

OPINION RESEARCH BUSINESS
FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SUFFOLK
 January 2009

INTRODUCTION:

- Weighted results from a telephone survey among 804 people.
- Base is all respondents unless otherwise stated.
- Where figures do not add up to 100% this may be due to rounding or where respondents could give more than one answer.
- All figures are percentages and, unless stated otherwise, based on the total sample of 1500 respondents.
- Where '- is shown this indicates that no respondent gave this response; a '*' indicates percentages of less than 1%.
- No results to be published without first receiving prior approval from ORB. Approval only withheld in cases of inaccuracy and/or misinterpretation.

Results

SECTION A: 'ENGAGEMENT' WITH LOCAL AREA

1: Taking everything into account, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with..?		All respondents Base: 804
a) Your village or town as a place to live?	Very satisfied	37%
	Fairly satisfied	50%
	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	4%
	Fairly dissatisfied	6%
	Very dissatisfied	2%
	Don't know/ Can't say	2%
b) Suffolk as a place to live?	Very satisfied	57%
	Fairly satisfied	39%
	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	2%
	Fairly dissatisfied	1%
	Very dissatisfied	*
	Don't know/ Can't say	*

2. How strongly do you feel you belong to..?		All respondents Base: 804
a) Your village or town?	Very strongly	37%
	Fairly strongly	43%
	Not very strongly	13%
	Not at all Strongly	4%
	Don't know/ Can't say	2%
b) The county of Suffolk?	Very strongly	31%
	Fairly strongly	35%
	Not very strongly	20%
	Not at all Strongly	10%
	Don't know/ Can't say	4%
c) Your borough / district	Very strongly	36%
	Fairly strongly	44%
	Not very strongly	13%
	Not at all Strongly	5%
	Don't know/ Can't say	2%

SECTION B: LOCAL ISSUES / AWARENESS OF PROPOSALS

4. At the moment what do you think are the most important LOCAL issues for your area? And what else? (spontaneous, multi-code)	All respondents Base: 804
Traffic congestion/ road building/ river crossing	19%
Employment	11%
Housing	11%
Crime / more police presence / anti-social behaviour	10%
Entertainment/ leisure facilities (esp. for young people)	9%
Transport / public transport	8%
Education / change to 2 tier system	6%
More shops/ The closure of shops	5%
Litter / rubbish collection	3%
Planning, development, regeneration	3%
Flood defence / coastal erosion	3%
Car Parking / charges	2%
Environment	2%
Council Tax	2%
Economy / credit crunch	2%
Immigration	2%
Transparency of council spending	1%
Hospital / NHS services	1%
Proposed new Tesco supermarket	1%
Joining Norfolk / boundary change	1%
Other	5%
Nothing in particular	15%
Everything fine	4%
Don't know	6%

5. There is currently a review taking place, looking at arrangements for the structure of local government in Suffolk? Are you aware of this review and if so how much would you say you know about what is being discussed?	All respondents Base: 804
Not aware of the review	53%
Aware - but don't know anything about what is being discussed	11%
Aware – and know a little about what is being discussed	25%
Aware – and know a fair amount about what is being discussed	8%
Aware – and know a great deal about what is being discussed	2%
Don't know/ Can't say	1%

SECTION C: PREFERNCES FOR FUTURE STRUCTURE

As you may know the review I mentioned is looking at the current situation whereby Suffolk has two main tiers of local government. There is Suffolk County Council which provides some county-wide services (such as education) and also seven Borough/District Councils: Babergh, Ipswich, Forest Heath, Mid Suffolk, St. Edmundsbury, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney, who are responsible for delivery of other services (such as waste collection).

There are **three proposals** being talked about as possible alternatives to the current situation, with each meaning that in every part of Suffolk people will have their major services provided by a single local authority. I'll briefly outline the three alternatives:

A: A **single local authority** for the whole county

B: Suffolk being split into **two authorities** (one to cover Ipswich and its surrounding area including Felixstowe; and the other to cover the rest of Suffolk)

C: Suffolk being split into **three authorities**: one covering the Ipswich area, another for East Suffolk and one for West Suffolk.

