

One Council – programme of engagement

1. Background

1.1 A formal eight-week period of public and stakeholder engagement has been planned to ascertain if there is public support for the option to dissolve both Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils and replace them with a single district council for the area. The aim of the engagement programme will be to raise awareness of the proposal and to give people an opportunity to have their say.

2. External engagement programme

2.1 A summary of the external engagement plan is included below.

2.2 A media campaign will be launched with regular press releases, use of social media and a dedicated page on the council's website. A media briefing will be arranged to increase the profile of the engagement in the local and regional media.

2.3 The new 'One Council' webpage will be designed to signpost the visitor to relevant background information and to provide a link to the online survey where a written response can be provided. The webpage will include:

- 2.3.1 An introduction from the leaders
- 2.3.2 Link to an information leaflet containing background to the proposal
- 2.3.3 'Frequently asked questions' section which will be used to respond to any concerns or misunderstandings about the proposals, for example 'will there be a rise in Council tax?'
- 2.3.4 Link to an online survey which will provide the opportunity for the public and other stakeholders to comment on the proposal and ask questions which will be answered directly (if an email address is provided). The frequently asked questions will be updated as necessary.
- 2.3.5 Links to access background information, including press releases and Council papers.
- 2.3.6 The list of stakeholders engaged with as part of the programme

2.4 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk social media accounts will be used to raise awareness of the engagement programme and to encourage residents to submit their comments and questions via the survey. Targeted posts on Facebook will be used to increase engagement with different areas of the districts and with different demographics, for example young people.

2.5 A letter from the Council Leaders will be sent to every parish and town council in the districts. The letter will include an information leaflet and be used to raise awareness of the engagement programme, to offer an opportunity to discuss the proposal and to encourage the parish and town council to have their say by responding to the letter or by responding using the online survey.

2.6 A list of key Council stakeholders and partners has been created and an email/letter will be sent from the Leader, Chief Executive or the relevant Portfolio Holder or Assistant Director. The correspondence will include an information leaflet, offer the opportunity to discuss the proposal and encourage the recipient to have their say via the online survey or by responding to the letter.

- 2.6.1 An indicative list of stakeholders is included at Appendix A of this note

2.7 An information leaflet will be distributed to public buildings across the districts, for example libraries, leisure centre etc. The leaflet will include the following information:

- 2.7.1 Introduction from the Council Leaders
- 2.7.2 The history of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk 'Working Together' partnership
- 2.7.3 The challenge faced by the two councils
- 2.7.4 The benefits of becoming one council
- 2.7.5 Details of how to take part in the engagement

2.8 Elected members from Babergh and Mid Suffolk will also be provided with information packs and encouraged to discuss the proposal with the residents, businesses and community organisations in their Wards.

2.9 A telephone polling specialist has been commissioned to independently survey 2000 randomly selected electors in each Council area. The aim of the call will be to capture their views towards the proposal and will provide a statistically and demographically robust set of results. Further detail on this methodology is included below. Details of the telephone polling is included at Appendix B of this note

2.10 The proposal will also be discussed at existing community/business events where appropriate, for example at Parish meetings, business meetings with the LEP etc.

3. Internal engagement programme

3.1 A summary of the internal engagement plan is included below.

3.2 A dedicated intranet page will be created to include background information, Frequently Asked Questions and a link to a staff survey (separate to the public survey) where staff can comment on the proposal and ask further questions. The page will also include a link to the information on the public webpage.

3.3 Regular staff briefings will be arranged for all staff so that updates on the engagement programme can be provided and to encourage staff to provide their feedback and questions through the intranet page.

3.4 There will be a regular update in the 'Working Together' newsletter to ensure the messages from the staff briefings are sent to all staff.

3.5 The proposal will be a regular item at the employee staff forum which includes representatives from service areas. Discussions at the forum will include the challenges and opportunities presented by the proposal and also be a useful forum to discuss any common concerns that are raised by staff as part of the engagement programme.

3.6 Information posters and leaflets will be displayed at the office and locations of field staff and will be used to staff to provide their feedback and to pose questions. A member of the Senior Leadership Team will complete a 'roadshow' of staff to ensure the message is consistently cascaded throughout the organisation.

3.7 Frontline employees, for example waste operatives, will be targeted with additional briefings to enable them to refer their customers to the relevant information if asked.

3.8 Briefings with union representatives will be undertaken by the Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources.

4. Evaluating the feedback received:

4.1 The engagement programme has been designed to inform residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders of the proposal and to provide an opportunity for people to provide feedback or pose questions. A full report summarising the public engagement will be published as part of the business case for Councillors to consider in the New Year.

4.2 The report will also include a full report from the independent telephone polling specialist. This will provide a significant amount of quantitative and qualitative information to support Councillors when debating the business case. Further information can be found at Appendix B.

