

Appendix 1

The Consultation Format

We used a four step process to identify the issues for people and to let them discuss the various options for Norfolk.

A: Set the scene

- Get people thinking about the similarities that bind Norfolk together
- Identify the differences that separate the different parts of Norfolk in respect of the geography - valleys, coast, broads; cultural identity; social attitudes; deprivation; urban v rural and barriers to services; educational attainment and skills; landscape and housing;
- Any observations about economy - seasonal, agricultural, financial; Health - life expectancy; and barriers like the River Yare

B: Size v Performance

- Populations of certain Unitary/2-tier authorities [eg 180,000 in London, 85,000 in Hartlepool]
- CPA status
- Leadership

C: How local? - cost v accountability

Then think about the tensions or dilemmas

- The need to have economies of scale v local accountability
“to what extent should the pursuit of low council tax be achieved by the dilution of democratic accountability?”
“attitudes to regional government”
- Illustrate the tensions with some practical examples
 - *Would you mind if someone from Kings Lynn determined a local planning application in Diss?*
 - Licensing issues
 - Highways
 - Adult Social Services
 - *What things should be decided locally?*
 - *What about merging some of these ‘big’ services with neighbouring authorities?* [eg Museums/Economic Development]

- *What about seven authorities in Norfolk Suffolk running some of the biggest [eg Fire/Highways]?*
- *How important is it that different services should have the same boundaries?*
- Let’s show how there’s no co-terminosity with Social Services/Education
- Let’s show how the big services are based around Norwich, West, North and South.

• Visible Leadership

Let’s think about those distance tables...

“If you lived at Loddon how long would you allow to get to Kings Lynn if you had a really important meeting to attend?”

Would this change in the summer if there was holiday traffic?

Compare with the distance tables from Bedfordshire/Cheshire/Northumberland

- *What should be devolved to the neighbourhoods?*

- *How should the neighbourhoods be constructed around police/school areas, parliamentary constituencies?*

D: Look at the various options presented

- The County Unitary
- The 4 unitary option - is it a good idea to share-out the obviously deprived areas
- Nut cracker - demographics and communities of interest
- Eastern Doughnut
- Yartoft - how about moving the county boundary of Norfolk/Suffolk?
- East West - What about moving across the Yare?
- East West Doughnut

Focus Group Work Executive Summary

- Awareness and understanding of the term “unitary councils”, what the term means and the possible implications to Norfolk and current local Government were at a low, and only very superficial, level
- The perceived level awareness and interest in the debate/consultation surrounding the implementation of unitary councils (in some form) in Norfolk was felt to be low within the South Norfolk community
- There was consistent speculation that, by moving to single tier councils, long term cost savings (through reduced paper work and personnel) would be the primary benefit intended and achieved – with more evident benefit to the public purse than to enhanced residential amenity
- Concern was expressed as to the impact upon services requiring equitable countywide delivery access, such as police, social services and education, if the area moved to a number of unitary councils services; and emphasis placed on the importance of a council structure that would enable delivery of a joined up approach to delivering these services across Norfolk
- There was overall preference for the four option approach, it delivers least change to current council boundaries, maintaining valued local characteristics and accessibility whilst retaining the evident loyalty felt between local people and their district (i.e. South Norfolk)
- Next best option would be one council as it was felt that this would really deliver the logic and principles of unitary status across all services with the perceived cost savings this change implies
- It was felt that there would be some resistance to the Yartoft option by local residents of the areas affected, but most members of the group were ambivalent as to the suggestion, believing it is not likely to affect them directly
- Overall the benefits of moving to unitary status need to be communicated to local residents so that they understand the principles and potential benefits of unitary councils (and why indeed they should take an interest); in the absence of this deeper understanding the majority are happy with (and preferring) the status quo within SNDC, noting that the current delivery of services and perception of South Norfolk District Council are well perceived





Notes from meeting with Parish and Town Councils

Key Points from discussion

Unanimous acceptance that a Norwich Unitary is the keystone of any reorganisation.

Unanimous acceptance that our four-unitary option is the right one for Norfolk.

Unanimous opposition to a county Unitary, and that two councils would also be too large to be acceptable.

Yarftoft option had less opposition, most people were ambivalent, but once the change to the county boundary was explained there was more resistance. They did not want things to change, and the two counties should stay separate..

There was acceptance that there are clearly four concentrations of deep deprivation in Norfolk and a single authority should not have to concentrate on more than one or two, and certainly not Yarmouth & Kings Lynn in one authority.

However, recognition also that there is poverty in the rural areas but that it is less recognised because it is diffused.

Recognition of a distinct identity and nature of West Norfolk, and acceptance that there should be a western council based on King's Lynn.

If four council option is excluded, next best preference would three councils with an east-west split, with Greater Norwich separate from the remainder of the East.

