

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

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Devolution/LGR

Strategic Authorities

Mayors and councils working together across the country

Preference for Mayors

ambition for all areas to move to a mayoral model

Set powers and funding
focused on driving growth

Local government reorganisation
for two tier areas

Reorganisation and devolution to progress together with some areas in a fast-track Devolution Priority Programme



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

English Devolution White Paper

Power and Partnership:
Foundations for Growth

December 2024



Strategic Authorities (2 forms)

- **Foundation Strategic Authorities**
 - Non-Mayoral Combined and Combined County Authorities and any local authority designated as a Strategic Authority without a Mayor
- **Mayoral Strategic Authorities (Govt preference)**
 - Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) and Mayoral Combined County Authorities (MCCA)
 - In all areas prior to local government reorganisation, Government establishes MCCA but not MCA
 - A MCCA/MCA includes the Mayor (who must appoint a Deputy) and a number of Constituent Members from the Constituent Authorities (upper-tier/unitary authorities)
 - Constituent Authorities can appoint a set number of non-constituent and associated members (e.g. a district or borough authority, local NHS Trust)

Scope of Strategic Authorities



Geography of Strategic Authorities

- **Scale** - default assumption combined population of 1.5m (Sussex approx. 1.7m)
- **Economies** - particular focus on functional economic areas, travel to work patterns and labour markets
- **Contiguity** - across constituent Councils
- **No devolution islands**
- **Delivery** - able to deliver key functions e.g. Spatial Development Strategies and Local Transport Plans
- **Alignment** - Government seeks to promote alignment between devolution boundaries and other public bodies e.g. Police, ICS
- **Identity** - ability for local residents to engage with and hold their devolved institutions to account.

Funding of Strategic Authorities

Government has committed to a simplified funding landscape:

- MCCA/MCAs will receive:

a consolidated funding pot for:

- local growth;
- housing/ regeneration;
- adult skills;
- local transport

a 30-year Investment Fund to drive economic growth

the ability to raise a precept to generate money for local priorities

the ability to impose a “Mayoral Community Levy”, to help deliver local infrastructure

- Foundation Strategic Authorities will have less flexibility, receiving dedicated local growth allocations decided by formulae

Devolution Priority Programme

On 5 February the Government confirmed that Sussex is one of 6 areas successful in applying for the **Devolution Priority Programme (DPP)**.

Consultation on the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority launched on 17 February and running to 13 April 2025.

The DPP involves:

- Having a Mayor elected by 2026, which is the earliest point
- Having access to the Mayoral Strategic Authority level of the devolution framework
- Taking a seat at the Council of the Nations and the Regions, Mayoral Council to feed into national policy making
- Starts the clock on getting to Established status - unlocking the single settlement
- Backing from Government, including Ministerial support and engagement and capacity funding

Devolution Consultation

- deadline 13 April

- ESCC draft response available at: [Devolution Consultation - Full Council Paper](#)
- Consultation questions on benefits of devolution, including on economic development, social outcomes, service delivery and local needs and the governance arrangements
- Really supportive of proposal
- Need clarity about roles that are being drawn up from Councils or where there are overlaps - inc. planning
- Want more flexibility about governance
- Want to be called “Sussex MCCA” (not Sussex and Brighton)

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

On 5 February the Government wrote to all District, Borough and County Councils in two-tier areas and some unitary councils issuing a statutory invitation for proposals for a single tier of government.

Government invited proposals for new unitary councils which have populations of 500,000 or more to:

- Achieve efficiencies
- Improve capacity
- Withstand financial shocks

ESCC and the 5 District and Borough Authorities have worked together to produce a single Interim Plan covering East Sussex submitted to Government on 20 March 2025

Summary - proposed Tiers of Government for Sussex

Representation/voice to National Govt via the Council of Nations/Regions and Mayoral Council

National Government

Delivery and coordination of national level services.

Sussex Mayoral Combined County Authority

Comprised of a Mayor and the Constituent Councils (currently ESCC, WSCC and BHCC), plus a maximum of 6 non-constituent and associated members (e.g. a district authority, local NHS Trust)
Responsible for a cross-county, strategic approach. Functions would give the Authority and the Mayor greater local control over areas such as transport, adult education and skills, and housing to enable improvements in local connectivity, educational outcomes, economic development, driving economic growth and improved social wellbeing.

Two members from each of the unitary authorities would be the constituent council members on the MCCA.

