SUPPLEMENT 2: APPENDICES C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, AND C6

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APPENDIX (c)1: SUMMARY OF COMRES OPINION POLL

1. The key aims of this research were to understand the views of adults in the two districts about the proposal to create a new single district-level council for both areas; current concerns and perceived benefits of the proposed creation of a new council; and residents’ priorities and objectives for local government in their area.

2. Specialist polling organisation ComRes were commissioned to carry out telephone interviews with adults aged 18+ living in the districts. All respondents were eligible to vote in Council elections in either district. ComRes set quotas by Council area and surveyed 2000 adults in Babergh and 2003 in Mid Suffolk, ensuring that samples were balanced in terms of age, gender, ward, socio-economic grade and ethnicity. This gave a 99% confidence level and margin of error of plus or minus 2%.

3. ComRes also conducted telephone polls for Waveney District Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council as part of their respective ‘one council’ consultations. These four councils have since received Secretary of State approval to merge to form East Suffolk and West Suffolk district councils. The company independently surveyed randomly selected electors across both Councils’ areas to capture their views towards the proposal. The methodology used provided a statistically robust set of results, in line with the gold standard for the industry. The survey provided neutral, factual information to help people make an informed decision, and also provided several open-ended questions for people to give their views openly. The format and questions were almost identical to those used for East and West Suffolk.

4. 70% of adults surveyed said they have heard of the proposal to create a new single district to replace Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, with 57% saying they know at least a little about the proposals. When first asked more local adults in both districts say they are favourable towards the proposal rather than not – 49% in favour as opposed to 31% against (20% don’t know). These results are strongest in Mid Suffolk rather than Babergh. When provided with more information on the proposal and its impact, the majority of residents across both districts are favourable to the proposal – 62% in favour as opposed to 28% unfavourable (10% don’t know). Again these results are strongest in Mid Suffolk where 69% are in favour, but there is also still a majority in Babergh of 55%.

Favourability towards the proposed creation of a single District Council – revisited
5. Almost all residents (93%) surveyed say it will be important for the new council to provide long term financial stability to be able to protect the services that are most important to residents and to provide better public services that are more tailored to residents’ needs. Around seven in ten saying that these are very important – the most of any objectives tested.

6. Nearly nine in ten adults say that ensuring that the new council is equipped to meet the future challenges facing local government is an important priority, alongside strengthening residents’ voices through a stronger and more influential council, and providing long-term financial stability to protect the services that are most important to residents (89%, 85% and 93% of respondents said that these priorities were important).

7. Despite four in five adults saying that delivering further efficiency savings of around £1m per year and increasing the effectiveness of the council’s economic and housing roles are important (79% of respondents rating them as important priorities), they are rated as the lowest of all the objectives listed.

8. A majority of adults across the districts say they are not concerned with the proposal to create a new council (54%). Around two in five adults expressed concerns with the proposal (43%). Indeed, approximately one in seven (14%) say they are very concerned about it. Concerns were raised regarding the risk of creating a disconnected, more distant council with a deterioration in services. When asked about the impact a new Council would have on particular demographic groups, local adults are more likely to say this would be positive or neutral rather than negative upon each; especially for older people, disabled people and younger people. The full ComRes report and data tables are attached in Supplement 1.
APPENDIX (c)2

APPENDIX (c)2: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES RECEIVED

1. Council officers and Councillors have engaged with a range of stakeholders to provide information about the proposals and respond to questions. A summary of engagement by stakeholder group is provided below. This involved a combination of formal letters, meetings and briefings. Letters were sent on 13\textsuperscript{th} December 2017, and reminders to those who had not replied were sent in January 2018.

2. A total of 44 letters were sent to key stakeholders across both districts. 16 responses were received, copies of these letters are below. Of those, 13 were in favour, 2 were against, and 1 called for a referendum.

3. Business letters of support:
   - David McQuade, Chief Executive of Flagship Group
   - John Dugmore, Chief Executive of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
   - Stephen Javes, Chief Executive of Orwell Homes
   - Jenny Cousins, Director of the Museum of East Anglian Life
   - Sally Chicken, Head of the Shotley Pier Fund
   - Chris Starkie, Chief Executive of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

4. Local Government letters of support:
   - Councillor Colin Noble, Leader of Suffolk County Council
   - Councillor Mark Bee, Leader of Waveney District Council
   - Councillor Ray Herring, Leader of Suffolk Coastal District Council
   - Julie Collett, Clerk to Wilby Parish Council

   “Suffolk County Council is supportive of the proposal for Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Districts to merge to form a new District Council. The booklet attached to your letter very clearly demonstrates the progress you have made. A formal merger is a prudent next step given the financial environment and challenges facing local public services and builds on your track record. The future ambitions of our councils are very much aligned in terms of finance, efficiency, collaboration and leadership, not least in our drive to attract investment in infrastructure to boost our economy and benefit local communities.”
   (Leader of Suffolk County Council, Colin Noble)

   “At a recent parish council meeting Wilby fully supported the proposed creation of a single District Council. Wilby Parish Councillors agreed that this seems to be the logical end point of the current fully integrated joint working under a single Chief Executive and reflected majority public opinion in Mid Suffolk as expressed in the 2011 referendum.”
   (Julie Collett, Clerk to Wilby Parish Council)

5. Health & 3\textsuperscript{rd} Sector letters of support:
   - NHS Ipswich & East Suffolk CCG
   - Dr Professor Stephen Dunn, West Suffolk Foundation Trust
• Alison Smith (on behalf of David Hulme), Ipswich Hospital and East Suffolk Community Hospitals
• Tracey Loynds and Tim Mutum, Chief Executive and Chairman of South Suffolk Leisure

“We at Ipswich Hospital and East Suffolk community hospitals whole heartedly support the collaboration and the additional benefits you have identified will be achieved; increased financial savings, release of staff capacity, improved decision making processes, designing the council for the community of the future and increasing the voice of these communities within the Pan Suffolk discussions by being a single entity.” (Alison Smith on behalf of David Hulme, Ipswich Hospital and East Suffolk Community Hospitals)

6. Other local stakeholder letters of support:

• Lady Clare, Countess of Euston, HM Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk

7. Stakeholder letters of concern:

• Holbrook Parish Council - consultation process and whether responses will reflect opinions of our parish residents; costs will be passed to residents.
• Debbie Hattrell, Clerk to Nayland with Wissington Parish Council - lack of consultation; more remote from residents; savings would be absorbed by cost of re-organisation; distraction from running services efficiently.
• David Crimmin, Clerk of Chilton Parish Council – referendum should be held on the same day as Parish and District Council elections in May 2019 to minimise costs.

A full list of stakeholders who were contacted is as below:
Dr. Dan Poulter MP
James Cartlidge MP
Jo Churchill MP
Councillor Bee, Waveney District Council
Councillor Ellesmere, Ipswich Borough Council
Councillor Griffiths, St Edmundsbury District Council
Councillor Herring, Suffolk Coastal District Council
Councillor Noble, Suffolk County Council
Councillor Waters, Forest Heath District Council
Town and Parish Councils
Lord John E. Gardiner
Lord John S. Deben
Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk
Lord Robert W. Dixon
Lady Rosalind C. Scott
Hadleigh Chamber of Commerce
Federation of Small Businesses
Stowmarket Chamber of Commerce
Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
New Anglia LEP
Sudbury and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Citizens Advice Bureau - Stowmarket
Citizens Advice Bureau - Sudbury
Job Centre Plus - Sudbury
Dear Nick

I refer to the letter from yourself and Councillor Jennie Jenkins dated 15 December 2017, explaining the proposals to merge Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council, creating a single council for the central Suffolk area.

It will be no surprise to you, given that Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils have already agreed to create a single council for East Suffolk, and already have embarked on that process, that we fully support your proposals. I am sure that, having considered all the relevant issues in detail, you will have reached the same conclusions as we have in East Suffolk. The pressures faced by local authorities require a clear, unequivocal, and perhaps radical response. We face financial challenges, increasing demands for services, and a need to engage more effectively at the regional and national level. By joining forces you will be able to respond to those challenges more effectively, and act on behalf of your communities with more authority and with a louder voice. A single council will generate economies of scale and be more resilient to future threats and challenges.

In conclusion, we fully support your proposals to merge the existing districts into a single council, and if we can support that process in any way, such as by sharing our experiences as we proceed with our merger, we will be more than willing to do so.

Yours sincerely
Cllr Mark Bee
Leader
Waveney District Council
| Councillor Herring | Cllr Nick Gowerley  
One Council Engagement  
Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils  
Endeavour House  
8 Russell Road Ipswich   IP1 2BX |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Dear Nick  
One council proposal  
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In conclusion, we fully support your proposals to merge the existing districts into a single council, and if we can support that process in any way, such as by sharing our experiences as we proceed with our merger, we will be more than willing to do so. |
| Yours sincerely  
Cllr Mark Bee  
Cllr Ray Herring  
Leader  
Waveney District Council Suffolk Coastal District Council |
Dear Nick and John

Re: “One Council for the Heart of Suffolk”

Thank you for your letter of 15 December 2017 and may I take the opportunity to wish you a very Happy New Year.

Overall, Suffolk County Council is supportive of the proposal for Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Districts to merge to form a new District Council. The booklet attached to your letter very clearly demonstrates the progress you have made, including the recent co-location of the two councils in Endeavour House. A formal merger is a prudent next step given the financial environment and challenges facing local public services and builds on your track record. The future ambitions of our councils are very much aligned in terms of finance, efficiency, collaboration and leadership, not least in our drive to attract investment in infrastructure to boost our economy and benefit local communities.

As acknowledged in the correspondence, the 4 councils east and west Suffolk are also on the road to merger and Suffolk County Council has been supportive of both these mergers to create the new single District Councils, East Suffolk and West Suffolk. We recognise the opportunities and savings presented by having fewer Councils in Suffolk and we look forward to being able to further strengthen our strategic and local collaboration and service delivery arrangements across Suffolk.

Finally, we wish you, the Leaders, Councillors and Officers at Babergh and Mid-Suffolk well in putting together your business case and look forward to continuing to build on our positive, productive and valued partnership.

Yours sincerely

Colin Noble Leader Suffolk County Council

Date
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<tr>
<th>Councillor Griffiths, St Edmundsbury District Council and Councillor Waters, Forest Heath District Council</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr John Ward, Leader, Babergh District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endeavour House 8 Russell Road Ipswich, IP1 2BX</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 January 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dear John and Nick,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thank you for your letter of 15 December describing your vision for a new larger council and the benefits that this could bring for your communities and businesses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As you set out in your letter, transforming local Government is vital for Suffolk to continue as an economic success while meeting the needs of our communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have argued as part of our business case for a single council how more resilient district councils can better champion their areas and Suffolk as a whole; drive the local and national economy and be on a sounder financial footing while delivering locally tailored initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having read your proposals and kept abreast of the debate, we support your suggestions for a new council for the Mid Suffolk and Babergh area. We believe this would help meet future challenges and is part of the work your authorities have been carrying out in working more closely together. It should also have clear benefits for your communities and help further cement the partnership working across Suffolk public services. At the same time we recognise that your Cabinets have asked for people’s views, and rightly, any decision to go forward will of course be subject to further consideration by your councils and others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whatever the decision, we look forward to continuing to work with you.</td>
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<td>Yours sincerely,</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Griffiths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Edmundsbury Borough Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr Nick Gowerly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader, Mid Suffolk District Council</td>
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<td>Endeavour House 8 Russell Road Ipswich, IP1 2BX</td>
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<td>11 January 2018</td>
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Dear Jenny and Nick,

Thank you very much for your thoughtful letter of the 13th of December.

I am delighted to hear of your plans to establish a new, single Council in the heart of Suffolk and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Happy New Year!

Best wishes,

Clare Euston

Clare, Countess of Euston
H.M Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffolk Chamber of Commerce</th>
<th>19th January 2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dear Arthur,</td>
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<td>The future of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils: a new single merged council for the heart of Mid Suffolk</td>
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<td>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to create a new single district-level council for the heart of Suffolk which would merge the current Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.</td>
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<td>I am responding on behalf of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and I can confirm that we support the creation of a new single council for the heart of Suffolk.</td>
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<td>The business case claims of significant cost savings, improved accountability and improved services together make a compelling case and we are mindful that the recent services merger between Babergh DC and Mid Suffolk DC has already started to progress this project both on the ground and in the public's perception.</td>
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<td>I hope that the proposals to establish a new single council for the heart of Suffolk are quickly realised.</td>
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<td>Yours sincerely</td>
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<td>John Dugmore</td>
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<td>Chief Executive</td>
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<th>Wilby Parish Council</th>
<th>Dear Sir,</th>
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<td>At a recent parish council meeting Wilby fully supported the proposed creation of a single District Council. Wilby Parish Councillors agreed that this seems to be the logical end point of the current fully integrated joint working under a single Chief Executive and reflected majority public opinion in Mid Suffolk as expressed in the 2011 referendum.</td>
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<td>Kind regards,</td>
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<td>Julie Collett</td>
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<td>Clerk to Wilby PC</td>
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<td>Chilton Parish Council</td>
<td>CPC fully support a referendum on of the proposed merger between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and that it should be held on the same day as Parish and District council elections in May 2019 in order to minimise the costs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dave Crimmin  PSLCC</td>
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<td>Clerk, Chilton Parish Council</td>
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<td></td>
<td>01787 375085</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.chilton.suffolk.gov.uk">www.chilton.suffolk.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Holbrook Parish Council</th>
<th>Dear One Council Engagement,</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Holbrook Parish Council met on the 15th January 2018 to consider and discuss the above proposal and our comments for consideration are listed below:-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Since the 2011 referendum on ‘Merger’ was held, for which Babergh residents voted against, a great deal has changed. The Parish Council are concerned about the way the consultation process has been conducted and if the responses will truly reflect the opinions of our Parish Residents. Consideration should be given to a formal decision or vote being taken, which would provide transparency.</td>
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<td>• The Parish Council are concerned about the financial implications to our residents. The two councils have pursued a ground-breaking and award-winning approach of working together to deliver services with new ways of working, with an expected significant saving in the cost of service delivery but our residents are seeing a forthcoming rate rise. The Parish Council are concerned about the proposed changes and what further costs will be passed directly onto residents and will these be outweighed by the benefits.</td>
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<td>If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. I normally work Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Warm Regards,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Linda Goodyear</td>
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<td>Parish Clerk for Holbrook</td>
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<td>Nayland with Wissington Parish Council</td>
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<td>This matter was discussed in detail at yesterday's Parish Council Meeting in Nayland with Wissington.</td>
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<td>The Parish Council would like to register its objections to the proposal.</td>
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<td>Reasons given included: -</td>
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<td>1) We object to the way this has been handled and the lack of consultation.</td>
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<td>2) This would represent a fundamental change to the democratic process very soon after the Referendum on the subject. It would result in a Council and its Officers more remote from residents who are already experiencing deteriorations in service.</td>
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<td>3) Any financial savings would be soaked up by the cost of re-organisation</td>
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<td>4) We cannot see any evidence to support a case for this change and are concerned it would be yet another distraction from running services efficiently</td>
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<td>Please therefore take these points into consideration.</td>
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<td>Regards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debbie Hattrell</td>
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<td>Clerk to Nayland with Wissington Parish Council</td>
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Dear Arthur,

Thank you for your letter of 12th December 2017 in relation to the proposed merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils. On behalf of Flagship Group I would like to express our support for the principle of a merged council that will be in a stronger position to deliver vital public services in the future. This is of particular interest to Flagship Group as we have strong roots in the community. We currently have approximately 840 homes across the proposed new Council. Our primary focus is the delivery of homes and services to our customers and we welcome the opportunity to increase collaboration between our organisations and the new Authority.

As the ‘One Council’ document states; housing, infrastructure and demographic changes are key future challenges for the Councils. These echo many of our own priorities at Flagship and represent areas where we can work better together with a merged Council. We would be keen to see the results of the eight week engagement period and look forward to hearing the outcomes of the councillor’s discussion and any subsequent decision by the Secretary of State. We also look forward to continuing to work with the councils to deliver the best possible service to the people of Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Yours sincerely,

David McQuade
CEO
Flagship Group
Dear Arthur, Re: Proposal for Change

Many thanks for your letter dated 12 December advising of your proposal for change. The CCGs in East and West Suffolk are very supportive of the rational you have put forward. It makes good sense in the current context around the public sector collaboration and also in making the best use of public sector resources. We hope to work more closely with you in the future in the integration of health and care services in Suffolk. I wish you all the best in driving forward your agenda.

Yours Sincerely,

Ed Garratt
Chief Officer
Dr. S. Dunn - West Suffolk Hospital

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<th>23rd January 2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dear Arthur,</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am writing in response to your letter dated 11th January 2018 regarding the proposal to look at the creation of a new single district council, following the dissolution of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.</td>
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<td>The basis of the proposal from the Councils’ perspective is very much aligned with our own strategy for the integration of health and care. This is evidenced through the shift in the delivery of community services aligned to the west of Suffolk and the structure of an Integrated Care System (ICS) for West Suffolk.</td>
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<td>The opportunity the proposal presents to further strengthen integration and joint-working is most welcome and is something we wholeheartedly support.</td>
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<td>Yours sincerely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Professor Stephen Dunn</td>
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<td>Chief Executive</td>
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Dear Arthur,

I write in response to your letter of 11 January 2018, asking for my organisation’s views on the merging of Mid Suffolk District Council and Babergh District Council.

As you are aware, the Museum of East Anglian Life receives support from MSDC through an annual grant and in kind, through the delivery of the museum’s front-of-house by MSDC’s Tourist Information Centre. With the caveat that we do not know what the impact of the proposed merger would be on the stability of this support, we are in favour of it taking place.

The staff team which supports us from MSDC is shared with BDC. Efficiencies could result in more time becoming available for engagement and support.

By pooling the financial strengths of both authorities it may give you greater stability and therefore place you and, by extension, us in a more sustainable position to enable delivery of the priorities for communities that we both share.

In terms of funding I understand that you operate the same grants and funding framework for both councils so there should not be any significant impact on the way that we currently work.

I wish you every success with the plans.

Best regards,

Jenny Cousins Director
Dear Arthur,

Thank you for your letter of December 2018 and the One Council information that it contained. Within the context of an increasingly challenging financial environment and the need to continue delivering your much needed services a merger sounds a very strategic and sensible way forward.

Please do let me know if there is any aspect that you wish comment on. For clarity, I am very supportive of the merger between Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils.

With best wishes,

Mark Bills,
Director, Gainsborough’s House
Dear Mr Charvonia

Many thanks for your letter to Mr Hulme dated the 12th December and 11th January 2018, apologies for not responding sooner.

Many thanks for seeking our views on the proposal to create one district council for Babergh and Mid Suffolk and we welcome the work you have undertaken to date in combining your resources and expertise, delivering services in 2 districts with one workforce and the savings this has provided for the partnership. We at Ipswich Hospital and East Suffolk community hospitals whole heartedly support the collaboration you have already undertaken being formally endorsed under a single district council and the additional benefits you have identified will be achieved; increased financial savings, release of staff capacity, improved decision making processes, designing the council for the community of the future and increasing the voice of these communities within the Pan Suffolk discussions by being a single entity.

We look forward to hearing the outcome of this consultation

Kind regards

Alison Smith
Director of Community Services
Mobile Number: 07712233838
Tel: 01473 702083
Ext: 6250
Alison.H.Smith@ipswichhospital.nhs.uk

Executive Assistant Lorna Fraser
Tel: 01473 702120
Dear Arthur

Thank you for your letter dated today. I have no objections to the proposals that could result in the dissolution of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and the creation of a new, single District Council for the area from 2020.

Should you require anything else, please let me know.

Yours Sincerely

Stephen Javes
Chief Executive
Dear Arthur, RE: ONE COUNCIL FOR THE HEART OF SUFFOLK  Following on from your presentation to the Hadleigh Steering Group on Monday 15th January 2018 where you shared Babergh and Mid Suffolk’s vision for one council for the heart of Suffolk we would like to express our support.

We are aware that since 2011 Babergh and Mid Suffolk have been working together to pool resources and expertise. You have adopted a shared vision and work towards the same key priorities. One workforce now delivers all services resulting in significant and essential savings across the double district. South Suffolk Leisure feel that the quality of local services during this time has not been affected.

We feel that with the strong leadership in place that the natural next steps would be to merge the two councils. Significant officer time is being spent doing everything twice. It is our understanding that both councils are currently reviewing the number of councillors in each district and therefore local representation will not significantly change. It is our understanding that if a decision is taken to stay as we are; that the council will continue to deliver all services in the same way. Therefore, the changes do not appear to affect the general public.

A new council for the double district offers a more unified voice when working with partners and Government. Our fears would be that if Mid Suffolk decided to merge with a larger authority in East or West Suffolk, this would leave Babergh as the smallest and most vulnerable district in Suffolk.

South Suffolk Leisure fully support the recommendation to merge.

Yours sincerely,

Tracey Loynds  Tim Mutum  Chief Executive  Chairman
hi Arthur,

I have filled in the online survey and also emailing you here, with my personal views.

I fully support the planned merger, and feel the area to be covered is a sensible size and fit for the future.

I was dismayed by the argument that a referendum from years ago should be relied on to prevent change. The world has changed, we have had several general elections, we are leaving the EU, and life is very different with the new Treasury approach to financing local authorities.

Of more importance to me is ensuring channels of communication online and by phone keep taxpayers engaged and informed. Where your buildings are located is irrelevant, how far the authority reaches is not a concern, and how the democratic process works should be driven by logic and resources, not some archaic set up that is preserved just because it was like that in the past, and only since 1974 anyway!

I have been disturbed to see some district councillors behave in ways that seem more geared to their personal interest of retaining their seat, rather than the future sustainability of our district council. Everyone I have spoken to locally feels this is an issue but how to tackle it is a real problem.

regards
Sally
John McMillan - President of Sudbury and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Dear Sirs

Re:Sudbury and District Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Response to consultation on merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

Sudbury and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry represent businesses in the Sudbury area. The Chamber have considered the proposals for merger and have determined that no merger should proceed until business in Sudbury is satisfied that this merger is in the local interest.

The Chamber have reviewed the documentation and have also had the benefit of meeting with John Ward and discussed the proposals at a local meeting. Following this the Chamber confirms that their principle concerns realy to a lack of consultation - public perception that the merger plans are being forced through and that the consultation is not a genuine effort to listen to public concerns and merely represents a political exercise to serve internal and political purposes.

The Chamber considers that the council should have consulted on how local services should best be provided first and foremost and not the structure.

Business in the Sudbury area are principally affected by the charging framework for car parks. The merger will certainly result in changes to parking charges and this is flagged in the councils own documentation. The Chamber consider that the merger will result in a loss of local democratic accountability for services that are critical to the success of the town centre. As a result the Chamber oppose the merger and, in the absence of meaningful engagement between the district council and the Chamber intend to re-energise the campaign to retain free parking in Sudbury with the merger as the focus of our concerns.

Your Faithfully,

John McMillan
Tuesday 27th March 2018

Dear Mr Charvonia,

Re: A Proposed Single District Council for Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Thank you for your letter requesting views regarding the merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk district Councils.

I would like to express New Anglia LEP’s support for the proposal as we see a positive case for the creation of a single council covering the aforementioned districts.

A new larger council of greater scale will be even more effective in delivering public services and will be able to further support local businesses, skills and the wider growth agenda for Suffolk.

The mid Suffolk and Babergh area is recognised as containing many key economic drivers for Suffolk and the region, and this proposal will augment that position, improving the representation and advocacy for the area at the regional and national level. It is also recognised that the change will generate organisational benefits in terms of skills, capacity and resilience, which of course will be welcome.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh has been identified as a priority growth location in our new Economic Strategy for Norfolk and Suffolk and the creation of a single council will assist us in supporting the creation of jobs and growth in this area.

We look forward to seeing any proposal and look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Starkie
Chief Executive
APPENDIX (c)3: RESPONSES TO ONLINE SURVEY

1. The online survey was widely advertised through the website, in staff email signatures, on flyers and posters and by the Chief Executive and the Councillors. It was also advertised on social media, local media and promoted to staff through email, email signatures with direct survey links, bulletins and briefings.

