

By Email:

Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister

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The Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP

First Secretary of State, Chancellor of the
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Cabinet Office

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Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
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Rt Hon Jim McMahon OBE MP

Under-Secretary of State for the Ministry of
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Kent Council Leaders

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5 August 2026

Ref: KCL/Devo

Dear Prime Minister,

The time for devolution in Kent and Medway is now

As you will be aware, securing devolution and the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway is an ambition that unites council leaders in Kent and Medway from right across the political spectrum because we can instantly see the benefits it will bring for the people we serve as well as the country more generally.

We strongly believe our case is compelling:

- We were collectively determined to make progress on Local Government Reorganisation when the previous government stated on 5th February 2025 that the current size disparity between the two upper tier authorities were the barrier to us being part of the Devolution Priority Programme. With the LGR decision now concluded that barrier has been overcome.

- We have a long tradition of working together at political and officer levels to deliver the best possible services – the groundwork is already in place.
- We already have a comprehensive plan for growth – important both for Kent and Medway’s economy and the country as a whole.
- We need to tackle the unique challenges that come from being the gateway to Europe including managing our border and the infrastructure that comes with it as well as looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- We have a very clear idea of what a strategic authority could deliver including:
 - improved transport and critical national infrastructure around Kent’s key ports of entry
 - economic development and regeneration including the Local Growth Plan
 - delivery of our Spatial Development Strategy
 - skills and job creation
 - public service reform including strategic collaboration with the health service and taking on the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner whose office is being abolished.

Our neighbouring areas have either already secured devolution agreements or have been accepted onto the Devolution Priority Programme.

As a result, Kent and Medway risk falling behind. Without devolution, we will be unable to access the opportunities and significant service investment that accompany these arrangements, while neighbouring regions are positioned to benefit from them.

Above all, we share your view that decisions about local priorities are best made by local leaders, who are closest to their communities and best placed to direct investment towards the projects and infrastructure that will deliver the greatest benefits for their areas. Ultimately, we all want to see good growth in every postcode.

We are working hard to prepare for local government reorganisation while maintaining services. Devolution is a key piece of the jigsaw, enabling effective local decision-making and supporting a streamlined reorganisation process. For us, it makes perfect sense to align the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway with Local Government Reorganisation, with both taking effect on 1 April 2028, so that the necessary changes only need to be implemented once.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you or your senior civil servants at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Noel Ovenden
Leader, Ashford Borough Council



Jeremy Kite MBE
Leader, Dartford Borough Council



Jim Martin
Leader, Folkestone & Hythe District Council



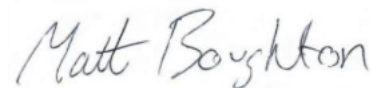
Linden Kemkaran
Leader, Kent County Council



Vince Maple
Leader, Medway Council



Tim Gibson
Leader, Swale Borough Council



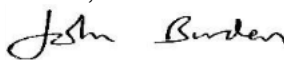
Matt Boughton
Leader, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council



Alan Baldock
Leader, Canterbury City Council



Kevin Mills
Leader, Dover District Council



John Burden
Leader, Gravesham Borough Council



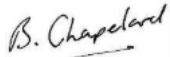
Stuart Jeffery
Leader, Maidstone Borough Council



Kevin Maskell
Leader, Sevenoaks District Council



Rick Everitt
Leader, Thanet District Council



Ben Chapelard
Leader, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council



Tracey Kerly
Chief Executive, Ashford Borough Council



Suzi Wakeham
Joint Chief Executive, Canterbury City Council



Peter Davies
Joint Chief Executive, Canterbury City Council



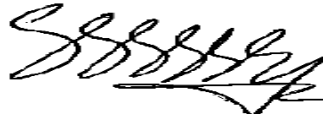
Sarah Martin
Chief Executive, Dartford Borough Council



Nadeem Aziz
Chief Executive, Dover District Council



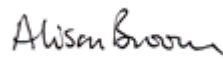
Dr Susan Priest
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Stuart Bobby
Chief Executive, Gravesham Borough Council



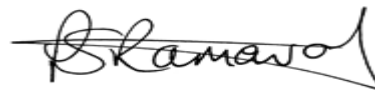
Amanda Beer
Chief Executive, Kent County Council



Alison Broom
Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council



Richard Hicks
Chief Executive, Medway Council



Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive, Sevenoaks District Council



Larissa Reed
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