

Lancashire Combined Authority Consultation Report February 2016



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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Consultation response

- 1,944 responses were received to the consultation on a proposed Combined Authority in Lancashire between 11 January and 19 February 2016
- 1,317 residents and 518 local authority employees took part in the consultation, as well as 35 businesses and organisations
- Promotion of the consultation reached an estimated 444,000 people and over 15,000 people visited the consultation website over a 6 week period

1.2 Agreement with proposal

- 74% of respondents strongly or tend to agree that a partnership approach is important in Lancashire
- 70% strongly or tend to agree with the proposal to establish a Combined Authority in Lancashire
- Local authority employees (79%) and businesses or organisations (82%) had a higher level of agreement with the proposal than residents (65%)
- Of those who disagree with the proposal, the main concerns appear to be around where any resources would be focused across the county and the adverse impact the proposal might have on local services

1.3 Key objectives

- The level of agreement with the identified objectives for the proposed Combined Authority is highest for a Prosperous and Connected Lancashire (81% strongly or tend to agree), followed by a Skilled Lancashire and Public Services Working Together (both 80%) and then Better Homes for Lancashire (74%)
- A range of other objectives for the proposed Combined Authority were suggested by respondents, including a 'Greener Lancashire', an 'Equal Lancashire' and a 'Listening Lancashire'

1.4 Other comments and feedback

- Final comments were varied with the most important issues seeming to be achieving a balance between local identity and a strong strategic voice for Lancashire, as well getting the right structure and administration to achieve efficiencies without impacting on local service delivery

2 Background and Methodology

2.1 Background

A Combined Authority is a formal legal arrangement which supports and enables collaboration and co-ordination between two or more local government areas on transport, regeneration and economic growth as well as skills, housing and employment. It is intended to support increased democratic accountability and transparency complementary to that provided by the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to a major area of local government policy making. Each of the councils that are members of a Combined Authority remain separate authorities; the Combined Authority is a mechanism to work more effectively and formally in partnership.

A Governance Review was requested by Leaders across Lancashire in order to determine whether the existing arrangements are effective or would benefit from change. As part of the Review an options appraisal was undertaken and consideration was given to arrangements including – enhanced status quo, Joint Committee, Economic Prosperity Board, Integrated Transport Authority and Combined Authority.

The Review concluded that a Combined Authority offers the strongest governance model to attract freedoms and flexibilities from the Government and will enable a cohesive approach across Lancashire to a range of issues including developing better and broader skills provision, including entry level skills; more co-ordinated infrastructure planning with improved use of resources; more co-ordinated approach to housing provision; more co-ordinated approach to business growth.

Councils across Lancashire agreed to undertake a public consultation on the proposal to establish a Combined Authority and seek views on the Governance Review and Draft Scheme of Governance.

After consideration of the outcome of public consultation, authorities wishing to form a Combined Authority would then submit a proposal to the Secretary of State for consideration.

2.2 Methodology

To ensure an independent, robust and coordinated approach to the public consultation, councils in Lancashire commissioned Infusion Research. This is a not-for-profit local government research service which has operated across the county for over ten years.

The primary method was a consultation website, hosted on the Infusion website. This set out information on the proposal, including supporting documents such as the Governance Review and Draft Scheme of Governance, and provided respondents the opportunity to have their say through an online survey. Moreover, to ensure access to a paper-based survey for those who may not use the internet, copies were made available at libraries across Lancashire.

The consultation went live on Monday 11 January and closed on Friday 19 February 2016, giving respondents six weeks to have their say on the proposal. As an open consultation, the primary purpose was to seek views from any resident, employee, organisation or business wishing to express an opinion. Whilst the findings are not representative of the population as a whole, they indicate the level of interest and general views of the most engaged.

During this time a proactive, coordinated approach was taken to communicating and promoting the consultation. This included:

- Signposting to the central consultation website from each local authority website
- Regular social media posts from Lancashire councils as well as online promotion from Marketing Lancashire and several references to the consultation on local radio
- 50 online and written news articles about the consultation
- Email alerts to a range of local resident panels and databases
- Direct invitations to a comprehensive list of local and regional stakeholders and businesses at the beginning of the consultation, with a reminder sent part way through

This level of promotion resulted in a combined reach of 444,406 people through social media and new articles, and a total of 15,539 views of the consultation website during the consultation period. A total of 1,944 responses were received to the consultation, comprising of 1,897 online survey submissions, 41 paper survey returns and 8 direct written responses (two of which duplicated an online submission).

