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# Essex LGR 5 Unitary Authorities Proposal
# Resident Engagement Survey

July 2025

# Executive Summary

Overall, there was a good level of responses across the district/unitary authorities and inclusion of respondent types. With 7391 responses received in this public consultation, with the highest number of responses from Basildon, Chelmsford, and Southend-on-Sea.

The most important functions of local authorities to respondents were efficient use of council tax and public funds, clear accountability on decision making, and **staff and councillors knowing and understanding the local area**

The functions of new authorities prioritised by respondents were most prioritised were high quality services that work well, infrastructure planning, ease of contacting your local council, the level of council taxes paid and, accountability to residents.

Overall levels of support indicate **a divided, but marginally negative, response to the proposal**: 28% strongly opposed it, 16% opposed it, 20% were neutral, 18% supported it, and 18% strongly supported it. With the proposal receiving the **highest levels of support in Southend-on-Sea, Chelmsford and Castle Point,** and the highest levels of opposition in Harlow, Basildon, Uttlesford, and Rochford.

There was a strong correlation with age and levels of support, with **younger respondents the most likely to support the proposal**. Additionally, those from a **minority ethnic group were more likely to support the proposal**. There was a **stronger level of support with men than women**, and similar levels of non-support between genders. Additionally, there was a slightly higher level of non-support with those who have a disability.

Analysis of respondents' priorities for current and new councils showed that **support was lowest for those who held concerns pertaining to the local character of the new councils**, such as the local identity, accountability to residents, and contactability of councillors and staff were the most likely to not support the proposal.

Semantic Analysis was conducted on the additional comments to respondents' support/non-support. Among those who left additional comments the **most common reason for opposing the proposal was that the 5UA model felt too remote or not sufficiently local** - a concern cited by 29% of respondents. This was followed by concerns centring the **impact of current councils' debt** with 19% raising this concern. A further 16% **opposed the idea of Local Government Reorganisation in Essex more broadly**.

Among those who left additional comments **the most common reasons for supporting the proposal was that the 5UA model looked to be the right size** – noted by 32%. Secondly 22% hoped that the reorganisation process would act to **catalyse wider improvements**

Comparisons with wider public opinion polling on support for two-tiered and singe-tiered local government structured suggested **the specific 5 UA proposal is viewed more favourably than single unitary authorities are generally with the wider public.** This **suggests the 5UA model may be more acceptable than "unitarisation" in principle**, especially when locally defined.

# Survey Findings

# Weighting Methodology

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Sample weighting was performed along the answers to demographic information within this survey.
The demographic weighting then followed along age and gender prevalence within the survey, weighted towards the greater Essex (current county, Southend, and Thurrock) population characteristics within the 2023 Mid year ONS population projections, from the 2021 Census.

- The weighting coefficients had an upper limit applied to reduce sampling bias through overrepresentation. A square root transformation was then used to reduce skew, bringing all weights closer to 1 and ensuring each respondent's input carried more equal influence.

- These Weighting coefficients, rather than count of Reponses, was then used in reporting the survey data insights, to account for any under sampling bias and make the reporting more representative of the wider population.

- Non-responses were evenly distributed against the Greater Essex relevant demographic information so that these responses were included in the reporting following sampling weighting.

# Total Responses – 7391
## *Weighted & Unweighted*

Within this consultation a total of 7391 responses have been recorded. With the ambition to hear from around 0.5% of the proposed 'Greater Essex' population, including the Essex County Council boundary combined with Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. This would be an approximate of 9,000 responses had the target been met. While the target was not fully met, the **volume of responses represents a strong level of engagement from the public.**

This target was achieved in 6 of the 14 areas. These were: Basildon, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Maldon, Southend-on-Sea and Uttlesford.

As there was such a significant variation in response by authorities, weighting responses by area would introduce high levels of sampling bias, so a demographic based on identity factors was preferred, with the weighting having a negligible impact on the representativeness by area of these insights.

| Current Authority Area | *Population - post Weighting* | Unweighted Responses | Response Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Basildon | *1509* | 1518 | **0.8%** |
| Braintree | *262* | 256 | 0.2% |
| Brentwood | *246* | 250 | 0.3% |
| Castle Point | *724* | 737 | **0.8%** |
| Chelmsford | *1035* | 1032 | **0.6%** |
| Colchester | *479* | 464 | 0.2% |
| Epping Forest | *37* | 37 | 0.0% |
| Harlow | *105* | 105 | 0.1% |
| Maldon | *435* | 441 | **0.6%** |
| Rochford | *319* | 320 | 0.4% |
| Southend-on-Sea | *1348* | 1347 | **0.7%** |
| Tendring | *90* | 88 | 0.1% |
| Thurrock | *37* | 35 | 0.001% |
| Uttlesford | *720* | 737 | **0.8%** |
| Other | *30* | 24 | - |

# Cross tabulation of responses by District/Unitary and role
*Number of Unweighted Responses*

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As expected, there was a significant response across residents of most areas, with residents views the largest group heard from across all areas.

Notably there was a large response from residents across Basildon, Southend-on-Sea and Chelmsford.

There is also significant inclusion of those from public sector working backgrounds, business, and the voluntary sectors.

There is a wide distribution of councillors across each level and across the district/unitary areas.

| Current Authority Area | District, borough or county councillor | Business | Parish/Town council | Public services worker | Resident | Voluntary or community sector organisation | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basildon | 9 | 8 | 16 | 47 | 1415 | 10 | 13 |
| Braintree | 8 | 2 | 12 | 17 | 205 | 7 | 5 |
| Brentwood | 5 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 228 | 4 | 2 |
| Castle Point | 25 | 4 | 1 | 47 | 640 | 13 | 7 |
| Chelmsford | 13 | 20 | 12 | 110 | 846 | 23 | 8 |
| Colchester | 5 | 10 | 7 | 47 | 382 | 10 | 3 |
| Epping Forest | 3 | | 1 | 4 | 28 | 1 | |
| Harlow | | 3 | | 13 | 87 | 1 | 1 |
| Maldon | 10 | 11 | 16 | 20 | 372 | 7 | 5 |
| Rochford | 2 | 1 | 3 | 23 | 281 | 5 | 5 |
| Southend-on-Sea | 23 | 14 | 2 | 140 | 1108 | 35 | 25 |
| Tendring | 1 | | | 6 | 78 | 3 | |
| Thurrock | | 2 | 1 | 4 | 28 | | |
| Uttlesford | 15 | 13 | 17 | 30 | 646 | 13 | 3 |
| Other | | | | 6 | 16 | | 2 |

# How did Respondents Identify their local Area?
*Weighted & Unweighted*

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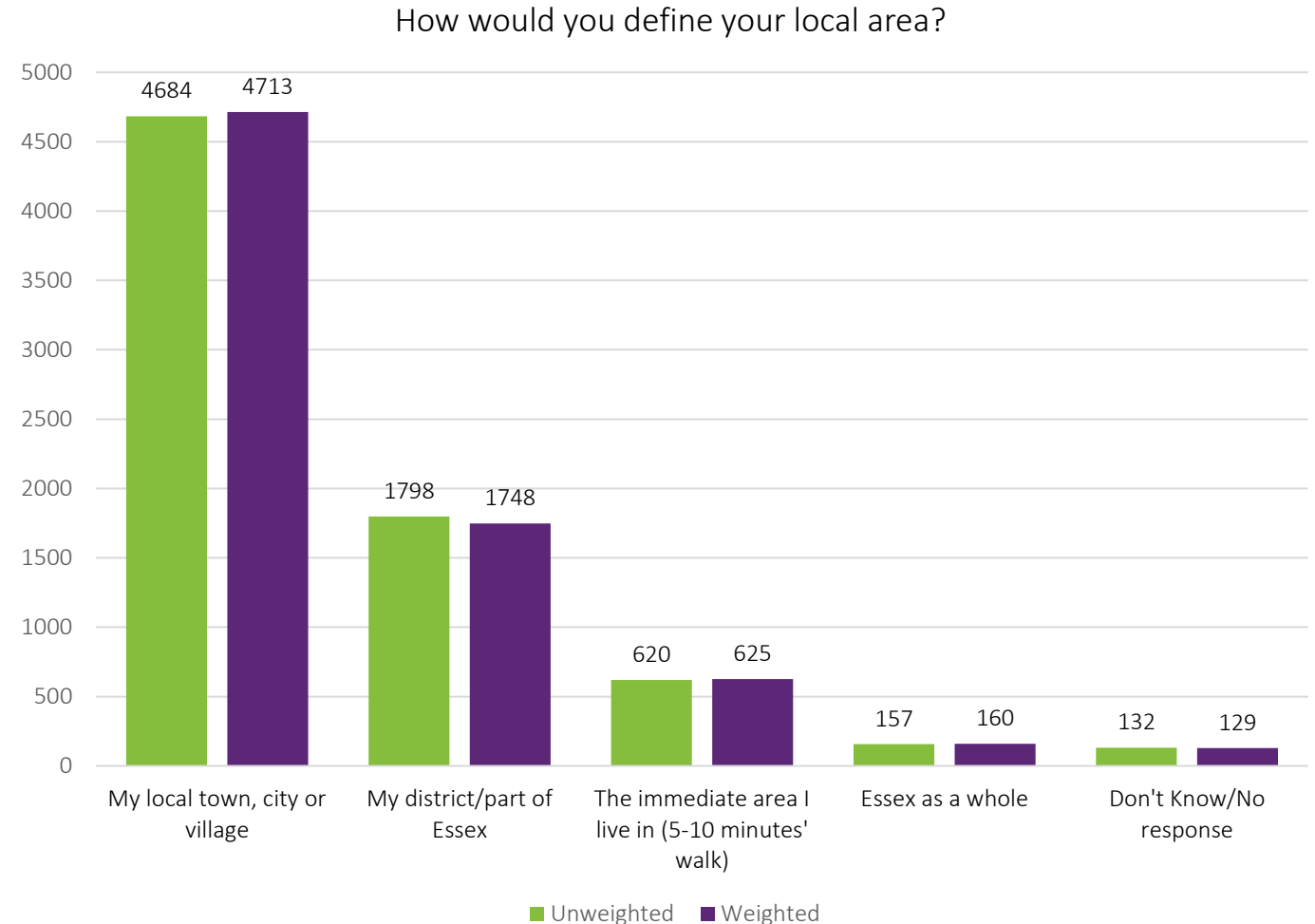
Respondents to the question that sought views on what each considered their local area found that **the majority see their local town, city, or village as their local area** with 63% of responses sharing this view. Following sample weighting this marginally increased to 64%

The second most common view was that the district respondents live or work in was viewed as their local area. With 24% sharing this view.

Additionally, 8% found that the immediate area between a 5- and 10-minute walk matched their view of the local area.

The **least common view was that the whole of Essex is a respondents' local area** with 2% holding this view

**How would you define your local area?**

| | My local town, city or village | My district/part of Essex | The immediate area I live in (5-10 minutes' walk) | Essex as a whole | Don't Know/No response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unweighted | 4684 | 1798 | 620 | 157 | 132 |
| Weighted | 4713 | 1748 | 625 | 160 | 129 |

■ Unweighted   ■ Weighted

# How important are the following to you?
*Weighted Figures*

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All council functions were seen by a majority of respondents to be important, with the lowest ranked, *'having a physical office in the local area'*, being viewed as important by 75% of respondents.

The most important functions were viewed as: **Efficient use of council tax and public funds** with 99.3% viewing it as important, **Clear accountability on decision making** with 98.6%, and staff and **councillors knowing and understanding the local area** with 97.9% importance.



