An article by Tony Murphy

It is seen as an appropriate moment to clarify the position, which has been uncertain during recent months. There remains some areas of uncertainty, as will be explained, but the position in relation to Surrey, including Surrey Heath and therefore Windlesham has not been in doubt. Our progress had been 'fast tracked' so that our Shadow Authority members were elected in May 2026 and are working towards the 'Vesting Day' on 1st April 2027. [Representing Bagshot, Chobham and Windlesham are Cllrs Simon Browne and Richard Wilson].

For those with a wider interest, here in full is the recent Government Statement

From: **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** and **Jim McMahon OBE MP** Published: 29 October 2026



Five areas have moved closer to streamlined local government in their area as the government announced the next steps in its review of Local Government Reorganisation.

Following the announcement of a review last month, Ministers have confirmed that the programme is continuing and remains aligned with the wider plans to shift power out of Westminster and back to local communities, including those announced at this week's Budget.

The government is now minded-to go ahead with reorganisation in five areas. There will be a period of three weeks minimum for further representations before final decisions are taken.

The five areas where the government is minded to proceed are:

- In East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, the two unitary proposal including boundary changes requested by Brighton and Hove City Council, except for the parish of Falmer.
- The one unitary proposal in Gloucestershire;
- The three unitary proposal in Oxfordshire, including boundary changes.
- The two unitary proposal in Warwickshire;
- The two unitary proposal in Worcestershire;

The Government remains committed to the reorganisation programme. Ministers will consider the best way forward for all remaining areas in the programme – 15 in total, including the nine areas which had reorganisation paused in September and which now have their decisions withdrawn.

Withdrawing these decisions does not mean reorganisation has been cancelled in these areas. All options and proposals remain under consideration in these areas and every area will have an outcome by early next year.

Local elections in these areas will go ahead in May 2027 on existing council boundaries, providing certainty for local leaders and communities. New councils will be established for 2029, with elections to shadow councils in May 2028.

All areas with previous decisions will receive £450,000 per the number of previously announced new unitary authorities from the £63 million capacity fund, to cover costs incurred in implementing reorganisation. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and West Sussex will each receive £500,000 as decisions have yet to be made there. This funding will be paid in the coming weeks. The remaining balance will be paid after final decisions.

Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth Jim McMahon OBE told Parliament today:

Yesterday's budget showed that we are committed to giving local leaders, local councils and local communities the tools to shape their own future.

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No areas want to see a return to two-tiers once strong unitary councils are in place… The decisions that we take now will be the building blocks for how this country is governed for generations to come.

Reorganisation in Surrey will remain unaffected with two new unitary authorities – East and West Surrey – going live in April 2027.

The government has heard concerns from places about retaining their city status and has committed to making it a priority to protect them and will consider all available options – including bringing in new legislation if necessary.

For more information:

Areas where government is minded to proceed:

- East Sussex and Brighton and Hove: Two unitary proposal submitted by East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Rother District Council - with the boundary change requested by Brighton and Hove City Council, with the exception of Falmer parish.
- Gloucestershire: One unitary proposal submitted by Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, and Tewkesbury Borough Council.
- Oxfordshire: Three unitary proposal submitted by Oxford City Council, including the adjoining area of West Berkshire Council - with the boundary change Oxford City Council requested alongside the proposal.
- Warwickshire: Two unitary proposal submitted by North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council.
- Worcestershire: Two unitary proposal submitted by Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council and Wychavon District Council.

15 areas remaining under review:

Nine areas where decisions are now withdrawn and will be reconsidered:

- Derbyshire and Derby
- Devon, Plymouth and Torbay
- Hertfordshire
- Kent and Medway
- Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool
- Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland
- Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire
- Nottinghamshire and Nottingham
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

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Four areas where decisions were withdrawn in September:

- Essex, Southend on Sea and Thurrock
- Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton
- Norfolk
- Suffolk

Two areas which are awaiting decisions:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- West Sussex

The latest report on progress on the West Surrey authority [which includes Windlesham] is as follows;

West Surrey Council is on track to launch on 1st April 2027 (referred to as Vesting Day) replacing Borough Councils Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Woking and Surrey County Council.

Recent updates include

Contract Reviews (Nov 2026) – examination of hundreds of supplier contracts and to flag transfer or termination clauses ahead of the 1/4/27 split.

Headquarters & Name Decision (Oct 2026) – confirmed operational HQ at Woking Borough Council offices and Victoria Gate, with a civic base at Millmead in Guildford. Government confirmed the Structural Changes Order cannot be amended to rename it “West Surrey & South Middlesex Council” leaving alternative naming or branding options for future discussion.

Contracts and Governance (Sep – Oct 2026). The Shadow Authority approved governance standards and Section 24 decisions covering key contracts and transition arrangements.

NB Existing Councils will continue to deliver day-to-day services until 1st April 2027.

This is continuing our interest in the subject – I hope you will also be interested. If you have any comments we will be happy to hear from you at windlesham.life

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