2. 275 completed the online surveys. It is interesting and worth noting that 70% of respondents were Babergh residents. 170 of those responding opposed the proposal and 68 were in favour of the proposal. The remaining 37 respondents were either unsure, needed more information, wanted a referendum or super council or to join with another council.

3. Summary of the points raised by those in support of the proposal:
   - Some Councillors self-interested to keep people opposed to merger with misinformation.
   - ‘Ridiculous’ hasn’t happened already, merger will save money.
   - Efficiencies with staff and processes.
   - It just makes sense.
   - It will save money, resources and be more efficient.
   - Already working together; it is logical to merge.
   - “Please do not let the backward looking but vocal minority's stand in the way of progress.”
   - Why is this taking so long? Be brave and do it.

4. Some of those in favour of the proposal also raised ancillary points:
   - The Council is becoming distant.
   - Want to see more information.
   - There should be a referendum.
   - Political in-fighting is putting off the next generation of politicians.

5. Summary of the points raised by those in opposing the proposal:
   - Consultation - telephone survey was inadequate and open to manipulation.
   - Information - insufficient evidence to decide either way, one sided argument presented.
   - Financial Information - more figures wanted and do not believe the savings being projected.
   - Referendum - ignoring 2011 local poll, so undemocratic.
   - Services – already remote and isolated from people, “I want to talk to a human being”, staff are not visible.
   - Council size - too large for purpose, local should be local. Spread too thin, one size does not fit all.
   - Local representation - voices will be lost, and people & places forgotten, and local knowledge lost.
- Democracy - Too few councillors for too large an area, and opposition parties will lose voice.

6. Some of those opposing the proposal also raised ancillary points:

- You’re going to do it anyway.
- We won’t listen anyway, engagement is a sham.
- Cannot see the benefit for residents.
- Endeavour House is not easily accessible for the public - out of district & no parking, hard to contact & appointments difficult.
- Contact centre cannot resolve issues.
- Babergh are residents resolutely convinced they will lose out e.g. car parking charges and council tax increases.
- You’ve left yourselves no other choice.
- Purely a financial decision.

Responses to online survey:

1. To create a single council we must draw up a business case for the proposal, one which must be informed by feedback from our residents, businesses and other stakeholders. Please use the text box below to provide your opinions on the proposals and reasons why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-Ended Question</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered</td>
<td>281</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. If you have any questions (not otherwise answered in the FAQs linked to above) that you would like to see answered in our business case, please ask them here. All questions submitted will be directly responded to if you leave your contact details later in this survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-Ended Question</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Are you writing this response on behalf of a council, parish council, business or other organisation, or as an individual?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On behalf of a council, parish council, business or other organisation</td>
<td>4.03%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an individual</td>
<td>95.97%</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 answered, 286 skipped

### 4. As a representative for your organisation, which district are you based in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babergh District</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Suffolk District</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside both districts</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 answered, 12 skipped

### 5. Which of the following best describes your organisation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town or Parish Council</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents’ Association</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Group</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 answered, 286 skipped
6. Please tell us the name of your organisation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-Ended Question</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>Skipped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. In which district do you live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babergh District</td>
<td>69.89%</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Suffolk District</td>
<td>27.96%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither district</td>
<td>2.15%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>Skipped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>279</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 18</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>21.51%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>25.81%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>36.20%</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>12.19%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>Skipped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>279</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Please select your gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>61.51%</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30.22%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>8.27%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>Skipped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>278</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Which of the following best describes your employment status?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Full-time employment (more than 29 hours a week)</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Part-time employment (8-29 hours per week)</td>
<td>11.79%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Retired</td>
<td>38.21%</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Student</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Not working / Sick / Disabled / Working less than 8 hours per week</td>
<td>3.21%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Prefer not to say</td>
<td>13.93%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered 280  
skipped 18

11. If you would like to receive email updates from Babergh and Mid Suffolk on the progress of this work, or direct answers to your questions, please provide your name and email address below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Name</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Email address</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered 150  
skipped 148

Free text responses:

1. Completely against the merger. The financial status of both councils, especially the HRA are so far apart, one district would be subsidising the other.
   
   Local government should remain local. Joining the 2 together would create a lumbering political monster covering too vast an area.
   
   Smaller organisations work more effectively because a smaller team has a better work ethic.

2. Local authorities should be “local” and not merged into larger areas

3. There is far too little information available for anyone to make a valid decision. I am fortunate in being reasonably computer literate and having access to a computer. Large numbers of residents are not so equipped and so will be left out.

   Nick Gowery states that £13million has been saved since 2011. Where and how, throwing figures around is of no use to anyone without evidence. As an ex Local Authority employee he should know this.

   Since 2011 Babergh has increased spending on staff to a level where they now spend £1.2million MORE a year on staff. If that is savings, what next. I understand from figures given to Council that Mid Suffolk currently spend £2.0 million more a year!

   The combined council activities to date show that they are incapable of saving money just moving it around without any attempt at making savings.

4. I very firmly support this proposal. It will make our already extremely efficient local councils even more efficient in these times of stringent financial circumstances. It is entirely sensible.

5. Two separate Councils are too costly to operate and the two Councils are effectively operating as one Council anyway.
Great Idea and very sensible to assist a joined up approach to local government in the area with the added benefit of considerable financial savings.

It is a major disappointment that this merger is even being contemplated, not least, without public consultation. This ‘engagement’ appears to be more about consolidating the case for rather than being genuinely ‘open’ and inviting all options for the future.

Already, there has been a diminution in services locally and it is very hard to see the merger reversing that trend. The removal of both District Council offices to Ipswich may make financial sense but the inevitable depreciation in local contact and the further divorce from the people served cannot be viewed as beneficial. Residual offices in Stowmarket and Sudbury cannot deliver what was previously available in Needham Market and Hadleigh.

Staff savings may be achievable but what about the inevitable detrimental effect on service? Has a risk or impact assessment been carried out on the effects of further staff reductions and, if so, does that assessment provide overwhelming support for such reductions?

While there are very difficult financial constraints impacting upon both District Councils this is not new. Contrary to the contention in the Cabinet paper (13 October) presented to both Councils, it is not believed that a new merged Council would have a stronger ‘localism’ and engagement arrangement. Indeed, everything points to a major reduction in ‘localism’; and engagement will be harder still.

Residents appreciate the local expertise provided by the District Council and, until now, it has been readily approachable in the heart of the community. While there is, obviously, a lot to be gained by joint working, there is a real risk that the merged Councils based in Ipswich will, for a great many people, be indistinguishable from the County Council such that the unique advantages of a separate District Council will be lost. At the same time, local representation is critical to residents so by detracting from that representation in favour of a ‘broader democracy’ there is going to be less accountability and less ability to influence.

To reiterate, the two Councils working closely together remains good sense and should be encouraged but there is no compelling argument for a merger.

firstly: you have neither made a business case nor proven it.

this move to ‘engagement’ although necessary is in your full knowledge a sham. Babergh has no mandate to engage in any merger discussions. indeed consequent upon a democratic referendum vote you (Babergh) have neither sanction nor authorisation and are therefore acting against the wishes of the people, in an undemocratic manner, this is unacceptable.

further having been through a number of mergers in the Private sector I can assure you there is no such thing; one party always becomes subservient to the other. As an employee you have the option to vote ‘with your feet’ and leave.

the electorate of whom we have established you hold in complete contempt and as an inconvenience have no such luxury. It is likely if not certain that the Councillors they voted for will become thwarted by people they don’t know, did not vote for and who manifestly hold interests and allegiances to a region other than ours. this is not representation. Its a disgrace.

Have saving been made with the current working arrangements?

One council can only work if all policies and procedures from the former councils have been aligned. Whilst this has been ongoing and implemented in places over recent months, a lot of the procedures cannot be altered due to the councils not being joined fully. Which often results in conflicting ideas, delays and confusion when dealing with public requests.

Any procedures which affect the individual areas should be considered and actioned before formally merging, so that the majority of loose ends are resolved, prior to dissolving both councils. Any savings on expenses should be reflected in revising the staff pay scales which are still less than other councils in the area and with the additional costs of working in Ipswich each day would be considered more realistic against the cost of living. Training courses for staff on how the integration would affect day to day jobs would also be valuable in dealing with the public’s expectations throughout the process, should it go ahead.

Babergh residents voted 60-40 NOT to merge. How about another referendum, and another, and another, until we give you the answer you want. If on a 52-48 vote the government takes a decision to leave the EU, on a 60-40 you have no mandate to merge. Just the opposite. The proposal is totally undemocratic. You already have back office links with Mid Suffolk and Ipswich, and we already have a county council.

This is a major change to the governance of the people of Babergh and Mid-Suffolk and decision "must" be reached through referendum and public engagement. Not tucked away on a website with a questionnaire which is open to abuse

Please keep Mid Suffolk as it is, separate from Babergh. Large size is not necessarily better. Work together if you must to save money (though I would prefer not) but retain the distinct identity of this beautiful District in the heart of Suffolk. I very much regret the move from Needham Market and want District Council Offices in our District, without becoming part of a greater Ipswich.

I am against the proposals because the high-handed trickering you’ve already started (with no mandate I believe?), i.e. combining offices, etc, has led to severe inconvenience for many residents WHO WANT TO DISCUSS IN PERSON issues such as planning applications. Previously they could, for example, pop into offices in Needham Market or Stowmarket but now? It’s not good at all.
I have no confidence in you councillors having the conviction to do what’s right for the residents, for their convenience and for their ease of access of services. Forget all of this rubbish about access on-line etc - people want to talk face to face with someone. Problem reporting? “Just log-on, enter you problem and details & we’ll give it a reference number which you can follow-up”. There’s NO HUMAN BEING to talk to!

The collective councils have not so far listened to the electorate, and despite a lot of opposition and very poor reports, have already chosen to close the existing offices and move out of the district to an inaccessible office with little access to officers. Many issues raised at PC level have remained unanswered for months and enforcement of planning issues is all but absent. It is abundantly clear that the council cannot function as one unit as it has already created itself, despite public disapproval for a joint council. The use of the localism act by the Junta to justify and carry out changes is not democratic, and is unaccountable.

This is a TERRIBLE idea. The public have already said no. The council is already too big without someone who has never even heard or been to my village making decisions for me. For once don’t ignore us!

I voted against the merger and still hold this opinion.

We voted no so stop this nonsense or we will vote you out at the next round of elections.

These are two quite small district councils with significant on-costs to maintain their independence. Consolidation must provide better back-office value for money - I wholeheartedly support amalgamation.

The challenge will be to reduce wasted travelling time by staff and make contact with the public easy. I would hope to see further improvements in digital communication including the use of Skype and other face to face digital interfaces.

Currently I have some contact with the Planning Department, the service offered is lumbering with additional mistakes. This needs sorting out.

One council makes sense. It will save money and avoid duplication of services.

We do not want to merge because Mid Suffolk only want Babergh money.

I believe that this merger will cost Babergh residents extra money.

great idea if it’ll help to create more jobs in areas that require more development

I live in Sudbury which is all but forgotten as far as Babergh is concerned. Joining up with mid Suffolk will only increase our isolation. Border towns will always lose out. The merger will NOT improve services or reduce the cost of those services. This merger will cover an area which is too diverse

I disagree with the proposal. You already have a mandate from Babergh residents to “not” proceed with a merger. Please respect the decision of the electorate.

I am definitely against the two councils merging. this has been voted on by the public before, the outcome being no merger of the councils.

We need local councils, in the boroughs as we have now. Residents will not have same communication with their own council, this has changed already by the closure of the two council headquarters. This will just become worse.

I do not support the merger of the two councils.

Your unwillingness to hold another poll disturbs me. You clearly suspect the results will not be what you want and I find your explanation on the FAQs unconvincing.

The issue of increased council tax bills for Babergh residents and the untruthiness of this has not changed.
The FAQs are woolly and vague with no depth to them. I therefore do not trust mere assertions that savings will be made. Having worked in the public sector with mergers/closer working relationships I know most of the alleged savings are bogus - exaggerated at best.

The council would be too large for its purpose. If the merger went ahead, then the merging of all the district councils to a unitary authority might as well happen instead.

28 I disagree with the proposal. You already have a mandate from Babergh residents to "not" proceed with a merger. Please respect the decision of the electorate.

29 The whole basis of this survey is that to agree you have to accept the ending of Grant funding to District Councils. This is a clearly disgraceful Central Government Policy and if Councillors of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, especially the Conservative Councillors had any ounce of Courage, or integrity they would be fighting this Central Government Policy.

Instead you are rolling over and letting Central Government destroy a whole tier of Local Government.

For this reason

30 The referendum in 2011 gave the answer NO You should respect the wishes of the electorate and not ignore them for your own gains! Absolutely disgusted

31 It makes sense and cannot understand why this was not done years ago.

Why have two lots of information duplicated on two websites and two social media feeds.

Could this be an opportunity to move your HQ back to within the district?

32 A referendum was held and voted against in 2011 so the voters of Babergh have already voted on this issue. In addition where does it stop? Will the new council then join with Suffolk Coastal or one of the other Local councils. Eventually they could feasibly then dispense with all of them and leave it to Suffolk County Council, and leave locals without a local voice.

In my opinion this is a terrible idea which will just disenfranchise Babergh voters.

33 This survey of residents on the proposal causes me to feel this a just a publicity exercise following the debacle of the decision to move council offices to Ipswich. The lack of open, intelligent, DEMOCRATIC involvement with local people and shopkeepers begs belief. The towns of Needham Market and Hadleigh thrived with the footfall of the hundreds of staff who worked in the towns, using local transport, shops, businesses and facilities

The effects this is having on local towns and communities, shops, transport will catastrophic.

If the council cannot think outside the box on this, what hope is there for a so called business plan for a single council. If it wasn't so tragic I would laugh out loud.

34 I do not believe that centralisation is the best way forward. As a council you are in utter chaos at the moment and this hot desking idea is ridiculous. We are a rural community. You are being driven by spread sheet accountants rather than do what you should be doing by being accessible to your local residents, businesses and parish councils. This is a short term gain. In 20 years time everyone will be devolving back out again. You don't have a good name - in fact if you say Babergh District Council most people groan and roll their eyes. Come one Babergh open your eyes and do as your residents asked - do not merge.

35 I agree with the proposals. In a time where Council's need to deliver savings and act more commercially I see this decision as one to be supported.

36 In the referendum I voted, as did the sizeable majority of Babergh residents, for Babergh not to form a single council with Mid Suffolk. My opinion has not changed.

I understand that earlier in 2017 it was proposed that only seven councillors would have the power to make the momenteous decision of pushing ahead with the merger, despite the result of the referendum. How on earth can only seven people make such a huge decision instead of the whole of the council voting? Undemocratic in the extreme.

I am pleased that there is now some consultation. The case however appears to be heavily promoting a merger going ahead rather than maintaining the status quo. Will the questions in the telephone poll be loaded to provide answers that some undemocratic councillors/officers want to achieve - a merger? Or will the telephone poll questions be strictly neutral, not leading the poll participants in any one direction?

At the end of the day I believe that Suffolk needs to go full circle, returning to the days of West Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk County Council.

37 It is against the wishes of the Babergh electorate!
I remain unconvinced by the arguments!

38 In 2011 the referendum voted against the merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils. I believe the vote was swayed by rumors the day before about the effect on Council tax to even up the amounts between the two councils.

The council’s response was to merge in all but name.

The prime issue is why was the result of the referendum 7 to 8 years ago ignored?

Today things are different and will be more so by the time the results of the present survey are carried into place in the future.

As a supporter of a single council as the best way of achieving cost savings I support the present merger.

39 If Babergh is no longer a viable entity in its own right Parishes in the west of Suffolk, especially those of Long Melford, Glemsford, Acton, Lavenham, Alpheton, Shimpling, Hartsed and Cookfield, would be far better served by joining St. Edmundsbury Council. The majority of residents of these Parishes naturally look to Bury St. Edmunds not Ipswich as their centre, and have far better transport, road connections and access to Bury.

This merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk and relocation to Ipswich flies in the face of democracy and only serve to make our District Council more remote.

LET US HAVE A REFERENDUM NOT ONLY ON A MERGER BUT WHAT COUNCIL THE RESIDENTS OF THIS PART OF SUFFOLK WOULD PREFER.

40 In your argument, you state that a new council will be “a more democratically accountable body for the area.” I strongly disagree as we will no longer have the same local representation and we have already lost local contact with neither council now having a HQ in either district - all done without consultation. I am concerned that you will become more and more in to bed with Suffolk CC and not truly represent the local residents. You also say that you will save £1 million pounds but are vague as to where the savings will come from.

Larger organisations become harder to manage efficiently and although on paper there are savings, it is the service users who lose out. Local views from the likes of Parish Councils who know their area and needs are often ignored now and we have seen district councillors come to site meetings with no knowledge of the area. This will get much worse with a combined council and local views will be ignored even more.

KEEP REPRESENTATION LOCAL - it is not just about the money.

TO be absolutely clear, I oppose the merger.

41 I am strongly against the proposal to merge. In particular, considering a referendum was completed in 2011, in which the people specifically rejected such a move, another referendum should be required to reverse that decision. The council works for the people and it should do so on a democratic basis.

The proposal itself is poor. Losing district councillors will reduce accountability and the ability of local people to influence their local area.

The savings which have been suggested to be possible are tenuous at best, and even if they were deliverable, are nowhere near sufficient to compensate for the weaker structure that would result.

I am particularly disappointed in Jennie Jenkins. I voted for you to fight the people’s corner, not to attempt to railroad change through undemocratically.

42 I totally disagree with this merger - the total area would be too large and diverse to be effective and practical and ineffective to manage in this manner.

THIS IS WHY I ORIGINALLY VOTED AGAINST IT - AND MY OPINION STILL STANDS.

43 I am strongly against the proposed merger, which I regard as a direct attack on local accountability and the principles of democracy.

44 the merger should not be progressed. the council has not mandate to merge, in fact the referendum that was held precluded the councils from merging.

45 We had a referendum on this subject and we voted NO. There is no justification for going against this result without another full referendum. Attempts to circumvent the clearly stated will of the Babergh residents are not acceptable. You have tried to push this through without any reference and should resign your positions and put yourselves back before the voters.
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>This proposal is wrong on many levels. The vote in 2011 was decisively against such a merger - and the machinations at that time over the replacement of two chief executives by one seemed only to benefit the individuals concerned. The recent move to place the administrative offices outside the area of both current councils seems bizarre - and indicative of the lack of priority given to jobs within the Council areas. The Sudbury area has been poorly served by the local authorities at District and County level since the restructuring in the early 1970s as it has been perceived as being distant from the centres of power - this proposed move would do nothing to improve this.</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>We the people have previously voted against this merger - why are you WASTING money by going ahead against the peoples wishes</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>I am against the merger of BDC with Mid Suffolk. I believe that it would degrade democracy for Babergh residents by diluting the views of our District Councillors. We have already had a referendum that said NO to a merger. This is not about a business case. It is about democracy and fair representation. Also, I know from by work experience that it is relatively easy to make a business case look good on paper only to find that it does not work out in practice, e.g. costs are cut assuming efficiency improvement that never materialise. Thus cuts to services become the only way to achieve the Business Case cost targets.</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Currently shared services works OK after a long and expensive period of integration and I imagine any savings it was going to make have been realised. Doing the same at the political level offers limited benefit and is a major distraction and added cost in the short term.</td>
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<td>As a long term Babergh resident I have observed the slow withdrawal from local focus in the Councils service model. Most recently this has been evidenced by the withdrawal of services from Hadleigh into premises in Ipswich.</td>
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<td>The move to Endeavour House can only sensibly presage a single County/District service model and the political model will follow this in due course, ie unitary. Taking the interim step of merging Babergh and MSDC is not therefore worthwhile or value adding in itself.</td>
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<td>Finally residents were clear in the referendum on this in 2011 and it would be arrogant and anti democratic to ignore that vote unless the process is repeated with a different outcome. The change doesn’t offer enough real value for those outside the political bubble (and paying the bills).</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>No Need to draw up a business case just merge with SCC as one council for Suffolk.</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>We have to ask, &quot;what was the point of the referendum?&quot;</td>
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<td>The views of Babergh residents were completely ignored and they are now left feeling that the idea of a merger was considered a fait accompli by the two councils - with a single CEO already chosen.</td>
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<td>We now understand that consideration of plans for future use of the Hadleigh council offices has be deferred into the New Year. Surely a competent council would have made this decision BEFORE moving out! We fear another East House situation.</td>
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<td>Cooperation and cost sharing is one thing but the public voted against merger and this must be respected irrespective of any presupposed economic benefits.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The move to Ipswich was hardly a smooth one with delay after delay and I have not heard one staff member compliment the decision.</td>
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<td>The decision to hold a public meeting the week before Christmas IN IPSWICH boggles belief!</td>
</tr>
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<td>52</td>
<td>1 Babergh Council is currently in an extremely difficult situation, with staff losses, unfilled posts, increased costs due to contracted staff, an unacceptable delay in response to residents, eg in planning searches, and unresolved cost issues relating to relocation to Endeavour House. 2 Further change on the flimsiest of forecasts will undoubtedly unsettle staff further, and be likely to result in continued staffing difficulties. 3 The current cabinet and leading party at Babergh is in a state of extreme dysfunction and in no position to take a representative decision in this important and potentially anti democratic matter. 4 It is disingenuous to say that there needs to be no wider and well informed public referendum on a further arbitrary change in local representation. 5 If the boundary commission is currently is currently reviewing the warding arrangements in both Councils, (presumably with cost), and this rearrangement is planned, surely they should be briefed to comment. 6 There may be a case for a long term transition to unitary West Suffolk and East Suffolk Unitary councils. If this is the long-term goal, this should be approached calmly and with persistence without short-term continued unsettling and disruptive reorganisations, which rarely, if ever result in forecast savings. 7 On a local note, Babergh has better potential prospects for growth, in both in business and housing markets, and keeping rate expenditure local, should keep local taxes lower for residents.</td>
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Completely against merger. Agree that there are too many layers of councils. Obviously keep SCC. Then remove either town or district councils to save money, and let local residents in each district decide which to keep. THAT would save much more than this ridiculous proposal. Where are the savings when you’ve already merged services and moved most to Ipswich - outside the district! How can merging the councillors - thus making accountability even more remote than it is already - be a significant cost saving. They could simply vote to reduce their "allowances" - that would save just as much as merging the elected representatives.

I am against a joint council. Both councils have withdrawn from their respective towns and amalgamation will see even more distance between council and customer/ rate payer/electorate.

I am affected by this as we live just across the border in Essex. I think this is a terrible idea. Local government should be local.

Residents of Babergh voted in 2011 NOT to merge with Mid Suffolk. I fail to understand why this result isn’t considered binding on the council, particularly when referendum results nationally are cited as being so. The least the two Councils should do if they can argue the case constitutionally is to hold another referendum.

"To create a single council", well therein lies most of the problem. The people ‘currently’ acting as officers of Babergh District Council, have NO mandate to pursue such a venture.

A public vote took place in 2011 if I recall correctly, where a clear majority said NO to any merger. That’s it, end of story.

In order to 'take the people with you', on this, or any other important plan, proposal or otherwise, you need the support of the public. Unfortunately there are those currently serving as officers for Babergh, Suffolk County, and most likely Mid Suffolk too, who either had, or no longer have any regard for democracy, nor the democratic process.

No means ... well ... NO, and that’s it. In order to move forward, the 'mergers' need to move on with the vote that was taken, and work to the best of their ability to maintain this position. (You know, a little like Brexit, where a small majority won the day, an the government then cracked on with the Vote.)

It would seem however, that out here in the 'boonies', democracy was ridden over by a 4x4, and left for dead, some while ago.

Even after the NO vote was taken, there were those who cared ‘not a jot’ what was said, and continued plotting, scheming a going behind the backs of voters, oh you know, the Tax payers, squandering money, with their feasibility 'studies' on how a merger might pay for cuts from central government.

