




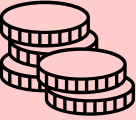



<p><u>Our work to 2027</u></p> 	<p><u>Staffing & engagement</u></p> 	<p><u>Geography of a new authority</u></p> 	<p><u>Development of a new unitary authority</u></p> 
<p><u>Political implications</u></p> 	<p><u>Financial implications</u></p> 	<p><u>Devolution Priority Programme</u></p> 	
<p><u>GLOSSARY</u></p>			
<p><u>USEFUL LINKS</u></p>			

FAQs

SOURCE	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
OUR WORK TO 2027		
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	1. Will the Council Plan be amended?	Yes, we need to focus on what we can realistically deliver and what makes a difference to residents. We welcome views and will be holding an awayday with Members in March to review the Plan. We will keep staff updated on the outcome of those discussions.
All Colleague Briefing, 19 March	2. How will the current Council Plan be amended, and when? Will changes be made in time to feed into current service plans?	The current Council Plan was adopted in December 2024. In light of LGR, we will be reviewing the outlined activity, however, the Plan's three strategic themes (Live Well Locally, A Thriving Local Economy, and Green to the Core) and the Fit for the Future programme will remain key priorities for RDC. Revisions to the Council Plan must be reported to Cabinet/Council and we will communicate any changes to staff in the coming months. We will also be reviewing and prioritising our Capital Programme projects, as we are unable to tie a new authority to long-term debts.
All Colleague Briefing, 19 March	3. Will we pass our longer-term ambitions on to a new authority?	Any planned activity that we are unable to deliver will be considered as part of discussions with partners. We will also be articulating the longer-term needs and priorities for Rother as part of the LGR and Devolution processes.
Member briefing, 6 February 2025	4. What will happen to the assets that Rother owns?	The default will be that all assets held by RDC will be transferred to the new authority. Where existing arrangements are in place, such as assets owned by RDC being leased to a third party, these will remain in place and the new authority will become the lessor (replacing RDC). There may be opportunities for other bodies (such

		as Town & Parish Councils) to express an interest in an RDC asset and these will be considered on a case by case basis.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	5. Is there time to review our assets before they are transferred up to the new authority? What would the offer be to town and parish councils?	We met with the Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC) on 22 January 2025 and briefed them on the impact of devolution and local government reorganisation to our services. We have encouraged town and parish councils to work with us so that we can consider how their precepts can be used to protect discretionary local services and assets- what this looks like in practice is unknown at the moment.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	6. Will there be guidance or a briefing on how officers should act, given how political the changes are?	The work of the council continues, so we still need to work elected members and MPs. Be factual when you talk about the changes. Please seek advice from a member of Senior Leadership Team if you have concerns.
STAFFING & ENGAGEMENT		
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	7. Will we be replacing vacant posts?	We will continue to recruit to posts- our workload has not changed.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	8. TUPE Q'S A) Will staff be transferred to new unitary authority under TUPE on existing contracts/Terms & Conditions? B) Does protection include travel time/distance to office base? C) Could there be a possibility that the new authority keeps RDC pay as it is and does not join NJC?	A) Yes - TUPE protects existing Terms & Conditions B) Yes - existing contractual workbase and travel expenses/policies are protected and transfer. C) RDC have committed to rejoin NJC in April 2026 - so before the transfer. D) Pay, grades, and contractual terms & conditions remain the same - unless they are changed by the new employer, with agreement, following consultation.

	<p>D) Would it be more productive and beneficial for staff pay and conditions to be raised to match pay/annual leave?</p> <p>E) When the TUPE transfer takes place, if two officers join at different pay grades, would they have a case for an equal pay claim?</p>	E) TUPE protects employers from Equal Pay claims.
Emails direct to Lorna	9. Will Environmental Health staff that are on TUPE contracts be TUPE'd over again on their Wealden contracts?	Not at this time – this may be a consideration for a future employer.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	10. Do we know how much influence the district and boroughs will have in shaping the new unitary staffing structures?	District, Borough and County councils in East Sussex have committed to joint working on future staffing structures.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	11. As Rother's pay is below other authorities, will it mean pay rises when we go to the Unitary?	Pay, grades, and contractual terms & conditions remain the same.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	12. Are there any plans to change current TUPE staff to Rother terms and contracts?	Not at this time – this may be a consideration for a future employer.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	13. As ESCC pay on Single Status pay grades, would it be worth considering moving to SS rather than NJC?	Single Status has multiple meanings; ESCC have a different grade structure to RDC (and the other District/Boroughs) – the expectation is that all employees of the 5 councils will join a new unitary council on existing terms and conditions (including pay and grades).

<p>All Colleague Briefing January slides</p>	<p>14. What are the staffing implications?</p>	<p>Many roles won't change as the work will still be the same. So, for roles like an EHO or planning officer the caseload doesn't change, it just means you will be working for a different authority. The savings really come from senior management roles; you only need one CEO for example. Part of the process of setting up the new Council will be to identify roles that will transfer over to the new council and those that are at risk. The transfer list will be by far the majority of the existing workforce. Some local discretionary services could be devolved to Local Councils (most likely town councils), so in theory staff could be needed at town councils too.</p>
<p>All Colleague Briefing January slides</p>	<p>15. How have other [devolved] Councils managed the physical presence in respect of residents & staff? Of the new Councils [that have already devolved] do you have figures in respect of staff number changes/losses?</p>	<p>In other areas with a new unitary council, area offices have been required. It's too early to say what that would look like for Rother. Unfortunately, we have been unable to find figures on the changes to staffing numbers however we will endeavour to update this answer should the information become available.</p>
<p>All Colleague Briefing January slides</p>	<p>16. What might the physical representation across the 3 areas of East Sussex, West Sussex & Brighton & Hove look like? Would we still all be working for the 'Rother' area of this new authority and therefore in essence do the same job from the same office, i.e. to what extent are our jobs protected?</p>	<p>A new combined authority will be established called a Strategic Authority with an elected Mayor which will cover the whole of Sussex – as far as I am aware, it has not been agreed where it will be based. In terms of the new unitary authorities that sit beneath the Strategic Authority, proposals have not yet come forward. They could be based on the existing boundaries of the upper tier councils, or the boundaries could be changed. The government has said the desired size of the new unitaries is 500,000 population. This fits well for East Sussex (560,000) but it means Brighton & Hove is a bit small and West Sussex a bit big, so we could see boundary changes. Elsewhere in the country local offices have been retained to ensure accessibility. For most roles, the work will not change.</p>

All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	17. Will you do more online staff briefings?	Yes, we will share regular communications as we move through uncertain times.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	18. Would you consider face to face meetings for the all colleague briefings, or ones with smaller groups that could encourage more staff to feel comfortable to ask questions?	Recent feedback from managers suggested that the online all colleague briefings are useful to many, as they can be recorded and watched back later. We are also happy to be invited to team meetings (diary permitting) to talk to smaller groups and colleagues are always welcome to contact SLT directly if they have any questions or concerns.
THE GEOGRAPHY OF A NEW AUTHORITY		
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	19. Will there still be facilities for local residents i.e. Town Hall?	We are unable to say for sure, but it is likely that there will continue to be a local presence.
All Colleague Briefing January slides	20. Does it mean that there will be just one authority in East Sussex (the merged districts and boroughs along with the current ESCC) that will also sit within a wider Sussex authority?	We do not know if the existing East Sussex boundary will be the boundary of the new authority, although the size is about right. The government has written to upper tier and districts/boroughs setting out what it expects from Local Government reorganisation. The government has already said that it expects councils to agree on proposals for LGR – they don't want competing bids on different boundaries, any new unitary authority would be part of the new Sussex Strategic Authority.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	21. How will the areas that services cover change? For example, Environmental Health cover Wealden and Rother districts.	This will be part of discussions with the future employer.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

<p>All Colleague Briefing, 19 March</p>	<p>22. What happens between the Mayoral elections in May 26 and the implementation of a shadow unitary authority in April 27? Will priorities be set at the Mayoral level during this period?</p>	<p>At the moment it is unclear exactly what will happen between the Mayoral elections and the implementation of the shadow authority however it is likely that Mayoral priorities will be set during this period. This could be an aspect of the process that RDC will be able to help shape and influence. At this stage, we need further information on our respective roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p>Member briefing, 6 February 2025</p>	<p>23. When will the shadow authority be set up and elected? How will this impact decision-making? Is there potential for our district councillors be in office beyond May 2027?</p>	<p>There is still uncertainty about when elections for the shadow authority will take place- we are seeking clarification from central government.</p>
<p>Member briefing, 6 February 2025</p>	<p>24. Who decides how many Councillors will make up the unitary authority? Why do district councillors have to continue in office even when a shadow authority is in place?</p>	<p>The number of Councillors on the new unitary authority will form part of the business case that government has requested. We do have some input into the setup of the unitary authority and will feed into proposals for this. It is expected that district and shadow authorities will be in office at the same time as this has happened in other areas where unitary authorities have been created.</p>
<p>Member briefing, 6 February 2025</p>	<p>25. What will happen to areas without town or parish councils?</p>	<p>Engagement can be held through other local groups but there may need to be community governance reviews.</p>
<p>Member briefing, 6 February 2025</p>	<p>26. Does the boundary for Sussex include Brighton & Hove?</p>	<p>The letter from Jim McMahon MP, sent 5 February 2025, was addressed to Leaders of two-tier councils (including Brighton & Hove City Council) and the unitary authority in East Sussex. The Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council has asked central government for clarification on this matter.</p>
<p>All Colleague Briefing Teams</p>	<p>27. When will we know about who is interested in role of Mayor for Sussex area?</p>	<p>This information is dependent on who is interested in the role of Mayor- it is too early to say at this point.</p>

discussion, 23 January 2025		
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	28. Are there any discussions about town and parish councils combining? Some are very small and may be limited in the support they can provide for local services.	This has been raised at discussions with Town and Parish Councils, although there are no proposals as yet.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	29. Have electors been consulted on delaying elections? Will people be happy about not being able to vote and have their say about who makes decisions for their area, especially when council tax has been increased?	No electors were consulted about the cancellation of elections. It's worth noting that only 30-35% of electors vote in county elections.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	30. How many Councillors would there be?	It is proposed the strategic authority covering all of Sussex, including Brighton and Hove, will be led by an elected mayor – it may look like the most recent combined authority – East Midlands – you can find out about the governance for that combined authority here - Meetings, agendas and decisions - East Midlands Combined County Authority . When Somerset County became a unitary council, bringing together four districts with the county council in April 2023, it went from 55 County Councillors to 110.
All Colleague Briefing January slides	31. If the Devolution Priority Programme is accepted, the timeframes appear to potentially clash with our own District elections, so would they be impacted?	Yes, district elections would be impacted. If a new shadow authority is in place for 2027, we would not need district elections.
All Colleague Briefing January slides	32. I've noticed that the leaders of the other districts and boroughs in East Sussex have signed a joint letter regarding the potential cancellation of the county elections. What is RDC's stance on this?	The Leader of Rother agreed with the Leader of East Sussex County Council that it did not make sense to hold elections this year. This was due to the cost of holding elections (over £1.5m across the county) and the need for stability to lead through this change. It should be noted that the government did not request the views of

		<p>districts and boroughs on this issue. The request to cancel elections could only be made from upper tier authorities.</p> <p>All Members were polled on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation before Christmas, and most are accepting of the changes.</p>
All Colleague Briefing January slides	33. What are the pros and cons of keeping or postponing the elections?	Pros of having elections - it's ultimately more democratic. Cons - the cost and instability of new councillors having to drive through the creation of Strategic Authorities and LGR. There are also practicalities such as preparing for the Mayoral elections in 2026.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	34. Under LGR, it is likely the main administrative centre will be to the west of the East Sussex area. Is there a danger that residents in the east of the county will be disregarded more in terms of services and funding?	The current County Council serves all the residents of the county and is held to account by elected members.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS		
All Colleague Briefing, 19 March	35. What happens if we do not receive the funding required for LGR?	As outlined in the Interim Plan, early indicative estimations for the cost of LGR in Sussex total £30-35 million. Central Government has indicated that participants of the Devolution Priority Programme may be eligible for additional benefits or funding and we have requested clarity on this in the Interim Plan. We will update colleagues once further information is made available.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 16 January 2025	36. Has there been any information/discussion about how finances will merge as part of the new unitary authority? Especially considering the difficulties our immediate neighbours are in, what does it mean for	There has been no information shared yet by the government on how respective councils finances will merge as part of the new unitary authority, nor how the merging with authorities with challenging positions (including significant debt or S114 notices in place) will be managed. We will be assessing the impact as soon as

