

# Community Governance Review

Matthew Archer, Head of Corporate Governance

Richard Beesley, AEA Consultant

First stage consultation, 2026

# Agenda

- Housekeeping
- Introductions
- About local government
- Community Governance Reviews
- Timetable
- Stage 1 consultation
- Questions

# Housekeeping

- Fire alarms
- Toilets
- Questions

# Introductions



- Matthew Archer, Head of Corporate Governance
- Richard Beesley, AEA Consultant
- Viktor and Keegan, Consultation team

# About local government



- Levels (or tiers) of local government
  - Kent County Council
  - Canterbury City Council
  - Parish councils, which can be called...
    - *Parish*
    - *Town*
    - *Community*
    - *Village*
    - ...

# Kent County Council



- Education
- Social Services
- Health and social care
- Transport
- Roads and pavements
- Libraries
- Children and youth services



# Canterbury City Council



**Waste collection/street cleaning**



**Leisure facilities**



**Council housing**



**Planning and licensing**



**Parking services**



**Whitstable Harbour**

# What is local government reorganisation?



- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is the creation of unitary authorities
- It takes larger counties and smaller boroughs and districts and combines them to create unitary authorities
- Unlike previously, government also recognises some current unitaries are too small to succeed
- Government has set minimum levels for new unitaries of 500,000 people (Medway is about 280,000)
- There is no upper limit, but there is broad local agreement that one or two authorities would be too large and maintaining Medway as-is would be too small

# Current local government setup in Kent

There are 14 local authorities in Kent: 12 districts, Kent County Council and one existing unitary (Medway).



## Key context relevant to this appraisal:

- The 14 local authorities are collaboratively completing this options appraisal to support decision making on which LGR options proceed to the business case stage.
- New unitary authorities are expected to be in place from April 2028, with elections to shadow authorities in May 2027.
- Kent councils applied to become part of the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) but were not successful and will therefore not have mayoral elections in May 2026. The assumption is that devolution could be achieved one year behind the DPP areas, with potential mayoral elections in May 2027.

Metric	Medway (unitary)	District councils												Kent County Council	Kent total
		Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Folkestone and Hythe	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells		
Population (mid-2024)	292,655	140,936	162,100	125,011	119,768	112,411	110,671	187,767	122,748	158,379	142,691	136,853	119,694	1,639,029	1,931,684
Geographic area (sq km) (2024)	194	581	309	73	315	357	99	393	370	373	104	240	331	3,545	3,739
Population density (people per sqkm) (2024)	1,509	243	525	1,712	380	315	1,118	478	332	425	1,372	570	362	462	517
Net revenue expenditure (£m)	3.6	24.4	21.0	26.3	14.8	18.2	17.8	28.2	18.7	29.4	35.1	21.7	16.7	1,635	1,913
Councillors (including County allocation)	69	54	47	46	39	36	44	58	60	54	63	51	45	(81)	658

# The five business cases

## Separate structure and content using shared evidence base

### Single unitary (1A)



<b>Kent</b>	Single unitary with three area assemblies
1,931,684	

## Shared structure and significant shared content across all four business cases

### Three unitaries (3A)



A three unitary option with a north, east and west unitary.

N	W	E
686,716	567,062	677,906

### Four unitaries (4B)



A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east.

N	W	E	M
528,337	567,062	424,559	411,726

### Four unitaries (4D)\*



Key:  
 White line – District Boundary  
 Dotted line – Boundary Change

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east, including boundary changes.

N	W	E	M
615,931	374,269	523,642	417,842

### Five unitaries (5A)\*

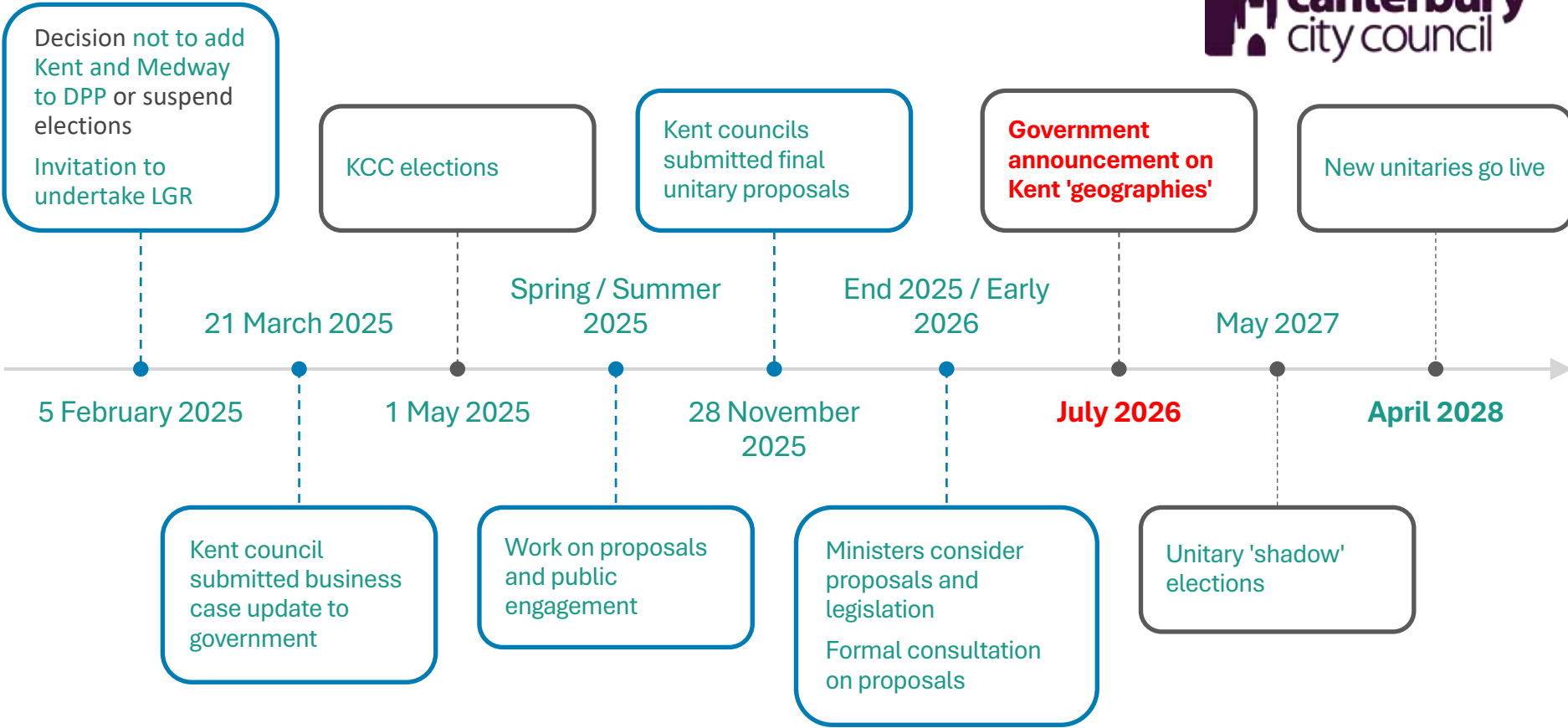


Key:  
 White line – District Boundary  
 Dotted line – Boundary Change

A five unitary option, including boundary changes.

N	W	E	M	S
330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115

\*Option 4D and 5A propose boundary changes



# Councillor numbers draft figures

Option	Approach	Councillor numbers and ratios						
1A	Review of comparative councils and existing Kent County Council divisions to identify a workable ratio.	<b>Kent</b>						
		<b>Electorate*</b>	1,383,050					
		<b>Proposed number of councillors</b>	<b>118</b>					
		<b>Electorate to councillor ratio</b>	1: 11,721					
3A	Kent County Council divisions used as the primary basis, assuming 3 councillors per division.		<b>North</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>Total</b>		
		<b>Electorate*</b>	481,335	411,635	490,080	1,383,050		
		<b>Proposed number of councillors</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>269</b>		
		<b>Electorate to councillor ratio</b>	1: 5,348	1: 4,900	1: 5,159	1: 5,141		
4B	Uses Kent County Council divisions and Medway wards. Splitting current 2-member divisions, 3 councillors per division, 2 members per ward.		<b>North</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>Mid</b>	<b>Total</b>	
		<b>Electorate*</b>	369,875	411,635	304,480	297,060	1,383,050	
		<b>Proposed number of councillors</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>291</b>	
		<b>Electorate to councillor ratio</b>	1: 4,566	1: 4,900	1: 4,613	1: 4,951	1: 4,753	
4D	Adapted based on deprivation and urban/rural mix from starting point of 12 members of executive and 40 members across up to 4 Scrutiny Committees.		<b>North</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>Mid</b>	<b>Total</b>	
		<b>Electorate*</b>	439,755	276,498	371,879	294,917	1,383,050	
		<b>Proposed number of councillors</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>312</b>	
		<b>Electorate to councillor ratio</b>	1: 4,832	1: 4,254	1: 4,375	1: 4,154	1: 4,433	
5A	Based on wards as the basis of the boundary changes.		<b>North</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>Mid</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<b>Electorate*</b>	231,502	403,188	234,885	239,055	274,420	1,383,050
		<b>Proposed number of councillors</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>343</b>
		<b>Electorate to councillor ratio</b>	1: 3,924	1: 4,335	1: 3,851	1: 3,919	1: 3,977	1: 4,001

\* Consistent electorate numbers used to inform ratios. These may differ slightly from work done in individual councils.

# Town and parish councils



- First tier of local government - not a return to the old urban district council
- Small number of statutory services: allotments
- Wide ranging discretionary powers: to complement/enhance existing provision

# Town and parish councils



# Town and Parish Councils



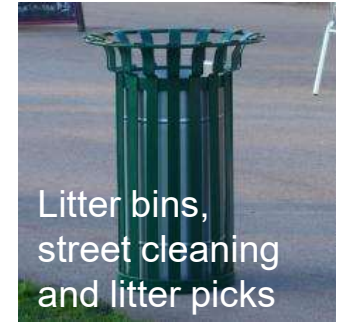
Street lighting



Public toilets



Theatre (Sevenoaks)



Litter bins, street cleaning and litter picks



Community centre and room hire



Events and exhibitions



Sports pitches, courts and venues

*Examples from other parish and town councils*

# Town/parish councils' influencing role...



- Town and parish councils can work with the city and county councils and others to:
  - provide a focus for representing local issues and the area's identity
  - champion residents and local businesses, and represent the town or city's interests
  - act as a statutory consultee, give its collective view on planning and licensing applications
  - make external funding bids
  - promote cultural events
- Not a replacement for other levels of government. It works alongside others to use its money to improve the area.

# What does it cost?

- Town and parish councils set their own precept.
- Summary based on the 12 town councils in east Kent (located in the Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Swale, and Thanet districts):
  - 2026/27 Council Tax Band D precept
    - Highest is £149.90 per year
    - Lowest is £64.46
    - Average is £113.85
- Entitlement to council tax reductions also apply to parish precepts.

