Dear Councillor

CABINET - MONDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2025

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed:

Agenda Item No.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION(Pages 3 - 22)

1. Overview and Scrutiny Comments following the Extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Joint Group on 12th November 2025.

2. Council Comments following the Extraordinary meeting of the Council on 19th November 2025.

3. Preferred Options as received from Town and Parish Councils.

This page is intentionally left blank

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

8.0 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMENTS

8.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Joint Group discussed the Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Report at its meeting on 12th November 2025.

8.5 Following an enquiry from Councillor Chapman, it was clarified that Huntingdonshire District Council would be submitting one proposal to the Government. There had been some discussion as to whether neighbouring Councils would be submitting multiple preferences, however it was established that this was no longer the case. In response to a further question on the process from Councillor Gardener, it was clarified that each Council within the region would submit their preferred outcome option and that this would then be presented forwards on behalf of the region.

8.6 It was clarified to the Group following a query from Councillor Alban, that the Cabinet recommendations from F onwards referenced the action taken in recommendation E rather than the Business Case Option E.

8.7 Following an observation from Councillor Pickering on the differences between Options C and E, and the resulting creation of 2 or 3 new unitary authorities, the Group were assured that the current advice was to put forward one preferred option only or risk not having an option on the table. It was clarified that there would be opportunity for the Secretary of State to adjust submitted options but not to suggest entirely new business cases, it was also noted that a statutory consultation would be held following the option submission and that the district council would be able to submit further information at this point as a statutory consultee. The Group heard that the legislation being used for the LGR process was fully tested and is considered robust by Government.

8.8 In answer to a question from Councillor Bywater, the group heard that attention had initially been focussed on Option C and that the dataset for this had also been used when the addition of Options D and E were requested by Peterborough City Council. It was understood that the proposed split of Huntingdonshire in Option D had been hinted at in an open letter written by the two Peterborough Members of Parliament however any further detail on the reasoning for this would need to be requested from partners. This proposal was one that HDC had not put forward. It was clarified that scoring criteria had been

awarded against the criteria set by the Government to allow for a best judgement approach to be taken.

8.9 The Group heard from Local Partnerships colleagues, who, in response to a question from Councillor Hassall, confirmed that Option E implied a recurring financial pressure of £1million however when the overall new unitary budget was taken into consideration this would be a minimal figure. It was noted that, in comparison, Option C has a recurring net saving of £3million. However, it was noted that these pressures would need to be taken into context of the larger budgets at play and the many benefits that the new unitaries would bring.

8.10 Following questions from Councillor Jennings, the Group heard that scores weighting within the agenda pack were based upon Government guidance (with no indication from Government about individual weighting) but that it was very much to allow Councillors to make an informed decision on which option they would prefer to support. It was acknowledged that initial summaries for scoring were succinct however following the addition of multiple layers of detail became more in depth. This was due to the development of the guidance throughout the process. It was noted that the resulting unitary authority would need to be sustainable so options which supported longevity should be sought and supported and to inform the decision of Councillors, the report looked to highlight strengths and robustness for the Options. It was noted that in weighing up the policies and the background papers, it may be prudent to take a more rounded approach when choosing an option to ensure it provided the best or better fit for Huntingdonshire and its residents.

8.11 In response to a question from Councillor Hunt relating to the financial modelling of Option D, the Group heard that each Council's MTFS was taken and consolidated together to give a broad picture. The modelling also took into account funding streams such as Council Tax and how this would look for residents with the changes brought by LGR. It was noted that this brought significant challenges as more affluent areas of the region would generate different income to others and that the demands of a new unitary in funding demands including social care and special educational needs may vary geographically across the region as a whole thus affecting the income and expenditure of the new unitaries. Following a further question from Councillor Gleadow, it was further advised that the financial modelling had also aimed to forecast financial viability and sustainability.

8.12 Further to a question on risks to residents from Councillor Catmur, the Group heard that analysis showed greater financial savings with Options A and C but that it should be noted that this would need to be proportional across the region and take social requirements into consideration. The analysis undertaken showed that financial risks varied across the options but that this was a

relatively minor consideration in the bigger picture for the new unitaries with the bigger picture of what is best for the region to be considered.

8.13 Councillor Alban expressed concern that should Huntingdonshire make its decision based on the Government's criteria residents may be disadvantaged by other neighbouring Councils who had voted in a more tactical manner. The Group were assured that the decision should be made against the Government's guidelines and criteria, however it would be prudent to be mindful of the decisions already made by neighbouring Council's as once submitted the Secretary of State is unable to introduce a new business case but is able to amend proposed and preferred options. It was clarified that the legislation in play is tried and tested and that it could be challenged by judicial review if necessary. It was also noted that following the decisions by the Secretary of State, elections would be held to appoint Councillors to the new shadow board for the new unitary, with it being observed that the political make up of these boards may be very different to the current political representation of the Councils affected.

8.14 Further concern was expressed by Councillor Alban in relation to the anticipated number of Councillors representing the current Huntingdonshire district being a vast reduction from the current number of District and County Councillors. The Group observed that the amount of work and time the new Councillors would encounter with both Council business and parochial work on behalf of residents would prohibit those who were employed and would instead require significant time dedication thus skewing the representation of residents to either the wealthy or retired rather than the spectrum of ages and occupations who current represent residents. It was further clarified to the Group that the membership of the new unitary would be based upon the current boundaries set by the Electoral Commission, whilst the concerns of Councillors were noted, a further boundary review could not be requested until after the first term of officer for the new body. The Group were assured that the best fit for the area would be considered and presented as part of the development of the chosen business case but that ultimately the Government remained the decision maker on this and that Councillors needed to remain mindful of the looming deadline for submission.

8.15 Councillor Pickering queried the population figures referenced in Option E as varying from 213,000 to 300,000 and additional enquired about the potential for a boundary review to include Tempsford. The Group were advised that population guidance from the Government had evolved and that this was to be considered as part of the option criteria. The opportunity with the Tempsford development was acknowledged and that in the event of the business case moving forward, a boundary review could be requested as part of that.

8.16 Concern was expressed by Councillor Chapman in relation to statements within the report relating to the proportion of residents employed within the district, when local knowledge informed that many travelled outside of the district for employment. Councillor Chapman felt this painted a conflicting picture and referenced the data used to inform the St Neots Master Plan. The Group were advised that the data was drawn from the 2021 census and due regard should also be given to the passage of time and the purposes of the respective reports and analysis. Officers took an action to further check the validity of the data. It was acknowledged that due to the geography of the district, residents may travel to another district for employment, especially for those residing in towns and villages near to the district boundary.

8.17 Councillor Gardener queried the validity of Option D due to the Government criteria stipulating that the existing district councils should be the building blocks of the new unitiaries. The Group heard that this was an iterative process and a moving challenge, the nuance of the criteria has shifted from the original clear guidance and as a result there had been different interpretations and clarifications as a result. It had therefore been clarified that a business case could be made based on criteria to support and provide justification as to why the proposal could deviate from the guidance in splitting an existing district.

8.18 It was observed by Councillor Gardener that the existing Shared Services functions between Huntingdonshire District Council, South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council worked well and had proved that collaborative working could work and presumably continue to work should Option E progress. Comments were made by Councillor Gardener in respect of Option D. The Group heard that the comments within the report relating to Option D did not critique other Councils but did give an honest scoring and took logic, place and local identity into consideration with the Shared Services function being covered under the Other Considerations section. It was believed that the existing Shared Services structure could provide a good building block to better deliver services more efficiently and effectively under Option E.

8.19 In response to observations made by Councillor Hassall regarding ICT and the benefits of the existing Shared Services which could be transitioned under Option C, the Group heard that the existing Shared Services could provide a strong base for the future but that it was important to bear in mind that any new unitary would also have to integrate Cambridgeshire County Council and its systems thus acknowledging that there would be significant challenges with all Options.

8.20 Councillor Bywater expressed significant concern that the Schools Forum had not been consulted as part of the process but that education affected or would affect the majority of the region's residents. Clarification on the Newton data as a shared data set, agreed by the relevant, responsible officers in the existing

Unitaries was provided The Group were assured that the challenge of education were real and acknowledged with a White Paper due to provide further clarity and layering to the existing considerations. It was noted that by moving to a unitary system some current geographical challenges may be improved whilst acknowledging that new challenges could be presented. The Group was additionally advised that there would be further opportunity for input and opinions during the statutory consultation later in the process.

8.21 In response to a question from Councillor Jennings relating to the pay back periods quoted in the various options, the Group heard that a 5 year period had been used in order to create a standard comparable between the Options with this period felt to be a reasonable medium term assessment. Following a further query from Councillor Jennings, the Group heard that staffing assessments within the Options were based on the assumption that only one of each senior role would be required within the new unitary with the example of four Section 151 Officer roles being reduced to the one required role. It was also noted that the assumed Member Allowances were taken from an average of existing Member Allowances. The Group also heard that the 5% savings quoted within the report were where duplication between shared third party suppliers for duplicate costs and that further savings could be explored as a business case developed. The Group were assured that best practice was being followed with hindsight learned from other authorities however the overriding aim was to be safe and legal from day one. The meeting was also reminded that the size and nature of any new unitary would be for that new organisation to determine – with new priorities and expectations for service delivery residing with that new authority. Bearing all these factors in mind the assessment of financial returns within the documents were prudent in their forecasts.

