

LGR Preparedness Our Journey To Date

Tim Woolmer – Kent & Medway LGR Programme Director

Susan Priest – Chief Executive, Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Andrina Smith – FHDC LGR Programme Director / Chief HR Officer



Kent Council Leaders & Kent Chief Executives

Kent Council Leaders

A COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR KENT & MEDWAY

Search...



MENU



**YOUR
COUNCILS
CHANGE IS
COMING...**

The government wants us to
deliver your services differently

[Find out more](#)



Kent Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution



Page 3
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Folkestone & Hythe District Council

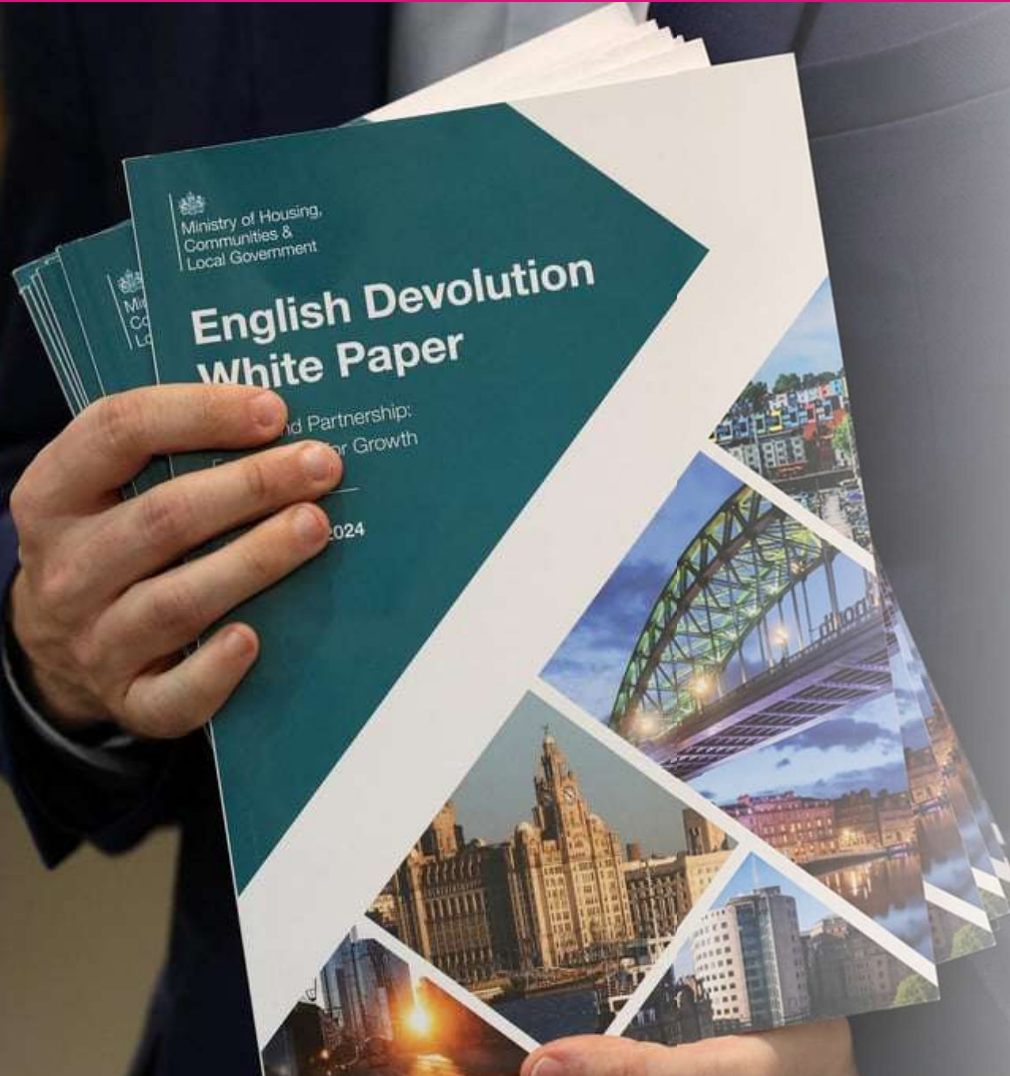
28 July 2026

www.kentcouncilleaders.org.uk

Kent & Medway
LGR Programme

Background

Page 4



- In December 2024, the government published the English Devolution White Paper, outlining plans for universal coverage of 'Strategic Authorities' across England. As part of this, areas including Kent and Medway were invited to apply for the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP).
- However, on 5 February, the Government announced that Kent and Medway had not been selected for the programme. On the same day, all Kent councils received a letter from the Minister, inviting them to collaborate with other local leaders to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation (LGR), creating new unitary councils.