Within this report any percentages reported are based on the number of responses to each individual question (referred to herein as the 'base' total). Any open-ended comment questions have not been quantifiably categorised at this stage but a summary of some of the common responses is provided for each question to give a feel for the comments received. These summaries should not be interpreted as being representative of the views of all respondents to the consultation.

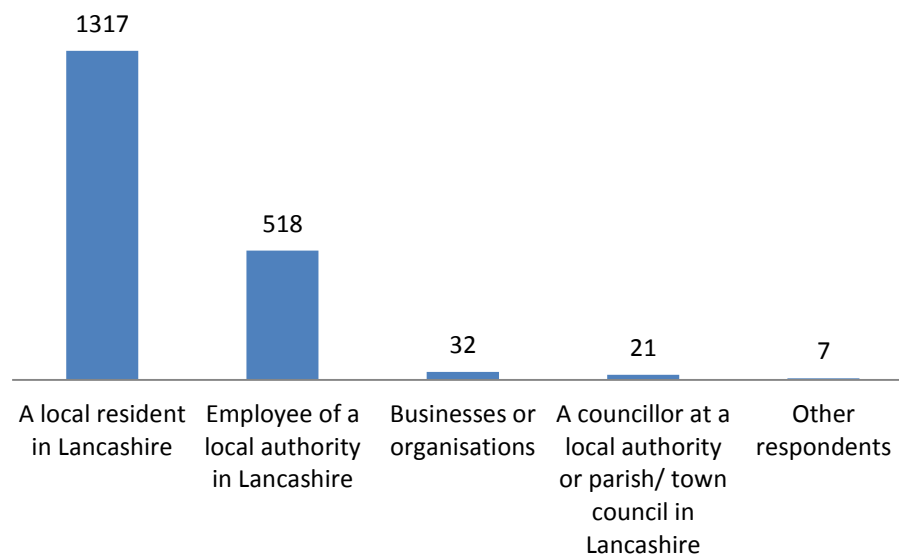
Apply some caution to the percentages expressed for business/ organisation and councillor categories where the 'base' totals are low.

3 Who Responded?

Of the people who indicated their response type in the consultation, 69% were local residents in Lancashire and a further 27% were local authority employees in the county.

48 respondents did not indicate in what capacity they were completing the consultation survey. In addition to the survey returns, 8 written responses were received (two of which duplicated an online submission).

Figure 3.1: Are you responding as...? (Q1, base – 1888)



3.1 Local residents

Of those residents who provided their home postcode, nearly half live in a PR postcode area which covers Chorley, Leyland and Preston.

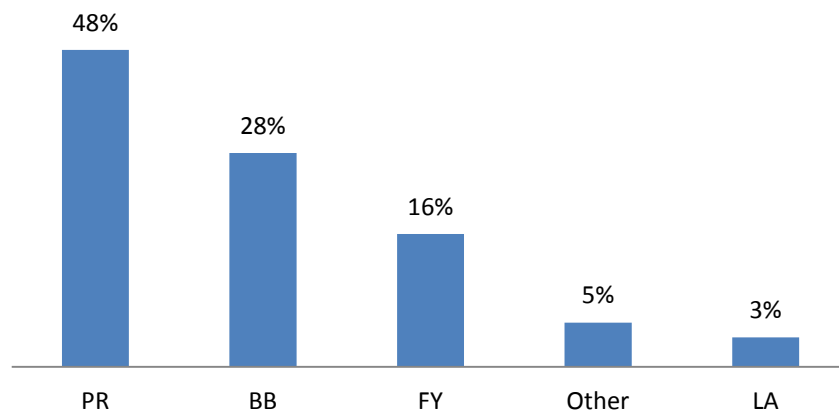
The BB postcode area covers much of East Lancashire, including Blackburn, Burnley, Pendle, Accrington and Clitheroe.

The FY postcode area covers the Fylde Coast, including Blackpool, Fleetwood, Lytham St Annes and Thornton-Cleveleys.

The LA postcode area covers Lancaster and surrounding areas such as Carnforth and Morecambe.

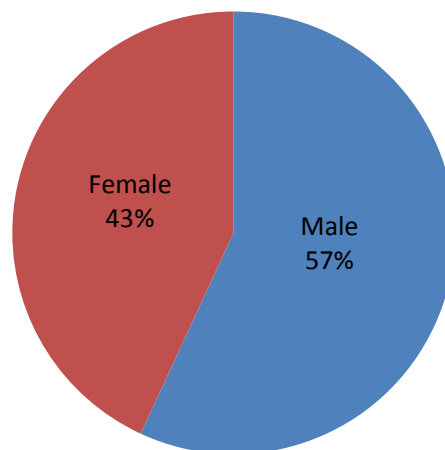
A range of other postcodes were captured from areas of Lancashire including BL (outlining areas of Blackburn, Chorley and Rossendale), OL (outlying areas of Rossendale) and WN (covering parts of West Lancashire such as Skelmersdale).

Figure 3.2: What is your home postcode? (Q8, base – 1269)



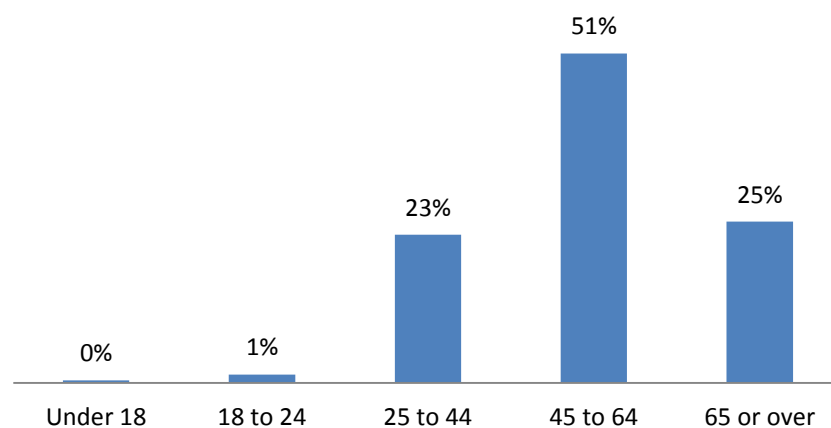
More male residents than female residents responded to the consultation.

Figure 3.3: What is your gender? (Q9, base – 1288)



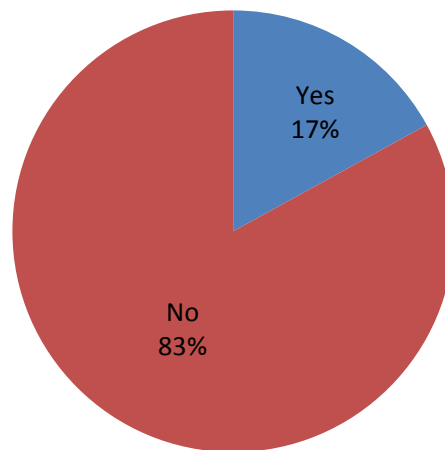
Around half of residents who responded to the consultation were aged between 45 and 64. One in four were aged 65 or over and 23% between the ages of 25 and 44.

Figure 3.4: Which age group do you belong to? (Q10, base – 1304)



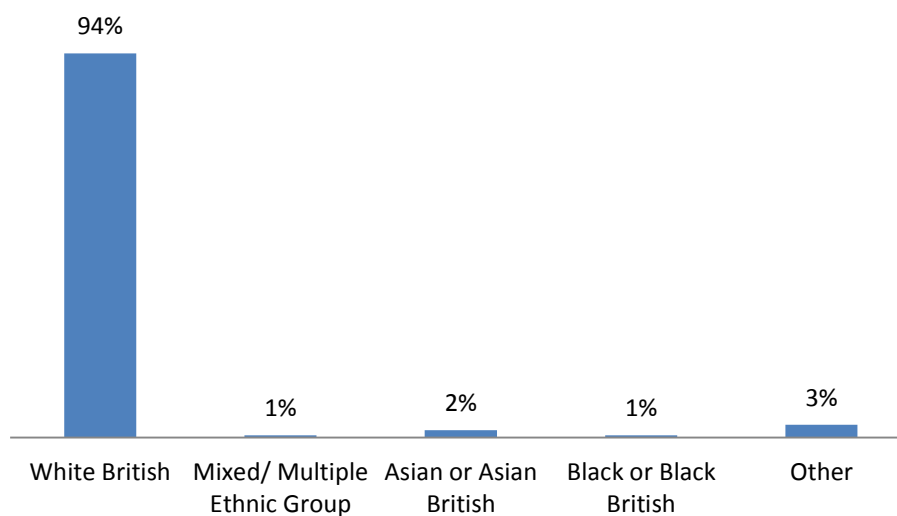
17% of local residents who responded to the consultation indicated that they have a long standing illness or disability.

Figure 3.5: Do you have a long standing illness or disability? (Q11, base – 1272)



The majority of residents responding to the consultation indicated that they are of White British ethnicity.

Figure 3.6: What is your ethnic origin? (Q12, base – 1279)

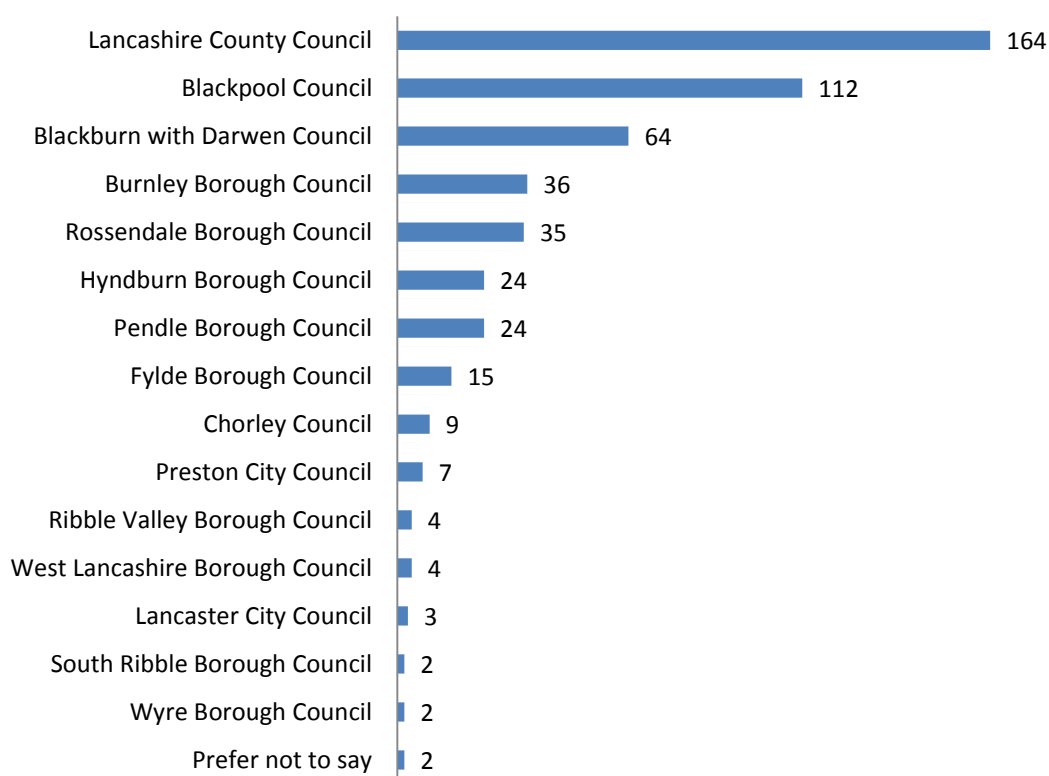


3.2 Local authority employees

Nearly a third of local authority employee responses to the consultation came from those working at Lancashire County Council.

The unitary councils of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen cumulatively account for a further 35% of the local authority employee responses.

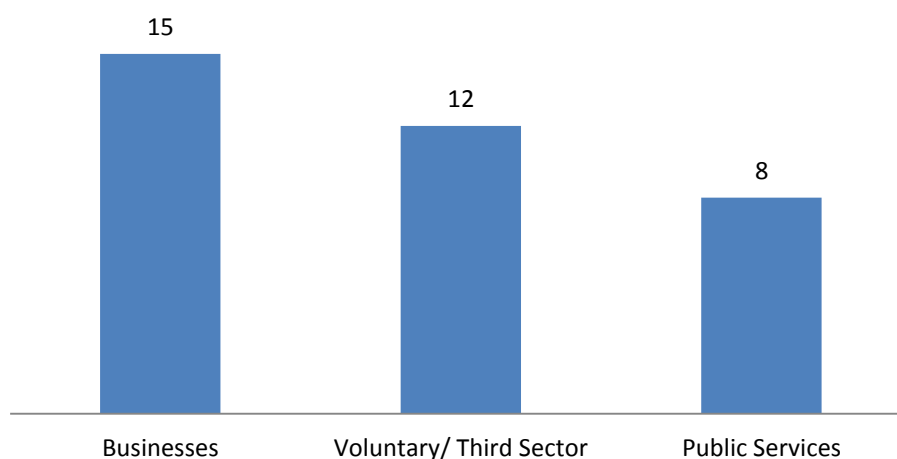
Figure 3.7: Which local authority do you work for? (Q1c, base – 507)



3.3 Businesses and organisations

Of the 35 businesses and organisations who provided their details, either through the survey or via direct written response, 15 came from private businesses across the county. 12 responses to the consultation came from representatives within the voluntary and third sector. This included an enterprise trust and a number of local community groups. A further 8 were from public services representatives covering sectors including health, universities, police and an already established combined authority.

