

Agenda Item 4

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| Report to: | Leader and Lead Member Strategic Management and Economic Development |
| Date of meeting: | 18 February 2026 |
| By: | Chief Executive |
| Title: | Local Government Reorganisation: Response to questions from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the Structural Changes Order for Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex |
| Purpose: | To seek Leader and Leader Member approval of the responses to the Government's questions regarding the Structural Changes Order for Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex |

RECOMMENDATION:

The Leader and Lead Member is recommended to approve the proposed responses set out in Appendix 3 to this report.

1. Background

1.1 In response to the Government's December 2024 announcement of a national programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) for two-tier council areas and some existing unitary councils, and subsequent invitation for proposals, 'One East Sussex' was submitted on 26 September 2025. One East Sussex is the proposal for a single tier of local government for East Sussex as a unitary council on the current footprint of the county council, with Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) remaining unchanged. The proposal was developed by all six councils in East Sussex and was submitted by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, and Rother District Council. Wealden District Council (WDC) had worked with the other five councils on One East Sussex but at its meeting on 24 September 2025 WDC Cabinet made the decision to not submit any proposal.

1.2 When new unitaries are formed there are two routes:

- a) **The Preparing Council** model which is only available when the geography of a new unitary council matches that of one of the predecessor councils. The associated transition costs, transactional complexity, disruptions and risks are significantly lower. The One East Sussex proposal, approved by Full Council and Cabinet, is predicated on the Preparing Council model underpinned by strong agreement and determination from the proposing councils that we are creating a new unitary council. This means ESCC in its current form will not exist from 1 April 2028 (vesting day). It will transition from a county council into the new unitary council. It means district and borough council staff (about 2,500 for East Sussex), contracts, and property are transferred rather than ESCC's larger workforce, including school-based staff (about 10,000) and assets. This will minimise disruption, use fewer resources, and reduce the risks involved in moving back-office systems to a new council.
- b) **The New Council** model which is required when an existing county council is being split or amalgamated with neighbouring councils meaning the geography does not match. An example of a new council model is Surrey, where two unitary councils are being created on the footprint of Surrey County Council (SCC) to replace SCC and all district and borough councils within the county footprint.

1.3 BHCC submitted an LGR proposal for five unitary councils across the whole of the area of East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove. This includes a request to split existing

district council areas between the proposed new councils. ESCC's response to the Government's statutory consultation sets out numerous significant concerns about the BHCC proposal. The response was agreed by Cabinet on 16 December 2025 and was submitted on 24 December 2025.

1.4 As set out in the timeline in Appendix 1, it is expected that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government will announce in mid-March the decision on which proposal is to be implemented, with or without modification. Government then intends to share a draft of the Structural Changes Order (SCO) in May, lay the SCO before Parliament prior to the Summer recess, with it being issued to councils in Autumn 2026. Elections to what will become the unitary authority would follow in May 2027 to enable the transition to vesting day on 1 April 2028.

2. Structural Changes Order

2.1 The Structural Changes Order (SCO) is legislation that establishes the new single tier of local government, makes provision to abolish the predecessor councils, and sets out transitional and electoral arrangements.

2.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has written to councils in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove to seek views on matters that will be necessary for the Secretary of State to consider in any SCO/s. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 2i, with information provided by MHCLG on precedent models from authorities that have undergone LGR in previous rounds attached as Appendix 2ii. The answers to the questions included in the letter will inform the Government about our preferences for the formation of the formal governance in the period between the SCO being issued and the election in May 2027.

2.3 As the One East Sussex bid is based on the Preparing Council model, an Implementation Executive (and supporting team of officers) will be formed, which will be made up from representatives of all the constituent authorities that will make up the new unitary. The lifespan of the Implementation Executive is from when the SCO comes into force (Autumn 2026) until the elections in May 2027. Its key task will be to ensure the preparing council has strong foundations and has all it needs to make the decisions about the new council following the elections in May 2027. The Implementation Executive will discharge its functions, which will be set out in the SCO, primarily through preparation, review and revision of the Implementation Plan. Drafting and delivery of the plan is carried out by an officer implementation team. Between now and the SCO coming into force councils can make whatever arrangements suit locally and it is agreed that in East Sussex these will continue largely as per the current arrangements, given that they work well.

