Appendix 2 – Joint Options Appraisal

Kent Council Leaders have worked with strategic partner KPMG to undertake the joint options appraisal on behalf of all councils in Kent and Medway. This was presented to Kent Council Leaders in September 2025.

Kent
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Kent LGR Options Appraisal

01.09.2025

Ashford Borough Council

canterbury city council

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Gravesham Borough Council

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

MAIDSTONE Borough Council

Medway COUNCIL Serving You

Sevenoaks DISTRICT COUNCIL

Swale BOROUGH COUNCIL

thanet district council

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL www.tmbc.gov.uk

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Report contents

01

Scope, purpose and context

Scope of this report

The options appraisal summarised in this report has been completed to enable the fourteen councils of Kent to contribute to making an informed decisions regarding shortlisting appropriate unitary options for the development of full business case(s) to submit to government.

Options appraisal scope

- Objective, evidence-based approach to analysis of potential unitary options for local government reorganisation (LGR) in Kent.
- Review and build on existing analysis and work undertaken locally as well as the interim plan submitted to MHCLG on 21 March 2025.
- Review publicly available data sources and structure an appraisal of options in line with Government criteria set out in the letter dated 6th February 2025.

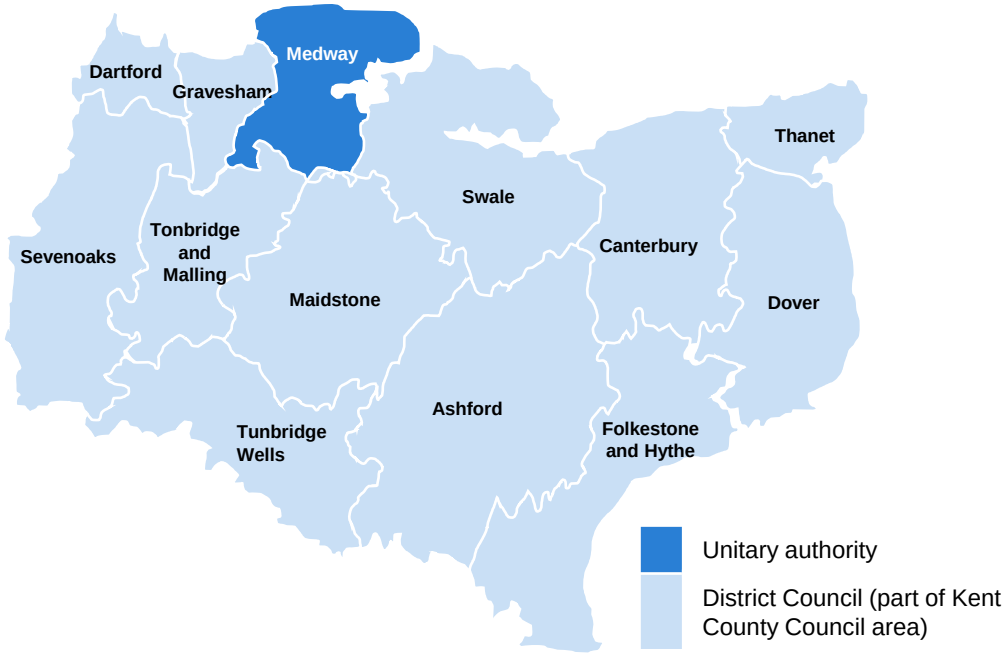
Government's six criteria for LGR					
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	3. High quality and sustainable public services	4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	5. Supporting devolution arrangements	6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

Not in scope

- Subjective judgement is excluded from the report as far as possible, whilst noting that a certain level of interpretation is impossible to avoid. This is particularly in relation to government criterion 4, 5 and 6, where more of qualitative assessment is required.
- Detailed analysis on any specific topics (e.g. economic, service) beyond review of relevant metrics.
- This report does not produce a ranking of options or conclude on overall preferred options. Councils, collectively and individually will make conclusions and decisions with reference to this options appraisal and other relevant factors.

Current local government setup in Kent

There are 14 local authorities in Kent: 12 districts, Kent County Council and one existing unitary (Medway).



Key context relevant to this appraisal:

- The 14 local authorities are collaboratively completing this options appraisal to support decision making on which LGR options proceed to the business case stage.
- New unitary authorities are expected to be in place from April 2028, with elections to shadow authorities in May 2027.
- Kent councils applied to become part of the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) but were not successful and will therefore not have mayoral elections in May 2026. The assumption is that devolution could be achieved one year behind the DPP areas, with potential mayoral elections in May 2027.

Metric	Medway (unitary)	District councils												Kent County Council	Kent total
		Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells		
Population (mid-2024)	292,655	140,936	162,100	125,011	119,768	112,411	110,671	187,767	122,748	158,379	142,691	136,853	119,694	1,639,029	1,931,684
Geographic area (sq km) (2024)	194	581	309	73	315	357	99	393	370	373	104	240	331	3,545	3,739
Population density (people per sqkm) (2024)	1,509	243	525	1,712	380	315	1,118	478	332	425	1,372	570	362	462	517
Net revenue expenditure (£m)	3.6	24.4	21.0	28.3	14.8	18.2	17.8	28.2	18.7	29.4	35.1	21.7	16.7	1,635	1,913
Councillors (including County allocation)	59	54	47	48	39	36	44	58	60	54	63	51	45	(81)	658

Options in scope

Seven options are in scope for the options appraisal.

Single unitary

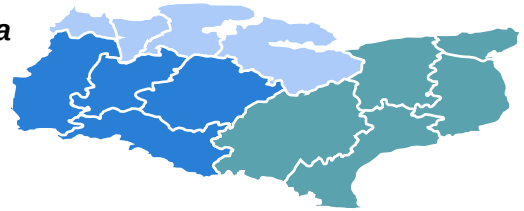
1a

1a
1,931,684

Not included in interim plan but raised in KCC Cabinet Committee meeting.
1a Single unitary with three area assemblies

Three unitaries

3a

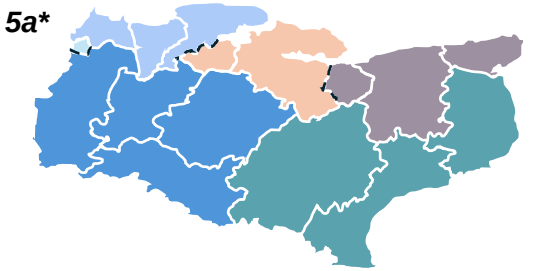


A three unitary option with a north, east and west unitary.

N	W	E
686,716	567,062	677,906

Five unitaries

5a*



N	W	E	M	S
330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115

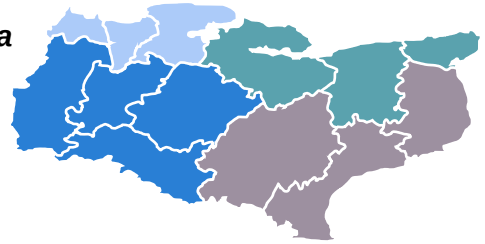
Key:
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

Not included in interim plan. Referenced as a preference by Gravesham and Dartford.

The 5-unitary model proposes the following areas: Dartford, Gravesham, parts of Medway west of the River Medway, and Swanley; Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells, and Maidstone (excluding Swanley); the remainder of Medway with the western part of Swale (Sittingbourne area); the rest of Swale (Faversham area) combined with Canterbury and Thanet; and finally, Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe, and Dover.

Four unitaries

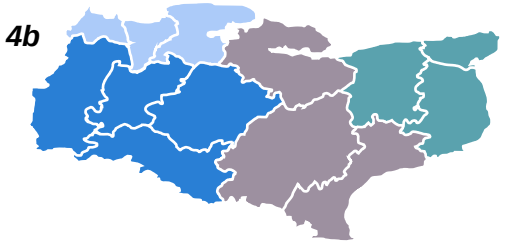
4a



N	W	E	S
528,337	567,062	463,170	373,115

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north west, north east, south west and south east.

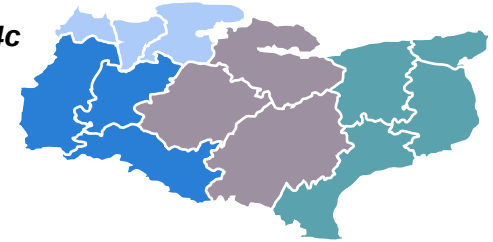
4b



N	W	E	M
528,337	567,062	424,559	411,726

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east with Folkestone and Hythe in the central unitary.

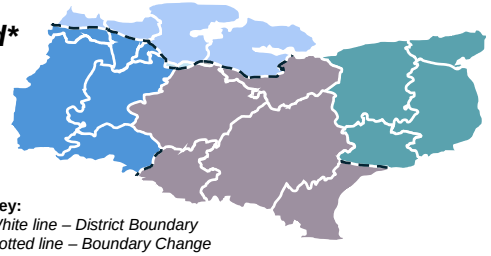
4c



N	W	E	M
528,337	379,295	536,970	487,082

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east with Maidstone in the central unitary.

4d*



Key:
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

N	W	E	M
615,931	402,914	497,034	415,805

Not included in interim plan. Referenced as a preference by Medway. A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east with boundary changes.

**To match the current total population of 1,931,684, we applied a proportional multiplier to the original figures for options with boundary changes. This preserves the relative population distribution across each area while ensuring the total aligns with up-to-date data.*

Kent
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02

Options appraisal approach

Options appraisal approach

Set out below are the five steps which have been carried out to complete the options appraisal that we have agreed with Kent CEOs at the LGR Programme Board.

1

Selecting options for appraisal

To build upon the existing analysis and options development, a longlist of ten options was created, including all options raised during analysis to date, initial interviews and follow-up discussion with Council Leaders.

Following a meeting with Council Leaders from each council, it was agreed to carry forward seven options for appraisal.

2

Data sets gathered and modelled

Data was collected for each current council though a combination of publicly available sources and council data requests.

Data was then consolidated to create a view of all potential unitaries for each of the options in scope.

For options including boundary changes specific assumptions were made.

3

Set evaluation criteria and "What good looks like"

With direct reference to government criteria and linked guidance, 14 evaluation criteria were defined for options to be assessed against.

For each evaluation criteria, a series of metrics were identified. For each metric, a statement of 'what good looks like" has been agreed.

4

Determine assessment parameters

For every metric, a definition of 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' was determined. For most metrics the assessment is determined by the level of balance, which is calculated through a statistical analysis of ranges for each option.

For metrics not assessed on balance a specific definition of 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' was set.

5

Assessment of options against metrics

All options were scored against all metrics with average results for each metric presented on an overall dashboard.

Supporting commentary has been prepared to provide explanation and relevant context.

Note: no weighting has been applied evaluation criteria.

See following pages for further explanation of each step.

Points to note:

- Additional analysis has been carried out in relation to Option 1A (the single unitary) on the basis that the majority of metrics (specifically those relating to balance) cannot be assessed in the same way as other options given we are assessing only one unitary.
- Additional supporting analysis has been prepared for specific metrics where required (see Section 5).

Step 1: Selecting options for appraisal

Ten potential options were raised at the start of the options appraisal, but Leaders jointly agreed to rule out three options, with seven remaining in scope for the options appraisal.

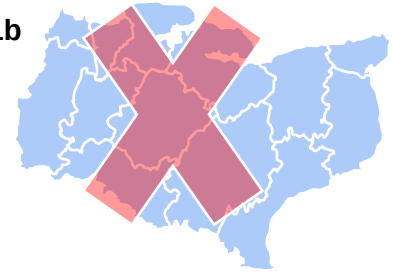
Single unitary

1a

1a
1,931,684

Not included in interim plan but raised in KCC Cabinet Committee meeting.
1a Single unitary with three area assemblies

1b

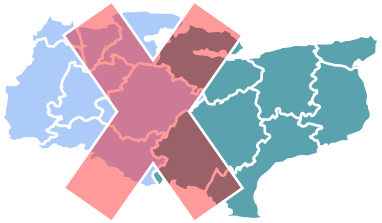


1b
1,931,684

Not included in interim plan, but in KCC options analysis.
1b A single large unitary across the whole of Kent.

Two unitaries

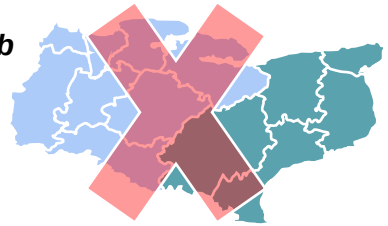
2a



Not included in interim plan, but in KCC options analysis. An east and west two unitary option with Swale in the east.

W	E
1,095,399	836,285

2b

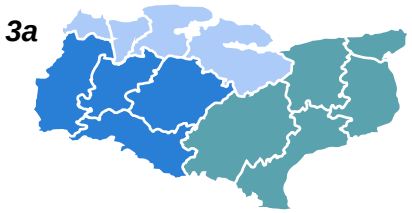


Not included in interim plan. Referenced by Swale in response to 2 unitary proposal in KCC report. An east and west two unitary option with Swale in the west.

W	E
1,253,778	677,906

Three unitaries

3a

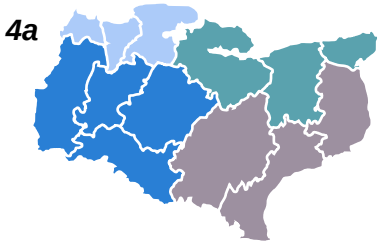


A three unitary option with a north, east and west unitary.

N	W	E
686,716	567,062	677,906

Four unitaries

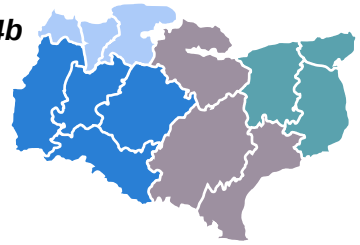
4a



N	W	E	S
528,337	567,062	463,170	373,115

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north west, north east, south west and south east.

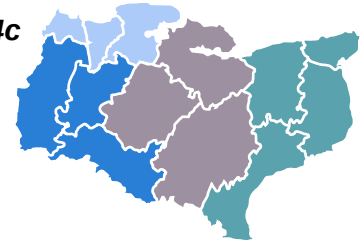
4b



N	W	E	M
528,337	567,062	424,559	411,726

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east with Folkestone and Hythe in the central unitary.

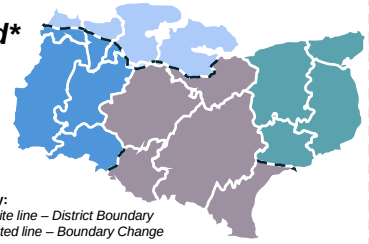
4c



N	W	E	M
528,337	379,295	536,970	487,082

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east with Maidstone in the central unitary.

4d*



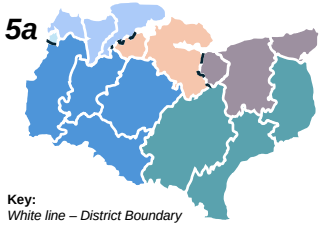
Key:
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

N	W	E	M
615,931	402,914	497,034	415,805

An undisclosed option proposed by Medway. **No detail provided for discussion in interviews. Expected to be a four unitary option with boundary changes.**

Five unitaries

5a



Key:
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

Not included in interim plan. Referenced as a preference by Gravesham though with acknowledgement that a five unitary model is unlikely to be financially viable.

N	W	E	M	S
330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115

The 5-unitary model proposes the following areas: Dartford, Gravesham, parts of Medway west of the River Medway, and Swanley; Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells, and Maidstone (excluding Swanley); the remainder of Medway with the western part of Swale (Sittingbourne area); the rest of Swale (Faversham area) combined with Canterbury and Thanet; and finally, Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe, and Dover.

**To match the current total population of 1,931,684, we applied a proportional multiplier to the original figures for options with boundary changes. This preserves the relative population distribution across the four areas while ensuring the total aligns with up-to-date data.*

Step 2: Data sets gathered and modelled

Date was collected for each current council though a combination of publicly available sources and council data requests to build a set of comprehensive inputs for the assessment model.

