

Engagement exercise on local government reorganisation

Project title: Share your thoughts on local government reorganisation

Dates covered: 24 February 2025 to 10 March 2025

Report summary:

Brighton & Hove City Council launched this engagement exercise to gather early views from residents, staff, business owners and stakeholders on potential local government reorganisation in Sussex.

This report provides a summary of participation and key themes from the initial feedback collected from a small section of our city's whole population. A total of 597 respondents took part in the survey, offering a range of views on local government reorganisation. This small segment represents an early sample of views, rather than a definitive position at this stage.

AI technology has been used to analyse the responses. While AI helps ensure a thorough examination of the data, there may still be some inaccuracies.

Respondents expressed a mix of opinions on local government reorganisation, with a significant number preferring Brighton & Hove to remain as it is, citing concerns about losing its unique identity and local governance. Many fear that merging with other areas could dilute Brighton & Hove's distinct character and lead to less effective local services.

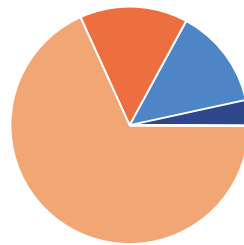
Some respondents are open to expansion, particularly towards areas like East Saltdean and Shoreham, to address boundary anomalies and improve service delivery. However, there is resistance to merging with more rural or politically different areas, such as those north of the city.

Concerns about the potential loss of local accountability and increased bureaucracy were common. Some respondents worry about the financial implications and fear that reorganisation might not lead to the promised efficiencies or improvements in services.

A minority see potential benefits in reorganisation, such as improved financial sustainability and more strategic regional planning. They suggest that combining with neighbouring areas could lead to better resource allocation and service delivery.

Overall, the responses highlight a strong desire for maintaining Brighton & Hove's autonomy and identity, with cautious consideration for any changes that might bring tangible benefits without compromising local governance and community needs.

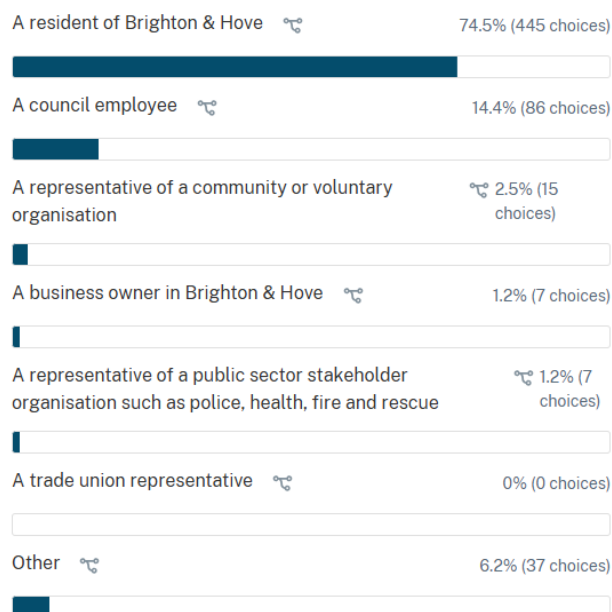
Traffic sources



- Search engines (3%)
- Social networks (14%)
- Websites (15%)
- Direct entry (68%)
- Campaigns (0%)

How are you primarily responding?

597/597 - Multiple choice - choose one - required



Residents of Brighton & Hove

Of the 445 participants responding primarily as residents of Brighton & Hove:

- 8.3% live in Hollingdean & Fiveways
- 7.9% live in Rottingdean & West Saltdean • 6.3% live in Kemptown
- 6.3% live in Hanover & Elm Grove
- 6.1% live in Preston Park
- 5.2% live in Patcham & Hollingbury

- 5.2% live in Central Hove
- 4.7% live in Westdene & Hove Park
- 4.5% live in Wish
- 3.8% live in Regency
- 3.6% live in Goldsmid
- 3.6% live in Hangleton & Knoll
- 3.6% live in Westhill & North Laine
- 3.6% live in North Portslade
- 3.1% live in Woodingdean
- 3.1% live in Queen's Park
- 3.1% live in Moulsecoomb & Bevendean
- 3.1% live in Brunswick & Adelaide
- 2.9% live in Westbourne & Poets' Corner
- 2.2% live in Round Hill
- 2% live in South Portslade
- 2% live in Whitehawk & Marina
- 0.32% live in Coldean & Stanmer
- and 5.4% of those responding primarily as a resident chose not to share which ward they live in.

Community and Voluntary Representatives:

15 participants responded primarily as community or voluntary representatives.

Business owners

Of the 7 participants responding primarily as business owners:

- 71.4% responded as transport business operators
- 14.3% responded as cultural and creative industry business operators
- 14.3% responded as utilities business operators
- There were no responses from business owners operating in retail, hospitality, tourism, financial, property, digital or agricultural.

Representatives from public sector stakeholder organisations

- 7 participants responded primarily as representatives from public sector organisations. These included education, housing and local government.

Trade unions

- There were no responses from participants primarily responding as trade union

representatives.

Other

37 respondents identified as 'other' when asked how they were primarily responding. Some:

- identified themselves as former residents
- mentioned they were living in other areas around Sussex including Worthing, Newhaven and Peacehaven

Local Government Reorganisation: Summary of responses to questions.

