
Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Residents Survey Report

July 2025

Your councils are changing

Share your views on Local Government
Reorganisation proposals at:
eastsussexcouncils.org



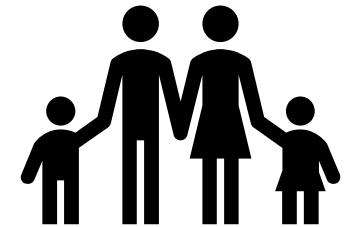
Introduction

- ▶ The six councils in East Sussex carried out a survey of East Sussex residents using an online survey from 12th May to 23rd June (6 weeks). Paper copies of the survey were available on request.
- ▶ The survey was promoted to residents by all 6 councils in East Sussex.
- ▶ Respondents were asked what council services they use, what council services are important to them now and for a new council, their view on one council replacing the six councils in East Sussex, and if they thought that there were any other options and boundaries that should be considered.

Who responded (1)

- ▶ **5,654 residents** from across East Sussex participated in this initial engagement survey. This is **about 1% of the East Sussex population (555,000)**.
- ▶ To give some context to this level of response, Surrey has a population of 1.2million and they achieved 3,000 responses and Leicestershire's engagement had 4,500 responses from a population of 1.1million people. We are delighted with the engagement rate in East Sussex.

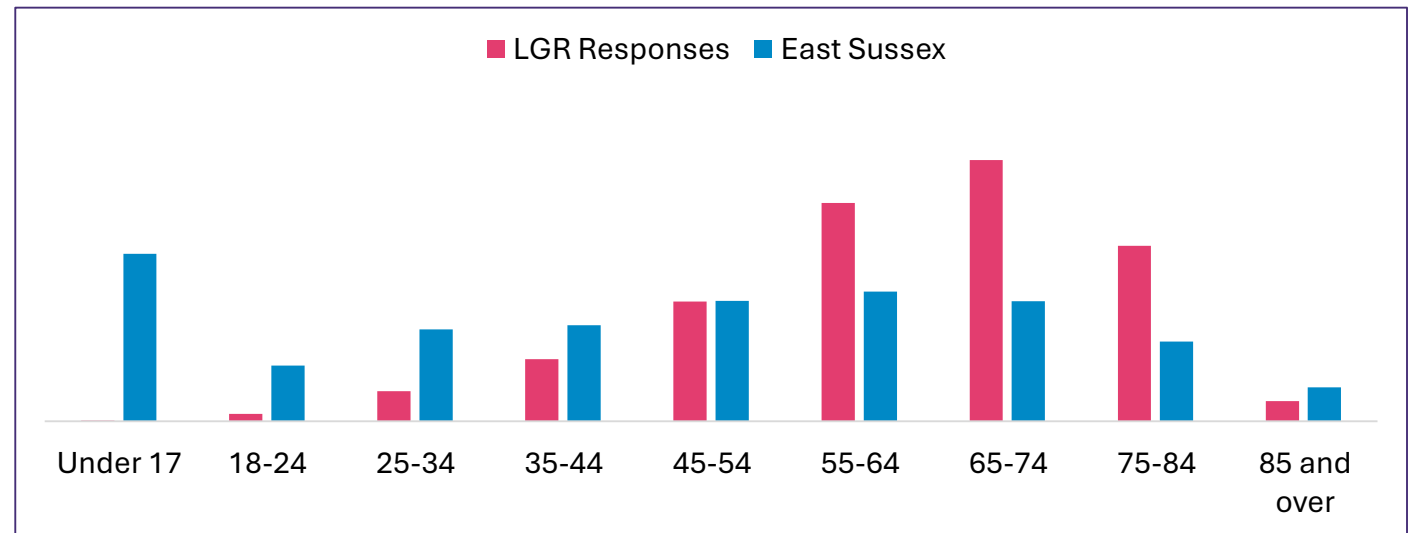
Area	Responses received	Population of area (2023)	Proportional response
Eastbourne	974	103,796	0.9%
Hastings	633	90,817	0.7%
Lewes	1,294	101,356	1.3%
Rother	1,055	94,862	1.1%
Wealden	1,585	164,653	1.0%
East Sussex	5,654	555,484	1.0%



Who responded (2)

- ▶ **78.5%** of respondents said that they **understood LGR** a 'little bit' or 'really well'.
- ▶ **21.81%** of respondents identified themselves as having **an impairment or disability**. The proportion of the East Sussex population that identify themselves as disabled is **20.3%** (2021 Census).

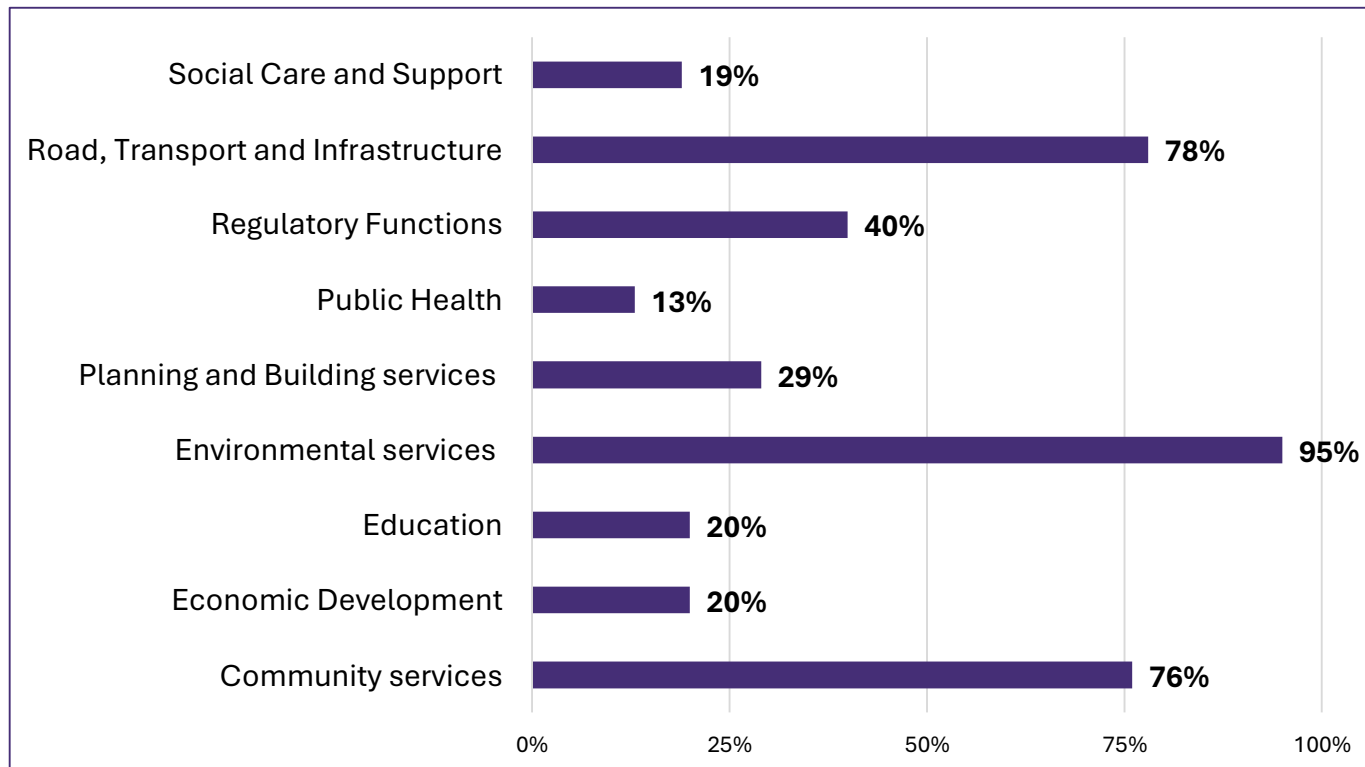
Gender	Count	Percentage	East Sussex %
Female	2,943	52.8%	52.0%
Male	2,305	41.4%	48.0%
Prefer to self-describe	33	0.6%	
Prefer not to say	292	5.2%	
Total	5,573	100.0%	100.0%



52.8% of respondents identified as female and **41.4%** as male. This is a **similar gender distribution** to the East Sussex population (2021 census). The male % is slightly lower (The census does not allow for self-describing or prefer not to say).