Example metrics gathered across all current authorities

Metric	Medway (unitary)	District councils												Kent County Council	Total / Average
		Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells		
Population (mid-2024)	292,655	140,936	162,100	125,011	119,768	112,411	110,671	187,767	122,748	158,379	142,691	136,853	119,694	1,639,029	1,931,684
Geographic area (sq km) (2024)	194	581	309	73	315	357	99	393	370	373	104	240	331	3,545	3,739
Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	1,509	243	525	1,712	380	315	1,118	478	332	425	1,372	570	362	462	517
Total GVA (£m) (2023)	7,657	3,939	4,352	4,343	3,277	2,802	2,206	5,550	5,098	3,633	2,588	5,406	4,114	47,308	54,965
GVA per capita (£) (2023)	26,164	27,949	26,848	34,741	27,361	24,926	19,933	29,558	41,532	22,939	18,137	39,502	34,371	28,863	28,454

See Appendix A4 for all data gathered for current authorities.

Data was then consolidated to create a view of all potential unitaries for each of the options in scope.

Metrics consolidated by potential future unitary authority for options in scope

Metric	Option 1A	Option 3A (example)			Option 4A (example)				Option 5A (example)				
		N	W	E	N	W	E	S	N	W	E	M	S
Population (mid-2024)	1,931,684	686,716	567,062	677,906	528,337	567,062	463,170	373,115	330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115
Geographic area (sq km) (2024)	3,739	739	1,334	1,666	366	1,334	786	1,253	287	1,267	503	429	1,253
Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	517	929	425	407	1,444	425	589	298	1,151	430	682	793	298
Total GVA (£m) (2023)	54,965	17,839	20,168	16,958	14,206	20,168	10,573	10,018	9,373	19,244	7,815	8,515	10,018
GVA per capita (£) (2023)	28,454	25,977	35,566	25,015	26,888	35,566	22,827	26,850	28,356	35,322	22,788	25,024	26,850

See Appendix A3 for all data by future unitary for all seven options in scope

Note: where options do not align to current authority boundaries, metrics have been calculated on a pro-rata basis by population. See following page for further details.

Data for options with boundary changes

Options 4D and 5A require new boundaries to be drawn. As such, the datasets at current authority level cannot be applied directly. To address this, population data from mid-2022 by LSOA has been used to identify LSOA population estimates for 2023 by (i) calculating the proportion of a district's population in 2022 in each LSOA and then (ii) multiplying the relevant proportion for an LSOA by the total population of a district in 2024.

The other data sets that are generally not available at LSOA level have been pro-rated based on the split of population of current districts into future unitary geographies. Where appropriate, different assumptions can be made for specific data sets.

Current Authority	Total Population	Option 4D – population splits					Option 5A – population splits					
		Boundary change?	North	West	East	Mid	Boundary change?	North	West	East	Mid	South
Ashford	140,936	NO				140,936	NO					140,936
Canterbury	162,100	NO			162,100		NO			162,100		
Dartford	125,011	YES	98,003 **(78%)**	27,008 **(22%)**			NO	125,011				
Dover	119,768	NO			119,768		NO					119,768
Folkestone and Hythe	112,411	YES			72,475 **(64%)**	39,936 **(36%)**	NO					112,411
Gravesham	110,671	YES	96,566 **(87%)**	14,105 **(13%)**			NO	110,671				
Maidstone	187,767	YES	3,794 **(2%)**			183,973 **(98%)**	NO		187,767			
Medway	292,655	YES	285,873 **(98%)**	6,782 **(2%)**			YES	72,606 **(25%)**			220,049 **(75%)**	
Sevenoaks	122,748	NO		122,748			YES	22,248 **(18%)**	100,500 **(82%)**			
Swale	158,379	YES	127,544 **(81%)**			30,835 **(19%)**	YES			38,143 **(24%)**	120,236 **(76%)**	
Thanet	142,691	NO			142,691		NO			142,691		
Tonbridge and Malling	136,853	YES	4,151 **(3%)**	132,702 **(97%)**			NO		136,853			
Tunbridge Wells	119,694	YES		99,568 **(83%)**		20,126 **(17%)**	NO		119,694			
Total	1,931,684		615,931	402,914	497,034	415,805		330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115

Step 3: Set evaluation criteria & "what good looks like"

Fourteen evaluation criteria have been defined by direct reference to Government guidance in the letter dated 6th February 2025 and the guidance provided by Government in June 2025.

The letter includes clear requirements to be included within LGR proposals. These have been used to develop the evaluation criteria shown here where they enable comparison between options.

Some of the government requirements are not included in the evaluation criteria where they have been deemed to be statements of requirements for proposals rather than differentiating factors for LGR unitary options..

Evaluation criteria defined to structure options analysis

Headline Government Criteria	Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs
	1.3 Single tier governance structures
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size
	2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money
	2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation
	3.2 Public service reform and better value for money
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	4.1 Local identity, culture and historical importance
	4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns
5. Supporting devolution arrangements	5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement

Example of metrics to be assessed
(1.1: Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base)

Metrics/factors	What does good look like?
Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	Balanced GVA per capita between unitaries, suggesting balanced levels of productivity and positive implications for the distribution of economic prosperity among residents
Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	Each unitary has a sufficient GVA to generate tax and there is balance between unitaries, meaning good long-term prospects for all future authorities
Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	All authorities with a sufficient number and profile of properties to provide a council tax base which can sustainably support services, with a reasonable balance between authorities
Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	District areas within a unitary have low to no difference between council tax rates. The least difference between councils within a unitary would provide minimal administrative and resident disruption in harmonising rates
Alignment to major Kent industries	Unitaries demonstrate alignment to one or more of the key industries

Step 4: Determine assessment parameters

Across the 14 evaluation criteria, most metrics are assessed through a balance analysis (i.e. determining which options produce the most balanced outcomes). Some metrics have other specific criteria and some involve qualitative assessment.

Assessing balance

The assessment process is designed to evaluate how well each option achieves balance across the proposed unitary authorities. If one unitary performs exceptionally well under a given option, it is likely at the expense of another. Therefore, the goal is not to maximise metrics for individual unitaries, but to achieve equitable outcomes across all unitaries for the county area within an option.

Please note:

- This is a comparative model, meaning except for Option 1a we are not judging and assessing whether an option is objectively good or bad against a given metric. We are comparing how each option performs relative to others in the shortlist. The frame of reference is the set of options under consideration (the current shortlist).
- Where differences between options are very small, this approach will still result in at least one option scoring 'High' and at least one option scoring 'Low'.
- Some of the ranges may change slightly once data for all options is fully incorporated into the model

Generating High / Medium / Low scores for each metric based on balance

A standard formula, summarised below, is used to assign scores for each option against each metric.

Step	Description
1. For each metric, identify the range of unitary values	For all options, identify the difference between the highest and lowest values between unitaries
2. Determine parameters for High / Medium / Low	The range of differences between unitaries is divided into percentiles. • **High**: Range <33rd percentile • **Medium**: Range between 33rd and 66th percentiles. • **Low**: Range >66th percentile
3. Assign scores for each option	Assign each option a score of High, Medium or Low depending on how large the variance is between the highest and lowest.

See Appendix A3 for assessment parameters for all metrics across all evaluation criteria

Step 5: Assessment of options

All options were scored against all metrics with average results for each metric presented on an overall dashboard. Supporting commentary has been prepared to provide explanation and relevant context. No weighting has been applied to specific metrics or evaluation criteria.

Each option is scored against each individual metric, producing an average score for each criteria.

Note: to provide further ability to differentiate between options, average score include *'Medium / High'* and *'Medium / Low'.*

Metrics	Assessment (example)
Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	High
Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	Medium
Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	Medium
Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	Medium
Alignment to major Kent industries	High
Average for criteria (1.1)	**Medium / High**

The average scores for all metrics, for each option is presented on the overall dashboard.

Headline Government Criteria	Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Summary assessment by option						
		1A*	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	M	H	M/L	M	M/H	M	M/L
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	L	L	M	M	M	H	M
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Population of 500,000 or more as a guiding principle	M	H	M	H	M	L	L
	2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money	H	H	M/L	M/L	M/L	M/L	L
	2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities	H	H	M	M	M	M/L	L
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	H	M	M/L	M/H	M/H	M/L	M
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	M	H	M	M/H	M/L	M/L	M/L
	3.2 Public service reform and better value for money	M	M	M	M	M/L	M/L	M
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	M	M	M/H	M	L	L	M
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	4.1 Issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance	M/L	M	M	M	M	M	M
	4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Supporting devolution arrangements	5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	L	H	H	H	H	M	M
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	L	M	L	H	M	H	L

Note: Option 1A has been assessed differently as it cannot reasonably be assessed against criteria related to balance due to there being a single unitary.

03

Options appraisal summary findings

Summary assessment by government criteria

Set out below is a dashboard of assessment scores based on averages of all metrics assessed. The detail and commentary on the options is presented later in this section and in the supporting sections. Most metrics are relative (i.e. they compare the relative merits of each option).

Headline Government Criteria	Option 1a	Option 3a	Option 4a	Option 4b	Option 4c	Option 4d	Option 5a
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	M	M	M/L	M	M	M/H	M/L
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	H	M	M	M	L	L
3. High quality and sustainable public services	M	M	M	M	M/L	M/L	M
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	M/L	M	M	M	M	M	M
5. Supporting devolution arrangements	L	H	H	H	H	M	M
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	M	L	H	M	H	L

* **Option 1a** appraised separately due to it proposing a single unitary and an innovative model of local government which is not suited to the appraisal methodology. See Section 5.

Summary assessment by evaluation criteria

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Set out below is a dashboard of assessment scores based on averages of all metrics assessed. The detail and commentary on the options is presented later in this section and in the supporting sections. Most metrics are relative (i.e. they compare the relative merits of each option).

Headline Government Criteria	Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Summary assessment by option						
		1A*	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	M	H	M/L	M	M/H	M	M/L
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	L	L	M	M	M	H	M
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size	M	H	M	H	M	L	L
	2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money	H	H	M/L	M/L	M/L	M/L	L
	2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities	H	H	M	M	M	M/L	L
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	H	M	M/L	M/H	M/H	M/L	M
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	M	H	M	M/H	M/L	M/L	M/L
	3.2 Public service reform and better value for money	M	M	M	M	M/L	M/L	M
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	M	M	M/H	M	L	L	M
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	4.1 Issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance	M/L	M	M	M	M	M	M
	4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Supporting devolution arrangements	5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	L	H	H	H	H	M	M
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	L	M	L	H	M	H	L

* **Option 1a** appraised separately due to it proposing a single unitary and an innovative model of local government which is not suited to the appraisal methodology. See Section 5.

Summary scoring and narrative:
1. Establishing a single tier of local government

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	M	H	M/L	M	M/H	M/L	M/L
1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
1.3 Single tier local government structures	L	L	M	M	M	H	M

Commentary

- **Option 1a** rated Medium due to retaining the whole tax base and economic area of Kent but council tax harmonisation across the whole county is likely to result in the greatest increase in council tax of any model.
- **Option 3a** rated High because of good balance between unitaries in GVA, GVA per capita and council tax.
- **Option 4a** rated Medium/Low primarily due to an imbalance between unitaries in total GVA and council tax base,
- **Option 4b** rated Medium due to good balance between unitaries in GVA per capita and reasonable balance across all other metrics.
- **Option 4c** rated Medium/High despite imbalance in GVA per capita due to good balance in total GVA, council tax and the impact of council tax harmonisation.
- **Option 4d** rated Medium/Low due to imbalance in GVA per capita, business rates and the impact of council tax harmonisation.
- **Option 5a** rated Medium/Low despite scoring well regarding the impact of council tax harmonisation because of imbalance in total GVA and council tax base.

- **Option 1a** rated Medium due to maximising the space available in Kent for strategic housing planning decisions but offset by the practicality of service delivery over such a large area and the need for the council to operate at both the strategic and very local level.
- **Option 3a** rated High due to strong balance of population density, geographic area and historic housing delivery.
- **Option 4a** rated Medium despite imbalance in population density due to strong balance in historic housing delivery and homelessness.
- **Option 4b** rated Medium due to reasonable balance across metrics despite imbalance in population density.
- **Option 4c** rated Low due to imbalance in geographic area, historic housing delivery and homelessness.
- **Option 4d** rated Medium due to good balance in population density, geographic area and transport connectivity despite imbalance in historic housing delivery and green-belt designation.
- **Option 5a** rated Medium due to some imbalance in geographic area and green-belt designation.

- **Option 1a** rated Low as while it establishes one council it requires a new layer of local government (area assemblies) to be effective which would potentially still maintain a two-tier local government structure.
- **Option 3a** rated Low as it has an average electorate ration of 8,853 and the East authority would have 113 members, above the LGBCE recommended range.
- **Option 4a, 4b and 4c** rated Medium as they have a reasonable elector ratios and ranges of elector ratios between unitaries.
- **Option 4d** rated High as it has the lowest range of elector ratios between unitaries and a reasonable average elector ratio.
- **Option 5a** rated Medium as it has the lowest range of elector ratios between unitaries and a reasonable average elector ratio.

Summary scoring and narrative:
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
2.1 Appropriate population size	M	H	M	H	M	L	L
2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money	H	H	M/L	M/L	M/L	M/L	L
2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities	H	H	M	M	M	M/L	L

Commentary

- This metric is based purely on balance of population between unitaries.
- As this metric is based on balance **Option 1a** was appraised separately and rated Medium due to meeting the government's 'guiding principle' of 500,000 but the population over 1.9m would be over 3 times larger than the population size of the largest current unitary.
- **Options 3a and 4b** rated High due to the most balanced populations between unitaries.
- **Options 4a and 4c** rated Medium due to reasonable balance of population between unitaries.
- **Options 4d and 5a** rated Low due to the largest imbalance in population between unitaries.

- **Option 1a** rated High due to efficiencies in the corporate back office and statutory roles though there will be duplication in member and officer roles through Area Assemblies.
- **Option 3a** rated High due to comparatively high levels of savings expected to be achieved through reorganisation and only requiring one additional top-tier authority.
- **Options 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d** scored Medium/Low due to savings still being expected to be achieved from reorganisation but this is impacted by requiring the establishment of two additional top tier local authorities.
- **Option 5a** scored Low due to lower expected savings and requiring the establishment of three additional top tier local authorities. The initial benchmarking for the options appraisal indicates that the efficiencies from this model are not likely to outweigh the additional costs.

- **Option 1a** rated High due to lower implementation costs though with a risk that a single unitary reduces innovation and transformation opportunities aligned to local needs.
- **Option 3a** rated High due to proportionately lower transition costs and complexity and no requirement for boundary review.
- **Options 4a, 4b and 4c** rated Medium due to manageable transition costs and no requirement for boundary review.
- **Option 4d** rated Medium/Low due to transition cost and complexity being increased through requiring boundary review.
- **Option 5a** rated Low due to highest transition costs and complexity as well as boundary review.

Summary scoring and narrative:
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	H	M	M/L	M/H	M/H	M/L	M

Commentary

- This metric is based purely on balance of general fund reserves, debt affordability and gross budget gaps (current) between unitaries. More detail on indicative efficiencies, disaggregation costs and implementation costs can be found in Appendix A1.
- **Option 3a** was rated Medium due to a reasonable balance between all metrics
- **Option 4a** was rated Medium/Low despite balanced reserves due to imbalance in debt affordability and gross budget gap.
- **Option 4b** was rated Medium/High due to well balanced reserves.
- **Option 4c** was rated Medium/High due to well balanced debt affordability and budget gap despite an imbalance in reserves.
- **Option 4d** was rated Medium/Low despite well balanced debt affordability due to imbalance in reserves and gross budget gap.
- **Option 5a** was rated Medium due to well balanced gross budget gaps despite imbalance in reserves.
- As this metric is based on balance **Option 1a** was appraised separately and rated High due to maximising reserves and assets in a single unitary to be allocated across Kent and Medway and minimising ongoing disaggregation costs. Though an additional level of bureaucracy would potentially be required to allocate resources to Area Assemblies.

