



Council

Monday, 16 March 2026

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation

Report by:

Chief Executive – Paul Burkinshaw

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

The report asks Full Council to consider the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Greater Lincolnshire that have been included for Statutory Consultation, note the format and deadline set by Government and agree to respond to the consultation.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council:

1. Notes the timeline and requirements of the government's LGR Statutory Consultation exercise, and;
2. Agrees that the Council submits a response based on the assessment of the proposals against the Council's principles and with regards to the statutory questions in the consultation as set out in this report and appendices.
3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to finalise and submit the final Statutory Consultation response and that a final copy of the response be circulated to all Members of the Council for information.

Legal:

Following publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024; on 5th February 2025 Government issued a Statutory Invitation letter inviting all local authorities in two-tier areas to submit proposals for a single-tier of local government in the area. In Greater Lincolnshire, this invitation was issued to all ten local authorities, including West Lindsey District Council (“the Council”).

In November 2025, Government received six final proposals for LGR, three of which were based on the same geographical boundaries.

On 5th February 2026, the Government commenced a period of Statutory Consultation running for seven weeks until 26th March 2026. As a named consultee, the Council is invited to respond.

Government will use the consultation responses to inform which, if any, of the LGR proposals to implement either with or without modification.

Financial: FIN/171/26/CL/SL

This report has no direct financial implications.

There will however be financial implications associated with LGR transition.

Once the Government has made a decision on how LGR will be delivered across Greater Lincolnshire, legislative changes will be enacted, including a Structural Changes Order to create the new unitary authority(s).

Usually, after the Structural Order is laid and the establishment of the shadow authority, a Section 24 notice will come into effect. This places legally binding financial restrictions on existing local authorities involved in Local Government Reorganisation, including the Council.

Specifically, a Section 24 notice means that any land disposals over £100k, entering into any capital contracts over £1million, and entering into any non-capital contracts over £100k will require written consent from the successor Council.

Based on current timelines and information, it can be anticipated that the Structural Changes Order could be drafted as early as Autumn/Winter 2026, with the formation of the shadow authority and Section 24 notice coming into effect following the Local Elections in May 2027.

Government has stated previously that the transition costs associated with LGR must be met by local councils impacted by LGR, however recently Government announced some capacity funding may be available to support the implementation of the new council structures. However, the details and criteria related to this funding remain unknown.

As such, until clarity on the level of funding and associated parameters the Council will need to proceed on the basis that a contribution towards the transition costs of establishing a new unitary authority will be required.

A separate paper will be presented to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee setting out the financial implications of transition arrangements for the Council in due course.

Staffing: HR255-03-06

This report has no direct staffing implications.

There will however be staffing implications associated with LGR transition.

LGR is a new priority workstream for all councils undergoing reorganisation which will, by its nature, put pressure on the capacity and resources of some corporate and other service areas who will be required to respond to the different elements of the transition process at the same time as continuing to provide well-managed services and delivering the Council's priorities.

LGR will impact on all of the council's workforce. Council staff continue to be kept regularly informed and involved at every stage of the process.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

In appraising the final LGR proposals, consideration has been given to Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications.

Data Protection Implications:

Effective collaboration through the development of shared assumptions and datasets is a key requirement within the government's assessment criteria. It is therefore expected that councils will openly and effectively share data and information, with government prepared to intervene where this is not the case.

In Greater Lincolnshire, a data sharing agreement is in place, including provisions to safeguard and ensure handling of data is GDPR compliant and that high standards of data management are adhered to at all times.

This data sharing agreement remains under review to ensure that it remains suitable for each of the stages of LGR and detail and sensitivity of data being shared at any given point during reorganisation.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None arising from this report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None arising from this report.

Health Implications:

None arising from this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

[English Devolution White Paper 2024](#)

[Statutory Invitation from the Minister for Local Government & English Devolution to Greater Lincolnshire Council Leaders - 05.02.2025.](#)

[Local Government Boundary Commission for England LGR FAQs](#)

[WLDC LGR Interim Proposal Report to Full Council 18.03.2025](#)

[MHCLG: Summary of Feedback on Interim Plans - 03.06.2025](#)

[WLDC LGR Update Paper to Full Council - 07.07.2025](#)

[WLDC LGR Update Paper to Full Council - 08.09.2025](#)

[WLDC LGR Resources Paper to CPR 25.09.25](#)

[WLDC LGR Update Paper to Full Council 10.11.25](#)

[MHCLG Statutory Consultation for Greater Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire & North-East Lincolnshire](#)

Risk Assessment:

The Council could choose not to engage with the Statutory Consultation.

As a named consultee representing the interests of residents and businesses in the district, it is considered prudent for the Council to respond to the consultation, having regard to the best interests of the economic, social, and democratic needs of West Lindsey and the Greater Lincolnshire area.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the Statutory Invitation from the Minister for English Devolution and Local Government (“the Minister”), received on 05th February 2025, Councils across all 21 two-tier local authority areas in England have now submitted their final proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to Government.
- 1.2 As part of Government’s decision-making process on which, if any, of the final proposals should be implemented across Greater Lincolnshire, on 5th February 2026, a period of Statutory Consultation was launched to allow interested parties to share their views on each of the proposals submitted in their area.
- 1.3 In Greater Lincolnshire, six final proposals were submitted in November 2025, with three of these proposals containing identical options for geographic boundaries. As such, Government has combined these three into one proposal meaning that four unique geographic proposals have been brought forward for consultation.
- 1.4 On 10th November 2025, Council resolved to *“undertake an options assessment of all the final Greater Lincolnshire LGR proposals, once these are published, in order to inform the Councils response to the Statutory Consultation.”*
- 1.5 The assessment of each of the proposals is based on principles agreed by Council on 10th November and in alignment with the statutory consultation questions prepared by Government.
- 1.6 In the intervening period, the final Greater Lincolnshire proposals have been published in full, thus allowing that assessment to take place.

