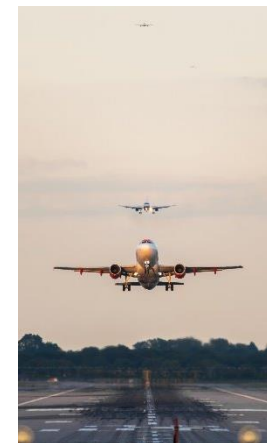


Shaping West Sussex

.....
**Prospectus pack:
models for local government
reorganisation for West Sussex
July 2025**



Introduction

This pack contains prospectuses for the shortlisted options for West Sussex Local Government Reorganisation. Each prospectus provides a detailed description of the option, including the supporting socio-economic data, financial baseline position, and design considerations for each option. These prospectuses are intended to aid in understanding the options and do not draw comparisons, as this will follow in the evaluation phase.

The models presented in this pack have been derived from a structured approach that initially considered a long list of 14 options. The factors that contributed to creating this initial long list included community identity, economic geography, service delivery efficiency, and political and administrative feasibility. Through a rigorous filtering process, using the government criteria as a basis, this list was narrowed down to the most promising options. A further assessment was conducted to ensure that only those options that are financially viable were considered.

As of July 2025, the result of this process is that a single unitary, and two unitary variants, have been identified as the most financially sound.

These options will be evaluated in detail over the coming weeks.

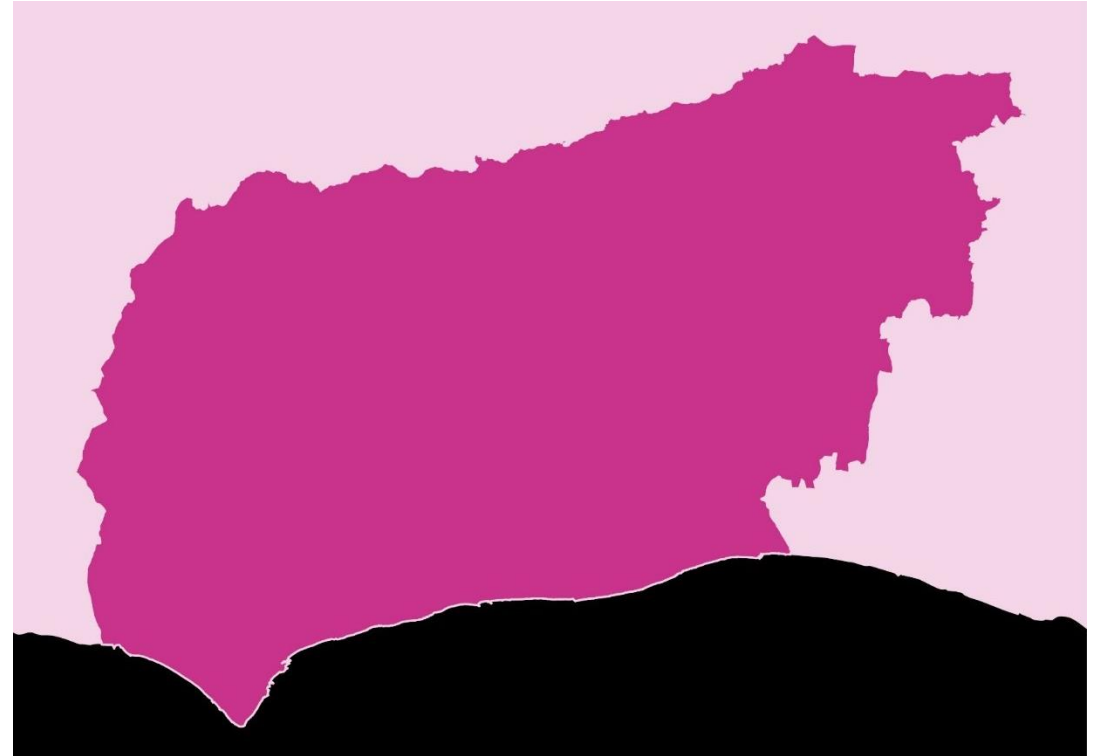
A single unitary model

Prospectus information

A single unitary model

A single county unitary would align with the current West Sussex county boundary.

