

# The East/West model

A concept paper for an East/West pattern  
of unitary local government in Norfolk

East/West Norfolk - The Economic Reality







“Increasingly, the scale of governance decision-making and policy implementation in fields such as transport, housing and physical infrastructure investment have become divorced from the real functional areas of towns and cities. Realigning the two may be a powerful means of improving the efficiency of strategic planning for sub-regional areas, with consequent improvements in outcomes for all parts of the country.”

ODPM (2006)  
Working Paper 1:  
Mapping City Regions

## Proposal

This document sets out a concept for a two unitary model of local government in Norfolk. Our proposal provides for an east/west unitary solution which builds upon the functional economic sub-regions of Norwich in the east and King's Lynn in the west of the county of Norfolk.



# Foreword

This document is a response to the request from the Boundary Committee to review and if considered necessary to revise our original proposals for the structural review of local government in Norfolk submitted in November 2007.

We originally assembled and considered an extensive range of evidence in relation to the way in which the economy of Norfolk works, the way people live their lives and the way in which public services are currently delivered across the county. We have now reviewed the decisions made in other parts of the country, the opinion of the Secretary of State, and further evidence that has been published more recently and amended our proposals accordingly.



We believe this strengthens our original conclusion that Norfolk has two distinct and very separate economic sub regions, one in the east of the county driven by the economic powerhouse of Norwich and a second in the west of the county, where King's Lynn fulfils a similar role. We also believe that recent decisions reinforce the move towards larger unitary local authorities.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that must be taken, to provide new local government structures that are 'future-proof'. It is our strongly held view that these new councils should be built around the reality of the way Norfolk works. The proposals contained in this submission, after evaluating the evidence base, do just that.

This proposal has been developed in consultation and discussion with Norfolk County Council.



Ray Harding  
Chief Executive



Nick Daubney  
Leader of the Council

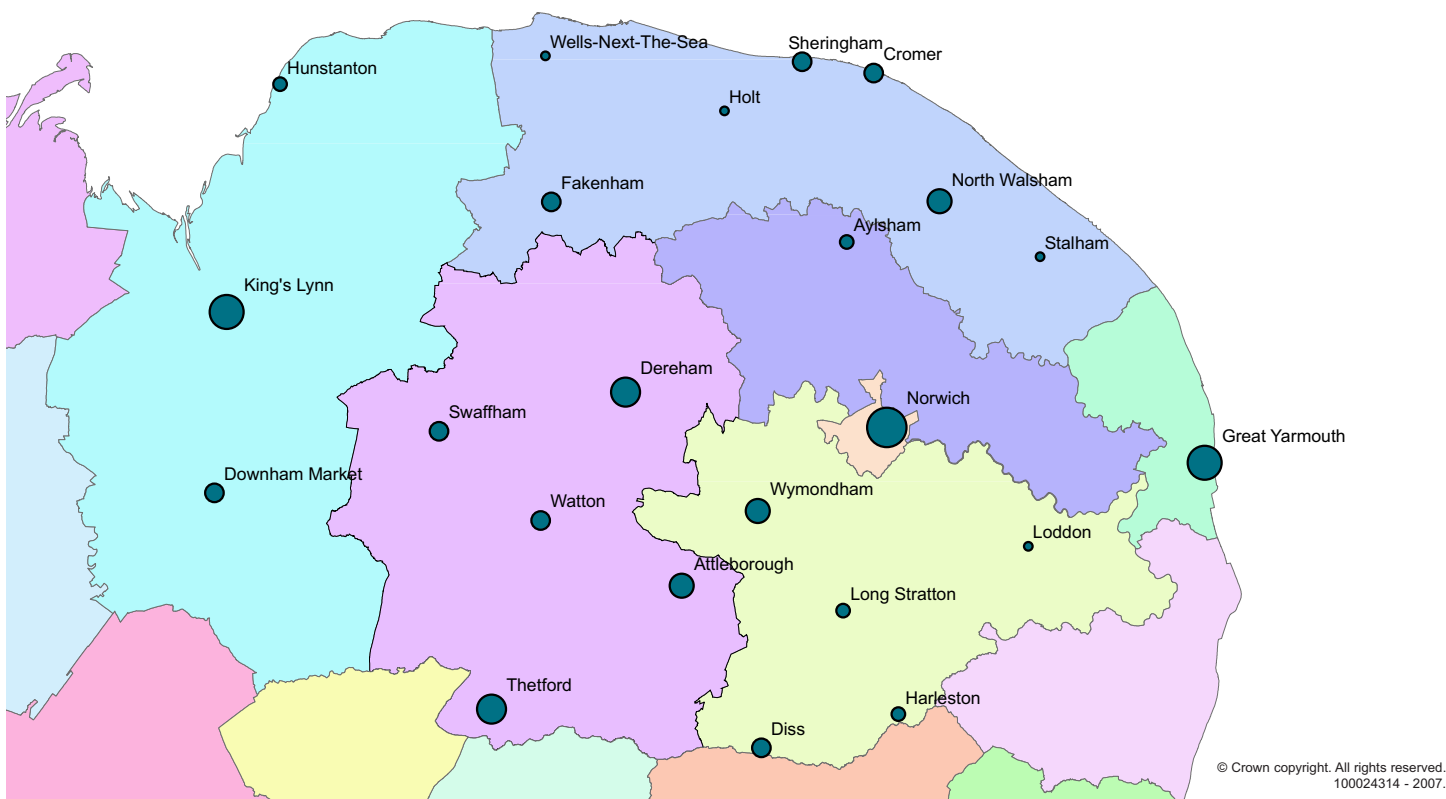
NTS Daubney



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# Existing District Council Boundaries in Norfolk and Main Settlements



## Assumptions

We have made a number of assumptions in producing this document. In particular we have assumed that:

- a** It is important that proposals take full account of recent decisions made by the Secretary of State with respect to unitary proposals. This proposal is therefore a revision of our previous submission 'A Model for Unitary Local Government in Norfolk' following a careful and detailed analysis of the decisions made by the Secretary of State. We have particularly noted the significance of
  - i. scale
  - ii. value for money
  - iii. the relevance of the Cheshire decision to the position in Norfolk.
- b** The Boundary Committee is seeking evidence-based proposals. Consequently this document presents clear evidence that there are two functional economic sub regions in Norfolk, which influence the way in which people live their lives.
- c** Our proposals should be at a conceptual level at this stage. We have drawn indicative lines on the map (page 6) to illustrate our concept, and whilst wanting to keep this submission at a strategic level, have provided a more detailed boundary for the purposes of determining approximate population and geographical areas in Appendix A.
- d** We are not required at this stage to evidence in any detail the affordability of our proposals.
- e** Wider consultation will inform the final recommendations made by the Boundary Committee. At this stage, we have cross-referenced our proposal with existing evidence, and 'reality-checked' our ideas, to ensure that this submission is both realistic and appropriate.







## Executive Summary

- 1 This concept paper sets out a model of local government that is applicable across Norfolk. It meets the government's criteria and responds to the Boundary Committee's Key Lines of Enquiry. It will deliver improved services and greater value for money for local taxpayers through strong local leadership, neighbourhood empowerment and improved democratic accountability – across geographical areas that make sense to residents and businesses alike.
- 2 Norfolk is big. The challenge is to divide it into coherent, functional administrative areas that make sense to those who live and work here. It has a population of 824,200. Of every ten people, four live in the three major centres of Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, two live in its 21 market towns and four live in communities with fewer than 2,500 people. There are over 500 parishes, most with thriving active communities.
- 3 Norwich has an economic influence of national importance which extends across a significant part of Norfolk. In its recently published 'Growth Point Integrated Development Programme', Norwich City Council described Greater Norwich as having "a population of 368,000...Norwich exerts a powerful economic, social and cultural influence over the surrounding market towns and villages". It is our belief that this review is an unprecedented opportunity to create England's first fully functional single authority to lead a city-region, taking responsibility for East Norfolk in its entirety, thereby avoiding the later requirement to

create complex and bureaucratic Multi Area Agreements.

- 4 Due largely to its equidistance from Norwich, Peterborough and Cambridge, King's Lynn performs an economic role greater than that of towns of comparable size. Its influence extends eastwards towards the centre of the county as well as out towards parts of south Lincolnshire and north Cambridgeshire across a catchment area of over 200,000 people.

"Although successive reorganisations of local government in the last half-century have never embodied the geometry of City-Regions, the argument for their relevance as administrative or strategic entities has grown ever more powerful. The increased range of commuting brought about by greater car ownership and higher employment mobility has widened the functional area of English cities, as a result making existing local authority district boundaries increasingly less representative of the real functional reach of towns and cities."

ODPM (2006) Working Paper 1: Mapping City Regions

- 5 We believe that the Secretary of State's rationale for her decision to approve an east/west solution in the case of Cheshire, apply equally in Norfolk. We note in particular her view that "...a single authority would be too big and that there were risks that the authority would be seen as remote by local people ...." Norfolk is of course considerably larger than Cheshire in terms of both its physical size and population. The decision

letter went on to state that "...the economic realities of an area are a significant factor in strategic leadership. The more an authority's area matches that economic reality, the more likely that it will be effective in providing the strategic leadership necessary to create prosperity".

- 6 We also note the decisions to date in terms of new unitary councils approved – with the trend towards larger councils. So far 45 councils are being reduced to 9 across seven county areas. No county area has been divided into more than two unitaries; even with the size of Norfolk, we have reached the same conclusion as Norfolk County Council that more than two unitary authorities for Norfolk would not represent a cost-effective or efficient solution to the review.
- 7 This proposal provides a number of benefits, including:
  - less duplication and a less bureaucratic form of local government
  - greater, faster local decision making
  - savings for the Council Tax payer and more investment in frontline services
  - less confusion for the public in how to access services
  - simplified democratic arrangements and stronger community leadership
  - devolution of services or local accountability where appropriate
  - an ability to respond to changes in the external environment
  - a sharper focus on key issues
  - improvements in performance and value for money
  - responsive to issues and problems which are unique to the local area
- 8 In particular, the new authorities will be able to tackle a range of important local issues in new and innovative ways, freed from the current service delivery paradigm. These include educational attainment and skills; economic renewal; rurality and sparsity; inequality; and environmental /social cohesion issues.
- 9 New unitary councils will be able to tackle these problems in new ways, founded on a series of principles such as redesigning services around the needs of customers; focusing on ends not means; being future-proof; employing innovative commissioning arrangements.
- 10 Geography and population density are dominant considerations. We believe that somewhere on a continuum between the two there is an optimum solution for Norfolk:
  - Setting a boundary to provide two equally sized councils in terms of population would make the western council geographically too large to sustain value for money service delivery. King's Lynn and West Norfolk is already the seventh largest council area in England.
  - Providing two geographically equal councils would mean that the eastern council has a population over 500,000 – only Birmingham and Leeds are bigger.
  - Dividing Norfolk into three or four new councils, whilst enabling a more even split of population, would still mean that the western unitary is significantly larger than the others. This would not, in our view, represent enough of a step change in order to provide long-term, sustainable local authorities.
- 11 These factors pre-condition the western unitary to be geographically larger and less densely populated than the eastern unitary. Our conclusion is that this difference in size reflects the difference in local circumstances that allows both councils to deliver the benefits outlined above. These differences are reflected in the Key Lines of Enquiry.
- 12 New local government arrangements for the county should be founded upon the functional economic sub-regions of Norfolk; this would provide for two new councils based upon the city-region of Norwich in the east and on the sub-region of King's Lynn and its rural hinterland in the west. These new authorities make sense in terms of the way in which people live their lives - where they work, shop, spend their leisure time, access health, education and other public services. This will also allow the respective authorities to focus on, and address the very different needs of the two sub-regions, tackling the 'place-shaping' agenda.
- 13 Our conclusion is that an east/west unitary solution will best deliver the benefits outlined above. We are aware of a number of options, and our analysis of them is appended (F), including our views on a 'Yarftoft' unitary which, whilst not incompatible with the evidence underpinning the east/west solution, appears to raise more issues than it solves. Our assessment also refutes arguments for unitary government based on both north/south (so-called 'Nutcracker') and greater Norwich and the rest (so-called 'County Donut') solutions as inappropriate and ill conceived.







