

CGR Phase 2 Consultation Data Analysis

Introduction

Total number of responses: 2,203.

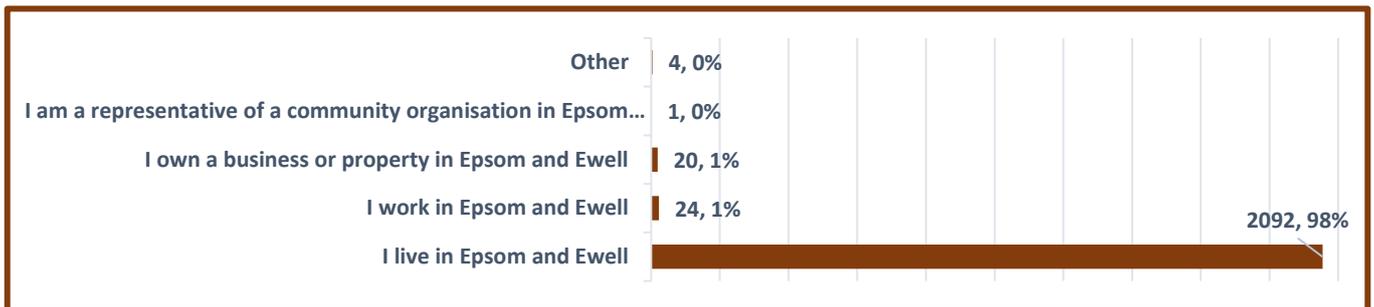
Total number of registered electors: 59,193 (16/10/2025).

Format of the bar charts: the data labels include two figures, the first being the total number of respondents who chose a particular question option, followed by the percentage that this option represents compared to all options.



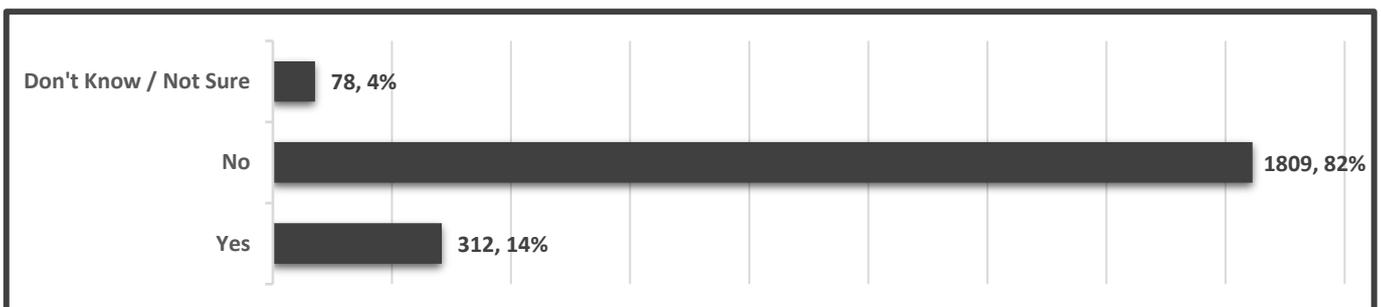
1) 'About you' question: Please state which of the following best describes you

- This question was answered by 2,141 respondents.



2) Do you agree with the proposal to create two new parish areas (Epsom Parish Area and Ewell Parish Area) and serving them, two new parish councils (Epsom Community Council and Ewell Community Council), with the associated precept?

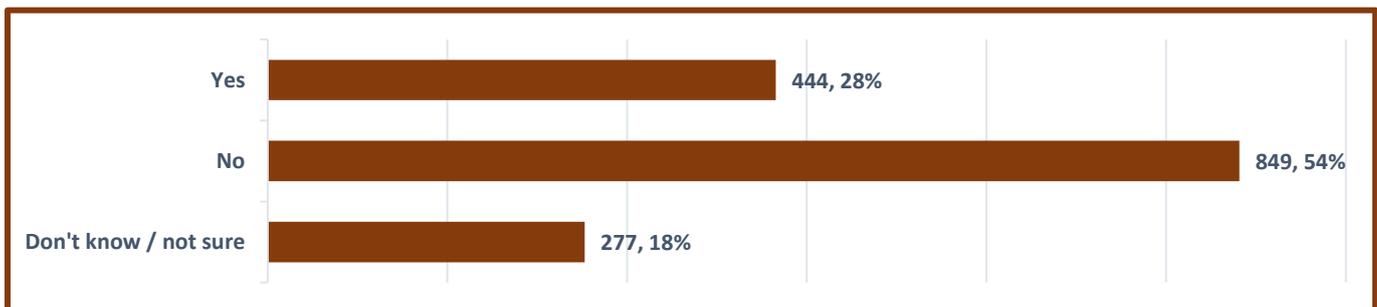
- Answered by 2,199 respondents.



