The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Household survey report: Broxtowe Borough Council (DRAFT)

October 2025

Broxtowe Borough Council

LGR | Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

public perspectives

Research, consultation and evaluation for the public and charitable sectors.

Contents

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Broxtowe household survey report

Executive Summary

Introduction and background

1. Nottinghamshire is a two-tier area served by seven district and borough councils and a county council. The city of Nottingham is contained within the boundary of Nottinghamshire, with all council services in the area provided by Nottingham City Council, which is a unitary council. In total, nine different councils provide services across the county, including Broxtowe Borough Council.
2. In February 2025, as part of the Government's local government reorganisation plans, it contacted local councils in areas such as Nottinghamshire to work together to draw up initial proposals to reduce the number of councils by replacing two-tier councils with larger unitary councils.
3. Following considering key criteria and a range of potential options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal to Government in March 2025, which included proposals to create two new unitary councils that would be responsible for all council services in their areas and replace the existing nine councils.
4. An important part of the local government reorganisation process is engaging with residents and stakeholders. Consequently, the councils undertook an engagement exercise about the proposals, including different options for the configuration of the future councils. This engagement exercise is subject to a separate report.
5. In addition, Broxtowe Borough Council commissioned independent organisation, Public Perspectives, to conduct a separate postal survey of all households in the council area. **This report analyses and presents the results of the survey of households in Broxtowe Borough Council.**

Approach

6. The county-wide engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14 September 2025. Broxtowe Borough Council's specific household survey was administered during this period.
7. The same questionnaire developed as part of the county-wide engagement process was sent to all 52,292 households in the Broxtowe Borough Council area along with a freepost envelope to facilitate return of the paper questionnaire.[1] In addition, the council developed a postcard with additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the proposed options for future councils in the county. Households were given the opportunity to respond to this online or return via post along with the paper questionnaire.

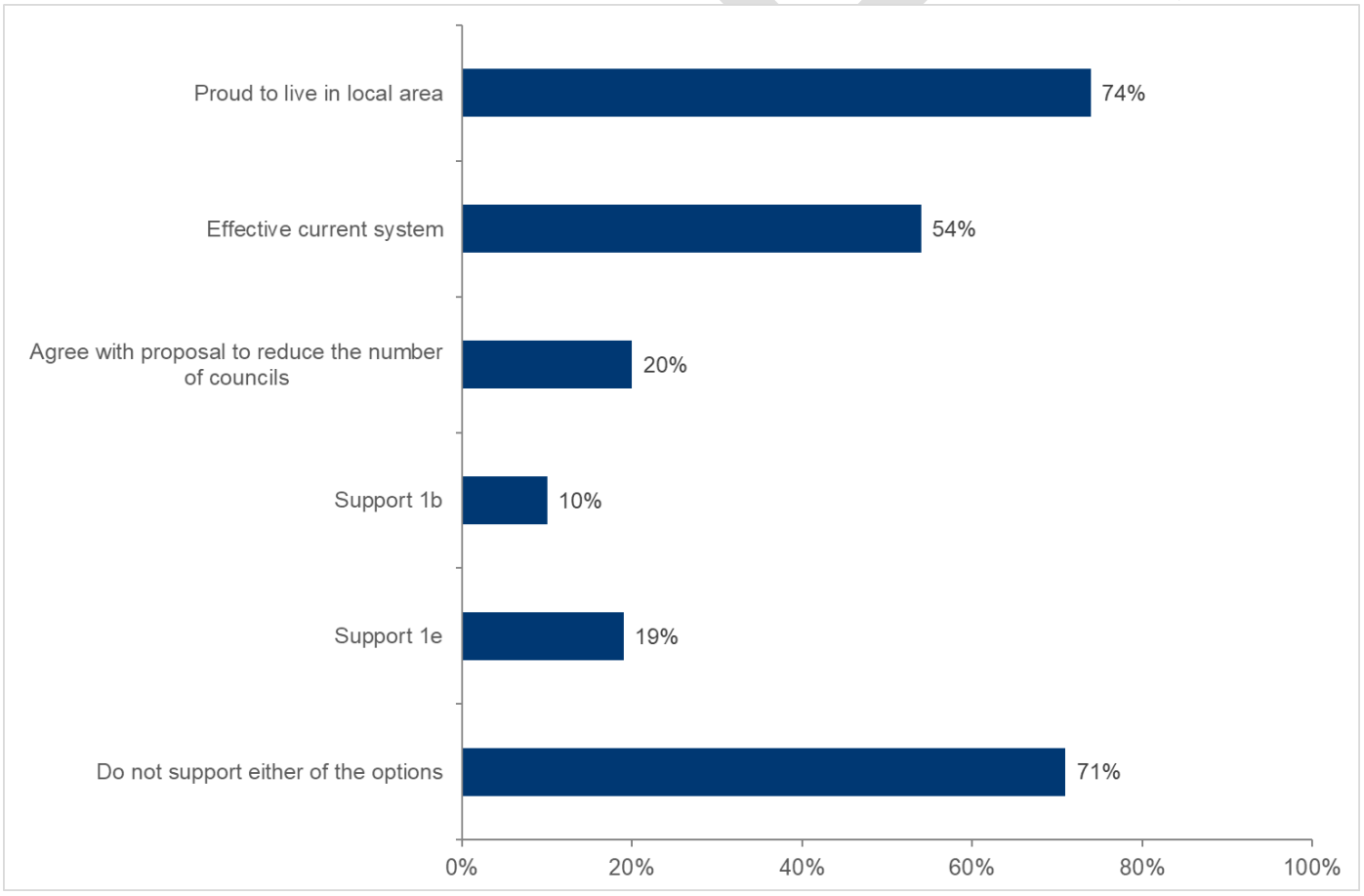
[1] The paper questionnaire and postcard included UIDs to manage the process and link responses to postcodes and wards at the analysis stage.

8. In total there were 12,507 responses,[2] representing a 22% response rate to the household survey:
   - 11,287 paper responses.[3]
   - 1,220 on-line responses to the three additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the options.

Key findings

9. Most respondents are proud of their local area (74%) and over half said the current structure of councils and approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is effective (54%).
10. Only 20% agree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area (and 64% disagree).
11. Over seven-in-ten respondents (71%) do not support either of the proposed options for configuring future councils in the county.

Figure 1: Summary of key findings



[2] This is in addition to the 2,480 Broxtowe respondents to the separate county-wide engagement process. These are not included in this report (partly to avoid the risk of double counting), which covers responses to the household survey only.
[3] Of these, 9,817 responded to the full questionnaire and 12,025 to the postcard/additional Broxtowe specific questions. Those that did not respond to the full questionnaire either decided to return the postcard only or had previously completed the full questionnaire online via the county-wide engagement process. Similarly, those that decided not to return the postcard may have done this online via the council's website.

12. **Concerns about merging with Nottingham City and its council dominate the responses.** Many respondents strongly opposed such a merger, citing perceived financial and service delivery problems, poor management, and fears that an urban Nottingham City would dominate any new authority. They felt this could undermine local voice, representation, identity, and services.
13. **There was also criticism of the proposed boundaries**, particularly the inclusion of rural or outlying areas with the city and the exclusion of areas with stronger connections to it. In addition, some respondents **expressed broader opposition to local government reorganisation itself**, highlighting worries about disruption, costs, limited efficiencies, and a preference for a district-based system that is closer and more responsive to its local areas and communities.
14. Respondents who were more **supportive of local government reorganisation and the proposed options generally referred to potential benefits** such as increased efficiency, cost savings, and improved access to services and outcomes. However, this **support was often qualified**, with some noting that their backing depended on these benefits being achieved in practice.
15. Some respondents expressed the view that the **decision had already been made, and were dissatisfied that all the options presented involved joining Nottingham City.** They felt there should have been options for Broxtowe to remain as it is and/or to form part of a wider county-based arrangement.

The future of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Broxtowe household survey report

Main report

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction and background

1.1. Nottinghamshire is a two-tier area served by seven district and borough councils and a county council. The city of Nottingham is contained within the boundary of Nottinghamshire, with all council services in the area provided by Nottingham City Council, which is a unitary council. In total, nine different councils provide services across the county, including Broxtowe Borough Council.

1.2. In February 2025, as part of the Government's local government reorganisation plans, it contacted local councils in areas such as Nottinghamshire to work together to draw up initial proposals to reduce the number of councils by replacing two-tier councils with larger unitary councils.

1.3. Following considering key criteria and a range of potential options, Nottinghamshire's councils submitted an interim proposal to Government in March 2025, which included proposals to create two new unitary councils that would be responsible for all council services in their areas and replace the existing nine councils.

1.4. An important part of the local government reorganisation process is engaging with residents and stakeholders. Consequently, the councils undertook an engagement exercise about the proposals, including different options for the configuration of the future councils. This engagement exercise is subject to a separate report.[4]

1.5. In addition, Broxtowe Borough Council commissioned independent organisation, Public Perspectives, to conduct a separate postal survey of all households in the council area. **This report analyses and presents the results of the survey of households in Broxtowe Borough Council.**

[4] There were 2,480 Broxtowe respondents to this engagement process. These are not included in this report of the separate postal survey of Broxtowe households.

Approach

1.6. The county-wide engagement exercise was conducted over a six-week period ending on Sunday 14 September 2025. Broxtowe Borough Council's specific household survey was administered during this period.

1.7. The same questionnaire developed as part of the county-wide engagement process was sent to all 52,292 households in the Broxtowe Borough Council area along with a freepost envelope to facilitate return of the paper questionnaire.[5] In addition, the council developed a postcard with additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the proposed options for future councils in the county. Households were given the opportunity to respond to this online or return via post along with the paper questionnaire.

