

## Appendix D

### Item 14 (27.01.25) DEVOLUTION: WHAT THIS MAY MEAN FOR WEST SUSSEX

**Purpose of the report:** A briefing for information as to the Government White Paper released on 16<sup>th</sup> December and the WSCC/ESCC/Brighton and Hove Council decision of 9<sup>th</sup> January

#### Background

1. The white paper was published 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and can be accessed via this link. [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)
2. *"...growth, more joined-up delivery of public services, and politics being done with communities, not to them. These are all key aspects of this government's Plan for Change. We believe it is only by redistributing political, social and economic power that we will rewire England and allow everyone everywhere to realise their full potential."* - Executive Summary
3. The paper talks of more areas for Directly Elected Mayors (such as London and Birmingham have) and an integrated settlement to fund local priorities and far greater powers for Mayors
4. Regarding Local Authorities it says: *This White Paper announces that we will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for two-tier areas, and for unitary councils where there is evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries may be hindering their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality public services. We will invite proposals for reorganisation from all these areas.*

#### West Sussex County Council

1. West Sussex is a two-tier authority having both a County and District Council administration. Beneath both of these sits the Town and Parish Councils, there is no reference in the white paper as to Town and Parish Councils of which there are over 10,000 in England and Wales. We are not directly affected by the paper, but will be impacted by the changes in West Sussex should the upper tiers achieve permission for their proposals.
2. On 9<sup>th</sup> January, West Sussex County Council, Cabinet met to agree a proposal to submit to the Government for a joint Unitary Council for the upper tiers of East, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove.
3. The papers from the WSCC meeting agenda are here [\(Public Pack\)Item 3 - to follow report Agenda Supplement for Cabinet, 09/01/2025 10:30](#)

#### Secondary Tiers

1. The secondary tiers are the District and Borough Councils. As the unitary bid from East and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove speaks of a unitary council with strategic responsibility and an elected Mayor for all Sussex it is not clear what this may mean for a District Council.
2. The Paper makes this statement: *"In areas with two tiers of local government, before moving to a single tier, the government will establish Combined County Authorities but not Combined Authorities. In those cases, while districts will not be constituent members, the government expects effective levels of collaboration to be demonstrated between constituent members and district councils, especially where the district council covers the primary city or economy in that county."*

#### Time Lines

The deadline to submit interest was 10<sup>th</sup> January, the government will seek greater details as to what this may look like by March 2025. During 2025 there will be approval of reorganisation plans and legislation to change the administrative landscape. It is expected The Mayoral election will take place

May 2026 and the shadow elections for the new Council in May 2027 with the new unitary Councils being in place for 2028. It is not known whether the County Council elections will take place in May 2025, West Sussex CC will be proposing to the Government that they are not held, in lieu of the timeline for new organisation elections following so quickly.

### **Conclusion**

This is a very brief update for members as so little is known at this time but it will mark significant change to the Local Government structure in Sussex, more will follow as the effect on the District and Boroughs comes forward and their own potential plans emerge.