

Local Government Reorganisation – Where We Stand

Message from Charmian Keatley Chief Executive Kent Association of Local Councils.

We were informed on 5th February that Kent had not been accepted on the Devolution Priority Programme. In his letter to Kent Leaders, Minister Jim McMahon, told them: “I had to make a judgement of the best-placed areas to take forward on the Programme according to our strict criteria, and, in the round, concluded your proposals could not be taken forward due to **concerns about the size of the population disparity between the two proposed constituent members of your proposed Kent and Medway Combined County Authority** and the consequential impact on its governance.

Although Kent was not accepted onto the Devolution Priority Programme, central government has now requested that an interim plan for local government reorganisation be submitted by the 21st March 2025, with final proposals expected by the 28th November 2025.

It is important to note that this submission is not about devolution – it is about local government reorganisation. Therefore, while Kent may be reorganising, it is not receiving devolved powers nor the finances that accompany them.

What This Means for Town and Parish Councils

KALC is actively working to ensure that town and parish councils are prioritised in the reorganisation process. **We have been meeting with the Chief Executives of each District and Borough Council to:**

- ✓ Share good practices and lessons learnt from areas that have already undergone reorganisation.
- ✓ **Ensure town and parish councils are included in future plans.**
- ✓ Advocate for the parishing of unparished areas to protect local assets and ensure democratic representation.
- ✓ **Communicate the possibility of transfer of assets to existing town and parish councils to maintain local assets.**

While the full impact of reorganisation is yet to be determined, it is clear that parish and town councils should start mapping their local assets and services and consider what their communities may want them to take on.

Preparing now will help councils make informed decisions should opportunities arise in the future.