

King's Lynn Town Board – 28 February 2025

Devolution update

Norfolk has been accepted onto the Government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). We have received the [formal letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(MHCLG\)](#) inviting local Leaders to work collaboratively and proactively to develop proposals for local government reorganisation in Norfolk. This letter also provides more clarity on the criteria for unitary proposals, which I have summarised below.

As a result of being accepted onto the DPP, the Government will work with us toward an election for the Mayor of the Strategic Authority in May 2026. To manage this, local County Council elections planned for May 2025 will be postponed until May 2026.

All District and County Councils that have been accepted onto the DPP have been asked to submit LGR proposals by 21 March 2025.

Developing proposals for reorganisation

Leaders and Officers from across the district councils in Norfolk have been working together on LGR proposals for Norfolk and this will continue at pace to achieve the requirements and timeframe outlined in the [letter from the MHCLG](#) and summarised below.

Criteria for unitary local government

- A proposal should seek to achieve better outcomes and local service delivery for the whole area
- Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial challenges
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to residents
- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

When developing proposals for unitary local government, the following matters should be considered:

- Boundary changes
 - Existing district areas should be considered as building blocks
 - If any boundary changes proposed there needs to be strong public services and financial sustainability related justification

- Engagement and consultation on reorganisation
 - Local Leaders to work collaboratively and proactively
 - Engage Members of Parliament
 - Engage local partners, stakeholders, residents, workforce & their representatives and businesses
 - Engage with the Integrated Care Board, Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire & Rescue, Local Higher Education & Further Education providers, National Parks, voluntary & third sector organisations.

The Government has fully committed to supporting councils through this stage and has acknowledged the need for us to continue to deliver our business-as-usual, alongside the work outlined above.

Timelines and next steps - summary

- **Interim plans** that set out our progress towards developing final proposals will need to be submitted to Government on or before **21 March 2025**.
- **Postpone local elections** from May 2025 to May 2026
- **Mayoral elections** for Strategic Authority May 2026
- Devolution and reorganisation will be delivered to the most ambitious timeline possible - **Full proposal by 26 September 2025**.
- Elections to new shadow unitary authorities* asap

** Shadow unitary authorities will be temporarily formed until the new unitary authority is formally established.*