

East Sussex and Brighton and Hove -
Summary and analysis of consultation responses and summary of
representations from named consultees

Introduction

1. A statutory consultation on proposals for unitary local government in East Sussex, Brighton and Hove and West Sussex was opened on 19 November and closed on 11 January 2025. We received a total of 3828 responses.
2. The four proposals being consulted on were made by councils and submitted to the Government on 26 September 2025.
3. This document is a partial response to the consultation. It provides a summary of the responses received on the proposals submitted by councils in the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove invitation area. No decision has yet been taken on local government reorganisation in West Sussex. A further response covering the responses to proposals submitted by councils in the West Sussex invitation area will be published once a decision has been taken.
4. The Secretary of State wrote to Leaders of Sussex councils on 25 March 2026, outlining that he was not able to take a decision on local government reorganisation in Sussex due to concerns that he had across all proposals received. Two further statutory consultations were held between 12 May and 15 June 2026 on a potential modification to two unitary authorities in both East Sussex and Brighton and Hove; and West Sussex respectively. The analysis of the additional consultation in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove is published alongside this document. The analysis of the additional consultation undertaken for West Sussex will be published once a decision has been made on local government reorganisation in that invitation area.
5. The consultation invited views on the proposals submitted by:

East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Rother District Council proposed 2 unitary councils across the whole of the area of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, comprising the current areas of:

- a single unitary council covering Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden
- Brighton and Hove to remain unchanged

From here this is referred to as the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal

Brighton and Hove City Council proposed 5 unitary councils across the whole of the area of East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove. This proposal includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Unitary A:** Brighton and Hove plus 4 wards and 1 parish from Lewes

- **Unitary B:** Eastbourne, Hastings, Rother plus 5 wards from Lewes and 9 wards from Wealden
- **Unitary C:** Mid-Sussex plus 34 wards from Wealden and 10 wards from Lewes
- **Unitary D:** Chichester, Crawley, Horsham
- **Unitary E:** Adur, Arun, and Worthing

From here this is referred to as the Brighton 5 unitary option.

6. The consultation on these proposals has informed an assessment of the merits of each proposal. All the proposals have been considered carefully, alongside the responses received to this consultation, representations and any other relevant information, in assessing the proposals against the criteria before a judgement was taken on which proposal to implement.
7. The criteria by which proposals for local government reorganisation have been assessed are set out in the [letter of invitation](#), sent to councils in area on 5 February 2025. The consultation asked questions relating to the criteria for each of the above proposals.
8. This consultation relates to the structure of local government in East Sussex, Brighton and Hove and West Sussex. These proposals relate to England only.

Decision

9. **East Sussex:** The Government announced to Parliament on 16 July 2026 that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for two unitary authorities submitted by East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Rother District Council. In doing so, the Secretary of State will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change Brighton and Hove City Council requested alongside the proposal. The new councils will comprise the areas of:
 - Expanded Brighton and Hove: Brighton and Hove plus four wards from Lewes District.
 - East Sussex Council: Districts of Eastbourne, Hastings, the remaining areas of Lewes, Rother and Wealden.
10. **West Sussex:** The Secretary of State announced on 16 July 2026 that no decision has yet been taken on local government reorganisation in West Sussex, outlining that further time was required to consider the additional consultation responses received.

Methodology

11. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 states that the Secretary of State may not implement a proposal unless they have consulted with every authority affected by the proposal and other such other

persons as they consider appropriate. Those councils and persons considered appropriate are hereafter referred to as '[named consultees](#)'.

12. The list of named consultees is available on [gov.uk](#).
13. In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (the Ministry) welcomed the views of any other persons or bodies interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.
14. The Ministry used Citizen Space, a third-party consultation programme to collect responses. Citizen Space was open to both named consultees and all other interested parties. Further information on the statutory basis for, and methodology of, the consultation is provided on the [publication page](#).
15. Responses to the consultation were also received by email and letter.
16. The department used a tool named Consult AI to assist in the analysis of responses. The AI tool identified themes present in the responses, which MHCLG officials have checked for accuracy. The tool did not have access to any personal data. All responses from named consultees were read by department staff.
17. To evaluate Consult's performance, human reviewers independently checked the theme assignments Consult had produced, and these were compared against Consult's original outputs using an F1 score—a standard measure that penalises both over- and under-assignment of themes. Consult's theme mappings were broadly consistent with the human reviewers' assessments.

