

East Herts Council Report

Council Meeting

Date of meeting: Wednesday 14th May 2025

Report by: Ben Crystall – Leader of the Council

Report title: Update on Local Government Reform and Devolution

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – To ensure all members are aware of the Local Government Reform and Devolution timetable for Hertfordshire and the upcoming consultation and decision making process

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Council:

- a) To note the information contained within this report AND
- b) To endorse the Leader and Interim Chief Executive's continued negotiation and debate with the other 10 Hertfordshire Councils to develop a proposal for the future of Hertfordshire local government taking into consideration the options that best continue to deliver services for our residents in East Hertfordshire
- c) To come back to this Council in Autumn 2025 to present the final proposal for endorsement by members following public consultation.

2.0 Background

2.1 On 16th December 2024, the Government published the [English Devolution White Paper](#), which set out a range of proposals relating to devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

2.2 The current system of local government is complex. There are a range of different structures, including Strategic Authorities (mostly mayoral combined authorities), county councils, city councils, borough councils, district councils, and town and parish councils.

2.3 The recent Devolution White Paper seeks to achieve two things: devolving more powers to local areas (devolution) and simplifying the local government structure (Local Government Reorganisation).

2.4 Collectively, Hertfordshire authorities (10 District and Boroughs plus the County Council) agreed not to postpone county elections (May 25) and not to pursue the Priority Programme. Hertfordshire was invited to submit initial proposals for the future of the County administrations by 21st March 25

2.5 On 20th March 25, all 11 authorities submitted a single joint proposal, to which all authorities signed up to. A copy of the interim submission can be found [here](#)

2.4 The Government has committed to providing initial feedback on the interim submission by the end of May 25

2.5 Full details are available on the [East Herts Council](#) website

3.0 Actions

3.1 In accordance with the timetable set by the Government, Hertfordshire is now being invited to submit a final proposal by 28th November 2025

3.2 Chief Executive Officers and Council Leaders across Hertfordshire are working collaboratively to develop a final proposal on which wider consultation can be undertaken, including our residents, businesses and the wider community

3.3 Councillors (via their Group Leaders) will be asked for their views as part of the wider consultation

3.4 It is currently anticipated that the final proposal will be presented to all Hertfordshire administrations and will come to a future council meeting in the autumn for endorsement by East Herts Council, before the November deadline

3.5 Next Steps Indicative Timetable

End of June 25 – First full draft proposal plus early consultation

July – September 25 – Full consultation and iteration

September/October 25 – Democratic process

November 25 - Submission

4.0 Options

4.1 Councillors consider the options laid out in the [Interim Submission](#) in the context of future local government administration across Hertfordshire, with the preferred outcome being that East Herts Council is able to endorse a single proposal for Hertfordshire in November 2025, jointly agreed with the county and other district and borough councils.

4.2 Do Nothing – This option could result in East Herts not having a 'voice at the table'

4.3 Submit East Herts Council's own proposal in November, independently of the other district/borough councils – preparing such a case would take significant officer time and resource, and risks the Government imposing its own solution on Hertfordshire.

5.0 Risks

5.1 There is a high risk that consensus will not be reached across all 11 local authorities

5.2 There is a moderate risk that a secondary 'break away' proposal comes forward

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Extensive consultation is expected to take place from July 25 onwards

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

Yes – there are some costs associated with the preparation of the final submission (yet to be fully established) All costs will be split across all 11 authorities

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes – there will be legal requirements in order to comply with the democratic process. Specialist advice is being sought to ensure compliance

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 [English Devolution White Paper](#)

7.2 [Interim Proposal](#)

7.3 [East Herts Council Website](#)

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