



COUNCIL MEETING – 24th September 2025

Questions by Councillors under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question.
- If a questioner who has submitted a question is unable to be present, the Mayor may ask the question on their behalf, or invite another Councillor to do so, or indicate that a written reply will be given and published on the website following the meeting. or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with.
- Please note that following the response given by the Leader, a Cabinet Member or Committee Chair, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original reply.
- The **total** time allocated for Councillor questions will normally be limited to 40 minutes.
- Written answers will be published to questions submitted (but not supplementary questions) following the meeting.

	From Cllr:
1	Bolton
2	Godfrey
3	Horrill
4	Brook
5	Cunningham
6	Miller
7	Lee
8	Godfrey



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City Council

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Question under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Bolton

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

The business case asserts that contract savings of around £25m per annum will be made across a variety of services including Waste, Highways etc. Please explain the basis of this assumption and can you provide detailed figures to back this up?

ANSWER:

The £25m assumed contract savings in question come from contract consolidation costs – for those services where different councils have different providers – and consolidation of those providers offers opportunities for efficiency savings.

While the most obvious areas of saving that this relates to comes from areas where unitaries, districts and boroughs have different providers for the similar services such as waste collections, there will also be opportunities to make savings by combining unitary and upper tier contracts for the unitaries that include Southampton and Portsmouth into larger scale contracts such as those for care and highways.

At this stage in the process, as is normal at the early stage of transformation planning, those savings have been estimated based on similar work done for similar analyses in the past – cross-checked with a ‘bottom-up’ reality check based on the current situation in our region – and phased over time to reflect a realistic estimate of how long it will take to implement them.

The exact details of individual savings on particular contracts will be developed using the approach outlined in Appendix 5 of the report for ‘service contract consolidation’.



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Godfrey

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

What social care cost savings are forecast to be delivered by each new council given that the number of adult and children's service users remains the same and there will be 5 of each service rather than the current four?

ANSWER:

The bid does not anticipate significant savings from social care. Quite the opposite, as you can see on page 158 of the Appendix, it assumes that there will be some additional costs arising from the disaggregation of these services.

However, your question is a good one, because it focuses attention on the biggest financial risk to the new unitaries – specifically the budget gap they will inherit from Hampshire County Council and the failure of Hampshire County Council to be able to transform to better address this issue.

That failure is ultimately because scale is not the answer to the problem. Beyond a certain point, it stands in the way of making the change that's needed.

Smaller unitary Councils, based on real communities, not arbitrary lines on a map to achieve a target population, are the key to transforming these services.

For example, integration with Housing Services will allow for more people with social care needs to have their own front door and avoid institutional care. Where families are under strain because of homelessness or inadequate housing, solutions can be found which make it less likely children come into care.

The reason our plan will work is because our plan recognises that families in trouble and people with social care needs can benefit hugely from access to all the resources we have in our communities. Many are not provided by the state, but some, like health care, are. Working locally, with real people who are known to services, the plans in front of us tonight give us the opportunity to do a much better job at targeting and meeting need – focusing on prevention – and avoiding the need for high cost statutory services.



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Horrill

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

In the recommended proposal from the administration the right sizing of the new organisation is a key driver of cost savings, indicated to be circa £32m. How many staff from which Councils and from which functions will these savings be delivered? Which Council services will no longer be delivered in the new unitary?

ANSWER:

The savings from LGR in the bid are mainly based on the merger of “like functions”. These generate savings in management costs, corporate functions and contracts etc. The “like functions” being merged (except in those authorities that include Southampton and Portsmouth) do not include Adult and Children’s services.

And the intention – particularly within the Hampshire County Council footprint – is to design new organisations rather than necessarily being constrained by the structures of the past. Smaller unitaries can have fewer tiers of management, a clearer line of sight into practice, and more reliance on direct management rather than the audit and quality control measures necessary to ensure consistency of practice in very large organisations.

Recognising that, our biggest priority is to ensure continuity of the many critical services provided by all the councils in Hampshire: TUPE and contract novation will provide safeguards to address the risks of change.