So there it is, laid bare for all to see. The "merger" has never been about democracy, but those in servitude to those further up the food chain, who continue to bankrupt the country, in its debt repayments, to the likes of the Chinese. Brexit vote = leave, so we are leaving. Babergh vote NO to a merger, so we ignore the ‘yokels’, and do as we want. 21st Century Democracy in action!

The people voted for the 2 councils to keep their own identity. If what is being done applied to Brexit there would be a huge backlash.

What are all the cost cutters going to do when no more can be cut?

We are not far off Greece and we claim to be a major power and a economy that the EU need to take notice of!

Meanwhile we are concerned about the cost of getting kids to school we hear!

I realise that we poor uneducated electorate gave you the "wrong "answer back in 2011, what an inconvenience we must be to you.

To hide behind Government saying that you do not have to hold a referendum , and that a telephone survey will be just as good, just shows how out of touch and arrogant the Councillors leading this proposal are.

You were emphatically told by the electorate "NO Merger" and yet like spoiled children you now try to get your own way again.

Any survey can be tilted to ensure that you get the answer that you want.
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<td><strong>I think it would be a good idea to create a new council covering the whole of Babergh and Mid Suffolk. In fact I personally think that a unified Suffolk Council providing all council services is ultimately the way forward as it avoids confusion as to who does what - ie District deal with detritus on the edge of the road but SCC deal with highways. Remaining as BDC &amp; MSDC would not be a good thing with larger east and west suffolk councils already forming either side of us.</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>The key point is that with a larger council excellent staff management will be key in order to provide a good level of customer service. At the moment I think staff are stretched and trying to serve two different councils at the same time and it would be logical for them to just be able to focus on one council.</td>
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<td>In order to keep the electorate on side with this proposal you will need to fully explain the financial implications - ie the anticipated council tax for the new council as opposed to what we are currently paying in each district. You could have made it easy for us and told us what the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council tax is for say a band D property for the current year. It will be the first thing everyone wants to know. Also explain clearly what the benefit will be to us all in merging and if you can for see any negative impacts on being one larger council.</td>
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<td>It would have been helpful if you had created a link on your website to your initial business case on the last FAQ. I did have a quick search but it wasn't easy to find which makes one wonder if you are trying to hide something! Be open and transparent.</td>
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<td><strong>A merger is not what the residents voted for in the referendum. Even if costs can be lowered by uniting, the merger is still against the will of the residents.</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>The purpose built offices in Needham Market have closed depriving people of direct access to the council and the services. Having offices in Ipswich may be cost cutting but it does not serve the residents. It is not all about a business case, but what is best for the local people. It is not all about money. We receive so little in return for our council tax and a merger will make a reduction in this. A face to face service is always appreciated.</td>
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<td><strong>I am against the proposed merger of the two councils. There are so many opportunities for Babergh District Council to save money it’s difficult to know where to begin, but let’s start with Babergh having a judicial review against its self in respect of the planning application behind Scutchers Restaurant Long Melford. You have no mandate for this proposal and had a referendum which voted against this proposal. The leader, Jennie Jenkins should resign.</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
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<td><strong>Like the senior cabinet members, I am quite apathetic about the whole issue. My biggest concern is where are the next cost cuts going to be made.</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
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<td><strong>I don’t think Babergh &amp; Mid Suffolk Councils should merge. Both Councils are large &amp; rural in nature, &amp; this leads to remoteness from local residents, probably also with quite marked local differences. Merging the two Councils will simply lead to even greater distance.</strong></td>
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<td>The Local Government Commission, when setting current boundaries, paid due regard to the concept of &quot;locality&quot; &amp; arrived at its conclusions. If this Government’s misguided Austerity Policy (sic) is providing too few resources to run the current 2 District Authorities, it should be the responsibility of Government to reorganise local government. After all, you’re not seriously suggesting that the new, merged Council will be better for local residents, just cheaper to run! Your implicit argument on unaffordability of the current structure falls on deaf ears. I do not think it is my responsibility to do an incompetent Government’s dirty work for it. So, if you’re unhappy being 2 separate Councils, refer the matter back to the Department of Communities &amp; Local Government for resolution.</td>
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<td><strong>The proposed merger takes local democracy further away from local people. It was bad enough when Babergh was form and Councillors were not aware of problems away from their immediate areas. It also gave rise to paid, local, career politicians promoting the party system. A great deal of local council tax payers’ money had gone into the provision of offices in Hadleigh &amp; Needham Market which provided good facilities for Council meetings and the Council staff. If the record of Babergh is anything to go by, East House &amp; Angel Court in Hadleigh, these offices will be left to deteriorate. I do not know of other buildings in the Babergh or Mid Suffolk areas. It also seems to me that this proposed merger, to which the voters of Babergh were against is being pushed by the upper echelons of pf local authority civil servants. One has suspicions of salary upgrades.</strong></td>
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<td>The rank &amp; file of both authorities, once weeded out by redundancies, will be housed in overcrowded, inadequate offices that are difficult to reach, have inadequate parking facilities and in the end will cost the local council tax payers a considerable amount of money. I urge all the Babergh District councillors to oppose the result of referendum and vote against this proposed merger. The very least would be to hold another referendum.</td>
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<td><strong>No to merger</strong></td>
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<td>It is a pity this didn’t go ahead the first time of asking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I remain in favour of creating a single council, in fact the joint working arrangements have demonstrated clear benefits, and the case is stronger now than when previously considered by referendum.</td>
<td>68</td>
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The case made by the CEO in recent Parish Liaison Meetings has been persuasive, and the financial assessment presented in Appendix B is robust.

The consultation on the Joint Local Plan has shown that common policies and arrangements can be developed and implemented, while recognising the diversity that exists across the significant area of the joint councils.

Excellent idea. Smoother operation and less confusion.

The merger would further centralise rather than localise government in a time when central power is overwhelming and local people get less of a voice. This merger is for money saving not for the good of the people in the districts.

I am totally against the proposal as we have already voted on the idea and it was decided against merger.

I do not think you can disregard what has happened in the past just because it was what you consider the wrong decision.

I think there is a danger that the combined council will be too large and cost savings will be minimal.

I am strongly against this proposal. Local government should serve the needs of local people and be directly accountable to them. By merging and forming a larger organisation I believe that rather than removing duplicated services, you would add layers of management and bureaucracy, and justify the ever increasing rates of executive pay within the public sector. Having had very recent experience of mid-Suffolk and Babergh combined planning departments, I am not filled with any confidence that this will deliver the benefits that your joint statement alludes to. Please listen to the people who pay your salaries and do not do this.

Providing that the business case can demonstrate efficiencies, includes the cost of implementation and have the expertise to deliver then I would support.

I would far rather both councils focus on back office efficiency and reducing cost to serve than cuts to services.

I am against this merger on the following grounds:

1. The number of councillors will be cut.

2. In the interests of democracy, we need local representatives, particularly on the Local Plan.

3. The balance of power will alter and I am concerned that one party will dominate.

4. Cost will be higher for the first year but services are already inadequate.

You already know that the residents in Babergh totally opposed this - why are you trying to overthrow the wishes of the people.

You Are not demonstrating Democracy - this is going directly against the law of this land!

Demonstrate as an electorate of the people that you abide by the Law!

Kindly desist in your effort to coerce - totally misguided and not in the best interest for Babergh residents.

I am against the merger proposal. It will reduce the accountability of councils to the people who elect the Councillors. It is already the case that the move to a cabinet form of governance is eroding the power of Councillors. It may make for faster decision making but not necessarily better decision making.

There was a referendum in 2011 the result of which was clear cut against a merger. To go against this decision without referring back to the voters is undemocratic. There should be another referendum.

This assumes a continuation of the party that believes it has a divine right to rule us. This is no longer a given and a change of government could usher in rethink on local council funding.

We have seen no business case to show that the level of cuts is serving us well and we must therefore challenge the assumption that what this government serves up is the only option.

I voted for a unitary authority for the following reasons:

1. Critical mass results in it being more possible to attract high calibre staff

2. Clarity for the electorate about services
3. Representations not duplicated - one local councillor represents us on all local gvt issues

4. Jointed up thinking is the way forward

5. Financial savings are possible with one authority

| 78 | People in Babergh district council voted to stay with BDC, not amalgamate with Mid Suffolk. Why has Corks Lane office been closed and staff moved to Ipswich. Long Melford is 22 miles from Ipswich, Hadleigh was 13 miles away. If we have to amalgamate with another Council then we should go to St Edmundsbury, Residents of Long Melford look to Bury st Edmunds for shopping, hospitals, etc. We NEVER go to Ipswich. Our two District councillors, R.Kemp and J.Nunn voted for BDC to remain on its own, as did the majority of residents in this area. Surely this is all a waste of public money, and BDC should still be at Corks Lane, Hadleigh. I am a conservative voter, but will not support this party in the future if Mrs Jenkins is to be leader again. Thank you |
| 79 | You can not go ahead with a scheme however profitable you consider it without the mandate of the people it concerns |
| 80 | I really think things should stay as they are in order to keep our local issues more focused, a merger would simply make the area and working with its very different need spread way too thinly in my opinion! |
| 81 | The proposals provide economies of scale and therefore I support them. |
| 82 | I think the move by the Councils out of their districts to Ipswich represents a huge loss of identity for both. A The creation of a larger district, also based in Ipswich, one assumes, further erodes the identity of each area. Why not be based amongst your constituents? |
| 83 | I don’t believe you have a viable mandate to merge, even if it is true that things have changed significantly since 2011. |
| 84 | I can see the sense in a full merger and support a change that reduces the expenditure on the political structure and overall number of politicians. |
| 85 | As a resident of Babergh which voted by majority to remain as Babergh in 2011, I find wholly undemocratic that this merger goes against this. |
| 86 | Such essential services need to be kept local with a focus on local communities, with more combined services this will be lost. |
| 87 | I am against merging the two Councils. Based on our past practical experience after the referendum, the two councils effectively merged, in spite of the outcome of one agreeing and the other not agreeing. My husband and I were in the process of the final stages of completing Planning Permission to convert a barn into a house and we found it impossible to talk to our designated Planning Officer because she was either working for the other council that day and could not be reached by telephone, nor could an appointment be made, or it was her day off. We live in a small village in Mid Suffolk, having had 90-odd houses added, we are now threatened with two applications for more housing, one for 22 houses, the other for 60, in the same road. The school is full, public amenities are minimal and there is limited bus service. We apparently have no reasonable protection from unsuitable development because Mid Suffolk DC has not produced a Development Plan and however well the village produces a Local Plan, we are likely to lose and the extra housing will be imposed on a village already crammed along narrow roads. Democracy is being removed from the general population of Suffolk. It was getting difficult to access Officers, and, evidently, Councillors seem to becoming impotent. Both Councils are not being straight forward about moving their offices to Ipswich either. With more miles to access Endeavour House and lack of car parking, train and bus fares rising exponentially. No doubt a case will be made for "cheaper to run" but you have purpose-built offices already in Needham Market. |
I fully support a merger of both councils to create one. Local government is short of money and this will save costs with less councillors. We are over-governed in this country. Councils have less services and therefore need less councillors to manage them. In a world where there will a shortage of money for many years larger units are needed to create savings. We should move to unitary councils as soon as possible to save more money. Finally, having merged the staff to create one workforce and now moved to Ipswich with one office it is ludicrous to carry on with two sets of councillors - managing this creates two lots of work for staff.

My proposal is to leave things as they are.

Although there are many reasons why Babergh DC should merge with Mid Suffolk DC, and both councils have benefited from joining various services so far, but it seems to me, Mid Suffolk DC has a whole lot to gain from a merger, because of their poor administration techniques. They want to be carried along on the backs of the Babergh DC, because Babergh DC have been able to trim successfully their finances and services, and Mid Suffolk DC haven't. Whereas Babergh DC have used their skill in reorganising their services to save money, it appears Mid Suffolk DC can't. Either leave things as they are, or tell them to join with another council.

My concern is that having lost the attempt to combine Mid Suffolk with Babergh in 2011 when constituents of both councils were required in referenda to approve the merger, the council officers have decided to proceed with the merger without further referenda. You were geared up to merge even without any consultation. This is unconstitutional.

The move was kept very low-key and only after people began to complain have we been able to comment.

I fear that this merger will be forced through, contravening the combined stated wishes of the two district's voters.

The proposed sale of both council offices have doubtless made the move to Endeavour House, Ipswich most financially attractive, at the expense of local government becoming less local.

Parking in Ipswich is expensive and not easy.

All of the proposed and carte blanche changes have been for the comfort of councillors.

It is wrong and undemocratic.

My proposal is to leave things as they are.

Although there are many reasons why Babergh DC should merge with Mid Suffolk DC, and both councils have benefited from joining various services so far, but it seems to me, Mid Suffolk DC has a whole lot to gain from a merger, because of their poor administration techniques. They want to be carried along on the backs of the Babergh DC, because Babergh DC have been able to trim successfully their finances and services, and Mid Suffolk DC haven't. Whereas Babergh DC have used their skill in reorganising their services to save money, it appears Mid Suffolk DC can't. Either leave things as they are, or tell them to join with another council.

I am against the merger with Mid Suffolk.

As a resident I really don't want a merger to go ahead as I believe that certain areas would miss out in favour of others, as can be seen with other Councils, Police, etc. Also I think delays happen as no one seems to agree with where the budget should be spent.

I am in favour of the merger. Reason: economies of scale.

I voted for Babergh to stay as one local Council. I did not want them to merge. Always when these so called savings are made 'on paper' the actual savings never happen.

What happens to all Section 106 money that belongs to Babergh residents for local amenities probably get swallowed up in areas to provide facilities that were not originally Babergh District.

What happens to the assets from Hadleigh offices not given to help Babergh area.

I am against this proposal. A merging of two councils would be less able to represent its people.

I agree although this needs to be cost effective and not an onerous task. In part however the move should not have an impact on residents as business must surely continue as usual albeit in a different form. The Councils could be bold and save money by informing residents rather than gauging opinions.

What was the point of the referendum if BDC totally ignore the outcome?

Absolute power really does corrupt absolutely doesn't it?

This would be a good idea, only if you attacked the "contracting out policy " and employed, as in the past loyal workers. Example for MSDC: Nick just look back at the resurfacing of pavements in Stowmarket. Subbed out 4 times and work carried out by 2 lads from Wendsbury/ West Midlands being paid £95 a week and sleeping in a lorry ( tools a burner to melt tar / a rake /a broom /and bucket.) The wasted money list goes on and a wake up call would for all to benefit.

Babergh Council is already less accessible to us here in Hadleigh since offices moved to Ipswich. If the complete amalgamation with Mid Suffolk goes ahead I can't help feeling the Babergh District will lose its identity completely.

Whats next - an amalgamation with Ipswich Borough Council ???

In this period of austerity the pursuit of efficiencies in the way local government works is of paramount importance as long as democratic representation is adequately maintained. As MSDC and Babergh have for some time now shared its workforce and has recently developed a joint vision for the area it makes sense to amalgamate and streamline the councillor function and working of the councils.
I believe there is a case for fewer wards/councillors thereby reducing costs as well as reducing the amount of unnecessary committee time I a no need for two full council meetings. Care does need to taken however to ensure that constituents are still connected with their representatives and that local government does not become too remote from the people. More emphasis on and autonomy for local councillors would help this process.

You need to get the current council structure right before considering further integration. Staff shortages and shocking customer service is what you get from £13m of savings, it’s as simple as that.

From all that I hear it seems that the savings one would expect are not occurring

I am very unhappy that the two Councils are implementing this step despite a definite NO from the residents when we were asked. I do not think that bigger is better, furthermore disposing of Council owned headquarters in the two towns and moving staff to a rented office in Ipswich must be counter productive, as well as more expensive. I am not in favour of this merger and feel very agrieved that you are going against the stated wishes of your electorate and will certainly reflect this at the next elections.

I think the merger of the two councils is a natural progression of the work started in 2011/12 and would make life simpler by and communities

Government funding is becoming more challenging and yet local councils still have a major contribution to make to providing essential services for the public and communities generally.

I will say that I am totally against the proposed merger of Mid Suffolk District Council and Babergh District Council. I fail to understand why this amalgamation of the two District Councils has been proposed again

As taxpayers we were given a vote and we voted against this merger, however you have done it anyway!

None of this is making any sense to the general public and is totally against our wishes, and makes the original referendum a nonsense and a complete waste of the tax payers money.

Whilst you may argue that a lot of services are not your responsibility, I can assure you that the state of our roads, signage, verges, etc. are a disgrace and to contact any one about a specific problem is nigh impossible; you have been very clever in making the websites almost impossible to navigate and to speak to a human being is a rare luxury.

All in I am very dissatisfied with the services we receive from the the current combined Council, since the combining of services nearly every aspect has gone downhill, and joining the two together to form one Council in my mind will not improve the situation. What is for sure is that we shall end paying more for less, that is a given.

The respective areas are too large to warrant a single body. It should not always be about cutting costs but what offers a realistic council for an area. It is increasingly becoming the case that people feel remote and isolated and this would make this feeling all the more acute. It would be nice to be able to contact a council that knows where you are and has some connection to you.

The Government says that the people’s word is sacrosanct and must be acted on, and on the original survey the people voted against the proposal.

Once again I will say that I am totally against the proposed merger of Mid Suffolk District Council and Babergh District Council. I fail to understand why this amalgamation of the two District Councils has been proposed again

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The Government says that the people’s word is sacrosanct and must be acted on, and on the original survey the people voted against the proposal.

My reason for voting against the proposal is that political representation will be further reduced and that Mid Suffolk was not selling off OUR assets and properties

A lot has changed in Britain since 2011 and I fully accept that the re-orgnisation is needed to cope with the new landscape locally, regionally and nationally.

We already voted against this and the public’s opinion should be respected.

As it does not appear that there is any prospect of a single unitary authority for the whole of Suffolk (which I would prefer) this is an excellent proposal that I fully support. The two Councils officer structures are combined and the natural progression is to formally merge the two Councils. Both the East and West Suffolk councils are on track to merge by 2019. To remain as two separate entities will leave Babergh and Mid Suffolk at a disadvantage.

There should be identifiable savings from the merger - this should not be a case of reducing the number of councillors and paying more to those that remain so that the £ remain the same.

When “Babergh” was created, there was endless comment about the fact that it bore no relation to historical boundaries or links. Forty years on and it must remain, according to the doomagers!!

I would like you to publish more information on how exactly you expect £1m of savings to be made and how long it will take to make those savings - you mention long term only. How will you safeguard the councils current financial position if one is wealthier than the other at present? You may not have a legal reason to hold a further referendum but surely you have a moral one to do so? It so often feels like local politicians do things “quietly” so that residents do not have the opportunity to make their thoughts known - like shutting local offices and moving to Ipswich! How are you going to ensure that all residents know what is happening and how they can have their say? Surely the only way is another vote?

Government funding is becoming more challenging and yet local councils still have a major contribution to make to providing essential services for the public and communities generally.

I believe there is a case for fewer wards/councillors thereby reducing costs as well as reducing the amount of unnecessary committee time I a no need for two full council meetings. Care does need to taken however to ensure that constituents are still connected with their representatives and that local government does not become too remote from the people. More emphasis on and autonomy for local councillors would help this process.

As a resident the move of the HQ to Endeavour House in Ipswich and out of both districts is a far more contentious and controversial issue than the proposal to merge.

I agree that the Government’s wishes are the final Say.

I think the merger of the two councils is a natural progression of the work started in 2011/12 and would make life simpler by having one overall financial strategy and budgetary process.

The respective areas are too large to warrant a single body. It should not always be about cutting costs but what offers a realistic council for an area. It is increasingly becoming the case that people feel remote and isolated and this would make this feeling all the more acute. It would be nice to be able to contact a council that knows where you are and has some connection to you.

The respective areas are too large to warrant a single body. It should not always be about cutting costs but what offers a realistic council for an area. It is increasingly becoming the case that people feel remote and isolated and this would make this feeling all the more acute. It would be nice to be able to contact a council that knows where you are and has some connection to you.
The merger of the two councils only seeks to reduce democratic representation. Costs savings will be minimal as most services are already shared where it is practical to do so. Merging councils is tied to reducing the number of councillors, with more people covered by single councillors, which will make them even more remote and out of touch.

The problem with this proposal is that the council has decided not to listen to the people, and reducing the number of councillors will make that problem even worse.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh are very different. Sudbury and Hadleigh have free parking - while Mid Suffolk has charges. The levels of council tax are different, and this will mean that council tax bills for everyone in Babergh will go up. Any claims of savings are very hollow when your proposal is going to raise taxes. Babergh must have assurances that there will be no alignment of council tax levels at all until central government requires all council tax bands to be revalued.

114 We had our say in 2011 and my view hasn’t changed since then.

The two councils are not compatible, and Babergh has some financial reserves that Mid Suffolk seem to want to get their hands on. Alignment after a merger would mean Babergh’s Council Tax would have to go up, and things like free parking for a few hours in Hadleigh and Sudbury would be taken away.

Any move towards merger should be put to the electorate again. the proposed "consultation" of 2000 people by telephone is simply not adequate and open to manipulation.

115 I believe that we have too many layers of local government in Suffolk and too many individual councils and councillors. These proposals will address those issues resulting in a reduction of councillors but more efficient.

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney councils have agreed to merge as have St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath so the potential merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk makes perfect sense and brings the central part of the county into line with the eastern and western areas. Both councils are small by comparison with many others and increasingly the efficient and cost effective delivery of services depends on scale, which neither have by comparison with their newly merging neighbours.

Provided that there are proper links to the parish councils and provision of not just on-line services but centres for service users and the wider electorate to visit with any queries they might have, I am happy to support the proposals to merge the two councils.

116 The bigger the council area covered the less contact they have with local people. Any saving made is paid for by the community in greater expense and delays in contact with the council

117 I, like the majority of residents who voted, and who voted NOT to amalgamate councils, when this was put to residents, still do NOT want to amalgamate.

The continued refusal of council to abide by the will of the people should outrage both councillors and residents. If you ask the people what they choose, and they tell you, and you then decide to ignore the result because it's not what you expected, you should be hauled from office, and replaced by those who accept and follow due process.

Further, I completely object to having Babergh Council situated outside the Babergh borough area. It's a barely disguised attempt to sell public property when council should be looking more closely at making savings by reducing bureaucracy, waste and the inflated perks, pensions and pointless positions in it's own administration.

Stop the Merger, and start responding to real needs of your constituents. Purge council of waste and featherbedding in it's managers ranks, and join the real world.

You are the servants of the residents of Babergh. Start acting like it.

118 I am totally against the proposed merger/creation of a new authority and the move to Ipswich.

Moving offices to Ipswich, which is outside the councils’ area is counter-intuitive and a diminution of local accountability and service to tax payers.

Expecting taxpayers to use only telephone or online services ignores the disenfranchisement of those who cannot use either, such as my mother.

These ideas appear to be more for the benefit of the staff than the people they serve. Councillors appear to have been applied with limited and very late issue of information.

119 You had a referendum and the proposal was rejected. Now you don't need a referendum so you're going to do it anyway. Does it matter what I say? I think you've made your minds up, and are merely going through the motions of consultation.
The process confirms the contempt and ridicule in which most elected representatives are held. I speak as a local councillor myself.

The merger is silly it should all be unitary.

First, I would like to establish whether this is a public consultation or public engagement exercise? Huge difference not made clear. Is this deliberate poly to give the illusion that the taxpayers can influence the decision.

It was quite clear in 2011 referendum result that myself and others did not want a merger. Whilst I can fully understand the ruling party wish for a rebrand after they have made the brand BDC as toxic as Windscale or the Titanic. And of course, it has the added benefit it will close down further financial scrutiny of their omnishambles of financial management e.g. what business organisation would move premises without knowing what the final rent and costs are?

No there is no legal requirement for another referendum, but there was never a requirement in the first place. If BDC management is so confident of the robustness of their business case for merger what is there to lose by holding a referendum?????? Only conceivable reasons are it might result in an inconvenient truth.

I note the time and effort (and no doubts more public money) by the communications team on little slogans, well here is one: DEMOCRACY MATTERS!

As for ‘we are listening’ .......really then perhaps your Councillors and chief executive should take their fingers out their ears!

To be clear I want another referendum, under proper electoral transparency so BDC management cannot cherry pick the results as it is so apt at doing in planning matters.

If we are going to merge for fiscal reasons lets have a third option - abolish both councils and absorb into SCC (unitary authority). The poor taxpayer will save a heap of money, the public will not notice any loss in service and the incompetent local politicians will be out in the cold.

This is ridiculous that this hasn’t already happened years ago.

I am a strong believer in the merging of the two councils. As they now run in tandem with a joint staff I cannot see the point of the unnecessary expense of there being two sets of councillors. Any sane person thinking objectively would think it mad to retain the current situation.

Some people feel that there should be a referendum. My view is that we elect councillors to make decisions for us and we should leave it to them.

My main concern is that a single council will need less members and some of them may be tempted to vote against the merger for personal reasons.

I suspect that many members of the public would find it hard to name their local councillors or to say what functions the district councils perform.

I am also in favour of a unitary council for Suffolk and suspect that eventually that will happen.

I with the majority of my neighbours in a referendum, voted against amalgamating the two Districts are you suggesting a second local referendum, I thought the Government was against such things.

Please keep working together and as two separate councils. Two smaller bodies can better hear and understand the voices and needs of the communities. We don’t need a centralisation of power we need local District Councils serving their local districts.
whilst improving front line democracy for ALL in Suffolk, INCLUDING citizens of Babergh and MSDC.

So, we too seek a fair outcome for our area. Yet, where we are different is that our solution preserves and streamlines the democratic disaster for the Ipswich area, since 1974.

As we highlighted in feedback to local plans, there is a total failure in the “duty to cooperate” philosophy, and “side by side” district cooperation has been a democratic disaster for the Ipswich area, since 1974.

We strongly believe that since 1974, a political vacuum exists in the Ipswich Felixstowe peninsula.

This is not healthy for Suffolk’s major conurbation, plus it means that Suffolk is failing to reach its potential.

We recognise that Ipswich area, parts controlled by Babergh and MSDC needs a unified and greater voice.

So, we too seek a fair outcome for our area. Yet, where we are different is that our solution preserves and streamlines the best of the existing systems, whilst improving front line democracy for ALL in Suffolk, INCLUDING citizens of Babergh and MSDC.
We are calling for a single shared ‘back room’ - a Suffolk-wide service unit handling all county & district operations; reporting to three equal sized, democratically elected district led executive authorities. This will provide a powerful combination of district led (front line democracy), with county wide economies of scale.

Orwell Ahead’s ‘Reform Suffolk’ high level proposal:

a) A single shared service provider for all Suffolk. Largely based upon the county council organisation, delivering all county and district services. Operationally, it would replace one county, six districts and one borough.

b) Essentially the shared service group will report to three, democratically elected, executive bodies. These will be based on historic and geopolitical commonality - East Suffolk, West Suffolk and Orwell (Greater Ipswich & Felixstowe).

c) Each of the three democratically elected executive authorities will have economic, planning political, financial responsibility and accountability for their area. Replacing the current 368 two-for councillors with 225 fully accountable councillors (ie. 75 for each authority).

d) This same model is used successfully for many of the world’s top organisations. Think Volkswagen Audi which shares many backroom operational functions, but has separate profit centres and leadership for its brands for VW, Audi, Skoda, Porsche, etc; also the likes of BP, Coca-Cola, Diageo, Johnson & Johnson, Kelloggs, Lufthansa, Rio Tinto and Vodafone. The structure is tried and tested in acquisitions and mergers, strengthening front line services, while allowing for substantial cost savings, shared IT systems, financial systems, no overlap or duplication of service, with reduced administration and property costs.

e) Taxpayers of Suffolk are fed up of continuous cuts to front line services. Citizens of Suffolk are fed up of politicians with no local accountability making decisions for them. Our powerful combination district led (front line) democracy, with county wide operational economies of scale is a clear win-win. If it’s good enough for some of the world’s top organisations, then it should be good enough for the citizens of Suffolk.

I hope that you will find our proposals of interest. They are sent in good faith and with a real desire to improve local government for all in Suffolk. If you would like to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks & regards

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We need a local Council, for local people, not a combined council.

services should be provided on a local basis, from a location within the district.

Mid Suffolk Council has (except for the last 1-2 years) done a good job for the people of mid Suffolk and could do so in future. Vast sums have recently been wasted employing consultants etc from outside the district, and re-structuring the office workforce. The public has a poorer service as a result, with difficulties in actually contacting anyone. Good officers seem to have disappeared, and it seems that inappropriate individuals now head up some departments. There seems to have been change for the sake of change, and an emphasis on window dressing rather than actually doing the job. This sort of attitude is likely to be more pronounced in an enlarged organization.

I want decisions and priorities suitable for where I live, not for the other side of the county. We have Suffolk County Council for that. The thrust should be towards local government for local people, not creeping centralisation.

These proposals are for purely monetary reasons, and not to improve the quality of life of residents. Any proposals made on such a basis will inevitably result in a poorer outcome for local people.

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Opinion: could be a good thing if doesn’t provoke any more political infighting which is disastrous for encouraging the next generation to get involved in guiding their futures.

Why: Financially - savings have to be made as well as increases to CT to continue to deliver level of services as is.

Profile in discussions with Govt maybe viewed more favourably as merger would bring the councils in line with the other East and West areas in Suffolk.

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Having moved to Ipswich Mid Suffolk Council is no longer accessible. The problems with Voters getting to the Offices or attending meetings has been clearly demonstrated by the nearby businesses applying to have their car parks changed to Pay and Display. Public transport into Ipswich is useless taking days to complete a simple, short visit to the Council Offices compared to when they were in Hadleigh and Needham Market. Fail to get an appointment around mid day and you need an overnight stay. Further integration just moves democracy and accountability further from the Voters.

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There is no mandate to merge the two councils - the previous referendum on this subject clearly demonstrated that the people of Babergh did not want a merger with MSDC

I am sure that there will be major changes to the shape of local government in the next few years. If a future government takes the sensible step of transferring social care from County authorities to the NHS, and with schools being encouraged to become academies, the role of the County will be greatly diminished. This could result in Suffolk becoming two unitary authorities, reflecting the old West and East

Babergh lies half within East and half within West - it would make far more sense to me to consider splitting the authority, part merging with St Edmundsbury and the other with Suffolk Coastal or MSDC

I believe that the majority of people living in the former ‘West Suffolk’ parishes would opt to be part of a Bury centred authority rather than an Ipswich centred one.
I feel that this approach would be far more sensible in anticipating the way that local government may develop than pursuing a merger which may have to be unravelled at some time in the future.

The proposal to merge the two councils is supported.

Whilst it is true that significant progress has been made in sharing services i.e. HR, there remains two distinct council processes requiring significant duplication by the Democratic Services Team. It is suggested that the staff overall will struggle to deliver a fully integrated and truly shared service whilst the two council system continues to operate, for example, there is currently additional expenditure in preparing two sets of accounts, running two websites etc.

Looking at the bigger picture with SCC already managing highways, waste and other centralised services it makes some sense in Suffolk being represented by three larger District Councils i.e. West, Central and East

A merged council makes sense. The economies of scale and possible savings has got to be good. As the government cuts funding to councils. With other Suffolk councils merged it would seem we are behind with Babergh residents voting against in previous referendum.

Whilst one can see the obvious financial attractions of amalgamation, with economies of scale, that has to be balanced against the service offered to residents. One is easy to measure and quantify the later much more difficult.

As an example having been on the receiving end of one of those activities, namely the joining of the two planning systems, it is apparent that any cost savings have been achieved at the expense of customer service and facilities.

The migration was not thought out properly. There was no pre-customer warning of the impacts, the user interface was not properly tested, the historical data is still not properly recorded with obvious objections being brought forward as neutral, the local Barham development was presented in a shambolic way with missing data being added well after the original postings and insufficient local publicity and confusing cut-off dates. Some 4 months after the migration the customer reports were still not working reliably, but not only that, but there seems no-one doing any checks internally to verify that the systems are working.

It just reinforces my view of negative consequences of the change, which will just be swept under the carpet.

Coincidently I got a phone call on Friday 29th October from the company COMRES wanting to do a questionnaire on the possible merger, and based on my experience I would have no confidence on the results of that survey.

I must say that I was warned that it would take about 15 minutes and after 8 minutes I had lost the will to live, and no doubt my answers would have been coloured accordingly. The young lady who was calling me, I eventually found out, was from I think she said Huddersfield, so had no idea about the subject matter and was just reading from the script.

It was a totally biased survey telling me about all the benefits and cost savings that had already made asking me other biased questions about priorities and which of the benefits of joining the two council together I thought more important. I don't know who designed the survey but anyone who asks people to rank three out of eight chosen benefits has no idea on the ability of “Joe public” to assimilate such information and to make such choices. What appears OK on paper cannot be translated to a verbal questionnaire. As to a random sample of recipients her final comment was “did I know anyone else who she could phone” so how is that random?

On a completely different topic I would guess that many others who could previously make shorter journeys to council offices are now suffering the effects of the enforced move to Endeavour house. How do you measure the cost of that? Additional traffic movements, extended working days spent commuting, problems with parking etc.

Others have commented on the lack of the personal touch, ie knowing by voice or previous dialogue or talking to someone who actually knows about "LOCAL" issues.

Many of the above are known problems of centralisation, I guess the only evidence of such issues will be by customer feedback. However judging by my experience that is also being covered up.

So my point is that the business case should put a realistic cost on the negative aspects of the move, and not just to follow political dogma.

I think that the merging of the two councils would be a bad idea. Each council has their own priorities and would only make us one huge one with strong possibility of being swallowed up into Ipswich.
The proposal to amalgamate has already been rejected by Babergh residents. There will be no benefit to residents. There will just be yet more bureaucracy, more non-jobs and the increasing of council tax revenue to cope with increased expenditure. One only has to look at the farcical result of relocating both councils to Ipswich.

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140 I completely disagree with the proposal to merge the councils. The creation of a larger council takes democracy further from the people.

Given that we had a referendum a couple of years back and the people of Babergh rejected the formation of a single council, the moves that the councils have since made to merge services and move into a single HQ is underhand and undemocratic.

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141 Seems a good idea if it saves costs and can achieve the same level of service

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142 CAN BABERGH D.C. EXIST IF THEY "GO IT ALONE"? THE GENERAL FEELING IS THAT THEY CANNOT, THEREFORE SURELY A MERGER WITH MID SUFFOLK D.C. IS THE ANSWER. AFTER ALL THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING JOINTLY FOR SOME YEARS AND NOW THEY ARE ALL TOGETHER IN ENDEAVOUR HOUSE.

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143 No merger should takes place without a referendum. Residents gave their answer to this question in 2011. YOU are now ignoring that decision. This is not democratic!

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144 I've no trust in the current administration. The Councils should promote their local areas and support their local businesses. Re-locating the two Councils out of their area into Ipswich was a negative move with regard to promoting the geographical areas that the Councils represent. It has made the Councils more remote and has taken jobs and the wealth that workers provide out of the area.

My understanding is that Babergh District Council is under greater financial pressure than Mid Suffolk.

Why as a Mid Suffolk resident would I want to join up with a Council that is in a worse financial situation than the Council that represents me?

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145 There has already been a vote on this which clearly showed, we, the public were not in favour of joining the two councils. My opinion has not changed

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146 This is an unfair question for residents to answer - they only want access to the services that they have paid for, and , by access I mean an approachable and visible Council, one that they can contact easily!! to get their queries answered. You have moved out of the area that you manage and are not easily contactable. You now wish to merge. I would support any move that makes the council more efficient and affordable but, your presence is distant and it does not feel that you are working for the residents, with some very questionable financial activities, such as closing buildings that you own, located in the area and renting premises in Ipswich - out of the area. How many staff have you lost due to this move and now, will your new employees have a link to Mid Suffolk or Babergh or for them, will it be just another job!!!

It seems that you are doing things the wrong way around - had you merged in to one council a few yours ago and then moved - it may well have been more acceptable. You could have shown that the merger worked first. By moving and then merging, it looks as though you do not care and are now distant enough to do what you like as people would only be able to contact you through electronic means and therefor will probably not bother!!

You moved without any real consultation so why are you asking now!

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147 I believe that this proposal is seriously flawed.

As a resident in the Sudbury area we have historically not been well served by the Babergh Council with a centre of gravity in Hadleigh.

To now be faced with a situation where the elected body covers a larger area with Sudbury even further from the centre is unlikely to improve the situation.

When this is added to the shift of the administrative offices to Ipswich - completely outside the Authorities area - the service to the public is going to be even worse.

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148 As a member of staff it is clear that the organisation operates as a single organisation and there would be further efficiencies by having only one body of elected members.

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149 Cost savings. Merging departments will mean a saving on resources.

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150 A referendum on this matter has already taken place, and the merger was rejected in the resulting vote. Apparently the merger has gone ahead despite the vote and you are now looking for a different approach to give you the answer you wanted. Given the Conservative majority on both councils - and the government's attitude to the EU referendum (that a second vote is 'out of the question' - this hardly seems appropriate. You have already had the opinion of local residents, and chosen to ignore it.

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151 As a resident of Babergh I have seen nothing but cuts, cuts cuts and none of the benefits. Fortunately I own my own property but I feel very sorry for Council House tenants who have to travel miles to see a housing officer now the offices at Babergh have closed. I feel sorry for sheltered housing tenants who had their own full time scheme manager and now have an ad hoc member of staff.

Staff cuts have been so severe the public have lost out again, and the depleted number of staff mean more pressure on them (and a high sickness level in certain departments.....I know).
Previous to our ‘merger’ with Mid Suffolk (which nobody in Babergh wanted), things were great for residents. Now all I see is Babergh district council ‘bailing out’ Mid Suffolk.

I am very angry how the way staff and resident have been treated, and know that no amount of consultation will change the minds of those who have already decided that we will be a single council.

| 152 | There is no need for a merger. As the councils are operating out of Endeavour House and are no longer ‘local’ government they may as well be abolished and the area be run by Suffolk County Council which would cut down on a whole layer of expenditure and the extra money saved could be more efficiently used where it is needed most. |
| 153 | I do not think a merger will meet the needs of residents in both areas. A lot of money, resources and time will be wasted, jobs will be lost, members of the public will be let down. A merger is not what the public want. |
| 154 | Under the current system of local government local councils should remain local. This proposal creates a huge area half the size of the county. Both councils have already shown their disapproval of the idea of ‘LOCAL’ government by spending more of their taxpayers money than was necessary in moving their offices out of the districts they serve. The only way this proposal would work, covering such a large area is to shut all county councils and transfer their powers and responsibilities to these new enlarged districts |
| 155 | Babergh held a Referendum a while ago asking residents if they wished to merge with Mid Suffolk and we voted against it. END OF STORY |
| 156 | Makes sense given the continuing limited funding for local government from national government. |
| 157 | I am totally opposed to BDC and Mid Suffolk Council being amalgamated. The residents of Babergh District Council voted against this proposal in a referendum in 2011. Please stop wasting rate payers money. |
| 158 | The West of Babergh District would be served far better by joining with St Edmundsbury Council. Babergh has failed its residents particularly in planning matters in this area. |
| 159 | I can see potential savings can be attractive but this counts against the considerably less democratic voice of residents in an area, say Sudbury. Instead of having planning applications and other local issues discussed by a cabinet in the Babergh area, which is already geographically well spread, (I think of the people in East Bergholt wanting to move to Essex because of this) A cabinet in the unitary council with less councillors would have far less representation, interest and local knowledge of areas like Sudbury or East Bergholt, therefore individual voters will have less voice, less say and less interest in one, |
| 160 | I do not believe that a merger will solve the financial problems in the long term. It may for a couple of years but not permanently. Mid Suffolk have much higher liabilities and a huge loan to enable regeneration of Stowmarket. Babergh residents should not be shoring Mid Suffolk up by having an increase in council tax for no local benefit. Visitors are attracted to Babergh by free car parking which would cease. It is likely that spending in Babergh businesses would decrease maybe leading to closure of some businesses and therefore a reduction in receipts from business rates. |
| 161 | The rather biased phone survey which I have had the misfortune to endure recently shows how little regard the intelligence of your populace is respected. |
| 162 | Holton St Mary Parish Council does not believe that as a parish council it will be better served by the two councils joining. The business case is purely financial and will not improve the service offered by the council to its electorate. Nothing in Government regulations prohibits another referendum/poll hence ensuring that the council listens to the wishes of its electorate. |
I would fully support the merger of the current two District Councils. 

Economies of scale would allow the combined council to drive much bigger savings and provide better value for money for the council tax payers in the years ahead.

The move to Endeavour House in Ipswich means the councils are already one in name and practical terms. 

Please do not let the backward looking but vocal minority’s stand in the way of progress.

The single council concept is a great idea and will allow for more collaborative working among the employees and a better outcome for the customers. 

Bring on the referendum.

A bigger council could better work with the South Suffolk MP to make the case for more investment and more resource being allocated to this part of Suffolk. Which lets be honest does need it. Aging population, poor infrastructure.

I do not agree to this merger for many reasons the first one being that as a Sudbury/Babergh resident i like the other 60.9% of Babergh residents voted in the first referendum voted no. I believed that seeing as the overall vote was 65.9% against to 39.1% for merging with a turn out of 45.2% in Babergh district compared to Mid Suffolk’s vote of 59.9% for and 40.1% against with 43.2% turnout, you would have accepted the democratic choice of the voters. But sadly no you acted more like a dictatorship and stealthily started merging a number of sections of the services. Secondly you say you will be making savings in the future by slim lining staff but i cant see how this is saving money after you factor in redundancy payments for staff and everyone knows if they don’t accept it they are normally moved to another department within the council unlike the private sector. Then there’s the moving of the office’s and staff from Hadleigh to ipswich, where they have to pay for parking for the working day, I believe that is going to be subsisted? and whats more its no longer in the district that it looks after. 

How are you making savings when as from April 2018 council tax is rising by 5.1% that’s not a saving that’s an increase, Does that mean in the future you are going to pass on the savings to the residents by cutting our council tax?, Mind you that would be a first for a council to drop the rate in my lifetime i have never seen a council tax reduction. 

I do not see how making something bigger makes it better, Normally it has the adverse affect. People and services get lost and forgotten within a bigger entity from my experience even more so when austerity figures in the equation.

I have voted against the merger previously to no avail. I think the councils should remain separate to preserve their individual identity.

The Babergh vote in our own referendum was quite clear. Residents of Babergh still have no desire to join those in Mid Suffolk. The various statements you make in favour do not give a true picture but are heavily biased. On the face of it, it might seem that the ‘savings’ are worthwhile. However, the disruption made in the move to Endeavour House caused much disruption while leaving the previous headquarters cost a lot of money and the upkeep in maintenance costs which are likely to be present for years to come. The expected total cost of this does not appear in any of your self applauding ‘information’. We already appear to be run for the benefit of the executive, with this intended move this situation is likely to be preserved.

No costs have been shown for producing various surveys, particularly the telephone survey based on leading questions in favour of total amalgamation.

Combining the councils makes best sense. It will release officer time to deal with one organisation and reduce wastage. I support the CEO’s recommended option.

Merger enables the councils to present with greater influence to County and government and other agencies as the new one will represent a significantly large proportion of population in Suffolk.

It allows for comprehensive unity of service delivery and also an integrated policy approach in key areas of public life e.g. planning and local administration and that must be a good thing.

One major issue is reduced representation, when cost of services are rising. The UK has the one of e lowest proportions of local representation per capita in Europe and reducing access to local democracy cannot be welcomed. Just because the areas combine does not mean therefore the council members must also reduce in numbers. The council must remain accountable.

We already have a county council. Creating a joint council by merging Babergh and Mid Suffolk would make our representatives more remote as you would inevitably have to reduce the number of councillors, in the long run, to make an enlarged council less unwieldy.

Councillors living miles away from a particular area cannot be expected to know about that area. This is already a problem in Babergh when it comes to planning decisions. A reduction in local knowledge, already slender in some areas, would be a retrograde step.

I think the 60-40 vote against in Babergh in 2011 was pretty convincing. But you could always ask us again.

Yes they should merge to save money and make the overall process more efficient.
I am not in favour of amalgamation. Some planning councillors have NEVER visited East Bergholt but still made decisions and judgements that affect residents!

Therefore, an even greater size of council would have committees that make decisions, totally ignorant of who and where the villages are!

This is positive in that major cost savings can be made.

As long a decisions meet local needs the host for that process is comparatively irrelevant. Many detached sites with duplicated staffing cannot be efficient with current financial restrictions. Therefore full use of technical ‘connections’ needs to be explored with the opportunity for face to face contact still available when required.

Staff should go out to see the public when possible rather than the other way round as it has been in the past. All rural communities have meeting places, they should be used.

IF BDC AND MSDC DO NOT MERGE, CAN BDC CARRY ON ALONE?

Whilst saving money and attempting to deliver services more efficiently is laudable, it should not be the sole objective. As an inhabitant of a hinterland hamlet I receive precious little from the district or county for my £2K+ pa. I am concerned that under a single council my representation would be reduced since the voice of the local councillor could be diluted or if combined with a market town, lost altogether.

I think the proposal to create one large council is unworkable as both councils will be based outside of the areas they represent and make it more difficult for people they represent to access them. Not everyone has access to transport or online facilities. Since Babergh have left the area, the telephone number you normally contact them on is unobtainable with no message to advise of an alternative number to dial thereby making it difficult to contact them. I voted against the merger in the referendum held in 2011 and feel that the council have just gone ahead with their plans despite the views of the people. At that time Babergh were in a fairly good financial position but since “unofficially merging” with Mid Suffolk this does not appear to be the case. There seems to be less staff, less knowledge and less resources since this unofficial merger and I cannot see any reason why making it official will be of any benefit to the public.

What is the point in holding this consultation. Babergh and Mid Suffolk have all but merged and have already given up their premises to move to Endeavour House with all the associated expense so are not likely to reverse this even if the public vote against a merger happening. It is a done deal and the councils are just trying to appear to make the public have a say when their mind is already made up or they wouldn’t have started with any move if they felt the public should have a say first. Waste of time and money!!!!

I am not in favour of a combined council. Services and support are already stretched and difficult to access. I do not agree that a combined council will provide a better service. Also, there will be less understanding of local needs and geography.
In local government, a business case is insufficient. If the change is purely based on the business plan that is based upon providing the best value for money, with less central funding, then it makes greater sense to have unitary authorities.

Babergh District is currently based in Ipswich many more miles away from the western edge of the authority. Hadleigh was in the centre of that district. The Council, its offices and its Officers were based geographically nearer the heart of its residents and businesses. The Council, as an entity were approachable and part of the community. The electors and the elected shared greater cohesion. There was a more direct connection.

The move to Ipswich has broken that cohesion. Power Officers will live within the district and therefore know it less well. This contributes to weakening the thread of democracy, where the electors, residents and business owners have a shared interest and responsibility in their local area.

The best business case could be made for a unitary authority, whereby there would be no further moves by officers who would share the burden of delivering services with officers of Suffolk County Council.

The role of a Council is to serve its electors, residents and businesses. It does it best by knowing the area. The much larger area covered by an amalgamated authority, together with Councillors living a greater distance from sites about which decisions are being made is a deterioration in Authority.

Residents, electors and businesses are feeling cut off from the process of local government. If that is the case, we might as well have a unitary model as it is ultimately, on a spreadsheet, the cheapest form of provision.

Not one mention is made about Parish and Town Councils or their role/relationship with a new merged Authority. Again, the proposals miss the point about engaging with democracy and decisions. The separate decisions by the boundary commission don’t help. The pre 1974 era of the Urban/Rural District Councils whereby each Parish had its own Councillor in the secondary tier of local government won’t return but the District Council is in danger of appearing ‘too far away’ from its electors, residents and businesses in its decision making.