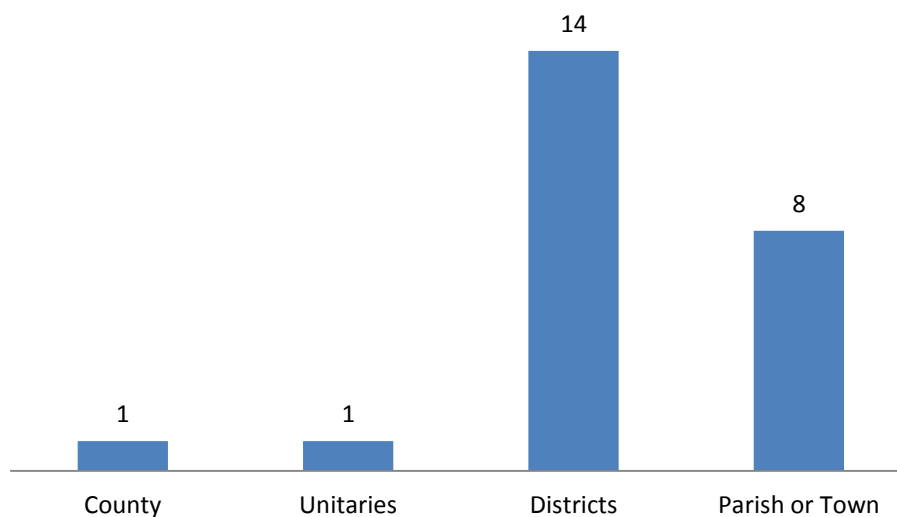
Figure 3.8: Which business or organisation do you represent? (Q1a, base – 35)



3.4 Local councillors

Of the 24 local councillor respondents who indicated the authority they are at, 14 came from district councils across Lancashire and 8 responses were from local parish or town councillors. Note that some parish councillors responded as 'other' which is why the base total exceeds the response level from councillors in Q1.

Figure 3.9: Where are you a councillor at? (Q1d, base – 24)



Moreover, one written response was received from a local Member of Parliament which expressed overall support for the proposal to establish a Combined Authority in Lancashire.

