

Borough Council of  
**King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk**



# Questions on concepts for unitary local government in Norfolk

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Response to the Boundary Committee

May 2008

## Introduction

Our concept paper set out a model of local government that is applicable across Norfolk, based on an east/west split. We believe this will deliver improved services, greater accountability and improved value for money for local taxpayers across geographical areas that make sense to residents and businesses alike.

We reviewed a wide range of independent evidence before drawing up our proposals on the most appropriate local government arrangements for Norfolk. This evidence led us to a number of conclusions:

- firstly, the Secretary of State's decisions to date suggest that more than two councils is not a radical enough move away from the status quo, and that one council for Norfolk is simply too big.
- secondly, the new councils should be based on Norfolk's functional economic sub-regions, supporting the Government's thinking behind the sub-national review of economic development and evidenced by work published by the LGA.
- thirdly, the opportunity to align the areas administered by the new councils with the areas within which the majority of people live their lives will allow councils to deliver effective and dynamic leadership for their communities.
- fourthly, that creating a Norwich unitary based on reasonably tight boundaries misses the opportunity to create a fully-fledged Norwich city-region with direct control over its own destiny and delivery of its growth agenda over the next thirty years.

The result of our work is to propose two new councils based upon the city-region influence 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 places where people work, shop, spend their leisure time, access health and education and other public services. This allows the respective authorities to focus on, and address the different needs of the two sub-regions.

## Questions to all Proponents

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### 1. Why would your proposed model best address the social and economic challenges of the Norfolk county area?

Our submission argues that we should take this opportunity to align the new council areas as far as is possible with the natural economic centres and their spheres of influence. By taking account of the areas within which people live the vast proportion of their lives, we can better align both service delivery and strategic leadership to have a real positive impact on local quality of life.

This builds social, economic and environmental sustainability into the heart of the decision-making process and the benefits this would allow the new councils to deliver would be tangible to local people. None of the other models achieve this alignment, and some, as we outlined in our concept paper (March 2008), actively disregard these challenges. This opportunity is now being voiced by existing unitaries such as Plymouth and Torbay who, writing in the Local Government Chronicle (24<sup>th</sup> April 2008) recognise 'the model chosen should be the one that responds to the concept of city region', reflecting the travel to work area.

**In particular, if you have not already addressed these issues in your concept document, please consider the following issues:**

**(a) the social and economic challenges of the Norwich urban area**

Taking the above argument a step further it seems entirely logical that the Norwich growth agenda should deliver economic and social benefits to the city, and be controlled by a single council covering the area involved. If Local Government for Norwich is going to still be relevant in thirty years time, driving the development of the city to be recognised as a city of National and European importance, it has to be on substantially expanded boundaries reflecting the social and economic patterns at work. It would be a missed opportunity if, in the future, we are still having the same debate about the future growth of the city being hampered by the tight council boundaries.

**(b) the specific challenges faced by Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn**

We have set out in detail in our submission (appendix E) and supporting evidence those challenges affecting King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Some of these are common to Great Yarmouth, such as relative remoteness and poor road communications, high levels of deprivation in parts of the urban areas and isolation in the rural hinterland, and relatively low skills and aspirations. Our proposals will address these issues, and others, by:

- providing capacity and resilience for the new councils to better tackle local issues.
- enhancing cohesion and integration across local communities.
- improving accountability of leadership.
- providing equity, convenience and choice.
- strengthening Norfolk's economic position to create vibrant, successful business environments.
- creating lean, low cost authorities which deliver significant savings through increased efficiency and improvement.

**(c) the corresponding issues faced by rural areas and smaller market towns**

The needs of Norfolk's market and coastal towns and the rural areas they support must be well served by these new councils and not be lost within a focus on Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth. Our proposals make sure these issues are not marginalised or given a low priority within the new councils.

Basing our proposals for neighbourhood engagement and Local Service Forums on settlement hierarchies and service centres (mirroring the Police's Safer Neighbourhood areas) provides a framework for delivering local solutions to local issues and connecting the more rural areas.

Focusing two councils in the east and west of the county ensures that the issues set out in our submission can be appropriately tackled without leaving any one new council to carry the burden alone. These issues include rural isolation, particularly in the fen villages to the west of the county, high levels of second home ownership in the coastal area, and the extent to which development should take place in villages.

In the west of the county our proposals build on local experience of balancing these agendas and creating links between places. In the east of the county they reflect the greater contrasts between city and rural economies. Because Norfolk is characterised by its rurality and its population is focused in three urban centres, it would be a mistake to artificially separate them from the

hinterland to which they are inextricably linked – and this applies equally to Norwich and Great Yarmouth in the east and King's Lynn in the west.

**(d) the present and future challenges of coastal erosion and flooding in the coastal areas of the county**

The coast is Norfolk's longest and most contentious border. Different marine processes and issues affect different parts of the coast and do not respect administrative boundaries. The Wash area from Hunstanton to Lincolnshire is subject to distinct geographical and marine processes and has its own Shoreline Management Plan. The remainder of the Norfolk coast is divided into two distinct areas with regard to the preparation of Shoreline Management Plans. Coastal issues will have significant resource implications. To identify a single local authority with a relatively low population but which is responsible for such a large area of coastline will place a huge and unstable burden on that local authority and its residents.

