

Overview and Scrutiny

24th of March

2026

Report title

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sue Baxter
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor, Assistant Director Corporate Services and Transformation
Report Author	Job Title: as above. Contact email: Hannah.corredor@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/a
Relevant Council Priority	Local Government Reorganisation
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overview and Scrutiny RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The updates regarding the consultation responses and engagement activity are noted.
- 2) The overview of the current position and next steps regarding Devolution are noted.

2. **BACKGROUND**

Stage one: Inviting unitary proposals	Received November 2024
Stage two: Submission of formal unitary proposals.	Completed November 2025
➤ Stage three: Statutory consultation (MHCLG)	5 th of February to 26 th of March 2026
Stage four: Decision to implement a proposal	Expected before summer recess, July 2026
Stage five: Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO).	Begins later in 2026 and ends with shadow elections in May 2027.
Stage six: Transition period	From decision to vesting day April 2028.
Stage seven: New unitary authority goes live	April 2028.

- 2.1 The consultation is live and can be accessed directly via our Transforming Worcestershire webpage:

www.transformingworcestershireshire.co.uk or directly on the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-worcestershire/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-worcestershire>. All Members are encouraged to promote response to the consultation throughout their networks.

- 2.2 The five workstreams detailed in the previous paper – HR, Legal, Finance, IT and Services – are progressing as planned. Fortnightly meetings are taking place with key leads from each authority in each group. The Chief Executives LGR Preparations Board continues to meet every four weeks and an extended session including s151 and Monitoring Officers is planned to take place in Pershore at the end of March. This session will be attended by a Senior Sector Advisor on behalf of MHCLG.
- 2.3 As part of the above the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council has arranged a workshop on the development of a data hub to assist with the collection of data across the seven Worcestershire local authorities. The workshop is being facilitated by colleagues from Westmorland and Furness Council who became the second of two unitary councils on 1st April 2023, the second being Cumberland Council. This followed the unitarisation of Cumbria County Council and the six former districts.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 Following submission of the Transforming Worcestershire proposal in November 2025, we were invited to attend a ‘Listening’ meeting with MHCLG on the 11th of March 2026. Preparations for the meeting included work with KPMG. The Chief Executive of BDC and RBC, Chief Executive of Wychavon and Malvern Hills and Managing Director of Worcester City Council provided a presentation to MHCLG on the Transforming Worcestershire proposal. The presentation included an overview of the proposal highlighting how it met the Government’s six criteria for Local Government Reorganisation, and within the criteria delivered high quality and sustainable public services alongside other key aspects such as risks to delivery, and areas of concern, whilst finishing with a strong and confident summary followed by a Q&A.
- 3.2 The Government’s consultation for Local Government Reorganisation in Worcestershire runs until 26th March. Bromsgrove District Council Group Leaders are being consulted on the response to be provided to Government on the Transforming Worcestershire proposal and the One

Worcestershire proposal, alongside a response to LGR proposals in Warwickshire. For Members information, as is the case in Worcestershire there are two proposals in Warwickshire – one covering the County area and the other being a two unitary option (covering the north and south). With the agreement of Group Leaders responses will be provided to Government on these proposals by the deadline.

DEVOLUTION

- 3.1 The Transforming Worcestershire proposal that was supported by Full Council provides a preference for a Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire and or Gloucestershire devolution footprint/footprint for a Foundation Strategic Authority. It did, however, leave open the opportunity for other options should that be the wish of Government for the area to further consider them. Throughout the last year, the Worcestershire Leaders Board representing all authorities, have continually considered Devolution. In September 2025, the Leaders Board agreed that the most suitable geography was Herefordshire + Worcestershire + Warwickshire; however, the final position on these options was dependent on the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the potential split, or not, of Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. This view is based on strong evidence related to economic links (e.g. defence sector, A46/M42 corridors) and alignment to the existing Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- 3.3 On the 12th of February 2026, MHCLG wrote to all authorities without an existing devolution agreement, including Bromsgrove District Council. inviting expressions of interest with neighbouring counties for the creation of a Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA) over what Government describes as a “sensible geography”. The Department stated that it would begin reviewing responses from 20 March. Over recent months, Government policy on devolution has shifted from an expectation of progressing directly to Mayoral Strategic Authorities, towards a staged approach requiring areas to first establish FSAs.
- 3.4 At the same time, Government has reintroduced Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) — high-level strategic plans that set broad parameters for housing, employment land and major infrastructure across a larger geography. SDSs are intended to sit above Local Plans, and Government has made clear that SDS footprints should generally align with future devolution geographies. There will be practical implications of the new Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) requirement to consider. County and Unitary councils will hold the formal responsibility for SDS preparation.

- 3.5 On 10 March 2026, a paper was considered by the Worcestershire Leaders' Board to support authorities to agree how to respond on both the matter of FSAs and SDSs and restate preferred local options in advance of Government's review window. The paper highlighted that, while Worcestershire has maintained a consistent position, neighbouring counties are currently taking different approaches in response to the Government's invitation.
- 3.6 Following the Worcestershire Leaders' Board meeting on 11 March 2026, all seven councils agreed a common position for submission to MHCLG. Worcestershire's position is that Herefordshire and Worcestershire must progress together due to their shared border, health arrangements, and long-standing joint fire and rescue service, and that either Warwickshire and/or Gloucestershire should form part of the wider devolution and SDS geography. Leaders have written to Government to confirm this position in time for the deadline of 20th March.
- 3.9 As spatial planning expertise currently sits within district councils; Worcestershire Leaders have stressed the importance of district involvement in SDS preparatory work through to April 2028. This temporary arrangement would support continuity of planning work and ensure a smooth transition ahead of future mayoral responsibility.
- 3.10 In providing this report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is acknowledged that updates on LGR are of interest to the Committee when there are specific mentionable activities to report on. Now that the MHCLG stakeholder consultation is coming to a close and the MHCLG "Listening Meeting" has taken place, there is unlikely to be any significant activity to report, other than the work of the internal/countywide LGR groups which is ongoing. We are therefore flagging to members that future reports may be limited. On these occasions a Chief Officer will provide a verbal update.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Financial implications will continue to arise as LGR progresses; however, these implications may relate to Bromsgrove District or the future Unitary, dependent on the time of arising.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Legal implications will continue to arise as LGR progresses. This committee will be updated as and when necessary.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

6.1 This is the subject of this report.

Relevant Council Priority

6.2 N/a

Climate Change Implications

6.3 N/a

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.4 Significant equalities implications will arise from the redesign and redistribution of services across the County. Reports will be brought here once planning progresses to a stage where these can be considered.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Devolution and LGR are listed as a Corporate Risk in the Corporate Risk Register, owned by the Chief Executive Officer and lead by the Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Transformation. Ongoing work to improve our risk management systems continues, with a focus on flagging risks that relate to LGR to enable a single view of LGR related risks – noting that LGR will be a dependency for a increasing number of risks over the upcoming two years.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/a

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2026

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Baxter	16/03
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor	13/03
Financial Services	Julie Lorraine	11/03
Legal Services	Claire Felton	
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Hannah Corredor	11/03
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/a	