This would bring the County Council and all seven District and Borough Council services together to form a new unitary council for West Sussex



Overview

A single county geography, aligned with the existing West Sussex boundary. Encompasses coastal communities, historic towns, prosperous commuter corridors and rural landscapes, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park.

A mixed economy, combining traditional sectors such as agriculture and tourism with a strong business sector, alongside economic influence of Gatwick Airport.

Challenges in some areas relating to higher service demand, pockets of deprivation, uneven access to key services, and increasing pressures on housing across both urban and rural settings.

Distinct strengths sit alongside specific challenges. Coastal areas have strong tourism economies, yet face ongoing issues relating to inequality, housing supply, and health outcomes. The urban areas demonstrate cultural vitality and opportunities for economic growth while experiencing increasing demand for infrastructure and public services, and rural areas offer a good quality of life whilst contending with challenges such as social isolation, transport connectivity, and affordability of essential services.

Opportunity to balance the needs of different areas, while offsetting the pressures and challenges each community faces – from service demand and access to services, to regeneration and economic inequality.

Understanding demand, a single unitary model

The West Sussex population is projected to increase by 109,399 by 2042.

The 0-15 and 16-64 age groups have risen by a larger percentage than the Southeast as a whole in the decade 2013 to 2023.

A higher proportion of the West Sussex population provide over 50 hours of care for someone than the Southeast population as a whole.

There are 8.1% more single person households over 65 than in the Southeast of England as a whole.

	Ages 0-15	Ages 16-64	Ages 65+	Total
Area population (2023) <small>Source: ONS Mid-year estimates 2023</small>	158,732	533,151	208,979	900,862
Area population increase 2013-2023 <small>Source: ONS 2024</small>	7.1%	7.1%	16.5%	9.2%

Southeast England population increase 2013-2023: 7.6%

Area projected population 2042: 1,010,261

Source: ONS 2024

Births 2023: 7,648 Deaths 2023: 9,972

Source: ONS 2024

Unpaid Carers 2021: 20,327 (2.43%)

Southeast England Unpaid Carers 2021: 2.39%

Source: 2021 Census (over 50 hours per week)

Deprivation ranking: 211 (out of 317)

Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (average local authority ranking, 1 is most deprived, 317 least deprived)

Number of households 2021: 375,216

Source: 2021 Census

Single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 57,408 (15.3%)

Southeast England single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 13.2%

Source: 2021 Census

Gross Value Added (GVA) 2022: £26.7 billion

Source: ONS 2024

Working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 8.2%

Southeast England working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 8.6%. Source: DWP 2025

Economic Activity Rate: 83.4%

Source: ONS 2025

Understanding finances

All income and expenditure across local government in West Sussex will be pooled. Further financial modelling will be undertaken to determine the impact of reorganisation on the baseline, factoring in new costs, savings, investments and cost of change.

These figures show combined budget estimates taking local authority revenue expenditure and income, April 2025 to March 2026, broken down by service.
(income figures exclude any use of reserves to fund in-year deficits)

Expenditure by category	Amount (£m)
Council services (net of service income), see spend by service breakdown right	-996.0
Fire service	-43.9
Education services	-717.4
Housing Benefit payments	-156.8
Levies less trading surplus	4.2
Financing costs (interest)	-39.7
Total Expenditure	-1,957.9

Income	Amount (£m)	
Ring-fenced grants	166.8	
General grants	276.6	
Schools' grants (including Dedicated Schools Grant)	634.7	
Business Rates (retained Income)	148.9	
Council Tax 25/26 (calculated)	772.5	
Total Income	1949.4	
Spend by service (including disaggregated services)	Amount (£m)	Percentage
Adult Social Care	364.5	36.6
Children's Social Care	221.4	22.2
Environmental and Regulatory Services	141.3	14.2
Highways and Transport	57.7	5.8
Public Health	52.0	5.2
Central Services	43.8	4.4
Cultural and Related Services	41.1	4.2
Housing Services (General Fund Revenue Account only)	35.1	3.5
Planning and Development Services	30.9	3.1
Other Services	8.2	0.8

Design implications and considerations

Leadership and Governance

- Single executive leadership team and governance structure and fewer elected councillors.
- Large-scale transition, merging eight councils into one. Governance, workforce, systems and service models would need to be redesigned end-to-end, with strong central leadership and sustained coordination.
- New County-wide partnership forums or governance mechanisms would be required alongside maintenance of local relationships.
- Shared services between councils would no longer be required.