7: What are your thoughts on local government reorganisation and how it relates to Brighton & Hove?

- Respondents expressed mixed opinions on local government reorganisation concerning Brighton & Hove. A significant number opposed changes, fearing loss of local identity, reduced accountability, and potential negative impacts on services. Many emphasised the distinct needs and character of Brighton & Hove compared to surrounding areas. Concerns about merging with East or West Sussex included fears of Brighton's progressive values being diluted by more conservative neighbouring areas.
- Some respondents supported reorganisation if it led to improved efficiency, better service delivery, and financial savings. There was interest in expanding Brighton & Hove's boundaries to include nearby areas like East Saltdean and Shoreham, but not further inland. There is support for combining with areas that share similar urban characteristics, particularly along the coast, but less enthusiasm for merging with rural areas to the north.
- Overall, while some saw potential benefits in reorganisation, the predominant sentiment was caution and a desire to maintain Brighton & Hove's distinct identity and ensuring that local needs are not overshadowed by broader regional interests.

460 / 597 inputs

8: What are your thoughts on potential changes to local government in Sussex?

- Responses to the potential changes in local government in Sussex are mixed, with a significant number of respondents expressing concerns about the impact on local identity and services. Many fear that merging Brighton & Hove with other areas could dilute its unique character and lead to less tailored services. There is also apprehension about losing local accountability and representation, with worries that larger governing bodies might not adequately address local needs

- On the other hand, some respondents see potential benefits in terms of efficiency and cost savings through the reduction of duplicated services and economies of scale. The idea of unitary authorities is viewed positively by some, as it could streamline governance and improve service delivery.
- There is a notable call for more detailed information and clarity on the proposals, as many feel unable to form a definitive opinion without understanding the specifics of the changes. Concerns about potential job losses and increased workloads for council employees are also prevalent
- Overall, while there is some support for the idea of reorganisation to improve efficiency, there is significant apprehension about the loss of local identity and representation, as well as a demand for more transparency and information about the proposed changes.

410/597 inputs

9. What impacts, if any, do you think local government reorganisation in Sussex could have?

- Respondents expressed a mix of concerns and hopes regarding local government reorganisation in Sussex. A significant number feared negative impacts, such as job losses, reduced local accountability, and diminished local knowledge.
- Many worried about Brighton & Hove losing its unique identity and autonomy, potentially being overshadowed by larger, more conservative areas. Concerns about increased bureaucracy and costs were also prevalent
- On the positive side, some respondents anticipated improved efficiency, better service delivery, and potential cost savings. There was hope for more integrated services and strategic planning across the region
- However, many respondents were uncertain about the outcomes due to a lack of detailed information.
- Overall, the responses highlighted a tension between the potential for streamlined services and efficiencies versus the risk of losing local identity and accountability.

388/597 inputs

Should Brighton & Hove stay the same or be changed?

- The majority of respondents believe that Brighton & Hove should stay the same, emphasising the city's unique identity and specific needs that differ from surrounding areas. Many express concerns about losing local identity and the potential negative impact on service delivery if merged with other areas

- Some respondents are open to minor expansions to include nearby areas like Saltdean or Peacehaven, where it makes geographical sense.
- A smaller group supports combining with other councils for potential benefits like shared expertise and economies of scale.
- However, many express a need for more information on the benefits and drawbacks of such changes before making a decision.
- Concerns about the financial implications and the ability to maintain quality services were also highlighted.

547/597 inputs

11. Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas east of the city?

- A significant number of respondents are opposed to combining with areas east of the city, citing reasons such as different needs and identities, lack of transport infrastructure and concerns about service quality
- Many respondents specifically mention that Saltdean should be unified under one authority due to its current division. Some see potential benefits in including Peacehaven and Newhaven, especially for economic reasons or due to existing connections.
- However, there is a strong sentiment that any changes should be carefully considered with input from local residents and a clear understanding of the benefits and drawbacks
- Some respondents are open to the idea if it results in improved services or cost savings
- Overall, the responses reflect a mix of opposition, conditional support, and calls for more information before making a decision.

528/597 inputs

12. Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas west of the city?

- Respondents are divided on whether to combine with areas west of the city, with a significant number opposing the idea. Many express concerns about losing local identity and the distinct character of Brighton and Hove.
- Some respondents suggest that Shoreham-by-Sea could be included due to its proximity and existing connections, but there is less support for including Worthing, which is seen as more distinct.
- Some respondents are open to the idea if it results in improved services or economic benefits, while others feel more information is needed to make an informed decision

- Overall, there is a clear split in opinion, with many preferring to maintain the current boundaries.

508/597 inputs

13. Should Brighton & Hove combine with areas north of the city?

- A significant majority of respondents oppose combining with areas north of the city, citing reasons such as differing identities, demographics, and needs.
- Many feel that the South Downs acts as a natural boundary and that the areas north are too rural or distinct from Brighton & Hove . Concerns were also raised about potential administrative challenges and the dilution of local identity.
- A minority see potential benefits in terms of economic ties and infrastructure, particularly with areas like Crawley and the Gatwick corridor.
- However, even among those open to the idea, there is a preference for careful consideration of the specific areas involved and the potential impacts on services and community identity.

470/597 inputs.