Summary scoring and narrative:
3. High quality and sustainable public services

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	M	H	M	M/H	M/L	M/L	M/L
3.2 Public service reform and better value for money	M	M	M	M	M/L	M/L	M

Commentary

- **Option 1a** rated Medium due to limited service fragmentation though this model of reorganisation will require the unitary to work at regional, local and neighbourhood levels for different services. It either requires reorganisation or risks missing transformation opportunities through retaining status quo.
- **Option 3a** rated High due to good balance in deprivation levels and working age adults.
- **Option 4a** rated Medium for all metrics, except for 65+ population balance where it scores high.
- **Option 4b** rated Medium/High due to most metrics rating medium despite good balance of deprivation levels
- **Option 4c** rated Medium/Low due to imbalance in deprivation levels and the older adults population.
- **Option 4d** rated Medium/Low despite scoring highly on manageable geography for service delivery due to imbalance in deprivation and working age adults population and fragmenting services.
- **Option 5a** rated Medium/Low despite scoring highly on manageable geography for service delivery because of imbalance in older and working age adult population and additional service fragmentation due to creating 3 additional top tier authorities.

- **Option 1a** rated Medium as it provides significant capacity and scale to deliver public service reform but it is a large footprint to deliver effective public service reform and relational public services, particularly with People services operating at a county level.
- **Option 3a** rated Medium due to good alignment with partner boundaries but challenges to enable localism over such large unitary footprints.
- **Option 4a and 4b** rated Medium for enabling localism and alignment with partners
- **Option 4c and 4d** rated Medium/Low due to alignment with partner boundaries
- **Option 5a** rated Medium due to enabling localism despite lack of alignment with partner boundaries.

Summary scoring and narrative:
3. High quality and sustainable public services

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	M	M	M/H	M	L	L	M

Commentary

- Difference driven by balance between metrics.
- **Option 1a** rated Medium due to enabling a county-wide strategic approach to children's services across Kent and Medway. Adult social care area teams do not align with Area Assembly boundaries so will not align with members or will require reorganisation.
- **Option 3a** rated Medium despite imbalance in households in temporary accommodation and adult social care and children's services spend data due to good balance of adults in social care, children in social care, the older adults population and registered pupils with SEND.
- **Option 4a** rated Medium/High despite good balance of children in low income families and adult social care spend due to imbalance in registered pupils with SEND.
- **Option 4b** rated Medium despite good balance of adults and children in social care due to imbalance of registered pupils with SEND.
- **Option 4c** rated Low due to imbalance of children in low income families, adults in social care, social care spend and children in social care.
- **Option 4d** rated Low due to imbalance of children in low income families, households in temporary accommodation, adults and older adults in social care and children's services spend.
- **Option 5a** rated Medium despite good balance of children's services spend due to imbalance of children in social care.

Summary scoring and narrative:
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
4.1 Local identity, culture and historical importance	M/L	M	M	M	M	M	M
4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Commentary

- Option 1a rated Medium/Low due to the scale of a single unitary presenting significant challenges in representing a local identity, while it does represent the historic boundaries of Kent.
- All other options scored Medium as all options included strong local identities which were maintained within new unitaries but also local identities or connections which risk being disrupted through local government reorganisation and the establishment of unitary authorities.
- We do not have credible local engagement regarding all options to feed into the options appraisal.

Summary scoring and narrative:
5. Supporting devolution arrangements

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	L	H	H	H	H	M	M

Commentary

- **Option 1a** rated Low due to not having multiple constituent members, so no population ratio, in a Combined/Strategic authority requiring an exception from government. This additional complexity is unlikely to enable devolution of powers and funding to Kent rapidly compared to areas proposing standard unitary and strategic authority structures.
- **Option 3a** rated High despite 3 being a relatively small number of constituent authorities within a strategic authority because of balance population ratios.
- **Option 4a** rated High due to establishing four unitaries as constituent authorities despite population ratios being less balanced than other options.
- **Option 4b** rated High due to establishing four unitaries as constituent authorities with balanced population ratios.
- **Option 4c** rated High due to establishing four unitaries as constituent authorities despite population ratios being less balanced than other options.
- **Option 4d** rated Medium due to imbalance in population ratios despite establishing four unitaries as constituent authorities.
- **Option 5a** rated Medium due to imbalance in population ratios despite establishing five unitaries as constituent authorities.

The options are not differentiated based on even or odd numbers of constituent members as this can be resolved through the constitution and Mayors typically have non-voting chair rights within current combined authorities.

Summary scoring and narrative:
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Scoring by option						
	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	L	M	L	H	M	H	L

Commentary

- This metric is based purely on balance of existing civic engagement between unitaries. Strong community engagement depends much more on how the council operates rather than the geography it covers so this is a relevant proxy measure to identify where an option would create a unitary with currently low levels of civic engagement.
- As this metric is based on balance **Option 1a** was appraised separately and rated Low due to a very large authority and still large Area Assemblies. Community Councils proposed alongside Town and Parish Councils which risks a complex local government landscape without clear accountabilities.

04

Metric level assessment

Criteria 1: Establishing a single tier of local government

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Establishing a single tier of Local Government

1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	Balanced GVA per capita between unitaries, suggesting balanced levels of productivity and positive implications for the distribution of economic prosperity among residents.		H	M	H	L	L	M	• ***Options 3a and 4b*** *score highest with the smallest GVA per capita differences (~£10,500 - £11,500), possibly indicating more equitable economic productivity.* ***Options 4a and 5a*** *are moderate (~£12,500 - £12,700).* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *show the greatest disparities (£13,400 - £14,300).* ***Option 4c*** *has the largest disparity, signalling uneven economic productivity.*
Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	Each unitary has a sufficient GVA to generate tax and there is balance between unitaries, meaning good long-term prospects for all future authorities.		H	L	M	H	M	L	• *There is a high variation in total GVA between councils, owing to high variations in population sizes and economic activity/ deprivation.* • ***Option 4c and Option 3a*** *rank highest, with the smallest GVA differences (£1,599m and £3,210m), reflecting balanced economic strength and sustainable tax bases.* ***Options 4d and 4b*** *show moderate balance (£4,240m difference).* • ***Options 4a and 5a*** *have larger GVA disparities (~£10,000m+), suggesting uneven economic power and potential financial pressure on weaker unitaries.*
Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)**	All authorities with a sufficient number and profile of properties to provide a council tax base which can sustainably support services, with a reasonable balance between authorities.		H	L	M	H	M	L	• ***Option 3a*** *has the smallest gap between tax bases indicates good balance across the three unitaries, with* ***option 4c*** *also being strongly balanced between unitaries.* ***Options 4d and 4b*** *are moderately balanced, with some disparity in tax base size.* • ***Option 4a*** *has a large variation in tax base size across unitaries.* • ***Option 5a*** *has the highest difference among options. Considerable imbalance could raise concerns over the financial resilience of smaller tax base areas.*
Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates**	District areas within a unitary have low to no difference between council tax rates. The least difference between councils within a unitary would provide minimal administrative and resident disruption in harmonising rates.	L	M	M	M	H	L	H	• ***Options 1a and 4d*** *create the largest increase in council tax across Kent (>£45m) due to including districts with currently lower council tax rates in a unitary.* • ***Options 3a, 4a and 4b*** *entail a similar moderate increase in council tax income (£32-35m) so have been rated Medium.* • ***Options 4c and 5a*** *maintain areas with aligned council tax rates within unitaries so the total increase in council tax is lower (<£30m)* • *Additional analysis can be found in Appendix A1.*
Alignment to major Kent industries*	Unitaries demonstrate alignment to one or more of the key industries	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	• ***Option 5a*** *offers the alignment with Kent's key industries by combining geographic coherence with economic logic, enabling targeted economic development across distinct regional markets (e.g. coastal, commuter, logistics corridors).* • ***Options 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d*** *also demonstrate consistent alignment, with strong internal industry links, although* ***option 4d*** *would require effective management of boundary transitions and inter-unitary collaboration.* • ***Option 1a,*** *aligns by default due to being a single unitary, but risks oversimplifying the county's diverse economic landscape. Economic identity could be diluted with significant differences between coastal and inland economies.* • *Additional analysis can be found in Appendix A1.*
Summary		M	H	M/L	M	M/H	M	M/L	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Establishing a single tier of Local Government

1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	Relatively balanced population density between unitaries, ensuring that each unitary has sufficient space for housing development.		H	L	L	M	H	M	• ***Options 3a and 4d*** *score highest on the difference in population density between unitaries indicating balanced population spread* • ***Options 4a, 4b*** *score low due to large density gaps (the difference exceeding 1,100 people per km).* • ***Options 4c and 5a*** *show medium balance with moderate variation.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	Relatively balanced geographical area between unitaries, ensuring that each unitary has sufficient space for housing development.		H	M	M	L	H	L	• ***Options 3a and 4d*** *score high, with relatively even land distribution supporting development.* ***Options 4a and 4b*** *score medium, with slightly higher variation but still within acceptable range for balanced growth potential.* • ***Options 4c and 5a*** *score low, with some unitaries have significantly less or more land area.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	Housing delivery targets reflect the ability of a proposed option to meet the housing needs of its population and government quotas. Relatively balanced HDT measurements between unitaries will help ensure a more even distribution of housing development across Kent		H	H	M	L	L	M	• ***Options 3a and 4a*** *rank high on HDT balance, with a difference ranging from 7-29%. Indicative of a relatively even ability across unitaries to meet housing supply targets, supporting balanced development.* ***Option 4b*** *scores medium, showing moderate imbalance but still within the acceptable range.* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *score low with HDT differences exceeding 51% (Option 4c: ~65.5%, Option 4d: ~61.3%).* • ***Option 5*** *is medium with an HDT difference near 31%.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Homelessness per 1,000 households	Balanced between unitaries, avoiding disproportionately high homelessness rates in each unitary. Unitaries with disproportionately high homelessness rates will have resource allocation and financial planning implications.		L	H	M	L	M	M	• ***Option 4a*** *scores high, with a difference below 1.34 per 1,000 households, indicating a relatively even distribution of homelessness rates across unitaries. This reflects a mix of urban and rural areas without a single authority bearing excessive demand for housing support.* • ***Option 4b, 4d and 5a*** *score medium. Slightly greater variation in homelessness rates may relate to higher urban concentration or economic deprivation in particular unitaries.* • ***Low scoring options (3a and 4c)*** *suggest significant imbalance and one or more unitaries may have more acute housing pressure.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Transport connectivity and travel times*	Good travel links within authorities and ease of travel across future unitaries without needing to enter other unitary areas, indicating logical geographic footprints that take account of how local people travel.		M	M	M	M	H	M	• *Using the public transport / walking average travel time to key services as the comparison metric provides a focused and equitable proxy for intra-unitary connectivity.* • ***Option 4d*** *offers the best internal transport cohesion across unitaries – ideal for efficient service delivery and coherent policy implementation.* • *The remaining options* ***(3a, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a)*** *provide varying levels of balance, all landing in the medium category, indicating manageable connectivity with localised variation.* • *No option scored low, suggesting none would severely compromise internal mobility.* • *Additional analysis can be found in Appendix A1.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	Relatively balanced protected land area sizes between unitaries, ensuring that each unitary has sufficient space for housing development		H	M	M	L	L	M	• ***Option 3a*** *scored high with a difference of ~35%, suggesting a relatively balanced distribution of protected land across units.* • ***Option 4a, 4b, and 5a*** *scored medium indicating some variation in protected land distribution.* • ***Option 4c and 4d*** *score low indicating a significant imbalance in protected land. Some unitaries have very high protection, which may severely restrict housing development and create uneven growth pressures.*
Summary		M	H	M	M	L	M	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Establishing a single tier of Local Government

1.3 Single tier local government structures

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Councillor to electorate ratio*	Ability to establish a councillor to electorate ratio within each authority that allows for a workable number of councillors and maintains an acceptable ratio of councillor to electorate. The LGBCE expects no council proposals to contain fewer than 30, nor more than 99, councillors.	L	L	M	M	M	H	M	***Option 1a** is rated low as it would either require an elector to service 13,906 electors (assuming maintaining current wards) or would require 270 councillors to enable a ratio of 5,000 electors to member (as per KCC analysis). This would create challenges in open and democratic debate at Council.* ***Option 3a** is rated low as it has an average electorate ration of 8,853 and the East authority would have 113 members, above the LGBCE recommended range.* ***Options 4a, 4b and 4c** are rated medium as they have reasonable elector ratios and ranges of elector ratios between unitaries.* ***Option 4d** has the lowest range of elector ratios between unitaries and a reasonable average elector ratio so is rated high.* ***Option 5a** has the lowest average elector ratio but a significant difference in elector ratio between the Mid and South unitaries so is rated Medium.*
Summary		L	L	M	M	M	H	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Criteria 2: Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

2.1 Appropriate population size

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Population size (mid-2024)	Populations are balanced and of an appropriate size to support service delivery, improvement and financial resilience. Government indication of 500,000 as a guiding principle, not a target.		H	M	H	M	L	L	• ***Option 3a*** *provides the best balance of population size with a difference of ~120k. Rural and urban districts are reasonably clustered in this option for balanced service delivery and financial resilience.* • ***Option 4b*** *also scores high reflecting some balance with a difference of ~155k.* • ***Options 4a and 4c*** *present moderate balance with differences ranging between ~157-190k.* • ***Options 4d and 5a*** *have the most imbalance with population differences exceeding 210k.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Summary		M	H	M	H	M	L	L	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Estimated savings through integration**	Greatest reduction in overall net revenue expenditure as a result of LGR (calculated as a combination of the benefits of aggregation less the costs of disaggregation).	H	H	M	M	M	M	L	• *Based on high level financial assumptions and initial benchmarking, a comparative analysis of the financial impact of each option has been completed. The analysis has applied benchmarking from past LGR cases adjusted for the the number of unitary authorities being created.* • *Disaggregation costs exist for all options where more than two unitaries are being proposed, given there is already a unitary authority (Medway) in addition to Kent County Council.* • ***Option 3A** score high, **four unitary options** score medium and **Option 5A** scores low as:* o *The level of aggregation benefits through economies of scale reduces with each additional local authority added* o *The level of disaggregation costs increase with every additional set of 'upper tier' services compared to the current position* • *Note, for **Option 1A** there are no costs of disaggregation. It could be argued that some of the benefits of aggregation could be lost if an additional tier of management is needed to manage a large population over a large geographic area, and to deliver the requirements of area committees.* • *Additional analysis can be found in Appendix A1.*
Avoiding duplication of statutory roles / management teams*	No increase to the number of authorities delivering top tier services (County and Unitaries), on the basis that this does not introduce the need for additional statutory roles. Duplication of roles due to more authorities suggests the need to hire additional resources/management and relies on available expertise.	H	M	L	L	L	L	L	• ***Option 1a** scores high, as a single authority could minimise duplication of statutory roles and governance structures. It could potentially reduce overhead and complexity while maintaining local input via area assemblies.* • ***Option 3a** scores medium due to only requiring one additional set of statutory roles and key posts.* • ***Options 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d and 5a** score low with potential governance duplication, increasing costs, recruitment demands, and coordination complexity.*
Summary		H	H	M/L	M/L	M/L	M/L	L	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Transition costs and complexity	Minimising the complexity and costs associated with establishing new local authority structures	H	H	M	M	M	M	L	• *Under any option the LGR implementation process will be complex and incur significant one-off costs.* • *Initial benchmarking against past LGR cases has been used to consider relative one-off implementation costs for each model. The biggest driver of additional transition complexity and cost are the number of unitary authorities being proposed, with additional one-off costs incurred for boundary changes.* • ***Option 5a** incurs the highest costs of implementation, and will incur some additional cost due to boundary changes (assessed separately)* • ***Options 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d** score medium and 4d will incur some additional cost due to boundary changes (assessed separately)* • ***Option 3a and 1a** score high* • *See Appendix A1 for further details.*
Need for boundary reviews*	No changes to existing local authority boundaries which increases costs and complexity of reorganisation.	M	M	M	M	M	L	L	• *Government has been clear that boundary changes will be considered within proposals where there is clear justification.* • *Boundary changes add complexity into an already complex programme of local government reorganisation.* • ***Options 1a, 3a, 4a, 4b, and 4c** are based on existing council boundaries. No new boundary reviews are required, helping to avoid additional cost, legal processes, or risk of service disruption.* • ***Option 4d** changes eight current authority boundaries and **Option 5a** changes 3 current authority boundaries. Both options propose changes to the boundary of the existing unitary authority (Medway), which adds additional complexity.* • *See Appendix A1 for further details.*
Summary		H	H	M	M	M	M/L	L	