The removal of Committee structures and creation of Cabinet models, again stiffs and frustrates that engagement.

It can only make sense to merge the two DCs, I worked for SCC from 1981 to 2009 and saw too many resources wasted on local government changes/mergers that never happened. Historically Suffolk is a 1974 Maud Commission creation as previously it was East Suffolk and West Suffolk plus Ipswich. Moving on to now the present DCs are clearly too small so a move to Babergh merging with Mid Suffolk, St Edmundsbury plus Forest Heath, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney and then Ipswich makes perfect sense. Reducing 7 local govt areas to 4, or less, makes sense. In the previous ballot I voted for a merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk and would strongly support it.

It saves money it sounds like a sensible idea, as I understand many of our services are already provided jointly.

I understand and appreciate that the costs of services provided across the two Council areas can be reduced through ‘economies of scale’ and that way of working makes some sense.

However, having lived and worked in several areas of Suffolk most of my life (I am now 71) and also abroad, one has to also - and very importantly - take into account the nature of the two areas concerned; and they are very different now, and will continue to be so, due to physical, employment, housing and infrastructure factors. Back in 2011, we were living in the Forest Heath DC area, thus we did not take part in the referendum at that time affecting Babergh, and Mid Suffolk.

However, if we had been living in Babergh then, we would have voted for the Council to remain as a single entity, due to the above; and nothing in those respects has altered, and if anything, the differences in the factors mentioned have become even more marked.

Sadly, the current administration at Babergh District Council is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many others that we come across, ‘unfit for purpose’; for example, the planning department is totally awry, the move to Ipswich carried out without any forward plan decided for the existing buildings in Hadleigh, and many other situations.

The attempted steam rolling through of these proposals to combine Councils appears to have been initiated at the top in order to save the Council from going into financial and administrative meltdown. Even the current staff have been placed in considerable stress, and this has affected staff morale very badly.

The proposals to combine legally and formally should NOT go ahead; AND a further referendum is DEFINITELY required.

Regardless of the business case, it would be immoral to proceed having undertaken a poll in 2011 which gave a resounding no as the answer. There may be no legal requirement to repeat this but there sure is from a standpoint of openness and moral integrity. You have to prove that the 2011 poll is null and void, 2000 people in a phone survey doesn’t do that. Have faith in your ideas (merger may well be the way forward) and put the question to the entire electorate.

As a local resident in Hadleigh, Babergh I am in full support of a merged council. All frontline services have been integrated as have back office functions. The double District are working towards one strategy and one vision. The only thing left to do is reduce council meeting by 50% to ensure officer time is effectively used to deliver on these plans.

I am concerned that local residents may feel that a decision not to merge will mean that we revert to the old ways of working. (which we can not afford)

I do not feel that the level of service to the public has reduced in any way.

I believe Cllr representation will be 1 local Cllr out of 64. Rather than 1 out of 45. If our elected representative is not strong enough to have a voice in this group they are the wrong Cllr to represent the locality they are in.

I have not seen sufficient evidence to persuade me that a single council will be of greater benefit to residents Babergh District than currently exists with the present Babergh District Council, both financially and from a practical point of view. The present arrangement of using the same staff for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk does not appear to have produced the cost savings originally promoted, the service offered has deteriorated (fewer staff doing ever more work)
and the move of headquarters to Ipswich is a disaster. Access to Babergh Council offices is much more difficult for most Babergh residents than when the Council was based in Hadleigh.

With fewer councillors on a combined council the council becomes more remote from the people it is supposed to serve.

Babergh residents rejected a joint council in the referendum a few years ago and there should not be a move to a new joint council without a fresh referendum of Babergh residents.

190 It is a matter of concern that evidence of the claimed £13m saving from the merging of services provided by the Babergh and Mid-Suffolk has not been provided to the public. Indeed it appears that the costs of Redundancy payments to staff and the failure to attract new permanent staff resulting in the need to employ expensive temporary staff may almost undoubtedly have resulted in a net increase in costs.

There is no evidence provided that the formation of a single council will result in £1m cost savings. It does not appear to be based on any reduction in the numbers or costs of council officers or staff.

The geographic areas of Babergh and Mid-Suffolk are diverse and have few if any features which are related or interdependent. Babergh alone makes little sense as an area to be represented by a single District Council and the addition of Mid-Suffolk would only serve to further dilute the already poor representation of local interests at District Council level.

Although there is a clear case for reducing the number of District Councils and also removing the duplication and inefficiency that exists with a political structure including a County Council, it is important that the administrative entity created is logical and capable of representing the interests of the constituents economically and effectively.

There has been no case presented to indicate that Babergh combining services and merging councils should logically be with Mid-Suffolk and not with one or more other District or Town Councils.

I took part in the telephone survey. I was disappointed that the Survey was heavily biased with a clear assumption that a merger would take place. The objectives were so generic as to be meaningless as an indication of why a merged council would be of any benefit, unless there was some intention to suggest that the existing councils and merged services are performing to an acceptable standard. The survey is unlikely to provide meaningful evidence of the public’s views.

191 I think this is the most useless survey I have ever taken part in.

I do happen to know quite a lot of what it is about, but without seeing a full financial case and without regard to the future I find it very difficult to respond. The facts that I live in Babergh, am female and am over 65 which seem to be the only questions asked! are not going to be very helpful.

Broadly I am in favour of the 2 councils getting together, as has already happened at executive level. I fully expect that within a few years the role of county and district councils will change into unitary authorities with less division of responsibility and I regard this as a step on the way.

192 Opinion.

In 2011 the residents of Babergh said an emphatic NO to a merger.

Despite this, the arrogant among our local leadership have effectively merged Mid Suffolk and Babergh already.

Why is this such an issue with the ‘great unwashed’? Well maybe its because we do not need to share our poultry revenue, with a council in need of more money that Babergh.

The closure, and I expect future sale of the Corks Lane Offices in Hadleigh, will then see people in the Babergh region, having to travel as far as Ipswich now, to get help and advice.

Now considering the Bus services from Sudbury to Ipswich, are about the same now, as they were in 1968, how the hell are people without transport, supposed to get there??

This path that certain individuals at Babergh seem determined to take for reasons only known to themselves, and their political masters. The are removing help, and face to face assistance from residents, which is basically straight out of the archives of the ‘Medieval Governance for Dummies’ archives, February 1549.

193 Unfortunately I do not agree with the proposals for merging the two councils.

I strongly believe that this would make the council too large to serve the needs of the community. As it is moving our local office in Hadleigh to Ipswich has already lost some of this. No longer can we just pop into the office we have to travel to Ipswich to do so.

I also firmly believe that we are better at looking after our own finances (Babergh Council).

194 I can see no obvious benefit of a full Merger of both Councils, all of the savings have been made with the merging of Officers and now moving to Endeavour House without considering the impact on the citizens you are supposed to be representing.

I can only see further disadvantages to those who I represent in Sudbury with a risk to free parking which this Town and its Retailers and Businesses fully rely on, the evidence is the loss of trade suffered to the businesses of Friars Street in Sudbury when the road has been closed and partially closed to vehicles. Comparisons to other Market Towns similar to the size of Sudbury show that the footfall of Pedestrians has significantly reduced when parking charges have been introduced, many people I talk to who visit from other parts insist that it is the Free Parking that bring them here.

The rateable system in Mid Suffolk is higher with no apparent benefits to the Residents so I can see an increase in rates for no other reason than because we have become a single Council. I also understand that the Merger will favour Mid Suffolk as their financial position is not so secure as Babergh's, for these reasons I am opposed to a Merger.
This issue and opportunity to submit opinion was noticed by chance courtesy of free local magazine. Have all district households been sent detail? At time of writing why is there nothing on Babergh’s website Home page. The online leaflet states we are LISTENING. Really? Perhaps if people had been better informed there might have been more to listen to.

…… ‘This means we would be large enough to deal with Government over major issues such as new development, planning, infrastructure and economic development, while at the same time being small enough to continue working with our many diverse local communities and businesses to meet their individual needs and deliver the very best outcomes for all who live and work in the districts.’

Well that sounds just wonderful. The perfect scenario. Along with … ‘shared Vision and outcome based approach’……

In reality these are meaningless words attempting to present a catch-all utopia in support of a concept that as yet appears to have no definitive structure. They sound like a pitch from an ad agency.

This household is in a small village. It gets its bins emptied and very efficiently. What else under the current structure invokes confidence in those major issues of planning, development (including recent consultation forum for Local Plan that was an embarrassment) etc etc. Answer – not a lot. Will change to one council improve that? This household is very far from convinced.

Such consultation is almost as pointless as the above referred to Local Plan consultation. It is difficult to comment unless there is substance to comment upon. Two sentences promising this that and the other are not sufficient.

The online leaflet states: ‘the local government world is constantly changing.’ The local government world?! Sounds like a theme park. Is local government in a world of its own? One wonders.

The question is - is all of that constant change necessary? Why does Local Government have this continual need within its DNA to reorganise itself every ten minutes? When this episode is finally put to bed, whether it be a double or single, how long will it be before another proposal appears involving the need to restructure, reorganise, relocate….?

How long before we are told a new single council needs to devolve because it is too cumbersome or perhaps merge with other council because it is too small or whatever convenient council-speak reasons are thrown at us for further change down the line?

Why can’t local government get on with doing what it is supposed to do instead of spending time and resources trying to find other ways to constantly reinvent itself?

We are told it is too early to say what new council would look like but it is stated that at this stage, it is not anticipated that a new council would have less than 66 members. Notwithstanding boundary changes etc, this household regards that number as excessive and a negative.

However, the issue is not quantity it is quality. Can one perform and deliver better than two?

Whether it is a good idea or otherwise, it currently comes across as back door entry to something on which the public in a referendum closed the front door.

Hopefully, referendum will be offered on any such proposal. If not, this household is opposed.

This is ultimately about a democratic structure (whatever it may be) affecting thousands, not a new ride in local government world or a new playground for councillors. It is the public who should make such decision based on informative, specific, slogan-free, well publicised information. Hopefully we get some.

I think the two councils should merge and become one council for both South and Mid South; which could be coined as South Central Suffolk. My reasons for supporting this proposal are:

- ECONOMY OF SCALE, --- FASTER COMMUNICATION INTERNALLY --- HIGHER PROFILE WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT --- STRONGER ABILITY TO WIN FUNDING FOR OUR ELECTORS --- FASTER DECISION MAKING BY THE EXECUTIVE AND THE CABINET --- COMMON AND STANDARD PROCEEDURES THROUGHOUT --- REDUCTION IN OVERHEADS --- FINANCIALLY BETTER AND MORE COMPETITIVE COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS --- A MORE FOCUSED ADMINISTRATION --- OVERALL A MORALE LIFTING CHANGE FOR STAFF AND COUNCILLORS --- A EVOLUTION TO MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES.

Creating a single Council makes sense. Officers have been working together for a number of years now and on a day to day basis operate as one Council anyway. It seems crazy that there are still 2 sets of meetings, 2 lots of reports, different reporting mechanisms etc. It makes sense to create 1 Central Suffolk authority. MSDC & BDC are very similar in terms of demographics & if more money can be saved as well, then that should, technically prevent further cuts in services provided to the residents.

Creating 3 larger Councils in Suffolk, is a far better option than creating 1 unitary authority in which the rural locations stand to lose the most, as focus will inevitably go to the more urban connotations across the County.

Car parking Mid Suffolk over £480,000 profit Babergh £144,000 deficit

RAC foundation survey 2016 -2017 car parking charge expected.
Closing both headquarters and moving to Ipswich, without sorting out future use, leaving them empty and forcing staff to relocate and work from home.

Hence do not support merger as consider the saving of approximately £1m is outweighed by extra costings not published

- More efficient
- More financially resilient and viable
- Share similar issues and challenges across the 2 existing authorities
- Have a bigger influence

I believe the councils are not listening to their residents who voted against this proposal previously. This appears to be another attempt to bring in the merger without a public vote.

The closure of the two council offices at Mid Suffolk and Babergh is, in my opinion short-sighted and does not consider the financial impact to the local traders and businesses in both of the local towns that would have benefitted from the number or council employees giving their custom to local traders.

The additional traffic on incoming routes into Ipswich has increased as more staff are now having to make additional journeys from out lying areas into Ipswich which is already very congested.

The long term benefit of having local employment available within the catchment area of Hadleigh and Needham Market has been removed following this decision. I am also not convinced that the cost savings are anywhere near those provided to the decision makers.

I am also not convinced that the cost savings are anywhere near those provided to the decision makers. This is yet another example of how the local councils are not listening to residents, staff and local businesses and not working in their best interest in the longer term.

It is obvious that a merger would save the Councils money but what isn’t obvious is the benefits to residents. Why do you consider it is beneficial to the Tax Payer?

Kersey Parish Council cannot comment or express a view on the proposal to create a single council because there is not enough information available to give an informed view.

Referendum was held in 2011 and the proposal was rejected. Enough said!

I fully support the plans. In this day and age it’s more important to have online and telephone channels of communication than rely on one small area to represent a whole area.

There is no public transport from my area to the current HQ of Babergh, and travelling by car is on a rural winding road, no other aspect of my life is tied to a small geographical spot so why should Babergh be any different? It has always been a construct to draw a line around the area, so drawing a new line is not an issue

We all know the public sector constraints on spending require a different way of thinking, and becoming a larger area overall makes sense

To save money it does make sense to merge into one council BUT I feel the service to your customers may be compromised due to the relocation of staff to Endeavour House. It feels like a backward step. MSDC and Babergh were providing excellent customer service before the merger of the back room staff, and now the impact of the move to Endeavour House is being felt - not in a good way!

I approve of the plan to merge Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council, it will help the organisations cope with the cutbacks in central government funding

It makes sense to get on with this merger. No reason to delay and I want to see a larger area covered with modern methods used to keep local wards in touch with what is happening. I don’t feel much synergy or interest in the ward next to me, let alone over in Mid Suffolk, but that is not the point, as long as the services needed in my ward are being provided, how you structure your administration is of little interest to me

The majority in Babergh voted NO last time in 2011, (60% in Babergh)

John Ward pledged to hold a referendum.

If you plan this merger then do another referendum instead of hiding it online where many people will not know about it or have no access to the internet.

Why no leaflet drop to every house? or better still a voting paper.

We get little enough from our council tax, no local police walking the beat, hence the crime increase, grass cut a few times a year, bins emptied fortnightly, pay extra for garden waste bins.
Please do not keep going against the majorities wishes.

My family and I vote NO again.

210 I think the decision should be made by the residents. However it is extremely important that the residents are given the full financial facts of why a merger would be the best option for the Council to have a fighting chance of maintain and improving all services to the residents in the future.

211 The principles of centralisation, shared services and economies of scale are well defined and clearly applicable to this proposal. Whilst the business case will balance these benefits with the risks and constraints, as a commercial stakeholder in the district, we commend the idea to realize this opportunity.

212 After due consideration, Cockfield Parish Council has determined that it is unable to submit any views on the proposal at this stage given that insufficient financial information has been made available on which an informed view might be based. However, the Council would be pleased to comment when a fully-costed business case was made public.

213 No thanks

214 Saving money should not be the primary driver. Retaining locally relevant services is my overriding concern.

215 The two councils need to remain as separate entities. Just one example is the refuse collection service we had problems with our bin collection and when we tried to contact any body we were told that mid Suffolk was responsible and they could not help! It was only when we contacted our local councillor John Hinton that the matters were resolved. It seems to us that both councils thought the other was responsible and would work better as two completely separate organisations.

216 Of course - unitary councils are more efficient.

Hopefully you won’t have to have Ipswich going in with you.

217 I was selected for a telephone questionnaire on the merger proposal. The questions were clearly biased towards a merger and you will get the answer you are looking for if you phrase the questions in a biased manner. For example, I was asked if I want my council to save £1m. No one is going to say “no”, however, you will draw a conclusion that I want a merged authority because I answered “yes” to saving money.

218 It's five days before the consultation period runs out and quite by chance I've just found out about this plan on the internet.

Speaking as a council tax payer in Mid Suffolk for the past two years I am staggered and pretty annoyed.

I suppose if you merge, things are unlikely to be any worse than they are now....on the other hand.

219 Creating a single council will move local government away from the local people.

Having the base in Ipswich makes councillors and the people they serve distant from each other.

220 I wholeheartedly disagree that Babergh should merge with Mid Suffolk council. Bigger is not always best. We get a more personal touch with Babergh one which most residents appreciate. Given the ageing population of some Babergh villages we dislike dealing with larger organisations.

221 I have yet to see what advantages there are. Previous “financial savings” on similar proposals do not appear to materialise. Costs seem to escalate beyond initial estimates.

There has already been a referendum which said “No”.

You get one bite - then stick to it.

222 Having read the FAQs and background to this proposal I still don’t see it as being in the interest of residents.

My reasons for saying so is that local people are best represented by a local government that is close to its residents and understands their needs. The bigger a council becomes, the more distant it becomes from its community.

We already have a distant national government so we are now most at need of local representation and distributed government and support from leaders who deeply understand the communities they represent.

223 I strongly disagree with the move to merge as currently planned. I believe as both a Parish councillor and a resident of Babergh for such a major decision a referendum of the people that live in the two districts should take place. Not consult the people that you purport to represent is undemocratic.
224 I am all in favour of the move to a single council as it seems completely disproportionate that currently the two district councils have more councillors than the county council. A reduction of members to 66 or even lower would seem a sensible approach.

225 While it seems like a logical step forward financially, I am concerned that towns and villages could lose their voice with such a large area covered by the council.

226 I support the creation of a single council for the following reasons:
- single strategy, for what is a largely homogenous group of ‘citizens’
- larger council representing more people likely to have more power when negotiating on behalf of the bigger district
- reduced costs associated with a single council structure, single management structure, less duplication
- fewer county councillors (most residents don’t even know who their councillor is)

Efficiency savings would then permit greater investment in frontline services (rather than administration)

227 I realise that this for the councillors (and a few others) this is like turkeys voting for Christmas. But for the sake of the residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk, please could you:

- merge
- reduce the costs associated with duplicating everything in every district
- invest in frontline services instead

In fact - I see no need for Suffolk to be split up at all from an administration point of view.

228 It’s a good idea given the financial constraints and the overall need for coordinating regional aspiration with local views.

Can’t really see why it’s taking so long, other than others council’s appear to be reactionary (to central admin) rather than proactive.

Don’t lose sight of your raison d’etre in this process, being in ‘agile’ locations is ok for service delivery but you seem to forget it’s a two way street and that you need to listen to residents and businesses, something you are not good at. Anyone reading your proposals would think it was all about the two Council’s which is actually not the case.

The BC needs to take a bird’s eye view of the needs for housing and business development and come up with coordinated plans to deliver rather than trying to get away with the easy wins and bits and pieces approach that avoid upsetting the short sighted populism. Dump the politics and see what’s coming.

It’s just around the corner. Be positive in the face of bigotry and be proud of owning your objectives.

229 Of course outline must amalgamate small councils cannot survive the current economic squeeze. I really think you should be braver and join together as a unitary council as this is the way real savings will be made and make it easier for the public to understand who does what.

230 Of course outline must amalgamate small councils cannot survive the current economic squeeze. I really think you should be braver and join together as a unitary council as this is the way real savings will be made and make it easier for the public to understand who does what.

231 I am not in favour of the proposals.

Babergh has free car parking in market towns of Hadleigh and Sudbury. Mid Suffolk does not. I believe Babergh will lose this on merger with significant negative impacts to the economy of our town centres.

Mid Suffolk council has significant financial liabilities and is also planning a multi million £ redevelopment of Stowmarket. As a Babergh resident I have no desire to take on these liabilities.

The people were asked their opinion in a referendum - if we are not allowed to change our minds on something as significant as Brexit that then I object to this change being effectively smuggled in through the back door. Most people won’t bother to comment writing at length in a text box - any easy way to say you have consulted the people, without having really done so. Disappointing in our political leaders.

232 My memories of district Councils go back to Samford D C. I do not support the merger of Babergh with Mid Suffolk, as larger councils are more difficult to deal with, and have lost contact with their local areas and villages.
It has also proved difficult to access the new Babergh Offices in Ipswich, no parking facilities for the public.

233 I believe that the logical conclusion to the present situation must be to combine Mid Suffolk with Babergh to provide a more efficient and economically run organisation. It seems that those who are leading opposition to this are more interested in their own positions as Councillors than the improvement of the services to their residents.

234 I think that there will be a demolition of democracy as seems to be the case whenever smaller units merge to become ever larger. Then the "one fits all" practice prevails. Local people with local knowledge are best placed to make local decisions and time and again we see that bigger is not better. While I am not in favour of the merger, I acknowledge that government funding cuts are having an impact. However, it isn’t clear how merger will protect our public services but providing long term security for the new council.

With regard to job losses, your response is that this will not occur until 2019. How does this prevent job losses?

It is claimed that a new council will safeguard vital services. If these services were vital surely they would be provided vitally irrespective of merger.

In summary, I think that local democracy is too valuable to lose and you have not provided a convincing case for merger other than making unsubstantiated claims of benefit.

235 More detailed info will hopefully be forthcoming before the referendum to which the Leader of BDC has made clear his commitment. The online OneCouncil leaflet makes no mention of the on-going ‘political’ squabbling on this issue. Meantime, we are told Babergh & Mid Suffolk shared staff structure has been successfully Working Together for years to deliver services. Such integration would seem logical. Why can that not continue without creating a platform for 60 plus councillors which sounds anything but productive or a guarantee of streamlining? Whatever name is dreamed up, it appears at this stage as if it will have almost as many councillors as the County Council. Totally opposed to a council of that size. The Leaflet is filled with words some of which gain attention and make sense but there is little substance or detail and in parts is an exercise in naif copywriting....e.g. ‘refresh the council and councillor role’...."force a new relationship with the communities that we serve’.. Just froth and page filling.

Where does the supporting concept of being large enough to deal with central government whilst still being small enough to be relevant to diverse local needs cease to be applicable other than as a contrived jingle? How big does it get before it stops being local or will Babergh & Mid Suffolk work together to redefine the word ‘local’?

Where is the evidence this proposal would not erode the ‘local’ in local government? Would decisions currently made by those who are our local district representatives be influenced/taken by those who are not and have little or no experience/knowledge of such local matters in what is currently another district e.g. local planning matters/applications?

The picture being painted is that if we do not go this way then we will pay for it. That picture does not so far convince that we will not pay for it anyway.

The worry is not with the expertise and performance of the workforce as described, it is with those areas that might lead to the creation of a lumbering, top heavy, bureaucratic and mediocre political empire-building dinosaur that in the not too distant future will feel the need to morph itself into yet another entity full of eastern promise.

236 I am very suspicious of the fact that the Senior staff who pushed for this merger have left with no comeback on them. When I first came to Hadleigh, Babergh spent millions on their fine headquarters which are now vacant but still incurring running and maintenance costs. The first vote was against the merger principally because Mid Suffolk had a huge deficit of over 2Million and twice that of Babergh. Voters were worried about a Council Tax increase.

Although you claim to have saved £2m per year on salaries nothing has been mentioned about continuing costs, large redundancy payments, additional rents at Endeavour house, additional payments for staff to park in Ipswich.

What has happened in respect of the deficits? have they miraculously gone away. In your document you indicate a convenient fiction that Mid Suffolk ‘s general fund is in a better position than Babergh’s general fund. A complete change from at the time of the referendum. Can this be true?

You should have already drawn up a business case complete with all facts and figures which can be assessed by other people and verified where necessary. People want the whole Truth and not lies and half truths. When this is presented the voters can make up their minds about which way to go.

237 The Capel St Mary Parish Council objects to the merger of Babergh District Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council. It is not felt there has been an adequate consultation with the telephone poll giving leading questions to a desired response. The merger will give Babergh residents a disadvantage with higher council tax and car park charges for short term parking in our market towns.