Service Use

"Which council services have you, or someone living in your home, used at least once in the last year?"

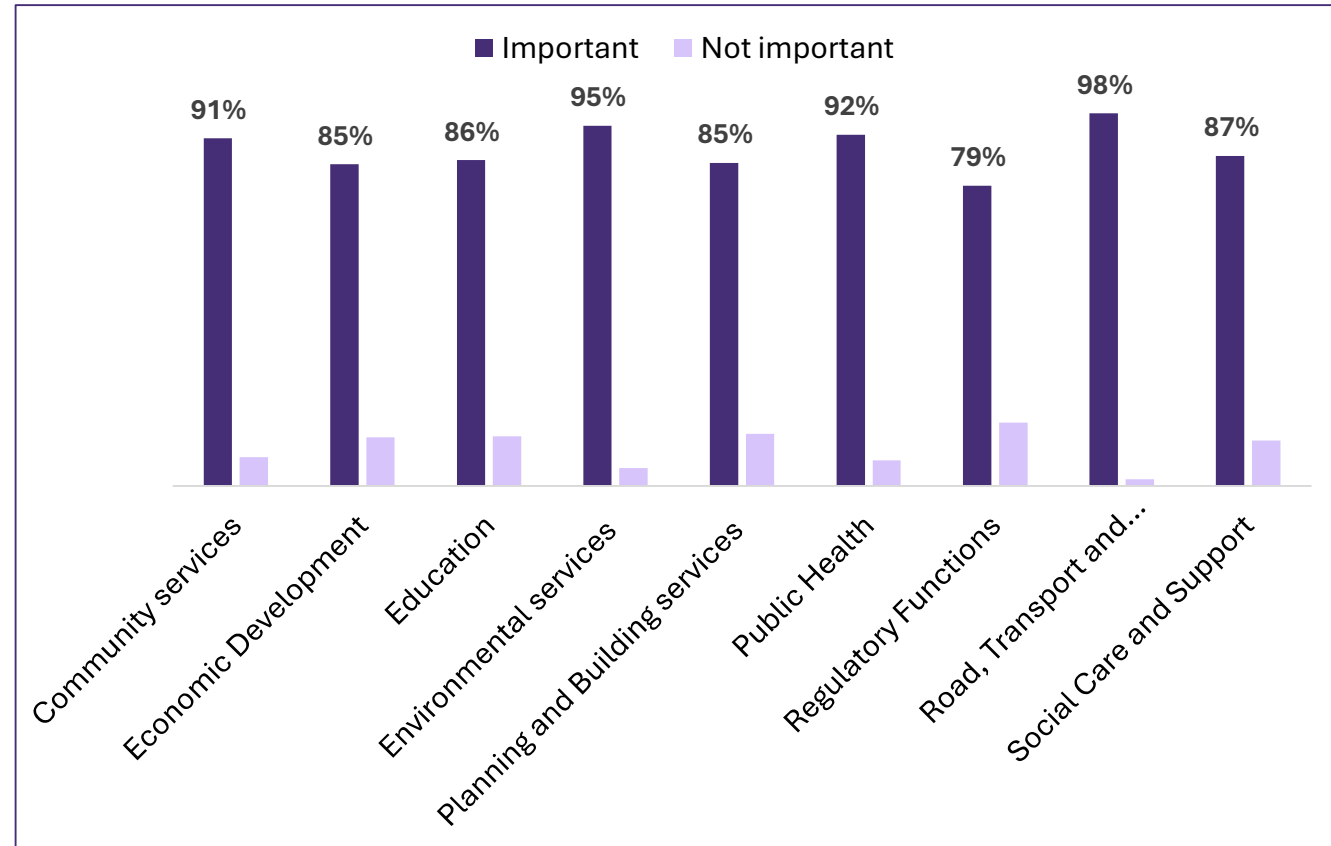


- **Environmental** (such as: rubbish collection, recycling centres (the tip), street cleaning, pest control (rats, wasps)) was **the most used service, with 95%** of respondents saying they had used this service.
- **Road, Transport and Infrastructure** (such as: local road and footpath repairs, street lights, public toilets, car parks) and **Community** (such as: Libraries, parks or playgrounds, were also **popular services with 78.4% and 76.2%** respondents respectively using them.