Harmonisation

- Services currently delivered by the county and district/borough councils would be fully integrated into unified delivery models, enabling consistent policy, systems and customer experience. Integrated, tailored and preventative working between services such as social care, housing, and revenues and benefits.
- A focus on integrating a wide range of services that are currently delivered through diverse models, such as waste and planning.

Design implications and considerations

Priority services

- No requirement to disaggregate county-wide services like adult and children's social care reduces complexity and transition risk.
- Service demand for adult and children's social care and housing-related demand can be balanced across the geography, with areas of higher need being offset by those with lower levels of demand.
- Integrated directorates would offer opportunities for joined-up support across a range of key services i.e. adult social care, housing, revenues/benefits, but structural and cultural redesign would be required.

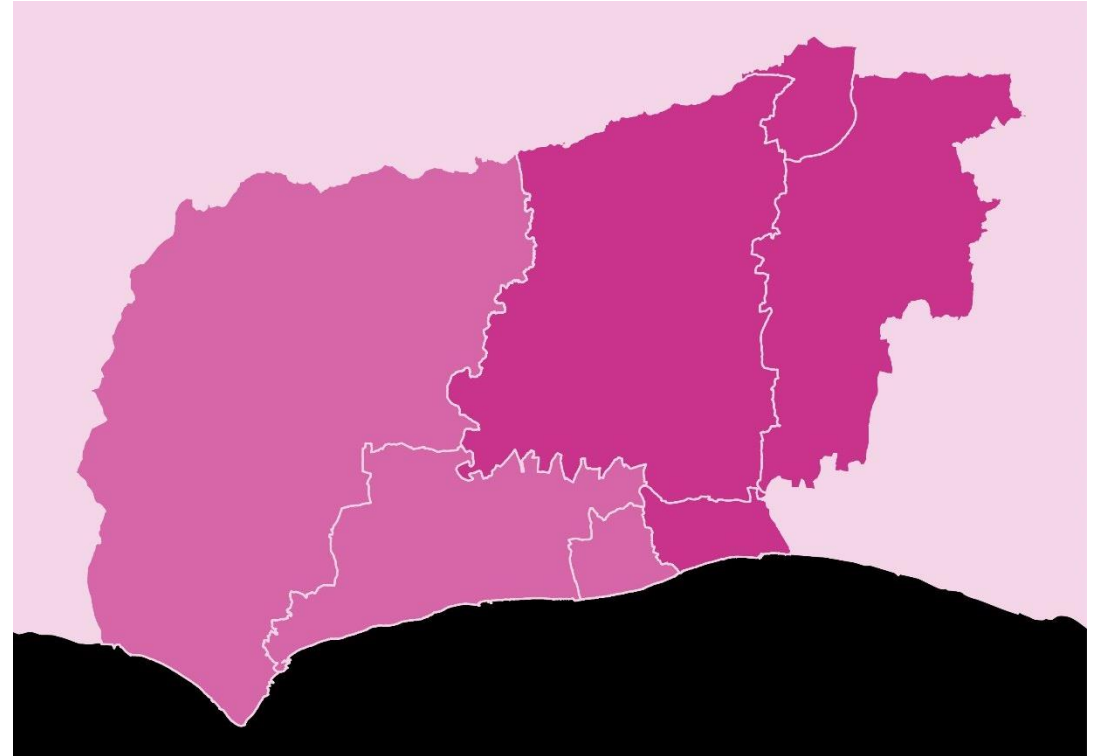
A two unitary model – variation 1

Prospectus information

A two unitary model – variation 1

One unitary combining Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

One unitary combining Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints.



Overview

Unitary combining Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

Encompasses coastal towns, rural communities and a strong and distinct cultural heritage.

- Prosperous northern communities balance the economic challenges faced by some coastal neighbourhoods.
- A diverse and balanced socio-economic landscape and the opportunity to leverage the area's combined economic strengths and social diversity to build resilience and promote balanced growth.
- An ageing population set alongside families and younger residents, contributes to the rich social fabric. This diversity reinforces the importance of local connections and community cohesion across the geography.

