

Overview and Scrutiny

16th of June

2026

Report title

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor
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 consulted	Councillor(s) 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) Note the updates regarding the refreshed guidance from MHCLG.
- 2) Note the new workstreams established by the LGR Preparations Board – Comms and a Data Hub.

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	MHCLG Meetings: 27 th of May. Expected before summer recess, July 2026
Stage five: First Transition Period	The first transition period runs from when the SCO comes into force, up to the inaugural elections to the new council. Begins later in 2026 when involuntary committees form.

Overview and Scrutiny

16th of June

2026

Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO).	
Stage six: Second transition period	The second transition period runs from a defined date following the inaugural elections to the Shadow Authority, up to vesting day – referred to as the reorganisation date in the SCO – April 2028.
Stage seven: New unitary authority goes live	April 2028.

- 2.1 Work on Local Government Reorganisation continues at pace through the established programme governance, with all core workstreams meeting regularly and reporting into a monthly Chief Executives' Board. The latest meeting on 28 May confirmed that activity across key areas including Finance, HR, ICT, Legal, Communications, Services and the Programme Management Office is progressing, with the majority of workstreams reporting ongoing delivery against plan and developing the detailed datasets and analysis required for transition. Work to assess the alignment of HR terms and conditions and prepare asset and financial information is underway and continued development of the Data Hub to support consistent, assured information.
- 2.2 Members will also note a growing focus on capacity planning, resourcing and recruitment at programme level, reflecting the increasing scale and technical complexity of the preparatory phase as activity moves from high-level planning into detailed implementation design. Recruitment is currently live for an LGR Programme Director (external), Programme Manager and Programme Support Officer (both internal). The LGR Programme Director will be a member appointment. Funding for recruitment is split across all seven authorities in Worcestershire.
- 2.3 The Worcestershire Leaders Board have indicated their support for establishing arrangements for a voluntary Joint Committee as soon as possible and will be discussing this further in the coming weeks. This is despite the SCO, which will formally mandate the committees, not being anticipated until later in 2026 (more below).

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Development of the Structural Changes Order

- 3.1 The close of the statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) closed in March after attracting 1972 responses.

MHCLG has now moved to the next phase of the process, which is the development of the Structural Changes Order (SCO). The SCO is the secondary legislation that will establish the new local government arrangements, including governance, electoral arrangements and implementation structures.

3.2 On 19 May 2026, Co-Deputy Director for Local Government Reorganisation at MHCLG wrote to all Worcestershire Chief Executives seeking views on a range of matters that will need to be determined within the SCO. The matters raised by MHCLG cover the key components required to implement LGR in legislation, including:

- the model for implementation (new council vs preparing council);
- implementation governance (e.g. joint committees);
- electoral arrangements (including councillor numbers and wards);
- naming of new councils;
- roles within the implementation team; and
- practical matters such as returning officers and alignment of parish elections.

3.3 A collective response was submitted on 22 May 2026 on behalf of all seven Worcestershire Chief Executives following discussions with Group Leaders. It established a clear, consistent Worcestershire position on the issues raised. The key principles set out in the Worcestershire response are:

3.4.1 Creation of new council(s): Worcestershire has expressed a clear preference for the creation of **new unitary council(s)** rather than a “continuing” or preparing council model. This is on the basis that a new organisation provides the best opportunity to establish a new culture, avoid perceptions of takeover, and enable a fresh approach to service design and leadership.

3.4.2 Implementation Governance: The preferred implementation approach is a **joint committee model**, with equal representation from each council (two members per council), rather than an implementation executive. The response indicates that there is no need for the SCO to prescribe chairs or impose political balance, as these matters can be determined locally. Consistent with MHCLG guidance, the approach emphasises collective responsibility across all councils for delivering a safe and effective transition. The preferred model follows a precedent that includes a single lead officer (the County Council Chief Executive), supported by deputy leads drawn from the Heads of Paid Service of each district council, creating a collectively led implementation team across all councils.

3.5 Electoral and governance arrangements during Transition:

- **Election cycle:** Elections to the new council(s) should align with existing parish and town council cycles (May 2027, 2031, 2035), maintaining a four-year cycle. The correspondence from MHCLG currently suggests a four year + 1 cycle.
- **Wards and councillor numbers:** Proposed wards are based on existing county divisions, with councillor numbers reflecting a doubling of representation per division. We are currently in discussions with MHCLG on these matters. The Boundary Commission is expected to undertake a full review after the first election.
- **Returning officer arrangements:** The response proposes that the Returning Officer role is assigned to the Head of Paid Service at Redditch Borough Council under a single unitary model; under a two-unitary model, this would be split between Redditch (North Worcestershire) and Wychavon (South Worcestershire).

- 3.7** The response also highlights that the indicative timetable (drafting over summer, laying in Parliament towards the end of the year) may be too slow relative to the complexity of implementation work required. It suggests that earlier laying of the Order (for example by October) would better support effective transition planning.

This work continues to be coordinated through the county-wide Programme Management Office and LGR governance arrangements described in previous reports.

Future Local Governance Arrangements

- 3.8** Alongside the development of the Structural Changes Order, work is progressing to consider future local governance arrangements for Bromsgrove in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. At its meeting on 20 May 2026, Full Council agreed to establish a cross-party working group to undertake preparatory work in relation to future local governance within Bromsgrove District.

- 3.9** The working group will consider the current local governance position across the district, including parished and unparished areas, and will help identify the intended outcomes for future local governance in Bromsgrove. This will include consideration of how local identity, representation and community voice could be supported in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. This work will inform whether there is a case for commencing a formal Community Governance Review, including consideration of the potential creation of a Town Council, the area any such council may cover, and related governance arrangements.

