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**Rt. Hon. Jim McMahon OBE MP**  
**Minister for Local Government and English Devolution**  
**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**  
**[By email]**

**Dear Minister**

**Re: Spelthorne Borough Council's response to Local Government Reorganisation Consultation**

We are pleased to submit this consultation response in support of the proposal to establish **three new unitary authorities in Surrey**.

On 19 March, at an Extraordinary Council meeting, borough councillors agreed our preference is for the development of three unitary councils in Surrey as substantiated in the proposal that was submitted on the 30 April 2025. This is available to read [here](#).

Our response recommends forming **three new councils - North Surrey, East Surrey, and West Surrey** - each responsible for delivering all local services within their areas. Spelthorne would be part of the proposed **North Surrey** council, alongside neighbouring areas such as Chertsey, Egham, Esher, Walton-on-Thames, and Weybridge. This part of Surrey is closely linked to London and Heathrow Airport, with strong economic sectors in professional services, technology, and the creative industries.

The three-council model is based on how people live, work, travel, and access services across Surrey. These new council areas would reflect real communities and local economies, rather than artificial boundaries. Each area has its own distinct identity, shared priorities, and economic links resulting in councils that will be more responsive to local issues and deliver services that are relevant to their communities.

We believe three new councils would be financially viable and capable of delivering high-quality services. Financial modelling shows that this model would deliver long-term savings and efficiencies, while managing the costs and risks of the transition responsibly. The new councils

would be large enough to benefit from economies of scale, but not so large that they lose connection with local residents and businesses.

Our formal response has been shaped by the views of local people. More than 3,000 residents across Surrey took part in engagement activities during the preparation of the proposal. Of those, **63% expressed a preference for the three-council model**, highlighting strong support for this approach. The feedback from residents made it clear that people want decisions to be made closer to home, by councils that understand local issues and reflect local priorities. In fact, over 80% of people surveyed said that having a council that understands their community and makes local decisions is one of their top priorities.

Here are some of the key advantages of the three-Council model:

- **Local accountability:** Services will be delivered by a single, local authority that residents can easily identify and engage with.
- **Community focus:** Councils will be based around real places with shared identities and needs.
- **Stronger local leadership:** Councils will be better placed to support local businesses, manage growth, and respond to challenges like housing and transport.
- **Financial resilience:** Larger council areas will be more robust and better able to cope with financial pressures and economic changes.
- **Simpler governance:** Replacing the two-tier system with unitary councils will make it easier for residents to know who is responsible for what services.
- **Devolution-ready:** The proposal supports a move towards more devolved powers and funding, including working alongside a directly elected Mayor for Surrey and a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

We believe in putting communities at the heart of Local Government. One of the concerns often raised about reorganising councils is the potential loss of local knowledge and connection. That's why three unitaries reflects a strong commitment to community engagement and participation. Each new council would embed modern approaches to involving local people, including:

- **Citizen panels** to give residents a direct voice in shaping services.
- **Participatory budgeting**, where communities can decide how some public funds are spent.
- **Co-designed services** that are built with and for the people who use them.

The Government has set out six key criteria for successful local government reform. We believe three unitary councils **meets all six criteria**, including:

1. Supporting a clear strategic footprint for devolution.
2. Enabling strong and effective local leadership.
3. Improving public service delivery.
4. Enhancing local democracy and accountability.

5. Delivering financial sustainability.
6. Strengthening local engagement and empowerment.

Two unitaries would be too large to retain such effective links to residents and businesses and lose connection to local democracy. Our preferred model is backed by strong evidence, a detailed financial plan, and significant public support. It offers a practical way to simplify how local government works, improve services, and bring decision-making closer to the people who are most affected by those decisions.

Ultimately, the three-council model is about building a better, more efficient, and more connected future for local government in Surrey. By aligning council boundaries with real communities and local economies, we can create councils that are not only stronger financially but also more responsive, democratic, and inclusive.

We firmly **encourage the Government to support the three-unitary model**, as it offers the most practical, sustainable, and widely supported solution for Surrey's future and welcome the opportunity to continue working with you and your team as this important process moves forward in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Joanne Sexton  
Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council  
Leader of Spelthorne Independent Group



Cllr Chris Bateson  
Deputy Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council  
Leader of Liberal Democrats



Cllr Jon Button  
Leader of the Labour Group