



A SINGLE COUNCIL FOR EAST SUFFOLK: AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY OF RESIDENTS

OCTOBER 2016

East Suffolk
Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils
In Partnership

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METHODOLOGY NOTE



Objectives

The key aims of this research were to understand the views of adults in the Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council areas about:

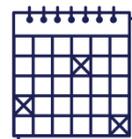
- The proposal to create a new single 'Super' District Council for both areas;
- Sources of information and preferred communication methods about the proposal going forward;
- Current concerns and perceived benefits of the proposed creation of a new single District Council for East Suffolk; and
- Residents' priorities for local government in their area.



Method

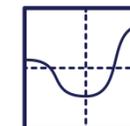
ComRes interviewed 1,000 adults aged 18+ living in Waveney District or Suffolk Coastal District Council areas by telephone.

Quotas were set to ensure 500 adults were surveyed in each Council area.



Fieldwork dates

Fieldwork was conducted between 3rd and 14th October 2016.



Interpretation

Data have been weighted to be representative of all adults living in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils by:

- Age
- Gender
- Council area
- Socio-economic grade (SEG)
- Ethnicity

Quotas were also set to ensure a good spread of responses by Council ward and working status (economically active v economically inactive).

Findings marked with an asterisk () indicates a low base size of less than 100. These results are indicative of the group tested, rather than representative, and should be treated with caution. This includes results on ethnic minority groups (BAME) and some filtered responses.*

With a population size of c. 193,000 across both Council areas, the margin of error on results at a 95% confidence level is ± 3.09 . Differences of less than this should be treated as indicative.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A MAJORITY ARE FAVOURABLE TOWARDS THE PROPOSAL

Three in five (61%) of all residents living in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils say that they have heard of the proposal to create a new single District Council for East Suffolk. Around half (45%) say they know something about the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk. When provided with brief information about the proposal, a majority of local adults say they are favourable towards it – more than twice the proportion who say they are unfavourable (57% v 22%). Indeed, when provided with some more information on the proposal, residents are more likely to be favourable than before (72%).

DELIVERING SERVICES TO LOCAL PEOPLE IS SEEN TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE FOR THE NEW SINGLE COUNCIL

Almost all residents surveyed say it is important for the new single District Council to sustain the delivery of important services to local people, with four in five saying this objective is very important. While the majority of residents say each objective is important for the new Council, they are least likely to say the objective of ‘strengthening East Suffolk’s political voice in the region’ is very important to them. As evidenced throughout the survey, local residents are more likely to view the continued delivery of services and maintaining how both Councils are run as important, compared to potential budgetary savings or any political advantages.

POTENTIAL CHANGES TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE COUNCIL BUDGET ARE CITED AS CONCERNS

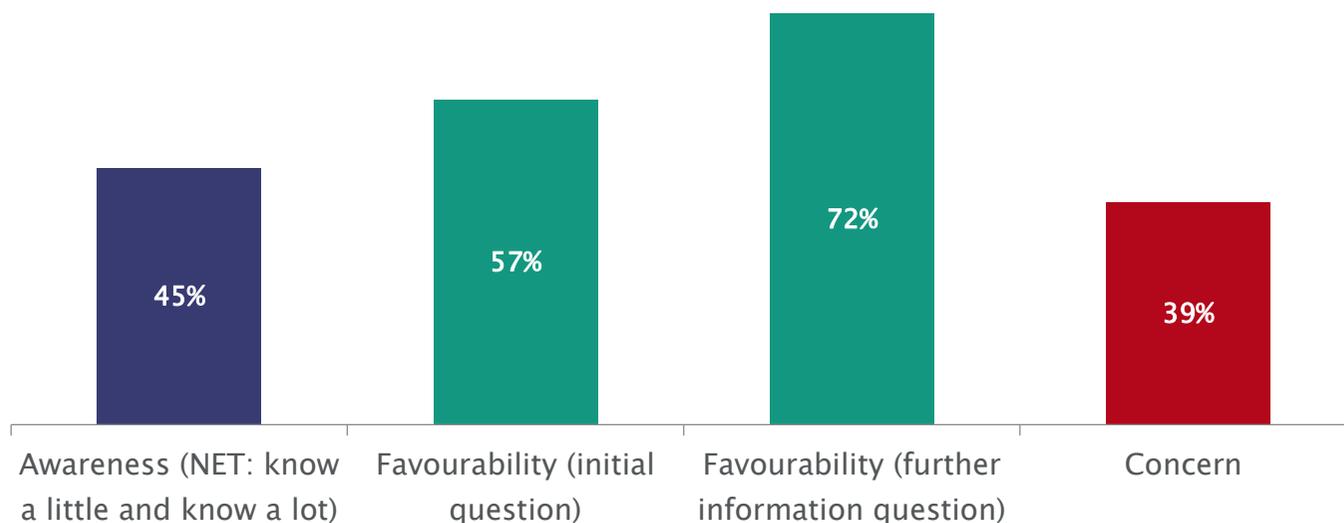
Around two in five local residents express some concerns with the proposal. The biggest concerns tend to be focused on how the Council is run, and the resulting impact on the delivery of services. In addition, a large minority of those who are concerned cite a lack of accessibility to the new single Council as a concern.

LOCAL MEDIA IS CURRENTLY THE GREATEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Among those residents who say they have heard of the proposal, they are most likely to have heard of it via a local media source. A significant minority say they have heard of it via national media or word-of-mouth. Indeed, more people say they have heard of it from these sources than from the individual Councils themselves. Going forward, residents say they would like to receive more information in the forms of flyers/leaflets, with a third identifying social media as a channel they would like to receive information via as well. Providing a timetable of the plans, and how each phase/change would work, is highly desired.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Metrics



Sources of information about the proposal – Top 5

STATEMENT	PERCENTAGE
Local media 	66%
National media 	31%
Word-of-mouth 	18%
From the Councils 	14%
Social media 	10%

Importance of achieving strategic objectives

Percentage selecting 'Important'

Sustain the delivery of important services to local people (96%)

Ensure that the new Council is better equipped to meet the future challenges facing local government (90%)

Maintain low Council tax (87%)

Keep Council offices in both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Council areas (84%)

Deliver further efficiency savings in the Council's budget of 1.3 million pounds a year (84%)

Strengthen East Suffolk's political voice in the region (77%)

Main concerns about the proposal

1. Concerns over whether the Council will run better than before / Efficiency
2. Lack of local accountability of local peoples' priorities / Lack of local councillors
3. Cuts to services
4. Accessibility / Less communications
5. Places won't get the required attention
6. Fewer councillors / Less representative of local population

**AWARENESS AND
SENTIMENT TOWARDS A
NEW SINGLE DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

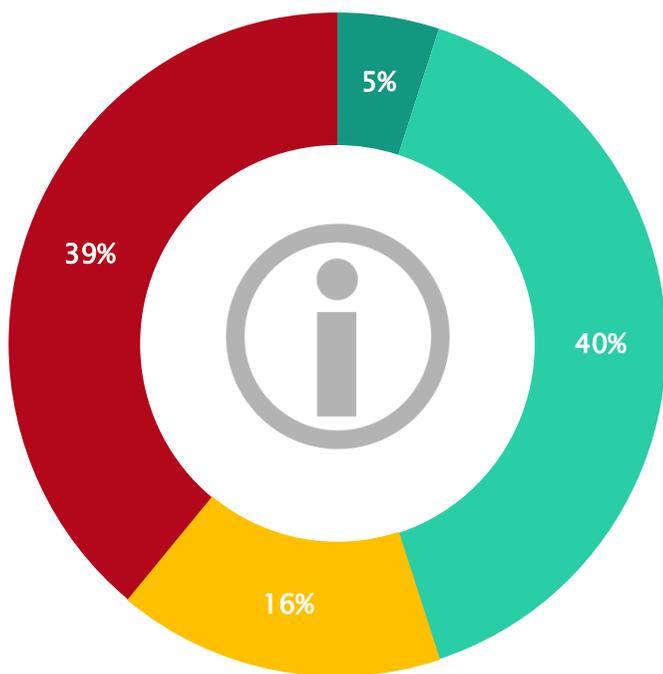


A MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS SAY THEY HAVE HEARD OF THE PROPOSAL TO CREATE A SINGLE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR EAST SUFFOLK

Awareness of proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk

Showing % aware of proposal

- Heard of and know a lot about
- Heard of and know a little about
- Heard of but know nothing about it
- Never heard of it



NET: Never heard of / know nothing
55%

NET: Know a little / a lot
45%

Residents living in Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Council areas are more likely to say they have **heard of the proposal** to create a new single District Council for East Suffolk than to say they have **never heard of it** (61% v 39%).

While two in five adults say they have **never heard of** the proposal to create a single District Council for East Suffolk, a majority of adults recall having heard of it previously, demonstrating that there has been some cut through with the initial coverage provided.

Awareness levels vary among particular sub-groups:

- Older residents aged 55+ (53%) are significantly **more likely** to report knowledge of the proposal than their younger counterparts aged 18-34 and 35-54 (39% and 38% respectively).
- While the base size is low, BAME adults are **less likely** to say they have knowledge of the proposal than white adults (46% v 27%*).
- Adults from social grades AB (55%) and C1 (51%) are **more likely** to report knowledge of the proposal than those in social grades C2 (40%) and DE (36%).

Around half (45%) of residents say they **know something** about the proposal (saying they either 'know a lot' or 'know a little'), with 5% saying they know **a lot about it**.

LOCAL MEDIA IS CURRENTLY THE GREATEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSAL

Sources of information residents have heard about the proposal from

STATEMENT	PERCENTAGE (%)
Local media 	66%
National media 	31%
Word-of-mouth 	18%
From the Councils 	14%
Social media 	10%
Online 	9%
Another source	4%
Don't know	1%
None of the above	2%

Among those residents who are aware of the proposal to create a new single District Council for East Suffolk, they are **most likely to have heard about it via local media** (66%), for example a local newspaper.

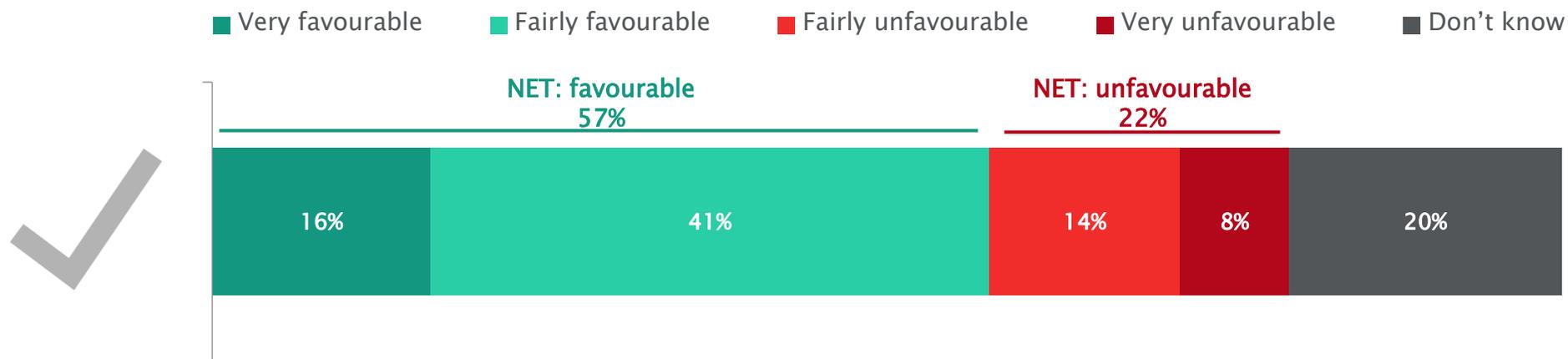
A significant minority say they have heard of the proposal via national media, for example on TV or a national newspaper (30%), and one in five say they have heard of the proposal via word-of-mouth, for example from friends, neighbours or family (18%). Indeed, **residents are slightly more likely to say they have heard of the proposal via other people they know, rather than from the two Councils themselves** (18% v 14%).

