

# **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**

## **Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**5 June**



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

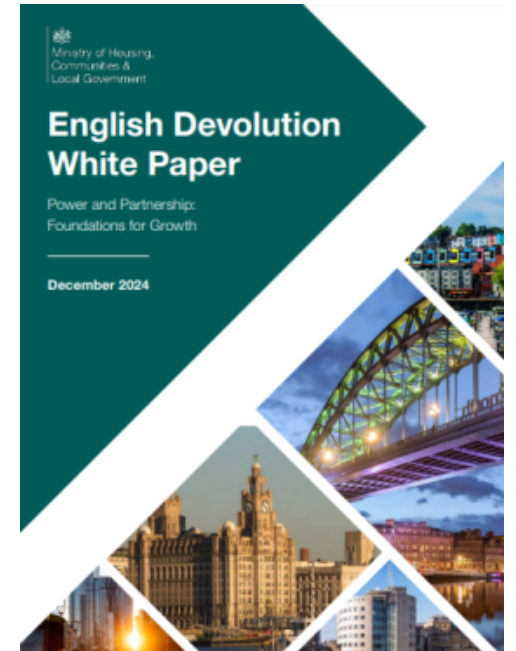
# A “Devolution Revolution”

## Government’s Mission

- Giving local leaders and communities the tools they need to deliver growth for their area and raise living standards in event part of the country.
- Putting in place an efficient and accountable local and regional government with local champions who understand their local places, their identify and strengths and how to harness them.

## How?

- English Devolution White Paper - published on 16 December 2024
- English Devolution Bill – Summer 2025
- Devolution Priority Programme Government led consultation for Sussex ended April 13<sup>th</sup> 2025
- Local Government Reorganisation Proposals intended to align with Devolution



# Devolution – the case for change

## Government believes Devolution:

- Can help to deliver growth, trust in politics and greater satisfaction with public services
- Means policy can be tailored to local situations
- Enables coordinated action in a place
- Gives communities a greater say in decisions that affect them
- Done right drives innovation - enabling different leaders to trial different methods and learn from what works to ultimately deliver more for citizens.



## Key Labour thinktank recommends major new powers for elected mayors

Plans would put mayors at forefront of delivering public sector improvements in areas such as health and education



City and regional mayors outside 10 Downing Street after Labour's general election win in July.

# Devolution Priority Programme Areas

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## 6 areas selected for the Priority Programme

- **Cheshire and Warrington** (Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Warrington Borough Council)
- **Cumbria** (Cumberland Council, Westmorland and Furness Council)
- **Hampshire and the Solent** (Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, Southampton City Council)
- **Greater Essex** (Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council)
- **Norfolk and Suffolk** (Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council)
- **Sussex and Brighton** (East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council)

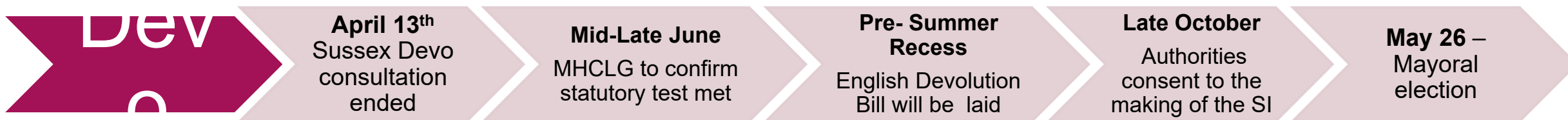
## ■ Existing Combined Authorities

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – **Mayor Paul Bristow (C)**
- Greater Manchester – **Mayor Andy Burnham (L)**
- Hull and East Yorkshire – **Luke Campbell (R)**
- Liverpool City Region – **Mayor Steve Rotherham (L)**
- North East – **Mayor Kim McGuinness (L)**
- North of Tyne – **Mayor Jamie Driscoll (IND)**
- South Yorkshire – **Mayor Oliver Coppard (L)**
- Tees Valley – **Mayor Ben Houchen (C)**
- West Midlands – **Mayor Richard Parker (L)**
- West of England – **Mayor Helen Godwin (L)**
- West Yorkshire – **Mayor Tracy Brabin (L)**
- York North Yorkshire – **Mayor David Skaith (L)**

## ■ Existing Combined County Authorities

- East Midlands - **Mayor Claire Ward (L)**
- Greater Lincolnshire – **Mayor Andrea Jenkins (R)**
- Lancashire (non mayoral)
- Devon and Torbay (non mayoral)

# Timeline for the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP)



- Sussex and Brighton & Hove confirmed as an area on the devolution priority programme on 5 February 2025.
- Being on the priority programme means that Sussex and Brighton will be working to the most ambitious timetable for devolution, including the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority by May 2026.
- **Mid to Late June:** Government will confirm its decision on whether the statutory tests have been met & its intention to pursue/not pursue Devolution for Sussex & Brighton – alongside release of consultation report.
- **Pre- Summer recess:** English Devolution Bill to be Introduced, session in Parliament to explain the Bill provisions and plan for its passage.
- **Late October:** Government to lay Statutory Instrument before Parliament for Approval (allow 8 sitting weeks, with Lords and Commons debates taking place within that window)
- **Early 2026:** Inaugural meeting of the new Mayoral Strategic Authority; constitution agreed and officers appointed.
- **May 2026:** Mayoral and local elections (where applicable). Mayor takes office.

# Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA)

A strategic authority is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. Depending on the form of devolution in an area, there are three levels of strategic authority available:

- **Foundation Strategic Authority:** without an elected mayor. It will have limited devolution.
- **Mayoral Strategic Authority:** with an elected mayor, a range of powers will be devolved.
- **Established Mayoral Strategic Authority:** For those Mayoral Strategic Authorities, with additional devolved powers. For example, Greater Manchester.

In Sussex, a proposal was submitted to the Government to form a **Mayoral Strategic Authority** covering West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. The Government approved this proposal and ran a public consultation ending in April 2025.

The expectation is that a Mayor will be elected in May 2026. **Two representatives of West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils and Brighton and Hove Council will sit on the MSA.** When the new unitary councils are created, the Leaders from these councils will sit on the Strategic Authority.

# What does this mean for Sussex and Brighton?

Council-wide corporate

- A new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) for Sussex & Brighton with an Elected Mayor.
  - Will move away from a 'Deal based' approach to a set Devolution Framework that is automatically available when relevant criteria are met.
  - Defined functions for the MSA to be set out in law
    1. **Transport and local infrastructure**
    2. **Skills and employment support**
    3. **Housing and strategic planning**
    4. **Economic development and regeneration**
    5. **Environment and climate change.**
    6. **Health, wellbeing and public service reform**
    7. **Public safety**
- ❖ **Integrated funding settlement**
  - ❖ **Statutory Duty to produce Local Growth Plans**





# Next Steps: Partnership and stakeholder engagement

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- Upper Tier Authorities are meeting Partners to discuss the opportunities and challenges and their engagement in the preparations for the Mayoral Strategic Authority
- Government is setting up a range of Devolution Framework implementation sessions with Authorities and Partners (May – September 2025)
- Upper Tier Authorities are considering options for bringing the interested stakeholders together in preparation for the MSA and for decision making
- Greater Brighton Economic Growth Board is commissioning research to understand the economic opportunities of a MSA for Sussex & Brighton
- Joint recruitment of a Director of Transition for Devolution, the establishment of a website and an interim officer Team is underway;
- Funding for the MSA will be confirmed post the June spending review.



# Update on Local Government reorganisation (LGR)



# BHCC LGR interim Proposal

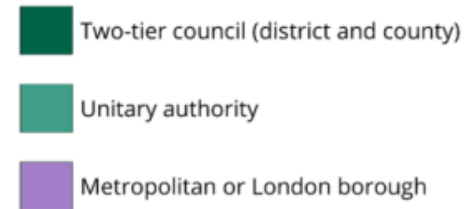
## BHCC Interim Proposal:

- Five unitary authorities across Sussex, with Brighton and Hove on our existing footprint or growing to form one of these authorities.
- A five-unitary model in Sussex could broadly lead to the creation of five council areas with populations in the region of c300,000 to c400,000.

## What will we do by 25 September 2025:

- The aim by the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 deadline is to advance a final proposal supported by robust data and evidence for Government to consider.

## Local authority structure in England



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# Interim Plan Feedback: East Sussex and Brighton pt 1

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**1. The criteria ask that a proposal should seek to achieve for the whole area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government**

- We note that the proposals submitted cover varying geographies and that you have sought clarity over the footprint that proposals should cover. **Any proposals that cover the East Sussex county footprint should have regard to the implications for Brighton and Hove as per the guidance**
- In the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more. This is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation

**2. The criteria ask that consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety (see criterion 3).**

- For any options where there is disaggregation, further detail will be helpful on how the different options might impact on these services and how risks can be mitigated.

**3. Further detail would be welcome in all plans on how the proposed new structures would support arrangements for the proposed Sussex and Brighton MSA (as per criterion 5), and how benefits of mayoral devolution will be achieved for local communities.**

- In this regard it will be helpful for proposals to have regard to the model of unitary government that is proposed across the whole Sussex and Brighton area.

# Interim Plan Feedback: East Sussex and Brighton pt 2

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**We welcome steps taken to come together to prepare proposals as per criterion 4:**

- Effective collaboration between all councils across the invitation area and wider proposed Sussex and Brighton MSA will be crucial; we would encourage you to continue to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will support the development of a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposals.
- It would be helpful if final proposal(s) use the same assumptions and data sets.
- It would be helpful if your final proposal(s) set out how the data and evidence supports all the outcomes you have included, and how well they meet the assessment criteria in the invitation letter.
- You may wish to consider an options appraisal that will help demonstrate why your proposed approach in the round best meets the assessment criteria in the invitation letter compared to any alternatives.

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# Next Steps for LGR

- Undertake a data and evidence based review of our interim LGR proposal, guided by the feedback from Government and supported by Ignite consultants;
- Facilitate robust public and stakeholder consultation on options;
- Submit final proposal to Government by 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

# Questions

