

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION



Decision taken by individual Cabinet member

(All sections must be completed (mark "N/A" as applicable))

DECISION MAKER *(Name and designation)*

Councillor Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council

DECISION AND THE REASON(S) FOR IT

The decision is to submit the Council's formal response to the Government's consultation on proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire, including a letter to Alison McGovern, MP, Minister for Local Government, and answers to the consultation questions on the Government's website.

The Council supports the creation of five unitary councils (four on the mainland and the Isle of Wight continuing as its own unitary authority). Our preferred option is Proposal 1A, which creates a North Hampshire unitary council covering Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke & Deane. The Council believes this model best supports local engagement, trusted relationships and inclusive service delivery.

The response also states the Council's preference for interim elections using district ward boundaries, with two or three councillors per ward to ensure fair representation.

DATE DECISION TAKEN

09 January 2026

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

(Those examined by officers and generated by consultation, etc)

The Leader consulted with councillors, senior officers, and portfolio holders in making this decision. The only alternative option would be to not respond to the consultation. However, given the potential impact on local governance and service delivery, this was not considered appropriate.

ANY CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

(conflict of interests of any executive member who is consulted by the officer which relates to the decision. A note of dispensation should be attached).

N/A

Signe

(Decision maker)

Designation: Leader of the Council

Alison McGovern, MP
Minister for Local Government
LGR Consultation
Ministry of Housing, Communities
and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire

I am writing on behalf of Rushmoor Borough Council to set out our position on the proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire to accompany our formal consultation response.

The Council strongly supports the joint proposal for four new mainland unitary councils plus the Isle of Wight, as endorsed by 11 councils across Hampshire. We believe it provides the most balanced and effective way to deliver local services while keeping strong links with local communities.

Our preferred option is Proposal 1A, which creates a North Hampshire unitary for Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane. This reflects real travel-to-work patterns and shared economic and service needs. North Hampshire is a coherent economic area along the M3 corridor, with strong links to the Thames Valley and major employers in aerospace, defence and tech. The Council also supports Proposals 1 and 2, which provide the same North Hampshire geography.

The Council does not support the proposal for a larger unitary council from Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council. A council of that size would be too large to stay connected to local needs and too remote from the people we serve.

The Council believes that democratic arrangements during any transition must be fair and based on real communities. We support interim elections using district ward boundaries, with two or three councillors per ward to ensure fair representation. These reflect genuine neighbourhoods recognised by residents and would maintain similar councillor-to-population ratios across the new unitary council.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Gareth Williams
Leader
Rushmoor Borough Council

Proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton Consultation

SECTION 1

Consultation on the Proposal from Hampshire County Council & East Hampshire District Council

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

- Strongly disagree

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

- Somewhat disagree

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

- Somewhat disagree

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

- Somewhat disagree

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

- Somewhat disagree

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

- Somewhat disagree

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?

- Somewhat disagree

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

- Strongly disagree

Q9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal

- The Council does not support the proposal from Hampshire County Council & East Hampshire District Council. Although the Council recognises the need for reform, this proposal creates unitary areas that are too large and not aligned to how our residents in Aldershot and Farnborough live, travel and access services. The suggested north-south split does not reflect existing travel-to-work patterns, economic links or community connections across the A331 and M3 corridors. These areas operate as a connected urban zone, and the Council believes that any new council must reflect this.
- The proposed Mid North area brings together places with significant differences in population density, service pressures and local identity, which could make it harder to ensure fair prioritisation of resources. The Council's communities share strong social and economic ties with Hart and Basingstoke, but not with Winchester or East Hampshire to the same extent. This proposal does not recognise those differences.
- The Council is also concerned that a large four-unitary model may lead to less local accountability, with decision-making becoming more centralised and further away from the neighbourhoods we serve. For Aldershot and Farnborough, where there are high service demands, unique circumstances linked to the military, veteran, and Nepali communities, and significant regeneration aspirations, it is important that any new authority is suitably focused and closely connected to local issues.
- The Council therefore believes that the geography proposed here would not deliver the benefits expected from local government reorganisation, and is less suitable than the three other proposals, all of which include a North Hampshire unitary that better reflects the functional geography of the area.

Q10. I confirm that I have not included any information that identifies an individual in the free text box

- Yes

SECTION 2

Consultation on the Proposal from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, New Forest District Council and Test Valley Borough Council

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

- Somewhat agree

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

- Somewhat agree

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

- Strongly agree

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

- Somewhat Agree

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

- Strongly Agree

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

- Strongly Agree

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?

- Strongly agree

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

- Somewhat agree

Q9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal

- The Council supports this proposal as it creates a North Hampshire unitary council for Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor. This geography reflects how residents in Aldershot and Farnborough live, travel and use services. The A331 and M3 corridors form a well-established functional area, with strong economic and social ties between these towns.

The proposed structure keeps this area together and avoids splitting natural communities of interest.

