



**Overview & Scrutiny
Committee**

**Tuesday, 08th September
2026**

Subject: Overview of Local Government Reorganisation Transition

Report by:

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Executive Summary:

This report builds on the report being presented to Full Council on 7th September and provides an overview of the Council's approach to Local Government Reorganisation from receipt of the statutory invitation to the Government's decision. It summarises the national process and assessment criteria, the proposals submitted for Greater Lincolnshire and the Secretary of State's intention, subject to legislation, to establish two new unitary councils for Lincolnshire.

The report also outlines the Council's response and role to date, including its governance, programme readiness, communication and engagement arrangements, and an overview of the independent readiness health check which will inform the next steps.

Finally, the report provides assurance of the continued focus on maintaining high-quality services for residents, businesses and communities throughout the transition, and provides an overview of the next steps towards shadow authority elections, implementation and Vesting Day on 1 April 2028.

Appendices to Report

No appendices included in this report

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- a) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the progress made in preparing for Local Government Reorganisation, the findings of the independent readiness health check and the next steps set out in the report

1.0 Summary of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process by Government to date

- 1.1 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) forms part of the Government's programme to simplify local government in England by replacing the remaining two-tier county and district arrangements with single-tier unitary councils.
- 1.2 The statutory process is principally governed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, set out the Government's view that simpler structures could strengthen accountability, support financial resilience, improve public services and enable areas to make fuller use of devolved powers. On 5 February 2025, councils in two-tier areas and neighbouring smaller unitary areas were formally invited to develop proposals.
- 1.3 Proposals were assessed against the Government's criteria, including whether they represented a sensible geography; were supported by evidence and reflected local identity; were financially sustainable; would support high-quality and innovative services; considered the needs of vulnerable people; demonstrated local engagement; supported devolution; and enabled stronger neighbourhood arrangements.
- 1.4 Greater Lincolnshire councils submitted final proposals by 28 November 2025, after which the Government undertook statutory consultation between 5 February and 26 March 2026. There were 6 proposals which covered 4 geographical areas submitted.
- 1.5 On 16 July 2026, the Secretary of State announced an intention to proceed, subject to legislation, with two new unitary councils for Lincolnshire: an expanded Lincoln City authority, including seven West Lindsey wards and 12 North Kesteven wards; and a Rural Lincolnshire authority covering the remaining areas of the county. North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire will remain unchanged.
- 1.6 The decision means that the existing and established West Lindsey and North Kesteven districts will be divided between two successor authorities; Therefore, the decision requires the disaggregation of district and county council services, resources and systems.
- 1.7 The next statutory stage is the making of a Structural Changes Order, followed by elections to the shadow authorities in May 2027, a transition period and Vesting Day on 1 April 2028. Existing councils will remain responsible for services until that date.

2.0 West Lindsey District Council (The Council) response to LGR & role in Greater Lincolnshire

- 2.1 The Council has engaged throughout the Government's process, however, did not submit a formal final proposal of its own.

- 2.2 Following receipt of the statutory invitation, Council considered interim options on 18 March 2025. Further update reports were considered by Council on 7 July and 8 September 2025, and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee considered programme resources on 25 September 2025.
- 2.3 On 10 November 2025, Council agreed principles against which the final proposals that has been submitted would be assessed. The Council did not submit or endorse a single final proposal; instead, it wrote to the Government setting out the Council's position and subsequently assessed each proposed geography on its own merits.
- 2.4 On 16 March 2026, Council considered the Government's statutory consultation and agreed that the Council's response should be informed by the previously approved principles and the statutory consultation questions. Final approval was delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader.
- 2.5 Alongside this work, the Council adopted "Our West Lindsey, Our Future: Corporate Plan 2026–2030" on 2 March 2026. Its themes of Thriving People, Thriving Places and Thriving Council, supported by refreshed thematic business plans, promoting the Council's priorities and ensuring a clear focus on service delivery during the transition.
- 2.6 The refreshed Corporate Plan and governance demonstrate commitment to high-quality services, sound governance, financial resilience and a forward-looking Council which provides a clear framework for balancing LGR activity with continued delivery for residents, businesses and communities.
- 2.7 In preparation for the final decision by Government, the Council established an LGR Ready programme and Project Management Office (PMO) to co-ordinate preparatory activity across finance and council tax, workforce, digital, data and technology, contracts and procurement, assets, legal and governance, communications and wider service readiness.
- 2.8 Initial governance and reporting arrangements were focussed on pre-decision "no-regret" phase, with activity aligned to the collaborative Greater Lincolnshire programme. The PMO developed plans, reported templates and risk arrangements, while supporting workstreams to improve the Council's data, contract, asset and workforce readiness.