The impact of rising sea levels and climate change will affect lower lying coastal areas including the King's Lynn area and Great Yarmouth and parts of east Norfolk and the Broads. The low lying area of the Fens is a particular issue in the longer term with regard to fluvial flooding and drainage. A western unitary council would be in a better position to prioritise issues in relation to the Fens and develop links with councils in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire. The flooding issues in east Norfolk are primarily related to marine flooding and the maintenance of sea defences, which is then compounded by fluvial flooding and drainage issues.

Our proposal provides two large authorities that each have the resilience to tackle coastal issues. We do believe that providing a single coastal unitary is too high risk and that it is not an equitable approach to leave the coastal residents alone to bear this cost, when those enjoying the coastline come from across Norfolk and beyond.

**2. If you have not already addressed these issues in your concept document, please explain how your proposed model would reflect:**

**(a) the economic significance of Norwich**

Our proposal is the only one that places Norwich at the heart of a larger authority reflecting its actual sphere of influence. By aligning the council with the area most influenced by the city, the council is better placed to deliver real community leadership and make decisions that release the opportunities for growth.

**(b) the significance of King's Lynn as a centre for the west of the county**

The East of England Development Agency (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 Kings Lynn as a sub-regional centre within the impending Regional Economic Strategy." EEDA's regional spatial strategy also identifies King's Lynn as a key centre for development and change and we anticipate the imminent award of growth point status by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The east/west unitary solution 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. Extensive research was used

to divide England into 50 sub-regions. This recognises two sub-regions in Norfolk focused on Norwich to the east and King's Lynn to the west.

- the focus of EEDAs city regions model of the economic influence illustrates vividly the need to establish an authority with a western Norfolk focus based on King's Lynn to ensure that benefits are spread across Norfolk.

We believe that an east/west unitary solution for Norfolk, based on Norwich and King's Lynn, addresses these issues. Every map of existing service delivery arrangements shows Norwich, King's Lynn and to a lesser extent Great Yarmouth as Norfolk's major service centres. Our supporting evidence already provided includes maps of catchment areas for hospitals, higher education, retail, schools etc; these can also be accessed via the West Norfolk Partnership's data observatory at [www.visitdawn.com](http://www.visitdawn.com).

### **(c) the interaction between the urban and rural areas of the county**

This is covered in some detail in our submission and in 1(c) above. In addition we would add:

- there is a hierarchy of settlements in Norfolk ranging from Norwich as the major city, King's Lynn as a secondary but very significant urban centre serving the west of the county, the larger towns of Great Yarmouth and Thetford and the smaller market towns. Our proposal recognises and provides coherence to this hierarchy.
- our proposals recognise the larger urban area to which the market towns tend to relate, e.g. in the east and south of the county, towns such as Diss, Harleston, North Walsham, Aylsham, Dereham, Cromer and Sheringham tend to look towards Norwich. In the west of the county towns such as Hunstanton, Downham Market, Swaffham, Wells and Fakenham tend to look towards King's Lynn, as illustrated in the travel to work areas.
- the social and economic challenges faced by market towns are inextricably linked with their rural hinterlands. They include affordable housing, skills, good quality employment opportunities, access to larger centres, protecting retail activity, agricultural diversity and tourism potential.
- our proposals for administrative structures also reflect this rural-urban interplay, through Local Service Forums (clustering wards and parishes around service centres), by providing a geographical focus to both executive roles and scrutiny and by recognising that the officer structure will need to reflect the geography of the council areas too (including neighbourhood management arrangements to tackle areas of deprivation).

### **3. If you have not already addressed these issues in your concept document, please consider what would be the impact on your proposed model if:**

#### **(a) A Great Yarmouth / Waveney unitary authority was added**

Our argument has always been made on socio-economic grounds. Creating a Great Yarmouth / Waveney unitary authority would not undermine that argument, on the basis that the three main economic and social 'drivers' within Norfolk are Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn. The impact on our concept would be to provide three new councils centred on these areas, which could be accommodated without undermining our other arguments of economies of scale and resilience.

It would also mean that the three councils are closer in population size with the west remaining geographically the largest:

<b>Unitary Area</b>	<b>Population</b>
West Norfolk	249,750
New Norwich & Central Norfolk	489,350
Yarmouth Population within new 'Yartoft'*	93,400
Norfolk Population	832,500

\* This illustration is based on the assumption that the whole of the existing Great Yarmouth Borough was removed from the Eastern Unitary in our proposal, creating a 'Norwich & Central Norfolk' unitary.

**(b) Part or all of Waveney district was added to a proposed unitary authority in Norfolk**

As above. We are not aware of the strength of feeling locally to the impact of part of the existing county of Suffolk becoming part of Norfolk for administrative purposes, and would anticipate that those affected councils and the Boundary Committee would test this more fully.

**(c) Part or all of Great Yarmouth borough was removed from a unitary authority in your model and added to an authority comprising Waveney and other parts of Suffolk**

As above. We are not aware of the strength of feeling locally to the impact of part of the existing county of Norfolk becoming part of Suffolk for administrative purposes, and would anticipate that those affected councils and the Boundary Committee would test this more fully.