**Qualitative measures*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks

2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
General fund balance (£)	Balanced between Unitaries, without any authorities at a level of reserves which would impact the ability to deal with financial shocks.		M	H	H	L	L	M	• *General fund balances from individual council financial returns (including KCC apportionment) have been analysed for balance* • *The total general fund balance across all 14 councils is £171m, £79m of which is the KCC general fund balance.* • *All options produce a relatively significant range* • ***Options 4a and 4b** are the most balanced with a range of £31m and £38m between the highest and lowest unitaries.* • ***Option 4c and 4d** are the least balanced as they combine all or parts of Ashford with Maidstone (the two districts with the highest general fund balances at £49m and £26m respectively), leaving other authorities with significantly lower general fund levels.* • ***Option 1a** not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Debt affordability - financing costs as %	No unitaries exceeding 10% for debt financing as a percentage of net revenue expenditure. Whilst there is no single accepted level, 10% is quoted as a manageable level of financing costs as a percentage of net revenue expenditure (NRE). A balance of financing costs as a percentage of net revenue expenditure across authorities suggests a serviceable debt portfolio and prudence within capital financing.		M	L	M	H	H	L	• *Total financing costs across Kent are £65m, which is around 3% of Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE). This relatively healthy overall position is helped by KCC and Medway each having low financing cost levels of 2% and 1%.* • ***Options 4a and 5a** score lower because they combine Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe and Dover, each of which exceeds 10% for debt financing as a percentage of NRE, creating a less balanced position.* • ***Options 4c and 4d** are the most balanced, but across other options the differences between ranges are not significant (all between 1% and 3%).* • ***Option 1a** not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Gross budget gap (£m)**	An equitable split of budget deficit will provide the best starting point for all unitaries within a configuration to build on through efficiencies		M	L	M	H	L	H	• *Based on individual financial returns, the gross budget gap across Kent is £124m, with £50m of this in KCC, £59m in Medway and a combined £15m across the Districts. Therefore, across all options, unitaries that include Medway have the highest gross budget gap.* • ***Option 5a** scores high because it divides Medway into two authorities and therefore spreads the budget gap more evenly with a range of £38m.**Option 4c** also scores high.* • *Across other options the differences between ranges are not significant (£56m to £58m) with small differences in ranges driving the assessment results.* • ***Option 1a** not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Summary		H	M	M/L	M/H	M/H	M/L	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
****Awaiting verification*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Criteria 3:
High quality & sustainable public services

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

High quality & sustainable public services

3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation (1/2)

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Income deprivation rate	Avoiding higher levels of deprivation and demand being clustered within individual unitaries Large differences would suggest areas with significant service delivery challenges, impacting resource allocation and financial planning.		H	M	H	L	L	M	• ***Options 3a and 4b*** *show the smallest differences (~0.054 and 0.059), indicating a more even distribution of deprivation across unitaries. High deprivation areas are paired with districts of moderate deprivation, avoiding concentration.* • ***Option 4a and Option 5a*** *score medium with differences around 0.064. This is likely due to some unitaries containing more deprived areas (e.g., urban centres like Canterbury or Dartford), paired with less deprived rural districts.* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *score low with differences of 0.065 and 0.086.* ***Option 4d*** *notably has the highest spread due to combining areas with very low deprivation (e.g., Sevenoaks or Tonbridge & Malling) with relatively high deprived districts like parts of Thanet or urban Dartford.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
65+ Population (mid-2024)	Balanced proportion of older people between unitaries, avoiding excessive pressure and strain on services in one area		M	H	H	L	M	L	• ***Options 4a and 4b*** *score high, reflecting the best balance.* • ***Options 3a and 4d*** *score medium and generally feature a better balance of older populations, helping to spread demand for age-related services more evenly.* • ***Options 4c and 5a*** *score low and have unitaries with large variation in older population sizes, which could potentially result in uneven service pressure, especially in unitaries with significantly higher elderly populations.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
20-64 Population (mid-2024)	Balanced proportion of adult population between unitaries, avoiding excessive pressure and strain on services in one area		H	M	M	M	L	L	• ***Option 3a*** *scores high with the smallest difference of 80,156, this option shows the most balanced distribution of working-age population across its unitaries.* • ***Options 4a, 4b, and 4c*** *score medium, with differences ranging between approximately 86,000 and 112,000.* • ***Options 4d and 5a*** *score low, with differences over 114,000 indicating larger disparities in working-age populations. These options may experience uneven pressures, potentially affecting service planning and resource allocation.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
0-19 Population (mid-2024)	Balanced proportion of 0-19 population between unitaries, avoiding excessive pressure and strain on services in one area		H	L	M	M	L	M	• ***Option 3a*** *scores high with the smallest difference of 38,953, this option shows the most balanced distribution of 0-19 aged population across its unitaries.* • ***Options 4b, 4c, and 5a*** *score medium, with differences ranging between approximately 43,000 and 54,000.* • ***Options 4a and 4d*** *score low, with differences over 55,000 indicating larger disparities in the 0-19 aged populations. These options may experience uneven pressures, potentially affecting service planning and resource allocation.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Avoiding service fragmentation*	Avoiding splitting of service structures. Options should aim to minimise service fragmentation due to risk, complexity and cost.	H	M	M	M	M	L	L	• ***Option 1a*** *scores high and could potentially avoid service fragmentation entirely by maintaining a single top-tier authority. It ensures continuity of service delivery, simplifies governance, and reduces transition risk.* • ***Options 3a, 4a, 4b and 4c*** *score medium potentially introducing some service fragmentation.* • ***Options 4d and 5a*** *scores low with the highest level of service fragmentation, requiring significant restructuring. It increases the risk of inconsistent service delivery and raises transition costs and complexity.*

Continues on the following page

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

High quality & sustainable public services

3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation (2/2)

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Manageable geography for service delivery*	Travel within all future unitary geographies is manageable for service delivery teams that allows service delivery to be conducted effectively.	L	M	M	M	M	H	H	• *Average travel times to key services is a strong proxy for manageable geography because it reflects how easily service teams can reach essential locations across each area. Shorter travel times indicate well-connected, compact geographies that support efficient service delivery, while longer times suggest challenges due to size or infrastructure.* • ***Option 1a** scores low, as a single large authority would have extensive geographical spread and high average travel times for many areas, particularly rural and coastal zones. The sheer size risks uneven service delivery and reduced responsiveness.* • ***Options 3a, 4a, 4b and 4c** score medium, as they retain several councils with varying travel times. Some units like Swale and Ashford still face higher travel times, but grouping remains coherent enough for manageable service delivery with some coordination challenges. For 3a, east and north groups are more compact with better infrastructure, supporting moderately efficient delivery.* • ***Options 4d and 5a** score high. Smaller, more compact areas such as Dartford, Gravesham, and Medway individually have lower travel times and well-connected infrastructure. This leads to more manageable geographies for efficient, responsive service delivery with fewer logistical barriers.*
Summary		M	H	M	M/H	M/L	M/L	M/L	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

High quality & sustainable public services

3.2 Public service reform and better value for money

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Enabling localism and place-based public service reform*	Appropriate geography for service delivery and place based public service reform in each unitary. Place based public service reform will require the ability to operate in neighbourhoods and localities with community partners at a more local level than any proposed unitary geographies.	L	L	M	M	M	M	H	• *Population size has been used as a proxy for assessing the suitability of unitary geographies for localism and place-based reform. While useful for broad comparison, this metric does not capture other factors such as community cohesion, service infrastructure, or governance capacity, which also influence the ability to deliver localised public services effectively.* • ***Option 5a** scores high, with smaller average population sizes which supports more localised service delivery and better opportunities for place-based public service reform through closer collaboration with community partners.* • ***Options 4a, 4b, and 4c** score medium providing a moderate balance, allowing some flexibility for localism while maintaining economies of scale, but may face challenges in delivering highly localised services uniformly.* • ***Options 1a and 3a** score low, with average population sizes exceeding 500,000. Larger unitaries in these configurations may struggle to effectively operate at the neighbourhood or locality level, potentially limiting the effectiveness of place-based public service reform and local community engagement.*
Alignment with existing public sector boundaries	Unitary boundaries align with all public sector partners, enabling stronger relationships and coworking and removing duplication of partnering arrangements.	H	H	M	M	L	L	L	• *Kent Police operates across all of Kent and Medway. It operates through a North division (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale), East division (Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover) and West division (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone) This aligns with the unitaries in **Option 3a** and the Area Assemblies of **Option 1a** (though People services will not be delivered by Area Assemblies.* • *NHS Kent and Medway covers the whole area. There are four health and care partnerships within the ICB: Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley , Medway and Swale, West Kent (this matches the West unitaries in **Options 3a, 4a and 4b**) and East Kent (this matches the East unitaries in **Option 3a**).* • *There are 9 acute Trusts in Kent (in Thanet, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Canterbury, Ashford, Maidstone, Medway, Tunbridge Wells and Dartford. This would provide an acute hospital in each unitary in all options.* • *Kent Community Health NHS Trust operates community hospitals: Faversham Cottage Hospital, Hawkhurst Community Hospital, Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, Sevenoaks Hospital, Tonbridge Cottage Hospital, Victoria Hospital, Deal, West View Hospital, Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital and Minor injury units.* • *South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust covers the whole area of Kent and Medway so does not differentiate between options. Kent Fire and Rescue operates across the whole area.* • ***Option 1a** aligns with existing ICB boundaries and the footprint of many partners.* • ***Options 4a and 4b** match some partner boundaries so have been rated Medium.* • ***Option 4c** does not align with public sector boundaries so has been rated low.* • ***Options 4d and 5a** change local authority boundaries which potentially increases the complexity for partners and joined up service delivery.* • *Additional analysis can be found in Appendix A1.*
Summary		M	M	M	M	M/L	M/L	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

High quality & sustainable public services

3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND & homelessness

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		H	M	M	L	L	M	• ***Option 3a*** *scores high, reflecting the lowest variation in the proportion of older adults in care (difference of 0.71%). This suggests strong balance in demand across the three proposed unitaries, supporting consistent service delivery and manageable resourcing.* • ***Options 4a, 4b and 5a*** *score medium with moderate variations, suggesting reasonably balanced caseloads.* ***4a*** *has a difference of 0.72%,* ***4b*** *has a difference of 0.79% and* ***5a*** *has a difference of 0.87%.* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *score low with the highest variation with differences of ~0.90%, suggesting more uneven demand and potential resource planning challenges.*
Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		H	M	H	L	L	M	• ***Options 3a and 4b*** *have the smallest variation (difference of 0.50%) in adult social care caseload across proposed unitaries, indicating a strongly balanced demand profile.* • ***Options 4a and 5a*** *score medium with differences ranging between 0.54-0.55%, indicating a moderately balanced spread of adult social care demand.* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *show greater disparity (differences ranging between 0.58% and 0.62%), suggesting challenges in distributing adult social care resources evenly.*
Adult social care total spend (£m)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		L	H	M	L	M	M	• ***Option 4a*** *has the smallest variation (£12.2m) in adult social care spend across the proposed unitaries, suggesting a well-balanced allocation of resources and relatively even demand.* • ***Options 4b, 5a, and 4d*** *show moderate spend variation (£13.7m–£91.2m). While not as tightly aligned as 4a, these options maintain a reasonable distribution, though some areas may face more significant cost pressures.* • ***Options 3a and 4c*** *exhibit the largest variations (£106.7m–£162.3m) in spend between unitaries, indicating significant disparity in service demands or population needs.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		H	M	H	L	M	L	• ***Options 4b and 3a*** *scores high with the lowest variation across unitaries (difference of 0.32%), suggesting strong alignment in caseload levels and a well-balanced demand profile.* • ***Option 4a and 4d*** *score medium with differences ranging between 0.33-0.35%.* • ***Options 4c and 4a*** *scow low with differences ranging between 0.36%-0.43% indicating the most uneven distribution of children's social care demand across unitaries, which could strain some areas disproportionately.*
Children's services total spend (£m)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		L	M	M	M	L	H	• ***Option 5a*** *shows the smallest spend variation (range: £42M–£91M)* • ***Options 4a, 4b, and 4c*** *have moderate spend variation (range: approx. £51M–£124M), reflecting some unevenness in demand but still generally within a manageable range.* • ***Options 3a and 4d*** *show the greatest variation in spend (up to approx. £152M or more), indicating significant differences in demand and/or service cost between unitaries.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		H	L	L	M	M	M	• ***Option 3a*** *has the smallest variation in SEND rates (difference of 1.37%), suggesting the most balanced caseload.* • ***Options 4c, 4d, and 5a*** *show moderate variation in SEND prevalence (difference ranging between 1.62%–1.85%), indicating some unevenness* • ***Options 4a and 4b*** *show the greatest variation in SEND pupil proportions (differences of 2.31% and 1.96%, respectively).* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*

Continues on the following page

**Qualitative measures*

***From financial model/ finance data request*

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

High quality & sustainable public services

3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND & homelessness

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		M	H	M	L	L	M	• ***Option 4a*** *provides the most even distribution with the smallest difference of 7.87%, supporting more balanced service demand.* • ***Options 3a, 4b, and 5a*** *show moderate disparities with differences ranging between about 7.9% and 9.46%.* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *score low with differences above 9.46% showing greater disparities across unitaries, which may create challenges in service delivery and require targeted interventions.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries.		M	H	M	L	L	M	• ***Option 4a*** *scores high with the smallest difference (6.43%), this option has the most balanced distribution of children in absolute low-income families.* • ***Options 3a, 4b, and 5a*** *score medium with differences between 6.55% and 7.85%.* • ***Options 4c and 4d*** *score low with differences above 7.85% showing larger disparities.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	Significant variations in the number of householders in TA per 1,000 population could indicate disparities in resource allocation, leading to potential inefficiencies and financial pressures.		L	H	H	M	L	M	• ***Options 4a and 4b*** *score high, with the smallest difference demonstrating good balanced level of housing needs across proposed unitaries.* • ***Options 4c and 5a*** *score medium demonstrating relatively balanced levels of housing need, with moderate differences in TA rates between unitary areas. While not fully equal, the spread in figures suggests more equitable distribution of housing pressure and manageable service coordination.* • ***Options 3a and 4d*** *score low and show the greatest variation in TA levels, with significant gaps between high- and low-need areas.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Summary		M	M	M/H	M	L	L	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Criteria 4: Working together to understand and meet local needs

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Working together to understand & meet local needs

4.1 Issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Sense of identity*	Unitary geographies reflects factors including culture, sense of place, common geographical features and historical links between areas.	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	• ***Option 1a*** *risks the potential loss of local identity due to the large scale of a single unitary. While area assemblies might help retain some place-based connection, concerns were raised about dilution of local voices.* • ***Option 3a*** *appears to align well with North, West, and East Kent identities.* • ***Options 4a, 4b, 4c*** *have some boundaries aligning with historic ties, but others combine areas with less shared identity.* • ***Options 4d and 5a*** *can have some benefits in more granular local control, but the configuration can be seen to overcomplicate existing cultural/geographic lines. New groupings could potentially weaken historical cohesion between some communities.*
Travel to Work Areas (TTWA)*	Unitary boundaries minimise splitting of existing TTWA areas. Unitary boundaries that align with established travel to work areas would represent areas where the majority of residents live and work, indicating a greater sense of place and community.		M	M	M	M	M	M	• *No configuration maps perfectly to existing TTWA boundaries. TTWAs are complex and overlapping by nature, shaped by real commuting patterns rather than administrative convenience. As such, all unitary options involve some degree of compromise in preserving these boundaries.* • ***Options 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d and 5a*** *deliver a moderate level of alignment, with some TTWAs maintained within single unitaries but others split across multiple geographies, potentially impacting the effectiveness of place-based policy and services.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as the unitary includes all TTWAs.* • *Additional analysis can be found in Appendix A1.*
Maintaining history and tradition*	All unitary options should preserve local tradition and sense of history, to maintain important connections between communities and local government.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	• ***Option 1a*** *could potentially maintain the historic identity of Kent.* • ***Option 3a*** *appears to reflect historic divisions of North, West, and East Kent, this model generally aligns well with identities and administrative geography.* • ***Options 4a, 4b, 4c*** *have some unitaries partially preserving historic relationships, particularly where district groupings follow existing local government structures.* • ***Option 4d and 5a*** *could be seen as disruptive to tradition in some areas, particularly where existing authorities are split or absorbed.*
Summary		M/L	M	M	M	M	M	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Working together to understand & meet local needs