Important Services

“How important are these council services to you?”

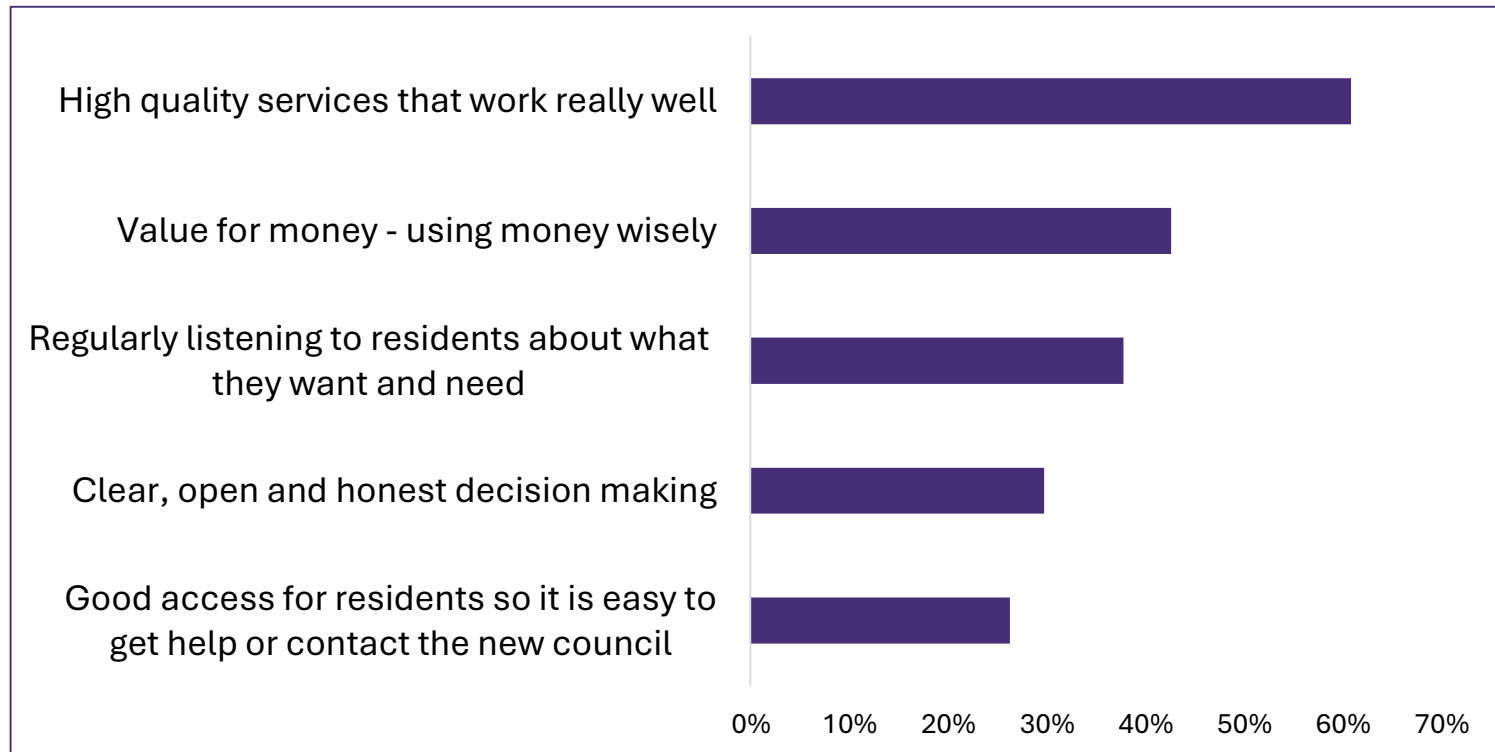
- ▶ **All services** were rated as **important** to at least **79% of respondents**.
- ▶ The **highest** was **road, transport & infrastructure**, **98% of respondents** rated it as important.
- ▶ The **lowest** was **regulatory functions**, **79% of respondents** rated it as important. This service also had the highest % of respondents that rated it as ‘Not important’ at 17%.



