

Overview and Scrutiny

2026

21st of July

Report title

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor
Report Author	Job Title: Assistant Director Corporate Services and Transformation Contact email: Hannah.corredor@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All
Ward Council(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**

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- 1) Note the reaffirmed of decision making and implementation timeline.
- 2) Note the updates to the governance matters.

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	Decision expected by 16 th of 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. We expect to form informal committees in August 2027, voluntary committees in September 2027, and formal

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Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO).	voluntary committees by the end of 2027 when the SCO passes through parliament.
Stage six: Second transition period	The second transition period runs from the inaugural elections to the Shadow Authority expected May 2027, 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 At the time of writing, the decision had not yet been shared, however, it is expected week commencing 13th of July, and so officers may be able to provide a more up to date briefing for the committee at the meeting.
- 2.2 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 25th of June 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 The Worcestershire Leaders Board have indicated their support for establishing arrangements for a Voluntary Joint Committee(s) as soon as possible. It is anticipated this will be put forward for formal approval at the Full Council meeting in September.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Preparations for the decision announcement

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- 3.1 The Chief Executive attended a Teams briefing on 23 June 2026 led by the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness, Alison McGovern MP. The Minister advised that the Government remains committed to delivering local government reorganisation and confirmed that the programme remains on schedule. An announcement on the Worcestershire proposals is still anticipated before the Parliamentary summer recess on 16 July 2026. The rationale for LGR decisions will be explained when announced, and the outcome of the stakeholder consultation will be provided at the same time. For Worcestershire there were 1,972 consultation responses overall.
- 3.2 During the briefing, the Minister outlined principles that will inform decision-making on local government reorganisation proposals. These included the creation of strong unitary councils aligned to recognised economic and community geographies, capable of working effectively with Strategic Authorities through devolution arrangements. The Minister also emphasised the importance of streamlined decision-making, support for housing growth and regeneration, and the delivery of more integrated and effective public services for residents.
- 3.3 Preparations continue to be coordinated across the seven authorities in anticipation of the decision. Staff briefings are scheduled throughout the week commencing 13th of July, and a full schedule of communications and content has been agreed with group leaders. Plans focus on ensuring that members and staff are informed at the earlier possible moment. Guidance for managers has been provided to ensure they are enabled to support staff on receipt of decision.

Continues development of the Structural Changes Order

- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 As previously reported, Worcestershire councils submitted a collective response to MHCLG in May 2026 setting out a shared position on a number of matters requiring determination through the SCO. This included a preference for the creation of new unitary council(s), rather than a “continuing” or preparing council model, implementation through a Joint Committee model, with two councillors per predecessor council, and electoral arrangements that align, where possible, with existing local election cycles.

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- 3.6 **Election cycle:** Worcestershire's response sought alignment with existing parish and town council election cycles. Since that time, MHCLG has indicated that its current preferred approach would be elections to the new authority or authorities in May 2027, followed by a one-year shadow period and a subsequent four-year term, creating an initial five-year electoral cycle. Worcestershire Chief Executives have highlighted that this approach would create a mismatch with parish election arrangements. MHCLG has also confirmed that existing councillors elected until May 2027 would have their terms extended through the legislation that will establish the new councils and would be eligible to stand for election to the new authority whilst continuing to serve on predecessor councils during the transition period if elected.
- 3.7 **Wards and councillor numbers:** Worcestershire's submission proposed warding arrangements based around existing county divisions, with councillor numbers reflecting a doubling of representation per division. MHCLG has now requested further information on warding arrangements by 17 August 2026 and discussions are continuing. Whilst the principle works relatively straightforwardly in Bromsgrove, additional consideration is being given to arrangements within Redditch where four-member wards would arise under a direct application of the model. Alternative warding configurations are therefore being explored for Redditch which better reflect advice from MHCLG and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The overall number of councillors would remain consistent with the proposals submitted to Government in November 2025.
- 3.8 **Boundary reviews:** MHCLG has advised that electoral boundaries can be reviewed after the first election to the new authority or authorities. This would allow longer-term warding arrangements to be considered once the new councils are established.
- 3.9 **Charter Trustees:** A report is due to be considered by Full Council on 15 July 2026 in relation to Charter Trustees for Bromsgrove. This follows a recommendation from the Electoral Matters Committee that the Council request provision to be included in the Structural Changes Order for the appointment of Charter Trustees for the unparished areas of Bromsgrove. The purpose of this request is to ensure that arrangements can be put in place for relevant civic and ceremonial property, including civic regalia, to be held locally by Charter Trustees during the Local Government Reorganisation process and while any future Community Governance Reviews are considered. If parish or town councils are created for the relevant areas in the future, the Charter Trustees would

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be dissolved. Any civic and ceremonial property held by the Charter Trustees would then transfer to the relevant parish or town council.

- 3.10 **Returning Officer arrangements:** Worcestershire's joint response to MHCLG proposed that the Returning Officer role is assigned to the Head of Paid Service at Redditch Borough Council under a single unitary model, or split between Redditch and Wychavon under a two-unitary model. Confirmation of these arrangements will be expected post-decision through a draft SCO.
- 3.11 Further clarity has also been provided on the anticipated legislative timetable. Whilst Worcestershire previously highlighted concerns that a prolonged timetable could affect implementation planning, MHCLG has advised that development of the Structural Changes Order will continue over the summer, with progression of the Order anticipated in early autumn and laying before Parliament before Christmas 2026. This will provide greater certainty regarding the governance and implementation arrangements required to support transition towards vesting day in April 2028.
- 3.12 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

- 3.13 Alongside the development of the Structural Changes Order, work is still progressing to consider future local governance arrangements for Bromsgrove in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. This follows the decision of Full Council on 20 May 2026 to establish a cross-party working group to undertake preparatory work in relation to future local governance within Bromsgrove District.
- 3.14 The local governance engagement exercise is now live and is available on the Council's website at: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/local-futures
- 3.15 The engagement exercise is intended to help 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. The exercise will inform the working group's consideration of whether there is a case for commencing a formal Community Governance Review in due course. If a formal Community Governance Review is commenced, the statutory requirements of that process, including formal consultation, would still need to be followed.

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- 3.16 The engagement exercise has been publicised through the Council's social media channels and information has been sent directly to all parish councils and relevant community groups. A poster has also been produced, with a focused drive to display posters throughout unparished areas of Bromsgrove Town Centre and Rubery to raise awareness and encourage residents to take part.
- 3.17 The engagement exercise will close on 09 August 2026. Following the close of the exercise, the Local Governance Working Group will meet on 20 August 2026 to consider the responses received, alongside further updates on other local governance arrangements, including Neighbourhood Area Committees. The results of the engagement exercise, together with any findings and recommendations from the Working Group and Electoral Matters Committee, are expected to be reported to Full Council in October 2026.
- 3.18 Discussions regarding an LGR Task and Finish group, as requested by the O&S Committee, are currently on hold which the direction of the governance review is confirmed.

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
 - 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

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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

- 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

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risk as reported on the Corporate Risk Register is included in the appendix below.

8. **APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9. **REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Taylor	05/06
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor	08/07
Financial Services	James Walton	13/07
Legal Services	Claire Felton	13/07
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Hannah Corredor	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/a	08/07