

# Local Government Reorganisation

Lorna Ford (Chief Executive, Rother District Council)

# Current Tiers of Government in Sussex



## **National Government**

Delivery and coordination of national level services, including defence, macroeconomic policy, and health.

## **County Authority (East Sussex County Council- ESCC)**

Delivery of services including education, social services, road and transport, waste disposal, economic development, countywide planning and the environment, protecting the public, and libraries.

## **District and Borough Councils (including RDC)**

Delivery of services including waste collection, tourism, environmental health, leisure, planning permission, housing needs services, collection of council tax.

## **Town & Parish Councils**

Delivery of services including parish lighting, grants for local projects and organisations, recreation and sports fields.

# Proposed Tiers of Government in Sussex

## National Government

Delivery and coordination of national level services, including defence, macroeconomic policy, and health

## Strategic Authorities (Mayoral County Combined Authority)

Principal Authorities come together to form Strategic Authorities. Strategic Authorities coordinate levers relating to local growth and issues crossing council boundaries, such as infrastructure planning, transport, and spatial planning, while convening partners for public service reform

Devolution

District and  
Borough  
Councils

ESCC

## Principal Authorities (Unitary Authority)

Delivery of local public services, place shaping and local public service reform.

LGR

## Town & Parish Councils

Delivery of local-level services.

# Local Government Reorganisation – what we were asked to do



Make a proposal to government by 26 September for unitary government in East Sussex. ***(To submit alongside any proposals made for Brighton and Hove).***

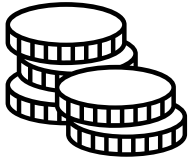
The Government expects new unitary councils should:

- Be a single tier
- Have a population of 500,000 or more
- Not break up existing boroughs/districts
- Provide quality and sustainable public services
- Work with other local councils and listen to local views
- Support devolution
- Talk to communities and empower them

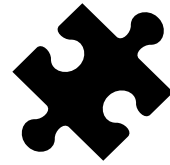
# Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation



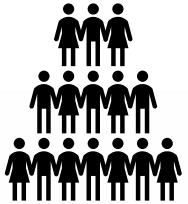
- Submitted back in March 2025 – all six councils supported a single authority for East Sussex whilst being open to other options
- Key principles included:



Better value for money through economies of scale



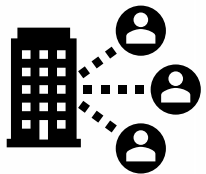
Tackling inequalities by shifting investment towards prevention and early intervention



Better outcomes by freeing up funding through reduced management and overhead costs



Enhancing attractiveness to investors by providing a unified voice



Addressing shared workforce challenges



Greater strategic presence and influence within Southeast England

# How did we develop a business case?

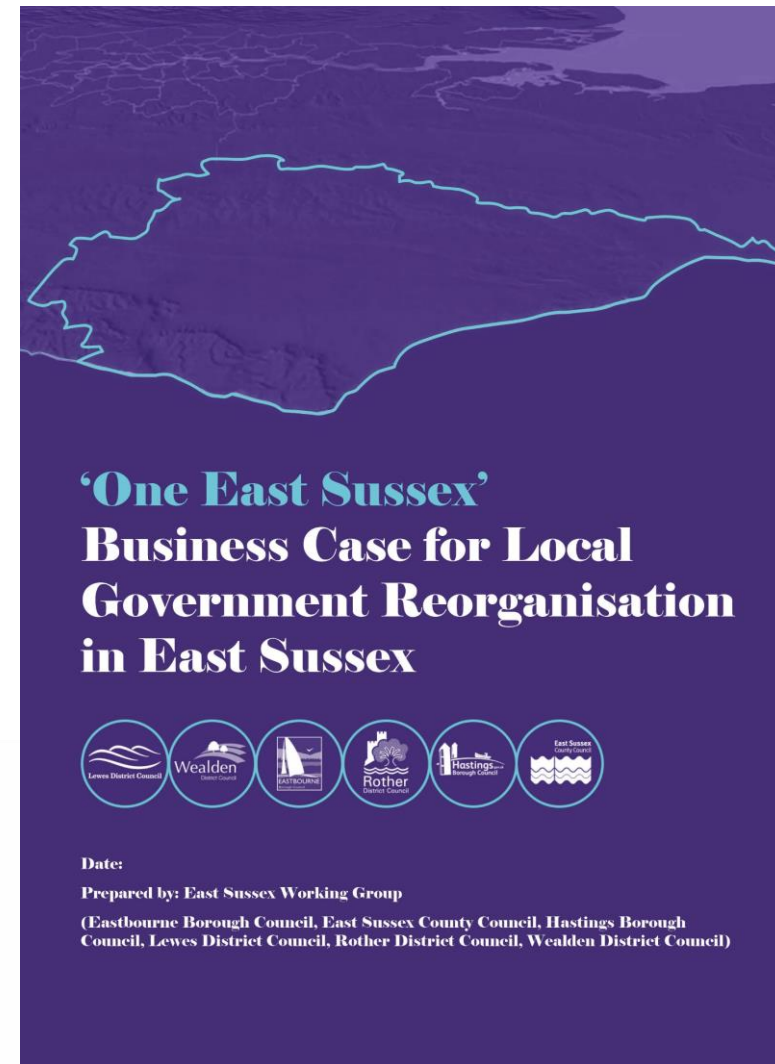
Following the submission of our Interim Plan in March, we:

1. Worked with the other five councils in East Sussex (Eastbourne BC, Hastings BC, Lewes DC, Wealden DC, East Sussex County Council) to develop a detailed business plan for a single council for all East Sussex (*not including Brighton and Hove*).
2. Assembled evidence and data to underpin this case and to share with partners.
3. Carried out surveys and focus groups with residents, businesses and partners to get their views. More than 14,000 responses received – thank you.

# One East Sussex...

A detailed and evidenced proposal for a single council on the present ESCC boundaries to serve all East Sussex from April 2028.

Prepared over several months by staff and leaders from all six local councils with expert consultants.





# One East Sussex...

Analyses the case for a single unitary and compares with other suggested options:

- Two Councils in East Sussex with BHCC remaining as is
- Four variants of an expanded BHCC; with remainder of East Sussex forming a single council

Establishes that **One East Sussex (a single unitary council for East Sussex) is the best option.** This model:

- ✓ Aligns with existing service delivery footprints (e.g. social care, education, public health).
- ✓ Minimises disruption to statutory services and partnerships.
- ✓ Builds on established collaboration across the six councils.
- ✓ Meets the government's population guidance and maintains a coherent geographic identity.
- ✓ Creates operational savings as a single authority and avoids the substantial costs of disaggregation.



# What did our residents, partners and businesses tell us?



- During spring and summer, several surveys and discussions took place to inform the business case
- Common themes included:
  - **Support for reorganising on the current East Sussex footprint:** In areas of Lewes district where BHCC suggested it might expand, almost nine in 10 people (89 per cent), rejected the idea. In a county-wide survey, 74% of respondents felt a single unitary was the only model which should be proposed.
  - **High-quality services:** In the same survey, six in 10 people named this as a priority.
  - **Cost-saving:** Named as the single biggest benefit by 49% of respondents to the county-wide survey.
  - **Local representation:** Emerged as the biggest concern under a single unitary council.

# Addressing Democratic Deficit

- Addressing local representation was a key theme that emerged from engagement
- The One East Sussex business case sets out principles to guide the assessment of future models for neighbourhood governance:
  1. **Building on existing structures and foundations**
  2. **Sustainability** – ensuring appropriate resourcing is in place
  3. **Fit for the future** – meaningfully shaping decisions
  4. **Fairness** – appropriate representation across the region
  5. **Collaborative leadership** – enabling partnership work

# How to have your say on neighbourhood governance



- The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill was announced by government in July. The bill introduces a requirement on local authorities to ensure local influence over decisions in a unitary authority.
- To inform this work, the government are reviewing local authority-led neighbourhood governance models
- A consultation has been launched to gather views on what effective neighbourhood governance looks like: [Neighbourhood Governance review](#)
- The survey runs until 7 October 2025
- The views of town and parish councils are invaluable – please have your say

# What happens next?

**26  
September**

Proposals  
submitted  
to  
government

**Nov/Dec  
2025**

Government  
begins  
public  
consultation

**January  
2026**

End of  
consultation  
period

**March 2026  
(expected)**

Government  
announces  
final  
decision

**May 2027**

Shadow  
authority  
for East  
Sussex  
established

**April 2028**

New  
authority  
for East  
Sussex  
established  
(*Vesting day*)

# Feedback, questions & answers