

Future Surrey

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Implementation Plan

May 2026



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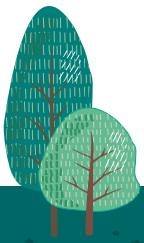
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Introduction

Introduction to the Implementation Plan

From Terence Herbert, Senior Responsible Officer, Surrey Local Government Reorganisation

Devolution and local government reorganisation (D&LGR) is one of the most significant changes to public services in Surrey in a generation. It brings together the collective experience, capability and commitment of our county, district and borough councils to create two new unitary authorities that are simpler, clearer and better placed to serve our communities.

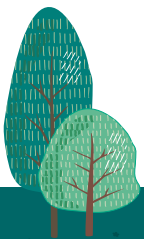
This Implementation Plan sets out how we will deliver that transition safely, legally and responsibly. It provides a shared roadmap for the work required to move from the current two-tier system to the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils, while maintaining high quality services throughout. Above all, it is about ensuring continuity, stability and confidence for residents, councillors, partners and our workforce.

Since the government's decision to proceed with reorganisation, councils across Surrey have worked together to establish a single, integrated implementation programme, supported by a Programme Management Office, drawing on expertise from all 12 councils. This approach reflects our shared commitment to collective leadership, transparency and pace, while recognising the scale and complexity of the task ahead.

Our priority is to deliver a safe and legal transition that meets statutory requirements and provides assurance to government and residents. That means understanding how services, people, assets, data and contracts operate today and ensuring they are ready to transfer on day one of the new councils. Transformation and service redesign will follow in the next phase; this plan is about building firm foundations.

The work set out here is being led through defined programme themes, each sponsored by senior officers and supported by workstream leads and subject matter experts across Surrey. It is underpinned by strong governance, effective communication and clear reporting to ensure progress, risk and interdependencies are actively managed.

I want to thank colleagues across all councils for their professionalism, collaboration and continued focus on business as usual during this period of change. This plan reflects that collective effort. By working together, staying focused on our shared purpose, and keeping residents at the heart of our decisions, we will deliver a smooth transition and create strong, modern councils for the future of Surrey.



Vision for the Programme

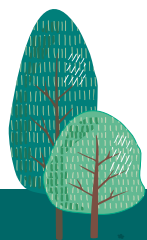


What we aim to achieve through the Devolution and local government reorganisation (D&LGR) programme

Our vision for the Devolution and local government reorganisation (D&LGR) programme in Surrey is that it leads to the establishment of resilient new councils which meet the needs of their staff, residents, businesses, partners and communities and creates the framework for the future success of those councils.

The transition will be well governed, ensuring stability and continuity of services, and will set the benchmarks for best practice in local government reorganisation.

The Programme management office (PMO) will act as a trusted enabler to deliver the programme - driving collaboration, transparency and efficiency - while safeguarding public confidence and supporting staff through change.



Working Principles

The way we commit to work so that we can deliver the Vision



Collaboration: We work collaboratively across all councils. We value open dialogue and constructive challenge.



Representation: We represent all councils, not just our own, and ensure appropriate and inclusive representation in every aspect of the programme.



Trust: We work in good faith, sharing ambition and fostering trust between colleagues and councils to achieve our shared goals.



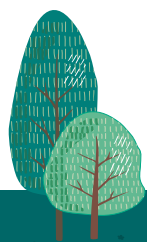
Respect for Expertise: We respect and draw upon the diverse expertise from across all councils, recognising the value each brings to the programme.



Honesty: We recognise that consensus will not always be possible, but we commit to truthfulness, transparency and being evidence-based in all our interactions and decisions.



Accountability: We are accountable for our actions and decisions, ensuring they are subject to scrutiny and aligned with the interests of all councils and communities.



Definitions of Success

Safe and Legal Operation

All statutory services and functions are compliant and operational from Day One, including customer contact channels, registration services, and emergency support.

Legal requirements (TUPE transfers, statutory officer appointments, governance structures) are fully met.

Workforce and Service Continuity

Every employee is successfully transferred to the correct new authority under agreed (disaggregation) principles and TUPE legislation.

Critical services remain uninterrupted, with plans for specialist roles and hosted models where needed.

Financial Sustainability

County Council budgets, reserves, debts, and assets are disaggregated based on agreed metrics (population, usage, geography) and District/Borough budgets, reserves and assets are aggregated.

A clear baseline is established, to enable the future unitaries to set their budgets. Forecasts and cost controls are in place to prevent overspend and ensure value for money.

Technology and Data Readiness

Core systems and data structures function with minimal disruption, even where different systems remain in use; new councils have secure access to essential platforms to enable success.

Digital self-service options are live to reduce demand on contact centres.

Governance and Risk Management

Programme governance bodies have delivered all milestones on time and escalated risks effectively.

Risk register shows no critical unresolved issues at Vesting Day.

Community and Customer Focus

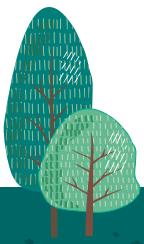
Residents can access services through familiar channels (phone, email, web chat, post) with clear branding for new councils.

Local identity is reflected through the transition.

Foundations for Future Transformation

Structures, contracts, and workforce models enable ongoing improvement beyond Vesting Day.

Shared principles applied consistently: prioritise critical services, maintain safe/legal operations, reflect local community, and ensure financial viability.



Transition Principles

Overview

During the period of proposal writing, submission and decision making by the Secretary of State, there were two parallel sets of activity underway in district and borough councils and the county council, focussed on understanding service delivery and operating models as they are (discovery).

The discovery period of data gathering enabled an understanding of the end-to-end system of services delivered across the organisations.

The next phases of activity are part of an integrated plan with all 12 councils. The focus for Vesting Day is the transition of services, as they are, to the two new unitary authorities, not transformation nor design of new structures or services. Any change required in advance of Vesting Day will be determined by critical risk. Any redesign of services and structures to deliver them will be the responsibility of each new authority following Vesting Day.

A collaborative approach will enable planning and implementation of service configurations in new authorities and focusses on:

- confirming service configurations and the associated decision making required
- documenting service configurations in blueprints for the two new authorities

This section of the Implementation Plan sets out 'Transition Principles' for the programme. These are the principles that guide the approach to transitioning services from 12 councils into the new authorities, including disaggregation and aggregation of services, and development of blueprints that document what will transition into each new authority.

The guiding principle is “transition not transformation”.

The decision making on service configurations will rest with shadow authorities, using the outlined programme governance.



Discovery

Prior to the Secretary of State decision, all councils undertook discovery (understanding the detail of all services), including:

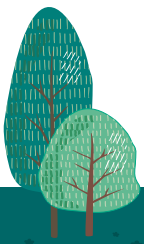
- district and borough councils completed 'Requests for Information' which were submitted to the PMO (June to November 2025) and collated and analysed December 2025 to January 2026. Modelling of East and West data sets was completed for handover to thematic workstreams
- the county council identified safe and legal activity and key information (May to September 2025); followed by analysis and initial implementation planning and identification of where further work is required to assess risks to disaggregation (October to December 2025)

Discovery for district and borough councils was complex due to variation in systems, terminology and structures. Data was gathered across the 11 separate authorities, with each authority collating their response. The PMO collated this to identify commonality or differences in service provision or operations.

Information gathered for all councils includes:

- People - make up of teams and requirements for deliverables and operating model
- Data - what data is available, what are the gaps to giving a full understanding of workstream
- Systems - understanding of IT systems, constraints and blockers, gaps in provision
- Contracts - understanding of contracts, forward plans, and their value
- Process - key processes to be maintained to deliver services
- Assets - including property and non-property such as specialist equipment
- Service metrics, such as key performance indicators and service level agreements

Thematic workstreams will assess the data and identify any additional requirements and use the data to inform the approach they take for each service for Vesting Day

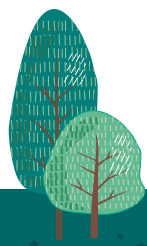
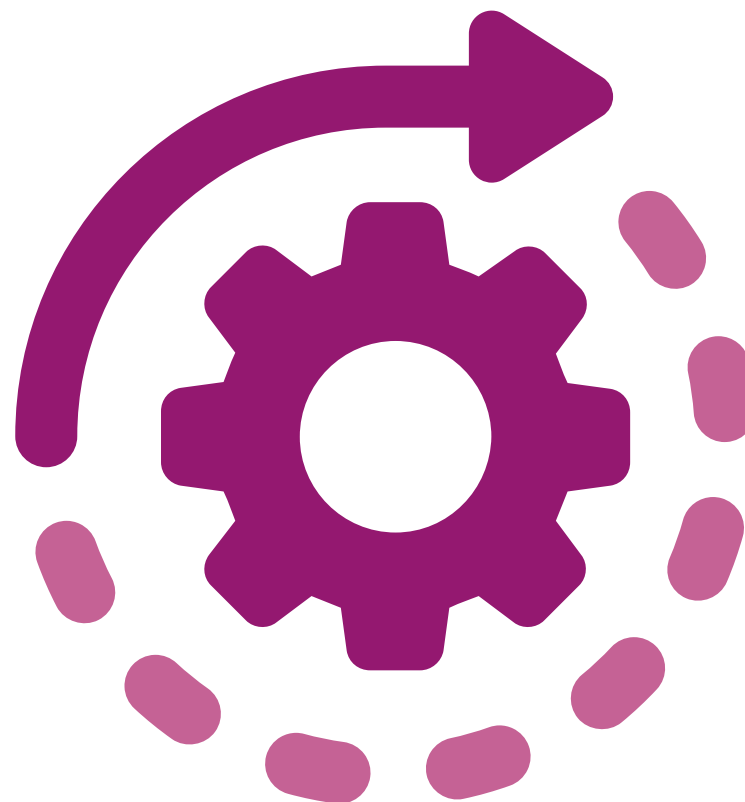


Service Configurations for Vesting Day

The approach includes disaggregation of services into the new authorities, and aggregation of 'like' functions, which will transition together into the new unitary authorities. This transition will be without changes to services, except where it is critical to ensure safe and legal operation by Vesting Day. Similarly, any data hygiene activity in advance of Vesting Day will be determined by a requirement for safe and legal transition.

In some cases, there will be a need for an arrangement other than disaggregated services, and the recommended approach for hosted provision may be interim (for example to allow for disaggregation over a longer period, avoiding impact on statutory service provision in 2027/28) or longer term.

Redesign and transformation of services will be within the remit of the new unitary authorities. Any such activity will take place post Vesting Day.



Service Configurations for Vesting Day / Continued

Planning Assumptions

Service delivery for each authority aligned with geographical boundaries

Disaggregation of services - including workforce - will be the default, unless there is a compelling reason otherwise. For systems, contracts and assets, the approach to disaggregation may be different.

Aggregation of services - including workforce - will be carried out by transitioning to new councils without change to local services, unless there is a critical need to harmonise service delivery. Multiple systems and contracts will be in operation, except where critical harmonisation is identified.

Data hygiene (data quality, management, retention & disposal) in advance of Vesting Day will be approached pragmatically, with a focus on those activities that are essential to support decisions and to ensure safe and legal transition.

Disaggregation
Split existing countywide service to unitary council (one to two) with harmonisation as identified.

Aggregation
Transition existing borough and district services, along with disaggregated county council services, to unitary councils (12 to two) with harmonisation as identified.

Joint provision
Hosted or shared: led by one authority; each retains statutory duties, or joint governance.

Integration
Bringing together like services into new operating model to drive value through re-design. Timeframes to be determined by new authorities.

Guidance on pathways, parameters and appraisals to inform any exceptions, including Fire and Rescue Service.

Guidance on parameters to inform harmonisation.

This may be an interim arrangement until safe disaggregation, or agreed as longer term arrangement.

VESTING DAY

Transformation e.g. integration will be planned for and implemented in new authorities through a roadmap showing essential harmonisation for vesting day, and recommending wider harmonisation and integration to follow



Defining 'Service Components' and 'Disaggregated for Vesting Day'

A service will be considered 'disaggregated' for Vesting Day if its work, people, skills, land, property and finance are split into the new organisations.

Systems and data, non-property assets, contracts, or delivery partners may be hosted and accessed by the disaggregated service, with a roadmap in place for transformation in new authorities.

All services' operation and delivery models comprise several components. Which components and the complexity of each varies from service to service, depending on what it delivers and how.

County council services will need to disaggregate to move to two new authorities. This involves determining whether the work and the workforce delivering it can split for Vesting Day or, if it cannot do this without exceeding specific parameters, to plan for an interim hosting arrangement.

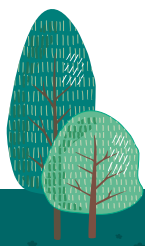
- **The work:** what a service does, what it needs to fulfil its remit (e.g. statutory commitments, safe and legal), its activities or service offer, associated workflows and processes.
- **Workforce:** staff who deliver the work and fulfil the service's remit / service plan commitments

All county council services will also have:

- **Finance:** e.g. budgets, debts, grants, income generation
- **Systems and data:** digital and non-digital information, systems, technology, forms

And many services will also have additional components:

- **Contracts and delivery partners:** external organisations, agencies, suppliers and contractors who support or co-deliver with the county council
- **Land and property:** land or buildings where the service is a sole or 90% occupant of that building, e.g. registration, library, children's home, sheltered accommodation
- **Non-property assets:** service specific, e.g. books, vehicles, specialist equipment



Defining 'Aggregation' and 'Harmonisation'

A service will be considered aggregated for Vesting Day if its work, people and skills, land and property and finance are transitioned into the new organisation(s) alongside "like" functions from other councils.

Each unitary may operate with multiple systems and data sets, non-property assets, contracts, or delivery partners on Vesting Day, with a roadmap in place for transformation in new authorities.

All service functions comprise several components. Which components and the complexity of each varies from service to service and between functions, depending on what it delivers and how.

