

Future of your Council Residents’ Survey – Final results

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About

Context

1. The Data & Insight Team were commissioned in March 2025 to conduct a rapid piece of engagement work to capture resident's views on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
2. This engagement piece was designed to be accessible to all (regardless of LGR background knowledge) and focused on local identity, local democracy, local economy and priorities for LGR.
3. The purpose of this engagement is to inform proposals for LGR, which will be submitted to the UK government on the 9th May.
4. This engagement piece was conducted under extremely compressed timelines, with a fieldwork period of 3 weeks (31st March – 21st April).
5. A detailed breakdown is available in an interactive [PowerBI report](#). This report allows authorised users to 'drill down' by demographics.

Sample

1. The total sample number is 1461 completed survey returns.
2. The survey was advertised through:
 - a. A mailshot of invitation to participate postcards that were distributed to a random selection of 15,000 households across the borough (using the multistage cluster sampling technique)
 - b. Social media advertising (including boosted promotions)
 - c. Targeted online advertising
 - d. Posters and hardcopy questionnaires in community centres
 - e. Emails to stakeholders
3. Respondents were also able to request a paper copy, which was posted out to them and can be returned via FREEPOST.
4. To encourage participation, three £50 Love2Shop vouchers are available in a prize draw. The prize draw will take place after the survey has closed.
5. It is not yet possible to confirm the level of demographic representation within the sample. Whilst the mix of respondents is diverse, and the distribution method aimed to achieve a demographically (and statistically) representative sample, this was not fully achieved. For example, 37% of respondents in the final results are retired, whereas 21% of the borough population are retired (as per Census 2021). There was no time available to do adjustments to the sample (e.g. weighting) to achieve full demographic representation.
6. All best efforts and distribution methods were deployed to maximise participation of various demographic groups. The sample in general has achieved a good mix of ages (including younger groups) and other demographic characteristics. This is the best possible outcome given time constraints (e.g. a compressed fieldwork period).

Analysis Methods

1. *Closed questions*: these were analysed by dividing answer choices by the total number of responses. *Please note*, some questions allow respondents to select more than one option. **The questions with multiple answers reflect the proportion of all answers given (and not % of respondents)**. These figures are best interpreted as an indication of the popularity of an answer.
2. *Free text*: these questions were run through a topic modelling AI algorithm to achieve a quick analysis of the data. A deeper manual thematic analysis then took place to identify and refine topics, and to provide the number of comments each topic received.

Limitations

1. A target sample size of 780 was selected in order to achieve a +/-3.5% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. Although this target sample size was greatly exceeded, and there is a good demographic mix of respondents, the final results are not fully demographically representative. Timelines did not allow for corrective analysis for results to reflect full demographic representation. Given the timescales, the best possible outcome has been achieved.

Headline findings

Local identity

Resident's local identity

Respondents were asked to select one statement that best describes what they consider is their local identity. Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. I feel part of my local area¹ (55%).
2. I feel part of the borough of Reigate & Banstead (21%).
3. I feel part of Surrey (9%).
4. I feel part of East Surrey (4%).
5. I feel part of South-East England (3%).

Why residents value their local area

Respondents were asked to select statements that describe why they value their local area (select all that apply). Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. Natural Environment (20%).
2. Transport links – road/rail (15%).
3. Proximity to London (14%).
4. Transport links – proximity to airport (13%).
5. Proximity to family (10%) and proximity to friends (10%).

What ties residents' local community together

Respondents were asked to select statements that describe factors that ties their local community together (select up to 5 options). Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. Natural Environment (18%).
2. Places where people can meet together (12%).
3. How people interact with each other (11%) and accessibility of local services (11%).
4. Willingness to help others (10%) and common interests (10%).
5. Variety of local services (8%).

Local democracy

Engagement with demographic processes

Respondents were asked to indicate that, if they wanted to raise an issue about their local area, how they would go about it (select up to 3 options). Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. Borough councillor (29%).
2. Raise with my Council - Town/Parish, Borough or County (22%).
3. MP (18%).
4. Raise with a resident association or my housing association (10%).
5. County councillor (9%).

¹ Please note, in the online version of the survey, the area respondents live in (drop-down list) pulled through into this option. For example, "I feel part of [respondent's local area]."

Getting involved in decision making

Respondents were asked if they would like to get involved in decision making.

1. 76% selected yes.
2. 22% selected no.

Respondents who selected yes were asked to indicate how they would like to get more involved in local council decision making (select all that apply). Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. Take part in public consultations (30%).
2. Know more about my councillors and how to contact them (25%).
3. Take part in focus groups or resident panels (25%).
4. Attend or watch council meetings (12%).
5. None of the above (3%).

Local economy

Travel to work

Respondents were asked to indicate the distance they travelled to work (or if they entirely work from home, are retired, in education or not in employment).

Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. I am retired (37%).
2. Travel 1 – 5 miles to work (12%).
3. Travel over 20 miles to work (9%).
4. Travel 5 – 10 miles to work (8%).
5. I work from home on all my working days (8%), and I am not in employment (7%).

Town centres visited in the last 12 months

Respondents were asked to indicate 5 town centres they have visited the most in the last 12 months (select up to 5 options). Of all answers given, the top 6 answers were:

1. Reigate (25%).
2. Redhill (18%).
3. Banstead (11%).
4. Horley (9%) and Epsom (9%).
5. Dorking (8%).
6. Crawley (6%).

Reasons for visiting town centres

Respondents were asked to select reasons for why they visited each town centres (select all that apply). The top 5 reasons for visiting:

Reigate:

1. Shopping (28%).
2. Dining (23%).
3. Sports, recreation and outdoor spaces (12%).
4. Entertainment (10%) and visiting friends or family (10%).
5. Public services (7%).

Redhill:

1. Shopping (35%).
2. Entertainment (16%).
3. Dining (12%).
4. Public services (11%).
5. Sports, recreation and outdoor spaces (9%).

Banstead:

1. Shopping (32%).
2. Dining (22%).
3. Public services (11%).
4. Visiting friends or family (10%).
5. Sports, recreation and outdoor spaces (9%).

Horley:

1. Shopping (36%).
2. Dining (14%).
3. Public services (14%).
4. Visiting friends or family (13%).
5. Entertainment (6%).

Epsom:

1. Shopping (36%).
2. Dining (17%).
3. Entertainment (15%).
4. Visiting friends or family (8%) and public services (9%).
5. Sports, recreation and outdoor spaces (6%).

Dorking:

1. Shopping (34%).
2. Dining (17%).
3. Entertainment (15%).
4. Sports, recreation and outdoor spaces (11%).
5. Visiting friends or family (10%).

Crawley:

3. Shopping (47%).
4. Entertainment (16%).
5. Dining (11%).
6. Visiting friends or family (8%).
7. Sports, recreation and outdoor spaces (7%).

Transport links

Respondents were asked to rate the transport links (combined road and public) between their home and the town centres they visit the most. The table below shows respondents' transport connection ratings of the most frequently visited towns.

	Very poor or poor	Satisfactory	Good or very good	Don't know
Reigate	20%	30%	44%	7%
Redhill	13%	24%	59%	4%
Banstead	29%	28%	36%	8%
Horley	10%	26%	56%	7%
Epsom	32%	32%	29%	7%
Dorking	24%	30%	37%	8%
Crawley	11%	31%	51%	8%

Priorities for Local Government Reorganisation

What resident's value about RBBC

Respondents were asked to select statements that indicate what they value about their local borough Council (select all that apply). Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. Communication from the council (19%) and good knowledge of the local area (19%).
2. A source of information and advice (17%).
3. Knowing my local councillor (12%) and a trusted organisation (12%).
4. Council buildings close to where I live (9%).
5. Nothing at all (6%).

Moving RBBC services to a larger council

Residents were presented with a list of RBBC services, and asked to indicate if they support, do not support (or don't know) the delivery of these services by a larger Council. Across the board, all services received a majority 'do not support' responses².

Of all answers given, the 5 services areas that received the most 'do not support' responses were:

1. Local plan and planning applications (60% do not support).
2. Community development (56% do not support).
3. Parks and greenspaces (55% do not support).
4. Community safety (50% do not support).
5. Street cleaning and Waste and recycling collection (49% do not support).

Positives and negatives of moving RBBC services to a larger council

Respondents were asked to provide up to 5 positives and 5 negatives of moving RBBC services to a larger council (free text).

² Business support received 39% 'do not support' and 39% 'don't know' responses.

Positives

Cost savings (592 comments)

1. The economies of scale and reduction of duplicated work provided through LGR will make delivering services more cost effective and efficient. (514 comments)

“More cost effective”

“Cost saving for county wide initiatives & activities”

“Possible efficiency gain”

2. Joining up with other Local Authorities will provide a greater pool of resources for services to draw from. (78 comments)

“More resources available”

“Opportunity to use best resources from a larger area”

“Possible increased funding for improving services”

Improved services by joining with other councils (145 comments)

1. Services could be improved due to joining with other councils (55 comments)

“Enhanced Services”

“Streamlining services”

2. Greater strategic vision and co-ordination of services (80 comments)

“More strategic approach to service delivery”

“Potential for more joined up thinking”

3. Having a single council to contact may make it easier for residents to ‘get in touch’ and resolve any issues (53 comments)

“There will be one council and we will know who to contact - no more is it borough or is it county”

4. The sharing of best practices and innovative ideas (50 comments)

“Better placed to share best practice across the area”

“Opportunity to share knowledge and learn from what works well elsewhere”

5. Reduced bureaucracy (43 comments)

“Reduction in bureaucracy”

“Able to get things done”

Consistency (82 comments)

1. LGR may lead to a more consistent coverage of services available across areas, alongside consistency in the quality of services. (82 comments).

