



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Our reference: MC2025/02944

Cllr Rodger Gough
Leader - Kent County Council

Cllr Vince Maple
Leader - Medway Council

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders,

In July 2024, the Deputy Prime Minister invited you to partner with this new Government to deliver the most ambitious programme of devolution this country has ever seen. Since that letter, we have published the English Devolution White Paper, setting out further detail on how we will widen and deepen devolution across England, providing mayors with unprecedented powers and funding and hardwiring devolution into the way government works, and our determination to rebuild local government and to reset the relationship between national and local government.

In the White Paper, we also announced our new Devolution Priority Programme and invited areas to come forward and submit proposals for being part of our Devolution Priority Programme. It will provide a fast-track to mayoral devolution for those areas that are ready to come together under sensible geographies which meet the criteria set out in the White Paper. We were incredibly pleased to see such a positive response, showing that the country is ready for change.

I was pleased by the enthusiasm in your response to my letter of 16 December. However, I had to make a judgement of the best-placed areas to take forwards on the Programme according to our strict criteria, and, in the round, concluded your proposals could not be taken forward due to concerns about the size of the population disparity between the two proposed constituent members of your proposed Kent and Medway Combined County Authority and the consequential impact on its governance. I believe this will affect your readiness and ability to meet the delivery criteria of the White Paper, and that local government reorganisation would benefit your area before a mayoral institution is established. I will be writing separately to all Local Authorities in two-tier areas about taking forward reorganisation.

I appreciate that this will be disappointing news, and I want to recognise the hard work and good faith which had gone into developing your proposal to the exacting requirements and timetable of the programme. I want to reassure you that we remain committed to supporting all areas of the country on a path towards devolution and I want to keep building on the enthusiasm and consensus you have shown. We will continue to work with you to provide further feedback for how to strengthen your proposal for consideration later in the Parliament.

Please note that by not progressing with the Devolution Priority Programme, this means that I will not be postponing the May 2025 elections to Kent County Council.

I also want to place on record my appreciation for the leadership you have shown in support of our shared ambition, and I assure you that the decision in no way reflects on the political leadership in this process, in fact I see this as the start of the process and not the end.

I want to thank you again for your interest in the Devolution Priority Programme, and my officials and I look forward to supporting your area with future plans to access greater devolution.

I am copying this letter to Chief Executives. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

