



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

**Ministry of Housing,
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Local Government**
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/mhclg

Chief Executives of West Sussex Councils

27 March 2026

Dear Chief Executives,

Further to the letter from the Secretary of State of 25 March regarding local government reorganisation in Sussex, and our discussion yesterday, I am writing to provide some more information about the next steps.

To start, I would like to apologise that we included some inaccurate information relating to population size in relation to West Sussex. This was an administrative error that occurred when preparing the letter. We appreciate this should not have happened and we are updating the published letter. In terms of data, we have used small area (2021 based) population estimates from the ONS for 2024. This is because it means we can better reflect sub-district level boundary changes that have been requested. Small area estimates are subject to a level of statistical uncertainty and so to reflect this, figures have been rounded. We would like to work with you to ensure that the information that is subsequently provided in the consultation is accurate. We have included an updated map and population figures in Annex A.

With regards to that consultation, our intention is for this to start after the local elections in May, and to run until mid-June. We will seek your views, as affected authorities, on the potential modification to the 2 unitary authority proposal put forward by West Sussex District and Borough councils. For East Sussex, there will also be a consultation on the potential modifications to the proposal from East Sussex councils, as put forward by Brighton and Hove as a formal request in response to the consultation. This would see parts of Lewes District Council joining an enlarged Brighton and Hove, and a consequently smaller single unitary for the rest of East Sussex. As before, we intend to share the questions with you in advance and to seek your views on any other bodies that the Secretary of State should consider consulting. Through the consultation we will provide a mechanism for members of the public and others affected to provide their view.

I would like to emphasise though that this is a technical exercise, focused on a proposed modification to the 2 unitary proposal rather than a public consultation. We will be seeking evidence and views in relation to the potential modification against the criteria. We do not envisage that the consultation document will provide analysis of the potential modification.

Following the close of this consultation the representations made will be considered by the Secretary of State, alongside all responses already received and all other information available in determining which, if any, proposal to implement, with or without modification. The Secretary of State will take his decisions having careful regard to the criteria set out in the invitation letter of 5 February 2025.

We appreciate that you may feel that you do not have additional information to provide to a consultation given the potential modification is an option you considered at an early stage of the process and dismissed. However, Ministers would like to provide you with the opportunity to provide views. In addition, as we discussed you may wish to update your modelling following the Fair Funding Review and so provide this information, or to set out what further support or other adjustments you consider would be necessary as part of the potential modification.

I wish to again confirm that this additional consultation does not affect the intended timetable for new councils, as the timeline will now move to align with the 'tranche 3' areas, where decisions are due to be made in the summer, with new councils still to 'go live' in April 2028. Your share of the transition capacity funding, announced in February, will also be confirmed in the summer alongside any reorganisation decision. That funding will equal at least £900,000 for each new unitary council.

I would also like to confirm that the Parliamentary record is being corrected to reflect that the Secretary of State should have been more specific and referred to East Sussex when responding to the question in the Chamber on Wednesday.

As we set out, we are happy to meet again and will share with you draft consultation questions. I would like to thank you again for your continued work to deliver local government reorganisation.

Kind regards,

Ruth Miller
Deputy Director, Local Government Reorganisation

Annex A – Map and Population Data

Unitary A: Eastbourne, Hastings, Rother, Wealden and remaining parts of Lewes (pop: around 537,000)

Unitary B: Arun, Adur, Worthing (pop: around 349,000)

Unitary C: Brighton plus following wards and parish from Lewes (as requested) – East Saltdean & Telscombe Cliffs, Peacehaven West, Peacehaven East, Peacehaven North, Falmer Parish (from Kingston ward) (pop: around 308,000)

Unitary D: Crawley, Chichester, Horsham, Mid Sussex (around 566,000)