## Vision

14 Our vision is to transform local government in Norfolk for the benefit of our citizens, the businesses which are located here, the people who visit, and the partner organisations with whom we work, now and for subsequent generations. The elements of our vision are:

- A county town – Norwich - that controls its own destiny and is of a size necessary to compete successfully with the other major cities nationally and deliver its growth agenda
- An east Norfolk authority that ensures the benefits of the city-region cascade out across that region for the benefit of all
- A west Norfolk authority that can harness the benefits of its distinct economic sub-region for the benefit of all, delivering its growth agenda in King's Lynn and Thetford and capitalising on its unique geographical location
- A west Norfolk authority that specialises in service delivery to a rural, sparsely populated area
- Two councils that work together to deliver shared services where such arrangements make sense to the user and in terms of value for money
- Continued promotion of the social and civic identity of the County of Norfolk
- Market towns and large villages that have a revitalised role as a service 'hub', bringing together public services in new and accessible ways and being at the heart of new Local Service Forums
- Parishes that have a strengthened role, able to select those improvements they would like to take-up locally from a menu of options, ranging from a greater say in service standards to increased opportunities to deliver services themselves and new ways to hold service providers to account
- A set of personally visible elected members running both councils with the real power and influence needed to make a difference, motivated by the challenge this presents
- Public service delivery by organisations that devolve elements of their organisation across the area they serve based on new ways of working that harness the possibilities of technology
- A range of other public, private, voluntary and community organisations that actively engage with the new councils to tackle quality of life issues
- Strong partnerships that deliver tangible improvements in response to important local issues, with the active removal of barriers to silo-working within and between organisations
- Councils that are not heavily exposed to the impact of major risks such as coastal flooding, the ageing population, deprivation, second home ownership
- A motivated workforce that excels in the opportunities to bring innovation and new ideas to the way services are planned and delivered, and embraces new ways of working
- Local people enjoying improvements to their quality of life, with increased levels of satisfaction with services that are more responsive to their needs





- 15 Our proposals will create two robust and focused new authorities with the resilience and capacity to tackle the principle (but very different) challenges faced by East Norfolk on the one hand (inner city deprivation in Norwich and concentrated deprivation in the resort town of Great Yarmouth), and West Norfolk on the other (low skills and aspirations, decline of the food processing sector, rapid expansion of the migrant worker population).
- 16 Our proposals provide for:
  - Strong, visible and accountable leadership balanced by a stronger role for non-executive councillors
  - Radical devolution to Local Service Forums, comprising clusters of parishes and wards
  - A model of service delivery and governance that provides for services to be shared where appropriate, but where accountability and decision making are devolved to the lowest level possible
  - Tangible and meaningful community empowerment including participatory budgeting, the transfer of assets to community and voluntary organisations, and public involvement in service development
  - Clear roles for members within the council, as a community leader, as an advocate of their ward, in Local Service Forums and engaging with their communities
  - A Norfolk Commission overseeing shared services and providing a coherent and powerful voice at regional and national level. The Commission will be custodians of a 'Norfolk Charter' setting out the roles and responsibilities of each level of governance within this model
  - increased capacity to attract and retain a well-trained and motivated workforce who will work in new and innovative ways to help the organisation achieve its vision and objectives.
- 17 These proposals will:
  - strengthen Norfolk's economic position to create vibrant, successful business environments
  - create lean, low cost authorities which deliver significant savings through increased efficiency and improvement
  - enhance cohesion and integration across all Norfolk's communities
  - improve accountability of leadership
  - provide equity, convenience and choice
  - enable the new councils to better tackle local issues
- 18 The fundamental advantages of the east/west model are:
  - a. it provides an East Norfolk unitary that can capitalise on the benefits of co-terminosity with the Norwich city-region. By aligning decision-making with the functional area the new unitary is better placed to enable delivery of the Government's growth agenda
  - b. it provides a new West Norfolk unitary that is big enough to punch above its weight and able to secure the best deal for the area regionally and nationally, whilst being small enough to be light on its feet and able to deliver fast, significant improvements in quality of life for local people
  - c. that both new councils enable decision-making and accountability at the appropriate level – the principle of subsidiarity – not only at the level of the new unitary councils, but also at the level of the Norfolk Commission (shared services) and the new Local Service Forums (devolved services).

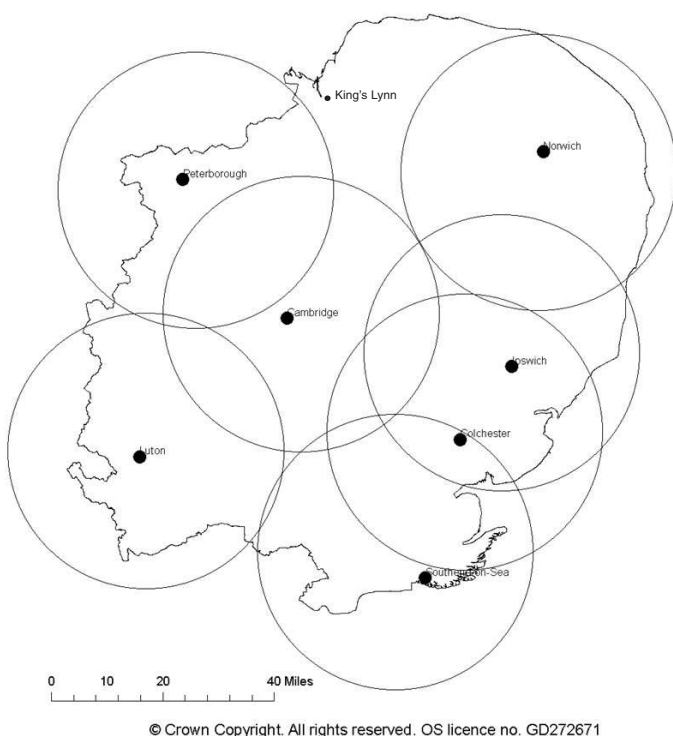
# Evidence

19 There is clear and compelling evidence that Norfolk 'works' (in terms of economy, how people live their lives, infrastructure etc) around Norwich as the primary economic and social driver for the east of the county, with a secondary, but no less important role played by King's Lynn to the west. This east/west focus can be seen in the patterns of:

- Travel to work areas
- Highways and transport infrastructure
- Schools, libraries and children's centres
- High school catchments
- Police safer neighbourhood areas
- Deprivation
- Sparsity and population density
- Employment
- Retail catchments
- Adult Social Services
- Voluntary and community infrastructure
- Established church dioceses
- District general hospitals
- Major sporting and cultural facilities
- Major further and higher education institutes

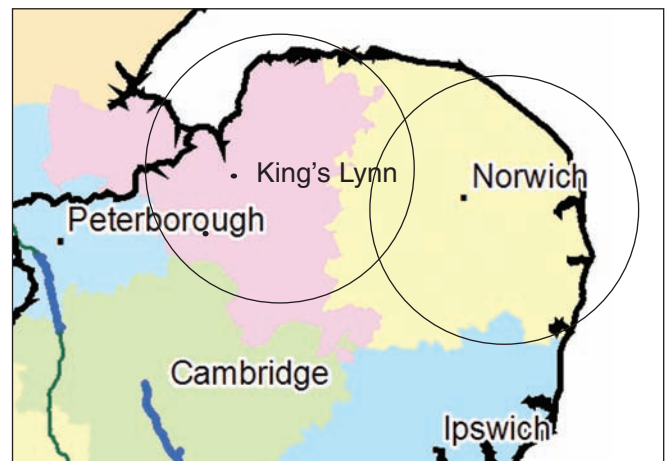
These patterns are shown in the evidence referenced in Appendices C and D.

