

REPORT OF THE
Chief Executive
PART I

1. ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

- 1.1 Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, the Minister for Local Government wrote to all 15 Local Authority Leaders across Hampshire and the Solent Region on 5 February, to invite proposals for Local Government Reorganisation, with interim plans due by 21 March 2025.
- 1.2 Both the White Paper and subsequent Ministerial Invitation is clear on the Government's policy position that Local Government Reorganisation will consolidate the two-tier system of county councils and district councils into a small number of financially resilient Unitary Authorities also encompassing current small or failing Unitary Councils.
- 1.3 The overarching objective is to determine the most efficient and effective future structure for local government, seeking to develop financially resilient organisations which can deliver and enable the best possible public services and ultimately the best outcomes for residents and communities.
- 1.4 The Local Government Minister emphasised the expectation that Local Authorities work together to collectively develop plans for the whole Region. Since the publication of the White Paper there has been a regular dialogue between Leaders and Chief Executives of all 15 Local Authorities.
- 1.5 A report has been prepared for Cabinet setting out the work undertaken in partnership with the other Local Authorities across Hampshire and the Solent Region to develop an Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation. The report is appended here for Council to consider the emerging options and guiding principles, the capacity of current and future decision making, and the Interim Plan for submission to Government on behalf of all 15 Local Authorities.
- 1.6 The full report to Cabinet can be found at the following link and is appended to this Part I report: [Agenda for Cabinet on Friday 21 March 2025, 10.00 am | About the Council | Hampshire County Council](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the report annexed to this Council report, it is recommended that the County Council recommends that Cabinet:

2. Notes the emerging journey for Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire and the Solent including the consideration of emerging options.
3. Agrees that the capacity in which current and future County Council decisions are taken in respect of Local Government Reorganisation:

- a. Represent all the people within the County Electoral Divisions.
 - b. Works to secure an outcome that continues to enable high-quality and effective public services for the residents, communities and visitors across Hampshire.
 - c. Appropriately represent all Upper Tier Local Government functions and responsibilities (statutory and non-statutory) currently delivered or enabled by Hampshire County Council, for which all County Councillors are currently accountable for.
- 4.** Agrees the County Council's specific guiding principles:
- a. We will prioritise delivery of efficient, high quality public services, enhancing delivery through reform whilst avoiding unnecessary fragmentation of services.
 - b. We will safeguard service users, including vulnerable children and adults, by minimising risk to the services the County Council delivers and the potential threats from a lack of effective business continuity and appropriate future local government structures in the long-term.
 - c. We will seek to ensure organisations of the future have the best chance of being financially sustainable and resilient. Organisations will need to be sufficiently large to withstand financial shocks and smoothing of significant cost drivers such as demography and deprivation.
 - d. We will leverage anchor institutions as the basis of the most appropriate structures to underpin sustainable delivery that offers value-for-money for the taxpayer and minimises the cost of transition.
 - e. We recognise that any future Unitary Solution will require effective mechanisms to enable local identity, engagement and local growth ambitions (including Local Place/Regeneration Boards, Area Committees and potential future Development Corporations).
 - f. We want to ensure equity of representation in a future Mayoral Combined Authority. All mainland Unitary Authorities to have equitable representation and voting rights.
- 5.** Agrees to collectively submit to Government the Interim Plan (Appendix A) ahead of the 21 March deadline across all 15 Local Authorities in Hampshire and the Solent, including the collectively agreed Guiding Principles:
- a. Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of Unitaries.
 - b. Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies.
 - c. To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes.
 - d. Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission.

- e. Government criteria and guidance will be used to inform our proposal, as far as possible.
 - f. Proposals will ensure there are sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with options retaining equitable representation and voting rights.
 - g. Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services.
 - h. Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes.
 - i. New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks.
- 6.** Agrees that if any minor amendments to the proposed interim plan are agreed by the 15 Councils, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council has delegated authority to approve the updated interim plan on behalf of Hampshire County Council.