How important are the following to you?

| | Very important | Fairly important | Neither important or unimportant | Not very important | Not important at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient use of Council Tax and public funds | 6857 | 469 | | | 37 |
| Clear accountability on decision making and spending | 6357 | 917 | | | 76 |
| Staff and councillors know and understand your area | 6352 | 865 | | | 117 |
| Improving the quality of council services | 6077 | 1165 | | | 117 |
| Representation and participation of all communities in decision making | 5167 | 1795 | 299 | | |
| Accessible information available on council services and councillors | 4926 | 2070 | 294 | | |
| Supporting local businesses and community organisations | 4910 | 2102 | 283 | | |
| Reducing bureaucracy | 4511 | 2049 | 689 | | |
| Prioritising services for the most vulnerable | 3790 | 2594 | 776 | | |
| Having a physical council office in your local area | 3527 | 1993 | 1197 | | |

■ Very important   ■ Fairly important   ■ Neither important or unimportant   ■ Not very important   ■ Not important at all

# List of Council Services Accessed
*Weighted Figures*
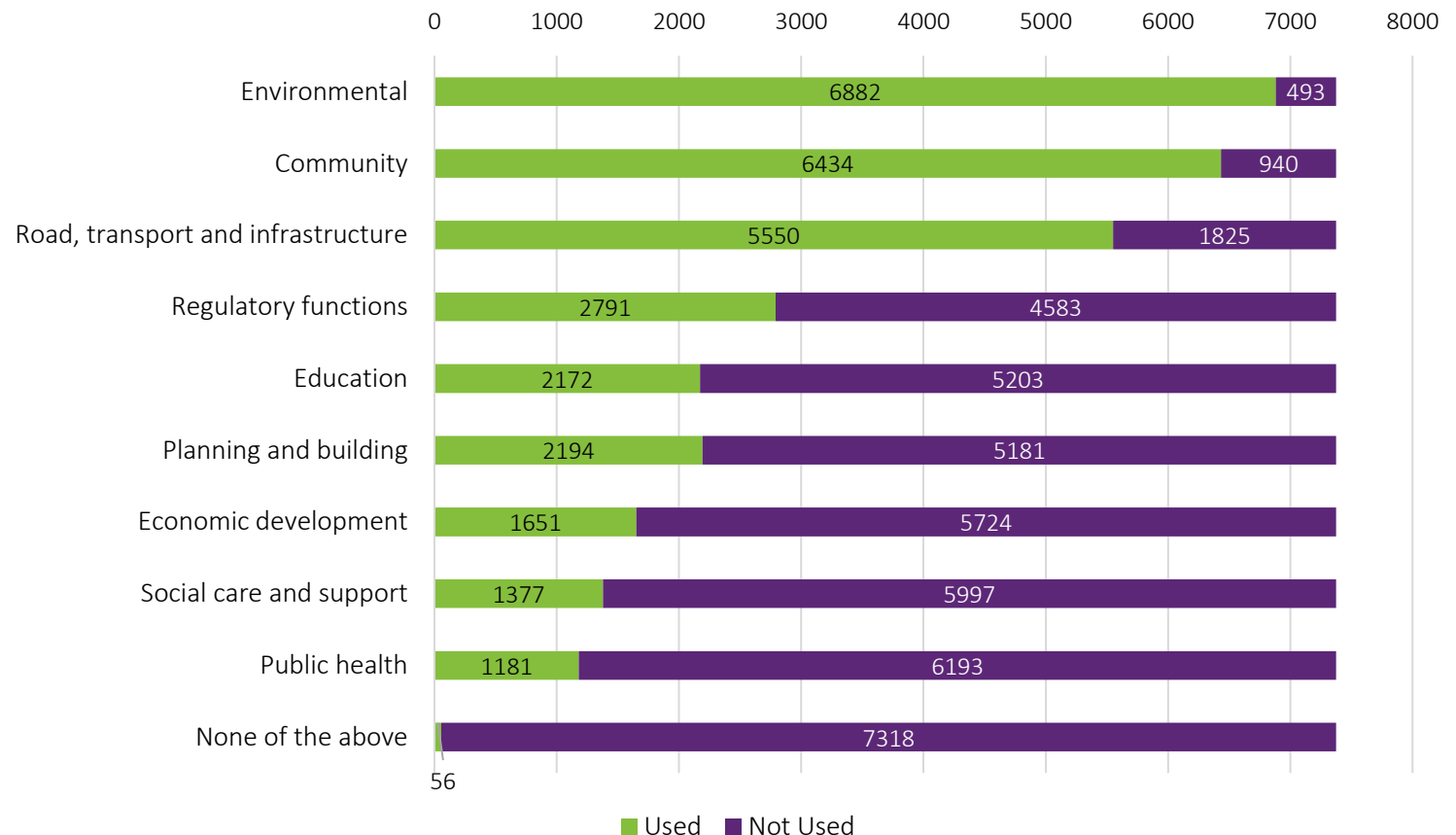
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99.2% of respondents recorded that they had interacted with at least one council service. With 56 stating they had not used a council service.

The most used services with survey respondents was the **Environmental, Community, and Road, Transport and Infrastructure Services**.

There was a clear drop-off in engagement beyond the top three service areas, indicating these functions are more widely recognised and interacted with by the surveyed population.

The least interacted with services were the Economic development, Social Care & Support, and Public Health services.

Which of them have you, or someone living in your home, used at least once in the last year?

| Service | Used | Not Used |
|---|---|---|
| Environmental | 6882 | 493 |
| Community | 6434 | 940 |
| Road, transport and infrastructure | 5550 | 1825 |
| Regulatory functions | 2791 | 4583 |
| Education | 2172 | 5203 |
| Planning and building | 2194 | 5181 |
| Economic development | 1651 | 5724 |
| Social care and support | 1377 | 5997 |
| Public health | 1181 | 6193 |
| None of the above | 56 | 7318 |

Used   Not Used

# Top 5 Priorities for Council Services
## *Weighted Figures*

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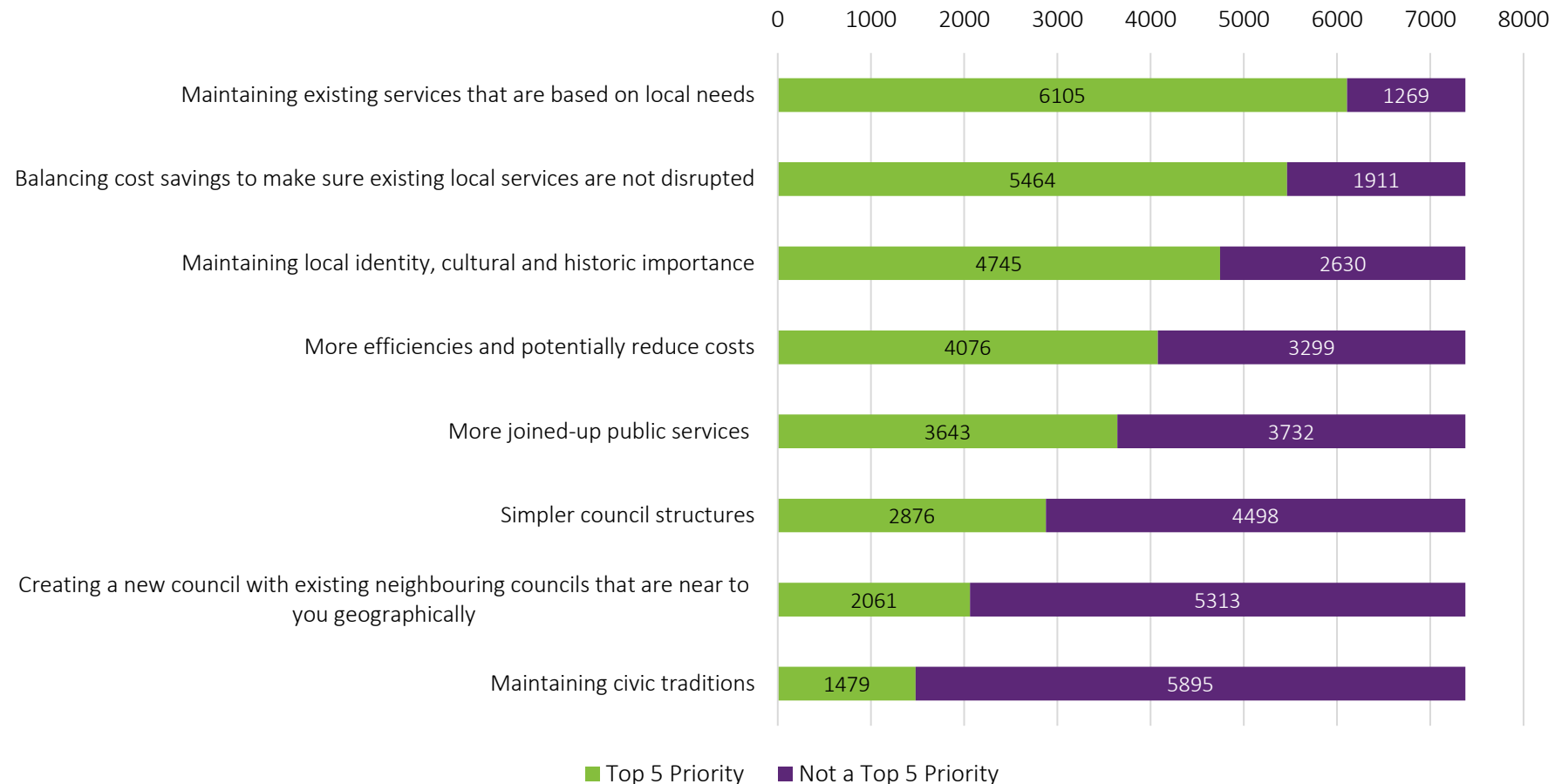
The priorities that featured most frequently in respondents top 5 priorities, included:

1. Maintaining existing services that are based on local needs

2. Balancing cost savings to make sure existing local services are not disrupted

3. Maintaining local identity, cultural, and historic importance

4. More joined-up public services

5. Simpler council structures

While each is important, which was stated in multiple free text responses, the above were the most commonly prioritised of the 7 options.

### What are the top five priorities for you regarding council services?

| Priority | Top 5 Priority | Not a Top 5 Priority |
|---|---|---|
| Maintaining existing services that are based on local needs | 6105 | 1269 |
| Balancing cost savings to make sure existing local services are not disrupted | 5464 | 1911 |
| Maintaining local identity, cultural and historic importance | 4745 | 2630 |
| More efficiencies and potentially reduce costs | 4076 | 3299 |
| More joined-up public services | 3643 | 3732 |
| Simpler council structures | 2876 | 4498 |
| Creating a new council with existing neighbouring councils that are near to you geographically | 2061 | 5313 |
| Maintaining civic traditions | 1479 | 5895 |

■ Top 5 Priority   ■ Not a Top 5 Priority

# Priorities for the New Councils?
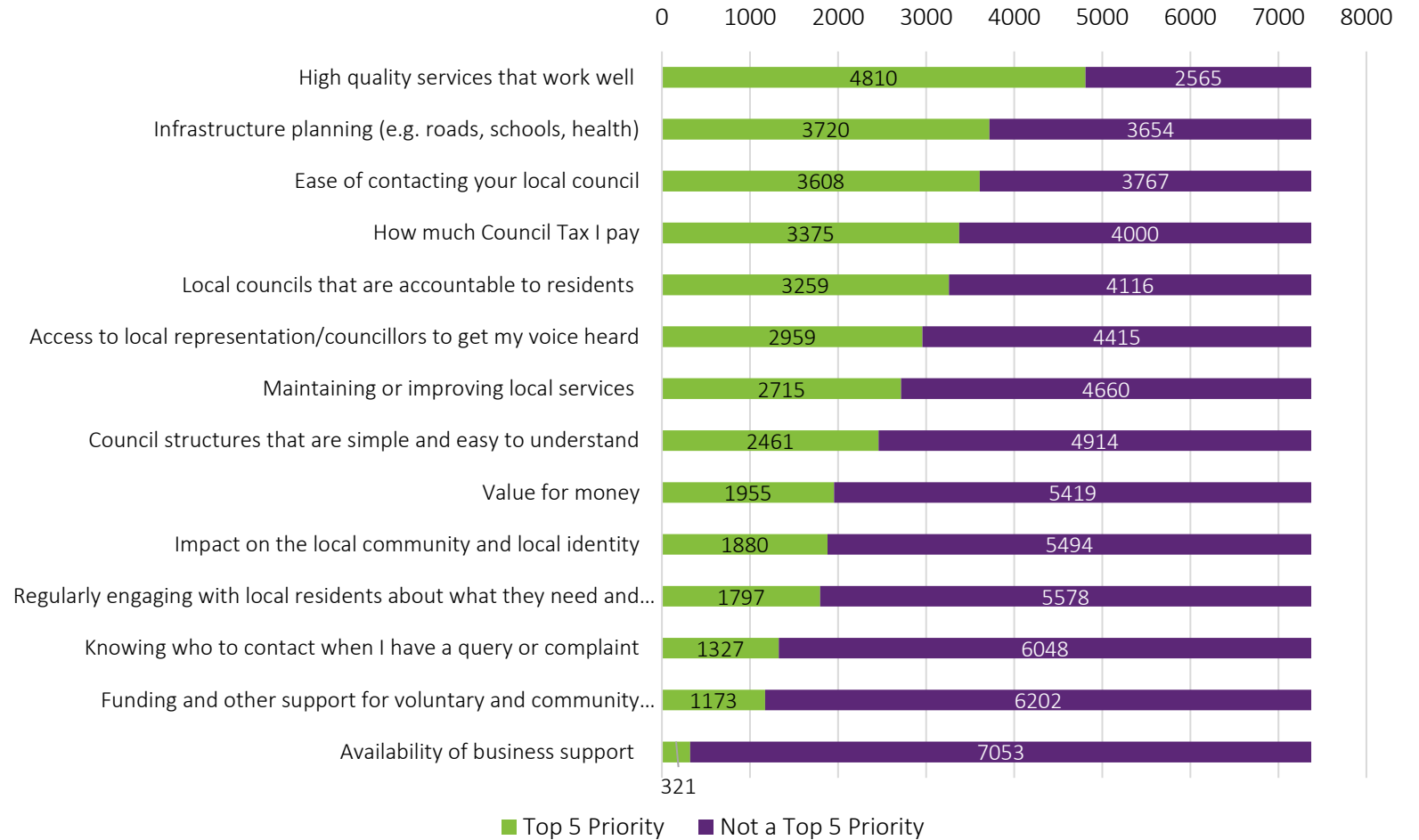*Weighted Figures*

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The priorities for the functioning of the new councils, most frequently featuring in respondents top 5 priorities, included:

1. High quality services that work well

2. Infrastructure Planning

3. Ease of contacting your local council

4. How much Council Tax I pay

5. Local councils that are accountable to residents

It is important to note that there was a number of responses that highlighted a preference against having to rank council functions that they viewed as all important.

Furthermore, some response options covered overlapping themes  (such as ease of contact and knowing who to contact) which may have led to a degree of vote-splitting. As a result, individual priorities may appear underrepresented where respondents were required to choose between similarly worded statements

Thinking about how you would like your new local council to be run, please rank the following in order of importance
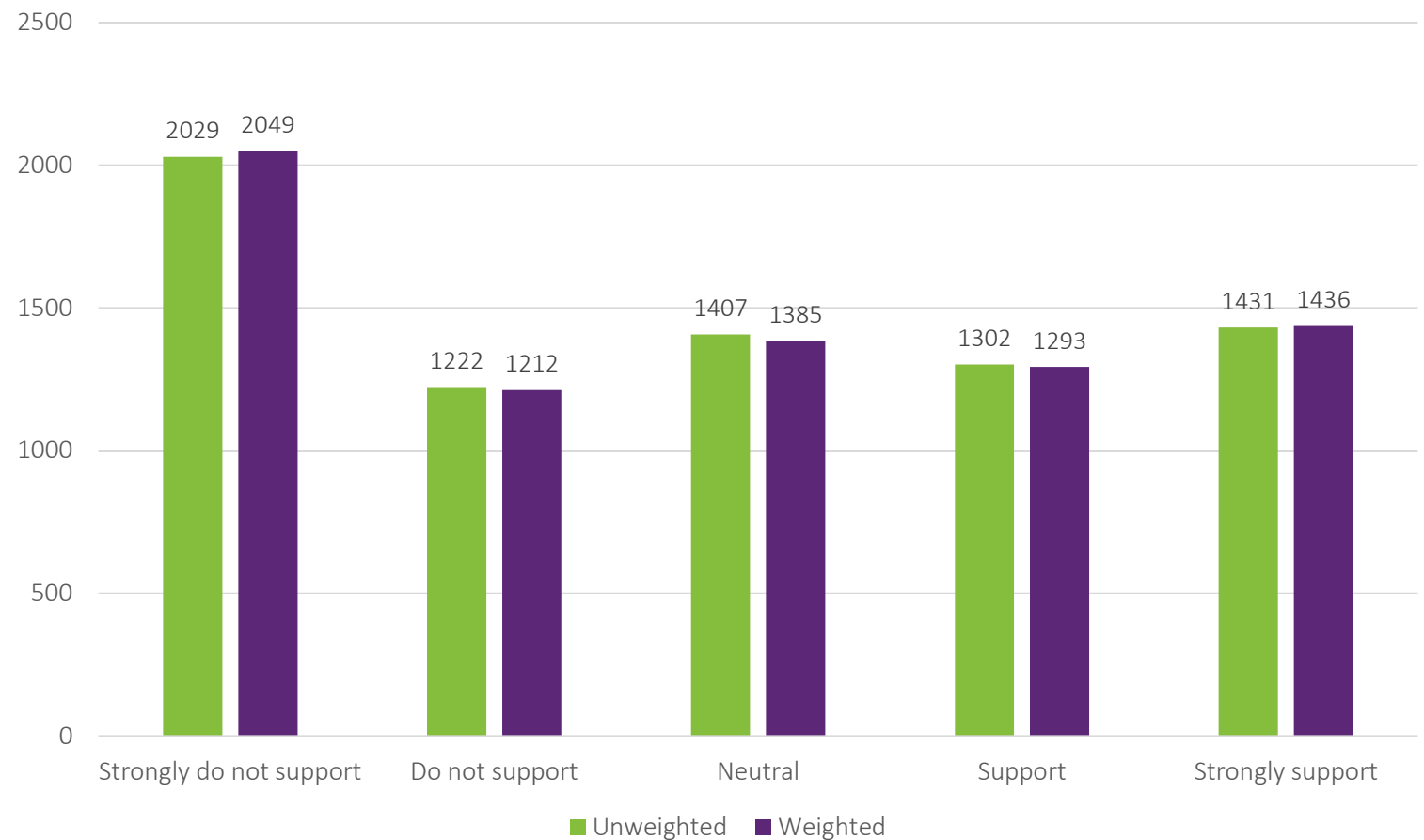
| Category | Top 5 Priority | Not a Top 5 Priority |
|---|---|---|
| High quality services that work well | 4810 | 2565 |
| Infrastructure planning (e.g. roads, schools, health) | 3720 | 3654 |
| Ease of contacting your local council | 3608 | 3767 |
| How much Council Tax I pay | 3375 | 4000 |
| Local councils that are accountable to residents | 3259 | 4116 |
| Access to local representation/councillors to get my voice heard | 2959 | 4415 |
| Maintaining or improving local services | 2715 | 4660 |
| Council structures that are simple and easy to understand | 2461 | 4914 |
| Value for money | 1955 | 5419 |
| Impact on the local community and local identity | 1880 | 5494 |
| Regularly engaging with local residents about what they need and... | 1797 | 5578 |
| Knowing who to contact when I have a query or complaint | 1327 | 6048 |
| Funding and other support for voluntary and community... | 1173 | 6202 |
| Availability of business support | 321 | 7053 |

■ Top 5 Priority    ■ Not a Top 5 Priority

# Do you Support the Proposal
## *Weighted & Unweighted*

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Overall levels of support **indicate a divided, but marginally negative, response to the proposal,** with opposition outweighing support by 8 percentage points.

There is a noticeable difference in the strength of feeling for those who did not support the proposal. With a larger proportion of those not supporting the strongly not supporting it, in comparison to the relative strength of feeling with those who supported.

Contextual Analysis follows in next section, providing greater understanding of the reasons why individuals are either in support or not in support of the proposal.

How much do you support the proposal to form five new unitary councils which would each serve between 326k and 510k people?



| | Strongly do not support | Do not support | Neutral | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unweighted | 2029 | 1222 | 1407 | 1302 | 1431 |
| Weighted | 2049 | 1212 | 1385 | 1293 | 1436 |

■ Unweighted  ■ Weighted

# Understanding Levels of Support
## *Support by District/Unitary Area*

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The level **of support for the 5 Unitary Authorities proposal was highest in Southend-on-Sea** (54%), **Chelmsford** (48%) and **Castle Point** (42%). However, in Castle Point more respondents were not in support of the proposal than in support.

The **areas with the highest proportion of respondents who did not support the proposal** include **Harlow** (63%), **Basildon** (62%), **Uttlesford** (56%), **Rochford** (53%) and **Tendring** (49%)

Support was more evenly split (within a net support of 10) in Thurrock, Colchester, Braintree, Epping Forest, Maldon, and Brentwood

Across all current Districts and Unitary Authorities **there is a high level of neutrality**, with majority support/opposition only present in 4 of the 14 areas.

### Level of support for Proposal by Area

| Area | Strongly do not support | Do not support | Neutral | Support | Strongly support |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Southend-on-Sea | 235 | 178 | 210 | 295 | 430 |
| Chelmsford | 158 | 146 | 230 | 228 | 273 |
| Castle Point | 212 | 108 | 100 | 96 | 208 |
| Thurrock | 9 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 4 |
| Epping Forest | 13 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Colchester | 97 | 88 | 111 | 100 | 82 |
| Braintree | 58 | 39 | 71 | 56 | 38 |
| Maldon | 107 | 76 | 96 | 81 | 74 |
| Rochford | 118 | 52 | 36 | 58 | 55 |
| Brentwood | 56 | 50 | 53 | 45 | 43 |
| Tendring | 33 | 12 | 21 | 10 | 15 |
| Uttlesford | 230 | 171 | 146 | 85 | 89 |
| Basildon | 669 | 262 | 271 | 207 | 100 |
| Harlow | 46 | 20 | 17 | 8 | 13 |

Legend: ■ Strongly do not support ■ Do not support ■ Neutral ■ Support ■ Strongly support

# Understanding Levels of Support
## *Support by Age Group*

There was a noticeable trend with the level of support by age. The **level of support was strongest within younger respondents,** with the highest level of support with respondents aged under 18 and between 18 and 24. However, there was a very low response rate with under 18s.

Levels of **non-support were more concentrated in the older population**.

However, there is a slight increase in support for those aged 75 and over, which bucks this trend.

Those who did not return an answer the demographic question on their age grouping were much more likely to not be in support of the proposal than those who did provide their age.



Level of Support by Age

| | Strongly do not support | Do not support | Neutral | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under 18 years | 2 | | | 4 | 4 |
| 18-24 | 29 | 22 | 27 | 36 | 47 |
| 25-34 | 155 | 90 | 111 | 130 | 122 |
| 35-44 | 256 | 136 | 166 | 154 | 187 |
| 45-54 | 288 | 147 | 194 | 203 | 233 |
| 55-64 | 314 | 193 | 241 | 210 | 247 |
| 65-74 | 242 | 181 | 195 | 190 | 169 |
| 75+ years | 177 | 114 | 159 | 134 | 134 |
| No Response | 586 | 329 | 292 | 232 | 292 |