Around one in ten residents who are aware say they have heard of the proposal via social media (10%), or online (9%). Around one in six 18–34 year olds say they have heard about the proposal online or via social media (16% and 14% respectively).

Seven in ten older adults aged 55+ who are aware of the proposal say they have heard of it via local media (70%), compared to only 14% who have heard of it from the Council.

LOCAL RESIDENTS ARE FAVOURABLE TOWARDS THE PROPOSED CREATION OF A SINGLE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR EAST SUFFOLK

Favourability towards the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk



When provided with some very brief information about the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk*, a majority of adults in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils say they are **favourable** towards the proposal (57%) – **more than twice the proportion who say they are unfavourable** (22%). Indeed, local residents are twice as likely to say they are **very favourable** than **very unfavourable** towards the proposal (16% v 8%). The Council should also be aware of the proportion of adults who say they “don't know” how they feel towards the proposal – **one in five are unsure** (20%).

Favourability does not differ significantly by subgroup, with a majority of adults from all key demographic groups (age, gender, social grade, ethnicity and working status) saying they are **favourable** towards the proposal.

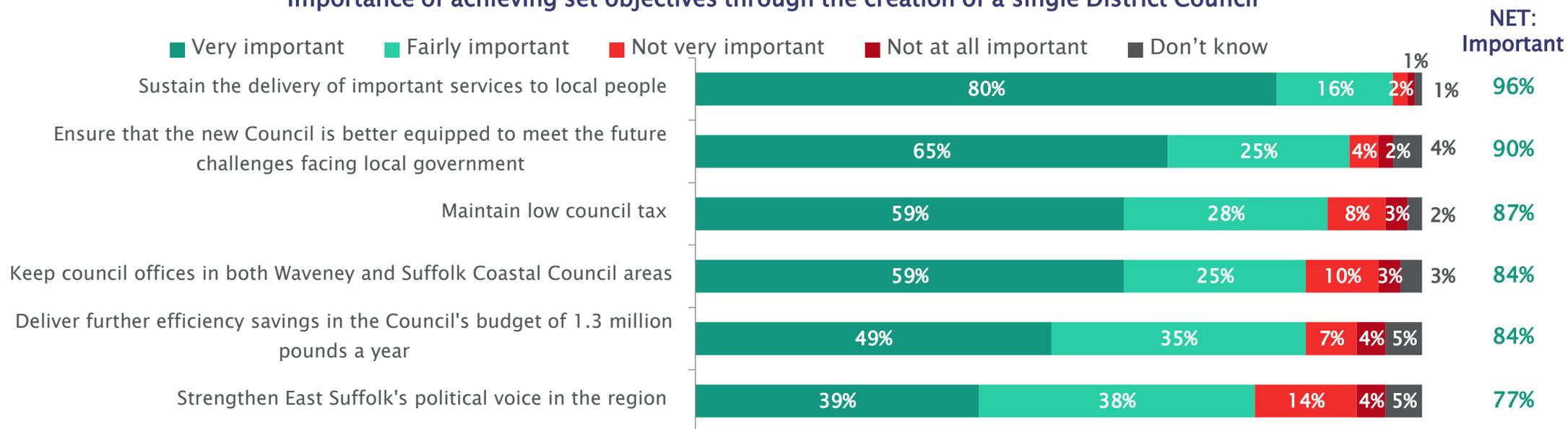
Prior knowledge of the proposal is not related to favourability – in fact, local adults who have knowledge of the proposal are marginally **more likely** to say they are **unfavourable** towards the proposal than those who have never heard of it (25% v 19%). However, it should be noted that these adults are still far **more likely** to say they are **favourable** towards the proposal than unfavourable (60% of those with prior knowledge say they are favourable towards the proposed creation of a single District Council).

IMPACT OF THE CHANGES TO THE DISTRICT COUNCILS



SUSTAINING THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO LOCAL PEOPLE IS SEEN TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE FOR THE NEW COUNCIL

Importance of achieving set objectives through the creation of a single District Council



A majority of adults say that it will be important for the new Council to meet each of the objectives listed. Almost all adults living in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Council areas say that it is important that the new Council sustains the delivery of important services to local people (96%). Indeed, four in five (80%) say this is very important.