Kent & Medway
LGR Programme

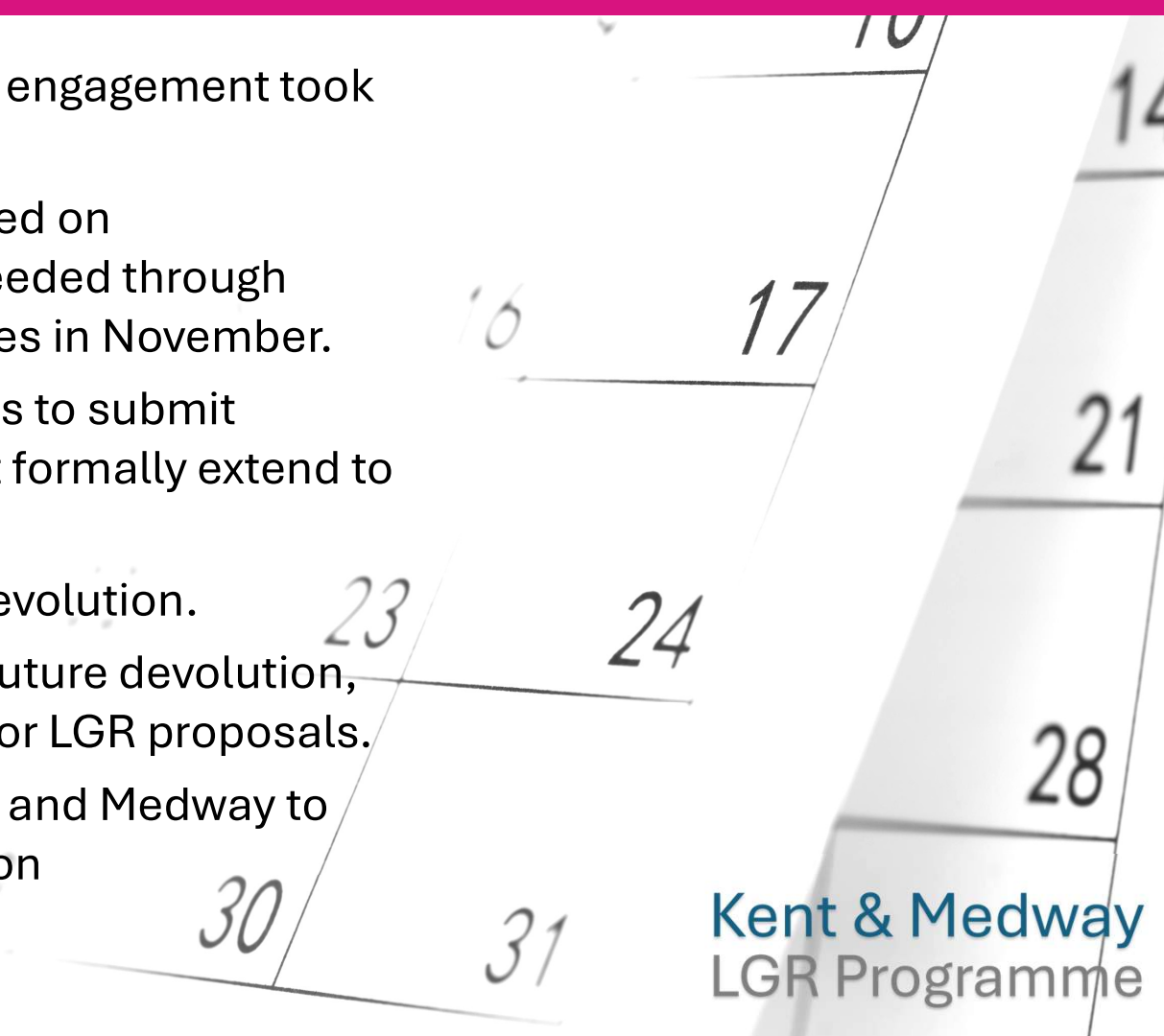
Government's Vision

- LGR is the government's long-term vision for simpler council structures, with the government facilitating LGR in England for all two-tier areas (i.e. those with county and district/borough councils) such as in Kent.
- The government's position is that LGR can deliver long-term benefits:
 - Opportunity to generate efficiencies by having just a single tier of local government
 - Create clearer lines of accountability for residents
 - Opportunities for public service reform, with councils working more closely with partners such as the NHS and the Police
 - Ultimately, in their view, deliver better outcomes for resident



Business Case Submission - 28 November 2025

- Public awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement took place to input into the business cases.
- All of the draft business cases are published on www.kentcouncilleaders.org.uk and proceeded through each of the Council's democratic processes in November.
- The invitation to Kent and Medway councils to submit proposals for LGR by 28 November did not formally extend to proposals for devolution.
- It is currently unclear when Kent will get devolution.
- Government is clear LGR should support future devolution, so it remains an important consideration for LGR proposals.
- In February 2026, Government asked Kent and Medway to consider submitting an EOI for a Foundation Strategic Authority



Kent & Medway
LGR Programme

Enhanced Discovery Phase and Next Steps

- In December 2025, MHCLG shared a list of preparatory activities to complete ahead of Ministerial decision
- Overseen by LGR Programme Board (chiefs) – ‘Enhanced Discovery Phase’
- 11 x Priority Activity Groups, each chaired by chief exec and deputy
- Predominantly back office preparatory activity agnostic of decision
- Meanwhile starting to plan for post-decision including procurement of a strategic partner, appointment of programme director and design of PMO
- Understand legal implications of SCO

Kent & Medway LGR – Enhanced Discovery Phase



PRIORITY ACTIVITY GROUPS

Assets	Audit	Cyber, Digital & Technology	Data	Finance & Council Tax	Legislation & Legal	Pensions	Procurement, Contract Management & Supplier Alignment	Project Team, Mobilisation & Local Protocols	Stakeholder Engagement & Communication	Workforce & HR
Lead Chief: Susan Priest Deputy: Tracey Kerly Project Officer: Charlotte Hammersley (Ashford)	Lead Chief: Sarah Martin Deputy: Nadeem Aziz Project Officer: Vicki Williams (Thanet)	Lead Chief: William Benson Deputy: Alison Broom Project Officer: Amy Wilton (Sevenoaks)	Lead Chief: Alison Broom Deputy: William Benson Project Officer: Michelle Batstone (Gravesham) Alex Crowe (Dartford)	Lead Chief: Stuart Bobby Deputy: Sarah Martin Project Officer: Jeremy Whittaker (T&M)	Lead Chief: Nadeem Aziz Deputy: Colin Carmichael Project Officer: Josie Newman (Canterbury)	Lead Chief: Pav Ramewal Deputy: Tracey Kerly Project Officer: TBC	Lead Chief: Peter Davies Deputy: Lee-Anne French Project Officer: Uche Olufemi (Maidstone)	Lead Chief: Larissa Reed Deputy: Peter Davies Project Officer: Ian Hirst (Tunbridge Wells)	Lead Chief: Suzi Wakeham Deputy: Richard Hicks Project Officer: Narisse Tait (Dover)	Lead Chief: Damian Roberts Colin Carmichael Deputy: Amanda Beer Project Officer: Sam Cridland (FHDC)