Unitary combining Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints.

Strong infrastructure, a thriving business sector and diverse labour market.

- Brings together the growth corridors along the M23 and A23 and the economic influence of Gatwick Airport with growing, business parks, and the rural communities.
- Opportunity to address key challenges, including housing supply and homelessness.
- Generally balanced socio-economic profile, with lower levels of overall deprivation alongside localised areas of higher demand, particularly in some coastal and urban communities.

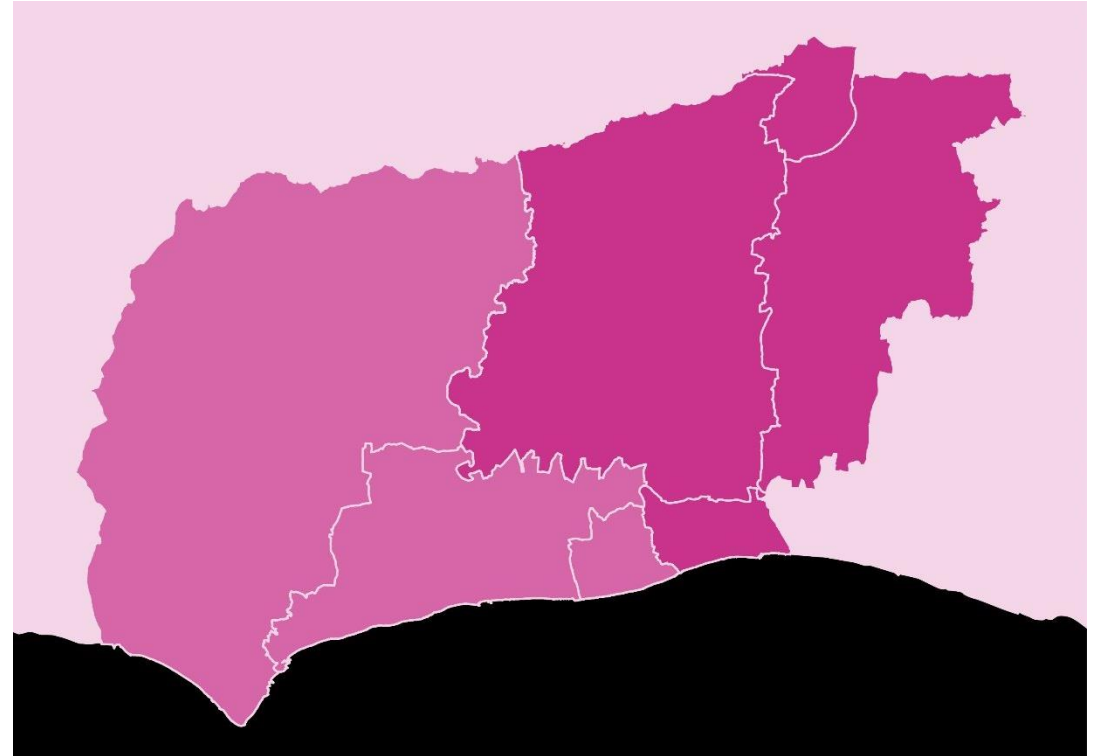
Understanding demand, two unitary model – variation 1

The unitary combining Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints will see a faster population growth by 2040 than the unitary combining Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints.

The percentage of single person households aged over 65 is higher in the unitary combining Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints and is notably higher than Southeast England as a whole.

The Gross Value Added contribution to the UK economy from Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex is £3.4billion higher.

There are more unemployment benefit claimants from the Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprint area than the Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex area although the Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprint area has a higher economic activity rate.



Understanding demand, two unitary model – variation 1

Unitary combining Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

	Ages 0-15	Ages 16-64	Ages 65+	Total
Area population (2023) <small>Source: ONS Mid-year estimates 2023</small>	63,920	235,221	109,110	408,251
Area population increase 2013-2023 <small>Source: ONS 2024</small>	3.4%	7.1%	14.7%	8.4%

Southeast England Population increase 2013-2023: 7.6%

Area projected population 2042: 456,042

Source: ONS 2024

Births 2023: 3,076 Deaths 2023: 5,396

Source: ONS 2024

Unpaid Carers 2021: 10,245 (2.68%)

