

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Hampshire and the Solent Area.

Introduction

Central Government wants local government to be reorganised across the country to change how councils operate, so we want to make sure it delivers the best outcomes for people, no matter where they live in the area.

By simplifying how councils work across Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, we want to make services easier to access, more joined-up, and better value for money, all while protecting what matters most to local people.

We're making the most of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to build a stronger, more secure future with councils that are better equipped to meet the needs of our communities, support our local economy, and deliver high-quality services for all.

We've been studying data and talking to people who use public services, and the people who run them, to find out what matters most and what they want from the new structure – and now we want to hear from you.

Your views are really important to us, as they will help shape the final proposal that we are required to submit to Government this autumn.

This final proposal will first be discussed by Hampshire County Council and by East Hampshire District Council at their Full Council meetings, then by their Cabinets who will make a final decision on 26 September.

You can tell us what you think about our ideas between Monday 21 July and Sunday 17 August 2025 at www.hants.gov.uk/lgr

Background

Currently, Hampshire and the Solent area includes 15 district, county and unitary councils. Some areas have 'two tier' councils – which means they have Hampshire County Council delivering essential services such as education, roads, social care for older people and safeguarding vulnerable children and adults, and district or borough councils delivering other key services, including planning, housing and waste collection.

The Solent area – Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight – has single-tier councils that deliver all services. The Government now plans for these 15 councils to be reorganised into a smaller number.

LGR would not change parish and town councils in Hampshire and the Solent area.

Government requirements

In the future, councils must be unitary councils. These are councils that deliver all the services for an area, in a single tier (there will be no county, district or borough councils).

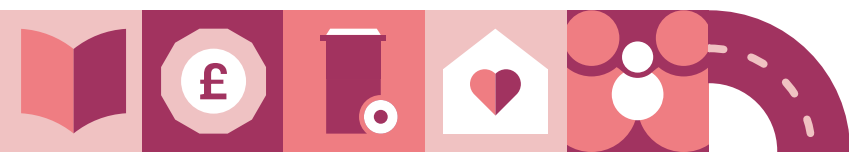
As a guiding principle, each council should serve a population of around 500,000.

Councils in Hampshire and the Solent area have been invited to submit proposals for their preferred restructure of local government, and the Government will make the final decision. The Government has also said that they will run a consultation, which will be open to residents and interested organisations, before making a decision on the restructure of local government in Hampshire and the Solent.

The new structure for local government must:

- provide an opportunity to reform public services
- not be too costly to set up
- where possible, avoid breaking services apart unnecessarily
- provide high quality, sustainable services
- use sensible economic and geographic areas for service delivery
- have boundaries that make sense (using existing council boundaries where possible)
- ensure that the people who need councils the most still receive a good service (or an even better service)
- ensure council taxpayers receive good services for their money
- be financially strong and stable
- understand the unique identity of local areas and meet the needs of the local community
- enable communities to shape their local area and influence decisions that affect them

Where an area has powers devolved from Government, the new structure must support the delivery of these. (Hampshire and the Solent area will soon have devolved powers, and a mayor to oversee them. You can read about what this means at www.hants.gov.uk/devolution).



Our vision is to achieve a Simpler, Stronger, Secure model of public service delivery across the area:

- strong, single-tier services that are accessible, transparent and easy to navigate
- local people will feel heard and supported, with urban and rural areas fairly served
- a smooth and cost-effective transition, ensuring continuity for people who use our services, especially those who need the most support

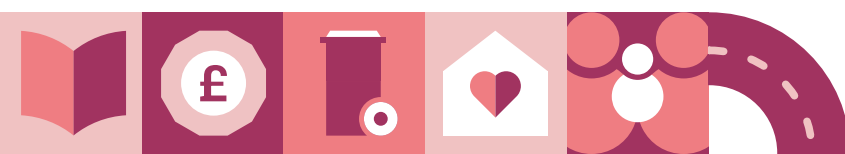
To achieve our vision, we have considered a number of options very carefully. Our proposal is based on evidence and informed by views of local people and our partners.

