

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	4	
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>13 March 2026</b>	
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Local Government Reorganisation – Response to Statutory Consultation</b>	

## **1 Purpose / Summary**

- 1.0 To provide a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) progress update for the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire area.
- 1.1 Further to Full Council, for Cabinet to agree the draft consultation response to be submitted to government as a part of the statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## **2 Key Issues**

- 2.0 On 16 December 2024, the White Paper on English Devolution was published, outlining extensive reforms to the local government framework across England. These changes include increased devolution from central government to strategic authorities and local government reorganisation in two-tier areas, and in some adjoining Unitary Authority areas. The White Paper can be accessed here: [English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth - GOV.UK](#)
- 2.1 As set out in the White Paper, the Government intends to implement local government reorganisation in all two-tier areas and in some adjoining Unitary Authority areas. All Councils in an area have been expected to collaborate on unitary proposals that serve the best interests of the region.
- 2.2 Generally, the Government anticipates new unitary authorities will have populations of 500,000 to 1,000,000, but in exceptional cases the Government is believed to be willing to consider a new unitary authority which has a population as low as 300/350 thousand.
- 2.3 Leaders and Chief Executives of the 7 Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together on the LGR process. Members will recall meeting in March, July and November 2025, to discuss progress on LGR, to give feedback on the emerging proposals and to ultimately express the Council's opposition to the entire LGR process but, if the process does nevertheless go ahead, to recommend Option D to government.
- 2.4 Members will recall that a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough wide engagement process on LGR took place between 19 June and 20 July 2025. The results of which can be found here; [Joint engagement with other local councils - Fenland District Council](#)

- 2.5 In November 2025, four proposals were forwarded to government by the constituent Councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for consideration.
- 2.6 Option D, which was supported by both Fenland District Council and Peterborough City Council, would see the creation of 3 new unitaries across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – Unitary 1 - Peterborough City, West Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions, Unitary 2 - East Cambridgeshire District, Fenland District, East and South Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions, Unitary 3 - Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire District and County Council functions. Details of the other options submitted can be found below.
- 2.7 On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the government launched the statutory consultation on the four options submitted by constituent Councils. The deadline for responses is 26 March 2026. Anyone can submit a consultation response and the link to the consultation page is here; [Proposals for local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - GOV.UK](#) This is another important opportunity for Members individually and collectively to provide feedback to Government on their favoured outcome for Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 2.8 Fenland District Council's draft consultation response can be found at Appendix 1.
- 2.9 Once Central Government have decided on the future of Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, a Structural Change Order (SCO) will be laid before Parliament to legalise the new arrangements, with Shadow Authority elections expected in May 2027. The new Unitaries will be created on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028. On this basis, Fenland District Council would cease to exist on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028.
- 2.10 Cabinet will hear feedback from all Members on the proposed consultation at the Full Council meeting preceding the Cabinet meeting, and will be able to take that feedback into account in their deliberations in terms of the final response to government.

### **3 Recommendations**

- 3.0 For Cabinet to review the feedback from Full Council and agree FDC's response to the statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as set out at Appendix 1, and to delegate to the Leader of the Council to make any final amendments prior to the submission date of 26th March 2026.

Wards Affected	All Fenland wards
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Boden – Leader of the Council

Contact Officers

Paul Medd, Chief Executive  
Carol Pilson, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer  
Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Section 151  
Officer  
Amy Brown, Assistant Director  
Anna Goodall, Assistant Director  
Dan Horn, Assistant Director  
David Wright, Head of Policy and Communications

Background Papers

White Paper on English Devolution published on 16 December 2024

[English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth - GOV.UK](#)

Council Report: LGR – draft proposals; 14 March 2025

[Draft Council report - Local Government Reorganisation - Draft Proposals NA 1.pdf](#)

Cabinet Report: LGR – draft proposals; 14 March 2025

[Draft Cabinet report - Local Government Reorganisation - Draft Proposals 1.pdf](#)

Council Minutes; 14 March 2025

[Agenda for Council on Friday, 14th March, 2025, 5.30 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Cabinet Minutes; 14 March 2025

[Agenda for Cabinet on Friday, 14th March, 2025, 6.15 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Council Report: LGR – draft proposals; 21 July 2025

[Draft Council report - Local Government Reorganisation - July 2025.pdf](#)

Cabinet Report: LGR – draft proposals; 21 July 2025

[Draft Cabinet report - Local Government Reorganisation - July 2025 1.pdf](#)

Council Minutes; 21 July 2025

[Agenda for Council on Monday, 21st July, 2025, 4.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Cabinet Minutes; 21 July 2025

[Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 21st July, 2025, 5.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Council Minutes; 7 November 2025

[Agenda for Council on Friday, 7th November, 2025, 4.00 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Cabinet Minutes; 7 November 2025

[Agenda for Cabinet on Friday, 7th November, 2025, 5.15 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

[Joint engagement with other local councils - Fenland District Council](#)

Overview and Scrutiny; 3 November 2025

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Monday, 3rd November, 2025, 2.30 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

## 1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.0 On 16 December 2024, the White Paper on English Devolution was published, outlining extensive reforms to the local government framework across England. These changes include increased devolution from central government to strategic authorities and local government reorganisation in two-tier areas. The White Paper can be accessed here: [English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.1 The Government intends to implement local government reorganisation in two-tier areas and in some adjoining Unitary Authority areas. All Councils in an area have been expected to collaborate on unitary proposals that serve the best interests of the region. Generally, the Government anticipates new unitary authorities will have resident populations of 500,000 to 1,000,000, but in exceptional cases the Government is believed to be willing to consider a new unitary authority which has a resident population as low as 300/350 thousand.
- 1.2 Cambridgeshire currently has approximately 700,000 residents, while Peterborough, which already operates as a unitary council, has around 220,000 residents.
- 1.3 The five districts within Cambridgeshire (Fenland, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge) have approximate resident populations, respectively, of 104,000, 186,000, 91,000, 169,000 and 150,000.
- 1.4 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited all seven councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to submit their reorganisation proposals by 28 November 2025. Proposals are to be judged on the following six criteria:
1. Forming coherent economic areas and supporting housing.
  2. Ensuring financial resilience and efficiency.
  3. Delivering sustainable, high-quality services.
  4. Demonstrating collaboration and community engagement.
  5. Enabling further devolution.
  6. Strengthening democratic representation and neighbourhood empowerment.
- 1.5 The Council responded to the Government's request for an initial response in regards LGR proposals which was sent following the Council and Cabinet meetings held on 14 March 2025 and can be found here:  
[https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/21970/FDC-LGR-Letter-21-March-2025/pdf/FDC\\_LGR\\_Letter\\_21.03.25.pdf?m=1742572592553](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/21970/FDC-LGR-Letter-21-March-2025/pdf/FDC_LGR_Letter_21.03.25.pdf?m=1742572592553)  
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/210325-response-to-jm-lgr-invitation-to-leaders.pdf>

- 1.6 Council and Cabinet also met on 21 July 2025 and considered and provided feedback on the emerging proposals at that time; minutes below:

Council:

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/documents/g3064/Printed%20minutes%2021st-Jul-2025%2016.00%20Council.pdf?T=1>

Cabinet:

<https://moderngov.fenland.gov.uk/documents/g3072/Printed%20minutes%2021st-Jul-2025%2014.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=1>

- 1.7 Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on LGR at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 and were able to provide comments on the information presented.
- 1.8 Each constituent Council, through their own democratic processes, independently considered their favoured proposal to Government and a joint letter was sent setting this out by the deadline.

## 2 PROPOSALS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

- 2.0 The Council, through the Leader and Chief Executive, have been working with the other constituent Councils to develop proposals. Leaders across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough met on several occasions and worked productively together to consider different proposals for unitary government.
- 2.1 This process concluded with 5 proposals for unitary government having emerged across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. The 5 proposals were:

Proposal	Unitary 1	Unitary 2	Unitary 3
<b>Proposal A:</b> <b>North-West / South-East</b>	Peterborough City, Fenland District, Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions	Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire District, South Cambridgeshire District and County Council functions	N/A
<b>Proposal B:</b> <b>North / South</b>	Peterborough City, East Cambridgeshire District, Fenland District, Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions	Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire District and County Council functions	N/A
<b>Proposal C:</b> <b>East / West</b>	Peterborough City, East Cambridgeshire District, Fenland District and County Council functions	Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire District, South Cambridgeshire District and County Council functions	N/A

<b>Proposal D:</b> <b>Greater Peterborough / Mid Cambridgeshire / Greater Cambridge</b>	Peterborough City, West Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions	East Cambridgeshire District, Fenland District, East and South Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions	Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire District and County Council functions
<b>Proposal E:</b> <b>Huntingdonshire Unitary</b>	Huntingdonshire District and County Council functions	Peterborough City, East Cambridgeshire District, Fenland District and County Council functions	Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire District and County Council functions



**Option A**



**Option B**



**Option C**



**Option D**



**Option E**

2.2 However, following consideration by all constituent Councils, only 4 proposals were submitted to government with Option C not proposed by any Council. There was a reduction from 5 to 4 proposals because Huntingdonshire were

originally supporting 2 proposals, however they were only able to submit one proposal to government.

