

Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex



Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timeline so far

Dec 2024: Government decides all two -tier areas will become unitary - replacing current county councils and district and borough councils.

Proposals for new unitary councils (with populations of at least 500,000) to:

- achieve efficiencies
- improve capacity
- withstand financial shocks
- enable strong community connections
- enable wider public service reform.

Feb 2025: East Sussex announced in fast track (Devolution Priority Programme)

March 2025: Interim Plan submitted by all six East Sussex councils

Summer 2025: One East Sussex Proposal developed, costed and consulted on. Very strong public support to create a new unitary council on existing boundaries

Two further models developed in Hastings.

Sept 2025: ‘One East Sussex’ proposal submitted to Government by five Councils (Wealden decided not to express a preference for any model)

Nov – Jan 2026: Statutory consultation underway

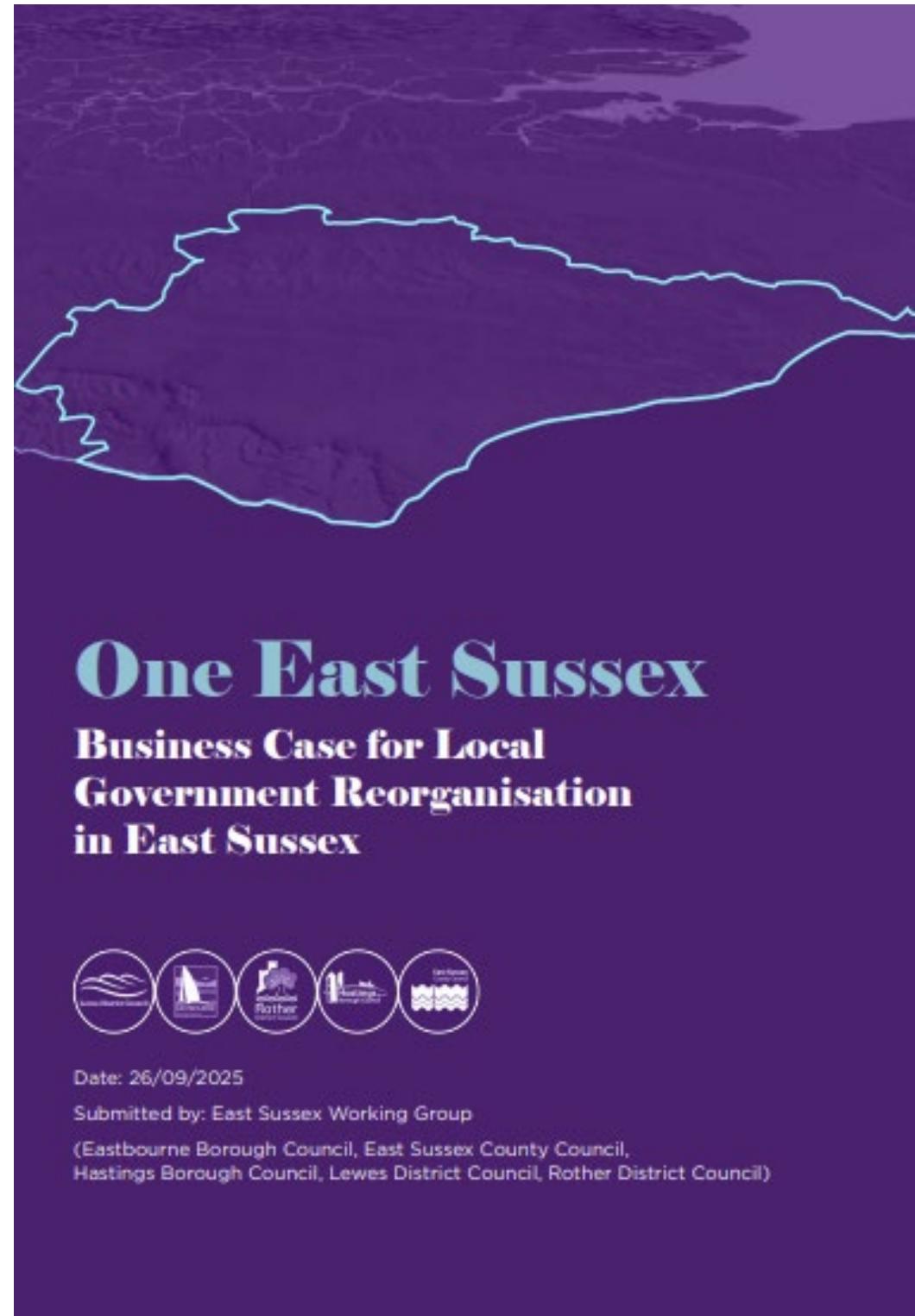


One East Sussex – principles agreed by the councils' Leaders

- This is a joint endeavour in which all Councils have a shared ambition to work collaboratively to co -design the new unitary authority, whilst acknowledging and respecting the corporate roles, responsibilities and risks of the current authorities.
- We will work together to deliver proposals which are in the best interests of the whole area.
- We will be evidence led.
- We will learn from others' experiences of Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution.
- Decisions made by all sovereign bodies until vesting day will have the interests of the future Council as an explicit consideration.
- There will be full transparency over resources including transition funding and agreed allocations reflecting costs incurred.
- There is a commitment to appropriate levels for decision making, engagement and local member roles including in non parished areas.
- There is a commitment to robust scrutiny arrangements in transition/formation and beyond.
- A comprehensive workforce plan to provide maximum stability is to be created as a priority.



One East Sussex – the proposal submitted by Eastbourne Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, and Rother District Council



- ✓ Is underpinned by a robust evidence base, including sign-off of the financial data by Chief Finance Officers.
- ✓ Takes account of resident and stakeholder feedback.
- ✓ Aligns with existing service delivery and partnership footprints (e.g. housing, 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 and avoids the substantial costs of disaggregation.
- ✓ Worked up by the six councils, involving cross-party collaboration to reach agreement on the strongest proposal for the area.
- ✓ Meets all six Government criteria for LGR.

What have residents, businesses and partners told us?



- Strong support for reorganising on the current East Sussex footprint and near -universal opposition to sharing new council structures with the city of Brighton & Hove (BHCC). In areas of Lewes district where BHCC suggested it might expand, almost nine in 10 people (89 per cent) rejected the idea.
- High -quality services was the most important thing people wanted to see from a new council. In a county wide survey, six in 10 people named this as a priority
- Almost three -quarters of people (74 per cent) in the same survey felt the single unitary was the only model that should be proposed to government. Cost -saving was named as the single biggest benefit.
- Concern about a potential loss of local representation under a single unitary council.