Southeast England Unpaid Carers 2021: 2.39%

Source: 2021 Census (over 50hours per week)

Deprivation ranking: 185 (out of 317)

Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (average local authority ranking, 1 is most deprived, 317 least deprived)

Number of households 2021: 176,318

Source: 2021 Census

Single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 30,615 (17.4%)

Southeast England single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 13.2%

Source: 2021 Census

Gross Value Added (GVA) 2022: £11.7billion

Source: ONS 2024

Working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 9.1%

Southeast England working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 8.6%. Source: DWP 2025

Economic Activity Rate: 84.2%

Source: ONS 2025

Understanding demand, two unitary model – variation 1

Unitary combining Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints

	Ages 0-15	Ages 16-64	Ages 65+	Total
Area population (2023) Source: ONS Mid-year estimates 2023	94,812	297,930	99,869	492,611
Area population increase 2013-2023 Source: ONS 2024	9.8%	7.1%	18.5%	9.8%

Southeast England Population increase 2013-2023: 7.6%

Area projected population 2042: 554,219

Source: ONS 2024

Births 2023: 4,572 Deaths 2023: 4,576

Source: ONS 2024

Unpaid Carers 2021: 10,082 (2.21%)

Southeast England Unpaid Carers 2021: 2.39%

Source: 2021 Census (over 50 hours per week)

Deprivation ranking: 230 (out of 317)

Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (average local authority ranking, 1 is most deprived, 317 least deprived)

Number of households 2021: 198,902

Source: 2021 Census

Single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 26,792 (13.5%)

Southeast England single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 13.2%

Source: 2021 Census

Gross Value Added (GVA) 2022: £15.1 billion

Source: ONS 2024

Working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 7.5%

Southeast England working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 8.6%. Source: DWP 2025

Economic Activity Rate: 81.7%

Source: ONS 2025

Understanding finances

All income and expenditure across local government in West Sussex will be pooled. Further financial modelling will be undertaken to determine the impact of reorganisation on the baseline, factoring in new costs, savings, investments and cost of change.

These figures show combined budget estimates for a unitary combining Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints, taking local authority revenue expenditure and income, April 2025 to March 2026, broken down by service.

(income figures exclude any use of reserves to fund in-year deficits)

Expenditure by category	Amount (£m)
Council services (net of service income), see spend by service breakdown right	-484.6
Fire service	-20.0
Education services	-296.0
Housing Benefit payments	-77.6
Levies less Trading Surplus	-1.7
Financing costs (interest)	-24.3
Total Expenditure	-904.2

Income	Amount (£m)
Ring-fenced grants	82.8
General grants	140.8
Schools' grants (including Dedicated Schools Grant)	261.9
Business Rates (retained Income)	81.6
Council Tax 25/26 (calculated)	335.7
Total Income	902.8

Spend by service (including disaggregated services)	Amount (£m)	Percentage
Adult Social Care	190.3	39.2
Children's Social Care	112.5	23.2
Environmental and Regulatory Services	66.8	13.8
Highways and Transport	24.0	5.0
Public Health	23.8	4.9
Central Services	18.9	3.9
Cultural and Related Services	16.9	3.5
Housing Services (GFRA only)	15.0	3.1
Planning and Development Services	12.2	2.5
Other Services	4.2	0.9

Understanding finances

All income and expenditure across local government in West Sussex will be pooled. Further financial modelling will be undertaken to determine the impact of reorganisation on the baseline, factoring in new costs, savings, investments and cost of change.

These figures show combined budget estimates for a unitary combining Adur, Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints, taking local authority revenue expenditure and income, April 2025 to March 2026, broken down by service.