1.8. In total there were 12,507 responses,[6] representing a 22% response rate to the household survey:

- 11,287 paper responses.[7]
- 1,220 on-line responses to the three additional Broxtowe-specific questions relating to each of the options.

1.9. There is a spread of responses across different demographic groups, albeit a skew towards older groups, which is common in self-selecting/open-access questionnaires such as this.[8]

[5] The paper questionnaire and postcard included UIDs to manage the process and link responses to postcodes and wards at the analysis stage.
[6] This is in addition to the 2,480 Broxtowe respondents to the separate county-wide engagement process. These are not included in this report (partly to avoid the risk of double counting), which covers responses to the household survey only.
[7] Of these, 9,817 responded to the full questionnaire and 12,025 to the postcard/additional Broxtowe specific questions. Those that did not respond to the full questionnaire either decided to return the postcard only or had previously completed the full questionnaire online via the county-wide engagement process. Similarly, those that decided not to return the postcard may have done this online via the council's website.
[8] The results have been kept 'as they are' and not re-weighted at the analysis stage to bring them into line with the latest population estimates.

Figure 1.1: Demographic profile of respondents

Sex	
Female	48%
Male	47%
Another term	0%
Prefer not to say	5%
Age	
Under 18	0%
18-24	1%
25-34	5%
35-44	9%
45-54	11%
55-64	19%
65 and over	50%
Prefer not to say	6%
Disability	
Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a lot	8%
Yes, which reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities a little	11%
Yes, but they don't reduce my ability to carry out my day-to-day activities at all	11%
No	61%
Prefer not to say	9%
Ethnicity	
White British-Irish	87%
Non-White British-Irish	7%
Prefer not to say	6%
Housing situation	
Owner-occupier	83%
Privately renting	5%
Renting from the council or housing association	6%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	5%

Note: Not all figures add up to 100% due to rounding.

Reporting

1.10. The report is organised in-keeping with the structure of the questionnaire, as follows:

- Section 2: Your local area
- Section 3: The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- Section 4: Local Government Reorganisation in England
- Section 5: Future councils
- Section 6: Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (including the additional Broxtowe specific questions)

Section 2: Your local area

Introduction

2.1. This section presents findings about respondents' views on their local area, including movement across the county, sense of place and council services/priorities.

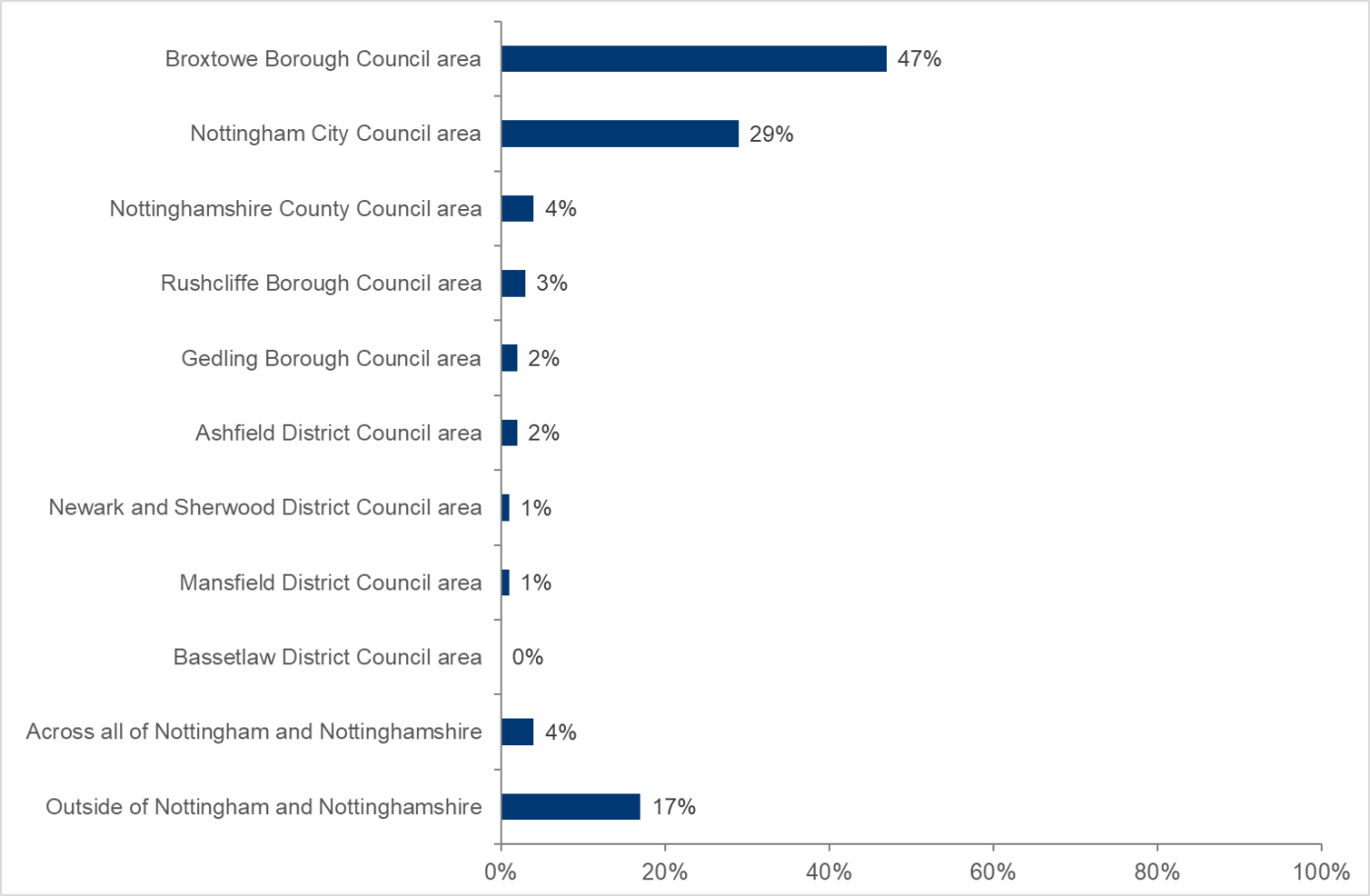
Where is your main place of work or study?

Broxtowe respondents tend to work or study locally, in Nottingham City or outside of the county

2.2. Almost half of Broxtowe respondents work or study in the area (47%).

2.3. 29% work or study in Nottingham City, and 17% work or study outside of the county.

Figure 2.1: Movement across Nottinghamshire



Number of respondents: 4,301 (excludes respondents that do not study or work currently – 52%). Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

How do you describe where you're from when talking to someone who doesn't live nearby? Which names or places do you mention?

Respondents explain where they are from through a mix of local identity and regional anchor points or landmarks

2.4. 8,926 respondents described where they're from to someone who doesn't live nearby. The majority of these respondents (approximately three-quarters)[9] referenced named local towns or villages within Broxtowe such as Beeston, Eastwood, Kimberley, Stapleford, as well as rural areas, suburban areas and villages such as Bramcote, Chilwell, Nuthall and Toton.

2.5. About two-fifths locate themselves in relation to Nottingham City, for example 'Near Nottingham' or 'West of Nottingham'.

2.6. About a fifth refer to Nottinghamshire itself or 'Broxtowe, Nottingham'.

2.7. About a fifth identify their area through well-known landmarks like Ikea, Wollaton Park, or Attenborough Nature Reserve, while a similar proportion use proximity-based descriptions such as "near Ilkeston" or "between Derby and Nottingham."

2.8. A smaller proportion (approximately 5%) express local pride or community sentiment, describing Broxtowe as a pleasant or friendly place to live.

2.9. In several cases, respondents provide multiple answers and reference points, highlighting a multi-layered sense of place.