Mid-Suffolk District Council has greater liabilities and is not in the same financial position as Babergh District Council with a further debt to be incurred by MSDC borrowing £60million for regeneration of Stowmarket. This is an unbalanced proposal working in favour of Mid-Suffolk and to the detriment of Babergh District Council.

238 I do not agree with the proposals because since integrating the staff from Babergh & Mid Suffolk this idea was to make savings which I fail to see that this was done. There were huge redundancy costs & a lot of experienced staff went. Then even more staff were taken on & posts regraded increasing salary costs. Would be interesting to see true & honest costs of that particular decision to integrate & not massaged ones.

239 I do not agree I think that council tax would rise to the level of Mid Suffolk.

240 I object to the merger of Babergh & Mid Suffolk. Surely with more houses & businesses planned for the area the more rural / village people need to have more representatives and say in what goes on and not be overwhelmed by one large council, many of which are not aware of what is needed and are only interested in their own area.
Sadly Ipswich is not central to the proposed merger and is difficult to get into especially at peak times. I do not believe money will be saved in a merger of the two councils.

241 In the last referendum, during 2011, it was made clear that Mid Suffolk council had a huge debt. This debt would be merged into Babergh accounts and hidden and paid for by Babergh residents, by increasing their council tax. This was unfair on Babergh residents and should not go ahead. It is for the same reason that I am against the proposed merger now. The council does not have my, or many other residents' approval for precisely the same reason.

242 The following are my reasons for not merging. I would prefer the councils to stay in partnership.

Future Options Working Together Oct 13

1. 4.1. You say the 50/50 division of costs is not sustainable. Then change it to a realistic/fair distribution now at council level. If it must be done that is more transparent than later, by departmental decision, in a merged council. A partnership allows both present councils to see the decision making. The argument is not one to merge.

2. 4.2 While I appreciate forward thinking, it is not always a reason for present and drastic change. You say the partnership is going well but problems could occur in the future. If you think this is the case, you should say why. You should discuss at meetings and modify as necessary. It is not an argument for a dramatic restructuring of the council with all the negatives that entails.

3. As above, an alternative is to split. At present, this can be done as the council is not restructured. That is an option that would be taken away if the councils merged. So a merger means less choice.

4. You say that any split would be "catastrophic" for Babergh. This might imply MSDC is supporting Bambergh. You have not made this clear to all residents, which is important for their decision-making. It seems to be a good reason for Bambergh to want to keep the partnership at least but may not appeal to Mid Suffolk residents. I do not know how it would affect either side re a merger, but should be made clear, if this is the case. This then is an example of lack of detail in the present paper. This is not helping us to give an informed opinion. Personally, I do not mind supporting Bambergh, providing I know for what, and why and how much.

5. You say a merged council would be better for negotiation with the government. A partnership is just as effective if both agree. Unfortunately, I cannot see either council negotiating or protesting against the government's brutal cuts, so do not see this as an valid argument.

243 From the information on the Babergh website I am not persuaded that there is a business case for a single council. From information I have gleaned there does not appear to have been the level of savings suggested originally for the two existing councils when working together and sharing staff. The service available now is poorer than it used to be. The move to Endeavour House has clearly been mishandled and not properly costed and is a very bad move. A single council will cover a huge geographical area and with fewer councillors residents will be more poorly represented, and will feel more remote from the council and its staff.

244 The two councils have made significant savings by working together. Merging the two councils wholesale would be a step too far. It might make some modest savings financially, but would also save on history and on democracy. It would create an artificial local government unit with no foundation in logic, in history or geography. Local government finances are hugely disabled by the Conservative government's approach to national finances. The solution is to permanently change national policy, not for local councils to merge piecemeal and without overall coherence. This particular proposal would appear to be wholly politically motivated to tie Babergh - which has a history of No Overall Control, with a significant Independent element - to permanent Conservative control. That is clearly a narrow party interest and completely contrary to real democracy and pluralism.

245 Holding the 2011 referendum was just another example of the way in which tax payers money is misused and spent. That the merger has gone ahead anyway. The two councils are like a couple living together married in all but name. Since it seems that the marriage is soon to be formalised whether we want it or not you might just as well get on and do it and save further fawning about and waste of money.

246 WHY? You have provided no valid or proven reason. In this I include valid and measurable sums apart from simple repeated unproven statement of £2 million pound per week is it?

247 I find it amazing and quite astounding when I hear the mantra "The Country/County/district is broke". Why is that every time there is a problem which is a valid public concern such as hospitals, education and many more , that a pot of up to £10 million can be found within hours. Is this the same pot which is being recycled? Or is it a pot driven by ego and kudos?

And while this going on there are new Government ministers being created and more jobs being created within County and Local government. Please recognise the lack of credibility and respect that many government officers and official are held in by large sections of the public.

This attempt to overturn an earlier vote without formal consultation at much earlier stage only serves to compound the problems of poor image and lack of respect

248 What a bunch of Hypocrites the Tory leaders of the Babergh Council are! These Clowns have held a referendum inviting the electorate of Babergh to vote on whether they would like to merge with Mid Suffolk District Council. The answer was No. They didn't like the answer so now they want to repeat the exercise a few years on now that they can apparently offer fresh incentives for amalgamation. Does any of this sound familiar? Their hypocrisy knows no bounds. I bet these are some of the same Tories who voted for Brexit. Now that the jury is out on the vast amount of economic harm it will cause this country by leaving the European Union the government which they support stubbornly refuses to counteract and another referendum on Brexit. It would be a good idea if they got there act together and all sing from the same hymn sheet. If there can't be a second referendum on Brexit now that all the lies have been revealed, why should there be a second referendum for the merger of these two district councils?

249 Having already voted against the merger in the previous referendum, this is now happening by stealth - I don't think it will be a good thing especially judging by the mess that has been made of the website and information sent out by the council on wrong headed paper etc
Given that the two sovereign councils both share the same workforce and back office services but each have to agree policy through their own councils, one council would dispense with the duplication of decision making and allow staff to work more efficiently. Hopefully this would have some cost saving benefit in addition to speeding up procedures. This should and must be clearly explained and expanded upon in the business case proposal.

One of the reasons why Suffolk is so popular is that the District councils are small enough for residents to feel involved much more than at County level. The greater the area a council covers the more distant at least 50% of any councillors on any committee become and therefore less attached to the areas they are required to control. For a Councillor from one end of the proposed new council to be required to properly adjudicate on a planning application from the other end of the area becomes more difficult, and, from a residents perspective less reliable.

I am not qualified to comment on the broad financial case or the “goings on” in the Council, for merging with Mid Suffolk DC so I will confine myself to commenting on more practical issues which I feel are important to the average resident in the Babergh area. First of all, the 2011 referendum in this area rejected the idea of merging, and it seems quite wrong to go ahead now, ignoring the earlier result, when little seems to have changed. I understand that Mid Suffolk’s Council Tax is higher that Babergh’s and ours would have to rise towards the average of the two. Things like the fact that short-term car parking here is free whilst Mid Suffolk has charges, are important to the residents. It seems that some of Babergh’s carefully organised housing money would be spent in the Mid Suffolk area. I am perfectly happy that the waste disposal and bin collection will continue to work well. My conclusion and probably that of most Babergh residents, is that our local council works well and has done so ever since I first arrived here 50 years ago. The best option, is to carry on with the sensible situation at the moment, that a number of functions have been combined between the two councils, but that a full merger is not in our best interests.

I do not agree with the merger of the 2 councils because it seems that they are distancing themselves from the people that they represent.

It is not easy to visit in person anymore as any travel arrangements are complicated, public transport does not stop very close by and if traveling by car there is nowhere to park. People sometimes want to ask questions of the council face to face and this will be removed if there is such limited access to council members.

If the one council is to be based in Ipswich the local part of local authority is removed and all decisions can be made by people who don’t understand what is needed in the local area. This lack of knowledge will result in planning decisions being made based purely on paper rather than on site which could be detrimental to the rural community.

In your leaflet you say that there will be savings for both councils but as the figures are not specific then how can the public know if this is true. Closing 2 offices and now renting in Ipswich with all the set up costs entailed in this doesn’t seem to be saving money. Do the set up costs and savings include the disposal of assets in the 2 offices and replacements bought for the office at Endeavour house? How long will it take for these costs to be covered.

I hope this email is read and thought about as it seems to me that the decision has already been made and all the consultation is just for show.

Should Not merge - Babergh residents voted this - nothing has changed its to big and varied an area - makes no sense especially financially.

There is no reasonable correlation between Babergh and Mid-Suffolk as far as district council governance is concerned. Suffolk is a big county and needs to be managed in sensible portions.

Babergh has its own attitudes to such things as parking charges, which are kept low to attract trade, and these would be swamped and swept away if the councils were combined.

Other aspects, such as planning, would also lose its focus.

There has been no saving in moving Babergh DC out of Hadleigh, and residents have lost easy access to the council.

Combining the councils is an altogether bad and negative idea. It has no merit.

I am concerned that we will loose our local contacts and representation. I have recently gone through the process of making a planning application it used to be you could meet and discuss your proposal, now it is more remote, web based and seems to be understaffed. The information provided about the merger is very one sided it doesn’t mention any of the problems or downside.

I think the proposals for one single council are a nonsense. The people of Babergh gave you a clear mandate. Nothing has changed. Two separate Councils thanks.

The most useful element of our current District Council is that the debates and decisions are taken by councillors who are relatively local and who know the issues “at local level”. It is impossible to conceive that a representative from Hoxne or Rickinghall can have any empathy with Nayland or Shottley.

I can see no democratic advantage of merging these two councils if they are to remain primarily representative of their constituents. Other considerations eg cost savings should be secondary.

I don’t agree with the proposal to create a single council.
The 'referendum' poll was less than 10 years ago, residents clearly voted against the plan and this decision must be respected. As a poll has already been held it would be against the wishes of the residents to go ahead with merger without a further poll of all residents.

I am concerned about the different financial status of each council and am not convinced that merger will produce the best outcome for Babergh residents.

Living close to the border with Essex and Tendring District Council I feel we are often ignored as the fringes of Babergh. That issues which are cross border are not discussed, especially infrastructure issues such as Brantham/Manningtree rail crossing. A merger with Mid-Suffolk would mean that these issues that affect the fringe areas of Babergh would disappear into the fog of a vast single council.

I understand that Mid-Suffolk has a greater Conservative balance than Babergh. I understand that it is the varied voices from Babergh that have given the residents a say in this process. I would feel that a merger to a single council will fundamentally affect Babergh's varied voices and therefore the robust scrutiny on behalf of Babergh residents. The community is varied and made up from different voices, different views and different political followings. Our council should reflect this variety.

I do not consider that the merger of the two district councils will benefit the residents and businesses of the current Babergh council.

The only perceived benefit from a merger would be a financial saving on behalf of both councils but at a cost to the residents of Babergh who will have increased council tax and lose the free parking currently enjoyed across the two districts.

In addition I think highly unlikely any issues and concerns raised by residents of the current Babergh district would be improved by a single merged council. In fact quite the opposite.

Also why should Babergh residents bail out the financial difficulties of the Mid Suffolk district council.

The primary objective of any district council is to serve its residents as best as possible. And the primary objective is not to save money.

I cannot see why the residents of Babergh council are going to be asked to pay more council tax and give up certain benefits such as free car parking, all of which are thanks to the efficient running of the Babergh council to Slovenia the financial challenge of Mid Suffolk council.

While one council may be cheaper to run it will not be able to provide the local support that the residents of Babergh council currently enjoy.

I have no faith in large councils where it has been shown that the smaller Babergh council is providing a very cost effective and efficient service to the residents and businesses in its district.

A better solution would be for Mid Suffolk to consider the Babergh model of service delivery as a first step to improving its performance as a council.

In the current economic climate there is a need to seek benefits of scale, although not such that it then becomes too big to alter or be able to respond to changes in social and economic needs.

There needs to be caution in outsourcing services to ensure that the Council continues to drive the service and not the service contractor controlling the service.

There needs to be reassessment of the cabinet style of government as with a larger electorate this format can lead to over domination by one party or a political clique that is not reflective of the range of opinions needs and expectations of the electorate.

I would support a single council to deliver services with savings and efficiencies made. This seems the logical way forward as officers are already working together.

The proposal of the One Council policy is the asking of acceptance of a policy that has already happened in everything but name and to the limit of what is legally possible. Only now when all other options have been exhausted do the council seek to ask permission where all the staff have been merged and it is only the councillors and the names left to be changed. In democratic terms the whole process of bringing together has been undertaken in terms that have been stretched from the original poll.
I understand of course that the money from government is being cut. However, that is an ideological from central government. If it has come to the point that the councils cannot exist on their own because of the pressure of higher government that is an authoritarian move to destroy the localism and trust that has been invested in the residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

By leaving the matter of merger until the point that nothing else can be done, and as a last resort, there it does not stand up to reason that this is the best option because it is the only one. It shows that there is a failure in the role to find other options and bring them up before the problem has become an overwhelming problem and issue.

265 You are creating a head office in Ipswich - which is out of the 'new, larger' area and realistically not accessible to the people you are meant to be serving. 'Larger' usually means the formation of greater bureaucracy and more expenses.

266 The idea of a local council is to close and accessible and already prior to the referendum departments have amalgamated and moved out of the district which we pay for.

If it is impossible financially to retain LOCAL councils, savings are essential there should only be a Suffolk Council and no districts.

From outside the organisation, whatever the reasons, it seems an inglorious muddle.

267 All public sector organisations are facing increased financial pressure. Any way to save money must be considered seriously and not just rejected out of hand. There are savings that can be made by Babergh and Mid Suffolk joining together to form one larger Council. Other Suffolk Councils are joining in partnerships. Babergh and Mid Suffolk risk being left behind and being put at a disadvantage, after being at the forefront of ‘joined up working’.

Any decision which has to be made by Council at the moment has to go to both sets of Councillors. Two meetings, which Council Officers have to attend, mostly very Senior Members of staff. There would be savings on the costs for their time. Also the administration for these meetings would be halved, with associated reduction in costs.

I am sure these would not be the only savings, but these are the most obvious to me.

To make a decision based on high profile issues such as ‘car parking’ may be short sighted. Whilst we may prefer there not to be parking charges in Babergh, in these days of austerity decisions may have to be made which are unpopular in the short term, for long term gain.

268 I don’t want to join midsuffolk, I already voted not to at a referendum. Why? The demographics and needs are very different of each district which has been acknowledged in the past by BDC. I rather have bespoke policies for each district rather than a one size fits all approach. Also, looking at the different financial situations of the authorities I as a BDC tax payer have no wish to pay more to bail mid Suffolk out.

Further, I have no faith that the current management /leadership has the expertise to bring about the cost savings implied. The last few years BDC has been a rudderless omnisambles. Vast sums have been wasted fighting its own electorate, taking its self to judicial review, moving from hadleigh without knowing full costs etc.

Further, I suspect that this consultation is going to be the usual BDC political exercise of cherry picking the results i.e reporting the data which supports merger and disregarding that which doesn’t. Conveniently no mention is made of independent scrutiny of results.

I also strongly object to the representation that this is the only option to save costs. It isn’t, for instance we could abolish both councils and just have one unitary authority.

269 The Winston Parish Council is in favour of the proposed merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils into into one District Council but with the proviso that all services are maintained to the current level, if not improved upon. Of particular concern were that infrastructure and housing should be priorities for the proposed new District Council.

270 I totally disagree with the single council option.

Babergh was a fully integrated council, working well with the Hadleigh and surrounding area residents.

Its’ offices and departments were easily accessible to all (including ample parking), with the staffs’ local knowledge being a valuable asset to provide speedy solutions to all/any problems, thereby giving fast resolutions which in turn gave savings on both time and expense.

This of course will all go out of the window with the single council proposal.

The award winning Council Offices at Corks Lane in Hadleigh were a very pleasing place to visit and ran extremely efficiently, with all visitors rarely suffering delays or lengthy waiting time.

This has of course not been without cost over the years, with Babergh spending a considerable sum of the rate-payers money on the building, infrastructure, IT and staffing.

All this has been lost at a stroke. This being despite:-

1. Babergh staff not wanting to amalgamate or leave the building.

2. A referendum of the residents not wanting to amalgamate or close the building.

3. An extremely costly report prepared by independent experts (at ratepayers expense) finding in favour of keeping
the building in service.

All this has been totally ignored by faceless bureaucrats, who in their ‘expert’ opinion know better than all and proceeded post haste to close down these valuable facilities. Do we still live in a democratic system in Suffolk, or have I missed something...???

271 I am against this.

We have already voted in 2011, this decision should stand.

By joining as a single council, this larger council will be more remote from the people it represents.

We have already had Babergh move their offices out of the area that they claim to represent.

Where will this all stop. I can see us ending up as East and West Suffolk.

272 I want to be independent and not have my council tax going into the mid Suffolk money pit.

273 What are the actual benefits of a merger? It already isn’t showing cost savings with the move of offices.

District authorities need to be based in their district, otherwise get rid of them completely and let’s just have a broader ranging county council.

274 The residents of Mid Suffolk must be given a vote on this proposal. There is no mandate from the previous referendum several years ago. At that time Babergh was thought to be a prosperous Council. Now it is known to be suffering from severe financial pressure, and the suitability of it to merge with Mid Suffolk is now very questionable. Would Mid Suffolk be better off merging with West Suffolk.

The move of the two Councils out of the areas they serve is very strange. I understand that these are the only Council’s whose bases are outside of the area. This can either be looked at as ground breaking innovative idea or a ridiculous idea that sends out entirely the wrong message to the residents it serves. I think it was a poor decision.

275 The service has been getting worse and more remote since the two councils have been ‘working together’ and this deterioration has continued since BDC left Hadleigh for Ipswich. I would prefer my council tax to be used to provide efficient services in the area that I live - and to be accessible.

276 Capel Community Trust objects to the merger of Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council.

It is not felt there has been an adequate consultation with the telephone poll giving leading questions to a desired response.

The merger will give Babergh residents a disadvantage with higher council tax and car park charges for short term parking in our market towns.

Mid Suffolk District Council has greater liabilities and is not in the same financial position as Babergh District Council with a further debt to be incurred by MSDC borrowing £60million for regeneration of Stowmarket.

This is an unbalanced proposal working in favour of Mid Suffolk and to the detriment of Babergh District Council.

277 I vote in elections - and I believe we must trust our elected body to get on with whatever it is they need to do remain viable. They are telling us they want to merge and I support them whole heartedly; let them get on with it.

I don’t care what the council which I pay my council tax to is called, whether it be called Mid Suffolk or Central Suffolk, or whether it is formally or informally merged with a neighbouring council. I do care that they do the most sensible thing to ensure they can succeed, be more resilient and have a voice.

Forming one council with Babergh must surely be the way forward.

278 I object to the proposed merger as it takes local democracy away from key services that I see as important. For example the parking charges in Sudbury which is a key concern to local businesses.

Instead of consulting on how Babergh can deliver better services and how these services are best delivered this so called consultation is setting out what the council wants and not what local people want.

In reading the documentation provided there is a lack of clarity over the services provided and how best these should be provided in future. In particular looking at what services might be taken over by County Council and what might be provided by town and parish councils. Overall therefore the proposals are poorly thought out and poorly structured and fail to address concerns at a local level.
I don't think it really matters what we think, as was shown with the vote on whether to merge the two councils you chose not to listen and instead merge in all but name, sharing services making people redundant and closing local council offices was a merger, no matter the spin or trying to use clever words that is exactly what happened. And all that done was to highlight the disdain you have for residents within your areas, it also shows your level of arrogance that you would ignore the will of the people, wonder why people become apathetic towards politics, councils and councillors then the way you behaved is reason enough that you should understand and know why.

From the "merger" we've seen local council offices close, that now stand empty and abandoned, without any care for those that cannot travel to the new offices, that don't have internet connection, but you don't care about that as you'll pat yourselves on the back whilst turning it on those you're supposed to be making the area better for them.

This is nothing more than a box ticking exercise, one that has to be done to show that you're giving the democratic process its due course, its nothing more than an empty gesture, just like the merger vote.

Barham Parish Council are in favour of the merger, as it seems the most logical approach given the amount of joined up thinking already in place.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are consulting on a proposal where there clearly two options: merging, and staying the same. But the councils are only presenting one side of the argument. The council is of course at liberty to have a preferred position, but if it really values the opinion of the public, then we need to be informed about what the options are, and what the implications of those options would be for us as local residents. Babergh might claim to be in 'listening mode' but it actually appears to be in an echo chamber.

Financial pressures are set to increase, but councils cannot continue getting ever bigger. Babergh and Mid Suffolk have already moved out of their local areas, with scant consideration for the staff involved. In holding meetings at Endeavour House instead of in the districts they serve, the councils are not even paying lip service to promoting democracy. What assurances do we have that a merged council won't then seek to merge with other Suffolk districts, further decreasing the connection residents have with their council, and reducing the local knowledge that councils are built on?

It is clear in the consultation information that the key reason for the councils seeking to merge is the forthcoming withdrawal of central government funding. Thus the business decision Babergh and Mid Suffolk are putting forward directly stems from a reversible political decision to withdraw central government funding.
APPENDIX (c)4: OTHER RESPONSES BY LETTER, EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA

1. A total of 43,446 people were reached through Twitter and Facebook. Posts were regularly made throughout the consultation period with links to the website, online survey and providing the One Council email address. Facebook adverts were posted on each Council’s Facebook page. In total there were 33 responses directly via social media. Of those 19 were against, 2 were in favour, 10 called for a referendum, and 2 were neutral.

Facebook:

2. There are 961 followers on the Babergh Facebook page and 912 following the Mid Suffolk Facebook page. A total of 15 posts were made on each page throughout the engagement period. One Facebook advert was posted on each District’s Facebook page on 31st December and 31st January. 12,093 people were reached through the Babergh Facebook page and 3327 were reached through the Mid Suffolk Facebook page.
   - Babergh: 0 clicks, 22 likes, 4 angry reactions, 46 shares.
   - Mid Suffolk: 28 clicks, 12 likes, 12 shares.

3. All comments received, apart from one, were exclusively posted on the Babergh Facebook page. In summary these were:
   - Calls for a referendum
   - ‘We already said no’
   - Praised for Councils' savings
   - Savings should be spent on housing and reduction in council tax
   - Results are skewed and the merger will go ahead regardless

Twitter:

4. There are 7254 followers of the Babergh Twitter page, and 5327 followers on the Mid Suffolk Twitter page. A total of 16 posts were made on each page throughout the engagement period. In total the Mid Suffolk Twitter page accrued 12,385 impressions from each of its posts regarding the proposal and the Babergh Twitter page accrued 15,640 impressions. There was a combined total of 94 post clicks, 11 likes, and 35 retweets for both pages.