(income figures exclude any use of reserves to fund in-year deficits)

Expenditure by category	Amount (£m)
Council services (net of service income), see spend by service breakdown right	-511.3
Fire Service	-23.9
Education services	-421.4
Housing Benefit payments	-79.1
Levies less Trading Surplus	5.9
Financing costs (interest)	-15.4
Total Expenditure	-1,057.1

Income	Amount (£m)
Ring-fenced grants	84.1
General grants	135.8
Schools' grants (including Dedicated Schools Grant)	372.8
Business Rates (retained Income)	67.2
Council Tax 25/26 (calculated)	386.8
Total Income	1,046.6

Spend by service (including disaggregated services)	Amount (£m)	Percentage
Adult Social Care	174.2	34.0
Children's Social Care	108.8	21.3
Environmental and Regulatory Services	74.5	14.6
Highways and Transport	33.6	6.6
Public Health	28.3	5.5
Central Services	24.9	4.9
Cultural and Related Services	24.2	4.7
Housing Services (GFRA only)	20.1	3.9
Planning and Development Services	18.7	3.7
Other Services	4.0	0.8

Design implications and considerations

Leadership and Governance

- Two full sets of statutory functions and leadership teams.
- Large-scale transition, organising eight councils into two. Governance, workforce, systems and service models would need to be redesigned end-to-end, with strong central leadership and sustained coordination.
- New governance structures and procedures that could be tailored to specific sub-regional needs and identities.
- Adur and Worthing Councils Officer operating model to be disaggregated.

Harmonisation

- Integrated, tailored and preventative working between services such as social care, housing, and revenues and benefits.
- A focus on integrating a wide range of services that are currently delivered through diverse models, such as waste and planning.
- Services currently provided by multiple councils would be redesigned to achieve harmonisation.
- Aggregating and harmonising district and borough back-office functions such as legal, digital and finance together removes the need to completely duplicate the current county back-office functions.

Design implications and considerations

Priority services

- Disaggregating county-wide services like adult and children's social care adds complexity and transition risk.
- Operating model options, such as shared services, could be considered to provide a way to attain economies of scale, reduce duplication and manage risk.
- Easterly unitary would inherit a disproportionate share of children's social care and housing-related demand, and would require targeted resourcing, commissioning and workforce planning.
- Adult social care demand is disproportionately higher in the West with more sustained pressure from ageing populations and people retiring to the area.

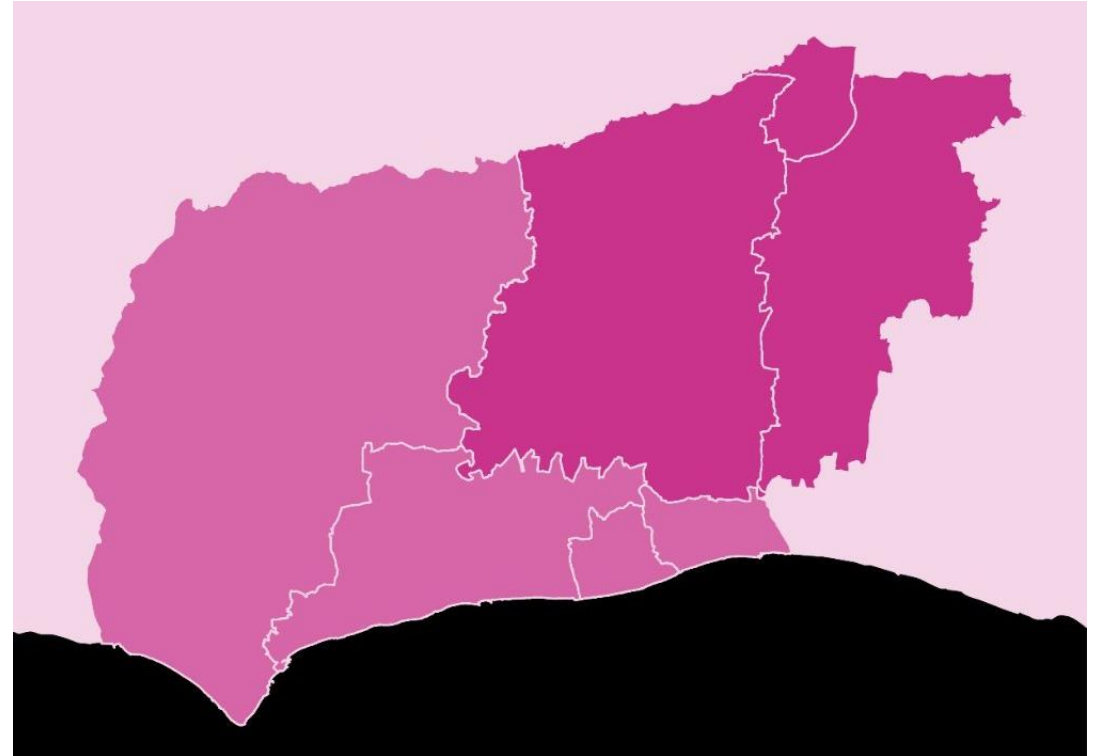
A two unitary model – variation 2

Prospectus information

A two unitary model – variation 2

One unitary combining Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

One unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints.



