



Report To: Cabinet

Date: 26th November 2025

Subject: Local Government Re-organisation – proposal to Government

Purpose: To consider approving the Partnership's proposal to Government for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire.

Key Decision: Yes

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Dale Broughton, Leader of the Council

Report Of: James Gilbert, Assistant Director - Corporate

Report Author: James Gilbert, Assistant Director - Corporate

Ward(s) Affected: All

Exempt Report: No

Summary

Greater Lincolnshire is one of several areas in England that is invited by the Minister for Local Government to submit a proposal for Local Government Re-organisation.

The 21st March, 2025, was the deadline for the Government to receive interim proposals, with final proposals to be submitted by 28th November, 2025.

Working together, East Lindsey and South Holland Councils developed an interim proposal that was submitted to Government.

Greater Lincolnshire received feedback from Government in early June and this was previously shared with all Councillors. Since that time, whilst it is likely multiple proposals will be submitted by Councils in Greater Lincolnshire, Councils have shared information to inform their proposals.

In July, Boston confirmed its support for the East Lindsey and South Holland proposal.

Boston, East Lindsey and South Holland Councils have been working with a team of expert advisors to prepare their proposal to Government – *A Greater Lincolnshire for All.*

This report brings forward the proposal to Government for Local Government Re-organisation (Appendix A). The proposal meets the Government's criteria, is grounded in evidence and provides a solid foundation for the future of Local Government within Greater Lincolnshire.

Current timelines suggest that Greater Lincolnshire is earmarked by Government to go live with its new arrangements in April 2028. A shadow authority would be likely to form in May 2027.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the proposal for Local Government Re-organisation (Appendix A) for submission to Government; and
2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Corporate, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any changes/additions that might be required between the Cabinet meeting and submission to Government; and to submit the proposal.

Reasons for Recommendations

To enable the Council to submit its proposal for Local Government Re-organisation by the 28th November 2025 deadline.

Other Options Considered

Not to submit a proposal - this was discounted as the Council has a clear vision for Local Government Re-organisation that it wishes to submit by the deadline.

To consider an alternative proposal – the Greater Lincolnshire for All proposal is considered to provide the best opportunity for Greater Lincolnshire. Other options set out in Appendix A are not considered to deliver the same opportunities.

1. Background

1.1. On 5 February, 2025, the Minister for Local Government wrote to all Council Leaders in Greater Lincolnshire. This letter, which was shared with all Councillors, confirmed the Government's ambition to create "simpler, more sustainable local government structures" and formally invited the Leaders in Greater Lincolnshire to collaborate on developing a proposal for Local Government Re-organisation based on the following criteria:

- A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of Local Government.

- Unitary Local Government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

1.2. The letter, with detailed criteria, is included at Appendix B.

1.3. It should be noted that the Minister has made it clear that the Government expects areas to collaborate and jointly develop a single proposal for unitary Local Government. This has not been possible in Greater Lincolnshire. Discussions with other Councils suggest that a range of proposals will be submitted to Government for Greater Lincolnshire. Councils within Greater Lincolnshire have shared data to support the development of proposals. In addition, in line with Government's request, the District Councils that are developing proposals have also shared a common set of assumptions to underpin their financial modelling – this work has been undertaken by an independent consultancy not connected with any of the proposals being developed in Greater Lincolnshire.

1.4. The Government expects proposals to detail how communities are engaged. The proposal at Appendix A sets out the detail of the extensive engagement that has been undertaken to co-produce '*A Greater Lincolnshire for All*' with input from a range of key stakeholders, including Members of Parliament, strategic public sector partners, the business community, local residents, the voluntary and community sector and Town and Parish Councils (including the relevant Associations for Local Councils). Engagement was undertaken throughout the proposal's development to ensure the document could be shaped in consideration of the views that were shared.

2. Report

- 2.1. Appendix A sets out this Council's proposal for Local Government Re-organisation in Greater Lincolnshire. The proposal has been developed between Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council.
- 2.2. Constitutionally, the Cabinet is responsible for approving the proposal for submission to Government but during its development there have been regular briefings for all Councillors, as well as an extensive programme of community and stakeholder engagement. Councillors were all given the opportunity to consider an emerging proposal in draft form and share thoughts/views in advance of Cabinet.

2.3. The proposal, which is for the whole of the Greater Lincolnshire region, splits the area into two Unitary Councils – North and South - based on the following model:

- **Northern Unitary** would comprise of the following existing Council areas – City of Lincoln Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council, West Lindsey District Council.
- **Southern Unitary** would comprise of the following existing Council areas: Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council, North Kesteven District Council, South Holland District Council and South Kesteven District Council.

2.4. The Councils commissioned a team of experts to work with them to develop the proposal with a focus on ensuring it is grounded in evidence and informed through conversations with key stakeholders. This team has been led by Commercial Gov with support from a range of specialists focused on different aspect of the proposal (such as Adults and Children's Services and financial and economic modelling). This work has been overseen by an Internal Working Group, in line with the governance arrangements set out in the previous Cabinet report.