Consultation Questions

18. Respondents answered the questions below using a five-point agree–disagree scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', with an additional 'don't know' option
19. The questions were as follows:
 - a) **Question 1:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?
 - b) **Question 2:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?
 - c) **Question 3:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?
 - d) **Question 4:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly

given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

- e) **Question 5:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?
- f) **Question 6:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?
- g) **Question 7:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?
- h) **Question 8:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?
- i) **Question 9:** If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.
- j) **Question 10:** This proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary changes. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?
- k) **Question 11:** If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10

Summary of responses to proposals from East Sussex and Brighton

20. There were 3828 total respondents to this consultation, 36 from named consultees and 3792 by other respondents. 7 respondents sent in replies relevant to all reorganisation areas. Not all respondents provided an answer to each question, please see analysis of responses by question below for individual response data.

Responses from named consultees

Named consultee respondents	Number of Responses
Principal councils	6
Neighbouring councils	12
Strategic Authority	0
Health Bodies	2
Police and Fire	2
Education Bodies	0
Other Public Sector	4
Voluntary and Community Sector	1
Business Organisations	1
National Bodies	7

Other named consultees	1
Total named consultees	36

Responses from other respondents

21. Tables in this report included numbers rounded to the nearest whole number and as such, not all cumulative scores will equal 100%.
22. Respondents were invited to respond to 8 multiple-choice questions per proposal and could provide a rationale for their answers in a free text box. Where a proposal included boundary change, respondents were invited to answer an additional question and provide an additional free text response. The multiple-choice questions invited respondents to state whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed/agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed/disagreed, strongly disagreed, or did not know when responding to a statement.
23. For the purposes of this document we have classified positive responses as strongly agree, somewhat agreed or agree and negative responses as somewhat disagree or disagree and strongly disagree.
24. The tables below take the average response across the multiple-choice questions to provide an overall view of whether all respondents viewed a proposal positively or negatively.

East Sussex and Brighton and Hove

All responses

25. The tables below take the average response across the 9 multiple choice questions to provide an overall view of whether proposals were viewed positively or negatively.

Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
East Sussex 2 unitary proposal	23413	59%	26%	11%	4%
Brighton 5 unitary option	24451	12%	78%	8%	3%

26. Overall, the responses demonstrate a preference for the 2 unitary authority proposal. 59% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 26% of respondents provided negative responses. 15% were neither agree nor disagree or don't know.

Named consultees

Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
East Sussex 2 unitary proposal	175	64%	21%	15%	0%
Brighton 5 unitary option	188	20%	55%	24%	1%

27. The responses from named consultees demonstrate a preference for the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal. 64% of respondents to the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 21% of respondents provided negative responses. 15% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know.

Individuals living in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
East Sussex 2 unitary proposal	16366	66%	25%	8%	2%
Brighton 5 unitary option	14890	11%	80%	6%	3%

28. The responses from individuals living in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove demonstrate a preference for East Sussex 2 unitary proposal. 66% of respondents to the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 25% of respondents provided negative responses. 10% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know.

Individuals living outside East Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
East Sussex 2 unitary proposal	256	58%	25%	12%	5%
Brighton 5 unitary option	322	13%	74%	10%	3%

29. The responses from individuals outside East Sussex and Brighton and Hove demonstrate a preference for East Sussex 2 unitary proposal. 58% of respondents to the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 25% of respondents provided negative responses. 17% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know.