2.4 In order to reinforce to MHCLG the strength of support behind the One East Sussex bid, it has been agreed that the five supporting councils agree a joint response, which is attached as Appendix 3. To get to this position each council has determined its own governance route. For ESCC this has meant Group Leader discussions, consideration by the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Scrutiny Reference Group (views of the Reference Group are attached at Appendix 4), and finally today's Leader's decision.

2.5 Following discussions between the Leaders of the five councils supporting One East Sussex, and with Group Leaders within each council, it is proposed that to reflect the collaboration and partnership approach to LGR taken in East Sussex and the principles drawn up at the start of the process, the recommendation will be that the Implementation Executive has seven members in total; each of the Leaders from the councils that will come together to form the new council and an additional member from the County Council. This follows a more collaborative approach than in previous rounds of LGR, where membership has been at least 50 percent county council members with the addition of the Leader of the county council as Chair.

2.6 None of the five councils that support One East Sussex will be commenting on the arrangements for the implementation of the BHCC model given the significant concerns as set out in ESCC's response to the Government's statutory consultation.

2.7 As requested by MHCLG, responses have been discussed with BHCC and WDC (as they are both part of the same administrative area) at a meeting of the Chief Executives.

2.8 The SCO will include a requirement on all councils within the area of the new unitary council to co-operate and there will also be a direction under Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 about the control of disposals, contracts and reserves once the SCO comes into force.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development is recommended to approve the responses set out in Appendix 3 in order that the responses to the questions asked by MHCLG in relation to the SCO can be sent.

BECKY SHAW
Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Philip Baker
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Local Members

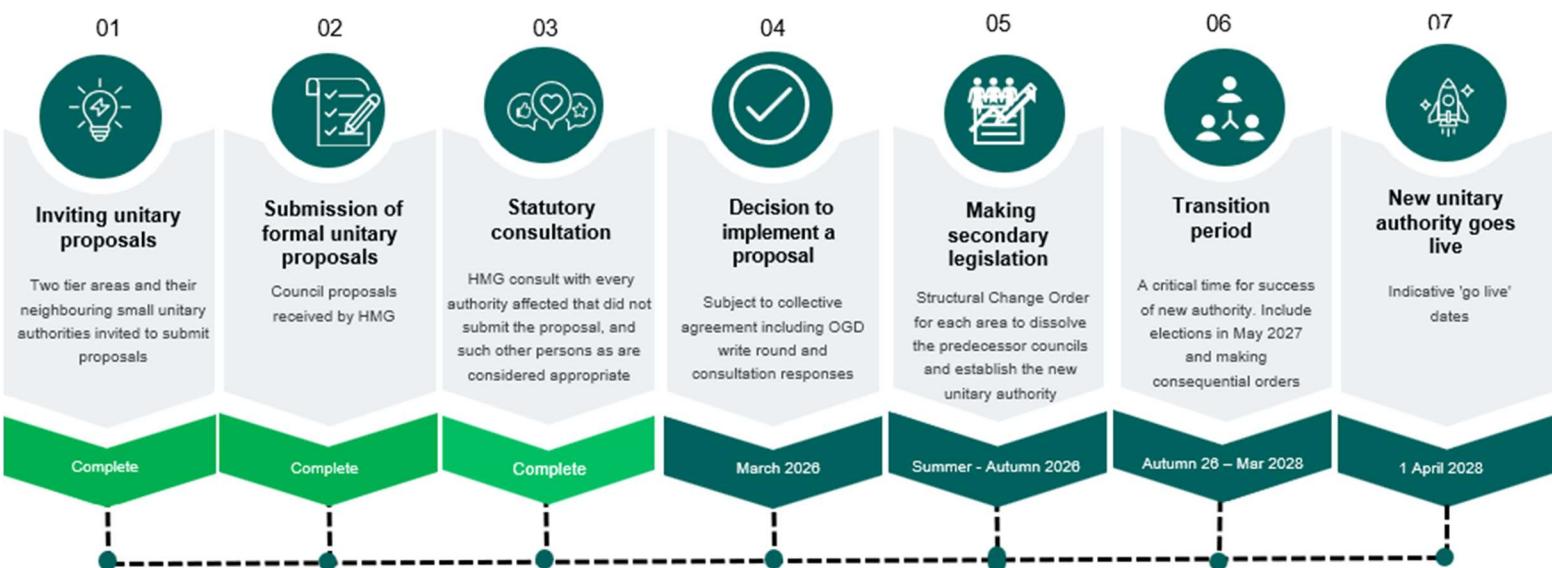
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Background Documents