2 The Statutory Consultation Process

- 2.1 The Government’s Statutory Consultation takes the form of an online survey which is open to named consultees, interested parties, and the general public for a seven-week period between 5th February 2026 – 26th March 2026. Paper copies of the survey are also available in main Council buildings and some Libraries across Greater Lincolnshire.
- 2.2 As Statutory Consultation, the survey is an important element in the decision-making process on which, if any, of the LGR proposals Government chooses to implement, either with or without modification.
- 2.3 The consultation is led and managed by Government, with local Councils encouraged to promote the survey across the relevant channels. Whilst Councils are encouraged to promote the survey, promoting the benefits or otherwise of the individual LGR proposals themselves is actively discouraged during the seven-week consultation period to ensure fairness.

- 2.4 As required, an impartial Greater Lincolnshire online hub has been established containing links to each of the six final proposals promoting the four geographic areas. Factual information about LGR, an indicative timeline and a link to the Government's consultation page is included on the hub.
- 2.5 The site is being promoted on all relevant channels across the area throughout the consultation period and can also be accessed here [Local government changes in Greater Lincolnshire | Greater Lincolnshire LGR Hub](#)
- 2.6 The survey itself takes the form of eight questions, with options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" for each question, repeated for each of the four proposals. Additionally, two free-text boxes are included for respondents to add any additional supporting comments or information.
- 2.7 It is important to note that one question, question 9 and one free-text box, question 10, only relates to the City of Lincoln proposal, specifically the boundary changes. The full list of questions can be found at appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.8 As a named consultee, West Lindsey District Council has been invited to respond. Information has been shared by the Council with Parish and Town Councils in the district in addition to an online information session hosted by the Council on 2nd February to which all Parish and Town Councils were invited. This event was well attended, with further engagement planned during spring 2026.
- 2.9 Upon conclusion of the consultation, the Government will use the responses to inform its decision on implementing a proposal. Based on current information, it is expected that a decision will be made and communicated to Councils before the Parliamentary summer recess in July.

3 Assessing the Final Greater Lincolnshire LGR Proposals

- 3.1 This paper presents the Council's approach and high-level findings of the assessment of each of the proposals against the principles which Council approved at the meeting held on 10th November 2025. In considering the assessments as set out in appendix 2, Members are asked to consider how these will shape and influence the Council's final response to the Statutory Consultation.
- 3.2 The 10 statutory consultation questions relate closely to the original six criteria as set out in the Statutory Invitation and whilst there is flexibility to strongly agree to strongly disagree with statements against each proposal, there is no requirement to rank the proposals or overtly support one over another. Essentially, each proposal is considered on its own merits.

- 3.3 When considering the Red, Amber, Green rated assessment (RAG) summary of principles, against each of the consultation questions, and associated narrative in appendix 2, it is clear that there isn't one proposal that obviously stands out, which promotes wholly the best interests of West Lindsey against the agreed principles.

4 LGR Timeline and Next Steps

- 4.1 Following the end of the Statutory Consultation, Government will consider all of the responses and undertake their own assessment of each proposal against their six criteria. This was originally detailed within the Statutory Invitation issued to all local authorities in two tier areas across the country. The letter including the original criteria can be found in appendix 3 of this report.
- 4.2 A decision is expected to be made and communicated by Government on LGR in Greater Lincolnshire before the Parliamentary summer recess in July.
- 4.3 Following that decision during Autumn/Winter 2026 Government will enact legislative changes, including the Structural Changes Order to create the new Unitary Authority(s) serving Greater Lincolnshire and provide arrangements to support effective transition.
- 4.4 Subject to those timelines being met, elections planned for 06th May 2027 will be held to elect Councillors to the new shadow Unitary Authority(s) across Greater Lincolnshire.
- 4.5 The appointment of key officers to the new authority will also take place through 2027 and into early 2028 to support the new organisation(s) governance and structure set up, including transition management and engagement and ultimately that the new Council(s) are operationally ready for Vesting Day on 01st April 2028. A presentation of the breakdown of the timeline and associated activities from the close of the statutory consultation to Vesting Day was shared with all members following an all-member briefing on 11th February 2026.

5 Summary

- 5.1 In response to the government's Statutory Consultation, the Council has undertaken an assessment of the Greater Lincolnshire LGR final proposals submitted to Government. This has been done using the principles agreed at Council in November and in alignment with Government's statutory consultation framework.
- 5.2 The assessment indicates that there is no single proposal which fully accords with all of the Council's principles. In some instances, this is due to the geographic areas being proposed breaking up existing established partnerships, economic areas and shared industries and housing markets. In others it is due to a lack of information or evidence to support the proposal in line with the principles important to the Council and the area it serves.

5.3 The Council remains committed to ensuring that its response to the Statutory Consultation is robust, impartial, and reflective of the community's best interests to inform and support the next steps of LGR in Greater Lincolnshire.