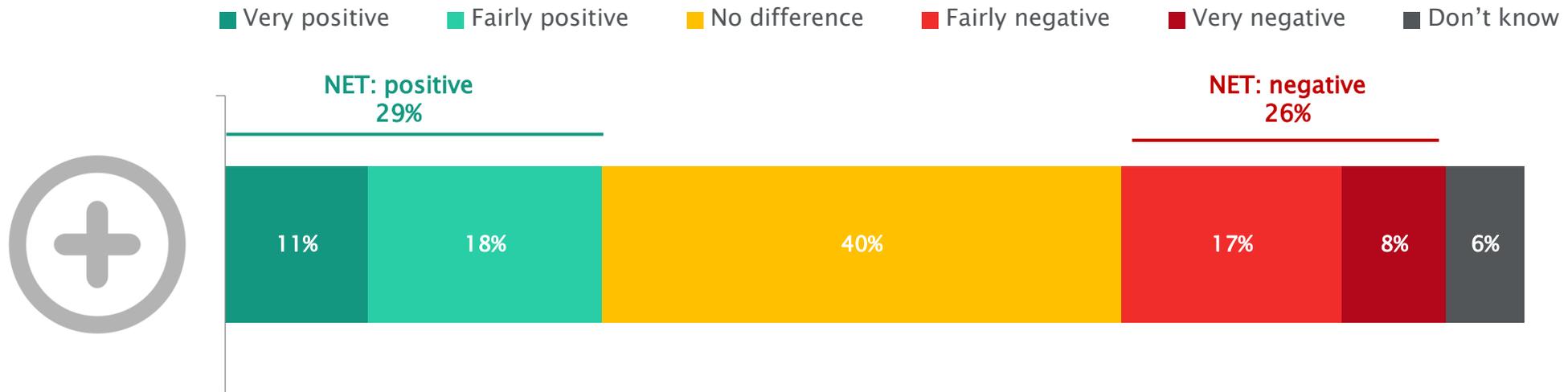
Three in five adults say that maintaining low rates of Council tax is a very important objective for the new single Council (59%).

Few adults in the local area say that each of the objectives listed are not important. They are most likely to say that strengthening East Suffolk's political voice in the region is not an important objective (18%).

Perceptions of the importance of each objective are broadly similar by demographic, including by age and prior knowledge of the proposal. Adults who are concerned about the proposal for a new single Council are significantly more likely than those who are not concerned to say that keeping Council offices in both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal areas is important (93% v 79%).

A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS IS MOST LIKELY TO BE SEEN AS MAKING NO DIFFERENCE TO HOW THE COUNCIL IS RUN

Positivity/negativity relating to a reduction in the number of Councillors



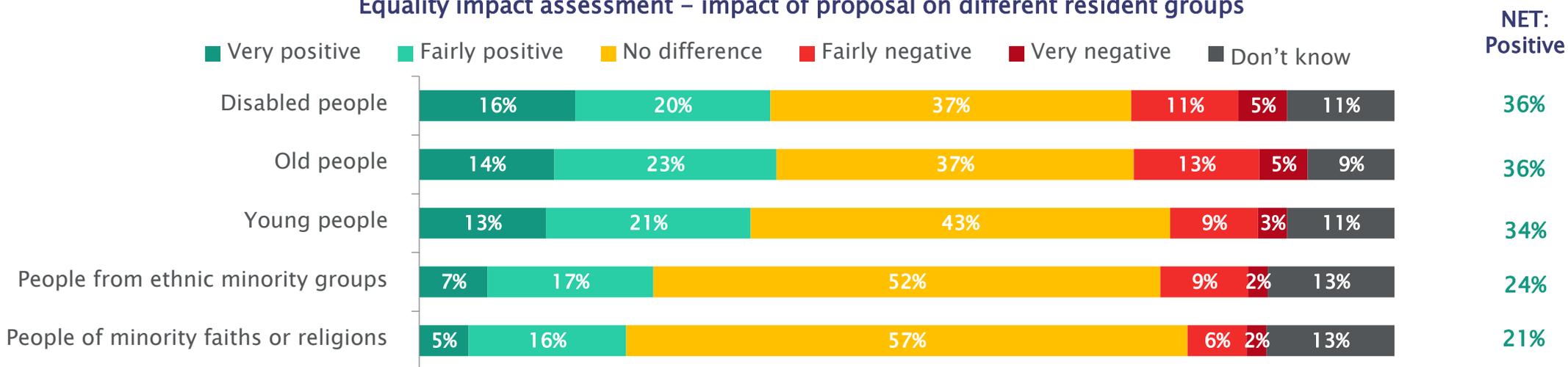
When asked what impact they think a reduction in the overall number of Councillors will have on how their Council is run, local residents are most likely to say this will make **no difference at all** (40%).

Similar proportions say this will have a **positive** (29%) and **negative** (26%) impact. Nine in ten local residents (90%) say it is important that the new Council ensures it is better equipped to meet the future challenges facing local Government.

There are no significant differences by demographic sub-group, with the perceived impact of the reduction broadly consistent among different age groups. However, adults who are unfavourable towards the proposal are significantly more likely than those who are favourable to say that the reduction in the number of Councillors will have a negative impact on how the Council is run (52% v 17%). This suggests that for those who do not approve of the proposed creation of a new single District Council, the reduction in the number of local representatives is an important factor.

MORE THAN A THIRD OF RESIDENTS SAY THAT THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL WILL MAKE NO DIFFERENCE TO ALL RESIDENT GROUPS TESTED

Equality impact assessment – impact of proposal on different resident groups



More than a third of residents say that the impact of the proposal will make no difference to any of the groups tested. Indeed, more than half of residents believe that the proposal will make **no difference** to people from ethnic minority groups and people of minority faiths or religions – the most of any of the groups tested (52% and 57% respectively).

Older people and disabled people are those identified as being most likely to be impacted by the proposal. Around one third of respondents (36%) say that the proposal will impact old people and disabled people in a positive way. However, these two groups are also most likely to be seen to be negatively impacted, with 18% of residents saying the impact will be **negative** for old people and 16% saying the same for disabled people. However, it should be noted that residents are twice as likely to think the impact will be **positive**, rather than **negative** for these groups.

