



ADUR DISTRICT
COUNCIL

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The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

15 June 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Consultation on modified proposal for local government reorganisation in Sussex

Adur District Council members discussed at a full council meeting the proposed modification to local government reorganisation and the potential creation of a unitary authority combining district and county council services on the footprint of Adur, Worthing and Arun councils.

Members agreed that comments from the political group leaders should accompany my submission as Leader of the Council. I have therefore incorporated these comments for your consideration within this response.

West Sussex council leaders worked together over a considerable period to consider options for new unitary authority arrangements. Following analysis on areas set out in government criteria, and the information available to us, financially viable options were identified to include a unitary covering the current Chichester, Arun, Worthing and Adur area. This would create two financially balanced unitary authorities in West Sussex.

The modification - opportunities and challenges

The modification, with an Adur, Worthing Arun footprint, offers an attractive proposition if it means a well-resourced council able to take advantage of opportunities and to meet the challenge of this coastal area.

The modification would respect the strong view given in local public engagement that a unitary authority should be of a size to enable effective community engagement and empowerment, and allow a close relationship between the council and local civic and community organisations, residents and businesses.

Work is already underway on an economic strategy. This shows the potential for this area. The modified proposal would unify a highly productive, polycentric coastal corridor into a substantial £9.3 billion GVA economy. The area boasts a diverse economic base with powerful clusters in advanced manufacturing, precision engineering and life sciences, anchored by clean energy and marine innovation. Creative industries are also strong. The area includes more than 141,000 jobs and 11,000 businesses. A forward-facing coastal economy model could seamlessly integrate walkable town centres and high-value industry with pioneering "blue-green" growth initiatives, building on the innovation and sustainable growth at Shoreham Port, the Rampion wind farm expansion, and the national exemplars of the Worthing Heat Network and Sussex Bay marine nature recovery project. By transitioning from fragmented districts into a connected network of towns and growth clusters, the new authority would have a unique opportunity to position the area as a leading sustainable coastal economy.

There is a real economic geography here. We also share common challenges: housing affordability, an ageing population, transport, significant coastal deprivation, a skills gap, town centre renewal, climate adaptation and the pressures of climate change on a coastal environment and pressure on public services due to homelessness issues and social care need in particular. There would be benefits in having a unitary authority with a focus on meeting those challenges, reshaping and developing new tailored ways to support and work with our communities. It is an opportunity to develop more responsive and efficient services.

The modification would give coastal West Sussex a stronger voice and a clear focus on local needs and opportunities. This is essential if the area is to fully benefit from the devolved powers and growth strategies of the Brighton and Sussex Strategic Authority.

The financial challenge and mitigations

None of the opportunities or challenges can be met without resource. If the modification is favoured by government, it is imperative that sufficient funding, transitional arrangements and long term financial support are available to enable the new coastal authority to succeed.

Based on updated local financial modelling, the proposal to remove Chichester from the coastal footprint creates an immediate and significant financial imbalance between the two authorities.

Given the scale of the imbalance, and the potential for disagreement between successor authorities, I would request clarification on the formal mechanisms the government will implement to ensure the long term financial sustainability of the new coastal authority. This may include- legally binding arrangements regarding distribution of funds in West Sussex, transitional equalisation mechanisms or ministerial directions between successor authorities. Alternatively direct Government transitional and long term financial support would be required.

Minority group comments

Comments expressed by opposition groups on Adur District Council are as follows:

The Green Party: "Our view on the proposed LGR boundaries is that the only viable option is to include Chichester in the southern unitary authority alongside Arun, Worthing and Adur. This is the only option that has been judged financially viable, and indeed was agreed upon by all the district and borough councils within West Sussex as the best way forward."

The Shoreham Beach Residents' Association Independents leader: "As I stated at Full Council, it is impossible to have meaningful debate or consultation as the Government's latest proposals are not fully costed. Viability is not set out.

The second, of the four Gunning Principles for effective consultation, states as follows, in bold: Sufficient information must be provided – Public bodies must clearly explain the proposals, their rationale, and potential impacts so consultees can respond meaningfully

As a result, the consultation is fundamentally flawed as respondents cannot give informed responses to the questions below. It is impossible to answer any of these questions as the financial data is not available. Responses will be at best based on estimates, and at worst on pure speculation."

Conclusion

A unitary authority covering Chichester, Arun, Worthing and Adur would be financially viable and meet public support for two unitary authorities in West Sussex

The modified proposal represents an opportunity to create a unitary to work closely with and for our communities, focussing on the needs and opportunities for our coastal communities.

It is an opportunity to create a unitary authority to bring services together, to transform services to support our communities and their specific needs, further build the local economy, to challenge inequalities and to tackle deprivation.

The modified proposal would give coastal West Sussex a stronger voice to take advantage of investment opportunities opened up by growth strategies of the Brighton and Sussex Strategic Authority

In order to do this the new authority would have to be supported by funding including a fairer funding settlement that recognises the particular opportunities and challenges facing our coastal communities. This must be backed by further arrangements, recognising that the modification would create a northern West Sussex unitary in financial surplus and a coastal authority in deficit. Without such arrangements there is a danger that the creation of the modification (Adur, Worthing, Arun) unitary and a rural (Chichester, Horsham, Crawley, Mid-Sussex) unitary would bake-in inequality to West Sussex; a richer rural authority and a poorer coastal unitary authority. This would not benefit our coastal communities. Clarity and direction to ensure financial arrangements to support the coastal unitary is vital.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeremy Gardner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J' and 'G'.

Jeremy Gardner

Leader of Adur District Council