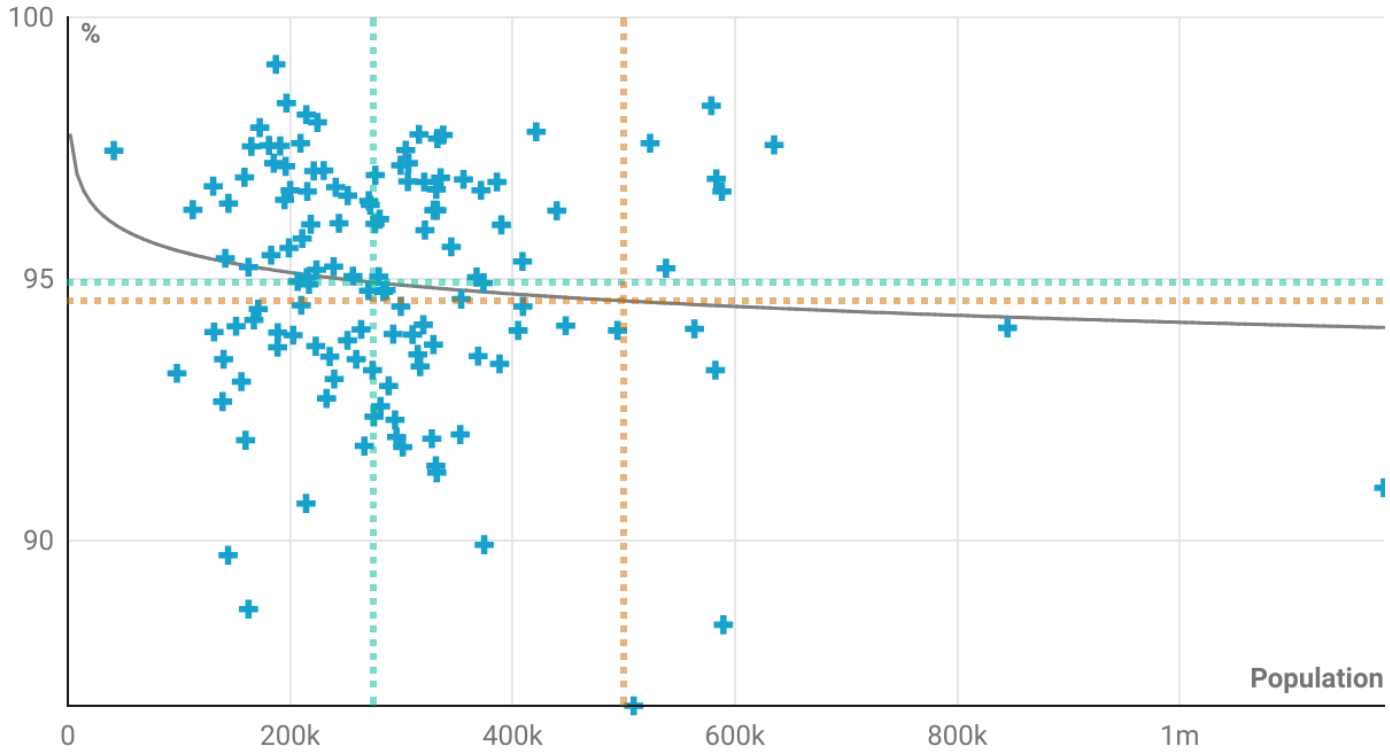
Note: a more detailed outline of this process is available in the technical note on slides 40 and 41.

For 10 metrics median population is better than 500k population

Strength of effect	Median population appears better	500k population appears better
Strong or above	8 metrics: • Ombudsman complaints upheld • ASC: carers who find information easily • ASC: clients who find information easily • ASC: clients receiving follow-up care • ASC: carer-reported quality of life for carers • Major planning apps decided in time • Non-major planning apps decided in time • Waste per household	None
Moderate or minimal	2 metrics: • Business rates collection • Council tax collection	None
No meaningful correlation	10 metrics: • Debt servicing costs • Total debt • Total reserves • Unringfenced reserves	• A roads & motorways requiring maintenance • B & C roads requiring maintenance • Waste recycled • Waste rejected • Major planning apps overturned at appeal • Minor planning apps overturned at appeal

Council tax collection rate

Council tax collected as a percentage of council tax due



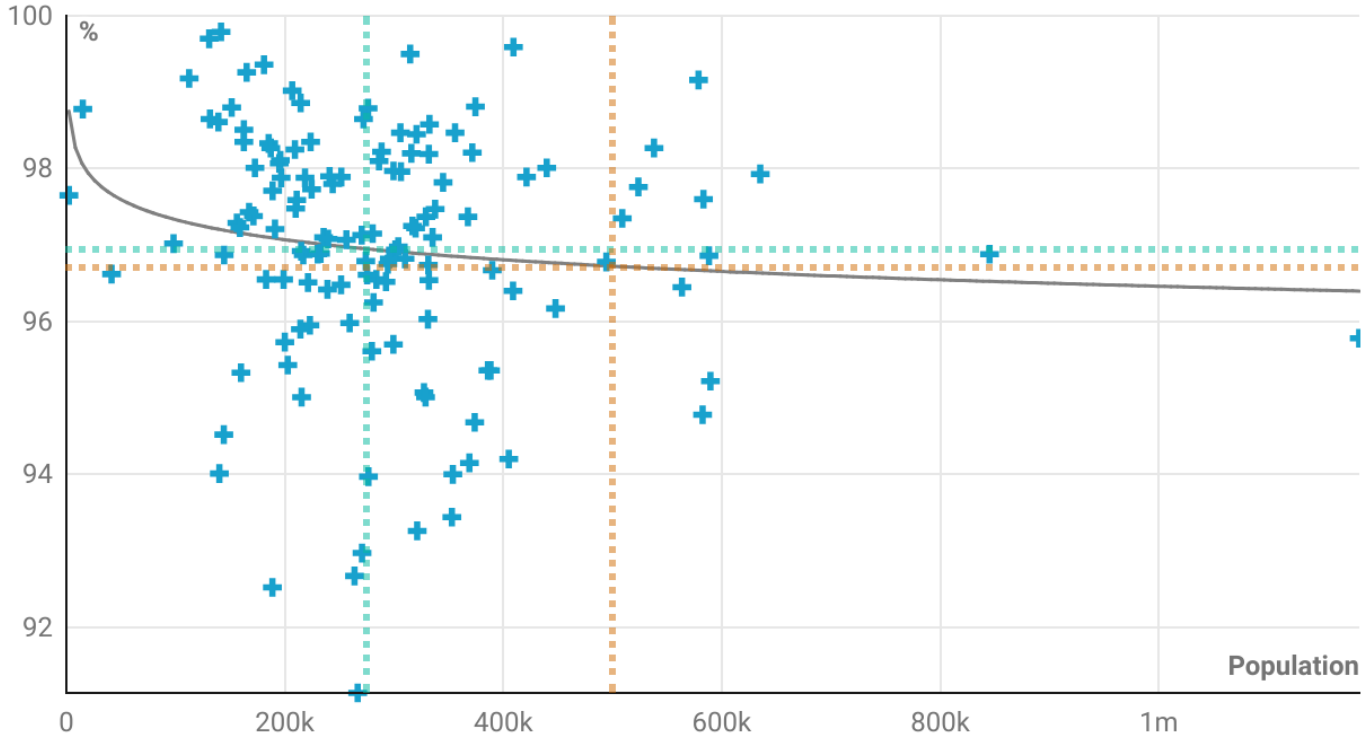
P=0.051 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.021

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Moderate

Business rates collection

Non-domestic rates collected as a percentage of non-domestic rates due



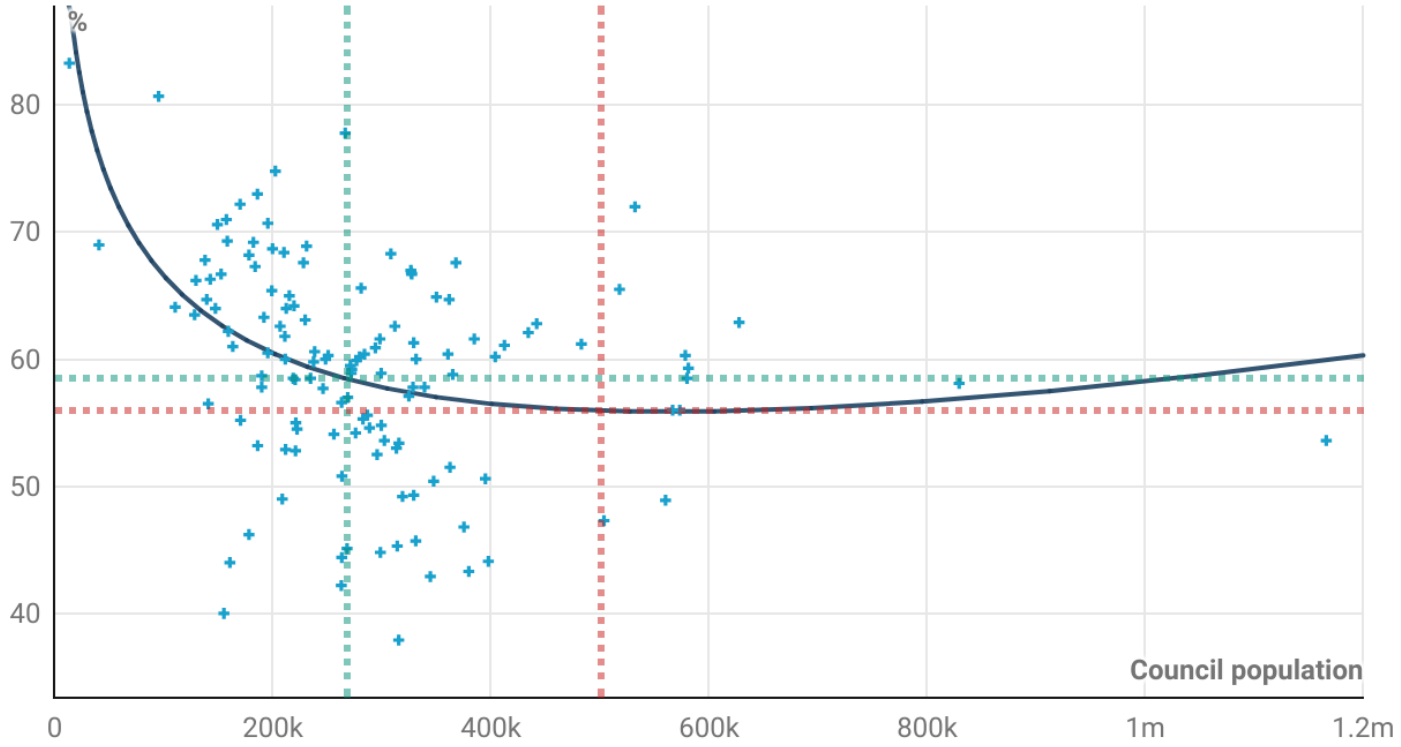
P = 0.078 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.016

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Moderate

Adult social care: ease of access to info for carers

% of carers who find it easy to access information about services / support



P = <0.000 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.157

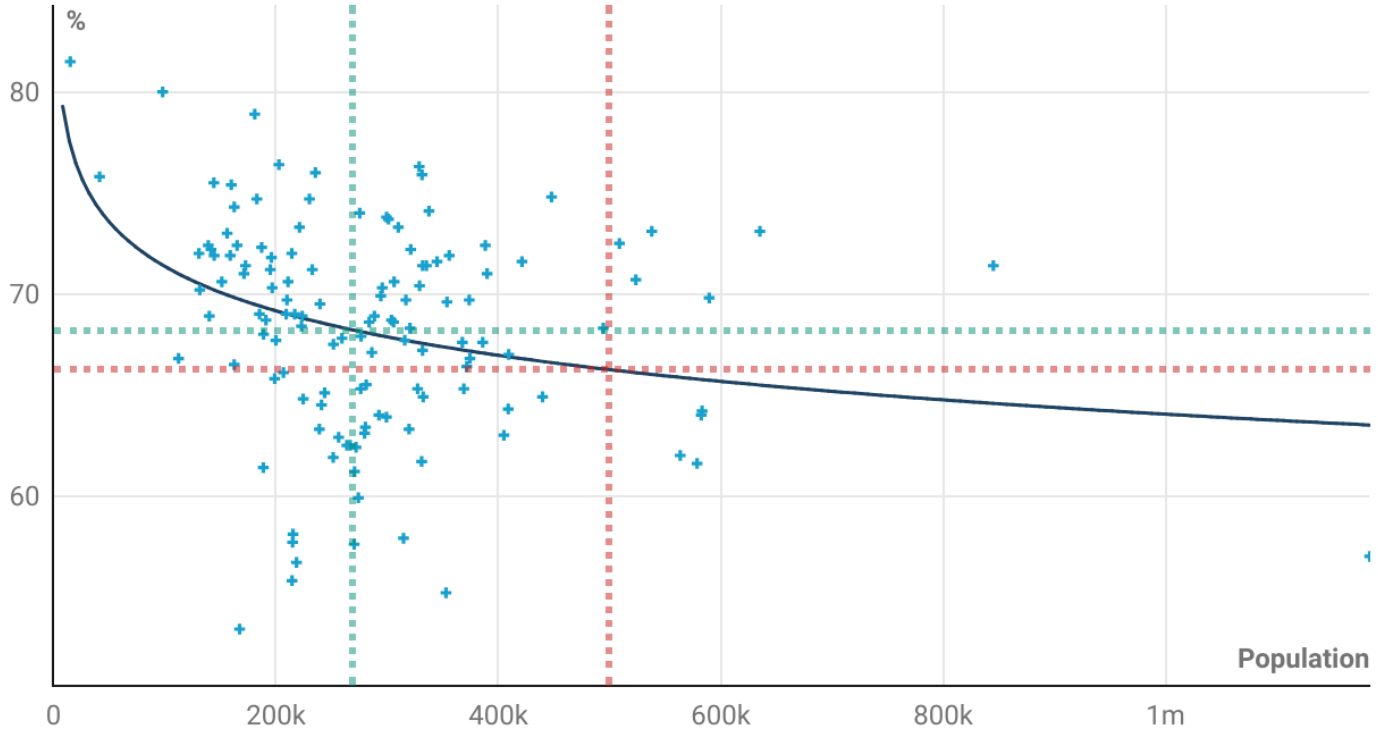
Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Very strong

DCN DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

Adult social care: ease of access to info for users

Proportion of people who use care services who find it easy to find information about services / support



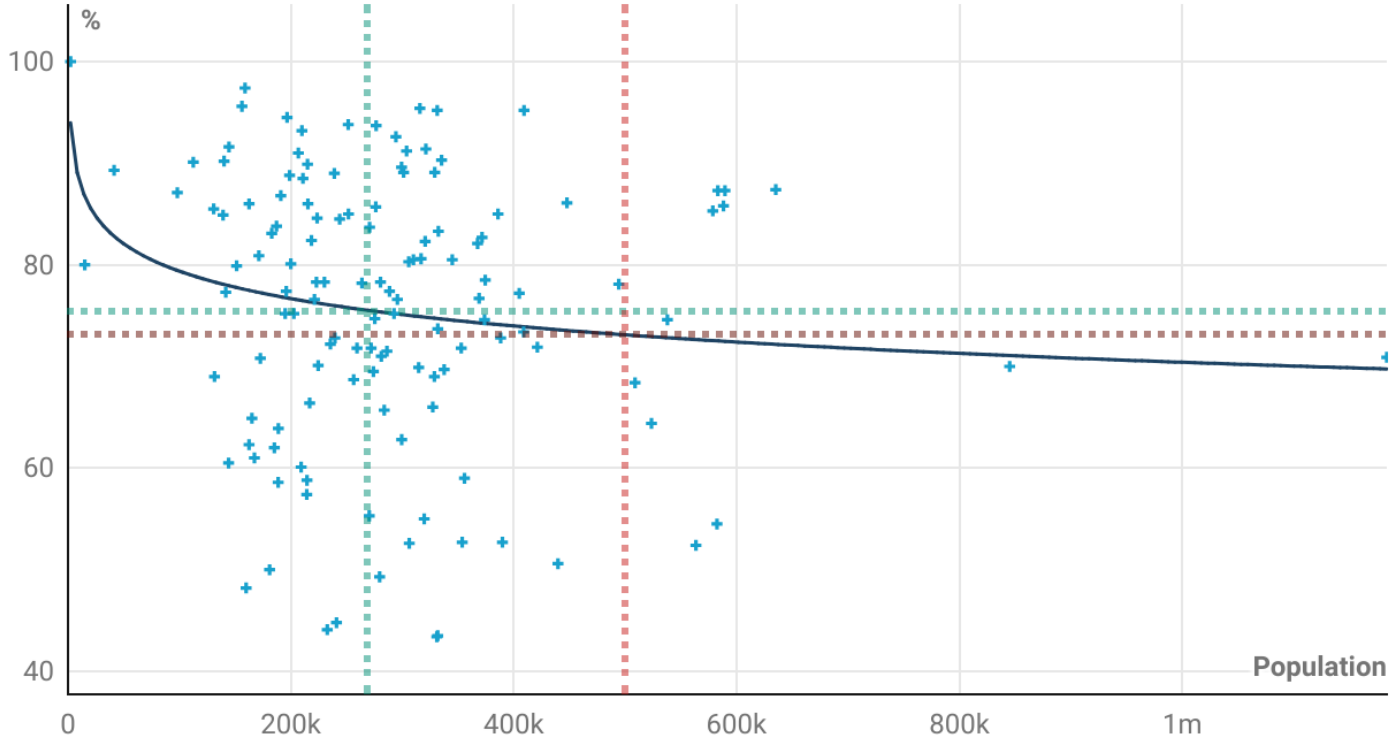
P = 0.000 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.086

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Very strong

Adult social care: follow-up care

% of clients receiving short term service where sequel was lower level support or none



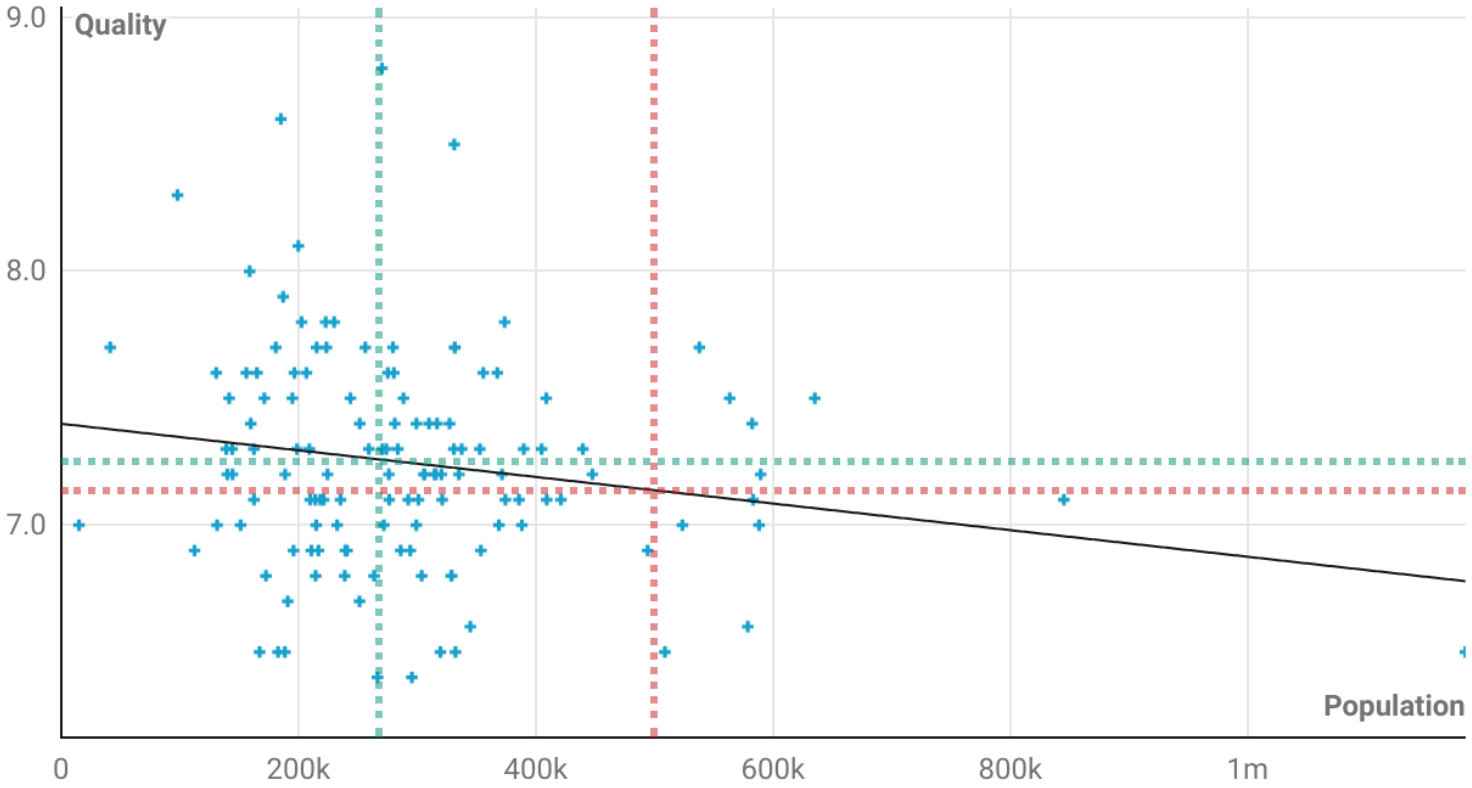
P = 0.030 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.029

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Strong

Adult social care: quality of life for carers

Carer-reported quality of life for carers (score out of 12)



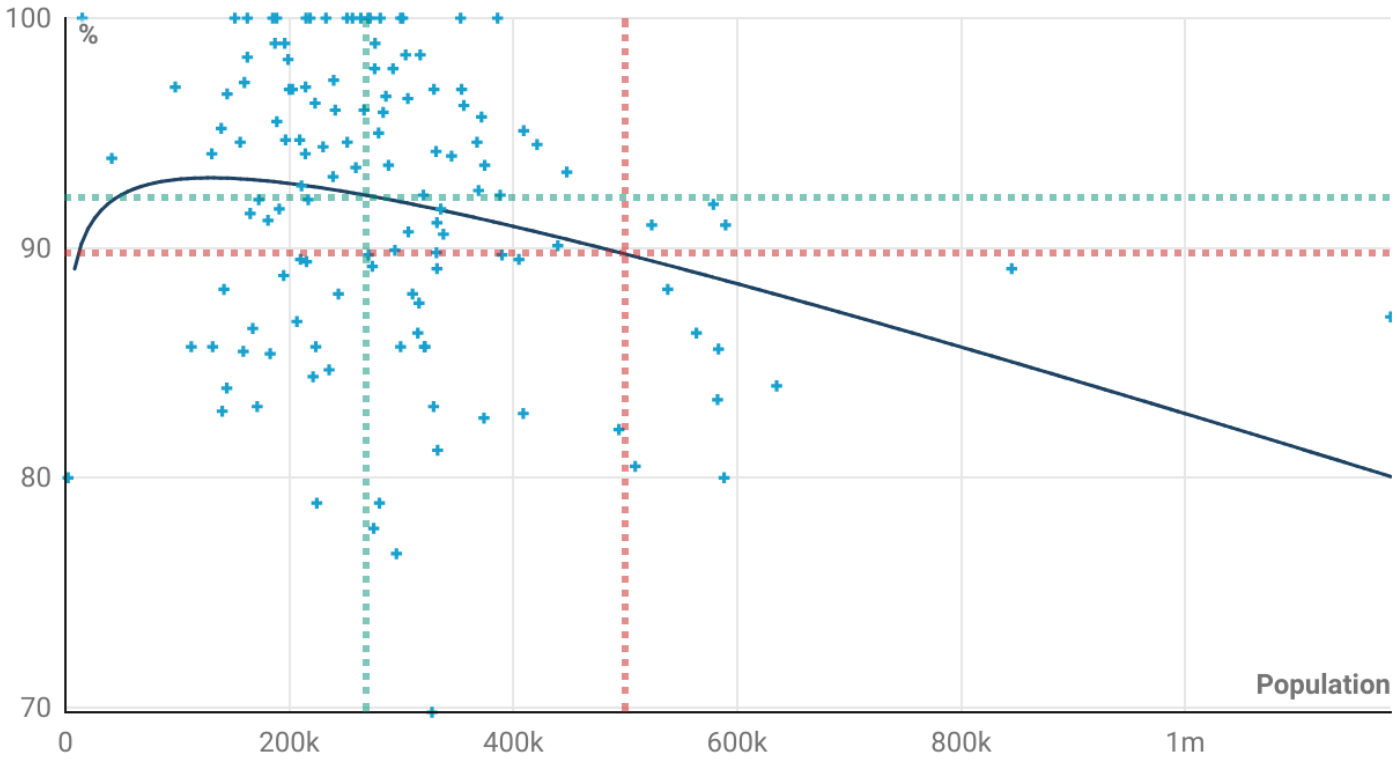
P = 0.037 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.026

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Strong

Major planning applications decided on time

Percentage of all major development planning applications decided within 13 weeks or agreed time - 24 months



P = 0.096 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.057

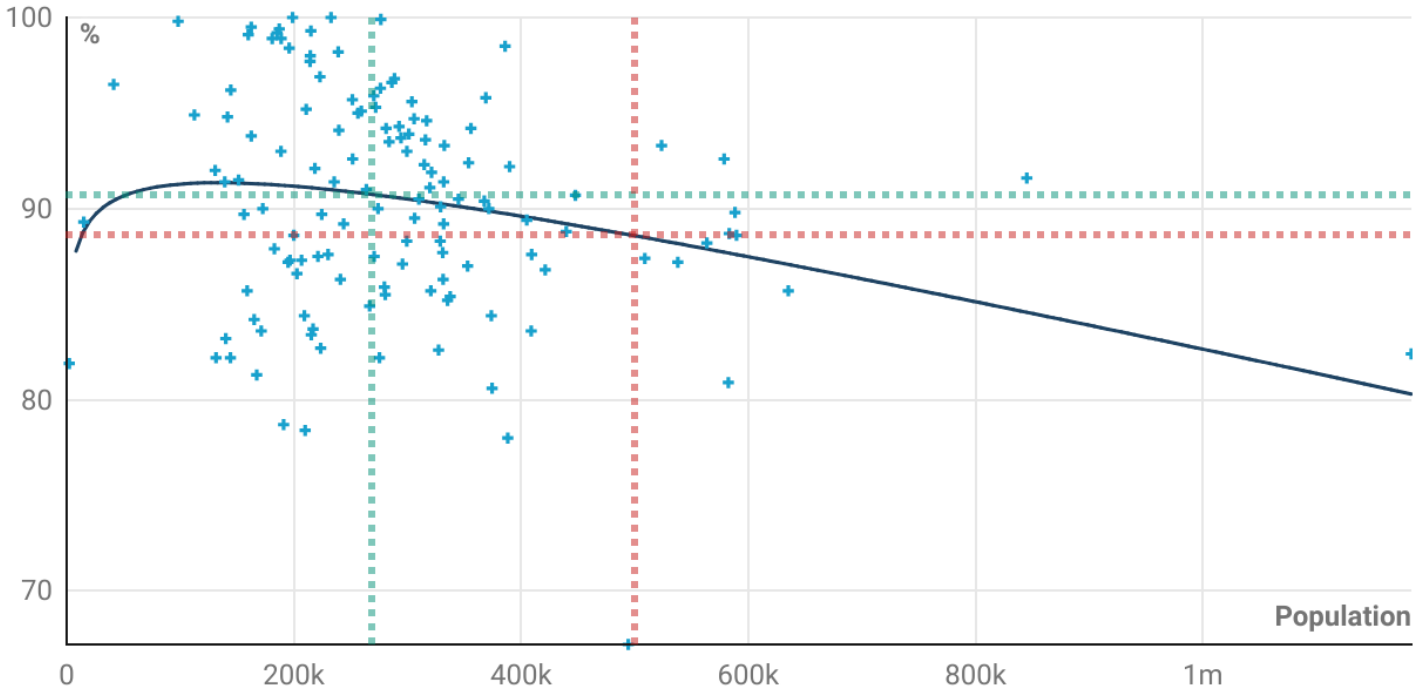
Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Very strong

DCN DISTRICT COUNCILS' NETWORK

Minor planning applications decided on time

Percentage of all non-major development planning applications decided within 8 weeks or agreed time - 24 months



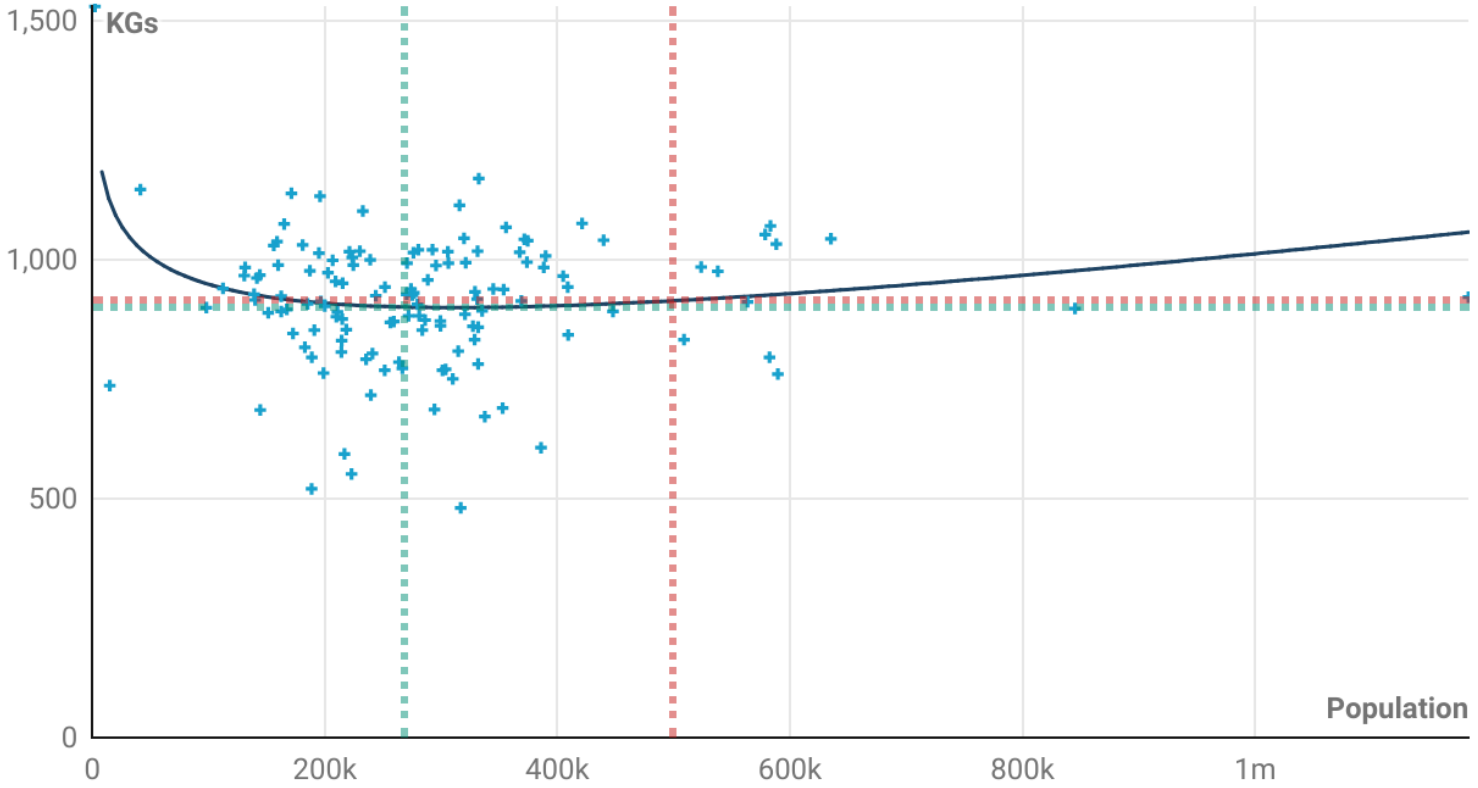
P = 0.014 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.049

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Strong

Residual waste collection

Total household waste per 1,000 households (annual)



P = 0.000 and Adjusted R^2 = 0.092

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Is median or 500k population preferable?
Median
Evidence of a robust effect
Very strong

Annex 1: Technical details on Performance Measure Analysis

Technical note: analytical process applied (1)

	Plain Language	Technical Definition
1.	Each performance metric is modelled with population as a predictor	Regression models run for each performance metric with predictors: a) population, b) population in base 10, and c) both together.
2.	Any metric that did not produce a meaningful correlation was dropped from further analysis	Metrics where no model achieved an adjusted R^2>0.01 were dropped.
3.	Otherwise, for each metric, the model which was most predictive of the variations in the actual results was chosen.	The model with the greatest adjusted R^2 is chosen. In the interests of parsimony, a penalty of 0.01 was applied to models that used both predictors.
4.	A robustness test was conducted for each of the chosen models to determine how likely the correlation is to reflect more than just random fluctuation. The models were classified accordingly.	A t-test was conducted on each model. The models were classified in terms of the resulting p-values as follows: “Very strong” < 0.01, “Strong” < 0.05, “Moderate” < 0.1, “Minimal” < 0.25, “Weak” < 0.5, and “Very Weak” < 1

Technical note: analytical process applied (2)

	Plain Language	Technical Definition
5.	The trendline from each chosen model was used to obtain estimates for the most likely outcome for populations ranging from 5,000 – 1,200,000. The highest or lowest value - depending on whether the metric represents a desirable or undesirable outcome – was identified as 'the optimum population' for that metric.	The regression equation for each chosen model was solved for Y for 500-wide intervals of X ranging between 5,000 and 1,200,000. Depending on if the metric represents a desirable or undesirable outcome, the maximum or minimum predicted Y-value was identified and the corresponding X-value deemed 'the optimum population' for that metric.
6.	The trendline for each chosen model was used to estimate the most likely outcome for each metric at populations of: a) 274,775 – the median for existing councils; and b) 500,000 – the Government's guidelines populationlevel for new councils. The projected outcome for the 'median' or 'target' population was deemed preferable based on whether the metric represents a desirable characteristic or not.	The regression equation for each chosen model was solved for Y, when X = 274,775 and 500,000. If the metric represents a desirable outcome, then the > Y-value was preferred and the corresponding X-value deemed preferable. If the metric represents an undesirable outcome, then the < Y-value was preferred and the corresponding X-value deemed preferable.



WARWICKSHIRE North / South

A Case for Two New Councils in Warwickshire



Contents

1. Executive Summary **3**

2. Introduction **15**

3. Criteria 1: Unitary Local Government Must be the Right Size to Achieve Efficiencies, Improve Capacity and Withstand Financial Shocks. **18**

4. Criteria 2: Unitary Local Government Must be the Right Size to Achieve Efficiencies, Improve Capacity and Withstand Financial Shocks. **38**

5. Criteria 3: Unitary Structures Must Prioritise the Delivery of High Quality and Sustainable Public Services to Citizens. **65**

6. Criteria 4: 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. **96**

7. Criteria 5: New Unitary Structures Must Support Devolution Arrangements. **107**

8. Criteria 6: New Unitary Structures Should Enable Stronger Community Engagement and Deliver Genuine Opportunity for Neighbourhood Empowerment. **112**

9. Implementation **128**

1. Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Warwickshire is an administrative county of proud and distinct communities, shaped by different histories, with different economies and populations. It is a county of variety with different priorities and needs from top to bottom. It is not a homogenous place. The North and the South are two very different places.

1.2 This proposal is submitted in response to the Government's invitation for Local Government Reorganisation. As part of that process we have assessed reasonable alternatives. The evidence shows that the best way forward is to establish two new unitary authorities that are rooted in identity:

1. A North Warwickshire Unitary, covering the Boroughs of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby
2. A South Warwickshire Unitary, covering Stratford and Warwick Districts.

1.3 This two council model provides organisations that are close enough to residents to reflect their priorities and sense of place. It also provides sufficient scale to be financially sustainable and to deliver efficiencies. The new councils will reflect the realities of the county's two different economies and demographics. They will have the clarity, focus and capacity to deliver improved outcomes for all residents, North and South.

1.4 In the North, a council can reduce inequalities, promote regeneration and connect people to growth. In the South, a council can manage good growth, improve housing affordability, reduce rural isolation and support healthy ageing. As the needs of the two areas are distinct, two councils allow focused interventions, rather than a single council trying to fight on all fronts or prioritising some issues and services, while risking leaving some communities behind.

1.5 As part of the Government process we have also assessed a single countywide unitary as the County Council wishes to establish a 'continuing' single unitary authority built on the foundations of the current County Council. This is an argument for little change and is a missed opportunity to target resources to where they are most needed. A super-council of more than 600,000 people, which would be the third largest local authority in England, would be too broad and too remote.