6. As I have described them which of the three is your preferred option? Is it (repeat description of A), or (B) or (C)? And do you strongly or tend to prefer that option?		
	All respondents Base: 804	All expressing a preference Base: 631
Strongly prefer A	10%	13%
Tend to prefer A	10%	12%
Strongly prefer B	4%	5%
Tend to prefer B	7%	9%
Strongly prefer C	22%	28%
Tend to prefer C	25%	32%
All equally	*	-
Should not change should leave it as it is	8%	-
Need more information	4%	-
Not interested / don't really care	5%	-
Don't know/ Can't say		-

7a. Why do you tend to prefer A? For what reasons do you think this is the best solution for the future structure of local government in Suffolk? And for what other reasons? (spontaneous, multi-code)	All respondents who initially prefer Option A Base: 152
It is the most efficient / best use of resources	29%
Don't think should be split / splitting would alienate other areas	24%
Convenience / easier	15%
Cost / would be cheaper	12%
One council so know where to go	9%
Suffolk is fine as it is	8%
Other	9%
Nothing in particular	1%
Everything's fine	2%
Don't know	7%

7b. Why do you tend to prefer B? For what reasons do you think this is the best solution for the future structure of local government in Suffolk? And for what other reasons? (spontaneous, multi-code)	All respondents who initially prefer Option B Base: 94
Easier to manage two, too big for one, too much indecision for three	24%
Ipswich (and Felixstowe) needs its own council	18%
Better to be small / more efficient / decisions are better made locally	17%
Cost	7%
Less bureaucracy	3%
Convenience / easier	1%
Worked well in the past	1%
Other	6%
Nothing in particular	11%
Everything's fine	1%
Don't know	14%
No answer	1%

7c. Why do you tend to prefer C? For what reasons do you think this is the best solution for the future structure of local government in Suffolk? And for what other reasons? (spontaneous, multi-code)	All respondents who initially prefer Option C Base: 385
Decisions should be made locally / being smaller would mean more efficient services	63%
Suffolk is big and should be split three ways	27%
There shouldn't be one body governing all	7%
Easy to contact your local council	3%
Cost	2%
It's the best option (of the three)	1%
Want to keep Suffolk as it is / stay in Suffolk	1%
Other	8%
Nothing in particular	2%
Everything's fine	1%
Don't know	3%

8. In some of the proposed options Lowestoft (and the area covered by Waveney District Council) will no longer be a part of Suffolk. Instead it will come under the administration of Norfolk. Do you support or oppose the idea of Lowestoft being moved out of Suffolk and into Norfolk as part of the reorganisation of local government?		
	All respondents Base: 804	All expressing a preference Base: 508
Strongly support	5%	7%
Tend to support	9%	15%
Tend to oppose	14%	23%
Strongly oppose	34%	55%
Not interested / don't really care	28%	-
Don't know/ Can't say	10%	-

9. Earlier you said that you prefer A or B. In this option Lowestoft would move out of Suffolk and into Norfolk? Given this do you still prefer this option or would you change your mind to option C which would ensure Lowestoft stays in Suffolk?

	All respondents who initially prefer Option A or Option B Base: 246	All expressing a preference Base: 214
Still prefer original choice	60%	67%
Would change mind	29%	33%
Need more information	1%	-
Not interested / don't really care	7%	-
Don't know/ Can't say	4%	-

10. The Boundary Committee for England is holding a public consultation to find out residents' views about Options A and Option B. Both of these options would result in Lowestoft being moved out of Suffolk and into Norfolk.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Option C should also be included in the public consultation? The option in which Suffolk would be divided into three authorities (one covering the Ipswich area, another for East Suffolk and one for West Suffolk) with Lowestoft remaining in Suffolk

	All respondents Base: 804	All Expressing a preference Base: 717
Strongly Agree	45%	51%
Somewhat agree	31%	35%
Neither	4%	4%
Tend to disagree	4%	5%
Strongly disagree	5%	5%
Not interested / don't really care	6%	-
Don't know/ Can't say	5%	-

SECTION D: SERVICE DELIVERY

13. Overall which of the three options do you think will provide citizens like you with the best value for money? That is which one will most likely give the best quality of local services for the money that it costs to run them?