5. In summary the responses were:
   - Ignored referendum, not listening
   - Council will keep asking until they get the answer they want
   - Will do what you want anyway
   - Calls for a referendum
   - Mid Suffolk can look for another partner if Babergh aren’t interested
   - Thought the Councils had merged already
Social media responses in full:

Facebook comments on the Mid Suffolk page:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook post and date:</th>
<th>Comment:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/01/2018</td>
<td>• Obviously the merger should not go ahead unless endorsed in a referendum of all residents of both councils. See: <a href="https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-babergh-and-mid-suffolk-merge-without-residents-having-a-vote">https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-babergh-and-mid-suffolk-merge-without-residents-having-a-vote</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/02/2018</td>
<td>• How many comments were received?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facebook comments on the Babergh page:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook post and date:</th>
<th>Comment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/12/2017 From Today until the 5th of February, the public, businesses and stakeholders will be able to have their say on our proposal to dissolve the two district councils in favour of creating a single council. Take part online here</td>
<td>• 11/12/2017 – This has just one field to put your comments, and lots on your age, sex, etc. This is hardly a valid consultation approach. Previously Babergh has considered just telling what they are doing using the Localism act as justification to do whatever they wish, is consultation. A simple referendum would have been appropriate, but then Babergh etc have already taken away any meaningful office access which I doubt would have been supported by any Public consultation (Again consultation was by telling us what they were doing and ignoring what the public had said) Look at the office move report and its done on the basis of Localism act (Not as it was intened by Government) this means they can basically do what they wish that is lawful. Terribly open ended and unaccountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/12/2017 Make sure your voice is heard, and take part in our engagement. <a href="http://ow.ly/WEjX30hdZLD">http://ow.ly/WEjX30hdZLD</a> &quot;In the last 6 years, we have achieved £13m of cumulative savings by delivering our services under a joint Chief Executive and fully shared staff structure. Let’s keep the success going.&quot;</td>
<td>• 14/12/2017 – The telephone polling (methodology so far unspecified) will be undertaken using a demographic profile. For anybody interested in polling techniques and the validity of the results produced, I recommend an American website. Sorry, 538 is the website. Very good analysis of the analysis! A bit numbers and politics nerdy, but food for thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/12/2017 How can Councillors and officers be familiar with an area this big? Be as anonymous as Suffolk County Council or is this the ultimate aim, dispense with local government entirely.</td>
<td>• 15/12/2017 – Haven't reduced council tax though II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 15/12/2017 – This is brilliant news! Amazing achievement saving £13m such a good feeling to know money not being waste a huge pat on the back well done !!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 15/12/2017 – You don't listen anyway, and even if it’s voted against its done regardless. Another waste of tax payers money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 20/12/2017 – Has to be a full referendum. A telephone consultation is not sufficient for a fundamental change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 22/12/2017 – How can Councillors and officers be familiar with an area this big? Be as anonymous as Suffolk County Council or is this the ultimate aim, dispense with local government entirely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 22/12/2017 – A full referendum. A telephone is necessary. Telephony consultation is not sufficient for a fundamental change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/12/2017</td>
<td>You'll need some of that to pay for the extra moving costs you didn't account for when you decided to move despite being advised it wouldn't save you money. The people who told you that have now been proved right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/12/2017</td>
<td>Now that Jenny Jenkins has slung her hook, could we have an investigation into her dealings, especially where housing development is concerned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/12/2017</td>
<td>You are asking for comments. Simple reduce the number of councillors by half at least. Reduce the amount of staff by half at least. Make all your expenses wages etc. published in the press monthly be accountable and open. Far too many portfolio holders are a complete joke as are most of the published decisions. Make them all accountable as in other public offices. Get rid of the hangers on and excess in most areas. Then we can have our well-earned council tax fairly set, not set to satisfy the do-gooders etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/01/2018</td>
<td>There are only 6 DAYS left to give us your comments on our proposal to create one district council in the heart of Suffolk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/01/2018</td>
<td>The people of Babergh District responded was it six years ago when a majority said no they did not want to become a larger district, i.e., one District Council with Babergh enjoined with Mid-Suffolk. I ask for what reason/s this notion has subsequently reared its head again? I do not wish this new plan of joining together as one larger District Council to go ahead. Only with another affirmative referendum should it go ahead, but why the duplicated expense of this after only six years I ask?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/02/2018</td>
<td>Tomorrow is the last day for you to have your say on our proposal for one district council in the heart of Suffolk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The councils have already saved around £2m per annum since 2011 through working together, but have reached the limit of new savings that can be achieved this way. In order to face the challenges that lie ahead, we must consider new options. &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read more, find the answers to some of your questions, and comment on our proposal: <a href="http://ow.ly/Suln30i5pfi">http://ow.ly/Suln30i5pfi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>04/02/2018 – You saved that lot spend it on some council houses not fk privet all time just to get more money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>04/02/2018 – And the conservative leaders have already indicated that they intend to skew the results to say what they want. I would also seriously question the savings considering that there are two empty buildings requiring maintenance and twenty-four hour security and a senior officer (who didn’t get the ce job) is getting voluntary redundancy having been seconded to the same London authority that the previous ce went for several months. Not to mention an extensive use of consultants. The reason being given for the need for savings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
working together but have reached the limit of new savings that can be achieved this way. A new council is estimated to deliver further savings of £1m a year and would be financially stronger overall".

Read more, find the answers to some of your questions, and comment on our proposal: http://ow.ly/FhAs30ia2Y8

Twitter comments on the Mid Suffolk account:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Twitter Comments (Mid Suffolk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>As far as I was aware they already have!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>&quot;Put it to a referendum?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/12/2017</td>
<td>Is your personal salary and benefits structure changing ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/12/2017</td>
<td>Both stronghold Tory so should be okay... when there is a major political difference it can be an issue. However, I do feel sorry for all those Council workers doing their site visits from Ipswich.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/12/2017</td>
<td>Why so difficult? Its obvious - put it back to a referendum and let democracy take place!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/01/2018</td>
<td>[In response to the promise of a merger] Doubt whether it will make a jot of difference. Waste of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/01/2018</td>
<td>So if your backdoor merger with Babergh doesn't go ahead are the offices to be reopened? How much is it costing per week to secure the building less than the 10k per week for the middle school I hope?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/02/2018</td>
<td>Get rid of Msdc and merge with Suffolk County Council, that would save money!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tweets on the Babergh account:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Twitter Comments (Babergh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>The fact that they haven't taken on board the result of the referendum result that said NO to this means they are not listening!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>Thought this was answered last time. The answer is NO! Will you keep asking the same question until you get the answer you want? What about asking all those without internet access? Write to EVERY household affected for written replies!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>You say you're listening, but appear to have already made your mind up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/2017</td>
<td>Put it to a referendum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/12/2017</td>
<td>Thought this was answered last time. The answer is NO! Will you keep asking the same question until you get the answer you want? What about asking all those without internet access? Write to EVERY household affected for written replies!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/12/2017</td>
<td>&quot;It's about democracy. 'Cornard North Babergh Councillor Tony Bavington in the @SFPSudbury talking about @BaberghDistrict merger that is undemocratic after referendum said no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/12/2017</td>
<td>Is your personal salary and benefits structure changing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/12/2017</td>
<td>Why so difficult? Its obvious - put it back to a referendum and let democracy take place!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/01/2018</td>
<td>[In response to promise of merger] Perhaps need to tell west Suffolk councils about that as residents denied vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/01/2018</td>
<td>[In response to the promise of a merger] Doubt whether it will make a jot of difference. Waste of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01/2018</td>
<td>The worst decision Babergh's kitchen cabinet made was moving the council out of the area it is supposed to serve. Merge/don't merge? Personally I'm against but I'm not sure people care that much given that Babergh's leaders don't seem to care about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/01/2018</td>
<td>Just been phoned 4 @BaberghDistrict sample consultation @LukeMCresswell @SFPSudbury Preliminary Q: 'Am I eligible to vote in local elections?' Turns out if you don't already know, you don't get to carry on with the survey - nor do you get advised how to register. So democratic...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/01/2018</td>
<td>Replying to @BaberghDistrict and 3 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/02/2018</td>
<td>I've submitted Qs to @BaberghDistrict Looking forward to answers. Q1 why are the 2 councils in such different £ positions &amp; what are they doing to address underlying probs other than just expanding. Q2 what difference wld merger make to staff pay&amp;conditions &amp; service provision?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX (c)5: RESPONSES TO STAFF SURVEY

1. All the Councils’ employees were provided with details on the launch of the engagement on 11th December via email, and were encouraged to include adverts and links to the survey in their email signatures. Further information was also provided through the weekly staff bulletin. The Chief Executive held seven face to face staff briefings during January and February 2018, one of which was filmed in order to enable all staff to see the presentation.

2. Despite some previous ill feeling and resentment towards the decision to move the Councils into a single headquarters premises during 2016 / 17, the staff were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposal to create a new, single council. Most staff respondents live in the Mid Suffolk District (48%), with 20% living in Babergh. 89 members of staff completed the survey with 79 expressing an opinion. Of these, 57 were in favour, 11 were against, 11 either unsure, calling for a referendum, for more information or for a super council.

3. Summary of the points raised by those in support of the proposal:

- Merger will save money and provide clear leadership, which is overdue.
- The Councils need to keep up with our neighbours and have a stronger voice – it’s working well for them.
- It will make things much simpler in working terms and reduce duplication.
- It will remove a lot of public confusion.
- It will generate efficiencies - we need to be more streamlined.
- Makes sense, more efficient, not left behind.
- Shame it can’t happen sooner.
- Supportive, however more information is needed – more community engagement from Councillors.
- There is no other option.

4. Summary of the points raised by those in opposing the proposal:

-Disconnected – the council would be too big, concerned about potential remoteness from residents, communication with the public must be improved and trust rebuilt.
- Information – ‘The public needs hard facts and figures to assist them in making this decision’.
- Councillors - infighting between Councillors is not to the benefit of the communities, and it is embarrassing to be an employee.
- Consultation – we said no in 2011, what’s the point in asking us, you don’t care what we think and you’ll do it anyway.
- Services – the public cannot get the help they need from us.
- Finances – Mid Suffolk residents do not want to bail out Babergh’s extravagant spending.
1. Do you work for the organisation as a:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent employee</td>
<td>97.75%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary employee</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On secondment</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered 89  
skipped 0

2. What are your normal hours of work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>80.90%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered 89  
skipped 0

3. How long have you worked for the Councils?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>7.87%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 years</td>
<td>15.73%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 years</td>
<td>10.11%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>47.19%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered 89  
skipped 0
### Which directorate/service area do you currently work in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Resources</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Services</td>
<td>12.94%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>10.59%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Projects</td>
<td>18.82%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>10.59%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment and Commercial Delivery</td>
<td>2.35%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Governance</td>
<td>8.24%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Growth</td>
<td>14.12%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Leadership Team/Executive PAs</td>
<td>4.71%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total answered:** 85  
**Total skipped:** 4

### How did you hear about the proposals for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to come together and create ‘One Council’ for the heart of Suffolk? Please select all that apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local media coverage</td>
<td>26.97%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From recent Council/Cabinet meetings/reports</td>
<td>17.98%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From councillors</td>
<td>5.62%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From your line manager</td>
<td>24.72%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From colleagues</td>
<td>28.09%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff briefing by Chief Executive</td>
<td>25.84%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email update to staff from Chief Executive</td>
<td>62.92%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babergh and Mid Suffolk website</td>
<td>16.85%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other website</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babergh and Mid Suffolk social media</td>
<td>8.99%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other social media</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECT intranet</td>
<td>20.22%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Working Together’ fortnightly news update</td>
<td>37.08%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yammer</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t recall</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>6.74%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How did you hear about the proposals for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to come together and create ‘One Council’ for the heart of Suffolk? Please select all that apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In which district do you live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babergh</td>
<td>20.22%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Suffolk</td>
<td>48.31%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live outside the districts</td>
<td>31.46%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following age groups do you belong to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 18</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>26.97%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-54</td>
<td>38.20%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>23.60%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please select your gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59.55%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37.08%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>3.37%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered 89
skipped 0
To create a single council, we must draw up a business case for the proposed option, one which must be informed by feedback from our staff as well as many other important stakeholders. Please use the text box below to provide your opinions on the option of ‘One Council’ and reasons why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-Ended Question</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>79 answered, 79 skipped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have any questions (not otherwise answered in the FAQs linked to above) that you would like to see answered in our business case, please ask them here. All questions submitted will be directly responded to if you leave your contact details below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-Ended Question</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>14 answered, 75 skipped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you would like direct answers to your questions, please provide your name and email address below. If you do not wish to provide these details, please leave these fields blank and proceed to finish the survey. Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>19 answered, 70 skipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td>94.74%</td>
<td>18 answered, 70 skipped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Free text responses:

1. I have worked for Babergh District Council for 25 years. The Councils have worked closely together in the last few years. I can see no reason why one council wouldn't work.

2. Each department can and do work together closely as they have been, so why waste the money and time carrying out a formal merge. The residents of both districts voted against this not so long ago, yes it was a close result but the result still stands, you don't keep having votes and bringing it up until to acquire the result you want NOT the residents.

3. I am all in favour as a relatively new employee and see the two Councils as one entity already. The benefits for me would be unity of purpose by not having to separately reference each DC in relation to Officers, Elected Members or budgets which seems to me to over-complicate things and also draws a divide between those who think and say they are only representing one Council. I think it is important to remove these barriers so work is streamlined and more effective, and communication, shared vision and a common purpose become integrated into our working culture internally and externally, serving our Communities.

4. I think that it is about time we did it. The current work I am doing to streamline services is being hindered by the fact that we still have two separate Councils and Financial systems.
5 I am fully supportive of having 'One Council' but please, please make sure that enough lead in time is given to align all IT systems before going LIVE. For example SRP currently have 2 separate data bases (Northgate) for BDC and MSDC for managing CTAX/HB. These will need to be aligned into one data base which could take 2 years. Whilst BDC and MSDC already have one data base (Open Housing) for Housing, there will still be a lot of work to align the data base into one HRA. The same will apply to Finance and their data base Integra. All of these data bases will need to be ready to go LIVE at the same time as they are reliant on interfaces to communicate with each other. I expect go live will be at the beginning of the financial year so all alignment work will need to be completed by November in order to go live in the Apr as Year End Jan-Apr is the busiest time of year for Housing/SRP/Finance. There needs to be sufficient resources to allow the alignment to happen on time. Any delay will be a delay of a year until the next financial year. If we try to align the system using the existing resources whilst having to do the day job it will be delayed if you wish 'One Council' to be implemented any time soon, trust me....

6 One Council would enable more efficient and effective supporting operations meaning better delivery of service for the Council and externally a more streamlined and cohesive strategy and values.

7 In theory it may be a sensible idea. However, in practice, if it's managed and implemented in the same inefficient and money wasting manner with which the "Move to Ipswich was undertaken, then it will be a massive "white elephant" and cost the tax payer millions of pounds that will never be recovered!

The move to Endeavour House and the "All Together" programme has cost 10's of millions of pounds and was based on political motives and ill informed costings. The merge of the two councils will be another disaster if the management don't take notice of the staff this time - the reliance on overpaid outside consultants needs to stop - if our own managers can't the make the necessary decisions about major changes at the Councils, then they are in the wrong jobs.

8 Please take all actions needed asap to become one council.

This will avoid duplication of reporting.

Border issues creating different policies in our two areas. Remove the need for two websites, two social media feeds, etc.

Do something once and do it well.

Political nonsense of one lot of members thinking the other group are in some way taking them over or being taken over.

All, be they staff or members, need to work for the good of all within our geographical areas.

9 In the present and future financial climate in terms of Central Government funding I see no option other than the introduction of One Council. Staff have been servicing both districts for a number of years. Working with two Sovereign Councils, who have two separate budgets, and separate Members has made joined up working difficult at times.

It makes sense to in terms of resilience and sustainability and is a natural follow on from the current situation. From both a staff and resident perspective its the sensible way forward.

One Council is the final step to achieving a true 'working together' culture

10 Seems like a very sensible idea to me - with services between the two authorities being shared it seems like having 'Babergh' and 'Mid Suffolk' as separate entities is an increasingly meaningless divide.

11 I am totally opposed to this. When BDC residents were previously consulted they voted unanimously against a merger. Local government is becoming less local and less democratic. Why are residents views being ignored? Where is the mandate for this? A merged district will be too large and BDC historically has little in common with MSDC. Historically BDC was always in West Suffolk with Bury St Edmunds as it’s "capital". Now we are being run from Ipswich which is remote and distant for a large part of the BDC area.

12 Its the only logical step to have one set of councillors. However we need to go further and look at altering our boundaries to give Ipswich room to expand and stop our new council from unsustainably dumping its housing allocations onto the edge of Ipswich - to continue to do so is undemocratic to Ipswich.

13 I believe that we should be a single council. Having worked here for two years I am aware there is still a divide in some teams between long standing employees who have worked for either Babergh or mid Suffolk. Creating one Council with a new name will give a strong identity, better team work and more stability. I think it will also provide more clarity for residents. It must be very confusing for residents especially now we are based in Endeavour House too.

It would make more sense to have one set of Councillors, one payroll, one pension scheme. We also have two child care voucher schemes, cycle schemes etc.
We need to be sending a clear message to residents and employees with clear objectives. One Council will make us stronger, and budgets will be more streamlined.

14

There is no point in voicing an opinion or thoughts on the way forward. For several years now we have been asked our opinion an almost without exception no notice was taken of staff, or the public some to that.

15

The larger plan is to install Arthur as the new CEO of SCC, a fait accompli if you will...

Paid for in the dissolution of his own districts and shoehorning the remnants into Endeavour House (without legal contract).

“We are listening” but we really don’t care about councillors, staff, the public or anyone else affected by this power grabbing frenzy. Shame on you all!

16

Considering the extra money spent on the move - the number of consultants, the fact that a lot of it wasn’t ready on time and extra items needed purchasing an d most importantly the fact that the cheaper long term option was to stay and future-proof the Hadleigh offices for both councils I have no confidence in the supposed saving of £1million which seems too convenient and rounded a figure to be realistic. I suspect the figures have been manipulated to give the conservative led council the figures it wants. The Conservatives since taking overall control have shown themselves to be arrogant and willing to ride roughshod over staff and residents - this is the ultimate example: after deciding to move out I the districts completely we are now seeing them wanting to go against their own constituents’ wishes and merging the two councils. The phrase in the message from the CE included the words “Every piece of feedback we receive will help shape the business case for ‘One Council’ ” which would appear to show that the councillors (and C E) have made up their mind and results of any consultation will be merely twisted in such a way to supply the result they want.

17

It now makes sense to revisit this and consolidate into a single Authority - given the financial landscape, way we now work and potential efficiency gains (e.g. reporting once instead of twice) and to use the strengths of both districts to support a sustainable way forward to support front-line services and challenges to come.

The costs must be carefully risk assessed up front - especially legal and need to do the groundwork/baselines effectively rather than take the big decision first then work it back. Some lessons to learn from recent relocation of HQ? For example there is a legacy of services that have historic/evolved (and political) differences - there may need to be service level (and external) consultations, adoption/re-adopt of certain legislation etc. with a significant cost (and service continuity/risk implication). This work will need identifying and auditing - corporate risk and business continuity may increase significantly during any transition.

Ensuring legal opinion at services level - separate sovereign authorities/committees etc. will need to be worked through carefully as is a potential minefield.

Citizens may be responding to this consultation based on very local level concerns (or on the process itself) whereas the Councils need to take a strategic and contextual decision - residents may be sceptical or cynical so positive communications around this are essential. Implications on councillors and governance from a new Council - one PFH instead of two, less locality knowledge etc. may be difficult to balance?

Politically this is a very sensitive issue.

18

I appreciate that legally the councils do not have to listen to the results of the referendum, but by opposing the outcome of this, the majority of constituents are left with a bad taste in their mouths, in the council goes ahead and does whatever it likes without any care about the wishes of the people. The savings mentioned in the FAQ’s are impressive, and being part of the accommodation move, I can see where these savings are being made, however, what benefit will the public see from these savings?

19

I think it’s a good idea. Whilst the days of functional Shire District Councils may well be numbered, the larger one is, the less chance of its extinction. Both Councils alone are relatively small in population and rural or semi-rural aspect. They both have similar political outlooks and strong Parishes and Town Councils within them.

On the other hand there is a bit of a disconnect between certain areas of the different Councils. People in Stowmarket, for instance, rarely travel all the way to Hadleigh or Sudbury. That doesn’t, however, imply a cultural disconnect but rather a lack of attraction between the two. Nor does it reflect those who commute to work in Suffolk either.

20

Financial - helps to resolve imbalance in general fund and HRA between the 2 districts , more efficient (avoid duplication) less committees , avoid double briefings etc. Ensure future sustainability of services.

Status - 2 small district councils will lose voice and impact in a county with 2 other large combined district authorities new authority would be on level with new authorities.

Vision and future - a great and exciting opportunity for a new organisation with new ways of working to develop and grow and bring finally all parties together, the current arrangements feels like a job half done!

21

I think One Council would be a much better idea in terms of having a cohesive approach.
I fully support the creation of a single council because I consider that this will lead to savings and efficiencies that we could not achieve with the current model.

For financial reasons, one council makes sense. However, there are many areas that both councils do differently and a lot of thought and planning is needed to align processes. I think 2019 is ambitious.

The staff are already operating as one team for two councils - with over 80 members. We have to undertake several tasks twice for the two councils which would drop to once only. Managing accounts and costs would be much easier. Most activity by staff and costs incurred is already on behalf of both councils.

According to the general consensus - Babergh residents voted AGAINST the merger in 2011, including myself, therefore I would continue to choose NOT to merge the councils. It would make the “one council” far too big, these are very rural areas, covering great distances - the fact that the councils are working away from the districts (in Ipswich) is already creating problems within the local communities - travel, communications etc.

Currently, we are providing the same level of service across both council areas. With the two councils financial situations diverging it will be increasingly difficult to avoid differential service levels between the two areas, this will be very difficult, if not impossible, to manage and it will make integrated services almost pointless resulting in increased management costs for both councils.

As a customer-facing employee, I believe that our local residents will be disappointed that their access to services has been digitised. Especially the older generation who do not/can not use a computer. Face to face or written communications are the only way for some of our residents, especially in such a rural area. Digital works fine, but must not completely replace good customer service. As far as one Council goes - to save money on Councillor’s expenses (more than my part-time earnings) by reducing the numbers, may help to plug the financial gap temporarily. One council across the whole of Suffolk was mooted before (Unitary) but then didn’t happen. I’m sure that as long as bins are emptied, houses maintained, communities supported etc. all will be well.

Firstly, I think you need to reconsider referring publically to this as an option of “One Council for the Heart of Suffolk”. This is misleading as it implies that there will literally be one Council providing services in the area (i.e. Unitary) when what you actually mean is One District Council. I’m surprised SCC haven’t picked us up on this already.

Secondly, whilst there are undoubtedly benefits in creating a single larger district council, the financial benefits of doing so (the main driver) appear to be relatively modest. What other changes could be made to generate a similar savings return (£1m)? For example, scaling back on the extensive use of career interims and consultants and investing in developing the permanent workforce. Have these options been identified and properly considered?

If we move to a single district council, will we move the new Council’s HQ back into the community we serve? If that is the plan, then it may be beneficial to be open about this intention from the outset. It could help to win over hearts and minds in Babergh in the event of a local poll. I would suggest developing a clear policy statement on Council Tax equalisation as well; as concern over this was clearly a factor in 2011.

Finally, in the longer term we should look to be more ambitious. For example, in line with TCA principles could we work collaboratively to create a public service village in Sudbury or Stowmarket by rationalising existing property assets and creating something modern and purpose built for the future. For example, incorporating health services, leisure, library, customer service points and community space etc...?

As we’ve been working as one makes sense to merge to actually become one. Instead of having everything split between Babergh and Mid Suffolk I’m sure it would produce some savings to have one version of everything. One payroll, one set of accounts etc.

It makes sense to me to merge as staff have already done so and there is a lot of double handling of work or doing things twice in a slightly different way as both councils work slightly different so it would enable me to work more efficiently if the two councils merged and most probably save money.

It would be only fair to have a Referendum again to see what the public would like.

As £13 million has been saved already from Working Together, where has this money gone or what is it being used for or ear-marked for?
Working Together may have saved money but on the 'shop floor' it is chaos (ie Planning and Land Charges and very poor IT provided by SCC). How are these problems going to be solved by now possibly changing again to one Authority?

32 Financially I do not think the Councils have an option other than to merge.

33 Merger was rejected recently - 2011, right? Seems immoral to ask again, with such a short timescale. If the decision first time around was the wrong one, just be honest and stop pretending this is democracy in action - and make the change without more consultation.

34 I think its a great idea in the long term as it will make CIL a lot easier to administer if we are just one Council.

35 In regards to the Suffolk space I do feel that it would be preferable to be part of a bigger entity in order to provide a healthier financial picture and one council approach.

As both East and West Suffolk councils are merging it would appear to be the right strategic approach for the two central Suffolk.

As a member of staff it would certainly be easier to take reports and seek key decisions from one councils as opposed to two. Having one budget with the combined financial resources of both current authorities would also provide a stronger basis for service delivery.

