

**Report to:** Leader and Lead Member Strategic Management and Economic Development

**Date of meeting:** 15 September 2025

**By:** Chief Executive

**Title:** Local Government Reorganisation: Proposal for a single tier of local government across East Sussex

**Purpose:** To consider seeking the view of Full Council on the full proposal for a single tier of local government in East Sussex.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Leader and Lead Member is recommended to recommend to Council to:

- 1) Note the business case setting out the proposal for a single tier of local Government in East Sussex; and**
  - 2) Express views to Cabinet on the proposals set out in the report and appendices.**
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### **1. Background**

1.1 In December 2024 the Government published its English Devolution White Paper which, alongside setting out Government's ambitions in relation to devolution, announced a programme of local government reorganisation (LGR) for two-tier council areas and some existing unitary councils. Following the publication of the White Paper, Sussex and Brighton (covering the areas of East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton & Hove), alongside five other areas nationally, were approved to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). The DPP programme enabled these areas to fast-track their plans for the creation of new Mayoral Strategic Authorities and for LGR.

1.2 On 5 February 2025 the Government wrote to the councils in East Sussex inviting proposals for a single tier of local government in the areas of the county of East Sussex. This area incorporates Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. As well as issuing the invitation to submit proposals the Secretary of State also issued Guidance to which authorities must have regard in responding to the invitation.

1.3 The East Sussex District, Borough and County Council Leaders and Chief Executives have met regularly to oversee the preparation of a proposal. External consultants, Roretti, have been commissioned to work with the six councils to deliver an evidence-led business case that follows Government criteria and guidance, and takes account of the outcomes from resident and stakeholder engagement, financial analysis, and the economic case for change. There has been engagement with Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) as the proposal has been developed. However, it should be noted that a separate submission is being made by BHCC to government.

1.4 'One East Sussex', the proposal for a single tier of Local Government for East Sussex as a unitary council on the current footprint of the county council, is due to be considered by Cabinet 24 September 2025, following a meeting of the Full Council. The draft report to Cabinet is attached as Appendix A.

1.5 As set out in the accompanying appendices, should the proposal and suggested timetable be accepted by Government with an election anticipated in 2027 it is recommended that the election in 2026 be cancelled due to cost, resource constraints, the upcoming transition to a new

authority, and the short term new councillors would serve before re-election, and that the Council when submitting the proposal requests this.

## **2. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

2.1 The meeting of Full Council affords an opportunity for all Members to express views on the proposals ahead of consideration by Cabinet.

**BECKY SHAW**  
**Chief Executive**

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Local Members  
All

Background Documents