**4. How significant are the economic links between Great Yarmouth and Norwich in the sub-regional economy and how would your proposed model reflect these links?**

Our proposal for an east/west split recognises the significant role of Norwich as a major urban centre and city region and its strong linkages with Great Yarmouth. Great Yarmouth is as an urban centre in its own right but because of its proximity to, and economic links with Norwich, it is very much part of the wider Norwich sub region. The same can be said for Lowestoft in relation to the "Yartoft" proposal. Our proposal reflects the economic links between Great Yarmouth and Norwich including:

- connected by the A47 trunk road (half hour journey time) with good bus and rail link, and significant levels of commuting in both directions
- house prices are lower in Great Yarmouth than in Norwich which means that to some extent the Great Yarmouth area meets some of Norwich's housing needs
- tourism is significant in both Norwich and Great Yarmouth but serving, to some extent, distinct markets; the Broads area connects Norwich and Great Yarmouth
- Great Yarmouth acts as a port serving the needs of Norwich
- Norwich Airport is a major facility for Great Yarmouth's economic activity - in particular the offshore industry. The original reason for the development of Norwich Airport, with links to Aberdeen, was to serve the offshore industry out of Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft

- there is evidence of businesses within the offshore industry using Great Yarmouth as their operational facility making use of the port, while other energy related businesses (who are in the area because of the development of Yarmouth) choose Norwich as a business location. However, the links between the two locations in this sector is important.

**5. Could you provide further details of how parish and town councils might be encouraged to take a more active role in neighbourhood governance under your proposed model?**

We ran a series of workshops with representatives from the town and parish councils in West Norfolk to inform this work. It is essential we continue and expand on this initial engagement through the transition phase.

Our proposals are set out in more detail as they refer to the Local Service Forums (question 13) and neighbourhood governance (question 14) and are illustrated in the diagram under question 10.

Parish and town councils are central to this thinking and, as set out in our concept paper, would receive an appropriate level of support funded through operational savings generated as a result of the reorganisation. This could take several forms, including:

- assistance in the preparation of parish plans.
- supporting applications for Quality Parish status.
- clear routes for engaging in LSPs, community planning and scrutiny.
- provision of IT / use of technology to support this process locally.
- provision of training / induction courses eg on the planning process.
- roll-out of community information points into parishes that want them.
- involvement in the proposed Norfolk Assembly.

Whilst the number of members elected to the new unitaries will be much fewer than under the present two-tier arrangements, we will work to encourage more people to stand for election to parish councils. Our proposals embed town and parish councils much more closely into the operation of the new unitary structures, which we hope will lead to more people getting involved in these councils and fewer uncontested elections.

**6. What would your proposed model do to further improve service delivery across the whole of the county? What would be your priorities?**

Both new councils need to respond to the different challenges they face. We set out in our submission what we felt they were; they would need to be considered in more detail by the councils to enable them to prioritise and allocate resources appropriately. The key elements of our submission that we felt would secure improvements in service delivery were:

- stronger and more focused community and strategic leadership.
- greater devolution of services.
- greater accountability to local people.
- sufficient resilience to respond to new / emerging issues.
- release of resources achieved by creating two unified authorities in place of the current arrangement of eight councils.

It is possible to secure improvements by simplifying, integrating, co-ordinating and/or standardising service delivery arrangements. We highlighted areas in our submission where this could be the case (paragraph 69); since then we have

done further work to identify opportunities where the new unitary authorities can add value; this is summarised in appendix A.

The answer to question 17 sets out in more detail our thoughts on county-wide service delivery: in principle the need to plan, co-ordinate or deliver services across Norfolk should be determined through a robust options appraisal process to ensure that this is the appropriate solution to the defined problem.

Many of the submissions to the Secretary of State in 2007 predicated their value for money and affordability arguments on the theory that having one of everything was better than having many (eight in Norfolk's case, with seven districts and a county). This is a simplistic 'biggest is best' argument that we believe does not translate into such a geographically large and sparsely populated area as Norfolk – although we do think it precludes a unitary solution of more than two councils.

It remains one of our underpinning principles that economies of scale do not continue *ad infinitum*. Once the area served becomes too big, inefficiencies start to emerge as local knowledge and influence lessens. This is fundamentally the reason why debates about the ideal size of public sector administrative organisations – health, police, councils etc – continue to swing over the years in extremes between small is beautiful and biggest is best.

We believe that two councils for Norfolk is the optimum balance.

## **7. How would educational under-achievement and urban/rural deprivation be addressed?**

Educational underachievement across the County is a reflection primarily of two features of Norfolk's economy:

- a low skills, low earning economy based on agriculture and manufacturing, where families are used to being able to leave education at the minimum school leaving age and get a job; where the belief is widespread that 'it's easy to get a job in Norfolk but not a career', and where families have low aspirations and are not convinced of the value of education in getting better paid work with progression opportunities (see appendix B).
- multiple deprivation and benefit dependency, a more noticeable feature of poorer urban areas in Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Norwich, where a tradition of not working has become established in families.

The effects can be seen in a slightly lower than average performance at Key Stage 2, most noticeable in the poorer areas, and significantly lower achievement in many areas at Key Stage 4 and post 16, especially noticeable in schools serving the poorer catchment areas but also generally lower in the west of the county.