“Fairness across the Borough”

“Common standards”

“More unified experience across the county”

Accountability (31 comments)

1. One larger council will make it clear as to who is responsible for delivering services, and therefore make it easier for residents to hold them accountable. (31 comments)

“Less passing the buck”

“Clearer Accountability - With just one council in charge of all local government services, it's easier for residents to know who is responsible for what. This simplifies public engagement and can enhance democratic accountability”

Staff (26 comments)

1. A larger council may attract more higher skilled and specialist staff, alongside giving existing staff more experience. (26 comments)

“Able to attract the best people”

“More specialist expertise”

“More experienced staff by reason of exposure to greater issues across a greater area”

Influence (24 comments)

1. A larger council is likely to have more external influence. (24 comments).

“Closer ties to central government”

“Might have greater power to make things happen”

“More influence for the council externally”

Council Tax (19 comments)

1. Some residents hope Council Tax will be reduced as a result of LGR. (19 comments).

“Hopefully reduce council tax”

Councillors (9 comments)

1. A larger council may attract more experienced councillors. It will be easier to raise an issue as only one councillor would need to be contacted. (9 comments).

“Easier access using one Councillor for everything”

“Possible greater experienced councillors with more relevant skills as there will be fewer of them selected from the same pool”

Negatives

Removed from the community (1334 comments)

1. A larger council would be removed from the community (275 comments)

“Little connection with local needs and communities”

2. A one size fits all approach will be given to services and policies, meaning services will not be tailored to the specific needs of each community. (561 comments)

“Smaller boroughs or districts may feel overlooked or underrepresented in a larger authority, especially rural or distinct communities. Local nuances can be lost when decision-making is centralised”

“Potential loss of attention to local matters”

3. Decisions will be made by people who do not have local knowledge of the Reigate & Banstead area. (365 comments)

“Blanket decisions made that impact negatively due to lack of local understanding”

“Do the people dealing with thing know what is going on in my area/road?”

4. Residents will be less able to influence decisions or have their views represented (133 comments)

“Feeling more detached from decisions made on our behalf.”

“Loss of voice for local communities when part of a larger authority”.

Poorer services (515 comments)

1. A larger council will mean resources are spread over a wider area, meaning the types of services available to residents will decrease (311 comments)

“Poor service delivery”

“Services will be worse”

“Loss of services”

2. There will be inconsistency in the type and quality of services delivered over a larger area, and some areas may get preferential treatment and priority for services and the investment of council funds. (123 comments)

“Funding & services might not be distributed fairly”

“There will inevitably be even more prioritisation of certain areas to the detriment of others”

“Too much being focussed on the bigger towns e.g. Guildford or Woking”

3. Face to face services may be located further away from residents', requiring further travel and therefore making services harder to access (48 comments)

“Council Hubs likely to move to larger towns meaning less accessibility for people outside those towns”

“Older, disabled and those who do not drive will be unable to attend appointments easily”

4. The transition period to a larger council will disrupt services that are currently being delivered. (33 comments)

“Possible interim disruption to services”

“Unable to maintain continuity of service”

“Change is always disruptive and unsettling”

LGR will not save money and could be inefficient (348 comments)

1. A larger council may be more expensive to run and may not save money. (129 comments)

“Centralisation doesn’t equal efficiency normally the opposite”

“Less prudent way in spending our council tax money”

“Wastage on cancelled contracts as joined-up Councils' contracts terminate at different times for same purpose”

2. Reigate & Banstead residents will need to absorb the debt of other financially struggling councils in Surrey. (132 comments)

“Inheriting large debts from fiscally irresponsible councils”

“Boroughs monetary surplus will be absorbed”

3. LGR may result in higher council tax bills for Reigate & Banstead residents. (48 comments)

“Council tax will go up”

4. The high financial cost of merging with other councils. (39 comments)

“It will cost a fortune and be a waste”

“Initial cost of moving services take long time to recoup”

“Money wasted on re-organising”

Too big to manage (204 comments)

1. A unitary council that delivers services over a large area will be too big to effectively manage. (150 comments)

“A larger unlocal council will not cope with all the duties that the existing councils can”

“Too large a population and area”

2. The priorities of the different joined councils may differ, resulting in conflicts and difficulties in decision making. (54 comments)

“Potential disagreements amongst councils made up of multiple political parties”

“A larger council's funding priorities may not align with local priorities”

“Vulnerable to unwelcome compromises”

Communications with a larger council (125 comments)

1. A larger council may not provide clear communications, be less responsive and will be harder for residents to contact to resolve their queries (125 comments).