Across all of the groups tested, residents who are favourable towards the proposal are more likely to say that the impact of the proposal will be **positive**:

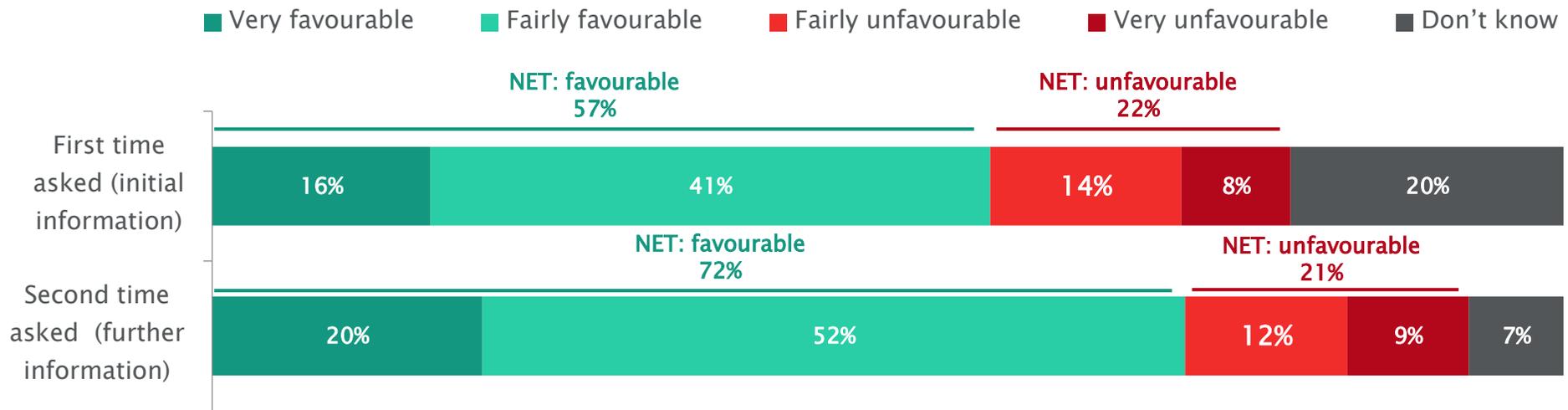
- Nearly half (46%) of those who are favourable towards the proposal say the impact on old people will be positive, compared to one fifth (22%) of those who are unfavourable towards the proposal. Indeed, around two in five (37%) of those who are unfavourable report that the impact on old people will be **negative**.
- Adults who are favourable are also more likely to say the impact on young people will be positive, compared to those who are unfavourable (42% v 25%).

**SENTIMENT TOWARDS A
NEW SINGLE DISTRICT
COUNCIL – FURTHER
INFORMATION QUESTION**



WHEN PROVIDED WITH FURTHER INFORMATION, LOCAL RESIDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY ARE FAVOURABLE TOWARDS THE PROPOSAL THAN BEFORE

Favourability towards the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk – revisited



As part of this research, respondents were provided with a brief overview of the proposal to create a new single District Council for East Suffolk, and were then asked to share their views towards it. Later in the survey, having been given further information on the strategic objectives and potential impact of a new single District Council, respondents were asked to share their views towards the proposal again.

Having received further information, local residents are significantly more likely to say they are favourable towards the proposal than when initially asked (72% v 57%). While this information provided was specific to the purposes of the survey*, these results show that greater knowledge of the impact and benefits of the proposal may be a driver of support.

For example, almost all respondents who said they were favourable towards the proposal when asked earlier in the survey remain favourable (96%), and around a quarter who were initially unfavourable (23%) say they are favourable when asked again. **This additional information particularly applies to residents who are unsure about how they felt previously** – with the proportion saying they ‘don’t know’ falling by 13 percentage points (20% to 7%), and the proportion saying they are favourable increasing by a similar level.

The proportion of adults who say they are unfavourable towards the proposal remains the same (22% at the first favourability question v 21% at the second favourability question), suggesting there is an underlying level of negativity towards the proposals.

SENTIMENT AND PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD

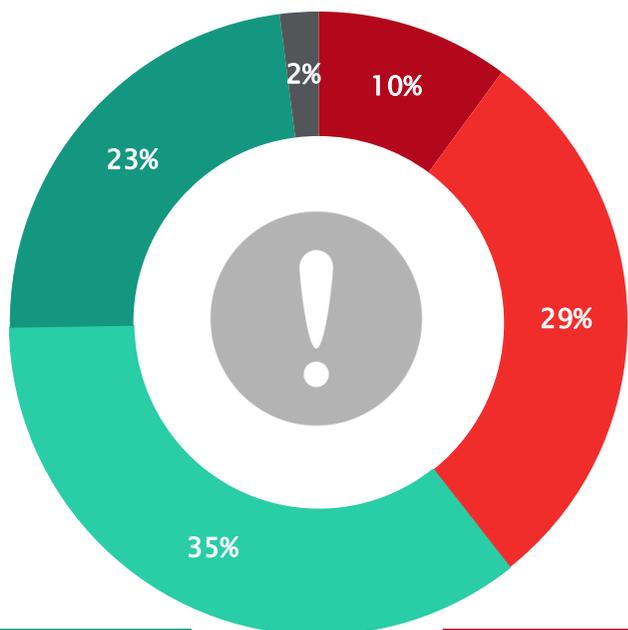


RESIDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY ARE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROPOSAL THAN TO EXPRESS CONCERN

Concern about the proposal to create a single District Council for East Suffolk

Showing % concern about proposal

- Very concerned
- Fairly concerned
- Not very concerned
- Not at all concerned
- Don't know