From 2010 local authorities will be responsible for delivering the reforms needed to raise the educational and training leaving age to 18 by offering all young people in their area a range of options – including diplomas and apprenticeships. The new unitary councils in the east and west will be more responsive to local need and better able to target this resource to drive up levels of local skills, commissioning provision to meet demand from young people and employers.

Strong partnerships are in place to tackle these issues, particularly through the 14-19s partnerships, most of which are centred on High School catchments with their feeder schools in Children's Services locality areas (appendix A of our submission). In the west of Norfolk, the 14-19s agenda encompasses Localities 1 and 2 of Children's Services: a significant proportion of the proposed West Norfolk unitary authority. Ten High Schools are brought together in these localities. Their priorities include improving the Information, Advice and Guidance offer in the west of Norfolk and streamlining links between employers and education, particularly in the planning of the 14-19 diplomas.

Our proposals are clear on how two unitary councils would lead an improved approach to tackling deprivation both where it occurs more obviously in urban areas and where it is more hidden in rural areas. Local working arrangements would be developed through existing neighbourhood management schemes or the proposed Local Service Forums (LSF). We would want to make sure that the proposed LSFs highlighted and tackled pockets of rural deprivation and isolation, which often does not show up when aggregated to super output area level. See also question 1c, 2c, 14 and Diagram 1 together with the section on Neighbourhood Engagement and Appendix E of our submission.

**8. We would welcome further evidence that your proposed model would be likely to command a broad cross-section of support from stakeholders across the county and in different sectors.**

The support for a western unitary and the concepts on which our model of unitary local government for Norfolk are based has been overwhelmingly positive from meetings we have had with a range of stakeholders. This constructive engagement has allowed us to share and reality-check our proposals to ensure that they would deliver benefits to a range of stakeholders. This suggests to us that we have growing support and that our ideas are gaining momentum. For example, our proposals support the thoughts of, amongst others:

- The **Norfolk Police Authority**, which has set out some principles it like to see considered: "If unitary solution(s) are to be adopted, then the fewer the better; one would be exceptionally convenient for us; three or four is too many. The complexities of having triplicate (or worse) LAA/CAA frameworks which, at best have different, or at worst conflicting, objectives will cause Norfolk Constabulary potential operational difficulties."
- **Norfolk Chamber of Commerce**, which is looking for the best solution for business which achieves, amongst others: the least level of bureaucracy and the least cost of administration; a large enough critical mass to be effective; a solution that will enable a single Norfolk Voice on key issues affecting the County; Norfolk-wide strategic lobbying to achieve better skills, transport, technology and environmental improvements.

In addition to the schedule of engagement set out in Appendix B of our concept paper, we have written to the following stakeholders with a newsletter summarising our position and ideas:

- voluntary and community organisations.
- leading local businesses.
- Norfolk Parish and Town Councils.
- public Sector organisations.
- schools.

We believe our proposals meet the requirements of stakeholders and groups such as these. We will continue to share and test out our thinking and ideas with a wide-ranging audience; this will ensure that our proposal is practical and achieves maximum benefit for people in Norfolk, which at the end of this process is what we all want to achieve.

## Questions in relation to the proposed East Norfolk and West Norfolk unitary authorities

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### 9. To what extent does the indicative boundary of the proposed West Norfolk authority extend beyond King's Lynn's economic and social sphere of influence?

The indicative east / west boundary (Appendix A of our submission) is a line of 'best fit' reflecting catchment and service delivery areas, particularly around high schools and the Police's safer neighbourhood areas. It is broadly co-terminous with the King's Lynn and Fakenham Travel to Work Area (illustrated in Appendix D of our original submission) and existing socio-economic patterns. It is the most appropriate and sustainable balance between geographical size and population served, whilst still reflecting King's Lynn's sphere of influence.

We have considered towns such as Dereham and Thetford and which council area they best fit with. We believe that, on balance, Thetford sits more readily in the west than it does in the east. It is more than a market town and is in a location which means that it has links in various directions – to King's Lynn, to Cambridge and Norwich via the A11 and to Bury St Edmunds. However as a London overspill town it has some similar issues to King's Lynn, particularly in relation to the need to look outwards towards Cambridge, issues of deprivation and migration, and delivering an ambitious growth agenda. The two towns serve as 'gateways to Norfolk', are connected by the A134 and are on rail links to Cambridge.

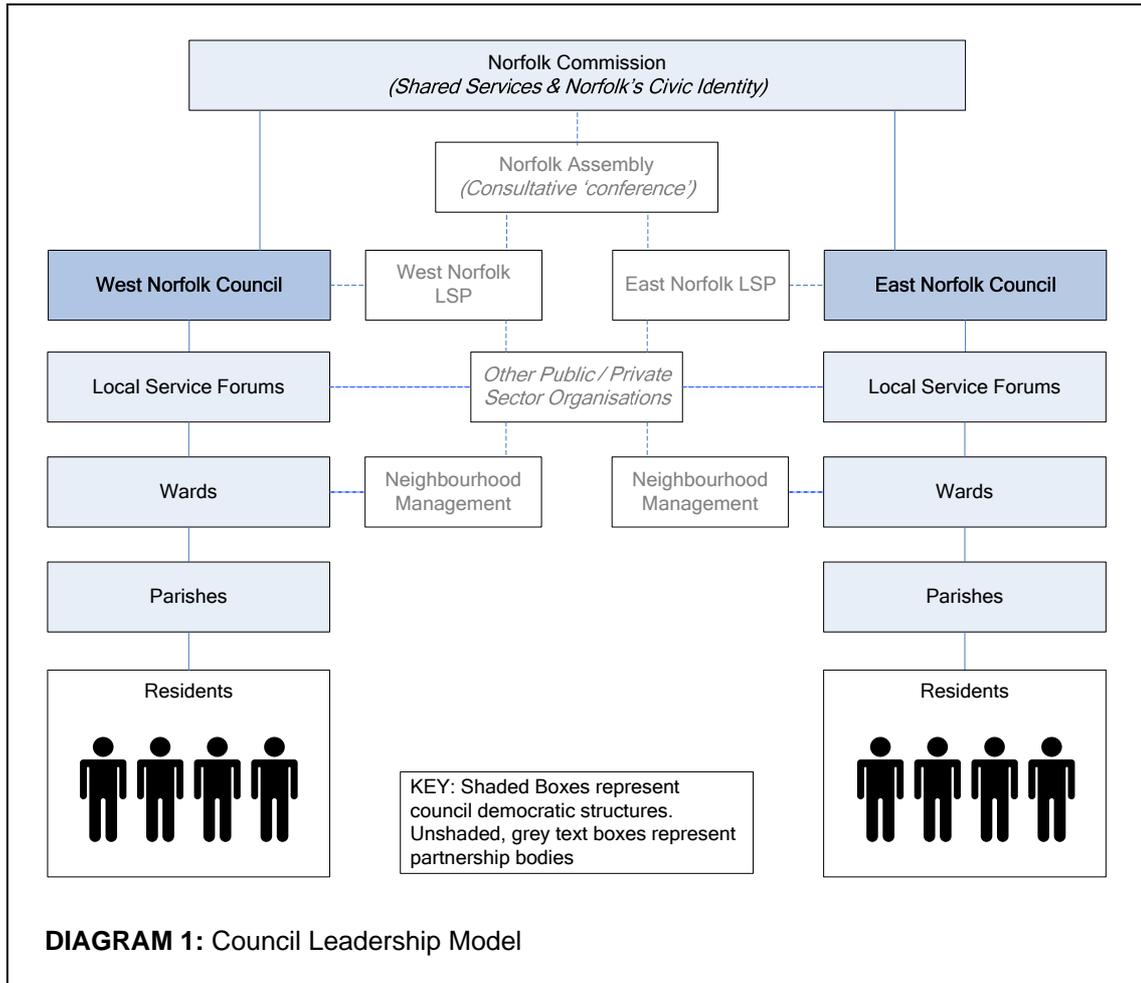
Whilst incorporating Dereham into a western unitary would reflect its links to Fakenham and Watton, and bring the population of the West to around 300,000, it is also clear from the evidence that Dereham is more closely linked to the Norwich economic sub-region than to King's Lynn.

### Strategic leadership

### 10. Please clarify the relationship between the proposed Norfolk Strategic Partnership and the proposed Norfolk Assembly.

To clarify the diagram on page 16 of our concept paper (March 2008), we propose one Local Strategic Partnership for each new council area. Our concept does not suggest a Norfolk Strategic Partnership, but rather a **Norfolk Commission** – comprising leaders and members of the two councils, fulfilling a set of responsibilities summarised in paragraph 44 of our submission, including convening a **Norfolk Assembly**. This 'assembly' would comprise representatives of public, private voluntary and community sector organisations with a Norfolk-wide remit, such as elected members, parish councillors, school governors, management committee members of voluntary organisations – bringing together those who have taken on a community leadership role. It is a response to the need to bring organisations with a cross-county remit together to develop a joined-up response to specific county-wide issues.

This is shown in the diagram below:



### 11. Can you specify the preferred executive model for the Eastern unitary authority?

As set out in our concept we are exploring locally the potential advantages of a directly elected mayor as a way of delivering real, visible and personally accountable community leadership. The leader and cabinet model, preferred in all the other concept papers, is the most likely executive option for these new councils, including the Eastern unitary. We recognise that the move to four year electoral cycle in Norwich and Great Yarmouth will provide the stability of leadership already enjoyed elsewhere in the county. To reflect the difference in size of the new councils, it is likely that the executive for the western unitary will comprise fewer members than the Eastern one (see question 15).

### 12. What would be the impact of your preferred model of unitary local government on key existing partners?

We believe that, having talked to a number of the key local stakeholders, a reduction in the number of councils will be seen as a positive outcome in terms of their capacity to engage with councils. Most of our partners are currently required to work with eight councils and eight Local Strategic Partnerships - on issues such as anti-social behaviour they may be required to attend the County Strategic Partnership to sign-off the Local Area Agreement and agree targets for reducing Anti-Social Behaviour, the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to plan and allocate resources and district councils to respond to ASB issues on the ground. Having only two councils will enable us to dramatically simplify these

arrangements: we do not need eight sustainable community strategies, eight Crime and Disorder Reduction plans etc in Norfolk. We need one community strategy in each council area translated into the Local Development Framework and key strategy documents all monitored through the local area agreement, allowing partners and the councils to focus their efforts.

## Neighbourhood Empowerment

### 13. What issues and services might fall within the remit of Local Service Forums? How would they take decisions and how large might their budget be?