All district and borough services (including any that are shared or outsourced) will need to aggregate to one of the two new authorities*. **This involves the transfer of all staff into the new organisations, along with transfer of all duties of work.**

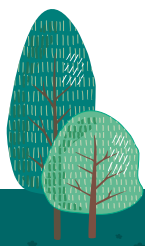
On Vesting Day councils might still operate with multiple and different components and delivery features for each service function, e.g. multiple systems, teams and service offering. Service functions might operate at local levels with harmonisation of critical components to ensure safe and legal service delivery on Vesting Day.

Harmonisation is the deliberate act of aligning a service's key delivery features so that they operate in a more unified, consistent, and coherent way across the new unitary authority. These delivery features typically include (but are not limited to), opening hours, contact channels, fees and charges, service levels or policies. Any harmonisation activity will be assessed carefully to ensure it is lawful and would not negatively impact anyone with a protected characteristic, in line with the approach to Equality Impact Assessments.

Key planning assumption:

Aggregated services, including workforce, will transition to new councils without aligning service levels, unless there is a critical need to harmonise service delivery. Multiple systems and contracts will be in operation except where critical harmonisation is identified.

*This is the current planning assumption, to be validated through detailed service planning.



Defining 'Joint Provision' and 'Integration'

A service will be considered joint provision for Vesting Day if its work, people and skills, and finance are transitioned into a new organisation, with arrangements in place to deliver with, or for, other organisations.

The programme will focus on ensuring safe and legal operation for Vesting Day, including any harmonisation that is required to achieve this. Further harmonisation and integration will follow, once the new authorities are in place.

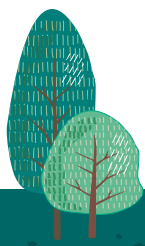
Some of the existing councils already share services, or outsource delivery to shared providers. **Joint provision** is where two or more local authorities work together to deliver specific services while each council remains a separate legal entity.

Where it has been agreed that a county council service cannot be safely or legally disaggregated, these will transfer to one of the new authorities as a hosted arrangement. For district and borough services where there are shared arrangements, this might also be the case, if the relevant councils are not transitioning into the same new authority on Vesting Day.

For some this will be an interim position to enable safe or legal disaggregation to the new organisations, with disaggregation taking place after Vesting Day. For others, this arrangement might be formalised and longer term. One authority will lead delivery of the service, but each authority retains statutory duties. An inter-authority agreement and service level agreements will be in place.

Integration is the process of formally combining services to create a unified approach to planning and delivery. This is likely to happen through re-design and bring together operational delivery, staffing, policy and decision making in new operating models.

This level of transformation will follow Vesting Day. A roadmap of priority areas will be put together during the life of the programme, for agreement with statutory officers and shadow authorities, to enable new authorities to plan appropriately after Vesting Day.



Planning and Implementing Service Configurations

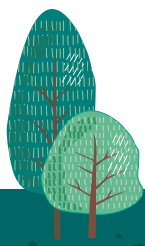
Planning assumptions for disaggregation and aggregation and supporting detailed frameworks will enable thematic workstreams to identify, prioritise and plan for:

- Where an alternative to disaggregation exists, such as interim hosting arrangements being required to enable disaggregation in a safe and legal manner
- Where there is a critical need to harmonise service delivery features prior to Vesting Day
- Critical changes prior to Vesting Day and develop a roadmap for longer term change for new authorities which will enable clear expectations on transformation and appropriate communication of this with residents

A high-level overview of this activity is outlined in the following two pages. Activity will be delivered as an integrated programme, but some will be specific to county council services or district and borough services. The high-level programme plan shows where key activities and decisions will be required and programme governance will enable appropriate endorsement and agreement of recommended service configurations and blueprints.

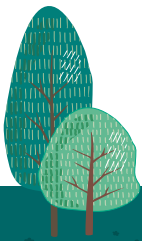
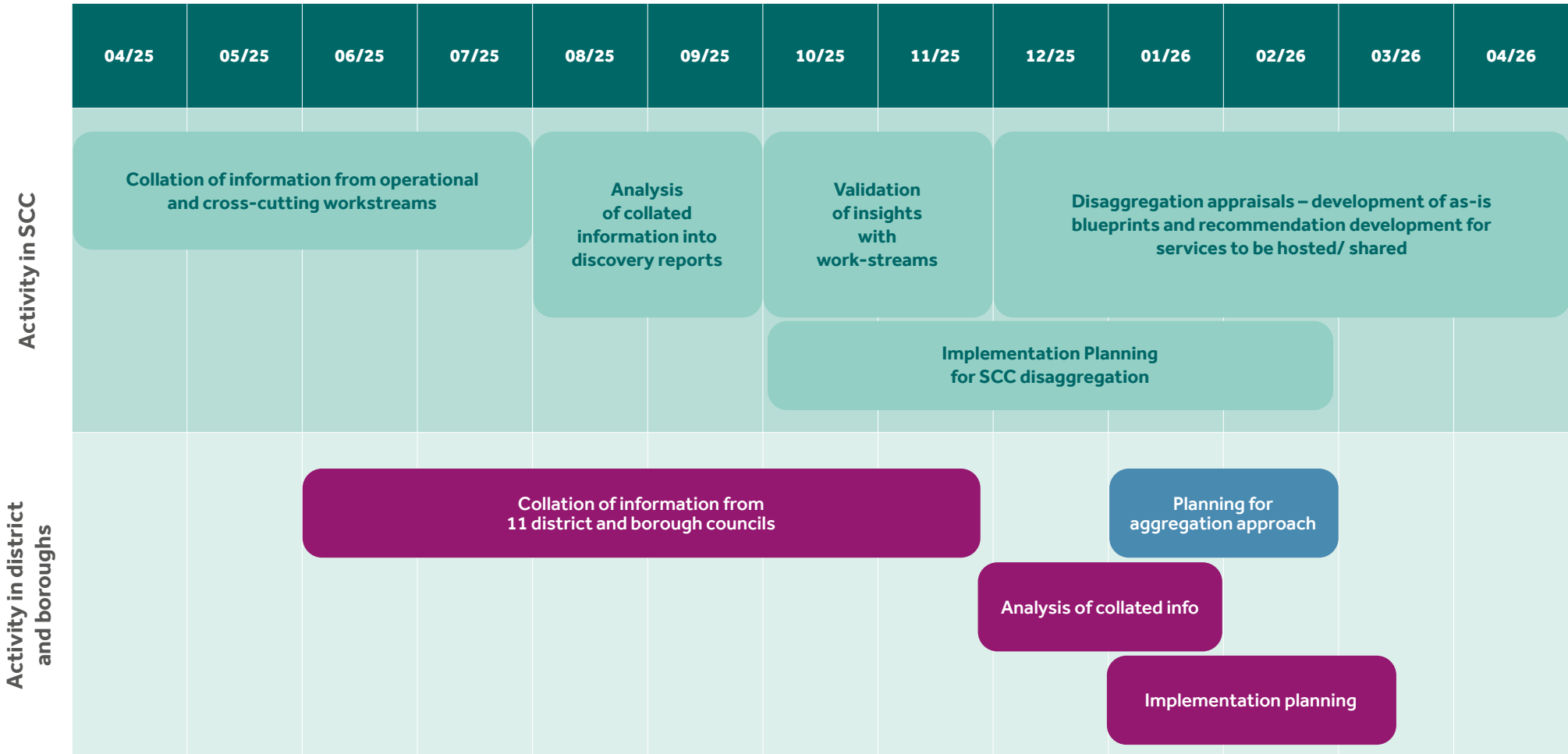
Service configuration **over-arching principles** act as a guide to all the work relevant to disaggregation/aggregation.

- These are supported by a number of **high-level principles**, that describe the overall approach for a number of specific contexts (for example workforce) to which planning of disaggregation/aggregation will apply.
- **Application of these principles** will support planning of service configurations, and programme-wide oversight will manage the dependencies between different elements (for example tech and data and contracts), ensuring these can be appropriately delivered by Vesting Day, and monitoring transition plans to ensure service delivery is not destabilised.



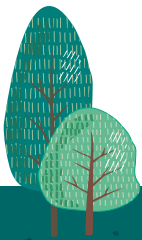
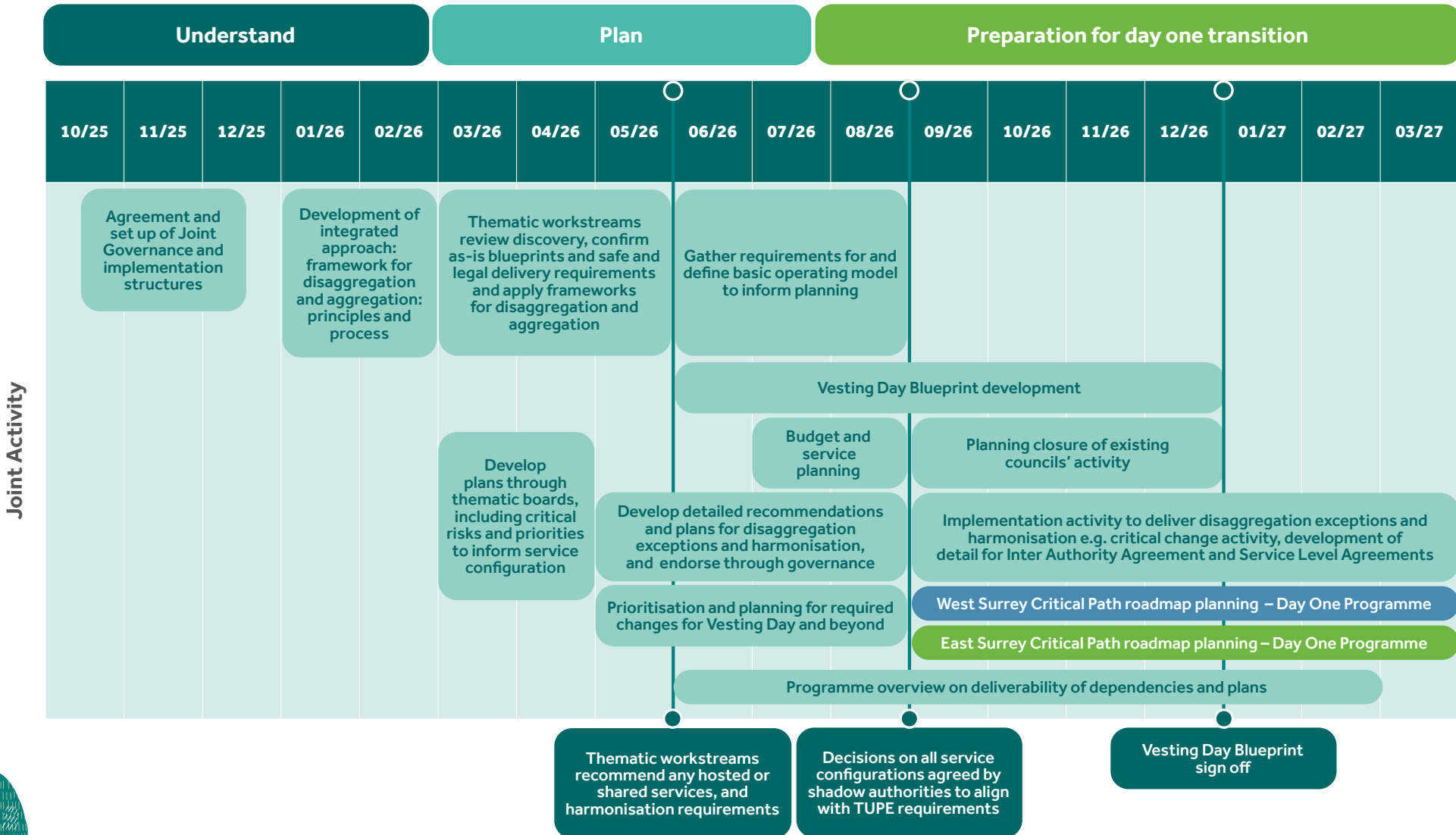
High-Level Stages for Transition Activity for the Programme

Timeline showing **work to date** in Surrey County Council and district and boroughs.



High-Level Stages for Transition Activity for the Programme

Timeline showing **integrated activities** to be undertaken prior to Vesting Day in April 2027 as part of an integrated programme.



Which Principles guide how to Disaggregate or Aggregate Services?

Overarching principles should be used to help guide decisions on how services disaggregate or aggregate.



Prioritise critical services and needs throughout planning and delivery



Maintain safe and legal operations in service planning for day one



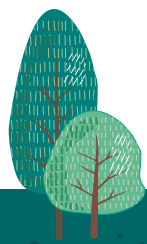
Align with existing infrastructure and consider **geographic coherence**



Consider **financial viability** of new **authorities within funding envelopes**



Plan services to **reflect local community identities**



Which Principles guide how to Disaggregate or Aggregate Services? / Continued

Cross-cutting workstream principles describe the overall approach to those individual components of a service and whether disaggregation / aggregation (or an alternative approach) should apply.



Land and property - Land, buildings, and associated property interests for operational and administrative purposes **will be disaggregated or aggregated to the successor authority** in which they are geographically located or, for out of county assets, which new unitary authority is best placed to act as the 'caretaker authority' for safe and legal continuity on day one.

Shared assets will vest wholly in the geographically aligned authority, supported by inter-authority agreements to maintain operational access for both.

Commercial investment properties, regardless of where they reside, will be considered in respect of the associated impact on their income contribution to the revenue budget, as the primary reason for their being held.



Workforce - All staff employed on Vesting Day will transfer to a new authority **in alignment with transition legislation**. For county employees this is in line with disaggregation (or other approach) agreed for the service. For district and borough employees this is based on geography of current council (unless other arrangements, e.g. hosted services, are agreed).



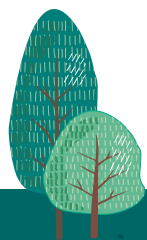
Contracts - Approaches differ depending on criteria and priorities, with a focus on **ensuring safe and legal operation** for Vesting Day.



Finance - Disaggregate or aggregate budgets, reserves, debts, and assets based on **agreed metrics**. e.g. population, usage, geography. Ensuring ringfenced funds are kept separate.



Tech and Data - Keep system and data structure changes minimal. **Disaggregation and harmonisation is the most complex, time-consuming, and least preferred option** for Vesting Day.



Other Arrangements

There are some areas in which arrangements other than transition to one of the new unitary councils will be appropriate, and these are set out below.

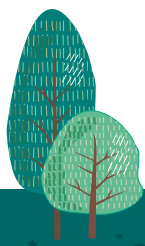
Pensions

As a consequence of local government reorganisation, a new administering authority for the Surrey Pension Fund will need to be established. A number of options have been explored, and the preferred option is to establish a Single Purpose Pension Authority for optimal governance. This would mean the pension fund would not be situated in either of the unitary councils but in a separate authority with a single purpose of delivering pension administration, governance and investment.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Surrey County Council currently oversees Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, but it will end in March 2027. By April 2027, new arrangements must be in place so that fire and rescue governance remains safe and legal. Government confirmed in October 2025, as part of the Surrey Local Government Reorganisation decision, that fire and rescue services will continue to operate across the whole of Surrey, as they do now.

Action is already underway to make sure there is a smooth and lawful transition from the county council to new arrangements by Vesting Day. Subject to final Government confirmation, this is expected to be achieved by setting up a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority (CFRA).



Blueprints

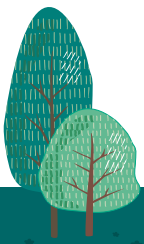
All workstreams will develop blueprints that describe the component elements that will transition to the new organisations on Vesting Day, with a priority focus on maintaining safe and legal operation from day one.

As-is blueprint

An as-is blueprint forms the snapshot baseline information to split or transition the work and workforce and will be drawn from discovery insights. They are the starting point for the range and complexity of services disaggregating from Surrey County Council and aggregating from district and borough, and contain the basic information needed to operate and deliver each current service.

Vesting Day blueprint

A Vesting Day blueprint is an iteration of the as-is. They ensure the new organisations have and can access the necessary components for operation and delivery from Vesting Day. It is a thorough and accurate handover note to the new organisation. This will allow each new organisation to have a comprehensive day one view of all services and their components, and to make informed and swift future operating model design choices.



As-Is Service Blueprints and Vesting Day

Blueprints will describe the services' component elements (including workforce, systems, contracts and assets) that will transition to the new organisations to enable safe and legal operation from day one: the jigsaw pieces

As-is service blueprint

Purpose

Baseline key information needed to understand the whole 'picture' of service, including all the component parts and interdependencies; enables an audit trail overview of everything that is being disaggregated from SCC and aggregated from districts and boroughs.

Audience

Internal: managers and senior leaders; common format to enable mutually and consistently understood overview of individual SCC and districts and boroughs services

Content

Compiled from existing documentation gathered during discovery, service and directorate business plans or equivalents, and system generated reports, e.g. HR and financial

Vesting Day service blueprint

Purpose

Show Vesting Day configuration and costings of services, including components and interdependencies with other services whether aggregated, hosted or disaggregated

Audiences

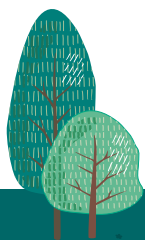
Internal: officer level detail for shared understanding and use by both managers and senior leaders

Shadows and External: high-level summaries and overview of picture for publication within council papers

Content

Will evolve in line with D&LGR timeline, governance and availability of decision-makers

Will become a vehicle for new organisations' operating model design choices and integrated year one service planning



High-Level Timeline

Introduction and Purpose

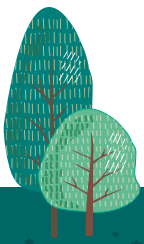
This timeline provides a single, coherent view of the programme's overall structure, sequencing, and key milestones from safe and legal discovery work through to Vesting Day and the immediate post-vesting stabilisation period.

The timeline is **designed to support assurance and constructive challenge by the Joint Committees, shadow authorities and the Implementation Programme Board**, ensuring the programme will successfully enable the new authorities to establish a safe and legal baseline from Vesting Day onwards.

Any versions of the programme plan and timeline targeting other audiences, such as residents, or staff within the 12 councils, will be developed specifically for that purpose, drawing on this version.

This timeline **sets the frame** for the detailed workstream plans, which will be managed and reported through the programme's theme and workstream structure.

A **detailed and operational programme plan** will expand on the High-Level Timeline, drawing together the significant activities and milestones from individual workstream plans. This will enable management of dependencies and ensure adherence to the programme's critical path. It will be **held by the PMO** as the guiding tool of the programme's reporting and internal assurance.



Surrey's Operating Context

The programme is operating within a highly challenging and fast-moving context, which shapes both the scope of the work and the pace at which planning and decision-making must occur.

It is essential that the development of the Implementation Plan is understood within this context.

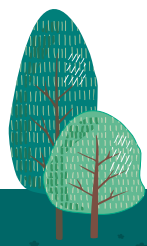
The new authorities will face **significant financial pressures**, driven by:

- **Inheritance of existing debt** - particularly in West Surrey
- **Fair Funding Review** - cash flat funding for Surrey
- **Increasing demand on services** - especially in adults and children's social care

The **disaggregation and aggregation** of existing services from the 12 authorities is a highly complex and resource-intensive process, involving the separation and joining-up of systems, data, finances and funding, contracts, assets and staffing.

This requires careful sequencing, clear decision-making and agreement on how costs, liabilities and ongoing operational responsibilities are split between the new authorities, whilst also ensuring continuity of service for residents.

Considering this challenging operating context, the programme has adopted a guiding principle of **transition, not transformation**. The plan sets out how this process will be carefully governed to ensure **a safe and legal transition**, recognising that opportunities for transformation will come after vesting day, once the new authorities have established their own strategic direction and financial position.



Approach to Phasing and Milestones

The High-Level Timeline is structured around a small number of programme phases that reflect the logical build-up from discovery work carried out across all 12 councils, to Vesting Day.

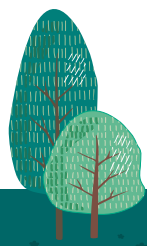
Each phase includes the most significant milestones and decision points required to establish the new authorities safely and lawfully.

The milestones have been identified based on:

- **Statutory and governance requirements** (including Shadow Authority readiness)
- **Critical programme activities** such as workforce transition and mobilisation
- **Known external time constraints** (including election-related milestones and financial cycles)
- **Key dependencies** between workstreams (where progress in one area enables or constrains progress elsewhere)
- **Emerging readiness criteria and critical-path items**, including data migration, systems cutover, and organisational design sequencing

The High-Level Timeline acts as the programme framework: workstreams will build their detailed implementation plans beneath it, and progress will be monitored through programme governance.

As delivery planning matures, dependencies will be mapped and the critical path will be confirmed and managed explicitly, with specific visibility of high-risk interdependencies such as finance, workforce, digital and data readiness, and statutory decision-making.



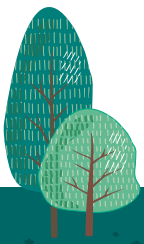
Approach to Delivery

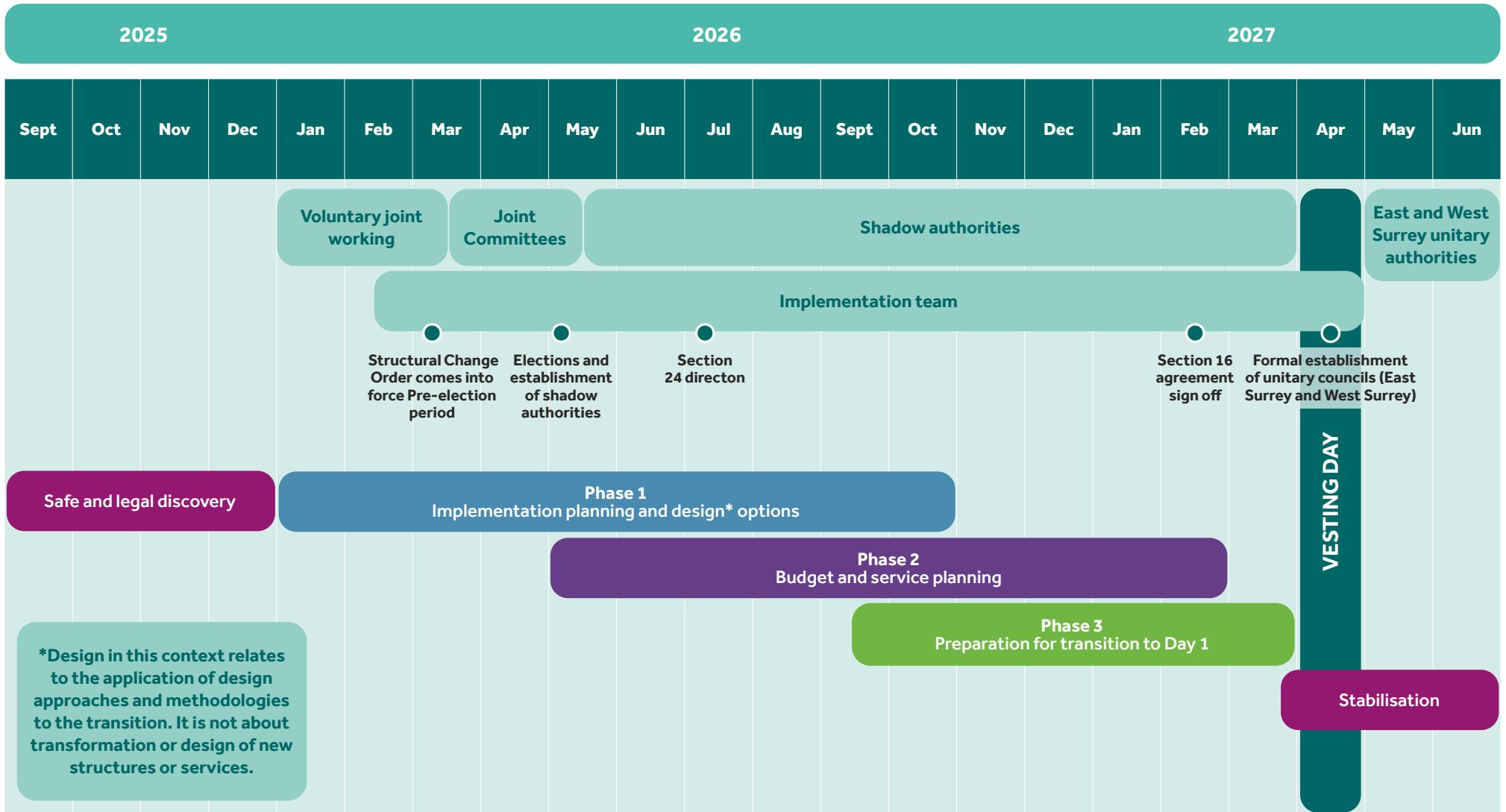
A high-level representation of selected detail may be incorporated into later iterations of the High-Level Timeline as appropriate to support the shadow authorities to maintain effective oversight of delivery, where it materially strengthens assurance and oversight (for example: key readiness criteria, major decision points, and the confirmed critical path).

Further detail is in development, including on:

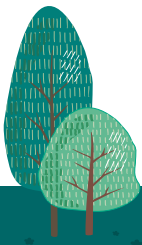
- **Workforce disaggregation process and TUPE**
- **Finance and funding** (including transitional costs, budget-setting requirements, council tax considerations)
- **Wider communications and engagement** across residents, partners and staff
- **Transition and integration of IT, data, assets, contracts and procurement arrangements**

The more detailed plan development will also incorporate clear sequencing of organisational design decisions, systems testing and cutover windows, partner and union engagement milestones, and any statutory requirements emerging from the shadow authorities' programme of work. These will be reflected and monitored as part of the operational LGR programme plan.



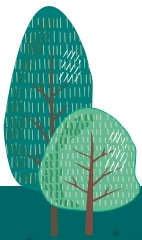
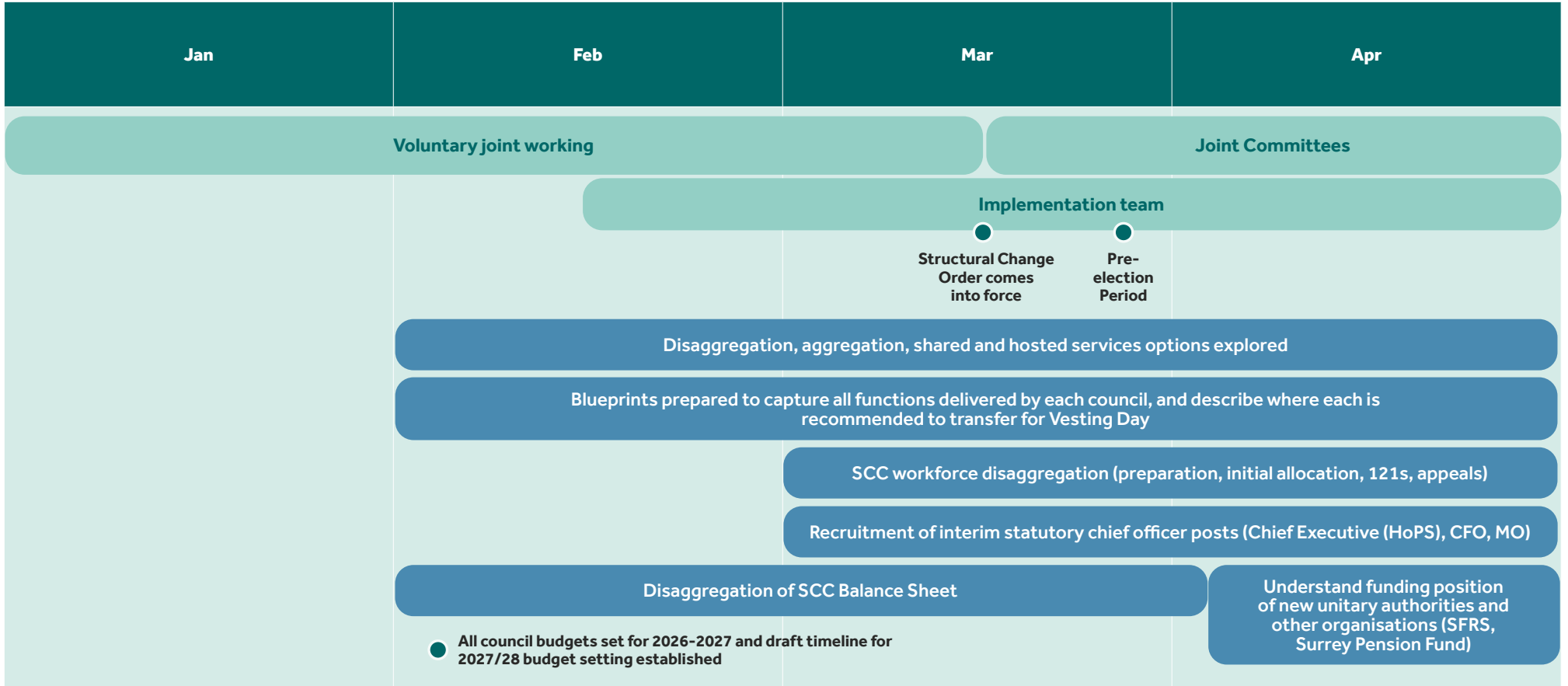


The following slides show an expanded view of activity within each phase. Whilst these are shown sequentially, there is an element of parallel activity between the phases, as shown above.