8.22 In response to a question from Councillor Gleadow regarding what officers felt to be the greatest risks to the process, the Group heard that the risks were identified within the report, however it was acknowledged that there were financial risks for all Options but that it was important to balance this against the benefits that each Option could bring. The implementation and integration of a new IT system was also identified as a risk with the importance of maintaining business as usual during the transition period which would be managed through programme management. Service Delivery was noted as an additional risk with the merging of district and county services and systems and it was advised that this was reflected in the report scoring. Learnings were being taken from other Councils who had already transitioned to unitary authorities and that the business cases were prudent without over inflation to create a balanced compelling business case to move forward from an operational perspective. The balance of risk versus reward was contemplated with the opportunities that the new unitaries could provide being considered as a

counter to the perceived risks. The Group were also advised that Officers are already doing work on LGR risks, relating to our existing risk register.

8.23 Councillor Hunt observed the role of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combine Authority and the Group heard that the headline of the Review was to support devolution and reference in the guidance to supporting functional economic areas. It was noted that there is existing evidence and understanding of the three functional economic areas of the region, Cambridge, Peterborough and the remaining rural districts/market towns – all 3 areas being interconnected.

8.24 Councillor Catmur observed that he perceived the biggest risk to be not making a decision. This sentiment was echoed by the Group and acknowledged by officers as not a viable option. It was clearly noted that in order to take the district and its residents forward a decision would need to be considered at the following Council meeting and ultimately made by Cabinet.

8.24 Following the meeting it was noted that the comments from the meeting would be compiled and published as a supplement for Council to consider at their meeting to discuss the report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

COUNCIL COMMENTS

The Council discussed the Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Report at its extraordinary meeting on 19th November 2025.

Before the debate began, the Council were advised verbally by Councillor Chapman that St Neots Town Council (SNTC) would be supporting Option C.

Members heard from the Leader, Councillor Conboy, that it was important to make an evidence-based decision based upon facts rather than political concerns and that only one Option should be submitted to the Government. She also reminded members that this was an opportunity to vote tactically as only submitted options could be considered by the Secretary of State and this was an opportunity to allow the fullest submission of options for consideration.

Councillor Bywater addressed the Council and gave thanks to officers for their hard work and dedication to the papers especially when there is uncertainty over how their own futures will be affected by the decision. He continued that it was important that the debate and decision made was made delivered the best outcome for both Huntingdonshire residents, and the residents of the County as a whole. Councillor Bywater expressed his belief that Option E would create an effective, sustainable and fair option for all. He noted that the current growth within neighbouring authorities was already felt by rural communities bordering those areas and that the forecasted growth would exasperate this situation. He felt that by supporting Option E a strategic and long-term plan for growth would be developed. Councillor Bywater furthermore expressed his lack of support for Option D expressing concern that the split of Huntingdonshire proposed by the Option would simply be to allow for a housing expansion zone from a Council who had run out of room to grow further. In his opinion this would be an unfair burden which would fail residents and burden communities. He also expressed concern about the impact Local Government Reform (LGR) would have upon education and noted that the impact upon schools and Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision had barely been addressed with minimal engagement with the Schools Forum to date. Councillor Bywater observed that Education would be one of the most critical services delivered by the new Unitary Authority (UA) and felt that

Option E provided the most stability for the education provision to residents for the future. Councillor Bywater expressed further concern about the pace of the LGR process and noted that this should not be driven by national politics but rather local need. He concluded that residents deserved an option which suits their needs and gives the strongest protection for the future, he felt that this would be Option E.

The Council was then addressed by Councillor Alban, who observed that there may be varying merits across all the presented options with the exception of Option D, which would see parts of the District become part of a Greater Peterborough. He expressed concern that the resulting UA would be dominated by Peterborough and be city centric, not taking the rural nature of Huntingdonshire into account. Throughout the LGR process to date, Councillor Alban advised that residents and parishes he had spoken to did not have any positive comments in support of Option D, he acknowledged that residents in the North of the District may cross into Peterborough for their work, shopping or socially but that did not mean that they wished to be a part of a Greater Peterborough. Councillor Alban expressed his preference to support either Option E or B which would, in his opinion, create equal regional partnerships. Given that only one option can be supported, he was minded to support Option E which would result in a strong, independent Huntingdonshire. This option would allow to build on economic successes and opportunities within the District and allow neighbouring authorities to do the same thus would be in the best interest of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents. Councillor Alban further stated that Option E provided a more identifiable, local and democratic link with residents. He concluded that having invested in the business case to support Option E, Huntingdonshire should not waste the opportunity to present that Option to Government for their consideration.