■ Strongly do not support  ■ Do not support  ■ Neutral  ■ Support  ■ Strongly support
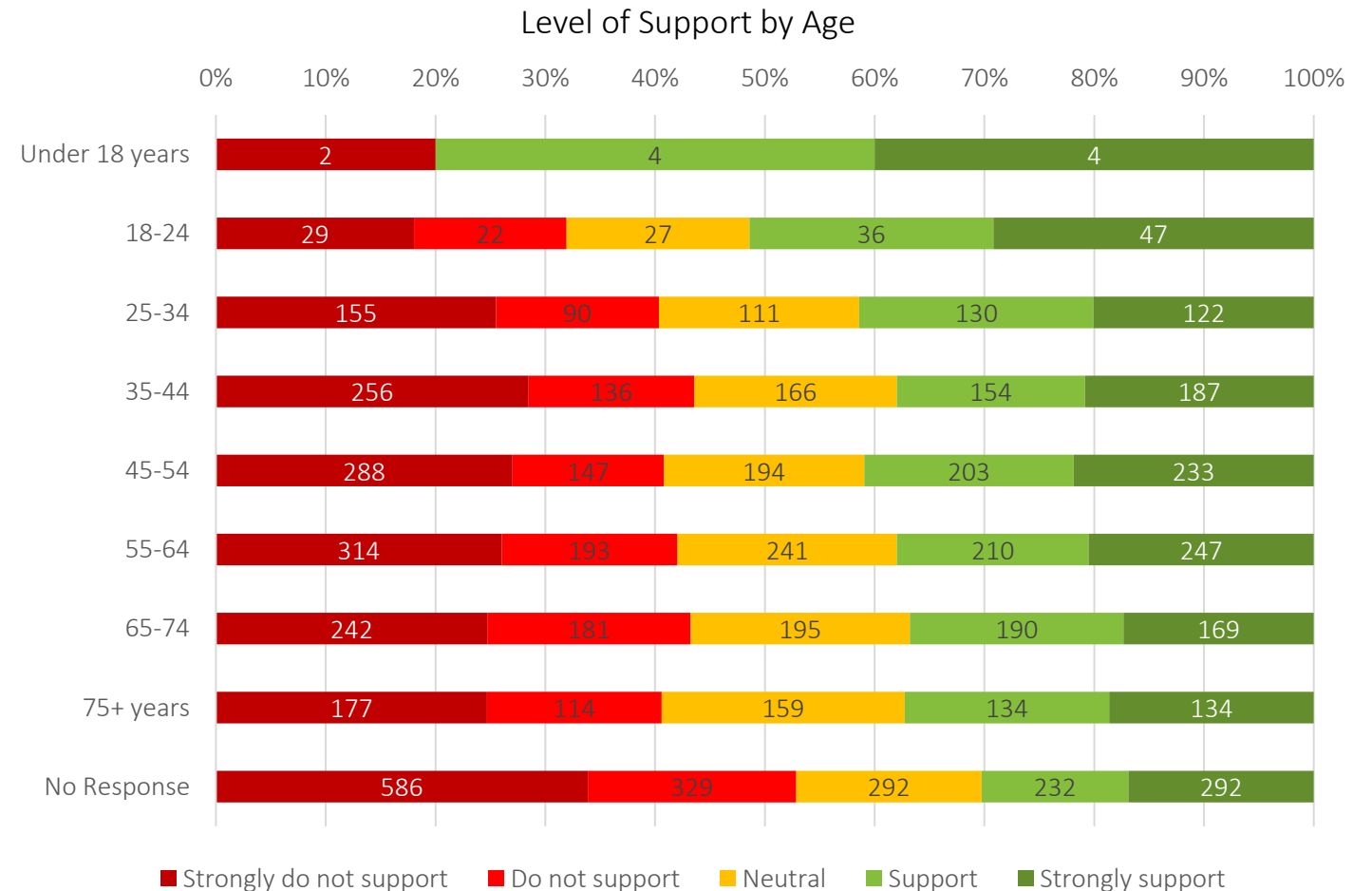
# Understanding Levels of Support
## *Support by Gender*

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Overall, the level of enthusiasm was low across both men and women, with **men more likely to state they** *strongly* **did not support the proposal.**

**Women were less likely to either support or oppose the proposal** with 24% responding with a neutral position.

Conversely, the **net support, while overall opposing, was marginally higher with men than women by 2%**, as the numbers of non-support were consistent at 41%, but men were more likely to be in support of the proposal (40% compared to 37%).

The survey also heard from those who identified with a non-binary gender, who overall supported the proposal, as well as those who self-described their gender identity who overall did not support the proposal. These are missing from the reporting due to weighting relying on ONS mid-year population projections, but were split according to projected demographics in the same way as those who did not respond to the question.

### Level of Support by Age

| | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Female:** 708 | 517 | 641 | 534 | 577

**Male:** 753 | 363 | 439 | 510 | 562

**No Response:** 589 | 332 | 305 | 249 | 297

Legend: ■ Strongly do not support  ■ Do not support  ■ Neutral  ■ Support  ■ Strongly support
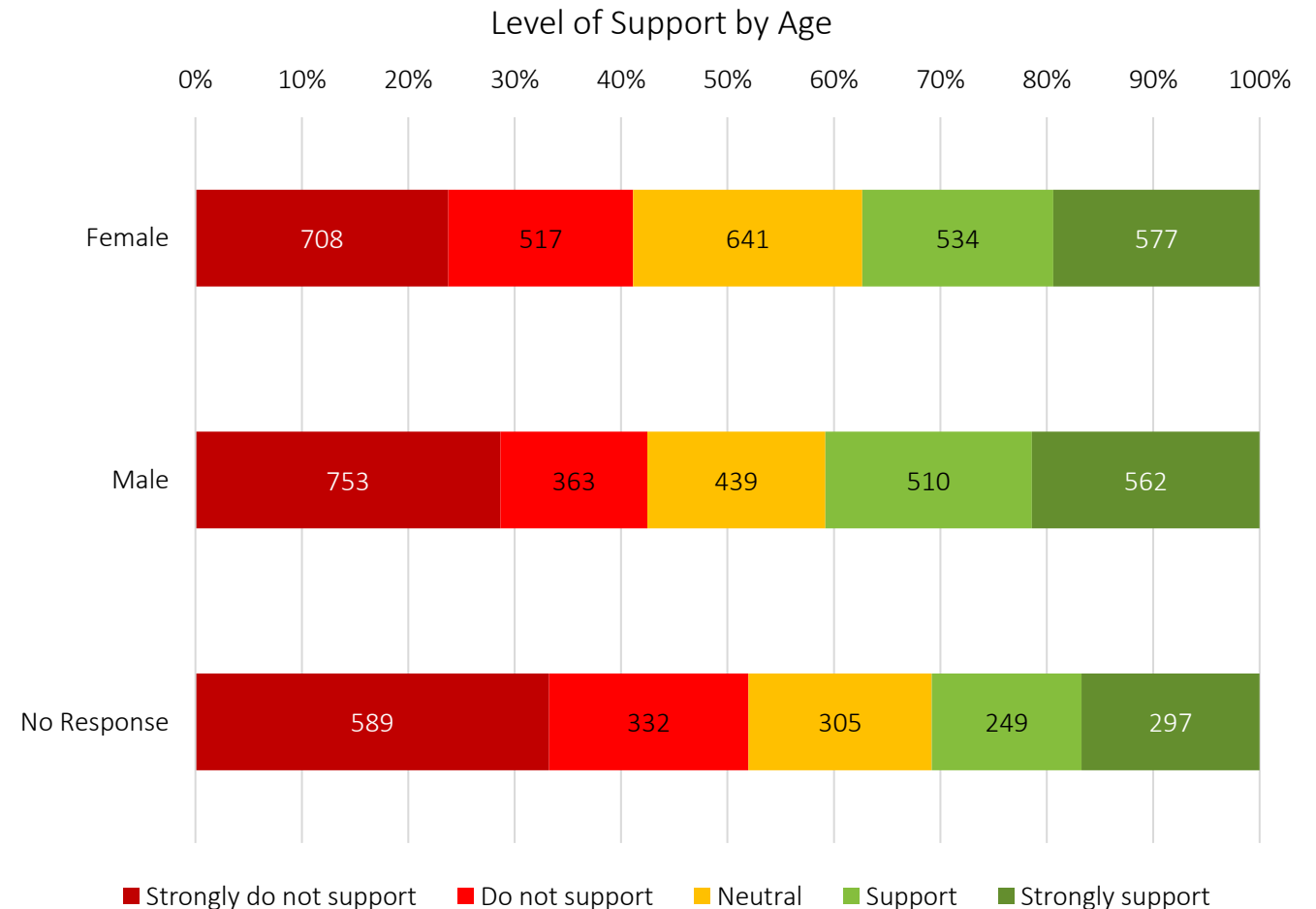
# Understanding Levels of Support
*Support by Ethnicity*

There was noticeable variation in the level of support for the 5 Unitary Authorities proposal across different ethnicities.

The **groups most in support of the proposal were Asian/Asian British** (58%), and **respondents from mixed or multiple ethic groups** (47%).

**Respondents identifying as 'White' were less in support of the proposal** with 26% strongly and 16% not in support of the proposal.

The number of responses were somewhat over-representative of respondents from a White background with 96% of responses that answered with the ethnic group they belong to, compared to 89% of the population of 'Greater Essex'

Those who did not provide demographic information on their ethnicity were more likely to not support the proposal than any other group

**Level of support by ethnic group**

| Ethnic group | Strongly do not support | Do not support | Neutral | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asian or Asian British | 9 | 5 | 18 | 11 | 33 |
| Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | 19 | 9 | 14 | 14 | 22 |
| Any other ethnic group | 12 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| White | 1338 | 832 | 1012 | 997 | 1065 |
| Black, African, Caribbean or Black British | 15 | 4 | 15 | 13 | 11 |
| No Response | 657 | 360 | 318 | 250 | 297 |

Legend: ■ Strongly do not support ■ Do not support ■ Neutral ■ Support ■ Strongly support

# Understanding Levels of Support
*Support by Disability Status*

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The **levels of support from those who recorded having a disability and those who did not was similar**.

17% of respondents with a disability and 19% of those who do not have a disability strongly supported the proposal.

20% of those with a disability compared to 21% of those without supported the proposal. Overall, those without a disability were 2% more supportive than those with.

Opposition to the proposal was slightly higher among respondents with a disability, with 28% strongly opposed and 16% opposed. This compares to 26% strongly opposed and 16% opposed among those without a disability

Level of Support by whether the respondent has a disability

| | Strongly do not support | Do not support | Neutral | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Have a disability | 227 | 130 | 147 | 140 | 174 |
| Do not have a disability | 1224 | 763 | 929 | 903 | 959 |
| No Response | 598 | 319 | 309 | 250 | 303 |

- Strongly do not support
- Do not support
- Neutral
- Support
- Strongly support
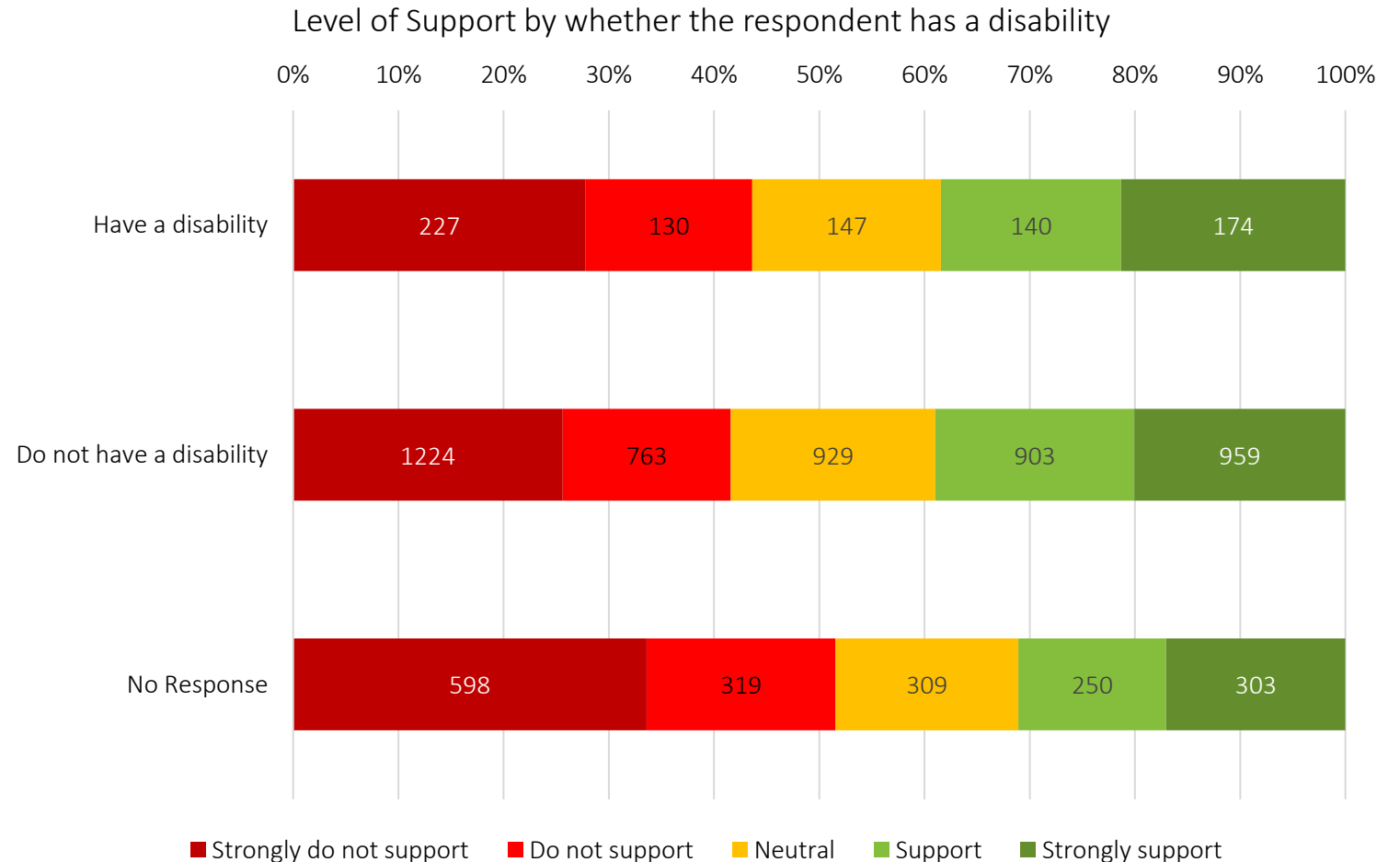
# Understanding Levels of Support
## *Familiarity with the Proposal*

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While overall enthusiasm was low across the levels of familiarity, there is a strong correlation that **respondents that reported a higher level of familiarity with the proposals were more likely to take a supportive position towards the proposal**. With 46% supportive and 46% not supportive with those very familiar.