We proposed Local Service Forums (LSF) that enable local engagement and responses to local issues, providing a mechanism through which to focus the efforts of unitary councillors, parishes, residents and agencies working locally (such as PCSOs or health visitors) and sharing intelligence.

They would be formally constituted, comprising three or four ward councillors (see question 15) and representatives from the parishes in the area. They would receive a small devolved budget and be supported by a lead officer and appropriate IT. They would have a role to play overseeing the delivery of council and partnership priorities and in making sure that local issues were addressed within the broader strategic vision for the area.

We are clear that they are not replacement bodies for local councils and the services they may already provide, but act as a forum for 'first tier' councils to engage with, and influence the new unitaries and other partners agencies working locally. They would also enable some of the more rural councils or those with more limited capacity to work together on local issues, thereby adding value to the process.

The unitary council would be the accountable body for the purposes of holding and allocating budgets, providing staff to support the operation of the LSFs and otherwise bringing governance arrangements such as standing orders to their operation. Currently in West Norfolk the LSP and the CDRP allocates funding through its nine Neighbourhoods in order to tackle 'cleaner, greener, safer' issues. More important than the actual devolved budget is the change in culture and working practice required by the new council and its partners, to make this a success.

Initially the LSF would operate as consultative forums to debate and tackle local issues set out in a local action plan. In areas where there is sufficient capacity and willingness they may evolve to take on different roles: from consultation and engagement through influencing services and commissioning against local need to local delivery or decision-making. This is illustrated in the table below:

<b>Local Service Forum: Roles</b>		
<b>Overseeing:</b> location & operation of - community facilities; street furniture; local environmental services; war memorials; local parks; toilets; community safety initiatives; Multi-Use Games Areas	<b>Influencing:</b> Waste prevention & recycling; local transport provision & traffic management schemes; joining up services around vulnerable people; shaping schools as major community hubs; linking sports, leisure & arts provision with youth work, exclusion & community cohesion	<b>Informing:</b> Planning & licensing decisions; scrutiny processes; sharing local intelligence; identifying pockets of deprivation

LSFs could evolve to be formally constituted committees of the council with governance arrangements that enable the commissioning and delivery of local services – for example decisions around licensing, housing and planning. We do not expect this to be the case until the new organisations and LSFs reach a level of maturity.

We do not envisage the model to be prescriptive, as we expect each LSF to make its own decisions on what is important locally, and this would in turn determine the detailed decision-making / governance arrangements and the size of budget. We want these forums to work for local people in local areas and believe that local people must therefore be involved in their establishment. We want to make sure that we build on the learning from other areas that have established devolved structures.

#### **14. Please provide further details of the proposed neighbourhood governance schemes for Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Norwich**

Our proposal for neighbourhood governance contains several elements, illustrated in diagram 1. Local Service Forums would cover Norfolk, based on the Police's Safer Neighbourhood areas, with neighbourhood management schemes instead of LSFs in the most deprived areas of the county. Such schemes are already running in Norwich, King's Lynn, and Great Yarmouth, providing a more intensive response to local conditions of deprivation. Each neighbourhood management scheme is based on the same principles but has evolved quite differently. It is right that this is encouraged, so that local solutions reflect local conditions.

Our concept paper recognised the need to work with residents in our unparished areas – including King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth – to determine whether it is appropriate to create parish / town councils or formalise neighbourhood management structures in these areas in response to the need for clear public involvement, and this would be an early decision for the new Councils.

#### **15. Given the potentially large councillor to elector ratio envisaged, can you clarify how councillors might balance their time between strategic or scrutiny roles and representational responsibilities?**

The number of councillors in each new council recently approved by the secretary of state varies between 67 in Northumberland to 126 in Durham, with the Executive/Cabinet generally the maximum size of 10. In turn the average number of electors per councillor varies from 2,998 in Bedford to 6,335 in Cornwall. Our proposals are in line with these ball-park figures.

We are proposing a Western council with 63 councillors, based on an average of 4,000 residents per ward, to reflect the sparsity and size of many of the wards in the West and associated cost and time spent travelling.

The Eastern Council, with an average of 5,500 residents per ward, would have 106 councillors, ensuring an appropriate balance between Norwich, Yarmouth, the towns and rural areas without Norwich dominating – based on its current population and boundary, 23 of these councillors would come from Norwich.

This administrative structure ensures that both councils have sufficient numbers of councillors to carry out the required roles:

Element	West	East	Norfolk	Ratio
Residents	249,750	582,750	832,000	
Parishes	222	321	543	3.2 per Councillor
Wards	63	106	169	1 per Councillor
Average Ward size	4,000	5,500	5,000	residents per Councillor
Local Service Forums	16	36	52	Clusters of approx. 3 wards
Unitary Executive	7	10	17	Maximum 10

Each councillor could therefore be predicted to represent a ward of 4,000 - 5,500 residents, liaise with three or four parish councils, and attend one Local Service Forum. In addition to their representative role they may also have an executive or overview and scrutiny role.

In our concept paper we touched on the support members would need to perform these roles. This culture change programme needs to be supported through training and induction, better use of technology, capacity-building, harnessing local data and intelligence, and with appropriate levels of remuneration.

