

Cllr Jay Mercer
Leader of the Council

Tel: 033 022 22979
jay.mercer@westsussex.gov.uk
www.westsussex.gov.uk

Cabinet Office
County Hall
West Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RQ



15 June 2026

Alison McGovern MP
Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

By post and email

Dear Minister,

West Sussex Local Government Reorganisation – Urgent Concerns

Thank you for hosting the Teams meeting on 2 June 2026 regarding Local Government Reform.

Ahead of the meeting, we submitted specific questions for you to address. Those questions were not answered at the meeting or subsequently. Since the Government announced the revised proposal, we have also sought clarification on several other important points.

It is disappointing that the following information has not been provided to us:

- the full data, evidence, and modelling underpinning the revised proposals;
- a substantive response to the three questions we submitted in advance of the meeting;
- any representations or evidence received since our submission relating to our proposals for unitary authorities in West Sussex which we need, in the interests of transparency and fairness; and
- a clear explanation of how your proposed modification will be financially sustainable.

This information is essential if we are to respond fully and have confidence that Government decisions are being made on a robust, objective, and transparent basis.

We have worked constructively with Government over the past 18 months to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based business case. We continue to support the ambition of creating strong, stable, and effective local government. However, we are increasingly concerned that your modification will undermine those shared aims.

In particular, the modified proposals depart from the Government's previously stated six principles. We particularly highlight the principles relating to (i) creating sensible economic areas and geographies in your first criteria, and (ii)

of a scale capable of delivering efficiency and resilience in your second criteria. The analysis carried out locally shows that your modification creates an unsustainable financial outcome for your coastal proposal with an annual deficit in the order of £42m.

The decision you take will shape local government in West Sussex for generations. It must not be a decision that is flawed, incoherent, or unfit for purpose from the outset.

We therefore urge you to work with us to ensure that the final proposal is:

- grounded in transparent, shared evidence;
- financially sustainable over the long term;
- rooted in real communities and geographies; and
- capable of commanding local confidence.

We remain ready to work with you constructively and at pace to produce a solution that works for our communities. We would welcome an early meeting to resolve these issues. Given the tight timescales we look forward to your urgent reply.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Jay Mercer

Leader of West Sussex
County Council

Cllr Martin Lury

Leader of Arun District
Council

Cllr Adrian Moss

Leader of Chichester
District Council

Cllr Martin Boffey

Leader of Horsham
District Council

Cllr Robert Ellgeston

Leader of Mid Sussex
District Council