Councillor Neish expressed to the Council that in making a decision, Members should weigh up what was best for the residents of both Huntingdonshire and the region as a whole, noting that the primary concern should be Huntingdonshire residents. He expressed concern about the County Council's preference for Option A which he felt was made in the absence of a supporting business case. He further observed that indications were clear that Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) would prefer Option B which would result in a Greater Cambridge authority thus resulting in Option C being unlikely to progress further. Councillor Neish expressed his concern about Option D which had been developed without prior consideration or consultation with Huntingdonshire who would be greatly affected by the proposal which would create an unnecessary split of Huntingdonshire as it is today. Having considered feedback from local parishes and residents, Councillor Neish observed that residents appeared to be overwhelming in favour of Option E. He shared this view observing that it took Huntingdonshire residents into

account, kept the District independent of neighbouring areas and reflected upon the stable and responsible authority that Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) has proven to be and would be the optimal choice to take forward especially considering the proposed future growth within the District boundaries.

Councillor P Kadewere stated that he had given consideration to both Options C and E but noted that it was difficult to ascertain direct comparisons between the two. He observed the sustainability benefits alongside the benefits of being a smaller UA. He stated that he trusted Cabinet to make the right decision at their forthcoming meeting based upon the debate heard at this meeting. In conclusion he advised that he would be supporting Option E.

In addressing the Council, Councillor Cawley observed that it was rare to make this type of decision which was weighty and with a long-lasting impact on delivered services and managed growth for decades to come. In his opinion, Option E have the strongest, most coherent and sustainable choice for Huntingdonshire. He expressed his concerns about Option D, which he felt must be rejected as incoherent, divisive and a politically driven land and cash grab that did not serve the residents of Huntingdonshire. He further stated that Option E would respect people, place and practicality, its success would be the respect of the nature shape of local communities and that it would keep Huntingdonshire intact, recognising the District as cohesive, with shared services that work and market towns connecting residents thus reflecting how the people of Huntingdonshire actually live rather than lines drawn to create a new UA for political convenience. Councillor Cawley further observed that Option E aligned with current public service footprints including health, police, fire and education as well as the CPCAs long term strategic planning. This alignment would bring long term stability, integration and reduced risks keeping the community of Huntingdonshire whilst enabling reform. He further observed the financial stability of the Option which increased its viability and that the proposed development of Tempsford in St Neots would ensure that the new UA would continue to grow. Councillor Cawley observed that the expressed wishes of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire to create a Greater Cambridge option made Option C untenable whilst he felt Option D to be the greatest risk in its irresponsible, fragmented and divisive split of Huntingdonshire which carved out high growth areas of the District and attached them to its proposal in order to support an authority facing financial pressures. In conclusion Councillor Cawley felt that Option D should be rejected firmly and publicly and that Option E should be supported as a well aligned, sustainable and cohesive future for Huntingdonshire.

Councillor Jennings thanked the joint administration for allowing all Members to have an opportunity to debate and vote on the Options outlined within the report rather than preferred options only. Councillor Jennings thought Scrutiny was effective and showed the diligence the Council had applied to the process as a whole. He said he is a long-standing advocate of UAs but think that the speed of the LGR process has missed an opportunity to develop new authorities which reflect the current needs and desires of residents and rely on the building blocks of existing authorities created 50 years ago. Councillor Jennings stated that he had viewed each option with the application of the scoring criteria. He observed that Option A and B were untenable due to their geographic diversity and size. Option D was felt to be ridiculous due to the land split resulting in his ward being aligned with Ramsey and Wisbech but not Huntingdon noting that he would have to drive through Huntingdon to reach the rest of the UA, and a lack of geographical and community understanding. Councillor Jennings weighed the benefits of Options C and E being mindful that Option C on the face of it may have better financials however he was mindful that a solution suitable for all residents was required. He also considered that the feedback from CCC and SCDC demonstrated that they did not wish to be aligned with Huntingdonshire. He observed the levels of development at Tempsford and across the District as a whole and the related benefits that this would bring for both residents and services. He concluded by clarifying he was split on which decision to make between Options C and E and whether to follow his head with Option C or heart with Option E.