2.5. **Financial case - summary**

	Greater Lincolnshire for All (2 Unitary model)	LCC area, North and North East (3 Unitary model)	North, North East, Central and South (4 Unitary model)	Expanded Lincoln (4 Unitary model)
One-off costs (£m)	£56.979	£36.679	£37.606	£38,160
Ongoing annual savings (£m)	£32.701	£22.269	£9.967	£11.457
10 Year Savings (£m)	£220.982	£152.611	£47.111	£59.227
Payback period (years)	4	4	6	5

The detailed financial case is within Appendix A but the summary table at 2.5 sets out the high-level financial summary based on prudent financial assumptions. The financial assumptions were independently produced and the proposal is modelled on 'mid-point' to avoid optimism bias.

The Greater Lincolnshire for All model generates the most significant savings and the joint-shortest payback period. Through Public Sector Partnership Services, it has a scalable model for driving efficiencies through merging council services with proven experience of generating savings. Under a range of scenarios, the Greater Lincolnshire for All model demonstrates the highest relative savings due to the

biggest footprint of people and services being impacted by the change. There are no systemic issues with reserves, resilience or Council Tax equalisation that would hamper achievement of these efficiencies or threaten the viability of the newly formed councils. These direct savings should be considered alongside the wider costs and benefits for the region, considered in the economic impact chapter of the proposal document (summary at 2.6).

2.6. Economic case – summary

Based upon a Green Book compliant assessment of the wider impact of costs and benefits of each option known to be in development, the economic analysis demonstrates that A Greater Lincolnshire for All proposal will have the widest economic impact for residents in the area, as well as being the most economically efficient model from the options considered.

2.7. Options Appraisal

An options appraisal has been developed based on the proposals under development within Greater Lincolnshire. The appraisal has been against the Government's six key criteria that underpin Local Government Re-organisation. The appraisal clearly demonstrates that 'A Greater Lincolnshire for All' is the most advantageous proposal understood to be under development for Greater Lincolnshire.

	GLFA	LCC Area, North, North East	North, North East, Central & South	Expanded Lincoln
1. Proposal should work for the whole area	12	7	8	8
2. Right size to achieve efficiencies (financial sustainability)	11	9	6	7
3. Prioritise High Quality Services	9	8	7	7
4. Meet local views and heritage	8	7	8	8
5. Support devolution	9	7	8	7
6. Community engagement	6	5	5	5
TOTAL	55	43	42	42

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. A Greater Lincolnshire For All has been developed following significant engagement. The proposal meets the Government's criteria for Local Government Re-organisation. It is also deliverable and based on realistic financial assumptions with both financial and economic analysis suggesting A Greater Lincolnshire For All is the option being developed that can deliver the greatest benefit to the region. The proposal, if supported by Government, provides a positive platform to both improve service delivery and create financially resilient new Councils in place of the existing structure.

As such, this is a credible and ambitious proposal for Local Government Re-organisation in Greater Lincolnshire.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

The proposal builds on the Partnership's existing success but extends that learning to the whole of Greater Lincolnshire.

Corporate Priorities

The Council has a Partnership priority focused on being efficient and effective. The proposal puts forward to Government an efficient, effective and achievable model for the delivery of Local Government in Greater Lincolnshire.

Staffing

Local Government Re-organisation will have an impact on the workforce as it progresses and the Council is committed to ensuring colleagues organisation-wide are kept fully informed, along with Trade Unions. The Council has engaged with Trade Unions during the development of this proposal.

Workforce Capacity Implications

None directly arising from this report. The proposal document sets out a model for transition to new arrangements.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has exercised powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to invite any principal authority in the area of the county of Lincolnshire to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government. A Greater Lincolnshire for All is a combined proposal which is permitted form of proposal under the 2007 Act.

The decision to submit a proposal for Local Government Re-organisation is an Executive Function. All Councillors were consulted on the proposal during its development.

As proposals must be submitted to Government by 28th November, on this occasion and noting the wider member engagement, it has been agreed with the relevant Members that the usual Call-In period associated with key decisions be waived. As such, there is no call in period associated with this report.

Data Protection

None

Financial

Appendix A sets out the financial opportunity arising from this Council's Business Case for Local Government re-organisation. This is summarised at 2.5 in the body of the report.

Risk Management

Whilst any re-organisation will come with an element of risk, within the proposal developed the Councils have sought to mitigate any risks. Risk management will be a key focus in any implementation plan.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

Appendix A includes the programme of engagement that has supported the development of the proposal. Engagement has taken place over a 10 month period with 1 to 1 meetings with key stakeholders, focus groups with key sectors and public meetings, both in-person and online.

Reputation

None

Contracts

None at this stage, however, Local Government Re-organisation will have an impact on all Council contracts.

Crime and Disorder

The proposal, if supported by Government, could help to reduce Crime and Disorder.

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

Any transition process to the new arrangements will need to consider these matters in detail.

Health and Wellbeing

The proposal, if supported by Government, could have a positive impact on the Health and Wellbeing of the community.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Through new approaches to service delivery and a rationalisation of assets, there is an opportunity for the new Councils to have a positive impact on the environment.

Acronyms

None

Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

Appendix A

Local Government Re-organisation – full proposal

Appendix B

Local Government Re-organisation – letter from Minister for Local Government

Background Papers

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
English Devolution White Paper	www.gov.uk

Chronological History of this Report

None

Report Approval

Report author: James Gilbert, Assistant Director – Corporate
james.gilbert@e-lindsey.gov.uk

Signed off by: Rob Barlow, Joint Chief Executive
robert.barlow@e-lindsey.gov.uk

Approved for publication: Councillor Dale Broughton, Leader of the Council
Dale.broughton@boston.gov.uk