4.3 The engagement summary report will include details of how far the message was distributed. This will include:

- 4.3.1 The number of stories published in the local, regional and national press and in local government publications.
- 4.3.2 The number of radio/ TV stories used
- 4.3.3 The total reach of the social media campaign, including the number of comments/ responses received direct on social media, comments on corporate posts or using the official hashtag for the engagement programme.

4.4 All emails and letters received in response to the engagement programme will be published as part of the engagement summary report and an analysis of the comments and questions received through the online survey will also be provided. The common messages coming through the letters and online survey will be categorised and Council responses provided to each category.

Appendix A

Initial list of Council stakeholders

Sector / organisation	Person/ organisation
MPs	Jo Churchill MP
	James Cartlidge MP
	Dan Poulter MP
	Sajid Javid MP
Town and parish councils	All towns and parishes
	Parish liaison meetings
	Suffolk Association of Local Councils
Lords	Lord-Lieutenant for Suffolk
	Lady Rosalind C Scott (Mid Suffolk)
	Lord John E Gardiner (Mid Suffolk)
	Lord John S Deben (Mid Suffolk)
	Lord Robert W Dixon-Smith (Babergh)
Business community	New Anglia LEP
	Chamber of Commerce in both districts
	Stowmarket & District Chamber of Commerce
	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
	Federation of Small Businesses
Partners	Orbit Group
	Havebury
	Flagship
	Orwell
	Saffron
	Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG
	West Suffolk CCG
	West Suffolk Hospital
	Ipswich Hospital
	Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trust
	Police and Crime Commissioner
	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CA Mayor
	The Gainsborough House
	Museum of East Anglian Life
	Serco
	South Suffolk Leisure
	ID VERDE
Voluntary and Community Sector	Citizens Advice Bureaux - Stowmarket and Sudbury
	Community Action Suffolk
	Job Centre - Stowmarket and Sudbury
County Councils	Suffolk
	Norfolk
	Cambridgeshire
	Essex
District Councils	South Norfolk
	Breckland
	Braintree
	Colchester

Sector / organisation	Person/ organisation
	Tendring
	Ipswich
	Suffolk Coastal
	Waveney
	St Edmundsbury
	Forest Heath
National membership groups	DCN
	LGA
	NLGN
	LGIU
	SOLACE
	SPARSE
Hard to reach groups	The Rural Coffee Caravan
	Home First
	MyGo
	Homestart
	The Mix (youth club)
	The Debenham Project
	The Bridge Project
	The Porch Project
	Norfolk and Suffolk G&T Liaison Service
	Foodbanks
	VASP
	Iceni charity
	Suffolk refugee support forum
	Ipswich and Suffolk Council for racial equalities
	Suffolk disability forum
Union	Unison and Unite
Other	Boundary Commission
	External auditors

Appendix B

Telephone polling of electors in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

ComRes is a specialist polling agent and will be commissioned to conduct a 10-15 minute telephone survey among 4,000 residents living in Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils. The total sample size will be split evenly between the two council areas (2,000 interviews in each area).

Having previously conducted similar surveys for East and West Suffolk, ComRes will use the surveys from the other areas as a base. Changes will be made to reflect the different area. The questions will be focused on the following areas:

- Awareness of the proposal to create a single District-level Council for the area. This will test the success of the media campaign.
- Opinion on the proposal to create a single District-level Council for the area
- Opinion on the importance of objectives that could be achieved by creating a new single District Council for the area.
- Opinion on the potential impact that a new single District-level Council would have on a particular demographic group, for example whether positive, negative or no impact at all.
- Opinion on priorities for local government
- There will also be a chance to provide feedback on the following areas:
 - o Likes and dislikes about the local area
 - o Opinion on how a new Council should work with residents and businesses
 - o Concerns about the proposal to create a new single District-level Council
 - o Further information that they would like to receive about the proposal and how they would like to receive the information.

The survey will be representative of the local population by age, gender, ward, socio-economic group and ethnicity for each local authority separately, meaning results from Babergh will be representative of Babergh, and the same for Mid Suffolk. The combined results would be weighted to be representative of the combined area.

The large overall sample size will ensure strong data that allows for analysis by demographic and other relevant factors. This approach will provide detailed insights on residents' views towards the proposals. By undertaking this survey of 4,000 residents the council is achieving 99% confidence level and margin of error of plus or minus 2%. This means that if the study was repeated then 99% of the time the result would be within 2% of the result of the first survey.

ComRes will produce an independent and in-depth analytical report on the findings across both areas, which will include:

- A concise and easily-digestible executive summary;
- Clear sections detailing elements of the questionnaire;
- Detailed analysis of each individual question and its responses;
- Comparison of results between the two council areas;
- Relevant analysis by demographic subgroups, e.g. by age, social grade or awareness of the proposals;
- An overview of the trends and patterns across the survey findings;
- Actionable conclusions.

ComRes will also provide full data tables of the results and can be requested to deliver a detailed presentation to Councillors.