We set out the key roles of councillors within the new councils in our original submission, which can be summarised as follows:

Executive	Overview & Scrutiny	Representational
<p><b>Strategic leadership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key decision-maker</li> <li>• Provide strong leadership to councillors &amp; officers</li> <li>• Develop a clear vision for the future, working with partners</li> <li>• Take tough, strategic decisions on competing priorities, in accordance with the vision</li> <li>• Provide leadership &amp; direction within the council for designated portfolio areas</li> <li>• Lead the LSP and its theme partnerships to maximise links with partners &amp; LAA</li> <li>• Hold senior officers within the council to account</li> <li>• Develop financial strategies to fulfil commitments</li> <li>• Ensure there is proper support for ward councillors</li> <li>• Attend Local Service Forum as geographic Responsibility</li> </ul>	<p><b>Thematic issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following themes of sustainable community strategy</li> <li>• Scrutinise partner engagement with LSP, LAA &amp; theme partnerships</li> <li>• More localised health scrutiny</li> <li>• Policy development &amp; review</li> </ul> <p><b>Geographical Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutinise operation and work of LSFs</li> <li>• Ensure equity of service delivery</li> <li>• Respond to geographical variations</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold executive to account</li> <li>• Respond to community calls for action</li> <li>• Contribute to cross-Norfolk or regional scrutiny as appropriate</li> <li>• Arrangements for Corporate Governance, Standards etc</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community leadership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent residents</li> <li>• Parish liaison</li> <li>• Attend Local Service Forum and ensure appropriate use of devolved budgets</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• speak in support of area to inform decision-making eg local planning &amp; licensing issues</li> <li>• promote council's vision locally</li> <li>• monitor local performance of public services</li> <li>• promote effective joint working locally</li> <li>• feed geographical issues &amp; local 'intelligence' into corporate body</li> <li>• promote community cohesion and the principles of equality &amp; diversity</li> </ul>

We are clear that these arrangements are indicative at this stage and that they need to be worked up in more detail as we move forwards through this process. However, we believe that our proposals reflect the differences of both councils whilst providing sufficient capacity to ensure that they operate effectively.

## Value for money services

### 16. How would the business models for the two unitary authorities incorporate county council services?

The transitional arrangements for the two new councils will be critical. In Norfolk this process is complicated by the fact that we are only talking concepts at this stage. The councils that are now proceeding to vesting day on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009 were required to prepare a full business plan. We will be looking at a tight timescale from the announcement of the preferred option for consultation through work on affordability to the secretary of state's decision with vesting day scheduled for 2010. The more complicated the arrangements for the new councils, the more work will be required during this time period. We think the two unitary model will require the simplest transition arrangements of any multi-unitary solution, whilst the single county unitary solution will still require more extensive area-based management arrangements.

The transitional process will see two new organisations created that must pick up delivery of services currently provided by eight councils. In comparison with the three and four unitary models our proposal for two councils requires a relatively less complex disaggregation of county services. The east/west split largely reflects most of the sub-Norfolk operational arrangements already in place within county services as evidenced by the maps previously provided. Our model could also be implemented without any major adjustment to school catchment areas, as illustrated in appendix A of our submission. It therefore strikes an appropriate balance between innovation and pragmatism.

Our concept maximises the capacity of the two new councils to deliver benefits to the citizen by re-thinking or 're-engineering' services. We have done some initial work to identify those service functions that could be devolved to a neighbourhood level and those that could be aggregated to a shared services level. For each function the delivery, accountability or both could be devolved or aggregated.

The new councils should be designed around the customer to incorporate all these services – whether currently provided by the county council, district council or other organisation – and in order to realise the benefits of unitary local government (appendix A).

### 17. Can you clarify the need for shared services overseen by the proposed Norfolk Commission?

We set out in our submission certain services that it makes sense to retain, administratively, on a county-wide level, and which would be overseen by the Norfolk Commission. We would want to ensure that those services that are shared are done so because this is the best solution for the customer. Those services that meet some or all of the following criteria may be more predisposed towards shared arrangements:

- **specialist services** meeting the needs of a relatively small element of the population, such as educational psychologists, special educational needs and trading standards' scientific specialists.

- those services where a **county-wide infrastructure** is desirable – such as archives, pensions fund management or the library service which operates inter-library loan services from its hub in the Forum in Norwich.
- those services where we should encourage **cross-organisational working** – such as child protection.
- those services that are of **strategic importance** to the county – such as transport planning and flood defence / emergency planning.

This is about ensuring that opportunities are taken to secure the best quality services – whether they are joint arrangements for sharing information or data, joint policy development, provision of the civic / ceremonial function or county-wide service delivery.

We do not see this as a fixed approach. We should identify early on those services the new councils should consider sharing from inception, but that there is a role for the Norfolk Commission and the two authorities themselves to keep these arrangements under review and respond to changing needs, pressures, funding, challenges etc. It is as important that the new councils develop the culture, capacity and willingness to think innovatively about service delivery.

## Appendix A: Service Functions

Illustration of opportunities to improve service delivery.

<p><b>Adult Care</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrating service elements eg aids &amp; adaptations</li> <li>Closer links with the PCT and hospitals</li> <li>Single commissioning process</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rationalise building portfolio</li> <li>Transfer to community ownership</li> <li>Remove duplication, improve access</li> <li>Reduce maintenance / running costs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Highways &amp; Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Busses</li> <li>Integrated planning</li> <li>Integrate repairs with 'clean/green/safe' agenda</li> <li>Improving road network?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Safety</b></p> <p>Intelligence-led multi-agency working focusing on hotspots including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tackling noise nuisance, ASB etc</li> <li>Domestic violence</li> <li>Road safety</li> <li>Emergency planning</li> <li>POPO scheme</li> </ul> <p>Crime &amp; disorder, including simplification of partnership arrangements &amp; closer working with Safer Neighbourhood Teams</p> <p>Integration with YOT, probation etc</p>	<p><b>Economic Development</b></p> <p>Greater integration / co-ordination of effort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implementing sub-national review and the new duty</li> <li>influencing regional bodies</li> <li>responding to city-regions agenda</li> <li>Better integration with the 14-19 agenda and neighbourhood management / tackling deprivation</li> <li>More effective use of LABGI / other external funding</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture, Sports, Arts</b></p> <p>Reduce duplication and simplify arrangements in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>performing &amp; visual arts</li> <li>museums &amp; archives</li> <li>built heritage</li> <li>sports facilities, events &amp; grants</li> <li>parks, habitats &amp; recreation – including rights of way</li> <li>children's play / MUGAs</li> <li>tourism, festivals &amp; attractions</li> <li>marketing &amp; promotion of place</li> </ul>
<p><b>Corporate Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>policy co-ordination eg seven districts trying to feed into the LAA process; eight community strategies</li> <li>eliminate duplication in corporate functions</li> <li>simplified arrangements for external funding / financial assistance / SLAs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of growth agenda</li> <li>Rationalise LDFs and align with more sensible, functional sub-regions</li> <li>Standardise performance with quicker decisions</li> <li>Explore opportunities to streamline planning process between new East Norfolk Council and Broads Authority</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children's Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding Children Board</li> <li>Simplify current complex arrangements to tackle low attainment</li> <li>Enhanced role for extended schools</li> <li>Health and leisure links</li> <li>16-19 skills &amp; training provision (former LSC)</li> <li>Use breadth of Unitary to raise awareness of opportunities, provide challenging work experience etc</li> </ul>
<p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger links with economic development and LDF process</li> <li>Delivering housing targets</li> <li>Meeting Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>Closer links between housing provision and community care plans</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environmental Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align waste collection and disposal</li> <li>Combining cleansing and environmental services</li> <li>Integrated 'streetscene' services including highways</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cross-Cutting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access</li> <li>Joint commissioning</li> <li>Information sharing</li> <li>improved capacity in 'hard to recruit to' services</li> <li>Health promotion</li> <li>IT</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Raising Educational Attainment

### CASE STUDY: Examples of how we have used partnership working in West Norfolk to tackle these issues.

The Borough Council, with its focus on strengthening the local economy, works closely with the 14-19s partnership in Localities 1 and 2, for example:

- collaboration on an 'Opportunities West Norfolk' careers event to raise awareness of employment opportunities in the local economy and awareness of and aspirations towards higher skilled and paid opportunities. This is a West Norfolk rather than County-wide initiative to reflect the realities of the labour market and travel to work (and training) patterns.
- identifying employers in the West of Norfolk who might assist the development of the diplomas identified for the next Gateways. The schools in localities 1 and 2 have recently adopted the name Opportunities West Norfolk for the development of the diplomas and 'OWN' is becoming a collective 'brand' for improving the curriculum and IAG offer for 14 to 19 year olds in the West of Norfolk.

A West Norfolk Partnership initiative to 'Grow our Own' skills has developed from our good base of local labour market intelligence. WNP has a Skills and Learning Group with members from Children's Services, 14-19s, Adult Education, the College of West Anglia, Norfolk Learning Partnership, the Borough Council and local employers. The Skills and Learning Group has a strategic overview of the skills challenges facing West Norfolk and commissions projects to generate solutions and good practice. Among its current work are:

- a 'Year 8 Girls' project involving 3 rural high schools and aimed at girls who lack confidence and under achieve. It uses an area they are interested in - media - to build wider skills and education and increase confidence, communication and presentation skills, team work and other 'employability' skills. The first year was highly successful and the project is being extended into a second year.
- promoting apprenticeships: focusing on refrigeration, where 2 major employers are currently unable to get the training they need in the local area; and maintenance and production engineering in general, particularly with employers whose head offices are keenly aware of the costs of apprenticeships but not so aware of the costs of other methods of meeting skills gaps or their relative benefits.

A number of initiatives across the County are in place to try to raise family aspirations and engage adults and families in learning. In Norwich, for example, 'Learning Community Mentors' operate through community groups in the poorer urban areas. In West Norfolk, 'Learning Catalysts' operate in primary schools serving the areas of highest education and skills deprivation in King's Lynn and the Fens, with the University of Cambridge Leadership for Learning team overseeing this as a action research project. Experience is shared through Norfolk Learning Partnership.

An east/west unitary solution reflects these variations and would allow greater focus on local conditions particularly in light of recently announced changes to the funding of skills provision for 16-19 year-olds which will now be administered by local councils. Closer working with the new Skills Funding Agency will also be possible with two unitary councils in Norfolk, thus ensuring that local needs are tackled and not lost within too big a picture.