4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Views expressed through engagement*	Proposals should align as far as possible with the views expressed through engagement with both the public and partners. Where concerns are raised there should be confidence that these can be adequately mitigated.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	• *There is currently no consistent engagement evidence across Kent and Medway to enable us to appraise these options.*
Summary		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Criteria 5: Supporting devolution arrangements

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Supporting devolution arrangements

5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Population ratios between members of a strategic authority	Balanced population ratio between all unitaries within a future strategic authority. Unitaries should seek balanced population sizes resulting in even power balance in authorities.		H	M	H	M	L	L	• ***Options 3a and 4b*** *have the most even population ratios between constituent members so have been rated High.* • ***Options 4a and 4c*** *have been rated Medium as having population ratios in the middle of the range.* • ***Options 4d and 5a*** *have the greatest imbalance in population ratios between constituent members so have been rated Low.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Number of constituent members in strategic authority	Higher numbers of constituent authorities provides stronger decision-making within the strategic authority.	L	M	H	H	H	H	H	• ***Option 1a*** *has been rated low as only providing one constituent member which would require an exception from government to enable a devolution deal.* • ***Option 3a*** *has been rated medium as 3 is a relatively small number of constituent authorities within a strategic authority.* • ***Options 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d and 5a*** *have been rated high as providing a relatively high number of constituent authorities within the strategic authority.* • *The options are not differentiated based on even or odd numbers of constituent members as this can be resolved through the constitution and Mayors typically have non-voting chair rights within current combined authorities.*
Summary		L	H	H	H	H	M	M	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

Criteria 6: Stronger community engagement & neighbourhood empowerment

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Stronger community engagement & neighbourhood empowerment

6.1 Enabling strong community engagement

Metric	What does good look like?	1A	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A	Commentary
Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	Strong existing civic participation, community networks and potentially town and parish councils across all proposed unitary authorities.		M	L	H	M	H	L	• ***Option 4b and 4d*** *score high, showing relatively balanced and strong civic participation levels across unitary areas. This suggests these configurations may support meaningful community engagement and effective local representation.* • ***Option 3a and 4c*** *fall into the medium category, indicating some variation in civic participation between unitaries. While they maintain a community involvement, there may be challenges ensuring equitable engagement across all areas.* • ***Option 4a and Option 5a*** *score low, with significant disparities in civic participation rates between unitary areas. This suggests potential difficulties in fostering consistent community networks and effective engagement at scale, possibly due to less manageable geographies or fragmented local identities.* • ***Option 1a*** *not assessed against this metric as this is based on balance which can not be achieved by a single unitary.*
Summary		L	M	L	H	M	H	L	

**Qualitative measures*
***From financial model/ finance data request*
Note: Option 1a summary scoring based on specific analysis in Section 5.

05

Option 1A appraisal

Option 1A appraisal

Option 1A was proposed at the Kent County Council Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee on 28th July 2025 and has since been developed by KCC officers. It proposes a single unitary encompassing Kent and Medway with three Area Assemblies which are an innovative approach to local government. The unitary would set budget and strategy and be responsible for strategic and people services while area assemblies would be responsible for place-based services.

As an innovative model of local government involving a single unitary, it does not fit with the comparative methodology based on the MHCLG criteria. If data corresponding with the Area Assemblies is required, the boundaries align with the three unitaries proposed in option 3a.

Headline Government Criteria	Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Rating	Strengths (specific to Option 1A)	Challenges (specific to Option 1A)
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	M	▪ Retains economic area of Kent. ▪ Maximises existing tax base (council tax and business rates) for allocation across area committees.	▪ Likely to entail highest council tax increases (harmonising council tax levels between the lowest and highest districts in Kent).
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	M	▪ Maximises geographic footprint for housing planning.	▪ Very large footprint to deliver both strategic and delivery services.
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	L	▪ Establishes a single council across Kent and Medway.	▪ Does not establish a single tier of local government structures (unitary authority and area assemblies). ▪ Lack of clarity for residents and government regarding accountability. ▪ Complexity entailed in developing and establishing a new approach to local government ▪ Challenge to address local concerns with either a very low member:elector ratio or a very large number of members (est. 260).
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstandin g shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size	M	▪ Meets government's 'guiding principle' of 500,000.	▪ Population over 1.9m would be significantly larger than the population size of the largest current unitary.
	2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money	H	▪ A single unitary would reduce corporate back office costs and the need for statutory roles. ▪ Greater efficiencies expected through larger economies of scale.	▪ If area assemblies are responsible for local service delivery there could be duplication of roles reducing the efficiencies that can be achieved.
	2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities	H	▪ Expected to entail lower implementation costs due to lower levels of disaggregation.	▪ Potential for transformation opportunities to not be aligned with local needs.
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	H	▪ Maximises reserves and assets in a single entity. ▪ Minimises ongoing costs of disaggregation through single approach to People services.	▪ Challenge regarding how funding and resources are allocated across area committees increasing bureaucracy.

Option 1A appraisal

Headline Government Criteria	Evaluation criteria based on Government guidance	Rating	Strengths (specific to Option 1A)	Challenges (specific to Option 1A)
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	M	▪ Single unitary minimises service fragmentation though services typically operate on smaller footprints.	▪ Potential for transformation opportunities to not be aligned with local needs. ▪ Some service change required to align with area assembly boundaries.
	3.2 Public service reform and better value for money	M	▪ A single unitary would reduce corporate back office costs through minimising duplication. ▪ Capacity to invest in public service reform and alignment with ICB footprint.	▪ Large footprint to deliver effective public service reform and relational public services. ▪ Risk that a single unitary reduces the agility and autonomy of Area Assemblies to meet local needs.
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	M	▪ Supports strategic approach to children's services (social care, unaccompanied asylum seekers and SEND) across Kent and Medway.	▪ Adult social care operates on 4 area teams which do not align with the Area Assembly requiring reorganisation.
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	4.1 Issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance	M/L	▪ Retains Kent identity and Area Assemblies reflect recognised communities in Kent.	▪ Challenge regarding how local issues can be addressed over such a large unitary.
	4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns	N/A	▪ N/A – no results of local engagement available across Kent and Medway	
5. Supporting devolution arrangements	5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	L	▪ Single council managing border issues	▪ A single constituent authority may prevent a devolution deal. ▪ A single constituent authority would create challenges for decision-making and is not aligned with the government approach to standardising devolution arrangements.
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	L	▪ N/A – to be determined how area committees will engage with and empower communities.	▪ Large population with a risk that community engagement and empowerment is lost through operating too remotely from residents and partners. ▪ Community Councils coexisting with Town and Parish councils risks lack of clarity on roles in local government.

A1

Supporting analysis linked to metrics

Supporting analysis has been included in this section where appropriate to support assessment of specific metrics in the metric level assessment (Section 4).

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Council tax harmonisation (1.1)

- Council tax rates in Kent range from £1,754.69 to £1,906.78 in the current system. Council tax harmonisation is a political choice for the new unitaries as it impacts councils income and resident tax rates. It can be harmonised up to the highest council tax rate in the council area but this takes time as annual increases are subject to the usual limits.
- We have modelled council tax harmonisation based on increasing Band D rates to the highest rate within a unitary (shown below to reflect the highest possible impact on residents), standardising to the lowest rate and based on a weighted average.
- As Options 4d and 5a do not use existing boundaries, and therefore council tax rates and income, it is not possible to do comparable analysis of total income raised. The modelled Band D rates are based on the new unitary authority for the majority of residents where a unitary boundary splits a current district.

	Current Tax Yield	1A*	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
Increase in council tax	£1,231,758,632	£ 49,171,419	£ 34,327,196	£ 32,675,002	£ 32,986,194	£ 29,703,060	£ 45,043,817	£ 28,298,300
Options appraisal assessment		L	M	M	M	H	L	H

				Total difference in Band D rates						
	2024-25 final taxbase	Current combined Band D rate	Current Tax Yield	1A*	3A	4A	4B	4C	4D	5A
Folkestone & Hythe	40,466	£1,907	£77,159,931	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Maidstone	68,264	£1,904	£129,958,194	£3	£0	£0	£0	£0	£3	£0
Thanet	46,454	£1,874	£87,054,908	£33	£33	£0	£0	£33	£33	£0
Sevenoaks	52,395	£1,855	£97,168,160	£52	£49	£49	£49	£0	£19	£49
Canterbury	53,348	£1,851	£98,732,177	£56	£56	£23	£23	£56	£56	£23
Tonbridge & Malling	53,478	£1,849	£98,879,623	£58	£55	£55	£55	£6	£25	£55
Gravesham	35,995	£1,842	£66,296,691	£65	£0	£0	£0	£0	£62	£0
Dover	40,875	£1,825	£74,604,137	£82	£82	£82	£49	£82	£82	£82
Tunbridge Wells	48,361	£1,816	£87,822,911	£91	£88	£88	£88	£39	£91	£88
Swale	50,368	£1,812	£91,242,368	£95	£30	£62	£95	£92	£92	£30
Ashford	49,832	£1,799	£89,636,805	£108	£108	£108	£108	£105	£108	£108
Dartford	41,029	£1,796	£73,679,473	£111	£46	£46	£46	£46	£108	£46
Medway	90,913	£1,755	£159,523,255	£152	£87	£87	£87	£87	£149	£57

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Alignment to major Kent industries (1.1)

	Medway	Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells	Kent County Council
1	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Education	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles
2	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Construction	Manufacturing	Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Human Health & Social Work Activities
3	Education	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Transportation & Storage	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Transportation & Storage	Education	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Administrative & Support Service Activities
4	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Manufacturing	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Transportation & Storage	Education	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Education	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Education	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Transportation & Storage	Education	Education
5	Manufacturing	Education	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Construction	Manufacturing	Other Service Activities	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Education	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Manufacturing	Construction	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities
6	Construction	Construction	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Construction	Construction	Education	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Construction	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Construction
7	Transportation & Storage	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Construction	Education	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Education	Transportation & Storage	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Education	Financial & Insurance Activities	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities
8	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Information & Communication	Manufacturing	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Transportation & Storage	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Manufacturing	Human Health & Social Work Activities	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Transportation & Storage
9	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Transportation & Storage	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Construction	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Information & Communication	Construction	Transportation & Storage	Accommodation & Food Service Activities	Information & Communication	Manufacturing
10	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Financial & Insurance Activities	Information & Communication	Administrative & Support Service Activities	Construction	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	Transportation & Storage	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management & Remediation Activities	Construction	Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security

- **Option 5a:** Strong alignment, sensible geographic and economic logic supporting distinct regional markets such as wholesale & retail (Dartford, Sevenoaks), health & social care (Medway, Thanet), and logistics/transport (Swale, Ashford).
- **Options 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c:** Strong alignment, clear industry clusters like wholesale & retail, health & social care, and education are well-represented.
- **Option 4d:** Four unitary councils reflecting boundary changes, strong industry alignment with clusters in wholesale & retail (Dartford, Gravesham), health & social care (Medway), and manufacturing (Maidstone), though transitional coordination challenges may arise.
- **Option 1a:** Meets metric but risks oversimplifying diverse economic areas, potentially diluting targeted support for key sectors such as wholesale & retail, health & social care, and professional services.

Source: *Kent Economy | Labour Market & Industries*

**Top industries based on total number of jobs*

Transport connectivity and travel times (1.2)

Using the public transport / walking average travel time as the comparison metric provides a focused and equitable proxy for intra-unitary connectivity, particularly for populations who rely on public services and do not drive. This mode reflects the accessibility of key services (like schools, healthcare, and employment) via the most commonly used and publicly available transport options, especially in urban and semi-rural areas. It offers a balanced view of how well residents can move within a unitary.

Benchmark: Kent average public transport + walking travel time to key services = 19.3 minutes.

- **High balance:** Most or all unitary areas consist of councils with below-average times (<19.3 min).
- **Medium balance:** A mix of better and worse councils around the average.
- **Low balance:** Most councils have slower travel times (>19.3 min), indicating weaker internal connectivity.

Average minimum travel time[1] to reach the nearest key services by mode of travel, Local Authority, England, 2019				
	Minutes walking (average of 8 key services) [2]			
Local authority	Public transport / Walking	Cycle	Car	Walking
Medway	15.7	13.2	9.6	22.2
Kent	19.3	17.6	10.9	32.5
Ashford	21.4	18.4	11.5	36.5
Canterbury	18.6	16.1	10.5	30.5
Dartford	15.6	12.6	9.3	22.1
Dover	21.5	22.9	12.4	38.3
Gravesham	17.5	15.1	10.3	29.2
Maidstone	19.9	16.4	10.9	31.1
Sevenoaks	21.6	20.2	11.8	41.6
Shepway	22.0	23.4	11.8	39.2
Swale	20.6	21.3	12.8	36.3
Thanet	15.2	12.7	8.8	22.5
Tonbridge and Malling	18.5	16.5	10.5	33.2
Tunbridge Wells	19.5	16.7	10.8	32.0

1. A maximum value of 120 minutes is used where journey times exceed 120 minutes. This means that for some service by mode combinations (particularly for walking and smaller destination sets), the average provided is lower than would actually be the case in reality.
2. The average of minimum journey times to medium sized centres of employment (500-4999 jobs), primary schools, secondary schools, further education, GPs, hospitals, food stores and town centres.

Source: *Journey Time Statistics (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/journey-time-statistics)*

**Top industries based on total number of jobs*

Councillor to electorate ratio (1.3): current

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There are currently 658 councillors in Kent serving an electorate of 1,348,857.

This provides a current ratio of 2,043 electors per councillor (average across Kent and Medway).

Local government reorganisation typically increases that ratio due to removing the two tiers of local government.

It is important to preserve democratic representation while balancing it with a number of members that enables functional, healthy democratic debate at Council.

There are 73 County Council divisions and 279 wards across Districts and Medway.

Current councillor position and electorate per councillor

Council	District/ Unitary councillors	Kent County councillors	Total councillors	Electorate	Electorate per councillor	Divisions	Wards
Medway	59		59	206,075	3,493		24
Ashford	47	7	54	95,087	1,761	7	39
Canterbury	39	8	47	108,317	2,305	8	21
Dartford	42	6	48	84,833	1,767	6	20
Dover	32	7	39	87,238	2,237	5	17
Folkestone and Hythe	30	6	36	70,194	1,950	7	13
Gravesham	39	5	44	76,516	1,739	3	17
Maidstone	49	9	58	131,670	2,270	8	22
Sevenoaks	54	6	60	90,283	1,505	6	26
Swale	47	7	54	110,044	2,038	6	24
Thanet	56	7	63	103,386	1,641	5	23
Tonbridge and Malling	44	7	51	100,052	1,962	6	19
Tunbridge Wells	39	6	45	85,162	1,892	6	14
Total	**577**	**81**	**658**	**1,348,857**	**2,043**	**73**	**279**

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Councillor to electorate ratio (1.3): per option

We have estimated the electorate ratio of the unitaries based on existing wards.

Option 1a is rated low as it would either require an elector to service 13,906 electors (assuming maintaining current wards) or would require 270 councillors to enable a ratio of 5,000 electors to member. This would create challenges in open and democratic debate at Council.

Option 3a is rated low as it has an average electorate ration of 8,853 and the East authority would have 113 members, above the LGBCE recommended range.

Options 4a, 4b and 4c are rated medium as they have reasonable elector ratios and ranges of elector ratios between unitaries.

Option 4d has the lowest range of elector ratios between unitaries and a reasonable average elector ratio so is rated high.

Option 5a has the lowest average elector ratio but a significant difference in elector ratio between the Mid and South unitaries so is rated Medium.