Rank	Theme	Approx. %
1	Concerns about increases in council tax	40%
2	Concerns about value for money	40%
3	Value local representation	10%
	Total	90%

3) Do you agree with the proposed warding arrangements (wards matching existing borough wards)?

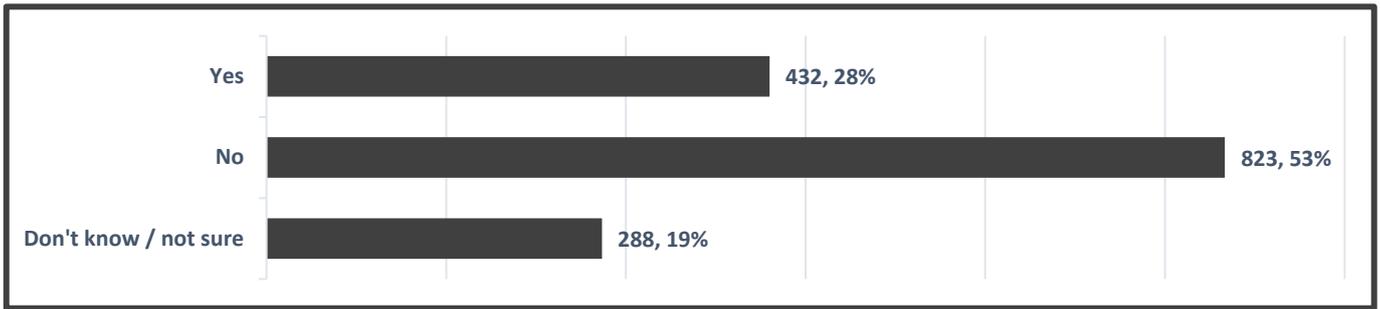
- This question was answered by 1,570 respondents.



Rank	Theme	Approx. %
1	Disagree with the proposal for Parish Councils in answer to Question 3	40%
2	Concerns about value for money	30%
3	Concerns about increases in council tax	20%
	Total	90%

4) Do you agree with the proposed names for the parish areas, councils and wards?

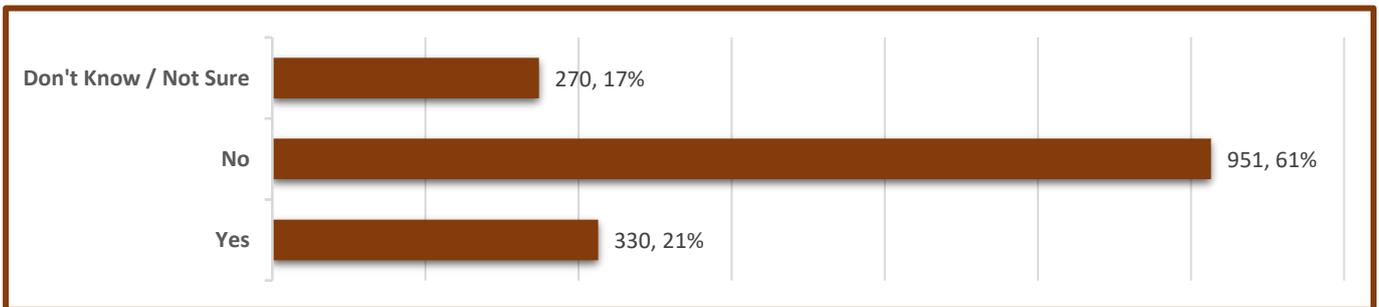
- This question was answered by 1,543 respondents.



Rank	Theme	Approx. %
1	Disagree with the proposal for Parish Councils in answer to Question 4	60%
2	Concerns about value for money	20%
3	Concerns about increases in council tax	15%
	Total	95%

5) Do you agree with the proposed number of Councillors (two per ward)?

- This question was answered by 1,551 respondents.



Rank	Theme	Approx. %
1	Concerns about value for money	30%
2	Disagree with the proposal for Parish Councils in answer to Question 5	25%
3	There should be fewer councillors	20%
4	Concerns about increases in council tax	15%
	Total	90%

6) Are there any further comments you would like to add about the Community Governance Review or the proposal to create two parishes and parish councils in Epsom and Ewell?

- This question was answered by 856 respondents.

Rank	Theme	Approx. %
1	Concerns about value for money	30%
2	Concerns about increases in council tax	25%
3	Disagree with the proposal for Parish Councils in answer to Question 6	20%
4	Concerns about how the consultation was run	15%
	Total	90%

Copilot AI Analysis

Summary of Key Themes in Question 2

[Question 2] contains respondents' written explanations expanding on their agreement or disagreement with the proposal to create two new parish areas. The dominant themes are as follows:

1. Strong Opposition to Creating Parish Councils

Many respondents express *clear disagreement* with the proposal, often citing:

- **No perceived need** for additional parish councils.
- **General dissatisfaction** with the current council or belief that the proposal is politically motivated.
- **Belief that existing arrangements (EEBC + new unitary)** are sufficient.