Our preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire and the Solent area

We propose that Hampshire and the Solent area has four councils (three councils on the Hampshire and Solent area mainland, and a standalone Isle of Wight council).

They would be organised into the following areas:

- North and Mid Hampshire (incorporating Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor and Winchester), with a population of around 656,000
- South-East (incorporating Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth), with a population of around 533,000
- South-West (incorporating Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton, and Test Valley), with a population of around 707,000
- Isle of Wight, with a population of around 141,000

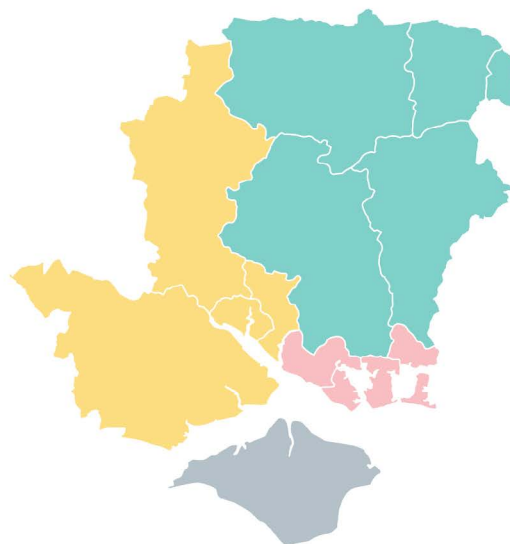


Your Councils – A Better Future

Simpler. Stronger. Secure

The councils would look like this on a map:

Proposed Option



Why are we proposing this option?

We feel it's the best option to deliver our vision and principles, whilst meeting the Government's criteria

The proposed option presents the best balance of maintaining scale, driving economic and housing growth, strengthening local identity and meeting local needs when reviewed against the Government's criteria.

It builds on existing services and frameworks, to provide a good basis for high quality and sustainable services for the future. It also helps to ensure that rural communities have a clear voice.

We believe this option offers the most stable and cost-effective route through transition and the best possible foundation to reform public services.

We've looked at the opportunities to transform services for the better.

We believe that by choosing the right structure, we can make improvements:

- **simpler for residents and partners** – fewer organisations to speak to, fewer systems, contracts and processes to co-ordinate
- **stronger services** – consolidation and improvement, more collaboration and opportunities for reform and innovation
- **secure for the future** – joined-up, targeted support to the most vulnerable people, more resilient councils, and investment in the infrastructure that we all share

Your Councils – A Better Future

Simpler. Stronger. Secure

We've listened to the views of residents, businesses and partner organisations

We want the new structure to meet the needs and aspirations of local people and places. We've been talking to residents, through our residents' panel, about their hopes for Local Government Reorganisation, as well as anything that concerns them.

We've listened to businesses, through the Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board. Meeting the needs of both residents and businesses is a key requirement of any new model.

We've also talked to council staff, and people with experience in other public services, such as senior figures in the Police, Fire Service, NHS, the two National Park Authorities, as well as the head teachers of our schools and other education settings, Hampshire Association of Local Councils, the voluntary sector and others across local government.

We've considered the costs and risks of different options

We've been working out the costs involved in different options – how much the councils would cost to set up, and how well the councils would be able to fund themselves, once they are running. This involves looking at things like population sizes, deprivation and employment, and opportunities for business rates revenue.

This is a really important part of the proposal. We have carefully analysed the data, to understand the financial implications of each option.

When you look closely at the numbers, not all the options we have looked at are financially viable. The most costly services are things like social care, which vulnerable people rely on every day. If an unaffordable council structure were developed, those people could be at serious risk.

How the options stack up financially

Three councils

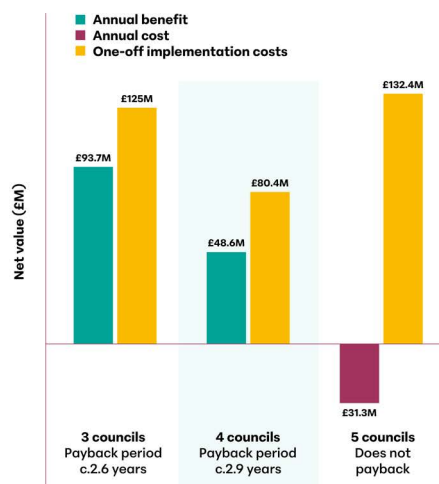
Most cost-efficient model to operate annually

Four councils

Lowest cost to implement

Five councils

Most costly by all measures



Minimising the risk of disruption to critical services

We also want to protect people from the disruption caused by breaking up services and having to create brand new structures. Such changes pose a risk to people who rely on continuity of care. This disruption must be kept to a minimum.

At the moment, the costly services like adult social care and education are provided by four councils, who already have the systems and processes in place to do this well. If the future structure has four councils, we can achieve this by making changes to the shape and size of existing services.

If our future structure has three or five councils, this will mean completely dissolving one of these strong services – or creating a new one from scratch, which would be expensive and risky.

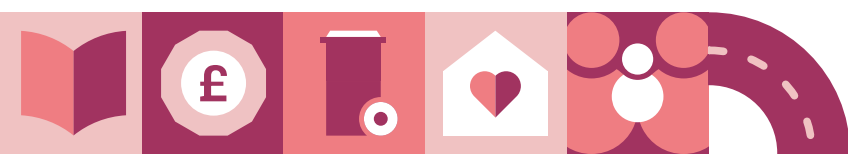
Isle of Wight

As part of our assessment of possible options, we have looked at dividing Hampshire and the Solent area into three, four or five councils. In every option we include the Isle of Wight Council, which is proposed to remain as it is despite its population being below the 500,000 threshold, for reasons explained later.

Our conclusions

Because it will benefit from the strong foundations provided by our existing services and frameworks, we believe this structure would provide a unique opportunity to:

- **work together to make things better.** We can integrate county council functions and services with district council functions and services systematically – for example, unifying waste collection, recycling and disposal services, joining services such as social care and housing, and improving collaboration between services like local planning and highways
- **level up across the area,** by creating more opportunities for fair and long-term growth, making better use of public assets, modernising and digitising how councils work, and simplifying and joining up services
- **make savings.** Our preferred option could save up to £50 million a year. The potential to make savings would come earlier, and be greater, when councils of the future are built on stable foundations that minimise the risk of transition



Other options which we do not think would work so well

Merging the Isle of Wight with a mainland council area

The Isle of Wight has a much smaller population than the other areas we are proposing, but there are good operational reasons for it to remain separate.

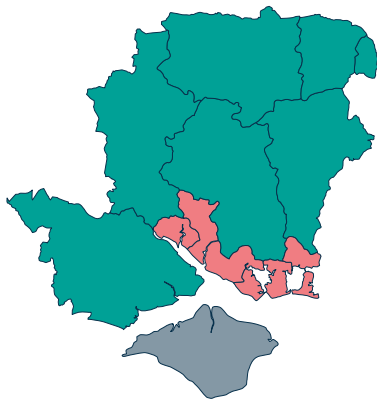
Joining it with another council, and aiming to provide services in a cohesive way, would present unique challenges. It also has a very distinct identity as an island.

Instead, we think all the councils should work together, and create partnerships to join up on strategic issues. This would allow the Isle of Wight Council to work with mainland councils and would support collaboration across the whole area. We are still working on this part of our proposal, in partnership with the Isle of Wight.