	our fiscal responsibilities for the coming 2 years?	information is available and working with colleagues across East Sussex on this.
All Colleague Briefing January slides	37. What happens to the Budgetary Reserves that district councils have accumulated once the Unitary Authority is established?	All the assets of Rother DC would transfer to the new authority (by statute) and that authority would be free to do what it liked. Technically, earmarked reserves are allocated to specific things, but new authority could "un-earmark" them and use as it pleased.
All Colleague Briefing Teams discussion, 23 January 2025	38. Will other local authorities be spending to avoid their reserves subsidising other councils once a unitary authority is in place?	Central Government will try to discourage this behaviour. At Rother, we are trying to think of what would reduce the burden for a new authority and some projects may not be brought forward with this in mind.
DEVOLUTION PRIORITY PROGRAMME		
All Colleague Briefing January slides	39. How much say did Rother have in advance of ESCC/WSCC/B&HCC resolving at their Cabinets' to push ahead as part of the Priority Programme?	The government wrote to upper tier authorities about whether they wished to join the Devolution Priority Programme, they did not seek the views of districts and boroughs. East Sussex County Council did engage with the district and boroughs across East Sussex to seek views but ultimately it was a decision for them.
DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW UNITARY AUTHORITY		
All Colleague Briefing, 19 March	40. Who is leading the work on LGR? Is there any difference between districts/boroughs and county?	Chief Executives and Leaders from all councils have shared responsibility for the Interim Plan and many collaborative discussions have taken place so far. The background work on the Plan has been completed by a Policy Officer Group that is also made up of representatives from all councils. In terms of setting up the new unitary authority, it is important to note that although we may follow a county boundary (geography is still TBC), this would be a new entity that requires equal input from all existing district/borough councils and the county council.

GLOSSARY

Devolution	<p>The transfer of powers and funding from national to local government.</p> <p>In the context of the English Devolution White Paper, this refers to proposals for a strategic authority covering populations of at least 1.5 million. For Sussex, this means combining West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, and Brighton & Hove City Council.</p>
Local authority	<p>Refers to the administrative body for local government. In Rother, the local authorities are currently Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council.</p> <p>In the context of the English Devolution White Paper, the Government have set out plans to establish unitary authorities (please see below) as part of Local Government Reorganisation.</p>
Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)	<p>The process in which the structure and responsibilities of local authorities are reconfigured.</p> <p>In the context of the English Devolution White Paper, the Government have set out plans to move away from the current two-tier system of district and county councils (including East Sussex). The Government has indicated that for most areas this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more, but there may be exceptions to ensure new structures make sense for an area, including for devolution, and decisions will be on a case-by-case basis.</p>
Precept	<p>Refers to a tax that is set by Parish and Town councils which covers their spending on service delivery. Towns and Parish councils do not receive funding from central government, so they need the precept (plus any income they generate) to provide services.</p> <p>Rother District Council acts as the billing authority for council tax, so we collect the precept from residents on behalf of Town and Parish councils.</p>
Strategic authority	<p>A strategic authority will be a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.</p> <p>In the context of the English Devolution White Paper, this refers to mayors and councils working together, covering populations of at least 1.5 million. For Sussex, this means combining West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, and Brighton & Hove City Council.</p>
Unitary authority	<p>Many parts of England have both a county council and a district council. County councils run public services such as education, libraries, roads and social care, whilst district councils are responsible for</p>

matters such as waste, environment and housing. In other areas, a single 'unitary' council is responsible for all these services.

[Unitary local government: An explainer](#)

USEFUL LINKS

[Devolution and local government reorganisation frequently asked questions | Local Government Association](#)

[Devolution in Sussex | East Sussex County Council](#)

[English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

Polymaking and coordination

Tiers of government

Representation