Organisations

Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know Responses
East Sussex 2 unitary proposal	751	50%	22%	20%	8%
Brighton 5 unitary option	914	15%	70%	12%	4%

Analysis of responses by question East Sussex and Brighton and Hove

30. To reflect the areas covered by each proposal, individuals are categorised as "living in affected area" differently per proposal as follows:
- **East Sussex 2 unitary proposal:** East Sussex, Brighton and Hove
 - **Brighton 5 unitary option:** East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	40%	60%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	17%	17%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	11%	67%	22%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	4	50%	25%	25%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	4	25%	50%	25%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	23	70%	17%	13%	0%

Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	22	18%	64%	18%	0%
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Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	2050	78%	19%	2%	0%
Individuals living in affected area Brighton 5 unitary	2575	15%	81%	3%	1%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	772	53%	28%	13%	6%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	36	19%	78%	3%	0%
Organisations East Sussex 2 unitary	94	60%	20%	15%	5%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	102	20%	72%	8%	1%

Total Responses Question 1

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2939	71%	21%	6%	2%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2735	15%	80%	3%	1%

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	40%	60%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	17%	17%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	11%	67%	22%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%

Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	22	64%	18%	18%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	19%	62%	19%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2048	70%	23%	6%	1%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2564	12%	79%	6%	3%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	771	45%	29%	17%	9%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	36	11%	75%	14%	0%
Organisations East Sussex 2 unitary	94	52%	18%	22%	7%

Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	101	12%	70%	14%	4%
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Total Responses Question 2

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2935	63%	25%	9%	3%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2722	12%	78%	7%	3%

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	20%	80%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	22%	56%	22%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%

Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	0%	33%	67%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	22	68%	23%	9%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	14%	62%	24%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2045	70%	23%	6%	1%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2562	12%	77%	7%	3%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	764	45%	32%	15%	9%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	35	14%	74%	11%	0%
Organisations East Sussex 2 unitary	94	54%	20%	17%	9%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	102	14%	72%	12%	3%

Total Responses Question 3

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2925	62%	25%	9%	3%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2720	13%	77%	8%	3%

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	20%	80%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	83%	17%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	11%	78%	11%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%

Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 1 unitary	22	68%	18%	14%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	14%	71%	14%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2043	64%	24%	10%	2%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2561	10%	77%	8%	5%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	764	41%	30%	18%	11%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	36	8%	75%	3%	14%
Organisations East Sussex 1 unitary	93	51%	20%	20%	9%

Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	101	12%	72%	12%	4%
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Total Responses Question 4

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2922	57%	25%	13%	5%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2719	10%	77%	8%	5%

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	17%	17%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	22%	44%	33%	22%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%

Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	22	64%	18%	18%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	19%	48%	33%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2046	61%	25%	12%	2%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2557	10%	77%	9%	3%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	763	38%	31%	21%	10%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	36	14%	72%	11%	3%
Organisations East Sussex 1 unitary	94	43%	21%	28%	9%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	102	13%	72%	13%	3%

Total Responses Question 5

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 1 unitary	2925	55%	27%	15%	4%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2716	11%	77%	9%	3%

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	17%	17%	0%

Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	40%	60%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	11%	44%	44%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	50%	50%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	0%	33%	33%	33%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%

National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	22	59%	23%	18%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	14%	48%	33%	5%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2045	63%	28%	7%	2%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2548	10%	82%	6%	3%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	762	37%	32%	20%	12%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	36	6%	75%	17%	3%
Organisations East Sussex 2 unitary	94	43%	27%	21%	10%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	102	13%	72%	13%	3%

Total Responses Question 6

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2923	56%	29%	11%	4%

Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2707	10%	81%	6%	3%
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Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	44%	33%	22%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%%	33%	33%	0%

Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	21	57%	24%	19%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	29%	43%	29%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2042	66%	21%	10%	4%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2554	12%	72%	11%	5%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	762	46%	27%	17%	10%

Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	36	8%	69%	14%	8%
Organisations East Sussex 2 unitary	94	57%	15%	19%	9%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	101	16%	63%	14%	7%

Total Responses Question 7

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2919	60%	23%	12%	5%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2712	12%	72%	12%	5%

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	5	20%	60%	0%	20%
Neighbouring Council East Sussex 2 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	9	44%	33%	22%	0%
Strategic Authority East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

