



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 June 2026

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,
Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member
for Economic Development and HR

Invitation for representations regarding the Structural Changes Order for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire: Response

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To consider and approve the proposed response on behalf of South Kesteven District Council to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) invitation for representations regarding the Structural Changes Order for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to approve the proposed responses to the MHCLG invitation for representations on the contents of the Structural Changes Order, as set out at Appendix B of this report, and instruct the Chief Executive to submit the responses on behalf of the Council prior to the deadline of 16 June 2026.

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Effective Council
Which wards are impacted?	All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report but there will be a significant financial impact once a decision is formally made on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 1.2 As part of the business case proposal submitted to MHCLG on 28th November 2026 this set out the high-level financial implications with a number of caveats and assumptions made regarding the potential impacts. Until the final proposals are known and the configuration of authorities confirmed, the exact financial analysis cannot be developed with any more certainty.
- 1.3 Based on the learning from other authorities which have gone through LGR previously and the analysis undertaken with PwC as part of the business case development, there will be up front one-off transitional costs which will need to be funded from all Councils. These were included in the submission but the basis for the sharing of these costs hasn't yet been determined and will be an action that needs to be agreed once the final proposals are confirmed.
- 1.4 If we do receive confirmation in Summer 2026, then funding will need to be allocated to be meet this future requirement and will be incorporated in the 2027/28 Budget Framework and medium-term financial planning.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

- 1.5 Whilst the Council is under no express legal obligation to respond to the most recent consultation, doing so provides the Council with an opportunity to potentially influence the contents of the SCO prior to its implementation.
- 1.6 Responding to government consultations relating to LGR is capable of constituting an executive function. Under the executive arrangements framework established by the Local Authority (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, functions are generally executive in nature unless they are specified as non-executive by legislation or otherwise reserved to Full Council.

- 1.7 This report concerns the submission of representations only. The making and content of any Structural Change Order remains a matter for the Secretary of State in accordance with the relevant legislative framework.

Completed by: Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 On 5 February 2025, the Government issued statutory invitations to all Councils in the 21 two-tier areas across England, and smaller unitaries, to develop proposals for unitary (single status) local government.
- 2.2 On 28 November 2025, four separate proposals for reorganisation were submitted by the authorities of the Greater Lincolnshire Invitation Area to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).
- South Kesteven District Council and North Kesteven District Council have proposed four unitary councils: a north/south division of the Lincolnshire county area and the status quo for North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire
 - Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council have proposed two unitary councils: a unitary combining City of Lincoln and West Lindsey with North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire, and a unitary for the remaining Lincolnshire county area.
 - City of Lincoln Council has proposed four unitary councils: an expanded city through the inclusion of twelve North Kesteven wards and seven West Lindsey wards, a unitary for the remaining Lincolnshire county area, and the status quo for North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire.
 - Lincolnshire County Council (supported by North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire) has proposed three unitary councils: a single unitary on the current county footprint for Lincolnshire and the status quo for North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire.
- 2.3 From 5 February 2026 to 26 March 2026, MHCLG undertook a process of statutory consultation on the four proposals. The final decision on which (if any) proposal to implement, with or without modification lies with the Secretary of State. A final decision for Greater Lincolnshire is expected to be announced in July 2026, before the Parliamentary summer recess.
- 2.4 On 19 May 2026, MHCLG wrote to all councils in Greater Lincolnshire to seek views on matters that will be necessary for the Secretary of State to consider in any Structural Changes Order (SCO) (Appendix A). A SCO is a statutory instrument (secondary legislation) that will establish a new unitary authority, make provision to abolish predecessor councils, and set out transitional and electoral arrangements.
- 2.5 The matters/questions on which the Council has been invited to make representations are:

1. *Whether you prefer a preparing council and implementation executive model (where geographies align) or a new council model with a joint committee?*
2. *How many members from each relevant council would you prefer to sit on each Joint Committee or on the Implementation Executive, including the balance of members from different councils?¹*
3. *Would you prefer for any individuals to be specified for the Chair/Deputy Chair roles, and if so, who?*
4. *What are your views on any requirement for political balance in the joint committee(s)/ implementation executive?*
5. *Who should be the returning officer for the first election to each of the new unitary councils, that proposals would see established.*
6. *What are your preferences for the membership of the Implementation Team and whether roles should be specified?*
7. *Would you prefer for any parish council elections to be aligned with elections to the new councils?*
8. *What are the current legal names of the councils and what are your preferred names for new councils?*
9. *If different to proposals, has there been any further modelling of your preferred councillors for each new councils that you would like the Secretary of State to consider, alongside any information on the rationale for the numbers?*
10. *What are your suggested wards, that reflect the proposal and councillor numbers decided, and that best meet the LGBCE guidance, for inclusion in the SCO?*

2.6 Representations for questions **one to nine** are to be made by no later than 16 June 2026. Representations on the **tenth** question regarding ward boundaries are to be made by 17 August 2026.

2.7 The representations will inform the Secretary of State's considerations on the detailed contents of the SCO. However, the final decision on the detail for inclusion in the SCO remains with the Secretary of State.

2.8 It is anticipated that MHCLG will draft the SCO during summer 2026, with a draft shared with Greater Lincolnshire authorities in autumn 2026 for fact checking. It is thought that the SCO will then be laid in Parliament in winter 2026/2027. Subject

¹ Under the New Council model (establishment of a unitary council on a new footprint), a Joint Committee is the vehicle to provide democratic governance in the period from the SCO coming into force to the first meeting of the Shadow Authority. It is responsible for developing an Implementation Plan and the draft Member Code of Conduct and a Constitution for the Shadow Authority. An Implementation Executive is utilised under a Continuing Authority model (establishment of a unitary council on an existing footprint) and serves the same function. Unlike a Joint Committee, an Implementation Executive is constituted as a committee of the 'Preparing Authority's (the continuing authority) Executive.

to Parliamentary timetabling, MHCLG anticipate that debates will take place in committee in January 2027 and that the SCO will come into force in March 2027.

- 2.9 Current expectations are that elections to the Preparing Authority/Shadow Authority(s) (the governance model depending on the LGR outcome and SCO contents) will take place on 6 May 2027. On the current LGR timeline for our area, Vesting Day for the new unitary authority is 1st April 2028.
- 2.10 Since the end of the Statutory Consultation period, all authorities in Greater Lincolnshire have closely collaborated on multiple preparatory workstreams to establish the foundations for the effective delivery of the Secretary of State's decision for Greater Lincolnshire from July 2026.
- 2.11 South Kesteven District Council has collaborated particularly closely with North Kesteven DC, although with due consideration having been given to the views of the other councils, to develop the representation (Appendix B).

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The Government has invited the Council to make representations on the detailed contents of the Structural Change Order (SCO). This is the statutory instrument that will establish a new unitary authority, make provision for predecessor councils to be abolished, and set out the transitional and electoral arrangements.
- 3.2 A delegation is sought from Cabinet to enable the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to submit a response to Government.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The Council is under no explicit legal obligation to submit a response. However, the Council understands that representations will inform the Secretary of State's considerations on the detailed contents of the Structural Change Order. Therefore, if the Council does not submit a response, it will lose an opportunity to potentially influence the government on key elements of the future transitional and electoral arrangements.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The Government has invited the Council to make representations on the detailed contents of the Structural Change Order (SCO). These representations will inform the considerations of the Secretary of State and thus represent an opportunity for the Council to attempt to ensure that the SCO is properly tailored to the particular circumstances of Greater Lincolnshire.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 On 20 November 2025, Full Council endorsed the Kesteven LGR proposal. The submission was the product of extensive engagement. An all-Member briefing on the transitional governance and electoral arrangements was delivered on 3 March 2026.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – Letter from MHCLG to Greater Lincolnshire Chief Executives inviting representations for the detailed contents of the Structural Changes Order, 19 May 2026
- 7.2 Appendix B – Joint Representations from North Kesteven DC and South Kesteven DC regarding the Structural Changes Order for Greater Lincolnshire