



Local Government Reorganisation

Parish Impact Assessment

Consequences, Risks and Mitigations
for Parish and Town Councils

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC)

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Prepared with the assistance of AI, there may be some errors

Executive Summary

Local Government Reorganisation will happen in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The question facing parish and town councils is not whether the change is desirable, but what the practical consequences will be — and what can be done now to manage the risks.

This document identifies 47 areas where LGR will directly or indirectly affect parish councils. For each, it sets out the factual change, the specific risk or consequence for parishes, and whether the risk varies depending on which reorganisation option is selected.

The analysis draws on the LGR option proposals submitted for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Options A, B, D and E), national evidence from previous reorganisations (Cornwall, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset), NALC and SLCC research, and CAPALC's own engagement with parishes.

Key Findings

Transition is the highest-risk period. Regardless of which option is selected, the transition to April 2028 will absorb officer capacity, disrupt service delivery, and create confusion about responsibilities. Parishes must prepare for a period where responsiveness from principal authorities declines.

Many promised benefits are not legally binding. Parish forums, locality working, co-production, and community empowerment are frequently cited in LGR proposals but have no statutory basis. Evidence from other reorganisations shows these mechanisms are the first casualties of financial pressure. Parishes should treat non-embedded promises as risks, not assurances.

Financial exposure is real and immediate. Council Tax harmonisation, loss of district grant schemes, concurrent function funding, and expenditure transfer all create direct financial risk for parish precepts. Parishes elsewhere have seen precept increases of 69% or more following unitarisation.

Planning protections need active defence. New Local Plans will replace existing district plans. Settlement boundaries, housing allocations, CIL rates, and conservation protections may all be revisited. Parishes with Neighbourhood Plans have some protection; those without are significantly more exposed.

Not all risks are equal across options. Of the 47 impact areas identified, 22 vary significantly depending on which option is selected. Larger unitary authorities generally increase the risk of diluted parish voice and deprioritised rural services, while smaller authorities may lack strategic capacity in areas like flood management and SEND provision.

Parish Groupings

Parishes fall into two categories that affect how these risks apply:

Fixed-UA parishes will be under the same unitary authority regardless of which option is selected (for example, Peterborough parishes remain under Peterborough). For these parishes, risks vary by the powers and structures each option gives their authority, not by which authority they belong to.

Variable-UA parishes may fall under different unitary authorities depending on the option selected (for example, a Huntingdonshire parish might be in a large North unitary under Option A or a standalone Huntingdonshire unitary under Option E). These parishes face all the same risks as fixed-UA parishes, plus additional uncertainty about which authority they will deal with.

Impact Assessment by Theme

Each impact area below identifies: the factual change that LGR brings; the specific risk or consequence for parishes; and whether the risk varies depending on the option selected. Items marked as option-variable require particular attention from parishes whose unitary authority destination differs across options.

A. Planning & Development

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
1	Planning application consultation District planners who know local context are replaced by a larger pooled team.	Parish objections carry less weight in a larger authority. Officers less familiar with local character. Response times may worsen.	Yes — larger UA = more dilution of local knowledge
2	Local Plan rewrite Each new UA must produce a new Local Plan, replacing current district plans.	Existing protections (green belt designations, settlement boundaries, site allocations) could be revisited. Parishes may face unwanted allocations during the gap between old and new plans.	Yes — different UA boundaries create different strategic housing pressures
3	CIL charging authority changes The body that sets and collects CIL changes from district to UA.	CIL rates may be harmonised (likely downward for some areas). Collection and enforcement priorities shift. Parish projects deprioritised in larger spending pool.	Yes — UA size affects how thinly CIL is spread
4	S106 negotiation and enforcement S106 agreements are negotiated by the planning authority.	Smaller parish-relevant S106 items (play areas, traffic calming) may be traded away for strategic UA priorities. Enforcement of existing S106 obligations may slip during transition.	Partially — all options create transition risk, but larger UAs have more competing priorities
5	CIL neighbourhood portion Parishes receive 15% (or 25% with Neighbourhood Plan) of CIL from local development.	New UA may change how neighbourhood portion is calculated, administered, or prioritised. Delays in payment during transition. Risk the mechanism is reviewed downward.	No — statutory right, but administration and timeliness at risk under all options
6	Neighbourhood Plan status Made Neighbourhood Plans are part of the statutory development plan.	A new Local Plan could undermine or supersede NP policies. Parishes without NPs lose a key protective tool. NP referendum and examination processes may stall during transition.	Yes — different UAs may take different approaches to NP integration
7	Housing allocations Strategic housing numbers are redistributed across the new UA area.	Parishes may face increased housing targets if the UA prioritises growth in their area. Rural parishes may absorb allocations previously directed to towns.	Yes — UA boundary determines which housing market area the parish sits in
8	Conservation and heritage Listed buildings, conservation areas, TPOs administered by planning authority.	Specialist conservation officers may be lost in merger. Less capacity for heritage enforcement. Conservation area reviews deprioritised.	Partially — larger UAs may have better-resourced teams but less local focus

B. Finance & Funding

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
9	Council Tax harmonisation Different district rates must merge into a single UA rate.	Some parishes see council tax rise, others fall. Transitional period of uncertainty. Precept becomes more visible as a separate line item.	Yes — which districts merge determines the harmonisation gap

10	Precept visibility and 'double taxation' pressure With one UA rate, the parish precept stands out more.	Political pressure to reduce or freeze precepts. Public confusion about what the precept pays for vs what the UA provides. Media scrutiny.	No — all options create a single UA rate that makes precepts more visible
11	Loss of district grant schemes Discretionary community grants, village hall funds, small capital grants run by districts disappear.	Parishes lose funding sources they currently rely on. Replacement schemes may not be created. Larger UA grant pots attract bigger competing bids.	Yes — depends on which districts merge and their current grant programmes
12	Expenditure transfer UA under financial pressure pushes services down to parishes without matching funding.	Parish precepts rise to cover services previously funded by district/county. Parishes lack capacity to deliver. Unfunded mandates.	No — risk exists under all options, but larger UAs have larger budget pressures
13	Concurrent functions funding Grants to parishes for services also provided by principal authority.	Concurrent function payments may not transfer to the new UA. No legal obligation to continue them. Parishes absorb cost or cut services.	No — at risk under all options; depends on new UA willingness to continue

C. Service Delivery & Assets

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
14	Asset transfer pressure UA offers parishes assets (parks, play areas, community buildings) to reduce its maintenance burden.	Assets come with maintenance liabilities, compliance costs, insurance. Parishes lack staff and expertise. Transfer is voluntary but pressure is real (accept or lose the asset).	No — all options create a UA looking to rationalise assets
15	Loss of local services Libraries, public toilets, car parks, recycling centres rationalised by UA.	Services close in smaller settlements first. 'Service devolution' means parish picks up cost or service disappears. Evidence from Cornwall and Wiltshire shows 69%+ precept rises.	Partially — larger UAs have more rationalisation pressure
16	Waste and recycling service changes Harmonisation across merged area.	Collection schedules, bin types, recycling rules change. Transition period of confusion. Potential service reduction in areas currently well-served.	Yes — depends which districts merge
17	Street cleaning and grounds maintenance Currently split between district and county.	Service level may drop as UA prioritises statutory over discretionary maintenance. Rural areas deprioritised. Parish expected to fill gap.	No — risk under all options

D. Highways & Transport

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
18	Highways reporting and responsiveness Single point of contact changes.	Pothole reporting, street lighting faults, drainage issues — current contacts disappear. New UA system may be less responsive to rural parishes. Local knowledge lost.	Partially — all create change, but larger UAs may be slower
19	Traffic calming and speed limits Lobbying target changes from county highways to UA.	Priorities reset. Parish campaigns for traffic schemes lose momentum during transition. New UA may have different criteria and longer queues.	Yes — different UA = different highways priorities and budgets