1.6 Research shows that the largest unitary councils do not outperform their smaller counterparts. The two new councils we propose, serving populations of up to 350,000, better fit into the landscape of local government, being above the current average population size for unitary councils in England. There is also evidence that councils of this size deliver more cost effective social care than bigger councils. There is clear precedent, including across the border in Northamptonshire where two unitary councils replaced the former county and districts.

1.7 A fresh start is required. Two new councils represent a transformational beginning. They can create new cultures and ways of working, based on the best of existing practice across the county, providing local government of the right size to meet local needs and to deliver devolution. This Business Case shows how two new unitary councils, connected to our wonderful communities, will unlock potential in the North and in the South, and transform public services for the long term in both places.



The George Eliot statue, Nuneaton


William Shakespeare Statue Stratford Upon Avon

A Council for North Warwickshire

1.8 The North Warwickshire Unitary Council would bring together the existing Boroughs and Districts of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby.

1.9 This is an area of proud industrial heritage and dynamic change. Rugby sits at the heart of the national logistics network, with unrivalled motorway and rail connections. Nuneaton and Bedworth are the largest urban centres in Warwickshire, with close economic and commuting links to Coventry and the wider West Midlands. North Warwickshire combines former mining villages and distinctive rural communities with nationally significant logistics hubs at Birch Coppice and Hams Hall.

1.10 The North is home to younger, more diverse and more deprived communities than the county average. It includes 21 of Warwickshire's 22 most deprived neighbourhoods, with higher health inequalities and lower average household incomes.

1.11 Regeneration of town centres, investment in skills, and improvements in public health are therefore critical priorities, requiring proper focus.

1.12 These opportunities and challenges are shared across the three boroughs. A North Warwickshire Unitary would be able to focus squarely on levelling up, regeneration, housing growth, and skills development, and transport which reflects residents' needs.

A Council for South Warwickshire

1.13 The South Warwickshire Unitary would bring together the areas currently represented by Stratford and Warwick Districts.

1.14 This is an area of rural landscapes, historic towns and villages, and international reputation. It has one of the most prosperous economies in the country, combining high-value services, advanced manufacturing, a burgeoning digital industry, and globally recognised tourism and culture.

1.15 This prosperity is balanced by distinctive challenges. Stratford and Warwick Districts cover almost half of Warwickshire's land area and are fully parished, with over one hundred civil parish councils (made up of town councils, parish councils and parish meetings) and dispersed communities. Connectivity and access to services, particularly in rural areas, are major issues, as is affordable housing for younger people. Infrastructure improvements such as the potential reinstatement of the Stratford to Honeybourne rail link will be key to future sustainable growth especially as the two Districts are anticipating very significant housing and employment growth.

1.16 Stratford and Warwick have already demonstrated the benefits of collaboration through a shared waste collection service, a shared Local Plan, a joint economic strategy, a joint community safety partnership, shared legal and information governance teams, and a globally renowned destination management organisation, Shakespeare's England.

1.17 A South Warwickshire Unitary would provide the scale to build on this record, combining prosperity with a strong commitment to its town and rural communities.

Service Transformation

1.18 Local government reorganisation is an opportunity to reshape the way councils serve their communities rather than merely repackaging existing services.

1.19 The two unitary model can transform services for a generation by focusing on place, simplifying structures and reducing duplication. Specifically, the two unitary model will:

1. Create more effective service models that are rooted in place and an understanding of local communities and their needs and priorities, with more tailored solutions.
2. Take a strengths-based, early intervention and prevention approach, bolstering the voluntary sector and creating stronger community engagement.
3. Bring County and Borough and District responsibilities together and redesign services around residents and service users, making them easier to access and more efficient.

1.20 In particular, the two new unitaries could transform social care services, by pursuing a service model of strategic commissioning, early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and being responsive to place. Evidence collated by the consultancy Peopletoo shows that medium sized unitary councils spend less per head on social care than bigger councils. The most effective size of population served by an authority is in the range 250,000 to 350,000.

1.21 Adult Social Care would benefit from integration with housing, leisure and public health, and also focus on the different priorities in each place. Priorities in the North include tackling health inequalities and increasing healthy life expectancy. Priorities in the South include supporting independence for a growing older population in rural areas. Two different councils are needed to tackle these different priorities.

1.22 Children's Services would also be strengthened by building trusting relationships with families at risk at an early stage and making decisions closer to families, relying on local staff and building community relationships. This approach will lead to better outcomes for children, as they have a greater likelihood of staying at home with their families with greater levels of tailored support.

1.23 Housing and planning would be integrated with highways and infrastructure. The two councils would be able to prepare fewer Local Plans, increase capacity in planning teams, and boost the economic and housing growth agenda. Both councils would have a Housing Revenue Account and could support the Government's house building mission and secure more affordable homes for residents and communities.

1.24 This approach would build on existing high performing Borough and District Council services, which have been successful because they are built at the local level around communities. This core strength means that decisions can be made closer to the residents and communities to which they relate, therefore ensuring greater local knowledge and likely more effective solutions. Two unitaries can achieve this better than one because of the scale at which they can operate and the culture of localism that they can create. They can also integrate more quickly than a single county unitary, as they can build on existing collaboration and partnership activity, while also representing a fresh start culturally.

1.25 Moreover, the risks of disaggregation of County Council services can be minimised using a flexible approach. For example, we propose that Safeguarding services would be retained at the county level through a Joint Safeguarding Board. Where some additional cost is required for senior posts or new IT systems, any costs are outweighed by the significant potential benefits.

Financial Efficiency and Sustainability

1.26 Our service transformation approach will provide better value for money and address the financial challenges facing local government. Warwickshire is in a reasonable financial position as a county by the standards of local government nationally. All six councils currently have a stable financial position and outlook. While there is debt, this has been borrowed for capital and infrastructure developments.

1.27 When the financial positions of the councils are combined, based on dividing the County Council's financial position on a per capita basis, both North and South unitary councils are sustainable. The North, with higher levels of deprivation, would be more reliant on government grant and business rates, while the South would lean more heavily on its stronger council tax base, but face greater demographic costs from ageing. The financial position in the North is expected to be strengthened by the outcome of the Government's Fair Funding Review. The costs of local government reorganisation are complex to make detailed assumptions around, given the process can take a long time and involve negotiation to ensure that both councils are sustainable, with resources meeting demand, and no council loses out.

1.28 Reorganisation is an opportunity to address the financial pressures in services. Demand for Adult Social Care is rising steeply as the population ages. Children's Services face sustained pressures from safeguarding, looked-after children, and rising complexity of need. Inflation and rising contract costs add further challenges. Costs arising from the SEND High Needs Block are a national issue.

1.29 This Business Case proposes a service transformation approach that will allow the two unitary model to manage demand in services such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND, therefore tackling the most significant financial risks facing the county.

1.30 An approach to financial analysis was undertaken of the costs and benefits of the single unitary and two unitary models. Headline estimated calculations, based on the information available, indicate that either a single unitary or two unitary model will deliver net savings due to greater economies of scale and lower costs.

Net Savings	27/28	28/29	29/30
Single Unitary	-	**£32.7m**	**£56.8m**
Two Unitary	-	**£29.1m**	**£54.8m**

1.31 While the single unitary may generate marginally more savings in the process of reorganisation itself, the opportunity for service transformation in the two unitary model offers the potential for much greater long-term financial benefit. Independent analysis by Peopletoo, with detailed modelling of demand and costs in social care, indicate an additional potential saving of £30m over five years in the best case scenario for two unitaries compared with a single unitary. This is on top of the £54.8m saving to be delivered by 2029/30. This is consistent with evidence that councils with a population size of 250,000 to 350,000 can meet more costs more effectively than larger councils.

An additional saving of this magnitude would mean that the two unitary model would be substantially more financially efficient in the long term than the single county unitary. It substantially supports the financial sustainability of two unitary councils moving forwards together.

Strong Local Governance

1.32 Local identity matters. Residents want councils that reflect the places in which they live and which understand their priorities. An independent survey of residents found that around three quarters (73%) of individuals agree with the proposal for two unitary councils in Warwickshire.

1.33 North and South Warwickshire are established geographies. Public services already reflect this split. The NHS has three place-based partnerships for Warwickshire North, Rugby and South Warwickshire. Warwickshire Police structures three Local Policing Areas: North Warwickshire, Rugby and South Warwickshire. Further education, community safety and economic development partnerships also mirror this geography.

1.34 Two councils would provide governance that matches these realities. They would be closer to residents, with councillors rooted in their communities. They will deliver a better ratio of residents to representatives over the single unitary model, and therefore enhance democracy.

1.35 In addition, strong arrangements for area governance will ensure that decisions remain close to communities. Each new council will establish clear structures to give towns, parishes (where they exist) and rural areas a voice in shaping priorities and services. Alongside this, new Area Committees will be established to give communities real say in the decisions that most affect them.

1.36 These arrangements will preserve local identity, safeguard civic traditions, and strengthen pride of place. They will provide a framework in which strategic services are planned at unitary scale, with each council large enough to exercise strategic leadership and influence regional policy, but also make decisions about neighbourhoods and towns locally, ensuring that the new councils remain responsive to the communities they serve.



Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council Town Hall



Chesterton Windmill, Chesterton

Partnership and Collaboration

1.37 Although distinct, the two new councils will work together where it makes sense. Transport and infrastructure planning, shared promotion of the wider Warwickshire economy, and collaboration on emergency planning will remain priorities.

1.38 The councils will also be active partners in regional and sub-regional engagement, working with neighbouring councils and strategic authorities, including the West Midlands Combined Authority, to deliver growth and investment.



Coleshill, North Warwickshire

Priority Outcomes

1.39 In conclusion, the two new councils will be designed to deliver clear improvements for residents, businesses and communities. These include:

1. Driving inclusive economic growth and creating better jobs.
2. Improving healthy life expectancy, especially in the north.
3. Increasing housing supply and affordability, with better infrastructure.
4. Transforming social care and SEND services, providing better outcomes at lower cost.
5. Raising educational attainment and adult skills.
6. Enhancing transport and digital connectivity.
7. Accelerating action on climate change.
8. Delivering simpler, more accessible and better services.
9. Building greater pride of place, with stronger town centres and high streets.

Options Appraisal

1.40 We have tested our preferred approach through a formal options appraisal comparing the two choices for Warwickshire: a single county unitary and a two unitary model. Both of the options have been scored either 1 or 2 against the six criteria set out by the Government, with 2 indicating the best option. The scores for each option have then been added together with the highest score being selected as the preferred option. This process has been undertaken by assessing the relative merits of the evidence as well as the theoretical benefits and disbenefits of each option against each criteria.

Criteria	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
1. Establishment of a single tier of local government	**1**	**2**
2. Right size to achieve efficiencies, and withstand financial shocks	**2**	**1**
3. Public service delivery	**1**	**2**
4. Councils working together and local place identity	**1**	**2**
5. Support devolution arrangements	**1**	**2**
6. Stronger community engagement	**1**	**2**
Overall Score	**2nd Place Score: 7**	**1st Place Score: 11**

1.41 There is therefore a strong conclusion from this appraisal that the two-unitary model is best for Warwickshire against the Government's six criteria. The body of this Business Case contains the evidence and rationale for each of the scores against the six criteria. The table below provides a summary of the findings:

Government Criteria	Key strengths of the North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire model, with disadvantages of the single county unitary model
1. Establishment of a single tier of local government. Including sensible economic areas and geographies.	✔ **Focus on Place:** The North and South of the county have extremely different populations, economies and challenges. The two new councils can set their own priorities to address these challenges. ✔ **Focus on housing and economic growth:** the two unitary model can integrate housing, planning and highways policy at a sensible and meaningful geographic level, focusing on local priorities, ensuring joined up solutions, and creating growth.

Government Criteria	Key strengths of the North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire model, with disadvantages of the single county unitary model
1. Establishment of a single tier of local government. Including sensible economic areas and geographies.	✔ **Sensible geographies:** all of the data suggests a North / South split with two distinct places with their own identities. This is recognised by the public, with 73% of individuals agreeing with the proposal for two unitary councils in Warwickshire. ✘ Single county unitary creates a footprint that is **too big** and has less chance of creating economic growth due to its **lack of focus on place**. For one local authority to develop individualised plans to address the variety of needs across the county would be very difficult. It should be noted that the proposed populations of the two new North and South councils would be under the Government's identified target number of 500,000. However, the Government has clarified that this is guidance, not a mandatory target. Indeed, the proposed two unitaries would cover a significant population size and compare favourably to other unitary councils that currently exist in England: the population of both proposed councils is currently greater than the average population of all existing unitary councils, which stands at 287,808. However, if a single county unitary is created, it would be the third biggest in England. This indicates that a single county unitary would be an outlier in the current unitary council landscape, not so the proposed two unitaries for North and South. Finally, bigger is not always better, as the District Councils Network has recently shown: the biggest unitary councils do not outperform their smaller counterparts. There is little or no evidence to support a preference for large unitary councils and no evidence to support the 500,000 population level.
2. Right size to achieve efficiencies, and withstand financial shocks	✔ **Financially efficient:** The two unitary model delivers £55m of net savings by 2029/30, with the potential for significantly more savings as additional social care transformation is delivered. ✔ **Tackling financial problems:** The two unitary model will more effectively tackle the single biggest financial problem facing the county, increasing demand for social care and SEND services and rising costs in these areas. ✔ **Financial resilience:** The existing authorities are in solid financial positions and the division of the County Council position could be negotiated to ensure that assets, revenue and reserves follow the demand. ✔ **Council tax:** Both new councils will be able to set appropriate levels of council tax for their residents, and big increases should be avoided, as the South will not have to raise rates to the same levels as the North. The single county unitary would achieve a greater level of net savings, and so has been ranked higher than the two unitary model, but the gap is not significant. In the long-term, additional savings arising from social care transformation, as per the Peopletoo work, will mean the two unitary model is more financially effective.

Government Criteria	Key strengths of the North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire model, with disadvantages of the single county unitary model
3. Public service delivery	✔ **Place focused and locally responsive:** The model enables services to be shaped around real community needs and priorities, with more tailored solutions. ✔ **Community focus:** The two unitaries will develop a new relationship between communities, citizens and the state, by taking a strengths-based, early intervention and prevention approach, bolstering the voluntary sector and creating stronger community engagement. ✔ **Integrated and effective:** The new councils will bring County and Borough and District responsibilities together and redesign services around the customer, making them easier to access and more efficient. ✔ **Minimise risk of disaggregation:** By taking a flexible approach, such as creating a Joint Board for Safeguarding in the transition period, risk can be reduced. The model also aggregates up existing effective Borough and District services, building on strengths while preserving local service models. ✔ **Minimise risk of aggregation:** As organisations get too big, diseconomies of scale can develop, and a two unitary model avoids this. . ✘ **Too big:** A single county unitary's organisational structures and processes could become too complicated and cumbersome. A bigger organisation may find, it more difficult for example, to bring about transformational change by building new sets of relationships with residents and the community and voluntary sector.
4. Councils working together and local place identity and local views	✔ **Popular with the public:** around three quarters (73%) of individuals agree with the proposal for two unitary councils in Warwickshire, based on the engagement activity undertaken. ✔ **Based on Effective Local Collaboration:** The two unitary model is better positioned to build upon existing successful partnerships and collaborative initiatives, such as the South Warwickshire Local Plan or joint waste contracts. This would reduce the burden for the significant transformation programme required to mobilise the new authorities, in that the two new councils can build on good practice. ✔ **Reflects real communities and place identity:** A two unitary model would better reflect the county's distinct local identities and variations in community needs. Local government structures should align with how people live their daily lives, including where they live, work, and access services. Evidence such as Travel to Work data confirms the North-South split. ✘ **Not the preferred option** of the public ✘ **Does not reflect local place identity** in North and South. Instead, a single county unitary has to make trade-offs with its budget and decide whether resources go to the North or the South, instead of the North and South making their own decisions with their own resources.

Government Criteria	Key strengths of the North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire model, with disadvantages of the single county unitary model
5. Support devolution arrangements	✔ **Flexibility:** The preference is for the two authorities to join the West Midlands Combined Authority. However, there is currently no clear solution for devolution in Warwickshire and it is essential therefore that as many options remain open as possible. The two unitary model provides more options, as the two individual authorities could look North and South for partners, or a single Strategic Authority could be created for Warwickshire. This would ensure the councils could join a Strategic Authority that reflected the economic geography of the area. ✔ **Implementation Readiness:** The two unitary model can be implemented at pace, and therefore be ready to deliver devolution. ✔ **Enhanced Local Voice:** A two-unitary structure provides a stronger platform for local voices to be heard within devolution arrangements, ensuring that strategies are grounded in local realities. ✘ The single county unitary can only look to WMCA for a devolution solution, which is not currently supported by the WMCA. ✘ × A single countywide council would be one of the largest authorities within the West Midlands Combined Authority. This raises questions about balance and proportionality within the Combined Authority. ✘ There is a risk that, under a single countywide model, some communities would relate less clearly to the strategic authority geography than they do to their local economic areas.
6. Stronger community engagement	✔ **Brings decision-making and services closer to people:** Two unitary authorities would operate closer to the communities they serve, with a greater number of councillors for each elector. This proximity facilitates a greater understanding of local issues, provides more accessible channels for citizen engagement, and fosters a heightened sense of accountability. Residents or communities will not get left behind, and councillors can focus on the satisfaction of the resident whom the authority is here to serve, but also the role that the wider community plays in effective, efficient services, especially around prevention and early intervention. ✔ **Stronger Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Empowerment:** Builds on the strengths of the Boroughs and Districts in working with local people, supporting the role of existing local forums, and creating a new approach for Area Governance, ensuring that community input is genuinely integrated into local governance. ✘ There may be a **loss of local influence and democratic accountability** within one large local authority. A single county unitary will have fewer members for each elector, therefore reducing engagement, and risks losing touch with residents and communities.



Almshouses. Bedworth

Kenilworth

Conclusion

1.42 Local government reorganisation represents the most significant change that the councils and residents of Warwickshire have seen in decades. The work to shape and embed new unitary councils cannot be underestimated.

1.43 In this context, the two unitary model allows existing arrangements and shared priorities across North and South Warwickshire, which are established, evidenced and well understood, to continue to be progressed during the implementation process. A single unitary would need to juggle these distinct and competing priorities.

1.44 The creation of a North Warwickshire Unitary and a South Warwickshire Unitary is a practical plan for local government reorganisation. It reflects the real geography, economy and identity of Warwickshire. It will deliver simpler, stronger and more efficient local government while keeping councils close to the people they serve.

1.45 Two councils will enable service transformation, harness digital opportunities, reduce duplication and release savings. They will be able to join up strategic planning on the things that matter such as planning, affordable housing and infrastructure, or housing and social care.

1.46 Two new councils will be able to strengthen local leadership and accountability and allow each new council to focus on the priorities of its communities, keeping services close to residents.

1.47 This is the right model for Warwickshire. Two new councils, rooted in the strengths and challenges of the North and the South, will deliver better services, stronger governance and a sustainable future for local government for local communities.

2. Introduction

2.1 In December 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's White Paper set out the Government's ambitions around local government reorganisation. The Government is seeking to establish Unitary Councils in existing two-tier areas. The Government has invited final proposals from councils for future unitary councils in their areas by the end of November 2025.

2.2 This Business Case document represents the formal proposal to Government from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Stratford District Council, and Warwick District Council.

2.3 It undertakes an appraisal of two key options for the future of local government in Warwickshire and makes the case for a preferred option.

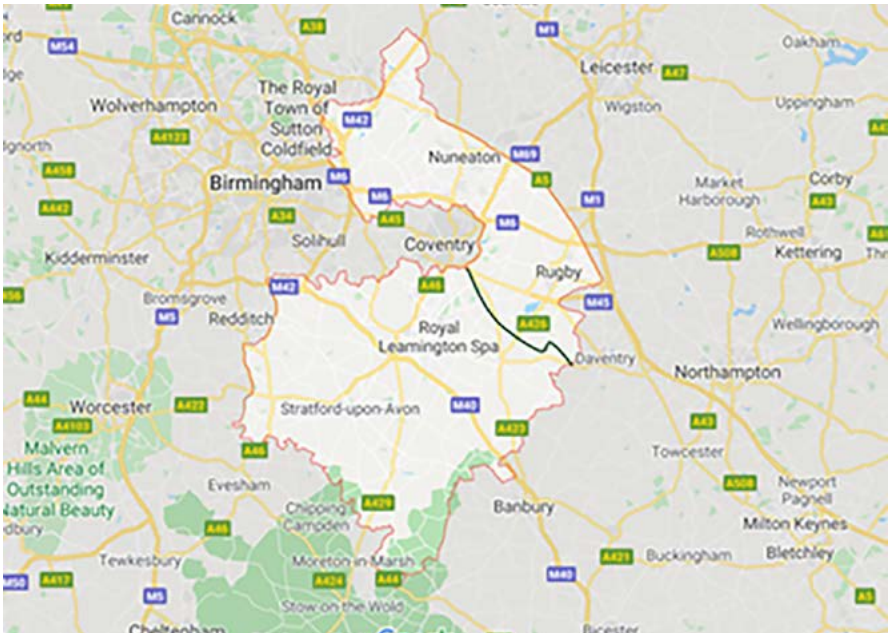
2.4 There are two proposed options for the future of local government in Warwickshire:

Option 1 – Single County Unitary

A single county unitary council covering the whole of Warwickshire.



Option 2 – Two Unitaries



Based on the following existing Borough and District boundaries:

Unitary 1: Based on the boundaries of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, and Rugby

Unitary 2: Based on the boundaries of Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon

The Criteria

2.5 These two options have been assessed against the following criteria, as set by the Government in the letter dated 5th February 2025:

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
4. 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.
5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

The body of this report contains the evidence and rationale for each of these rankings against the criteria. There is then a final concluding section on how the two unitary model would be implemented, if successful.

3. Criteria 1: Unitary Local Government Must be the Right Size to Achieve Efficiencies, Improve Capacity and Withstand Financial Shocks.

Summary

3.1 The key advantages of the two unitary model are as follows:

- ✔ **Focus on Place:** The North and South of the county have extremely different populations, economies and challenges. The two new councils can set their own priorities to address these challenges.
- ✔ **Focus on housing and economic growth:** the two unitary model can integrate housing, planning and highways policy at a sensible geographic level, focusing on local priorities, ensuring joined up solutions, and creating growth.
- ✔ **Sensible geographies:** all of the data suggests a North / South split with two distinct places with their own identities.

The primary disadvantages of the single county unitary model are as follows:

- ✘ Single county unitary creates a footprint that is **too big** and has less chance of creating economic growth due to its **lack of focus on place**.
- ✘ For one local authority to develop individualised plans to address the variety of needs across the county would be very difficult.

Therefore, the two unitary model has been ranked as best against this criterion.

3.2 The proposed populations of the two councils would be below the Government's indicative figure of 500,000. The Government has clarified that this is guidance, not a mandatory target. Both proposed councils would serve significant populations and compare favourably with existing unitary authorities. Each would be larger than the current average population for unitary councils, which stands at 287,808. By contrast, a single county unitary would have a population exceeded by only three councils, making it an outlier in the current unitary landscape rather than the proposed two councils for the north and the south. By 2048, both proposed councils are projected to exceed 350,000.

3.3 Moreover, there is a wealth of demographic and economic evidence that illustrates the key driver of the two unitary proposal, that Warwickshire is made up of two clear places, with different populations and economies. The best way to deliver housing and economic growth and tackle inequalities is for each of these places to have their own council to focus on their own priorities.

3.4 This section now considers the evidence underpinning this criterion.

Demography

3.5 Table 1 below shows population size and tax base projections for the current five Borough and District Councils.

Table 1: Population and tax base for the current structure[1 2 3]

Local Authority	Population				Tax Base			
	2021	2024	2032[5]	2047[6]	2021	2024	2032	2047
North Warwickshire	65,000	66,166	71,349	77,515	21,577	21,869	23,681	27,493
Nuneaton and Bedworth	134,200	137,794	144,798	156,923	39,187	40,085	43,406	50,393
Rugby	114,400	118,781	130,712	146,704	39,307	40,975	44,370	51,512
Stratford on Avon	134,700	141,929	162,678	188,308	58,229	61,704	66,817	77,572
Warwick	148,500	153,153	165,009	179,208	56,343	58,280	63,109	73,267

It must be noted that 2032 and 2047 tax base predictions are based on 1% year-on-year increases.

Table 2 illustrates the demographics of a potential single county unitary.

Table 2: Population and tax base for proposed single unitary model

Local Authority	Population				Tax Base			
	2021	2024	2032	2047	2021	2024	2032	2047
Single County Unitary	596,800	617,823	674,546	748,658	214,643	222,913	241,383	280,237

Table 3 outlines the structure of a Two Unitary model, in which two distinct unitary authorities would be established.

Table 3: Population and tax base for proposed Two Unitary model[4 5]

Local Authority	Population				Tax Base			
	2021	2024	2032	2047	2021	2024	2032	2047
North	313,600	322,741	346,859	381,142	100,071	102,929	111,457	129,398
South	283,200	295,082	327,687	367,516	114,572	119,984	129,926	150,839

1 Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

2 Council Taxbase 2021 in England - GOV.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-taxbase-2021-in-england

3 Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwalescensus2021

4 Local Statistics for Warwickshire (E10000020) - Office for National Statistics https://explore-local-statistics.beta.ons.gov.uk/areas/E10000020-norfolk

5 Council Taxbase: Local Authority Level Data for 2024 – Published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 13/11/24 and revised on 13/12/14.

6 Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

3.6 A single unitary model does meet the Government's 500,000 population minimum size criteria, whereas the two unitary model does not. However, the Government has clarified that this is guidance, not a mandatory target. Both proposed councils would reach a substantial population level of 350,000 by 2047, and would be close to this in 2032. There is a precedent for this: Northamptonshire was split into two unitary councils in 2020/2021, despite the 500,000 population threshold not being met for either council. It should also be noted that the population of both proposed councils is currently greater than the average population of all existing unitary councils, which stands at 287,808. Of the 132 existing unitary councils, only 53 have a population greater than the proposed South Warwickshire Council. However, if a single county unitary is created, it would be the third largest unitary council in England. This indicates that a single county unitary would be an outlier in the current unitary council landscape, not so the proposed two unitaries for North and South.

3.7 Moreover, a more detailed review of demographic information indicates the significant disparity between the North and the South. These are two different populations with different characteristics. This variety is at the core of this Business Case's argument for a two unitary model. As a starting point, the graph below shows that Stratford-On-Avon has a pronounced 65+ population, which is quite different to the Boroughs of the North. This creates specific pressures and needs, which must be addressed in any future model.

Chart 4: Population by age group for each local authority.

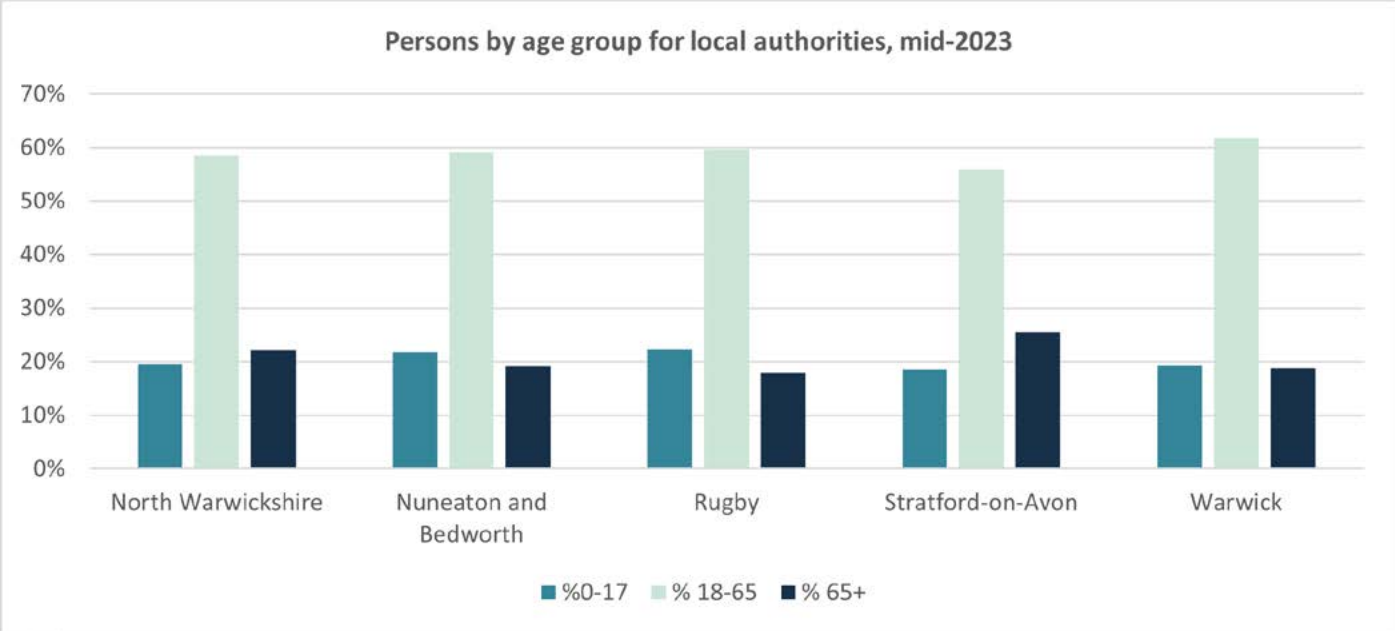
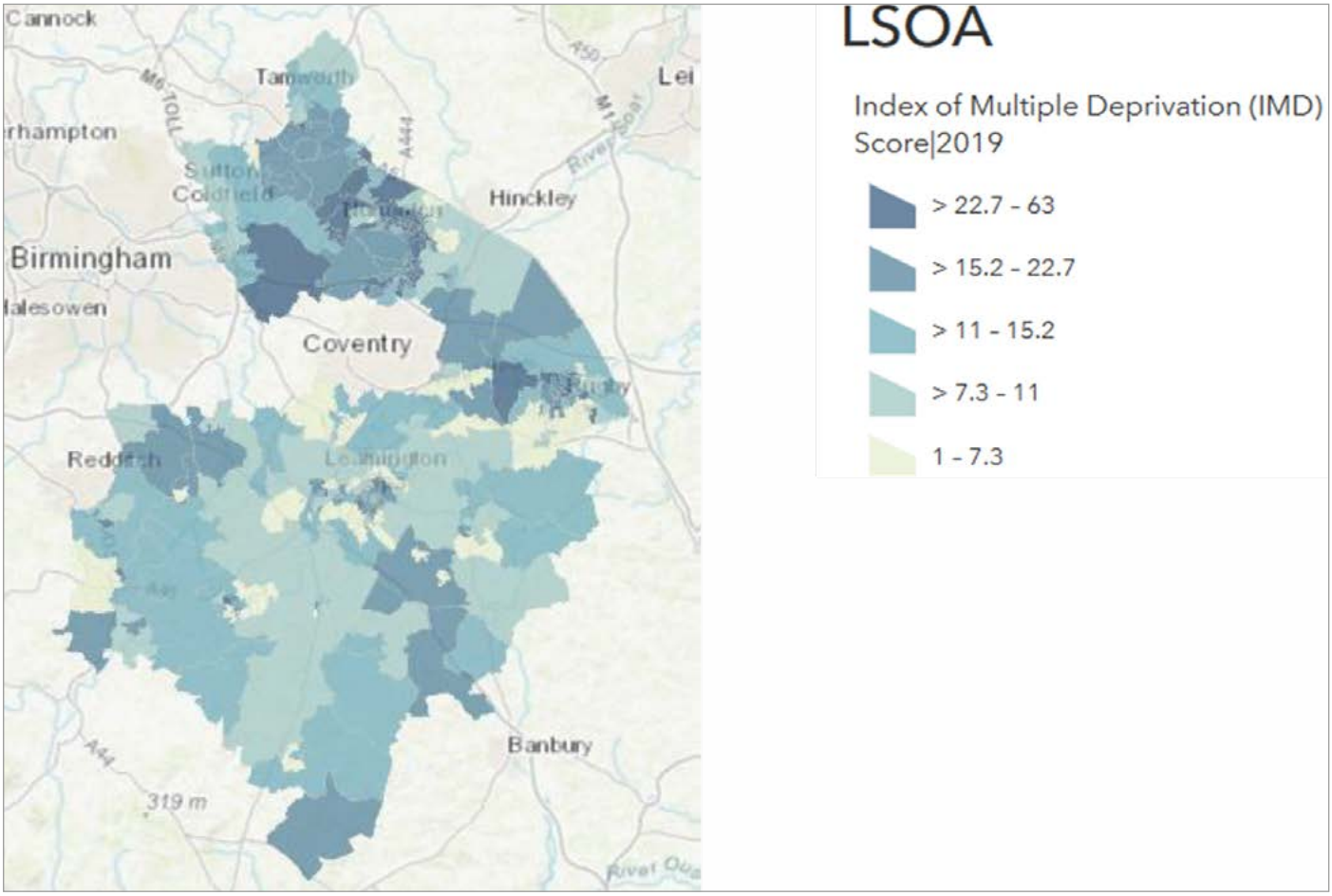


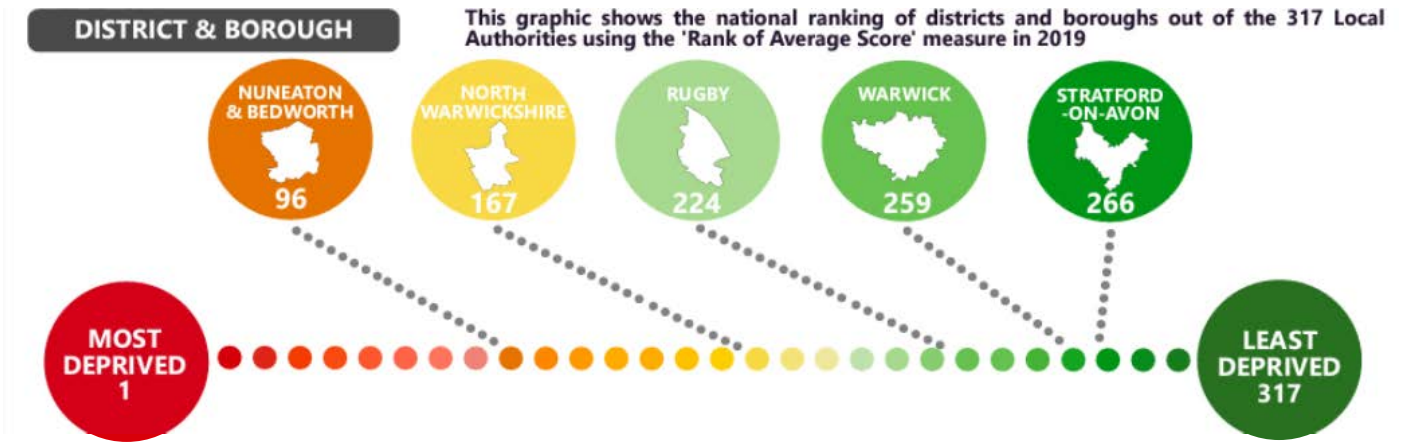
Chart 5: Warwickshire IMD scores, 2019



3.8 Chart 5, where darker colours signify greater deprivation, clearly demonstrate the differences between the North and the South. The North is much more deprived than the South. The South is relatively affluent and less deprived by comparison.

3.9 This is further shown in Chart 6:

Chart 6: Warwickshire IMD ranking of Boroughs and Districts, 2019



3.10 This clear picture is emphasised again in population health data. There are extremely different health needs in the North and South of the county. There is greater health inequality and deprivation in the North, while there is a more affluent but aging population in the South.

3.11 The Public Health Annual report reveals stark differences across the region in terms of health indicators. Notably, Nuneaton and Bedworth has significantly worse population health compared to other areas, as demonstrated by life expectancy, preventable deaths and reports of two or more long term conditions, highlighting the presence of health inequalities within the region.

3.12 Overall, the data shows a range of local issues that can be better tackled by local services focusing on prevention. For example, the districts of North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth have greater issues with obesity than the national average, whereas this is less of an issue in the other districts.

Table 7: Obesity prevalence by district (white cells are worse than the national average, grey filled cells are better than the national average (England))[7]

District	Adult Obesity Prevalence	Obesity Prevalence in Children at Year 6 Age	Obesity Prevalence in Children at Reception Age
North Warwickshire	35.8%	24.2%	10.8%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	26.6%	24.1%	11.1%
Rugby	31.9%	20.3%	8.0%
Stratford on Avon	22.8%	17.3%	6.3%
Warwick	20.1%	13.8%	6.3%
National Average	26.8%	21.0%	9.4%

3.13 Health issues will be influenced by lifestyle factors, particularly weight and smoking habits. Three out of five districts in Warwickshire have a higher percentage of smokers than the national average. These three areas also have a higher level of preventable cardiovascular mortality. This suggests that lifestyle interventions targeting diet and exercise are crucial in mitigating the onset and progression of chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

Table 8: Health indicators by district (white cells are worse than the national average grey filled cells are better than the national average (England))[8]

District	Cigarette Smokers	Cancer Diagnosis at Stage 1 and 2 (as a percentage of known cases)	Preventable Cardiovascular Mortality (per 100,000)
North Warwickshire	17.9%	56.3%	38.1
Nuneaton and Bedworth	12.8%	50.6%	32.4
Rugby	12.0%	59.5%	29.3
Stratford-on-Avon	10.4%	53.4%	20.5
Warwick	6.0%	53.7%	27.8
National Average	11.4%	54.4%	28.6

3.14 These lifestyle issues are significant in the North of the county. By contrast, the South has different issues. The aging demographic shown earlier presents significant challenges, including increased demand for complex healthcare services, higher rates of social isolation and loneliness, and a growing need for adult social care support. These factors require a proactive approach to ensure the well-being and independence of older residents and manage the demand of social care services. The demographic data therefore clearly shows the different needs and issues facing these two very different places within Warwickshire.

3.15 This points to the need for a two-council model. It is right that the issues of the residents of the North receive focus and attention to improve outcomes. It is also right that the ageing population in the South receives attention for their distinct needs. There should be no trade-offs or prioritisation or subsidies between the two populations and having two separate councils can ensure this.

[7] ONS - Local Indicators https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E07000149-south-norfolk/indicators#education-and-skills

[8] ONS - Local Indicators https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E07000149-south-norfolk/indicators#education-and-skills

Economy

3.16 Looking at each of the current District and Borough areas, it is clear that the North and South of the county have diverse economic needs and opportunities.

3.17 The North economy is shaped by its history. The market towns of northern and eastern Warwickshire which were industrialised in the 19th Century, include Atherstone, Bedworth, Coleshill, Nuneaton, and Rugby. Past major industries included coal mining, textiles, engineering and cement production but heavy industry is in decline and is being gradually replaced by distribution centres and other light-to-medium industry and services. The MIRA Technology Park on the A5 corridor provides a nationally recognised hub for innovation in automotive engineering.

3.18 Conversely, in the South, Warwick and Leamington Spa are centres for professional services and digital industries. The "Silicon Spa" cluster employs thousands of people across more than 30 video games studios, making it one of the UK's most important creative hubs. Stratford-upon-Avon attracts over six million visitors each year, generating hundreds of millions of pounds for the local economy. It is home to the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and a global cultural brand. South Warwickshire also hosts world-leading engineering and R&D. Jaguar Land Rover's engineering centre and Aston Martin's headquarters are based at Gaydon. The University of Warwick's Wellesbourne Innovation Campus brings together academia, business and applied research. NFU Mutual and other major employers strengthen the financial and professional services sector.

A comparison of North and South

3.19 The distinction between North and South Warwickshire is significant with the North seen as a place for younger people, from less skilled backgrounds, stemming from more deprived communities, lower income households, with higher health issues. There is still, to an extent, reliance for work within the traditional sectors of industrialised manufacturing, logistics and retail. The logistics of North Warwickshire with excellent connectivity from the motorway and rail networks allow for these sectors to be serviced through people willing to travel to work. Whilst the more traditional industries are in decline, North Warwickshire is building its Economic Development reputation on a good central location for logistics and distributive companies.

3.20 South Warwickshire contrarily has an older, skilled, dispersed, and ageing population. The area is seen as having strong educational links to good universities and schools, which will continue to feed skilled workers into local companies providing high quality jobs. Further, the area has a well-established parish network and greater community cohesion and therefore the potential for greater business cohesion and engagement, strengthened by the fact that South Warwickshire operates amongst less deprived communities with social issues that are not as acute. However, due to the high tourism element of South Warwickshire's business offering, the main issue is the low wages in the hospitality sector and comparatively the South has poor public transport connectivity.

A summary of the economy of each Borough is now provided

North Warwickshire

3.21 North Warwickshire, a predominantly rural area, bears the legacy of its historical dominance by the mining industry, even after the closure of its last coal mine in 2013. This industrial heritage continues to shape the community's identity. While mining may no longer define its economy, North Warwickshire has adapted, with key sectors driving its present-day economic landscape. In 2020, wholesale and retail, transportation and storage, the manufacture of metals, electrical products, and machinery, along with warehousing and transport, emerged as the dominant economic forces. This shift is evident in the emergence of a major logistics hub, characterized by large distribution centres and warehouses serving as key nodes in the UK's supply chain network. Additionally, North Warwickshire benefits from its integration into the Midlands automotive cluster, further contributing to the region's manufacturing strength.

3.22 While the area currently has a modest visitor economy, with Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon often overshadowing local destinations, and limited shopping opportunities leading many residents to seek retail options outside the borough, North Warwickshire anticipates that the rise of remote work and online shopping will reshape these dynamics in the future [9].

Nuneaton and Bedworth

3.23 Despite being the smallest borough in Warwickshire by area, Nuneaton and Bedworth holds the third-largest population, reflecting its predominantly urban character. Nuneaton is the largest town in Warwickshire. Historically reliant on industries like coal mining and heavy engineering, today, the dominant employment sectors encompass wholesale, retail, and trade; health and social work; and transportation, storage, and communication. These industries are housed within a network of industrial estates, accommodating a mix of small and medium-sized enterprises alongside headquarters of national and global companies. However, a significant portion of Nuneaton and Bedworth residents commute outside of the region to areas, such as Coventry and Leicestershire, for employment, highlighting a continued reliance on manufacturing and a need for greater diversification of employment opportunities within the borough[10].

Rugby

3.24 The Borough of Rugby revolves around its namesake town, which houses approximately two-thirds of the district's population, with the remainder residing in the surrounding rural areas. Rugby's location means it is well connected to all parts of the UK. The West Coast Mainline connects Rugby to Central London within an hour and Birmingham within half an hour. Rugby also sits within the inner, 'Golden Triangle', on the strategic road network (M6/ M1/M69/A5/A14) which is considered the prime location for logistics and warehousing as it provides access to 90 per cent of the UK population within 4 hours. Immediately adjacent to Rugby's southwestern boundary is DIRFT (Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal) which provides rail goods links to the deep sea ports.

3.25 The primary employment sectors are concentrated in wholesale, retail, and trade; motor vehicle repair; and transportation and storage. These industries are largely situated within retail parks predominantly located north of Rugby town centre, complementing the diverse range of retail businesses within the town itself. The largest business sectors in Rugby are logistics (14.7%) and manufacturing (12.9%) with particular strengths in aerospace and automotive. The Borough's

[9] North Warwickshire - Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/file/521/economic-development-strategy-consultation-document-2024

[10] Nuneaton and Bedworth - Borough Plan https://fs-filestore-eu.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nuneaton/Documents/Borough PlanFINAL120619.pdf

business base in terms of size is focused on the small (10-49 employees) and micro businesses (0-9 employees).

3.26 The Borough also houses significant employers including Jaguar Land Rover's Specialist Vehicle Operations division at Ryton, which produces around 10,000 specialist and high-performance vehicles each year. The technology centre at Ansty Park is also home major employers such as Meggitt, the London Electric Vehicle Company (which makes the iconic London Taxi), AVL, and the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centre, making Rugby a hub for advanced manufacturing and manufacturing technologies. Rugby has a track record of being an innovative and entrepreneurial area and currently has a higher than UK average start up rate by small businesses.

Stratford-On-Avon

3.27 The largely rural district of Stratford-on-Avon is characterised by a dispersed population, with its largest settlement, Stratford-upon-Avon, accounting for less than 25% of the district's residents ( ). The remaining population is distributed among smaller market towns and rural areas, contributing to the district's distinct character. Stratford on Avon is the largest district in Warwickshire covering an area of 978 km2, almost half the entire geography of Warwickshire. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Stratford-on-Avon was worth an estimated £5.3 billion in 2021, according to the ONS. Stratford-on-Avon's GDP growth between 2020 and 2021 was 7.4% per year.

3.28 Tourism plays an important role in Stratford-upon-Avon's economy, attracting over 6 million visitors in 2023. It is estimated that total tourism spend is in the region of £450m pa. Beyond tourism, the district's economy is bolstered by strategically located business parks that house manufacturing and distribution facilities. The manufacturing industry is the largest in Stratford-on-Avon based on the number of jobs, accounting for 17.6% of roles in the area. The district is home to prestigious employers such as Jaguar Land Rover's research and development facilities, Aston Martin's Headquarters and main assembly plant along with professional services such as NFU Mutual.

Warwick

3.29 Warwick's economy ranks among the most prosperous in England, boasting a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of £7.4 billion in 2021, with an impressive 10.6% annual growth rate between 2020 and 2021. The area exhibits a high value and high potential, with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a diverse range of businesses. The wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry is the largest employer, accounting for 13.8% of jobs. In fact, Warwick boasts a job density of 1.03, meaning there are more jobs than working-age residents. While the unemployment rate stands at 5.8%, the area faces challenges, including a reliance on low-paying jobs in retail, hospitality, and tourism, as well as limited access to superfast broadband and good mobile coverage in some rural areas. However, Warwick possesses a highly skilled workforce and a strong business survival rate, presenting opportunities for growth in emerging sectors like low-carbon technology and the digital creative industry. The automotive and future mobility sector also plays a significant role, along with a thriving tourism sector.

[11] Stratford-on-Avon District - Core Strategy
https://www.stratford.gov.uk/templates/server/document-relay.cfm?doc=173518&name=SDC%20CORE%20STRATEGY%202011%202031%20July%202016.pdf

Economic Sectors in Warwickshire

3.30 The following economic sectors are prevalent in Warwickshire:

- **Tourism:** Parts of Warwickshire attract many tourists, primarily in the South of the county, due to Stratford-upon-Avon's links with Shakespeare, as well as the historic castles found in Warwick and Kenilworth. To recognise this, a Destination Management Organisation is in operation for south Warwickshire, recognising it as an entity. This shared strength presents opportunities for joint marketing efforts, developing regional tourism itineraries, and collaborating on initiatives to extend the tourism season and attract new visitor demographics.
- **Access to Knowledge and Innovation:** A key advantage for all Boroughs and Districts is their proximity to renowned research and educational institutions. The university of Warwick and several Birmingham based Universities provide access to a wealth of knowledge and expertise. The MIRA Technology Institute in Nuneaton is a bespoke global centre for skills, developing specialist skills in key areas of emerging automotive technology. This accessibility attracts a significant influx of students from across the UK and internationally, contributing to the vibrancy and economic growth of the local communities, as well as opportunities for collaboration on research and development, knowledge transfer, and skills development, potentially benefiting businesses in both regions.
- **Manufacturing Base:** the Boroughs and Districts have a strong manufacturing presence, particularly in the automotive sector, which forms a significant part of their economic base.
- **Low Carbon Economy:** the Boroughs and District Councils are committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions, presenting opportunities for growth in renewable energy, green technologies, and sustainable practices.
- **Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering:** Building on the existing automotive expertise, the county can leverage opportunities in electric vehicle (EV) battery production, hydrogen technology, and future mobility solutions.
- **Digital Creative Industries:** Leamington Spa's "Silicon Spa" cluster provides a strong foundation for growth in video game development, digital technologies, and creative industries.
- **Bioscience, Agri-tech, and Medtech:** With a history of research and innovation in bioscience, Warwickshire can attract investment and foster growth in agri-tech, medtech, and related fields.

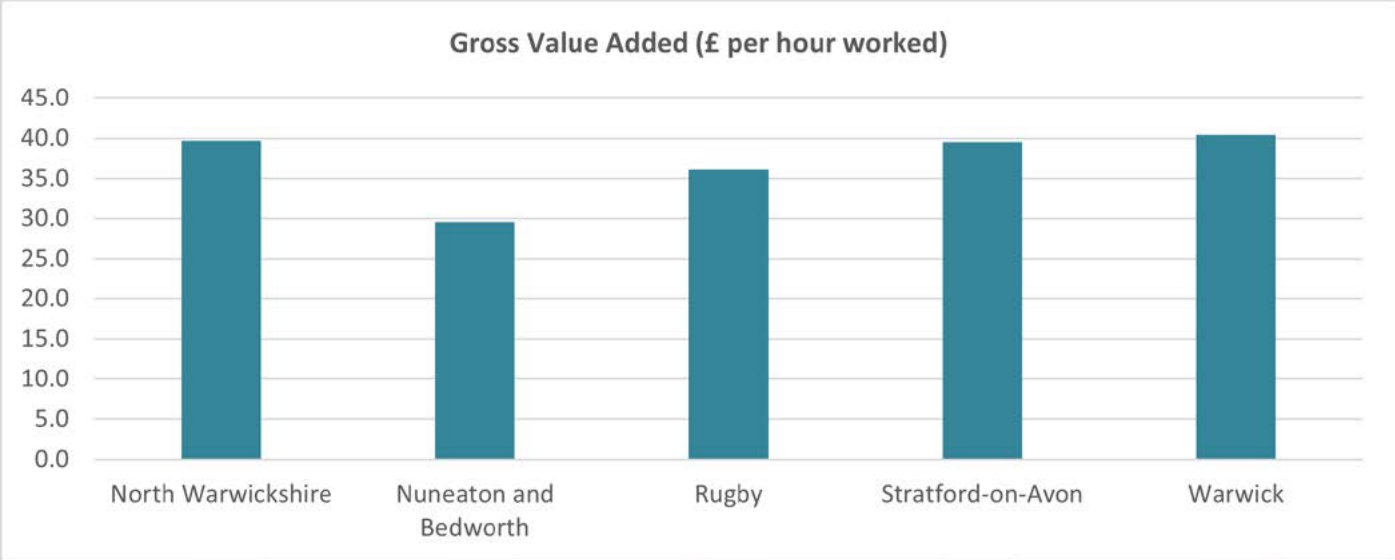
3.31 There is significant diversity across the county in sectors. The economy of the South of the county is largely based on higher value industries, particularly in the fields of professional business services, computing and software, and high-value engineering and manufacturing. Tourism is also important. By contrast, the economy of the North of the county is based on heavy industry and the legacy of the mining industry. The North continues to have a higher proportion of lower-value manufacturing industries, personal services and public-sector employment than the national average.

Economic indicators

3.32 A range of economic indicators show the diversity between North and South.

Gross Value Added (GVA)

Chart 9: Gross Value Added per work hour



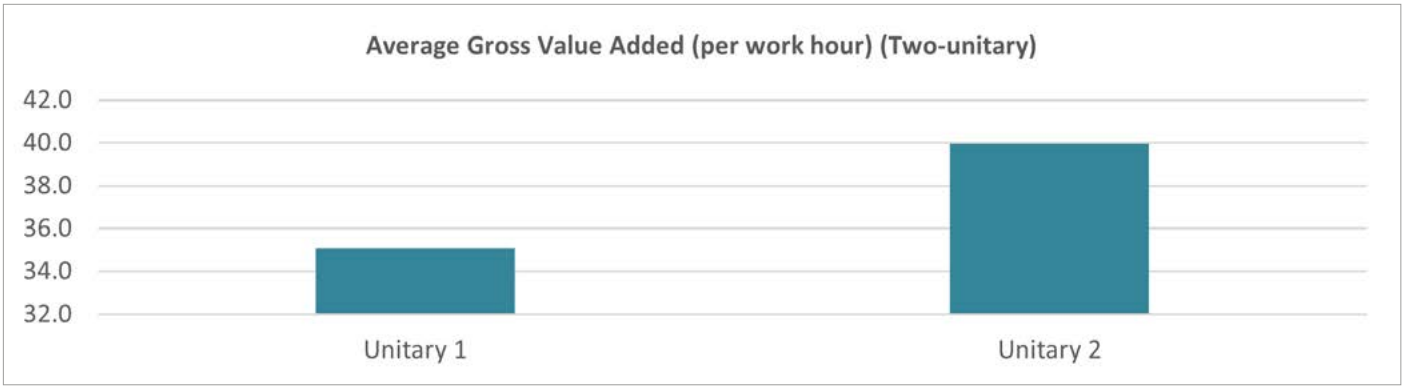
3.33 Examining the GVA figures across the region reveals strong performance in the South, as well as North Warwickshire, and weaker performance in the other Boroughs in the North.

3.34 This pattern suggests a more moderate level of economic output per worker in these areas, potentially influenced by a greater reliance on lower-value industries or a less skilled workforce.

3.35 This is supported by the analysis of GVA split between North and South in the graph below, with the South's performance significantly better than the North.

3.36 This indicates that the North and South have very different economies and in particular productivity. This is a gap that a future North unitary may wish to target.

Chart 10: Gross value added per work hour for the proposed Two Unitary model[12]



[12] Regional and subregional labour productivity, UK statistical bulletins - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures/bulletins/regionalandsubregionallabourproductivityuk/previousReleases

Employment

Chart 11: Percentage of people ages 16-64 who are claiming unemployment-related benefits[13]

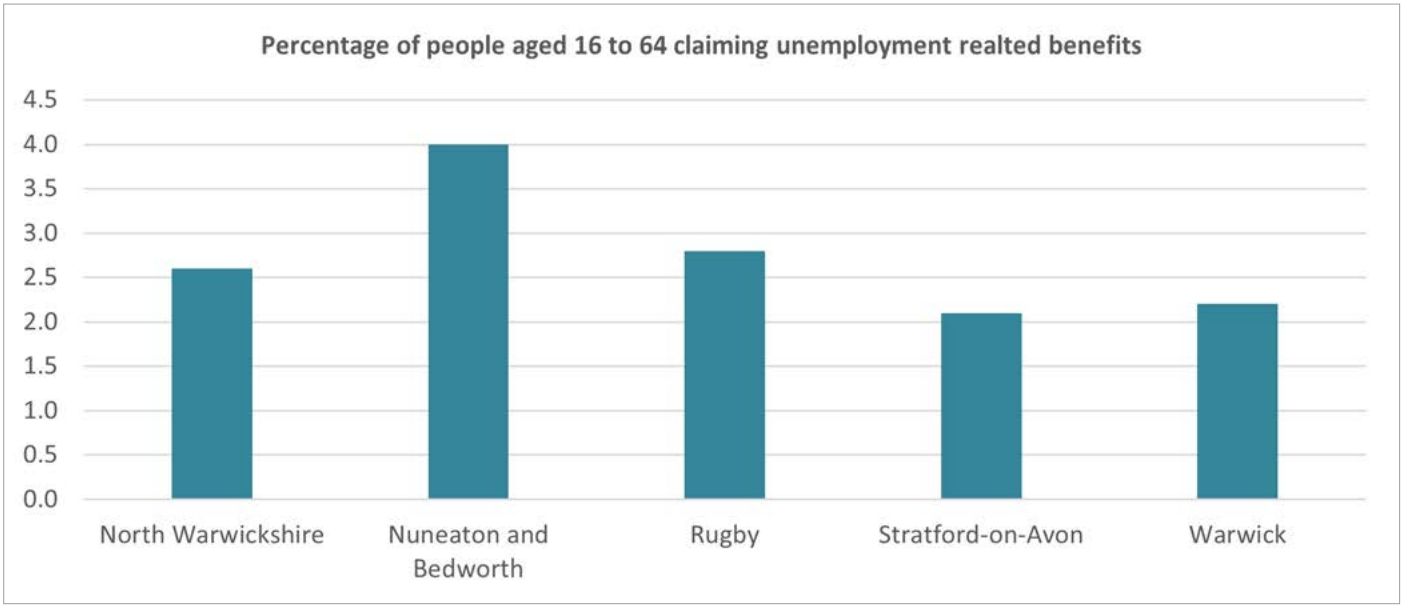


Chart 11 shows that:

- Nuneaton and Bedworth stands out with the highest percentage of unemployment benefit claimants, reaching 4% of the working-age population, indicating a significant need for employment support and economic development initiatives within this urban centre.
- Stratford and Warwick demonstrate lower percentages, at 2.1% and 2.2% respectively, suggesting relatively lower levels of unemployment in these areas.

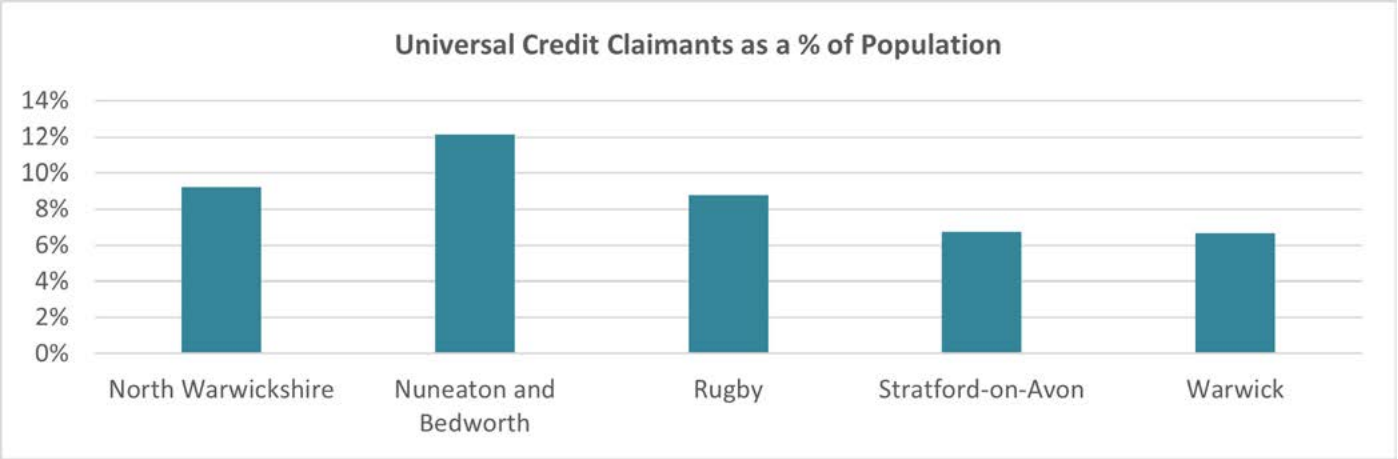
3.37 Again, these variations in unemployment rates across Boroughs and Districts highlight the importance of a place-focused approach to economic development and employment support within any unitary model.

3.38 A two unitary model would offer greater flexibility to tailor interventions to the specific needs and circumstances of each unitary area, recognising the diverse economic landscape of Warwickshire.

3.39 Data on Universal Credit claimants further reinforces the trends observed.

[13] Claimant Count - Office for National Statistics
https://explore-local-statistics.beta.ons.gov.uk/indicators/claimant-count

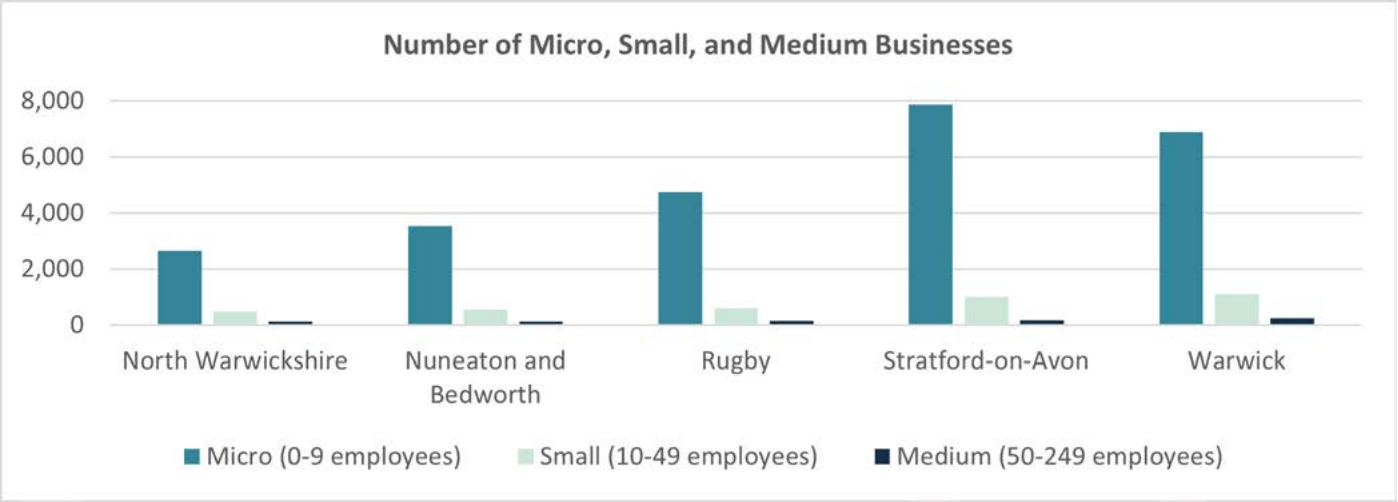
Chart 12: Universal credit claimants (Dec-24) as a percentage of population[14] [15]



3.40 The three Northern Boroughs have a higher proportion of Universal Credit claimants, aligning with the previously noted higher percentages of unemployment benefit claimants. This highlights a significant concentration of individuals facing economic hardship and requiring support in these areas.

3.41 The basic North-South split is shown in other indicators. Chart 13 also shows a disparity in business numbers: Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick consistently exhibit the highest numbers of businesses across all categories, particularly for micro and small businesses.

Chart 13: Number of Micro, Small, and Medium sized businesses by local authority[16]



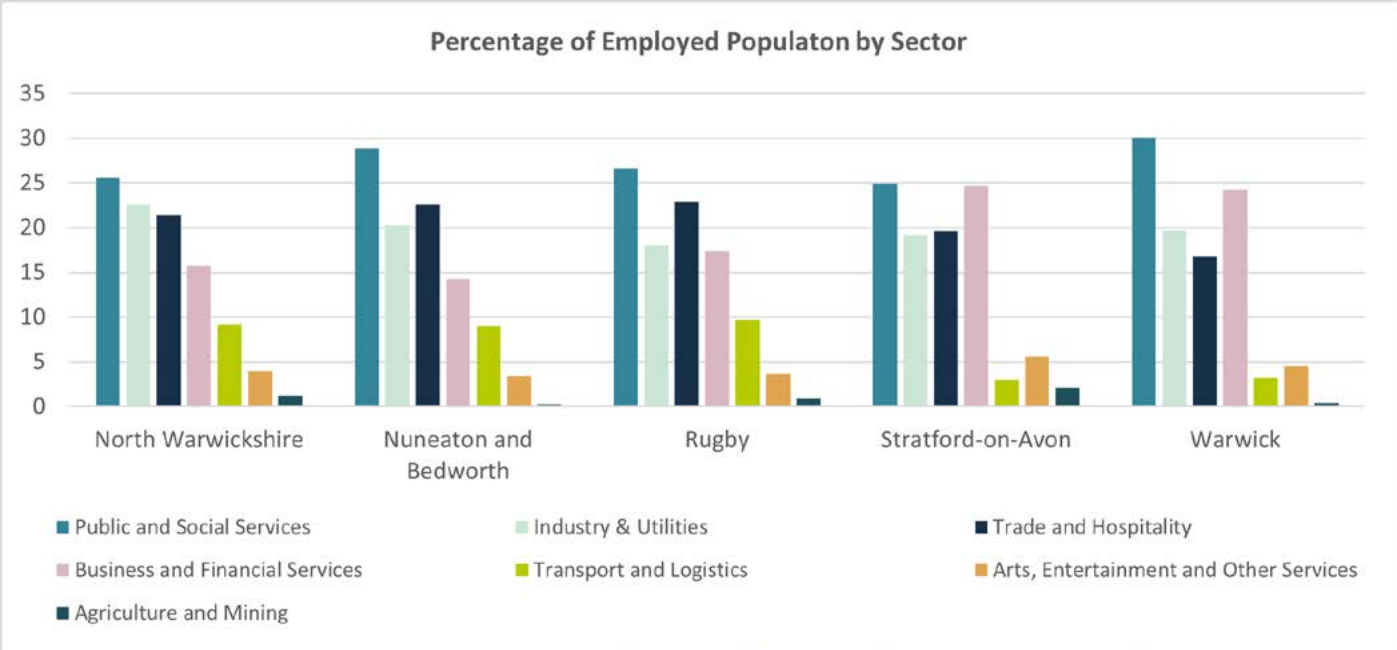
3.42 When employment data is considered, as in Chart 14, the highest numbers employed in Business and Financial Services are found in Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. The North has higher proportions of the population employed in Trade and Hospitality, and Transport and Logistics.

[14] Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

[15] Universal Credit Statistics - Department for Work and Pensions https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F678e2f061bc5bb4c4a9bdae1%2Funiversal-credit-ethnicity-statistics-november-and-december-2024.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

[16] Local units by industry and employment size band https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?menuopt=200&subcomp=

Chart 14: Distribution of employment by sector (2021)[17]

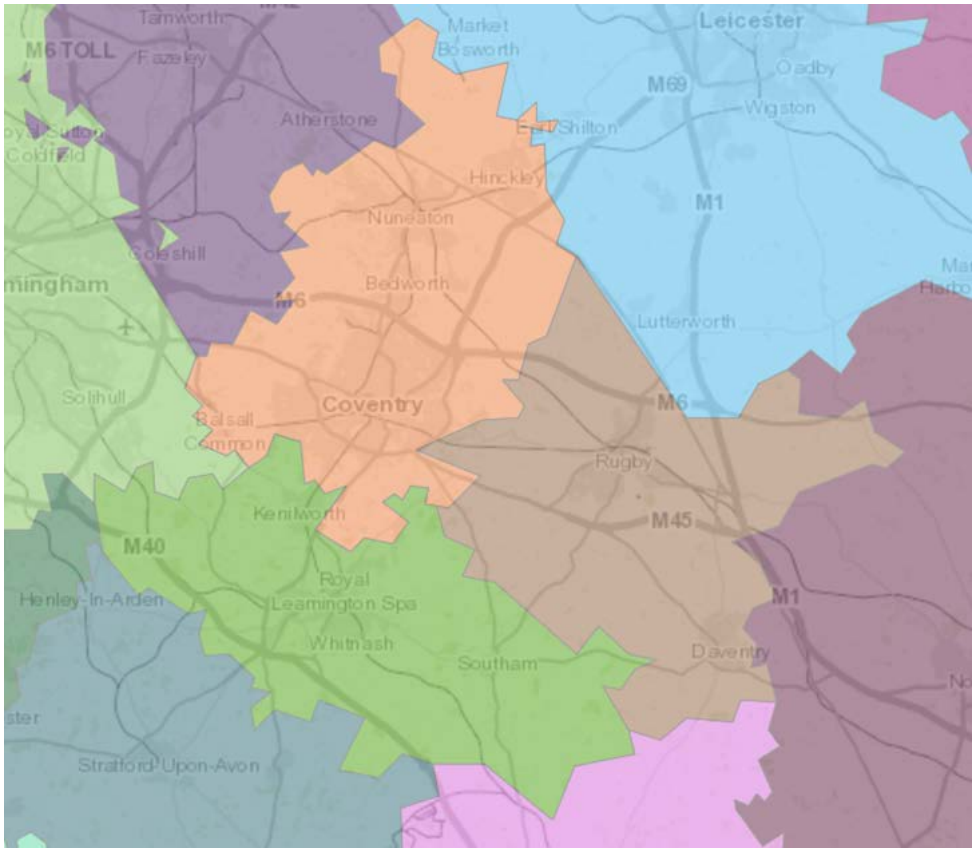


[17] Industries of those in employment, by local area - ONS Census 2021 https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/industriesofthoseinemploymentbylocalareaworkingpatternemploymentstatusenglandandwalescensus2021

Transport

Travel to Work Areas (TTWA)

3.43 The Travel to Work Area (TTWA) map[18] below is helpful in indicating how the residents of Warwickshire live their lives. The shaded areas show the Travel to Work areas within the county – i.e. where most people are commuting to for employment.



3.44 A North-South divide is clearly observed. The interconnectedness between the North of the county and Coventry is clearly indicated. Fundamentally, the majority of major travel routes in the county run East-West rather than North-South, such as the M40, M6 and M45, and the railway lines.

3.45 Therefore, the creation of two new Transport Authorities, one for each unitary, will reflect how the people of Warwickshire use transport, including Travel to Work areas, and can focus on key local priorities. A North unitary may choose to focus on the strong interconnectedness around Coventry and the northern towns, potentially facilitating effective integration and management of transport, economic development, and infrastructure.

3.46 The South unitary can address rural transport concerns and enable tailored transport strategies for tourism and heritage management.

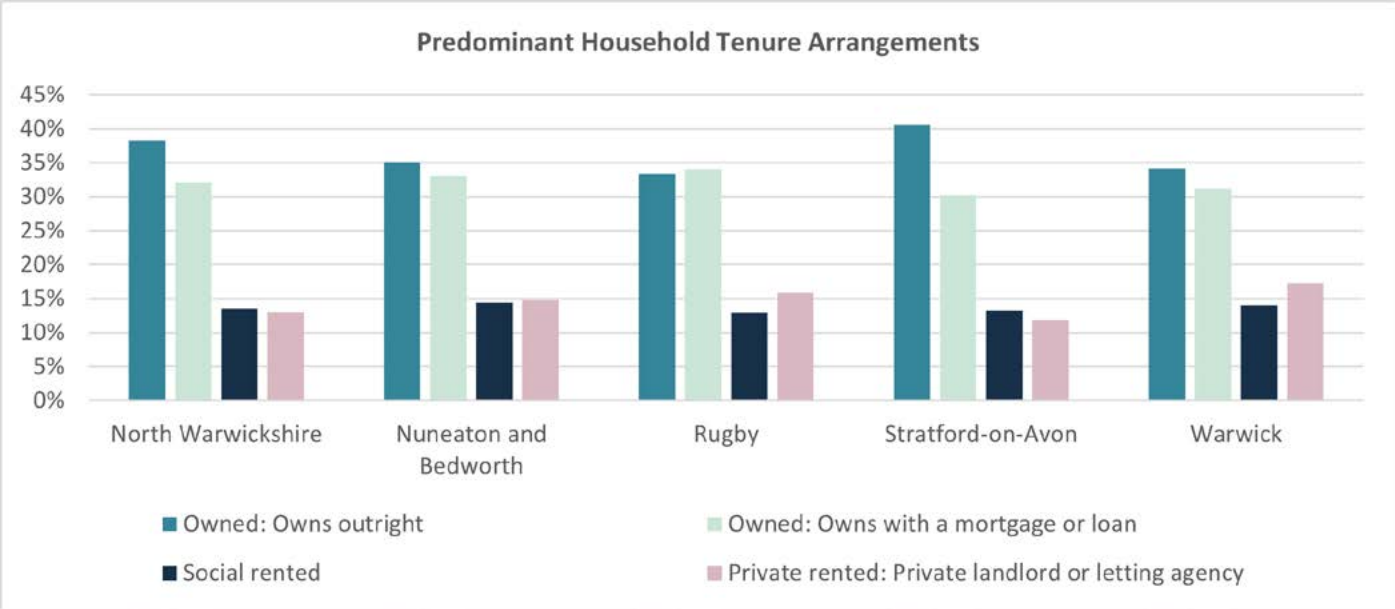
[18] Provided locally on data collection SharePoint

Housing

3.47 Unsurprisingly, given the demographic and economic differences between North and South, the same pattern is seen in the housing market.

Housing Tenure

Chart 15: Household tenure agreements by local authority as a percentage of total households[19]

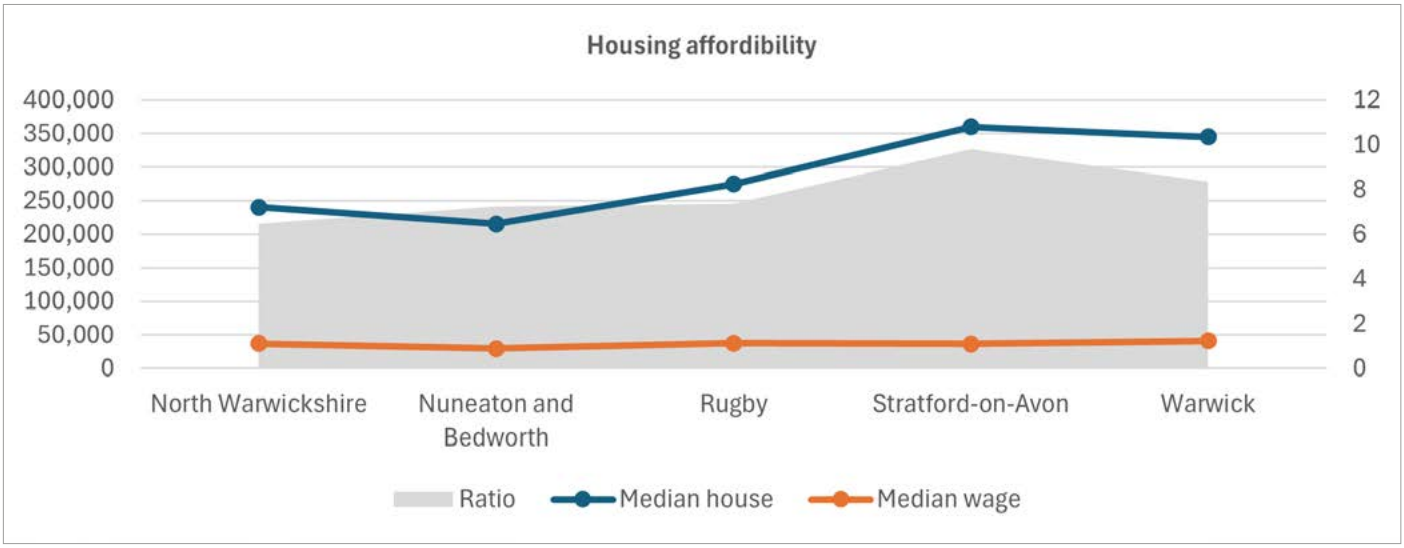


Stratford-on-Avon boasts the highest rate of outright homeownership in the county, reflecting its affluent resident base and desirable location. In contrast, North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth exhibit a more balanced distribution between social rented and private rented housing sectors, suggesting a greater diversity of housing needs and socioeconomic backgrounds within these districts. Meanwhile, Warwick stands out with a notably large private rental population, likely driven by the significant student population associated with the University of Warwick.