- Letter from Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to East Sussex Council Leaders 5 February 2025 - [Letter: East Sussex and Brighton - GOV.UK](#)
- One East Sussex proposal submitted to government 26 September 2025 - [One East Sussex – East Sussex Councils](#)
- Representative Councils for a Devolved Sussex: A Five Unitary Proposal submitted to government by BHCC - [BHCC submission documents and supporting materials](#)

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LGR in East Sussex – timeline and transitional periods



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| Close of Gov's Statutory Consultation | January 2026 | Prep for post Government decision SCO representations |
| Deadline for representations on SCO to Gov | 20 February 2026 | |
| SoS announcement of decision | March 2026 | Programme Management Team established Programme structure, plan and governance arrangements drafted |
| SCO draft shared | May 2026 | |
| SCO laid before Parliament | June / July 2026 | First transition period (period between SCO issued and elections) ~6-8 months Implementation Executive to be established no later than 14 days after the SCO has come into force (i.e. day following issue) and officer Implementation Team formed by the Executive no later than 21 days after the SCO has come into force |
| SCO issued (aka 'made') | Autumn 2026 | |
| Elections | 6 May 2027 | Second transition period (period between elections and vesting day) ~11 months Implementation Executive dissolved and replaced by Executive of newly elected preparing council |
| Vesting day | 1 April 2028 | |

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Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Ruth Miller
Co-Deputy Directors, Local Government
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**Ministry of Housing, Communities &
Local Government**
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Chief Executives of East Sussex and
Brighton and Hove Councils

16 January 2026

Dear Chief Executives,

Following the closure of the consultation on proposals for unitary local government in your area, I am writing to seek your views on matters that will be necessary for the Secretary of State to consider in any Structural Changes Order (SCO). The final decision on all these matters, including whether to implement a proposal, with or without modification, lies with the Secretary of State.

We would appreciate your response by Tuesday 17 February. This is so the Secretary of State can consider these matters alongside any announcement of a reorganisation decision, which we expect to take place in March 2026 ahead of laying any SCO in Parliament, in summer 2026. It is ultimately for the Secretary of State to decide what to include in the legislation to ensure any new councils are well placed to go live and to implement the proposal that is chosen. Seeking your views is without prejudice to whether the Secretary of State decides to implement a proposal.

We strongly encourage you to work together to seek to agree one representation for each proposal that would affect your council for the Secretary of State to consider. You can respond singly, jointly, or as a collective, to LGRorganisation@communities.gov.uk and to your delivery lead. Even if agreement cannot be reached, we encourage you to discuss your thoughts with each other.

If there is a situation where you are unable to provide a view at this stage on any of the questions, it would be helpful if this could be set out so it can be considered by ministers. In the event that a decision is made to reorganise we may also seek further information from you on warding arrangements, and any further details needed before a Structural Changes Order is drafted and laid before Parliament.

Interim implementation structures

In the event of a decision to reorganise, an SCO will provide for the creation of a new single tier of local government for the area. This could either be through the creation of an entirely new council, or by establishing the new council as a continuing authority of one of the existing councils – known as a preparing council. Our current view is that a preparing council will only be considered where there is an existing council on the same geography as the new unitary council.

For either model, in advance of elections, the SCO would require the establishment of joint committees for each newly established council or an implementation executive

for any preparing council. Once elections are held (expected 6 May 2027), it would be for the executive of the shadow council or preparing council to take forward transition. It would be for them to decide how they wish to involve the predecessor councils, which we anticipate would be abolished on 1 April 2028. The SCO would place duties on all councils to cooperate, and as a key principle it is important that transitional arrangements for reorganisation is a shared endeavour.

The SCO would therefore need to specify, for each new unitary council, the membership of the joint committee/s or implementation executive, including:

- The number of councillors nominated by the county council.
- The number of councillors nominated by the district councils.