20 The focus of the East of England Development Agency's (EEDA) city regions model of economic influence on regional cities reflects the fact that the west of the county is not significantly influenced by Norwich. Consequently there is a real need for a west Norfolk authority to ensure that benefits are spread across Norfolk. We believe that an east/west unitary solution for Norfolk would help fill this gap:



21 EEDA themselves recently recognised the growing significance of King's Lynn's economic role in a letter from their Chief Executive: "it is always impressive to see local authorities, the private sector and the Further Education community singing from the same hymn-sheet. I hope you were reassured about EEDA's commitments to our ongoing investments; together with our support for King's Lynn as a sub-regional centre within the impending Regional Economic Strategy."

22 The east/west unitary solution also reflects the Local Government Association's (LGA) preferred sub-regional model, commissioned as part of the evidence to the Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration published by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Extensive research was used to divide England into 50 sub-regions. This recognises sub-regions in Norfolk focused on Norwich to the east and King's Lynn to the west.



23 The LGA research reinforces our argument that Norfolk 'works' on an east/west basis and that this is an issue of national significance that should underpin future unitary governance across Norfolk. Our proposal will ensure the unitary councils can take a greater role in the new integrated regional planning arrangements to achieve investment in economic development, infrastructure and services that improve quality of life for local people.



- 24 There are significant differences in terms of both the economic structure and the major challenges facing both new authorities. Although there are key sectors common to both areas (eg tourism) there are also some major differences as summarised below:

Economic Drivers	
East Norfolk	West Norfolk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial services</li> <li>• Creative industries</li> <li>• Offshore/energy industries</li> <li>• Research (Norwich Research Park, University of East Anglia)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food processing</li> <li>• Food related industries (agriculture and associated activities)</li> <li>• Advanced manufacturing &amp; engineering</li> </ul>

- 25 Equally, the challenges facing the two areas also differ; those facing the west of Norfolk, and the benefits of having a unitary council tackling them, are set out in more detail in appendix E:

Policy Challenges	
East Norfolk	West Norfolk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting the needs of the financial and service sector;</li> <li>• Adapting to changes in the energy industry;</li> <li>• Developing the potential of port related activity;</li> <li>• Providing graduate level employment for university graduates who want to stay in the area</li> <li>• Deprivation in Norwich and Great Yarmouth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising skills and aspirations;</li> <li>• Adapting to changes in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and food processing;</li> <li>• Diversification in agriculture;</li> <li>• Support for the continuing opportunities in advanced engineering and manufacturing;</li> <li>• Recruiting skilled and graduate-level personnel</li> <li>• Maintaining and strengthening community cohesion</li> </ul>

- 26 Across Norfolk great strides have been made to address these challenges, led by Councils in partnership with other stakeholders and funders:

Successes	
East Norfolk	West Norfolk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A11 dualling</li> <li>• Norwich Forum &amp; central library</li> <li>• Great Yarmouth outer harbour</li> <li>• Creative industries</li> <li>• Hethel engineering centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelopment of King's Lynn's town centre</li> <li>• Nar Ouse Regeneration Area</li> <li>• New state of the art college and university</li> <li>• One of the largest single inward investments in the Eastern Region</li> </ul>

- 27 We believe that this momentum can only be maintained by strong, democratic public sector leadership. Our solution for Norfolk allows the two councils to focus on the specific and very different needs of their respective areas, whilst incorporating a strong and influential Norfolk Commission to represent the collective interests of the county as a whole.



# Key Lines of Enquiry

The following section has been structured to show how our proposal addresses each of the Key Lines of Enquiry. The elements of this model will extend across both the new authorities.



## Broad Cross-Section of Support

"Future unitary local government structures must be supported by a broad cross-section of partners and stakeholders"

- 28 As part of this process we have engaged with key stakeholder groups reflecting communities of place – such as elected members and parish and town councils – as well as communities of interest – such as local business leaders, key partner agencies and staff. It is important that these groups are informed of the challenges and possible impacts of this review, and that they have an opportunity to inform and influence our thinking and that of the Boundary Committee.
- 29 In order to minimise the cost of this work this approach has been low key. We have established an on-going dialogue with these stakeholder groups listed above to inform our proposals (summarised in Appendix B). The response has been overwhelmingly positive. At this stage we have not invested in taking the east/west model to the broader public or stakeholders based in the east of the county; although it has been clearly referenced in the County Council's consultation.
- 30 It is clear that Norfolk councils are putting together a variety of proposals - these have been widely debated in the media. It has been difficult to engage in a cross county debate because of regionalised editions of print media and separate radio coverage. A factor which supports our 'invisible from Norwich' argument.
- 31 We have engaged with all our council counterparts to assess where there are areas of commonality and where support can be given. Our analysis of the various options is attached at Appendix F. At the time of submission, there are no other proposals that appear to be so clearly based on impartial socio-economic evidence. We are therefore unable to support the other proposals that are on the table.
- 32 However, based on our analysis of the Secretary of State's earlier decisions we agree with the view expressed by Norfolk County Council that more than two unitary authorities for Norfolk would not be a cost effective or efficient outcome for the review. Our proposal mirrors the east/west unitary proposal from Norfolk County Council and has been refined in discussion with county officers.
- 33 The move to two councils will reduce the burden on the range of public, private, voluntary and community organisations that are increasingly required to work with councils – there will be less partnership meetings to try and attend (LSPs), a more relevant local area agreement to contribute to, fewer organisations to negotiate with for core or grant funding, and clearer opportunities for joint commissioning and service delivery. We believe that these advantages make a compelling case that organisations working in Norfolk would find difficult to ignore.
- 34 Establishing new unitary councils across Norfolk provides an opportunity to improve public services and achieve improved outcomes for local residents. To deliver this our proposals:
- capitalise on the strength of partnership working across Norfolk at both county and sub county levels
  - ensure effective working across organisational and functional boundaries to tackle difficult local issues such as obesity, fear of crime, low educational attainment, low skills and aspirations
  - build on the best practices and experiences from successful and innovative partnerships
- 35 These proposals are central to our ideas around integrating public service delivery and achieving local accountability for services at a neighbourhood level. Partners and the public will have a forum for scrutiny and challenge, through Local Service Forums (LSF), facilitated by strong leadership from the new local authorities.



# Strategic Leadership

Future unitary local government structures must provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership. The leadership should work with their local community, business community, voluntary sector and other stakeholders to create a vision for the future of the place and go on to deliver it. Community leadership is one of the most important features of the future of local governance.

