



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP
*Minister for Local Government,
Devolution and Regional Growth*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Council Leaders and Chief Executives
By email

29 October 2026

Dear Council Leaders and Chief Executives,

I am writing to update you on the Government's review of the Local Government Reorganisation programme and next steps for your area.

I want to begin by acknowledging the significant commitment that your council has shown throughout this process, and to thank you for your continued engagement. Since the invitation to submit proposals, councils have devoted substantial time, effort and resources to developing options, engaging locally, supporting decision making and preparing for implementation. I know the announcement of the review has had a significant impact on local councils, councillors and staff across the country, and I am grateful for the patience you have shown. I recognise that the review period has not been easy, and I do not take for granted your continued commitment to the long-term work needed to fix the foundations and put local government in the best possible position.

Outcome of the programme review

Following the announcement to Parliament on 7 September 2026, the Secretary of State and I have worked with officials to interrogate the key pillars and framework underpinning the Local Government Reorganisation programme, including asking whether the existing unweighted criteria set in February 2025 and the programme's objectives continue to support the policy priorities of the new Government.

We have concluded that the basis of the programme is robust and that the existing criteria against which proposals have been submitted were correct on their own terms and continue to support the Government's policy agenda. Following this initial phase of the review, we can therefore confirm that the Government remains committed to delivering Local Government Reorganisation and that we will continue to move forward with the programme based on the existing criteria, which we hope gives confidence as the programme progresses.

Throughout this phase of the review, ministers and officials have heard from leaders and officers from all corners of the programme, as well as key local government stakeholders. I know that consensus on the outcome in every area is not possible. But I have heard that more can, and must, be done to recognise the demands being placed on council leaders and senior leadership teams; to make sure councils feel supported to deliver such important changes; and to build consensus on how we deliver this programme and the timetable to which we do it in each area. Above all, I have heard a clear message from colleagues: you want clarity about what happens next and what it means for your area. Today, I want to provide that clarity and set out the way forward for each area.

Decisions

Separately from the programme-level review, together with the Secretary of State, I have been carefully considering all the proposals received, the merits of these proposals, and all relevant evidence and views against the existing criteria. I can confirm that we will issue a number of minded to decisions, with a programme of further decision-making, which I outline in further detail below.

We have concluded that further time is required to consider the outcome in your nine invitation areas. We will undertake further consideration in the next phase of the review for your areas. To give you clarity on the status of the existing decisions while I do that, we have decided to today withdraw the decisions announced in July 2026 for your area. That means decisions from July 2026 have been withdrawn for the following nine areas:

- Derbyshire and Derby
- Devon, Plymouth and Torbay
- Hertfordshire
- Kent and Medway
- Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, and Blackpool
- Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland
- Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire
- Nottinghamshire and Nottingham
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

This is not a reflection of the quality of the proposals submitted by councils in your area, but rather the need to give each decision of such significance the careful consideration it deserves. I want to be clear that the review remains ongoing, and we will thoroughly consider all the evidence and analysis available to us, before coming to a view on next steps for your area. For the avoidance of doubt, all options and proposals in your area will remain under consideration as part of the review.

We have also set out today that we have made “minded to” decisions in the five remaining areas that received decisions in July 2026. Before we take final decisions for these areas, there will be a short period of time during which those interested may make further representations to me. More detail on these areas can be found in the Written Statement I will make to Parliament today.

Next phases of the review: timetable and next steps

I now turn to the next phase of the review, which will focus on the following areas due to have minded-to decisions, in no particular order:

- The nine areas listed above where decisions have now been withdrawn;
- The four areas (Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock; Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton; Norfolk; and Suffolk) where decisions were withdrawn in September; and
- The two areas (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; and West Sussex) where decisions have not yet been taken.

I am mindful that you want clarity and I will work as fast as I can with officials to provide that clarity. As I have said, I believe it is right to take a structured approach to the review and give each area the serious and deep consideration it deserves given the significance of these decisions. We will, however, seek to inform councils at the earliest practical opportunity, meaning that some of these 15 remaining areas will receive an outcome before others.

We commit to providing updates on outcomes in another set of areas by Christmas – and that every area will have an outcome announced by early next year.

As previously communicated in September, we set out that the review meant that elections scheduled to take place in May 2027 would go ahead to existing councils. This remains the position for the areas covered by the review. In those areas, the timetable is elections to new councils in May 2028 followed by vesting day on 1 April 2029. While I appreciate that this revised timetable will have implications for local planning and implementation activity, it provides the time needed both to complete the review and to ensure that any subsequent implementation programme can be delivered successfully.

Previously announced funding

I recognise the impact and costs of ongoing uncertainty and delay, which I have also considered in the initial phase of the review.

I understand that areas will have incurred costs associated with local government reorganisation in good faith.

For areas where new unitaries were previously announced, we will pay 50% of the £900,000 transition support per new unitary, based on the number of new unitaries in the initial announcement. This funding is guaranteed and will be paid in the coming weeks. It is not contingent on the outcome of the Review. For Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and West Sussex, where no decisions have been previously announced, we will instead pay £500,000 to each area.

When final decisions are made, we will pay the balance of the £900,000 transition support per each new unitary, taking account of funding already paid to its area, as well as £150,000 of supplementary funding per new unitary for Leadership Capacity and Continuity in Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health.

Next steps

Ministers and officials will remain in regular contact with councils while further consideration continues, providing updates as decisions are taken. I have also set out further detail in the Written Ministerial Statement on important elements such as city status and ceremonial matters and the transition away from the Committee system. My officials are available to discuss any questions you have on those. I am copying this letter to your Chief Executives, MPs, and relevant Commissioners and Combined Authority officials.

Thank you again for your continued commitment, leadership and dedication to serving your residents and communities.

Yours sincerely,



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth