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West Sussex Councils Submit Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation

West Sussex councils have submitted their draft interim plan for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon, outlining their progress and seeking guidance on several critical issues to ensure a successful final submission in September 2025.

The interim plan, submitted by West Sussex Leaders and Chief Executives, emphasises the councils' commitment to devolution and a route map for creating unitary authorities that will deliver the best outcomes for citizens. The interim plan outlines potential options for new council structures. It also highlights the opportunity for public service reform and improved outcomes, particularly in areas such as homelessness prevention and social care.

The councils have also proposed how to address democratic representation, governance arrangements, and how new structures will support devolution ambitions. While acknowledging limited local engagement due to the tight timeline, they have committed to extensive consultation with local residents, businesses and wider stakeholders as proposals develop.

Indicative costs for preparing proposals and implementation have been provided, along with arrangements for inter-council cooperation and decision-making.

However, several key questions remain that require clarification from the government. Chief amongst these is the size and boundaries of potential new unitary authorities, particularly concerning any required expansion of Brighton & Hove. In addition, guidance is sought on how Crawley fits the unitarisation and devolution agenda given its strong economic links to Surrey. The councils are seeking clear guidelines on population size limits, funding, timelines, and the impact of the Devolution Bill.

"We are making good progress, but we need clarity on these issues to avoid costly delays and ensure we develop the most effective structures for our communities," said Michael Jones, Leader of Crawley Borough Council on behalf of the West Sussex Leaders. "We are committed to working collaboratively to create a shared evidence base and develop proposals that reflect the unique needs of our area."

"We are excited about the opportunities that LGR brings for public service reform and delivering significant improvements for local communities," Michael Jones added. "We are working diligently to ensure a smooth transition and a positive legacy for West Sussex."

The councils are seeking urgent answers to their questions from the government to maintain momentum and ensure a robust final submission in September.