Councillor Preparedness

- LGR member working group was established by the Leader in June 2025
 - Chair – Cllr Jim Martin
 - Membership – Cllrs Jenny Hollingsbee, Nicola Keen, Adrian Lockwood, Connor McConville & Jeremy Speakman
- Officers update the working group on progress towards LGR both across Kent and locally at FHDC
- Leader appointed a Cabinet Member for Assets & LGR – Cllr Connor McConville
- Leader attending Town & Parish Council meetings
- Lawrence Conway – lived experience of LGR in Cumbria
- Member briefings – will continue throughout our journey to the new unitary

Member LGR Newsletter

Page 10

F&HDC Local Government Reorganisation Update

17th July 2026

FHDC LGR Programme Board

Kent LGR Programme Board

Programme Board

CLT

Susan Priest – Chair

Ewan Green (MO)
Alan Mitchell (s151)
Andy Blaszkowicz

LGR Programme Director

Andrina Smith

LGR Programme Manager

Zoe Law

LGR Policy Lead

Michelle Farrow

LGR HR Lead

Andrina Smith

LGR Comms Lead

Jane Walker

Responsibilities

Strategic oversight of LGR

Responsibilities
Prepare FHDC for LGR
Oversight of workstreams
Cross working with new UA once decided
Safe & legal activities
Compliance with govt communications

Responsibilities
Support to LGR Director
Main contact for workstream leads
Document management and control
Prepare reports for Board
Deputise for LGR Director when required

Responsibilities
External focus
Strategic coordination
SCO / joint committees
Decision making arrangements
Member management
T&PC management

Responsibilities
Resourcing LGR & BAU
Training & development
Change & transition support

Responsibilities
External comms
Cross Kent Comms link
Internal Comms
Engagement with stakeholders

