SURREY LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

Introduction

On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to all councils in Surrey, enclosing the Secretary of State's invitation to submit a proposal for unitary local government. The invitation explained that a proposal could be submitted by a council individually or jointly with other councils receiving the invitation and included guidance on what a proposal should seek to achieve and matters to be taken into account, to which the councils were required to have regard.

The 2 proposals in were made by the following councils on 9 May 2025.

Elmbridge Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council proposed 2 unitary councils:

- East Surrey (Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge)
- West Surrey (Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Woking)

The Borough Councils of Epsom and Ewell, Guildford, Reigate and Banstead, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking, and Tandridge District Council proposed 3 unitary councils:

- East Surrey (Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge)
- North Surrey (Elmbridge, Runnymede, and Spelthorne)
- West Surrey (Guildford, Surrey Heath, Waverley, and Woking)

The Government is now consulting on these proposals with the Town Council, although not a named consultee, invited to respond to the following questions in relation to each of the proposals.

In order to assist councillors in answering the questions below, councillors have separately been provided with:

- Surrey County Councils Options appraisal – favouring the two unitary approach
- Godalming Town Council's summary of the options – favouring the three unitary approach (Farnham Town Council has also resolved to support this option and is writing to residents to urge them to respond to the consultation).

RECOMMENDED:

1. Haslemere Town Council resolves which option to support and authorises the Clerk to draft a response on their behalf which will be agreed by councillors before being formally submitted.

Consultation questions

This consultation seeks views on the 2 proposals being taken forward for consultation, posing the following questions in relation to each proposal:

1) Does the proposal suggest sensible economic areas and geographies which will achieve a single tier of local government for the whole of Surrey?

Please explain your answer, including any comments on whether this proposal suggests sensible economic areas (for example reflect economic geography/travel to work areas/functioning economies) for councils with an appropriate tax base that does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area, and a sensible geography that will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs?

2) Will the local government structures being put forward, if implemented, achieve the outcomes described?

Please explain your answer, including any specific comments on the evidence and analysis to support the proposals.

3) Is the councils' proposal for unitary local government of the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks and is this supported by a rationale for the population size proposed?

Please explain your answer, including any specific comments on the efficiencies identified to help improve the councils' finances, how it will manage transition costs and any future service transformation opportunities identified.

4) As an area covering councils in Best Value intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, do you agree the proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing?

As of 17 June 2025, councils in Surrey in Best Value intervention are Spelthorne Borough Council and Woking Borough Council.

As of 17 June 2025, the council in Surrey in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support in 2025/26 is Woking Borough Council.

Please explain your answer, including any specific comments on the area-specific arrangements necessary to make new structures viable.

5) Will the proposal prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens, improve local government and service delivery, avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services and lead to better value for money in the delivery of these services?

Please explain your answer, including any comments on the public service reform opportunities within the proposal, including social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and wider public services, including public safety.

6) Has the proposal been informed by local views, and does it consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance?

Please explain your answer, including any comments on the local engagement activity undertaken on the proposal and how it is proposed that any local concerns will be addressed.

7) Does the councils' proposal support devolution arrangements?

Do you have any comments on the proposed devolution arrangements?

8) Will the councils' proposal enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to community engagement?

9) Do you have any other comments with regards to the proposed local government reorganisation in Surrey?

Timeline