	All respondents Base: 804	All expressing a preference Base: 624
Option A	23%	28%
Option B	11%	14%
Option C	46%	58%
Need more information	6%	-
Not interested / don't really care	1%	-
Don't know/ Can't say	11%	-
None will provide good value for money	2%	-

14. Although many parts of Suffolk are relatively well-off, other parts are among the most deprived in the country. Ipswich and Lowestoft in particular have many deprived areas. In order that efforts to improve such deprived areas are as successful as possible do you think responsibility for regeneration and employment creation should be with..?		
	All respondents Base: 804	All expressing a preference Base: 653
A single Suffolk-wide local council	20%	25%
Two local authorities – one for the Ipswich, Felixstowe area; and another for the rest of Suffolk	12%	14%
Three local authorities: one covering Ipswich/ Felixstowe etc, another for East Suffolk (including Lowestoft) and one for West Suffolk.	50%	61%
All equally as likely to succeed	1%	-
More to do with national not local situation	5%	-
Need more information	3%	-
Don't know/ Can't say	8%	-
None of these options will make any difference	2%	-

SECTION E: ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS

15. I am about to read out some statements linked to the various option that have been discussed for the future structure of local government in Suffolk. For each one please say whether you agree or disagree with it. Is that strongly or somewhat agree/disagree?			
		All respondents Base: 804	All expressing a preference Base: varies by question (range 718-788)
a) Different parts of Suffolk have different needs and priorities; and a single council for the whole county will not get the balance right when allocating resources	Strongly agree	42%	44%
	Tend to agree	30%	31%
	Neither	5%	5%
	Tend to disagree	12%	13%
	Strongly disagree	7%	8%
	Don't know	4%	-
b) Local services are much better being delivered by smaller local authorities than by larger ones	Strongly agree	40%	43%
	Tend to agree	36%	38%
	Neither	4%	4%
	Tend to disagree	11%	11%
	Strongly disagree	4%	5%
	Don't know	5%	-
c) Smaller local authorities better understand the needs of residents and can therefore make sure resources are allocated in the best possible way	Strongly agree	51%	52%
	Tend to agree	35%	35%
	Neither	2%	2%
	Tend to disagree	7%	7%
	Strongly disagree	4%	4%
	Don't know	2%	-
d) In order to make good strategic decisions it is better to have a smaller number of larger councils	Strongly agree	22%	23%
	Tend to agree	40%	43%
	Neither	5%	5%
	Tend to disagree	18%	19%
	Strongly disagree	10%	11%
	Don't know	5%	-

e) Larger local authorities are less accountable to residents than are smaller ones	Strongly agree	40%	42%
	Tend to agree	33%	34%
	Neither	4%	4%
	Tend to disagree	11%	12%
	Strongly disagree	7%	8%
	Don't know	4%	-
f) It is more cost-effective if services are delivered by larger local authorities	Strongly agree	15%	16%
	Tend to agree	36%	40%
	Neither	6%	7%
	Tend to disagree	22%	25%
	Strongly disagree	10%	11%
	Don't know	11%	-
g) Reducing the number of local authorities to the minimum possible is a good thing	Strongly agree	16%	17%
	Tend to agree	27%	29%
	Neither	6%	6%
	Tend to disagree	24%	26%
	Strongly disagree	20%	21%
	Don't know	5%	-
h) People will be less able to influence decisions in their local area if all or most of Suffolk is under the control of a single council	Strongly agree	39%	40%
	Tend to agree	33%	34%
	Neither	3%	3%
	Tend to disagree	14%	14%
	Strongly disagree	8%	8%
	Don't know	3%	-
i) People will be less likely to get involved in the decisions that affect their local area if all or most of Suffolk is under the control of a single council	Strongly agree	41%	43%
	Tend to agree	32%	33%
	Neither	2%	3%
	Tend to disagree	13%	14%
	Strongly disagree	7%	8%
	Don't know	4%	-

SECTION F: POLITICAL IMPACT

16: If a general election were to be held tomorrow, some people we have spoken to say they would not vote while others have said they would vote. Using a ten point scale, where 10 would mean you are absolutely certain to vote and 1 would mean you are certain not to vote, could you say how certain it is that you would go and vote?	All respondents Base: 804
1 – Absolutely certain not to vote	12%
2	1%
3	4%
4	1%
5	7%
6	3%
7	6%
8	11%
9	4%
10 – Absolutely certain to vote	50%
Don't know	1%

17. If a General Election was to be held tomorrow, would you vote Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, UKIP, Green, BNP or for another party?	All respondents who may vote at the next general election Base: 729
Conservative	31%
Labour	21%
Liberal Democrat	10%
UKIP	1%
Green	2%
BNP	2%
Other	-
Don't know/ Have not made up mind yet	20%
Refused	14%

18. OK, even if you don't know who you would vote for yet, which party are you leaning towards right now? Even if it is only a slight leaning, would you please say which party you're leaning more towards. Is it Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, UKIP, Green, BNP or for another Party?	All those who did not initially know who they would vote for at the next general election Base: 252
Conservative	14%
Labour	14%
Liberal Democrat	5%
UKIP	-
Green	1%
BNP	-
Other	1%
Don't know/ Have not made up mind yet	30%
Refused	35%

19. Thinking again about your next vote the party nominated in Q17 or Q18. How likely is it that you would change your mind and vote for a different party before the next General Election? Would you say you are very likely to change, fairly likely to change, not very likely to change or not at all likely to change?	All who are likely to vote for a specific party Base: 560
Very likely to change	4%
Fairly likely to change	22%
Not very likely to change	37%
Not at all likely to change	33%
Don't know	4%

20. Thinking again about your vote the party nominated in Q17 or Q18; if their candidate at the next General Election supported an option for the restructuring of Suffolk local government that was different to your own preference, would you be more or less likely to vote for them, or would this not have any effect on your vote?	All who are likely to vote for a specific party Base: 560
Much more likely	3%
Somewhat more likely	5%
No change to vote	56%
Somewhat less likely	28%
Much less likely	2%
Can't say	6%

21. Sometimes people change their minds about proposals having thought about them further or having heard arguments for and against. So, thinking again about the three options which is now your preferred option for the future organisation of local government in Suffolk? And do you strongly or tend to prefer that option?

	All respondents Base: 804	All expressing a preference Base: 708
Strongly prefer A	10%	12%
Tend to prefer A	8%	10%
Strongly prefer B	4%	5%
Tend to prefer B	8%	9%
Strongly prefer C	34%	39%
Tend to prefer C	21%	25%
All equally	1%	-
Need more information	4%	-
Not interested / don't really care	2%	-
Don't know/ Can't say	7%	-

SECTION G: Demographic information

22. Gender	All respondents Base: 804
Male	49%
Female	51%

23. Please can I ask which age group you fall into?	All respondents Base: 804
18-24	9%
25-34	14%
35-44	20%
45-54	17%
55-64	15%
65+	24%
Refused	1%

24. Do you work outside the home full time, part time, or are you unemployed, retired, a student or are you not looking for work outside the home?	All respondents Base: 804
Full-time employed (inc. self-employed)	47%
Part-time employed (inc. self-employed)	14%
Unemployed	6%
Retired	28%
Student / full-time education	1%
Not look for work outside home/ looking after home/family	3%
Other	-
Refused	1%

26. Which of the following best describes your housing status, or the home in which you permanently live?	All respondents Base: 804
Own outright	37%
Own with mortgage	39%
Rent from council/local authority	12%
Rent privately / from someone else	8%
Rent free	3%
Other	*
Refused	2%

27. Would you say that the place where you live is in a village/rural area or is it in a town / built up area?	All respondents Base: 804
Village / Rural	46%
Town / Built up	54%

28. Social Class	All respondents Base: 804
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A	6%
B	14%
C1	28%
C2	17%
D	16%
E	16%
Refused	3%

Borough	All respondents Base: 804
Babergh	12%
Forest Heath	9%
Ipswich	17%
Mid Suffolk	13%
St. Edmundsbury	15%
Suffolk Coastal	17%
Waveney	16%