3.0 Approach to Communication & Engagement

Greater Lincolnshire Statutory Invitation Area

- 3.1 A Greater Lincolnshire communications group was established after the statutory invitation in February, bringing together representatives from all ten councils to support clear, consistent and respectful communication.

- 3.2 The developed shared principles focussed on transparency, respect, proactivity and collaboration, while recognising that prior to decision, councils may hold different views. The approach was developed to ensure information is factual and focused on residents, businesses and staff, reinforcing that maintaining services remains the priority for all Councils involved throughout the transition.
- 3.3 The Council led the development and implementation of the shared Greater Lincolnshire LGR Hub. The Hub is designed to provide a single, impartial source of information on the process, proposals, selected model, frequently asked questions and key dates across Greater Lincolnshire.
- 3.4 It also includes a postcode tool to help residents identify their proposed future council. The Hub will continue to be updated as legislation, governance arrangements and implementation plans are confirmed and will continue to be the core shared platform for all Lincolnshire Councils involved in reorganisation.

Internal Comms & Engagement

- 3.5 Internal engagement has combined formal decision-making with regular, informal opportunities for Members and staff to ask questions and understand emerging issues.
- 3.6 Members have received Council reports, briefing sessions and updates as key milestones have been reached, as well as copies of relevant Government correspondence received. These arrangements will be developed further during implementation so that Members understand both the Greater Lincolnshire programme and West Lindsey's responsibilities within it.
- 3.7 Members have also received informal briefings, and all-Member sessions, to support a shared understanding of the process, timetable and likely transition requirements. A dedicated MS Teams Channel is in place as an additional channel for sharing key information with all members.
- 3.8 For staff, a dedicated LGR area on Minerva brings together Government correspondence, local updates, frequently asked questions and an "Ask us Anything" facility. Regular all-staff updates, dedicated sessions and manager-led discussions are used to share information as it becomes available.
- 3.9 LGR is also a standing item for the Leadership Team, and Head of Service Network, with further updates and discussion through the Wider Management Team. The emphasis remains on timely and transparent communication, staff wellbeing and the maintenance of services while more detailed workforce implications are developed.

4.0 LGR health check

- 4.1 In order to assess the council's work to date and future programme, an independent health check of the current programme was commissioned and undertaken by Newtrality in July 2026. The report identified strong and visible leadership, an established PMO, organisational commitment and a clear willingness to move into delivery. It also recognised the additional complexity arising from the division of West Lindsey between two successor authorities.
- 4.2 The health check concluded that the Council is well placed to move into the next phase, but that its arrangements now need to develop rapidly following LGR decision from proportionate, pre-decision preparation into a more structured delivery programme.
- 4.3 This will require clearer governance and accountability, milestone-led workstream plans, appropriate resources and assurance, and a consistent approach to managing the division of services, people, assets, contracts, systems and data between the two successor authorities.
- 4.4 The findings will inform the Council's mobilisation and resilience planning, enabling it to support LGR across Greater Lincolnshire while continuing to be a well-run Council that provides good quality services to the communities and residents it serves.

5.0 Overview of next steps & timeline

- 5.1 The immediate focus is to translate Government and Greater Lincolnshire requirements into a clear West Lindsey mobilisation plan. This will include strengthening governance, establishing the local Implementation Team, confirming workstream leads and resources, completing service transition and disaggregation plans, and maintaining a single, consistent view of milestones, risks, dependencies and readiness evidence.
- 5.2 Work will be sequenced with the Greater Lincolnshire Implementation Team so that local and system-wide activity is complementary, while statutory and critical services continue without interruption.
- 5.3 Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Structural Changes Order is expected to establish the formal transitional arrangements. Elections to the new shadow councils are planned for May 2027.
- 5.4 Between those elections and 1st April 2028, the shadow authorities will appoint senior officers, agree initial budgets and priorities, establish governance, systems and operating arrangements, and assure service readiness.
- 5.5 Existing councils will dissolve on 31 March 2028, with the new councils assuming full responsibility on 1 April 2028. Leaders across Lincolnshire have confirmed their commitment to work together constructively, with residents, staff, service continuity and a safe and legal transition at the centre of implementation.

- 5.6 Lincolnshire Chief Executives continue to meet regularly, with two such meetings in August to progress discussions relating to the role and structure of the central implementation team, and the workstreams that the team will be responsible for. Key messages continue to be shared with staff on progress with these arrangements.

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The statutory process for Local Government Reorganisation is principally governed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Following publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, the Government issued a statutory invitation on 5 February 2025 to councils in two-tier areas and neighbouring smaller unitary areas, including the Council, to submit proposals for single-tier local government.

