

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 37

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation

Date of meeting: 25 September 2025

Report of: Director of Governance and Law

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Action Required of Cabinet:

- 1.1 That the Minutes Extract of the Special Council meeting held on 24 September 2025 and Minutes Extract of the Place Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on 22 September 2025 be noted.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL

6.30pm 24 SEPTEMBER 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Grimshaw (Chair), Galvin (Deputy Chair), Asaduzzaman, Atkinson, Alexander, Allen, Bagaeen, Baghoth, Cattell, Czolak, Daniel, Davis, Earthey, Fishleigh, Fowler, Gauge, Goddard, Guilmant, Helliwell, Hewitt, Hill, Hogan, Loughran, Lyons, Mackey, McGregor, McLeay, McNair, Meadows, Miller, Muten, Nann, Oliveira, Parrott, Pickett, Robins, Robinson, Rowkins, Sankey, Shanks, Sheard, Simon, Sykes, Taylor, C Theobald, Thomson, Wilkinson, Winder and Williams

PART ONE

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

- 4.1 Councillor Hewitt introduced and formally moved the report concerning Local Government Reorganisation.
- 4.2 Councillors McLeay, McNair, Taylor, Earthey, Atkinson, Sykes, Meadows, Alexander, Bagaeen, Shanks, Theobald, Asaduzzaman, De Oliveira, Pickett, Lyons, Sankey, Hill, and Hogan spoke in the general debate on the matter.
- 4.3 The following points were raised during the debate. Reservations were expressed about the process, describing it as rushed and imposed from the top down. They questioned what they felt was an absence of meaningful consultation with residents and neighbouring councils, warning that such an approach risked centralising power and undermining local democracy. Concerns were also raised about the potential erosion of public trust and the imposition of significant upfront costs without clear evidence of long-term financial benefits.
- 4.4 There were questions as to whether the proposed changes would effectively tackle core challenges such as adult social care, housing, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). They cautioned that the reorganisation could divert resources and attention away from essential services, without resolving the underlying issues facing local government.
- 4.5 Supporters of the local government reorganisation proposal emphasised that the changes would create more coherent and connected communities, reflecting existing social and economic ties, particularly between Brighton

and Hove and the neighbouring areas proposed for inclusion. They argued that the new structure would unlock significant devolution funding, improve service delivery, and ensure balanced representation for urban, coastal, and rural communities. Also highlighting the potential for greater local empowerment, streamlined governance, and the ability to address local needs more effectively through a model designed around real-life patterns and journeys.

4.6 Councillor Hewitt responded to the debate.

4.7 Councillors called for a recorded vote on the recommendations which was put to the vote and carried.

4.8 The Mayor put the recommendations as detailed in the report to the vote:

		For	Against	Abstain			For	Against	Abstain
1	Alexander	x			28	Lyons			x
2	Allen	x			29	Mackey	x		
3	Asaduzzaman	x			30	McGregor	x		
4	Atkinson			x	31	McLeay		x	
5	Bagaeen		x		32	McNair			x
6	Baghoth	x			33	Meadows			x
7	Cattell	x			34	Miller	x		
8	Czolak	x			35	Muten	x		
9	Daniel	x			36	Nann	x		
10	Davis		x		37	O'Quinn	Not Present		
11	De Oliveira		x		38	Parrott	x		
12	Earthey	x			39	Pickett		x	
13	Evans	Not Present			40	Robins	x		
14	Fishleigh	x			41	Robinson	x		
15	Fowler	x			42	Rowkins	x		
16	Galvin	x			43	Sankey	x		
17	Gauge	x			44	Shanks		x	

18	Goddard	x			45	Sheard	x		
19	Goldsmith	Not Present			46	Simon	x		
20	Grimshaw	x			47	Sykes		x	
21	Guilmant	x			48	Taylor	x		
22	Helliwell	x			49	Theobald			x
23	Hewitt	x			50	Thomson	x		
24	Hill		x		51	West	Not Present		
25	Hogan			x	52	Wilkinson	x		
26	Lademacher		x		53	Williams	x		
27	Loughran	x			54	Winder	x		
						Total	35	9	5

- 4.9 The Mayor confirmed that the recommendations had been carried by a vote of 35 in favour, 9 against, with 5 abstentions

RESOLVED:

That Council endorse the recommendations set out in the Cabinet report attached.

That Cabinet

- 1) Agrees the Final Proposal: 'Representative Councils for a Devolved Sussex: A Five Unitary Proposal' as set out at Appendix 1 and approves its submission to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government by 26 September 2025.
- 2) Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any final adjustments to the Final Proposal before the deadline for submission.