What should a new council do well?

“Please pick the two things that would be most important to you in any new council(s)”

- **‘High quality services that work really well’** was rated the most important thing, from 60.9% of respondents.



One council for the whole of East Sussex



Respondents were asked what they thought would be the **good things and some of the potential problems** with having just **one single council** across the area covered by East Sussex County Council and all five District and Borough Councils



91.6% of respondents wrote at least one good thing with this proposal



97.3% of respondents listed a potential problem with this suggestion

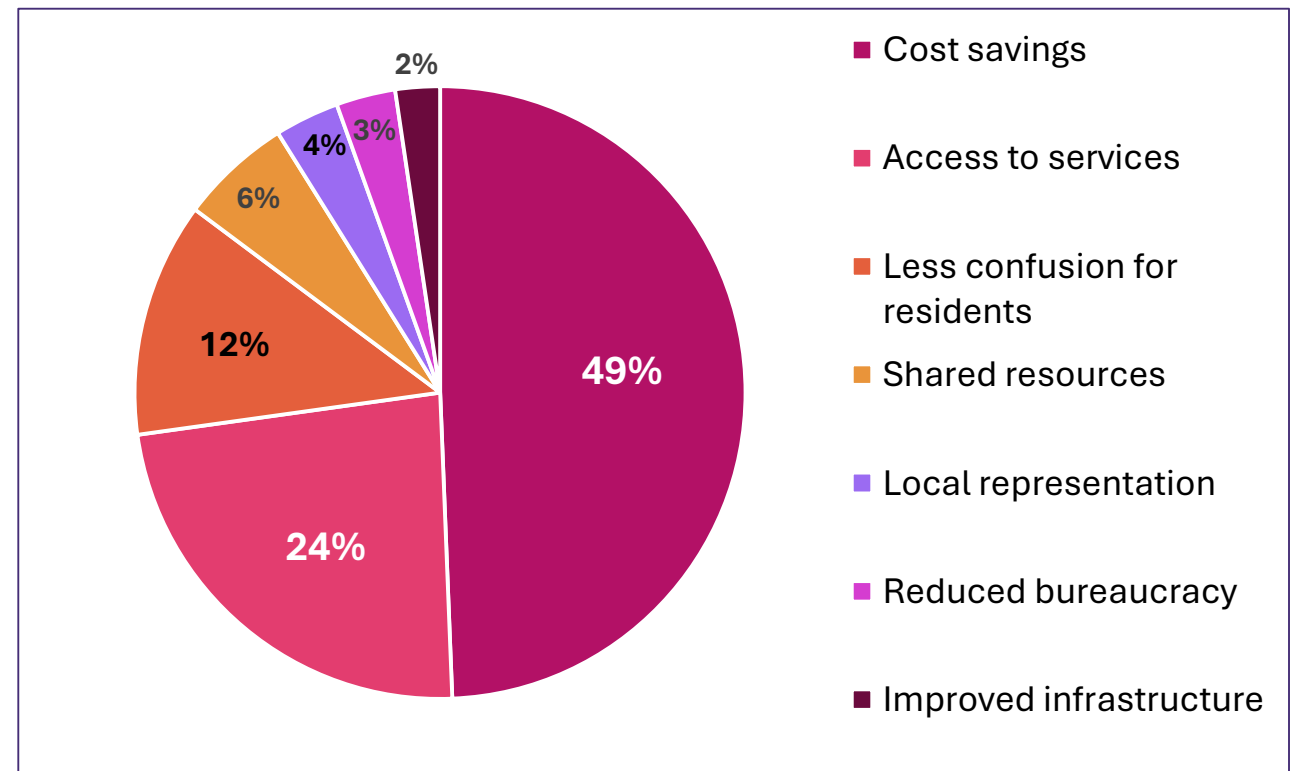


Cost savings was the most popular potential benefit given...

Reduced local representation was the most common potential problem...

One council for East Sussex – “good things”

- ▶ The **most common** potential positive with this proposal was **cost savings** – comments referred to savings made through ‘economies of scale’, ‘greater purchasing power for service contracts’ and ‘staff reductions’.
- ▶ **Access to services** was mentioned as a positive by a **quarter of respondents** – comments mentioned ‘improved services’, ‘easier access to services’, ‘consistency in delivery across the county’ and ‘reduced duplication’.



- ▶ This was a free-text box question, respondents were able to write whatever they wished to. The categories have been created during the analysis stage to allow presentation of the feedback.

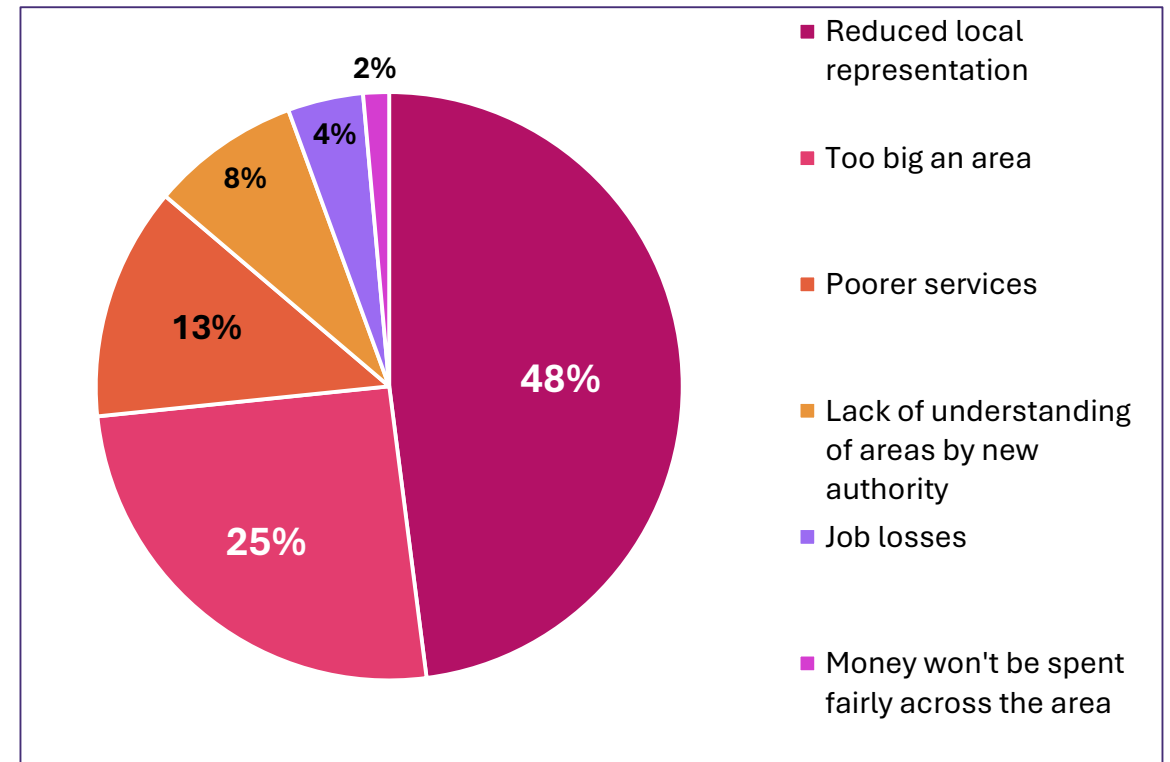
One council for all of East Sussex – “*good things*” (2)

- This word cloud summarises the key words used by residents when asked about what they thought were the potentially **good things** with the one East Sussex proposal.