The SCO could, but does not have to, also specify who is to be the Chair and could, specify provisions around political balance. The joint committee/s and implementation executive would have a time and purpose limited existence given the expectation in this round of local government reorganisation that elections take place 11 months before any new unitary councils go live.

The SCO would also require that a senior officer implementation team consisting of officers of both the county and district councils would be formed to support the implementation of the proposal through the entire transition. The SCO would specify particular roles, such as the Lead and Deputy Lead.

Elections

The SCO would need to specify the returning officers for the first election to each of the new unitary councils created. The SCO could also align parish council elections with the elections to the new councils.

Names

The SCO would list the councils that will be abolished and name new unitary councils. For 'new' names we would use the information in proposals, where this is indicated, unless you inform us otherwise.

Questions

In summary, for each proposal these are the questions for you to consider:

- Where geographies align, would you prefer a preparing council and implementation executive model or a new council model with a joint committee?
- How many members from each relevant council would you prefer to sit on each Joint Committee or implementation executive, including the balance of members from different councils?
- Would you prefer for any individuals to be specified for the Chair/Deputy Chair roles, and if so, who?
- What are your views on any requirement for political balance in the implementation executive/joint committee(s)?
- What would be your preferences for the membership of the Implementation Team and whether roles should be specified?
- Who should be the returning officer for the first election to each of the new unitary councils, that proposals would see established?
- Would you prefer for any parish council elections to be aligned with elections to the new councils?

- What are the current legal names of the councils and what would be your preferred names for new councils?

We have attached some information that sets out how other areas have approached this previously, along with links to relevant SCOs including the recently published draft Surrey SCO.

We are happy to meet again to discuss these matters or for you to share initial views. We look forward to receiving your response by 17 February 2026. This letter is copied to Leaders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Miller'.

Ruth Miller
Co-Deputy Director, Local Government Reorganisation

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Annex A: Implementation model precedent

There are two main models of implementation for establishing new single tier council. Below is a summary of some of the key detail of the models used in previous areas undergoing local government reorganisation.

With regard to the relative merits of an entirely new council or a continuing council becoming the new council (where geographies align), there are advantages and disadvantages in both models that may reflect local circumstances. Relevant considerations could include costs (including TUPE), culture of the new council, disruption/risk to services, and local relationships.

| Implementation model precedent – shadow council/joint committees (entirely new councils) | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Area | Cumbria | | Northamptonshire | | Cheshire | | Buckinghamshire | | BCP/Dorset | |
| LGR Model | 2+ Unitary Model | | | | | 1-unitary | | 2 unitary model over a county area plus 2 existing unitary councils | | |
| SCO link | The Cumbria (Structural Changes) Order 2022 | | The Northamptonshire (Structural Changes) Order 2020 | | The Cheshire (Structural Changes) Order 2008 | | The Buckinghamshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019 | | The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (Structural Changes) Order 2018 | |
| New Authority names and former councils | Westmorland and Furness (Barrow-in-Furness, Eden and South Lakeland and relevant part of Cumbria County Council(CCC)) | Cumberland (Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and relevant part of Cumbria County Council(CCC)) | West Northamptonshire (Daventry, Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Kettering, Wellingborough) | North Northamptonshire (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Macclesfield and relevant part of Wellingborough) | Cheshire East (Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich, Macclesfield and relevant part of Wellingborough) | Cheshire West and Chester (City of Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Vale) | Buckinghamshire (Buckinghamshire County Council and the four district councils of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South | BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and part of Dorset) | Dorset (Part of Dorset County Council, East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and) | |