36 While I fully understand the reason for the councils wishing to become one council, I believe that due to the differences in the fisceral positions of both councils, it will be unfair on Mid Suffolk council tax payers and also Babergh tenants as they will in effect be 'bailing out' the other general fund and HRA respectively. I as a Mid Suffolk resident do not wish to see my council tax going to Babergh to fill the coffers for what I see as years of extravagant spending be beyond its means, as a result of members pushing an agender the council could not afford and the poor management and leadership from SLT in allowing the financial situations in each council to arise.

37 It seems obvious that bigger is thought of as better for many reasons - mainly financial.

So why not abolish the district tier and all pretence at 'local government' and move everything under the umbrella of County Council. (Following the same logic - it is surely inevitable)

HQ isn't in either district now so it won't be that inconvenient.

Babergh tax payers voted 2 - 1 against Merger several years ago and it seems clear that their views are not really respected.

Most that I encountered at the time of that vote would have voted against integration as well but of course that option wasn't presented.

Note: A four page survey that spends the first three pages mining data about the person completing it!

38 As we have a joint staff it makes sense to also have a joint legal structure. It reduces the need for duplication in the provision of accounts etc and provides a clear leadership on the direction of the Council.

We currently have a differing level of service provision - for example we give business grants in Mid Suffolk but not Babergh. This needs to be rationalised across the 2 districts.

I also feel that the new Council should be called CENTRAL SUFFOLK as it fits between the new East Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils.

39 The concept is not in itself unattractive as it would streamline strategic decision making and standardise operational practice to a greater extent. In some respects, however, it may support the view held by some that it completes the takeover of Babergh by Mid Suffolk.

If the decision is to proceed with a single Council then such a move must have the backing of the electorate. Initially, there appeared to have been an assumption in political circles and possibly even senior management that such a move could proceed without this - thankfully, that requirement now seems to be better understood and taken on board.
There has also been much talk of the savings that could be realised as a result of having a single Council - often the case when initiatives such as this are launched. No detail on what savings are actually realised after the event ever seem to see the light of day. The nature of communications issued around the recent buy-out of free car parking from officer contracts suggested that Council finances needed to be very carefully managed over the coming years. If that is the case what has happened to the savings accrued as a result of workforce consolidation and other joint initiatives undertaken over the last 4-5 years.

It would be helpful and encourage support for a single Council if projected savings and how these will be used to support future work and initiatives were made available before any final decision is taken.

It is always easy to promote a particular direction of travel on the back of prospective savings but seems to be much more difficult to articulate what savings have been accrued and how these have been or will be used to improve communities in the aftermath.

40 Creation of a one council is a logical choice given the current working arrangements of the organisation. Running two sets of budgets and having to duplicate a lot of functions is a waste of money, especially when the budget is ever-shrinking!

Speaking with family, friends, and residents in both districts, many misunderstand the current working arrangements we have in place - they think we have already merged because communication at the time of the 'referendum' in 2011 was poor and misleading. Babergh was traditionally the better of the two councils; Babergh residents feared Babergh being brought down to Mid Suffolk’s standards, Mid Suffolk residents hoped Mid Suffolk would rise to Babergh’s standards. Now we have two sets of disappointed residents who feel betrayed.

Lessons have to be learned from the previous misconception and trust rebuilt with our residents.

41 We should have merged years ago to become one council, instead of just 'working together'

It is so awkward for everyone with us being two separate entities. We just need to get on with it and become a single council. It is way overdue.

42 Both councils will lose their individuality and would no longer represent what its electorate want. We went against their voice and vote re the merger and did it anyway under intergretion. If they vote against the unification will we ignore them again! What sort of democracy will we offer. How can we be sure their voice and vote re the merger and did it anyway under intergretion. If they vote against the unification will we ignore them again! What sort of democracy will we offer. How can we be sure that a lot of officers have left the organisation because of stress and other problems caused by getting this far, Mid Suffolk appears to be in a worse financial position than Babergh, (and I'm not convinced that the costs given for works needed to either or both of the HQs were accurate, even allowing for the fact that they had probably been deliberately 'run down' in order to support the case for the move to E House) and the way in which the move has been handled has not inspired confidence - so much that was flagged up by the Opposition, the Unions and staff early on was ignored - we were told ‘not to be negative’ - and now we are trying to sort out a lot of logistical problems while coping with traffic and parking issues, + the difficulties of getting together with colleagues because of not desking (HR and some PAs for example seem to have dedicated seats/areas) and agile working which do not always work for the benefit of the organisation, as opposed to the convenience of the individual - I don't need to be supplied by Clr’s direct. I do not see how contact with our public etc would be improved by merging, especially when we take into account that a lot of officers have left the organisation because of stress and other problems caused by getting this far, Mid Suffolk appears to be in a worse financial position than Babergh, (and I'm not convinced that the costs given for works needed to either or both of the HQs were accurate, even allowing for the fact that they had probably been deliberately 'run down' in order to support the case for the move to E House) and the way in which the move has been handled has not inspired confidence - so much that was flagged up by the Opposition, the Unions and staff early on was ignored - we were told ‘not to be negative’ - and now we are trying to sort out a lot of logistical problems while coping with traffic and parking issues, + the difficulties of getting together with colleagues because of not desking (HR and some PAs for example seem to have dedicated seats/areas) and agile working which do not always work for the benefit of the organisation, as opposed to the convenience of the individual - I don't need to be supplied by hsg/procurement/finance staff all discussing their issues which are of no direct relevance to my day-to-day role. If any merger was handled as badly, it would be difficult to see it as an improvement for anyone. We were also promised fewer meetings once our teams were integrated but the opposite seems to have happened - everyone seems to be spending a disproportionate time in meetings, but the problems are largely unresolved, again leading to a lack of confidence that the Administration and SLT are up to the task.

Finally - in view of the previous local polls, it would be interesting to see what members of the public think now - I have a feeling that they would be under the impression that, going on previous history, the decision has already been taken and that voting would be a waste of time (despite the efforts of the Babergh Opposition to challenge some of the assumptions made).
I shall also be commenting from my perspective as a Babergh Council tax payer.

44

The councils have been working with a single team of staff for a number of years and it makes logistical and financial sense to have a single set of councillors. Until this happens, it leaves Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils in a sort of limbo.

Creating a single council would give us equal status to neighbouring district councils.

Many residents will think that the councils are already merged and will question why this hasn’t been done already.

Becoming a single council will enable staff to be able to work in an even more efficient way.

45

A merger of BDC & MSDC is appropriate because:

One Council will work more efficiently than two

Council staff will have only one set of political "masters" creating a simpler and clearer decision making process

Merger will enable further efficiencies in the running of the Council and create substantial savings

Incomes and budgets can be more equitably spread across the existing two Council areas

The Council can provide a more consistent face to the public

46

It seems an obvious and sensible thing to do. Operating 2 councils when effectively they are 1 seems crazy.

47

I have no preference either way except than that we need to save money across the 2 councils and if this is a way of achieving it then it should be considered. However I firmly believe that this should be a proper consultation resulting in a vote - not like the office move where it was said that staff had been consulted when we clearly had not. The residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk MUST be given the opportunity to formally vote on this again and the information provided should be much more robust than that given for the last vote which was woolly and meaningless. The public need hard facts and figures to assist them in making this decision.

48

I do not think this is a good idea at all as this will result in redundancies and lack of support to customers. We have already moved into Endeavour House which was a big mistake so SCC are now getting rent for the building and also charging for IT which was better when it was just Babergh and Mid Suffolk. This is the start of a downhill spiral and the councillor’s are not up to date with the times. A big rash decision which has probably already been made but the council with go through the process to make it look legitamate. A bit like the housing in East Bergholt. money talks.

49

From an employee perspective will / should (!!!!) reduce work burden of seeking decisions etc to 2 different bodies even though the work is 'working together on 1 overarching plan'.

Single council should have a stronger voice in Suffolk space, regional space and England space.

More people in 1 LA means economies of scale could / may be exploited more.

Will stop confusion of Members and public when they contact us - some Members are still asking 'Do you work for BDC or MSDC'

Concerns as to how quickly new council members will pick up the local nuance of the larger council area. Will there be measures in place for say 5 - 10 years to ensure new Council Members don’t favour their ‘old patch’ more? - especially as spending gets tighter and tighter.

50

Now that the two Councils are housed mainly in one building and the majority of teams appear to be working closely together across both Councils there seems to be no good reason not to become one single Council with a shared budget and shared officers and councillors.
I think that the idea was good in principle but both councils have not fully examined the benefits and againsts properly. I think that false information has been given in the costs of merging and moving of both councils and the staff have not been listened to at all. The move has been an utter shambles from start to finish and a lot of good, knowledgeable staff have left. Money has been wasted on external bodies who have been paid lots of money but not actually done anything constructive towards bringing the two councils together. Perhaps in the future proper contracts should be drawn up and signed by external bodies so work to a proper timetable and then penalised financially when they over run. Moving our offices out of both districts is disgusting, discrimination towards groups of people so they can't come and see us, making people go online when we have a large number of elderly people within both districts and a lot of them do not have online facilities to do online banking etc to pay bills they like to meet people face to face. You still are not giving ALL people a chance to give there opinions because you have not contacted every person in the district. If everyone knew the real costs they would be very unhappy with how the money is being wasted.

In an age where Councils are working more closely together and merging, the longer we remain separate, the higher the risk of us getting left behind becomes. Our closest neighbours are already on the merger pathway and we need to keep pace with them. We are stronger together and as funds become more and more hard to come by the only way we will survive is by being as cohesive as possible and sharing our strengths whilst minimising any weaknesses we may have as individual Councils.

In keeping with the smarter, swifter organisation we have become. We are top heavy with over 80 councillors in what are relatively 2 small districts. We need to become more streamlined in terms of Council and enable decisions to be taken quickly and not drag heels through so many council briefings and meetings. I support One Council.

should have happened last time rather than the botched integration which has led to spiralling costs. Many jobs and levels removed last time have been reintroduced as managers (now on inflated salaries) finding themselves in endless meetings build their empires by adding layers of ‘Professional Leads’ Assistant this and that’s and Senior paper shufflers. On the ground, staff get cut and services are stretched. At least we have a nice office in a sensible location where we can easily get in touch wit our public.

One merged Council with one set of Councillors thinking about the best interests of the public must be better than two sets looking out for their own areas. You need to bite the bullet and get the name right. Central Suffolk DC seems sensible not the mess that we currently have to explain every time we give an email address over the phone. It needs a fresh start but only if one merged council can achieve real savings that can in part be reinvested into front line services that benefit the public (not just more paper pushers answering phones in remote offices)

I think we need to this logically and look at the benefits it will provide. other councils in the area have created a single council and this seems to be working really well for them.

Cost effective

Efficiencies - The current arrangement is unwieldy and unnecessarily complicated by having to take everything to 2 sets of committees

Financial security - the two authorities together will be financially stronger ensuring a more sustainable support for services

Public sector Profile - with the mergers to the East and West, we need a better profile... We already struggle to access infrastructure and LEP funding, almost none of that comes into our 2 districts should we stay as single districts or the two authorities decide to go their own way we will have a poor regional profile.

Reputational - We already have issues with public profile, especially in Babergh recent issues and this will help move past some of that

Simplicity it will improve things for those that work within the authorities, those who partner with the us and for the public who are confused by our relationship.

From my perspective, currently being in the middle of all the work to set a Budget for each Council for 2018/19 and having to do a range of briefings, Committees and reports twice and answering questions from two sets of councillors and Cabinet Members, then I can see immediate benefits from only having to do this once if there was
just one Council. This is one example of where efficiencies within the organisation could be gained from doing things once instead of twice.

59

I fully support the merger, but on two conditions.

1) The public AND staff are provided with more substantial information, especially about how it might affect them, and also the provision of some realistic figures that actually add up.

2) It is critical that the Council goes back to its communities in the form of locality officers or similar to reconnect. Through the move and the merger people feel abandoned by the Council. The people must be the priority here.

60

Creating a single council appears to the next logical step for us to take.

Currently staff encounter significant issues as there are still 2 separate authorities, these relate to different policies applying in the different areas, but more importantly in relation to the availability of resources, the two authorities currently have significantly different financial positions which is leading to a two tier service in some instances.

Creating one authority will allow for some further cost saving as only one authority will need to be serviced in terms of governance arrangements.

It will also align the central area of Suffolk with the East and West who are also progressing to create a single authority for their area. If we don't follow suit we will have a weaker voice.

61

I am supporting the proposal to have One Council.

62

The option of 'One Council' seems the most appropriate. It is a natural progression to the way we are currently working, simplifying decision processes and creating financial savings which are necessary.

63

I think the organisation would run much more efficiently as One Council. We would not have as much duplication especially in terms of the governance processes including Cabinet / Full Council. Staff time would not be duplicated on often the same tasks twice, or updating members twice. There is the potential for further savings to be driven from this efficiency both in terms of staff resource but also supplies and services.

The two districts are facing the same challenges and expectations from residents, but have different financial positions - merging would bring about a stronger and more resilient financial position for one authority. As separate organisations in the near future I don't believe they would be able to meet the financial cuts in the future which are sure to come.

As one authority we would have more influence as a single bigger voice across Suffolk - separately we run the risk of being swallowed up by those authorities around us who have already merged.

64

I support the One Council proposal for the following reasons:

It will provide an opportunity to reduce Council outgoings - this will provide additional job security for employees and sustainable services for residents

The newly formed larger District Council will be in a stronger position to negotiate with central government as well as matching the larger Districts that have been created in West and East Suffolk.

It will provide residents with more clarity - both for business purposes but also for governance and political purposes.

65

My personal preference is for a unitary authority.

However for reasons Arthur highlighted in his briefing I think we should come together as one organisation first.

If Babergh doesn't agree then we should look at joining with Ipswich. I know we are Conservative and Ipswich are Labour but Suffolk Coastal and Waveney merged and they were councils with very differing political views so it is possible.
If we delay we will be left behind while East and West Suffolk get stronger.

This whole difference of opinion between the Councils has not been easy for the staff. The councils couldn’t agree on a venue so we are now in an office outside our districts, a name so we are 'Babergh and Mid Suffolk' instead on something more relevant e.g. Central Suffolk and now we may not be able to agree on becoming one organisation.

We need to put our differences behind us and realise it is a positive and financially better move resulting in less bureaucracy.

Merger is appearing as the only option to survive in the future, however Merging is only part of the savings. We need to ensure the public are fully informed of the full financial facts to rely on support for the merger, Counsellors should have more public engagement especially prior to any referendum and the Council should have open days/road shows to create better awareness of all of the services provided and improve their standing in the community. Hiring specialists who earn a vast some of money and do not share their knowledge should be reconsidered and a better training programme should be implemented whilst they are employed to maximise the benefit of this cost.

We need to reduce double handling and better communications throughout all departments and really mean “working together”

I think it will give more of a say to Babergh and Mid Suffolk residents if they are joined and it seems to be the natural progression as we are joined in so many services already. It seems to be naïve thinking to believe that 2 small councils can continue to operate alone when larger councils are forming around us. I see this as a positive and the most sensible way forward to benefit everyone now and for years to come.

I believe that moving forward as one Council will improve the efficiency of officers. For example in my role alone I have to produce 3 versions of reports; one for each council and then one joint.

Many residents and organisations we work with already believe we are fully ‘merged’ and we often have to send cheques and invoices back when made out to both councils as we can not process them which delays payment and services.

Being one Council may also help employees and residents identify with the complete area rather than seeing themselves as one Council or the other and will help align policies etc.

I think it would be a good idea to create one new council. It has been working together in partnership for some time and savings have been made.

It would make good sense to have one council, and both Babergh and Mid Suffolk would profit business wise, and the staff.

Although merger was voted against by Babergh residents in 2011 the Councils have been working more and more in partnership ever since. Very little of what we do isn’t now joined up.

The democratic decision making and running of 2 separate councils is less efficient compared to being one Council. In addition it is possible that the democratic voice of residents is being diminished as two councils - because in effect each council has an influence on each other even though electors have only voted for one or the other Council.

If we are going to punch above our weight, survive financially, and do the best for our residents in the future this will be better served by becoming one Council or introducing Unitary arrangements in Suffolk.

My opinion won’t matter, just like the publics opinion didn’t matter when the merger was ushered in under a different guise after losing the vote originally.

This survey is another example of the council pretending it values everyone’s opinion when it has already shown that it doesn’t and will do what those “at the top” suits them, regardless.
I think the One Council approach is prudent in the current Local Government environment, especially given what is going on in West Suffolk and East Suffolk. In addition, other councils in East Anglia, namely Broadland and South Norfolk are now implementing shared staff resources so in this respect Babergh and Mid Suffolk are further along the way. One Council also ensures efficiencies as there is only one budget, one Cabinet and so on. However, it is also important to emphasise how the One Council will work within the Suffolk system and how it will create an identity within this. Partnership working is also key and we must not forget the need to work closely with neighbouring authorities, for example the One Council will still reside in the Ipswich Housing Market Area and Functional Economic Area.

On practical matters I feel one headquarter building is a good step forward as it enables closer integration with the existing model and will be essential with one Council. That said there could still be smaller outstations to ensure effective face-to-face communication with the community. Agile working appears to work well and once the IT is improved, e.g. not being able to always connect to the network, this will also ensure a more efficient mobile workforce.

In conclusion, I feel the One Council approach is a good and sensible approach looking to the future.

I support the option for one council. It will reduce duplication. It will provide a more sustainable business base for both councils and as a result protect key services to the public. It will enable the strengths in both BDC and MSDC to benefit the other district. It will create a significant sized district for the central Suffolk area with the size and cohesiveness to influence the Suffolk system.

A consultation exercise will not provide a sufficient mandate to proceed with merger, particularly as Babergh residents voted ‘No’ in 2011.

I believe that any decision to merge should be a democratic one. As neither set of politicians raised merger as a possible option at the last Council elections, neither can claim to have a mandate to proceed. The ruling parties should therefore either:

(a) hold another local referendum; or

(b) await the next Council elections and make a clear pledge to merge in their ‘manifestos’.

I would welcome one council apposed to two as it would enable us to a line each departments policies, stop duplication of work, have a clear website and enable over all greater cost savings.

National Treasury revenue funding for local authorities is being phased out in England by 2019. This means that the majority of our councils funding will be self-generated in future - from council tax and business rates. So budgets will reduce until housing growth has an effect. Therefore any savings on back room office functions needs to be looked at. By sharing an administration for the past four years the two councils have made significant savings. For the next tranche of savings greater integration now needs to take place. It is an obvious step for the two councils to form a central Suffolk local authority, especially since the two in the west of the council are joining up and the two in the east of the county have done so. It is a shame that the timescale is now so protracted, because the savings which are needed in 2019 cannot now be in place until 2021 - but all the more reason to move in an agile manner towards this obvious position.

We are already working as one council - its just the councillors who are infighting. I understand that this should be a democratic process but it is becoming very personal and not for the benefit of the communities they serve.

As an employee it is embarrassing to be part of this organisation at the current time as we only receive negative press.

I think we should be very clear to the public that we need to become one council to be viable, and that it is what we are going to do. It was a mistake to have a referendum the first time and a bigger mistake to have another one. East Suffolk and West Suffolk are managing it and so should we.

We should clearly set out to the public the reasons why must form one authority. This decision is not based on a whim, it is is based on facts. We should have more confidence in the fact that this is the correct and only viable decision at this point in time. We should stop wasting more money on referendums and the general placating of a hand full of councillors hanging on to the old ways, and get on with forming a new council and doing what needs to be done.

We should also get on with introducing car parking charges in Babergh. If we do this now as a separate piece of work, it will take this out of the argument surrounding ‘merging’. Why we don’t currently charge is baffling.

We should also get on with introducing car parking charges in Babergh. If we do this now as a separate piece of work, it will take this out of the argument surrounding ‘merging’. Why we don’t currently charge is baffling.

Babergh Mid Suffolk - have courage in your own convictions and merge!
APPENDIX (c)6: COMMENTS MADE AS PART OF LOCAL PETITION

1. As part of the local engagement work a Babergh District Councillor established a local petition seeking support from residents to encourage Babergh District Council to conduct a further local poll (referendum) before making any final decision. The Leader of Babergh District Council subsequently committed to holding such a local poll and it is anticipated that it will take place in Summer 2018. 614 residents signed the petition and where additional comments were made by those signing the petition those comments have been reproduced here. In summary the comments were:

- Quality of services has suffered (following the move to Endeavour House);
- Council tax will probably go up;
- Public should decide via referendum / undemocratic without a referendum;
- Council distant and not transparent.

2. The petition can be found here: https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-babergh-and-mid-suffolk-merge-without-residents-having-a-vote

Comments in full:

Reasons for signing

"The quality of council services (and the quality of the council as an employer) has suffered and continues to be damaged by the current reckless administration. Council Tax has not gone down as a result - indeed it will probably go up due to ill thought out plans (such as basing offices in Ipswich)."

Theodore B. 4 months ago

"This decision should not be made by a handful of people in 2 cabinets. This merger was rejected a few years ago and that decision should be respected or constituents should be asked again."

Simon P. 4 months ago

"Because WE need to decide, not them"

tricia d. 4 months ago
“I believe in Democracy and what they are doing is undemocratic, the people of Babergh said NO!”
Elisabeth M. 2 months ago

“Residents should be heard and not ignored. It is quite clear that the majority voted NO in the referendum. To ignore this is a cynical move and is undemocratic.”
Patricia W. 3 months ago

“We voted some time ago against this and they are trying to sneak it past. The economies of working together in departments is one thing but we never wanted a merger as we will lose more than the 6 District Councillors they are trying to remove now.”
Ann P. 3 months ago

“I believe Babergh is an arrogant and undemocratic council who believe they are superior and more intelligent than the public they represent. The people in Babergh have already voted for no merger and are beginning to think that perhaps Babergh should be abolished and replaced by a body who represent local people and not goverment directions.”
brian p. 4 months ago

“If the Brexit referendum is binding then the outcome of the BDC/MDC merger referendum should also be binding unless overturned by a second vote.”
Karen B. 4 months ago

“It’s a democratic right of the electorate to have their say on such an issue, as it was 6 years ago. What has changed in relations to not allow the electorate this right??”
Stewart S. 4 months ago
It is disgraceful that these councillors are ignoring the result of the 2011 referendum. Gradually over the last few years they have merged some services, and recently centralised their offices in Ipswich. Do they think the 60% who voted against a merger are happy with this? Well done Andrew Stringer for standing up for the referendum result.
Lorraine B. 4 months ago

We should have a say on where our council that we pay for operates from.
Diana S. 4 months ago

My council should not be making decisions like this without consulting me and other Babergh residents. They are only doing it this way as they know they will be told by the residents that they do not want this.
Simon T. 4 months ago

A referendum on this subject was rejected. Did not stop the council from merging all but the financials. As the proposal was thrown out by a referendum it should only be changed by one.
Ian W. 4 months ago

Undemocratic decision. Referendum voted against so what has changed. It is bad enough that BDC is moving to Ipswich
Amanda C. 4 months ago

Why is this happening when we voted against it in the 2011. Do these councillors think we don't know what's best for us? What has happened to democracy and free speech, what has happened to this transparency that was preached about? It seems that it has become a bit clouded now. Use your common sense and ask us, we know things. Honestly, we know what we want and have a right to a say.
Malcolm O. 4 months ago
The coterie of ruling Conservatives on Babergh seem completely uninterested in the people they are supposed to be serving - first an undemocratic cabinet system, then a move to Ipswich, then axing a third of councillors, now this.

Robert L. 4 months ago

Residents referendum voting rights should not ever be ignored just because it is inconvenient to the current government. To suddenly overwrite the voted residents results of 2011 because they feel like cost saving by rationalising two separate district councils into one is railroading over the rights of the people who voted in the first place - they may as well never grant any residents anywhere to ever have any rights to vote on anything in the local district area!

Rebecca H. 4 months ago

Babergh District Council is becoming remote and undemocratic

David P. 4 months ago

We live in a democracy, don't we?

Patricia D. 4 months ago

This initiative is not democratic. We should all have a say

Susan C. 4 months ago

We need some democracy and transparency!

Peter C. 4 months ago