Localities and accountability

Those present correctly identified the tension between cost and accountability unprompted, and confirmed that they would rather have four unitaries than one.

There was no support for the sub-regional proposal, as it does not include a recognisable Norwich.

Discussion followed around the boundary of Norwich – clear that the southern Norwich boundary should be on a tight basis, using the River Yare, but with the Southern Bypass, A47, as a fall back. The river is a natural and historic boundary, whereas the A47 is a recent man-made one.

Given that the A47 might be a boundary, there was reluctant acceptance that re-parishing within the A47 could happen.

The preference for four councils and tight boundaries is partly on the basis equality of representation. Two or three councils would mean wider boundaries, and it was seen as unacceptable for Norwich's boundary to go as far as Wymondham or Hethersett.

The representatives from parishes on the fringe of Norwich unanimously stated their wish to remain outside the city.

Governance and service delivery

The distances that have to be covered in Norfolk were discussed. For example, when asked what time they felt they would have to leave Loddon for a 10am meeting in Kings Lynn and still have time to park etc, 50% said 7.30am [2.5 hours!] and 50% said 8am [2 hours] - This is crucial, and the same applies in north/south terms. The consensus was that a council area should be no more than an hour or so to drive across, with ideally no more than 25/35 minutes to get to the council office.

It was suggested and agreed that there should be no more than 8-9 neighbourhoods in any authority, helping to maintain local identity without replacing parishes.

The current size of the five neighbourhoods in South Norfolk is about right at 20,000 approx [e.g. Wymondham + Hingham] but an area covering Wymondham, Attleborough & Watton would be too big.

There was a majority view that services should be provided as locally as possible, but that certain services are county-based [such as museums] and others could be provided on a joint Norfolk/Suffolk

It was difficult for people to grasp the concept of authorities 'clubbing together' to offer the big services whilst keeping the small ones local - "Isn't that what we've got at the moment?"

"If you're going to club authorities together in Norfolk/Suffolk, then 7 or 8 is the magic number". David Hewer, Poringland PC

Support

Unanimous support for no change, but if change has to happen then the four-unitary option is preferable.

There was little support for the "Yarftoft" option, and in fact one parish councillor working for Waveney/Yarmouth PCT was firm that Yarftoft is no solution. Consensus was that promoting and achieving Yarftoft, especially changing county boundaries, would be a hard-sell. There is no history, or cultural links between the two towns, far less the rural areas in each district, and there is no affinity.

On the "Nutcracker" option, people were of the opinion that it might work, if the line were tilted vertically as far as, say Wells, and to west of Thetford.



Appendix 2

Council approach to better community engagement

- Ensure clear governance arrangements (especially in the early stages)
- Focus clearly on the outcomes from early planning through to review
- Go directly to local people – in their spaces, allow them to develop agenda / best ways to engage
- Invest in the right range of people required to make engagement effective
- Build a co-ordinated, collective approach with partners – avoid duplication
- Importance of data, statistics and research to plan engagement but also to measure and evidence its impact
- Make sure you have clear data sharing arrangements with partners and can ensure data protection
- Information and engagement outcomes are invaluable to influence future planning and policy
- How does the information you gather fit with overall strategies?
- Know the needs of different parts of communities and review regularly – needs and priorities may change if responding to engagement has been effective
- Allocate a small funding pot for quick wins, secure community buy-in and build confidence (% for participation)
- Involve and inform your community all the way through the process
- Have a clear definition and understanding of your locality and neighbourhoods to set a strong model
- Spend early, save later – Engagement can drive efficiencies
- Make your community equal partners “None of us is smarter than all of us”
- Use common language and ensure information is accessible and clearly communicated to range of different communities
- Ensure a high awareness of possible exclusion in engagement activity
- Start simple – tap into existing community hubs, user focused forums i.e. café’s
- Use methods of engagement that are relevant and meaningful for the outcome you are working towards and the people you are engaging with
- Use a range of points and methods to engage – “no one size fits all”
- Don’t re-invent the wheel – use what already exists; amalgamate, consolidate and develop
- Importance of groundwork to (re)-establish credibility where apathy, mistrust or fear are high – challenge public perceptions
- Develop a template for quality assurance
- Pooling resources with partners
- Importance of joined-up analysis of engagement work – compare, benchmark for comprehensive picture
- Purpose: Clear objectives, shared vision with partners – more likely to secure buy-in with strong business case
- Build in and prepare for costs from the beginning
- Mediation – with partners and community. Engagement is not easy and doesn’t always produce clear-cut answers or solutions. Make sure you communicate and compromise
- Expectation management – this must be carefully managed especially with regard to what can be delivered
- Consistency, clarity across staff, partners and community
- Identifying and mapping groups for targeted engagement
- Think about sustainable engagement: Using community leaders, advocates to develop

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