With the provided trend lines, it is clear that while the proportion of those who were not in support only gently increased from those not at all familiar, to those who were very familiar. This was compared to the much stronger impact of those who self-reported higher familiarity increasingly supportive of the proposal. This **may suggest there is a knowledge/familiarity gap that if closed could shift sentiment in Essex towards support of the proposal**.

This familiarity gap is also evidenced by the larger number of respondents reporting that they were neutral to the proposal with 34% of those not at all familiar reporting they are neutral to the 5 unitary proposal compared to 8% of those very familiar with the proposed changes.

Levels of support for the proposal by familiarity with the proposal



| | Strongly do not support | Do not support | Neutral | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very familiar | 522 | 152 | 125 | 167 | 506 |
| Somewhat familiar | 1117 | 649 | 652 | 737 | 731 |
| Not very familiar | 272 | 287 | 420 | 309 | 158 |
| Not at all familiar | 122 | 114 | 180 | 72 | 36 |
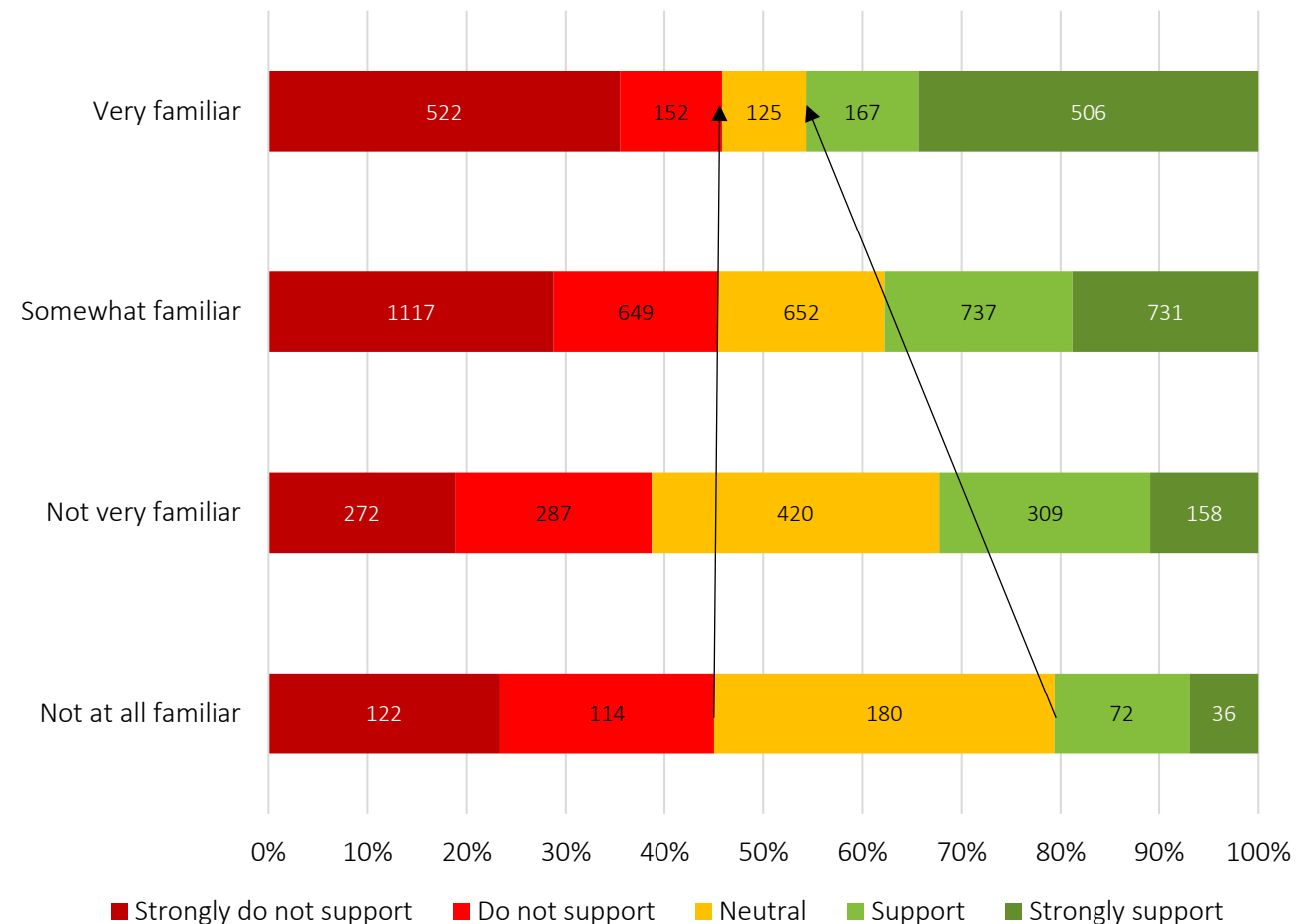
# Understanding Levels of support
## *Organisation's responses*

There were 57 of 7391 responses that included the voice of organisations.

Responses from organisations included the voices of:
- Small businesses
- Residents Associations
- Community Organisations
- Community Groups
- Community Campaign groups
- District/Unitary Councils
- Parish Councils
- Local Political Party Branches

Overall, **organisations showed a higher degree of support** (35% strongly supportive and 21% supportive) **than other responses.**

Level of Support from responses representing organisation's views



| | Unweighted |
|---|---|
| Strongly do not support | 21% |
| Do not support | 4% |
| Neutral | 19% |
| Support | 21% |
| Strongly support | 35% |

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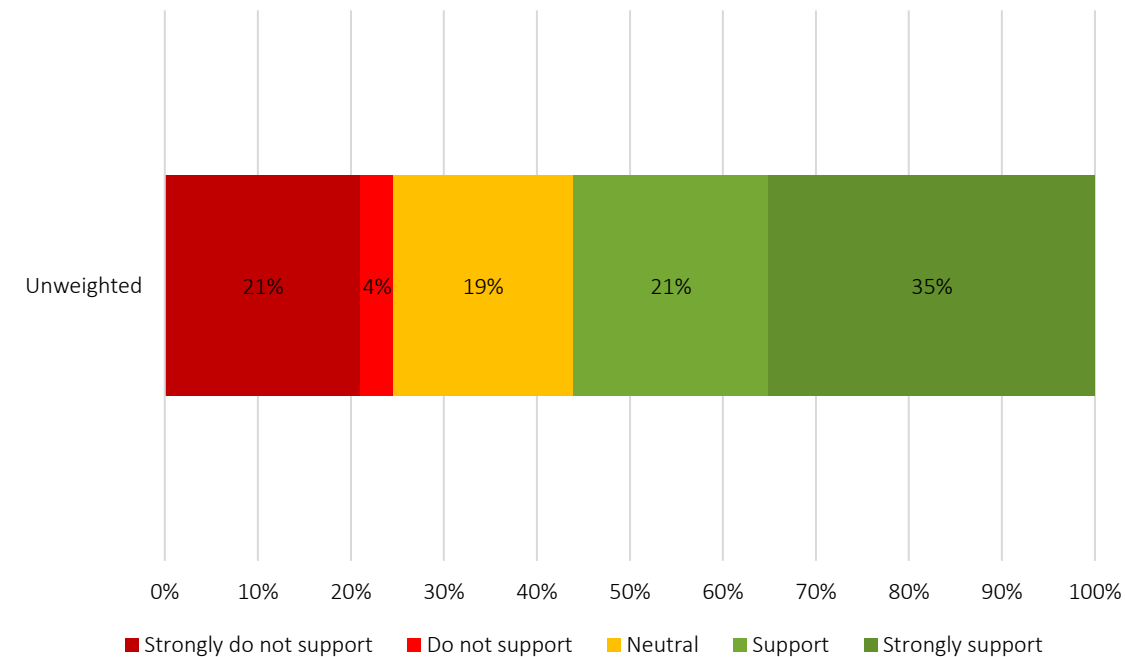
# Understanding Levels of Support
*Importance of Priorities*



- Question 5 gave a list of 10 priorities for local government, where respondents ranked how important they viewed each criteria.

- The **most important functions were** viewed as: **Efficient use of council tax and public funds** (99.4% viewing it as important), **Clear accountability on decision making** (99.1%), and **staff and councillors knowing and understanding the local area** (97.9%).

Comparing respondents' top priorities with overall support levels helps identify which values aligned most, or least, with a positive view of the proposal. This highlights where public sentiment may be driven by alignment or disconnection between what's important and what's perceived to be delivered.

- The areas ranked very important that corresponded with the highest overall levels of support were:
  - Prioritising services for the vulnerable (41% support – 41% opposed)
  - Improving the quality of council services (37% support – 44% opposed)

- The areas ranked very important that corresponded with the lowest levels of overall support were:
  - Having a physical office in my community (33% support – 53% opposed)
  - Accessible information available on council services and councillors (37% support – 47% opposed)
  - Representation and participation of all communities in decision making (37% support – 46% opposed)

# Understanding Levels of Support
## *By council service used in the last year*

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- This graph presents the level of support for the five Unitary Authorities proposal by whether the corresponding service was used by the respondent, or someone known to them.

- **People who had used council services in the past year were generally more supportive than those who had not.**

- **Economic Development, Public Health, and Social Care users showed the highest levels of support**, indicating these services may be seen as working well or improving under a new model.

- In contrast, **users of Planning & Building, Roads & Transport, and Environmental services were more likely to oppose the proposal**, however those in opposition were still in a minority in these groups of service users.

- The least supportive grouping of what service had been accessed where those who identified as not accessing any council services with 68% not in support.

### Level of Support by Services Accessed

0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%  80%  90%  100%

| Service | Strongly oppose | Oppose | Neither support nor oppose | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic development | 408 | 241 | 261 | 291 | 450 |
| Public health | 306 | 146 | 209 | 222 | 298 |
| Social care and support | 359 | 216 | 231 | 241 | 331 |
| Education | 646 | 293 | 365 | 374 | 494 |
| Regulatory functions | 741 | 469 | 488 | 505 | 589 |
| Community | 1766 | 1042 | 1173 | 1148 | 1306 |
| Road, transport and infrastructure | 1542 | 931 | 1009 | 945 | 1123 |
| Environmental | 1900 | 1132 | 1303 | 1221 | 1326 |
| Planning and building | 667 | 359 | 365 | 313 | 490 |
| None of the above | 25 | 14 | 11 | 6 | 1 |

■ Strongly oppose  ■ Oppose  ■ Neither support nor oppose  ■ Support  ■ Strongly support

# Understanding Levels of Support
## *Priorities for New Unitary Authorities*

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- The recorded levels of support against whether each of the corresponding was in respondents top 5 priorities for the new unitary authorities shows significant variation.