1a	Ward-based	Division-based	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Members	279	97			
Electorate	1,348,857	1,348,857			
Ratio	4,835	13,906	N/A	N/A	L

3a	North	West	East	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Wards	85	81	113			
Electorate	477,468	407,167	464,222			
Ratio	9,037	7,629	9,893	2,264	8,853	L

4a	North	West	East	Mid	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Wards	61	81	68	69			
Electorate	367,424	407,167	321,747	252,519			
Ratio	6,023	5,027	4,732	3,660	2,364	5,261	M

4b	North	West	East	Mid	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Wards	61	81	61	76			
Electorate	367,424	407,167	298,941	275,325			
Ratio	6,023	5,027	4,901	3,623	2,401	5,317	M

4c	North	West	East	Mid	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Wards	61	59	74	85			
Electorate	367,424	275,497	369,135	336,801			
Ratio	6,023	4,669	4,988	3,962	2,061	5,227	M

4d	North	West	East	Mid	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Wards	74	63	69	72			
Electorate	428,883	290,998	344,197	284,778			
Ratio	5,796	4,619	4,988	3,955	1,840	5,134	H

5a	North	West	East	Mid	South	Range of ratio	Average elector ratio	Scoring
Wards	48	76	50	36	69			
Electorate	228,839	390,803	238,205	238,491	252,519			
Ratio	4,767	5,142	4,764	6,625	3,660	2,965	4,891	M

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Estimated savings through integration (2.2)

All things being equal, a smaller number of unitaries will result in a lower costs base.

Recurring revenue savings (or costs) from LGR will be calculated by netting off:

Reorganisation savings (gross)	Disaggregation costs
The estimated annual savings from efficiencies achieved through reorganisation, moving from two tiers to one tier of local government, by removing duplication, consolidating services and operating at greater scale.	The estimated additional recurring expenditure that results from dividing upper tier (i.e. county level) services into multiple new unitary authorities.

Option(s)	Estimated savings through integration	Commentary
1a	**Highest**	• No disaggregation costs as there will be fewer 'upper tier' services than currently • Some of the benefits of aggregation could be lost if an additional tier of management is needed to manage a large population over a large geographic area. This has not been adjusted for within initial modelling.
3a	**Medium** (higher savings potential than 4 unitary models)	• Some disaggregation costs as one additional set of 'upper tier' services compared to current position
4a, 4b, 4c, 4d	**Medium** (lower savings potential than 3a)	• Significant disaggregation costs as two additional sets of 'upper tier' services compared to current position
5a	**Lowest**	• Most significant disaggregation costs due to three additional sets of 'upper tier' services • Greatest risk of not achieving payback

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Transition costs and complexity (2.3)

Implementation costs definition: The estimated one-off transition costs associated with moving to a new unitary model.

Method of calculation:

1. Benchmarked past LGR cases to arrive at an average implementation cost per capita
2. Used the per capita figure to arrive at an estimated implementation cost for Kent LGR
3. Adjusted for the number of unitary authorities being created, with additional costs incurred for each additional unitary authority
4. Made specific adjustments for one-off costs associated with boundary changes

Estimated implementation costs based on benchmarking

Option(s)	Transition costs	Commentary
1a	Lower	• A single programme of integration with no disaggregation at the council level. • There is no precedent for an LGR implementation of the nature of option 1A, which makes it challenging to estimate implementation costs.
3a	Lower	• Three unitaries means significant implementation complexity, but relatively lower than four and five unitary options • No boundary changes
4a, 4b, 4c	Medium	• Four unitaries means a relatively high implementation complexity and therefore cost • No boundary changes
4d	Medium	• Four unitaries means a relatively high implementation complexity and therefore cost • Increased complexity and cost due to boundary changes (see following page)
5a	Higher	• Five unitaries means high implementation complexity and therefore cost • Increased complexity and cost due to boundary changes (see following page)

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Need for boundary reviews (2.3)

Options 4D and 5A each require boundary changes, which will increase implementation complexity and cost.

Additional costs will be incurred to disaggregate current districts and unitary (Medway), on top of the current implementation costs. This is a one-off, rather than recurrent, cost to be factored into implementation costs.

The cost relates to:

- additional complexity in staffing allocations
- data transfers between case management systems
- work with the LGBCE
- additional programme and project management
- electoral changes
- additional engagement and communication
- contract and license management
- changes to policies and processes

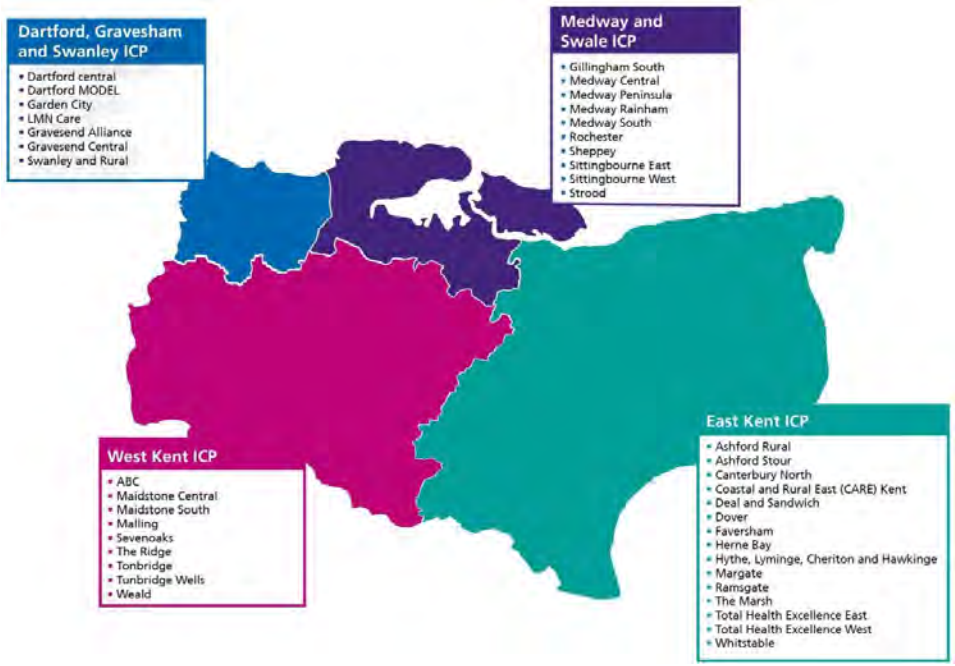
Previous local government reorganisations have used existing council boundaries so there is not a historic evidence base that can be used to calculate the additional cost.

Current authority	Option 4D Boundary change?	Option 5A Boundary change?
Ashford	NO	NO
Canterbury	NO	NO
Dartford	YES	NO
Dover	NO	NO
Folkestone and Hythe	YES	NO
Gravesham	YES	NO
Maidstone	YES	NO
Medway	YES	YES
Sevenoaks	NO	YES
Swale	YES	YES
Thanet	NO	NO
Tonbridge and Malling	YES	NO
Tunbridge Wells	YES	NO
TOTAL	**8 in total**	**3 in total**

Alignment with existing boundaries (3.2)

- *Kent Police operates across all of Kent and Medway. It operates through a North division (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale), East division (Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover) and West division (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone) This aligns with the unitaries in **Option 3a** and the Area Assemblies of **Option 1a** (though People services will not be delivered by Area Assemblies.*
- *NHS Kent and Medway covers the whole area. There are four health and care partnerships within the ICB: Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley , Medway and Swale, West Kent (this matches the West unitaries in **Options 3a, 4a and 4b**) and East Kent (this matches the East unitaries in **Option 3a**).*

ICP boundaries



Police division boundaries

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Adult social care and children's services spend data (3.3)

Analysis has been carried out to analyse the actual cost incurred by different councils for key County-wide services. This was led by KCC and tested with finance officers across Kent.

Adult Social Care spend

The calculation for Adult Social Care shows an estimated breakdown of spend across 24 community teams, which is how Adult Social Care operations are organised and how the vast majority of spend is managed. These community areas all sit within one individual current district area. These 24 areas are grouped into four broader areas which match health boundaries.

Key points to note include:

- The majority of spend is commissioned with few in house placements
- Spend levels in different areas are largely driven by where adult clients are living, but may not have come from that area originally
- Care homes are more predominant in coastal areas
- Cost of running care homes in West Kent is higher
- Funding formula (Relative Need Formula) is based largely on health, wealth and people living alone. This will not fundamentally change in the new funding formula.

Children's Services spend

An equivalent calculation for Children's Services cost data has been mapped based on child's home address (i.e. where family live)

Key points to note include:

- The new funding formula for children's services is expected to have some impact on allocation of costings and overall is more closely aligned to actual demand compared to adult social care spend.
- However, there will remain significant variance between funding and costs, so no option comes out well and there is no obvious conclusion

Key conclusions:

- Across all multi-unitary options being analysed there is significant misalignment between costs and funding for both Adult Social Care and Children's Services.
- This disparity is important for all council across Kent to be aware of and to take appropriate mitigating steps in LGR planning. The potential to share funding appropriately based on actual demand and costs could be discussed.

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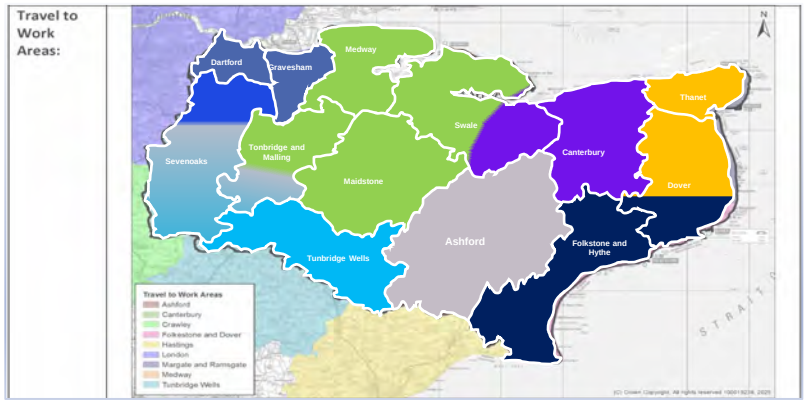
Travel to work areas (4.1)

- Travel to Work Areas are defined geographies where at least 75% of the resident workforce work within the same area, and at least 75% of workers live within it. TTWAs represent self-contained local labour markets and are statistically crafted boundaries that reflect where people live and work. Keeping these areas intact in any new governance structure maintains community coherence, sense of identity, and service alignment.
- Options 3A, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D and 5A deliver moderate alignment, but not sufficient to fully protect TTWA coherence.
- Option 1A (the single unitary) would be difficult to assess, as it merges all areas under one structure, effectively washing out TTWA distinctions.



Method of travel to work - percentages	All usual residents 16-74 in employment	Work mainly at or from home	Underground, metro, light rail, tram	Train	Bus, minibus or coach	Taxi	Motorcycle, scooter or moped	Driving a car or van	Passenger in a car or van	Bicycle	On foot	Other method of travel to work
England & Wales	100.00%	31.20%	1.80%	1.90%	4.20%	0.70%	0.50%	45.10%	3.90%	2.00%	7.60%	1.00%
South East	100.00%	35.80%	0.20%	2.20%	2.50%	0.50%	0.50%	44.20%	3.50%	1.90%	7.60%	1.00%
Kent	**100.00%**	**31.10%**	**0.20%**	**3.50%**	**2.10%**	**0.40%**	**0.50%**	**48.40%**	**3.90%**	**1.20%**	**7.80%**	**1.00%**
Ashford	100.00%	30.10%	0.10%	2.50%	1.90%	0.20%	0.30%	50.90%	4.00%	1.90%	7.10%	1.00%
Canterbury	100.00%	30.40%	0.20%	2.30%	2.90%	0.30%	0.40%	46.30%	3.80%	1.70%	10.80%	1.00%
Dartford	100.00%	31.00%	0.80%	7.80%	3.30%	0.70%	0.70%	45.00%	3.20%	0.90%	5.50%	1.00%
Dover	100.00%	24.10%	0.10%	2.00%	2.20%	0.50%	0.50%	54.60%	4.60%	1.30%	8.80%	1.20%
Folkestone & Hythe	100.00%	28.80%	0.10%	1.90%	2.80%	0.50%	0.40%	50.00%	4.00%	1.10%	9.10%	1.20%
Gravesham	100.00%	26.20%	0.40%	5.30%	3.30%	0.50%	0.70%	49.80%	5.20%	0.80%	6.60%	1.20%
Maidstone	100.00%	31.10%	0.10%	2.60%	1.80%	0.30%	0.40%	50.10%	4.00%	0.90%	7.70%	1.00%
Sevenoaks	100.00%	42.20%	0.30%	5.40%	0.80%	0.20%	0.50%	41.20%	2.70%	0.50%	5.20%	0.90%
Swale	100.00%	25.40%	0.10%	3.20%	0.70%	0.30%	0.60%	54.80%	4.30%	1.40%	8.30%	1.00%
Thanet	100.00%	24.30%	0.10%	2.40%	3.50%	0.90%	0.60%	49.80%	5.30%	2.00%	9.80%	1.10%
Tonbridge & Malling	100.00%	37.00%	0.10%	3.40%	0.90%	0.20%	0.40%	47.40%	3.10%	0.90%	5.80%	0.80%
Tunbridge Wells	100.00%	42.30%	0.10%	3.10%	1.50%	0.20%	0.30%	39.10%	2.90%	0.90%	8.70%	0.80%
Medway Unitary Authority	100.00%	26.00%	0.20%	4.00%	2.30%	0.60%	0.60%	52.40%	4.80%	0.70%	7.20%	1.10%

Source: *https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/traveltoworkenglandandwales/census2021*

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Assessment parameters by metric

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

1. Establishing a single tier of local government (1/3)

For each metric across all 14 evaluation criteria, a Red, Amber, Green ('RAG') approach has been taken to provide a summary view of how each option performed against "what good looks like".

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	**Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)**	Balanced GVA per capita between unitaries, suggesting balanced levels of productivity and positive implications for the distribution of economic prosperity among residents	Difference between highest and lowest GVA per capita (£)	Difference of < 11,821	Difference of 11,821 - 13,169	Difference of > 13,169
	Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	Each unitary has a sufficient GVA to generate tax and there is balance between unitaries, meaning good long-term prospects for all future authorities	Difference between highest and lowest total GVA (£m)	Difference of < 3,529	Difference of 3,529 - 10,074	Difference of > 10,074
	Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	All authorities with a sufficient number and profile of properties to provide a council tax base which can sustainably support services, with a reasonable balance between authorities	Difference between highest and lowest council taxbase	Difference of < 36,555	Difference of 36,555 - 87,650	Difference of > 87,650
	Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	District areas within a unitary have low to no difference between council tax rates. The least difference between councils within a unitary would provide minimal administrative and resident disruption in harmonising rates	Difference between highest and lowest band D rate (£)	<£30m total difference	£30-40m total difference	>£40m total difference
	Alignment to major Kent industries	Unitaries demonstrate alignment to one or more of the key industries	Unitaries demonstrate alignment to one or more of the key industries	All unitaries have at least one key industry aligned to its boundaries that would suggest the foundations of a functional economic market area	At least half of unitaries have one key industry aligned to its boundaries that would suggest the foundations of a functional economic market area	Minimal to no unitaries have good alignment. Many to all unitary boundaries do not align to key industries that may inhibit industry growth and co-operation

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

1. Establishing a single tier of local government (2/3)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	**Population density (people per sq km) (2024)**	Relatively balanced population density between unitaries, ensuring that each unitary has sufficient space for housing development	Difference between highest and lowest population density	Difference of < 685	Difference of 685 - 1,111	Difference of > 1,111
	Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	Relatively balanced geographic areas between unitaries, ensuring that each unitary has sufficient space for housing development	Difference between highest and lowest geographic area (sqkm)	Difference of < 940	Difference of 940 - 975	Difference of > 975
	Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	Housing delivery targets reflect the ability of a proposed option to meet the housing needs of its population and government quotas. Relatively balanced HDT measurements between unitaries will help ensure a more even distribution of housing development across Kent	Difference between highest and lowest HDT measurement (%)	Difference of < 30.33	Difference of 30.33 - 51.71	Difference of > 51.71
	Homelessness per 1,000 households	Balanced between unitaries, avoiding disproportionately high homelessness rates in each unitary. Unitaries with disproportionately high homelessness rates will have resource allocation and financial planning implications	Difference between highest and lowest homelessness rate (rate per 1,000 households)	Difference of < 1.34	Difference of 1.34 - 4.11	Difference of > 4.11
	Transport connectivity and travel times	Good travel links within authorities and ease of travel across future unitaries without needing to enter other unitary areas, indicating logical geographic footprints that take account of how local people travel	Qualitative assessment of whether unitaries demonstrate good travel links within their boundaries	Good travel links within all unitaries that support good intra-unitary travel	Fair travel links for all unitaries or only some unitaries supported by good intra-unitary travel links	Minimal to no unitaries have good travel links. Issues of people being left isolated or needing to cross boundaries to travel within unitaries
	Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	Relatively balanced green belt area sizes between unitaries, ensuring that each unitary has sufficient space for housing development	Difference between highest and lowest green belt area size (sqkm)	Difference of < 33.98%	Difference of 33.98% - 45.18%	Difference of > 45.18%