- 3.10 An engagement exercise is being developed to support this preliminary work. Its purpose is to understand what is important to local communities, how residents identify with their local area, and how they see future local governance and community voice working in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. If a formal CGR is commenced in due course, the statutory requirements of that process, including formal consultation, would still need to be followed.
- 3.11 A report is due to be considered by Electoral Matters Committee on 11 June 2026, setting out the proposed scope of the working group and an indicative timetable. Findings and recommendations are expected to be reported back to Full Council in October 2026. The timing of any future CGR will also need to be considered alongside the wider LGR timetable, including the role of any shadow authority and the future unitary authority's approach to neighbourhood governance, local representation and community voice.
- 3.11 Discussions regarding an LGR Task and Finish group, as requested by the O&S Committee, have been ongoing with the new portfolio lead for LGR and the Chair of the Committee. The original topic of focus was proposed to be community engagement. Due to the above development, and democratic calendar, the terms of reference for this group have not yet been tabled for the committee.
- 3.12 In considering the local governance work and a separate Overview and Scrutiny task group, it is important to recognise the overlap in subject matter and the level of member and officer capacity required to support both effectively. The governance work associated with future local governance arrangements, including options appraisal, engagement and development of proposals, will be substantive and time-critical in the context of wider LGR activity, and will be likely to consider the future of community engagement and how our civic structures support us to work closely with residents post-unitarisation. As such, Committee are invited to consider how these two aims could be met through a single group, with all activities closely aligned.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The financial implications of LGR will be assessed as part of the ongoing programme. Current work is focussed on establishing baseline financial information across all authorities to support the development of a robust financial model for the new authority or authorities. This includes:
- Asset valuation and capital receipts

Overview and Scrutiny

16th of June

2026

- Contract data
- Budgeted revenue expenditure, income, borrowing and investment
- Council Tax data and forecasts

4.2 Final proposals for the two proposed models in Worcestershire include transition costs arising from such areas as programme management, IT integration, workforce change and harmonisation of policies and systems. These costs will be refined following the stage four decision expected in July, as design work progresses.

4.3 Opportunities for medium term savings are expected through service consolidation, reduced duplication and streamlined governance but will be dependent upon the final decision and implementation plan. Financial risk will include demand driven service delivery and Exceptional Financial Support legacy implications, again dependent upon the final unitary model and the approach to aggregation / disaggregation necessitated.

4.4 No decisions have yet been taken on Council Tax harmonisation, future fees and charges structures or the treatment of reserves. Further modelling and member consideration will be necessary, and all financial planning will be subject to statutory requirements and agreement.

4.5 It will be necessary to deliver a balanced budget for vesting day. All material financial decisions taken by existing councils during the transition period will be subject to assurance processes to ensure undue liabilities are not created for the new authority or authorities.

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

Overview and Scrutiny

2026

16th of June

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 LGR is 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. A copy of the LGR risk as reported on the Corporate Risk Register is included in the appendix below.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- PDF: 'Implementation bodies and predecessor councils during local government reorganisation'
- Extract from Corporate Risk register below:

Reference	Risk Title	Risk Owner	Risk Lead	Status	Inherent	Residual
COR14	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) prevents the Council from delivering business as usual and work associated with LGR is also ineffective	John Leach	Hannah Corredor	Open	Red	Amber
Mitigating Action						
1. An LGR Preparations Board has been established internally, attended alternate meetings by portfolio lead members. 2. The LGR Board has supported regular updates to Members and staff during the development of the proposal stage. This work is to continue.						

Overview and Scrutiny

16th of June

2026

Reference	Risk Title	Risk Owner	Risk Lead	Status	Inherent	Residual
	<p>3. An Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation has been appointed with responsibilities relating to LGR transition. The postholder commenced work on 24th November 2025.</p> <p>4. Through the LGR Board and cross system LGR Preparations Board of Chief Executives, working with the other Councils, deliver against and an action plan that covers the framework of agreed activity in the “Transforming Worcestershire” proposal that was submitted to Government on 27th November (pages 164 – 173).</p> <p>5. A Programme Management Office (PMO) across all seven councils has been agreed by Chief Executives, Monitoring Officers and Section 151 Officers. This will report to the Leaders Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Programme Management Board has developed the following workstreams that are undertaking a “housekeeping exercise” to ensure all data is up to date in readiness for the outcome of the proposal assessment stage by Government (due before summer recess 2026): Finance, HR, ICT, Legal, Services, Data Hub, Communications. <p>6. The work of the PMO and the above workstreams are also aligning actions to LGA/MHCLG guidance issued to support the LGR prepare stage (November 2025 – June 2026).</p> <p>7. Assistant Directors to ensure that Service Business Plans cover key priority areas for work activity (for example delivery of matters such as the Local Plan) classed also as business as usual whilst undertaking any LGR related work. The preparations are to include consideration in particular relating to HR (e.g. capacity, resilience and recruitment) and finance matters including bids for capacity. Each service business plan has to have an LGR specific section that links in to ensure BAU activities are safeguarded as much a possible and relates to each services risk register.</p> <p>8. Assistant Directors provide quarterly assurance returns to SLT regarding delivery against the priorities for the service, finance, risk, capacity etc.</p> <p>9. All decision reports through the councils governance arrangements include a section on the impact of LGR regarding any proposals so that decision makers are sighted on the implications of their decision.</p> <p>10. Updates on LGR are provided to the LGR Portfolio Holder, Cabinet/Executive, Council and Scrutiny as appropriate.</p>					

Overview and Scrutiny
2026

16th of June

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Taylor	05/06
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor	05/06
Financial Services	James Walton	05/06
Legal Services	Claire Felton	05/06
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Hannah Corredor	05/06
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/a	