This is by far the most common theme.

2. Concerns About Increased Council Tax / Additional Costs

A frequent and prominent issue raised:

- Fear of **higher household costs** due to a new uncapped precept.
- Objection to paying **£45+ per year for what is seen as minimal benefit** (often only allotments).
- Concern that costs will continue to rise due to building or service transfers.

Many refer to the change as **poor value for money** or **an unnecessary financial burden**.

3. Perception of Unnecessary Bureaucracy

Respondents repeatedly describe the proposal as:

- Adding **another layer of government**.
- **Contradicting the purpose** of the move to unitary authorities, which was meant to *reduce* layers.
- Creating duplication and administrative waste.

4. Lack of Clarity, Transparency, or Evidence

Some respondents say they cannot support the proposal due to:

- **Insufficient detail** on future responsibilities, scope, or powers.
- Lack of **clear costings**, especially long-term.-term.
- Suspicion that key information is being withheld or that the proposal is pre-determined.

5. Value-for-Money Doubts Around Allotment Management

Since the parish councils would initially be responsible mainly for allotments, respondents comment that:

- Paying significant administrative costs to manage **a very small service** makes little sense.
- Only **1–2% of residents benefit**, leaving most subsidising a very limited function.

6. Skepticism About Local Representation Benefits

Although some respondents support local representation, many others say:

- Parish councillors would have **little real power**.
- Residents can already raise issues through existing channels.
- Parish councillors may be the “same people” with limited influence over the new unitary authority.

7. Concerns About Timing and Distrust of the Process

Respondents express:

- The belief that the consultation is **biased**, “stage-managed”, or poorly publicised. -managed”, or poorly publicised.
- Frustration that the **unitary authority transition** is still unclear, making it too early to decide.
- Concern that the proposal is driven by **self-preservation** of existing councillors. -preservation

8. Minority Themes Supporting the Proposal

A smaller number of responses support the parish council idea, citing:

- Desire for **continued local voice** under a large unitary authority.
- Belief that Epsom and Ewell have **distinct identities** worth preserving.
- Value placed on **local knowledge and accessibility** of community councillors.

These supportive views are noticeably fewer compared to the objections.

Summary of Key Themes in Question 6

1. Strong opposition to creating parish/community councils

A major recurring theme is strong, often emphatic rejection of the entire proposal. Comments frequently include:

- “Total waste of money”
- “Give this nonsense up”
- “We don’t need another tier of government”
- “Scrap the whole idea”

Many residents express frustration, disbelief, or fatigue with the process.

2. Concerns about increased costs and precepts

Cost is one of the most significant worries across the dataset.

- Fear of rising council tax or “uncapped” precepts
- Anger that residents would pay more “for very little benefit”
- Concern that estimated costs are misleading and could escalate

A large number of respondents cite affordability pressures, especially older residents and households already struggling.

3. Perception of unnecessary bureaucracy

Many respondents argue that parish councils would create:

- Another administrative layer
- More red tape
- More meetings, councillors, and overheads

This is seen as *contradicting* the stated purpose of forming unitary authorities (i.e., simplifying governance).

4. Distrust of motives behind the proposal

A substantial number of comments suggest residents believe:

- The proposal is about “job creation” for existing councillors
- The consultation is biased or predetermined
- RA councillors are trying to preserve influence after reorganisation

This distrust often fuels broader opposition.

5. Lack of clarity, transparency or information

Many respondents say they cannot support the proposal because:

- Costs are unclear or incomplete
- Future responsibilities and potential service transfers have not been explained
- Messaging is confusing or inconsistent
- The consultation was poorly advertised

Some call the process “flawed”, “misleading”, or “lacking transparency”.

6. Comments on the timing of the review

Quite a few respondents question why this is happening *now*:

- The unitary authority hasn’t been implemented yet
- Surrey-wide changes should settle before local layers are added
- The timing feels rushed or premature

Several note that “we should see how East Surrey Council performs first”.

7. Minimal support for local voice and democracy

A smaller number of respondents express support for parish/community councils, citing:

- Desire to retain a local voice after the unitary restructure
- Importance of local representation
- Fear that Epsom & Ewell may be overlooked in a large authority

These supportive comments are present, but strongly in the minority.

8. Planning, infrastructure and service related concerns-related concerns

Several comments link wider frustrations to the CGR:

- Anger about planning decisions (e.g., local plan, enforcement)
- Perceived decline of the high street, environment, or amenities
- Complaints that current issues aren't being addressed

These often reinforce the view that a parish council “won't fix” the problems.

