

**Minutes of the Council
6 February 2025**

Present:

Councillors:

M. Buck	J. Button	M.J. Lee
J.T.F. Doran	J.P. Caplin	S.C. Mooney
M.M. Attewell	D.C. Clarke	L. E. Nichols
C. Bateson	S.M. Doran	K.E. Rutherford
S.N. Beatty	S.A. Dunn	D. Saliagopoulos
M. Beecher	R.V. Geach	J.R. Sexton
S. Bhadye	D.L. Geraci	B. Weerasinghe
H.S. Boparai	M. Gibson	H.R.D. Williams
L.H. Brennan	K.M. Grant	P.N. Woodward
T. Burrell	S. Gyawali	
J.R. Boughtflower	K. Howkins	

Apologies: Councillors M. Arnold, M. Bing Dong, R. Chandler, A. Gale, N. Islam, O. Rybinski and J.A. Turner

122/25 Disclosures of Interest

Councillors Attewell, Boparai, Sexton and Weerasinghe advised they were also Surrey County Councillors.

The Interim Monitoring Officer made the following statement:

“Having considered the subject matter being discussed this evening, I am satisfied that on this occasion Surrey County Councillors are not prevented from taking part in the debate and voting.”

123/25 Local Government Reorganisation

The Leader made the following announcement:

“The English Devolution White Paper sets out the Government’s policy for devolution and local government reorganisation. This Government’s stated long-term vision is for simpler structures, making it clearer for residents who they should look to on local issues, with more strategic decisions to unlock growth and to deliver better services for local communities.

On 16 December 2024, the Minister for Local Government wrote to all councils in two-tier areas to set out plans for a joint programme of devolution coupled with local government reorganisation. Yesterday afternoon, we received confirmation from the Government that Surrey is to be in the first wave of local government reorganisation and that County elections planned for May 2025 will be postponed. All Surrey Councils now recognise that there is an inevitability that within a couple of years, unitarization will take place.

That will mean that all Surrey Council’s will be amalgamated into a yet to be agreed unitary configuration of 1, 2 or 3 new authorities. This is by far the biggest reorganisation local government has undergone in the last 50 years and will mean that Spelthorne Borough Council as a sovereign authority will no longer exist within three years.

The Government has set an ambitious timetable for both devolution and local reorganisation, though it is for local areas to self-organise and to agree what shape unitarization should take. That is why a pan-County Steering Group made up of Leaders has been meeting weekly to agree and coordinate that transition.

However, note that from intelligence gained at the Steering Group, government will not accept a request by Spelthorne or other Surrey Councils on the borders of London to join with any London Boroughs. Any unitary configuration will be composed of an amalgam of existing Surrey Councils only.

To ensure that I as Leader of Spelthorne have the democratic mandate to represent the wishes of all Members in this Chamber, I called for this ECM to take place so that we could debate and agree on what optimum configuration of new unitary authority would best serve the interests of our residents going forward.

Tonight, within the context of Local Government Reorganisation, Council is asked to:

1. Agree the preferred optimum number of proposed new unitary authorities in Surrey
2. Agree the preferred configuration for a potential two new unitary configuration for Surrey

3. Agree the preferred configuration for a potential three new unitary configuration for Surrey

4. Agree Terms of Reference for the proposed cross--chamber Spelthorne Reorganisation Board”

124/25 Preferred Optimum Number of Unitary Authorities

Council discussed the optimum number of Unitary Authorities that they would like to see put in place instead of the current 11 District and Borough Councils and Surrey County Council.

Council **resolved** that the preferred optimum number of Unitary Authorities was three.

125/25 Preferred Two Unitary Authorities Configuration

Council considered the report produced by KPMG and the options outlined in their report if the decision made by Government was for two Unitary Authorities (2a or 2b).

A named vote was requested.

Option 2a	Councillors Brennan and Clarke – 2 votes
Option 2b	Councillors J Doran, Bateson, Beatty, Beecher, Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Geach, Geraci, Gibson, Nichols, Rutherford, Sexton – 14 votes
Abstain	Councillors Buck, Attewell, Bhadye, Boparai. Boughtflower, Dunn, Grant, Gyawali, Howkins, Lee, Mooney, Saliagopoulos, Weerasinghe, Williams, Woodward – 15 votes

Council **resolved** that Option 2b was the preferred option if the Government decided that there would be two Unitary Authorities.

126/25 Preferred Three Unitary Authorities Configuration

Council considered the report produced by KPMG and the options outlined in their report if the decision made by Government was for three Unitary Authorities (3C, 3F or 3G).

A named vote was requested.

Option 3C	Councillors Brennan and Nichols – 2 votes
Option 3F	No Votes
Option 3G	Councillors Buck, J Doran, Bateson, Beatty, Beecher,

	Burrell, Button, Caplin, S Doran, Dunn, Geach, Geraci, Gibson, Grant, Gyawali, Rutherford, Sexton – 17 votes
Abstain	Councillors Attewell, Bhadye, Boparai, Boughtflower, Clarke, Howkins, Lee, Mooney, Saliagopoulos, Weerasinghe, Williams, Woodward – 12 votes

Council **resolved** that Option 3G was the preferred option if the Government decided that there would be three Unitary Authorities.

127/25 Terms of Reference for the Reorganisation Board

Council asked that the first objective be amended to remove the words 'decision making' and that the word 'Spelthorne' was placed in front of 'Programme Sponsor (Daniel Mouawad)' in Section 6 of the report.

Council **resolved** to agree the Terms of Reference for the Reorganisation Board subject to the proposed amendments