“Communication standards may decline”

“Longer waiting time for an answer”

“Even more difficult to speak to someone”

“Harder to find local info”

Accountability (96 comments)

1. A larger council will be less accountable to its residents. (96 comments)

“More pass the buck type culture”

“Will be too big and not accountable”

Loss of local identity (93 comments)

1. Local areas will lose their identity and sense of community by joining with other borough councils. (93 comments)

“Lose our village identity under a larger council”

“Breakdown of Community identity”

“Loss of identity. Proud to be part of the borough of Reigate & Banstead”

Bureaucracy (79 comments)

1. A larger council will cause increased bureaucracy for residents and make decision making processes longer. (79 comments)

“Additional unnecessary complexity/bureaucracy for residents/ services”

“More lengthy decision making processes”

Councillors (53 comments)

1. A larger council will mean that there are less councillors and therefore less opportunity for residents to raise their views and concerns to councillors. These councillors may not be aware of the specific needs of communities in the areas they represent. (53 comments).

“Fewer councillors who will have more work”

“Councillors making decisions about an area they don't know”

“Loss of local connection between residents and councillors”

“Less influence for ward-level councillors”

Staff losses (48 comments)

1. The possible redundancies for some Reigate & Banstead Borough Council staff will cause a loss of local jobs, alongside the loss of experience, skills and local knowledge needed to deliver effective services. (48 comments).

“Current staff at town hall are excellent, fear this being watered down”

“Local people losing their jobs”

“Loss of a large number of knowledgeable staff”

Number of unitary councils

Respondents were asked to indicate how many unitary councils should cover Surrey (select one option only). In order of the highest percentage of responses:

1. Support for 3 unitary councils (37%).
2. None of the above (28%).
3. Don't know (23%).

4. Support for 2 unitary councils (12%).

Area groupings

Respondents were asked to indicate the areas that RBBC should be grouped with (select all that apply).

Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:

1. Mole Valley (24%).
2. Epsom & Ewell (20%).
3. Tandridge (18%).
4. None of the above (12%).
5. Crawley (9%).

Priorities for Local Government Reorganisation

Respondents were asked to select what RBBC should prioritise for Local Government Reorganisation (select up to 3 options). *Of all answers given, the top 5 answers were:*

1. Service quality (31%).
2. Value for money (25%).
3. Accountability (24%).
4. Representation (13%).
5. Access (6%).

Views and concerns for Local Government Reorganisation

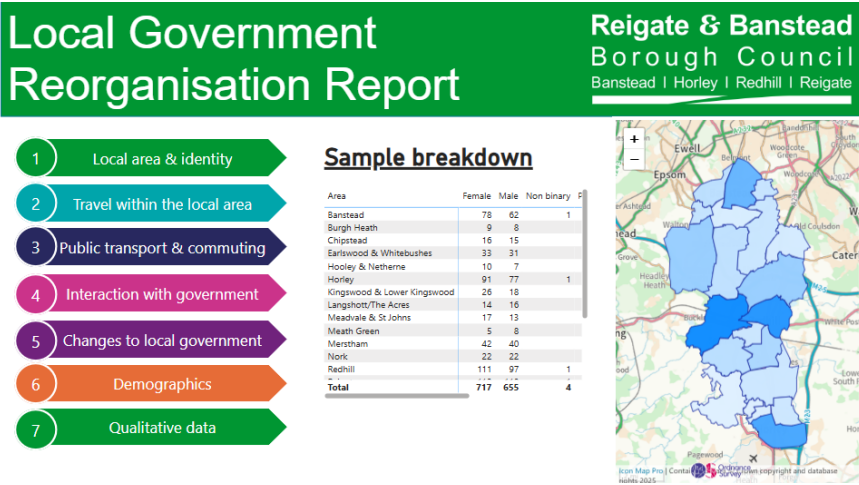
Respondents were asked to indicate any views or concerns they have about Local Government Reorganisation (free text).

The below answers are the headline topics highlighted in the comments. The themes identified were broadly similar to those identified in the “positives and negatives of LGR” free text question. In order to achieve an analysis in compressed time scales, a deeper and manual analysis of this free text question was not possible.

The below topics are in no particular order:

- There is a potential for savings and service improvements if Local Government Reorganisation is managed properly. However, increased financial costs and poorer services could happen if Local Government Reorganisation is mismanaged
- Larger geographical areas means less influence of smaller communities.
- Unfair that RBBC residents would have to take on debt of other councils, and that residents have no say in this.
- Local knowledge and an understanding of local issues will be lost.
- Worry of potential council tax increases and concern that those who managed the finances of councils in debt will manage the finances of the new unitary council.

Interactive PowerBI report



An [interactive PowerBI report](#) for the “future of your council” engagement is available for authorised users. Officers are encouraged to use this report in order to drill down by demographic groups, which will enable the engagement data to be fully utilised.