2.3 The options were supported by different Councils as follows:

<b>OPTION</b>	<b>PROPOSED UNITARIES</b>	<b>SUPPORTED BY</b>
<b>A</b>	<p><b>Unitary 1:</b> Fenland, Huntingdonshire, and Peterborough</p> <p><b>Unitary 2:</b> Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, and South Cambridgeshire</p>	Cambridgeshire County Council
<b>B</b>	<p><b>Unitary 1:</b> East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, and Peterborough</p> <p><b>Unitary 2:</b> Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire</p>	Cambridge City Council  South Cambridgeshire District Council  East Cambridgeshire District Council
<b>D</b>	<p><b>Unitary 1:</b> Peterborough and part of Huntingdonshire</p> <p><b>Unitary 2:</b> Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire</p> <p><b>Unitary 3:</b> East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and part of Huntingdonshire</p>	Fenland District Council  Peterborough City Council
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Unitary 1:</b> Huntingdonshire</p> <p><b>Unitary 2:</b> East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and Peterborough</p> <p><b>Unitary 3:</b> Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire</p>	Huntingdonshire District Council

- 2.4 The Government retains the authority to proceed with reorganisation on the basis they see fit following the statutory consultation. Active participation in this process ensures the Council has a say in shaping the future outlook for unitary government within our area.

### **3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

- 3.0 Between 19 June and 20 July 2025, a survey asking for views on the future of local government in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was live. The engagement focused on the connections people have to different areas; where they work, socialise or receive healthcare, for example. It also covered what priorities they think new unitary Councils should have and what is important to them when it comes to interacting with local government.

3,406 people from across the area responded and a summary of the feedback from the survey can be found here [LGR Public Survey 2025](#)

- 3.1 The statutory consultation on LGR was launched by government on 5 February 2025 and will run for 7 weeks until 26 March 2026. Anyone can submit a consultation response and the link to the consultation page is here; [Proposals for local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - GOV.UK](#)

### **4 Next Steps**

- 4.0 Further to the debate at Full Council, Cabinet will review the draft consultation response and consider the views of Council and submit the Council's response to the statutory consultation by the deadline of 26 March 2026.
- 4.1 We will then await the outcome of the statutory consultation and the announcement from government on which LGR option will be implemented in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

### **5 CONSULTATION**

- 5.0 Between 19 June and 20th July 2025, a survey asking for views on the future of local government in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was live. 3,406 people from across the area responded and a summary of the feedback from the survey can be found here [Joint engagement with other local councils - Fenland District Council](#)
- 5.1 The statutory consultation on future arrangements for local government in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough runs from 5 February to 26 March 2026.

### **6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.0 Government have invited Councils to respond to the statutory consultation to give their views on the future of local government in Cambridgeshire and

Peterborough. In order to ensure FDC Members are able to influence this process, a consultation response is advised. Therefore, alternative options are not available.

## **7 IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.0 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Local government reorganisation is governed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Secretary of State has the authority to invite or direct proposals and make final decisions.
- 7.2 The law says that Local Authority boundaries may not cross police force boundaries but can otherwise be whatever best meets criteria. The invitations issued under previous governments often say that existing districts must be used as the 'building blocks' from which new authorities are to be constructed, and whilst this is not required by Government, it is expected, unless there are compelling reasons to split an existing district between more than one new unitary authority.
- 7.3 Existing Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are unlikely to continue in their current form, with new Unitary Councils expected to operate in a shadow capacity from May 2027 before full implementation in April 2028.
- 7.4 Statutory consultation is a legal requirement of the LGR process.

### **7.5 Financial Implications**

- 7.6 At this stage, direct financial implications are minimal. However, extensive partnership working will be essential within any transitional arrangements to form new Unitary Councils.
- 7.7 There are many factors to consider when thinking about the creation of new, financially sustainable organisations. All Councils are struggling with forecast budget gaps in future years due to national pressures being experienced in demand for services and huge uncertainty around future government funding levels.
- 7.8 A finance workstream has been established to understand costs associated with LGR so they can be understood and discussed by Leaders and apportioned accordingly.

### **7.9 Equality Implications**

- 7.10 Not applicable.

## **8 SCHEDULES**

### **Appendix 1: Draft LGR Statutory Consultation Response**