9. Calls for a referendum or better democratic mandate

Some residents argue:

- The issue is too big for a consultation alone
- There should be a borough-wide vote
- Residents feel “not listened to”

A number want the entire restructure revisited or halted.

Overall Pattern

The overwhelming majority of Question 6 responses express:

- **Opposition**
- **Fear of cost increases**
- **Distrust in the process**
- **Belief that parish councils are unnecessary**

Supportive comments exist but are significantly outweighed by concerns.

Notes on methodology for analysing the responses

- Theme descriptors – the table below gives more information about the meaning of the themes referred to earlier

Retain local representation, accountability and voice
Support of the proposal: This theme included responses that supported maintaining local representation; holding local leaders to account; and ensuring communities in Epsom and Ewell have a voice.
Sustain / enhance community engagement
Support of the proposal: Codes for this theme included references to maintaining and / or enhancing community engagement.
Protect local services and community assets
Support of the proposal: Responses that referenced parish councils being able to preserve and protect local services and community assets. It also included references where parish councils gaining additional responsibilities in the future was perceived as positive.
Concerns about value for money
Critical of the proposal: References to concerns regarding the three E's (economy, efficiency, effectiveness) related to the proposal to create parish councils. Sub-elements of the three E's were also captured within this theme, such as sentiments relating to: Parish councils having a limited range of powers; the projected costs being too high to manage allotments (inefficient); that the proposal would increase local government bureaucracy and potentially duplicate or undo the proposed benefits of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), resulting in fragmented, duplicated, confused strategies across the different levels of local government; and references to the proposal adding bureaucracy and being a waste of time and / or money.
Concerns about increases in council tax
Critical of the proposal: This theme related to sentiments that expressed concern about, or that the respondent did not wish to pay, increased council tax. Also included are negative references to costs, and concerns that parish councils could increase their council tax precept by an uncapped amount in future years, which was a reoccurring sub-theme.
Concerns about how the consultation was run
Critical of the proposal: sentiments that were coded to this category reflected those that expressed: a desire for further information / evidence in order for the respondent to reach an informed judgement; that there was a lack of advertising / communication / promotion of the consultation; concern that the wording used in the consultation was misleading; a desire for wider awareness and 'buy-in'; and suspicions that residents' views will be ignored, and the outcome was already decided.
Disagree with the proposal
Critical of the proposal: This included sentiments that simply stated that the respondent disagreed with the proposal.
There should be fewer councillors

This was a theme directly related to Question:5) Do you agree with the proposed number of Councillors (two per ward)? It reflects respondents' answers that indicated they would prefer fewer councillors than the number proposed in the consultation document.

- The source data for this analysis were the submitted online and paper-copy consultation questionnaires.
- Themes in the responses:
 - Each sentiment expressed by a respondent in their free-text response to a question was coded to a theme. Whether one or more references were made to the same theme within a question, this was counted as one. If another theme was referenced in the same response to a question one or more times, this was counted as one reference to the other theme.
 - If a respondent submitted a free-text response that said “see above” or “see previous answer” the theme raised in the previous question was counted for this question.
 - The approximate theme percentages (%) above indicate the dominance of that theme within each question when compared to the other themes in the question. Each theme has been rounded to the nearest 5%, and if a theme had a representative percentage value of less than 10%, then the theme was omitted from the tables above.
 - Theme categorisation is subject to some variation between responses, given the context of interpreting qualitative data. Theme percentages should therefore be treated as indicative rather than absolute.
- Total number of responses:
 - Consultation questions were optional, therefore the total number of responses to the consultation does not match the total number of respondents to each question.
 - Incomplete / open responses to the online survey have not been included, nor have paper copy submissions received at the Town Hall after 4th February 2026.
- The Copilot analysis was run separately to the thematic analysis that is included next to the bar charts. While Copilot has limitations and its methodology will vary from the in-house approach, the two analyses show consistent interpretations of the data.

DEI data from Phase 2 CGR consultation survey compared to EEBC population (percentages).

SEX

	CGR	EEBC
Male	55	48
Female	41	52
Prefer not to say	4	Na.

ETHNICITY

	CGR	EEBC
White	85	80
Asian (inc Asian British)	5	11 (includes Asian Welsh)
Mixed/multiple	1	4
Other	1	3
Prefer not to say	7	Na.

AGE

	CGR	EEBC
16-24	<1	9
25-34	4	11
35-64	47	42
65-74	25	9
75+	20	9
Prefer not to say	3	Na.

RELIGION

	CGR	EEBC
Christian	51	48
None	34	36
Other	4	16
Prefer not to say	11	Na.

Note:

EEBC data via 2025 Borough Profile.

Percentages – rounded to nearest whole per cent.