NET: Not concerned
59%

NET: Concerned
39%

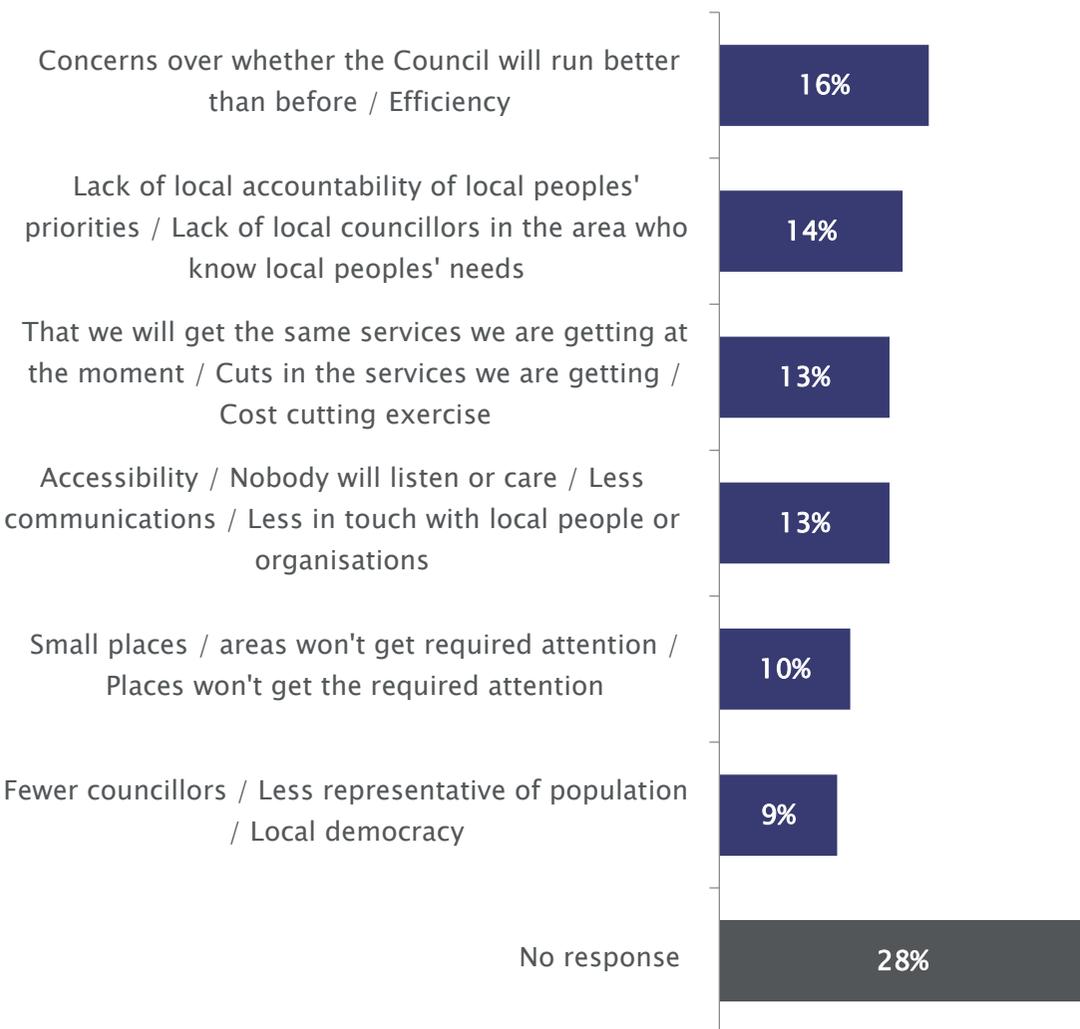
Three fifths of adults in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils (59%) say they are **not concerned** about the proposal to create a single District Council for East Suffolk. However, two fifths of residents (39%) say they are **concerned**.

These results mirror sentiment towards the proposal, with 72% those who are favourable saying they are **not concerned**, compared to 23% of those who say they are unfavourable.

RESIDENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT EFFICIENCY AND HOW THE COUNCIL IS RUN, WHEN ASKED OPENLY

Concerns about the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk

% saying each of the following – showing the top responses



"Whether it's primarily a cost cutting or saving exercise, or something that will actually make services efficient"

"That the people that are going to be in the council will be spread too thinly. There will not be enough people to listen to the vast community, we're spread out and big counties and the district is spread out and people and smaller villages are going to be missed"

"My concern is that not everybody would be represented if fewer councillors were available"

"There will be less local accountability"

When asked openly what concerns they have regarding the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk, respondents are **most likely** to say they are concerned about the impact of efficiency and how the new Council will be run (16%).

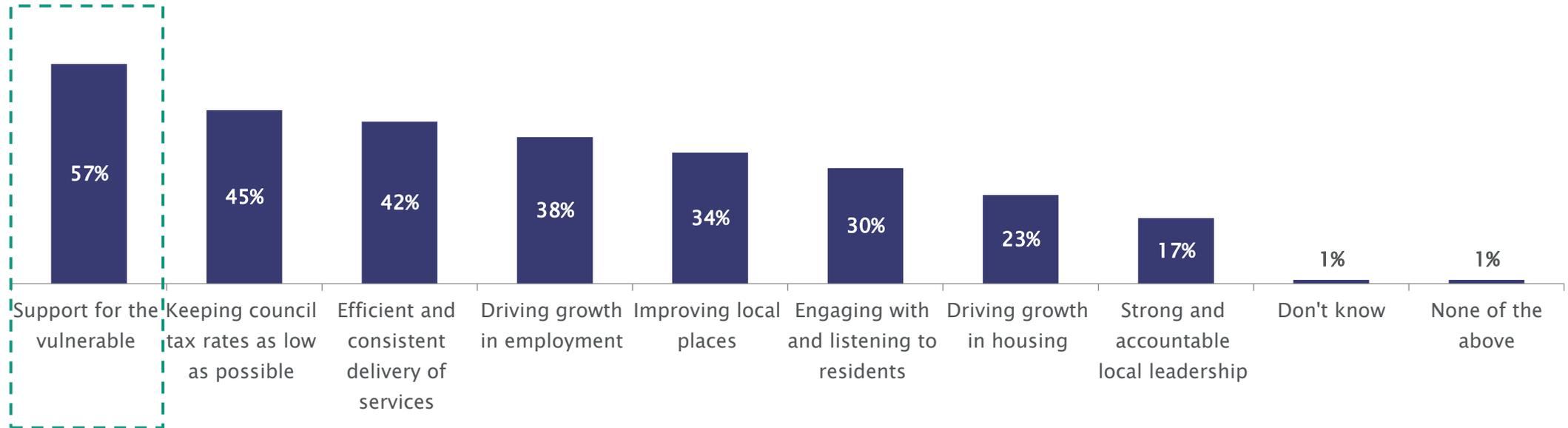
Around one in eight say they are concerned about a potential lack of accountability (as Councillors will be representing larger areas), or any change in services going forward (14% and 13% respectively).

PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN EAST SUFFOLK



SUPPORTING VULNERABLE RESIDENTS AND LOW COUNCIL TAX ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE SEEN AS IMPORTANT PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Priorities for local government in East Suffolk
% selecting this as one of their top three reasons



When asked to select their top three priorities for local government generally, adults across both Councils are most likely to say that **providing support for the vulnerable is most important to them (57%)** – the only priority selected by a majority of respondents. A large minority also say that keeping Council tax rates as low as possible (45%) and the efficient and consistent delivery of services (42%) is important to them.

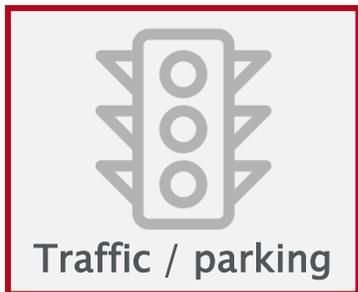
While accountability is expressed as a concern unprompted, this option is the least likely to be seen as important (17%) when thinking of the strategic objectives for the new Single District Council.

RESIDENTS SAY THEY LIKE LIVING IN A RURAL AREA BY THE SEA, BUT DISLIKE THE LACK OF AMENITIES IN THEIR AREA

Like most – unprompted



Like least – unprompted



“The fact that it's rural and by the coast, it's an attractive area and has a low population”

“It's clean, safe and 10 minutes from the sea”

“The peace and quiet”

“It's near enough to the town but far enough out to be more in the country.”

“We are a long way from everywhere. The shops closed down from the high street. One little high street got ruined. We have to go miles to get to clothing shops – it is getting harder. If you have no car it means you are stuck”

“The bus service could be improved. They only run every 2 hours; we're a bit cut off”

“Car parking – on our road there's a shortage”

“The street lights go off at midnight and I have to walk home in the dark sometimes”

When asked to provide an open response on what they like most about where they live, adults in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Council areas are most likely to say they like that it is rural or by the sea. A large number say they like the activities that this allows (e.g. walking) and that this means that the area is quiet and peaceful. They also say the communities they live in are friendly and safe. All these messages reinforce the area's status as a tourism hub.

While many residents say that one of the things they like most about living in the area is the amenities, many residents also say that the lack of amenities, specifically the need to travel long distances to access them, is one of the things they like least about living in the area.

Transport is a common theme for what people like least about living in the area; the lack of parking spaces (specifically during the Summer), the traffic that runs through the area, and that the public transport links are not frequent enough are all cited. Many residents also do not like the upkeep of the area, highlighting street lighting, litter and road quality, saying they need improvement.

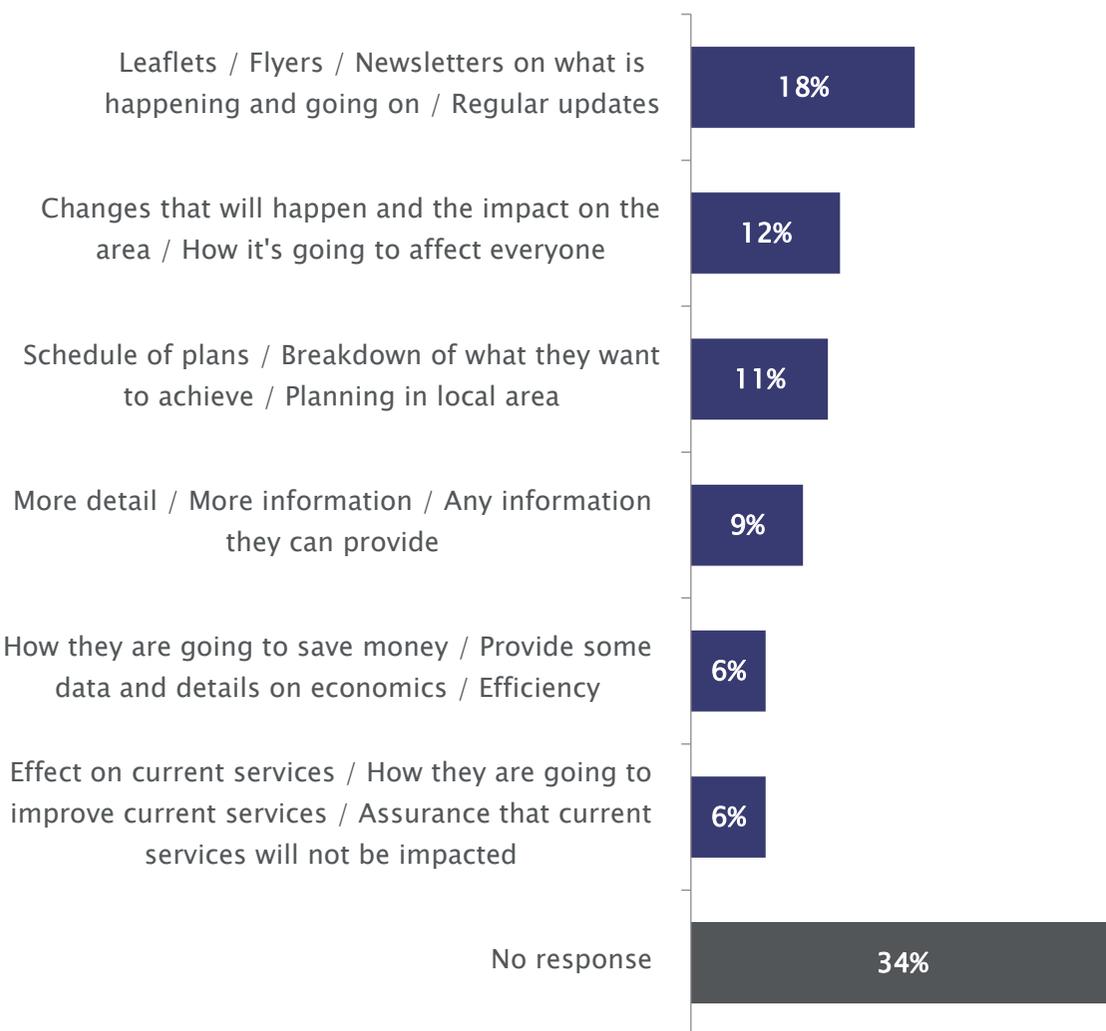
**FUTURE
COMMUNICATIONS**



RESIDENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO REQUEST LEAFLETS WITH UPDATES ON THE PROPOSAL

What further information would you like to see from the two councils about the proposed changes?

% saying each of the following



"I would like to see some more information and I would like to see what changes there would be and what the impact will be, both positive and negative impacts"

"Just to give people a briefing, where we are at and where were going with it, a regular briefing of the issues, and some kind of timeline to show when things are going to be done"

"Keep people informed on what's going on and how they're going to maintain services and access to councillors"

"A regular update on the proposal, maybe something like an annual newsletter and some kind of press released through the local press"

"I want reassurance about bins being emptied and grass being cut"

When asked unprompted on what information they would like to see from the two Councils about the proposed changes going forward, **local residents are most likely to say they would like a newsletter or flyer with updates on the proposal (18%).**

More than one in ten residents say they **would like to receive a schedule of the plans**, or a timetable of what will be achieved as a result of the proposal (11%).

While the vast majority of residents say they would like to receive more information from the two Councils, a third (34%) do not provide a response, suggesting that they are unsure of what information they would like, or have no particular preference. The information requested mainly focuses on more general topics on how the new Council will be run and the impact on day-to-day services, rather than specific policies or the affect this will have on some groups.

RESIDENTS WOULD MOST LIKE TO HEAR FROM THE COUNCILS VIA A LEAFLET/FLYER, OR THROUGH THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER

How would you like to hear from the two Councils about the proposal?

STATEMENT	PERCENTAGE (%)
Leaflet or flyer 	62%
Local newspaper 	57%
Social media 	32%
Public event 	28%
Email 	25%
Telephone 	11%
Don't know	1%
None of the above	4%

A majority of residents would like to hear from the two Councils about the proposed creation of a single District Council for East Suffolk by leaflet / flyer or via the local newspaper (62% and 57% respectively).

This correlates to how residents say they have heard about the proposal already, with 66% of residents who are aware saying they heard about it from local media.

However only 10% of residents say they had heard about the proposal from social media, compared to a third (32%) saying they would like to hear from the two Councils about the proposal in this manner.

Residents would rather hear about the proposal via leaflet or flyer rather than through a public event (62% v 28%).

APPENDIX



DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents from each Council area	
Waveney District Council area	50% (500)
Suffolk Coastal District Council area	50% (500)

S1. Can I start by checking whether your main residence is in the Waveney Council area, the Suffolk Coastal Council area, or somewhere else? Base: all respondents (n=1,000)

Economic Status	Percentage (%)
Economically active	69% (580)
Economically inactive	31% (420)

Male	Female
48% (480)	52% (520)

D2. Gender. Base: all respondents (n=1,000)

Age	Percentage (%)
18–24	3% (29)
25–34	15% (135)
35–44	16% (172)
45–54	17% (180)
55–64	18% (183)
65+	29% (301)
NET: 18–34	19% (164)
NET: 35–54	33% (352)
NET: 55+	47% (484)

D1. Which of the following age groups do you fall into? Base: all respondents (n=1,000)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Social Grade	Percentage (%)
AB	20% (229)
C1	29% (243)
C2	25% (261)
DE	25% (267)

D3. Which of the following best describes the employment status of the Chief Income Earner in your household? Base: all respondents (n=1,000).
D4. Does the Chief Income Earner have a private pension or allowance. Base: all retired respondents (n=327).
D5. What is/ was the profession of the Chief Income Earner in your household? Base: all respondents who are employed or have a pension (n=815)

Ethnicity	Percentage (%)
White	96% (981)
Non-white	3% (19)

D6. And to which of the following ethnic groups do you consider you belong? Please say the ethnic group that you feel most closely matches yours. Base: all respondents (n=1,000)

NOTES ON THE PUBLIC USE OF COMRES DATA

Guidelines for the public use of survey results:

ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules (www.britishpollingCouncil.org). This commits us to the highest standards of transparency. The BPC's rules state that all data and research findings made on the basis of surveys conducted by member organisations that enter the public domain must include reference to the following:

- The company conducting the research (ComRes)
- The client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, post, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc.)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage.

Published references (such as a press release) should also show a web address where full data tables may be viewed, and they should also show the complete wording of questions upon which any data that has entered the public domain are based.

All press releases or other publications must be checked with ComRes before use. ComRes requires 48 hours to check a press release unless otherwise agreed.

An aerial night view of London, featuring the Gherkin skyscraper in the foreground, illuminated with warm lights. The city lights and the River Thames are visible in the background. A large red diagonal shape covers the left side of the image, serving as a background for the text.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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