Councillor Keane addressed the Council reflecting upon his life history within the District, and stated that he wished to support Option E. In giving reasons for this, he noted that scale may create capability but also created distance and complexity, UAs which were too large created additional problems including failings in trust and service deliverability. He observed that Councils often succeed because they understand and serve their communities, a Council which reflects the place its residents identify with has an advantage that no financial metric could truly measure. Councillor Keane observed the many failings of Option D in his opinion due to the division of Huntingdonshire and the division this would create for residents and impracticalities for those communities bordering the new boundaries and creating unnecessary risk for coherent service delivery. He also observed that Option C would risk Huntingdonshire losing its identity in a much larger authority whose focus would inevitably be on a Greater Cambridge which would not be of benefit to Huntingdonshire residents. He also noted that whilst Option B created a balance between urban and rural, it did not provide the clarity or cohesion of Option E. Option E was felt to be the best Option due to keeping Huntingdonshire intact, coherent and accountable whilst be large enough to be financially viable it would also be small enough to remain connected to its communities and built around the lives of its residents. It would give greater control of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan and create major growth opportunities supporting the principle that efficient public service is not about scale but about

identity, focus and purpose. Option E would also enable the new UA to understand the place they serve and give residents the confidence that decisions were made with the best interests of their communities in mind.

In addressing the Council, Councillor Chapman observed that St Neots accounted for roughly 25% of the population of Huntingdonshire and that the information provided by Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots Town Councils being in favour of Option C would account for nearly half of the District being in favour of this option. He observed that many St Neots residents travelled outside of the District for employment but that this was rarely to the north of the District and felt that they were more aligned to employment within either South Cambridgeshire or Bedfordshire. He reflected upon the previous Local Government Reorganisation which saw the boundaries between Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire change and felt that many residents and local bodies still bore allegiance with Bedfordshire. He reflected on St Neots location within the OxCam Arc as well as the East West rail and Black Cat transport links and that these developments were not designed to connect St Neots to the North of the region and strengthen the recognition from St Neots residents of a local area which included Bedfordshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. He further noted that the guided busway connected St Ives to Cambridge. He concluded that he would be supporting Option C and further noted the Councils long standing Shared Services arrangement with SCDC and CCC which had proved to be very efficient partnership working between the authorities and would provide the basis for integration as the process developed.

The Council was then addressed by Councillor Hodgson-Jones, who observed that the decisions made needed to reflect upon democracy accountability and practicality as well as localism. He observed that Option D must be rejected due to taking no account of the reality of residents or their communities. He observed that reorganisation into larger authorities would not necessarily lead to greater efficiencies or better services, it would be better to have a viable Council with an identity, a coherence and connection with local people which would be delivered by Option E. He observed the importance of geography and that this was equally important for all residents of the District and noted that Option E would place Huntingdonshire centrally back on the map as a UA rather than a District putting the resulting UA in charge of their own destiny and giving the opportunity to further grow through the already identified areas. In conclusion Councillor Hodgson-Jones also noted that Option E would provide stability for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to carry out its strategic role rather than the predicted chaos any other option would entail.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Martin, addressed the Council echoing the previous thanks to the Officers hard work and dedication in bringing the report and Options to the table for consideration. Councillor Martin quoted Plato “the heaviest penalty for declining to lead is to be led by someone inferior to yourself” observing that Huntingdonshire Councillors knew their residents best and that any option other than E would be allowing others to have a say and potentially dictate the future for Huntingdonshire and its residents. Councillor Martin observed that Option C proposed for 8 Councillors for St Neots out of a total of 86 giving a 10% representation whereas Option E proposed 11 Councillors for St Neots out of a total of 52 members for the new UA giving a 20% representation thus demonstrating that Option E would give a bigger voice to St Neots and its residents. The Universal Studios development in Bedfordshire was acknowledged and Councillor Martin observed that he felt Option E would provide better opportunities for Huntingdonshire residents whereas the opportunities could be absorbed by the bigger urban centres in Option C. Councillor Martin conveyed that he had had concerns about the only two options being whether Huntingdonshire would align with Cambridge or Peterborough but he was very pleased that the opportunity to retain Huntingdonshire as a unitary had been developed. He felt that this was an opportunity missed to not unilaterally back Option E as this would demonstrate the leadership of Huntingdonshire and their desire to move forward. He observed that Huntingdonshire was unique in both the District and its politics and that the current political balance provided a strong opposition to counter a strong administration holding each other to account and promoting a good deal of collaborative cross party working. He further observed that this did not happen in other authorities, notably those neighbouring the District and that the opportunity to show a united opinion would send a strong message to government that Huntingdonshire not only does things differently but better. He expressed concern that other options would result in Huntingdonshire being the poor relation and concluded that prosperity in Huntingdonshire would only happen under Option E. He expressed concern that under other options, residents would face increased taxes to subsidise the cities and urban centres but that Option E would give hope for Huntingdonshire in creating its own destiny.