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| | Cumbria County Council (CCC)) | | relevant part of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) | gh and relevant part of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)) | Cheshire County Council (ChCC)) | Royal and relevant part of Cheshire County Council (ChCC)) | Bucks and Wycombe). | County Council). | Weymouth and Portland). |
| Joint committee or Shadow leader and cabinet executive | <u>Joint Committee</u> 12 persons: 3 from CCC, who represents an electoral division within Westmorland and Furness districts 9 from District/Borough Councils (3 from each) | <u>Joint Committee</u> 12 persons: 3 from CCC, who represents an electoral division within Cumberland districts 9 by the District/Borough Councils (3 from each) | <u>Joint Committee</u> 16 persons: 4 from NCC, who represents an electoral division within West Northamptonshire districts 12 from District/Borough Councils (4 from each) | <u>Joint Committee</u> 15 persons: 3 from NCC, who represents an electoral division within North Northamptonshire districts 12 from District/Borough Councils (3 from each) | <u>Joint Committee</u> 15 persons: 6 from ChCC, who represents an electoral division within Cheshire East districts 9 from District/Borough Councils (3 from each) | <u>Joint Committee</u> 15 persons: 6 from ChCC, who represents an electoral division within Cheshire West districts 9 from District/Borough Councils (3 from each) | <u>Shadow executive</u> Shadow leader and cabinet executive: 17 persons: 9 members from the County Council and 2 members from each of the District Councils. | <u>Shadow executive</u> Shadow leader and cabinet executive: 16 persons: 8 members from Bournemouth, 6 from Poole and 2 from Christchurch. | <u>Shadow executive</u> Shadow leader and cabinet executive: 20 persons: 10 members from county and 10 from the districts (2 from each). |
| Voting arrangements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority voting of those present • Each member (including the chairman of the committee) has one vote. • the person presiding at the meeting (whether or not the chairman of the committee) has a casting vote, in addition to any other vote the person may have. | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority voting of those present • Each member of the shadow executive has one vote | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority voting of those present • Members of the shadow authority who (upon the Order coming into force) is a member of both the | | |

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| | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>voting includes substitute members.</i> | County Council and of one of the District Councils has two votes. | | | | |
| Chair of JC/Leader of Shadow executive | Not specified | Not specified | Leader of Macclesfield BC | Leader of Vale Royal BC | Leader of the Buckinghamshire County Council executive. | *To be elected by the Shadow executive | | | | |
| Political Balance | Not specified | Not specified | Yes At least one member from each party on JC. | | Not specified | Not specified | | | | |
| Timing of Joint Committee/Shadow executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within 14 days of the Order coming into force - Dissolved on the day following each shadow authority holds its first meeting. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From the day after the Order comes into force - Shadow period ends 4 days after the ordinary day of elections in 2020 | | | | | | | |
| Implementation Team | | | | | | | | | | |
| Timing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not later than 21 days after the coming into force of the Order to assist the Joint Committee in the discharge of their functions, and after its dissolution to assist the relevant shadow authority(s) if so required | | | | | | | | | |
| Implementation team members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Team comprising officers from CCC, the Cumberland councils and the Westmorland and Furness councils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Implementation Team • Implementation Team leader must be the Chief Executive of NCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two Implementation teams - Comprised of officers from ChCC and each of the East Cheshire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One implementation team - The leader of the implementation team to be the Chief | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central implementation team • The leader of the Central Implementation | | | | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of Implementation Team appointed to be the leader • Must be 2 Deputy Implementation team leaders appointed (1 from the Cumberland councils and 1 from the Westmorland councils) | <p>Deputy leaders must be an officer within each respective Shadow Authority</p> | <p>councils or each of the West Cheshire councils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cheshire East: Leader must be an officer of Macclesfield BC - | <p>Executive of the County Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The deputy leader of the Implementation Team is to be an officer of one of the district councils. - The team comprised of officers from the county council and each of the district councils | <p>Team is an officer of one of the Borough Councils or of the shadow authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The members of the Central Implementation Team are to comprise officers from each of the Borough councils |
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| Area | Surrey - shadow council/joint committees (entirely new councils) | |
| LGR Model | 2+ Unitary Model | |
| SCO link | The Surrey (Structural Changes) Order 2026 | |
| New Authority names and former councils | East Surrey (Part of Surrey County Council (SCC), Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge; and West Surrey Council) | West Surrey (Part of Surrey County Council, Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking) |
| Joint committee(s) | <p>Joint Committee</p> <p>12 persons:</p> <p>6 from SCC, 6 from District/Borough Councils (1 from each)</p> | <p>Joint Committee</p> <p>10 persons:</p> <p>5 from SCC, 5 from District/Borough Councils (1 from each)</p> |
| Voting arrangements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority voting of those present Each member (including the Chairman of the committee) has one vote. the person presiding at the meeting (whether or not the chairman of the committee) has a casting vote, in addition to any other vote the person may have. | |
| Chair of leader and cabinet executive | Not specified | |
| Political Balance | Not specified | |
| Timing of Joint Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not later than 14 days of the Order coming into force - Dissolved on the day following each shadow authority holds its first meeting. | |

