

Advice for SACREs about Local Government Reorganisation

The government has announced that it will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for two-tier areas and for those unitary councils where there is evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries may be hindering their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality services for their residents. This has potential to significantly affect 42 SACREs

On 5 February 2025, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution Jim McMahon, wrote to all councils in two-tier areas and small neighbouring unitary authorities to formally invite proposals for local government reorganisation (LGR).

Areas submitted interim plans by 21 March, and full proposals will follow later in the year at the end of November. The Government will follow the established assessment and decision-making process, with a view to undertake elections in May 2027 ahead of the establishment of new local authorities in April 2028.

Surrey, and those areas on the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), will move at greater speed. These are the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, East Sussex, West Sussex, Essex, Hampshire, and the authorities within them.

Final proposals are currently subject to public consultation in Surrey, with a view to undertaking elections for the new authorities in May 2026 ahead of go live in April 2027.

Areas on the DPP will submit final proposals by the end of September, with a view to undertaking elections for the new authorities in May 2027 ahead of go live in April 2028.

	Final proposals	Consultation	Decision	Legislation laid	Shadow council elections	Go live
Surrey	May 2025	Closes 5 August 2025	October 2025	Early 2026	7 May 2026	1 April 2027
DPP	26 Sept 2025	November 2025	March 2026	Autumn 2026	6 May 2027	1 April 2028
Non-DPP	28 Nov 2025	Early 2026	Before summer recess 2026	Autumn 2026	6 May 2027	1 April 2028

On the date when the new Authority 'goes live' the old LA will cease to exist and the new LA(s) will come into being. From that date the new Authority will have a statutory duty to:

- Establish and support a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), including appropriate membership, governance, and resourcing.
- Convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to determine the local Agreed Syllabus for RE and review it at least every five years.
- Provide maintained schools with clear guidance and access to the current Agreed Syllabus for RE and arrangements for collective worship, including determinations.
- take note of, and respond to, advice from the SACRE.

NASACRE advises those affected SACREs to work with your LA and plan ahead. It may be wise for those SACREs who have a syllabus due for revision to set up an ASC to renew the existing syllabus, rather than undertake a full scale revision, until the new Authority is in existence.

There may be scope for Authorities to collaborate and set up a single SACRE over a number of Authorities, as has happened in Cumberland and Westmorland with the Cumbrian SACRE.

Alternatively, with more evenly sized LAs there may be potential for the Agreed Syllabus to be a more accurate reflection of the locality.

(Thanks to LGA for much of the information <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-hub/local-government-reorganisation-lgr> and to Deborah Weston of the RE Policy Unit for help in putting this together.)

The affected LAs and therefore SACREs are:

Local Authority	Type	LGR phase
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Blackpool Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Brighton & Hove City Council	Unitary Authority	DPP - Sep 2025
Cambridgeshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Derby City Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Derbyshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Devon County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
East Sussex County Council	County Council	DPP – Sep 2025
Essex County Council	County Council	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Gloucestershire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Hampshire County Council	County Council	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Hertfordshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Isle of Wight Council	Unitary Authority	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Kent County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Lancashire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Leicester City Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Leicestershire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Lincolnshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Medway Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Norfolk County Council	County Council	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
North East Lincolnshire Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
North Lincolnshire Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Nottingham City Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Nottinghamshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025

Oxfordshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Peterborough City Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Plymouth City Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Portsmouth City Council	Unitary Authority	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Reading Borough Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025 Reading isn't formally part of the programme so aren't subject to a deadline
Rutland County Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Southampton City Council	Unitary Authority	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Southend-on-Sea City Council	Unitary Authority	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Staffordshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Suffolk County Council	County Council	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Surrey County Council	County Council	First wave
Thurrock Council	Unitary Authority	Devolution Priority Programme – Sept 2025
Torbay Council	Unitary Authority	Third wave – Nov 2025
Warwickshire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025
West Berkshire Council	Unitary Authority	West Berks aren't formally part of the programme so there's no deadline as such, though if they go in with South Oxfordshire then they will submit in November
West Sussex County Council	County Council	DPP - Sep 2025
Worcestershire County Council	County Council	Third wave – Nov 2025

October 2025