

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ADDENDUM

4.00PM, THURSDAY, 31 JULY 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

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ADDENDUM

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Brighton & Hove City Council

Agenda Item **25**

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - Progress Update and Engagement Overview

Date of meeting: 31 July 2025

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny

Contact Officer: Name: Rachel Kelly, Programme Director LGR
Email: rachel.kelly@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards)

Key Decision: No

For general release

Note: Urgency

By reason of the special circumstances below, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the 1972 Act, the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Reasons for urgency

The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that the relevant consultation documents were not available until 25th July.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Brighton & Hove City Council's approach to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), aligned to the launch of the public engagement phase in July 2025. It is brought forward to ensure member oversight remains central to the process.
- 1.2 The Committee received an update on English Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in June 2024, including the publication of the

Council's Interim Plan. That plan set out a commitment to transparency, public engagement and early member involvement.

1.3 This specially convened meeting reflects the importance of aligning Scrutiny input with the public engagement timeline and ensuring timely oversight ahead of the Council's statutory submission.

1.4 The report:

- Summarises progress since the Committee last considered LGR and Devolution matters
- Outlines the Council's engagement approach and rationale
- Sets out the options under consideration and how they align with national criteria
- Describes how partner engagement will inform the next phase
- Clarifies the statutory next steps following the Council's proposal
- Invites feedback and further lines of enquiry from Members

2. Recommendations

2.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee to:

- note the progress update on Local Government Reorganisation;
- consider the engagement approach and materials (Appendix 1);
- identify any issues or lines of enquiry that need to be considered in the development of BHCC's final proposal to Government.

3. Context and Background Information

3.1 The Government is planning a major reorganisation of how councils work. Under these plans, County and District Councils, such as neighbouring East Sussex County Council and Lewes District Council, will be abolished and replaced by new unitary councils. This is part of a wider national set of reforms detailed in the Devolution White Paper. These proposals are intended to strengthen local leadership, improve service integration, and ensure long-term financial resilience.

3.2 On 3 June 2025, the Government formally invited councils in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove to submit final proposals for Local Government Reorganisation within the East Sussex ceremonial county boundary. In parallel, councils in West Sussex were invited to develop proposals for the West Sussex ceremonial county boundary. While these invitations were framed around the two ceremonial counties, the Minister for Local Government and Devolution made clear that views on the wider Sussex

footprint would be welcomed, particularly in light of future Mayoral Combined Authority boundaries

- 3.3 Brighton & Hove, as an existing unitary authority, has not been excluded from these discussions and is expected to test its future scale and sustainability through this process.
- 3.4 The Government has made clear that it is not prescribing a single model or geography for Local Government Reorganisation. Instead, proposals must meet their core criteria including:
- Serving a population of around 500,000 (or providing a strong rationale for deviation). Minister McMahon has expressed that unitaries of 300,000 may be considered.
 - Aligning with patterns of service use, travel, work and community identity
 - Demonstrating financial sustainability and long-term value for money
 - Protecting or enhancing public services through more integrated delivery
 - Showing evidence of local support
- 3.5 Further guidance from MHCLG (June 2025) confirms:
- There is no expectation of a single map or unified Sussex-wide proposal, but reference and consideration of the new Mayoral Authority for Sussex and Brighton would be welcomed.
 - All councils must demonstrate how proposed boundaries reflect functional geographies, service resilience, and fiscal stability
 - MHCLG will decide whether proposals meet the government's criteria, assess viability and which proposals they will take to statutory consultation
- 3.6 Government guidance encourages councils to work within existing local authority boundaries, using whole areas wherever possible. However, it also recognises that in some cases, the most coherent or viable proposal may involve combining parts of neighbouring authorities. Where this arises, proposals must be clearly justified and aligned to functional geographies and service integration.
- 3.7 In this context, councils may consult using whole wards as building blocks for potential new geographies. This ensures clarity and consistency while enabling proposals to reflect real-world patterns of service use and community life. Should any reorganisation proceed, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) would lead a formal review of electoral arrangements, including warding and representation for any new authority.
- 3.8 All proposals must be submitted to MHCLG by 26 September 2025, with our Cabinet due to consider Brighton & Hove's proposal on 25 September 2025.

- 3.9 MHCLG will assess all proposals received and will only proceed to statutory consultation where a proposal is deemed to meet the Government's criteria and to be financially viable. This statutory consultation will be led by Government and separate from the local engagement phase.
- 3.10 Other local authorities across East and West Sussex will be submitting their own proposals, which may reflect differing boundaries. However, as these options emerge, the Council is continuing to undertake analysis to assess how its options align with neighbouring unitaries and the wider Sussex geography, though this is not part of the BHCC's public consultation. This will help us understand wider local support for any Sussex model that Brighton and Hove is minded to submit, as per the Governments core criteria.
- 3.11 The timeline for this work is set nationally. While the Council would prefer a longer period for consideration and analysis, the timescales have been set to align with the Government's intended timetable for announcing new Mayoral Combined Authorities in May 2026. The Council is doing all it can to ensure a robust and inclusive process within these constraints.

4. Analysis and Consideration of Alternative Options

- 4.1 The options currently under consultation were informed by early engagement undertaken between 24 February and 10 March 2025, using the Council's "Your Voice" platform. A total of 597 responses were received from residents, staff and stakeholders. This engagement did not test specific options but gathered views on the principles and potential implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 4.2 Feedback reflected a wide range of perspectives. While many respondents expressed concerns about losing Brighton & Hove's distinct identity, democratic accountability, or quality of services, others saw potential benefits in improved coordination, efficiency and economies of scale. There was conditional support for modest merge with eastward neighbourhoods, particularly to areas such as Saltdean, Peacehaven and Newhaven, which respondents identified as having natural links to the city. By contrast, proposals involving merging with areas to the north or west raised stronger concerns, particularly around identity, infrastructure and differences in community needs. The importance of transparent communication also emerged as a theme, informing how the current consultation has been framed.

- 4.3 Alongside this engagement, the Council undertook early technical appraisal of a range of potential configurations, including boundary changes to the north, west, and east. The eastern corridor was identified as the most viable focus for consultation. This reflects strong patterns of service usage, shared public infrastructure, education and health networks, and cross-boundary travel along the A259. Brighton & Hove already delivers or manages services in several of these areas, including parts of the Downland Estate. These factors support a coherent and functional geography for potential reorganisation, aligned with MHCLG guidance.
- 4.4 By contrast, options to the north and west presented less compelling evidence of service integration or community alignment. In the early engagement, many residents identified the South Downs as a natural northern boundary, and noted differences in rural character, demographics, and infrastructure. While some respondents recognised potential benefits in westward integration (e.g. with Shoreham), evidence of existing cross-boundary service reliance or commuting patterns was weaker. Given these findings, and the Government's criteria that proposals must be deliverable, coherent and grounded in real service geographies, the Council has focused on the eastern corridor, where both public sentiment and technical evidence are stronger.
- 4.5 The Council is now engaging on four options for reorganisation. These are all modest merging of Brighton & Hove unitary area with neighbouring areas. They reflect viable, locally grounded proposals for functional growth, while remaining within manageable geographic and population boundaries. Full descriptions of each option are provided in the Engagement Document (Appendix 1).
- 4.6 The four options focus on different configurations east:
- Option A: Strengthening the Eastern Edge
This proposes incorporating East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, and Peacehaven. It reflects natural patterns of travel, service use, and community overlap with the city's eastern boundary.
 - Option B: Extending to the Eastern Downs
Building on Option A, this includes the parish of Kingston, enabling greater continuity with rural downland communities and service networks.
 - Option C: Uniting the Coastal Corridor
Extends Option B by incorporating Newhaven, creating a more coherent coastal geography with shared economic and transport links, particularly along the A259 corridor.
 - Option D: Coast and Downs Partnership
Combines all of the above, presenting the broadest illustrative footprint

and the greatest potential for achieving scale, service integration, and financial resilience.

- 4.7 These options were identified through early technical analysis of key factors including:
- Functional geography and travel-to-work areas
 - Use of public services and infrastructure
 - Existing community and economic ties
 - Population scale in relation to MHCLG's core criteria
 - Initial financial modelling, recognising limitations in available data
- 4.8 They are intended to provide a platform for discussion, not a finalised set of boundaries. The Council is not at this stage recommending any single option, nor excluding other potential configurations which may emerge through feedback or further analysis.
- 4.9 The aim of engaging on these options is twofold:
- To generate public feedback on which configurations feel most coherent and viable from a resident and community perspective
 - To signal clearly to MHCLG that the Council is engaging meaningfully with the Government's LGR criteria, including functional fit, local support, and financial resilience
- 4.10 Feedback from this consultation will inform further technical appraisal and comparative analysis over the summer, alongside engagement with partners and neighbouring councils.
- 4.11 It is important to acknowledge the limits of the current engagement. The Council is only engaging within its current boundaries, in line with statutory constraints and MHCLG guidance. Engagement with other councils, the NHS, and other anchor institutions is taking place through targeted bilateral conversations, deep-dive interviews, and shared analysis, not through the public consultation document.
- 4.12 A further strand of internal work is underway to assess how each option aligns with:
- Other potential unitary proposals being developed across East and West Sussex
 - Existing and future service commissioning footprints, particularly in health, care, and children's services
 - The broader viability of the Sussex sub-region under different LGR scenarios

- 4.13 This work is necessary because there is no requirement, or expectation, from MHCLG for a single, Sussex-wide solution. Multiple proposals are expected to be submitted from across the region, and MHCLG will assess each on its own merits, including how well they relate to one another. Brighton & Hove's options must therefore be robust in their own right, while also demonstrating how they contribute to a coherent wider picture.

5. Community Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 Our public consultation launched on 25 July 2025 and runs until 25 August. The engagement approach aims to ensure a range of voices are heard.
- 5.2 Our consultation invites residents, partners, community groups and stakeholders to:
- Understand what LGR means in the local context
 - Consider four boundary options developed in response to national criteria
 - Share views on what matters most to them, from local identity to service continuity
- 5.3 Given the limited timeline, the Council is delivering a proportionate engagement programme. In-person events have been planned in Saltdean and along the city's eastern border. Paper surveys are available through libraries, and digital materials have been made as accessible and inclusive as possible.
- 5.4 The consultation is clear that no decision has been made. Rather than asking the public to choose a final option, the Council is seeking to shape its formal proposal based on resident and stakeholder input.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 A key national test for LGR proposals is the financial *sustainability* of the resulting unitary authorities. Each proposed footprint must demonstrate viability in the long term, including the ability to meet statutory responsibilities and deliver value for money.
- 6.2 The Council is undertaking detailed analysis of each option's population scale, revenue base, and cost implications, including dependencies on financial data from neighbouring authorities. This work is ongoing and will inform the final submission to Government. At this stage, engagement and modelling are helping to identify the potential implications of reorganisation.

- 6.3 A second key test is financial *deliverability*: the ability of local authorities to absorb the costs of transition and structural change. The Government has not committed to providing transitional funding, meaning any implementation costs must be borne locally. this creates a potential risk for BHCC and we will continue to engage with government on funding.
- 6.4 The financial context for reorganisation is shaped by the wider local government funding environment, including:
- The forthcoming Fair Funding Review, which will redefine allocation formulas and baselines
 - Rising demand and cost pressures across statutory services, particularly adult social care
- 6.5 Financial modelling is taking place and will be reflected in the final Cabinet paper and submission to MHCLG.

Finance Officer: John Hooton

Date: 240725

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Following the submission of LGR proposals in September, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will carry out a statutory consultation before Government determine which proposal, if any, is to be implemented. A statutory process will then be followed to implement the new Unitary Authorities and establish the new single tier of government in the area. The legal process will specify the transition arrangements during the period until new unitary councils go live.
- 7.2 Legal advice will be required throughout the programme.

Legal Officer: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 240725

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed as part of the Council's formal proposal. The engagement process has been designed to ensure a range of voices are heard, including those at risk of exclusion from digital channels.

