



## Our vision for Surrey

Surrey is a place of thriving communities and businesses, creative heritage in the arts and, of course, beautiful countryside. It is undeniably a brilliant place to live, work, learn and visit. But for some, life can be challenging. That is why we need more affordable and better local government for the people of Surrey. We need to simplify the system, save money and improve engagement with local communities to ultimately improve lives.

In recent years we've seen rapid increases in service demand, challenges for the national economy and changes to our climate, alongside a reduction in funding. Our plan for two unitary councils, with a Mayor, will create stronger, simpler and more sustainable local government to give Surrey an even brighter future.

## How local government in Surrey is structured now

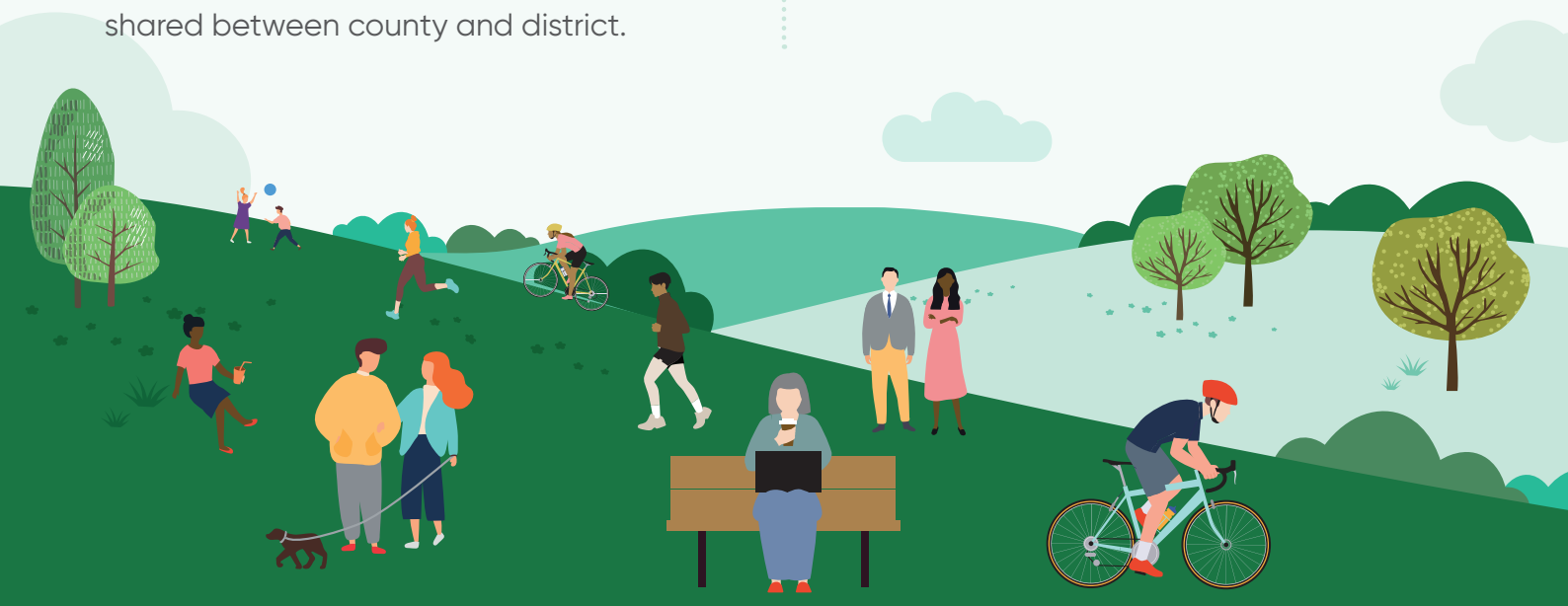
There are changes coming to Surrey through devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. Before we explain these, let's look at how Surrey is currently structured.

Surrey has a two-tier system of local government: the county council and 11 district and borough councils. The county council is responsible for services such as adult social care and children's services across the county, whereas the districts and boroughs provide services in their area. Some functions are shared between county and district.

## What is devolution?

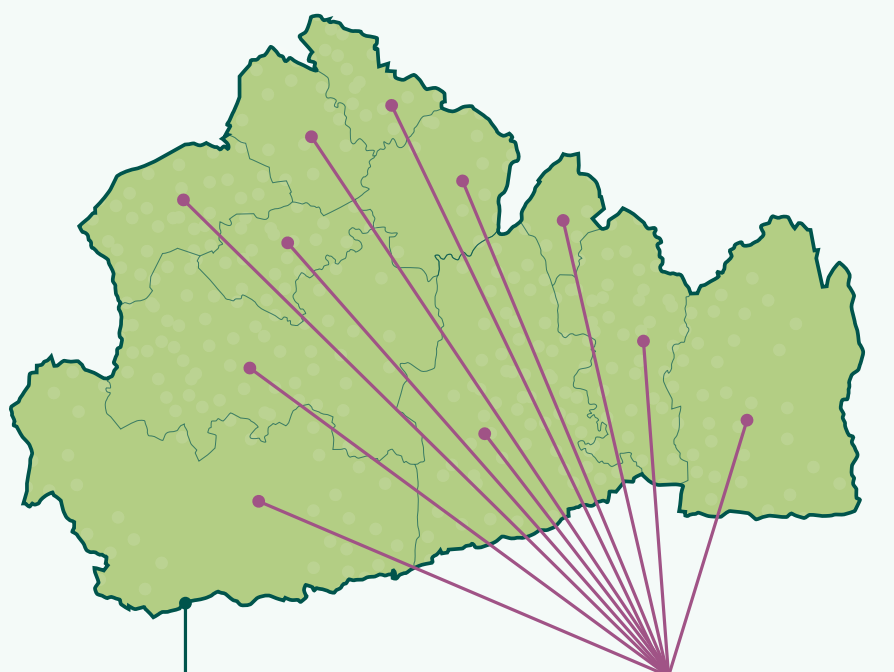
In December 2024, government published a Paper to set out its approach on devolution – transferring more powers from government to local or regional authorities.

The Paper proposed the creation of more Strategic Authorities in areas that don't currently have them – like Surrey. These authorities would be run by an elected Mayor. This approach means that additional power is given to the local communities who know their areas best, giving them more control over decision making and implementation of services.



## Who does what?

The below diagram breaks out which services the county council and 11 district and borough councils currently deliver.



### County Council

-  Social care
-  Libraries
-  Highways
-  Education support
-  Fire
-  Registration
-  Recreation
-  Strategic planning
-  Trading Standards
-  Transport
-  Waste disposal

### District and Boroughs

-  Benefits
-  Car parks
-  Council tax collection
-  Environmental health
-  Housing
-  Leisure and recreation
-  Facilities
-  Planning and building control
-  Public conveniences
-  Street Cleaning
-  Waste collection



### Parish and town council responsibilities

Surrey also has a number of parish and town councils. They have differing responsibilities and you can find the full list of parish and town councils in Surrey here: [surrey.gov.uk/parishandtowntown](https://surrey.gov.uk/parishandtowntown)

Central government isn't changing the role of town and parish councils as part of Local Government Reorganisation. New local government structures will enable community engagement and provide opportunities for existing town and parish councils to join those structures.

## What is Local Government Reorganisation?

To unlock the devolution of further local powers and elect a Mayor, some areas need to reorganise first. This means creating unitary councils to simplify and streamline local government. This includes us in Surrey.

Unitary councils are responsible for the services currently delivered by the county council and district and borough councils. In Surrey, there are twelve councils in total, so this would mean dissolving all of the existing councils and combining services in to two or three unitary councils. Having fewer councils creates efficiency, clarifies service delivery and saves money.

A Strategic Authority needs to work with multiple unitary authorities, so we can't just combine all the current councils in Surrey into one.