Phase 1: Implementation Planning and Design Options

2026



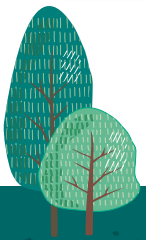
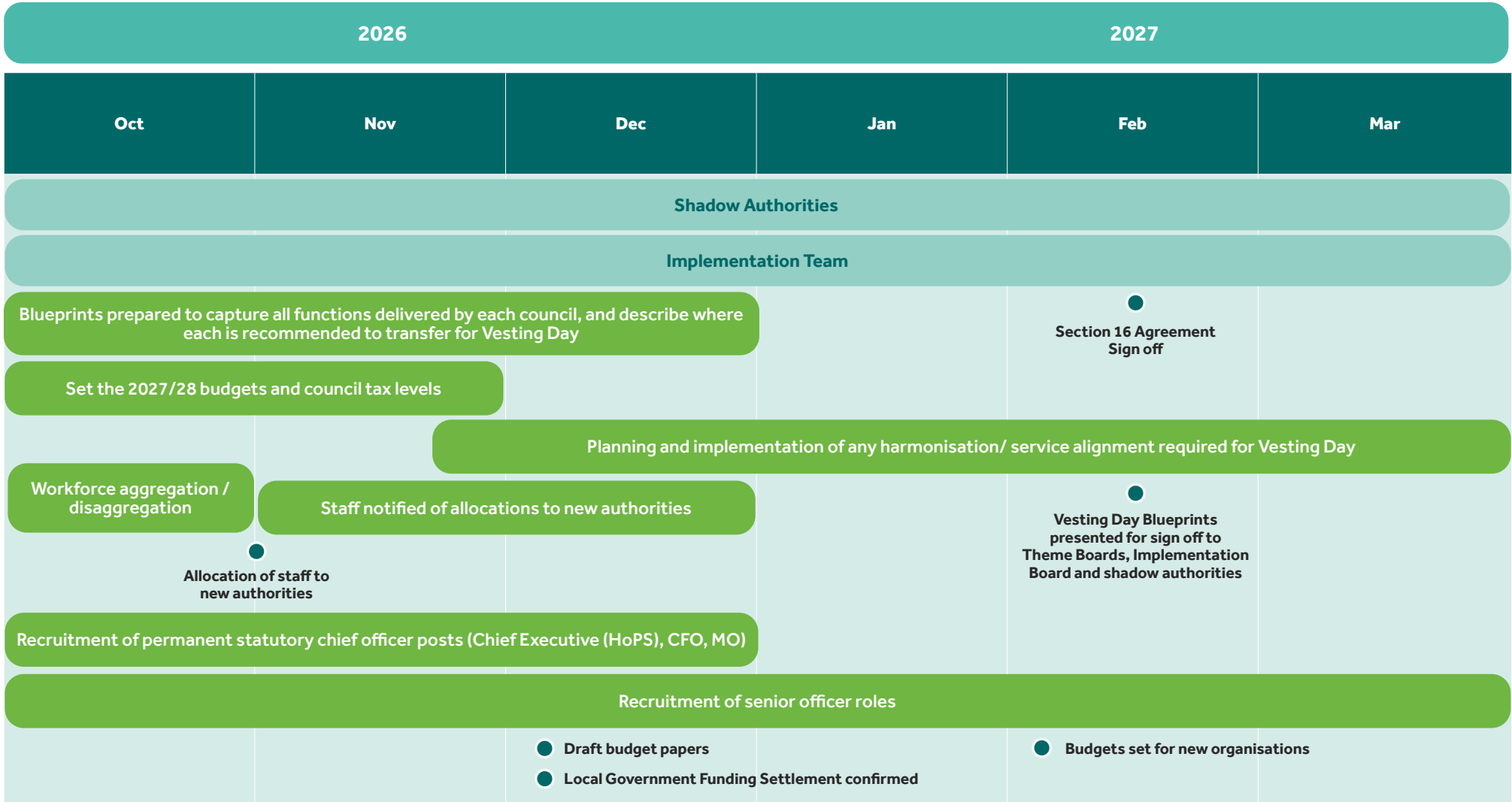
Phase 2: Budget and Service Planning

2026

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
Shadow Authorities				
Implementation Team				
Elections and Establishment of shadow authorities		Section 24 direction		
Disaggregation, aggregation, shared and hosted services options explored				
Blueprints prepared to capture all functions delivered by each council, and describe where each is recommended to transfer for Vesting Day				
		Interim draft Council Plans developed		Formal agreement of council plans for Vesting Day
Disaggregation of SCC Balance Sheet				
	District and borough workforce transition process: consultation and notifications			
Designation of interim Statutory Officer posts, East & West Surrey (Chief Executive (HoPS), CFO, MO)	Recruitment of permanent statutory chief officer posts (Chief Executive (HoPS), CFO, MO)			
Set the 2027/28 budgets and council tax levels				



Phase 3: Preparation for Transition to Day 1



Stabilisation

2027

Apr

May

Jun

Vesting Day

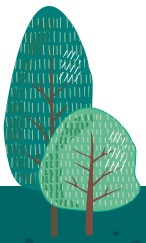
East and West Surrey

- Formal establishment of unitary councils (East Surrey and West Surrey)

Transformation and integration

- Council Plans come into force

Preparation of budget books, upload budgets to systems



Democratic and Programme Governance Arrangements

Overall Context (Structural Changes Order)

The Surrey (Structural Changes) Order 2026 (SCO) provides for the abolition of the existing county and district councils in Surrey on 1 April 2027 and establishes East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council as the new unitary authorities.

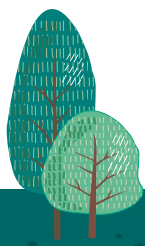
In accordance with the transitional arrangements set out in the SCO, the existing (“predecessor”) councils remain the statutory authorities until Vesting Day and therefore continue to be responsible for the lawful delivery of their functions throughout the transition period.

The SCO also establishes governance and preparatory structures - including Joint Committees, an implementation team, and subsequently the shadow authorities—that are intended to support coordinated preparations for the transfer of functions, rights, liabilities, staff, assets, contracts and governance arrangements to the new councils on 1 April 2027. These bodies undertake preparatory activity on behalf of, and with the involvement of, the predecessor councils, as set out in the SCO and accompanying government guidance.

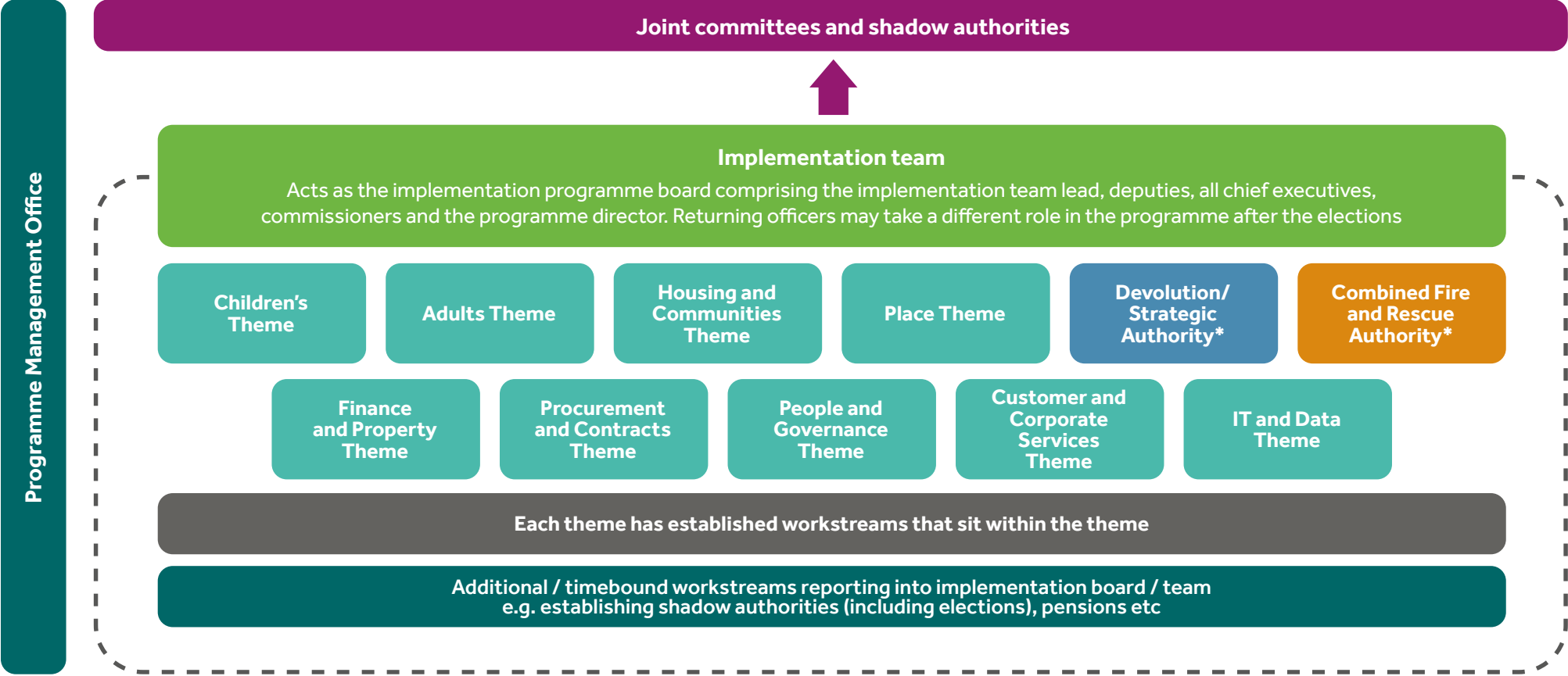
How the relationship works:

- Elected members, through the voluntary Joint Committees, then the formal Joint Committees and subsequently the shadow authorities, provide oversight and scrutiny to ensure all necessary elements transfer appropriately to the new unitary councils
- The D&LGR Programme structures the work required to meet the statutory duty, and the Implementation Team delivers that work in practice under the SRO

This separation ensures clarity between legal responsibility, democratic accountability and operational delivery, which is central to achieving a safe and lawful transition.



Surrey Devolution and LGR Implementation Programme Structure and Governance

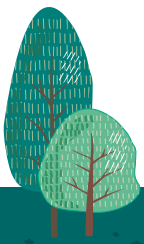
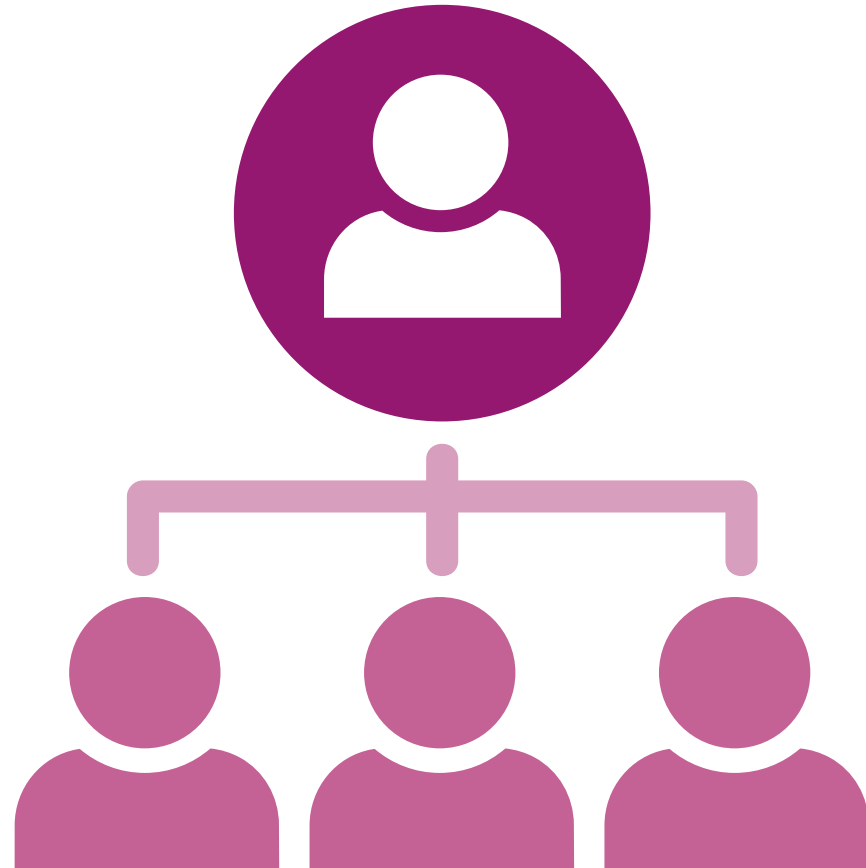


*Timeline to be agreed with MHCLG



Programme Structure and Governance

- Programme design and delivery overseen by implementation programme board, chaired by the Chief Executive of Surrey County Council (as the implementation team lead and senior responsible officer (SRO)).
- Membership includes all chief executives of current authorities, theme sponsors (where these are not chief executives), commissioners from Spelthorne and Woking Councils and the programme director. It is likely that, once appointed, the interim heads of paid service will also join the team.
- Work is organised into thematic areas - intended to support effective programme governance and delivery, not infer a future structure for the councils.
- Each theme is sponsored by a chief executive or senior officer of one of the current councils and supported by a series of workstream/SME (subject matter expertise) leads who co-ordinate working groups involving subject matter experts from each of the councils (where appropriate and as needed).
- The Programme Management Office (PMO) coordinate programme governance, planning, and delivery assurance. The PMO is overseen by the programme director.