One council for all of East Sussex – “*any problems*”

- ▶ There were **2,729 comments** that thought the one East Sussex proposal would result in reduced local representation – comments tended to focus on concern ‘**our area would be forgotten**’ by a single, county-wide council.
- ▶ These comments were similar to the **8% (468) of people who thought a new council wouldn’t ‘understand their area well enough’**
- ▶ **A quarter of responses** to this question were concerned with the fact they thought **East Sussex was too big an area** for a single unitary



- ▶ *This was a free-text box question, respondents were able to write whatever they wished to. The categories have been created during the analysis stage to allow presentation of the feedback.*

One council for all of East Sussex – “*any problems*” (2)

- ▶ This word cloud summarises the key words used by residents when asked if they could think about **any problems** with the one East Sussex proposal.



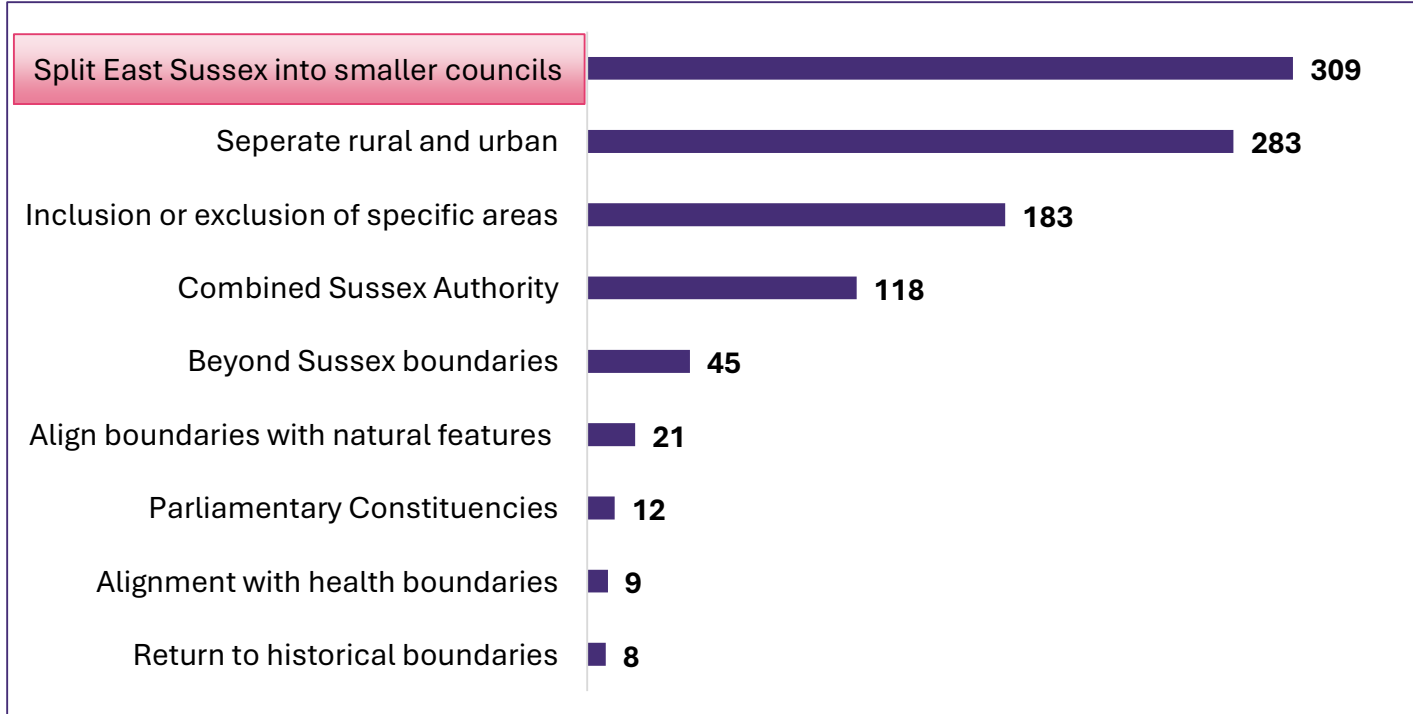
Respondents were asked if they thought **any other geographical boundaries** should be considered.