Health Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies East Sussex 2 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees East Sussex 2 unitary	21	62%	24%	14%	0%
Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	21	29%	43%	24%	5%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individuals living in area East Sussex 2 unitary	2047	56%	32%	11%	1%
Individuals living in area Brighton 5 unitary	2559	14%	76%	8%	2%
Individuals living outside affected area East Sussex 2 unitary	763	35%	37%	20%	8%
Individuals living outside affected area Brighton 5 unitary	35	23%	69%	9%	0%
Organisations East Sussex 2 unitary	94	44%	33%	16%	7%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	102	22%	65%	11%	3%

Total Responses Question 8

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	2925	50%	33%	13%	3%
Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	2717	14%	75%	8%	2%

Question 9: If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-7 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

Respondent type	Total Named consultees	Total Individuals living in area	Total individuals not in area	Total Organisation
Total responses East Sussex 2 unitary	23	1155	319	83

Total responses Brighton 5 unitary	25	1433	21	84
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Summary of named consultee responses

Principal councils

31. Responses from principal councils supported the proposals that they put forward, with the majority in support of the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal, and with concern expressed in relation to the Brighton 5 unitary option primarily related to the risks associated with the lack of engagement with impacted areas/councils, scale of service disaggregation and the financial sustainability of the proposed authorities.

Neighbouring councils

32. Neighbouring authorities from outside of the East and Brighton invitation area that responded were in support of the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal. A single neighbouring authority supported the Brighton unitary proposal.

Health

33. Health bodies who responded in relation to proposals from East Sussex and Brighton and Hove expressed a strong preference for East Sussex 2 unitary, citing that this minimises disruption and maintains established working relationships across the county.

Police and Fire

34. Of the Police and Fire bodies that responded, all were in favour of the East Sussex 2 unitary option, focussing on the importance of maintaining alignment with key partners in the area. There was also support for the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal with regards to devolution in Sussex and ensuring a balanced Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Other public sector

35. Of the public sector bodies who responded, there was a preference for the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal. Reasons for supporting this proposal included the belief that it would be more effective and financially efficient. There was also a sense that the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal reflected economic areas, simplified governance in the area and would bring together strategic areas such as housing and social care.
36. There was, however, some concern that a single unitary for East Sussex will be too large and disparate to connect with coastal authorities.

Business

37. Business organisations who were named consultees provided limited responses, but those that did noted that the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal reflected economic areas, but there was some concern regarding the continued separation of Brighton, reflecting that in this context, partnership working and small and medium enterprise engagement will be important.

Comments against the criteria

38. **For criterion 1: A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government:** Responses in support of the East Sussex 2 unitary highlighted transport links and shared service arrangements already in existence, while noting that it provided scale and aligned with economic areas. However, there was also concern that the single unitary for East Sussex was too large and would not be able to respond to localised challenges, for example, rural and coastal requirements. There was a concern that the Brighton 5 unitary option does not reflect local identity and long-standing communities, while others recognised the benefits of coastal authorities.
39. **For criterion 2: Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks:** Concerns were raised regarding the financial sustainability of new councils within the Brighton 5 unitary option and the East Sussex 2 unitary proposals, with a focus on the need for government support for SEND and social care. Concerns were also voiced about increased Council Tax levels, a belief that service provision would deteriorate as well as the cost and potential for service disruption owing to local government reorganisation.
40. **For criterion 3: Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens:** A common concern was the risk of service disruption because of reorganisation, whilst acknowledging that the single unitary for East Sussex would avoid the disaggregation of services. There was a strong reluctance for rural areas to be grouped with urban areas, citing that there are different challenges in providing services for rural communities.
41. **For criterion 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:** Responses also highlighted a concern regarding a lack of engagement with local communities on the proposals submitted and insufficient local representation, this was especially relevant to the Brighton 5 unitary option.
42. **For criterion 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements:** Principal authorities justified their own options with wider responses referencing a mix of support and opposition to devolution. Respondents felt that a single large authority provided the scale to enable balanced regional discussion, whilst opposition focussed on scepticism regarding Mayoral decision making and control.
43. **For criterion 6: New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment:** There were concerns expressed regarding the loss of local identity and democratic representation due to larger authorities. Additional themes focussed on the perception that creating larger councils will centralise powers, reduce local decision making, and have a negative impact on community engagement and local accountability. There is a desire from

respondents for local communities to manage local budgets and issues, with effective representation for differing local communities.