Programme - Themes and Workstreams

Adults

- Legislative Compliance
- Health and Care, Marking Shaping and Management
- Adults, Wellbeing and Partnerships Enabling Services

Children's

- Service Delivery
- Information Management
- Commissioning and Partnership Working
- Enabling Services

Education also sits within this them

Housing and Communities

- Housing And Homelessness (HRA and Non-HRA)
- Leisure, Cultural Services and Libraries (inc. Registrations and Coroners)

- Communities, Wellbeing and Engagement
- Community Safety

Place

- Highways and Transport
- Waste, StreetScene and Environment
- Planning and Building control
- Regulatory Services
- Economy, Growth and Regeneration

Finance and Property

- Finance
- Land, Property and Assets
- Companies
- Revenues and Benefits
- Housing Revenue Accounts

Pensions also sits within this theme

Procurement and Contracts

- Vesting
- Governance
- People and Structure

People and Governance

- People, Workforce and Culture
- Governance Services
- Constitutional and Shadow Authority*

Customer and Corporate Services

- Customer Services including Websites and Digital Services
- Corporate Support Services (including strategy and policy, transformation, performance management, leadership support, EDI etc)
- Emergency Management and Resilience
- Communications, Branding and Engagement

IT and Data

- System Mapping and Day One Requirements
- Tech Fundamentals
- Architecture
- Systems
- Data
- IT and D as a service

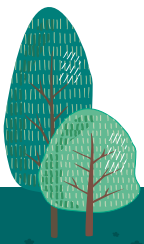
Devolution/ Strategic Authority

Preparations in anticipation of devolution and the creation of a (Mayoral) Strategic Authority

Fire and Rescue

Preparations in anticipation of creating a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority (currently an SCC function)

*A timebound workstream has been set-up to prepare for the establishment of the shadow authorities
N.B. There are several dependencies that have been identified that Theme sponsors will work through together



Role of the Implementation Team

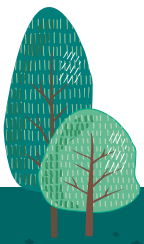
Drives day-to-day officer leadership for executing the implementation plan to transition to the new authorities.

This includes:

- Providing a **Programme Management Office** and supporting officer governance to initially prepare the **implementation plan**
- Working towards **day 1 readiness** for the new unitary councils to function from Vesting Day
- Supporting **appointments to leadership roles** in the new authorities
- Managing **aggregation and disaggregation of services**
- Identifying and managing **risks**
- Supporting **governance and legal processes**

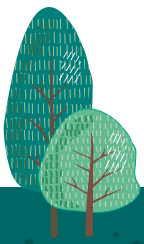
Officers appointed to the implementation team are **senior officers with the expertise and experience required** for the appropriate oversight of a safe and legal LGR transition.

Implementation team members form the **Implementation Programme Board**.



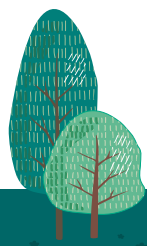
Implementation Team (Programme Board) Membership

Role - implementation team	Officer and current authority role
Lead, Chair and Senior Responsible Officer	Terence Herbert, Chief Executive, Surrey County Council
Deputy (West)	Nick Steevens, Chief Executive, Surrey Heath Borough Council
Deputy (East)	Adam Chalmers, Chief Executive, Elmbridge Borough Council
Sponsor - Adults Theme	Claire Edgar, Executive Director Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships (DASS), Surrey County Council
Sponsor - Children's Theme	Rachael Wardell, Executive Director Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (DCS), Surrey County Council
Sponsor - Customer and Corporate Services Theme	Jackie King, Chief Executive, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Sponsor - Finance and Property Theme	Andy Brown, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director Resources (and Section 151 Officer), Surrey County Council
Sponsor - Housing and Communities Theme	David Ford, Chief Executive, Tandridge District Council
Sponsor - IT and Data Theme	Pedro Wrobel, Chief Executive, Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils
Sponsor - People and Governance Theme	Karen Brimacombe, Chief Executive, Mole Valley District Council



Implementation Team (Programme Board) Membership / Continued

Role - implementation team	Officer and current authority role
Sponsor – Procurement and Contracts Theme	Terry Collier, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, Spelthorne Borough Council
Sponsor – Place Theme	Owen Jenkins, Executive Director Place, Surrey County Council
Returning Officer, Deputy Sponsor Place and Shadow Authority Workstream Lead	Mari Roberts-Wood, Chief Executive, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
Returning Officer and Deputy Sponsor Place	Andrew Pritchard, Chief Executive, Runnymede Borough Council
Commissioner (Woking) and Sponsor – Devolution / Strategic Authority Theme	Richard Carr, Chief Executive/Managing Director Commissioner, Woking Borough Council
Sponsor – Combined Fire and Rescue Authority	Dan Quin, Executive Director Community Protection and Emergencies (Chief Fire Officer) Surrey County Council
Commissioner (Woking)	Sir Tony Redmond, Lead Commissioner, Woking Borough Council
Commissioner (Spelthorne)	Lesley Seary, Commissioner, Spelthorne Borough Council
Programme Director	Nicola Kilvington, Programme Director (Devolution and LGR), Surrey County Council



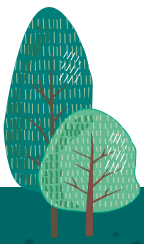
Implementation Team Roles

SRO Terence Herbert (SCC)	Deputy (East) Adam Chalmers (D and B)	Deputy (West) Nick Steevens (D and B)	Returning Officer (East) Mari Roberts-Wood (D and B)*#	Returning Officer (West) Andrew Pritchard (D and B)#
Adults Claire Edgar (SCC) Deputy sponsor: Sarah Kershaw (SCC)	Children's Rachael Wardell (SCC) Deputy sponsor: Suzanne Smith (SCC)	Housing and Communities David Ford (D and B)	Place Owen Jenkins (SCC) Deputies as above	Finance and Property Andy Brown (SCC) Deputy sponsor: Rachel Wigley (SCC)
Procurement and Contracts Terry Collier (D and B) Deputy sponsor: Darron Cox (SCC)	People and Governance Karen Brimacombe (D and B)	Customer and Corporate Services Jackie King (D and B) Deputy sponsor: Mike Stringer (SCC)	IT and Data Pedro Wrobel (D and B) Deputy sponsor: Liz Mills (SCC)	Strategic Authority Richard Carr (D and B)
Combined Fire and Rescue Authority Dan Quin (SCC)	Commissioner (Woking) Sir Tony Redmond	Commissioner (Spelthorne) Lesley Seary	Programme Director Nicola Kilvington	*Workstream lead - shadow authorities #Also co-deputy theme sponsor - Place

Supported by John Metcalfe, MHCLG Senior Sector Advisor

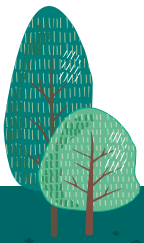
Key Roles and Responsibilities in the Programme (1)

Role	Responsibilities
Implementation team lead (SRO and chair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the implementation team/board operates efficiently and within its agreed terms of reference • Lead board meetings effectively, ensuring clear agendas and productive discussions, facilitate consensus-building among members and resolve conflicts constructively • Act as a visible leader for change, promoting cultural and behavioural shifts required for successful implementation • Provide direction on critical decisions impacting programme delivery and hold theme sponsors accountable for delivery of workstreams within their areas • Be the senior point of contact for key stakeholders, including government officials • Ultimate decision-maker for the programme, accountable for delivery • During periods of planned or unplanned absence for the SRO, the Deputy Chief Executive of Surrey County Council will stand in as acting SRO
Deputies (West and East)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports implementation team lead with political engagement and management relating to the programme in their geographic area • Ensures respective locality issues and opportunities are reflected in the programme's activity • Supports theme sponsors to mediate, resolve conflict and unblock issues in respective areas • Leads projects as requested by the implementation team lead and acts as their deputy as agreed / required
Programme Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic oversight and direction of the programme • Senior stakeholder management – internal and external • Assurance into/direction from implementation team • Accountable to SRO re. progress, risks and benefits • Leads the programme management office (PMO)



Key Roles and Responsibilities in the Programme (2)

Role	Responsibilities
Theme sponsor (one per theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic figurehead for the theme, provides leadership and strategic steer • Accountable to the implementation team and ultimately accountable for the theme • Ensures and agrees plans including critical success factors, deliverables, resources and risks as they apply to the theme • Mediates, resolves conflicts and unblocks • Route for escalation and decision making • Representative for the theme and not for their current council • Accountable for budget / costs related to the theme
Workstream lead (likely to be multiple per theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Director / Director / Head of Service who leads workstream representing all councils (as required) and related delivery of "safe and legal", accountable to the theme sponsor and feeds into strategic theme lead • Takes accountability for setting and delivering plan, objectives and deliverables of their specific workstream including the development of relevant blueprints • Responsible for successfully implementing change and embedding without negative operational impact within their specific workstream • Manages any budget associated with the workstream, ensuring in accordance with finance best practice and policies • Identifies any risks or issues within the project areas, including those which may impact on delivery
SMEs (likely to be multiple per theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides area/functional expertise and responsible for specific priority areas and delivery in the workstream • Provides progress reports to the workstream lead, identifies any risks or issues • Works across the system and with other SMEs and programme managers • Manages the production and delivery of the required deliverables • Reports to the relevant areas ensuring the direction of project(s)

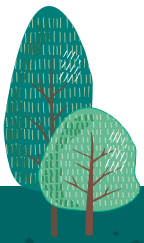


LGR Scrutiny Approach

Until May 2026 shadow authority elections, scrutiny oversight of LGR implementation planning by current councils will be via existing scrutiny functions (January to May 2026)

From May 2026, following the Shadow Authority elections, until Vesting Day in April 2027, existing councils' scrutiny functions will continue to scrutinise current councils' service performance, and transition risk issues will be incorporated into their work programmes. Where appropriate, intelligence will be passed on to the shadow authorities.

Following the Shadow Authority elections, scrutiny of implementation planning will be undertaken by shadow overview and scrutiny committees. Their role is to check and challenge the shadow executives/cabinets, with a focus on risk management, and to scrutinise implementation plans and other key strategies and policies, such as the constitution and medium-term financial plans.



Implementation Phase

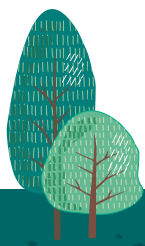
Approach to Risk Management (Programme Assurance)

The programme will operate under an assurance framework agreed across all the themes.

This will be based on the best practice approach to risk and issue management which is: identify, assess, treat, monitor and report. The framework will provide structured reporting cycles, clear escalation routes, and strengthened oversight. Programme-level and key theme risks and issues will be reviewed by the Implementation Programme Board, made up of all Chief Executives, Commissioners, and the Programme Director, supported by regular PMO assessments, to identify emerging issues and risks, ensure appropriate mitigation, and escalate as appropriate. These arrangements will provide collective oversight and offer assurance that risks and issues are being actively monitored and managed.

Regular reporting will capture key risk and issue movement and decisions for officer governance groups, including Theme Boards and the Implementation Programme Board. This will ensure senior stakeholders maintain clear visibility of the programme's risk position and take steps to manage risks as appropriate.

The programme will use a standard risk-scoring matrix where each risk is assessed by multiplying its likelihood and impact to produce a current risk score. This score helps prioritise risks and will inform where support or intervention needs to be targeted. Theme Boards will be expected to review these scores regularly with risk owners to ensure assessments remain accurate, reflect any changes in context, and support timely mitigation and decision-making.

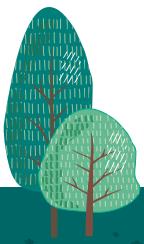


Risk Categorisation

It is necessary to make a distinction between the different types of risks being captured as responsibility for managing these risks sits with different owners.

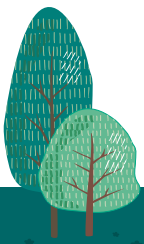
Risks are identified through the programme risk approach but managed through different governance and accountability arrangements:

- **Programme delivery and transition risks** relate to governance, capacity, dependencies and delivery of statutory milestones and are managed through programme controls and assurance in order to support delivery of the new unitary councils.
- **New Authority Risks** concern readiness, financial sustainability, workforce and skills distribution, systems availability and service continuity. These may be identified through the programme but will sit with the shadow authorities for management. One of the key risks within this will be the risk to the West Surrey Unitary to set a balanced budget, linked to the debt position in West Surrey.
- **Risks to existing councils** relate to maintaining governance, financial stability and service delivery during the transition year and remain managed through existing councils' corporate risk frameworks. For any current council risk identified through the programme, the relevant Chief Executive of that organisation will be engaged in discussions.



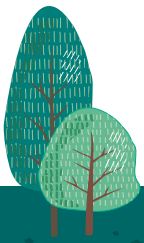
Top 5 Risks for the programme (April 2026)

Risk	Risk Score (Likelihood 1-5 x Impact 1-5)	Key Existing Management Controls
<p>Programme: There is a risk that there is insufficient capacity across the programme where staff are unable to deliver both their existing BAU workload as well as activities for D&LGR, this could impact delivery of the programme due to insufficient resources.</p>	<p>20 Likelihood = 4 Impact = 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMO, Themes, and Finance teams jointly prioritising resource requests, developing detailed implementation plans, and monitoring budgets, while the PMO and Implementation Programme Board conduct regular reviews of resource commitments and expenditure. • D&LGR implementation is being strengthened through expert engagement and guidance from prior D&LGR councils and MHCLG. • Service performance management will continue through the Performance Assurance Frameworks within each council. • Regular D&LGR risk updates to the Implementation Programme Board. • Regular meetings with MHCLG in place to track progress. • Funding agreed amongst all councils for D&LGR. • External capacity and expert support to be considered in exceptional circumstances. • D&LGR Implementation is being strengthened through engagement and guidance from councils that have implemented local government reorganisation such as Cumbria.



