

What is Local Government Reorganisation?

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is set to be the biggest change to local councils in our generation.

Right now, Kent County Council provides services such as education, social care and highways, while district and borough councils are responsible for waste collection, housing and more. Under the proposed system, new unitary councils would deliver all local services within their area, similar to the model already used by Medway Council.

LGR is about changing how councils are structured and run. In Kent, this would mean merging smaller district and borough councils into larger authorities and adding services currently provided by Kent County Council. The aim is to make services better and save money by reducing duplication and simplifying decision-making.

The new councils will be larger both in size and the number of services that they provide which creates opportunities for services to be more joined up, accessible and cost effective.

This process takes time because it requires careful planning and agreement from both government and communities. Ultimately, the goal is a clearer, more efficient system that works better for residents and businesses and provides value for money.

What is happening in Kent?

Along with all other councils across Kent and Medway, we have created a business case exploring the options for how LGR will look in the county.

In total five business cases were presented to the government to consider at the end of 2025. These ranged from one single unitary authority for the whole of Kent, to the county being split into five unitaries.

Our preferred option was a three unitary authority model, known as 3a, which would be made up of Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale in the north; Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells in the west; and Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Folkestone & Hythe in the east.



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The government is currently considering all the options and will be carrying out consultations.

The decision on the final structure of unitary councils is expected in the summer, and the new councils are planned to be in place by April 2028.

When is all this going to happen?

LGR will take several years to complete and there are key steps along the way.

The first milestone was 28 November 2025, when councils in Kent submitted their proposals to the government. After that, a consultation will be open from February 2026 for seven weeks, so people can share their views.

In July 2026, the government is expected to announce its decision on the new council structure.

Later in Autumn 2026, new laws will be introduced to make these changes official.

Next, on 6 May 2027, elections will be held for the new councils, and a Shadow Authority will be elected.

Finally, on 1 April 2028, the new authorities will take over and start delivering services.

This timeline below shows how the process will move from planning to action, ensuring communities have a say along the way.

What is a Shadow Authority?

When new councils are created, they don't start running services straight away. After the elections, a Shadow Authority is set up.

This is a leadership team made up of the elected councillors. Their job is to prepare for the big changes ahead. They plan budgets, agree priorities, and make sure everything is ready for when the new council officially takes over.

The Shadow Authority doesn't have full powers until April 2028, but it plays an important role in making sure the transition is smooth and residents get the services they need from day one.



How will LGR impact me?

LGR will change how councils work, but for most people the impact will be in how services are delivered.

Instead of having separate councils for different services, one council will handle everything in your area. This should make things simpler, reduce duplication, and save money.

Over time, there will be more joined-up services like housing, waste collection, and social care, all under the same authority.

LGR Timeline



Big enough to make a difference, small enough to care

Alongside Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Folkestone & Hythe District Council, we have chosen Option 3a as our preferred model for Kent.

This is one of five models currently under consideration for the county, and while it reflects our ambitions, it may not ultimately be selected as the chosen approach for the county.

We believe this model offers significant benefits that align with our vision for modern, responsive local government.

Service and resident focussed

Services will be designed around resident needs, maintaining strong community identity and local accountability, while ensuring fairness in access and outcomes across Kent.

This approach also aligns with the existing boundaries of Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, and the NHS, creating a more consistent and coordinated framework for public services. By mirroring these established structures, Option 3a supports collaboration, reduces duplication, and ensures residents experience a seamless connection between local government and essential services.

Financially resilient and efficient

Of the models being considered, option 3a has one of the lowest one-off implementation costs and the greatest savings potential combined with one of the quickest payback periods.

To learn more about all five proposals and what they could mean for Kent, visit our LGR information page: maidstone.gov.uk/lgr