9. Sustainability Implications

- 9.1 The engagement process includes reference to environmental and infrastructure considerations. While reorganisation is not being driven by net

zero or place-shaping objectives, the potential for greater integration of local transport, planning and climate action across geographies is being explored.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 10.1 The implications of LGR for health, adult social care, public health and integrated commissioning being explored. Structured interviews with NHS partners, including the ICB, provider trusts, and commissioners, will be undertaken in August. These will inform:
- The resilience of place-based working
 - Continuity of commissioning and safeguarding responsibilities
 - Workforce, governance and integration impacts
- 10.2 The Council recognises that changes to commissioning footprints and integration arrangements are of particular interest to health scrutiny members and commits to sharing emerging findings as part of future engagement. Health scrutiny members are invited to help shape the lines of enquiry.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The Local Government Reorganisation programme remains at an early but critical stage. This update reflects the Council's commitment to open engagement, robust governance and timely delivery in line with national deadlines.
- 11.2 The programme faces a compressed timeline, with the Council required to submit its proposal to Government by 26 September 2025, ahead of Cabinet consideration on 25 September 2025. This timeline has been set nationally to align with the Government's plans for new Mayoral Combined Authorities in May 2026. While the Council acknowledges that the timetable is uncomfortable, it is doing all it can to deliver a high-quality and inclusive process within the constraints.
- 11.3 MHCLG will assess all proposals received, including those from other Sussex authorities, against national criteria. There is no expectation of a single Sussex-wide view. MHCLG will determine whether proposals are viable and whether they proceed to statutory consultation, likely to begin from October 2025.
- 11.4 The Council recognises the scale and complexity of this decision and welcomes continued scrutiny as part of ensuring that any proposal reflects local needs, statutory responsibilities, and long-term resilience.

Supporting Documentation

- **Appendix 1** – LGR Engagement Document, July 2025

Exploring the options for local government reorganisation

Help shape how Brighton & Hove responds to big changes in local government.

The government is planning a major reorganisation of how local councils work and has asked councils in Sussex to put forward proposals.

This is called Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and is part of a wider plans outlined in the English Devolution White Paper.

Help shape our response to government

We'd like your help to shape our response. What you tell us will inform the proposal we send to the government.

The government wants to abolish two tier county and district councils, like East Sussex County Council and Lewes District Council, with new single councils called 'unitary' councils. These new councils would take on all local services under one roof, from roads and housing to planning and care for adults.

Unlike other councils in Sussex, Brighton & Hove is already a unitary council but we're still affected. The government says that councils like ours need to grow to stay strong and financially secure. That means looking at our boundaries to better reflect how people live, travel and use local services.

We don't control when or how these changes happen, but we do have a chance to help shape what comes next. If we don't take part, decisions could be made for us without our input.

The options

To meet the government's criteria for local government reorganisation, we'll need to grow our boundaries and serve a larger population than we do now.

We're consulting on four options, all involving merging with local government wards to the east of the city. This is because there are already strong connections there, like shared hospitals, schools, bus routes and people working across the area.

These options are based on the feedback and evidence we learned from you in April, when we first asked for your opinions. The early engagement exercise helped us understand local priorities and concerns.

We looked at options to the west as well. While those areas face similar challenges as Brighton & Hove, they don't offer as many opportunities to improve local services or make communities more resilient. This means they're less likely to meet the government's criteria for reorganisation.

This change is part of bigger plans across the country. The government wants to give more power to the Sussex region by setting up a new Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). The new councils will be part of this MCA, so what we decide now will affect how local people influence future decisions about things like transport, housing, skills and investment.

We're aiming for a fair setup across Sussex, where every council has enough people, money and influence to run services well and speak up for its community.

Nothing's been decided yet. Your feedback will help shape Brighton & Hove's plans, but the government will choose which ideas move forward and what happens next.

Have your say

Have your say on the options until Monday 25 August 2025. The survey will take around 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

About you

1. How are you primarily responding? (optional)

We know people have many different relationships with the council and the city.

For example, you may be a resident and a member of staff, or a resident and business owner or part of a community group.

Let us know how you're primarily responding. Only choose one option.

**Only choose one option.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> A resident of Brighton & Hove | <input type="radio"/> A resident living outside of Brighton & Hove who may be affected by these proposed options |
| <input type="radio"/> A council employee | <input type="radio"/> Local business |
| <input type="radio"/> Local charity, community or voluntary organisation | <input type="radio"/> A public sector stakeholder organisation such as police, health, fire and rescue |
| <input type="radio"/> Other | |

If 'Other', please specify

About you

2. What is your full postcode? (optional)

We ask this so we can understand where responses are coming from. It helps us identify patterns in how different communities are using services and what views are shared in different places.

This supports fair and balanced analysis of the consultation.

Please answer based on how you identified yourself in question 1. For example, resident, business or organisation.

What matters to You

3. Which of the following Brighton & Hove services have you used in the last 12 months? (optional)

Please select all that apply.

**Choose as many as you like*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bus or transport network | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary or further education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health support in schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and seafront |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries or cultural venues | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's or youth services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public health like health checks or vaccinations | <input type="checkbox"/> Waste and recycling centres |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council housing or homelessness advice | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |

4. Do you use similar services in other areas? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know / not sure

What matters to you

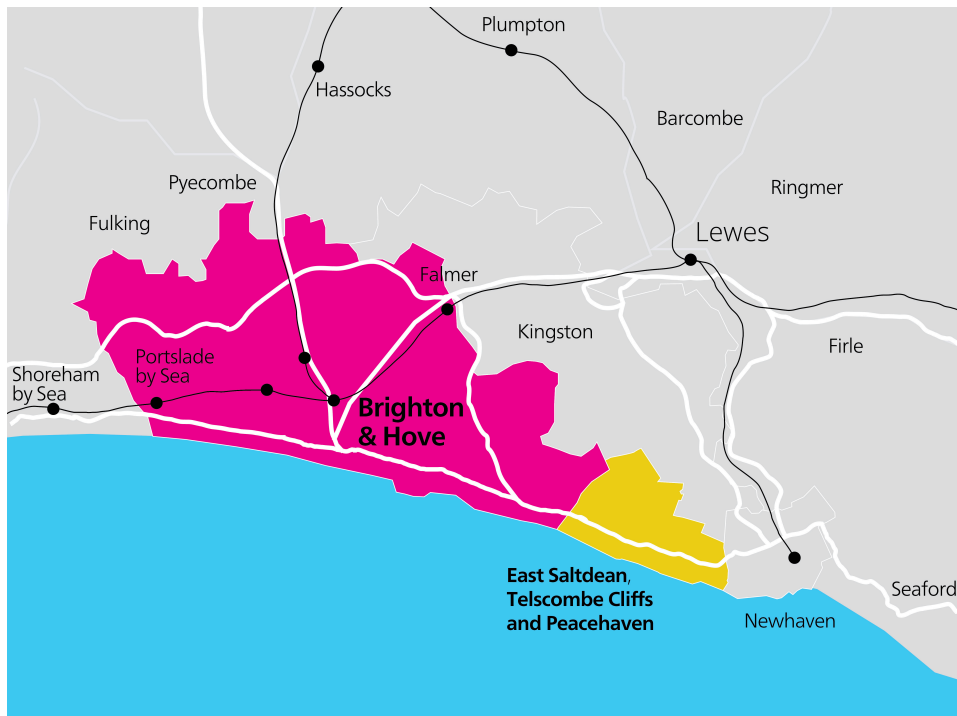
5. If change does happen and your areas becomes part of a merged larger council, what would be most important to protect or preserve? (optional)

Think about local services, identity, representation or something else.

What matters to you

6. What concerns, if any, do you have about how local councils will change through reorganisation? (optional)

Your views on the proposed option A



This option brings together our three neighbouring towns, East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven, within a single council area with Brighton & Hove. It reflects the close, everyday connections between the areas.

Residents in these areas regularly use Brighton & Hove's schools, hospitals, public transport and leisure facilities, and many commute into the city for work.

Despite this, these communities currently sit outside the city's boundary and have no formal voice in shaping the services they use. This option would correct that by aligning democratic representation with how people already live, without changing the distinct identity of these places.

Bringing these towns together with Brighton & Hove in to one council area could help unlock greater investment in local priorities, such as improved coordination of school places, youth services over a wider area and better public transport links.

7. To what extent do you support or oppose option A: strengthening the eastern edge (optional)

This will mean expanding the boundaries to include East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven.

Please write a number between 1 (Strongly support) and 5 (Strongly oppose) only

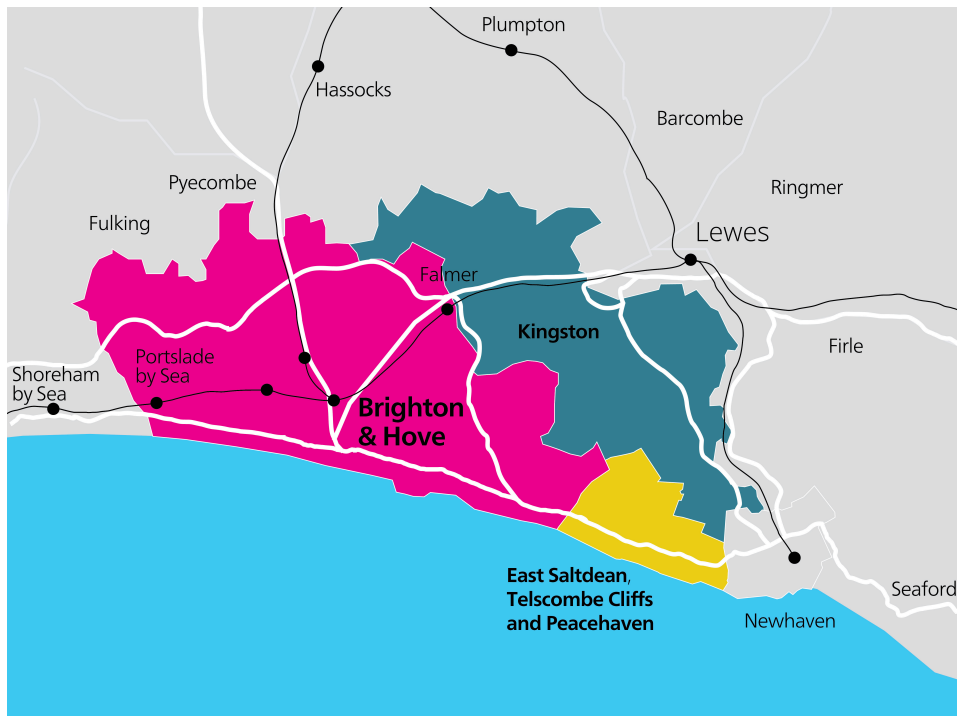
8. What are your main reasons for your answer? (optional)

Use this box to tell us more about what you think.

You might want to consider:

- Does the option feel too big or too small?
- Does it reflect your area's identity or not?
- Does it match how you use services, travel or take part in community life?

Your views on the proposed option B



This option brings together East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven with Kingston within a single council area with Brighton & Hove.

Many Kingston residents rely on Brighton & Hove for education, healthcare and employment, through the A27 and closeness to Falmer Station.

The University of Sussex campus is mostly in Brighton & Hove, but part of it falls under Lewes. Bringing it all under one council would make services for students more joined-up and easier to manage.

We already manage parts of the Downland Estate and this option would bring the estate fully into the city's council area. Including this would line up who owns the land, who provides services and who makes decisions for the area.

Including Kingston could also support better environmental planning and stewardship of the downs and improve transport planning along the A27 corridor.

Despite these changes, Kingston's rural character and identity would be preserved. Including the area ensures its residents are fairly represented in decisions about services they already use, while giving rural voices a formal seat within a broader city-region framework.

9. To what extent do you support or oppose option B: extending to the eastern downs (optional)

This will mean expanding the boundaries to include East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven and Kingston.