5 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting concluded at 7.35pm

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

3.00pm 22 SEPTEMBER 2025

HOVE TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Evans (Chair) Cattell, Loughran, Fowler, Mackey, Winder, Fishleigh, Sykes and Lyons

PART ONE

32 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

- 32.1 Cllr Hewitt presented to the committee on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Key points included: the proposal is for 5 balanced unitary councils with populations around 300,000 – 400,000; that Unitary A combines Brighton & Hove with East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven and Falmer Parish; that the idea behind this was to avoid having very large councils in favour of having 5 equal partners for the Mayoral Authority when Devolution takes place. The boundaries follow communities and travel links and retain parish and town councils. The consultants, Ignite, have done the financial modelling; there will be one-off costs to deal with ICT and data migration which will be done over several years, and council tax will be harmonised gradually.
- 32.2 Cllr Sykes asked about the costs for this; that the consultation has been done in a very short timeframe for such a big decision and they have chosen the option with the highest risk. Cllr Sykes said that the ongoing costs may be underestimated and the benefits overestimated and asked about the calculations for the agile unitaries element of the benefits. Cllr Sankey disagreed that this option was the highest risk as it depends how risk is calculated and what is being looked at. This model is sustainable and it preserves local identities and will be closer to local voices. The public engagement showed that people do not want too much change and are worried about unitaries being too big and too far away from localities. Jess Gibbons added the council is looking closely at areas that have already been through this process such as Dorset, Somerset and Northamptonshire.
- 32.3 Cllr Lyons asked where the one-off cost would come from. Cllr Sankey responded that there are potential sources such as savings from having fewer authorities across the region, capital receipts, and the possibility of using reserves. Government will also be asked to help fund the process.

- 32.4 Cllr O'Quinn was strongly in favour of the 5 unitaries proposal as she believed it was more able to deliver democracy at a local level. She asked a question about ICT systems and that changes can cause problems; how would a seamless move be achieved? She also asked about recruiting more officers and that the pool of experts or experienced staff in the area might be small with a lot of competition. Cllr Sankey said there would be initial dual running of some ICT systems until there is confidence that a risk-free switch can be made. Staff from existing Sussex councils would be moved across to the new unitaries, which would allow for continuity.
- 32.5 Cllr Hill asked about the deficits of the proposed unitaries and suggested that Unitary B would end up in emergency financial measures almost immediately. Cllr Sankey said that these figures should be used as indicators and not specific or precise forecasts. Local Authority finances are not in a good place, and there is no way to arrange councils in Sussex that would eliminate deficits. Councils are lobbying government to fund the process appropriately and to look at disparities across the region that already exist.
- 32.6 Cllr Hill asked what the leaders across the regions thoughts were on the proposal. Cllr Sankey said they need to work together and that collaboration and co-design is essential. Cllr Sankey has reached out to the leaders of East and West Sussex Councils. West Sussex are looking at a 2 unitary option and some areas of East Sussex such as Rother, Wealden and Hastings are interested in the Brighton & Hove proposal. The government will make the decision on which proposal goes out for statutory consultation. Jess Gibbons said she has been regularly communicating with Chief Executives at East and West Sussex councils and they have held a workshop together.
- 32.7 Cllr Hill asked about the people living in Saltdean and Telscombe who were against the proposal but also most affected by it; and about the Lewes Report that stressed the economic value of their current footprint and potential harm if current parts of East Sussex were to be removed. Cllr Sankey said that there was misleading rhetoric when the consultation went out that affected the perception of people living in those areas. There is a requirement to work across boundaries and these areas already have strong links with Brighton & Hove. For instance, there is no local over 16 education provision, so people are already coming to Brighton to access such services. The potential benefits to these areas are huge.
- 32.8 Cllr Fishleigh asked a question about the different levels of council tax across the areas in the proposal where some pay higher council tax to support the parish councils. Jess Gibbons said that council tax harmonisation means that council tax will be frozen in those areas currently paying a higher rate until all areas are at the same level.
- 32.9 Mary Davies from the Older Peoples' Council asked if they will be consulted on the EIA that is being prepared and that mitigations including local access points for essential services, accessible transport and non-digital routes for

engagement are essential as it is already difficult for older people in the city and they feel pessimistic that more can be achieved on a larger footprint.

32.10 Cllr Shanks said that the council should stop at this point and wait because people don't want reorganisation and there are more pressing issues that need sorting out first like Adult Social Care. Cllr Sankey said LGR is a positive move and gives the council the chance to shape the future of Sussex. Areas that are not in the priority programme have a deadline for their proposal at the end of the year and they will lose their say in how this process is carried out if they disengage.

32.11 Cllr Mackey asked about the risks of the proposal impacting on vulnerable groups such as SEND. Rachel Kelly said that this will be built into the planning.

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