[19] Household characteristics by tenure, England and Wales: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/householdcharacteristicsbytenureenglandandwalescensus2021

Affordable Housing Provision

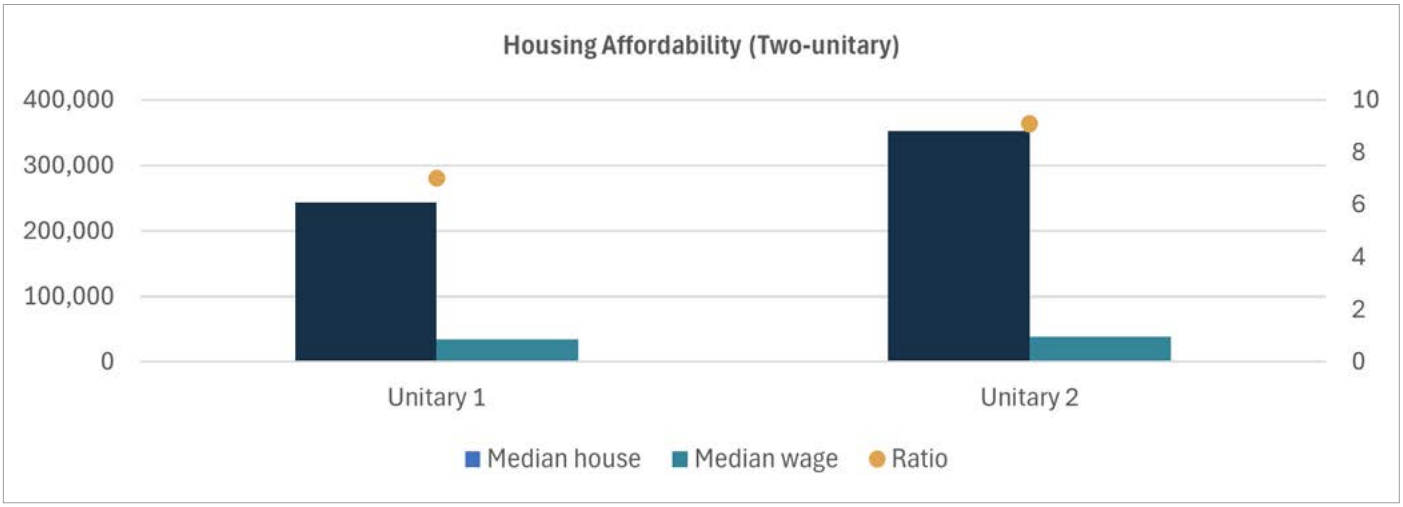
Chart 16: Median house price, earnings and affordability ratio (ratio of the median house price to earnings for each local authority[20]



3.48 There is a wide spectrum in house affordability in Warwickshire, with many house prices increasing at a rate far above salary increases and inflation. There is a wide disparity in house prices between North and South.

3.49 While the average house price in Nuneaton and Bedworth stands at £234,000, Stratford-on-Avon sees a considerably higher average of £387,000. This price gap exacerbates affordability issues, particularly as house price increases significantly outpace salary growth and inflation.

Chart 17: Median house price compared to earnings and affordability ratio for the proposed Two Unitary model.



3.50 Chart 17 above again shows the differences in challenges between North and South in terms of house prices, wages, and affordability ratios. These are different housing markets that require different specific solutions in areas such as building affordable housing.

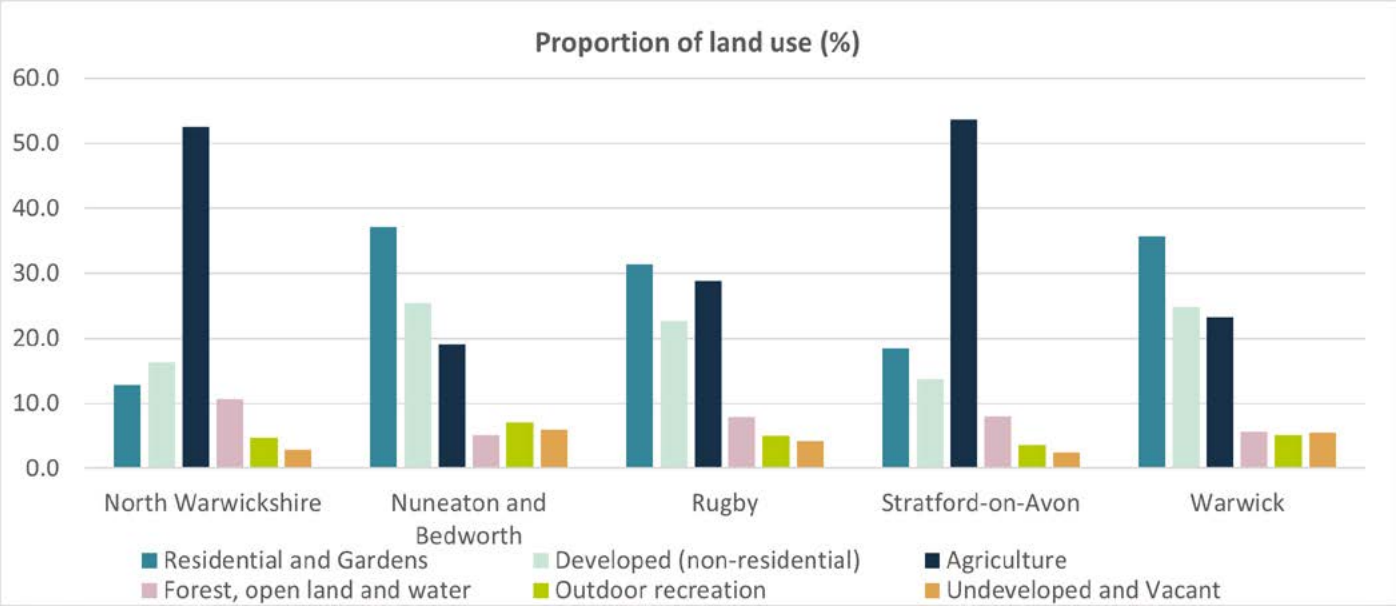
[20] House price to residence-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/housepriceexistingdwellingstoresidencebasedearningsratio

[21] Housing prices in Nuneaton and Bedworth https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000219/

Land Use

3.51 Chart 18 illustrates the distinction in the developmental characteristics of the regions. Nuneaton and Bedworth, alongside Rugby, exhibit a developed and urbanised profile, indicative of higher population densities, extensive infrastructure, and a greater concentration of commercial and industrial activities. In contrast, Stratford-on-Avon presents a predominantly rural character, characterised by more expansive green spaces, lower population density, and an economy often more reliant on agriculture, tourism, and heritage.

Chart 18: Proportion of land use (%) (2022)[22]



[22] Land use in England, 2022
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-in-england-2022

Conclusion

3.52 The evidence indicates that Warwickshire is made up of two distinct places: North and South, each with its own unique identity, history, and priorities. The economy of the South of the county is largely based on higher value industries, particularly in the fields of professional business services, computing and software, and high-value engineering and manufacturing. By contrast, the economy of the North of the county continues to have a higher proportion of lower-value manufacturing industries, personal services and public-sector employment than the national average.

3.53 Two distinct unitary authorities, which will be of significant size within the local government sector, can develop specialised strategies that leverage the unique strengths and opportunities of their respective localities. This targeted approach fosters innovation, attracts investment aligned with local strengths, and creates more diverse and resilient economies. Medium sized authorities are often more agile and responsive to the needs of local businesses, fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurship and job creation. This structure also allows each authority to tailor solutions to the specific economic challenges faced by their communities, whether supporting rural tourism, revitalising towns, or attracting investment.

3.54 For example, a Northern future unitary could place a strong emphasis on regeneration. One policy move could involve relocating the place of work of local government staff to the towns in the North, which could have a significant impact on local regeneration of town centres. A single county unitary may have to dilute the priorities of individual places and focus on the overall strategic position, simply due to its size.

3.55 Therefore, the two unitary model will be better able to drive housing and economic growth. The current two-tier system fragments responsibility for planning, housing and highways, slowing delivery and reducing capacity. For example, the Boroughs and Districts have concerns with the Highways service delivered centrally by the County Council currently, as priorities are often not linked to planning services. Integration within two unitaries would create the ability to streamline Local Plans, align planning, infrastructure, highways and housing, and accelerate the delivery of affordable and market housing that the county needs.

3.56 It could be argued that larger local government structures can focus more easily on major strategic issues including transport, skills and housing. However, this can be done through the Strategic Authority approach and adopting a collaborative approach, which focuses on Transport, Skills and Economic Development. Therefore, the two-unitary model is ranked highest due to its ability to provide better place leadership and local decision making across economic geographies, which supports the different need profiles across North and South.

	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
Rank Score	**2nd Place**	**1st Place**

4. Criteria 2: Unitary Local Government Must be the Right Size to Achieve Efficiencies, Improve Capacity and Withstand Financial Shocks.

Summary

4.1 The key advantages of the two unitary model are as follows:

- ✔ **Financially efficient:** The two unitary model delivers at least £55m of net savings by 2029/30, with the ability to add substantially to this figure through social care transformation.
- ✔ **Tackling financial problems:** The two unitary model will more effectively tackle the single biggest financial problem facing the county: increasing demand for social care and SEND services and rising costs in these areas.
- ✔ **Financial resilience:** The existing authorities are in solid financial positions and the division of the County Council position could be negotiated to ensure that assets, revenue and reserves follow the demand.
- ✔ **Council tax:** Both new councils will be able to set appropriate levels of council tax for their residents, and big increases should be avoided, as the South will not have to raise rates to the same levels as the North.

4.2 The single county unitary would achieve a greater level of net savings, and so has been ranked higher than the two unitary model, but the gap is not significant.

4.3 In the long-term, additional savings arising from service transformation may mean the two unitary model is more financially effective.

4.4 This section of the Business Case first reviews the current financial positions of the six councils in Warwickshire, to understand if this means anything for future financial sustainability. It then conducts a financial assessment of the potential costs and benefits of the two options.

Current Financial Position

4.5 In a single unitary model, the entirety of the councils' financial positions would be assumed by the single new authority. In a two-unitary model, the financial position would be divided between the two new authorities, ideally in a manner that reflects the distribution of assets, debt, services, and populations.

4.6 Therefore, the current financial positions of the councils have a significant bearing on long-term financial resilience for the future local government structures. If the councils are financially robust at the current time, it may be considered likely that the future structures would be financially resilient too. This is particularly the case in Warwickshire given that the Fair Funding Review is likely to benefit the North of the county, which is more deprived, and more reliant on business rates and government grant than the South, which has a bigger council tax base.

4.7 The methodology taken towards the division of financial resources could have implications, but this is currently uncertain given the Fair Funding Review, which as mentioned, is likely to benefit the North. It is expected that a thorough and equitable process will be taken to ensure the long-term sustainability of any chosen unitary model. In Northamptonshire, the division of the County Council position took several years to ensure that it was fair to both new councils. In previous unitarisation processes, it has been made clear that no new council should lose out financially.

4.8 In the short-term, a review of each council's financial position and the potential positions of the future unitary councils has been undertaken to illustrate any financial risks and issues that should be noted.

4.9 A summary of the current financial position for each council is provided below. This shows the financial position at the end of FY 2023/24 as this was the latest audited financial statements available for all Councils within Warwickshire, at the time of writing this report.

Table 19: A summary of the current financial position for each council.

Financial Position as Per 2023/24 Accounts	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
Gross Expenditure	44,295	101,875	62,321	65,684	115,490	1,181,400
Gross Income	-39,800	-67,217	-43,449	-41,202	-76,280	-543,800
Net Expenditure	**4,495**	**34,658**	**18,872**	**24,482**	**39,210**	**637,600**
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of HRA	-8,846	-7,515	1,293	N/A	1,587	N/A
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of General Fund Services	13,873	4,596	6,026	8,304	-2,987	-29,900
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis	0	4,866	0	0	0	18,500
Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	2,081	1,526	2,316	5,039	5,433	10,200
General Fund Increase / (Decrease) in Year	**4,592**	**1,898**	**5,300**	**2,504**	**-1,018**	**0**
Long Term Borrowing	46,229	62,669	83,355	0	238,517	272,400
Fixed Assets	210,768	461,340	315,946	102,424	714,628	1,584,600

4.10 The figures show that there are deficits on the provision of General Fund services in Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council, with the County Council having the largest deficit on provision of General Fund services at £29.9m.

4.11 The County Council also has the highest amount of long-term borrowing, followed by Warwick District Council. However, these two councils also have the highest amounts of fixed assets. More explanation is provided below.

4.12 There are also HRA deficits in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth. Merging these HRAs would give the future North unitary a larger, scaled up combined HRA, which could be more financially resilient.

4.13 The overall financial position for several councils is reliant upon the use of reserves. The reserves balances as of 2023/24 are shown in tables 21 and 22 below.

Table 20: Usable Reserves for each council

Usable Reserves	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
General Fund Balance	6,902	2,139	33,423	13,063	32,240	26,000
Earmarked Reserves	17,340	14,309	0	33,115	0	201,700
HRA	1,315	2,522	20,431	0	25,873	0
Earmarked HRA Reserves	2,843	5,311	0	0	0	0
Usable Capital Receipts Reserve	4,575	4,344	14,571	6,233	13,077	0
Capital Grants Unapplied	1,717	13,660	22	3,699	761	1,300
Major Repairs Reserve	1,844	1,830	5,802	0	6,821	
Total Usable Reserves	**36,536**	**44,115**	**74,249**	**56,110**	**78,771**	**229,000**

Note: Where columns are blank, this row did not appear in the Usable Reserves table within that Council's Statement of Accounts

4.14 The County Council has the highest level of usable reserves. North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth have the lowest level of reserves at £36.5m and £44.1m respectively..

Table 21: Unusable Reserves for each council

Usable Reserves	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
Revaluation Reserve	35,467	213,312	90,051	41,517	121,709	327,600
Capital Adjustment Account	113,106	98,092	130,724	45,072	286,202	881,100
Pensions Reserve	-3,613	33,360	-5,502	-3,077	23,367	-285,100
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	5,306	2,350	-3,809	2,593	-5,953	2,000
Accumulated Absences Account	-211	-103	-158	-303	-172	-7,300
Deferred Capital Receipts reserve	0	413	0	1,246	788	2,000
Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-33,200
Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve	-265	-240	0	-126	0	3,000
Housing Act – Deferred Capital Receipt	0	0	29	0	0	0
Donated Asset Reserve	0	0	60	0	0	0
Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account	0	0	-281	0	0	-400
Financial Instruments Adjustment Account	0	-76	0	0	-11	1,700
Total Unusable Reserves	149,790	347,108	211,114	86,922	425,930	891,400

Note: Where columns are blank, this row did not appear in the Usable Reserves table within that Council's Statement of Accounts

4.15 The County Council has the highest level of unusable reserves, followed by Warwick.

Debt

4.16 An overview of the debt positions for all councils is shown below.

Table 22: Borrowings as at 31st March 2024

Borrowings	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
Total Long Term Borrowing	46,299	62,699	83,355	0	238,157	279,400
Long Term Borrowing - HRA	TBC	53,949	TBC	0	TBC	TBC
Long Term Borrowing – General Fund	TBC	8,750	TBC	0	TBC	TBC
Closing Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	62,195	108,991	93,768	14,584	300,691	265,700

The County Council and Warwick District Council have by some margin the highest level of debt across Warwickshire.

Deficits and the use of reserves

4.17 The table below, which is incomplete due to information provided to date, shows how each council is planning to use its reserves over the next five years to fund any potential deficits and balance the budget, as identified in each council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Please note that this is difficult to show as a comparative table, as local authorities do take different approaches in their MTFSs – some project the allocation of reserves, and others leave future years of the MTFS unbalanced to reflect the unknowns of Government funding, and also emphasise the need for further savings / efficiencies. Therefore the table below represents a best possible estimate based on the likely need that any deficits would need to covered by reserves in future years (noting they have as yet not been allocated).

Table 24: Estimated use of General Fund reserves

Estimated (use of) / to General Fund Reserves	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
2025/26	1,385	-1434	TBC	-5,482	TBC	-4,800
2026/27	-3,625	-2,778	TBC	-2,332	TBC	-1,800
2027/28	-3,502	-3,680	TBC	-2,855	TBC	-400
2028/29	-3,067	-3,927	TBC	-3,948	TBC	4,100
2029/30	Not available	Not available	TBC	-3,783	TBC	0

Note: From evidence provided under MTFS, reserves are not forecasted to be used for Rugby

4.18 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) positions show that only North Warwickshire expects to add to their General Fund Reserve in 2025/26.

4.19 Stratford and Nuneaton and Bedworth planned to use reserves for all years of the MTFS to bolster their financial position. However it must be noted that these Councils both reported General Fund surpluses in 2023/24. Stratford additionally has no long-term debt.

4.20 The County Council present an improving position within their MTFS, in that the use of reserves is forecasted to reduce by 2029/30, including an addition to reserves in 2028/29.

4.21 The County Council's MTFS assumes large decreases in recurrent spending, particularly in social care in conjunction with high levels of savings achieved across these areas. For example, the County Council have planned for £21.8m in budget reductions for 2025/26, which is forecasted to grow to £79.6m by 2030, through efficiencies and increased income . This is a significant potential budgetary gap if those savings are not delivered.

4.22 Table 24 below shows each council's General Fund balance as a percentage of their total expenditure.

Table 24: General Fund Balance as a proportion of total expenditure.

% of Total Expenditure	North Warwickshire (£'000)	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)	Rugby (£'000)	Stratford on Avon (£'000)	Warwick (£'000)	Warwickshire County Council (£'000)
Closing GF balance 2023/24	6,902	16,448	33,423	13,063	32,240	227,700
Gross Expenditure less HRA	29,600	65,072	41,658	65,684	74,817	1,181,400
GF as a % of Total Expenditure	23.3%	25.3%	80.2%	20.0%	43.1%	19.3%

A higher percentage represents greater resilience in the financial position, as the balance is a greater proportion of the Council's expenditure. Overall, these figures are relatively healthy.

Implications

4.23 There may be concerns around the level of debt across the councils and how this would be apportioned for the future unitary councils.

4.24 The key point relating to debt is sustainability. There is nothing inherently wrong with debt if it can be repaid in a sustainable way based upon income.

4.25 For example, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby and Warwick have debt, as identified in the analysis above. It is likely, however, that in part this debt is part of their Housing Revenue Account as these Councils still own their own stock. If this is the case, the debt would not be likely to present a substantial risk, as when loans mature, they are refinanced, and there is an asset base and regular income. Most HRAs only repay interest on their loans, unless there is a surplus, which allows capital to be repaid.

[23] Warwickshire County Council approves budget for 2025/26 to support vulnerable residents amid financial challenges - Warwickshire County Council https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5958/warwickshire-county-council-approves-budget-for-2025-26-to-support-vulnerable-residents-amid-financial-challenges

4.26 This holds true for Warwick District Council, which has stated that the significant level of long-term borrowing included in its accounts is primarily attributed to social housing. Warwick has the highest level of debt among the District and Borough Councils by some margin. However, in mitigation, the council stated it has a high level of assets and a healthy quantum of reserves[24], and therefore a solid overall financial position. Most of Warwick's General Fund Long-Term borrowing is expected to be repaid by 2028, with it being linked to the delivery of housing by a Joint Venture in Kenilworth.

4.27 Similarly, Warwickshire County Council has stated that current debt is all Public Works Loan Board borrowing and "wholly used to finance capital expenditure" . Analysis of data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) demonstrated that County Council debt sat at £273.0m at the end of 2024/25 and had not increased in the last financial year.

4.28 It should be noted that all councils have a requirement to only use debt to finance capital expenditure and therefore this statement can be applied to all the councils in Warwickshire.

4.29 Further due diligence will need to be undertaken on the nature of debt of all six councils as part of unitarisation. This exercise will also need to drive how assets and debt are apportioned. However, at the current time, based on the information available, it is not considered that the amount of debt presents a significant financial risk. The debt will have to be dealt with by either option for unitary local government.

4.30 By contrast, given the financial positions described above, the most significant financial issue facing the Warwickshire local authorities is considered to be the County Council's deficit on the provision of services, which is being supported by the use of reserves, and is forecast to deteriorate over the next five years, requiring significant levels of savings.

4.31 The County Council itself has highlighted the likelihood that current plans, while robust, will result in future funding gaps[26]. The County Council is of course exposed to increasing expensive demand in social care and SEND services, as shown, for example, by the balance on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), in particular the high needs block funding education for students with SEND.

4.32 The DSG deficit for 2023/24 was £17.1m[27] an increase from the £5.0m deficit reported in 2022/23. This is driven by high needs DSG, which was £39.5m as at 2023/24 year end, also an increase from the £20.4m reported at 2022/23 year end. Demand in this area is increasing significantly year on year and represents a significant financial risk, as it does for many upper tier authorities across the country at the current time. It must be emphasised that this is a national issue and not one particular to Warwickshire.

4.33 The most important implication of the financial analysis is therefore the question: which model will give Warwickshire the best chance of managing such expensive demand increases most effectively? It will be argued below that the two unitary model offers the most potential due to its focus on early intervention and place-based solutions built around communities.

[24] Debt hits £260m at Warwick District Council which says it has 'strong balance sheet' https://warwick.nub.news/news/local-news/debt-hits-ps260m-at-warwick-district-council-which-says-it-has-strong-balance-sheet-270949

[25] Debt hits £260m at Warwick District Council which says it has 'strong balance sheet' https://warwick.nub.news/news/local-news/debt-hits-ps260m-at-warwick-district-council-which-says-it-has-strong-balance-sheet-270949

[26] 2024/25 Revenue Budget Resolution https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/s35233/202425 Revenue Budget Resolution.pdf

[27] Statement of Accounts (page 27) https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-428063900-1999

Future Financial Position of the Potential Authorities

4.34 It is impossible at the current time to determine exactly how the financial positions of the future authorities would be established. There are significant unknowns, such as the impact of the Fair Funding Review.

The analysis below has been undertaken on the basis of a simple population-based apportionment of the 23/24 positions

Single Unitary Model

4.35 A single unitary model would, unsurprisingly, have the largest amount of expenditure and income, the largest deficit, but also the largest reserves.

4.36 There are no particular concerns emerging from the figures below for the financial sustainability of a single county unitary.

4.37 The financial risks to the new council, as noted above, will derive from increasing demand for social care and SEND services.

Table 25: The potential financial position of a single unitary model

Analysis of Financial Position of Councils (23/24 Accounts) (£'000)	Single Unitary
Gross Expenditure	£1,571,065
Gross Income	-£811,748
Net Expenditure	**£759,317**
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of HRA	-£13,481
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of General Fund Services	-£88
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis	£23,366
Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	£26,595
General Fund Increase / (Decrease) in Year	**£13,276**
Total Usable Reserves	**£518,781**
Total Unusable Reserves	**£2,112,264**
Long Term Borrowing	**£703,170**
Fixed Assets	**£3,389,706**

Two Unitary Model

Table 26: The potential financial position of a Two Unitary model

Analysis of Financial Position of Councils (23/24 Accounts) (£'000)	North	South
Gross Expenditure	£799,191	£771,874
Gross Income	- £422,366	-£389,382
Net Expenditure	**£376,825**	**£382,492**
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of HRA	-£15,068	£1,587
Surplus / (Deficit) on provision of General Fund Services	£9,545	-£9,633
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis	£14,116	£9,250
Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	£11,023	£15,572
General Fund Increase / (Decrease) in Year	**£11,790**	**£1,486**
Total Usable Reserves	**£269,400**	**£249,381**
Total Unusable Reserves	**£1,153,712**	**£958,552**
Long Term Borrowing	**£328,453**	**£374,717**
Fixed Assets	**£1,780,354**	**£1,609,352**

4.38 Based on the analysis above, both new councils would have significant levels of reserves, assets, and also long-term borrowing.

4.39 The South unitary may inherit a small deficit on the provision of General Fund services and the North would inherit a small deficit on its HRA, but both councils would have substantial reserves to deal with these issues (and, as identified below, significant financial savings will be possible to improve financial sustainability).

4.40 The financial risks to the new councils, as noted above, will derive from increasing demand for social care and SEND services.

Summary

4.41 Warwickshire is in a reasonable financial position as a county by the standards of local government nationally. All six councils currently have a stable financial position and outlook. While there is debt, this has been borrowed for capital and infrastructure developments.

4.42 When the financial positions of the councils are combined, based on dividing the County Council's financial position on a per capita basis, both North and South unitary councils appear financially sustainable. The North, with higher levels of deprivation, would be more reliant on government grant and business rates, while the South would lean more heavily on its stronger council tax base, but face greater demographic costs from ageing. These are the same issues that would persist in the status quo, and none of the councils are projecting significant financial concerns at the current time, especially when compared to local government in other counties.

4.43 Moreover, future funding for these two unitaries is currently uncertain due to the Fair Funding Review. It could be expected that the North unitary would benefit from this Review as a more deprived area, which would help to mitigate some of the reliance on business rates.

4.44 Future funding is also uncertain due to the process of unitarisation, which can take a long time. The Northamptonshire County Council position was only fully disaggregated after a lengthy negotiation process taking four years. The future North and South unitaries would similarly debate the division of the financial position to ensure that both councils are sustainable, with resources meeting demand, and neither council loses out.

4.45 The ultimate conclusion from this work is that the most pressing issue facing local government in Warwickshire is the increasing demand from services such as social care and SEND and the financial consequences of this.

4.46 In this context, the financial assessment becomes very important as it helps to indicate which model can generate the most benefits and manage demand effectively to tackle these increasing pressures.

Council Tax

4.47 This section appraises the potential implications of Council Tax harmonisation for each unitary model.

4.48 Significant disparities in Council Tax rates across the county will present challenges for the new councils.

4.49 To understand the potential implications of Council Tax harmonisation, the analysis explores one scenario:

4.50 Low-to-Max: Raising lower tax rates across the Boroughs and Districts to match the highest existing rate.

4.51 This scenario has been chosen as it always results in the least income foregone by future local government in Warwickshire, and therefore helps provide a more stable financial position for the new councils.

4.52 Please note that this is a modelling exercise based on assumptions. Numbers should not be treated as accurate forecasts, but rather to show the relative benefits and drawbacks of each model. The exercise assumes a standardised annual Council Tax increase of 3% in lower-rate districts and a 1% increase to the tax base.

Single Unitary Model

Table 27: Estimated cost of harmonising Council Tax rates under the single unitary model

Single Unitary Model	Low-to-Max (£'000)
5 years	2,304

4.53 The single unitary model, when employing a low-to-max harmonisation strategy, would forego income of £2.3m over five years, compared to the status quo. This is the notional income lost to the future council by having to freeze certain rates of Council Tax until other council areas increase their rates and harmonise.

Two Unitary Model

Table 28: Estimated cost of harmonising Council Tax rates under the Two Unitary model.

Two Unitary Model	Low-to-Max (£'000)
5 years	2,304

The two unitary model, when employing a low-to-max harmonisation strategy, would forego income of £8.2m over five years, compared to the status quo.

Implications

4.54 A two unitary model requires income foregone of £8.2m over five years, which is more expensive than the single county unitary. However, such an approach would be less difficult to implement, and would potentially be more popular with residents, as big Council Tax increases in the South would not be required to match the North.

4.55 It should also be noted that there may be extra implications for Council Tax of potentially creating parish councils for the whole of the county, a proposal which has been mooted if a single county unitary was created. This would involve additional charges to the council taxpayer.

4.56 Fundamentally, a two-unitary model offers greater flexibility in setting Council Tax rates, potentially leading to more beneficial rates for residents. This is because each unitary authority would tailor rates to the specific needs and financial circumstances of its area, rather than a single rate being applied across a larger, more diverse area as might be the case with a single unitary authority. This localised approach could lead to more equitable and efficient distribution of the tax burden, reflecting variations in service costs and provision and resident income levels across the two unitary areas. It may also minimise individual tax rises for residents, which could be unpopular.

Council Tax Income Projections

4.57 Analysis has also been undertaken of the amount of income that would be collected under the different models, in order to understand any potential differences.

Implications

4.58 When looking at projected Council Tax income by 2040, the single unitary model projects the higher amount of income at £97.0m by 2040, with the two unitary model estimating slightly lower income at £92.6m.

4.59 Considering both Council Tax metrics (income foregone, and income collected) the single unitary model is the most effective in raising income, but does take longer for harmonisation to take effect, and may be more unpopular with residents.

Table 29: Single Unitary Income Projection

Unitary 1	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
North Warwickshire	6.5M	6.6M	6.8M	6.9M	7.1M	7.2M	7.3M	7.5M	7.6M	7.8M	8.2M	8.6M	9.0M	9.5M	10.0M	10.5M
Nuneaton and Bedworth	11.1M	11.7M	12.3M	12.7M	12.9M	13.2M	13.5M	13.7M	14.0M	14.3M	15.0M	15.8M	16.6M	17.4M	18.3M	19.2M
Rugby	5.2M	5.5M	5.8M	6.1M	6.4M	6.7M	6.9M	7.0M	7.2M	7.3M	7.7M	8.1M	8.5M	8.9M	9.3M	9.8M
Stratford on Avon	14.4M	15.1M	15.9M	16.7M	17.6M	18.4M	19.4M	19.9M	20.3M	20.8M	21.8M	22.9M	24.1M	25.3M	26.6M	27.9M
Warwick	14.3M	15.0M	15.8M	16.6M	17.4M	18.3M	19.2M	20.2M	21.2M	22.0M	23.1M	24.3M	25.5M	26.8M	28.1M	29.6M
Total	**51.5M**	**54.0M**	**56.5M**	**58.9M**	**61.3M**	**63.8M**	**66.3M**	**68.4M**	**70.4M**	**72.1M**	**75.8M**	**79.6M**	**83.6M**	**87.9M**	**92.3M**	**97.0M**

Table 30: Two Unitary Income Projection

Unitary 1	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
North Warwickshire	6.5M	6.6M	6.8M	6.9M	7.1M	7.2M	7.3M	7.7M	8.1M	8.5M	8.9M	9.4M	9.9M	10.4M	10.9M	11.5M
Nuneaton and Bedworth	16.1M	17.0M	17.8M	18.7M	19.7M	20.7M	21.7M	22.8M	24.0M	25.2M	26.5M	27.8M	29.2M	30.7M	32.3M	33.9M
Rugby	7.9M	8.3M	8.7M	9.1M	9.6M	10.1M	10.6M	11.1M	11.7M	12.3M	12.9M	13.6M	14.2M	15.0M	15.7M	16.5M
Total	**30.5M**	**31.9M**	**33.3M**	**34.8M**	**36.3M**	**37.9M**	**39.6M**	**41.7M**	**43.8M**	**46.0M**	**48.3M**	**50.8M**	**53.3M**	**56.0M**	**58.9M**	**61.9M**

Unitary 2	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040
Stratford on Avon	9.9M	10.4M	10.9M	11.5M	12.1M	12.7M	13.3M	14.0M	14.7M	15.5M	16.2M	17.1M	17.9M	18.8M	19.8M	20.8M
Warwick	4.7M	5.0M	5.2M	5.5M	5.8M	6.1M	6.4M	6.7M	7.0M	7.4M	7.8M	8.2M	8.6M	9.0M	9.5M	10.0M
Total	**14.7M**	**15.4M**	**16.2M**	**17.0M**	**17.9M**	**18.8M**	**19.7M**	**20.7M**	**21.8M**	**22.9M**	**24.0M**	**25.2M**	**26.5M**	**27.9M**	**29.3M**	**30.8M**

Costs and Benefits of Both Models

4.60 A financial assessment has been undertaken of the potential savings and costs of the two options.

4.61 This section outlines the results from the financial assessment undertaken, plus, importantly, the associated assumptions behind each element of the calculations. The assumptions made are based on information provided so far, evidence where it exists and previous experience of undertaking similar exercises.

4.62 Therefore, these figures cannot be relied upon for implementation as accurate estimates. Further work would be required to establish this. This is an exercise to show relative costs and benefits, which can then give an indication of which option may be the most financially advantageous.

Senior Leadership

4.63 The estimated size and cost of the current leadership structures is illustrated below.

Table 30: Estimated size and cost of current leadership structures across each council using midpoint salaries[28]

Unitary 1	L0		L1	
	Posts	Cost	Posts	Cost
North Warwickshire	1	£145,739	2	£197,800
Nuneaton and Bedworth	1	£144,365	4	£448,820
Rugby	1	£136,525	1	£94,822
Stratford on Avon	1	£151,359	1	£120,272
Warwick	1	£171,635	2	£239,578
Warwickshire County Council	1	£251,065	4	£741,631
Total	**6**	**£1,000,688**	**14**	**£1,842,923**
Grand Total				**£2,843,611**

4.64 The potential leadership structure required by a single unitary has been estimated below across Level 0 and Level 1, based on leadership structures for typical comparator councils of the same population size.

4.65 The total costs have then been compared to the current position, in order to identify a saving. The same process has then been followed for the two unitary model.

Table 31: Potential leadership structure within a single unitary model

Single Unitary	L0	Cost	L1	Cost	New spend	Old spend	Savings
Single	1	£166,781	6	£731,394	£898,175	£2,843,611	£1,945,436

[28] Statement of Accounts for each Council

[29] "Ward Electorates" document provided by Warwickshire County Council, on local SharePoint.

Table 32 Potential leadership structure within a two-unitary model

Two Unitary	L0	Cost	L1	Cost	New spend	Old spend	Savings
North	1	£166,781	6	£731,394	£1,796,350	£2,843,611	£1,047,261
South	1	£166,781	6	£731,394			

4.66 This process indicates that the single county unitary would make the greatest level of savings in this area. However, it would reduce the strategic capacity available to the new council, whereas two councils would retain more strategic capacity across the total area.

4.67 The two unitary model would make a reduced amount of savings and would retain more strategic capacity.

4.68 The difference between the two models is a key cost of disaggregating County Council services. For example, an additional Executive Director post for Adult Social Care and an additional Executive Director post for Children's Services are both required for the two unitary model.

Table 33: Savings summary

Unitary Structure	Savings (£m)
Single Unitary	**£1.95**
Two Unitary	**£1.05**

Democratic Representation

4.69 Determining the appropriate number of councillors for each proposed unitary model is crucial, balancing democratic representation with financial considerations.

4.70 Table 34 presents current data points for each council, including the number of councillors, their total basic allowance cost, their total special responsibility allowance cost and the total number of electors within their jurisdiction.

Table 34: Demographic representation and expenditure.

Local Authority	Current No. of Councillors	Current BA Cost	Current SRA Cost	Electors per Councillor	Total Electors[29]
North Warwickshire	35	£201,000	£55,000	1,415	49,510
Nuneaton and Bedworth	38	£237,735	£51,587	2,701	102,639
Rugby	42	£325,799	£73,546	2,021	84,869
Stratford on Avon	41	£263,040	£99,513	2,692	110,500
Warwick	44	£305,656	£72,810	2,560	112,622
Warwickshire County Council	57	£694,358	£124,614	8,073	460,140
Total	**257**	**£2,027,589**	**£477,070**		**460,140**

4.71 The actual numbers of councillors moving forward for both models will be determined in due course. As noted under criteria 6 below, this is work in progress, and focus should be placed on the guidance of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and their three core areas of Strategic Leadership, Accountability, and Community Leadership. Two options for the future number of councillors have been proposed under criteria 6.

4.72 For the purposes of illustrating the financial impact of reducing councillor numbers, future councillor numbers have been estimated here using comparator councils. This should be treated as indicative only and in no way a formal proposal for the number of councillors that each model would have.

Single Unitary Model

4.73 Using the North Yorkshire Council model as a comparator (1 councillor per 5,374 electors), a single unitary authority in Warwickshire, with approximately 460,140 electors, would likely require a council size of around 87 councillors. The costs of this model have been compared to existing costs to create an estimate of savings. This has been done by taking an average cost of both basic allowances and special responsibility allowances per councillor based on Table 34above and multiplying out by the number of councillors in the new model and comparing to current costs.

