

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Member Briefing, 11 June 2025



Devolution and LGR: what it means



- [English Devolution White Paper](#) published December 2024
- Sets out the Government's approach to both devolution and local government reorganisation
- Confirms all two-tier areas will be required to become unitary authorities

Reminder of LGR & devolution timelines



Date	
Summer 2025	Outcome of Government consultation on Sussex devolution (potentially to be announced later this month)
To end Aug 2025	Development of final West Sussex LGR proposals, including public consultation and member engagement
Sept 2025	West Sussex councils formally adopt their preferred proposal for LGR and submit these to Government
Dec 2025 – March 2026	Government decides on which LGR proposal to implement
May 2026	Elections for the Sussex Mayor (and current date for County Council elections)
May 2027	Shadow unitary elections
May 2028	Unitary Council elections New unitary councils start to deliver services to residents

Sussex Mayoral Combined Authority



- Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council are working towards establishing a Joint Committee as the most effective method of discharging our collective responsibilities, with Cabinet decisions to establish expected.
- A joint lead will be appointed by the 3 councils to develop the delivery programme and implement
- Still need to work through details: when to functions transfer, what is needed on Day 1?

Devolution latest



- **Outcomes of Government consultation on Sussex devolution –**
expect funding to be announced in Spending Review, with formal ministerial decision to implement later
- **Each council to take the lead for a key area:**
 - **West Sussex CC** to be the Accountable Body and account for spend of public money
 - **East Sussex CC** to be responsible for governance
 - **Brighton & Hove CC** to run Mayoral election (based on experience of running Police and Crime Commissioner elections across Sussex) and to lead on communications
 - **Funding** – Government has confirmed £1m funding to deliver the mayoral county combined authority in 2025/26

LGR in West Sussex



- Government requires all two-tier areas to unitarise. Doing nothing is not a sustainable option
- Interim submission in March 2025, from all West Sussex Leaders setting out all the options – a county unitary; 2 unitaries on the county footprint; a reduced West Sussex footprint (no preferences expressed)
- A county unitary is, prima facie, likely to best meet the requirements, given the size of the county council's budget and the cost and risk of disaggregation – but we are open minded and the final decision on the preferred option will be informed by what the evidence shows. Even with a shared evidence based, it is unlikely that all West Sussex Councils will come to the same conclusion on which is the preferred option
- We continue to believe that working collaboratively is the best way to achieve the aims of this process and sets the best conditions for likely success new councils once established
- Each council acknowledges that when it comes to submitting final proposals, there may be a difference of opinion about which model is best and more than one option may be put forward, with councils indicating their preferred model

LGR latest – developing the business case



- **Fortnightly meetings of Council Leaders** overseeing the development of the LGR business case on behalf of all West Sussex councils
- Cross-party **member working group** assisting with development of LGR proposal, supporting West Sussex County Council's contribution
- The **business case** will cover, for each option:
 - **Financial** sustainability and resilience, including how to allocate the High Needs Dedicated Support Grant deficit
 - **Governance**, including number of members
 - **Community** voice and decision making
 - **Capacity** to deliver, including the impact of merging and splitting services including housing, children's social care and adult social care

Member working group



- Cllr Steve Waight (Chair), Cllr Sarah Payne, Cllr Keir Greenway, Cllr Charlotte Kenyon, Cllr Kevin Boram, Cllr Chris Oxlade, Cllr Trevor Bence, Cllr James Walsh and Cllr Donna Johnson.
- Has met twice, with focus on:
 - Lessons learn from previous rounds of local government reorganisation – how to give new councils strong foundations
 - Engagement with residents, businesses and partners – feeding back on the proposals from the Joint West Sussex Team
 - Community engagement options for the new unitary councils – role of parish and town councils or other community connections

Options for democratic accountability

- Options for democratic accountability will be included in the LGR business case: how many councillors representing how many electors
- Electoral Review Panel TFG is considering options, reporting into All Party Working Group and Leader, with the first meeting on 3 June

Wider engagement



- Information about both LGR and Devolution is available on the WSCC website - [Future-of-local-government-in-Sussex](#)
- West Sussex councils will engage on the evidence base over the summer (Timing TBC)
- The Government will also carry out a statutory consultation following our final submission in September

Wider county councillor involvement



- **Full Council 18 July :** Leader's updates and opportunity for questions
- **Member working group:** input into development of the proposal
- **Electoral Review Panel TFG:** consider the size/number of members for unitary options
- **Public engagement:** members can take part in this (timing TBC)
- **Member Briefing:** Wednesday 3 September
- **Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee:** possible scrutiny of the final proposal on 19 September
- **23 September:** full Council consideration on the final proposal to submit to government, ahead of Cabinet meeting later that day

How will we judge the options?

Any proposal must:

- Be consistent with the criteria set out in the English Devolution White Paper and subsequent guidance
- Minimise disruption and turbulence to services during transition
- Be financially and socially resilient and have capacity to deliver
- Recognise the costs and risks of splitting services

Any Questions?



Further information



- **The Mine:** dedicated section, updated regularly, for information on [Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation](#)
- **The Council's website:** the devolution and local government reorganisation pages on the County Council's website will also be updated regularly: [Future of Local Government in West Sussex](#)
- [English Devolution White Paper](#) published December 2024