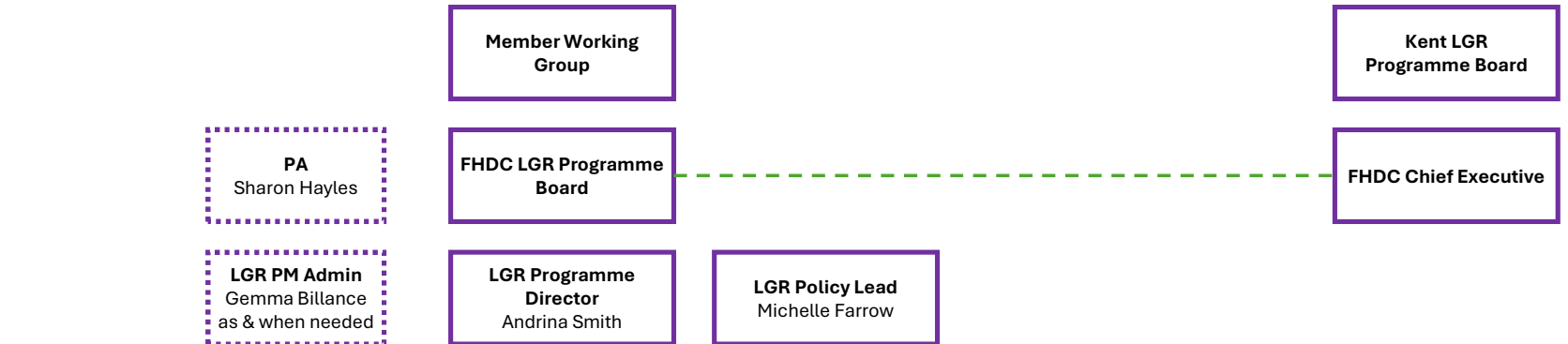
PA

Sharon Hayles

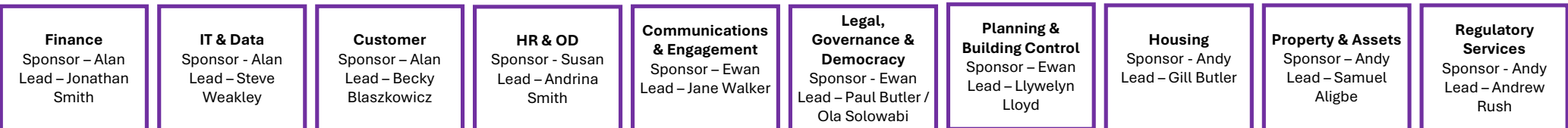
LGR Admin

Gemma Billance

FHDC LGR Enhanced Discovery Phase Workstreams



WORKSTREAMS



FHDC LGR Risk Register

Risk ID	Risk Name	Risk Owner	Risk Description & Triggers	Likelihood	Impact	Total	scheme (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer,	Proposed Actions
R1	Resource Capacity		Concern over capacity across the council to carry out the work required for vesting day	3	2	6	Tolerate	LGR PD oversight of workstreams, clear definition of tasks & timescales to inform capacity requirements, regular review of tasks being requested for completion & request for feedback from staff involved on capacity
R2	Recruitment & Retention of staff		Recruitment & retention is likely to be impacted when there is an uncertain future. Existing staff may become increasingly unsettled and the best staff are often the most likely to be mobile and therefore difficult to retain, aging workforce may also be considering options around retirement	3	2	6	Tolerate	Regular review of flight risks, single points of failure, recruit internally to retain knowledgeable staff, consideration of using interim staff, regular review of staff on FTCs
R3	Impact on BAU		Concern that BAU activity will be impacted by redirecting resources or the balancing of resources across LGR tasks and BAU work	3	2	6	Tolerate	Monitoring of performance data monthly, review of service plans & corporate plan actions via CGB
R4	Duplication of tasks across workstreams		Risk that interdependencies between workstreams may not be managed effectively	3	2	6	Tolerate	LGR PD oversight of workstreams & liaison with Kent LGR PD, LGR PM working closely with staff contributing to workstreams, interdependencies clearly highlighted on relevant workstreams
R5	Critical deadlines missed		Risk of non-delivery or missed deadlines relating to key tasks within workstreams that others may be reliant upon or critical to vesting day	3	2	6	Tolerate	Mechanisms to be identified for highlighting concerns (R/A/G) and reporting to internal LGR prog board, workstream leads / critical staff having regular reviews with LGR PD / PM, clear project planning and communication from Kent PMO, adequacy of resources regularly reviewed, clear identification of safe & legal tasks and 'nice to have' tasks
R6	Insufficient budget for FHDC		Concern that the reserves set aside for LGR may not be adequate to deliver the required outcomes	3	2	6	Tolerate	Regular budget monitoring between LGR PD & PM with identified Accountant, budgets discussed at internal prog board
R7	Lack of engagement		Service areas may not engage fully with activities such as obtaining workload metrics when requested from Workstream leads	3	2	6	Tolerate	Schedule workshops / meetings early and secure leadership buy in to the required activities, regular reviews by LGR PM with issues escalated as appropriate
R8	Snap election		Snap elections or high profile by-elections in addition to the May 2027 election could cause resource issues when staff are already working on LGR projects	3	2	6	Tolerate	Action plan implemented in this scenario as soon as possible by Dem Services Manager with secondment arrangements based on prior experience to ensure quick start on workload
R9	Quality of information		Concern over the quality of information provided in response to RFI or workstream requests	3	2	6	Tolerate	All responses to be QA by LGR PD or PM before submitting as the formal FHDC response to a request