# Existing parish arrangements



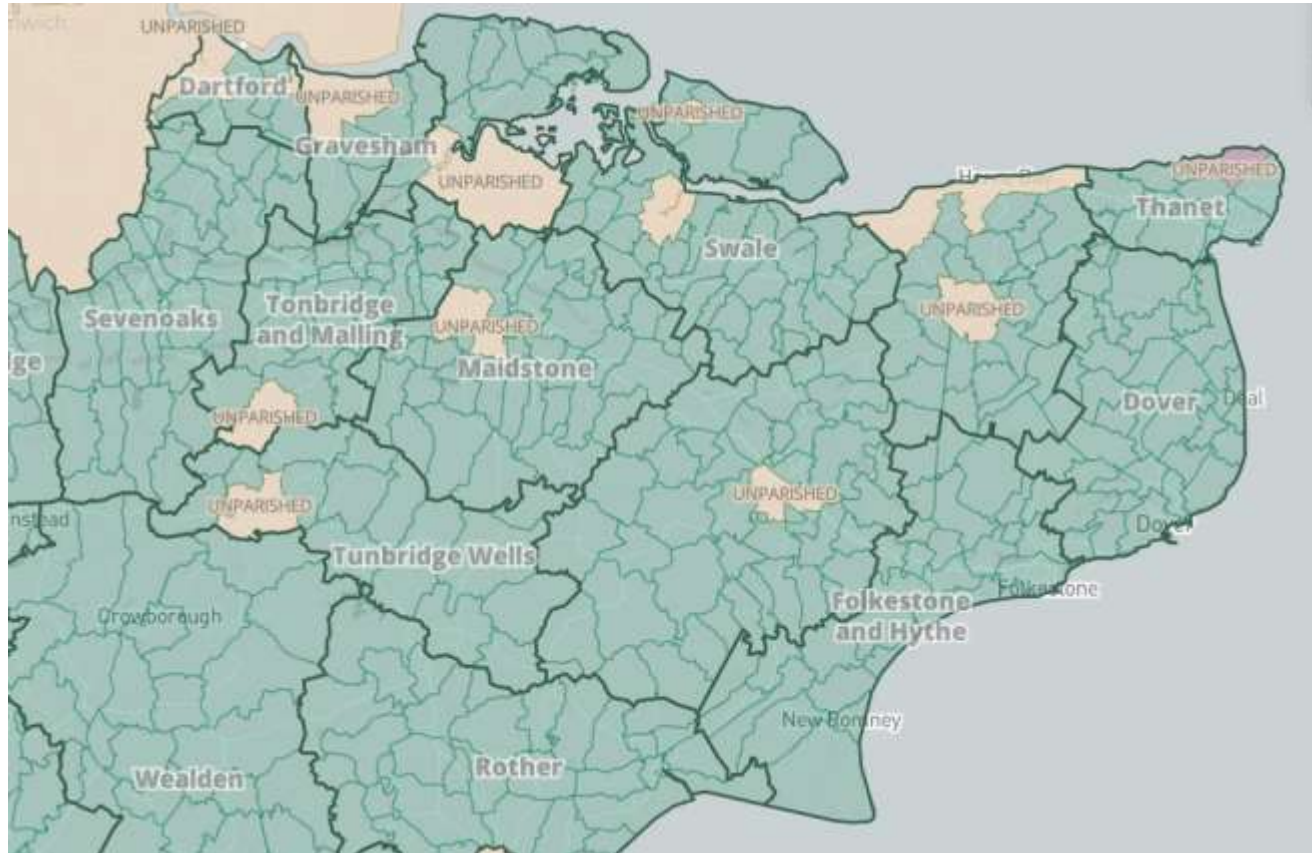
27 parish councils

Parish councils paid for  
by additional precept

Urban areas unparished

Services delivered  
directly by the city  
council in urban areas -  
no additional precept

# Parished/unparished areas in Kent



CGRs in progress:

- Margate
- Ashford
- Maidstone
- Swale

New town councils:

- Tonbridge
- Tunbridge Wells

# Context: what is changing?



- Local Government Reorganisation

- Kent County Council and Canterbury City Council being abolished
- New unitary authority being formed
  - will take on duties of KCC and CCC
  - size not yet confirmed (Kent may be divided into one, three, four or five unitary authorities)
- Parish councils unchanged
  - but possible impact on representation in unparished areas?