Greater Lincolnshire councils submitted six final proposals by 28 November 2025, covering four geographical configurations. The Government subsequently undertook statutory consultation between 5 February and 26 March 2026, to which the Council responded as a named consultee.

On 16 July 2026, the Secretary of State announced an intention, subject to the necessary legislation, to establish two new unitary councils for Lincolnshire. The proposed arrangements comprise an expanded Lincoln City authority, including seven West Lindsey wards and 12 North Kesteven wards, and a Rural Lincolnshire authority covering the remaining county area. North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire will remain unchanged.

This report is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for noting and comment. It does not itself approve the reorganisation, alter the Council's existing statutory functions or confer authority to implement structural change. The Council will remain responsible for the lawful discharge of its functions and the continuity of services until Vesting Day.

The next statutory stage is expected to be the making of a Structural Changes Order, subject to Parliamentary approval. This will establish the formal transitional arrangements and may impose requirements affecting governance, decision-making, assets, contracts and financial commitments. Specific legal implications will therefore be considered as the legislation and implementation arrangements are confirmed, with further decisions referred through the Council's appropriate governance processes and legal advice obtained where required.

Financial: FIN/72/27/OS/SL

Now 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).

After the Structural Order is laid, 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 Structural Changes Order will mean 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 will be laid in winter 2026, with the Section 24 notice coming into effect shortly after the elections to the new shadow authorities in May 2027.

The decision letter issued to leaders on 16 July 2026 confirmed a £63 million national capacity fund for local government reorganisation. This includes £900,000 in transition support for each new unitary authority, up to a further £150,000 per new unitary to support leadership capacity and continuity in children's services, adult social care and public health, and up to £1 million nationally for areas with complex fire and rescue authority transitions.

Taken together, the Government expects each new unitary authority to receive more than £1 million in capacity funding, with detailed allocations to be confirmed in due course.

Further details of the financial and resource implications for the Council will be presented to the Thriving Council Committee as transition arrangements and implementation requirements become clearer.

Staffing:

Local Government Reorganisation is a significant, whole-council change programme which is placing additional demands on staff capacity across corporate and service areas. Preparatory and mobilisation activity must continue alongside the Council's statutory duties, existing service commitments and corporate priorities. The Council will therefore need to manage priorities and resources carefully to maintain business-as-usual delivery and service continuity through to Vesting Day on 1 April 2028.

The proposed division of the current district between two successor authorities creates particular workforce and delivery complexity for West Lindsey. Officers will need to contribute to local and Greater Lincolnshire implementation arrangements, including service disaggregation and work on workforce information, finance, legal and governance, digital and data, contracts, assets, communications and service design. As plans develop, this may require the reprioritisation of activity and additional temporary or specialist capacity; any resulting resource requirements will be considered through the Council's appropriate governance and budget processes.

This report is presented for noting and comment and does not seek approval of specific changes to staffing structures, roles or terms and conditions. Detailed workforce implications will be developed as the statutory and implementation arrangements become clearer and will be subject to appropriate engagement and consultation with staff and recognised trade unions, together with separate decisions where required. In the meantime, the Council will continue to keep staff informed and supported through its established communication and engagement arrangements, with continued attention to staff wellbeing and service continuity.

LGR implications:

This paper deals specifically with LGR and as such implications are considered and assessed throughout the paper, removing the need to include specific implications in this section.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

In appraising the final LGR proposals, consideration has been given to Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications by Government. However, it is acknowledged that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will be a key consideration as part of the development of the LGR programme and implementation.

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.

Risk Assessment:

This report is presented for noting and comment and does not seek approval of a specific operational decision.

The principal risks arise from the scale, pace and complexity of transition, particularly the division of West Lindsey's services, people, assets, contracts, systems and data between two successor authorities. If these risks are not managed effectively, there is potential for reduced service continuity, insufficient organisational capacity, unclear accountability, loss of local influence and adverse impacts on residents, communities, staff and the Council's financial and legal position.

These risks are being managed through the LGR Ready programme and Project Management Office, alignment with the Greater Lincolnshire implementation arrangements, strengthened governance and assurance, milestone-led workstream planning, and the maintenance of a consistent view of risks, dependencies and readiness evidence. Active engagement will remain important to protect West Lindsey's interests and support a safe and legal transition.

Detailed risks, mitigations and any matters requiring decision will continue to be reviewed through the Council's established risk management and governance arrangements as the statutory and implementation requirements become clearer.

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](#)

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

[WLDC LGR Consultation Response to Full Council 16.03.26](#)

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

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No

X

Key Decision:

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

Yes

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No

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