At this stage this level of detailed workforce and function planning has not been completed – although the plan is clear that the opportunity lies in reducing duplication rather than cutting service provision.

The details of this work will be a critical priority in the next stage focused on implementation planning.



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Brook

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

How will £5.3m-£7.2m of IT system cost savings be delivered if the number of major service directorates will be 5 of each service rather than four? The number of IT licences would increase and in order to meet SLAs, the number of staff would need to increase, particularly as some councils have already made cost savings by sharing IT departments.

ANSWER:

It doesn't automatically follow that the services with the highest staffing costs – which is what I assume you mean by 'major service directorates' – have the highest IT costs. Services such as planning, housing, benefits management and tax collection – as well as the customer service systems used to manage services in all councils – are complex – and getting more complex – and in many of those areas, there are 14 or 15 systems in place with the potential to be reduced down to 5. This will drive significant saving – and this is what is highlighted in the report.

And that is before consideration of the further savings opportunity from joint services – such as those we share with Test Valley – or that Hampshire County Council currently provides to councils like Oxfordshire.

That said, there is recognition in the set-up costs in achieving this transformation. Page 157 of the report shows 31% of the set-up costs relate to IT consolidation.

It is also true that there could be one extra system for children's and adult services – but the experience of other places is that – at least initially – these are handled via data segregation and the creation of new instances of existing systems rather than the high cost designing new systems from scratch – and the extra cost of that is included in the social care inefficiencies on page 158 of the appendix.

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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Cunningham

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

With the waste collection arrangements in TVBC (in-house and cheaper), WCC (outsourced) and EHBC (shared ALMO). What detailed assumptions are made about delivery of savings of waste collection when the methods are so different?

ANSWER:

It is true that the service offer in different areas is currently different – we collect glass from the doorstep, for example – and the main reason that Test Valley's service is cheaper is that they do not.

Indeed, I appreciate the opportunity to remind members that our recycling rate is currently 40.8% - up from the 32.3% we inherited from the previous Conservative administration – which, as we all remember well, was an administration that – amongst its many other failings – was completely unable to collect the bins on time.

That 40.8% rate is also significantly higher than that achieved under Conservative leadership in Test Valley and East Hampshire as well. And while we're at it, it's dramatically higher than achieved by the other Conservative administrations in Hampshire - Fareham and New Forest - as well.

But one of the consequences of the national 'simpler recycling' proposals is that we will all be moving to much more similar systems which will provide a better basis for consolidation.

As outlined earlier, we have not yet done the contract by contract review necessary to identify the precise savings achievable ongoing – although we've made similar assumptions to similar authorities in similar positions – and the detailed work on this will be completed when the government has decided the exact configuration of potential services.



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Miller

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

The report mentions implementation Costs of £128m-£155m are predicted over 6 years. Which Councils will provide this funding and how is it going to fall?

The contract savings are predicted to be £24m-33m pa savings. Which contracts will provide these savings and how is this broken down by Council? As there will be 5 Highway contracts in future rather than the current 4, can there be savings of consolidation

ANSWER:

As of 31st March 2025, there are £1,779m of Total Usable Reserves across all authorities – and our proposal ensures that each new unitary has sufficient resources to fund the transformation costs outlined in the paper.

We've modelled the reserves position for each new unitary – and so can be confident that each of the unitaries in our proposal has the funds needed to transform.

As the paper states, the exact details of how that transformation will be managed is for each new authority to determine - although it is likely to be through a mixture of use of reserves and capital receipts.

In terms of how those costs fall, the table outlining this – for the base year through to year 3 – and for workforce, transition, consolidation and contingency costs is outlined on page 157 of the appendix.



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Lee

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

It is understood a risk register wasn't mandated by the Government. However, there are many concerns that the options appraisal focuses too heavily on financial modelling. But past LGRs show many other important issues/risks were not considered leading to future problems both financial and non-financial. Without a published risk table, it is difficult to get an overview of what was fully considered in determining the options by the 12 councils, their Officers and consultants. Can you explain how risks were captured, what they were, how they were assessed for determining the options before us tonight and what may have been missed?