The Council was then addressed by Councillor Tevlin who noted that she could find merits in both Options C and E. She acknowledged the historical nature of Huntingdonshire with its links to both Oliver Cromwell and also a former Prime Minister, however she also observed that parliamentary boundaries had since changed and that many parts of the District had a stronger local connection with their neighbouring authorities giving the example of Fenstanton and its proximity to South Cambridgeshire. She expressed concerns about Option E and whether the resulting UA would have the sustainability to deal with the burden of social care and its associated financial impact. Councillor Tevlin further acknowledged the existing Shared Service arrangement and significant partnership working between HDC, CCC

and SCDC and that this could help to develop Option C. She felt that by choosing Option C Huntingdonshire could remain an equal partner through advocacy for residents and observed that she felt Option C to be the most financially viable option. She stated that she felt Option D to be a terrible option which would tear up Huntingdonshire. She acknowledged that Option E had many great opportunities in terms of defence, Local Plan, housing development and investment in the District but was concerned about the burden of the other statutory services and the resulting financial sustainability. She further observed that Cambridge could be seen as a commuter city and that many Huntingdonshire residents identify with Option C which she would plan to support.

Councillor Hassall began by stating his belief that Options A and C were the most viable options presented with the lengthy agenda pack showing why a three way split of the region did not fit the government's criteria. He felt that the evidence demonstrated Option C scoring the highest when compared with other options. Councillor Hassall observed that Cambridgeshire County Council had only given Councillors the opportunity to vote for or against Option A and whilst this created its own issues, Councillor Hassall believed their decision to force Option A through to the Government was the right decision due to its support for a two-way split rather than multiple fragmented or less viable options. He believed that by supporting Option C HDC would give the Government a genuine choice between two credible unitary models, namely Options A and C. He felt that by failing to back option C, the Council would surrender its best chance at shaping its own future. If only Option A went forward, a partnership with Peterborough would be implemented by default whereas Option C would allow Government to see the associated merits of this business case and how it would be better for Huntingdonshire. He reiterated colleagues' observations about the Shared Services between HDC, CCC and SCDC for ICT, Legal and Building Control. He drew colleagues' attention to the report pack in particular the criteria the Government will use in its decision making and further observed that the note in defence of Option E being that three unitary options are immaterial because the savings are relative to the overall costs of the running services was a weak argument. He noted that the overall aim of LGR was to save money therefore the Government was unlikely to support an Option which would deliver a recurring annual loss. He elaborated on the financial numbers contained within the report and its business cases, and demonstrated that whilst it was claimed the figures were minimal in comparison to the overall budget, that monetary amount could equate to significant improvements for residents with the example of potholes being filled or the development of sports centres being given as examples.

In addressing the Council, Councillor Gardener stated that having listened to the discourse from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and feedback from residents he was

convinced that Option E would provide the most viable option for Huntingdonshire even without the Tempsford development whilst maintaining the integrity of Huntingdonshire. By supporting this Option, it would allow the Government the opportunity to make an informed decision across the whole region for the benefit of all residents. He also observed that the partitioning of Huntingdonshire under Option D should not be allowed just because it better suited other authorities as this was to the detriment of Huntingdonshire residents. He observed the geographical challenges which would affect the District under Options C and D with the size of the UA under option D being noted and the road repairs required under Option C in other areas of that new UA to the detriment of roads in Huntingdonshire. Councillor Gardener reflected that Option D would result in increasing housing demands on the District to support Peterborough but without any support to the affected Huntingdonshire residents. In addition, he also observed that SCDC and CCC had been vocal in not wishing to partner with Huntingdonshire and that Option C would again not be for the benefit of Huntingdonshire residents. Councillor Gardener expressed his view that Huntingdonshire Councillors know what is best for Huntingdonshire residents and that Option E would offer the District the chance to stand united, financially secure and democratically accountable. It would avoid the pitfalls that partnering with neighbouring authorities would bring ands would empower the District to create its own sustainable future. He concluded by saying that this should not be about party politics but what was best for the residents of Huntingdonshire and would therefore be supporting Option E.

Councillor Pickering addressed the Council and stated that whilst he could see the merits of Option E and that it would be admirable to see a strong and independent Huntingdonshire, he could not see the Government ultimately making this decision. He believed that a two unitary model would best fit the Governments criteria which would leave the Options of A and B. He noted that these options would both join Huntingdonshire with Peterborough and that there had been significant comment from colleagues about how Huntingdonshire better aligned with Cambridge, as a result of this and that in Councillor Pickering's mind the Government would not support a three unitary model, he was minded to support Option C.

Councillor Hunt started his speech by thanking colleagues from Overview and Scrutiny for their contribution at their meeting the previous week to discuss the report and its Options. He expressed concern about the process of the LGR rollout, the moving and developing criteria and that Councils have had to invest time and money developing Options for consideration rather than invest that money into local priorities. However, he observed that it was the right thing for Huntingdonshire to engage with the process and ensure that it has a voice in the process. In his opinion, Option C would be the best solution for Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire in that it strikes a balance in an

impossible situation, balancing areas of higher service need with those of lower service need and includes Social Care, SEN and homelessness. He felt that this Option balanced economic geography and population with Huntingdonshire looking towards Cambridge with its local economy and transport network. It balances local identity and pride with financial sustainability which he felt Option D did not achieve. He further observed that Option D would split Huntingdon and Godmanchester which would greatly affect the residents of these two adjoining communities. Councillor Hunt noted that he could support an independent Huntingdonshire however he was unconvinced that Option E or a three unitary split would meet the Governments criteria thus may not be considered by the Secretary of State when he makes his decision. He did acknowledge that he was torn between Options C and E and that should the Council and Cabinet ultimately support this Option however with the data in mind he felt he could only support Option C at this point. He emphasised that the final decision needed to support a sustainable financial fitting for the future UAs which also reflected local identity and economic geography.

The Council was then addressed by Councillor Gleadow who felt that the evenings debate had been very compelling but that she was mindful that the end decision needed to be to the benefit of all residents and that she was mindful to support a two unitary approach. She observed that Option C was a stronger business case and that St Ives was already aligned with Cambridge from a transport network perspective. She concluded by saying that her final decision would be between Options C and E.

Councillor Lowe addressed the Council with the observation that this was a moment beyond boundary lines, it was about who Huntingdonshire is, and who they want to be and whether Council believed residents deserved a UA that would be truly rooted in its communities. She was clear that she was firmly in support of Option E and echoed the Huntingdon MPs House of Commons speech relating to the historically County nature of Huntingdon with a strong and historical sense of local pride. She noted that rural communities already felt unheard and that the current system created a democratic deficit which pushed decision making further away from the communities it serves, if the Council chose any option other than E then decisions about roads, schools, funding and services would be made in either Cambridge or Peterborough who do not know or understand Huntingdonshire’s rural communities. Option E would strengthen the existing bonds between HDC and local communities and that the resulting UA would contain thriving market towns and resilient rural communities with the scale and diversity needed. Councillor Lowe observed that success in UAs of this size had been found previously in London boroughs and by choosing courage over caution, Huntingdonshire could also thrive. In conclusion, she observed that Option E would still allow for partnership working with neighbouring authorities but would allow for Huntingdonshire’s strength and autonomy to shine rather than be a junior voice,

furthermore Option E would allow the opportunity to reclaim Huntingdonshire's history, identity and pride.

In addressing the Council, Councillor Gray reflected upon the position that the LGR process had created for HDC as well as questioning whether this would genuinely result in financial savings. He drew attention to the views of residents and businesses within the report and was sceptical that a new UA would deliver better services but acknowledged that they could be easier to access. He also questioned how a resulting UA under Options A, B, C or D could achieve more accountability or transparency given the much larger resulting organisation. He stressed that any option other than Option E would result in many villages being far away from the decision-making centre of the resulting UA and expressed concern that focus would be drawn to the city and surrounding urban areas rather than either the rural peripheries or Huntingdonshire's market towns. He reflected that the huge growth in the District over the last 50 years meant that Huntingdonshire would once again be a viable UA and that whilst caution should be exercised, Option E would be the chance to have Huntingdonshire back.

Councillor Pitt addressed the Council and reflected on his personal experience in moving to Huntingdonshire in particular the proximity of St Neots to Cambridge and the good transport links to London. He also reflected on the relationship between HDC and SNTC which he felt had improved in recent years. He observed the importance of a sense of place and that Huntingdonshire had this along with a unique identity away from neighbouring cities. He also stated that he did not accept the argument of size equalling efficiency and that it would be likely that savings would not be found, he also acknowledged that the larger the authority, the more staff would be required to run it and to deliver services to residents. He expressed his support for Option E which would result in a great outcome for the people of Huntingdonshire who could retain their sense of place. He acknowledged that the Government's decision would be on what was best for the residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a whole but felt that the merit with Option E was that the other affected Districts might also support it as a way to progress their own preferences.