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

1. Establishing a single tier of local government (3/3)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
1.3 Single tier governance structures	**Councillor to electorate ratio**	Ability to establish a councillor to electorate ratio within each authority that allows for a workable number of councillors and maintains an acceptable ratio of councillor to electorate. The LGBCE expects no council proposals to contain fewer than 30, nor more than 99, councillors	Ability to establish a councillor to electorate ratio within each authority that allows for a workable number of councillors and maintains an acceptable ratio of councillor to electorate. The LGBCE expects no Council proposals to contain fewer than 30, nor more than 99, councillors	Size and electoral geography support a consistently balanced councillor-to-electorate ratio. The number of councillors is workable, supports effective representation, and can be backed by a strong rationale aligned with local needs and LGBCE expectations	Size and electoral geography will likely lead to variations in councillor-to-electorate ratios. Some areas may face representational or councillor workload challenges	Size and electoral geography will likely lead to councillor-to-electorate ratios that sit outside acceptable range. The councillor-to-electorate ratio is likely to be imbalanced, leading to potential issues with representation or councillor workload

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks (1/2)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
2.1 Appropriate population size	**Population size (mid-2024)**	Populations are balanced and of an appropriate size to support service delivery, improvement and financial resilience. Government indication of 500,000 as a guiding principle, not a target	Difference between highest and lowest population size between unitaries	Difference of < 156,061	Difference of 156,061 - 205,771	Difference of > 205,771
2.2 Efficiencies to improve council finances and taxpayer value for money	**Estimated savings through integration**	Greatest reduction in overall net revenue expenditure as a result of LGR (calculated as a combination of the benefits of aggregation less the costs of disaggregation).	Indicative financial benefits calculated for purpose of options appraisal	Comparatively high savings expected through reorganisation based on indicative financial benchmarking	Mid-range (comparative) savings expected through reorganisation based on indicative financial benchmarking	Comparatively low savings expected through reorganisation based on indicative financial benchmarking
	Avoiding duplication of statutory roles / management teams	No increase to the number of authorities delivering top tier services (County and Unitaries), on the basis that this does not introduce the need for additional statutory roles. Duplication of roles due to an increased number of authorities suggests the need to hire additional resources/management and relies on available expertise	Qualitative assessment assuming creating fewer unitaries reduces the need the for duplication of key governance roles and Cabinet positions	Number of unitaries < 3	3 unitaries	Number of unitaries > 3
2.3 Transition costs and transformation opportunities	**Transition costs and complexity**	Minimising the complexity and costs associated with establishing new local authority structures	Indicative transition costs calculated for purpose of options appraisal	Comparatively low transition costs expected through reorganisation based on indicative financial benchmarking	Mid-range (comparative) transition costs expected through reorganisation based on indicative financial benchmarking	Comparatively high transition costs expected through reorganisation based on indicative financial benchmarking
	Need for boundary reviews	No changes to existing local authority boundaries which increases costs and complexity of reorganisation	Qualitative assessment noting that boundary reviews should be minimised where possible due to the complexity they introduce. The greater the level of disaggregation required by a proposed boundary review, the higher the complexity and disruption to existing services	N/A	No boundary reviews required	Boundary reviews required, including disaggregation of existing unitary

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks (2/2)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	**General fund balance** (£)	Balanced between unitaries, without any authorities at a level of reserves which would impact the ability to deal with financial shocks.	Difference between highest and lowest value between unitaries (£m)	Difference of < 37.8	Difference of 37.8 - 46.1	Difference of > 46.1
	Debt affordability - financing costs as %	No unitaries exceeding 10% for debt financing as a percentage of net revenue expenditure. Whilst there is no single accepted level, 10% is quoted as a manageable level of financing costs as a percentage of net revenue expenditure (NRE) A balance of financing costs as a percentage of net revenue expenditure across authorities suggests a serviceable debt portfolio and prudence within capital financing.	Difference between highest and lowest value between unitaries (%)	Difference of < 2.29%	Difference of 2.29% - 3.17%	Difference of > 3.17%
	Gross budget gap (£m)	An equitable split of budget deficit will provide the best starting point for all unitaries within a configuration to build on through efficiencies	Difference between highest and lowest value between unitaries (£m)	56.2	56.2 - 58.0	£58

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

3. High quality and sustainable public services (1/3)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	**Income deprivation rate**	Avoiding higher levels of deprivation and demand being clustered within individual unitaries Large differences would suggest areas with significant service delivery challenges, impacting resource allocation and financial planning	Difference between highest and lowest deprivation level between unitaries	0.060	0.060 - 0.065	0.065
	65+ Population (mid-2024)	Balanced proportion of older people between unitaries, avoiding excessive pressure and strain on services in one area	Difference between highest and lowest 65+ population between unitaries	29,862	29,862 - 48,113	£48,113
	20-64 Population (mid-2024)	Balanced proportion of adult population between unitaries, avoiding excessive pressure and strain on services in one area	Difference between highest and lowest 20-64 population between unitaries	84,212	84,212 - 114,793	£114,793
	0-19 Population (mid-2024)	Balanced proportion of 0-19 population between unitaries, avoiding excessive pressure and strain on services in one area	Difference between highest and lowest 0-19 population between unitaries	42,182	42,182 - 55,259	£55,259
	Avoiding service fragmentation	Avoiding splitting of service structures. Options should aim to minimise service fragmentation due to risk, complexity and cost	Number of new unitaries is as close to the number of current upper tier authorities as possible	Number of unitaries < 3	Number of unitaries 3 – 4	Number of unitaries > 4
	Manageable geography for service delivery	Travel within all future unitary geographies is manageable for service delivery teams that allows service delivery to be conducted effectively.	Qualitative assessment of travel time around area, factoring in size, infrastructure and population. Having smaller unitaries is an indication of more manageable service delivery	The geographical area is coherent and manageable, infrastructure is well-developed and accessible, and population size supports efficient and responsive service delivery across the unitary	The geographical area, infrastructure, and population size present some challenges to effective service delivery. Delivery may be uneven or require additional coordination in some unitaries	The geographical area is difficult to manage, infrastructure is limited or poorly connected, and population size creates significant barriers to consistent and effective service delivery

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

3. High quality and sustainable public services (2/3)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
3.2 Public service reform and better value for money	**Enabling localism and place-based public service reform**	Appropriate geography for service delivery and place based public service reform in each unitary. Place based public service reform will require the ability to operate in neighbourhoods and localities with community partners at a more local level than any proposed unitary geographies	Place based public service reform will require the ability to operate in neighbourhoods and localities with community partners at a more local level than any proposed unitary geographies. Smaller unitaries are more favourable.	Average population size <400,000	Average population size between 400,000 – 500,000	Average population size >500,000
	Alignment with existing public sector boundaries	Unitary boundaries align with all public sector partners, enabling stronger relationships and coworking and removing duplication of partnering arrangements.	Qualitative assessment comparing proposed LGR boundaries against public sector boundary maps to determine level of alignment	Unitary boundaries closely align with public sector boundaries, minimising the need for boundary reviews and supporting stronger collaboration and joint working across services	Unitary boundaries somewhat align with public sector boundaries, limiting the need for boundary reviews	Unitary boundaries do not align with public sector boundaries, meaning boundary reviews will be required and collaboration and joint working across services may be weakened

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

3. High quality and sustainable public services (3/3)

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	**Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)**	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and lowest value (%)	0.50%	0.5% - 0.57%	0.57%
	Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and lowest value (%)	0.71%	0.71% - 0.89%	0.89%
	Adult social care total spend (£m)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and lowest spend (£m)	£13.2	£13.2 - £100.8	£100.8
	Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and lowest value between unitaries (%)	0.32%	0.32% - 0.36%	0.36%
	Children's services total spend (£m)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and lowest spend (£m)	£80.5	£80.5 - £102.2	£102.2
	Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and value (%)	1.56%	1.56% - 1.92%	1.92%
	Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and value (%)	7.90%	7.9% - 9.46%	9.46%
	Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	Balanced caseload or demand between unitaries	Difference between highest and value (%)	6.55%	6.55% - 7.85%	7.85%
	Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	Significant variations in the number of householders in temporary accommodation (TA) per 1,000 population could indicate disparities in resource allocation, leading to potential inefficiencies and financial pressures	Difference between highest and lowest value	8.86	8.86 - 13.28	13.28

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

4. Working together to understand and meet local needs

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
4.1 Local identity, culture and historical importance	**Sense of identity**	Unitary geographies reflects factors including culture, sense of place, common geographical features and historical links between areas	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which the option maximises resident and community connection within a place	All unitary boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place	Only some unitary boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place	Minimal to no unitary boundaries reflect established communities or resident senses of place, creating areas with no coherent identity
	Travel to Work Areas (TTWA)	Unitary boundaries minimise splitting of existing TTWA areas. Unitary boundaries that align with established travel to work areas would represent areas where the majority of residents live and work, indicating a greater sense of place and community	Qualitative assessment of unitary boundary alignment to TTWA areas	All TTWA areas in Kent are wholly contained within unitary boundaries, representing a coherent sense of place for each area	Some TTWA areas in Kent are contained within single unitary boundaries, with some TTWA areas split by unitary boundaries	Minimal to no TTWA areas in Kent are wholly contained within unitary boundaries, suggesting a lack of community coherence
	Maintaining history and tradition	All unitary options should preserve local tradition and sense of history, to maintain important connections between communities and local government	Qualitative assessment of the extent to which unitaries preserve local tradition and sense of history, in order to maintain important connections between communities and local government	All unitary boundaries reflect established connections between communities and local government	Only some unitary boundaries reflect established connections between communities and local government	Minimal to no unitary boundaries reflect established connections between communities and local government
4.2 Views expressed through local engagement, and ability to address any concerns	**Views expressed through engagement**	Proposals should align as far as possible with the views expressed through engagement with both the public and partners. Where concerns are raised there should be confidence that these can be adequately mitigated	Qualitative assessment, relying on engagement with local communities to assess level of support for each option amongst the public and partners	Feedback from local engagement points to widespread support for the option	Feedback from local engagement points to a moderate level of support for the option	Feedback from local engagement points to a low level of support for the option

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

5. Supporting devolution arrangements

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
5.1 Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	**Population ratios between members of a strategic authority**	Balanced population ratios between all unitaries within a future strategic authority, resulting in an even power balance	The difference between the highest and lowest population size between unitaries	156,061	156,061 - 205,771	205,771
	Number of constituent members in strategic authority	Balanced population ratio between all unitaries within a future strategic authority	Assuming single member constituencies, the number of unitaries will reflect the number of constituency numbers. A very low number risks creating power imbalances and eroding democracy.	Number of unitaries > 3	Number of unitaries = 3	Number of unitaries < 3

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Assessment parameters by metric

6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

Evaluation criteria	Metric	What good looks like?	Assessment approach	Measurement		
				High	Medium	Low
6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	**Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)**	Strong existing civic participation, community networks and potentially town and parish councils across all proposed unitary authorities.	The difference between the highest and lowest levels of civic engagement between unitaries (%) ***Data source:*** *Engagement in civic participation, activism or consultation activities in the last 12 months, by local authority, people aged 16 and over, England, October 2023 to March 2024*	<7%	6.95% - 8%	>8%

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Data for each option

Option 1A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	1A	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	28,454	
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	54,965	
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	679,650	
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	1,907	L
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	517	
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	3,739	
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.87	
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.46	
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	48%	
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	2,043	L
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size	Population size (mid-2024)	1,931,684	
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	171.2	
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	3%	
		Gross budget gap (£m)	124.0	

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 1A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	1A	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.115	
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	384,033	
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	1,082,173	
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	465,478	
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.9%	
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.6%	
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	634.0	
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.4%	
		Children's services total spend (£m)	298.1	
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	5.01%	
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	17.8%	
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	15.1%	
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	3.89	
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	41%	

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 3A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	Difference	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	25,977	35,566	25,015	10,551	H
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	17,839	20,168	16,958	3,210	H
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	219,764	223,706	236,180	16,417	H
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	1,842	1,904	1,907	65	M
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	929	425	407	522	H
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	739	1,334	1,666	927	H
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.84	0.92	0.86	0.07	H
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	6.56	4.07	8.40	4.33	L
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	41%	67%	36%	31%	H
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	9,037	7,629	9,893	2,264	M
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Population of 500,000 or more as a guiding principle	Population size (mid-2024)	686,716	567,062	677,906	119,654	H
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	40.9	51.4	78.9	38.0	M
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	2.15%	1.97%	4.35%	2.39%	M
		Gross budget gap (£m)	78.8	22.2	22.9	56.6	M

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 3A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	Difference	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.125	0.081	0.135	0.054	H
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	113,951	113,406	156,676	43,270	M
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	396,169	316,013	369,991	80,156	H
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	176,596	137,643	151,239	38,953	H
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.68%	0.73%	1.17%	0.50%	H
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.41%	2.27%	2.98%	0.71%	H
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	202.8	162.3	268.9	106.7	L
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.50%	0.18%	0.47%	0.32%	H
		Children's services total spend (£m)	152.4	43.8	101.8	108.6	L
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	5.00%	4.31%	5.67%	1.37%	H
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	18.67%	13.21%	21.12%	7.91%	M
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	15.82%	11.30%	17.91%	6.61%	M
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	22.59	9.17	18.03	13.42	L
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	36%	44%	42%	8%	M

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	S	Difference	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	26,888	35,566	22,827	26,850	12,738	M
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	14,206	20,168	10,573	10,018	10,150	L
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	169,245	223,706	153,833	132,865	90,841	L
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	1,842	1,904	1,874	1,907	65	M
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	1,444	425	589	298	1,146	L
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	366	1,334	786	1,253	968	M
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.74	0.92	0.84	1.04	0.30	H
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	5.34	4.07	5.27	4.35	1.27	H
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	46%	67%	32%	38%	35%	M
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	6,999	7,629	5,984	5,948	1,682	H
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size	Population size (mid-2024)	528,337	567,062	463,170	373,115	193,947	M
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	30.2	51.4	29.4	60.2	30.8	H
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	2.24%	1.97%	2.55%	5.56%	3.59%	L
		Gross budget gap (£m)	71.1	22.2	17.9	12.7	58.4	L

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	S	Difference	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.117	0.081	0.145	0.130	0.064	M
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	83,544	113,406	100,643	86,440	29,862	H
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	306,414	316,013	255,678	204,068	111,945	M
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	138,379	137,643	106,849	82,607	55,772	L
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.64%	0.73%	1.04%	1.18%	0.54%	M
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.36%	2.27%	2.84%	2.99%	0.72%	M
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	159.7	162.3	150.1	162.0	12.2	H
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.49%	0.18%	0.53%	0.44%	0.35%	M
		Children's services total spend (£m)	124.3	43.8	78.0	51.9	80.5	M
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	4.25%	4.31%	6.56%	5.46%	2.31%	L
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	18.42%	13.21%	21.07%	20.47%	7.87%	H
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	15.68%	11.30%	17.72%	17.39%	6.43%	H
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	18.03	9.17	10.89	11.71	8.86	H
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	35%	44%	39%	43%	8%	L