New Unitary Council Announcement – 16th July 2026

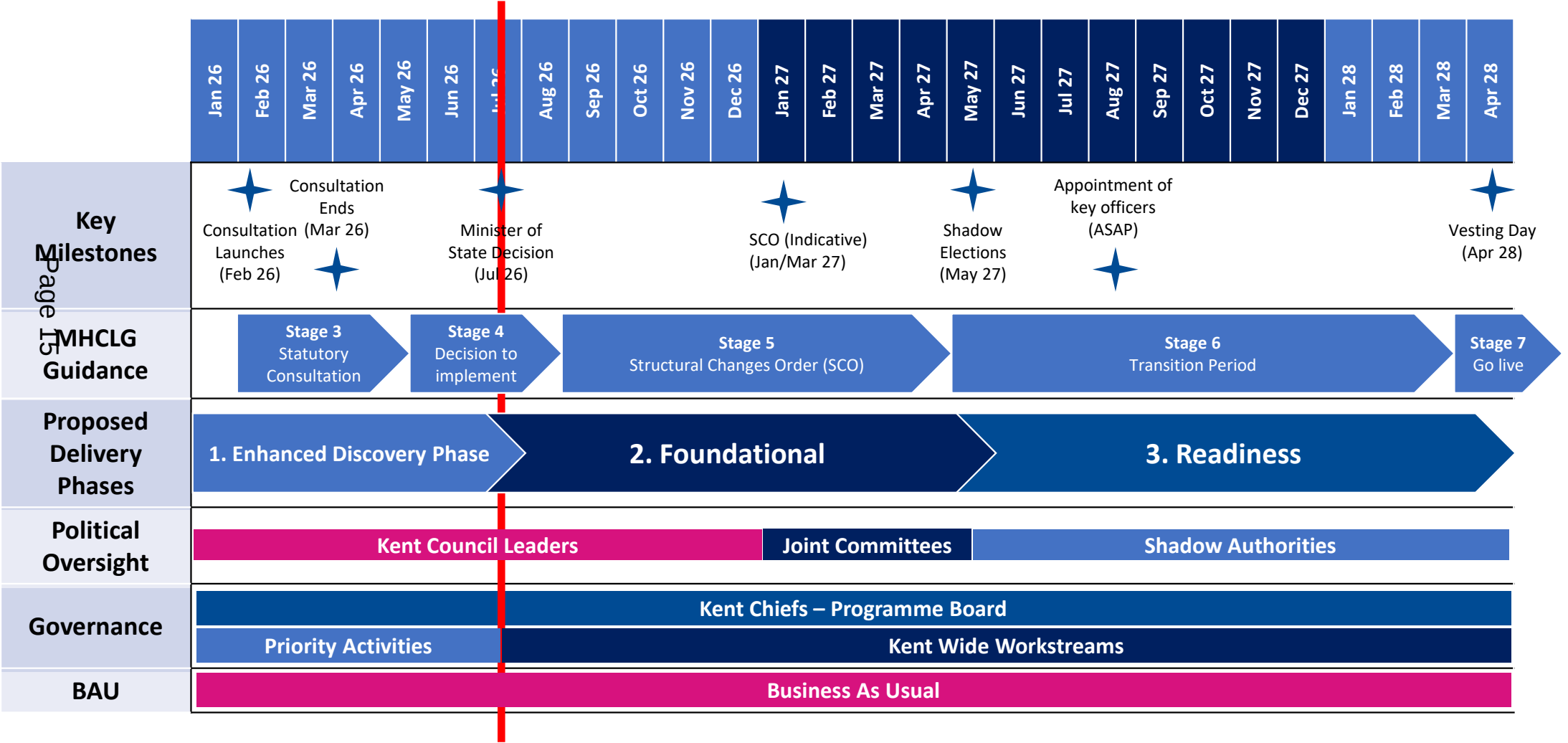


[Ministers Decide Future Shape of Kent and Medway's Councils - Kent Council Leaders](#)

More information is available on the Kent Council Leaders website:

[Kent Council Leaders - A collective voice for Kent & Medway](#)