| Implementation Team | |
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| Timing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Not later than 21 days after the coming into force of this Order |
| Implementation team members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One Team comprising officers from the County Council, East Surrey Councils and West Surrey Councils each of the district councils• The leader of the implementation team must be the Chief Executive of the county council- The deputy leaders of the Implementation Team are to be an officer of one of the East Surrey councils and an officer of one of the West Surrey councils |

| Implementation model precedent – preparing council/implementation executive | | | |
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| Area | Somerset | North Yorkshire | Wiltshire |
| LGR Model | Continuing authority model | | |
| SCO link | The Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022 | The North Yorkshire (Structural Changes) Order 2022 | The Wiltshire (Structural Change) Order 2008 |
| New Authority names and former councils | Somerset Council (Somerset County Council (SCC) and Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset) | North Yorkshire (North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby) | Wiltshire Council (Wiltshire County Council (WCC), Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury, and West Wiltshire). |
| Implementation executive | 9 persons: 5 from SCC 4 from District Councils (1 from each) | 17 persons: 10 from NYCC 7 from District Councils (1 from each) | 17 persons: 9 from WCC 8 from District Councils (2 from each) |
| Voting arrangements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority voting of those present Each member (including the leader of the executive) has one vote. the person presiding at the meeting (whether or not the leader of the Executive) has a casting vote, in addition to any other vote the person may have. | | |
| Leader of the Implementation executive | Leader of the Somerset Council's executive | Leader of the North Yorkshire Council's executive | Leader of the Wiltshire Council's executive |

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| Political Balance | Not specified | Not specified | Yes - At least one member from each party on the Executive. | | |
| Timing of Implementation Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the coming into force of this Order - Dissolved the fourth day after the election day | | | | |
| Implementation Team | | | | | |
| Timing | Not later than 21 days after the coming into force of the Order to assist the Joint Committee in the discharge of their functions, and after its dissolution to assist the relevant shadow authority(s) if so required | | | | |
| Implementation team members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Team comprising officers from both Somerset council and each of the district councils • The leader of the Implementation Team is the Head of Paid Service of the Somerset Council. • Must consist of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ head of paid service of the Somerset Council ○ head of paid service of each of the district councils ○ the Somerset Council's monitoring officer ○ the Somerset Council's chief finance officer ○ the Somerset Council's programme director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One implementation team • The members of the Implementation Team must include officers from both the North Yorkshire Council and each of the district councils • The leader is the head of paid service of the North Yorkshire Council. • The deputy leader of the Implementation Team is head of paid service of one of the district councils • Must consist of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ head of paid service of the North Yorkshire Council ○ head of paid service of one of the district councils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Implementation team comprising officers from both the Wiltshire council and each of the district councils • The leader of the Implementation Team shall be an officer of the Wiltshire council | | |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the North Yorkshire Council's monitoring officer ○ the North Yorkshire Council's chief finance officer ○ Council's programme director | |
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Points to consider:

- Intention for this round of local government reorganisation is that there will be elections for new councillors in May 2027 during the transition year – and as such two implementation periods. The first period will be overseen by a joint committee/implementation executive and the second by the new councillors to the new council. Buckinghamshire and Dorset/BCP (despite having elections after go live) are still included as examples for completeness on the other elements of their transition governance arrangements.
- Previous policy has been that democratically elected members on the joint committees/implementation executive are drawn from those elected to wards/divisions within the area of the relevant new councils. This is to ensure appropriate representation and an electoral mandate for all decision makers on the joint committee.
- The joint committees/implementation executive will be in place for a short period, before being effectively replaced with the new shadow authority/preparing authority and their executive following elections. Representations on membership, size and voting arrangements of the joint committee/implementation executive may want to reflect that model of decision making. Consideration may also be given to other factors including local political balance, continuity of leadership and local circumstances, including devolution arrangements/ambition, financial circumstances, service delivery concerns and which councils developed and put forward the proposal being implemented.
- A single implementation team of officers, with deputy leaders designated within that team for each new council area, allows information flow and engagement between joint committees, councils, teams and the government on progress, particularly for services being disaggregated, and should strengthen engagement and communication throughout. It will be important for strong

alignment and data sharing between the new councils as they work through preparation for shadow elections, and then subsequently vesting day, and the twin challenges of aggregation and disaggregation.