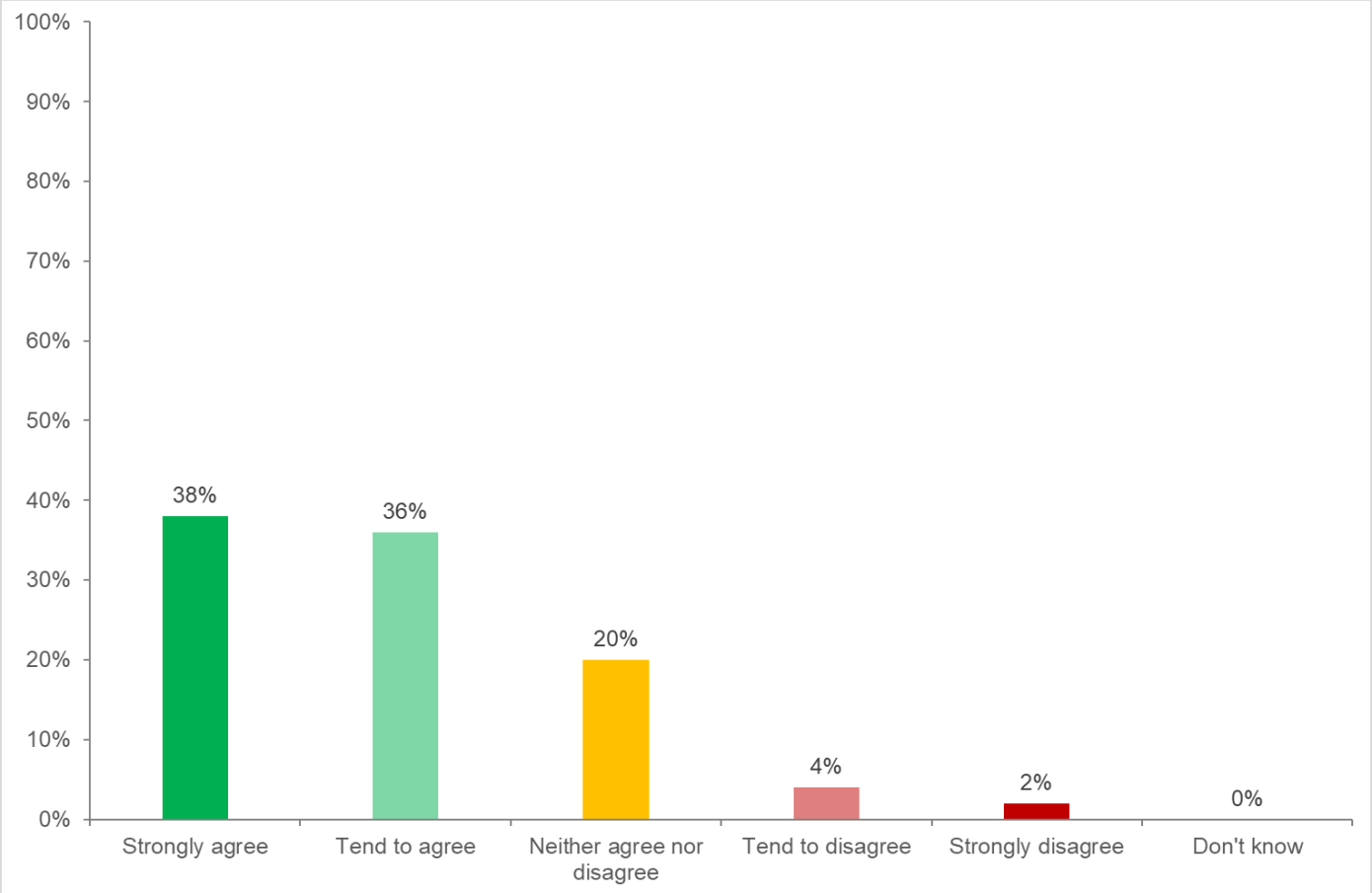
[9] The themes and findings of text-based questions are presented including approximated percentages/numbers of respondents (rounded up or down) as part of a thematic analysis. This is to help provide an indication of relative importance of the themes/findings. These should be treated as such (i.e. approximations) rather than conclusive percentages, given the qualitative nature of the data.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are proud to live in your local area?

Three-quarters of respondents overall said they are proud to live in their local area

2.10. Overall, 74% of Broxtowe respondents are proud to live in their local area and only 6% disagree with this question.

Figure 2.2: Proud to live in local area



Number of respondents: 9,454.

Thinking generally, what would you say are most important in making somewhere a good place to live? And what are your priorities for improvement in the local area?

Core and universal services/issues such as roads and pavements, crime and anti-social behaviour, clean streets, and travel and transport are key priorities

2.11. 79% of respondents said that maintaining roads and pavements are the priority for improvement (and also joint top cited as making somewhere a good place to live – cited by 87%).

2.12. 70% of respondents said crime and anti-social behaviour are priorities for improvement (third top cited as making somewhere a good place to live – noted by 86%).

2.13. 63% of respondents said clean streets are a priority, which is joint top cited as making somewhere a good place to live by 87% of respondents.

2.14. 59% noted public transport, roads and parking as priorities for improvement (also fourth cited as making somewhere a good place to live – mentioned by 83% of respondents).

2.15. Other core and universal services/issues such as refuse collection and recycling (cited by 48% as a priority for improvement), health services (45%), and parks, sports and leisure facilities (43%) also standout, along with regeneration of town centres/high streets (45%) and support and services for older people and vulnerable groups (43%).

Figure 2.3: Important aspects in making somewhere a good place to live and priorities for improvement

	Making somewhere a good place to live (9,362)	Priority for improvement (9,267)
Maintaining roads and pavements	87%	79%
Keeping the streets and public areas clean and tidy	87%	63%
Tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing crime	86%	70%
Public transport, roads and parking	83%	59%
Refuse collection and recycling	81%	48%
Parks, sports and leisure facilities	73%	43%
Health services such as mental health services and promoting healthy lifestyles	64%	45%
Support and services for older people and vulnerable groups	64%	43%
Decent and affordable homes	63%	37%
Schools and places of learning	61%	31%
Regeneration of town centres / high streets, including shops and markets	60%	45%
Activities and facilities for children and young people	57%	31%
Jobs and supporting people into work	52%	32%
Community events and activities and supporting local community groups	50%	24%
Arts and cultural services such as theatres and museums	34%	13%
Supporting residents to reduce their impact on the environment	34%	19%

Numbers in brackets are the number of respondents to each question. Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

Section 3: The current way councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Introduction

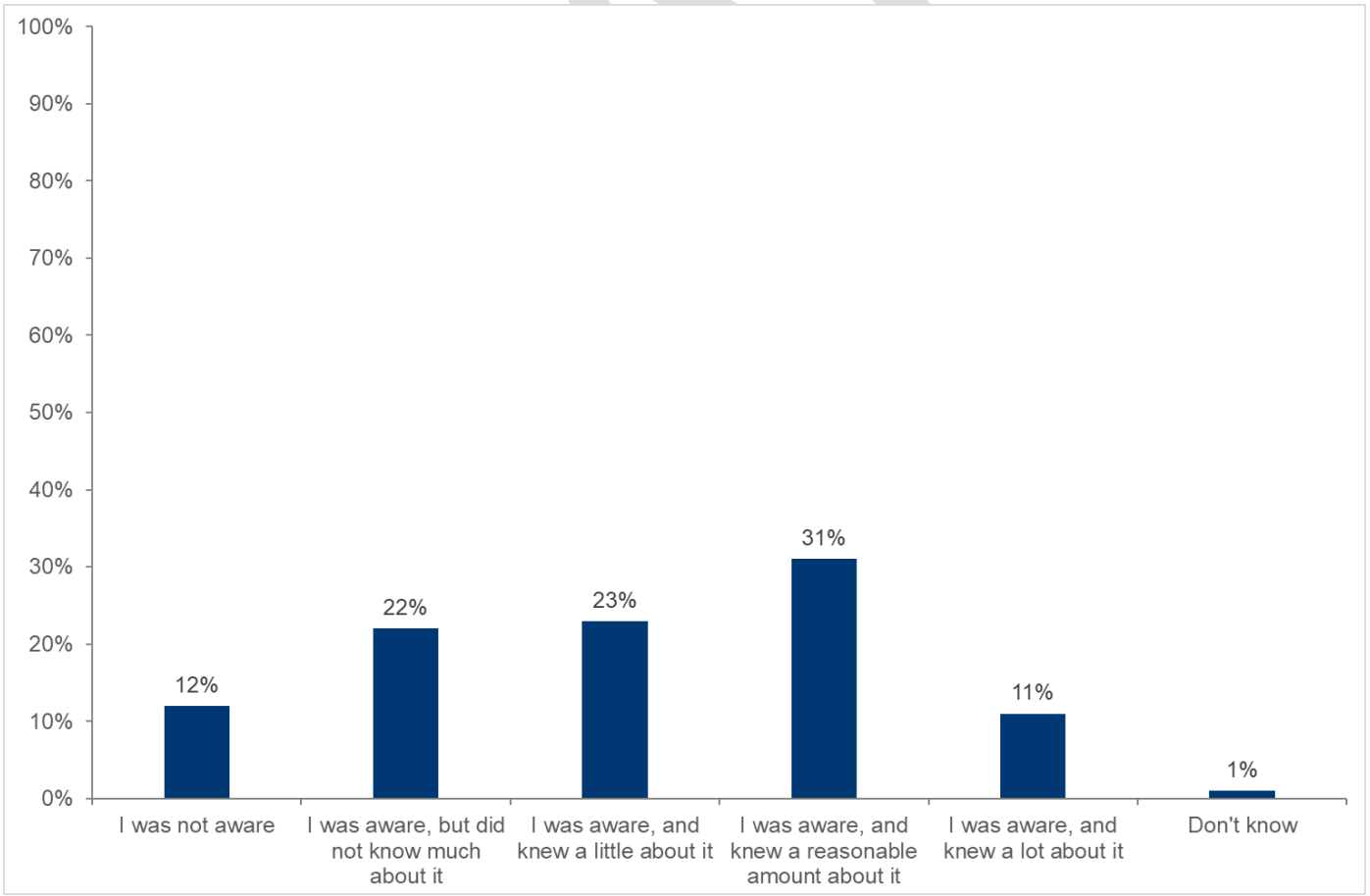
3.1. This section presents findings about the current ways councils are organised in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including awareness and knowledge, and perceptions of effectiveness.

Before today, how aware were you of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and the services each council provides?

Most respondents were aware of the current structure of councils and the different services delivered, and had varying levels of knowledge

3.2. Overall, 88% of respondents were aware of the current structure of councils, including 11% that knew a lot about it, 31% a reasonable amount, 23% a little and 22% not much about it. 12% were not aware of the current structure of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire before responding to the questionnaire.

Figure 3.1: Awareness and knowledge of the current structure of councils



Number of respondents: 9,563.