- The priorities that corresponded with higher levels of support were:
  - Availability of business support (46% support – 36% opposed)
  - Funding & other support for Voluntary and community organisations (46% support – 34% opposed)
  - Maintaining or improving local services (45% support – 35% opposed)
  - **This could suggest that respondents believed the proposal could serve these priorities effectively.**

- The priorities that corresponded with lower levels of support include:
  - Impact on the local community & identity (31% support - 53% opposed)
  - How Much Council Tax I pay (30% support – 51% opposed)
  - Local councils that are accountable to residents (34% support - 50% opposed)
  - **This could suggest that respondents believed the proposal would not support these priorities sufficiently.**

## Level of support by Priorities for New Authorities

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

| Priority | Strongly oppose | Oppose | Neither | Support | Strongly support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability of business support | 71 | 46 | 57 | 62 | 86 |
| Funding and other support for voluntary and… | 209 | 189 | 238 | 230 | 307 |
| Maintaining or improving local services | 531 | 414 | 554 | 589 | 627 |
| Council structures that are simple and easy to… | 531 | 370 | 483 | 522 | 555 |
| High quality services that work well | 1144 | 777 | 973 | 927 | 989 |
| Infrastructure planning (e.g. roads, schools, health) | 926 | 588 | 774 | 703 | 729 |
| Ease of contacting your local council | 979 | 587 | 674 | 652 | 716 |
| Value for money | 521 | 307 | 412 | 374 | 341 |
| Regularly engaging with local residents about… | 531 | 317 | 304 | 296 | 348 |
| Access to local representation/councillors to get… | 943 | 503 | 456 | 452 | 605 |
| Knowing who to contact when I have a query or… | 366 | 247 | 269 | 222 | 224 |
| Local councils that are accountable to residents | 1077 | 545 | 547 | 496 | 594 |
| Impact on the local community and local identity | 659 | 336 | 297 | 234 | 353 |
| How much Council Tax I pay | 1125 | 591 | 654 | 516 | 489 |

■ Strongly oppose ■ Oppose ■ Neither support nor oppose ■ Support ■ Strongly support

# Daily Number of Responses
*Weighted Figures*

There was a **significant increase** in the number of responses following **communication on social media that confirmed the known options** for Essex re-organisation were the 3 Unitary Authority proposal and the 5 Unitary Authority proposal.

This overall increases in responses following the 17th July (illustrated with the dotted line), saw a **decreasing proportion of responses that were neutral** to the proposal, with greater numbers taking a supportive or view not in support of the proposal. These increased at a similar rate after this date.



Social Media Engagement when both proposals were clear

Daily Number of Responses to the Consultation by Level of Support

Don't Support    Neutral    Support
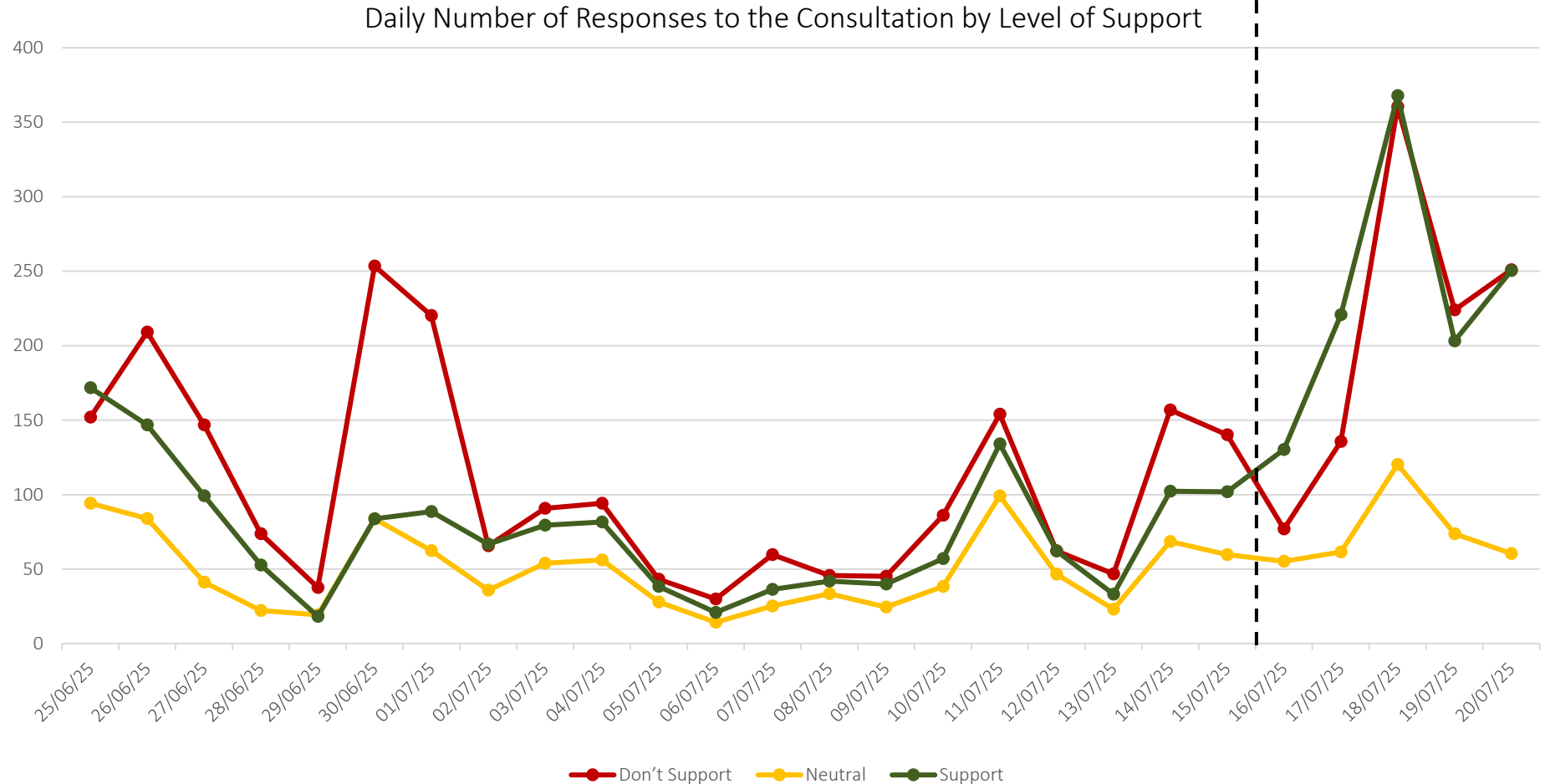
# Semantic Analysis

# Semantic Analysis Methodology

- The response to question 7 *"How much do you support the proposal to form five new unitary councils which would each serve between 326k and 510k people?"* was combined with the free text question 10 *"Please tell us if you have any additional thoughts about the changes that could come with the creation of 5 new unitary councils."*

- Semantic analysis based on those who reported they were Neutral, not in support, and strongly not in support of the proposed changes. A separate split of those who reported they were in support or strongly in support was then semantically analysed.

- Within semantic analysis, the amalgamation of Q7 and Q10 were then coded into themes, which are types of qualitative data (non-numerical information, for example written or spoken language) that share a repeated pattern of meaning.

- The prevalence of codes were then counted, with the strongest resonating theme taking primacy in responses where there were multiple present and used to provide context into the wider thoughts and feelings towards the proposal, compared to what response was given for Q7. These prevalences then underwent the same weighting process.

# Semantic Analysis of Support Levels
*Not in Support – overall*

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- 60% of those who responded to their level of support with strongly not in support, not in support, or neutral. Provided additional comments in the free text option.

- From this semantic analysis of where respondents gave additional context was performed to understand the themes of sentiments expressed. Finding:
  - The **most frequently expressed sentiment was a concern over less local representation** with 29%
  - The **next most frequent sentiment was a concern over councils' debt and their impact for the new unitaries** with 19%, although there was concentration in areas closer to Thurrock, notably Basildon.
  - The third most frequent was **raising a local boundary concern** at 8%, with this ranging from wanting their town to fit with a different district area, or feeling their area is more in tune with a wider structure that is not Essex.
  - **Notably 16% were opposed to the changes of LGR in Esssex more generally** with concerns around the costs, wanting to retain district councils or more generally preference for the status quo raised.
  - **15 stated that despite not supporting the proposal it would be preferable to others** such as the 3 Unitary proposal.

| Sentiment Expressed | Prevalence | Prevalence (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Concern over less local representation | 701 | 28.7% |
| Concerns of impact of other council's debt | 471 | 19.3% |
| Raised a concern with their current district/unitary boundary | 205 | 8.4% |
| Concern about services worsening/ wants more focus on improvements | 185 | 7.6% |
| Opposition to LGR – general | 164 | 6.7% |
| Would prefer Fewer Unitaries | 158 | 6.5% |
| Opposition to LGR – prefer current districts | 121 | 5.0% |
| Concern with the grouping of the 5 unitaries | 111 | 4.5% |
| Opposed to LGR – Cost | 110 | 4.5% |
| Raised a non-LGR specific issue | 48 | 2.0% |
| Concern about ease of contacting representatives / services | 41 | 1.7% |
| Concern of staff impact | 39 | 1.6% |
| Asked for greater clarity | 38 | 1.6% |
| Dissatisfaction with loss of vote in LE2025 | 35 | 1.4% |
| Would support 5 Unitaries over 3 | 15 | 0.6% |

# Semantic Analysis of Support Levels
## *Support – Overall*

- 42% of respondents that responded with a supportive or strongly supportive level of support for the proposal gave additional comments to their response.
  - The **most common sentiment expressed** was **that the size of the 5 looked right (32%)**. This was in terms of retaining a local view while being able to deliver efficiencies.
  - The next most frequent theme was the **hope that with the proposal greater improvements could be catalysed** (23%).
  - A further **11% raised their concern that the 5 Unitaries could not be local enough**.
  - 19 Stated that while supporting the proposal they would prefer fewer unitaries for Essex.

| Semantic Theme | Prevalence | Prevalence (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Size of Unitary Authorities looked right | 324 | 32.4% |
| Hope that these changes can catalyse wider improvements | 227 | 22.7% |
| Concern over less local representation | 110 | 11.0% |
| Asked for greater clarity | 69 | 6.9% |
| Concerns of impact of other council's debt | 50 | 5.0% |
| Opposition to LGR | 45 | 4.5% |
| Raised a non-LGR specific issue | 38 | 3.8% |
| Concern with the grouping of the 5 unitaries | 38 | 3.8% |
| Raised a concern with their current district/unitary boundary | 34 | 3.4% |
| Concerns of services impact | 20 | 2.0% |
| Prefer a different number of Unitary Authorities | 19 | 1.9% |
| Concerns of staff impact | 10 | 1.0% |
| Uncertain it will deliver | 8 | 0.8% |
| Dissatisfaction with loss of vote in LE2025 | 7 | 0.7% |

# Semantic Analysis of Support Levels
## *Overall Support & non-support split*

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### Prevalence of Sentiments that supported the proposal
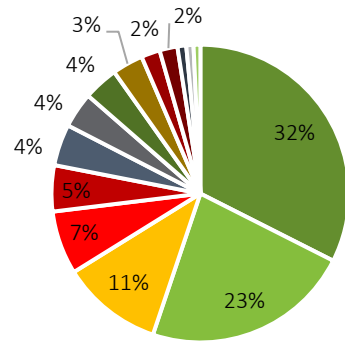
- Size of Unitary Authorities looked right
- Hope that these changes can catalyse wider improvements
- Concern over less local representation
- Asked for greater clarity
- Concerns of impact of other council's debt
- Opposition to LGR
- Raised a non-LGR specific issue
- Raised a grouping issue
- Raised a concern with their current district/unitary boundary
- Concerns of services impact
- Prefer a different number of Unitary Authorities
- Concerns of staff impact
- Uncertain it will deliver
- Dissatisfaction with loss of vote in LE2025

### Overall Level of Support
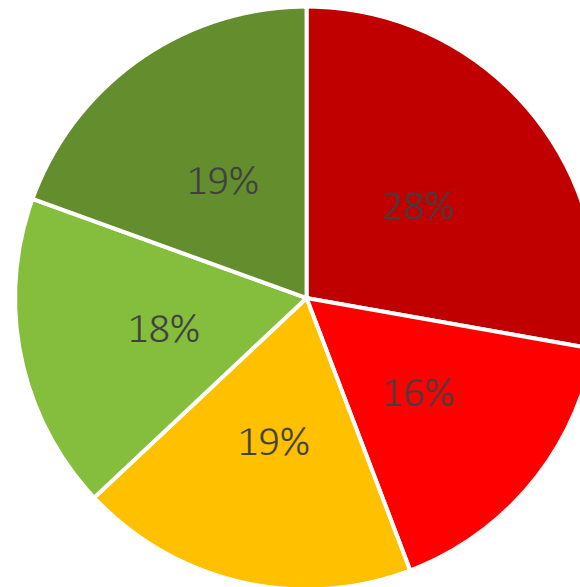
- Strongly do not support
- Do not support
- Neutral
- Support
- Strongly support

