



Dear Resident

New Consultation for Residents and Town and Parish Councils

Thank you to all who attended our recent briefing. We promised you a further update, and to share our own consultation platform as soon as we could.

We've included a short briefing note for your reference, but to highlight:

- We are preparing a District response to the national consultation on "Local Government Reform and Devolution", where we intend to highlight some of concerns about the process and rationale
- We are running our own more detailed consultation on "Local Government Reorganisation" and "Devolution" (**see below**) to help inform our position
- We have been working with other District Councils in Norfolk and Suffolk on potential responses and solutions – IF there is a forced "reorganisation" locally. The initial findings of that work are due to be debated by Breckland Members on 20th March at a special council meeting
- Whilst our preference remains the status quo we have highlighted the significant relative strengths of a "three" unitary solution in Norfolk, particularly relative to the weaknesses of a large single unitary council. This evidence will be published with our Council papers shortly, and will be debated by Members.

We think **your voice in this context is incredibly important**. Please complete the survey at

<https://www.future-east.co.uk/> and encourage Councillors and residents alike to share and complete it.

As previously, we would be happy to answer any questions or take any additional feedback.

Thank you

Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen (Leader of the Council)

Cllr Bill Borrett (Portfolio holder, Local Government Reorganisation & Devolution)

PARISH BRIEFING NOTE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM & DEVOLUTION

March 2025 Update

Background

- The Government published its '[English Devolution White Paper](#)' in Dec. 2024, which promoted the establishment of new regional areas of 1.5m+ population under new Mayors and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) (i.e. the merger of Councils, particularly in two-tier areas, to create new Unitary Authorities). The Government have stated they want to see universal coverage of both LGR and "Devolution" across the country as quickly as possible.
- Whilst some of these concepts have been around for decades, the rapid launch of an LGR policy is not something Local Government had been preparing for, with the first hint only coming in the Oct 24 Budget which promised a move to simpler structures.

- Under the proposals, all the Norfolk and Suffolk District and County Councils will be abolished and merged into new Unitary Authorities, which serve (probably) about 300,000 to 500,000 residents, working within the wider new regional area under a new Strategic Authority lead by a new Mayor.
- The responsibilities of the District and County Councils will be moved to:

Unitary Authority	Strategic Authority (Mayor)
- Education - Local planning - Social care - Libraries - Waste - Trading standards, - Council Tax collections - Housing	- Strategic Planning - Long-term investment funding - Transport, including LTP (potentially including taxi licencing) - Skills convening - Environmental convening - Public Safety (including the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Fire Authority)

- The Government has provided limited commentary about what would happen to parishes in this context but has inferred they remain unaffected.

Response in Breckland

- The clear approach to date has been to support the benefit of actual devolution (if done properly), but to challenge the principle and rationale of Local Government Re-organisation. Particularly to defend the record and effectiveness of Breckland and the Two-Tier model in places like Norfolk.
- Accepting that this is now Government policy there is a recognition that work needs to be done to engage, but this is being done on the basis there is no other choice. Unlike previous proposals for LGR, the Government is imposing this from Westminster.
- Working with partners Councils, Breckland has commissioned Deloitte to help develop an evidence base and options appraisal to inform the position locally. This will be dated at Council on 20th March and indicates the strong benefit of a three-unitary solution for Norfolk (and inherent weakness in a single unitary solution).

Status in Breckland and Norfolk (and Suffolk)

- Unlike previous iterations (from the last Conservative Government), the current Labour Government is not seeking to make the policies optional, deal based or provide any authorities with a choice. The vision is one of a rolling programme of change to cover the entire country in as short a time as possible.

Potential Timetable

- The LGR and "Devolution" Timetable is subject to considerable potential change. Whilst the Government has stated indicative milestones, much of this requires further legislation and significant activity to enable. However the current understanding is for Norfolk / Breckland (for both [devolution](#) and [LGR](#)):

March 21st 2025	All 2-Tier authorities submit "interim plans"
Sept 26th 2025	Final LGR proposals submitted to Government for Norfolk
Early 2026	Government plans to make decisions on LGR proposals
May 2026	Potential Norfolk/Suffolk Mayoral Election and County Council elections
Summer 2026	Government plans to lay LGR legislation
May 2027	Shadow Unitary Elections
April 2028	New Unitary Go Live

- At some point restrictions will be applied to all predecessor authorities, i.e. the District and County Councils, preventing them from taking new decisions
- From May 2027 to April 2028 there will be a transition year, whilst both the new and old Councils co-exist with Members and officers supporting transition