4 Main Findings

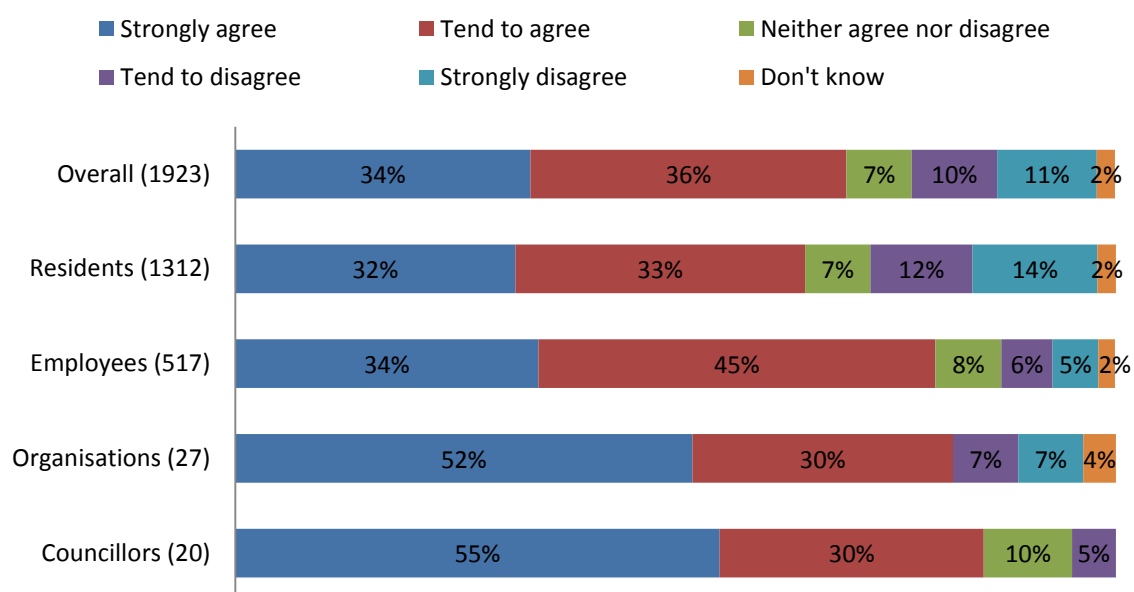
4.1 Working in partnership

74% of consultation respondents strongly or tend to agree that councils in Lancashire working together with businesses and other partners to drive forward transport, economic development and skills in the area is important.

This level of agreement is highest amongst local authority employees in Lancashire (83% strongly or tend to agree).

70% of local residents strongly or tend to agree that this partnership approach is important in Lancashire, 19% strongly or tend to disagree.

Figure 4.1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that this partnership approach is important in Lancashire? (Q2, bases in brackets)



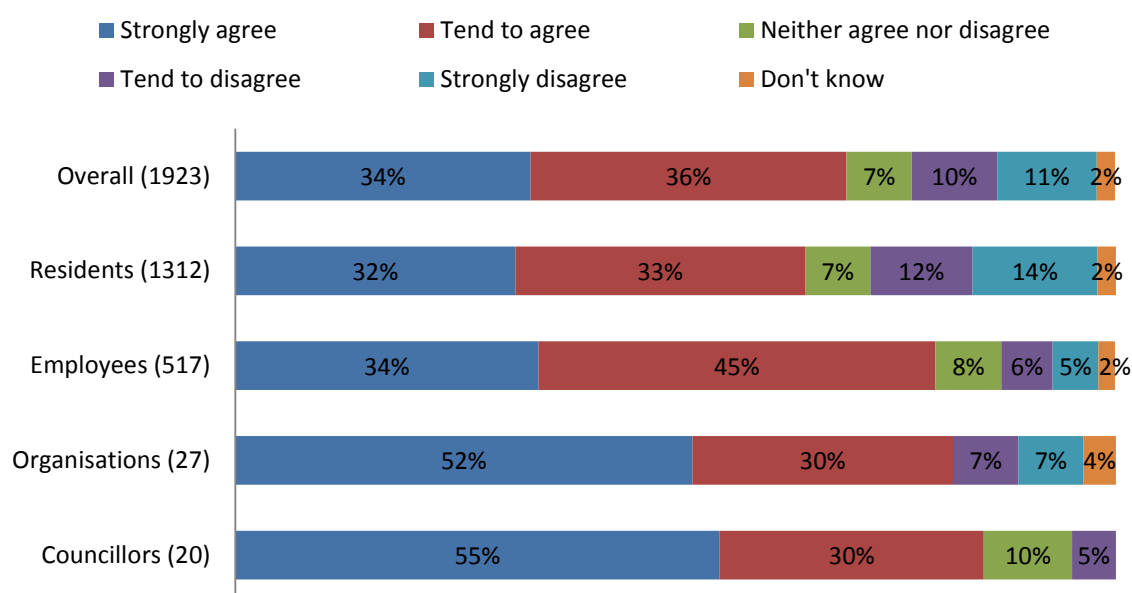
4.2 Proposal to establish a Combined Authority

After setting out the proposal to establish a Combined Authority in Lancashire, 70% of respondents strongly or tend to agree with this proposal. Additionally, each of the 8 written responses from organisations including local CCGs, a University and an existing Combined Authority supported the proposal, with some further comments on partnership working and the focus of the Combined Authority.

The level of agreement is highest amongst local authority employees (79%) and organisations or businesses (82%).

65% of local residents strongly or tend to agree with the proposal to establish a Combined Authority in Lancashire, 26% strongly or tend to disagree. This level of disagreement rises to 34% in the FY postcode area.

