

SPECIAL EDITION | #LOCALVOICESMATTER

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MAGAZINE

Lewes district 'at real risk of becoming part of Brighton & Hove'

Emergency local meeting

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Lewes District Council

#LocalVoicesMatter

Welcome to this *May 2026* special edition on LGR, brought to you by Lewes District Council

The printed edition we deliver to all homes in Lewes district will return soon, but due to the seriousness of the issues I must highlight, we have sent out this digital issue as an immediate way of contacting as many residents as possible.

This issue focuses on the government's local government reorganisation and how Lewes district residents could become residents of Brighton & Hove.

This would mark a fundamental shift in who makes decisions about their homes, their services and their way of life, and

it could happen despite overwhelming evidence that residents oppose it.

There is now an opportunity for everyone to respond to the latest government consultation, and I hope as many people as possible will make their voices heard.

I know and completely understand that many residents won't know much about this reorganisation and what it all means. That's why, in these pages, we have explained the process, why it is happening and how everyone can have their say – including at a public meeting.



Councillor Zoe Nicholson
Leader of Lewes District Council

'The next four weeks will define the next 100 years of Lewes district'

Telscombe is one of the areas that would be annexed by Brighton & Hove City Council under this proposal

The Leader of Lewes District Council has issued a renewed call for residents to take part in the government's latest consultation on local government reorganisation, warning that the future of several coastal towns, and Lewes district more broadly, is 'at a real risk of becoming part of Brighton & Hove'.

The government is consulting for a second time on a modified proposal, the fifth consultation of its kind, that would see Falmer, East Saltdean, Telscombe and Peacehaven

removed from Lewes district and placed under the control of the city council.

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council, said: "Residents in Lewes district have been absolutely clear in every consultation that they do not want to become residents of Brighton & Hove, yet the government is asking the question again.

"Added to this, we are still to see the results of the government's first consultation with residents from many months ago.



"We entered this process of local government reorganisation in good faith and worked hard with our local authority partners in East Sussex to meet all the requirements demanded of us. However, having done all that it feels like the rules have suddenly changed.

"I urge people to make their voices heard in this latest government consultation. The next four weeks will define the next 100 years of Lewes district."

Councillor Christine Robinson, Deputy Leader of Lewes District Council

“Where we call home is at a real risk of becoming part of Brighton & Hove, but as I have said all along, we will challenge any decision that redraws the current boundaries of Lewes district and every option remains on the table to do so.”

With Brighton & Hove facing major infrastructure pressures, including a government requirement to build nearly 40,000 new homes by 2040, there is widespread concern that Lewes district could be targeted for large-scale development to satisfy the city’s housing needs.

Councillor Nicholson said: “Everyone knows Brighton & Hove is struggling to meet its

housing targets, and I’ve no doubt they see Falmer, East Saltdean, Telscombe and Peacehaven as helping to solve that failure.

“Our residents would lose their local identity, their local voice and their agency to influence their future if this proposal goes ahead. Services would inevitably be reshaped around the needs of a city, not small towns and villages.

“It would mark a fundamental shift in who makes decisions about their homes, their services and their way of life, and it could be pushed through despite overwhelming evidence that residents oppose it.”

Visit lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LGR



“Peacehaven Town Council is absolutely committed to remaining part of Lewes district and within East Sussex. This position mirrors the views of our residents - during our public consultation there was no appetite at all to become part of Brighton & Hove.

“Our connection to Lewes district is rooted in history and it’s an integral part of local identity. Merging with Brighton will dilute that unique identity and undoubtedly will see local priorities overshadowed by the complex demands of a major urban city.”

**Councillor Debbie Donovan,
Peacehaven Town Council**

How did we get here?

In December 2024 the government announced it would abolish two-tier local government in East and West Sussex and establish single-tier unitary councils instead.

This means having one council that delivers all services, rather than having services split between district and borough councils and the county council, as happens currently.

LGR Timeline

December 2024

Government sets out plans to replace two-tier councils (county and district/borough) with unitary councils and to expand devolution.

June – July 2025

A countywide consultation on LGR is run jointly by East Sussex councils, inviting residents to give views on options for future council structures.

July – August 2025

To give affected communities a voice, Lewes District Council (LDC) and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) jointly run a local consultation for Lewes district residents on B&HCC's proposed eastward expansion into communities including Newhaven, Peacehaven, Telscombe, East Saltdean, Kingston and Falmer.

Early 2025

Councils across East Sussex begin work on local government reorganisation options and early engagement with residents.