20	Public transport and bus services Route planning and subsidies.	UA may reprioritise bus subsidies. Rural routes especially vulnerable. Parish connectivity could worsen.	Yes — UA boundary determines which routes are strategic vs marginal
21	Rights of way and footpath maintenance Currently county responsibility.	May fall between responsibilities during transition. Maintenance backlog. Parish pressure to adopt paths informally.	No — all options transfer this from CCC
22	Parking enforcement Districts currently manage off-street; county manages on-street.	Harmonisation may change enforcement approach. Parking charges may be introduced or changed. Parish car parks at risk of transfer.	Yes — depends on merged districts' current approaches

E. Flooding & Environment

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
23	Lead Local Flood Authority changes Currently CCC; transfers to UA(s).	Flood risk expertise split across multiple UAs. Smaller UAs may lack specialist capacity. Catchment-based approach harder across UA boundaries.	Yes — number and size of UAs directly affects flood management capacity
24	Drainage and watercourse responsibilities Ordinary watercourses, land drainage.	Responsibility unclear during transition. Maintenance gaps. Parish land flooding due to neglected upstream management.	No — transition risk under all options
25	Environmental and climate commitments Tree preservation, biodiversity net gain, net-zero targets.	Different districts have different climate ambitions. Harmonisation may dilute stronger local policies. TPO enforcement capacity drops.	Yes — merged districts bring different environmental standards

F. Governance & Representation

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
26	Ward boundary enlargement Larger wards, fewer councillors per resident.	Councillors represent more people, less time per parish. Harder to build relationships. Rural parishes share councillor with urban areas.	Yes — UA size directly determines ward sizes
27	Parish forums become fragile Non-statutory, discretionary, easily defunded.	Forums promised in LGR proposals have no legal basis. Historically fade within 2–3 years as budgets tighten. Parish loses its primary engagement channel.	Partially — some options promise stronger forums, but none are statutory
28	Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) Government's new unelected model.	NACs may duplicate or undermine parish councils. Unclear relationship. Risk of parish voice being channelled through NACs rather than directly.	No — government policy applies regardless of option
29	Constitutional recognition Whether the new UA's constitution formally recognises parish role.	Without constitutional embedding, parish engagement is discretionary. Officer attendance at parish meetings not guaranteed. No formal reporting route.	Yes — each option proposal offers different constitutional commitments

30	Scrutiny access How parishes feed concerns into UA scrutiny committees.	Parishes currently have informal routes via district councillors. Larger UA scrutiny is more formal and harder to access. Rural parish concerns rarely reach scrutiny.	Yes — larger UA = more distant scrutiny
31	Named locality officers Dedicated UA officer for a geographic area.	If not embedded, locality officers are cut when budgets tighten. Parishes lose their single point of contact. Service requests go into generic queues.	No — at risk under all options unless contractually embedded

G. Democratic Voice & Influence

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
32	Distance from decision-makers Larger authority, fewer access points.	Parish clerk currently knows district officers by name. In a larger UA, relationships reset. Parishes compete with more communities for attention.	Yes — directly proportional to UA size
33	Rural vs urban priority competition Resource allocation within UA.	Urban areas generate more council tax, more political visibility. Rural parish needs (transport, broadband, flooding) deprioritised. UA focuses on statutory urban services.	Yes — UA composition determines rural/urban balance
34	Parish charter or compact Formal written agreement on UA-parish relationship.	Without a charter, the relationship is ad hoc and depends on goodwill. Charters are rare and non-binding but create political accountability.	Yes — some options reference charters, others do not
35	Soft promises vs embedded mechanisms Engagement commitments in LGR proposals.	Promises of co-production, community empowerment, and parish voice have no legal force. Easily abandoned under financial pressure. Parishes must push for statutory or constitutional embedding during transition.	Yes — each option makes different promises with different levels of specificity

H. Elections & Boundaries

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
36	Community Governance Reviews UA can review parish boundaries, merge or split parishes.	Small parishes may be merged. Boundaries redrawn to align with UA wards. Parish identity at risk. Process is UA-led, not parish-led.	Partially — more likely in larger UAs seeking administrative simplicity
37	Electoral cycle disruption Parish election timing may shift to align with UA elections.	Transition period may extend or shorten current councillor terms. Casual vacancies during shadow period may not be filled. Democratic gap.	No — transition affects all options
38	Ward boundaries cutting across parishes New UA wards may split a parish across two wards.	Parish has two ward councillors with split attention. Confusing for residents. Undermines coherent parish representation.	Yes — different UA boundaries create different ward maps