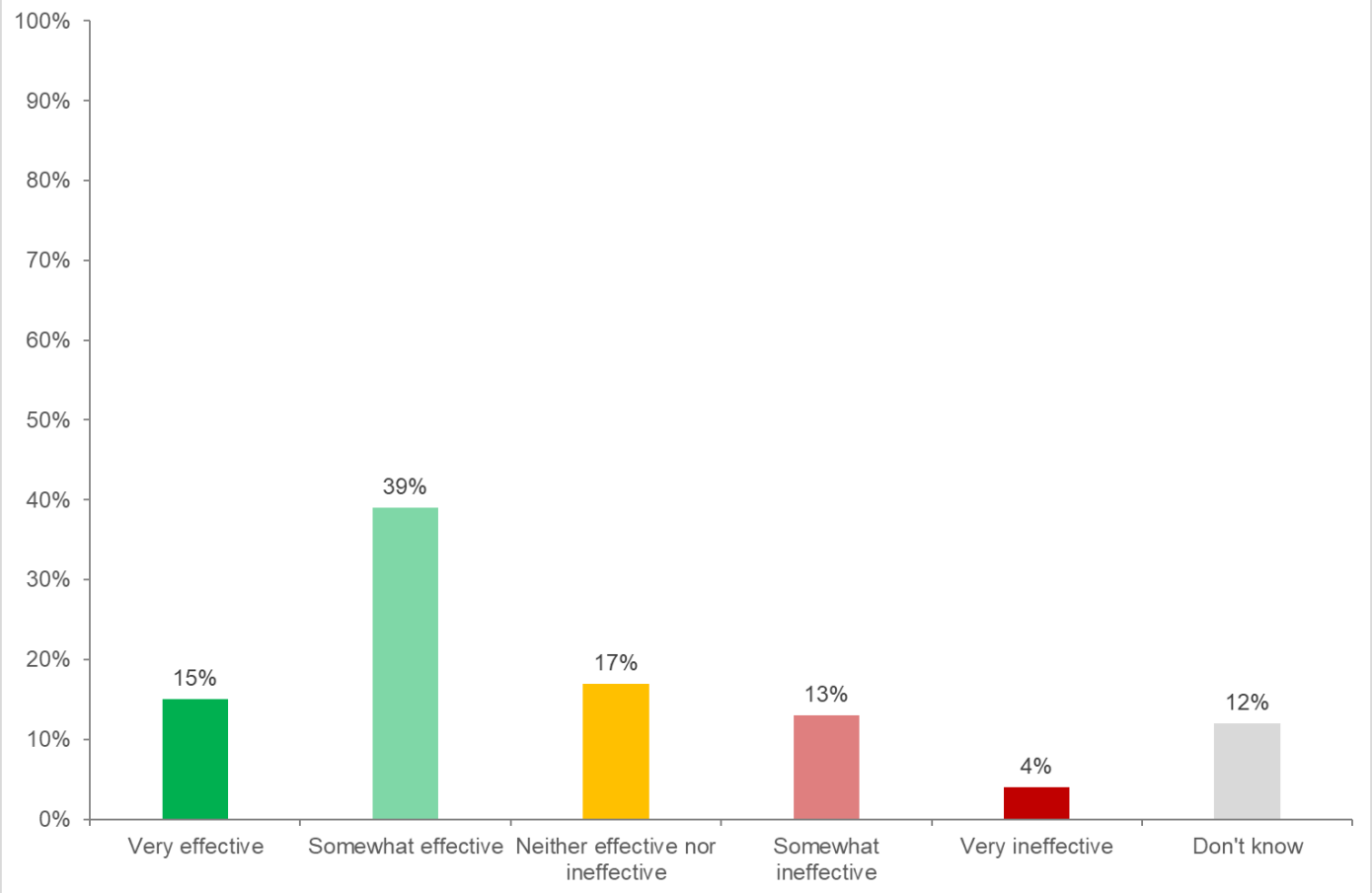
How effective is the current structure of councils and the approach to service delivery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire?

Over half of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery in councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is effective

3.3. Overall, 54% of respondents said the current structure and approach to service delivery is at least somewhat effective. 17% said it is at least somewhat ineffective.

3.4. There is a relationship between awareness of the current system and effectiveness. For example, 67% of respondents that had at least reasonable levels of awareness of the current system said it is effective. This compares with 35% of respondents that were not aware of the current system stating it is effective.

Figure 3.2: Effectiveness of the current structure and approach to service delivery



Number of respondents: 9,466.

3.5. Respondents were asked to explain their answers to help understand the reasons behind their perceptions about effectiveness with 5,865 respondents providing further explanation. Approximately a quarter of these respondents said the **current system is effective** because they are **satisfied with core council services and the overall performance of the council:**

> "Services provided by Broxtowe are mainly very good."[10]

> "Bins are collected on time and parks are well maintained."

> "Compared to other parts of the country I have lived in, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire generally do a good job of providing services for the people and community."

> "Everything seems to work reasonably well at a local level."

> "Day-to-day services run smoothly, and that's what matters to residents."

3.6. Approximately a fifth of these respondents appreciated the **local knowledge, representation and responsiveness** of the council to their area and local needs:

> "Understand who does what — the council knows the needs of residents in our area."

> "Broxtowe understands local people and issues."

> "Local councils feel more in touch with what residents want."

> "There is more accountability in local councils."

> "Local councils feel more in touch with what residents want."

3.7. A similar proportion of these respondents felt that the **two-tier system works well**, is fit for purpose, and relatedly that they valued **stability and continuity** over change:

> "The split works quite well - local council deal with local issues, county with bigger ones."

> "County and Borough council structures provide a reasonably effective approach, balancing scale and democratic accountability."

[10] Quotes should be used responsibly and not presented out of context.

"It has worked well for years - Broxtowe is very well run. I know who to contact both on a local and county level."

"It seems to operate effectively as it is."

"Works well for Broxtowe. Don't have any reason to complain. If it's not broken, don't try to fix it."

3.8. Those who said **neither effective or ineffective** often expressed mixed experiences of council services (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this follow-up question) or were not fully aware of, or knowledgeable about, the current system (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this question).

3.9. Those rating the **system ineffective** either said that they are unsatisfied with services (cited by approximately a tenth of respondents that answered this follow-up question) and/or that the current two-tier system is confusing to access (cited by about 5% of respondents to this question), and inefficient with duplication (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this question) and lack of joined-up working between councils (cited by approximately 5% of respondents to this question).

Section 4: Local Government Reorganisation in England

Introduction

4.1. This section presents findings about the Government's plans for reorganisation of local government across the country, including awareness and knowledge, and perceptions about these plans.

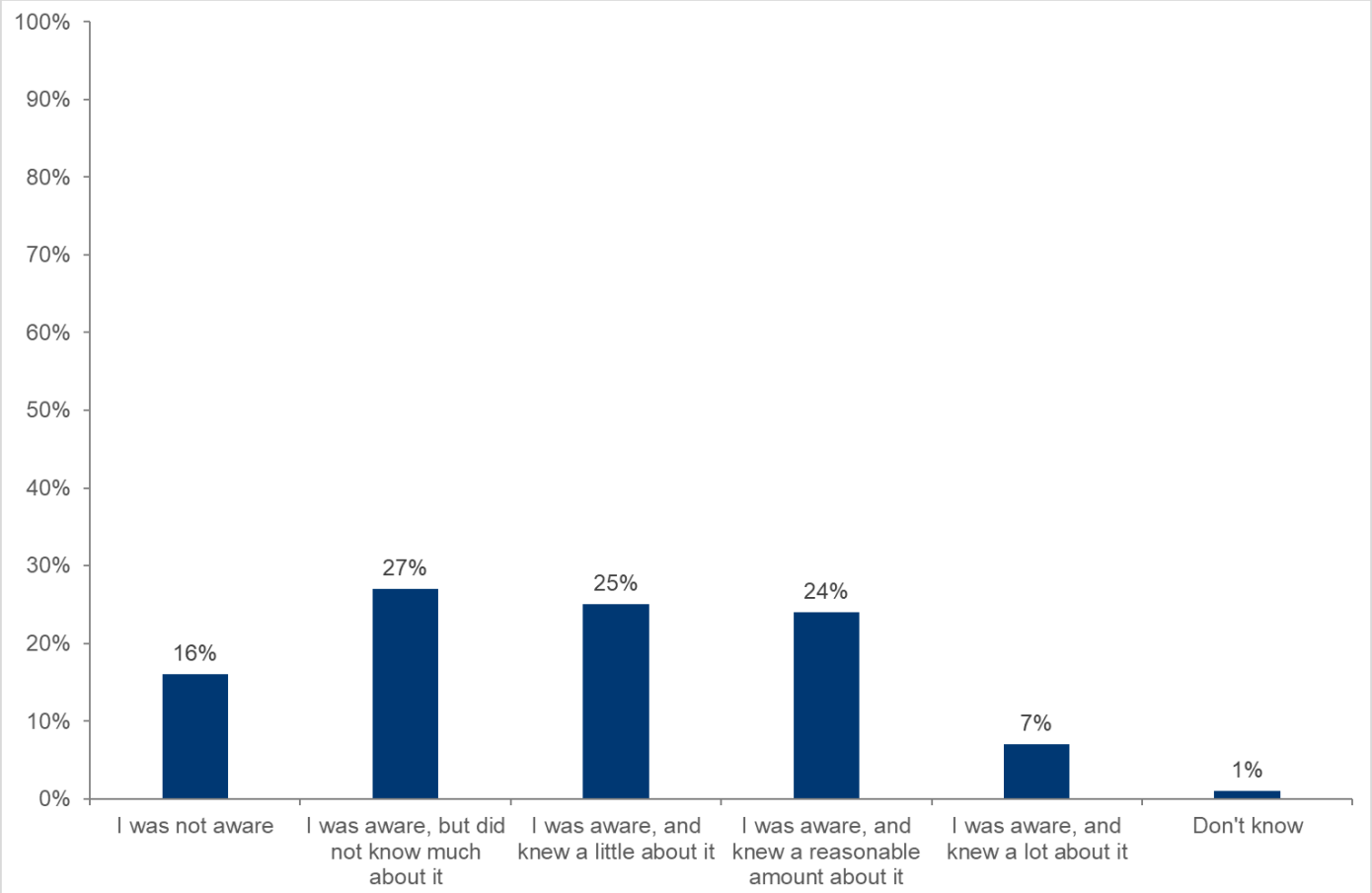
Before today, how aware were you about the Government's plans to reorganise local councils across England?