# What is a CGR?

- A Community Governance Review (CGR) considers "community" level governance – parish and town councils and their equivalents
- Legislation and statutory criteria must be adhered to.
- Statutory criteria:

The Council must, by law, have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:

  - (1) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
  - (2) is effective and convenient.
- Views of local people are important

# Why now?

- Local Government Reorganisation
  - removal of Canterbury City Council and Kent County Council
  - new unitary authority being formed (size not yet confirmed)
  - potential loss of local representation in unparished areas
  
- Ensure the retention and improvement of:
  - community engagement and cohesion
  - local democracy
  - delivery of effective local services

# Roles and responsibilities



- Full Council – decision-making body
- General Purposes – makes recommendations to council
- Cross-party Councillor Working Group
- Officers
- Consultees (including existing parish/town councils, residents' associations, community groups, individuals, elected representatives...)

# CGR requirements

- District/city councils are responsible for undertaking a CGR
- A review can cover any part of the district:
  - creating, merging, altering, or abolishing parishes
  - naming and style of new parishes
  - electoral arrangements
  - grouping parishes

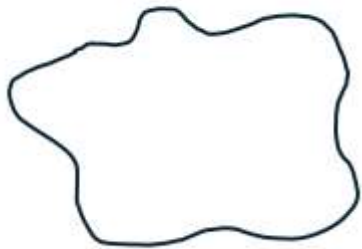
# CGR assessment

- The council is required to ensure community governance within the area under review will be:
  - reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area
  - is effective and convenient
  
- In doing so, the review is required to take account of:
  - the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion
  - the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

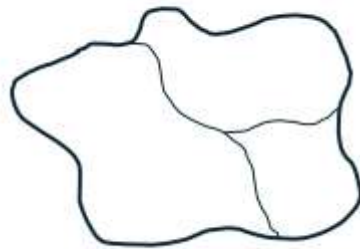
# Town / parish wards

Some town/parish councils are divided into wards to reflect local communities.

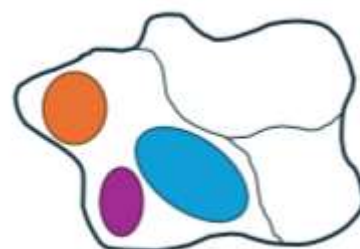
No town/parish ward can straddle a unitary authority ward but can be much smaller to represent local people.



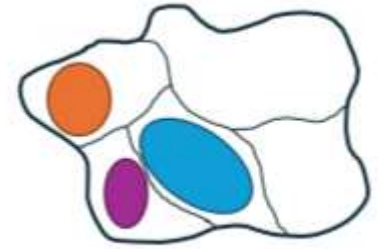
1. Town boundary.



2. Unitary wards / County divisions.



3. Tell us about local communities.



4. Future Town wards reflect local interests.

# Scope

- (1) Consider whether the unparished communities should have a town/parish council
- (2) Review existing parishes (including their external boundaries) to ensure they remain appropriate

# Overall timetable

Council approves CGR	April 2026
Stage 1 consultation	7 May 2026 to 5 July
Consider stage 1 submissions	Summer 2026
Full Council to approve Draft Recommendations	September 2026
Stage 2 consultation on Draft Recommendations	September to December 2026
Consider stage 2 submissions	Winter 2026
<b>Full Council makes final decision</b>	<b>March 2027</b>
Implementation of any changes	For May 2028 elections

# Consultations



- They are **not** referendums
- Anyone with an interest can respond
- Responses are used to shape council policy
- Full Council is the decision-making body

# Consultation – stage 1

- Now!
- Broad
- General
- Asking about your local area and community
- Are any changes needed

## Consultation – stage 2

- Later in the year
- Will be based on Draft Recommendations
- Specific and targeted
- Direct communication with affected households

# How to respond

**[bit.ly/cgr2026](https://bit.ly/cgr2026)**

This consultation closes on **Sunday 5 July 2026**