The government confirmed that Surrey would be part of the first wave of devolution, along with other areas like Sussex, Essex and Hampshire. This was so we could get the benefits of devolution quicker for Surrey residents and businesses. However, we need to reorganise first as we don't currently have unitary councils. Government asked Surrey for proposals on how it could reorganise by May 2025.

## Proposals put forward to government

Surrey County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council and Mole Valley District Council submitted a final plan to government for devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey.

This sets out a proposal to split Surrey into two councils, East and West, replacing the current 12 councils. These two councils would also work with an elected Mayor who would create a new Strategic Authority covering the county of Surrey.

We've analysed a wide range of data on how the two councils would operate and our approach is supported by many of Surrey's key public sector organisations including health, police, fire, business and community leaders. Existing county council services across Surrey are proven by independent inspectors to be strong, with successful outcomes for residents, and Surrey County Council and many of the district and borough councils have stable finances. This puts us in a good position to see Surrey through reorganisation smoothly.

Government is also considering a different proposal from some other district and borough councils, to reorganise Surrey into three unitary councils. You can read both proposals here: [surreycc.gov.uk/lgrplans](https://surreycc.gov.uk/lgrplans)



# A STRONGER FUTURE FOR SURREY

## Why two councils is best

There's a number of reasons why we think this arrangement is best for Surrey residents and businesses:

### SAVES



It saves money and offers better value for tax payers. Stable finances will protect vital services.

### SIMPLIFIES



It simplifies services, delivering everything residents need, with fewer points of contact and reduced confusion about which council does what.

### STRENGTHENS



It will strengthen our local communities by connecting people through Neighbourhood Area Committees in towns and villages.



### Strategic Authority

This will have an elected Mayor for the whole of Surrey, with some key services: Economic development, Housing, Health improvement and inequalities, Public safety including Fire and Rescue, Skills and Employment, Strategic planning and Transport.



### Unitary Councils

All remaining county council and district and borough services.



# A STRONGER FUTURE FOR SURREY

## Next steps

Now government has received plans for reorganisation in Surrey, they will decide on which option to take forward by the autumn. We will then be working together with all councils in Surrey to make this happen, gearing up for elections to the new unitary councils in May 2026.



## Government consultation

Central government is holding a consultation about the proposed changes in June which runs until 5 August 2025. This will help them to understand what residents, businesses and other stakeholders think about the changes in Surrey. They will use the results from the consultation to help them make a final decision on which option is best for Surrey.

**Take part in the consultation at: [surrey.gov.uk/lgr](https://surrey.gov.uk/lgr)**

You can also complete a paper copy of the consultation at any of our libraries, or request a copy by calling 03456 009 009 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays).







# EMPOWERING SURREY'S COMMUNITIES

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation presents an opportunity to strengthen communities and the impact of the council and other partners in local neighbourhoods.