Figure 4.2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with establishing a Combined Authority in Lancashire? (Q3, bases in brackets)



Of those who disagree with the proposal to establish a Combined Authority in Lancashire, the main reasons appear to be:

- A view that this would add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy in local government and public services and become 'distant' from residents
- Some concern that parts of the county would get more than others in any combined arrangement, either with resources focused on larger populations or those areas considered more 'in need'
- A belief that the local needs and profiles of different areas would not be adequately addressed through a combined authority
- A perception that this would result in reduced services for local residents due to redundancies and consolidation of services
- Some concern that decision making and processes could be slowed down by centralising through a combined authority
- Some queries around what impact it would have on local Council Tax rates across the county
- Not having enough detailed information about the proposed Combined Authority to make a judgement

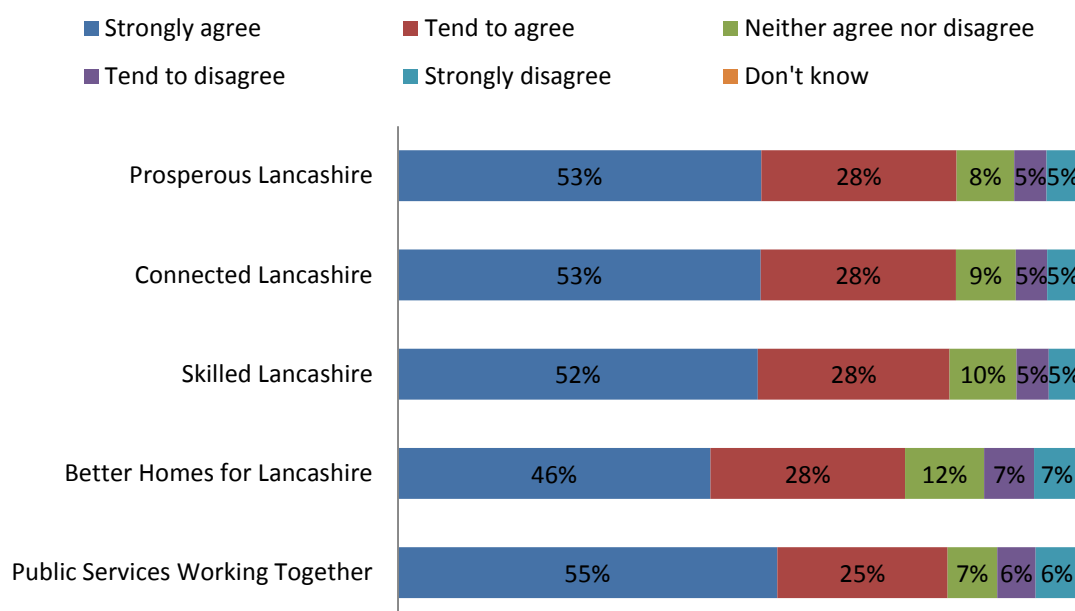
4.3 Key objectives

Five key objectives for the proposed Combined Authority were set out in the consultation:

- A **Prosperous Lancashire** that is recognised as a destination of choice, to do business in, live or visit.
- A **Connected Lancashire** with digital and transport connectivity across the county and to neighbouring areas.
- A **Skilled Lancashire** which can meet the demands of employers and future business growth, supporting employment opportunities for residents.
- **Better Homes for Lancashire** where residents have better living standards with good quality homes and a wide housing offer.
- **Public Services Working Together** with integrated public services.

Generally, the level of agreement was high with the identified objectives for the proposed Combined Authority. 81% agree with a Prosperous and Connected Lancashire, 80% agree with a Skilled Lancashire and Public Services Working Together and 74% with Better Homes for Lancashire.

Figure 4.3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the objectives identified for the proposed Combined Authority? (Q5, base – 1909)



People responding to the consultation were also given the opportunity to set out any other objectives they think the proposed Combined Authority should have. In addition to reaffirming some of the objectives above, the main suggestions include:

- A 'Greener Lancashire' with more focus on the environment and green spaces, reducing pollution, increasing energy efficiency and sustainability and creating a cleaner county with less litter
- A 'Healthy Lancashire' where local health services are joined up, there is more focus on wellbeing and mental health, vulnerable people are protected and people are happier
- An 'Equal Lancashire' with a commitment to tackling social, regional and health inequalities
- A 'Listening Lancashire' with customer focus which is responsive and with more emphasis on democratic accountability and transparency, particularly at a local level, communicating and listening to residents
- An 'Educated Lancashire' with better education systems and performing schools to meet demand
- A 'Safer Lancashire' with lower levels of crime and more safeguarding for children, young people and other vulnerable residents

4.4 Final comments and feedback

Finally, the consultation invited any other comments on the proposal to establish a Combined Authority in Lancashire. Specifically, respondents were asked to think about how the proposed Combined Authority might impact on the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government, as well as views on the constitutional arrangements and functions within the draft scheme and how it can work together with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

874 comments were received on a range of topics and issues, including:

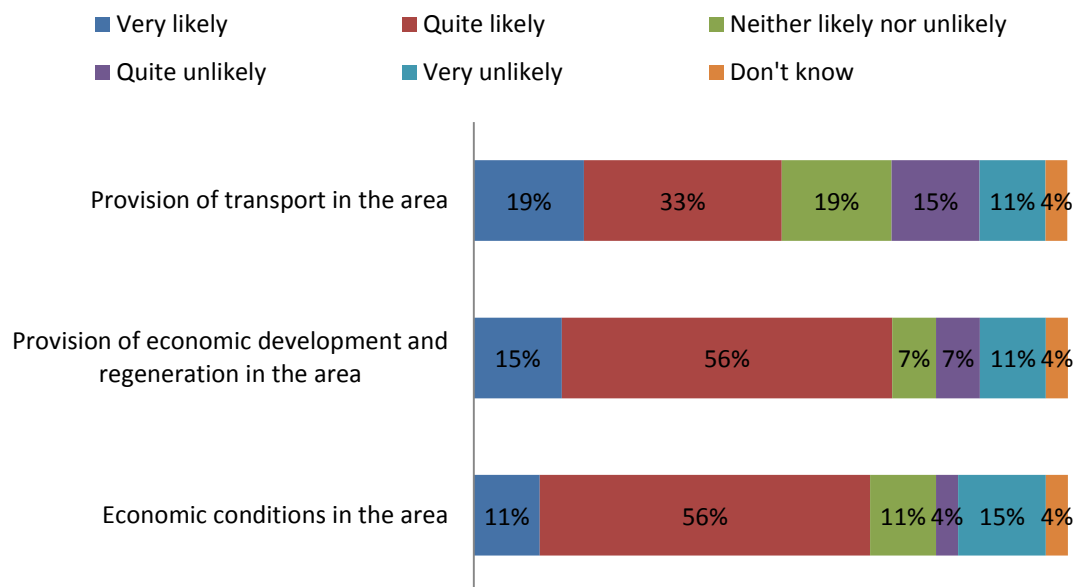
- The importance of maintaining local identity, local decision making and fair spend across localities under any combined arrangement
- A number of different suggestions around the structure and administration, including merges, a unitary Lancashire authority and combinations on different footprints
- General supportive comments for the proposal, with a sense that it would reduce duplication and ensure service delivery is more efficient
- Some hope that the proposed Combined Authority would give Lancashire a stronger, louder voice, particularly on key strategic issues
- Some concern around potential impact on job losses and as a result reduced capacity to deliver local services

4.5 Specific feedback from businesses and organisations

In addition to the core questions within the consultation, businesses and organisations were asked whether they thought the proposed Combined Authority would improve transport and economic development in Lancashire.

Of the 27 businesses or organisations who responded to the question, 71% feel it is very or quite likely that the Combined Authority would improve the provision of economic development and regeneration in the area. Just over half (52%) feel it is very or quite likely that the proposal would improve provision of transport in Lancashire.

Figure 4.4: How likely or unlikely do you consider it that the proposed Lancashire Combined Authority would improve...? (Q13, base – 27)



Some businesses and organisations had comments to make about their response to the above question. A range of comments were made, including the need for effective communication and processes to help businesses and some risks around the distribution of resources and the impact it could have on rural areas with transport cited as an example.

A mix of views were expressed when asked how the proposed Combined Authority might impact on the identities and interests of local communities. Some feel it will enhance Lancashire's influence regionally and nationally, restore the 'proud name of Lancashire' and help share best practice across the county. Some feel it will be a challenge to bring different areas together where demographics and socio-economics vary, as well as a perception that less populated areas may be neglected through any arrangement.

Businesses and organisations were then asked how the proposed Combined Authority might impact on securing effective and convenient local government. A number of comments centred on creating a single, unified voice incorporating other public services who act together on big strategic issues. At the same time any arrangement should remain accessible to local people and any sharing of departments should be efficient and effective.

A range of comments were made in relation to how the proposed Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) could work together. Suggestions included allowing the LEP to vote on some Combined Authority matters, the LEP acting as a sub-committee of the Authority, a role of the Combined Authority to shape the agenda of the LEP and a shared strategy for supporting and developing small businesses.

Final comments made by businesses and organisations included reiterating support for the proposal and the positive impact it could have on Lancashire if implemented successfully, suggestions around the management and structure of the proposed Combined Authority, effective support for businesses across the county and ensuring issues such as health and rurality have a higher profile in Lancashire.