Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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

Our reference: MC2026/33391

Cllr Richard Millard
Leader of East Hampshire District Council

04 November 2026

Dear Cllr Millard,

Thank you for your email of 29 October regarding local government reorganisation in Hampshire.

The Government is committed to shifting power from Westminster and Whitehall to the places where people live and work. Strong, sustainable local government is the foundation for devolution and the Rewiring the State agenda, with unitary councils providing the building blocks for strategic and mayoral authorities.

On 7 September, the Government paused the Local Government Reorganisation programme and announced a rapid review of the programme to ensure it aligned with the priorities of the new administration. The review tested the programme's framework, objectives and February 2025 criteria.

The first phase has concluded that the basis of the programme remains robust and that the existing criteria continue to support the Government's priorities. The Government therefore remains committed to delivering Local Government Reorganisation using those criteria.

Following full consideration of the proposals, their merits, and all the evidence and representations received, the Government is minded to implement proposals in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove; Gloucestershire; Oxfordshire; Warwickshire; and Worcestershire, subject to further representations, final decisions and Parliamentary approval. A minded to position allows the Government to set out preliminary conclusions while providing an opportunity for further representations before reaching a final decision.

The Government remains committed to delivering local government reorganisation using the existing criteria. All options and proposals for Hampshire remain under consideration, and councils will be informed at the earliest practical opportunity once consideration of the area is complete. A further update on outcomes will be provided by Christmas, and every area will have an outcome by early 2027.

The Government has listened closely to councils, Members of Parliament and local government stakeholders throughout the review and recognises the strength of feeling about local government reorganisation. Where a minded-to position has been reached, interested parties will have a minimum three-week period in which to make further representations before a final decision is taken.

While final decisions remain outstanding, the five minded-to areas may wish to continue preparing, recognising that these positions are provisional and further representations will be considered before final decisions are taken. The 15 areas without a decision should avoid activity that assumes a particular outcome. It is for individual councils to determine what decision-neutral activity they consider appropriate, which could include activity such as data sharing that would be beneficial regardless of the eventual outcome.

The Government also recognises that areas have incurred costs associated with local government reorganisation in good faith. Areas where transition funding had previously been announced will receive 50% of that funding, equivalent to £450,000 per new unitary previously announced. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and West Sussex will each receive £500,000. These guaranteed payments will be made in the coming weeks and are not contingent on the outcome of the review. Once final decisions are made, areas will receive any remaining balance of the £900,000 transition support per new unitary, taking account of funding already provided.

Elections scheduled to take place in May 2027 will go ahead to existing councils. Across the programme, elections to new councils will take place in May 2028, followed by vesting on 1 April 2029, apart from Surrey where East Surrey and West Surrey will go live on 1 April 2027.

The Government will also work with places to protect city status and ceremonial rights, including through legislation where necessary.

I appreciate the uncertainty that the review has caused for councils, councillors and staff. The Government will continue to give each area careful consideration and provide clarity at the earliest practical opportunity.

Thank you again for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP
Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth