

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive

To: **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee – 03 November 2025**

Subject: Update on the Kent and Medway joint process for LGR business case development

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper provides an update on the development of the LGR business cases as part of the joint process between Kent County Council, Medway Council and Kent's 12 District and Borough Councils, a summary of future milestones and next steps.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Note** the continued collaborative working between all 14 Councils in Kent and Medway, the progress made on the business case development and the commitment to continue working closely together up to 28 November 2025 submission date and beyond.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 5 February 2025 the then Local Government Minister wrote to Councils in Kent and Medway inviting them to submit proposals for Local Government reorganisation (LGR). The letter included guidance around the development of proposals and an expectation that all 14 Councils would collaborate. Councils were tasked with preparing a joint interim proposal by 21 March 2025 and a deadline of 28 November 2025 to receive a final submission on reorganisation.
- 1.2 Kent Council Leaders agreed to work together to respond to the Minister's direction and as such, on 21 March 2025 they submitted an interim response setting out a high-level direction of travel. Work is now ongoing in preparation for meeting the 28 November 2025 submission deadline.
- 1.3 KPMG were appointed as Kent and Medway's Strategic Business Partner for the initial phases of the work up until the November submission deadline following a joint procurement process and have to date supported Councils on preparing a single evidence base, options analysis and subsequent determination of which options would proceed to business case. This was agreed at Kent Council Leaders on 03 September 2025 (see appendix 1).
- 1.4 The options selected by Leaders to be part of the jointly funded process were:

- 3A – A three unitary option with a north, east and west unitary
 - 4B – A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east
- 1.5 A further 3 options were selected by individual Councils to proceed to full business case:
- 1A – A single unitary with three area assemblies (KCC supported)
 - 4D – A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east, including boundary changes (Medway Council supported)
 - 5A – A five unitary option, including boundary changes (supported by Dartford and Gravesham Councils)
- 1.6 Whilst there are 5 business cases being developed, the joint overarching process remains in place, with a shared evidence base, financial analysis, programme governance and communications, with key strands of narrative also shared between the business cases for 3A, 4B, 4D and 5A.

2. Current work on the joint process

- 2.1 Work continues at pace to prepare the business cases for submission on 28 November 2025. Timescales are tight and as such, a regular rhythm of collaborative governance and editorial meetings have been required and have progressed well to date. Each group has strong and senior Kent County Council representation on it.
- 2.2 Kent Council Leaders meet on 27 October 2025 where latest drafts of the business cases will be shared and any last comments or changes will be received. Leaders will be asked to review and input into the case for change, councillor numbers, and forewords for the respective business cases.
- 2.3 It is imperative this process is completed by the end of October to allow sufficient time in November for each Council to determine their formal position on LGR through their individual governance processes ahead of the submission deadline.
- 2.4 Final drafts will be published week commencing 03 November 2025 on the Kent Council Leaders website ahead of all 14 Councils commencing their individual governance processes.
- 2.5 Through these individual governance processes, each Council will determine their positions and ultimately which strategic business case they will each support.
- 2.6 On 28 November 2025, each Council will submit their preferred business case to Government. A joint letter or letters may also be submitted.

3. Next steps

- 3.1 Following submission, it is likely there will be a period of several months until we receive notice of the Minister's decision. Early indications are this will likely be between Spring/Summer 2026.
- 3.2 In the interim, Councils will collectively start to prepare for the next stage of the work, learning from areas of the country that have been through the process recently, to inform the extensive transition work that will be required to ensure services are safe and legal on day 1 of the new Unitary Council(s).
- 3.3 As this joint work continues, further reports and updates will be brought to this committee as and when appropriate.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

(1) Note the continued collaborative working between all 14 Councils in Kent and Medway, the progress made on the business case development, and the commitment to continue working closely together up to 28 November 2025 submission date and beyond.

5. Relevant Director:

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7. Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Maps detailing options and associated geographies being taken forward to full business case.