Table 35: Single unitary proposed councillor structure

Single Unitary	Total Current Cllrs	Proposed number of Cllrs	Current BA Cost (£000s)	Proposed BA Cost (£000s)	Current SRA Cost (£000s)	Proposed SRA Cost (£000s)	Total Current Cost (£000s)	Proposed New Cost (£000s)	Saving (£000s)
North Warwickshire	257	87	201	580	55	153	2,505	733	1,771
Nuneaton and Bedworth			238		52				
Rugby			326		74				
Stratford on Avon			263		100				
Warwick			306		73				
Warwickshire County Council			694		125				
Total			**2,028**		**477**				

Two-Unitary Model

4.74 Using Cheshire East Council as a benchmark (1 councillor per 3,475 electors), a two-unitary model for Warwickshire would result in the following:

- **North unitary:** This unitary would need approximately 56 councillors.
- **South unitary:** This unitary would require approximately 65 councillors.

4.75 The costs of this model have been compared to existing costs to create an estimate of savings. This has been done by taking an average cost of both basic allowances and special responsibility allowances per councillor based on Table 35 above and multiplying out by the number of councillors in the new model and comparing to current costs.

Table 36: Two unitary proposed councillor structure.

Single Unitary	Total Current Cllrs	Proposed number of Cllrs	Current BA Cost (£000s)	Proposed BA Cost (£000s)	Current SRA Cost (£000s)	Proposed SRA Cost (£000s)	Total Current Cost (£000s)	Proposed New Cost (£000s)	Saving (£000s)
North War-wickshire	121	56	201	372	55	88	945	460	485
Nuneaton and Bedworth			238		52				
Rugby			326		74				
Stratford on Avon	85	65	263	435	100	132	741	567	174
Warwick			306		73				
Warwickshire County Council	57	-	694		125		819	£0	819
Total		**121**	**2,028**		**477**		**2,505**	**1,004**	**1,478**

Table 37: Saving summary

Unitary Structure	Savings (£m)
Single Unitary	**£1.77**
Two Unitary	**£1.48**

4.76 The single unitary model provides the greatest level of savings. However, there would be concerns here around a democratic deficit. A number of councillors would be removed, and there would be fewer individuals to whom ward concerns could be submitted.

4.77 A two unitary model provides a balance between amount of savings and providing greater representation to the people of Warwickshire.

Service savings

4.78 New unitary models can deliver savings in expenditure on services due to integration and increased economies of scale. For example, back-office services can achieve considerable efficiencies through consolidation into larger teams. This may also be the case when current District and Borough services are aggregated up, for example in waste collection, where a bigger council may have more purchasing power and be able to strike a better deal with the market, if the service is outsourced. In current County Council services that need to be disaggregated, the question becomes whether the single county unitary will continue to deliver savings, or whether an alternative approach adopted by the two unitary model would be able to deliver more savings.

4.79 In the assessment below, potential savings opportunities have been estimated based on the most recent budget data for comparable and relevant services within each council, from their submitted RA forms and statements of accounts.

Table 38: Service Expenditure

Service Area	North Warwickshire (£'000)[30]	Nuneaton and Bedworth (£'000)[31]	Rugby (£'000)[32]	Stratford on Avon (£'000)[33]	Warwick (£'000)[34]	Warwickshire County Council (£'000) [35]
Children's social services						150,150
Adult social services						234,632
Homelessness and Housing	7,358	5,912	3,164	3,415	6,102	4,734
Education / SEND						440,121
Corporate Services	923	2,590	2,156	2,500	1,853	8,415
Remaining Expenditure	6,862	26,156	13,641	16,783	31,255	55,187
Total Expenditure (cost of services)*	**15,143**	**34,658**	**18,961**	**21,465**	**39,210**	**989,120**

**Includes additional services such as fire services, highways and public health expenditure, which are not included in above lines, as savings may not be made in these areas.*

[30] 2023/24 Statement of Accounts
[31] 2023/24 Statement of Accounts
[32] Net Current Expenditure – 24/25 RA Forms
[33] Net Current Expenditure – 24/25 RA Forms
[34] Net Current Expenditure – 23/24 RA Forms
[35] Net Current Expenditure – 24/25 RA Forms

Table 39: Service optimisation savings estimations for the baseline financial model position, before the assumptions around single, and two unitary models are applied

Service Area	Method used	Saving Oppotunity (£000s)										
		Year 0 2027/28	Year 1 2028/29	Year 2 2029/30	Year 3 2030/31	Year 4 2031/32	Year 5 2032/33	Year 6 2033/34	Year 7 2034/35	Year 8 2035/36	Year 9 2036/37	Year 10 2037/38
Children's Social Services	Calculation based on managing demand		£2,000	£4,000	£6,000	£8,000	£8,240	£8,487	£8,742	£9,004	£9,274	£9,552
Adult Social Services	Calculation based on managing demand		£14,867	£29,733	£44,600	£45,938	£47,316	£48,736	£50,198	£51,704	£53,255	£54,852
Homelessness and Housing	7.5% reduction		£2,301	£2,370	£2,442	£2,515	£2,590	£2,668	£2,748	£2,830	£2,915	£3,003
Education and SEND	10% reduction to HST		£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010	£3,010
Corporate Services	13.0% reduction		£2,397	£2,469	£2,543	£2,619	£2,698	£2,779	£2,862	£2,948	£3,036	£3,127
Remaining Expenditure	7.5% reduction		£11,241	£11,579	£11,926	£12,284	£12,652	£13,032	£13,423	£13,825	£14,240	£14,667
Total Savings Opportunity			**£35,816**	**£53,161**	**£70,520**	**£74,366**	**£76,506**	**£78,711**	**£80,982**	**£83,321**	**£85,731**	**£88,212**
Cumulative Savings Opportunity			**£35,816**	**£88,977**	**£159,497**	**£233,863**	**£310,369**	**£389,080**	**£470,062**	**£553,383**	**£639,114**	**£727,326**

Assumptions for Children's Social Services:

- Annual expenditure reduction taken from Peopletoo consultancy report[36] (£8m).
- Assumed gradual annual recurrent savings achieved in £2m increments.
- Assumed 3% inflationary increase when £8m total saving achieved.

Assumptions for Adult Social Services:

- Annual expenditure reduction taken from Peopletoo consultancy report[37] £44.6m).
- Assumed gradual annual recurrent savings in equal increments to reach £44.6m in three years.
- Assumed 3% inflationary increase when £44.6m saving achieved.

Assumptions for education and SEND:

- The 10% reduction figure in the table is only applied to the Home to School Transport (HST) element of the education and SEND Budget. This is based on knowledge of other councils' savings programmes in this area that seek to promote independent means of travel to school, using a travel trainer approach, which can be more easily operated at the two-unitary level.
- Warwickshire County Council report stated that the total budget for HST for 23/24 was £30.1m[38] .

Assumptions for homelessness and housing, corporate services and remaining expenditure:

- The initial percentage reduction was applied to service expenditure as in Table 26 to provide the year 1 savings figure.
- From there, assumed an inflationary savings increase of 3%.

Assumptions for single and two unitary models for remaining expenditure and consolidation of back-office functions:

- Savings are assumed to start from the 28/29 financial year, when the unitary model is in place. Costs are assumed to start from the 27/28 financial year, in readiness for unitarisation.
- The single unitary model is assumed to generate the highest level of savings for these functions due to greater economies of scale. The full 100% savings figure has therefore been used.
- The two unitary model is likely to achieve lower savings than the single unitary model due to the realisation of fewer economies of scale and costs of disaggregation. A figure of 83% of the total saving has therefore been used.

Assumptions for single and two unitary models for remaining demand led functions (e.g. ASC, CSC, SEND, homelessness):

- In these areas, the two unitary model is likely to create more financial savings as it supports the management of demand more effectively with a local, place-based, community focused, early intervention and place-based model.
- Savings are presented at 100% for the single unitary model, encompassing all savings currently calculated.

[36]Warwickshire LGR Support – ASC and Children Services Analysis to Inform the Two Unitary Decision, June 2025 by Peopletoo
[27]Warwickshire LGR Support – ASC and Children Services Analysis to Inform the Two Unitary Decision, June 2025 by Peopletoo
[38] Cabinet Report - Member Working Group – Home to School Transport

- Work has been done to estimate a percentage difference between county-level and smaller unitary provision. This has been estimated as 8.5%, based on some work provided by the consultancy People Too showing a difference in unit costs of this scale between councils of different types and sizes. A disaggregation cost has also been estimated at 3.5%.
- Therefore, the two unitary model has been estimated at delivering 105% of the savings, incorporating both the increase in savings (8.5%) and the cost of disaggregation (3.5%).

Assumptions for costs:

- All cost figures are based on experience of previous mergers of public sector bodies and the level of costs assumed, scaled for the size of the creation of the new organisations in the three options. Please note that estimating costs is an inexact science due to lack of knowledge of costs of IT systems etc in every council, so these figures should be considered as estimates. The cost figures are also dependent on the approach to implementation that is taken and in particular the pace and scale of change. If the transition process is longer, then the costs reduce and can be managed over time.
- A more granular assessment of these areas will be carried out as part of subsequent implementation planning, in which operational costs, service delivery models, and potential areas for consolidation or streamlining will be refined.

Summary of Findings

4.80 This section provides a consolidated overview of the costs and benefits. It is important to note that these cost and savings estimations are based on assumptions and not on forecasted figures. The cost breakdowns differentiate between recurrent and non-recurrent expenses.

4.81 The majority of costs are non-recurrent, for example those costs associated with an enhanced PMO, redundancies, and the gradual disaggregation of estates and facilities. These costs have been phased over the transition period to reflect the implementation of the new unitary structure. The projected savings, however, are considered recurrent year on year.

4.82 The following tables show the restructure costs (non-recurrent) and savings (recurrent) calculated using the above assumptions.

Table 40: Single Unitary financial analysis

Analysis - Single Unitary

Restructure Costs (£'000)	27/28	28/29	29/30
Leadership Redundancies (L0-L2)	£1,235	£0	£0
Delivery Support (PMO)	£1,587	£856	£490
Legal/ DD	£600	£0	£0
Comms and Engagement	£150	£150	£0
OD/Culture	£640	£160	£0
Procurement/Contracts	£600	£0	£0
Finance (inc. ledger)	£300	£0	£0
Estates Consolidation	£750	£750	£0
IM&T	£7,875	£5,250	£0
Total	**£13,737**	**£7,166**	**£490**

Savings (£'000)	27/28	28/29	29/30
Elections	-	£350	£350
Senior Leadership (L0-L2)	-	£1,945	£1,945
Councillors	-	£1,771	£1,771
Corporate (combined)	-	£2,397	£2,469
Service Delivery (Efficiencies)	-	£33,149	£50,692
Total	£0	£39,883	£57,228

Table 41: Two Unitary financial analysis

Analysis - Two Unitary

Restructure Costs (£'000)	27/28	28/29	29/30
Leadership Redundancies (L0-L2)	£570	£0	£0
Delivery Support (PMO)	£2,590	£1,420	£835
Legal/ DD	£700	£0	£0
Comms and Engagement	£125	£125	£0
OD/Culture	£480	£120	£0
Procurement/Contracts	£450	£0	£0
Finance (inc. ledger)	£250	£0	£0
Estates Consolidation	£625	£625	£0
IM&T	£9,135	£6,090	£0
Total	**£14,925**	**£8,380**	**£835**

Savings (£'000)	27/28	28/29	29/30
Elections	-	£350	£350
Senior Leadership (L0-L2)	-	£1,047	£1,047
Councillors	-	£1,478	£1,478
Corporate (combined)	-	£1,989	£2,049
Service Delivery (Efficiencies)	-	£32,617	£50,680
Total	£0	£37,482	£55,604

Implications

4.83 Table 42 shows the costs and savings for all unitary models..

Table 42: Cost and Savings Summary

Cost and Savings Summary (£'000)

Restructure Costs	27/28	28/29	29/30
Single Unitary	£13,737	£7,166	£490
Two Unitary	£14,925	£8,380	£835

Savings	27/28	28/29	29/30
Single Unitary	£0	£39,883	£57,228
Two Unitary	£0	£37,482	£55,604

Net Savings	27/28	28/29	29/30
Single Unitary	-	£32,717	£56,737
Two Unitary	-	£29,102	£54,769

4.85 Costs are lower, both in terms of transition and disaggregation costs, and the single unitary model produces higher economies of scale in back offices and other services which are aggregated.

4.86 Therefore, the single county unitary model has been ranked higher against this criterion.

	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
Rank Score	**2nd Place**	**1st Place**

4.87 However, it should be noted that the two unitary model also generates significant savings.

4.88 This is because of the significant savings generated by tackling demand in services such as Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Home to School Transport. These savings are projected to be generated by the place-based and community-focused early intervention and prevention approach that would be taken by two unitaries. The current county-led approach has not been successful in changing the demand curves for these services. A new approach is required.

4.89 As evidenced above in the financial position section, the increasing deficits as a result of high demand services like social care and SEND is the biggest financial risk factor for the county of Warwickshire. The two-unitary approach addresses this risk the most.

4.90 Please note that the costs of disaggregation have been built into the financial methodology above by reducing the potential savings for the two unitary model, as described in the assumptions.

Upside potential if services are fully transformed

4.91 The figures quoted in the analysis above for Children's Social Care and Adults Social Care are based on potential savings in the short-term. They do not include the potential upside resulting from further Peopletoo modelling.

4.92 This modelling projects an additional potential saving of £30m over five years, which is additional to the savings previously identified and represents the optimistic outcome achievable under a best-case scenario.

Should these additional savings be realised, the two unitary model would demonstrate substantially superior financial efficiency when compared to the single county unitary model.

5. Criteria 3: Unitary Structures Must Prioritise the Delivery of High Quality and Sustainable Public Services to Citizens.

Summary

5.1 Local government reorganisation is an opportunity to reshape the way councils serve their communities. Two new councils would have the scale and capacity to deliver modern, transformed services. Specifically, the two unitary model will transform services by taking the following approach:

✔ **Place focused and locally responsive:** The model enables services to be shaped around real community needs and priorities, with more tailored solutions.

✔ **Community focus:** The two unitaries will develop a new relationship between communities, citizens and the state, by taking a strengths-based, early intervention and prevention approach, bolstering the voluntary sector and creating stronger community engagement.

✔ **Integrated and effective:** The new councils will bring county and district responsibilities together and redesign services around the customer, making them easier to access and more efficient.

✔ **Minimise risk of disaggregation:** By taking a flexible approach, such as creating a Joint Board for Safeguarding in the transition period, risk can be reduced. The model also aggregates up existing effective Borough and District services, building on strengths while preserving local service models.

5.2 The disadvantages of the single unitary are as follows:

✘ **Too big:** A single county unitary's organisational structures and processes could become too complicated and cumbersome.

✘ A bigger organisation may find, **it more difficult,** for example, to bring about transformational change by building new sets of relationships with residents and the community and voluntary sector.

5.3 Therefore, the two unitary option has been ranked as the best against this criterion. This section of the Business Case explores the potential service models and evidence in a number of key service areas.

General approach to service transformation

5.4 The two unitary model can transform public services for a generation. The two new councils would:

- Pursue a service model of early intervention and prevention, building on local identity, working closely with the voluntary and community sector, and therefore reducing demand for services
- Build closer relationships with residents, families, young people and schools to ensure young and old alike can stay within their communities for as long as possible
- Develop the local market and build micro providers, ensuring the right capacity at the right price and the right quality
- Bring together key services such as Housing, Public Health, Leisure, Green Spaces and Social Care to ensure maximisation of community assets and a place-based approach to prevention and early intervention
- Use rich data sources from across revenues, benefits, social care and health, to develop predictive analytics, targeting intervention activity to prevent escalation across social care and health
- Develop the online offer, ensuring better information and signposting pre and at contact with the new authorities

5.5 Specifically, the two unitary model will prioritise communities as a key asset to promote independence and empower people to seek support. All successful prevention strategies rely on these principles. This involves identifying the breadth of community resources that can be accessed to help reduce and prevent many common reasons for ultimately requiring specialist intervention and understanding what is needed on a 'place' basis. The two unitary model can address the specific needs and demographics of each population, undertaking targeted resource allocation, ensuring funding reaches organisations working within specific socioeconomic contexts. Furthermore, the two new councils can focus on workforces that connect communities, investing in local staff in local towns and villages. Decisions will be made by senior leaders and members who are closer to front line services, and therefore more able to trust and empower their teams.

5.6 This approach would build on the strengths of the existing District and Borough councils, leveraging community partnerships and strategic partnerships. For example, the NHS is pursuing a strategy of neighbourhood health, building local integrated hubs in local communities, and aiming to move from a model of crisis to one of prevention. The two-unitary model, in understanding local neighbourhoods and communities better, can do more to facilitate this strategy, as the network of existing Borough and District Council services shows.

5.7 This is important. The demographics of the South and North of the county are clearly quite different, and therefore require tailored solutions. Moreover, there is also huge variation in the capacity, cost and quality of commissioned services, supporting the most vulnerable citizens across the County.

5.8 There is evidence that this kind of approach can be delivered more successfully by a two unitary model. People Too indicate that national benchmark data indicates that unitary authorities with a population of 350k and below, perform better in terms of key areas of expenditure across Adult Social Care and Children's Social care, as depicted in Table 43 below.

Table 43: Unit Costs

Average unit costs	S251 LAC unit cost	S251 residential unit cost	S251 SEN unit cost	Nursing unit cost	Residential unit cost	Residential & Nursing unit cost
Population 500-700k	**£1,949**	**£7,406**	**£123**	**£1,087**	**£1,160**	**£1,138**
Population 350-500k	**£1,946**	**£8,465**	**£118**	**£1,151**	**£1,209**	**£1,166**
Population 250-350k	**£1,718**	**£6,772**	**£96**	**£1,006**	**£1,028**	**£1,023**
Population <250k	**£1,759**	**£7,220**	**£100**	**£1,044**	**£1,059**	**£1,048**

Data source: Peopletoo analysis, taken from 2023/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) and ASCFR (Adult Social Care Financial Returns refer to Appendix A)

5.9 The two new unitaries fall into the green population band highlighted in the table. The single county unitary falls into the orange band highlighted in the table. Therefore, it could be concluded that the two unitary model will be able to deliver services more cheaply than the single county unitary.

5.10 It is not just the financial case. The County Council state that there are major challenges in areas such as special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). According to the written Statement of Action following its Joint Area SEND inspection in Sept 2021, there is a real need to rebuild the trust of parents, carers and schools. This is similar for the County's looked after children, if you consider that 44% (according to data provided by the County Council), are placed outside of the County.

5.11 In relation to adult social care (ASC), the County Council are higher users of residential services in comparison to their nearest NHS neighbours (ASCFR recognised benchmark grouping), and there appear to be capacity issues in relation to the provision of domiciliary care and extra care services, both crucial to keeping vulnerable older people within their own homes and communities.

5.12 The risk with one unitary is that adults and children's services continue as they are, with the risks outlined above.

5.13 The system needs real transformation, which only the establishment of two new unitary authorities can provide, allowing for laser focus on the distinct priorities between the North and South.

Improving outcomes

5.14 As a result of the approach outlined above, the two-unitary model will have a significant positive impact on outcomes for the people of Warwickshire. The following outcomes could be improved:

- More people maintain their independence and potentially delay or prevent the need for more intensive or long-term care.
- More people are enabled to maintain or regain their independence in daily living activities, such as personal care, mobility, and accessing the community.
- Individuals experience a better overall quality of life, including increased happiness, satisfaction, and engagement in meaningful activities.
- People can connect with others, participate in social activities, and maintain meaningful relationships, reducing social isolation.
- Individuals have a positive experience with the care and support they receive, feeling respected, empowered, and involved in decisions about their care.
- More young people stay together with their families and have stable and loving homes,
- More children are safe both at home and in the community.
- More children have positive educational and health outcomes.
- Housing options and pathways that are joined up and support better outcomes for residents, ensuring individuals, families and communities thrive.

General approach to disaggregation

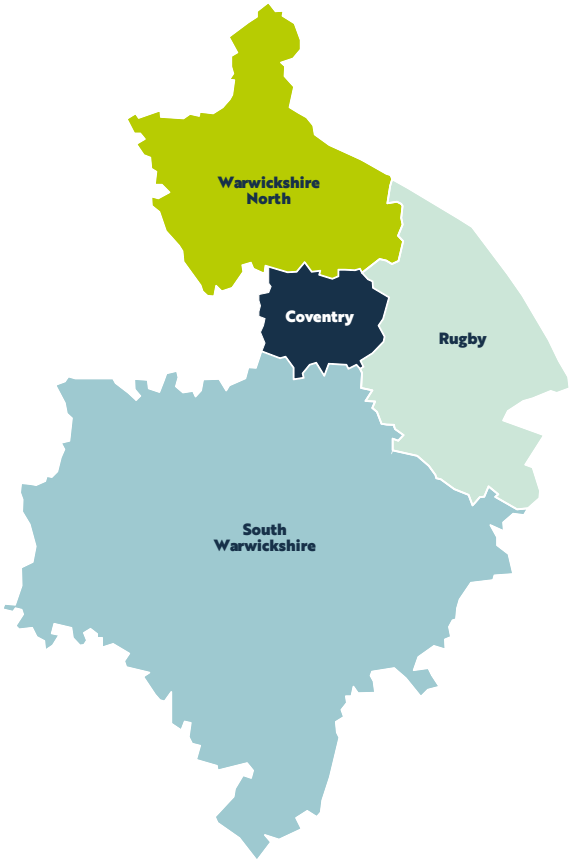
5.15 The potential benefits of disaggregating County Council services are clear and are outlined above, in terms of allowing a more locally driven approach that can manage demand. These benefits significantly outweigh the potential costs.

5.16 The risks of such an approach must be acknowledged and mitigated. The two-unitary model would take a flexible approach to determining the right scale for each individual function, making sure that the risks of disaggregation are minimised. As will be defined in this section, some functions will be disaggregated to the individual unitary level, to pursue a service model of early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and changing the demand curve for expensive statutory services.

5.17 For these services, when structure charts are reviewed, many county teams are already aligned on geographic footprints that would readily align to two new councils. There would only be a handful of posts that may need to be duplicated. The potential benefits of the more local approach would significantly outweigh this extra investment. This is factored into the financial assessment outlined above.

5.18 The following maps demonstrate how many services work on a local footprint already:

Services operating on a North / South footprint



Health and wellbeing partnerships, community partnerships, Health (ICB and Foundation Trusts) and country parks all currently operate on a North/ South and Rugby footprint.

Services operating on a District and Borough footprint:



- Family first Children's pathfinder
- Education entitlement
- SEND services
- Waste & recycling management
- Early help/family support
- Local Transport Plan
- Community safety partnerships
- Creating Opportunity plans
- Police area teams

5.19 The process of disaggregation would be supported by the way in which services often split on North-South lines already.

5.20 In terms of third-party contracts, IT systems and such factors: these could be shared between councils on a partnership basis if required. An assumption has been made in the financial assessment above on some disaggregation costs that would be required from, for example, additional IT systems for two councils.

5.21 There are some functions which would benefit from size and scale. In a two unitary model, these functions would be retained at the county level through a shared service approach. Such functions would include existing countywide services like Fire and Rescue, which could be managed through a Joint Committee. In addition, a joint Safeguarding Board could be adopted, as is the case in other areas following reorganisation, such as Northamptonshire's joint children's safeguarding board, or Cumbria's joint adults safeguarding board. These would be decisions ultimately for the new councils.

5.22 This approach could use section 113 agreements between the councils to create joint units with staff working across both councils. There are many examples of these arrangements in the current local government landscape. Finances could be carefully worked through and either operated on a per capita basis where appropriate, or on the basis of the location of demand.

5.23 This flexible model described here would provide the right functions at the right scale and give the two unitary model more chance of managing demand effectively. Overall, it is easier for two councils to scale up and share services, than it is for a single bigger council to get the benefits of localism and understanding place.

5.24 This section now provides some examples of services and how they would be operated under a two unitary model.

Adult Social Care

Current Demand

5.25 Warwickshire is grappling with a substantial and escalating challenge in the provision of adult social care, driven primarily by its aging population and increasing demand for long-term care services. The demographic shift is particularly acute in areas like Stratford-upon-Avon, where a significant 25% of the population is aged 65 and over, considerably exceeding the regional average of 21%. This demographic pressure translates into a substantial current demand: as of 2023/24, Warwickshire provided support to 4,592 older people, consuming 35% of the annual budget allocated to adult social care.

5.26 This support is delivered through a mix of care settings, with 2,322 individuals residing in residential or nursing homes and another 2,481 receiving domiciliary care services.

5.27 Further compounding the issue is the concerning state of some care facilities; a significant 18% of Warwickshire's care homes currently require improvement, raising serious questions about the quality and consistency of care available to this vulnerable and growing population segment. The overall scale of the need is substantial, with over 8,845 individuals currently reliant on social care support across the county. Looking ahead, projections paint an even more demanding picture: the over-65 population is projected to increase to 24% by 2030[39], representing a substantial increase in demand for services.

5.28 This escalating demand is directly reflected in the financial planning of Warwickshire County Council. The Council's MTFS for 2025/26 to 2029/30, approved in February 2025, allocates a substantial £46.8 million over the next five years specifically to address the growing pressures within adult social care. This investment supplements the existing funding generated by the 2% social care precept on Council Tax, which currently yields approximately £7.9 million annually.

5.29 The projected growth in demand is stark: by 2030, the Council anticipates a 30% increase in residents aged 75 and over compared to 2020 figures, alongside a 10% increase in the number of 16–64-year-olds with moderate or severe learning disabilities. These projections underscore the significant and multifaceted nature of the challenge. The financial implications are already evident, with adult social care spending rising by a 39.8% in the last five years, reaching £207 million in the last financial year (FY22/23). This substantial increase highlights the urgent need for proactive and comprehensive strategies to address the growing demand and ensure the provision of high-quality, sustainable social care services for Warwickshire's residents.

[39] Warwickshire Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2030
https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/s38811/Appendix 1 for Adult Social Care Strategy.pdf

Proposed Future Model

5.30 The overall driving force for the model would be to pursue a service model of strategic commissioning, early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and being responsive to place. This approach will:

- Provide practical support to people at risk with issues such as housing, debt, employment, health, and domestic abuse.
- Build on community relationships and capacity, focusing upon factors such as mobility, social connectedness and financial wellbeing, enabling people to thrive in their own communities.
- Rely on local staff rooted in local communities to signpost residents to local sources of help and local community assets, such as village halls or volunteer groups.
- Provide information about sources of support to those who may require care.
- Focus on digital and technology focused solutions to support people to stay at home.
- Focus on strengthening the reablement offer, helping people regain their independence, in particular by building a broad-based offer linked into various forms of support to build independence, such as focusing on reducing social isolation.
- Taking a strengths-based approach to social work, focusing on what people can do and supporting those capabilities.
- Promote independence and enablement with particular client groups such as those with mental health issues or learning disabilities.
- Forge strong partnerships with the voluntary sector, community groups, and local health partners, including anchoring existing Places and Health and Wellbeing partnerships.
- Develop the micro provider market to build capacity and support self-funders.
- Work with the market to develop more extra care provision across the county to support older people within their communities.
- Work with the market to develop more of the right housing and support provision for working age adults, keeping people within the county and out of residential care.
- Take a strategic commissioning approach with housing to help people to live independently for longer, including developing affordable housing, which is key for the social care workforce. For example, carers in South Warwickshire need assistance and cannot rely on the private rented market due to high costs and low wages.

5.31 In support of this approach, the District Councils Network[40] recommends that ASC is redesigned by capitalising on the strengths of districts and appropriately sized unitaries, their local knowledge and focus on preventative measures. Councils which achieve the right balance between scale and closeness to the community, with their intimate community knowledge, are ideally positioned to excel in this redesigned approach.

5.32 A locally led approach, which leverages community relationships and place-based capacity, unlocks new interventions and solutions by focusing upon factors such as mobility, social connectedness and financial wellbeing, supporting particularly those at risk of requiring a nursing or residential placement, or a mental health placement. A two unitary model would build on a system-wide prevention partnership model, enabling people to thrive in their own communities and be able to self-serve or, at the point of need seek earlier support from

[40] The power of prevention and place in new unitary councils https://www.districtcouncils.info/wp-content/uploads/Impower-DCN-ASC-LGR-Report-2025-FINAL-compressed-version.pdf

community-based interventions and universal front door opportunities. Local staff rooted in communities are best placed to undertake this signposting and understand the local community assets, be that the local parishes, village halls or volunteer groups, GP surgeries, or other service hubs. Local knowledge and a local focus allow for better signposting and access to information to these kinds of services, which are key for demand reduction. This an approach would also include implementing other best practices such as asset-based community development, community health champions, and neighbourhood action grants.

5.33 The success of this model hinges on stakeholder support and forging strong partnerships with the voluntary sector, community groups, and local health partners. A single unitary structure would find it challenging to develop meaningful local partnerships due to being spread over a larger geographical footprint. There are also the logistical challenges that accompany this, whereas smaller unitary structures may find it easier to leverage existing local partnerships and make use of community outreach. Other key partnerships include the police and wider health system services, including the GPs / Primary Care Networks and hospital trusts. Day to day operations are managed on a more local basis at neighbourhood level in these services, and a two-unitary model would be closer to these services. Stronger partnerships with these stakeholders would result in better outcomes.

5.34 A two-unitary model would facilitate more efficient data sharing and cooperation between social care and housing for improved outcomes due to these services sharing similar footprints, early prevention and enhanced market optimisation that is driven by a better understanding the local needs.
There are case studies that indicate that this kind of approach can have an impact:

Case Study: Cross-Cutting Social Care, Greenwich Integrated Care[41]:

5.35 Social and healthcare teams in Greenwich were engaged through workshops to redesign the service; they mapped pathways and identified gaps, blockages and bottlenecks. A multi-professional group then developed the (as was) new model. This included single initial point of access for referrals and immediate response to patient need, a Joint Emergency Team (JET) to provide a fast immediate response to prevent hospital admission, a Hospital Intervention Discharge team to provide speedy discharge to intermediate or social care and three Community Assessment and Rehabilitation teams (CARs) providing up to 6 weeks rehab and on-going social care. Additionally, flow through intermediate care beds was jointly managed via a collective KPI and teams of nurses, physiotherapists, OTs, social workers and care managers were co-located.

5.36 The impact of this service redesign was significant. In year one, admissions to social care reduced by 35%. After reablement, over 60% people required no care packages. This saved the Local Authority £900k. The number of avoided admissions continues to increase year-on-year. There was a decrease in emergency admissions for people with conditions that could be treated in the community. An increased number of people aged 65+ stayed at home following discharge from hospital through a reablement intervention and remained at home 91 days later. Over 2 years there was an 8% reduction each year in the number of people with a social care package. There was also a 7% reduction in the number of people supported in long-term care placements throughout the year.

5.37 Furthermore, a report by the Local Government Association in 2024 highlighted through studies that every £1 spent on prevention can save over £3.17 in downstream costs[42].

[41] Integrated Care Value Case - Greenwich
https://www2.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/greenwich-getting-back-yo-11d.pdf

[42] LGA: Investing in preventative support can save more than £3 for every pound spent
https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/investing-preventative-support-can-save-more-ps3-every-pound-spent

5.38 The City of York Council for example has implemented several community-based initiatives, including local area co-ordination, and have estimated that this work has resulted in £6.8m of costs prevented in 2023 (£4.9m of which would have been attributable to adult social care). This proactive approach contributes to a healthier population and a more sustainable social care system.

5.39 Please note that both Greenwich and York have similar population sizes to the proposed two unitaries for Warwickshire of between 200,000 and 300,000 each. This further makes the point that medium sized authorities are able to transform services by taking a more local, community focused approach.

Operating Model

5.40 The top priorities for the Adult Social Care Operating Model would be as follows:

- **Shift from residential to community-based support:** Warwickshire has significantly higher reliance on residential/nursing placements vs. comparators.
- **Expand domiciliary and extra care capacity** to reduce demand for residential placements.
- **Strengthen prevention & reablement** – embed "Home First" pathways, better triage, community networks.
- **Develop micro-provider markets** in rural areas to address capacity/access gaps.
- **Digital-first services:** resident care accounts, online assessments, AI-enabled triage.
- **Carer support** – respite, training, carer navigators.
- **Workforce sustainability** – reduce agency reliance, build local recruitment pipelines, embed strength-based practice.
- **Integration with NHS** – Section 75 agreements for hospital discharge, reablement, intermediate care.

5.41 The operating model will be community-based, preventative, and digitally enabled, consistent with the Government's 10-Year Health Plan. Core features are shown in the diagram below:



Key features are shown in the diagram below:



Structural Considerations

5.42 The two-unitary model would take a flexible approach to determining the right scale for each individual function. The overall driving force for this model would be to pursue a service model of early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and changing the demand curve for expensive statutory services. For this reason, the following Adult Social Care functions would be disaggregated to the individual unitary level:

- Early Help & Prevention
- Social Work for Vulnerable Adults
- Carers' Support
- Commissioning and market management

There are some functions which would benefit from size and scale. In a two unitary model, these functions would be retained at the county level through a shared service approach:

- Safeguarding

This flexible model would provide the right functions at the right scale and give the two unitary model more chance of managing demand effectively.

5.43 In terms of disaggregation, a small number of additional roles would be required, such as an Executive Director, and some additional senior staff overseeing commissioning, public health, prevention and social work. However, we would also assume that the roles and responsibilities, and therefore salaries, would reduce in the two unitary scenario also. This would be reflective of the scale of the role. For example, in a single unitary an Executive Director would be responsible for the delivery of social care for a larger population footprint, compared to that in a single unitary where the role and remit is split. An Executive Director in a smaller unitary can also oversee a greater breadth of services. Therefore, fewer roles may be required. As a result, some disaggregation cost has been built into the financial analysis above. This includes a new case management system which may be required for one of the new authorities.

Children's Services

Current demand

5.44 Warwickshire County Council faces significant demand for children's services, despite a referral rate lower than national and regional averages. The county's substantial child population of approximately 119,153 (0-17 years) constitutes roughly one-fifth of the total population, placing considerable pressure on existing resources. The increase in safeguarding contacts from 16,344 in 2022/23 to 17,907 in 2023/24 underscores this growing need. Furthermore, the number of children in need with plans rose from 2698 to 2840 during the same period, and a total of 805 children were in the care system in 2023/24, highlighting a substantial requirement for support and resources. The initiation of 5994 statutory social care assessments in 2023/24 further emphasizes the scale of demand .

5.45 This demand is greater in Warwickshire than its comparators, with a rate of 64 per 10,000 population compared to a statistical neighbour average of 55 per 10,000 population, as shown in the table below.

Table 44: Number of children in care[44]

Year	Number of looked after children at 31st March per 10,000			
	Warwickshire	West Midlands	England	Statistical neighbours
2020	65	83	68	
2021	73	86	69	
2022	69	88	70	
2023	64	90	70	
2024	64	90	70	55

5.46 While recent safeguarding audits reveal a positive trend, with approximately 60% of provision graded as 'good', 40% require improvement, indicating areas needing attention and resource allocation. This highlights the need for ongoing investment and strategic planning to address these service gaps and ensure the provision of high-quality care. The council's planned £8.1m investment in children's social care services for 2025/26, including £5.5m for increased placement costs and demand, reflects a recognition of these pressures. This substantial investment, alongside a further £7.4m allocated to home-to-school transport, demonstrates a commitment to meeting the escalating demands and costs within the children's services sector. The large budget allocated to Children's Services within the council itself reflects the extensive statutory duties and high level of regulation in this critical area.

[43] Warwickshire Safeguarding Annual Report 2023-24 https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/images/downloads/Annual_Reports/WS_Annual_Report_-_2023-2024_v21pdf.pdf

[44] Children looked after in England including adoption: 2023 to 2024 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2023-to-2024

5.47 Across the country, local authorities are facing significant challenges in children's services due to a 17.5% budget reduction between 2009/10 and 2019/20 which has led to a 35% decrease in non-statutory children's services spending, impacting preventative services. Furthermore, a lack of reliable data hinders strategic planning for placements. Existing data inadequately captures true demand, lacks a clear typology of needs, and fails to effectively link placement and cost data, making it difficult to quantify supply gaps and demonstrate the true cost of insufficient provision. The current market dynamic, where LAs compete fiercely for limited placements, rather than providers competing for clients, exacerbates the problem.

Proposed Future Model

5.48 The overall driving force for this model would be to pursue a service model of early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and changing the demand curve for expensive statutory services.

5.49 The service model adopted by the two unitary authorities would:

- Build trusting relationships with families at risk at an early stage.
- Provide practical support to families at risk with issues such as parenting support, housing, debt, employment, and health.
- Undertake outreach with families at risk in a proactive manner.
- Build community relationships and capacity, focusing upon factors such as social connectedness and financial wellbeing, enabling people to thrive in their own communities.
- Rely on local staff rooted in local communities to signpost families to local sources of help, such as volunteer groups or youth services.
- Ensure that help from different agencies and sources wraps around the whole family, helping them to navigate the system.
- ·Work with the market and partners to develop the right kinds of housing support to keep children in care (where applicable) closer to their communities, creating stable communities in which individuals and families can thrive, such as responding to the recent changes around Ofsted registration for supported housing for young people accommodated under section 17.

5.50 This approach will lead to better outcomes for children as they have a greater likelihood of staying at home with their families with greater levels of tailored support. Decisions can be made closer to the family and young person, with a real knowledge of their circumstances. A two-unitary model facilitates making informed decisions around packages of support for young people, based on their strengths and those of their families, and the community infrastructure around them. This then has positive financial consequences, as expensive care placements for children and young people can be avoided.

Operating Model

5.51 The top priorities for the Operating Model would be as follows::

- Reduce Children Looked After (CLA) rate: Warwickshire at 64/10k vs. Statistical Neighbour average 55/10k.
- Cut out-of-county placements: currently 44% of CLA placed outside Warwickshire.
- Family Help / Kinship-first model: develop Family Help hubs, prioritise kinship placements.
- In-house fostering expansion: reduce reliance on high-cost external placements.
- Safeguarding capacity: robust local MACPTs.
- Inspection improvement: align with ILACS recommendations, maintain Ofsted "Good" progress.

5.52 The operating model will be community-based, preventative, and digitally enabled. Core features are shown in the diagram below:

Family Hubs and Early Intervention

Creation of Family Help hubs across localities, offering early support to families before escalation; kinship-first approach to reduce children entering care.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding

Local MACPTs ensuring swift, joined-up responses to safeguarding risks, aligned to statutory thresholds.

Placements & Performance

Kinship, fostering and adoption prioritised; expand in-house fostering, joint regional commissioning of high-cost residential placements; stability and permanence planning from the outset.

Education & Inclusion

Strong partnership with schools and health; embed inclusion in mainstream schools; align Family Hubs and SEND support to improve outcomes locally.

Digital-First & Driven

Including AI-enabled solutions for information, advice and certain assessment points e.g. SEND; and assistive technologies to support independence.

Workforce Practise Development

Single practise model across localities (e.g. strengths-based, trama-informed); improve recruitment/retention of social workers and foster carers; shared training and stanards.

Prevention & Community Partnerships

Place-based working with VCS, schools, housing, and health partners; locally commissioned early help and edge-of-care services; focus on reducing demand for statutory intervention.

Children, Families & Carer Voice

Structured co-production with children, young people and families; clear Local Offer; transparent communication to rebuild trust, especially with SEND parents.

Structural Considerations

5.53 The two-unitary model would take a flexible approach to determining the right scale for each individual function.

The overall driving force for this model would be to pursue a service model of early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and changing the demand curve for expensive statutory services.

5.54 For this reason, the following Children's Social Care functions would be disaggregated to the individual unitary level:

- Targeted Early Help
- Children in need and child protection
- Children in Care and care leavers
- School Transport
- Commissioning and market management

5.55 There are some functions which would benefit from size and scale. In a two unitary model, these functions would be retained at the county level through a shared service approach:

- Safeguarding
- Potentially some specialist services for children with disabilities

5.56 This flexible model would provide the right functions at the right scale and give the two unitary model more chance of managing demand effectively.

5.57 In terms of disaggregation, the position would be exactly the same as for Adult Social Care, outlined in the previous section. A small number of additional roles would be required, such as an Executive Director, and some additional senior staff overseeing commissioning, early help and social work. However, the roles and responsibilities, and therefore salaries, would reduce in the two unitary scenario. Therefore, some disaggregation cost has been built into the financial analysis above. This includes a new case management system which may be required for one of the new authorities.

SEND

Current Demand

5.58 Warwickshire's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services are facing significant challenges due to a rapidly growing demand. The projected increase in children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans to approximately 7,500 by 2027/28 highlights a substantial rise in need across the county. While the number of children effectively supported within mainstream provision has increased (from 1,430 in 2021 to 2,132 in 2024), the number in special school settings has also risen (from 1,544 to 1,723), indicating a continued strain on resources. Fluctuations in independent provision further complicate the situation .

5.59 These escalating demands are compounded by significant financial pressures. Reports from the National Audit Office, the Local Government Association, and the County Council Network all highlight the unsustainable nature of current SEND provision, extending beyond educational costs to encompass related expenses such as home-to-school transport. Warwickshire is committed to working within its existing resources while actively advocating for increased government funding. Several key areas require immediate attention: the need for more SEND Resourced Provisions; consistent delays in EHC plan completion (exceeding the 20-week target) and annual review decisions (exceeding the four-week target); escalating costs exceeding allocated budgets; and the need for improved communication with families, children, young people, and professionals.

5.60 Further challenges include addressing attendance issues, emotionally based school avoidance, the needs of children with multiple vulnerabilities requiring multi-agency support, insufficient health visiting checks impacting early identification, lengthy waiting lists for autism and ADHD diagnoses (exceeding 18 weeks), and the need for more realistic transition and preparation packages for adulthood. These multifaceted issues necessitate a comprehensive and strategic approach to ensure sustainable and effective SEND provision in Warwickshire.

Proposed Future Model

5.61 A two-unitary model enables tailored support for specific community needs and fostering stronger partnerships. This approach strengthens community resilience and connection by enabling local solutions to local issues. The following approach would be taken:

- Closer engagement with families and schools by more appropriately sized authorities can build stronger trust with parents, improve co-production, and target awareness where it is weakest, building confidence in the mainstream offer for children with SEND.
- A specific understanding of local circumstances and the specific families and community support infrastructure is required for the delivery of better outcomes, paired with close connections to the health, education and housing services.
- Decisions can be made closer to the family and young person, with a real knowledge of their circumstances.
- Understand, develop and leverage community networks, enhancing opportunities for locally led support. Children and young people requiring SEND provision could be more easily referred to a wider range of areas and services which may be able to offer them a more suitable service.
- Review SEND support services to meet demand and need within the local area.

[45] SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2029
https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/send-resources/send-inclusion-strategy-2024-2029/5

Structural Considerations

5.62 The two-unitary model would take a flexible approach to determining the right scale for each individual function.

The overall driving force for this model would be to pursue a service model of early intervention and prevention, building community infrastructure, and changing the demand curve for expensive statutory services.

For this reason, the following SEND functions would be disaggregated to the individual unitary level:

- Support for Children with SEND
- Home to School Transport

5.63 There are some functions which would benefit from size and scale. In a two unitary model, these functions would be retained at the county level through a shared service approach:

- Admissions and allocation of places
- Any specialist SEND support areas

5.64 This flexible model would provide the right functions at the right scale and give the two unitary model more chance of managing demand effectively. The same disaggregation assumptions for children's services apply to SEND services.

Homelessness

Current Demand

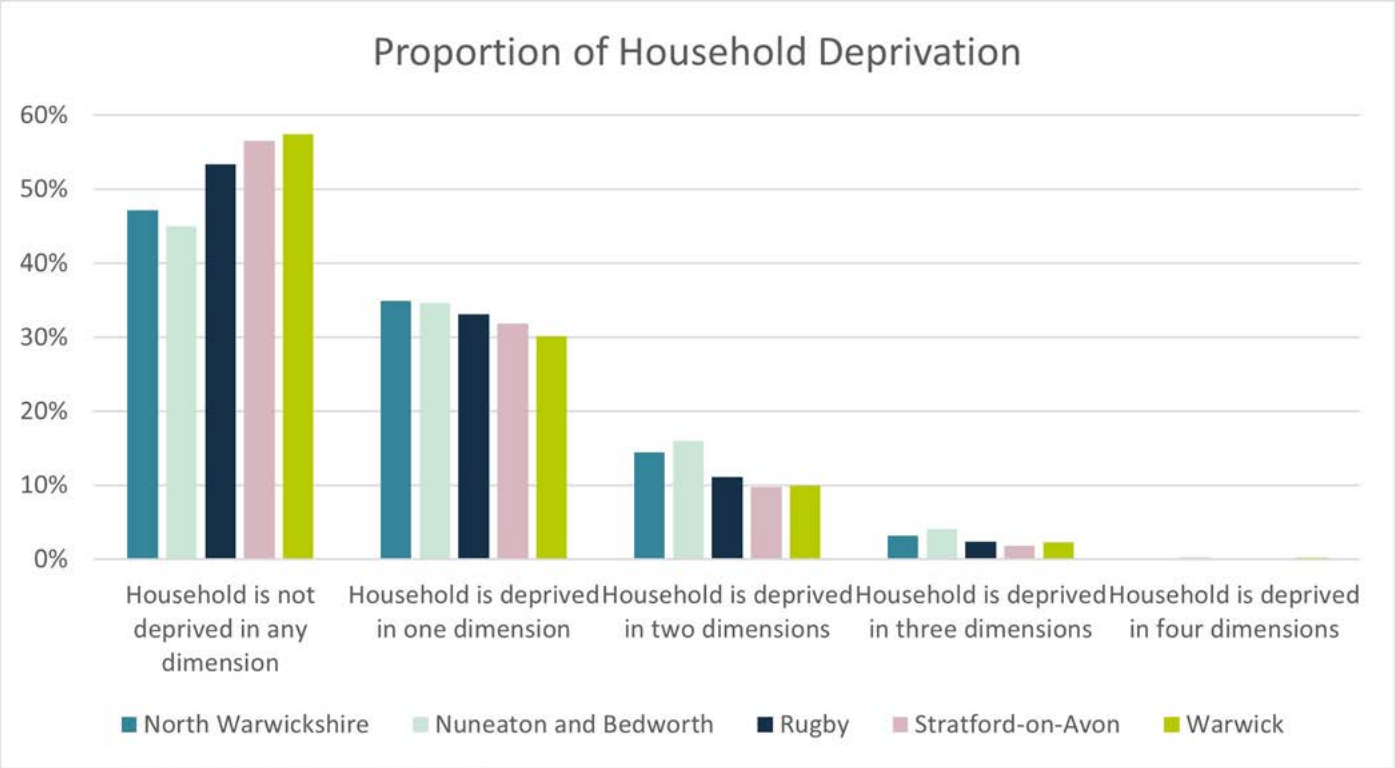
5.65 Deprivation and homelessness pose significant challenges in Warwickshire, particularly in the North of the county.

5.66 Nuneaton and Bedworth has high deprivation levels, with over 9,000 people experiencing deprivation across two dimensions (of employment, health, education, and housing) and 2,300 across three.

5.67 While North Warwickshire's figures appear lower in comparison, accounting for population size reveals that approximately 15% of the population experience deprivation in at least one dimension, highlighting a substantial issue.

5.68 This underscores the urgent need for addressing housing insecurity and the underlying factors contributing to deprivation in these areas.

Chart 45: Households by deprivation dimension[46]



5.69 Rough sleeping snapshots over five years show that areas with the highest estimated numbers of rough sleepers are Warwick and Rugby which have both seen a significant rise between 2023 and 2024. Nuneaton and Bedworth and Stratford-on-Avon also has relatively high numbers of rough sleepers, which saw a recent increase.

[46] Households by deprivation dimensions - Office for National Statistics
https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/send-resources/send-inclusion-strategy-2024-2029/5

[47] Rough sleeping snapshot in England
https://app.powerbi.com view?r=eyJrIjoiZWQ4ZTY3ZTEtZGE0Yi00Y2M0LTg3NjQtZjBhNGRhZjI5ZmJlIiwidCI6ImJmMzQ2ODEwLTljN2QtNDNkZSIhODcyLTI0YTJlZjM5OTVhOCJ9

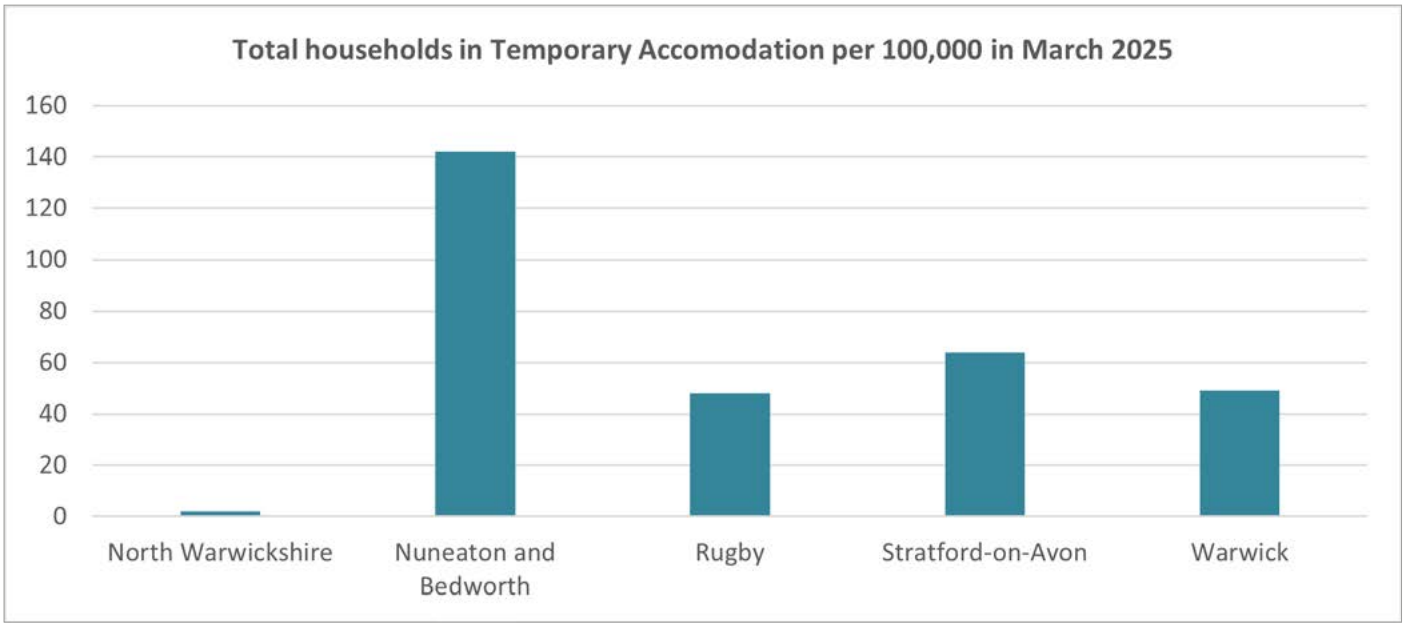
[48] Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables

Table 46: Rough sleeping snapshot by area, estimate of people sleeping rough per 100,000[47]

District	Estimated rate of people sleeping rough per 100,000 on one night in Autumn				
	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
North Warwickshire	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nuneaton and Bedworth	7.3	7.4	2.2	3.0	4.5
Rugby	10.9	3.4	5.2	2.6	4.4
Stratford-on-Avon	7.0	1.4	2.9	2.2	3.0
Warwick	8.5	4.6	7.3	4.0	2.7

5.70 In a snapshot in March 2025, as shown in Chart 47 below, data shows high levels of households requiring temporary accommodation in Nuneaton and Bedworth, providing temporary accommodation to 142 households at this time. Warwick, Stratford-on-Avon and Rugby all experienced similar demand for temporary accommodation with between 48 and 64 households in each district receiving support.

Chart 47: Total number of households in temporary accommodation (Snapshot in March 2025)[48]



Proposed Future Model

5.71 Enhancing prevention is key to reducing the number of people who require temporary accommodation which requires a multi-agency approach and effective use of data across housing, benefits and adult and children's social care teams. A two unitary model provides an optimum size of council to deliver this and build effective prevention strategies built upon collaboration with teams within the unitary as well as VCSE organisations.

5.72 The approach will be as follows:

- The two unitaries will integrate social care services with homelessness services and housing policy and allocations to obtain economies of scale whilst also maintaining local preventative focus.
- By combining data, very early identification of at-risk families will be possible to ensure a true preventative model can be put into place.
- The two unitaries will focus on community based early prevention initiatives, which will be improved due to the local focus on place and local communities. The councils would focus on specific issues such as unemployment, poverty, and lack of access to essential services.
- The two unitaries would also develop and implement strategic housing policies, including increasing the supply of affordable housing and addressing the specific needs of homeless individuals.

5.73 These kinds of methods can be successful. For example, after making homelessness a key priority, Newcastle City Council has partnered with more than 100 agencies and organisations to prevent over 24,000 households from becoming homeless between 2014 and 2021. They achieved this through a combination of partnerships with charities and financial inclusion groups, evidence-based decisions inspired by projects which have had success in other counties, and feedback from major studies into the effectiveness of their initiatives.

5.74 North East Lincolnshire Council worked in partnership on a primary care service called 'Open Door' which relies on referrals from the voluntary sector, council and NHS. 'Open Door' provides direct healthcare to people who are not registered with a doctor, including those who are homeless, and where required provides a social advice worker who can help with benefits, employment support and housing advice[49]. Again, please note that these two councils have population sizes of between 150,000 and 350,000, which are similar to the two proposed unitaries for Warwickshire.

5.75 To target more widespread deprivation issues, the two unitary model would develop and implement targeted interventions like these, focusing on area specific issues such as unemployment, poverty, and lack of access to essential services. A two unitary model could also play a more strategic role in community development and regeneration, working with local partners to improve infrastructure, create employment opportunities, and enhance access to education and training. Further to this, smaller, more localised models might support a face to face and place-based approach to homelessness services which are often dealing with vulnerable people.

5.76 Two councils would also be better positioned to develop and implement strategic housing policies, including increasing the supply of affordable housing and addressing the specific needs of homeless individuals and other households in housing need and allowing for more effective long-term planning, resource allocation and targeted delivery of affordable housing to meet needs.

5.77 The single county unitary may face greater challenges in understanding housing markets locally and taking appropriate action, as well as understanding local communities and services, ensuring adequate local representation and leveraging community partnerships.

[49] A councillor's guide to leading the homelessness sector https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-guide-leading-homelessness-sector#one-citys-approach

Highways and Transportation

5.78 Data on the current approach is provided under Criteria 1 above.

Future model

5.79 Functions in this area would be fully disaggregated to the two unitaries. The model offers a greater opportunity to integrate services such as planning, economic development and highways within the Place footprints.

5.80 This approach fits with the basic geography of Warwickshire: the majority of major travel routes run East-West rather than North-South, such as the M40, M6 and M45, and the railway lines. Therefore the new Transport Authorities will reflect how the people of Warwickshire use transport, including Travel to Work areas, and can focus on key local priorities.

5.81 A North unitary may choose to focus on the strong interconnectedness around Coventry and the northern towns, potentially facilitating effective integration and management of transport, economic development, and infrastructure.

5.82 The South unitary can address rural transport concerns and also enable tailored transport strategies for tourism and heritage management.

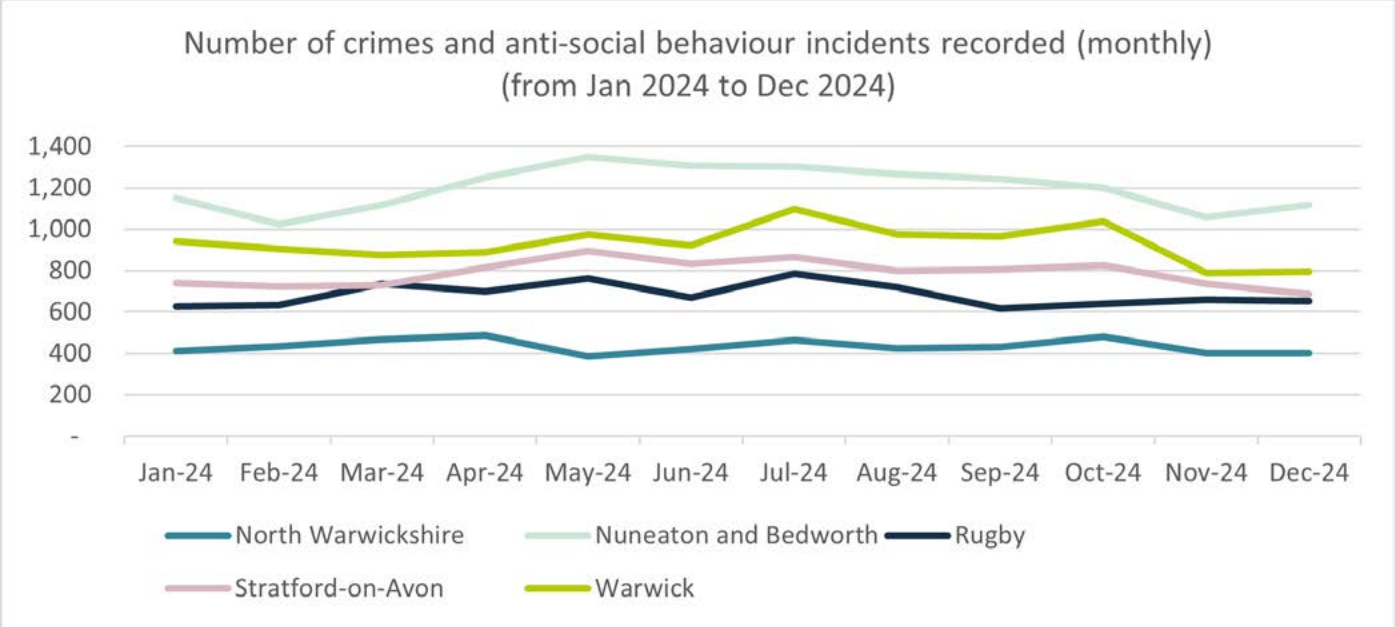
There are a number of more administrative functions that could be operated at a county level under a shared service arrangement, such as blue badge applications and driver training courses.

Public safety

Current Demand

Among the Boroughs and Districts, Nuneaton and Bedworth stands out with the highest crime rate, recording over 14,000 incidents in 2024. North Warwickshire has the lowest crime rate of all of the Warwickshire local authorities. However rural crime still remains a key priority in the Warwickshire Police and Crime Plan 2025–29[50].

Chart 48: Number of crimes and anti-social behaviour incidents recorded (monthly) (from Jan 2024 to Dec 2024)[51]



Proposed Future Model

5.83 The following model will be used:

- The two new authorities will focus on prevention and early intervention. This could include investing in neighbourhood safety, youth services, and support for domestic abuse.
- The two new authorities will focus on supporting this agenda through the Community Safety Partnerships that bring together voluntary and statutory organisations including Warwickshire Police, health services, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue, local authorities and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, co-chaired by the lead members for Community Safety in each local authority. These CSPs work to address crime and disorder, reduce reoffending, tackle serious violence, and address the misuse of drugs and substances. CSPs could be linked to the chosen method of area governance moving forward.
- Day to day operations are managed on a more local basis at neighbourhood level. A two-unitary model would be closer to these services with local community safety teams, building on strong district working at the current time.

[50] Warwickshire Police and Crime Plan 2025-29 https://www.warwickshire-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/PCCW-Crime-Plan-2025-29_web_final.pdf

[51] LG Inform: Number of crimes and anti-social behaviour incidents recorded in an area (monthly) https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=18587&mod-area=E07000222&mod-group=AllDistrictInRegion_WestMidlands&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup&mod-period=19

- Strong relationships will be preserved with Warwickshire Police and the Fire and Rescue Service.

5.84 This model can build on existing successful models such as the Community Warden Service in Warwick District.

5.85 The Community Warden Service in Warwick District has been operating for just over two years and has become a consistent, trusted, and highly effective presence in local communities. Unlike reactive enforcement models, the wardens provide ongoing visibility and develop deep local knowledge, allowing them to build rapport with residents, understand local crime and disorder trends, and offer early support to vulnerable individuals. Their partnership working across statutory and voluntary agencies enhances their ability to signpost, refer, and protect those at risk.

5.86 Before the introduction of the Community Warden Service, Warwick District faced several persistent and worsening challenges related to community safety and visible reassurance. There was a marked lack of consistent uniformed presence across our towns and parks, despite introducing a range of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), particularly in the evenings resulting in an environment where anti-social behaviour (ASB), low-level crime, and serious violence could escalate largely unchecked.

5.87 Since their establishment, the Community Wardens have consistently delivered:

1. **Presence & Reassurance:** Wardens now patrol town centres, green spaces, estates, and areas of vulnerability with regularity and consistency, particularly in the evenings. Residents frequently express appreciation for their visibility, approachability, and positive impact on feelings of safety. In 24/25 Wardens dealt with 1,605 incidents and conducted 2,304 patrols.

2. **Building Trust:** Wardens have developed strong rapport with businesses, residents, and community groups restoring trust, reducing tensions, and creating effective channels of communication between the public and enforcement services.

3. **Enforcement & Capability:** For the first time, the Council is actively enforcing PSPOs. Wardens now issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), deliver ASB warning letters, and issue Community Protection Warnings. This tangible enforcement capability is aligned with national priorities set out by the Home Secretary to clamp down on anti-social behaviour and visible disorder.

4. **Problem-Solving & Prevention:** Wardens play a critical role in partnership-based problem-solving, particularly in reducing youth ASB and serious violence in parks and open spaces. They have been instrumental in de-escalating tensions and preventing repeat incidents.

5. **Night-Time Economy Support:** Wardens are embedded within Leamington's Safe Space initiative, deescalating conflict, helping to safeguard vulnerable individuals, support licensed premises, and educate the public on issues such as personal safety, spiking, and stalking. Police colleagues have praised their contribution to delivering a safe night-time economy.

5.88 In 2024/25 Community Wardens contributed towards a 37% reduction in ASB and a 22% reduction in serious violence across Leamington's hotspot areas, vs the previous three-year average. These outcomes were achieved with just £75,000 in funding compared to £925,000 allocated to Warwickshire Police. This clearly evidences the cost-effectiveness and operational value of the Community Warden model.

Schools

Current Model and Demand

5.89 There are a total of 266 state-funded schools in Warwickshire, which are responsible for the education of over 85,318 students. There are 196 primary schools in the county. Of these, 10% have been rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and 68% are rated 'Good'. Attainment across primary schools is mixed, with 19% considered low and 16% considered good, though attainment data is missing for around 28% of primary schools. The most common pupil-teacher ratio in primary settings is considered very high. Primary schools represent the largest proportion of schools in Warwickshire. Despite a high number of 'Good' ratings, a relatively small percentage are rated 'Outstanding'. The high pupil-teacher ratios may be putting pressure on teaching resources and could contribute to the relatively mixed attainment levels seen across the county. Attainment levels are split quite evenly between high (22%) and low (19%), with 14% of schools lacking attainment data. Secondary schools in Warwickshire generally have a low pupil-to-teacher ratio, indicating smaller class sizes compared to primary schools.

5.90 Across the different districts of Warwickshire, participation in further education is generally lower than the national average. Additionally, in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth, fewer students than the national average achieve a GCSE in English and Maths by age 19. Attainment is better in Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick with these areas exceeding the national average for GCSE maths and English achievement by age 19.

Table 49: Attainment in secondary school and participation in higher education (grey filled cells are outperforming the national average (England))[52]

District	Further education and skills participation per 100,000 population (2023/24)	Apprenticeship achievements per 100,000 population (2023/24)	GCSEs in English and Maths by age 19 (2022/23)
North Warwickshire	4,540	584	72.3%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	5,257	629	72.1%
Rugby	4,344	505	78.8%
Stratford-on-Avon	3,443	441	85.2%
Warwick	4,072	473	80.5%
National average	**5,006**	**492**	**78.7%**

[50] ONS - Local Indicators https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E07000149-south-norfolk/indicators#education-and-skills

[51] ONS - Local Indicators https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E07000149-south-norfolk/indicators#education-and-skills

Early years and Key Stage Two attainment shows that North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth are below the national average in all areas, as shown in Table 30 below.

Table 50: Attainment in primary and early years education (grey filled cells are outperforming the national average (England))[53]

District	Pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by the end of KS2 (state funded schools 2023/24	Meeting expected level for communication and language skills by end of early years foundation stage (state-funded schools 2023/24)	Meeting expected level for literacy end of early years foundation stage (state-funded schools 2023/24)	Meeting expected level for maths by end of early years foundation stage (state-funded schools 2023/24)
North Warwickshire	57%	75.6%	66.7%	76.5%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	59%	76.4%	66.9%	75.1%
Rugby	54%	77.5%	72.0%	78.8%
Stratford-on-Avon	64%	81.3%	72.5%	78.7%
Warwick	61%	81.1%	72.5%	81.3%
National average	**60.0%**	**80.3%**	**70.7%**	**78.0%**

Proposed Future Model

5.91 A two unitary model could retain a shared service or partnership arrangement for education services, or it could choose to disaggregate services.

5.92 A shared service model would possess the strategic capacity to effectively plan and manage school places, ensuring sufficient capacity to meet demand and a more equitable distribution of resources across different areas.

5.93 Certain services provided to schools at a countywide level could be retained at this level and managed on a shared services basis, including cloud services, software support, accounting systems, advisory services, welfare services such as attendance advisors, safeguarding including the provision of software and advisory solutions, and HR and bursarial support.

5.94 However, a two-unitary model could develop locally tailored support, and allocate school places locally to minimise travel time. For example, a two-unitary model could target areas of weaker educational performance in the North.

5.95 There is not agreement on this model currently across the county, so further work will need to be done on this by the new councils.

Public Health

Current Health Landscape

5.96 Warwickshire benefits from good geographic distribution of acute care services, with three acute trusts serving the population: George Elliot Hospital NHS Trust in Nuneaton for Northern Warwickshire, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust serving Coventry and Rugby, and South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust serving the South. Furthermore, Warwickshire shows a slightly better patient-to-GP ratio (1,461:1)35 compared to the average in England, suggesting relatively good access to primary care.

5.97 However, Warwickshire presents a mixed picture in terms of population health, as evidenced in Criteria 1 above. While some areas show positive indicators, others highlight future challenges. There are extremely different health needs in the North and South of the county, with substantial differences in health inequalities that need to be addressed. There is greater health inequality and deprivation in the North, while there is a more affluent but ageing population in the South.

Proposed Future Model

5.98 Public Health functions would be entirely disaggregated from the County level to sit at the two-unitary level, enabling a more locally tailored service.

The two-unitary model allows for the continuation of existing successful programmes while enabling a more tailored approach to specific local needs.

5.99 For example, one unitary authority could focus on initiatives addressing obesity and promoting healthy lifestyles in areas with higher prevalence rates. Conversely, another authority could concentrate on combating social isolation and supporting an ageing population.

5.100 This targeted approach leads to more effective and impactful public health outcomes across the county.

Waste and Recycling

Current approach

5.101 Waste service delivery models currently vary across Warwickshire's local authorities. The Warwickshire Waste Partnership has been responsible for developing Warwickshire's Municipal Waste Management Strategy and is made up of elected members and officers from all Warwickshire Authorities. The partnership aims to promote closer partnership working of the authorities and closely monitors waste amounts and recycling rates in each district. Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick demonstrate high performance, while others face greater challenges.

Table 51: Recycling Rates % in Warwickshire[54]

District	Recycling, Composting and Reuse Rate (%)		
	20/21	21/22	22/23
North Warwickshire	44.9%	36.3%	42.6%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	38.2%	37.8%	34.1%
Rugby	45.0%	43.2%	43.6%
Stratford-on-Avon	59.4%	55.5%	64.0%
Warwick	54.6%	54.0%	58.2%

Proposed model

5.102 The two unitary model would operate as follows:

- **Collection:** services will need to be integrated in each of the two new councils. This can build on existing collaboration such as the 123+ service between Stratford and Warwick, where the new council could take the same approach that has proved successful to date. In house services will have to be merged and operating practices integrated. A lift and shift policy here is possible as a first step.
- **Disposal:** this will be operated as a shared service across the county. The authorities will continue to collaborate as at present, as shown with the Material Recycling Facility, operated by Warwickshire's five district and borough councils, Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Walsall Council.

5.103 As part of a two unitary model, services such as waste management and recycling would be enhanced through greater economies of scale, potentially leading to more efficient collection routes, improved recycling rates, and cleaner public spaces. Larger councils could also potentially invest in more advanced waste processing facilities and technologies.

5.104 Recognising the diverse needs and socio-economic make-up of the region, a two-unitary model enables service delivery to be tailored to each area's specific characteristics, such as varying recycling and contamination rates. This flexibility allows for targeted strategies to address the unique challenges of different areas.

[54] Warwickshire Waste Partnership: Waste Management Performance Data 2022 - 2023 https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/s31248/Waste Data Performance Q4 22-23_Jun23 FV.pdf

Conclusion

5.105 A two-unitary model presents a compelling option for communities, effectively balancing the need for efficiency with the imperative to address the diverse needs of its residents. A one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery is not optimal for a county as diverse as Warwickshire. A more nuanced approach is required to ensure services are tailored to local needs and priorities.

5.106 Evidence clearly demonstrates that residents across Warwickshire have distinct needs and face varying challenges. This is apparent in areas such as skills and education, unemployment rates, ageing population and social care needs, and health and well-being indicators. A two-unitary model, with its focus on creating two distinct authorities with a deeper understanding of local circumstances, can more effectively respond to these diverse needs. This structure allows for greater flexibility in resource allocation, enabling each unitary authority to prioritize services and investments that address the specific challenges and opportunities within its area.

5.107 Furthermore, the two-unitary model avoids the potential pitfalls of excessive centralisation associated with a single county unitary. A single authority risks creating an overly bureaucratic and inflexible system. Larger organisations can struggle to adapt to local needs, build strong relationships with communities, and implement transformative change effectively.

On this basis, the two unitary model has been ranked as best.

Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
2nd Place	**1st Place**

6. Criteria 4: 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.

Summary

6.1 The advantages of the two unitary model are:

- ✔ **Popular with the public:** around three quarters (73%) of individuals agree with the proposal for two unitary councils in Warwickshire, based on the engagement activity undertaken.
- ✔ **Based on Effective Local Collaboration:** Better positioned to build upon existing successful partnerships and collaborative initiatives, which makes implementation likely to be more successful. This would reduce the burden for the significant transformation programme required to mobilise the new authorities, in that the two new councils can build on good practice.
- ✔ **Reflects real communities and place identity:** A two unitary model would better reflect the county's distinct local identities and variations in community needs. Local government structures should align with how people live their daily lives - including where they live, work, and access services. Evidence such as Travel to Work data confirms the North-South split.

6.2 The disadvantages of the single county unitary are as follows:

- ✘ **Not the preferred option** of the public.
- ✘ **Does not reflect local place identity** in North and South. Instead, a single county unitary has to make trade-offs with its budget and decide whether resources go to the North or the South, instead of the North and South making their own decisions with their own resources.

6.3 This section now highlights the engagement activity undertaken, collaboration between the councils, and how the two unitary model can recognise and value the distinct local identities and rich cultural heritage that make each district unique.

Resident and Stakeholder Engagement work

Overview

6.4 Warwickshire's councils undertook a structured programme of engagement to inform this Business Case and to evidence local views. The work combined an open engagement questionnaire, resident and stakeholder deliberative sessions, and targeted conversations with strategic partners. Alongside this research programme, councils also conducted wider engagement through meetings, correspondence and briefings with leaders and partners across the county.

6.5 Information about the options for local government reorganisation was published on a dedicated website with an online questionnaire available to all residents and organisations. Paper copies were made available on request to ensure accessibility. Alongside the questionnaire, a series of deliberative sessions was held with residents and stakeholder groups, and interviews were undertaken with strategic partners.

6.6 In total, 2,002 individuals completed the questionnaire. Responses were received from across Warwickshire.

6.7 Engagement invited views on awareness of current responsibilities, the importance of streamlining and efficiency, support in principle for moving from two tier to unitary councils, the importance of decision criteria such as quality and accountability, and views on the different structural options and potential geographies. Options were presented in a neutral way to understand preferences and reasoning.

Residents views

6.8 Extensive engagement has been undertaken to ensure that this Business Case is informed by the voices of residents, communities, and partners. Government guidance is clear that proposals must command a good deal of local support. Warwickshire's councils have delivered one of the most wide-ranging programmes of engagement seen in the county.

Public Consultation

6.9 A dedicated microsite provided information, FAQs, and an online questionnaire

- The consultation ran for **five and a half weeks** (7 August – 14 September 2025).
- **2,002 individuals** responded to the survey.
- **Paper copies** were made available in council offices, including Rugby.

This response rate, combined with the structured programme of focus groups and interviews, gives a robust evidence base from which to draw conclusions.

Independent Research

6.10 ORS conducted a structured programme of engagement, including:

- **Residents** – four focus groups (one in each district except Rugby).
- **Service users** – one countywide focus group.
- **Voluntary and community groups** – one countywide focus group.
- **Business community** – one countywide focus group.
- **Town and parish councils** – two focus groups, including one in Rugby.
- **In-depth interviews** – with major businesses, economic bodies, NHS organisations, colleges, and voluntary sector partners.

Political and Public Service Leaders

6.11 Chief Executives engaged directly with Warwickshire's six Members of Parliament, Warwickshire Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service.

ORS Survey Findings

6.12 The ORS survey provides detailed quantitative evidence of residents' views:

- **Awareness of responsibilities** – 70% of respondents felt well informed about which services are provided by their district/borough council and which by the county council. This indicates a relatively high baseline understanding among residents.
- **Support for efficiency and simplification** – 83% agreed that councils should pursue opportunities to streamline services and make efficiencies while maintaining quality. This demonstrates a strong appetite for change and improvement.
- **Reorganisation in principle** – 54% supported the Government's requirement to replace the two-tier system with a smaller number of unitary councils. This confirms a majority in favour of structural reform.
- **Preferred model: two unitary councils** – 73% supported the specific proposal for two unitaries. Support was particularly strong in Stratford (79%), Warwick (76%) and Nuneaton & Bedworth (68%), with lower support in Rugby (33%). Despite this variation, majorities in most areas were in favour.
- **Support for boundaries** – 74% agreed with the proposed north/south split, showing that the geographic logic of the proposal is widely recognised.
- **Criteria for reform** – When asked to rate the importance of criteria on a 0–10 scale, all scored highly. "Quality" and "accountability" (both 9.3) were rated marginally above "efficiency" (9.1), "value for money" (8.7), and "local identity" (8.3). This suggests that residents want efficiency, but not at the expense of service quality or democratic accountability.

Qualitative Insights

6.13 The focus groups provide additional context:

- **Support for two authorities** – Most participants felt that two councils would be more manageable, retain local knowledge, and better reflect the different needs of north and south Warwickshire.
- **Concerns about a single authority** – A minority argued that a single unitary would be simpler, more efficient, and provide consistency across the county.
- **Support for the north/south split** – Participants in favour of two authorities felt this was the most sensible population division, retaining local focus while ensuring manageable scale.
-

Stakeholder Engagement

6.14 We have engaged widely with stakeholders across Warwickshire through combined themed forums, targeted interviews with strategic partners, and briefing and meetings with partners. In addition, we invited organisational responses to the questionnaire.

Parish and town councils

Representatives emphasised practical localism, clear routes into decision making, and interest in area arrangements that give communities a strong voice. Many asked for commitments on local access points and for clarity on how parishes will be involved in service design and delivery.

Voluntary and community sector

Stakeholders stressed continuity in partnership working, clarity of local points of contact, fair and accessible commissioning, and early involvement in transition planning so that support for vulnerable residents is uninterrupted.

Business and economic partners

Participants recognised the value of a strong, consistent voice for investment and growth. They also noted the different economic profiles of north and south Warwickshire and asked that future arrangements support distinct local opportunities while collaborating on countywide priorities such as skills, infrastructure and inward investment.

Public sector partners

Health and wider public service partners focused on alignment across prevention, public health, social care and housing, together with clarity at interfaces. They asked for clear commitments on local points of contact and on pathways for joint working, including safeguarding and system leadership, to maintain continuity for people who rely on multiple services. Warwickshire Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service were contacted with information on the proposals and invited to share views. We are keen to collaborate as plans are refined, ensuring their expertise shapes arrangements for community safety and resilience.

Members of Parliament

In parallel with the research programme, Chief Executives and senior leaders shared briefings with Warwickshire's Members of Parliament and invited discussion. We are committed to continuing this dialogue as proposals develop so that MPs' perspectives inform governance, accountability and system collaboration.

How research and engagement has informed the proposal

6.15 Feedback from stakeholders reinforces the case for clear local access, strong routes into decision making, and structured collaboration across shared systems. These points are reflected in the proposed area arrangements, in our commitments on customer contact and councillor visibility, and in the collaboration framework set out for health, safeguarding, community safety and resilience.

6.16 Our consultation engagement and research evidence shows that Warwickshire residents are supportive of reorganisation and engaged in the debate about how local government should be structured. The ORS survey demonstrates a clear majority preference for two unitary councils, supported by strong agreement on the proposed boundaries and criteria. Qualitative findings further confirm that most residents see two councils as the best way to balance efficiency with local focus.

6.17 A two unitary model would better reflect the county's distinct local identities and variations in community needs. Local government structures should align with how people live their daily lives - including where they live, work, and access services. A wealth of evidence was included under Criteria 1 of this Business Case to show the different places and communities across Warwickshire, such as the demographic, economic and Travel to Work data.

6.18 A two unitary model creates two councils which are naturally closer to these places and communities that they serve. This proximity translates into greater accessibility with the potential for local offices and service points, as well as dedicated local teams responsible for community engagement within their designated areas.

6.19 Two unitaries can enable engagement methods to be precisely tailored to the unique context of each community. This could involve leveraging existing networks and partnerships within a specific area or employing a diverse range of communication channels from traditional newspapers and public meetings to online platforms and social media, to ensure that all demographics are effectively reached. This localised approach also fosters a culture of co-production, where residents are actively involved in shaping and designing local services that meet their specific needs.

6.20 By contrast, a single county unitary has to make trade-offs with its budget and decide whether resources go to the North or the South, instead of the North and South making their own decisions with their own resources. A centralised approach also risks creating a perception of top-down decision-making, potentially leaving residents feeling unheard and disconnected from the decision-making process. This, in turn, could lead to the recreation of localised forums, potentially adding unnecessary complexity and fragmentation to the engagement landscape.

6.21 Finally, the two unitary model will enable the two councils to focus on developing the interests of the new communities that are planned in Warwickshire in the near future. Work will need to be done on placemaking for these communities, focusing on developing infrastructure, facilities and connectivity, and also softer work in community development. This work requires on understanding the identity of the places and local opinion and is therefore better delivered by two medium sized councils.

Collaboration

6.22 This proposal has been shaped through constructive engagement between the districts and boroughs, along with continuing dialogue with the county council and wider partners. All councils have shared information to build a broad understanding of local needs and pressures. This Business Case has been produced by four of the five Boroughs and Districts working together. Rugby Borough Council has also been involved in discussions.

6.23 There is a rich history of collaboration between the Boroughs and Districts in the North and the South. The two unitary model will build on this history and has a better chance of successful implementation as a result.

6.24 Examples of this collaboration in the North of the county include:

- Shared services between North Warwickshire Borough Council and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council for independent living support initiative and Private Sector Housing;
- A joint building control service that started with collaboration between North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth, and has now expanded to include Staffordshire areas, showing that collaboration outside of the county is possible, and shows the importance of market forces from outside the county for the North of the county;
- A joint Election Services Manager;
- Shared procurement and IT system support services between Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Rugby Borough Council, and
- Shared management of service areas between North Warwickshire Borough Council and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (including Head of Service, Revenues Manager, Systems Manager and Financial Inclusion Manager) as well as Revenues & Benefits and an IT system hosted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

6.25 Examples in the South of the county include:

- The shared information governance team across Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils, which started in 2018, and has developed over time with greater investment from both Councils.
- The shared legal team between both councils.
- Two joint members of staff for the South Warwickshire Local Plan.

There are further examples provided below.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

6.26 Since 2021, Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils have been jointly developing a Local Plan, demonstrating a shared vision for the region's future. This collaborative approach ensures cohesive planning and development, addressing the interconnectedness of South Warwickshire while considering the unique needs of each district. The ongoing consultation on the Preferred Options document highlights the commitment to transparency and public engagement in this process. This, particularly evident in their shaping of draft policies and policy directions as well the emerging spatial growth strategy ensures a fully co-develop approach.

6.27 The joint development of a shared Local Plan between Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils presents a range of benefits for South Warwickshire, leveraging the strengths of collaboration to address strategic planning challenges and unlock new opportunities:

- Streamline Processes and Reduce Duplication: Collaboration allowed for the streamlining of planning processes, reducing duplication of effort, and ensuring greater consistency in decision-making across the region.
- Enhance Responsiveness to Local Needs: While benefiting from a shared strategic vision, the joint plan allowed each district to retain a focus on its unique local needs and priorities, ensuring that planning decisions are tailored to the specific circumstances of each community.
- Improved Strategic Alignment: The shared plan provided a framework for addressing cross-boundary issues, such as infrastructure provision, economic development, and environmental protection, in a coordinated and strategic manner.
- Effective Governance and Resource Allocation: The councils could maximise efficiency by utilising existing governance structures and officer groups across both districts, ensuring clear lines of accountability and decision-making authority. The partnership also allowed for the allocation of dedicated resources, including a programme manager, to oversee the process and ensure its success.
- Best Practice Exchange: The councils benefited from the experiences of the other authority, sharing best practices and lessons learned.

Most significantly, the emerging overall benefit of this collaborative work was its ability to:

- Address Strategic Challenges: The shared plan provided a platform for tackling key cross-boundary challenges, such as climate change, economic recovery, and infrastructure provision, in a coordinated and strategic manner.
- Unlock Growth Potential: By presenting a unified vision for growth, the shared plan can attract investment, support sustainable development, and enhance the region's overall competitiveness.

6.28 The above, therefore, stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and the ability of the Councils to work together effectively to deliver high-quality, cost-effective services that benefit all residents. This challenges the notion that a single-unitary model is necessary for effective service delivery at scale.

South Warwickshire Economic Strategy

6.29 The joint South Warwickshire Economic Strategy aims to maintain gains of high-quality jobs, blue chip companies, and volume of new businesses seeking to locate. The two councils want to develop the wider partnership to deliver the SWES objectives, encouraging the release of employment land and/or fast-tracking applications.

6.30 Specifically, the joint strategy aims to undertake the following actions:

- Continuing engagement (aftercare) with businesses already operating within the area and regularly engage with them to determine their direction of strategic travel
- To determine their employment/skills needs, and that employment skills networks are partnered to develop the required pipeline
- Consider future funding and monitoring of projects such as the EV Hub at Stratford College, which will provide future skills uplifts, and
- Consider future release of employment land and planning applications.

Stratford and Warwick Joint Waste Contract

6.31 Stratford-on-Avon District and Warwick District have a single refuse and recycling collection contract and service. The new service is delivered to both Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District residents through a joint waste contract with Biffa Waste Services Ltd serving around 130,000 households across South Warwickshire.

6.32 As part of the waste service the councils' implemented a weekly food waste collection service ahead of this becoming a statutory responsibility. Food waste recycling stops this material going for incineration. Instead, it is taken to a specialist facility for anaerobic digestion where it is recycled. The waste is treated in specialist facilities to produce a biogas which can be used to generate a renewable, low-carbon electricity. The gas can also be put into the gas grid to help decarbonise the gas grid. The treatment method also produces a liquid which can be used to fertilise local farmland.

6.33 This service has been so successful that the councils have some of the highest recycling rates in England (Stratford on Avon DC now third with a household recycling rate of 61% and Warwick 20th with 57.2% out of 294 collection authorities). The joint contract has allowed for significant efficiencies in the delivery of the service and enabling the contractor to design the most practical routes for collecting housing waste and recycling.

HEART Partnership

6.34 The HEART (Home Environment Assessment & Response Team) Partnership is a collaboration between Warwickshire councils which provides advice and assistance to introduce home improvements and disabled adaptations to resident's homes. HEART arranges for adaptations based on the needs of residents such as stair lifts and small ramps, They also work to identify safety and hygiene risks in the home and helps residents to get help and support to rectify them.

Shakespeare's England

6.35 Both councils in the South are actively involved in Shakespeare's England, a long-established entity which is globally renowned and of national as well as local significance. As major funders and board members, the councils demonstrate their commitment to promoting Warwickshire's rich cultural heritage and attracting visitors to experience its unique offerings. Tourism is a key part of the South economy.

6.36 This collaborative approach to tourism promotion, with active involvement from multiple district councils, yields significant benefits for the region and contributes positively to the wider country:

- **Regional Brand:** A collective approach creates a strong, unified brand for Warwickshire as a tourist destination, enhancing its visibility and appeal in a competitive market. This allows for more effective and efficient marketing campaigns, maximizing reach and impact.
- **Visitor Experience:** Collaboration ensures a more seamless and enjoyable experience for visitors, who can easily navigate the region and access information, services, and attractions across district boundaries.
- **Spreading Economic Benefits:** A coordinated approach to tourism helps to distribute economic benefits more widely across Warwickshire, supporting businesses and creating jobs in multiple districts.
- **Funding Opportunities:** A unified front strengthens the region's position when bidding for tourism-related funding from national bodies, potentially unlocking greater investment in infrastructure, marketing, and destination development.

6.37 This thriving tourism sector also contributes to the overall success of the UK tourism industry, attracting international visitors and generating economic benefits for the country. Warwickshire's rich cultural heritage, which is of national and international significance, attracts visitors to Warwickshire. This focus on tourism beyond major cities, supports a more balanced and sustainable distribution of the visitor economy across the UK.

Conclusion

6.38 We have engaged widely with residents and stakeholders. There is strong evidence of support from residents for the two unitary model. Stakeholders recognise the differences in the North and South and noted that public services are already often coordinated around this geography. Collaboration has been strong. The Borough and District Councils are active partners: they actively engage in partnerships within their natural communities in the North and the South, leading and participating in initiatives that extend beyond their boundaries. The two unitary model can build on this track record of success and ensure successful implementation.

6.39 A two-unitary model therefore emerges as the most advantageous structure for Warwickshire, effectively balancing the retention of local identities with the need for efficient governance. This model holds significant potential for recognising and respecting the distinct identities that characterise the county.

6.40 Creating two new unitary authorities, broadly reflecting the distinct characteristics of North and South Warwickshire, acknowledges the existing cultural and economic disparities and allows for tailored policies and initiatives. This localised approach fosters a stronger sense of local ownership and belonging.

6.41 Preserving and celebrating Warwickshire's diverse cultural heritage is another key advantage. Each unitary authority would be better positioned to allocate resources and develop strategies tailored to the specific historical assets and cultural landscapes within their respective areas. Moreover, by empowering communities with a greater voice in local decision-making, a two-unitary model can strengthen civic pride and encourage active participation in civic life.

6.42 Therefore, the two unitary option has been ranked as best against this criterion.

	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
Rank Score	**1st Place**	**2nd Place**

6.43 A single unitary risks overlooking the unique needs and priorities of Warwickshire's diverse communities, leading to a homogenised approach that fails to capture the distinct character of individual communities. This could lead to a sense of disconnect between decision-makers and communities, potentially diminishing civic pride and undermining existing collaborative initiatives. A single unitary could also disengage partners, especially those who under current arrangements may be able to engage more local Borough and District Councils directly

7. Criteria 5: New Unitary Structures Must Support Devolution Arrangements.

Summary

7.1 The key advantages of the two unitary model are as follows: :

- ✔ **Flexibility:** The preference is for the two authorities to join the West Midlands Combined Authority. However, there is currently no clear solution for devolution in Warwickshire. It is essential therefore that as many options remain open as possible. The two unitary model provides more options. Two individual authorities could look North and South for partners, or a single Strategic Authority could be created for Warwickshire. This would ensure the Councils could join a Strategic Authority that reflected the economic geography of the area.
- ✔ **Implementation Readiness:** The two unitary model can be implemented at pace, and therefore be ready to deliver devolution.
- ✔ **Enhanced Local Voice:** A two-unitary structure provides a stronger platform for local voices to be heard within devolution arrangements, ensuring that strategies are grounded in local realities.

7.2 The disadvantages of the single county unitary are as follows:

- ✘ The single county unitary can only look to WMCA for a devolution solution, where the Mayor has already rejected the possibility of Warwickshire joining.
- ✘ A single unitary council would be the second largest member of the WMCA, and by some margin. A single unitary therefore would not integrate well in the WMCA. This does not comply with the Government's requirement for sensible size ratios between Councils within Strategic Authorities.
- ✘ There is a significant risk with a single unitary council of large parts of the population being in a Strategic Authority that bears no relation to the economic geography of the area.

Therefore, the two unitary model has been ranked best against this criterion.

Considerations

7.3 The UK Government's Devolution White Paper outlines a clear vision for empowering local areas through Strategic Authorities. However, the success of this model hinges on establishing a strong and effective foundation at the unitary level within Warwickshire.

7.4 A two-unitary model is optimal for Warwickshire as it balances strategic scale with a vital focus on local needs. A single county unitary could potentially join the West Midlands Combined Authority. However, it is reported that the Mayor could veto Warwickshire joining the Combined Authority as a full member. This significantly limits the potential to create an alternative devolution structure that would make sense for Warwickshire.

7.5 Any other structure may involve two or three other neighbouring county areas; in which case there would not be an effective size ratio between the single county unitary areas and the overall Strategic Authority. The single county unitaries would be too close in size to the potential Strategic Authority. If the single county unitary entered a Strategic Authority alongside other smaller unitaries, again there would be a size and power imbalance within the Strategic Authority between the Warwickshire single unitary and other, smaller unitaries.

7.6 Fundamentally, if the WMCA is not an option, there is not a logical devolution solution for a future single county unitary. There may be an option to look towards Leicestershire, or towards Worcestershire and Herefordshire, but in both cases, there are differences of geography and economy between South Warwickshire and Leicestershire, or North Warwickshire and the Worcestershire / Herefordshire footprint.

7.7 A two-unitary model provides more opportunity in this regard and makes it easier to deal with other county areas. First, the new unitaries could assess their local geographies and economies and decide to pursue the devolution options most effective for their local places. For example, the North unitary could look to Staffordshire and Leicestershire. The South unitary could look to Worcestershire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. Conversations are already being held by the Boroughs and Districts in this regard.

7.8 Moreover, the size ratio works more effectively in this scenario. The smaller unitaries can advocate for their local interests without dominating any potential future Strategic Authority as they are too large. Indeed, there would also be the option for a single Warwickshire Strategic Authority if a two-unitary model was pursued, given there would be a size differential between the unitaries and the Strategic Authority. This option would not exist with a single county unitary, as the Strategic Authority and unitary local authority would be the same size.

Two-Unitary Model

7.9 A two-unitary model for Warwickshire presents a promising approach to supporting devolution arrangements and fostering a balanced and effective partnership within a potential Strategic Authority. It creates a more balanced power dynamic within a larger Strategic Authority. This structure aligns with the Devolution White Paper's emphasis on partnerships between multiple local authorities, ensuring that no single entity dominates.

7.10 It would provide a stronger platform for local voices to be heard within the Strategic Authority. Each unitary would be more directly accountable to its residents, fostering greater responsiveness to local needs and priorities, a key principle of effective devolution. Each unitary, with its more focused geographical area, can develop a deeper understanding of its communities' specific challenges and opportunities. This local expertise can then inform decision-making within the Strategic Authority, ensuring that strategies are grounded in local realities. This would empower local leaders to develop tailored solutions to challenges that are best addressed at a more localised level, fostering innovation and responsiveness.

7.11 A two-unitary model for Warwickshire would foster the development of strong local leadership, empowering communities to take ownership of their future. This aligns with the White Paper's vision of capable and responsive local governance as a prerequisite for successful devolution. By distributing power and decision-making, this model encourages greater accountability and responsiveness to local needs.

Single Unitary Model

7.12 Although a single unitary authority for Warwickshire might initially seem to offer a more streamlined approach to local administration, it poses significant obstacles to the successful implementation and enduring effectiveness of devolution. A single unitary authority for Warwickshire could diminish the influence of individual communities. Subsuming a large and diverse area under a single entity risks reducing accountability and responsiveness to the specific concerns of local communities. Centralising decision-making within a large unitary structure runs counter to the White Paper's emphasis on devolving power to the most appropriate level, potentially hindering the effectiveness of devolution in addressing local priorities.

7.13 A single unitary authority for Warwickshire, encompassing a diverse range of communities and priorities. It might struggle to provide the necessary local insight and agility required for effective collaboration. Concentrating power and decision-making within a single entity risks stifling the development of strong local leadership across Warwickshire, ultimately limiting the effectiveness of the Strategic Authority. A large, single unitary authority might be less responsive to the needs of individual communities, as decision-making becomes more centralised and removed from those directly affected. This reduced accountability could undermine trust in the devolution process and hinder the long-term success of the Strategic Authority.

Conclusion

7.14 A two-unitary model balances the need for strategic coordination with the importance of local focus, particularly within the context of a potential West Midlands Strategic Authority. It ensures that local economic development strategies are tailored to the specific needs and opportunities of each unitary authority within Warwickshire. This localised approach allows for greater flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to the unique challenges faced by different areas.

7.15 It is also more practical. The new unitaries could assess their local geographies and economies and decide to pursue the devolution options most effective for their local places. For example, the North unitary could look to Staffordshire and Leicestershire. The South unitary could look to Worcestershire, Oxfordshire or Northamptonshire. Conversations are already being held by the Boroughs and Districts in this regard. Moreover, the size ratio works more effectively in this scenario. The smaller unitaries can advocate for their local interests without dominating any potential future Strategic Authority as they are too large.

7.16 However, the single unitary model, with its county-wide scope, presents a significant challenge in relation to a broader Strategic Authority. A single unitary authority risks overlooking the diverse economic needs and opportunities within Warwickshire, limiting the potential for tailored economic development strategies.

7.17 Practically, a single county unitary could potentially join the West Midlands Combined Authority. However, there would be risks of this approach. In allocation of the financial Integrated Settlement, Warwickshire could lose out to the more deprived areas elsewhere across the WMCA footprint.

7.18 As mentioned previously, it is reported that the Mayor could veto Warwickshire joining the Combined Authority. This significantly limits the potential to create an alternative devolution structure that would make sense for Warwickshire. Any other structure may involve two or three other neighbouring county areas; in which case there would not be an effective size ratio between the single county unitary areas and the overall Strategic Authority. The single county unitaries would be too close in size to the potential Strategic Authority. If the single county unitary entered a Strategic Authority alongside other smaller unitaries, again there would be a size and power imbalance within the Strategic Authority between the Warwickshire single unitary and other, smaller unitaries.

Therefore, the two unitary model has been ranked as best against this criterion.

	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
Rank Score	**1st Place**	**2nd Place**

8. Criteria 6: New Unitary Structures Should Enable Stronger Community Engagement and Deliver Genuine Opportunity for Neighbourhood Empowerment.

Summary

8.1 The two unitary model has been ranked as best for the following reasons:

✔ **Brings decision-making and services closer to people:** Two unitary authorities would operate closer to the communities they serve, with a greater number of councillors for each elector. This proximity facilitates a greater understanding of local issues, provides more accessible channels for citizen engagement, and fosters a heightened sense of accountability. Residents or communities will not get left behind. Councillors can focus on the satisfaction of the resident whom the authority is here to serve but also the role that the wider community plays in effective, efficient services, especially around prevention and early intervention.

✔ **Stronger Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Empowerment:** Builds on the strengths of the Boroughs and Districts in working with local people, supporting the role of existing local forums, and creating a new approach for Area Governance, ensuring that community input is genuinely integrated into local governance.

✘ There would be a loss of local influence and democratic accountability within one large local authority. A single county unitary will have fewer members for each elector, therefore reducing engagement, and risks losing touch with residents and communities.

8.2 The transition to a unitary council structure in Warwickshire presents a valuable opportunity to reimagine and strengthen community engagement. By streamlining local governance, a unitary model can empower communities by providing clearer lines of communication, increased local decision-making power, and a stronger sense of shared ownership over local issues. This presents a significant opportunity to foster collaboration between the council and its residents, cultivating a shared vision for the future of Warwickshire. The following section examines how the proposed unitary options for Warwickshire can facilitate stronger community engagement, ensuring local government remains responsive to the needs of its residents.

Community engagement, local governance and democracy

8.3 The creation of two new councils will ensure that local democracy remains visible, accessible and rooted in place. These new councils must combine strategic leadership with strong arrangements for local voice.

8.4 The arrangements for governance are guided by these clear principles:

- Decisions should be taken at the most local sensible level.
- Local identity and civic traditions should be safeguarded.
- Councillors must remain visible and accessible to resident.
- Structures should be simple and transparent, avoiding duplication.
- Governance should be flexible, able to evolve as the new councils mature.

Area Committees

8.5 A strong local voice will be central to both new councils. Each will establish a network of Area Committees providing a clear and visible link between the unitary council and local communities.

8.6 The precise geography of Area Committees will be developed through further engagement and may differ between the north and south of the county, reflecting the distinctive character of each area. The south covers a larger and more rural geography, while the north is more urban and densely populated. Districts and Boroughs vary considerably in population size and composition, which will be a key consideration in determining the most appropriate model.

8.7 The intention is to design boundaries that feel natural and meaningful to residents, rooted in community identity, local travel patterns and established service partnerships. This could mean Area Committees that align with recognised localities, clusters of market towns or neighbourhood areas, or other geographies where people feel a shared sense of place.

8.8 Area Committees will be councillor led, meet in public and act as the principal forum for local democratic debate and accountability. Their role will be to ensure that local priorities and local knowledge directly shape decision-making within the wider unitary structure.

8.9 While the scope of delegation will be developed in detail during transition, the core functions are expected to include:

- Setting and overseeing local priorities and neighbourhood budgets.
- Providing advice and local input on planning, regeneration, transport and place-based investment.
- Coordinating with partners across health, community safety and voluntary sectors.
- Monitoring the delivery and quality of local services.
- Promoting community participation and supporting parish and town councils in their area.

8.10 In parts of the new councils where there is strong town or parish representation, Area Committees will work closely with those councils to avoid duplication and reinforce local leadership. In more urban areas with fewer parishes, Area Committees may play a stronger direct role in representing neighbourhood voices and shaping local service delivery.

8.11 Final governance arrangements, including delegated powers, membership and operating procedures, will be set out in each council's constitution to ensure transparency, accountability and consistency.

Community-Level Arrangements

8.12 There may be benefits in developing additional community-level forums beneath Area Committees, for example boards in larger towns or panels for clusters of parishes. These could provide a focus for local engagement and potentially hold budgets for community priorities.

8.13 The detailed design of any further community-level structures will be a matter for the Shadow Authorities and the new councils to consider. This provides flexibility and ensures that arrangements are developed in response to local needs and expectations.

Parish and Town Councils

8.14 Parish and town councils will continue to play an important role. In the south, coverage is complete. In the north, coverage is more limited, with Nuneaton and Bedworth having no parishes.

8.15 The new councils will:

- Work in partnership with parish and town councils, recognising their democratic mandate.
- Support those that wish to take on greater responsibility for local services and assets, while recognising that this will not be appropriate everywhere.
- Use parish charters or similar agreements to provide clarity on roles and responsibilities.

8.16 This approach values the contribution of parishes where they exist, while recognising that different arrangements are needed in unparished areas.

8.17 New parish councils may be created. For example, the North unitary could consider creating parish and town councils in Nuneaton and Bedworth, which could potentially include a Nuneaton Town Council, a Bedworth Town Council and Bulkington Parish Council, all subject to due process decision whether that be Full Council or by Central Government Order.

Access and Visibility

8.18 The new councils will maintain visible and accessible democracy:Civic offices and service hubs will be retained in main towns

- Area Committees will meet locally, with opportunities for residents to participate.
- Digital access will be strengthened so that residents can follow meetings and contact councillors easily.

Formal Governance

8.19 Both councils will operate on a Leader and Cabinet model, providing clear leadership and accountability.

8.20 Each council will also establish:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committees to hold Cabinet to account.
- Statutory committees for planning, licensing, employment matters, audit and governance.
- The full range of statutory officer posts, including Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Services and Director of Public Health.

Councillor Numbers

At present there are 257 councillors across Warwickshire's county, district and borough councils:

Council	Number of Councillors
North Warwickshire	35
Nuneaton and Bedworth	38
Rugby	42
Stratford-on-Avon	41
Warwick	44
Warwickshire County	57
Total	**257**

8.21 In deciding the future number of councillors, focus should be placed on the guidance of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and their three core areas of Strategic Leadership, Accountability, and Community Leadership.

Strategic leadership: how many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the authority in the long-term?

8.22 The number of councillors approved by MHCLG will be the number contested for the Shadow Authority elections and will roll forward as the new Council on vesting day through to the next elections, expected to be in 2031. This four-year period will be key to setting the tone, aspirations, culture and policies for the new Councils. Within Warwickshire this has not happened since 1974 and provides a significant opportunity for change in way that services are delivered, and the support provided to the community. There are recognised significant challenges within local government and. During this window of opportunity, strong strategic leadership will be a key component.

8.23 The main strategic leadership will come from the Cabinet of the Council, which would be a maximum of ten Councillors. However, more broadly the contribution will come from all Councillors through good governance and community representation.

Accountability: how many councillors are needed to scrutinise council decisions?

8.24 There would be a need for strong and robust scrutiny of services but also the implementation of Local Government Reorganisation which will take several years to complete. Therefore, there will be a need for several Scrutiny Committees, looking at areas such as health, children, fire & rescue, service delivery, and resources. It could be assumed that each of these would be a Committee of 10 councillors.

8.25 It should also be noted that Warwick District Council has a specific Scrutiny Committee to review and challenge the progress in respect of ensuring compliance for safety under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and overall view on the operation and delivery of the Housing Investment Plan and the HRA. They provide assurance on the delivery of this to Cabinet (as the responsible body) on behalf of the Council. It is anticipated the Social Housing Regulator will expect this to continue because of the significance of tenant safety.

8.26 There would need to be a Committee to act as the Licensing Authority in respect of the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005. While consultation is being undertaken by the Government on the role of this Committee, much like the review of Planning Committees, it is still reasonable to assume that a Committee of 15 members would be required for each authority, except a single authority would be far busier for Councillors. In addition to this there would need to be careful consideration to Regulatory functions (such as Taxi and Private Hire) and whether the more serious matters would still come before members or if they were to be delegated to officers.

8.27 In addition to this there would need to be a Planning Committee, both in terms of strategic planning matters (for example major developments such as quarries) and then perhaps sub-committees for more local areas on more routine development.

8.28 There would also need to be some form of Pensions Committee. There is potential that this will need to be a joint Committee across two Councils.

8.29 Across the Councils there are a considerable number of outside appointments, partnerships, and mixture of wholly owned council companies or other companies. While these may well be reviewed within a new Council (including governance arrangements as some are a joint ownership between Warwickshire Councils) within the formative years of the new Council(s), having sufficient Councillor time to fully engage with these will be a key aspect. There are currently 217 appointments of Councillors to outside bodies. While some of these are duplicates between councils, the majority are not. If these were all to continue, there would be over 150 appointments to be made.

Community leadership: how many councillors are needed to represent and engage with local people and communities?

8.30 Warwickshire is currently represented, at County, Borough, and District level by 242 Councillors. This is a significant number and there needs to be recognition of the potential significant impact on community leadership through the reduction in number of Councillors. One of the Government's intentions is to provide clarity on accountability of service. Therefore, relying on Parish/Town Councils' elected representatives to respond to enquiries concerning unitary authority work would be counter intuitive and discounted when looking at community engagement.

8.31 Councillors need to recognise the additional work that will be required as a Councillor for a unitary Council, in addition to the demands from electors, compared to current roles.

8.32 There is strong evidence presented in respect of a growing population across Warwickshire. Councillors are elected to represent every individual within their Ward and more widely their Council area, no matter if they are a registered elector or not.

8.33 There are many challenges within the respective communities across Warwickshire, with different needs in the North and South of the County. It is key for Ward Councillors to be leading both their community and the wider Council area in respect of community cohesion through being present, but also working in collaboration with multiple partners, to help improve services and quality of life for the community.

8.34 At present in Warwickshire there are no dedicated officers allocated to provide support on case work for Councillors. Therefore, the reliance will be on the Councillor to undertake the majority of the work themselves liaising directly with the appropriate officer for answers to their questions.

Conclusion

8.34 Given all of the above, for the first elections to the Shadow Authorities, two main options are available:

1. Use of County council divisions – using the 57 existing county electoral divisions, with each returning two members. This would give approximately 60 councillors in the North and 57 in the South. It provides a clear basis for the initial elections, but it is recognised that population growth and the time since the last boundary review have created notable imbalances in representation between divisions. Current arrangements have reached all three criteria for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a boundary review.

2. Use of District and Borough wards – using the current district and borough wards as the building blocks for electoral arrangements. This would align representation more closely with the proposed Area Committees and may provide more equal representation of electors (electoral equality). These interim arrangements and council sizes will be set out in the Structural Changes Order for the first elections, with a full LGBCE review to follow.

Conclusion

8.36 The governance and democracy framework for the new North and South Warwickshire councils combines strategic strength with local accountability:

- Area Committees will provide the backbone of local governance.
- Parish and town councils will be supported and respected, with opportunities to take on greater roles where appropriate.
- Community-level forums may be developed in future, but their design will rightly be for the Shadow Authorities and new councils to decide.
- Formal governance will follow established models, with clear leadership, scrutiny and statutory functions.
- Councillor representation will be reduced overall, with options for county divisions or district wards at transition, and a Boundary Commission review to follow.
- Civic identity will be safeguarded through the continuation of traditions and visible local democracy.

This balanced approach ensures that Warwickshire's two new councils will be resilient, effective, and close to the communities they serve.

Existing partnerships: A foundation for engagement

Engaging Neighbourhoods

8.37 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council prioritises tenant engagement and actively seeks the input of its residents in shaping housing services. Recognising the importance of direct engagement, the Council empowers tenant groups to influence and shape service delivery.

8.37 Furthermore, the Council employs a proactive and multi-faceted approach to reach tenants across the borough. A mobile tenant engagement service visits neighbourhoods, providing a convenient platform for residents to share their views. Complementing this, the Council organises neighbourhood walkabouts and dedicated tenant engagement days, fostering open dialogue and collaboration on issues of importance to the community. This commitment to tenant engagement ensures that housing services are responsive to the evolving needs and priorities of residents.

Informing the Council's Decisions on Climate Issues

8.39 Rugby Borough Council actively integrates community engagement into its decision-making processes, ensuring that its strategies reflect the priorities and concerns of its residents. The "Climate Adaptation World Café" event held in November 2024 exemplifies this commitment. This interactive event provided a platform for residents to engage directly with the Council's draft climate change adaptation plan. Attendees shared their insights and expressed their views on the proposed approach.

8.40 The Council, demonstrating its commitment to incorporating community feedback, has since utilised the report generated from the event to inform its approach to climate adaptation. Further demonstrating the importance of community engagement in addressing climate change, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council have also undertaken initiatives in this area. In collaboration with the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils, these councils formed a steering group to empower community groups and town/parish councils in developing projects that promote the inclusion of typically under-represented voices in climate change discussions.

8.41 This collaborative effort underscores a shared commitment to fostering broader community engagement and collaboration in tackling climate change.

Leveraging Existing Strengths for a Unitary Future

8.42 The success of existing community engagement partnerships in Warwickshire provides a strong foundation upon which to build a framework for engagement within a new unitary structure. These partnerships can inform the development of effective engagement strategies for the future.

- **Leveraging Existing Relationships:** The new unitary authorities can tap into the established relationships and trust built through these partnerships to facilitate communication and collaboration with residents.
- **Adapting Successful Engagement Methods:** The diverse range of engagement methods employed by these partnerships, from community forums to digital platforms, can be integrated into the new unitary's structure engagement plan and adapted to suit the needs of the communities.
- **Embedding a Culture of Collaboration:** The collaborative ethos fostered within existing partnerships can serve as a model for the new authority, ensuring that community engagement is not a one-off event but an ongoing and integral aspect of local governance.

8.43 By learning from and building upon these existing successes in community engagement, the two new councils can establish a robust framework for community engagement that is both effective and sustainable.

8.44 Maintaining strong local engagement and preserving the vital connection between local government and the communities it serves are paramount considerations in the design of any new model.

8.45 While a single unitary model for Warwickshire might offer potential efficiencies, the analysis indicates a significant risk of diluting local engagement and diminishing community voice. A single county-wide authority could inadvertently create a more centralised and bureaucratic system, where local concerns might be overshadowed by broader strategic priorities.

8.46 The two-unitary model strikes a more effective balance between achieving economies of scale and preserving a strong local focus. By creating two entities with distinct identities and a deeper understanding of their respective communities' needs, this model fosters greater accountability and responsiveness to local concerns.

8.47 The two-unitary structure provides a platform for more direct and meaningful citizen participation. It enables the development of tailored solutions that reflect the unique challenges and opportunities within each unitary area. This localised approach is essential for ensuring that services are designed and delivered in a way that resonates with the specific needs of each community.

Conclusion

8.48 Maintaining strong local engagement and preserving the vital connection between local government and the communities it serves are paramount considerations in the design of any new model.

8.49 A single county-wide authority could inadvertently create a more centralised and bureaucratic system, where local concerns might be overshadowed by broader strategic priorities.

8.50 The two-unitary model strikes a more effective balance between achieving economies of scale and preserving a strong local focus. By creating two entities with distinct identities and a deeper understanding of their respective communities' needs, this model fosters greater accountability and responsiveness to local concerns.

8.51 The two-unitary structure provides a platform for more direct and meaningful citizen participation. It enables the development of tailored solutions that reflect the unique challenges and opportunities within each unitary area. This localised approach is essential for ensuring that services are designed and delivered in a way that resonates with the specific needs of each community.