- 36 This proposal provides councils with enough 'clout' to attract high calibre leaders – people will want to represent and work for them. Such strong leadership is central to the vision – we believe this is the only way to secure the benefits set out in this concept paper.
- 37 These councils will have stable leadership, providing clear and visible accountability in both the east and west of the county. In the west detailed discussions are underway to examine whether the directly elected mayor model would help to provide the focus and sense of clarity required for the newly created authority.
- 38 The nature and scale of the challenges facing both the east and the west of Norfolk mean that it is essential to build the new unitary local authority structures onto the firm foundations of the county's two functional economic sub regions. By building on the way people live their daily lives, the way in which businesses relate to their customers and supply chains and on how key partner organisations organise their own businesses, the new councils will be positioned to deliver the effective, visible and strong strategic leadership required to overcome the very real but quite different challenges facing the respective councils.
- 39 The 'place-shaping' agenda requires councils to move away from their traditional remit to tackle wider policy issues. We believe two unitaries are best placed to co-ordinate a logical and comprehensive response to these issues.
- 40 The creation of just two complementary authorities for Norfolk will ensure that each has sufficient capacity and scale to demand attention at a regional, and when appropriate, national level in order to attract the resources needed to address the challenges facing the east of England's most under-performing county area. The rationale underpinning the east/west division of Norfolk will enable key partner organisations to adapt their own structures to complement this logical sub-division of Norfolk.
- 41 The new councils will set out their vision for the future in the sustainable community strategy for the area, providing coherence to thinking and planning about the issues that are most important to local people. This vision will be developed through strong and visible Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) and underpinned by agreed targets set out in local area agreements and robust Local Development Frameworks.
- 42 The new councils will convene and support the work of the LSP. This will move away from simple collaboration and debate around policy issues towards more active commissioning and joint procurement. Council leaders and portfolio holders will therefore take leading roles in the theme partnerships that will underpin the LSP and reflect the local priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework. This will ensure that the vision is achieved whilst respecting local diversity and the different needs of different communities.
- 43 Cabinet members will have clear responsibilities:
- **thematic responsibilities** to engage with communities of interest. This will reflect the local priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. They will chair the relevant theme partnership of the LSP, ensuring the right organisations are involved in designing solutions to local problems
  - **geographic responsibilities** to engage with communities of place. These will allow executive members to take an overview of how issues play out within their locality, and they will attend one of the Local Service Forums as part of their role.
- 44 We advocate the constituting of a Norfolk Commission, comprising leaders and senior officers of the new councils. This body would:
- be the custodian of a Norfolk Charter, which would set out the roles and responsibilities of each level of governance
  - safeguard the civic function and traditions of the county of Norfolk
  - be responsible for overseeing any service functions shared across the new unitary councils; for example, this may include transport planning or the pupil referral units
  - provide additional influence at regional and national level
  - convene a Norfolk Assembly, drawing together those public, private and voluntary organisations with a cross-county remit to identify responses to common issues
- 45 We propose single-member wards to strengthen local accountability and reduce confusion amongst the electorate. Each ward would cover a population of 4,000 - 6,000. This would provide around 60 councillors in the West Norfolk unitary and slightly above 100 in the east, reducing the number of councillors in Norfolk by half from 419 to less than 200. This would still ensure that each council is of sufficient size to discharge its responsibilities – executive, scrutiny and overview, regulatory and neighbourhood responsibilities. It also ensures that the new councils are not too large to become unwieldy and to fragment decision-making and group working.
- 46 The level of responsibility for each councillor would increase to meet the needs of the electorate of their ward, engage with parishes and through their role with Local Service Forums, be responsible for decisions at

neighbourhood level. In addition, a number of councillors will be appointed to higher profile, executive roles. In all, this should serve to make the role more attractive and enhance the diversity of those wanting to stand for election.

- 47 An enhanced overview and scrutiny function will balance stronger local leadership. This will ensure that scrutiny and overview process considers

- **thematic issues** – how the councils work with their partners through the LSP to tackle the economic, environmental and social aspects of local quality of life, as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and monitored through the Local Area Agreement. In particular we would welcome the opportunity to provide localised health scrutiny that is far more meaningful in terms of tackling the health inequalities agenda.
- **geographical issues** – how effectively do the LSFs discharge their responsibilities, how engaged are partner agencies in this process and to what extent do the council and the LSP consider geographical variations their policy development and decision-making processes.

- 48 In order to perform their roles, members will need to access improved local data and intelligence, training and development, and receive commensurate levels of remuneration. This will build their capacity to work at a neighbourhood level. These arrangements will be supported by strong managerial leadership delivered

through an organisational culture and structure that is streamlined and de-layered, but incorporates sufficient strategic as well as operational capacity.

- 49 In the east, the challenge for a visibly strong local leader will be to balance the delivery of Norwich's growth agenda, tackling the needs of Great Yarmouth and the deprivation in both areas, with the need to ensure that the benefits of having a strong city-region cascade into the rural hinterland. This is what strengthened community leadership – individually and organisationally – is all about. Strong neighbourhood arrangements, devolution and community engagement will help to achieve this.
- 50 In the west, the challenge is to unite a diverse and sparsely populated area around some common ideas, themes and sense of identity. It will be important to ensure that the focus of activity is again seen to benefit the whole area and not just the growth points or larger towns. This is why we are exploring whether the first rural directly elected mayor would provide a highly visible public figurehead which could unite residents of towns, villages, and hamlets alike.
- 51 Across Norfolk, our proposals to create a Norfolk Commission both as a custodian of the Norfolk social and civic identity and to commission relevant shared services will ensure that strategic and civic issues are appropriately and effectively addressed.

## Neighbourhood Empowerment

"Future unitary local government structures must deliver genuine opportunities for neighbourhood flexibility and empowerment..."

- 52 The east/west model proposes two councils; to generalise, the east is large in population numbers, whilst the west is geographically large. This means that arrangements for neighbourhood empowerment must provide appropriate structures that respect these differences.

- 53 Our neighbourhood engagement and empowerment models will engage residents in the democratic process ensuring that they are able to directly influence service design, quality and priorities leading to continuous service improvement and greater participation in the democratic process.

