



NEWS RELEASE

25 March 2026

UPDATED: Government makes announcement on future of local government in West Sussex



This release has been reissued to include the correct date of the local elections.

The Government has today announced that it is to delay its decision on the future of local government in West Sussex, whilst at the same time publishing its decisions on four other areas.

West Sussex County Council and the county's district and borough councils put forward a business case submission in September 2025 that made the case for either one unitary or two unitary councils for West Sussex.

Today the Government announced that it would not be making a decision in line with the agreed timetable for the two areas in Sussex and instead would be seeking to modify the proposals submitted to it by local councils.

For West Sussex, the proposed modification is understood to be a variation on the two unitary proposal included in the councils' shared business case, and which would shift Chichester District from one of the two proposed new unitary councils to the other.

The inference from this position, and the decisions made elsewhere in the country is that they have discounted the case for a single unitary council covering all of West Sussex.

The Government has said that this modification will be considered following a 'short, technical' consultation after the local elections due to take place on 7 May 2026. A decision is now expected in the summer, with elections to the new councils still expected to be in May 2027, and the new councils formally running services from May 2028.

Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: "We are disappointed that, despite the hard work of councils in West Sussex to develop two implementable proposals for local government reorganisation in the county, the government has taken six months to decide to reject both of the sustainable options put forward,

"Our preference was for one unitary council which we believe provided the most financially stable model, especially considering the cost and confusion that could occur from splitting adult and children's services across two local authorities, and which our shared business case demonstrated best met the government's stated criteria.

"With other councils in West Sussex, we will need to look closely at the Government's proposals as we consider next steps, but we share the general frustration that after six months of deliberation, the government have been unable to reach a definitive conclusion, and they have decided to reject the unanimous conclusions of the councils in West Sussex about the best options for the local area."

ENDS

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