8.52 Therefore, the two unitary model has been ranked best against this criterion.

	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two Unitary
Rank Score	**1st Place**	**2nd Place**

9. Implementation

Implementation

9.1 Local government reorganisation represents the most significant change that the councils and residents of Warwickshire have seen in decades. The work to shape and embed a new unitary cannot be underestimated, whichever option is chosen. In this context, the two unitary model allows existing arrangements and shared priorities across North and South Warwickshire, which are established, evidenced and well understood, to continue to be progressed during the implementation process, contrasted with a single unitary that would need to juggle these distinct and competing priorities.

The Importance of Robust Implementation Planning

9.2 A local government reorganisation of this scale and complexity demands meticulous planning and adequate resourcing. Ambitious transformation programmes must be grounded in realism, acknowledging the constraints of available resources and time. Insufficient resourcing and a lack of necessary capabilities are frequent causes of organisational change failures. Implementing change effectively, including the iterative process of testing, refining, and reinforcing new processes, often proves more demanding and time-consuming than initially anticipated.

9.3 Therefore, dedicating sufficient resources, including robust programme management and transformation capacity, is paramount. Failure to adequately plan and resource the implementation phase risks compromising the realisation of the full intended benefits. While the financial assessment includes a dedicated budget for key project manager roles to support and coordinate implementation, the responsibility for driving this transformative process extends beyond these individuals. Leadership and management teams within each council will play a crucial role in facilitating the merger, supporting staff, and fostering the necessary cultural shift. The effort required to achieve such wholesale cultural change should not be underestimated.

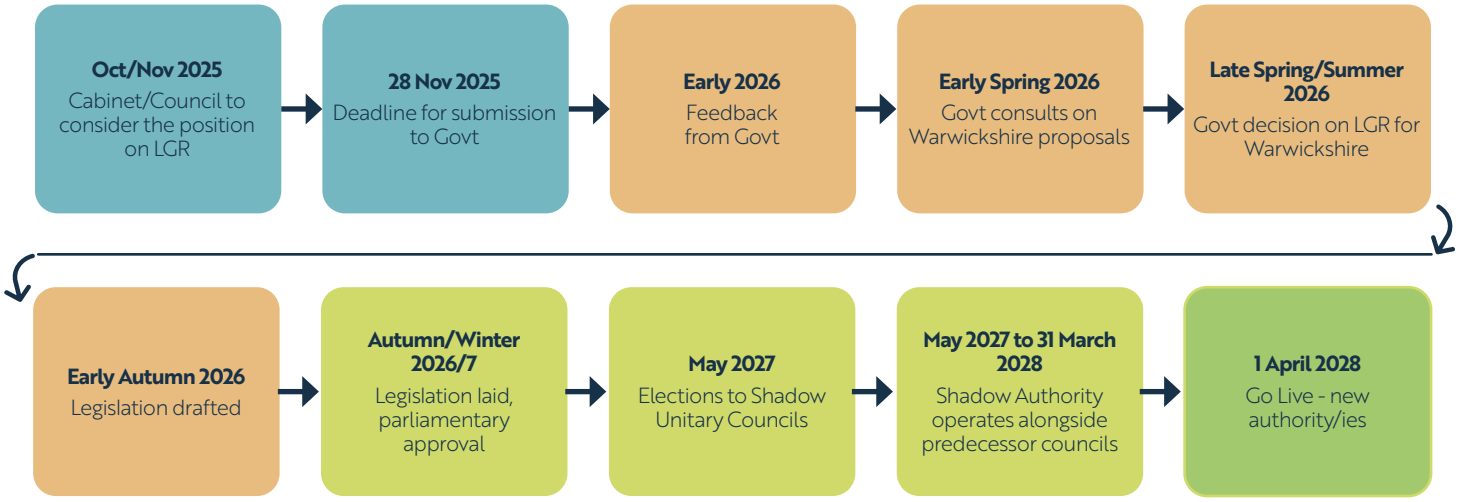
Implementation Timeline

9.4 Guidance states that new authorities should operate in 'shadow form' from May 2027, a year prior to their official "go-live" date in April 2028, when they assume full statutory powers, assets, and liabilities. During this shadow phase, while lacking full statutory powers, these authorities can recruit staff and undertake essential implementation planning. Governance during this period will fall to councillors elected in 2027, who will subsequently become councillors in the new unitary authorities upon the go-live date.

9.5 Before the election of shadow unitary authorities, governance arrangements for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) are determined by whether the new unitary councils involve breaking up the existing county council structure. If multiple unitary councils are created within a county area, a joint committee is typically established to oversee LGR preparations, as seen in Cumbria and Northamptonshire. Conversely, if a single unitary council is selected for the county, an implementation executive is often formed, following precedents from North Yorkshire and Somerset, though a joint committee remains a possibility.

9.6 These committees or executives are responsible for all key local decisions regarding LGR implementation during the transition period, with their specific governance arrangements detailed in a Statutory Change Order (SCO). While ministers have discretion over representation, joint committees usually grant equal representation to all predecessor councils, including districts, whereas implementation executives have historically given greater representation to the county council. Equal district council representation should be maintained in all transitional governance structures[55].

9.7 The below diagram illustrates the expected timeline for implementation.



9.8 To ensure a smooth transition, a structured approach, combined with dedicated resources and strong leadership commitment, will be essential for navigating the complexities of this significant transformation and realising its full potential.

[55] District Council's Network (DCN) – Briefing on Governance during LGR Transition and in new Unitary Councils, September 2025

Implementation Considerations

9.9 The upcoming local government restructure presents a unique opportunity for service transformation and organisational change. It is, therefore, imperative that this programme of change is adequately planned and resourced. When delivering ambitious programmes there needs to be an element of realism in terms of what can be achieved with the available resource and time. A lack of resource and capabilities is one of the most common reasons why organisational change fails. Implementing change, which is then tested, refined and reinforced, is often more expensive and takes longer than people realise. It is paramount that sufficient resource is dedicated, including programme management and transformation capacity, to ensure effective implementation and full benefits realisation.

9.10 In this regard, a specific budget to support and coordinate implementation has been included in the financial assessment above for key project manager roles. However, it should be noted that implementation will not fall to these individuals alone. It will be the responsibility of the leadership and management teams to drive forward the integration process and support their staff to create a new organisation. The effort required in this kind of wholesale cultural change should not be underestimated.

To ensure the smooth transition, the Councils should consider the key issues for implementation and overall approach.

A brief overview of the 11 indicative workstreams which could form the implementation programme is provided below.

Management

9.11 This work stream would establish the management team and structure required under the new authorities.

Services

9.12 This work stream would develop customer service strategies and focus on front line delivery, ensuring there is seamless transition to the new councils for customers and that ambitions for performance standards are met. As part of this, the workstream will integrate teams once Heads of Service have been consolidated across the councils.

9.13 To develop and implement combined services, the authorities will need to work on creating consolidated strategies for service delivery and implement the service efficiency opportunities identified as a result of combined service offerings.

ICT

9.14 This work stream would look at the key assets and enablers that the future councils would need in order to deliver services effectively. The future technology architecture would need to be designed to support the transition to a new operating model and there would need to be a clear understanding of the phasing and pace of technology change required.

9.15 Further work is required to review and consolidate systems, software and online portals to remove duplication and align.

People

9.16 This work stream would identify activities required to support the transition of staff to a new model of operation as defined by the organisational structures for the new councils and their working practices. Time will be required for extensive consultation with staff. Staff need to be kept informed and decisions on their individual futures communicated as soon as possible. The work stream will also require updates and consolidation of HR procedures and policies, as well as producing a new training and development programme for all staff.

Procurement

9.17 To leverage the new scale and size of the authorities, this work stream will look to create a single procurement function. As part of this, the procurement service will also review all existing contracts, applying transfer and vest where necessary, but also identifying opportunities to renegotiate contracts where efficiencies and benefits can be delivered because of economies of scale.

Assets

9.18 This work stream would identify options to reduce and consolidate assets to deliver cost efficiencies. Decisions would also need to be taken about the physical locations that the new councils would occupy and where customer facing services are delivered. This could involve investment but is likely to be offset by savings made from surplus elsewhere.

9.19 There will be some complicated issues to tackle as part of this workstream, such as the future of any council-owned companies. Stakeholder Boards could be set up, with the two unitaries becoming shareholders in any companies.

Democratic Governance

9.20 Moving towards new councils will require a review of corporate governance arrangements and the implementation of new committee structures, including assessing delegations from the Council to committees and officers to establish a clear constitution. This work stream will support this, as well as the development of a democratic services team, and new governance structure.

9.21 Time will be needed to map wards into systems to enable elections to take place in May 2027.

9.22 Further work will also focus on combining the electoral services of the authorities and the reduction in democratic members, which will require assessment of community demand, and the factors outlined above, with the elections to the new Councils in 2027.

9.23 Finally, this workstream could focus on setting up new Town and Parish Councils in Nuneaton and Bedworth, if decided upon.

Culture

9.24 The new councils would need to consider what kind of culture they want to develop, as well as the initiatives they would put in place to support staff and the pay/salary structures. This will require a significant communications campaign to engage staff, develop single policies and procedures, and implement new ways of working.

Finances

9.25 A key task will be to establish the budget requirement, the Council Tax requirement and the Band D council tax for the year restructuring comes into effect. As outlined above, there will need to be careful planning and consultation required around the council tax harmonisation.

9.26 This work stream will also complete the consolidation of various financial instruments and policies, including the Fees and Charges schedule, financial reporting and KPIs, bank accounts, and VAT numbers.

9.27 This workstream may also need to look at the pension schemes of the Councils and how these transition to the new local authorities, in particular, what is done around contribution rates.

Strategy

9.28 The creation of new councils will require the development of a single corporate strategy and business plan in the run up to, and after, the new councils are created. Consolidation of service strategies, policies and plans will also need to occur, e.g. one Local Plan for each area, and one housing allocation scheme and one enforcement policy.

Communications

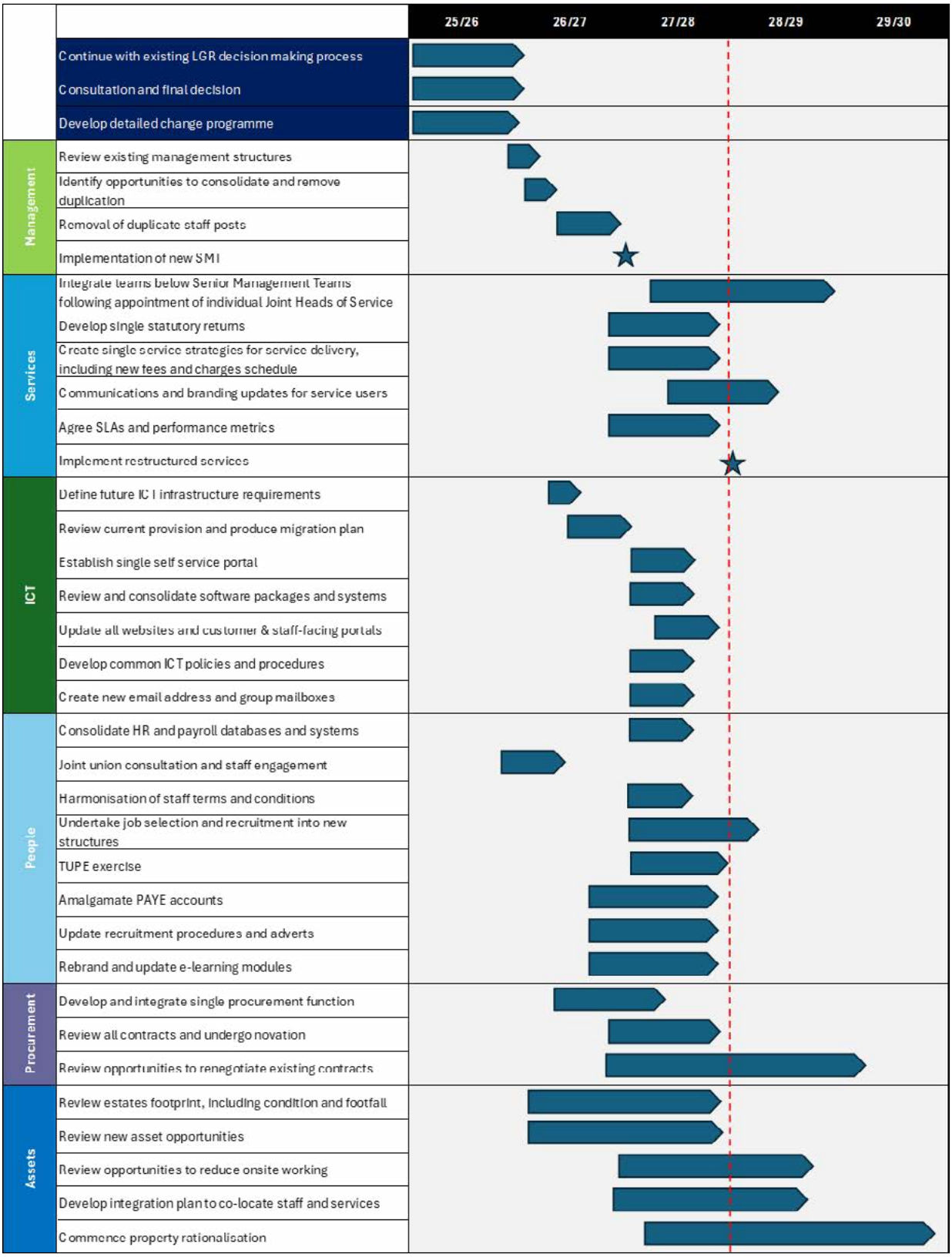
9.29 A significant work stream, this will focus on ensuring there is a plan for all stages of the implementation, appropriate for all audiences, to make sure everyone is well informed at the same time. This will include engagement with members, staff and the public to discuss the impacts of integration, timescales and what to expect once the new authorities are established.

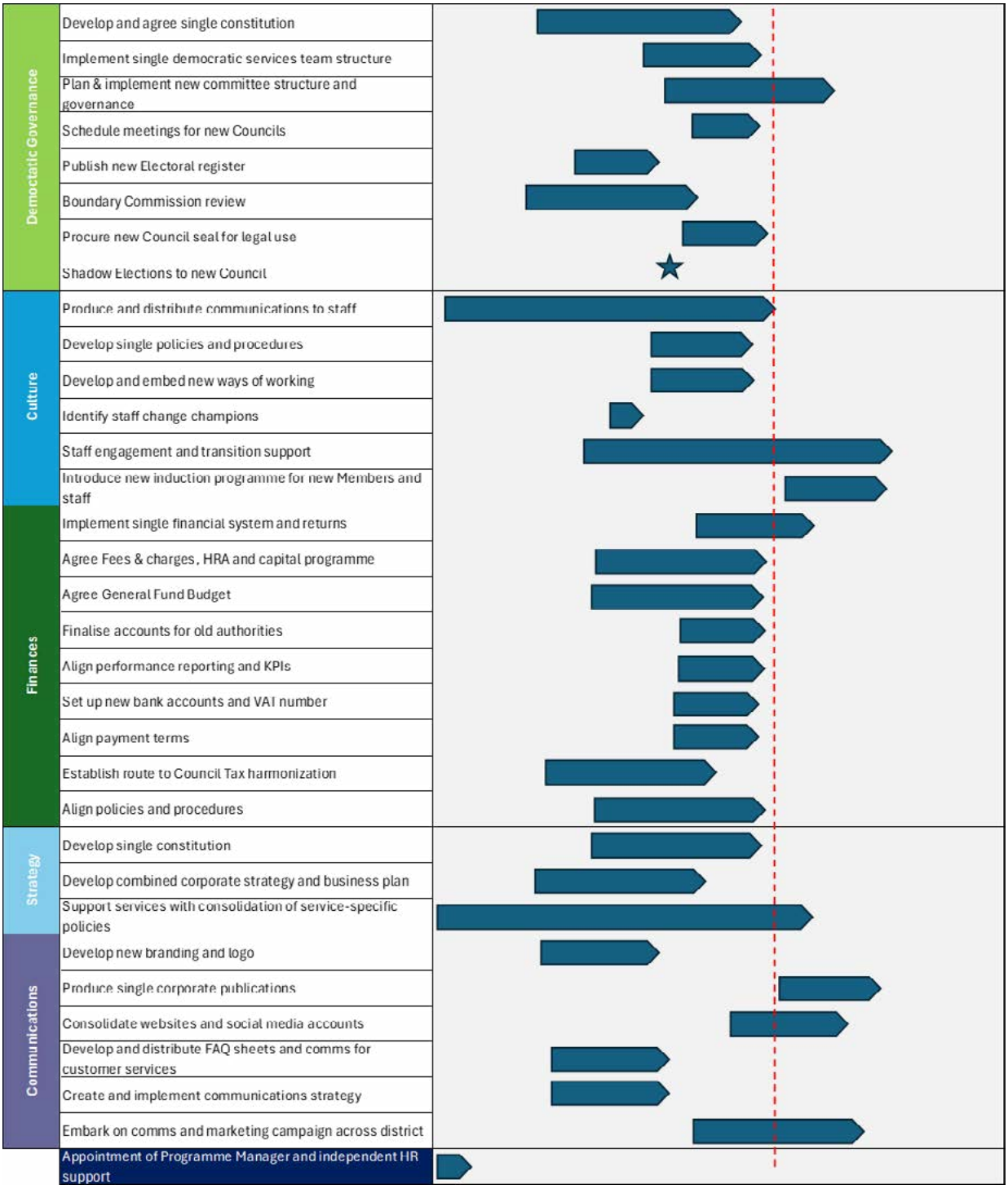
9.30 There will also need to be a programme of work to create a new corporate identity in the form of logos, branding, new websites and social media accounts for the new councils.

10. Implementation

Implementation planning

10.1 The diagram below indicates a potential implementation plan for the preferred option outlined in this business case.




Democratic Governance
Develop and agree single constitution
Implement single democratic services team structure
Plan & implement new committee structure and governance
Schedule meetings for new Councils
Publish new Electoral register
Boundary Commission review
Procure new Council seal for legal use
Shadow Elections to new Council
Culture
Produce and distribute communications to staff
Develop single policies and procedures
Develop and embed new ways of working
Identify staff change champions
Staff engagement and transition support
Introduce new induction programme for new Members and staff
Finances
Implement single financial system and returns
Agree Fees & charges, HRA and capital programme
Agree General Fund Budget
Finalise accounts for old authorities
Align performance reporting and KPIs
Set up new bank accounts and VAT number
Align payment terms
Establish route to Council Tax harmonization
Align policies and procedures
Strategy
Develop single constitution
Develop combined corporate strategy and business plan
Support services with consolidation of service-specific policies
Communications
Develop new branding and logo
Produce single corporate publications
Consolidate websites and social media accounts
Develop and distribute FAQ sheets and comms for customer services
Create and implement communications strategy
Embark on comms and marketing campaign across district
Appointment of Programme Manager and independent HR support

Social Care implementation

10.2 In practice, when councils negotiate a devolution deal or a structural change order (e.g. moving to unitary status, or transferring functions to a Combined Authority), the "safe and legal" test is the gateway: Government won't sign off unless it's clear that adult and children's statutory services remain legally compliant, safe for service users, and financially sustainable during and after the transition.

10.3 The following conditions must be met:

Statutory Compliance

10.4 The new arrangements must comply fully with all relevant legislation (e.g. Children Act 1989, Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014, Education Acts, Health and Social Care Act 2012).

10.5 Duties to safeguard and promote welfare of children, and to meet eligible needs of adults, must remain clear and enforceable.

10.6 The "single accountable body" principle applies: there must be a clear legal entity responsible for delivering each statutory function (no gaps or duplication).

Safety of Service Delivery

10.7 Services must continue without interruption through the transition (no gaps in provision for vulnerable children/adults).

10.8 Safeguarding arrangements must remain robust:

- Local Safeguarding Partnerships (for children) and Safeguarding Adults Boards must still function effectively.
- Clear escalation and accountability for risk and protection.
- Workforce, data, and systems must remain aligned so statutory timescales and thresholds are met (e.g. assessments, reviews, casework).
- The DfE and DHSC require formal assurance before approving restructuring/devolution orders.

Governance and Accountability

10.9 Local authorities must be able to show that political and professional leadership is clear, e.g. a Director of Children's Services (DCS) and a Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) are still appointed and legally responsible (as required in statutory guidance Children Act 2004, s18 and Local Authority Social Services Act 1970).

10.10 Decision-making and financial accountability must not be blurred when services are split or shared.

Financial Sustainability

10.11 Budgets for adult and children's social care must be ring-fenced or transparently allocated so that statutory duties can be met.

10.12 Risk-sharing mechanisms must be in place if pooled or delegated budgets are used (e.g. in Combined Authority or joint commissioning models).

Regulation

10.13 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) expect councils to demonstrate "safe and legal" operation when disaggregating/reaggregating services.

10.14 The DfE and DHSC require formal assurance before approving restructuring/devolution orders.

10.15 In this context, an implementation plan has been developed to provide:

- Continuity of care: Statutory assurance that vulnerable people remain protected.
- Financial case: Robust evidence of achievable savings and cost avoidance.
- Localism benefits: Smaller, more responsive unitaries aligned to NHS and communities.
- Inspection readiness: Clear focus on improvement and assurance frameworks.

Key considerations are shown in the table below.

Key Enablers	Risks	Governance & Oversight
Governance: Clear accountability (seperate DCS/DASS per UA), risk-share for joint services.	SEND DSG deficit (£151m) - risk of escalated DfE intervention if recovery not credible.	Programme Board: Chairs of Shadow Authorities + DCS/DASS.
Workforce: Local pipelines with FE collages; digital upskilling; practise academies.	Provider fragility in rural South - early market development essential.	Locality Boards: co-chaired by schools & NHS partners.
ICT/Digital: Residentc care assessments, predictive analytics, dual running until stable.	Agency social worker reliance (esp. children's) - risk to improvement momentum.	Regional Hub: high-cost placements, workforce academy, brokerage.
Commissioning: Local mirco-commissioning for volume; regional hub for high-cost/low volume.	ICT migration delays - dual running costs/risks	Inspection Readiness Group: aligned to ILACS, Area SEND, CQC frameworks.
Partnerships: Co-location with PCNs, schools, VCS; formal locality boards.	Inspection windows - likely Ofstead/CQC visits within 12-18months of Vesting Day.	
Inspection Readiness: Single improvement plans; routine dry-runs against Ofstead/CQC frameworks.		

A summary of the project plan is as follows:

Phase	Level of Delivery	Key Actions	Source/Requirement
Phase 1 Foundations (2025/26)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Identify "Day 1 Essentials" (continuity of care, safeguarding, ICT dual running)	DfE regional sufficiency programme
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Appoint statutory officers (DCS/DASS) Establish integrated programme and single business case (governance, budget, scope, benefits)	DfE/DHSC requirement
	Locality Hubs	Agree vision, principles and outcomes of locality working Agree scope for regional commissioning hub	Best practice
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Map current demand, budgets and workforce capacity (by ward where relevant) Initial engagement with schools, GPs, providers, VCSE, ICS and partners	LGA guidance
Phase 2 Design (2026)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Design shared frameworks for residential & SEND placements	DfE/DHSC policy
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Draft constitution & scheme of delegation Build draft transition plan with risk and benefit analysis, including shared/transactional services Align with MTFP, SEND and social care reforms	LGR statutory process
	Locality Hubs	Co-design operating model for family hubs & reablement	Family Help reforms
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Pilot micro-commissioning with VCSE Communication plan – staff, members, families, partners	Good practice

Phase	Level of Delivery	Key Actions	Source/Requirement
Phase 3 Mobilisation (2026/27)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Mobilise regional workforce academy	ADASS workforce guidance
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	TUPE workforce transfers; workforce training, induction and cultural alignment Implement system and data transition (case management, BI, reporting); data migration testing Secure leadership and retain critical expertise to vesting day	TUPE Regs / GDPR
	Locality hubs	Establish locality teams/structures and co-located MDTs (ASC front door, Family Help) Novate/renegotiate contracts "Day 1 Readiness Review" – dry run of key processes	Working Together 2023
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Launch early help & reablement pilots	Best practice
Phase 4 Go Live (April 2028)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Broker high-cost placements; regional market oversight	DfE MIAG / CQC assurance
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Submit statutory returns; monitor safeguarding continuity	Legal duty
	Locality hubs	Operate new front door pathways (FH + ASC triage) Launch locality operating model Implement contingency measures for risks identified earlier	Care Act / Children Act
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Ensure community-level services accessible (family hubs, carers) Maintain provider and community reassurance through ongoing comms	SEND reforms
Phase 5 Optimisation (Post-2028)	Regional (West Midlands/ICS footprint)	Sustain regional QA and market resilience programmes Plan financial resilience and interim shared service hosting	DfE/DHSC policy
	Local Authority (statutory corporate role)	Review outcomes and financial performance vs benchmark; adjust MTFP	CIPFA duty
	Locality hubs	Refine commissioning, sufficiency planning and service pathways based on learning Consolidate contracts and embed VFM approach Embed prevention and early help as a core operating principle	Best practice
	Community / Neighbourhood (30-50k PCNs, schools, VCSE)	Continuous improvement of early help, kinship, carer offers and wider partnerships (ICS, QA, market resilience programmes)	Ofsted inspection

Phases	Key Actions	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029-30
Phase 1: Foundations	Set up Day 1 essentials (care continuity, safeguarding, ICT), appoint statutory officers, and agree vision, outcomes, and governance.					
	Map demand, budgets, and workforce; define commissioning scope; and engage with schools, GPs, providers, and partners.					
Phase 2: Design	Develop shared frameworks, draft constitution, and transition plan with risk/benefit analysis.					
	Align with reforms and MTFP, co-design family hubs/reablement, pilot micro-commissioning, and plan communications.					
Phase 3: Mobilisation	Launch workforce academy, TUPE transfers, training, and cultural alignment; test data migration and system transitions.					
	Secure leadership, set up locality teams and MDTs, manage contracts, conduct readiness reviews, and pilot early help/reablement.					
Phase 4: Go Live	Operate new pathways (FH + ASC triage), launch locality model, and oversee high-cost placements with market oversight.				April 2028	
	Submit statutory returns, ensure safeguarding, maintain accessible services, and apply contingency measures.				April 2028	
Phase 5: Optimisation	Sustain QA and market resilience, review outcomes vs benchmarks, and refine commissioning and financial planning.					
	Consolidate contracts, embed prevention/early help, and drive continuous improvement with carers, kinship, and wider partnerships.					

Conclusion

10.16 The creation of a North Warwickshire Unitary and a South Warwickshire Unitary is an ambitious, transformative and practical plan for local government reorganisation. It reflects the real geography, economy and identity of Warwickshire. It will deliver simpler, stronger and more efficient local government while keeping councils close to the people they serve. It will avoid hidden or inadvertent diseconomies of scale and inefficiencies that can be caused if councils do not reflect real communities or are involved in devolution arrangements that bear no resemblance to the real economies in places.

10.17 Two councils will enable service transformation, harness digital opportunities, reduce duplication and release savings. They will strengthen local leadership and accountability and allow each new council to focus on the priorities of its communities. They will work together where issues are shared but remain free to pursue the distinct strategies that their areas need.

10.18 This is the right model for Warwickshire. Two new councils, rooted in the strengths and challenges of the north and the south, will deliver better services, stronger governance and a sustainable future for local government in the county.

WARWICKSHIRE North / South

BRIEFING ON GOVERNANCE DURING LGR TRANSITION AND IN NEW UNITARY COUNCILS

September 2025

1. Introduction

- DCN believes it is vital that district councils – and the strengths of district services – are fully represented during the LGR transition period and in the leadership and ethos of new unitary councils.
- This briefing note sets out the key issues to consider and arguments to make for a strong district influence in LGR governance arrangements.
- We encourage DCN members to make representations in your final LGR proposals to influence ministers and civil servants early. You will then be formally asked for views on governance arrangements after you have submitted your final proposal during the statutory consultation on the proposals (before the ministerial decision) and as part of the process of drafting the Statutory Change Order (after the ministerial decision).

2. Governance during LGR transition

- Governance arrangements in the period before the election of shadow unitary authorities may depend on whether the unitary councils selected in your area involve breaking up the existing county council footprint.
    - If more than one unitary council is created in a county area, there will be a joint committee to oversee preparation for LGR before elections to the shadow unitary authorities. This happened in Cumbria, Northamptonshire and Cheshire.
    - If ministers select a single unitary council for the county area, most recent precedent from North Yorkshire and Somerset is for the creation of an implementation executive. However, it may still be possible to create a joint committee instead, particularly if the new council is not a ‘continuing authority’ (see more on this below).
- These committees/executives will make all key local decisions on LGR implementation before shadow authorities are elected.
- There will be a Statutory Change Order (SCO) for each area undergoing LGR. The SCO will specify the governance arrangements for each new unitary council during the transition period, including joint committees.
- Ministers have discretion to decide the level of district council and county council representation on joint committees and implementation executives.
- In joint committees, there is strong recent precedent for all predecessor councils, including districts, to have equal representation. This is what happened in Cumbria (2023) and Northamptonshire (2021) where all councils had the same number of seats on the committee. DCN believes there is a strong, positive case for following this precedent in the current round of LGR.
- In implementation executives, the county council has tended to have greater representation than other councils. In Somerset and North Yorkshire, all predecessor districts were represented but the county council had a majority of seats on the executive.
- DCN believes district councils should have equal representation during transition regardless of whether the county council is broken up and the form of committee chosen.
- The reasons for having strong and equal representation for districts during transition are:

- LGR is an opportunity to blend the best of what district, county and unitary councils currently do as a platform for public service reform. This is more likely to happen if all councils are equally involved from an early stage in designing the future council and setting it up to deliver transformation across all the services the existing councils deliver.
- District services – particularly with their focus on place and prevention – are strongly aligned with the government's ambitions for LGR and delivery of your national missions. They have the power to help deliver economic and health benefits that will supplement and potentially outweigh any cash savings from LGR. It is more likely that district strengths will be embedded in the new councils if they have an equal voice and full role during transition.
- While county and unitary councils are currently responsible for the highest cost services that the new councils will deliver, district services have real influence on social care outcomes and on keeping people out of the social care system in the first place. Districts are important in thinking creatively about how the new councils can redesign social care services, especially with a stronger focus on place and prevention. Our recent reports on adult social care and children's services provide more detail about the influence and know-how that districts bring to the table.
- LGR is about integrating existing councils to create new councils with a clear vision, direction and set of priorities. It is important to instil an integrated, shared culture as early as possible. The best way to do this is for all predecessor councils to have an equal voice from the start of the transition period.

What to do if your council wants to call for strong district representation in transitional governance arrangements

- If your council is supporting a final proposal for two or more unitary councils, you can include a request in your proposal that all predecessor councils should have equal representation on the joint committee.
- If your council is supporting a final proposal for a single unitary council, you can include a request that all councils have equal representation on the implementation executive or that district councils collectively have at least the same level of representation as the county council.
- These requests in final proposals can be reiterated in responses you make to the statutory consultation that the Government will launch after final proposals have been submitted and during the development of the Statutory Change Order.

3. Legal form of new unitary councils

- Where two or more unitary councils are created in a county, the councils will be new entities as they will not map to the footprint of a single existing council. This is what happened in Northamptonshire, Cumbria and Cheshire.
- In any county where the outcome of reorganisation is a single unitary, the Government has the option to create a new council or to provide that the county council should continue and the functions, assets, rights etc. of district councils be transferred to it - known as a 'continuing council'. Both approaches have been used in recent reorganisations. More detail may be seen in the annex below.
- This is more than just a technical question of law. The legal form of a unitary council can have a big influence on the culture of the new organisation.
- There are several reasons why – in the circumstances of a single unitary council covering a whole county area - the better approach may be to have a 'clean sheet' rather than opt for a continuing council. This is because it would:

- facilitate the new council in developing its own values, culture and *modus operandi* rather than the risk of preserving existing cultures and ways of working and missing the opportunity to think differently about how to deliver services;
- ensure that the councillors elected to the new council were focussed in their shadow year solely on planning for and taking decisions on priorities, policies and service delivery for the period after reorganisation; they would not also have to take policy and operational decisions about county council services in the final 11 months of its existence;
- avoid the impression (if not the reality) that the county council was "taking over" the districts;
- ensure the 'section 24 regime' for obtaining consent for certain decisions on disposals and contracts in the shadow year would apply equally to county and district councils: they would all have to obtain the new council's consent;
- ensure a fairer approach to filling senior roles in the new council. A continuing council would be required to have open competition for the head of paid service (regulation 4(1) of The Local Government (Structural and Boundary Changes) (Staffing) Regulations 2008 as read with Schedule 1 to the 1993 Standing Orders Regulations). However, there is a likelihood that other senior roles such as the section 151 officer and monitoring officer would be filled without competition, on the basis that the county council already has staff in those posts. This would exclude the possibility of district council staff competing for the roles.

- **We recognise there are other circumstances – such as district councils proposing to create a unitary council on expanded boundaries of the existing district – where you may wish to choose a continuing council model in order to maximise district influence on the new authority**.

What to do if your council wants to call for a new unitary council that shares the county council footprint

- If your council is supporting a final proposal for a single county unitary, you can include a clear request to Government that it is constituted as a new council and that all existing county and district councils are abolished.
- If your council is supporting a final proposal for two or more unitary councils, you can still include a request to Government that, if a competing proposal for a single county unitary is implemented, it is constituted as a new council and all existing county and district councils are abolished.
- These requests in final proposals can be reiterated in responses you make to the statutory consultation that the Government will launch after final proposals have been submitted and during the development of the Statutory Change Order.

Annex: previous approaches to reorganisation under the 2007 Act

Abolition of all councils

- This was the model adopted in Cumbria (reorganised in 2023), Northamptonshire (reorganised in 2021) and Cheshire (reorganised in 2009):

  The Cumbria (Structural Changes) Order 2022

  The Northamptonshire (Structural Changes) Order 2020

  The Cheshire (Structural Changes) Order 2008

- The county council and district councils were all dissolved and the local government areas for which they existed were abolished.
- Each of the new councils – each previous county was split in two - was constituted as a non-metropolitan county and as a non-metropolitan district.
- In each of these examples, a joint committee was created to oversee LGR transition in the period before the election of the shadow authority. In Cumbria and Northamptonshire, all predecessor councils had equal representation. In Cheshire, predecessor district councils collectively had a majority of seats on the committee.

Cumbria (2022)	Northamptonshire (2020)	Cheshire (2008)
Westmorland & Furness • 3 from county council • 3 from each district (9 in total)	West Northamptonshire • 3 from county council • 3 from each district (12 in total)	Cheshire East • 6 from county council • 3 from each district (9 in total)
Cumberland • 3 from county council • 3 from each district (9 in total)	North Northamptonshire • 3 from county council • 3 from each district (12 in total)	Cheshire West and Cheshire • 6 from county council • 3 from each district (9 in total)

Abolition only of district councils

- This was the model adopted in Somerset and North Yorkshire which were reorganised in 2023:

  The Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022

  The North Yorkshire (Structural Changes) Order 2022

- It was also the model adopted when Shropshire was reorganised in 2009, demonstrating that the model has been used for over 15 years by different Governments:

  The Shropshire (Structural Change) Order 2008

- In 2023, these orders had the effect of retaining the county council and transferring all the districts' functions, rights and liabilities to it. In other words, the county council continued as an entity and become in the period before the reorganisation date what is termed a "preparing council" or "continuing council" in the relevant legislation. The district councils were all dissolved and the local government areas for which they existed were abolished with effect from 1 April 2023.
- The orders provided for the continuation of the county council and its designation as a district with effect from 1 April 2023.

- The North Yorkshire order provided for an implementation executive of 10 members of the county council and seven members from district councils (one from each district that was being abolished); and there was equivalent provision in Somerset (five members from the county council and four from the districts).
- While the implementation executive existed only in the period from 18 March 2022 to the fourth day after the elections in May 2022, areas facing reorganisation in 2028 could see such arrangements applying for longer periods with "baked in" majorities for county councillors.

Single unitary created, all councils abolished

- This was the model followed in Buckinghamshire. The Buckinghamshire structural changes order, which abolished both the county councils and the district councils, may be seen at this link:

  The Buckinghamshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019

- Buckinghamshire Council was created as a shadow council for the period from May 2019 to the date of the first elections to the new unitary (which were held after abolition of the county and district councils). The members of the Buckinghamshire Council were all members of the county and district councils. But it is not necessary to have that approach in the current round of reorganisation: councillors could be elected to a new council in May 2027 for its shadow year prior to the vesting day on 1 April 2028. While the structural changes order provided for interim arrangements for existing councils' statutory officers to support Buckinghamshire Council, it also required the council to appoint statutory officers before the reorganisation date.

Agenda Item No 14

Executive Board

24 November 2025

Report of the Chief Executive

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Recommendation to the Board

To consider whether, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

Agenda Item No 15

Sherbourne Recycling Ltd

Paragraph 3 – By reason of the report containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Agenda Item No 16

Exempt Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 15 October 2025

Paragraph 3 – By reason of the report containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

In relation to the items listed above members should only exclude the public if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, giving their reasons as to why that is the case.

The Contact Officer for this report is Marina Wallace (719226).