

RALC LGR Working Group MINUTES
Friday 23rd January 2026 at 11:30

Present: Martin Griffiths, Keith Robertson, Lorna Ford, Sue Prochak, John Barnes, Mary Philo, David Penfold, David Todd, Nigel Jacklin, Jenner Sands, Paul Redstone, Kay Moss, Cathryn Gallagher and Vicki Rutt.

Guest speaker: David Ford, Chief Executive Officer from Tandridge Council, Surrey.

1. Apologies for absence and introductions

Apologies were received from Alice Nolan.

2. Review of minutes of last meeting [10th December 2025]

The minutes were agreed.

3. Update on devolution, LGR and forthcoming elections (Lorna Ford)

Lorna updated that the consultation closed on the 11th January, everyone is now in a period of limbo until mid-March when a decision will be made. It has been confirmed that the County Council elections have been postponed until May 2027. The Government has confirmed that the Mayor elections will not be held until May 2028 so they are not aligned. RDC are now in the 'discovery phase' which is getting all the data in place with regard to finances, HR, IT etc. A section 24 notice being put in place regarding financial controls which is essentially a way of stopping outgoing Councils going on spending sprees.

4. Planning for LGR: developments in Surrey [David Ford, CEO, Tandridge DC]

David presented a powerpoint and this has been circulated to all members.

Key points and discussions were:

- Surrey is in the midst of it at the moment, Government announced their decision in Feb 2025 to proceed so Surrey moved quick with devolution and addressed significant debt.
- 2 proposals were submitted in May 2025 which were made up of a 2 or 3 unitary option. Consultation was held over the summer and Government announced on 28th Oct 2025 that they were proceeding with a 2 unitary council for Surrey.
- A structural changes order [SCO] was drafted and shared in October 2025. They have established a joint committees to oversee the implementation of the new unitaries.
- Appointments committee oversee recruitment of statutory officer posts.
- S151 will remain.
- External – working in the new partnership, promote the resident voice, work with them to pilot Neighbourhood Area Committees (NAC's) and retain housing stock.
- NAC's, the Government are keen for these to engage with local community in the new areas. Can't be too large, average 50k population. A report is going to Cabinet this week which contains the evaluation of the existing NAC's (*circulated*). David will also share their Terms of Reference with us (*circulated*).
- Membership on NAC's were discussed, and it is key that the right people sit on the group. There needs to be a formal arrangement between unitary and NACs, need some type of constitution. Need to clarify if/how the current district Association role will be when engaging with NACs'

- Clarity of the purpose of the NAC's, Which NGA's or other service providers need to be on the NAC's with what outcomes?
- The practical number of NAC's within a district were discussed. It was not clear yet if the number of NAC's in the Tandridge pilot were scalable at County level. We need to be clear how many NAC would be practical for Rother.
- How to get the views of those areas that non-parished, can get their voice heard through resident association. The NAC meetings are open but not held in public.
- Members on NAC have not yet had to sign anything, declaration of interest, no code of conduct etc. Will likely need to do this when they start allocate funding etc.
- A discussion took place regarding that NAC's can't make decision for PC's as this will not sit well with Cllrs and parishioners. Have Cornwall and Wiltshire done any evaluation on their NAC's as yet? **Ask Alice**

5. Report back on meetings with ESALC and with Council [Keith Robertson]

Keith stated that it is better to have a wider reach so would like to work with Lewes and Wealden to plan together on the development of proposal for East Sussex. We also need to work with ESCC to sense check our proposals and get their input to a workable solution. It was agreed that once a first draft completed, we will invite County to work with us.

6. Draft RALC recommendations [Martin Griffiths and John Barnes]

A paper was circulated but there was no time to look into this. All to looking into, reflect and discuss at the next meeting.

7. AOB

Martin questioned if we should now also reach out to Eastbourne and Hastings Borough Councils once a plan is in place. It was agreed to wait as now their plans post LGR are not known. It is unlikely the borough Councils will do anything until a decision is made on the structure.

8. Date of next meeting:

Friday 6th February at 11:00 (One agenda item meeting to discuss NAC's).

Friday 27th March at 11:30.

Meeting ended at 13:25