Most respondents are aware of the reorganisation of councils across England, although awareness tends to be at the lower end of the spectrum

4.2. Overall, 84% of respondents are aware of the reorganisation of councils across England, including 7% that knew a lot about it, 24% a reasonable amount, 25% a little and 27% not much about it. 16% were not aware at all before responding to the questionnaire.

4.3. There is a close relationship between awareness of the current council system and awareness of local government reorganisation. For example, 61% that are at least reasonably knowledgeable about the current system are also reasonably knowledgeable about local government reorganisation.

Figure 4.1: Awareness and knowledge of local government reorganisation across England



Number of respondents: 9,598.

What do you think are the main potential benefits, if any, of the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Potential benefits include efficiency and cost savings, and improved access, services and outcomes, although a notable proportion are sceptical about benefits being achieved

4.4. 7,838 respondents commented on the potential benefits of local government reorganisation. Approximately two-fifths of these respondents said that local government reorganisation could **reduce duplication, generate efficiencies and consequently save money**, of which a sub-set of these respondents said could lead to lower council tax and/or more value for money services (approximately a fifth):

> "Efficiency, reduced cost and duplication - councils as unitaries will be more connected for residents."

> "Cut out the duplication and save a lot of money; should be under one roof. Hopefully savings should help social care and the NHS."

> "Value for money 'enabled': less duplication, improved effectiveness and efficiency (this is the theory!).

> "More effective and streamlined and hopefully cheaper services."

> "Hopefully a reduction in headcount and overhead leading to a reduction in council tax or investment in local needs."

4.5. Relatedly, approximately a fifth of those that responded to this question said that there could be **service improvements** due to better coordination and joined-up working, economies of scale and cost-savings that could be reinvested into improved services, resulting in **better outcomes:**

> "Better coordination, less fragmentation, clearer focus."

> "Joined-up approach and sharing information - sharing best practice and implementing this."

> "More streamlined service, financial savings, less 'passing the buck' to other departments - more clarity on who is responsible for different services."

> "Less authorities, reduction of bureaucracy leading to savings and a clearer focus on important issues."

> "More equality in access to services and outcomes across different localities."

4.6. Approximately a tenth of respondents to this question said that local government reorganisation could **simplify the structure and make it easier to navigate the system and access services:**

> "Streamlining processes should make it easier for people to access support and understand responsibilities."

> "There is potential to streamline systems and processes, resulting in cost savings and simpler access to care and services."

> "It could make access to services simpler - with only one council to deal with, it could save money and ensure equality and uniformity of standards."

4.7. In contrast, approximately a fifth of respondents to this question were **sceptical about potential benefits** either in principle or realised in practice:

> "I see no benefits. The two largest unitary authorities — Birmingham City and Nottingham City - are both bankrupt."

> "No benefits to anyone other than the city council, who see surrounding areas as a cash cow - they've bankrupted themselves."

> "No benefits at all. None of these changes are about improving services - it's about doing the same or less at lower cost."

> "Can't see any positives - it will just create a bigger, less efficient bureaucracy."

> "None - the bigger an organisation, the more 'top heavy' it becomes. Money is spent on managers, not on doing the work."

What concerns, if any, do you have about the Government's proposed reorganisation of local councils?

Concerns about joining with Nottingham City Council, inheriting its perceived financial and services issues, and associated loss of voice, lack of responsiveness to local issues, and worries about cost, disruption and service provision

4.8. 8,069 respondents provided comments or concerns about the proposed reorganisation of local government. Approximately half of these respondents raised concerns about an urban-rural imbalance, including **concern about being absorbed into an urban Nottingham City dominated council**, and associated concerns about **loss of local voice, representation, accountability and identity, and associated lack of responsiveness to local issues and concerns:**

> "I am worried that we will be classed as part of Nottingham City when we live 12 miles from the centre!"

> "Being sucked into an urban council when we are rural or suburban in nature."

> "Rural areas being swallowed into city laws. Being made to pay for services that are irrelevant to me."

> "Broxtowe will be subsumed into the city, increasing local taxes on the community and reducing standards and resources."

> "We run the risk of losing the 'personal touch'. We currently have councillors who live in the area they represent — they care about it and have passion for it. Would we get the same representation under the new system?"

> "Too remote and bureaucratic. Less accountability. Less community identification, less neighbourhood approaches and commitment, more feelings of lack of engagement locally."

> "Reduced support in local areas, money invested elsewhere, lack of understanding of specific local issues."

> "That this is being railroaded through with no option to stay as we are - we would lose autonomy and local decision-making."

> "Less local accountability. More remote management, so less informed council making decisions."

> "More impersonal service. Loss of local identity. Potential for greater bureaucracy, and money spent on that rather than services."

4.9. Approximately a third of those that responded to this question were **concerned about being merged with Nottingham City Council and inheriting its debt or perceived financial mismanagement and/or service delivery issues:**

> "Broxtowe provides a great service, but Notts County Council do not. To lose Broxtowe to Nottingham City and other boroughs would only make services delivered worse. So no thank you."

> "The council we are in (Broxtowe) is a very well run council. For the proposals we would be joined with the City of Nottingham which has an inability to run properly, provide the services they should, or even just balance their budget."

> "Nottingham City Council is pretty poor at financial management, so I feel joining up with them will result in the whole county being mismanaged."

> "Nottingham City is very close to bankruptcy. I would be concerned that funding from suburban councils will go to fill the hole that Nottingham City has created."

> "Nottingham City is riddled with debt. Will residents of Broxtowe take on this burden with higher taxes?"

> "Nottingham City are bankrupt. If they join us in Broxtowe they will take all our money to bail themselves out. Nottingham City have a bad track record of wasting money on projects that fail, e.g. Robin Hood Energy."

> "The incompetent Nottingham City Council will attempt to take money from borough council tax payers to balance their books."

> "Do not want to be joined with Nottingham City Council: their mismanagement and lack of financial acumen over many years = bankrupt."

> "It is blatant gerrymandering pulling representation and funds away from local areas into an uncaring and bankrupt city council which shows no concern for the suburbs and towns."

> "Nottingham City Council is less efficient and more poorly run than Broxtowe, Rushcliffe and Gedling. Major concern we will receive a lower quality service."

4.10. In addition, approximately a tenth of respondents to this question raised general worries about the **cost of reorganisation, inefficiency of larger councils, or waste of public money** undertaking the reorganisation, including some advocating for stability and continuity:

> "I don't think there has been a proper analysis of any suggested cost savings - will this reorganisation actually save money?"

> "Having doubts whether any cost savings will exceed the cost of reorganisation."

> "A lot of money will be wasted in the process. Things started will be stopped and go back to square one."

> "A larger merged council cannot target the needs of a smaller area. The savings from reducing overheads could well be cancelled out by the money wasted from allocating funds to the wrong services."

> "At Broxtowe we get good services now. We have concerns this might change in the reorganisation."

4.11. Relatedly, a similar proportion raised concerns about **potential disruption in the short-term and/or a reduction in service quality or provision in the longer-term due to inefficiencies and lack of local responsiveness.** A sub-set of these respondents indicated that improvements to services are important, but felt these could be best achieved in-situ within the current structure:

> "The settling-in period will likely be messy and impact severely on residents and services. This is being done purely for cost-cutting measures."

> "This exercise could be a significant upheaval, put jobs at risk, and lead to change for the sake of it."

> "Reduced capacity of services, cuts to services, less accountability to local residents."

> "Centralized control doesn't mean more efficiencies; it means less, more bureaucracy, less local connection, and the chaos and disorder of change."

> "The cost of reorganisation would be better spent on improving services."

4.12. A minority (approximately 5% that responded to this question) **expressed no concerns or conditional support for change** if it improved efficiency and/or reduced costs:

> "If the new structure means better coordination and less duplication, then it's a good idea."

> "Fine with change, as long as it's managed well and benefits residents."

> "No concerns, providing the reorganisation actually improves local services."

> "Could lead to savings - this exercise could be a significant upheaval, but if it improves services, then restructure is fine."

> "None. The reorganisation will cost millions of pounds and take many years to implement, so any perceived savings will take time, but if it works in the long term, fine."

Section 5: Future councils

Introduction

5.1. This section presents findings about the design of the potential future councils, including the most important principles and features of a new council and the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions.