I. Transition Period Risks (to April 2028)

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
39	Shadow authority period New authority exists but old ones still operate.	Confusion about who to contact. Both old and new authorities distracted. Decisions deferred. Parishes in limbo.	No — all options have a transition period

40	Officer capacity drain Reorganisation absorbs council officer time.	Officers focused on merger logistics, not parish issues. Response times worsen. Proactive work stops. Key contacts leave or are redeployed.	No — all options create this risk
41	Service continuity gaps Handover between old and new authorities.	Contracts, SLAs, maintenance schedules disrupted. Parish-level services fall through gaps. No single point of accountability during handover.	No — all options create this risk
42	Planning application backlog System changeover causes delays.	Applications stuck in queue. Parish objections lost in transition. Developers exploit uncertainty. Enforcement lapses.	No — all options create this risk, but larger mergers = larger backlogs
43	Existing commitments at risk Ongoing S106 payments, grant agreements, service contracts.	New UA may not honour predecessor commitments. Legal continuity exists but practical enforcement is weak. Parishes must document and chase.	No — all options create this risk

J. Education, Health & Social Care

#	What Changes	Risk / Consequence	Varies by Option?
44	School place planning Moves from CCC to UA(s).	Smaller UAs may lack strategic capacity. School catchments may cross UA boundaries. Capital funding decisions fragmented.	Yes — number of UAs directly affects education planning
45	SEND provision Currently county-wide; transfers to UA(s).	SEND is already under severe pressure. Splitting across multiple UAs fragments specialist services. Families face different entitlements depending on UA boundary.	Yes — more UAs = more fragmentation of specialist services
46	Adult social care funding Largest single cost; consumes UA budget.	Social care costs crowd out all other spending. Parishes bear indirect consequences as discretionary UA services are cut to fund social care.	No — all options face this pressure, but smaller UAs have less resilience
47	Health integration UA may take on public health commissioning role.	Parish health initiatives (community transport to hospitals, wellbeing groups) may lose district-level support. New UA health priorities may not align with rural parish needs.	Partially — UA size affects health commissioning approach

What Parishes Should Do Now

Regardless of which option is selected, the actions available to parish councils are broadly the same. The transition period — from now until vesting day — is the window in which parishes have the most leverage to secure protections.

Document existing commitments. Record all current S106 payments, grant agreements, service level agreements, and concurrent function funding. These are at risk during transition and must be actively chased with the new authority.

Identify which promised benefits are statutory and which are discretionary. For every benefit cited in an LGR proposal (parish forums, locality working, asset devolution), ask whether it is written into law, constitution, or binding agreement — or whether it is simply a stated intention.

Press for embedding during transition. The period between now and vesting day is when parishes have the strongest negotiating position. Once the new authority is operational, attention shifts to delivery and engagement promises are easily deprioritised.

Prepare for financial impact. Model the potential precept implications of lost grant schemes, concurrent function funding changes, and possible asset or service transfers. Communicate proactively with residents about what the precept pays for.

Engage with ward and division councillors. District and county councillors are your current advocates within the principal authorities. Ensure they understand your parish's specific concerns and are briefed to raise them during transition planning.

Strengthen your Neighbourhood Plan. If your parish does not have a made Neighbourhood Plan, consider starting the process now. A made NP provides statutory weight in planning decisions and increases the CIL neighbourhood portion from 15% to 25%.

About this document

This assessment has been prepared by CAPALC to support parish and town councils in understanding the practical consequences of Local Government Reorganisation. It draws on the LGR option proposals submitted for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Options A, B, D and E), national evidence from previous reorganisations, research by NALC and SLCC, and CAPALC's engagement with member councils. It is intended as a working document and will be updated as the reorganisation process develops.