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4B (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	Difference	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	26,888	35,566	24,065	25,196	11,501	H
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	14,206	20,168	10,217	10,374	9,951	M
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	169,245	223,706	145,435	141,264	82,442	M
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	1,842	1,904	1,874	1,907	65	M
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	1,444	425	583	314	1,129	L
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	366	1,334	728	1,311	968	M
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.74	0.92	0.76	1.10	0.36	M
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	5.34	4.07	5.45	4.17	1.38	M
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	46%	67%	27%	41%	40%	M
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	6,999	7,629	6,183	5,749	1,881	H
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Population of 500,000 or more as a guiding principle	Population size (mid-2024)	528,337	567,062	424,559	411,726	155,336	H
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	30.2	51.4	25.9	63.7	37.7	H
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	2.24%	1.97%	3.30%	4.46%	2.49%	M
		Gross budget gap (£m)	71.1	22.2	13.9	16.8	57.2	M

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4B (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	Difference	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.117	0.081	0.140	0.135	0.059	H
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	83,544	113,406	99,972	87,111	29,862	H
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	306,414	316,013	230,129	229,617	86,396	M
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	138,379	137,643	94,458	94,998	43,921	M
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.64%	0.73%	1.14%	1.06%	0.50%	H
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.36%	2.27%	3.06%	2.73%	0.79%	M
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	159.7	162.3	162.9	149.2	13.7	M
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.49%	0.18%	0.50%	0.48%	0.32%	H
		Children's services total spend (£m)	124.3	43.8	64.1	65.8	80.5	M
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	4.25%	4.31%	5.95%	6.21%	1.96%	L
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	18.42%	13.21%	22.32%	19.38%	9.11%	M
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	15.68%	11.30%	18.86%	16.37%	7.56%	M
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	18.03	9.17	11.85	10.75	8.86	H
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	20%	25%	24%	26%	6%	H

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4C (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	Difference	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	26,888	38,540	24,245	26,940	14,295	L
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	14,206	14,618	13,019	13,122	1,599	H
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	169,245	155,621	186,848	167,936	31,227	H
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	1,842	1,855	1,907	1,904	65	M
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	1,444	403	495	362	1,082	M
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	366	941	1,085	1,347	981	L
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.74	0.65	0.78	1.31	0.66	L
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	5.34	2.12	6.85	4.72	4.73	L
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	46%	83%	35%	35%	48%	L
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	6,999	5,359	8,132	6,069	2,773	M
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size	Population size (mid-2024)	528,337	379,295	536,970	487,082	157,675	M
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	30.2	25.8	37.2	78.0	52.2	L
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	2.24%	1.86%	3.44%	3.70%	1.84	H
		Gross budget gap (£m)	71.1	15.1	18.7	19.1	56.0	H

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4C (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	Difference	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.117	0.076	0.141	0.118	0.065	L
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	83,544	77,794	128,875	93,820	51,081	L
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	306,414	208,801	290,408	276,550	97,613	M
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	138,379	92,700	117,687	116,712	45,679	M
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.64%	0.66%	1.27%	0.84%	0.62%	L
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.36%	2.14%	3.04%	2.59%	0.90%	L
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	159.7	112.8	232.1	129.5	119.3	L
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.49%	0.16%	0.52%	0.36%	0.36%	L
		Children's services total spend (£m)	124.3	28.4	84.9	60.4	95.9	M
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	4.25%	4.20%	5.85%	5.71%	1.66%	M
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	18.42%	11.99%	22.34%	17.38%	10.34%	L
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	15.68%	10.29%	18.89%	14.70%	8.60%	L
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	18.03	4.99	13.46	13.32	13.05	M
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	20%	28%	26%	22%	7%	M

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4D (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	Difference	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	25,995	37,624	24,191	28,310	13,433	L
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	16,011	15,159	12,024	11,771	4,240	M
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	197,265	161,398	172,135	148,852	48,413	M
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	1,904	1,874	1,907	1,907	33	H
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	949	442	519	340	609	H
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	649	911	958	1,221	572	H
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.83	0.65	0.77	1.27	0.61	L
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	5.78	2.60	6.35	4.29	3.75	M
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	41%	83%	33%	38%	*50%*	L
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	18,934	16,928	9,305	13,714	9,629	L
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Population of 500,000 or more as a guiding principle	Population size (mid-2024)	615,931	402,914	497,034	415,805	213,017	L
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	35.9	27.5	33.2	74.6	47.1	L
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	2.11%	1.99%	3.40%	4.23%	2.24%	H
		Gross budget gap (£m)	74.2	17.6	17.0	15.2	58.9	L

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 4D (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	Difference	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.073	0.042	0.128	0.059	0.086	L
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	102,437	80,068	118,607	82,921	38,539	M
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	355,231	223,319	268,993	234,630	131,912	L
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	158,263	99,527	109,434	98,254	60,009	L
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.73%	0.65%	1.23%	0.93%	0.58%	L
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.14%	2.20%	3.05%	1.59%	1.46%	L
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	185.6	116.3	207.5	124.5	91.2	M
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.44%	0.18%	0.51%	0.31%	0.33%	M
		Children's services total spend (£m)	140.3	34.0	77.5	46.2	106.2	L
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	4.91%	4.27%	5.88%	4.96%	1.62%	M
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	18.71%	12.66%	22.33%	16.81%	9.67%	L
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	15.85%	10.86%	18.88%	14.31%	8.03%	L
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	28.97	23.02	13.46	16.43	15.51	L
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	21%	27%	25%	23%	6%	H

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 5A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	S	Difference	H/M/L
1. Establishing a single tier of Local Government	1.1 Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	28,356	35,322	22,788	25,024	26,850	12,534	M
		Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	9,373	19,244	7,815	8,515	10,018	11,429	L
		Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	109,603	214,098	115,481	107,603	132,865	106,496	L
		Council Tax harmonisation / difference in Band D rates	£1,842	£1,904	£1,874	£1,812	£1,907	£95	L
	1.2 Sensible geography to increase housing supply and meet local needs	Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	1,151	430	682	793	298	853	M
		Geographic area (people per sq km) (2024)	287	1,267	503	429	1,253	980	L
		Housing delivery test (HDT) measurement	0.73	0.94	0.73	0.89	1.04	0.31	M
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	4.02	3.95	4.34	2.36	4.35	1.99	M
		Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%)	68%	66%	29%	32%	38%	39%	M
	1.3 Single tier local government structures	Councillor to electorate ratio	10,512	8,170	6,879	7,893	5,948	4,565	L
2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	2.1 Appropriate population size	Population size (mid-2024)	330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115	214,277	L
	2.4 Putting local government finances on a firmer financial footing	General fund balance (£m)	24.1	50.0	21.3	15.7	60.2	44.5	M
		Debt affordability - financing costs as % net revenue expenditure (NRE)	2.99%	1.96%	2.80%	1.37%	5.56%	4.19%	L
		Gross budget gap (£m)	27.8	21.3	12.1	50.1	12.7	38.0	H

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

Option 5A (Quantitative metrics only)

Government criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	N	W	E	M	S	Difference	H/M/L
3. High quality and sustainable public services	3.1 Improving service delivery and avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	Income deprivation rate	0.066	0.077	0.107	0.107	0.130	0.064	M
		65+ Population (mid-2024)	52,329	108,477	77,559	59,227	86,440	56,148	L
		20-64 Population (mid-2024)	191,014	304,078	187,539	195,475	204,068	116,539	L
		0-19 Population (mid-2024)	87,193	132,259	77,836	85,584	82,607	54,423	M
	3.3 Impact on crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.63%	0.74%	1.12%	0.70%	1.18%	0.55%	M
		Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	2.68%	2.29%	2.93%	2.12%	2.99%	0.87%	M
		Adult social care total spend (£m)	83.6	155.3	117.4	115.7	162.0	78.3	M
		Number of children in children's social care as % total population (2023-2024)	0.37%	0.18%	0.52%	0.61%	0.44%	0.43%	L
		Children's services total spend (£m)	55.4	42.3	56.6	91.8	51.9	49.4	H
		Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population (2023-2024)	4.41%	4.29%	6.14%	5.28%	5.46%	1.85%	M
		Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	17.33%	13.25%	21.66%	19.53%	20.47%	8.41%	M
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	14.82%	11.33%	18.29%	16.44%	17.39%	6.96%	M
		Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	19.33	9.17	10.89	9.60	11.71	10.15	M
6. Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	6.1 Enabling strong community engagement	Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	24%	25%	22%	19%	28%	9%	L

Note: See Appendix A4 for baseline data by current authority used to calculate unitary figures and data sources for each metric

A4

Baseline data by current authority and sources

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Baseline data by current authority with sources (1/3)

Metric	Source	Medway (unitary)	District councils											Kent County Council	Kent Total
			Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells	
Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (2023) (£)	Regional gross domestic product: local authorities - Office for National Statistics	26,164	27,949	26,848	34,741	27,361	24,926	19,933	29,558	41,532	22,939	18,137	39,502	34,371	28,863	**28,454**
Total Gross Value Added (GVA) (2023) (£m)	Regional gross domestic product: local authorities - Office for National Statistics	7,657	3,939	4,352	4,343	3,277	2,802	2,206	5,550	5,098	3,633	2,588	5,406	4,114	47,308	**54,965**
Council tax base (number of properties at Band D equivalent)	Financial data return submitted by councils	92,100	49,332	55,054	41,702	42,120	41,414	35,443	68,086	53,008	50,518	48,261	53,478	49,135	587,550	**679,650**
Population density (people per sq km) (2024)	See Geographic Area and Population Size	1,509	243	525	1,712	380	315	1,118	478	332	425	1,372	570	362	462	**517**
Geographic Area (sq km) (2024)	Standard Area Measurements for Administrative Areas (December 2023) in the UK – ONS Geography	194	581	309	73	315	357	99	393	370	373	104	240	331	3,545	**3,739**
Housing Delivery Test measurement (2023)	Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement - GOV.UK	0.72	1.17	0.67	0.90	1.06	0.83	0.59	1.49	0.44	1.22	0.67	0.60	0.94	0.90	**0.87**
Homelessness per 1,000 households (Jan-Mar 2025)	Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK (Jan – Mar 2025)	1.91	1.55	2.44	1.39	1.40	1.40	2.04	1.95	0.64	1.22	1.61	0.90	0.58	1.43	**1.46**
Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (000 sq km)	Local authority green belt statistics for England: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK	4,920	21,800	11,200	4,290	8,290	17,910	7,710	11,310	34,750	13,390	190	18,580	24,760	174,180	179,100
Total area (2023) (000 sq km)	Local authority green belt statistics for England: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK –Total area as at 31 December 2023	19,370	58,060	30,870	7,270	31,530	35,690	9,900	39,330	37,030	37,340	10,360	24,010	33,130	354,520	373,890
Area of land that is protected, including land designated as Green Belt (%) (2023-2024)	Local authority green belt statistics for England: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK	25%	38%	36%	59%	26%	50%	78%	29%	94%	36%	2%	77%	75%	49%	48%

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Baseline data by current authority with sources (2/3)

Metric	Source	Medway (unitary)	District councils												Kent County Council	Kent Total
			Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells		
Electorate	Publicly available data	206,075	95,087	108,317	84,833	87,238	70,194	76,516	131,670	90,283	110,044	103,386	100,052	85,162	1,142,782	1,348,857
Councillors	Publicly available data	59	54	47	48	39	36	44	58	60	54	63	51	45	(81)	**658**
Councillor to electorate ratio	Publicly available data	3,493	1,761	2,305	1,767	2,237	1,950	1,739	2,270	1,505	2,038	1,641	1,962	1,892	1,908	2,050
Population size (mid-2024)	Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics	292,655	140,936	162,100	125,011	119,768	112,411	110,671	187,767	122,748	158,379	142,691	136,853	119,694	1,639,029	**1,931,684**
General fund balance (£m)	Financial data return submitted by councils	£10.1	£34.9	£2.1	£3.5	£1.5	£5.9	£5.3	£16.6	£2.0	£3.1	£2.0	£1.3	£4.4	£78.6	**£171.2**
Financing costs (2023-2024) (£m)	Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2023 to 2024 individual local authority data - outturn - GOV.UK (Interest: external payments)	4.1	10.0	4.0	0	3.3	2.9	5.5	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.3	0	0	33.5	**65.1**
Net revenue expenditure (NRE) (£m)	Financial data return submitted by councils	3.6	24.4	21.0	28.3	14.8	18.2	17.8	28.2	18.7	29.4	35.1	21.7	16.7	1,635.0	**1,913**
Debt affordability - financing costs as %	See Financing Costs and NRE	1%	41%	19%	0%	23%	16%	31%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	**3%**
Gross budget gap (£m)	Financial data return submitted by councils	58.9	0.0	1.0	2.1	0.0	1.4	3.0	1.4	1.4	2.9	0.0	1.1	1.2	49.8	**124.0**
Income deprivation rate (2019)	Mapping income deprivation at a local authority level - Office for National Statistics	0.134	0.110	0.100	0.095	0.134	0.145	0.122	0.095	0.075	0.149	0.185	0.080	0.073	0.114	**0.115**
65+ Population (mid-2024)	Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics	48,069	27,801	36,194	16,755	29,736	28,903	18,720	35,612	27,192	30,407	34,042	26,578	24,024	335,964	**384,033**
20-64 Population (mid-2024)	Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics	169,350	79,583	88,840	74133	64,206	60,279	62,931	107,212	65,849	89,755	77,083	76,864	66,088	912,823	**1,082,173**
0-19 Population (mid-2024)	Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics	75,236	33,552	37,066	34,123	25,826	23,229	29,020	44,943	29,707	38,217	31,566	33,411	29,582	390,242	**465,478**
Number of adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	KCC analysis (districts) & LG inform data (Medway) – **Number of people aged 18 to 64 receiving long-term community support at the year-end (23-24)**	0.6%	0.8%	1.1%	0.5%	1.1%	1.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.5%	0.8%	1.2%	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	**0.9%**

Kent COUNCIL LEADERS

Baseline data by current authority with sources (3/3)

Metric	Source	Medway (unitary)	District councils											Kent County Council	Kent Total
			Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells	
Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population (2023-2024)	KCC analysis (districts) & LG inform data (Medway) – Number of people aged 65+ receiving long-term community support at the year-end (23-24)	1.9%	2.7%	2.7%	3.8%	3.3%	3.0%	2.3%	2.6%	2.0%	2.5%	3.3%	1.7%	2.8%	2.7%	**2.6%**
Adult social care total spend (£m)	Data from individual councils	£110.3	£36.8	£55.3	£23.0	£55.9	£69.2	£26.3	£49.5	£38.3	£43.1	£51.7	£37.6	£36.9	£523.7	**£634.0**
Number of children in children's social care as % total population	KCC analysis (districts) & ONS data (Medway) – Children looked after on Mar 31 (24) (Medway)	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%	0.8%	0.3%	**0.4%**
Children's services total spend (£m)	Data from individual councils	£93.6	£16.9	£19.6	£14.5	£14.3	£20.8	£16.1	£15.4	£8.3	£28.1	£30.3	£11.8	£8.3	£204.4	**£298.1**
Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	KCC analysis (districts) & LG Inform data (Medway) – Total No. CYP with an EHC plan 24-25 (Medway)	4.04%	5.04%	5.11%	4.45%	6.01%	5.46%	4.55%	4.53%	4.61%	7.71%	6.89%	4.59%	3.34%	5.20%	**5.01%**
Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s) (FYE24) (%)	Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2024 - GOV.UK (FYE24)	19.5%	17.1%	17.7%	14.9%	23.2%	22.4%	19.8%	15.7%	12.1%	19.6%	26.3%	12.5%	11.3%	17.5%	**17.8%**
Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under16s) (FYE24) (%)	Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2024 - GOV.UK (FYE24)	16.5%	14.6%	15.1%	12.9%	19.5%	19.0%	16.9%	13.4%	10.4%	16.3%	22.1%	10.7%	9.7%	14.9%	**15.1%**
Households in TA per 1,000 (Jan-Mar 25)	Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK (Jan – Mar 2025)	5.03	4.57	2.54	7.86	5.52	1.62	5.14	4.19	1.29	4.56	3.79	2.19	1.50	3.71	**3.89**
Level of civic participation (2023-2024) (%)	Community Life Survey 2023/24 annual publication - GOV.UK (Civic engagement, volunteering, social action in the last 12 months, people aged 16 and over, England, October 2023 to March 2024)	34%	38%	40%	36%	50%	42%	37%	35%	53%	36%	41%	42%	47%	41%	**41%**