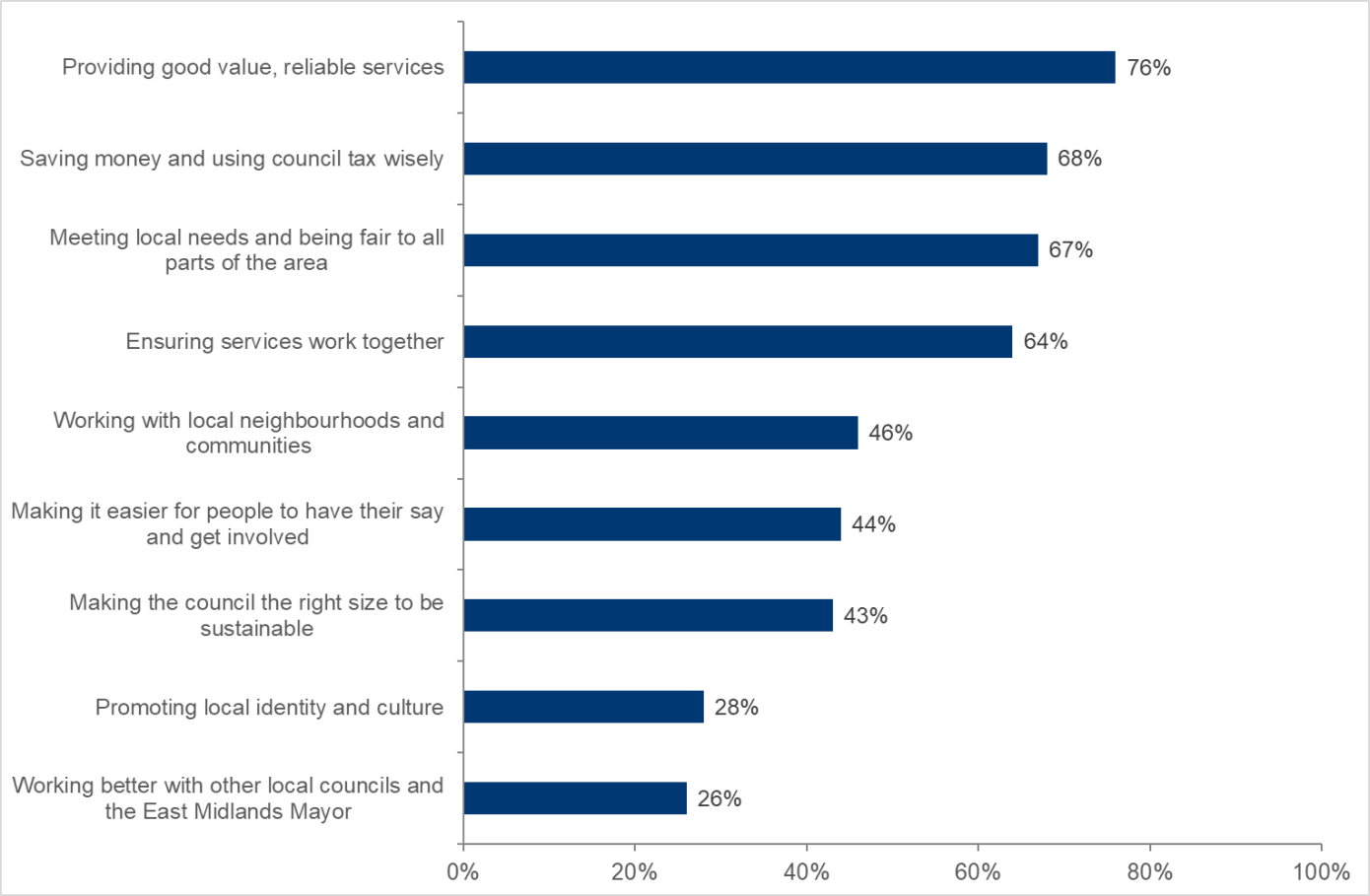
What should be most important when designing a new council?

Quality services, value for money and meeting local needs are the priorities for a future council, along with ensuring services work well together

5.2. Overall, 76% of respondents cited providing good value, reliable services.

5.3. This is followed by 68% saving money and using council tax wisely, 67% meeting local needs and being fair to all parts of the area, and 64% ensuring services work together.

Figure 5.1: Most important for a new council



Number of respondents: 9,378. Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

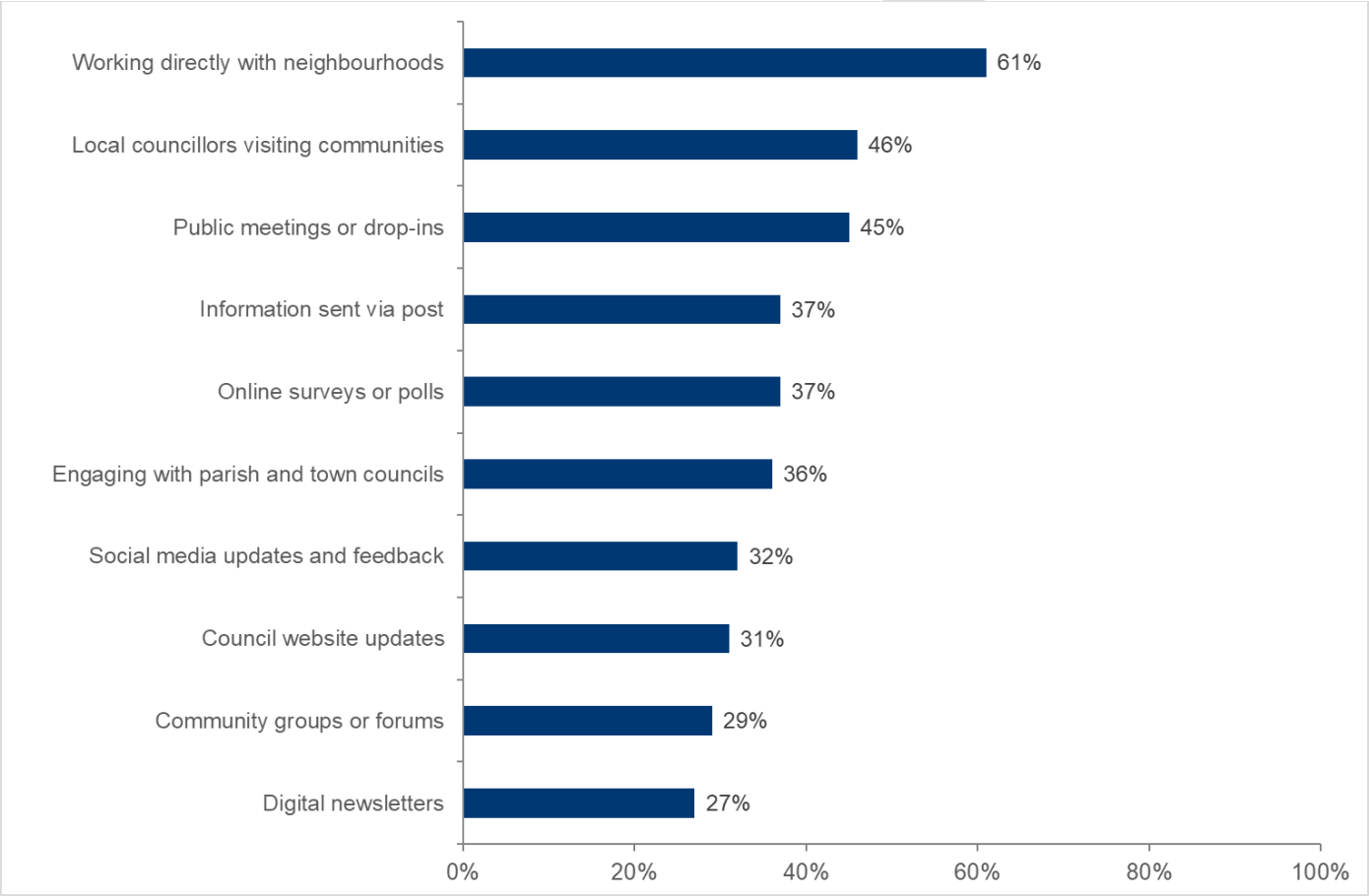
What are the best ways for the new councils to involve people in local decisions?

Neighbourhood working, local councillors and public forums are the best way to involve people in local decisions

5.4. Overall, 61% of respondents said working directly with neighbourhoods is the best way to involve people in local decisions.

5.5. This is followed by 46% that mentioned local councillors and 45% public meetings, along with a mixed economy of other approaches.

Figure 5.2: Best ways to involve people in local decisions



Number of respondents: 9,282.

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.

Section 6: Local Government Reorganisation across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Introduction

6.1. This section presents the proposals for reorganisation of local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils and different options for the proposed new councils.

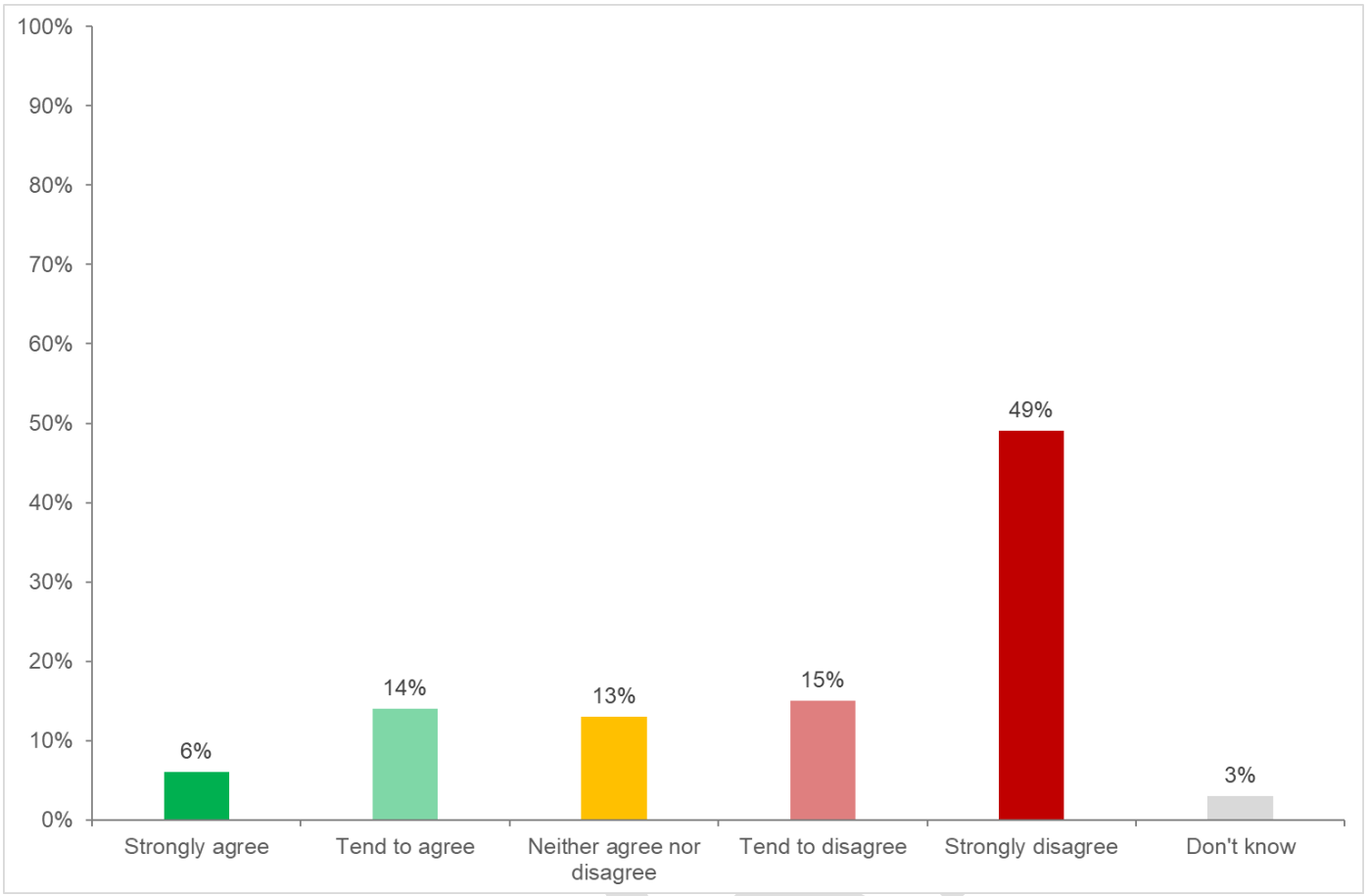
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two councils to run local government across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area?

Almost two-thirds of respondents disagree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils across the county, with a fifth agreeing with the proposal

6.2. Overall, 20% of respondents agree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils. In contrast, 64% of respondents disagree with the proposal, including 49% that strongly disagree.

6.3. There is a relationship between perceptions of the effectiveness of the current system and levels of agreement with the proposal to reduce the number of councils. For example, 14% of those that said the current structure of local councils is effective agree with the proposal to reduce the number of councils compared with 39% of those that said the current system is ineffective. i.e. in other words, those that consider the current system ineffective are more likely to state there is a case for change, although this is only a minority position.

Figure 6.1: Level of agreement with proposal to replace nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire



Number of respondents: 9,488.

6.4. Respondents were asked to explain their answers to help understand the levels of agreement for the proposal to replace the nine existing councils with two across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with 7,213 respondents providing further explanation. The **comments echoed the benefits and concerns raised earlier about local government reorganisation in England in general.**

6.5. In summary, those that **agreed** tended to state that the proposals would reduce duplication, generate efficiencies and consequently lead to cost-savings, while a smaller number also said that it would lead to a simplification of the system and therefore improved accessibility.

6.6. Those that **disagreed** are particularly concerned about joining in a council that they believe would be dominated by Nottingham City with implications for loss of local voice, representation, accountability and identity, and associated lack of responsiveness to local issues and concerns. Similarly, there are related concerns about inheriting Nottingham City Council's perceived financial and service issues. In addition, there is scepticism that the proposed benefits will be achieved in practice, with concerns that these will be outweighed by costs of reorganisation and disruption, with related impacts on services and outcomes.

6.7. Some of those respondents that are **neutral** emphasised the need for transparency and evidence before supporting such a significant shift and/or that they would only support such a proposal if it demonstrably led to cost-savings and/or service improvements.

The core options

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option (Option 1b)?

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling (known as Option 1b). This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Rushcliffe. The second covering Gedling, Broxtowe, and Nottingham City.

Concerns about joining with Nottingham City dominate responses, along with criticism of the logic of the boundaries and the inclusion and exclusion of certain areas

6.8. The dominant theme are concerns about being grouped in a new council with Nottingham City, mentioned by approximately a third of respondents to this question (6,503 respondents provided comments to this question). These respondents tended to **strongly oppose being merged with Nottingham City (and its council)**, citing concerns over perceived financial and service delivery issues, and poor management:

> "My main concern is that this proposal lumps my local authority in with Nottingham City. I don't want to be saddled with all of the city's problems and debts."

> "Nottingham City Council cannot manage their own finances and now need additional money and support from other areas."

> "Yes Nottingham City Council is bankrupt - how would it benefit Broxtowe?"

> "Broxtowe gains nothing from linking with the city, only taking on part of their enormous debt."

> "By and large, the system seems to work fairly well — why should we support Nottingham City Council who waste money?"

> "Concerned that I would pay extra council tax to pay off the debt of Nottingham City Council."

> "Gedling and Broxtowe will be bailing out Nottingham City and helping them pay off their debts."

> "Will only reduce already struggling services as Nottingham do not have best record at balancing their books!!"

> "I do not want to be included with Nottingham City Council in any way. Very poorly run and has wasted millions of pounds in schemes which they were told wouldn't work from the start."

"Do not want to join with Nottingham City Council - debt ridden and poor administration."

"I have deep reservations about being grouped with Nottingham City Council, judging by their past inadequacies and money problems."

"My concern is Broxtowe and Gedling will take on the city's debt leading to higher council taxes, poorer services and cuts to services."

6.9. Approximately a fifth of respondents to this question said they are concerned about an **urban Nottingham City dominating the new council, and undermining local voice, representation, identity and local services:**

"With Nottingham having a higher concentration of homes, businesses, and population, the new authority needs to guard against decisions being made that benefit the city and adversely impact Gedling and Broxtowe."

"Issues affecting Broxtowe are not the same as those affecting Nottingham."

"Concern Broxtowe and Gedling will be neglected in favour of Nottingham City."

"Any area with Nottingham City Council would lose their identity."

"This would effectively subsume Beeston into Nottingham and leave Stapleford and Nuthall out of the loop. We'd be ignored by a council focused on the city."

"A bad idea. Broxtowe is a well-run council dedicated to good services for its community. Unification would be detrimental to Broxtowe residents."

"I'd rather keep local councils that know our area than be part of a large authority."

"We need decision-making to stay close to residents, not in a distant office."

6.10. Approximately a fifth of respondents to this question **criticise the logic of the boundaries and the inclusion and exclusion of certain areas.** This includes the inclusion of Broxtowe in general, especially its more rural and/or outlying areas away from the city, and the exclusion of Rushcliffe amongst other areas:

"Why split it like this? It doesn't make sense."

"It seems random how the areas are divided."

"The groupings don't reflect communities or how people live their lives."

"Who decided these boundaries? They ignore geography and travel patterns."

"Keep the city and rural areas separate."

"The proposed lines don't follow natural boundaries or local ties."

"Option 1b seems to ignore how people actually move around the county."

"We are part of Nottinghamshire, not Nottingham. I feel like we're closer to Derbyshire than the city."

"Rushcliffe should be included – it makes more sense geographically."

"Ashfield shouldn't be lumped in with Mansfield and Newark; it's too different."

6.11. About a fifth of respondents to this question said they are **generally opposed to the concept of local government reorganisation** whether it be due to concerns over disruption, costs, efficiencies or favouring a district-based system:

"I'm against all these plans, it will cause disruption, cost more than it saves and create two big and cumbersome councils that will not be any better."

"I think it's a political move with no thought for the residents at all — waste of money!"

"Unitary councils will be too big and remote – the two-tier system works."

"Merging everything won't save money; it will just create bureaucracy."

"Local councils already know their communities and priorities – a big unitary won't."

"Too large and complicated; local accountability would be lost. It would cause a democratic deficit."

"Two-tier system works well – local for day-to-day issues, county for the bigger stuff."

"Current structure is fine; it provides local access and accountability."

"District councils already work well together – there's no need to change."

6.12. In contrast, **approximately a tenth of respondents expressed support for Option 1b**, albeit often caveated as a relative preference, such as the 'least bad' or most practical structure that separates city and county. Similarly, some of this support is also conditional on achieving the potential benefits:

"I think this is the best compromise if we must move to unitaries."

"1b makes sense; Broxtowe and Gedling are near the city but not part of it."

"This is the preferred option as Broxtowe and Gedling are similar in demographic."

"Better of the two, but still undesirable."

"On paper this looks okay - it might simplify things if managed well."

"If the new council delivers better joined-up services, I'd support it."

"It could work if funding is fair and local input is kept."

Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions about this option (Option 1e)?

This option is two new unitary councils, one covering Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield, and Gedling. The second covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City, and Rushcliffe.