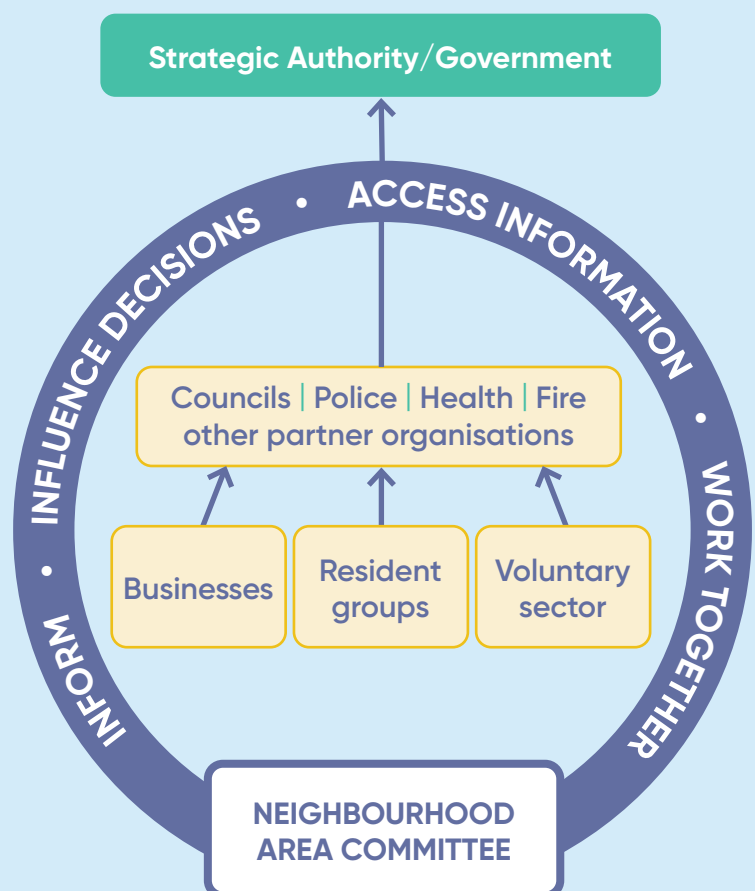
We are establishing Neighbourhood Area Committees to bring people together and create real opportunities for local collaboration and decision making in towns and villages across Surrey.

We will be initially piloting these in four areas across Surrey. Once fully up and running, these committees will 'Make It Happen', giving communities a chance to have their say, inform and influence decision-makers, access information, and work together to truly help their local area thrive. We're already working closely with communities on important projects via Your Fund Surrey.

We want you to be part of this journey – let's Make It Happen together! By understanding the specific needs of local areas, we can focus on the issues that matter most and make a lasting difference.

We'll be sharing more about how you can get involved, to make sure this new form of real local engagement is meaningful and effective. Make sure to follow us on social media and sign up to the Surrey Matters newsletter to find out more. You can also ask staff in any of our 52 libraries, or our contact centre for the latest information.

## How Neighbourhood Area Committees will work



To find out the latest on Neighbourhood Area Committees, visit: [surrey.gov.uk/communities](https://surrey.gov.uk/communities)



## How will services change?

We will continue to deliver our services as normal during this period of change. Local Government Reorganisation has taken place in several areas in the last decade, including Dorset, Cumbria, Northamptonshire and Wiltshire. We are talking to colleagues in other parts of the country to learn from their experiences and ensure a smooth transition.

## Working for councils in Surrey

Staff at councils in Surrey are being kept updated on plans and what this means for them, and most will move over to the new unitary councils in April 2027.

This is an exciting time to work in local government. If you're interested in working for Surrey County Council but not sure how Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation would impact your employment, check out our information for applicants at [surreycc.gov.uk/lgrjobs](https://surreycc.gov.uk/lgrjobs)

## Why were the elections cancelled?

The timescales from government mean there will be elections to the new unitary councils in May 2026, which replace Surrey County Councils May 2025 elections. This was to allow the detailed work of reorganisation and devolution to take place.

The resources, time and public money that would have been spent on elections for a soon-to-be-abolished council is being directed to working on the best possible outcome for Surrey's reorganisation.



We have a number of ways you can keep up to date on the changes in Surrey and ask questions:

- Our **Surrey Matters** newsletter
- Our **social media** accounts
- where we interact with residents
- and share the latest updates
- Our **website** has all the latest on the changes and all our services
- Speak to staff at your local **library** or our contact centre
- Through your local **district and borough council** communications channels
- Ask a question by **email** [devolutionandlgr@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:devolutionandlgr@surreycc.gov.uk)

**[surreycc.gov.uk/followus](https://surreycc.gov.uk/followus)**

If you would like this information in an alternative format or language, please contact us on:

**Telephone:** 03456 009 009

(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays)

**Text (SMS):** 07860 053465

**Textphone (via Relay UK):**

18001 03456 009 009

**British Sign Language:**

[www.surreycc.gov.uk/bsl](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/bsl)

**Email:** [contact.centre@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:contact.centre@surreycc.gov.uk)