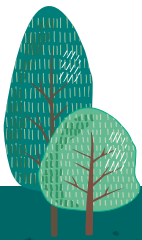
Top 5 Risks for the programme (April 2026) / Continued

Risk	Risk Score (Likelihood 1-5 x Impact 1-5)	Key Existing Management Controls
<p>Programme: There is a risk that the financial costs associated with D&LGR Implementation are higher than the Implementation fund of £35m, impacting programme delivery or leading to increased costs</p>	<p>20 Likelihood = 4 Impact = 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCC's Final Plan set out anticipated costs of D&LGR implementation. Councils agreed a £35m Implementation Fund, with £11.2m already committed; the latest forecast of £35.2m as of 24 March reflects agreed commitments and estimated costs submitted by Themes and PMO, however some themes have indicated that their forecasts are incomplete and anticipate further costs to be needed. This will be clearer once scoping is completed and additional resource needs are identified. • Applying learning from other areas to inform the budget-management approach. • Implementation Fund established with active budget monitoring to identify potential costs early and support decision-making. • Financial authorisation process in place through the SRO / Implementation Programme Board. • Joint Committees and shadow authorities receive regular budget-monitoring reports. • Strengthened financial challenge and assurance is being applied, requiring each Theme to justify requests through prioritisation, evidence, and clear resourcing options, supported by 1:1 review sessions with the SRO and Finance Sponsor. This approach ensures only essential, safe-and-legal activity is funded and that credible trade-offs are identified to remain within the programme's affordability limits.



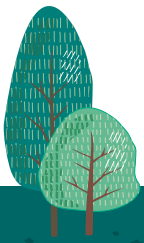
Top 5 Risks for the programme (April 2026) / Continued

Risk	Risk Score (Likelihood 1-5 x Impact 1-5)	Key Existing Management Controls
<p>IT and Data Theme: There is a risk that delays or misalignment with the TUPE timeline across any of the councils will prevent staff from being set up under the correct East or West authority tenancies. This may lead to incorrect or late access configuration and could disrupt service continuity across organisations.</p>	<p>20 Likelihood = 4 Impact = 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish interim user mapping based on current structure • TUPE is not determined until October 2026; however, work can progress for any location-based staff



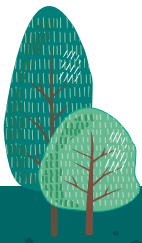
Top 5 Risks for the programme (April 2026) / Continued

Risk	Risk Score (Likelihood 1-5 x Impact 1-5)	Key Existing Management Controls
<p>Fire and Rescue Theme: There is a risk that continued delays in MHCLG decisions regarding Fire and Rescue Governance During the devolution and local government reorganisation (D&LGR) process may occur, which could lead to insufficient time for the MHCLG-led consultation to take place, resulting in slippage to statutory decision-making, potential non-compliance with required timelines, and impacts on the overall transition programme's ability to implement the agreed governance model.</p>	<p>20 Likelihood = 4 Impact = 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine communication updates circulated to key governance stakeholders, helping maintain awareness and alignment on what is required and when. • A clear, time-bound schedule showing key decision points. - Strengthened engagement with MHCLG, with regular meetings in place. • Seeking confirmation of MHCLG timescales for the FSA, which remains a key dependency.



Top 5 Risks for the programme (April 2026) / Continued

Risk	Risk Score (Likelihood 1-5 x Impact 1-5)	Key Existing Management Controls
<p>IT and Data Theme: There is a risk that contracts do not permit system hosting, leading to limited technical options and potential transition delays.</p>	<p>16 Likelihood = 4 Impact = 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking early assessment of contracts and drawing on the necessary technical expertise to identify issues promptly and ensure informed, timely decision-making.



Finance

The following section sets out a high-level summary of the approach to managing the financial and budget setting aspects of the transition. A full outline of this aspect of the programme is included in the Finance Annex.

1. Core Strategic Objective

Deliver safe, legal and financially sustainable new East and West Surrey Councils by Vesting Day (1 April 2027), including:

- Setting balanced and lawful 2027/28 budgets for both new authorities ahead of vesting day.
- Ensuring proper financial administration, controls and governance are fully operational from day one.

2. Budget Setting and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Disaggregate Surrey County Council's 2026/27 budget and aggregate district and borough budgets to create opening baselines for each new authority:

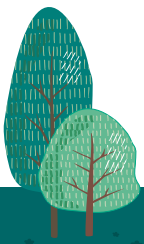
- Coordinate 2027/28 revenue and capital budgets.
- Calculate and inform funding splits and Council Tax harmonisation principles, for agreement by the shadow authorities.

- Disaggregate and aggregate opening balance sheets, including assets, liabilities, reserves and Capital Financing Requirement.
- Develop Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), for agreement by the shadow authorities.

3. Financial Governance and Control Framework

Once appointed, the S151 Officers will be embedded into all key decision-making structures.

- Draft and agree Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and governance arrangements for unitaries, which will include Commercial entities and Charitable trusts.
- Ensure robust systems of internal control, including workflows, segregation of duties, compliance checks and budget accountability.



Finance / Continued

4. Systems, Processes and Operational Readiness

- Ensure minimum requirements for all core financial systems are communicated to the IT Theme for Vesting Day, including:
- General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, income collection, bank accounts, cash management and consolidation processes.
- Ensure continuity of:
 - » Accounts Payable, BACS processing, supplier management and fraud prevention controls.
 - » Accounts Receivable, invoicing, debt recovery and statutory reporting.
 - » Income Collection.
- Put in place staffing arrangements to secure continuity of service for above critical activities through transition.

5. Treasury, Insurance and Taxation

- Establish new bank accounts and bank reconciliation processes for new councils, including ongoing reconciliations of legacy accounts.
- Ensure ongoing access to borrowing, investments (including money market funds and other treasury investment accounts) and cashflow forecasting.
- Novate existing borrowing to new entities.

- Re-procure insurance policies, undertake risk reviews and ensure insurance claims-handling activity continuity.
- Manage VAT transition: close old registrations, create new ones, complete final and initial returns, renew Options to Tax and address partial exemption impacts.

6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- Create legally compliant and financially sustainable HRAs for East and West Surrey.
- Consolidate multiple existing HRAs in West Surrey; transfer Tandridge's HRA into East Surrey.
- Coordinate 2027/28 HRA revenue budgets and capital programmes and develop 30-year HRA Business Plans.
- Harmonise assumptions (rent, inflation, interest rates, voids, Right To Buy, etc.).
- Develop consolidated HRA debt strategies.

7. Revenues and Benefits

- Prepare statutory documents to enable 2027/28 Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) setting.
- Ensure systems, processes and data enable compliant billing across transition.
- Calculate Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit awards in early 2027.



Finance / Continued

8. Audit and Assurance

- Inform external audit arrangements (Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) framework).
- Ensure external audit plans in place for new authorities.
- Decide on internal audit operating model and appoint Chief Internal Auditor.
- Develop Internal Audit Plans for approval before Vesting Day.
- Address significant assurance risks, particularly Value For Money issues and historic audit backlogs in several District and Borough councils.
- Coordinate outstanding external audit actions and put in place plans for achieving these in the new unitaries.

9. Major Strategic Financial Considerations

- **Woking Debt:** Ongoing Government support remains essential; West Surrey must manage the relationship and assurance requirements.
- **Spelthorne:** Outstanding asset rationalisation, revised MRP policy and improving financial governance must be incorporated into West Surrey planning.

• Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):

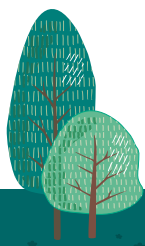
- » High Needs Block cumulative deficit at March 2026 expected to be largely cleared via Government Stability Grant, but any 2026/27 in-year deficit will need allocating between the new authorities.
- » Requirement to establish two Shadow Schools Forums for 2026/27.

10. Implementation Costs and Funding

- Estimated £35.3m pre-vesting implementation cost, funded 80% by SCC and 20% by districts and boroughs via LGR implementation fund..
- Expenditure will be governed through a Memorandum of Understanding and overseen by the Joint Committees and shadow authorities.
- Post-vesting costs will fall to the two new councils and will need to form part of the budget setting process for 2027/28 onwards.

11. Section 24 Direction

- A Section 24 Direction will apply from early July 2026, requiring predecessor councils to secure approval from the relevant shadow authority before entering into significant capital or revenue commitments.
- A scheme of delegation and a list of General Consents will need to be agreed to ensure business continuity and avoid operational blockages.



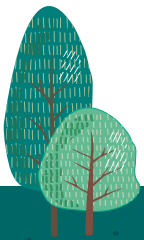
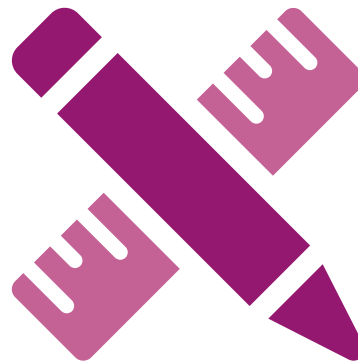
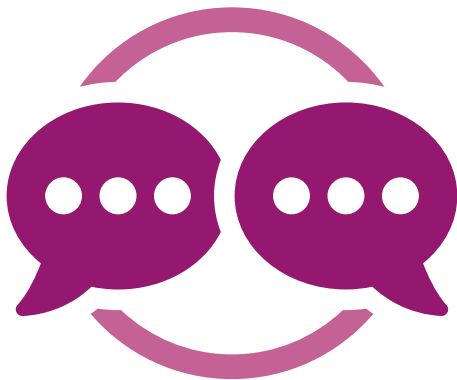
Communications, Branding and Engagement

Communications, branding and engagement is vital to support the smooth delivery of devolution and local government reorganisation. It can help set the tone for the new councils by building trust and providing clarity around change.

Any change programme of this scale must have people at its heart to be successful, understanding that we all respond differently to change. People need to understand what is happening, what it means for them, and what is expected of them. The communications function needs to share this information transparently and consistently, answering any questions along the way.

Communications is a specialist service that uses many varied tactics and channels, it is vital for mitigating risk, but can introduce risk when not structured and delivered properly, with the appropriate planning and oversight. The communications, branding and engagement workstream is therefore embedded in the core Programme Management Office and within the workstreams to ensure consistency and mitigate risk, and also to co-ordinate interdependencies with other workstreams.

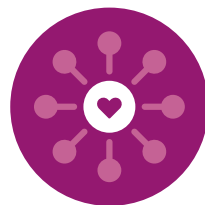
Communications activity will be based on insight from key audiences and evaluated regularly to continually improve and adapt to best service residents.



Communications Objectives



We will provide a **clear** and **consistent narrative** and deliver a robust internal and external communications strategy to manage the devolution and local government reorganisation transition in the best interests of residents, staff, councillors and partners.



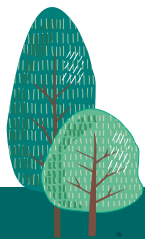
We will ensure **transparency, responsiveness, and meaningful engagement** with communities at a local level to strengthen trust.



Our activities will ensure all audiences **understand** the programme and have an opportunity to **engage**, in order to **build confidence** and to **support the transition to East and West councils**, and to maintain **momentum**.



We will support services and Implementation Themes and Workstreams to communicate change and **service updates** with key audiences, including staff, to **end councils well** and ensure a smooth transition on Vesting Day and beyond.



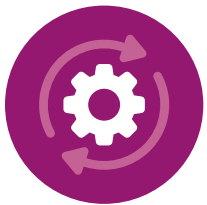
Communications Objectives / Continued



We will work with Shadow Authority leads to create, **agree and implement branding** for new authorities.



We will **celebrate** all organisations respectively by looking at the history with a focus on key moments, memories and shared experiences.



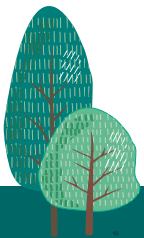
We will **transition communications services** into the new authority structures, including **safe and legal** requirements for emergency communications, branding, and channel creation and transition.



We will set the **tone** for the new councils by building trust **and providing clarity around change**, in a way that acknowledges and understands that people react to change in different ways.



We will provide **reassurance** on the **continuity of services** throughout the implementation phase and continue to signpost residents to Surrey County Council and their local district and borough for support until April 2027.



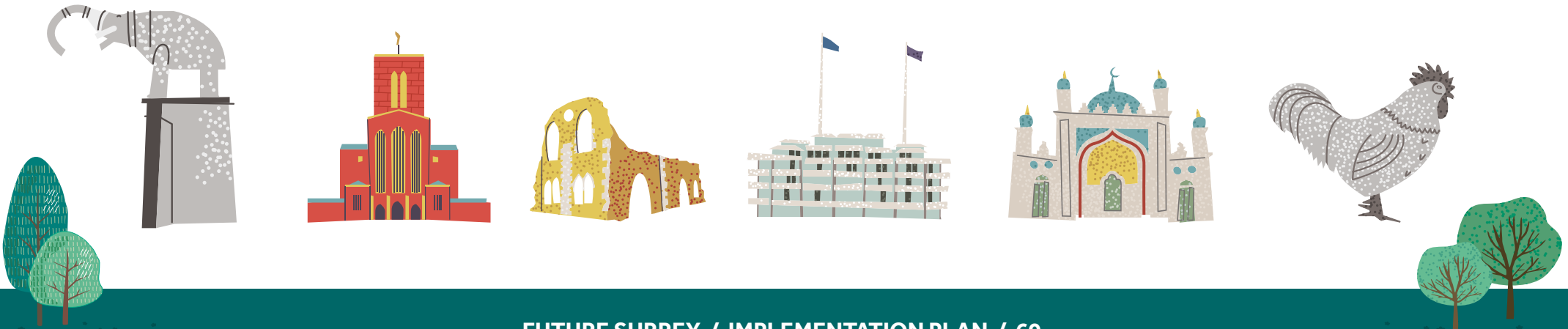
Communicating with One Voice - Future Surrey

D&LGR is a complex programme, involving thousands of people. It's important that we communicate updates with staff, residents, members, businesses, partners and communities in a clear and consistent way.

