



news release

16 May 2025

Statement from the Leader of West Sussex County Council on local government reorganisation

There is a big push ongoing to reorganise councils in England into a single tier of local authorities where all services for each area will be delivered under one roof.

This is a positive move and could very well be part of the solution to the pressures we're facing. But it is not a magic bullet and could be a missed opportunity if we fail to address the challenges.

I fully support the ongoing processes of devolution and local government reorganisation and believe that creating a combined authority for Sussex with an elected mayor will bring many benefits for our region.

My reservation is that I'm yet to see the government correct the one issue that could bankrupt local authorities across the country. Under the social care act, councils such as West Sussex County Council are required by law to provide certain levels of care.

My colleagues and I are very passionate about this issue and place our commitment to protecting vulnerable people as our topmost priority. Yet as a local authority we cannot afford to keep doing so in the way the system currently works.

Year after year we are coming under increasing pressure to keep funding services that meet the growing and increasingly complex need for social care.

In West Sussex, our teams strive to provide the best possible service and are always looking at ways to improve and make best use of our resources. But while the need for our services has grown, the funding from successive governments has not. This is simply not sustainable.

The government has asked us to look at reorganising councils with a view to creating efficiencies in the system, but this alone will not solve the social care issue unless government resolves the central question of funding. We must also consider how reorganisation is being approached. The government's White Paper published last year stated that councils should look to create unitary authorities in areas with a population of 500,000 or more.

This makes sense because it provides a footprint for authorities delivering services under one roof for a large population that will produce efficiencies in terms of the number of people, the building space, and cost of administering one organisation rather than several.

I want us to produce an option that sits within these guidelines so that we minimise the risk of additional cost and service disruption and negates the potential for smaller unitary authorities that would not produce the efficiencies needed to make reorganisation effective.

I want to be clear that I want devolution and local government reorganisation to succeed. Both present significant opportunities for West Sussex to flourish and prosper, but we must address the challenges. Failure to do so risks exacerbating the financial pressures and missing the chance to fully reap the benefits, leaving us with the same problems in the years to come.

Collaboration is key to success, and I am committed to working with my colleagues and partners across local government to develop a proposal that is right for the people, communities and businesses we serve and support.

Together, we can shape the right local government structure for West Sussex, one that is funded correctly, that is fit for purpose, that makes best use of resources, that delivers the right services to the right people when they need it, and most importantly that keeps people safe.

At a full meeting of West Sussex County Council on Friday 16 May 2025, I provided a full statement to members regarding the latest position on LGR and this statement is available by clicking [here](#).

In addition, we have received feedback from government on our submission which is available by clicking [here](#).

[Future of local government in Sussex](#)

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