- ▶ **25.9% (1,450 people)** said **‘yes’** they thought other boundaries should be suggested. From that, 1,415 made a suggestion.
- ▶ **988 (17.5%)** people suggested an **alternative geographic boundary** from the ‘One East Sussex’ proposal.
- ▶ **2.8%** of respondents (161) wanted to **maintain the current council structure**.
- ▶ **0.7% respondents (37)** suggested the **One East Sussex** option in their answer for other geographical boundaries.

Alternative boundary suggestions

► As mentioned, there were 988 alternative boundary suggestions - we have categorised these responses to identify common suggestions as shown in the chart.

► Splitting East Sussex into an unspecified number of smaller councils was the most common alternative with 309 comments (5.5.% of respondents).



GOOD THINGS

- ▶ The council would be **closer to its residents**, there is an enhanced '**local voice**'
- ▶ A council responsible for a smaller area would be more **responsive and accountable**
- ▶ **Services would improve** if they were tailored to smaller geographies
- ▶ It is **important that a council understands its area**, smaller authority areas make this easier

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

- ▶ Concerns raised about **higher costs** and **funding shortages**
- ▶ You would **lose the economies of scale** that the single East Sussex unitary option provides
 - ▶ If the new authorities are too small, **inefficiency** can creep in to service delivery and community representation

Splitting East Sussex into smaller areas

THE 'GOOD THINGS' AND 'POTENTIAL PROBLEMS' WITH SPLITTING EAST SUSSEX INTO SMALLER COUNCILS ARE SHOWN OPPOSITE

GOOD THINGS

- ▶ Each area would have its own challenges and services could be tailored to meet the specific needs of the communities
- ▶ There would be a shared identity
- ▶ An opportunity for improved sector specific support e.g. tourism, farming.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

- ▶ The areas might be too sparse and the Government's population target may not be met
- ▶ Complexity and logistical difficulties setting up the two different authorities
- ▶ Could create an artificial divide between the coastal and rural communities across the county

Separate Rural and Urban/Coastal

THE 'GOOD THINGS' AND
'POTENTIAL PROBLEMS' WITH
RURAL AND COASTAL
COUNCILS WITHIN EAST
SUSSEX

Emerging themes

- ▶ There were some **key themes** that related to the **process of change** and were not specific to any one suggestion.
 - ▶ **Loss of local representation:** Larger governance structures could lead to a loss of local representation and control, making it harder for residents to have their voices heard.
 - ▶ **Impact on services:** proposed changes could negatively impact local services.
 - ▶ **Administrative efficiency:** Some respondents are sceptical about the efficiency and cost savings of the exercise.
 - ▶ **No change:** Some prefer to maintain the current system or make only minor adjustments.
 - ▶ **Desire for consultation:** Respondents express a desire for more consultation and involvement in the decision-making process to ensure that any changes reflect the needs and preferences of local communities.
 - ▶ **Protection of natural areas:** Respondents emphasise the need to protect natural areas such as national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty, regardless of any boundary changes.
 - ▶ **Addressing deprivation:** There are specific socio-economic challenges that need to be addressed, and any changes should ensure that these areas receive adequate support.