### Prevalence of Sentiments of those who did not support the proposal
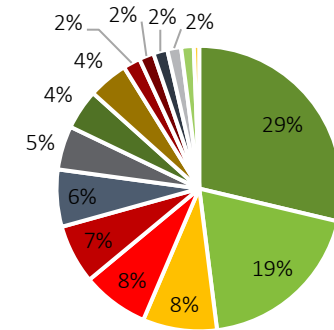
- Concern over less local representation
- Concerns of impact of other council's debt
- Raised a concern with their current district/unitary boundary
- Concern about services worsening/ wants more focus on improvements
- Opposition to LGR – general
- Would prefer Fewer Unitaries
- Opposition to LGR – prefer current districts
- Concern with the grouping of the 5 unitaries
- Opposed to LGR – Cost
- Raised a non-LGR specific issue
- Concern about ease of contacting representatives / services
- Concern of staff impact
- Asked for greater clarity
- Dissatisfaction with loss of vote in LE2025
- Would support 5 Unitaries over 3

# Ipsos polling on the state of local government

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- Ipsos polled a sample of the UK public that stated:
  - **26%** believed Unitary Authorities had the best outcomes
  - **38%** believed that 2 two-tier County and District councils had the best outcomes
  - **15%** believed there is no difference
  - **22%** did not know

- The charts to the left demonstrate the UK wide opinion polling on the best form of local government, with don't knows removed, compared to levels of support for the 5 Unitary proposal.
  - The comparison of these show that **the specific 5 UA proposal is viewed more favourably than single unitary authorities are generally with the wider public.**
  - Additionally, a lower proportion than the 48% who view 2-tiered county and district local governments as delivered the best outcomes, were not in support of the proposal (44%)
  - This **suggests the 5UA model may be more acceptable than "unitarisation" in principle**, especially when locally defined.

What council structure produces the best outcomes? (Ipsos Polling March 2025)

Single Unitary 33%

Combination of District & County Councils 48%

No difference 19%

28%

16%

19%

19%

18%
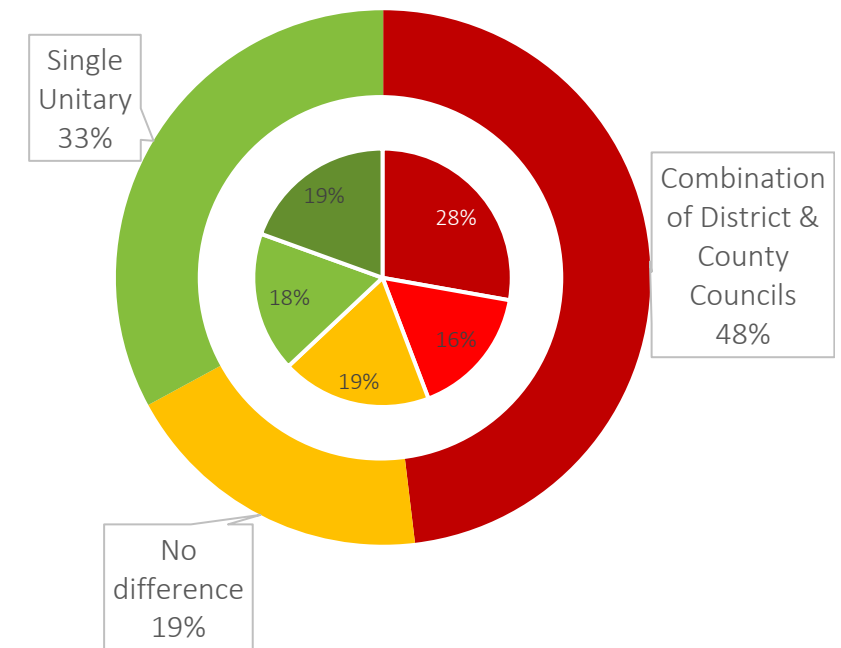
# Recent Unitarisation Polling during local government reorganisation

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An inspection of other unitarisation surveys shows higher support for more local focused unitaries.

## Somerset

- Ipsos survey commissioned by Somerset's district councils in January 2021:
  - **29%** supported creating two new unitary councils for Eastern and Western Somerset.
  - **27%** favoured more collaboration between district councils.
  - **15%** preferred a single unitary council for all of Somerset.
  - **23%** preferred no change & maintaining the county and district structure

## Worcestershire

- Shape Worcestershire survey:
  - **48%** backed creating two unitary councils.
  - **29%** supported one unitary council for the county.
  - **19%** didn't support any reorganisation.

## Hertfordshire

- A telephone survey by Survation in October 2020 revealed:
  - **59%** of residents strongly opposed the creation of a single county-wide unitary council. (only **12%** saying it was something they could support)
  - **80%** believed their area would be better served by a local council than a single county-wide unitary.
  - **76%** were concerned that their voice may not be heard by a county-wide unitary.

## Oxfordshire

- A face-to-face survey of 500 residents conducted by Opinion Research Services published by the county council in March 2017 suggested:
  - In the survey **70%** were in Favor of abolishing the existing councils and creating a new unitary for the whole of Oxfordshire.
  - However, in the engagement questionnaire two-thirds (66%) said they opposed the proposal for a single unitary, while 30% supported the idea.
    - *Despite this ORS pointed out that "engagement questionnaires are not representative of overall public opinion, and can be influenced by local campaign groups"*

# Semantic Analysis
## *Areas where more clarity was requested*

LGR related Questions:
- *Many raised concerns and wanted clarity over how existing debts would be handled following LGR.*
- *Residents wanted to know LGR would improve the services in their area.*

Devolution:
- *Some asked what the powers of the new mayor and their interactions with the new unitary authorities would look like?*
- *Responsibilities between Mayor and Unitary Authorities*

Implications for services/council areas:
- *Charity Grants*
- *Current local plans*
- *Housing*
- *School Catchments*
- *Hospital Catchments + GPs*
- *Situation of Council offices / local hubs along historical lines*
- *How will the new Unitary Authorities be named?*

Communications around what changes could mean in these areas could provide greater clarity to all stakeholders.

# Appendix A

- Descriptions of Proposed Unitary Area
- Theme Glossary

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# Descriptions of Proposed Unitary Area
## *Describe your area to a Neighbour*

## Proposed Unitary 1 — "Lovely and naturally beautiful countryside"

- *Epping Forest Resident: "Urban but with a beautiful and nationally important forest striped through the middle. Connected to London by sometimes fragile tube and bus links, and historically part of London's story as often as that of Essex. Forgotten by Chelmsford."*
- *Harlow Resident: "We live in the countryside, but with the benefits of only being 10 minutes away from our necessary utilities. Doctors, dentist, shops. Harlow's cycle tracks are the best. Can cover the whole of Harlow using the cycle tracks, which are through woods and field and countryside, staying away from the traffic. Harlow people are the best."*
- *Uttlesford Resident "Beautiful countryside, with great villages which hold lots of interesting events for people in the local area to go to. Vibrant small market town. Wonderful foodie market on Saturdays. Great choice of cafes Friendly. Culturally there is something for everyone including a Town Band, orchestra and Choral Society. Plus, various choirs Concert Hall and cinema, Scouts and Guides etc. Great for children and families Outstanding schools and nurseries. Very open and community minded Churches/a club for any taste."*

## Proposed Unitary 2 — "Local & Historically significant country villages"

- *Braintree Resident: "My local area is a, peaceful village in rural North Essex, surrounded by open countryside and winding lanes. It has a traditional English charm, with historic cottages, a local pub, a village school, and a centuries-old church. Though quiet and remote in feel, it's well connected, just a short drive from Halstead, with Braintree and Chelmsford not far beyond. It's the kind of place where life moves at a slower pace, ideal for those who enjoy nature, community, and a break from the noise of town or city life."*
- *Colchester Resident: "Colchester is the first city of Britain (founded city) with a strong Roman heritage. Colchester has all the facilities and services of a medium size city balanced with access to the countryside twenty minutes in any direction by car, as well as access to Europe by ferry from Harwich and by air from Stanstead. Colchester is the base of Essex University supported by other education facilities such as Colchester Institute"*
- *Tendring Resident: "I've lived in Essex all my life – [childhood] in Waltham Abbey, early married life in Hatfield Peverel and for the last 30 years in Thorpe-le-Soken. Tendring is the most-friendly of all these neighbourhoods - with a great diversity of beautiful coast & countryside"*

## Proposed Unitary 3 — "Beautiful scenes with close-knit communities"

- *Brentwood Resident: "It is a beautiful place to live in with a good connection to London. It has historic interest, and some close-knit communities brought together often by residents' associations. Schools are mainly excellent. Despite recent housebuilding, there is still beautiful countryside and parkland within close reach."*
- *Chelmsford Resident: "Essex is overlooked as a tourist destination, yet it is a 'sunshine state' and has many picturesque villages. Unfortunately, tourism has not been given much priority, but being fairly low-lying lends itself to excellent cycling and horse-riding possibilities and we have excellent beaches! The County Council has consistently cut staff supporting tourism and access to the countryside. Essex is beautiful and has much to offer holidaymakers and those interested in history and culture. It has excellent transport connections to London and world destinations."*
- *Maldon Resident: "An arcadian village, with numerous open vistas and places where one is reminded that one is in a village within open countryside and not just part of an urban sprawl. The feeling is quiet and peaceful, with properties generally well tended and parked cars tucked away"*

# Descriptions of Proposed Unitary Area
## *Describe your area to a Neighbour*

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### Proposed Unitary 4
## "Strong urban-based community feel"

- *Basildon Resident: "I would describe my neighbourhood as quite quiet, great community feel, nice shops and friendly people. I'd like to see river access improvements and road repairs kept up to standard. The biggest problem for us here is Stanford is the huge amount of traffic on the manorway heading to the port and I feel more needs to be done to the road, traffic lights and roundabouts to improve safety."*

- *Thurrock Resident: "It's home! I love and work in Wickford and have done so for over 20 years, I have the most amazing friends here! The town is small, but I love that it's a walk away or a short bus journey away, more shops would be welcomed, and I love walking around the market - again more stalls would be welcome! We have volunteer groups such as the Wickford feeders and Wickford in bloom who make the town and local park beautiful! We have a Wickford at Christmas group who puts on events at Christmas and now a summer event! It's a place where you can rely on your neighbours!"*

### Proposed Unitary 5
## "Mix of seaside urban living with accessible greenbelt land"

- *Castle Point Resident: "Castle Point is composed of Canvey Island, South Benfleet, Hadleigh, Thundersley and Daws Heath. They are five distinctly different areas, yet the people in them share a common bond of having worked hard to achieve what they have and recognise everyone with a similarly positive frame of mind. With our gardens and green spaces; it is as close to nirvana as you will find anywhere. Locals share a strong sense of identity of manner and place; being overwhelmingly well disposed to welcome people and offer them directions or conversation as appropriate. It is a calm area for the most part; only disturbed when traffic on the A13 into or from Southend blocks up or is noisy."*

- *Rochford Resident: "It is beautiful and green, close to the sea, but the roads are terrible. Its' got very good selective schools, and very good state schools. Its' got reasonable access to health and social services if somewhat fragmented. Shopping is difficult on high street but that could be attributed to change in habits and increase of more availability of online shopping that has become prevalent in recent years. It requires investment in all areas, especially social care."*

- *Southend Resident: "Southend is a vibrant coastal town where seaside charm meets a strong sense of creativity and community. Alongside its famous beaches sand pier, it has a thriving cultural scene. The Beecroft Art Gallery showcases everything from historic artworks to contemporary exhibitions and fashion collections, while Southend Museums offer fascinating insights into local history, archaeology, and natural heritage. Focal Point Gallery adds to this with cutting-edge contemporary art and community-focused events. With regular exhibitions, workshops, and cultural festivals, Southend is a place full of energy, expression, and opportunities to connect through culture."*