Please consider the following plus any other missing key risks : Missing criteria set by government e.g., Carbon emissions and wider environment impacts, Incomplete assumptions, Evidence realism with comparators, Disaggregation frictions, Cultural resistance & legitimacy, Children's & adults' demand pressures, Multiple legacy systems & data quality, Transformation capacity, Procurement/contract management complexity and under-capacity, Audit & accounts backlogs, Estate rationalisation, HR/union agreement difficulties, Councillor workload and member-to-parish support ratios, Environment & nature/geography compaction, resilience during contingencies for – environmental and health (e.g., pandemics etc.) and Service hub locations and Neighbourhood/democratic governance guarantees.

ANSWER:

Government gave us clear guidance on how they would assess our proposals – and, as a consequence, the options appraisal completed was based on all 6 of the government criteria and sub-criteria based on the guidance issued by MHCLG. The process has been discussed with MHCLG and no issues have been raised around the approach taken.

That's why you have the proposal in front of you – a proposal that is designed to persuade government against the criteria set by government.

We have a test to pass. Ultimately, there's no point in turning up to a maths test and writing an essay in French.

That doesn't mean that we haven't been thinking about risk and wider issues. Current risks, challenges and issues were captured as part of the service design workshops that covered the key services highlighted in criteria 3 of the case and key challenges with the current service delivery models were outlined in the document.



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Godfrey

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

What assumptions have been made for forecasting the cost to each council of providing Home To School Transport after reorganisation, given that the majority of the current £75m pa paid by HCC is required by students in the 4 main rural districts, so impacting primarily on the finances of the Mid-Hants unitary under all three options?

ANSWER:

I'm glad you highlighted this. SEND transport is an enormous issue: Hampshire faced a £17m hit on their school transport outturn in 24/25 and increased the budget for 25/26 by £40m.

However it's important to note that rurality isn't the only driver of this. Rurality plays a big role in mainstream school transport – and will be a big factor for any mid Hampshire authority – but that is only about £15 million of Hampshire's £65 million school transport spending – relatively easily manageable within the mid Hampshire authority's budget. The type of rurality matters too. It's affected by the distribution of schools and market towns. And overall mainstream school transport isn't growing quickly.

We are also not the only rural authorities. The top 3 councils for the number of young people receiving transport are – in order - New Forest, East Hampshire and Basingstoke – two of which are not in our proposed option. And when it comes to the average mileage per child transported – to my surprise – we're the lowest in the county.

SEND spending is driven by SEND demand – and that is less directly linked to rurality. There is an increasingly complicated relationship to deprivation and the relative prosperity of a given area. Anecdotally, it also links – in some cases – to the proportion of schools that are academies – which, sadly, in some cases, take an exclusionary approach to children with special educational needs – an issue also with parts of the private sector as well – putting extra pressure on the SEND budget.

Another consideration is that parents seek EHC assessments for their children is if they are dissatisfied with their local school, and, certainly in the Winchester district, our schools are generally good, very good or exceptional.

It's important to note that the increase in School Transport costs is dwarfed by the pressure on HCC DSG budget, which is currently reported as overspending by £131.5m, bringing the cumulative deficit to £344m. The statutory override ends in March 2028 when the County estimate the accumulated deficit will be £706m. The County has not been able to contain

this problem – its position is far worse than many other Councils. It will fall on the new Unitary Councils to do so.

And this is where our proposal can make a real difference. The county system is running out of road – and we will need to find new models. Smaller unitaries have a better chance of creating communities of schools and parents where trust in the system can be restored. This provides the basis for an inclusive model of education where children's needs can be met without the additional resources linked to an individual plan. And where nearly all children can have the expectation that their needs will be met, usually in a mainstream school, but sometimes in a state special school. A small number of children have always needed very specialist provision, but the way the system works overall has to change.