Having three or five councils in Hampshire and the Solent area

It would be possible to split Hampshire and the Solent area into three or five unitary councils, such as below:

Three unitary authorities



North: 965,387 (47.4%)

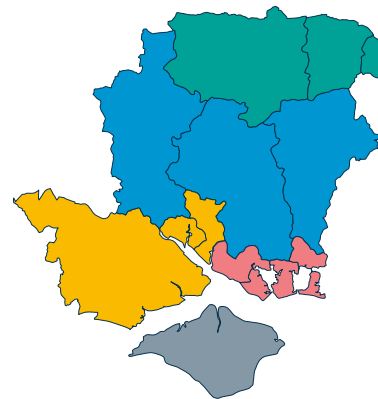
Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, New Forest, Rushmoor, Test Valley, Winchester

South: 929,579 (45.7%)

Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Southampton

Isle of Wight: 140,906 (6.9%)

Five unitary authorities



North: 394,648 (19.4%)

Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor

Central: 395,341 (19.4%)

Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

South-West: 572,458 (28.1%)

Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton

South-East: 532,519 (26.2%)

Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth

Isle of Wight: 140,906 (6.9%)

Your Councils – A Better Future

Simpler. Stronger. Secure

Our research and feedback from people we talked to suggests that these options would have some advantages and disadvantages:

Three councils

Most cost-effective: This option saves the most money. Councils cost money to run, so having fewer of them means lower costs. This means more money for services or keeping council tax as low as possible.

Strong in tough times: These councils could handle financial challenges well.

But less responsive to local need: They might struggle to meet the needs of local communities and could weaken the unique identities of Southampton and Portsmouth by combining them into one council area.

Five councils

Seen as local to communities: These councils could be perceived as being closer to residents.

But costly and risky: They could struggle to be able to afford to deliver local services that people need, and at the high-quality that residents expect. This could result in higher council tax bills to raise more money, or cutbacks in services like local tips, parks and libraries.

Long recovery time: This structure would not make savings, so the costs of setting it up would never be recouped.

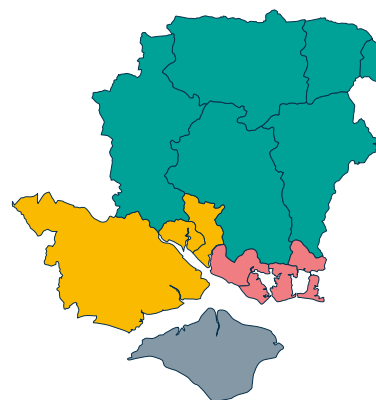
Risk to vulnerable people: Some would be cared for by a new, inexperienced organisation with new infrastructure, which could take years to become reliable. That's a risk we want to avoid.

Based on this balance of opportunities and risks, we do not think that three or five councils would work as well as four councils.

Making Test Valley Borough Council part of the North and Mid Council (instead of the South-West Council)

The option shown here, with Test Valley included in a North and Mid Hampshire unitary council, was considered.

Four unitary authorities



North and Mid: 789,989 (38.8%)
Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor, Test Valley, Winchester

South-West: 572,458 (28.1%)
Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton

South-East: 532,519 (26.2%)
Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth

Isle of Wight: 140,906 (6.9%)

In our options appraisal, we considered assigning Test Valley to either the North and Mid or the South-West unitary. Both options had similar financial resilience, and opportunities for neighbourhood involvement.

However, we think assigning Test Valley to the South-West is better, because it means:

- better blend of urban and rural services in both council areas
- better population balance across the Hampshire and the Solent area
- the whole of the New Forest National Park area can be supported by a single council
- rural communities would have more prominence in decision-making

Conclusion

Thank you for reading through this information.

You can give your views on our idea for Local Government Reorganisation by completing the survey at: www.hants.gov.uk/lgr

You can also email your feedback directly to Hampshire County Council using the email address insight@hants.gov.uk.

This document and the survey are available to view, enlarge, download and print in both standard and Easy Read format at www.hants.gov.uk/lgr.

You can also listen to the documents here using a screen reader or a 'Read Aloud' function.

If you need a copy of this document or the survey in another language or format (e.g. paper, Braille) or if you have any queries, please contact: insight@hants.gov.uk or call **0300 555 1375***.

The survey is open from Monday 21 July and closes at **11:59pm on Sunday 17 August 2025**.

*Calls from a landline will be charged at the local rate, although mobile phone charges may vary.