Please write a number between 1 (Strongly support) and 5 (Strongly oppose) only

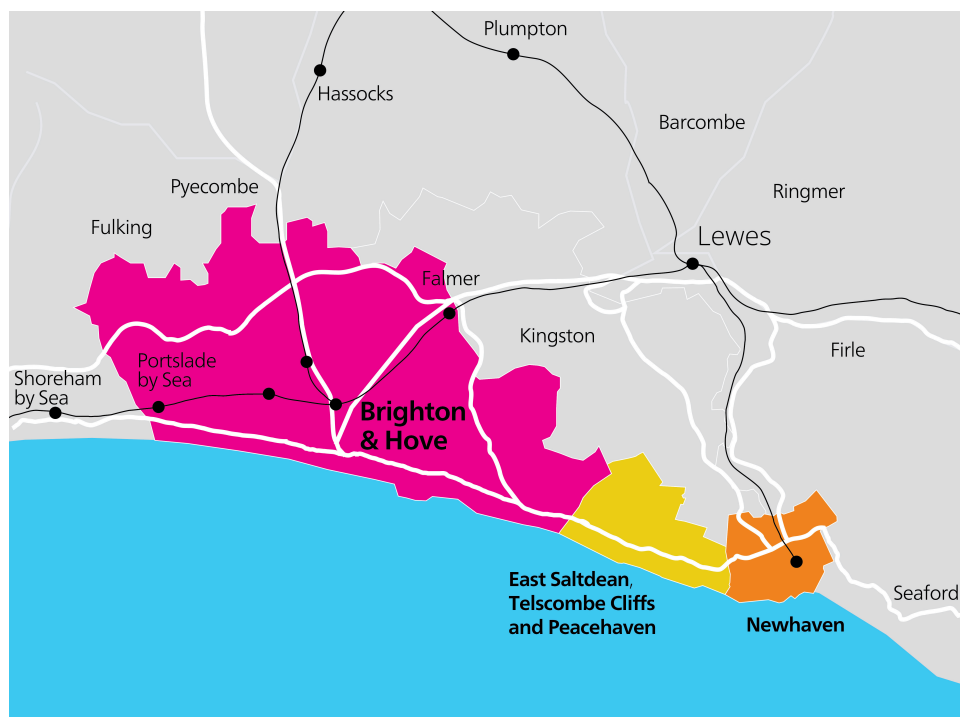
10. What are your main reasons for your answer? (optional)

Use this box to tell us more about what you think.

You might want to consider:

- Does the option feel too big or too small?
- Does it reflect your area's identity or not?
- Does it match how you use services, travel or take part in community life?

Your views on the proposed option C



This option brings together a continuous stretch of the Sussex coast, from East Saltdean through Peacehaven to Newhaven, within a single council area with Brighton & Hove.

These communities are already connected in everyday life. Many people travel between them for work, education, healthcare, shopping and leisure. Public transport, housing markets and essential services already operate across current council boundaries.

Peacehaven and Newhaven each have a strong sense of identity but face challenges that have proved difficult to tackle in isolation. Bringing these places into a single council would allow for coordinated planning and investment across the coastal area.

It would enable these areas to draw on Brighton & Hove's national networks and experience, for example, improved bus links, economic investment or increasing access to job opportunities. As well as support action on shared challenges like coastal erosion, climate resilience and flood risk.

Rather than being absorbed, towns like Newhaven and Peacehaven would be an equal part of the local authority. Local priorities would have a stronger voice. Each place could retain its character while benefiting from shared resources, better coordination and an ambitious future.

11. To what extent do you support or oppose option C: uniting the coastal corridor (optional)

This will mean expanding the boundaries to include East Saltdean & Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven and Newhaven.

Please write a number between 1 (Strongly support) and 5 (Strongly oppose) only

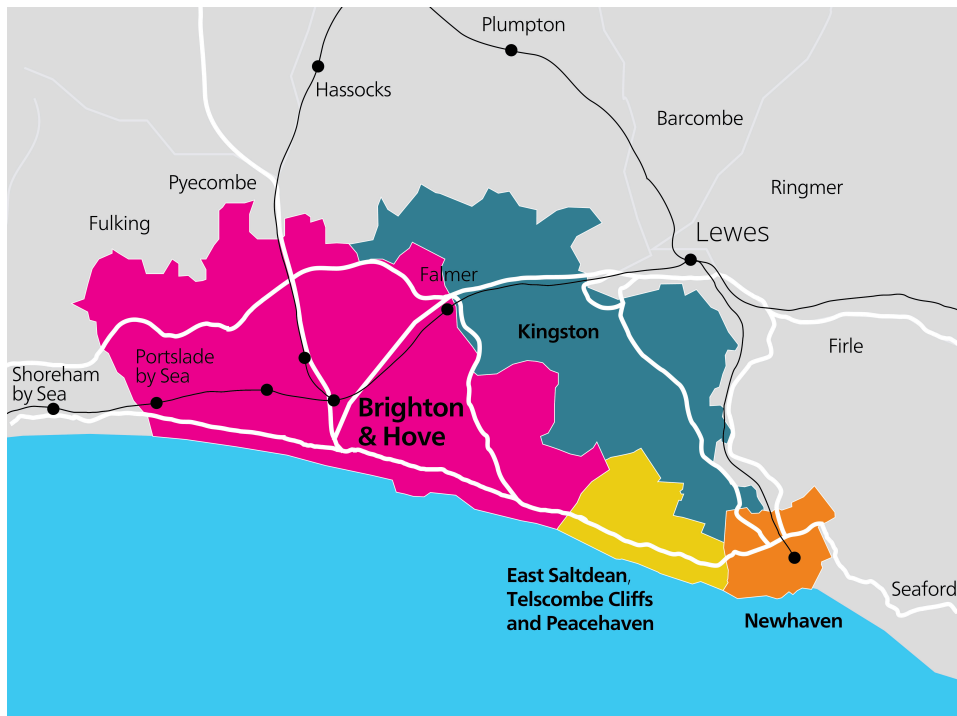
12. What are your main reasons for your answer? (optional)

Use this box to tell us more about what you think.

You might want to consider:

- Does the option feel too big or too small?
- Does it reflect your area's identity or not?
- Does it match how you use services, travel or take part in community life?

Your views on the proposed option D



This option brings together a mix of coastal towns and rural villages into a single council area with Brighton & Hove.

This is the most balanced option in terms of population. It would create a council that is large enough to deliver services efficiently, while remaining locally accountable. Each area would continue to elect its own councillors, giving communities a clear voice and helping to shape services that work for everyone.

Many people in these areas already travel into the city for work, health care, schools, shopping and leisure. Brighton & Hove already manages land and services nearby, including Stanmer Park and parts of the Downland Estate.

Creating one council for this wider area would allow decisions about shared services to be made in a more joined-up and effective way. This includes areas such as public transport, social care, youth services, housing and parks. It would also give residents outside the current city boundary a stronger voice in how services they use are planned and delivered.

Peacehaven and Newhaven, having stronger links with Brighton & Hove's diverse and growing economy would enable coordinated investment, planning and regeneration including growing local jobs and improving public spaces.

Kingston is a rural area just east of the city. Although small, many residents already rely on Brighton & Hove for services. Including Kingston in the same council area would ensure fairer representation, while continuing to reflect its rural character and priorities.

13. To what extent do you support or oppose option D: Coast and Downs Partnership (optional)

This will mean expanding the boundaries to include: East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven, Newhaven, Kingston

Please write a number between 1 (Strongly support) and 5 (Strongly oppose) only

14. What are your main reasons for your answer? (optional)

Use this box to tell us more about what you think.

You might want to consider:

- Does the option feel too big or too small?
- Does it reflect your area’s identity or not?
- Does it match how you use services, travel or take part in community life?

Further comments

15. Do you have any final comments about how Brighton & Hove should be organised in future, or about any of the proposals you’ve seen? (optional)

Equalities monitoring questions

We would like to ask you some equality monitoring questions.

- *All responses are anonymous.*
- *Data is used to help the council fulfil its legal equalities duties and ensure its services meet the needs of customers and service users*
- *The information you give will be used to see what impact these proposals may have on particular groups. We can also adjust our approach if we find a particular group is under-represented.*

These questions are different from the other questions in the survey.

These questions are optional and your answers are anonymous.

16. Do you want to answer the following equalities monitoring questions? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Equalities monitoring questions

17. What is your age? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 to 15 | <input type="radio"/> 16 to 24 |
| <input type="radio"/> 25 to 34 | <input type="radio"/> 35 to 44 |
| <input type="radio"/> 45 to 54 | <input type="radio"/> 55 to 64 |
| <input type="radio"/> 65 to 74 | <input type="radio"/> 75 to 84 |
| <input type="radio"/> 85 + | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

Equalities monitoring questions

18. What best describes your gender? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Female | <input type="radio"/> Male |
| <input type="radio"/> Intersex | <input type="radio"/> Non-binary |
| <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say | <input type="radio"/> Other |

If 'Other', please specify

19. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Equalities monitoring questions

20. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Asexual | <input type="radio"/> Bisexual or Bi |
| <input type="radio"/> Gay or Lesbian | <input type="radio"/> Heterosexual or 'straight' |
| <input type="radio"/> Queer | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Other | |

If 'Other', please specify

Equalities monitoring questions

21. How would you describe your ethnic origin? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi | <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British: Chinese |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British: Indian | <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British: Pakistani |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British: Other (please share details below) | <input type="radio"/> Black / Black British: African |
| <input type="radio"/> Black / Black British: Caribbean | <input type="radio"/> Black / Black British: Other (please share details below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed: Asian and White | <input type="radio"/> Mixed: Black African and White |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed: Black Caribbean and White | <input type="radio"/> Mixed: Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background |
| <input type="radio"/> White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British | <input type="radio"/> White: Irish |
| <input type="radio"/> White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller | <input type="radio"/> White: Other |
| <input type="radio"/> Other Ethnic Group: Arab | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Other | |

If 'Other', please specify

Equalities monitoring questions

22. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (optional)

**Only choose one option.*

- ☐ Yes, a lot
- ☐ Yes, a little
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Equalities monitoring questions

23. Please select your health condition, illness or disability from the list below (optional)

Please select all that apply

**Choose as many as you like*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autism/autistic spectrum disorder or condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental (e.g. affecting motor, cognitive, social, language) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (e.g. D/deaf, partial loss) | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difference (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD) | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-term physical illness/health condition (e.g. cancer, diabetes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health difference / condition (e.g. depression, schizophrenia) | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical difference (e.g. condition limiting basic physical activities) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sight (e.g. blindness, partial sight loss) | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech and language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visible difference with a disabling and/or discriminatory impact | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

If 'Other', please specify

Brighton & Hove City Council

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 26

Subject: Devolution Update

Date of meeting: 31st July 2025

Report of: Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny

Contact Officer: Director for Governance and Law

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

Note: Urgency

By reason of the special circumstances below, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the 1972 Act, the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Reasons for urgency

The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that the recent publication of the relevant legislation and recent updates from Government needed to be incorporated into the report.

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report informs and updates members on the devolution programme for Sussex & Brighton.
- 1.2 The appendices to this report set out the key developments, including the decision by Government to proceed with devolution for Sussex & Brighton and the introduction of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill in the House of Commons on 10th July.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee to note the update to members on Devolution.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 On 17th July 2025 the Minister of State, Jim McMahon, announced that the relevant statutory tests had been met to establish Mayoral Strategic Authorities in the six devolution priority programme areas. He indicated that legislation would be brought forward to create a Mayoral Strategic Authority in each of the six areas, including Sussex and Brighton, subject to the consent of the relevant constituent councils. This decision followed the conclusion of the Government's public consultation process in April. The Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation response from Government is set out at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Government has also now published the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, building on the commitments set out in the English Devolution White Paper. The Bill represents a significant step forward in the Government's devolution agenda, aiming to strengthen local leadership, enhance democratic accountability, and empower communities.
- 3.3 In addition to the Bill, a Statutory Instrument will be laid in Parliament in order to formally establish the Mayoral Strategic Authority for Sussex & Brighton.
- 3.4 East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council are required to formally consent to the establishment of the Sussex & Brighton Mayoral Strategic Authority and it is anticipated that this formal consent will be considered by the Councils for decision in the Autumn, once the funding proposals have been shared by Government.
- 3.5 If the proposals receive consent, the first Mayoral Election will take place in May 2026.
- 3.6 Key elements of the Bill are set out in Appendices 2-4, including proposed devolution structures and a detailed review of the duties and powers conferred, referred to in the Bill as 'areas of competence'. The anticipated next steps are also set out. This information is intended to support members in understanding the implications of the Bill and to inform future engagement with the devolution process.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is invited to note the update report.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Government ran a public consultation in areas chosen for the Devolution Priority Programme which closed on 13 April 2025. The consultation sought views on the proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. The outcome of the consultation is set out at Appendix 1.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. However the creation of the mayoral strategic authority for Sussex and Brighton will have a range of financial implications for Brighton and Hove.
- 6.2 These include the implications and transitional arrangements of certain grants from government previously directly received by the council, going to the Mayoral authority; as well as functions currently provided and funded by the council going to mayoral authority. The impact of these changes are unlikely to be fully quantified until the new mayor is in office. Transitional arrangements are expected at least for the first year.
- 6.3 In the shorter term there are costs of setting up the authority which are planned to be covered by year 1 of the transitional funding.
- 6.4 The costs of a Sussex and Brighton election are considerable and the Government have indicated the funding requires agreement by the constituent authorities.
- 6.5 Government officials have indicated that further financial information is likely to be provided in mid September which is expected to include years 2 and 3 transitional government funding as well as further details of grants and the 30 year investment fund for the Mayor.