Timeline to Vesting Day



Current Focus – Preparation and Mobilisation

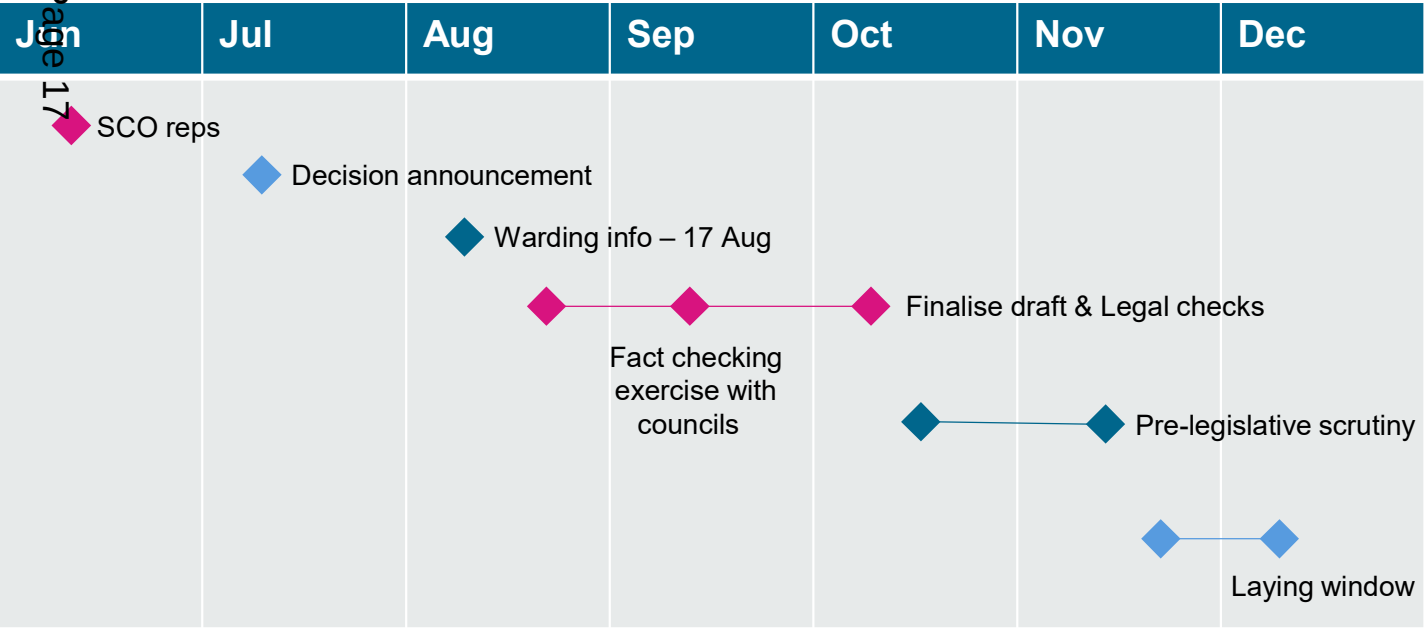
- Agreement on single joint programme structure
- Key roles including SRO, DSRO, Place Leads
- Strategic Business Partner recruitment
- Dedicated LGR Team build
 - Neutral resource
 - Hybrid model
 - Iterative and flexible design
 - Balance of programme-wide vs unitary level work
 - Change over time
 - Recruitment from across 14 Councils
- Programme governance, outputs, test and pilot
- Devolution?
- National change?

Structural Changes Order Timeline

Key dates:



2026 SCO Development



SCO Implications

- Voluntary arrangement across the whole area so all councils involved can balance the need to maintain service delivery with decisions that affect new unitary councils
- Draft SCO: autumn factual comments with quick turnaround
- Joint Committees will need to reflect SCO decisions
- Section 24 direction representations

Mid Kent Council – Warding Arrangements (work currently in hand)