Unitary Authorities

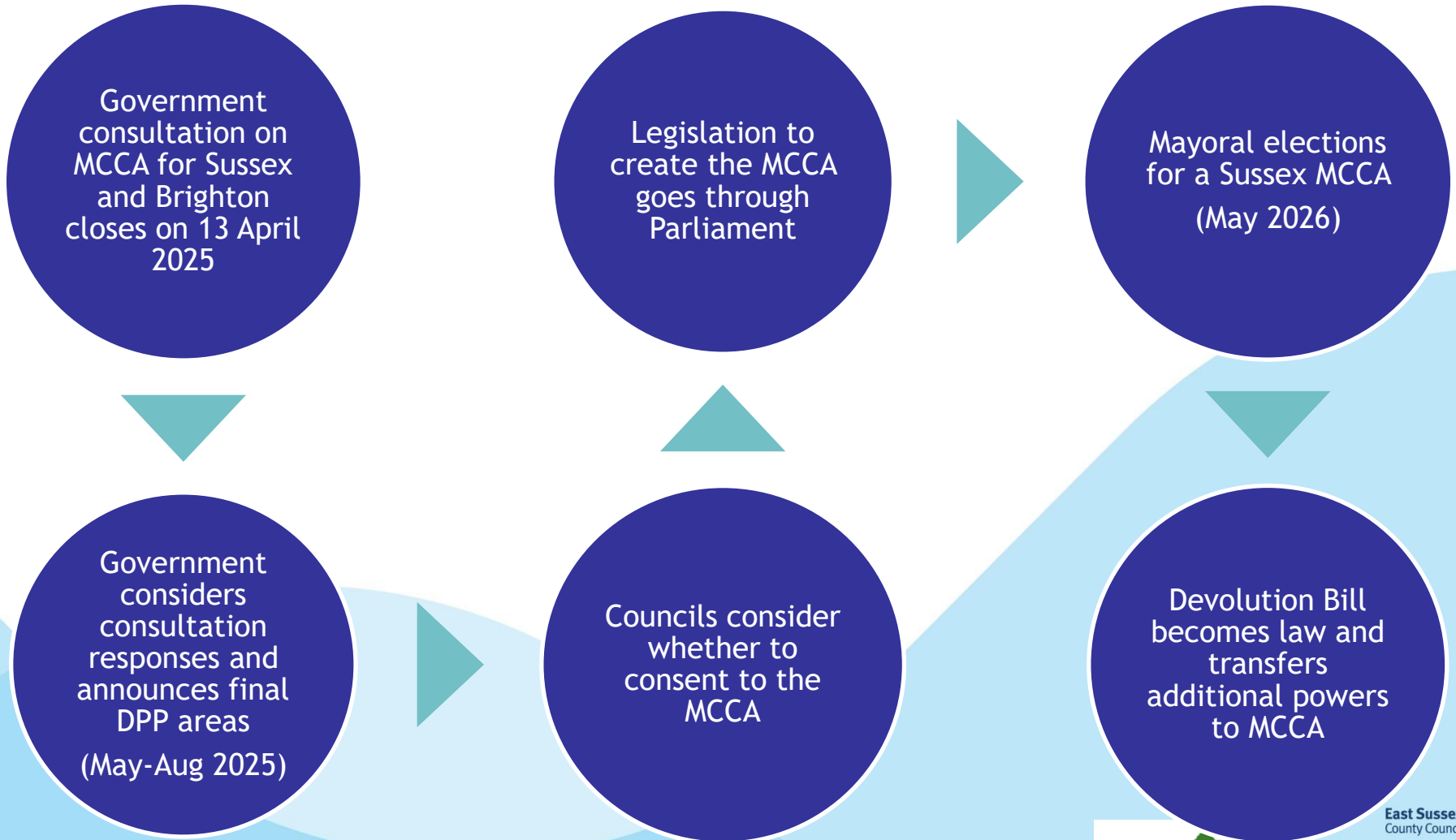
Delivery of local public services (e.g. social care) and place shaping.

Number of unitary authorities

Existing County/City Councils - ESCC, WSCC, BHCC
Existing District and Borough Authorities (12)

Local Councils (Towns and Parishes)

Next Steps - devolution



Next Steps - LGR

Interim plans
for LGR
submitted to
Government
(21 March
2025)

Government
announce
decisions on LGR
proposals in DPP
areas
(Jan-Apr 2026)

Legislation for
LGR proposals

Full proposals
for LGR
submitted to
Government
(26 Sept 2025)

Government
consultation on
LGR proposals

Elections to
shadow unitary
authorities
(May 2027)

New unitaries
come into being
(Apr 2028)

What does it all mean?

- Biggest change to local government in Sussex in 50 years - abolition of District/Borough and County Councils
- ESCC elections postponed in 2025
- No change to Town and Parish Councils' structure (may be more?)
- Strong community involvement will be key to success of new unitary...once agreed
- Govt keen:
 - *"We will...want to see stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens..."*
 - *"We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities..." (p.100 White Paper)*
- All six councils really interested in a wide range of views
- ***PS - no more money for council services***