Councillor Corney began by advising the Council that Ramsey Town Council had voted in favour of supporting Option E and expressed his view that Councillors across the chamber were working together to deliver the best outcome for the residents of Huntingdonshire. He acknowledged concerns about the deliverability of social care with any of the proposed UAs but felt that the residents he had spoken to were resoundingly in support of Option E. He expressed the pride he felt as a Councillor representing the people of Huntingdonshire and felt that supporting Option E would reflect the opinions of residents.

In addressing the Council, Councillor S Taylor stated that she had made up her mind on how she would vote through listening to the evenings debate. She acknowledged that it was not often she sided with colleagues from the opposition, however, the evenings debate had provided a good deal of common sense. Option E would allow for the District Council to continue its good work and delivering services which it already did well and would result in less disruption for residents of the District even with the integration of existing County Council services. Councillor Taylor acknowledged that the UA proposed by Option E was note the largest population however the report statistics in support of the proposal would be detailed for the Government's consideration with the additional option of a future boundary review to include the Tempsford development area. Councillor Taylor urged Cabinet to support Option E.

Councillor Gulson quoted the Council's Corporate Plan in particular the aspiration to make Huntingdonshire a place where people can thrive by improving the quality of life for local people and creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations by doing our core work well. He expressed his opinion that this aspiration was being met and that Option E would be the only tenable option to continue to deliver that. He expressed particularly that Option D was untenable in its tearing apart of Huntingdonshire. He felt that Option E, although small, could be more agile in service delivery, community engagement and growth. He appreciated the financial concerns expressed by colleagues however by not submitting this option for Government consideration Huntingdonshire will no longer exist. He felt that public opinion was against joining Peterborough and that Cambridge had been clear about not wanting to partner with Huntingdonshire therefore he would be supporting Option E.

Councillor Kerr addressed the Council and wished to be clear that she would be supporting Option E and had voted against Option A at the County Council meeting. She acknowledged the merits of Option C but had reservations about supporting this however the development of Option E made the most sense in her opinion and she felt it would be the best way forward for both Huntingdonshire and also the region.

Councillor Wells expressed his dismay at the process and reflected that other authorities had previously been allowed to restructure with more flexibility. He observed the existing links between St Ives and Cambridge and whilst Option A had some merits he was minded to choose between Options C and E.

In his address to the Council, Councillor Wakeford reflected upon the evenings debate and acknowledged the speech given on the matter by the Huntingdon MP in the House of Commons. He reflected upon the oppositions comments and agreed with Councillor Martin about the Council's ability to work collaboratively and constructively for the benefit of residents. He observed that by weighing the various business cases presented, it was helpful to make an informed decision for a sustainable future for Huntingdonshire. He also stated he would like to take the opinions of the District's Town and Parish Councils into consideration in making his decision. He debated the merits of Options C and E and reflected that he would be considering his decision prior to making the final decision in the forthcoming Cabinet meeting.

Following this debate and a summary of the process and proceedings from Councillor Conboy, a recorded vote was taken where Councillors expressed their preference of Option for the Cabinet to support. The summary of the votes are as follows -

Option A	0 Votes
Option B	0 Votes
Option C	7 Votes
Option D	0 Votes
Option E	36 Votes
Abstain	7 Councillors

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

PREFERRED OPTIONS

To gain an early understanding of Town and Parish Councils' preferences on Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Councillor Conboy wrote to Towns and Parishes in Huntingdonshire inviting them to indicate their initial preference. The letter asked parish and town councils to reach out if they supported Options C or E however, it acknowledged all options and allowed town and parish councils to express their particular preference. This engagement was taken after the proposals were published so that residents had a chance to look through all information and it is intended to give a general indication of support. The responses received to date are as follows:

Town/Parish Council	A	B	C	D	E
Huntingdon Town Council			X		X
Buckden Parish Council			X		
Waresley-cum-Tetworth Parish Council			X		
Bluntisham Parish Council					X
St Ives Town Council			X		X
Great Staughton Parish Council					X
Winwick Parish Council					X
Sibson-cum-Stibbington Parish Council					X
Broughton Parish Council					X
Sawtry Parish Council					X
Earith Parish Council					X
Somersham Parish Council					X
Stilton Parish Council					X
Holywell-cum-Needingworth Parish Council					X
Yaxley Parish Council	X				
Houghton & Wyton Parish Council			X		
Bythorn & Keyston Parish Council			X		
Great Gransden Parish Council			X		
Kimbolton and Stonely Parish Council					X
Offord Cluny & Offord Darcy Parish Council					X
Ramsey Town Council Clerk					X
Grafham Parish Council					X
Brington and Molesworth					X
Farcet Parish Council			X		

Folksworth and Washingley Parish Council					X
St Neots Town Council					
Bury Parish Council					X
Ellington Parish Council					X