
Frequently asked questions about local government reorganisation

What is devolution?

In England, devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government.

The current Government has made devolution a priority and set out plans to create a new network of Strategic Authorities that will cover the whole of England by 2029. The new authorities will be led by elected mayors and will cover a number of local council areas.

Derbyshire is already covered by a strategic authority, since the election of the East Midlands Mayor and establishment of the [East Midlands Combined County Authority](#) in 2024.

The Government explained these plans in an [English Devolution White Paper](#), published in December 2024.

This paper also set out plans for local government reorganisation.

What is local government reorganisation?

Local government reorganisation is the process by which the geographic remit and the roles and responsibilities of local authorities are restructured. As part of its plans for devolution, the Government announced a programme of local government reorganisation in areas with a 'two-tier' system (as currently exists in areas like Derbyshire), and also of small unitary councils (like the city council that covers Derby) that are part of, or neighbour such areas. In short this means that under the Government's plans, district, borough, county and small unitary councils will no longer exist. They will be replaced by new unitary councils which will provide all council services to the communities they cover.

What is the decision on local government reorganisation for South Derbyshire?

On Thursday 16 July 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced that from 1 April 2028, South Derbyshire District Council will cease to exist. From that day forward ('Vesting Day'), the Council will instead form part of a larger Unitary

authority, joining together with colleagues from South Derbyshire, Derbyshire, Derby City, Erewash and the southern side of Amber Valley.

What is a 'two tier' system?

Derbyshire is a two-tier area served by eight district and borough councils and a county council. You have 'lower tier' and 'upper tier' councils in a system like this.

The city of Derby is contained within the boundary of Derbyshire, but all council services are provided by Derby City Council, as this is already a unitary council.

In total, 10 different councils provide services across the county:

What are 'Lower tier' councils?

South Derbyshire District Council is a 'lower tier' Council, much like Erewash, Amber Valley or High Peak, for example.

Lower tier councils are responsible for services including:

- waste collection
- Recycling
- Housing
- benefits and council tax
- Planning
- leisure.

What is an 'Upper tier' council?

Derbyshire County Council is the 'upper tier council' for our area. It is responsible for services including:

- Education
- Transport
- social care
- Libraries
- waste management.

What is a Unitary council?

A 'unitary council', like Derby City Council, is responsible for providing all council services to the communities it serves. Local Government Reorganisation aims to create unitary councils in Derbyshire, covering a bigger area and greater population.

What are town and parish councils?

Some areas also have town or parish councils, which are much smaller in scale and are responsible for services, facilities and public spaces within a community such as parks, village halls, allotments, litter bins, local events, etc. These councils are not covered by the Government's plans for local government reorganisation and will not be directly impacted by the proposed changes.

What is a Structural Changes Order?

This is the Statutory Instrument that allows for the reorganisation of local government. It includes details specific to the area, for example, the new councils' name(s), elections, shadow council details and duties, and transitional arrangements.

What is a Shadow Council?

This is the Council that will be elected in May 2027 to carry out the functions of the new unitary council, until that authority formally comes into effect ('vesting day'). The Shadow runs in tandem with our existing Council and prepares the authority to be safe and legal on 'vesting day', including ensuring continuity of public services delivery. It does not replace day to day decision making of existing authorities. The shadow council(s) in Derbyshire are expected to operate from around 10 May 2027 (shortly after shadow elections) to 31 March 2028.

What is 'Vesting Day'?

This is the term used to describe the first day of the new authority. In Derbyshire, this will be 1 April 2028.

What is the timeline for this to happen? (updated July 2026)

Below are the key dates within the Government's current timetable:

- **July 2026** – the Government makes a final decision about which model of local government reorganisation will be implemented.
- **May 2027** – elections for new shadow authorities would take place.
- **Summer 2027** – New Leadership Team put in place for Unitary.
- **April 2028** – new councils would start to operate.

What is the Government's criteria for local government proposals?

Government set out criteria which local councils must follow when drawing up proposals, which include:

- a proposal should seek to achieve the establishment of a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned
- new councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks
- new councils must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens
- new council structures must support devolution arrangements (in Derbyshire, this means working with the [East Midlands Combined County Authority](#))
- new councils should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

What was your proposal for local government reorganisation in Derbyshire?

In response to the Government's call for local councils to work together, Derbyshire's eight district and borough councils, and Derby City Council, worked in partnership to draw up a joint proposal.

Details of the proposal can be found here: [Local Government Reorganisation - Previous information and consultation | South Derbyshire District Council](#)

How will these changes be paid for?

The initial investment required to set up the new councils would be paid for out of the reserves of the existing councils. One-off investment costs need to be put into context of the overall £3.8 billion gross budget for the 10 Derbyshire councils.

Financial analysis within the final proposal forecasts that the initial investment would be recouped within roughly three-and-a-half years after their launch.

Which services would the new councils provide?

Each of the two new councils in Derbyshire will provide all council services to their area, rather than being split between the two tiers of local government, as currently happens.

What will it mean for my current council services?

If you live in a borough or district, where services are split between a district or borough and the county council, it means your services will ultimately be provided by a single 'unitary' council.

If you live in Derby, all your services will continue to be provided by a single council, but the area covered by the council will change.

Will my council services be disrupted during local government reorganisation?

We will keep disruption to a minimum and ensure that high quality local public services continue to support communities during the transition period and beyond.

We will make sure that all essential council services work together to achieve this. That covers everything from waste collection and housing support to public health and social care referrals.

There are already many examples of bringing together shared or joint services across Derbyshire and we will use this experience to minimise disruption for residents, businesses and staff.

Will you be closing any of the main council offices?

We have not yet taken any decisions around things like the location of council offices. However, as part of this process there will be opportunities to make savings and rationalise our 'assets' including council offices, and we will consider this as part of the development of our plans.

But please be reassured that we are committed to ensuring councils have a strong and visible presence in our communities.

In South Derbyshire we are currently building a brand-new leisure centre and office development. We expect to use those offices either in full or part for Council employees and Members, however this has not been decided yet.

Research has been carried out, and we know there is a strong need for quality Grade A office space in the District, should the Council not require the accommodation.

Will Council Tax go up or down following reorganisation?

It's too early to say what will happen to the level of Council Tax yet, as many other factors affect the rate it is set at.

What we do know is that councils which come together to form new unitary councils must consider how they set a single level of Council Tax that people in the new council area pay. This is known as 'Council Tax harmonisation.'

Did residents have a say?

Following direction from Government, councils in Derbyshire have explored different options for how local government could be organised in the future. Councils developed proposals, shared data and listened to views from residents, partners, community organisations and the business community to develop their final proposals for Government. Government undertook a formal statutory consultation during February and March 2026 to help inform their decision on which proposal to take forward. We are extremely grateful to everyone who shared their views and helped to shape the future of local government in Derbyshire.

You can read more about Government's statutory consultation outcome, including a summary and analysis of the key findings here: [Local government reorganisation in Derbyshire and Derby - GOV.UK](#)