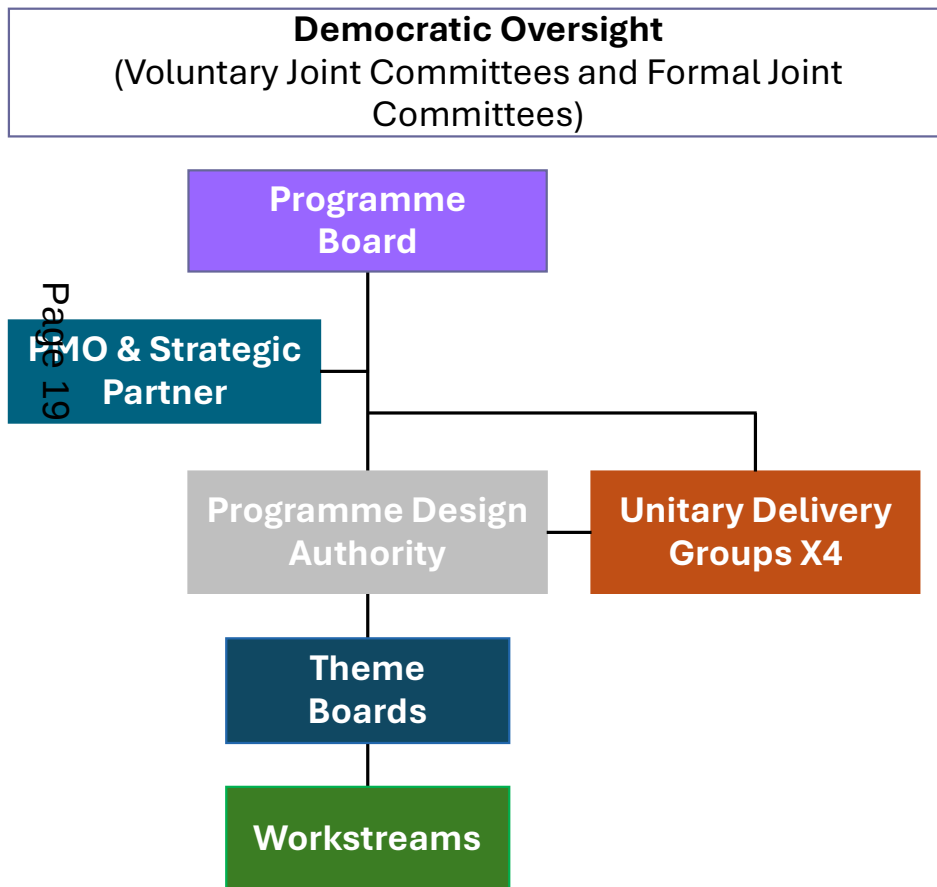
- Response is due from each Council to MHCLG on 17th August to confirm preference on warding arrangements based on the business case for 4B submitted in November 2025

	Councillor Numbers	KCC Members	KCC Divisions	Wards
Folkestone & Hythe	30	6	6	13
Ashford	47	7	7	39
Swale	47	7	6	24
	124	20	19	76
Mid Kent Council Business Case	60 councillors	3 per division	20 divisions	

Name of new council	Area covered	Number of councillors
North Kent	Dartford, Gravesham, Medway	81
West Kent	Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells	84
Mid Kent	Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe, Swale	60
East Kent	Canterbury, Dover, Thanet	66

Programme Structure

Programme Structure



Democratic Oversight

Ensuring programme alignment to members' priorities/government requirements. Oversight evolves from Kent Council Leaders to Voluntary Joint Committees, Joint Committees, Shadow Authorities and ultimately new unitary councils. the

Programme Board / Implementation Team

The central strategic leadership and decision-making forum. It monitors delivery, resolves escalated issues, manages risks and ensures the programme stays on track and aligned to agreed objectives.

Programme Team (PMO and Strategic Partner)

Provides capacity, coordination, reporting and delivery support needed across the programme. It ensures consistency, manages dependencies, tracks progress and enables effective collaboration across all councils and workstreams.

Unitary Delivery Groups

Leads and coordinates work specific to each future unitary while operating within the wider programme framework. Supports Joint Committees/Shadow Authorities, focusing initially on governance readiness and later on service transition and operational preparedness.

Theme Boards and Workstreams

Theme Boards oversee the development of future service designs and Day 1 operating models, supported by specialist workstreams. Workstreams undertake the detailed delivery activity, bringing together subject experts and senior officers to design and implement change.

Priority Work for Joint Committees

Drawing on learning from other LGR areas the below sets out the priority matters for voluntary and formal Joint Committees.

Formal Joint Committees are likely to be time-limited and may only be able to meet twice between March and May 2027.

01

First meeting decisions

Establishing the committee's

- Terms of reference & membership
- Chair and Vice-Chair election
- Substitution arrangements

02

Formal Joint Committee Focus

Three Priority Work Areas

Implementation	Governance	Interim Statutory Officers
Plan updates Funding arrangements	Draft Shadow Authority constitution and schedules Members' allowances Codes of conduct	Interim Statutory Officer preparations Recommendations for Shadow Authorities

Questions?

This page is intentionally left blank