Late July 2025

Brighton & Hove City Council launches a consultation for its own residents on its preferred five-unitary authority model, including proposals to expand the city's boundaries into parts of Lewes district.

Summer 2025

LDC launches an online petition opposing B&HCC's proposed expansion into Lewes district, alongside its local consultation activity.

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December 2025 – January 2026

Government runs its own consultation on LGR in East Sussex. The results of this consultation have not been published.

May – June 2026

Government runs a further consultation on the proposed boundary change.

July 2026

Government is expected to make its final decision on the future of East Sussex.

May 2028 (earliest)

New local government structures come into effect including 'vesting day' for new unitary authorities, replacing the current county and borough / district councils.

September 2025

Councils submit proposals for LGR to government. LDC's submission is in support of One East Sussex, a proposal for a single unitary council covering the whole county.

25 March 2026

Government announces it will delay a decision on reorganisation and will consult again on a variation proposal to move parts of Lewes district - Peacehaven, Telscombe, East Saltdean and Falmer parish - under B&HCC control.

May 2027 (earliest)

Elections to any new councils take place, if proposals are approved.

If you would like to write to the government yourself, we have created a letter you can [download here](#)

Why keep Lewes district and East Sussex together?

In our submission to government, we said the new unitary authority should cover the entire existing East Sussex footprint. This provides:

1. Better value for money

Keeping all of Lewes district within East Sussex maximises economies of scale, reducing duplication and securing better value from shared services and contracts. Breaking up services will inevitably create more costs and complexity.

2. More funding for frontline services

When there is a crisis in public funding, a single authority frees up more resources by cutting overheads, ensuring more money is spent directly on services residents rely on.

3. Stronger local identity

Communities have a strong sense of local identity that is deeply rooted in our towns and villages, and that identity would fracture if residents are were absorbed into Brighton & Hove.

4. Clear support from residents

Proposals to move parts of Lewes district to Brighton & Hove are clearly opposed by the majority of residents.

5. Greater regional influence

Keeping the district intact strengthens East Sussex's strategic presence in the South East, improving its ability to secure funding and shape regional priorities.

6. Protection of the local economy

Losing parts of the district would weaken East Sussex's economic base, reducing diversity, tax income and the strength of local supply chains.

7. Better delivery of homes and infrastructure

Integrated planning across the full geography of East Sussex supports coordinated housing growth, transport and infrastructure, reflecting real local connections.

8. A single, stronger voice for investment

A unified East Sussex presents a clearer, more compelling offer to investors, boosting confidence and attracting economic opportunity.

9. A more resilient workforce

Pooling expertise across East Sussex strengthens recruitment, retention and long-term workforce planning, something harder to achieve if the district is split.

10. The most viable, lowest-risk option

Alternatives - including boundary expansion by Brighton & Hove - offer limited benefit at higher cost and risk.

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Emergency public meeting

Residents are being invited to join the Leader of Lewes District Council at a public meeting on Friday 29 May, 6pm–7pm at the Meridian Centre, Peacehaven to discuss the government’s latest consultation on local government reorganisation.

The consultation could lead to Falmer, East Saltdean, Telscombe and Peacehaven being moved out of Lewes district and into Brighton & Hove.

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council, said:

“This meeting will give residents another chance to voice their concerns and send a very clear message to the government.

“We have invited Steve Reed, the Secretary of State for Local Government, to attend and explain why the government is not listening to our residents. Let’s not forget, we are still

waiting to see the results of the government’s first consultation from many months ago.”

The meeting will give residents the opportunity to hear the latest information, ask questions, and share their views.

Councillor Nicholson added:

”I encourage as many people as possible to join me on 29 May at the Meridian Centre.

“If this proposal goes ahead, our residents will lose their local identity, their local voice and their agency to influence their future.

“It is vital that people make their views heard and I hope the minister will join us to hear them.”

For more information and a link to the consultation, visit lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LGR

What's at stake?

These FAQs explain the government's latest plans for local government reorganisation in East Sussex, what they could mean for Lewes district, and what residents have told us.

What is local government reorganisation?

LGR is a national government policy to simplify how councils operate. In East Sussex, it would replace the current two-tier system (district and borough councils plus the county council) with unitary councils that deliver all local services.

What have councils in East Sussex proposed?

A detailed proposal known as One East Sussex was developed and submitted to government. This proposal would create a single unitary council covering the existing East Sussex boundary, serving around 550,000 residents.

What has the government proposed?

The government announced it would delay a final decision on reorganisation and instead run a further "technical" consultation on a variation to the One East Sussex plan.