Therefore, the 'Future Surrey' interim identity has been developed by all councils.

The Future Surrey identity indicates a trusted source and that information is being communicated on behalf of all 12 councils about D&LGR – one vision and one voice.

The temporary Future Surrey identity will be recognisable to everyone. It will explain the transition, but it's important to note that this won't be the branding for the future organisations. This will be agreed with the Shadow Authorities ahead of Vesting Day (1 April 2027).



Communications approach

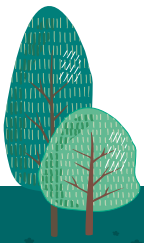
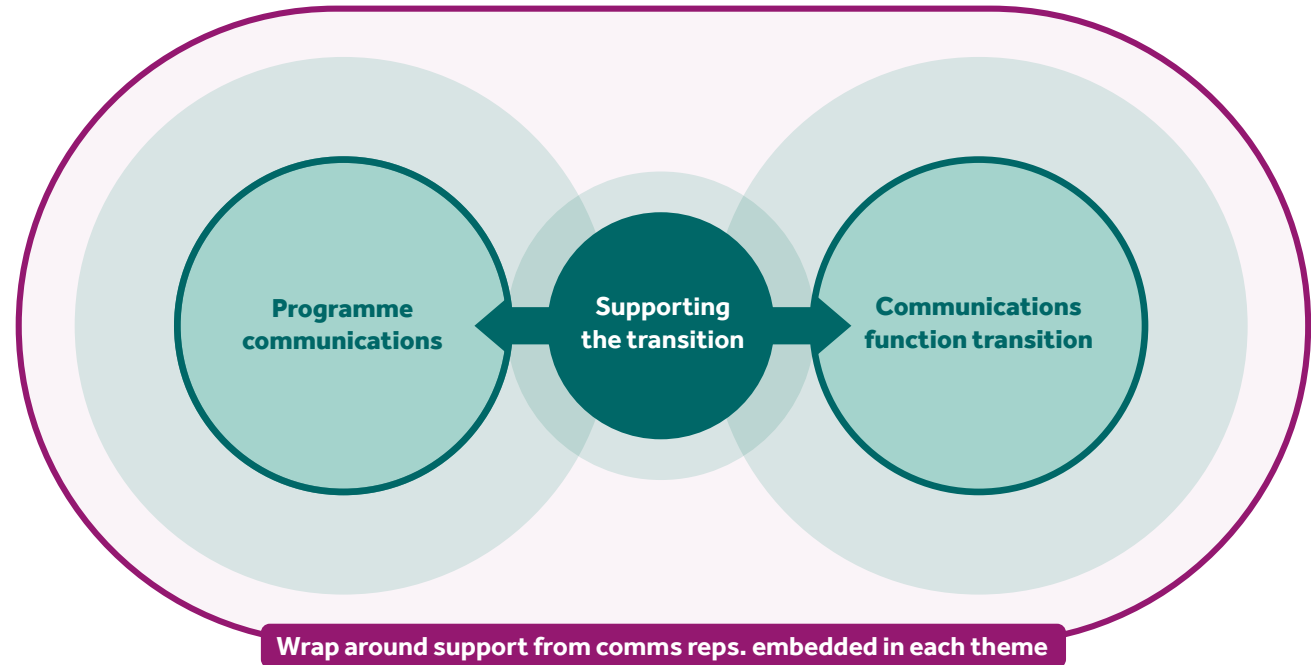
The communications, branding and engagement workstream has two core roles:

Programme communications

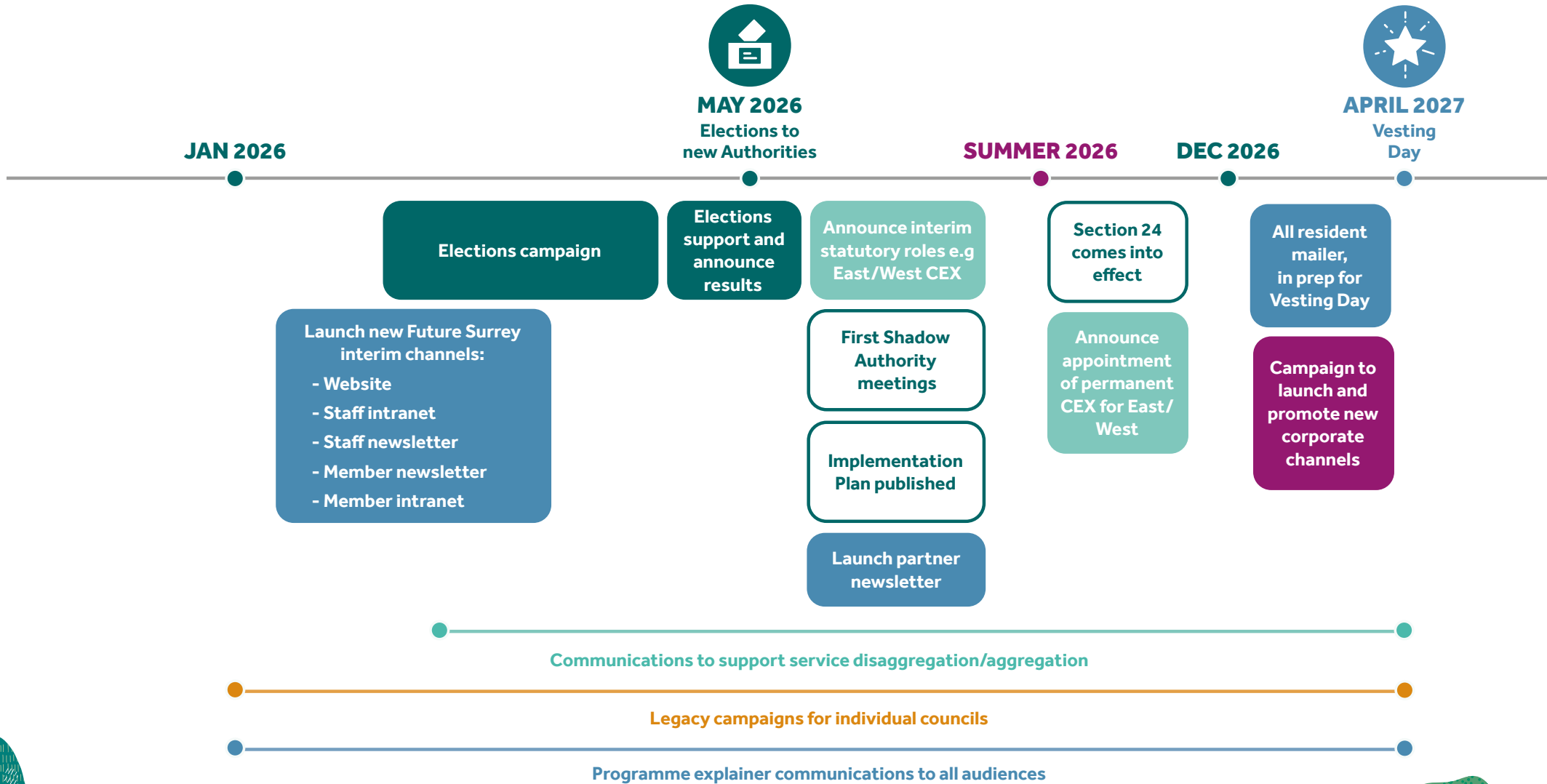
Explaining what devolution and local government reorganisation is and providing updates on programme progress, with tailored support to themes and workstreams to help achieve respective safe and legal requirements.

Function transition work

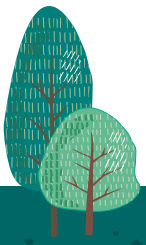
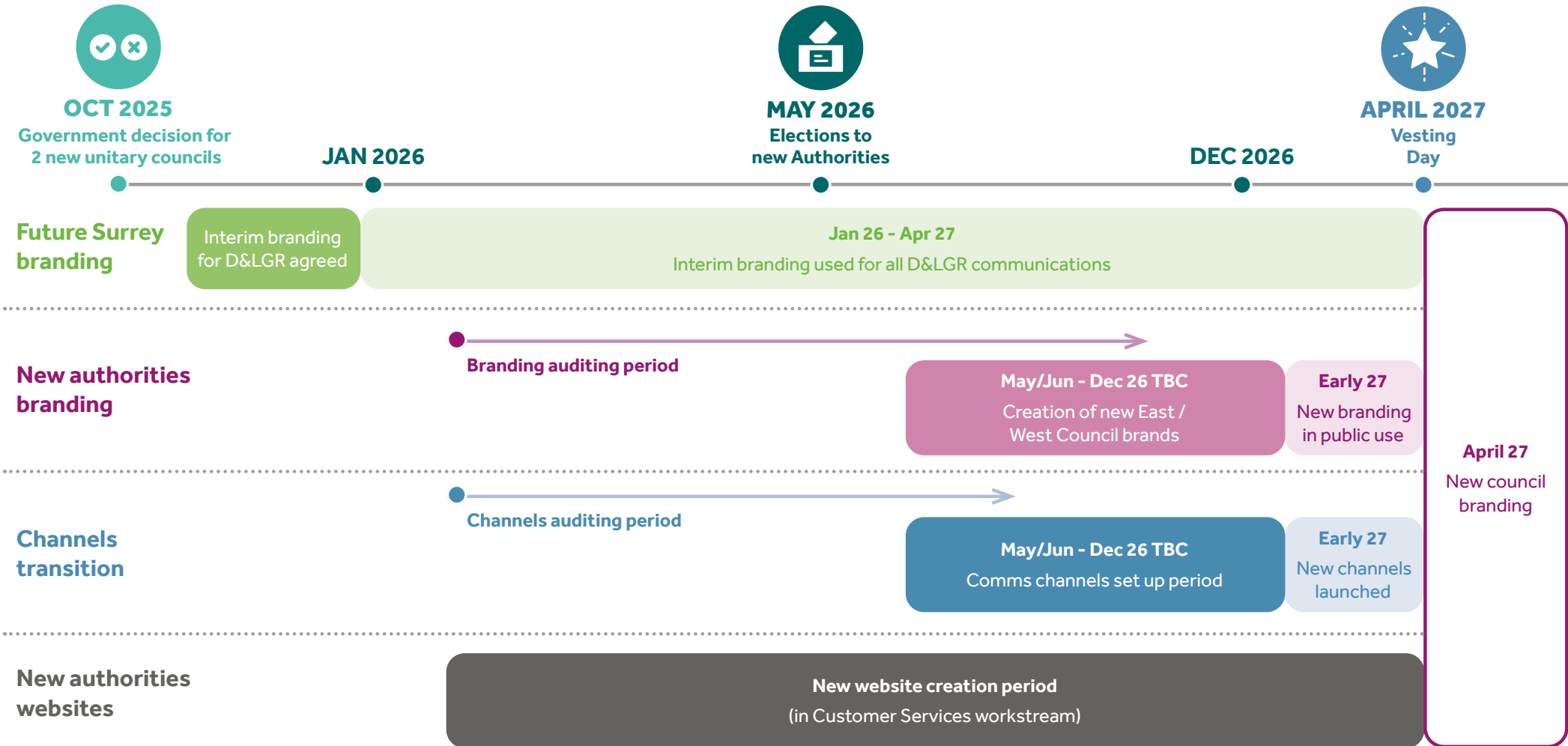
Creating brands and communications channels (such as newsletters and social media) for the new authorities.



Programme communications milestones



Communications function transition milestones



Audiences

Key deliverables for communicating with residents and staff

Staff



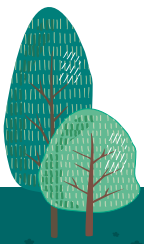
- Monthly newsletter for staff from all Surrey councils (digital and print)
- Intranet for staff from all Surrey councils
- Video content
- Printed materials e.g. posters, leaflets
- Briefings for front line staff
- Existing internal communications channels in individual organisations
- Opportunities for key leadership visibility and staff interaction

Residents



- Future Surrey website
- Social media, via existing council channels
- Newsletters, via existing council channels
- Printed materials e.g. posters, leaflets
- Webinars and in-person events
- Media activity (press releases, briefings, interviews etc)

We will use feedback from residents and staff received via email, web form, social media, and word of mouth to shape communications outputs and frequently asked questions (FAQs).



Audiences - continued

Key deliverables for communicating with councillors and partners

Councillors

- Monthly newsletter for councillors from all Surrey councils
- Dedicated intranet for councillors from all Surrey councils
- Opt-in WhatsApp community
- Posters and pop-ups in councillor spaces
- Briefings

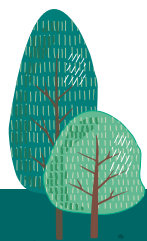


Partners

- Newsletter for strategic partners
- Website updates/FAQs on key topics relevant to partners
- Partner briefings facilitated by Programme Management Office
- Bespoke updates via service specific channels (where appropriate)



We will support councillors and partners to communicate about D&LGR to residents and service users by providing toolkits, fact sheets and FAQs linked to key milestones.



Engaging Our Communities

Community involvement will remain at the heart of local government. Residents will have the opportunity to shape communications about D&LGR through a representative customer panel. Insights colleagues across all councils will also produce a joint monthly monitoring report, so we can see what our audiences want to know about D&LGR.

These two mechanisms will be used to develop and shape local, place based narratives, which will be woven throughout our communications channels e.g. the Future Surrey website and social media activity. This will help ensure that the implementation of D&LGR matches the experience of our residents.

Throughout the implementation process, residents may also have the opportunity to participate in Strategic Authority consultations about structure and specific services.

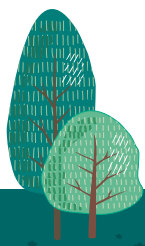
Outside of these formalised opportunities for engagement, residents are welcome to submit questions at any time about D&LGR using our dedicated web form.

The government also expect new councils to give communities more say through appropriate community governance arrangements.

In a letter to councils in June 2024, Minister for Local Government Jim McMahon emphasised the importance of localism and community participation, through accountable systems like Neighbourhood Area Committees (NAC). This was further expanded in the Government's English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill (March 2026), which sets out that local authorities in England must make appropriate arrangements to secure the effective governance of any area of a specified description that falls within the authority's area, requiring the carrying out of such activities for the purpose of ensuring local engagement with the neighbourhood area as may be specified.

Surrey County Council has trialled NACs in four pilot areas from July to December 2025, bringing together local councillors, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, health and police representatives, schools, businesses, and community groups to discuss priorities and drive collaborative action.

Feedback and insights from these pilot areas will be shared with the new shadow authorities to advise and support the development of effective community governance. This feedback will include different options based on key learnings from and evaluation of the NAC model. These recommendations will offer a strong foundation for future community governance arrangements and could be adopted or further developed by the new councils.



Accessibility Matters

To reflect the diversity of our residents, staff, members, partners, and businesses, we will share updates on a variety of communications channels.

Where appropriate, alternative formats will be offered, including Easy Read, large print and translated materials. Each respective council also offers customer service routes to accommodate a range of needs e.g. text phone or video relay service, and there will be in-person briefings and events.

In addition to digital communications, key milestones will be communicated using offline or print methods, such as posters, leaflets, and briefing documents for front line staff, who can answer questions from residents.

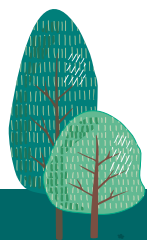
An Accessibility Statement will be developed on behalf of the programme and hosted on the Future Surrey website. The Communications, Branding and Engagement workstream have also developed a style guide document, for all Surrey council staff, to ensure that language used to describe D&LGR is accessible and consistent across the programme.

Communications officers will also work with subject matter experts across the programme to establish where bespoke communications may need to be developed e.g. to support partners to communicate to specific audiences about D&LGR.



Legacy Campaigns

As part of transition from the existing two-tier local authority system to two new unitary councils, it is important that all 12 existing councils end well. To support this, each organisation will develop and deliver their own legacy campaign. These campaigns will chronicle the history of each council, acknowledge their contribution to local communities, and celebrate successes. Each campaign will be council-specific with unique outputs.



Equality Analysis Approach

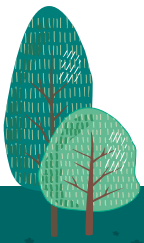
The D&LGR programme will carry out equality analysis that supports a safe and legal transition to the new unitary authorities, and ensure the programme complies with statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), with due regard given at the point decisions are developed and taken, and revisited where proposals materially change.

This programme is unique to Surrey in the breadth and scale of changes that cover structures, service delivery, workforce, governance and programme implementation. When considering these, the programme must have due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not
- Fostering good relations between different groups

Equality analysis, facilitated by Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), will be designed to deliver a fair, equitable and inclusive transition. This will support senior decision makers to observe the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. Integrating consideration of equality issues into thinking and delivery at every stage will enable monitoring and improve responsiveness to any emerging issues that could exacerbate risks to a safe and legal transition.

Not all decisions will require a full standalone EIA; however, all decisions within scope of the programme will include proportionate consideration of equality impacts, with EIAs undertaken where potential impacts are likely to be significant.



Equality Analysis Approach / Continued

EIAs will be completed for decisions in the D&LGR programme, as appropriate, where residents and staff are affected. Below are examples of scenarios where assessments could be required. A toolkit will be developed for programme staff to access.

Service changes affecting residents' experience, which could include:

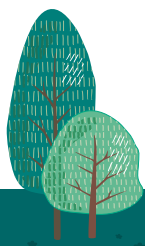
- Service transition approach (e.g. aggregation/disaggregation) - changes to eligibility, access or delivery models arising from D&LGR
- Budget setting for the new unitary councils
- Other policy and strategic choices affecting communities

Workforce and organisational changes, which could include:

- Moves under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations) to the new unitary councils
- Changes to working practices, locations or terms and conditions of employment

Programme implementation, which could include:

- Major procurement and contract decisions
- Decisions on estate: the buildings owned by the current councils



Equality Analysis Principles

The Programme will observe the following principles to equality analysis to ensure rigour, compliance and enable inclusive, positive changes for residents, businesses and council staff

Early integration - Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) should inform the development of options, not follow decisions

Streamlined - EIAs are a core part of wider programme documentation and processes

Proportionality - Depth should reflect scale, risk and potential impact of change

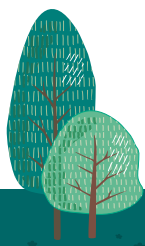
Iterative - EIAs are living documents; impacts and mitigations are regularly reviewed and monitored with EIAs updated as new information comes to light

Evidence-led - Drawing on the best available data and insight to develop equality analysis

Meaningful engagement - Inclusive engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. This will include engagement with recognised trade unions and staff representative groups to inform analysis and mitigations

Transparency - Publish assessments where appropriate to support accountability

Accountability - Responsibility for completing and maintaining EIAs will sit with decision owners, with oversight through established programme governance to ensure equality considerations inform recommendations and approvals.



Information Governance

Data Protection law requires organisations to integrate data protection considerations into every aspect of their processing activities – this is the “privacy by design” approach.

The devolution and local government reorganisation programme will be underpinned by a comprehensive and robust Information Governance (IG) approach, supported by subject matter experts from the councils involved, such as Senior Information Risk Owners (SIROs), Data Protection Officers (DPOs) and Caldicott Guardians, to ensure appropriate risk management and compliance throughout the transition.

The IG workstream (within the programme’s Customer and Corporate Services theme) will support the programme to follow established IG principles and processes, ensuring adherence to all relevant legislation and standards covering data protection, FOIs, SARs, information sharing, transparency and records management.

To ensure consistency and clarity, clear processes will be developed to guide staff through the IG considerations required for programme tasks, with signposting through the internal Future Surrey SharePoint site. Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) and data-flows will be considered in order to manage risk where processing is for

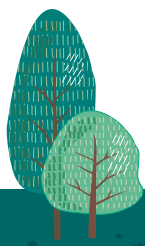
D&LGR specific reasons (e.g. TUPE, the Structural Changes Order), if it is new or novel, and involves personal or sensitive data.

New or updated privacy notices will be considered to ensure all data use associated with D&LGR is transparent, lawful and fit for purpose during transition, on Vesting Day, and beyond.

Guidance will be developed, including around the storing of all programme data within the Future Surrey SharePoint site, ensuring master document and version control, and appropriate long-term retention to support any future enquiries from residents, members and staff.

Revisions to the Surrey Multi-Agency Information Sharing Protocol (MAISP) are being considered, to facilitate forming the basis of information sharing between the new authorities and external partners. Services should also document existing data-sharing arrangements, for review and potential revision.

Together, these measures will provide a clear, consistent, well-governed and proactive framework, that offers assurance that information will be managed legally and safely across the D&LGR Programme and into the new unitary arrangements.



Implementation Plan Glossary

Abolition (of predecessor councils)

The legal closure of existing councils as part of local government reorganisation, when new councils are created to replace them.

Aggregation

Aggregation The process of transitioning equivalent or “like” services or functions from multiple councils alongside each other into a new authority.

Blueprints

Blueprints High-level documents that set out the component parts of services. In LGR, blueprints are used to record the detail of existing services within the predecessor councils, and to outline what will transition into the new councils.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO or CEX)

The most senior corporate, executive, or administrative officer responsible for managing an organisation, sometimes referred to as the Chief Executive.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

The senior officer responsible for a council's finances. They ensure the council sets a balanced budget and manages public money properly. This role is sometimes referred to as the Section 151 Officer.

Combined Fire and Rescue Authority

A separate body that oversees fire and rescue services across more than one council area.

Devolution

The transfer of powers and funding from central government to local government, enabling decisions to be made closer to local communities, residents, and businesses.

Devolution Framework

The structure that sets out the powers, responsibilities, and governance arrangements for different types of strategic authorities.

Devolution Priority Programme

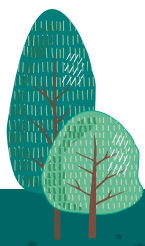
A government programme identifying areas ready to progress devolution at pace. Surrey is one of these areas.

Disaggregation

In the context of local government reorganisation (LGR), the process of separating and redistributing services, functions, resources, and data into the new authorities.

Districts and boroughs (D&Bs)

The 11 district and borough councils in Surrey that currently provide local services such as planning, housing and environmental health.



ERP (system)

An Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is a single, integrated software platform that brings together an organisation's main business processes and data in one place.

Established Mayoral Strategic Authority

A mature Mayoral Strategic Authority that meets eligibility criteria to access the full range of devolved powers and funding.

Fair Funding Review

A government review of how funding is distributed to local authorities. Its aim is to make funding fairer and more closely linked to local need. The outcome will affect how much money future councils receive.

Foundational / Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA)

A strategic authority available to areas without a directly elected mayor. An FSA may be a single upper-tier authority or multiple authorities and has limited devolved powers, such as acting as a Local Transport Authority. It does not provide access to mayoral powers or devolved funding.

Harmonisation

The process of aligning aspects of a service, such as opening hours, fees or policies, so they are consistent across a new organisation

Head of Paid Service (HoPS)

The most senior officer in a council, usually the Chief Executive. They are responsible for the overall management of the organisation and for ensuring staff are deployed appropriately.

Hosted Service

A service delivered by one successor unitary council on behalf of others, usually through Inter Authority Agreements (IAA).

Implementation Phase

The phase running from April 2026 to March 2027, during which the shadow arrangements are put in place in preparation for Vesting Day.

Implementation Plan

A legally required document setting out detailed plans and timetables for creating and preparing new unitary councils for go live.

Implementation Team

The group of officers from different councils working together to manage and deliver the reorganisation programme.

Inter Authority Agreements (IAA)

Legally binding agreements between public authorities defining how they will collaborate on services or projects, including responsibilities and financial arrangements.

Joint Committees (JCs)

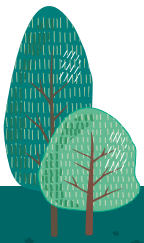
Committees made up of councillors from existing councils to manage specific tasks during the transition period. These may be voluntary.

Joint provision

Where two or more councils work together to deliver a service. During LGR, joint provision may be used to ensure services continue safely while new councils are being set up.

Legal

Ensuring that decision making and service delivery comply with statutory obligations, legislation, and good governance principles.



Local government reorganisation (LGR)

The process of changing how local government is structured, replacing county and district councils with unitary councils to improve outcomes, accountability, and value for money.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

The government department responsible for local government reorganisation and devolution.

Monitoring Officer (MO)

A statutory officer responsible for ensuring the council acts lawfully and follows proper governance arrangements. They also oversee the council's constitution and standards.

MRP Policy (Minimum Revenue Provision)

A council's policy for how it repays borrowing over time. It sets out how much money must be set aside each year to repay debt.

Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs)

Local partnership groups bringing together councils, partners, and community representatives to focus on neighbourhood priorities. Several NACs are currently in pilot in Surrey.

NNDR (National Non Domestic Rates)

Also known as business rates. This is a tax paid by businesses on commercial properties and forms part of local government funding.

Programme Management Office (PMO)

A team that supports planning, coordination, assurance, and delivery of the reorganisation programme.

PSAA framework (Public Sector Audit Appointments)

The national framework for appointing external auditors to councils, ensuring independent audit and value for money assessments.

Safe

Ensuring that organisational change does not increase risk to residents, staff, partners, or services. This includes safety, data security, financial stability, and operational continuity.

Safe and Legal Transition

The managed transfer of duties, assets, and liabilities from existing councils to new councils, ensuring continuity, compliance, and minimal risk.

Section 16

A provision in local government legislation that allows certain changes to council structures or governance.

Section 24 Direction

A legal restriction under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 that limits certain financial or contractual decisions by councils during reorganisation.

Section 151 Officer (S151)

The statutory chief financial officer of a local authority, responsible for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs.



Shadow Authority

A temporary council established before a new unitary council formally exists, responsible for preparing it for Vesting Day.

Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

The senior responsible officer is accountable for a programme or project meeting its objectives, delivering the projected outcomes and realising the required benefits within the policies set by ministers.

The senior responsible officer for devolution and local government reorganisation in Surrey is Terence Herbert, Chief Executive of Surrey County Council.

Strategic Authority

A category of devolved authority introduced through devolution legislation, responsible for overseeing strategic programmes such as transport, economic development, and health improvement.

Structural Changes Order (SCO)

The legal order that brings local government reorganisation into effect and sets out how it will be implemented.

Surrey County Council (SCC)

The county council that currently delivers county wide services such as education, highways and social care.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)

The county's fire and rescue service.

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE)

Regulations which protect employees' rights when they transfer to a new employer.

Two Tier Authority / Two Tier System

A local government structure where responsibilities are divided between county councils (for services such as education and adult social care) and district or borough councils (for services such as refuse collection and leisure). This is the current structure in Surrey.

Unitarisation

The process of merging existing councils into one or more unitary councils.

Unitary Authority

A single tier local government structure responsible for all local services in an area. This may cover a whole county, part of a county, or a large town or city.

Vesting Day

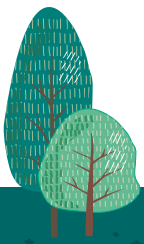
The date on which a new council legally comes into existence and takes responsibility for services. In Surrey, Vesting Day will be 1 April 2027.

VFM (Value for Money)

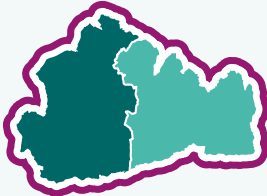
A term used to assess whether public services are being delivered economically, efficiently and effectively.

Workstreams

The specific areas of focus within the reorganisation programme's Themes, such as finance, systems, and communications.



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