Opportunities

Improved customer outcomes and value for money for residents
holistic view of need and design services accordingly through whole

through integrated services. A single authority can take a -system planning and delivery.

Financial savings through consolidation of back -office functions, rationalisation of assets, and streamlined governance. The One East Sussex model offers the greatest value for money by avoiding the high disaggregation costs and duplication associated with alternative models, delivering a forecast net benefit of £25 million by 2032/33 through consolidation, transformation, and increased income.

Enhanced Service Resilience: A larger council improves capacity to manage risks.

Economic Growth and Investment: A single council provides a stronger voice to attract investment and promote regional economic development. An integrated approach to the use of of digital and technological innovation will facilitate service delivery that better reflects how residents live their lives and how businesses operate, generating more economic prosperity.

Local Voice and Community Engagement: Maintaining strong local communities and digital access ensures that local voices shape council decisions. A unified East Sussex will have greater influence in regional and national decision -making and be better placed to shape policy and represent the interests of its residents.



Risks and concerns

- Resource and capacity for implementation
- Funding deficits/effect of funding reforms
- Managing changes for staff
- Perceived uncertainty for service users
- Perception of services being less local
- Increase in workload for Councillors



Alternative models considered...

A two -unitary model for East Sussex was considered but is not financially viable.

Implementation programme: Cost / benefit analysis	Cumulative to 2032/33	
	One Unitary £m	Two Unitaries £m
Implementation cost	68.456	121.246
Disaggregation cost		338.717
Total Costs	68.456	459.964
Reorganisation benefit	(47.591)	(43.061)
Transformation benefit	(40.508)	(12.665)
Total Savings	(88.099)	(55.725)
Cumulative net cost / (benefit)	(19.642)	404.238

One East Sussex - the exemplar

- Builds on strong relationships and experience
- Provides sensible and ambitious evolution to an efficient new council
- Greater clarity and seamless customer service for residents and businesses
- Confidence in delivery of new model
- Opportunities for staff



[Local government reorganisation in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, and West Sussex - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-east-sussex-and-brighton-and-hove-and-west-sussex)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the GOV.UK logo at the top. The page title is "Local government reorganisation in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, and West Sussex". The text "Open consultation" is displayed above the main content. The main content area contains the title in bold, followed by a line "From: [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)" and the date "Published 19 November 2025". At the bottom of the page is a button labeled "Get emails about this page".



Next steps

- **Now until 11 January** – statutory consultation
- **End Feb/March 2026** – Government expected to decide on unitary government for East Sussex
- **May 2026** – start of Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority
- **May 2027** – expected election of councillors to ESCC as continuing authority to prepare for unitary council
- **April 2028** – start of new unitary authority (vesting day)
- **May 2028 (tbc)** – election of Mayor for Sussex