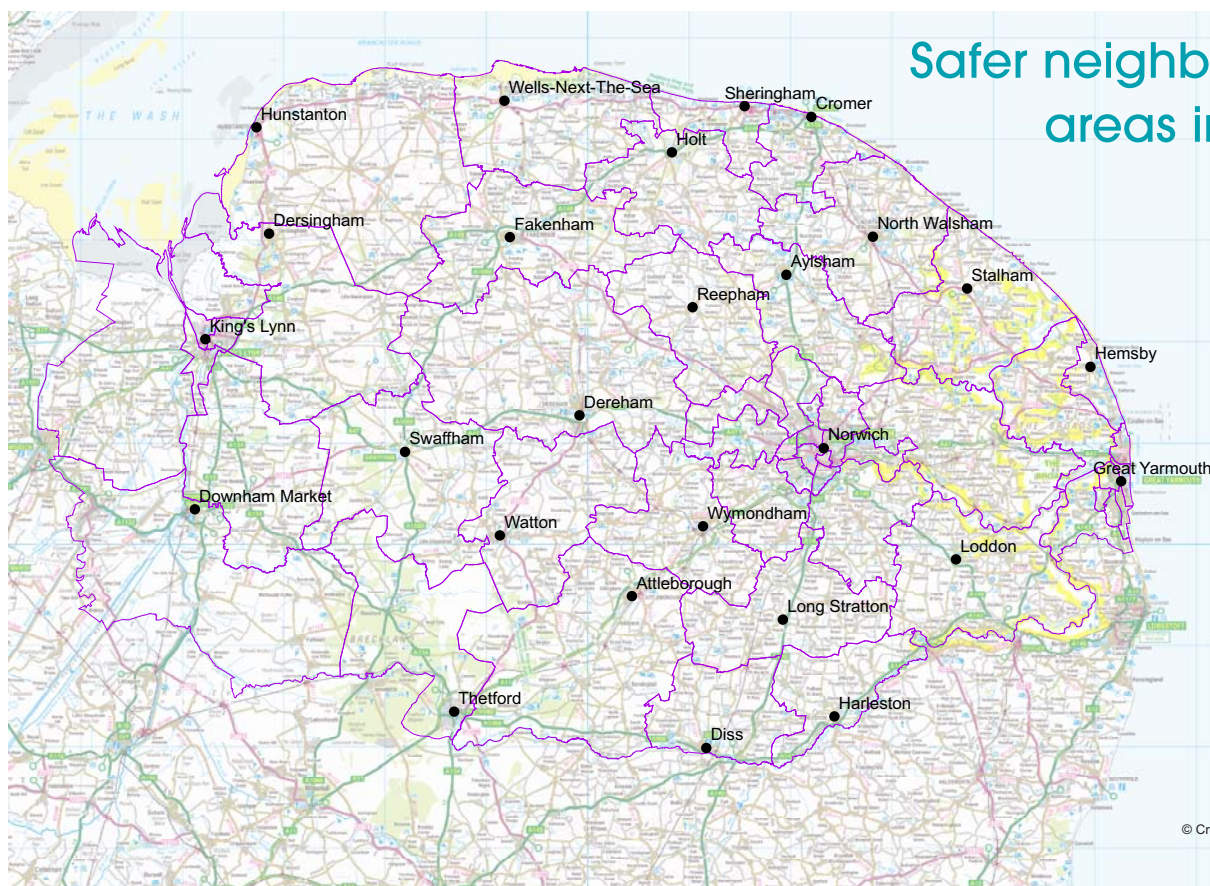
- 54 We will establish neighbourhoods of approximately 20-25,000 population. These will be centred on Norfolk's towns and large villages. Each neighbourhood will have a Local Service Forum (a mini LSP), comprising representatives of parish councils and ward members engaging with other public, voluntary and private sector organisations important in the area. We believe these neighbourhood areas should align with the Norfolk Constabulary's Safer Neighbourhood Areas, set out in the map on page 15.

- 55 Cabinet would designate a lead member for each Local Service Forum, helping them to discharge their geographical portfolio responsibilities. The Local

Service Forums will provide a mechanism through which frontline councillors can express their views, raise local issues, champion the needs of their communities, be accessible to the public that elected them and challenge other local service providers.

- 56 The Local Service Forums will
- be formally constituted and receive a small devolved budget to tackle local issues
  - be open, public meetings
  - lead development of 'place-shaping' initiatives
  - be a forum for engaging with town and parish councils
  - provide responses to important local issues that are best tackled at a local level. Any issues that can't be resolved will be escalated to the cabinet of the new authorities or the management group of the LSPs for resolution
  - be custodians of local citizens' charters, setting out local service standards and priorities within a local action plan
  - be a mechanism through which the community call for action is expressed
  - be supported by innovative use of technology – such as text services, online 'neighbourhood' portals, use of mapping technology and council websites to raise and track local issues
  - be assigned a lead officer within the new management structure.