44. The themes identified by the AI tool were as follows:

Local Democratic Representation

45. Respondents raised concerns about the loss of local representation, identity and democracy due to larger authorities. There was a perception that proposals may disrupt long-established local communities and cultural cohesion, and merging councils will centralise power, reduce local decision-making, community engagement, and local accountability.

Support for the One East Sussex Proposal

46. Support for the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal is the most common theme across the options received for East Sussex and Brighton Hove. Despite concerns raised about its large geographic size and potential negative impact on local identity, responses revealed a consensus that the proposal offers the best option to deliver significant savings and economies of scale in East Sussex.

Financial Stability and Efficiencies of New Unitaries

47. Respondents also raised concerns about financial mismanagement, strain, and cost implications of the proposals as well as the need for central government support for SEND and social care. In addition, there were concerns raised regarding the cost of reorganisation and the disruption of the change, increased council tax, and risks to service provision.

Impact on Rural and Coastal Areas

48. Concerns were raised that larger unitaries were unsuitable due to the large geographic and diverse area any new unitary authority would be responsible for, leading to concerns about the underrepresentation and neglect of rural and coastal communities and their respective requirements.

Opposition to the LGR Process

49. Respondents raised the concern that proposals were not informed by local views, with inadequate consultation, and the belief that local democracy was being eroded. There was some preference for maintaining the current system of local government in the area over the proposed change(s), and a belief that reorganisation will ultimately result in worse services being delivered to local residents.

Summary of paper and emailed non-named consultee responses

50. Emailed and written responses from non-named consultees were broadly consistent with the responses received on Citizen Space and largely mirrored those submitted by named consultees. Those that favour the East Sussex 2 unitary proposal noted concerns in relation to the proposed expansion of Brighton and Hove into Lewes. Again, there was apprehension about the impact that reorganisation will have on rural areas/communities.

51. There was concern with regards to legacy debts from existing councils being placed on new unitary authorities and how this will be managed, as well as the avoidance of service disaggregation as a recurring theme.

Question 10: This proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary changes. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change? This question and question 10 were asked in relation to proposal the Brighton 5 unitary option.

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council Brighton 5 unitary	6	67%	33%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council Brighton 5 unitary	7	14%	57%	29%	0%
Strategic Authority Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	0	0	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector Brighton 5 unitary	3	33%	33%	33%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
National Bodies Brighton 5 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees Brighton 5 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

Total Named Consultees Brighton 5 unitary	19	21%	53%	26%	0%
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Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individual Living in Brighton 5 unitary	2547	10%	81%	6%	3%
Individual Outside Brighton 5 unitary	36	14%	81%	6%	0%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	104	13%	69%	13%	5%
Organisations Brighton 5 unitary	101	12%	70%	13%	5%

Question 10: This proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary changes. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change? This question and question 11 were asked in relation to the Eastleigh 5 unitary 1A proposal.

Total Responses

Respondent type	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total all responses Brighton 5 unitary	2703	10%	80%	7%	3%

Summary of Local Government Boundary Commission (The Commission) Response

52. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England provided observations on the evidence provided to support the boundary change request within the Brighton 5 unitary option, drawing on their Principal Area Boundary Review expertise. The Commission observed limited evidence of community, demographic, geographic or social data to inform the specific boundary changes proposed.

Summary of named consultee responses

Principal councils

- 53. Of those that responded, there was one council in support of the Brighton 5 unitary option, setting out that the proposal aligns with how residents live and access services.
- 54. The remaining councils in the invitation area argued that the Brighton 5 unitary option proposed boundary changes that will lead to financially unsustainable local authorities, and the disaggregation risks are too high.