Respondents reiterated concerns about being merged with Nottingham City Council, becoming part of an urban-dominated authority, and the proposed boundary, although Option 1e attracted slightly more positivity than Option 1b, albeit conditionally and by a minority

6.13. As with Option 1b, concerns about being grouped in a new council with Nottingham City are most commonly cited, mentioned by approximately a third of respondents to this question (6,476 respondents provided comments to this question). **Respondents reiterated their opposition to being merged with Nottingham City Council**, re-asserting concerns over perceived financial and service delivery issues, and poor management, with implications for council tax and service delivery:

> "Nottingham City Council is bankrupt. Why would we want to join them? Our council tax would probably increase!"

> "Again Nottingham City Council is bankrupt, unfair to Broxtowe and Rushcliffe taking on the debt."

> "Clever idea it is not put together 2 councils who are successful to shield the poor administration of Nottingham City – another ploy to put money into Nottingham City."

> "Exactly the same problems/issues: a dominant Nottingham City will waste more money and Broxtowe yet again a successful council broken up."

> "Yes, I do not want Nottingham City Council. They cannot manage their own finances and now need additional money and support from other areas."

> "See earlier comments. The city council isn't interested in Broxtowe residents and will just suck up our council tax and give nothing back."

> "Again, Nottingham City Council would like to take over Broxtowe and Rushcliffe to give themselves more money. There are no benefits financially for Broxtowe or Rushcliffe."

> "There is no reason why Broxtowe and Rushcliffe should be part of the City of Nottingham… No doubt the city wants the council tax and business rates, but there is no guarantee they would be used for local residents."

"Broxtowe is well-run. Nottingham City is not. Don't drag us into their mess."

"My council tax will go up to benefit those in the city and pay for their services, not mine."

6.14. Similarly, approximately a fifth of respondents to this question **re-stated their concerns about an urban Nottingham City dominating the new council**, and undermining local voice, representation, identity and local services:

"Broxtowe has its own identity and has a better understanding of local needs - getting bigger is not the answer. Nottingham City has proven it is in a mess already!"

"Parts of Broxtowe and Rushcliffe are quite rural and very different to parts of Nottingham City, with different priorities and needs."

"As a Broxtowe resident, my primary concern is that the area has significant differences to Nottingham City, local specificities will not be taken into account."

"Broxtowe would lose its voice and end up being run by Nottingham City's priorities."

"Broxtowe has a clear identity and good local services that would be lost if merged with Nottingham City."

"We'd lose local control, local understanding, and be ruled by a council that doesn't know us."

"It will become Greater Nottingham in name and in governance, and Broxtowe's needs will be secondary."

"There is no guarantee that Broxtowe residents would get fair representation - city priorities would always come first."

"Rushcliffe and Broxtowe have many rural settlements, we'd be overlooked in a city-led structure."

"Nottingham City has no understanding of rural issues like transport, farming, or small villages."

6.15. As with Option 1b, **boundary concerns are cited**, albeit in less volume (cited by approximately a tenth of respondents to this question). This includes the inclusion of Broxtowe in general, especially its more rural and/or outlying areas away from the city. Whilst there is some acknowledgement of the appropriateness of including Rushcliffe (at least some parts of it), this is contrasted by questions about the exclusion of Gedling in Option 1e and other areas surrounding the city:

> "These boundaries make no sense - areas that work together are being split apart."

> "The proposed councils are unbalanced — one covers far more people and geography than the other."

> "We shouldn't be grouped with Nottingham - it's not where our services naturally connect."

> "Broxtowe and Rushcliffe have more in common [with each other] than with the city. Boundaries should reflect community links."

> "Merging rural areas with an urban authority will lead to neglect of smaller communities."

> "Urban and rural areas need different kinds of governance and priorities."

> "Rushcliffe areas are much closer to the city than Beeston is, so we shouldn't be part of it."

> "We'd be better joining with Ashfield as it impacts road boundaries, bins and planning in our village."

> "Areas such as Arnold, Gedling, Mapperley etc. should be included."

6.16. Approximately a fifth of respondents to this question **reiterated their opposition to the concept of local government reorganisation**, highlighting concerns over disruption, costs, efficiencies or supporting a district-based system:

> "Every change like this costs more money and causes disruption."

> "Why change and combine councils that are losing money? The best-performing ones should stay put."

> "Councils will be too large to effectively work."

"There is no clear efficiency, just higher costs and less democracy."

"No benefits - a bigger council just means money goes away from our area into the city."

"Local councils work well for local people - stop wasting money on reorganisation."

"Happy with current offering, don't see an improvement, just less representation and more distance from services."

"Keep district councils; they know their communities best."

"Reorganisation is not needed - focus on improving existing services."

"The government should support local councils, not replace them."

6.17. This said, there is **more positivity towards this option compared with Option 1b** with approximately a fifth of respondents to this question positive about the proposal either in absolute terms or as a preference compared to alternative options. As with Option 1b, some of this support is caveated or conditional:

"If this is a decision already made, I would prefer this option."

"This is the preferable option because it is a better balance of numbers and similar areas working together."

"In favour of [Option 1e] as it keeps neighbouring communities together – not disjointed."

"Seems more logical than Option 1B [South Nottingham]."

"Sensible geographical spread – one region for the North and the other for the South."

"This is probably the better option – but again I think the City Council should remain separate."

"This is better than Option 1B but still makes us a part of Nottingham City."

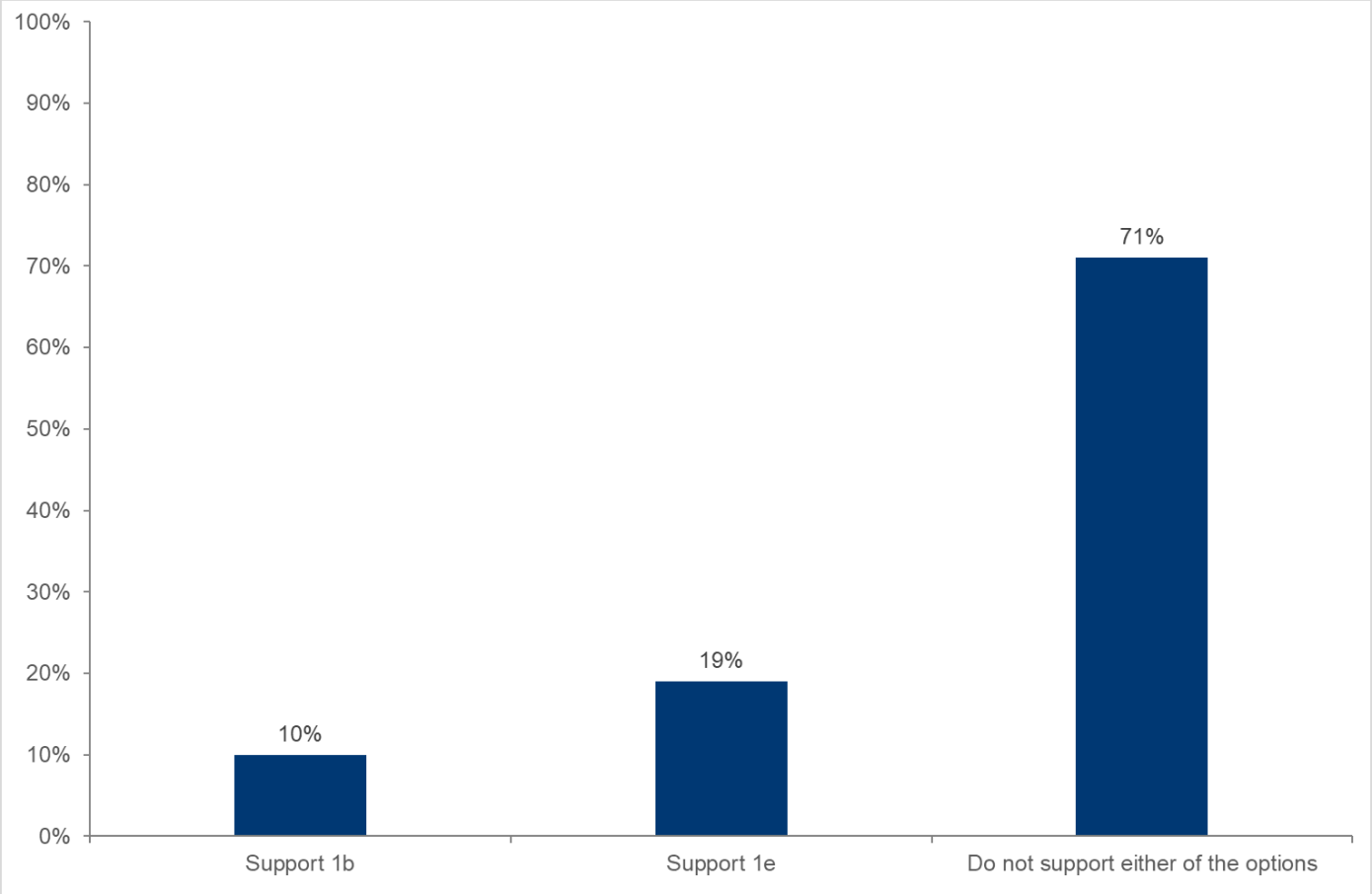
"This would be a better option and could work quite well, assuming it delivers positive benefits for the area."

Additional Broxtowe specific questions

6.18. The council asked additional questions as part of its separate survey of households in Broxtowe about support for each of the options:

- 10% support option 1b (of these 5% support both 1b and 1e).
- 19% support option 1e (of these 5% support both 1b and 1e).
- 71% do not support either of the options.

Figure 6.2: Additional Broxtowe specific questions about the proposed options



Number of respondents: 12,025.

www.publicperspectives.co.uk

MRS Evidence Matters™ Company Partner

public perspectives