This variation would remove Peacehaven, Telscombe, East Saltdean, and Falmer parish from Lewes District - and transfer them to Brighton & Hove City Council.

Why are LDC leaders so concerned?

They believe this proposal would break up long-established communities, destroy historic local identity, reduce

local democratic voice, shift decisions away from small towns and villages to a large city authority.

What do residents think?

- Strong support for keeping East Sussex together
- Clear opposition to any reorganisation involving Brighton & Hove City Council

What did residents say about moving into Brighton & Hove?

- Almost 9 in 10 respondents (89%) rejected the idea of their communities being moved into Brighton & Hove.
- Responses described fears of losing local identity, influence, and control over development decisions.

Did residents support the One East Sussex model?

Yes. In consultation feedback, 74% of respondents said a single East Sussex unitary council was the only model that should be submitted to government.

Was there a separate consultation about Brighton & Hove expanding?

Yes. In summer 2025, Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council ran a specific consultation on Brighton & Hove's proposed expansion into Lewes district.

That process also showed overwhelming opposition, and was accompanied by an online petition objecting to the takeover, which gathered more than 6,500 signatures.

Did the government have a consultation?

Yes. That consultation ran from November 19, 2025, to January 11, 2026, and invited residents, organisations and stakeholders to give their views on proposals for reorganising local government in the county.

Have the results of the government's consultation been published?

No. Lewes District Council has raised concerns about this, particularly because:

- Residents have already expressed clear views on boundary changes
- The government is now consulting again on similar proposals
- The evidence from its own earlier consultation has not been made public

Council leaders argue that repeating consultations without publishing previous results undermines trust and means communities are being asked to restate views the government already holds but has chosen not to release.

Why is the government consulting again?

The latest consultation is focused solely on whether parts of Lewes district should be transferred to Brighton & Hove, even though previous feedback rejected this idea by a large margin.

Is LGR the same as devolution and having a Sussex mayor?

No. Devolution is a separate process.

- Devolution would create a Sussex-wide mayoral authority with powers over transport, skills and major strategy.
- Local councils would still run day-to-day services.
- Boundary changes are not required for devolution.



“Community cohesion relies on coherent boundaries, shared identity and a sense of belonging. Removing parts of Lewes district and placing them under Brighton & Hove would fracture that cohesion and undermine the partnerships that the groups we represent have spent years building. Our voluntary and community sector depends on stability, clarity and strong local relationships, all of which are put at risk by the these proposals.

“Across previous consultations with residents there was overwhelming community support for the One East Sussex proposal, and that strength of feeling has not diminished. We stand with those residents in wanting to protect the integrity of Lewes district and the localism that underpins the work of our community organisations, whose services so many people rely on.”

**Penny Shimmin, Chief Executive
Sussex Community Development Association**



“It is simply a fact that many residents in East Saltdean and Telscombe feel a stronger affinity with the more rural and semi-rural character of East Sussex. There is a widespread fear that being absorbed into a large city authority would cause their specific identity to be ‘swallowed up,’ with their needs sidelined by the urban priorities of Brighton’s city centre.

“Almost everybody I have spoken to about the proposed changes has said that they would prefer to stay within East Sussex. They like and want to protect the position of being separate from the nearby city and do not want to become part of it.

“People in East Saltdean and Telscombe have said that they want to remain within East Sussex for their local government. They value the separate identity this provides and do not like the idea of becoming part of Brighton and Hove.”

Councillor Laurence O’Connor, Telscombe Town Council

“We firmly believe that Falmer’s future is best served by remaining within Lewes district and East Sussex, where our community’s needs and identity are properly understood.

“Falmer is a small parish with a strong sense of place and specific needs that require local decision-making. Lewes District Council has much experience of working with rural and parish communities like us, ensuring that our voices are heard and priorities understood.

“By contrast, there is concern that within a large city authority, Falmer’s issues would struggle to gain visibility alongside the demands of a major urban population.

“Local government works best when it reflects the communities it serves. Falmer’s character, environment and way of life are quite different from those of a city, and governance arrangements should respect that difference rather than override it.”

Councillor Melanie Cutress, Chair of Falmer Parish Council



“You said no to becoming part of Brighton & Hove, now you need to say it again.”

“Please take part in the government consultation.”

Chris Collier, Cabinet Member,
Lewes District Council

Join the emergency public meeting, Friday 29 May,
6pm–7pm, The Meridian Centre, Peacehaven

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Download your own poster [here](https://lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LGR)
lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LGR



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