Neighbouring councils

- 55. Of the neighbouring councils that responded, none were in favour of the boundary changes suggested in the Brighton 5 unitary option, however there was a recognition of the merits of smaller unitary authorities. Several councils outlined that Brighton's analysis for the proposed boundary changes does not assess the full impact across Sussex and does not seek to ensure balance of income and demand pressure. There were also concerns regarding the financial sustainability of several of the proposed authorities.

Health

- 56. Respondents from this group outlined that creating five local authorities with responsibility for children's and adult social care and public health could cause disruption and impact partnership working.

Police and Fire

- 57. Of the Police and Fire and Rescue bodies that responded, there were concerns around the impact of boundary changes on service delivery, highlighting a potential impact on the ability to provide a safe and effective emergency response.

Other public sector

- 58. Other public sector respondents contended that the proposed boundary changes do not align with recognised communities.

Business

- 59. Business organisations who were named consultees provided limited responses, but of those that did expressed concern that the Brighton 5 unitary created artificial boundaries, with councils that are too small to be resilient.

Comments against the criteria

- 60. **For criterion 1:** There was a strong sense that the proposed unitaries did not reflect local identities/communities, with little evidence to support the proposed boundaries and did not adhere to government guidelines regarding population size. There was a fear that rural and coastal needs would be neglected with a misalignment of need and inappropriate grouping of diverse areas. There was support for proposal with respect to recognising the needs of coastal communities.
- 61. **For criterion 2:** There was concern expressed about the financial sustainability of the new unitaries, and that they may not be the right size to achieve

efficiencies and demonstrate resilience. There were also concerns about the cost implications of implementing the proposal, with this being considered a waste of taxpayers money.

- 62. **For criterion 3:** Concern that there will be service disruption during the implementation period, with increased complexity and bureaucracy, along with the risks associated with the disaggregation of services such as SEND and social care.
- 63. **For criterion 4:** Responses highlighted a concern regarding a lack of engagement with local communities on the proposal submitted, whilst also not respecting local identities and communities and a desire to maintain current structures. There was a strong sense that rural communities in neighbouring areas did not want to be subsumed into an urban authority.
- 64. **For criterion 5:** There were limited responses to how the proposal would support devolution in Sussex, with those received a mix of both support and opposition.
- 65. **For criterion 6:** Responses highlighted a concern re the lack of engagement with local communities in developing proposals.

Themes identified by the AI tool were as follows:

Boundary Change

- 66. Respondents were not in favour of the proposed boundary changes and highlighted a range of reasons in their responses, including satisfaction with service provision in existing council areas and a desire to see traditional local boundaries respected and maintained.
- 67. Further responses outlined that the proposed boundaries are seen as fragmented and arbitrary, do not align with how residents view their county and access services currently, and have not to date, garnered widespread support.

Impact on rural areas

- 68. Concerns were raised that residents of rural district councils have very different service requirements than those of urban authorities, with a sense that this would make the proposal unsuitable to meet these needs.

Engagement

- 69. There was a concern that local people's views have not been taken into consideration and engagement activity was not conducted in the area(s) that would be impacted by the changes outlined in the proposal

Local Identity and Communities

- 70. Responses outlined resident opposition to the proposed boundary changes as they join communities that are not naturally connected and furthermore would result in imbalanced service need across the new council areas.

Financial

71. Attention was drawn to the belief that proposed changes are anticipated to be costly, with proposed new authorities unlikely to be financially sustainable. Respondents also set out that there appears to be a lack of evidence to support the need for such widespread changes.

Summary of paper and emailed non-named consultee responses

72. Responses largely mirror others received. Concerns were raised regarding the loss of local identity and risk/fear that rural areas will be overlooked by being aligned with urban area(s).
73. While recognising the scale of efficiencies available, there was concern regarding the size of the single unitary i.e. too remote from local communities.
74. Responses received also outlined criticism of local government reorganisation generally.

West Sussex

75. The results from the West Sussex consultation will be released once a decision on local government reorganisation has been made in West Sussex.