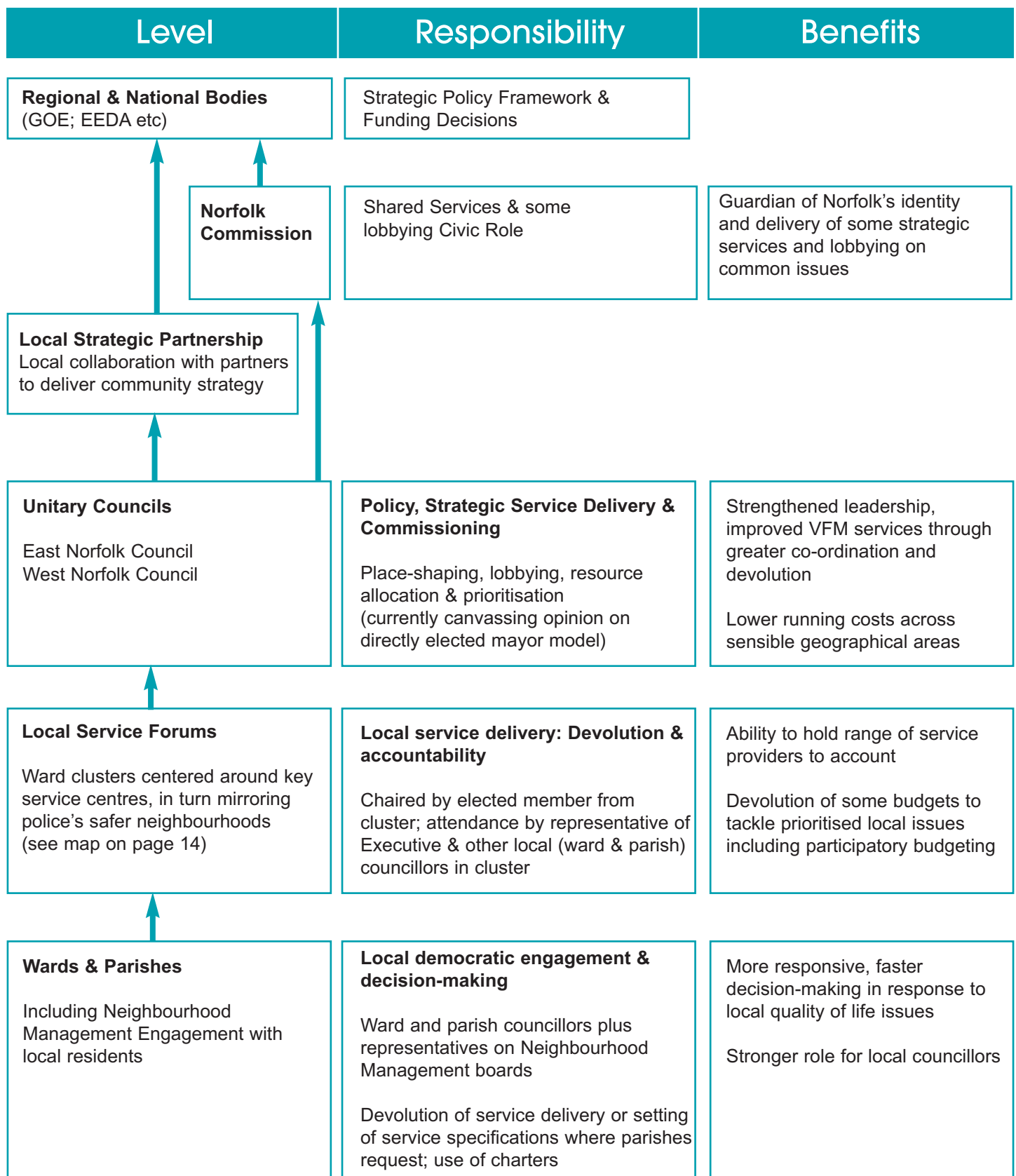




## Safer neighbourhood areas in Norfolk

- 57 This model builds on the successful experience of neighbourhood management in Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth where the existing neighbourhood structures will be strengthened and enhanced. The work in King's Lynn to develop local charters, a pilot project for the Department for Communities and Local Government, is demonstrating the positive impact that can be achieved by negotiating and agreeing the rights and responsibilities of service providers and residents, in one of the most deprived areas of the county.
- 58 Local data collection and sharing will help partners improve services. A quality of life survey will be conducted across the new councils, based on the innovative survey conducted across West Norfolk in 2007, which for the first time has provided statistically reliable data at a Safer Neighbourhoods level.
- 59 Community engagement is at the heart of this proposal, building on existing arrangements such as the Norfolk-wide citizens' panel to engage people in budgeting and service-review exercises. This will respect diversity within Norfolk, ensuring the new authorities are accessible to all. Local people should know how to engage with their council and how to get local issues resolved.
- 60 The eastern unitary, broadly comparable in size to Cornwall, will have a population somewhere in the region of 500,000. Neighbourhood empowerment in the urban centres will build on neighbourhood management arrangements already in place. This will provide a uniquely urban solution covering an urban area of nearly 300,000. Neighbourhood arrangements in the rural east would therefore cover the remaining 40% of the population and build on the proposed LSFs.
- 61 It will therefore be vital to ensure that neighbourhood arrangements in the urban and rural areas are balanced; neighbourhood management arrangements in Norwich and Great Yarmouth would compliment local service forums in the rural areas and market towns, in the same way that arrangements in King's Lynn and Thetford must be balanced with rural areas in the west. The links with the executive, set out under the previous KLOE, together with effective scrutiny arrangements, will make sure that this balance is achieved.
- 62 In the east, it will be particularly important to ensure that the benefits of the city-region are realised for all. In the west, the focus on the growth point towns of King's Lynn and Thetford must also be seen to drive improvements across the area and not be at the exclusion of the more rural parts.
- 63 The outcome of this strong focus on neighbourhood empowerment will include better targeted services and a greatly enhanced level of participation in the democratic process. This will initially be at a neighbourhood or parish level as real decision-making power is delegated, and will ultimately lead to increased engagement in the entire democratic process.
- 64 This is illustrated in the diagram on the following page which shows the different levels of engagement, the responsibilities at each level and the benefits they will achieve.

# A leadership model for the new councils





# Value for Money and Equity of Public Services

Future unitary local government structures must deliver value for money and equity of public services.

- 65 Value for money and service equity will be at the heart of the new councils. By combining the scale of two large unitary councils with a strong drive for shared services and commissioning models, this proposal will ensure that value for money is maximised.
- 66 The opportunity presented by the creation of the new councils to build new fit for purpose, streamlined, focused structures which reduce costs and realign resource to meet the strategic priorities of the proposed East Norfolk and West Norfolk councils respectively must be seized. These new organisations will be better placed to focus on delivering the national policy agenda in terms of growth, place shaping and economic development. This will in turn drive improvements in value for money and equity.
- 67 There is a long history of joint procurement in Norfolk delivering significant savings that will be capitalised on. It will be easier to secure procurement savings by:
- securing economies of scale within the new councils
  - working collaboratively across our partners in the LSP
  - working with a range of other councils
- 68 The model provides for extensive use of shared services at a level that will deliver the greatest value for money whilst retaining a strong local say in how these services will be delivered – this may be at a neighbourhood, unitary council or Norfolk-wide level. For example:
- we anticipate devolving choice around environmental schemes, input to local transport schemes, variations on environmental standards and youth provision
  - grass cutting arrangements could be streamlined and co-ordinated at a local level with local accountability through the Local Service Forums
  - library services will be shared at a Norfolk-wide level to secure appropriate economies of scale whilst retaining local operational decisions, for example opening hours
  - we anticipate the two authorities will maintain a joint transport and strategic planning function that will give life to a joint Local Transport plan.
- 69 The new councils will need to identify and seize opportunities for a step change in the development of shared services combined with the retention of joint service where that is sensible – such as archives, aids and adaptations, specialist functions in trading standards /environmental health, child care and so on. Potential areas of service improvement include:
- Aligning regulatory services
  - Developing joint commissioning between adult social care, supportive housing and health
  - Tackling the emerging issue of the rising costs of elderly social care – considering integration of service commissioning and delivery between adult social care and leisure and community services, in order to maximize direct payments and the development of community support networks and frameworks
- Potential devolution of planning decisions to local committees
  - Stronger resident and community focus on local transport schemes (traffic lights, crossings, speed humps, signage) whilst needing to establish a position of strength in the new regional planning framework
  - Tackling the challenges of educational opportunity for all and child protection, with a focus on parental support, children and families at risk
  - Establishing transitional governance arrangements to ensure the Building Schools for the Future programme is delivered to timescales.
- 70 Public sector assets and accommodation will need to be:
- rationalised to secure cost savings and maximise their value. For example, Jobcentre Plus and other public sector organisations will work out of joint council information centres across Norfolk.
  - transferred, where appropriate, into community ownership
  - better used, to improve the customer experience and access to services. For example, building on the concept of extended schools to improve access to a wider range services for the public
- 71 Different Local Service Forums will support and challenge service integration, for example around estates or schools. This would achieve the best alignment of cleanliness, police/warden visibility, outreach youth work, transport schemes, etc to place schools at the heart of their community.
- 72 Through the LSPs and the LSFs the new authorities will fully engage with private, voluntary and community sector organisations and those other organisations providing services to the local community, addressing local issues.
- 73 The new authorities will adopt a performance management framework that enables them to monitor service delivery, seek customer feedback and publish their performance against agreed targets.
- 74 Corporate development plans will underpin value driven cultures, building on the strengths of the old district and county councils but re energised and refocused to meet the challenges of their respective locations.

