

James MacCleary MP Newsletter January 2026

Local Government Reorganisation: Invitation to Participate in the Consultation

I am writing to update residents on the Government's ongoing programme of local government reorganisation and to encourage participation in the current public consultation.

Following the formation of the new Government in 2024, Ministers confirmed their intention to replace the existing multi-tier system of local authorities - comprising Town or Parish, District, and County Councils - with a new structure of unitary authorities. Alongside this, areas have been invited to establish Strategic Combined Authorities led by directly elected Mayors.

While views differ on the merits of this approach, it is clear that reorganisation will proceed, and it is essential that residents' perspectives are fully represented.

The Government is now consulting on proposals submitted by **East Sussex County Council** and **Brighton & Hove City Council**, which outline alternative models for replacing existing District and Borough Councils with new unitary authorities. The consultation closes on the **11th January**, and the outcomes will inform the Minister's final decision.

I strongly encourage residents to respond to the consultation, particularly in relation to the proposals submitted by East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council.

Below, for transparency, I outlined the responses that I have submitted:

Response to East Sussex County Council's Proposal

- **Coherent and recognisable authority:** The proposal establishes a single unitary authority aligned with existing parliamentary, district, and county boundaries that residents are familiar with.
- **Financial viability:** The scale of the proposed authority is sufficient to deliver value for money and achieve long-term financial sustainability.
- **Continuity of services:** It avoids the significant cost and disruption associated with disaggregating county-wide services.
- **Alignment with residents' priorities:** The proposal reflects the needs and preferences of communities across East Sussex.

Response to Brighton & Hove City Council's Proposal

- **Fragmented structure:** The proposal creates several small unitary authorities that would lack the financial resilience required and would cut across established communities, such as separating South Heighton from Newhaven, and other economic geographies.
- **Increased administrative cost:** The disaggregation of services would introduce substantial additional expense without delivering the efficiencies sought by the Government.
- **Limited local support:** The proposal has not secured broad backing across East Sussex and is widely viewed as politically motivated, which is inconsistent with the spirit of the consultation.
- **Non-compliance with Government guidance:** The proposed authorities fall below the recommended population threshold of 500,000, risk undermining county-wide services such as SEND and adult social care, and lack the financial capacity required for effective delivery.

Have Your Say

It is vital that residents' views are heard as part of this process. If you have not yet responded to the consultation, I encourage you to do so before it closes on the **11th of January**. Last year we successfully stopped Brighton & Hove's proposals to annex Newhaven, Kingston and other villages by giving the largest consultation response East Sussex County Council had ever seen.

You can read about the different proposals in full [here](#) and to take part in the consultation please click [here](#).

With best wishes for the new year,

James



Best wishes,

James Maccleary

MP for Lewes, Seaford, Newhaven, Polegate and the villages