Name of finance officer consulted: James Hengeveld Date:24/07/2025

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The legal implications are set out in the report and Appendices.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted 23/07/25

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Mayoral Strategic Authority will prioritise areas such as transport, adult skills, housing and health and may make changes to reduce inequalities in society, for example, making jobs more accessible across local authority boundaries. These changes may also allow for more locally responsive services that reflect the specific needs of diverse communities, including those with protected characteristics.
- 8.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed against the different elements of devolution and will inform the decision whether to consent to the establishment of the Mayoral Strategic Authority.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 One of the areas of competence to be exercised by the Mayoral Combined County Authority under the new devolution framework will be Environment and Climate Change. The ambition set out in the Government's English Devolution White Paper is for the new Mayoral Strategic Authorities to deliver more long-term sustainable development, particularly in the areas of transport and housing. They will have the power to expand and improve public transport services and promote low-carbon initiatives such as electric vehicles. They could also set sustainability standards for new housing developments to promote energy efficiency, for example.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 10.1 The Mayoral Strategic Authority will have a duty to improve health and to reduce health inequalities. It is expected that Mayors will have a pivotal role within the area's Integrated Care Partnership and the Mayoral Strategic Authority can take a more coordinated approach to reducing health inequality across the regions.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee is being asked to note the update to members on Devolution.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. [Sussex and Brighton Devolution Consultation Response 17th July 2025](#)
2. Slides for Devolution, including English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and Next Steps
3. [Government Guidance English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill](#)
4. [Devolution framework Explainer](#)

Devolution Update

Overview and Scrutiny Place Committee 31/07/25

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Brighton & Hove
City Council

Devolution Update

- Government response to Consultation
- English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill
- Proposal for Informal Partnership Board
- Next Steps

Government response to Consultation

- Statement from Jim McMahon, Minister for State for Local Government and English Devolution – 17th July 2025
- ‘Following an assessment, I am pleased to confirm that the relevant statutory tests to establish Mayoral Strategic Authorities in all six areas have been met. Subject to the constituent councils’ consent, legislation will be brought before Parliament in order to establish each of the six institutions early in 2026, devolving further powers to local leaders and those with local knowledge, to drive economic growth and empower communities with investment to support their work.’
- [Link to full statement](#)

Key Messages from Devolution Bill (published 10.7.25)

- Devolution Structures
- Changes to role of mayor and voting
- Local Government Structures and Accountability
- Communities
- Duties and Powers (Areas of Competence)



Devolution Structures

The “Strategic Authority”

- The Bill introduces a new devolution framework for England. It creates a new category of authority called Strategic Authorities (SAs).
- SAs will operate at the functional economic area level, meaning they will cover areas that reflect how local economies function.

Powers via devolution framework

- The new devolution model includes the development of a framework that will set out powers and functions available to SAs depending on whether they have a mayor and on their track record of delivery

Expanding the devolution framework

- The Bill allows for new powers and duties to be added to the devolution framework over time by providing Government with new powers to amend the devolution framework in future

The Government aims to introduce **a new SA for each area in England**, by

- creating new SAs, as well as by
- designating existing structures as SAs

There will be **3 levels of SA**:

- **Foundation Strategic Authority** (who do not have a mayor and have limited devolution)
- **Mayoral Strategic Authorities** (who have a mayor and have greater devolution power) -> This is where Sussex and Brighton will start.
- **Established mayoral authorities** (who meet key criteria and have the broadest devolved powers)

SAs will be responsible for strategy development and programme delivery in key areas BUT will not replace the **councils** (referred to here as constituent authorities, or ‘CAs’), which will continue to deliver key services to communities.

The role of the Mayor and voting

Mayoral Powers of Competence

- **Commissioners:** Mayors will be able to appoint up to seven commissioners to lead on each of the specified 'areas of competence' (e.g. transport).
- **No “dual hatters” as MP and Mayor:** Mayors will be prohibited from simultaneously serving as Members of Parliament (MPs).
- **Power to convene-** enabling Mayors to convene local partners to address local challenges
- **Duty to respond:** Placing a duty on local partners to respond to a Mayors request when they make use of the power to convene
- **Duty to collaborate** ensuring that mayors have a formal process by which they can collaborate with neighbouring mayors to deliver project and strategies together.

- **Remuneration** of Strategic Authority members
- Mayoral appointment of **up to 7 commissioners**
- **Voting on budget** by simple majority, including the Mayor
- **Mayoral Precept:** The Bill includes an optional Mayoral Council Tax precept that the Mayor may use to raise funds to be used across the full range of functions.

Mayoral Election Voting System:

- **Supplementary vote:** From 2027, elections for mayors and PCCs will switch from First Past the Post to the Supplementary Vote system. **This change will not be in place for the May 2026 Mayoral election for Sussex and Brighton.**

Duties and Powers (Areas of Competence)

Strategic Authorities (SA) will have the ability to perform functions in the following areas:

- Transport and local infrastructure
- Skills and employment support
- Housing and strategic planning
- Economic growth and regeneration
- Environment and climate change
- Health, Wellbeing and Public Service Reform
- Public Safety



SA: Transport and Local Infrastructure

Core Transport Functions

The SA will be the designated Local Transport Authority Oversight of local transport networks:

- Bus, tram, and light rail (where applicable)
- Legal duty to ensure passenger transport services
- Management of travel concessions (e.g. free/discounted travel)

Local Transport Plan

Must produce a plan outlining:

- Local transport policies
- How they will be delivered

Must align with growth and spatial strategies

Constituent councils support delivery using local powers

Funding & Coordination

- Levy transport charges on constituent councils
- Provide grants for improvements (e.g. bus/cycle lanes)
- Coordinate local roads, unify standards, and enter agreements (with council consent)

Must set up and manage a **Key Route Network** (KRN)

Mayors can:

- Direct council use of highway powers on the KRN
- Set Traffic Reduction Targets (e.g. reduce congestion, promote sustainability)

Micromobility Licensing- Can license:

- Shared cycle schemes (e.g. bike hire)
- Future: e-scooters, delivery bots (pending regulation)
- Local conditions can improve safety, integration, and order

Traffic Enforcement

- May apply for powers to issue Penalty Charge Notices
- Requires agreement from councils with existing powers

SA: Skills and Employment

Adult Education Responsibilities

- The Bill transfers adult education functions from central government to Strategic Authorities.
- This includes the ability to receive and manage the Adult Skills Fund (ASF)—a non-repayable grant from the Department for Education.

Adult Skills Fund (ASF)

Funds skills training for adults aged 19 and over, from pre-entry up to Level 3. Supports adults to:

- Gain skills for employment
- Enter apprenticeships
- Progress to further learning
- Funding is non-ringfenced, giving Strategic Authorities flexibility to meet local needs.

Local Discretion and Flexibility

- Beyond legal entitlements, Strategic Authorities have broad discretion over how to use the ASF.
- They can tailor adult education provision to meet local economic, and skills needs.

Legal Entitlements Strategic Authorities Must Honour

- Strategic Authorities must ensure eligible learners receive fully funded training for:
- English and maths (up to Level 2) for adults 19+ without a GCSE grade 4/C or higher.
- First full Level 2 qualification for individuals aged 19–23.
- First full Level 3 qualification for individuals aged 19–23.
- Essential digital skills (up to Level 1) for adults 19+ assessed below Level 1.

Future-Proofing

- The Bill includes provisions for a transition period.
- Adult education functions will be automatically transferred to any new Strategic Authorities as they are established.

SA: Housing and Strategic Planning

New Planning Powers

- Power to **direct refusal** of planning applications of strategic importance
- Power to **call in applications** for review—especially where proposals align with spatial strategy but face local rejection

Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)

- Must publish an SDS setting out the area's long-term development vision
- Planning powers can only be used **once SDS is in place**

Mayoral Development Orders (MDOs)

- May directly grant planning permission for specific developments without the submission of a planning application
- No need for Local Planning Authority (LPA) consent to prepare/consult
- LPAs must still approve the MDO
- If refused, mayors can escalate to Secretary of State (via Planning Inspector Inquiry)

Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Can charge a CIL on new developments to fund infrastructure

Conditions:

- SDS must be in place
- Simple majority approval from constituent councils
- Mayor has casting vote in case of tie

Mirrors powers used in London (e.g. Elizabeth Line)

Mayoral Development Areas (MDAs) & Corporations (MDCs)

- Can designate **MDAs**—defined regeneration zones
- Can establish **MDCs**—statutory bodies to lead development

MDCs provide:

- Geographic focus
- Broad planning and land powers
- Ability to attract investment and private sector expertise

SA: Economic development and regeneration

Local Growth Plans

Required for all Mayoral Strategic Authorities (except London)

Each plan must include:

- **Economic overview** of the region
- **Shared priorities** agreed with government
- **Investment pipeline** for public and private sector support

Greater London Authority is exempt (already produces an economic strategy)

Statutory guidance will support plan development

Legal Responsibilities

Public Bodies Must 'Have Regard' to Shared Priorities

Applies when:

- Bidding for government funding
- Developing related plans or strategies
- Requested by a Mayoral Authority

Relevant organisations will be named in regulations

Collaboration with Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS)

Must work with LGPS authorities to increase local investment

Projects must deliver:

- **Social or economic benefits**
- **Financial returns** to support pensions

Legal duty to be introduced via the Pension Schemes Bill

Encouragement of visitors and promotion of visitors

This extends the powers currently available to local authorities over encouragement of visitors and promotion of visitors, and power to facilitate provision for entertainment, dancing, premises suitable for entertainment, maintenance of a band or orchestra, and promotion of the arts to CAs and CCAs.

SA: Environment and Net Zero

Heat Network Zoning coordination role

This means that Strategic Authorities will be well placed to take forward heat network zones and create zone coordinators.

While the Bill does not transfer any other statutory environmental or climate powers to Strategic Authorities, it recognises their importance in:

- Protecting the natural environment
- Safeguarding biodiversity
- Advancing the green transition

SA: Health, Wellbeing and Public Service Reform

New Legal Duty on Health

- Strategic Authorities will be required to “have regard” to health outcomes and reduce health inequalities when using their powers.
- What this duty means: SA must consider health impact of their decisions, minimise negative effects on public health and avoid increasing health inequalities.
- SAs have a leadership role in health and wellbeing and working with health and care system partners.

Definition of Health Inequalities

Differences in life expectancy or general health caused by factors such as:

- Housing standards
- Transport services
- Public safety
- Employment opportunities

SA: Public Safety

New Mayoral Responsibilities

- The government aims to expand the number of Mayors with PCC (Police Crime Commissioners) and FRA (Fire Rescue Authority) functions.
- This supports a more joined-up approach to local services and improves public safety outcomes.
- Where mayoral and police/FRA boundaries align, Mayors will automatically take on PCC and FRA functions.

4 Mayors may:

- Exercise PCC functions across multiple police force areas, if aligned with their geography
- Oversee multiple FRAs, with the potential for mergers under one Mayor

Deputy Mayors for Policing and Crime

Where the Mayor is responsible for Police functions, a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime must be appointed by the Mayor.

Exceptions

- If a police force spans more than one Strategic Authority, the Mayor will not take on PCC functions for that force.

Boundary Alignment Powers

The Secretary of State will have the power to:

- Adjust police and fire boundaries
- Do so simultaneously with the transfer of PCC and FRA functions to Mayors

Next Steps

- Proposal to establish an Informal Partnership Board
- Appointment of interim Devolution Programme Director for Sussex & Brighton and internal BHCC Programme Lead
- Draft constitution and assurance framework
- Review of implications following analysis of powers and funding
- Full Council debate and Cabinet decision in Autumn
- If agreed by the three Constituent Authorities, Statutory Instrument laid and comes into force establishing Mayoral Strategic Authority with immediate effect.

Devolution Update

Questions and Discussion

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Brighton & Hove
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