- 75 Budgets will be prepared in line with priorities, setting out in particular how working with other partners will achieve the outcomes in the sustainable community strategy and will deliver efficiency savings and service improvements through joint procurement, extensive use of commissioning, recruitment, information / data sharing etc.
- 76 Public sector workers will take on a wider civic responsibility as they go about their 'day job' in our communities. Frontline health workers or Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) for example could report fly tipping, broken street lights or graffiti in the normal course of their duties.
- 77 Use of Citizens' Panel research, customer feedback, analysis of complaints and councillor caseloads together with harnessing the knowledge of ward councillors and front line staff will ensure that the new authorities will remain responsive to local people and the wider community. It is essential that these changes deliver clear improvements in service quality without a commensurate increase in cost. Monitoring and evaluation of customer satisfaction and service performance will be an integral part of service development, as will research with non-users.
- 78 It is our view that these advantages and benefits cannot be secured across more than two unitary councils, and that one council for Norfolk would need correspondingly complex arrangements for partnerships, neighbourhood working and devolution. The two unitary solution would provide councils that have the resilience to handle future issues without impacting negatively on cost to the taxpayer. The eastern council benefits from having greater control over its costs. For example, those who currently go to Norwich for work or leisure, but live and pay their council tax to neighbouring authorities, will pay for the demands they place on local services.
- 79 The western council would have a smaller population, and therefore a smaller tax base-roughly comparable to Herefordshire. However we believe that it is of a size to make service delivery sustainable given the geographical size of the area. If the geographical area was any larger, the additional costs of service delivery would not necessarily be covered by the additional population served. There is therefore a balance to be struck between these economies of scale.
- 80 The challenge for both these councils will be to identify those areas for shared services that will provide greatest value for money. And as councils increasingly deliver fewer services directly and commission more with local partners, so the collective 'bang for your buck' increases and the risks are shared.

## Affordability

- 81 The size of the two proposed authorities will provide the scale required to deliver significant efficiency gains combined with a strong resilience in service delivery. Our proposals balance geographical and population size, tax base and existing public and transport infrastructure.
- 82 The east/west unitary model will deliver the political and managerial commitment to shared services and joint delivery arrangements. The transition to a strong unitary framework will provide a catalyst to a step change in the development of shared services with an initial look at transactional services – eg some finance, HR, IT, property maintenance and legal services. We would want to investigate whether these are best shared across Norfolk – between the two proposed councils – or across the two new council areas working with partner organisations.
- 83 This scale will also support strong service alignment to focus on each unitary 'place' – through innovative approaches to environmental standards, public realm amenities, housing provision, leisure and cultural facilities, economic development, and regulation. We are currently exploring these opportunities in more detail.
- 84 In addition, we recognise the impact of co-terminosity on all of the Key Lines of Enquiry. As we highlighted in the section on evidence, most services – public and voluntary – are managed on an east/west basis. We have taken the view that for the opportunities of this process to be realised we should not shy away from re-configuring existing administrative boundaries. This is why we have not based our proposals on existing district boundaries. In fact, this is an opportunity to realign some of these so they enable greater co-ordination of services and secure the vision and improvements set out in this concept paper.
- 85 Although a full financial appraisal is not required as part of this submission we have taken advice and carried out work ourselves on the financial viability of our proposals. It is clear from this preliminary work that this two unitary model will be more cost effective than those models which provide for three or more councils. This is reinforced by a willingness and enthusiasm for the sharing of appropriate services at a Norfolk level. This will further reduce running costs and achieve a faster repayment of start-up costs.



- 86 There are substantial variations in the council tax currently charged by district councils from £110 in Breckland to £205 in Norwich. We anticipate from the work undertaken to date, to be able to achieve significant reductions in overall council tax levels for residents living in those parts of the county where council tax is currently high, and measurable reductions for most residents.
- 87 We acknowledge the increase in costs of our improved community engagement model for Norfolk. From this high level appraisal, and extrapolating the success that Norfolk authorities have already had in making savings on their own budgets, we consider that there is sufficient experience and scope for savings to be achieved that will recover all set up costs within three to five years.

## Conclusion

- 88 This is an opportunity for radical and cutting edge developments in leadership and service delivery arrangements. Our proposal will provide strong and enhanced community leadership, neighbourhood engagement and partnership working. This will achieve high quality, value for money services that local people rightly expect. It is vital we create two unitary councils of sufficient scale and capacity to focus upon and address the very distinct and different challenges which face east Norfolk on the one hand and west Norfolk on the other.
- 89 Our approach is based strongly on the evidence available, our in-depth knowledge about what works in particular areas of Norfolk and how this could be applied across the whole county. It is set within both the county and regional context and explores innovative solutions to the challenges facing local government. It ensures that local government will be strong and responsive to local need whilst respecting Norfolk's strong sense of identity.
- 90 We believe that there is a compelling case based on powerful, indeed incontrovertible evidence for the east/west, two unitary model for local government in Norfolk. A case which anticipates, the emerging place-shaping role for local government, strengthened through the sub-national review of economic development and building upon the county's two functional economic areas.
- 91 Our concept clearly meets the Government's criteria, builds upon local sense of place and community, and recognises how local places 'work' economically and socially. It provides councils that are both small enough to be 'light on their feet' and responsive to local issues and circumstances, yet large enough to 'punch above their weight' to influence regional and national decision makers and funding bodies, securing a fair deal for their communities.
- 92 It is our strong contention that the proposed county doughnut, north/south and various three unitary models fail to demonstrate how they could secure the potential gains of strengthened 'place-making' that is the hallmark of our proposal and of all of the most effective unitary councils.
- 93 This model mirrors the east/west model developed by Norfolk County Council.