- A North Hampshire unitary would have the right balance of size and local connection. It is large enough to support specialist services, share resources and plan strategically, but small enough to stay close to residents' needs. For Rushmoor, this matters because our population includes high levels of mobility, major defence-related employment, and neighbourhoods with significant regeneration needs. These shared characteristics with Basingstoke and Hart make this grouping coherent.
- The Council believes this proposal strengthens accountability by aligning services such as children's services, adult social care, transport, housing and public health under one organisation serving a consistent area. This removes duplication and provides clearer responsibility for outcomes. It also ensures representation can remain grounded in local communities, especially if interim elections use district-based ward boundaries, which the Council supports.
- However, this proposal does not resolve the issue in the south of county where the district and unitary boundaries no longer reflect modern patterns of housing, transport, and economic activity. Retaining these existing boundaries results in less well-balanced population sizes across Hampshire and less fair representation on both the unitary councils and the combined authority.
- Overall, the Council considers this proposal suitable and believes it provides a practical and balanced solution for the future of local government in Hampshire.

Q10. I confirm that I have not included any information that identifies an individual in the free text box

- Yes

SECTION 3

Consultation on the Proposal from Eastleigh BC, Fareham BC, Hart DC, Havant BC, Portsmouth CC, Rushmoor BC and Southampton CC

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

- Strongly agree

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

- Strongly agree

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

- Strongly agree

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

- Somewhat Agree

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

- Strongly Agree

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

- Strongly Agree

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?

- Strongly agree

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

- Strongly agree

Q9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal

- The Council supports this proposal as the most realistic and community-focused option, aligning governance with how people live, work and travel. It suggests a North Hampshire unitary council for Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor, which

matches the established travel-to-work area, public service footprint and shared economic profile of these communities. Residents in Aldershot and Farnborough regularly travel to and from Fleet, Farnham, Camberley, Frimley and Basingstoke for work, healthcare, education and services, and this pattern underpins the case for a single North Hampshire authority.

- A North Hampshire unitary would also bring together areas facing similar pressures. This includes high housing demand, shared health inequalities, a large military presence, pockets of deprivation and major regeneration needs. These factors benefit from joined-up services that can operate across the whole functional area, rather than being split across several different authorities and governance arrangements.
- The Council supports the principle of four mainland unitaries plus the Isle of Wight, which is backed by 11 councils across Hampshire. The Council believes this structure is well-balanced, avoids creating councils that are too large or too small, and supports stronger local accountability.

Democratic arrangements

- The Council strongly supports interim elections using district ward boundaries, which reflect established neighbourhoods and allow for fair representation during the transition. Maintaining district-based ward boundaries ensures continuity for residents and supports a clear connection between councillors and the communities they serve. Rushmoor's neighbourhoods, such as North Camp, Cove, Cherrywood, Manor Park and Aldershot Park have distinct identities that would be preserved under this approach. The Council suggests that two or three councillors are elected per ward by a method that ensures similar councillor-to-population ratios across the new unitary council.
- For these reasons, the Council considers Option 1a to be the most realistic, effective and community-focused proposal.

Q10. This proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?

- Strongly agree

Q11. If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10.

- The Council believes that the district and unitary boundaries in the south of the county no longer reflect modern patterns of housing, transport, and economic activity. Boundary changes will ensure balanced populations and fair representation, aligning councils with natural economic geographies. It will align the new unitary councils with sensible, natural economic geographies and better link together communities.

Q12. I confirm that I have not included any information that identifies an individual in the free text box.

- Yes

SECTION 4

Consultation on the Proposal from Winchester City Council

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

- Somewhat agree

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

- Somewhat agree

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

- Strongly agree

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

- Somewhat Agree

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

- Strongly Agree

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

- Somewhat Agree

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?

- Strongly agree

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

- Somewhat agree

Q9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal

- The Council supports this proposal because it retains the North Hampshire unitary for Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor. This grouping reflects the real geography of how people in Aldershot and Farnborough live and access services. The A331 and M3 corridors create a strong link between these communities, supported by shared economic, social and transport patterns.
- This proposal creates unitary councils that are balanced in size and capacity, without creating an organisation that is too large to remain close to local needs. For Rushmoor, this is essential because our communities include areas of high population density, a significant military presence and a range of service pressures that benefit from being managed at an appropriate scale. A North Hampshire unitary supports this by bringing together areas with similar service profiles and enabling joined-up planning.
- However, this proposal does not resolve some of issues in the south of county where the district and unitary boundaries no longer reflect modern patterns of housing, transport, and economic activity. Retaining these existing boundaries results in less well-balanced population sizes across Hampshire and less fair representation on both the unitary councils and the combined authority.
- The Council believes that this proposal aligns well with the broader model of four mainland unitaries and the Isle of Wight, which is supported by 11 councils across Hampshire. The structure avoids fragmentation while keeping councils close enough to residents to maintain clear accountability. For these reasons, the Council considers this proposal suitable.

Q10. I confirm that I have not included any information that identifies an individual in the free text box

- Yes