

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS286)

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Written Statement made by: **Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Steve Reed)** on 16 Jul 2026.

Local Government Reorganisation

This Government is driving the most ambitious programme of local government reform in a generation, replacing the inefficient two-tier system with new unitary councils so that all parts of our country can access strong services, and are ready for devolution.

We need to devolve power out of Whitehall so that we can rebalance wealth, power and opportunity across our country. This is the second richest country in Europe, and yet England has seven of the ten poorest regions in Northern Europe. That is the case for change.

But devolution requires strong local councils delivering good public services, supporting economic growth, which are closely connected to the communities they serve.

Doing this right means recognising the unique contributions that different areas make to people's lives, as well as to the national economy. Some of our smaller cities are highly productive, but have been constrained by tight boundaries, set decades ago, which stop them from building the homes they need. Others are more rural, with significant demand for social care services and affordable housing. Local government should be set up to address the unique circumstances of each area and design public services tailored to each community.

Reorganisation provides us with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that councils genuinely represent the communities they serve today and stand the test of time. We know that people care about their own villages, home towns, high streets and communities. But in many parts of the country, existing boundaries do not match local economies, public services, or local identities.

But we won't achieve effective devolution or enable effective place-based public services with outdated and misaligned structures that slow down delivery, fragmenting public services, hampering housebuilding and slowing down important decision making. We need to make sure that new councils are grounded in place and are genuinely connected to their communities.

DECISIONS

I am pleased to announce today further decisions for local government reorganisation - a key milestone for our ambitious programme. This follows the decisions previously announced on unitary government in Surrey, Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Fourteen areas were invited to put forward proposals by 28 November 2025. From this, my department received 52 proposals. I would like to thank councillors and officers for their hard work and collaboration on these proposals. As the House was informed on 5 February, all the proposals received were taken to consultation, which closed on 26 March 2026.

Further consultations were also undertaken across May and June 2026 in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove and West Sussex.

I considered each proposal carefully against the criteria set out in the invitation letter, alongside the responses to the consultation, all representations and all other relevant information to assess the proposals. Each decision was made on a case-by-case basis, based on the merits of each proposal, respecting local circumstances and taking into account the views of local people.

Today, I have written to the Leaders of councils for all sixteen remaining areas. I have decided to implement the following proposals, subject to Parliamentary approval, in these areas:

Derbyshire and Derby: Two unitary option submitted by Chesterfield Borough Council, Derby City Council, Erewash Borough Council and High Peak Borough Council. In implementing this option, I will exercise the power to modify the proposal submitted by South Derbyshire District Council to achieve the boundary change councils requested.

Devon, Plymouth and Torbay: Four unitary proposal submitted by Exeter City Council and Plymouth City Council. I will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change Exeter City Council and Plymouth City Council requested alongside the proposal.

East Sussex and Brighton and Hove: Two unitary proposal submitted by East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Rother District Council. I will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change requested by Brighton and Hove City Council, with the exception of Falmer Parish.

Gloucestershire: One unitary proposal submitted by Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, and Tewkesbury Borough Council.

Hertfordshire: Four unitary proposal submitted by Broxbourne Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. I will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change requested by the proposing councils, with the exception of Arbury Ward.

Kent and Medway: Four unitary proposals submitted by Dover District Council, Swale Borough Council and Thanet District Council.

Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen: Four unitary proposals submitted by Chorley Borough Council, Lancaster City Council, Preston City Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, South Ribble Borough Council and West Lancashire Borough Council.

Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland: Two unitary proposal submitted by Leicester City Council. I will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change Leicester City Council requested alongside the proposal with the exception of the part parishes.

Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and Northeast Lincolnshire: Four unitary proposal submitted by the City of Lincoln Council. I will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change requested by the City of Lincoln Council.

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham: Two unitary option requested by Nottingham City Council. In implementing this option, I will exercise the power to modify the two unitary proposal submitted by Nottinghamshire County Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council to achieve the boundary changes requested by Nottingham City Council.

Oxfordshire: Three unitary proposal submitted by Oxford City Council, including the adjoining area of West Berkshire Council. I will exercise the power to modify the proposal to achieve the boundary change Oxford City Council requested alongside the proposal.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent: Two unitary proposal submitted by East Staffordshire Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council and Cannock Chase District Council, and also by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Warwickshire: Two unitary proposal submitted by North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council.

Worcestershire: Two unitary proposal submitted by Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council and Wychavon District Council.

Further detail on the decisions for these areas is provided in letters to council leaders in the areas, which will be published on gov.uk later today. A summary of the responses to the consultations for proposals in these areas will also be published in due course.

In both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and West Sussex, I am not announcing decisions, and I believe that further time is required as it is vital that we get these decisions right.

I remain committed to meeting the existing deadline, aiming for elections to new unitaries in 2027, with new councils going live in 2028.

TRANSITION SUPPORT

A broad support offer is in place for councils, including support to councils through our sector advisors and through funding to the Local Government Association for an enhanced support offer. We have already announced £63m in capacity funding to support the reorganisation process, and I am pleased to provide further detail today on how this funding will be allocated.

Of the £63m capacity funding, as well as the unprecedented £900,000 transition support to each new unitary already announced, we are also committing up to £150,000 per each new unitary as supplementary funding for Leadership Capacity and Continuity in Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health. This is part of a wider package of support worth up to £10m for children's services, adult's social care and public health leadership, which will also fund targeted development, mentoring and peer support for current, new and aspiring leaders.

In addition, up to £1m of funding overall will be available to support the small number of areas with complex fire and rescue authority transitions.

Taken together, this means that areas undergoing local government reorganisation will receive more than £1m per new unitary created. This is the first time reorganisation has been supported in this way and shows this government is commitment to supporting councils to get these reforms right. We will confirm details of these allocations in due course.

My department will also continue to work closely with the Home Office, Department for Education, other departments and agencies, as well as existing and new councils in Kent to continue vital work to support the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children operations.

NEXT STEPS

Reorganisation is a shared endeavour between central and local government and we will need to continue collaborating closely to deliver it successfully. Everyone involved wants to see stronger local councils delivering better services, which will improve the lives of the people we serve.

We remain fully committed to the timetable already set out, with elections to the new unitary councils scheduled for May 2027, ahead of vesting day for the new councils to begin delivering services in April 2028.

I will place copies of the letter and the documents I have referred to in the House Library, and these will also be published on gov.uk today.