- Membership of the implementation team(s) is for each of the councils to determine beyond any limits/requirements set in the structural changes order. Precedent is that the leader and the deputy leaders may be specified
- Each shadow authority, at its first meeting, will be required to appoint key interim officers before appointing, by the date specified in the SCO, a monitoring officer, finance officer and head of paid service for the shadow authority. Each shadow authority can continue to be supported by the implementation team if it wishes.
- Parish elections are not automatically affected. However, provision can be made to align parish elections to the new unitary elections where this is desired locally, in order to minimise the costs of these elections being held separately.
 - Examples are at:
 - [The Cheshire \(Structural Changes\) Order 2008](#)
 - [The North Yorkshire \(Structural Changes\) Order 2022](#)
 - [The Shropshire \(Structural Change\) Order 2008](#)

Responses to MHCLG questions re. East Sussex Structural Changes Order (SCO)

Q1: Where geographies align, would you prefer a preparing council and implementation executive model or a new council model with a joint committee?

As our geography aligns we would like a Preparing Council and Implementation Executive.

Q2: How many members from each relevant council would you prefer to sit on each Joint Committee or implementation executive, including the balance of members from different councils?

We would like the Implementation Executive to be 7 members: the Leader of each of the six councils in East Sussex with an additional member from the County Council.

Q3: Would you prefer for any individuals to be specified for the Chair/Deputy Chair roles, and if so, who?

We would prefer to decide our own Chair/Deputy Chair.

Q4. What are your views on any requirement for political balance in the implementation executive/joint committee(s)?

We would prefer no political balance requirements given the make-up requested at Q2 above.

Q5: What would be your preferences for the membership of the Implementation Team and whether roles should be specified?

We would prefer the membership of the Implementation Team to comprise the

- ESCC Head of Paid Service (also specified as leader of the team)
- Heads of Paid Service (or nominee) of all the districts and boroughs (with joint CEx of HBC, EBC and LDC specified as deputy leader of the team)
- ESCC Monitoring Officer

- ESCC Chief Finance Officer

We would prefer all other participants and supporting work streams to be determined locally.

Q6: Who should be the returning officer for the first election to each of the new unitary councils, that proposals would see established?

We would prefer the ESCC CEx to be the Returning Officer.

Q7: Would you prefer for any parish council elections to be aligned with elections to the new councils?

Parish Council elections to be aligned in 2027.

Q8: What would be your preferred name for the new council?

Name of the new council to be “East Sussex Council”.

Appendix 4

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Scrutiny Member Reference Group – views to Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

1.1 The cross Place and People Scrutiny Committees' Member Reference Group (MRG) met on 17 February 2026 and agreed the following comments to be put to the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development for consideration of his response to the Government's request for views in regarding any Structural Change Order required for Local Government Reorganisation on 18 February 2026.

1.2 The MRG agreed with all the draft responses to the questions posed by the Government on the East Sussex Structural Changes Order, and that a Preparing Council with an Implementation Executive would be the best model for establishing the new council. Some members of the MRG held differing views on question 8, the preferred name for the new council, and suggested the word 'Unitary' could be added to the proposed name to make it a clear departure from the current arrangements, while other Members preferred the suggested name East Sussex Council, with the recollection of previous arrangements fading over time.

1.3 The MRG agreed on the importance of joint scrutiny arrangements between the County Council and the district and borough councils to provide appropriate oversight of the Implementation Executive, but agreed that these arrangements should be decided locally.

1.4 In light of the Government's decision to proceed with elections for East Sussex County Council in May 2026, the MRG expressed concern about the capacity of staff to deliver both LGR and Devolution on the current timeline set out by Government. The MRG agreed that the response to the questions should reflect the fact that a newly elected council will need to have the opportunity to review and amend the submitted responses.

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