# Theme Glossary
## *What does each theme mean? With example responses*

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Concern about services worsening/ wants more focus on improvements** | Respondents raised their concerns about the quality of services declining or becoming more expensive. This also included those who wanted the focus to be on improving council delivery in many service areas. |
| | *"Services will decline"*<br>*"I DO NOT WANT SERVICES MAINTAINED, I WANT THEM IMPROVED!!"* |
| **Concern about ease of contacting representatives / services** | Respondents raised the concern that they will not be able to contact relevant representatives or council staff after re-organisation |
| | *"Current council is hopelessly understaffed and staff turnover is too high. There is no accountability and it is impossible to see or speak to anyone. How is a council three times bigger going to improve this"* |
| **Concern over less local representation** | Respondents raised there concerns about their local area having less of a voice following the proposed changes, with decision making more remote and not being focused on the concerns of local residents. |
| | *"Local councils are losing focus on residents needs. By giving them more residents to look after will further remove them from focus"*<br>*"I don't think there will be any local knowledge, much less care"* |
| **Concern with the grouping of the 5 unitaries** | Respondents raised a concern with regards to the combination of some, or just the unitary they would be moved to, of the council combinations going into the 5 Unitary Authorities. |
| | *"Brentwood is an uncomfortable fit with Chelmsford/Maldon"*<br>*"Proposed merger brings together 3 very different socioeconomic areas with differing needs…"* |
| **Concerns of impact of other council's debt** | Respondents raised their worry about the impact of taking on debt from other councils, most frequently Thurrock council's debt. |
| | *"I would be concerned about taking on the debts of neighbouring councils…"*<br>*"Serious concerns about taking on Thurrock councils' debt"* |
| **Concerns of services impact** | Respondents raised their concern that services would be negatively impacted |
| | *"This should only be considered if the services provided can be improved"*<br>*"I don't want to lose services such as my local library"* |

# Theme Glossary
## *What does each theme mean? With example responses*

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| | |
|---|---|
| Concerns of staff impact | Respondents raised their concerns about increased redundancies and impacts to the working conditions of council staff following re-organisation |
| | *"Worrie[d] about the impact on workers employed by those organisations and our sense of choice about how / where we [work]"* |
| Dissatisfaction with loss of vote in LE2025 | Respondents raised their dissatisfaction with the loss of voting in the May 2025 local elections as a result of re-organisation. |
| | *"When will we have elections as they were cancelled this year"* |
| Hope that these changes can catalyse wider improvements | Respondents raised areas they would like to see improvements in, with this re-organisation seen as a driver of wider changes to these areas. |
| | *"We need more investment opportunities. Planning decision need to be aligned with highways and infrastructure, more recognition as a unitary council"*<br>*"This must be used as an opportunity to make efficiency savings and cut waste"* |
| Opposed to LGR – Cost | Respondents raised the concern that the cost and disruption caused in re-organisation would not be beneficial. |
| | *"Complete waste of time and money"*<br>*"A lot of disruption for several years, no saving of council taxpayers money initially & loss of key long standing officers."* |
| Opposition to LGR – general issue | Respondents raised that they did not want to see changes to the current structure, but without a specific reason (as seen with the other two Opposed to LGR themes). |
| | *"Keep it as it is. We do not want change"*<br>*"None… happy with things as they are. Stop reinventing the 'wheel'"* |
| Opposition to LGR – prefer current districts | Respondents raised that they are happy with the current district structure and so did not want reorganisation. |
| | *"Satisfied with Castle Point Council"*<br>*"This is not needed. Keep the city council as it is, services will get diluted over a large area"* |
| Prefer a different number of Unitary Authorities | Respondents, while in support of the proposal, would prefer a different count of unitary authorities, frequently this was fewer authorities. |
| | *"5 is too many. Still remain complex."* |

# Theme Glossary
## *What does each theme mean? With example responses*

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| | |
|---|---|
| Raised a concern with their current district/unitary boundary | Respondents raised that they would want their local town/part of a district to be a part of another, or that they felt their area was closer to an area outside of Essex. |
| | *"Move Billericay away from Basildon council, Basildon never respects our identity."*<br>*"Our natural geographical position is much more Cambridge than anywhere else. I lived 45 years in Uttlesford and have never been shopping anywhere else but Cambridge or Saffron Walden. All decent road links and bus services are linked to Cambridge."* |
| Size of Unitary Authorities looked right | Respondents raised that they believed the structure of the 5 was a good fit in terms of retaining a local focus and being larger than districts and more able to officer efficiencies. |
| | *"I think five areas could still feel local to residents, any less would mean far more people being [severed] by fewer members of council…"*<br>*"Keep services as locally-run as possible"* |
| Uncertain it will deliver | Respondents, while in support, raised their concerns that the proposed changes would not necessarily deliver on the priorities of re-organisation |
| | *"I doubt this plan will provide the cost savings required by the government"* |
| Would prefer Fewer Unitaries | Respondents did not support the changes, as they thought that fewer authorities would be better in terms of structure or delivering efficiencies. |
| | *"In my view the three UC would be a better fit"*<br>*"Five is too many. Three would be ideal: North Essex, Mid-Essex and South Essex"* |
| Would support 5 Unitaries over 3 | Respondents who did not support wider reorganisation but would support the 5 structure against other number of authorities. |
| | *"I would support the change to 5 unitary authorities, provided there is no increase in the number of civil servants, or the cost of the [bureaucracy]"*<br>*"I don't like the proposals at all, however if it is between this and a three authority model, I would prefer the five."* |
| Asked for Greater Clarity | Respondents asked further questions about the precise process of LGR, devolution, or had a question about the impact on council delivery. |
| Raised a non-LGR specific issue | Respondents raised an issue not-specific to local government reorganisation |

# Appendix B

Southend/Castle Point Council Social Media Semantic Analysis
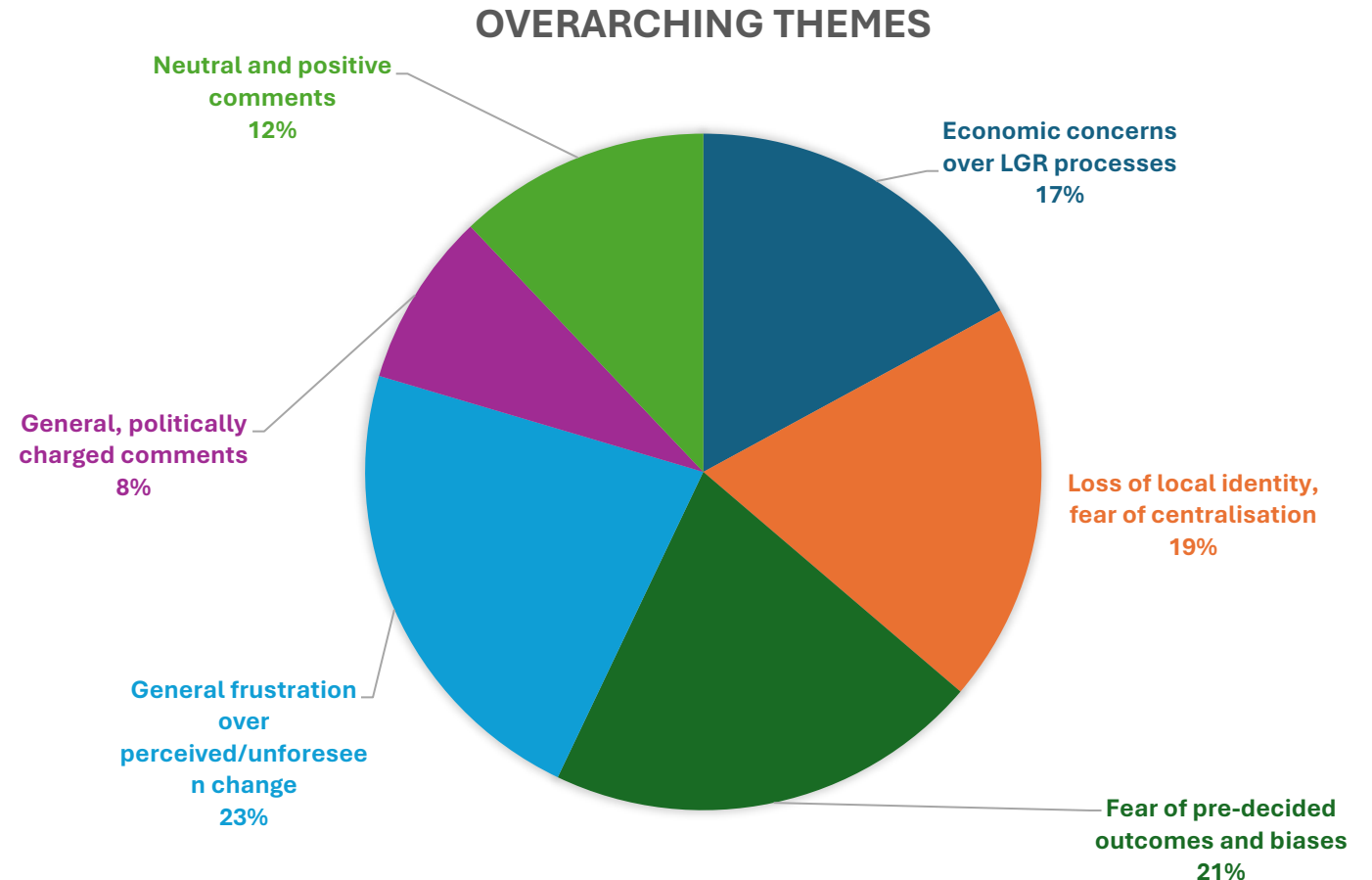
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# Social media sentiment analysis:

Chelmsford, Colchester, Castle Point, Harlow, Maldon, and Uttlesford posted on social media – Facebook and Twitter – about the Public Engagement survey between 25 June – 20 July 2025. We analysed the reports captured between 25-29 July 2025. The number of posts varied between 3-7 on one media channel by council, the organic posts representing approximately 80% of the overall posts.

## Qualitative analysis:

Over 1,200 public social media comments were reviewed and categorised by recurring themes. Each theme was coded, quoted, and verified against the source material. No assumptions were made. Sentiment was evaluated based on direct tone and phrasing.

Overarching themes were created from interconnected themes.

**OVERARCHING THEMES**



- Neutral and positive comments 12%
- Economic concerns over LGR processes 17%
- Loss of local identity, fear of centralisation 19%
- Fear of pre-decided outcomes and biases 21%
- General frustration over perceived/unforeseen change 23%
- General, politically charged comments 8%

Note: key words analysis showed an approximately 63% neutrality, whilst qualitative analysis showed approximately 70% overall negative sentiment. This is due to the differences between the two methods.
Additional Note: The percentage of neutral or positive comments ranged from 30% - 12% between the qualitative coding method and the keywords analysis, highlighting the challenge with reporting commenters who expressed multiple sentiments within a comment between the two methodologies.

# Social media sentiment analysis:

Chelmsford, Colchester, Castle Point, Harlow, Maldon, and Uttlesford posted on social media – Facebook and Twitter – about the Public Engagement survey between 25 June – 20 July 2025. We analysed the reports captured between 25-29 July 2025. The number of posts varied between 3-7 on one media channel by council, the organic posts representing approximately 80% of the overall posts.

## Quotes: negative sentiment
## LGR process specific

"Council tax will go up, services will go down."
"How much extra will this cost us?"

"It will be faceless, bloated and further from the people."
"Local voice will vanish."
"More overheads / claims for expenses less money will be going to the constituents."

"Rural areas like Maldon will be left out again."
"Pockets of deprivation will be forgotten."
"This plan doesn't serve small towns."

" We'll lose jobs, or be relocated miles away."
"Redundancies are inevitable."
"Won't take long for offices to be converted into houses."

"What happens to refuse collection?"
"Housing policies differ – who decides?"
"Some have sacks, some have wheelie bins – no standard."

## Quotes: positive sentiment
## LGR process specific

"Quietly confident this could work. Tendring, Colchester and Braintree have already been working together on the Garden Communities scheme. Anything that brings more control away from Chelmsford-based Essex Council is only a good thing."

"I certainly prefer the five option… getting rid of Essex County Council, with no overall Essex Mayor. This would be the better saving of money and putting local people front and centre."

"I've just done the survey… Reducing the number of councils may make sense *as long as the resulting areas fit together*."

"Thank you for providing the survey for us to complete."

"Brilliant job to whoever wrote this [council response]. We need more factual information like this on social media because there are way too many people repeating false information."

"I would say there are both risks and potential benefits."