Overview

Unitary combining Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

Encompasses coastal towns, rural communities and a strong and distinct cultural heritage.

- Prosperous northern communities balance the economic challenges faced by some coastal neighbourhoods.
- A diverse and balanced socio-economic landscape and the opportunity to leverage the area's combined economic strengths and social diversity to build resilience and promote balanced growth.
- An ageing population set alongside families and younger residents, contributes to the rich social fabric. This diversity reinforces the importance of local connections and community cohesion across the geography.

Unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints.

Strong infrastructure, a thriving business sector and diverse labour market.

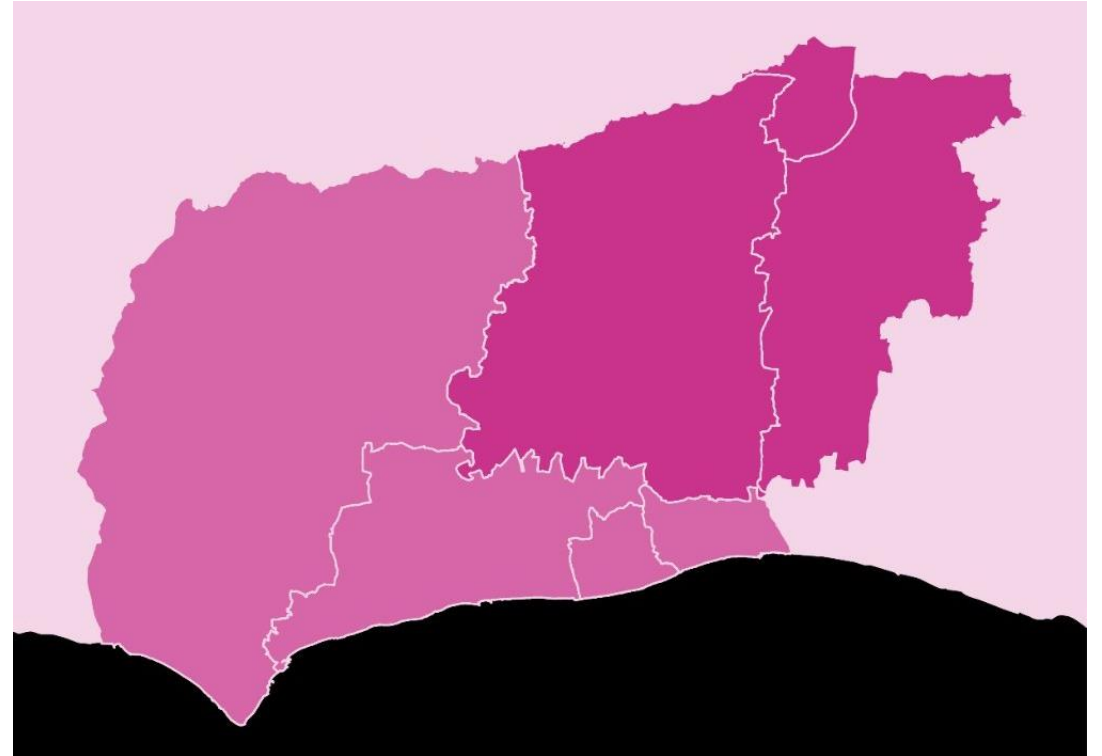
- Brings together the growth corridors along the M23 and A23 and the economic influence of Gatwick Airport with growing, business parks, and the rural communities.
- Opportunity to address key challenges, including housing supply and homelessness.
- Generally balanced socio-economic profile, with lower levels of overall deprivation alongside localised areas of higher demand, particularly in some coastal and urban communities.

Understanding demand, two unitary model – variation 2

The unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints will see a faster population growth by 2040 than the unitary combining Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

The percentage of single person households aged over 65 is higher in the unitary combining Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing than the unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints and is notably higher than Southeast England as a whole.

The unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints contributes slightly more Gross Value Add to the UK economy.



Understanding demand for two unitary model – variation 2

Unitary combining Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints.

	Ages 0-15	Ages 16-64	Ages 65 +	Total
Area population (2023) <small>Source: ONS Mid-year estimates 2023</small>	75,517	272,798	124,623	472,938
Area population increase 2013-2023 <small>Source: ONS 2024</small>	3.6%	6.1%	13.9%	7.6%

Southeast England Population increase 2013-2023: 7.6%

Area projected population 2042: 523,964

Source: ONS 2024

Births 2023: 3,553 Deaths 2023: 6,133

Source: ONS 2024

Unpaid Carers 2021: 11,991 (2.70%)

Southeast England Unpaid Carers 2021: 2.39%

Source: 2021 Census (over 50hours per week)

Deprivation ranking: 181 (out of 317)

Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (average local authority ranking, 1 is most deprived, 317 least deprived)

Number of households 2021: 203,997

Source: 2021 Census

Single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 35,329 (17.3%)

Southeast England single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 13.2%

Source: 2021 Census

Gross Value Added (GVA) 2022: £12.9billion

Source: ONS 2024

Working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal

Credit: 9.1%

Southeast England working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 8.6%. Source: DWP 2025

Economic Activity Rate: 81.7%

Source: ONS 2025

Understanding demand for two unitary model – variation 2

Unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints.

	Ages 0-15	Ages 16-64	Ages 65 +	Total
Area population (2023) <small>Source: ONS Mid-year estimates 2023</small>	83,215	260,353	84,356	427,924
Area population increase 2013-2023 <small>Source: ONS 2024</small>	10.5%	8.2%	20.6%	10.9%

Southeast England Population increase 2013-2023: 7.6%

Area projected population 2042: 486,297

Source: ONS 2024

Births 2023: 4,095 **Deaths 2023:** 3,839

Source: ONS 2024

Unpaid Carers 2021: 8,336 (2.11%)

Southeast England Unpaid Carers 2021: 2.39%

Source: 2021 Census (over 50 hours per week)

Deprivation ranking: 250 (out of 317)

Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (average local authority ranking, 1 is most deprived, 317 least deprived)

Number of households 2021: 171,223

Source: 2021 Census

Single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 22,078 (12.9%)

Southeast England single person households (ages 65+) 2021: 13.2%

Source: 2021 Census

Gross Value Added (GVA) 2022: £13.8 billion

Source: ONS 2024

Working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 7.3%

Southeast England working age claiming unemployment benefit through Universal Credit: 8.6%. Source: DWP 2025

Economic Activity Rate: 84.2%

Source: ONS 2025

Understanding finances

All income and expenditure across local government in West Sussex will be pooled. Further financial modelling will be undertaken to determine the impact of reorganisation on the baseline, factoring in new costs, savings, investments and cost of change.

These figures show combined budget estimates for a unitary combining Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing footprints, taking local authority revenue expenditure and income, April 2025 to March 2026, broken down by service.

(income figures exclude any use of reserves to fund in-year deficits)

Expenditure by category	Amount (£m)
Council services (net of service income), see spend by service breakdown right	-560.0
Fire Service	-23.2
Education services	-356.0
Housing Benefit payments	-93.2
Levies less Trading Surplus	-1.8
Financing costs (interest)	-24.1
Total Expenditure	-1,058.4

Income	Amount (£m)	
Ring-fenced grants	96.0	
General grants	162.8	
Schools' grants (including Dedicated Schools Grant)	314.9	
Business Rates (retained Income)	99.2	
Council Tax 25/26 (calc.)	384.0	
Total Income	1,057.0	
Spend by service (including disaggregated services)	Amount (£m)	Percentage
Adult Social Care	217.1	38.8
Children's Social Care	132.0	23.6
Environmental and Regulatory Services	76.0	13.6
Highways and Transport	28.8	5.1
Public Health	27.4	4.9
Central Services	22.9	4.1
Cultural and Related Services	19.2	3.4
Housing Services (GFRA only)	17.0	3.0
Planning and Development Services	14.6	2.6
Other Services	5.0	0.9

Understanding finances

All income and expenditure across local government in West Sussex will be pooled. Further financial modelling will be undertaken to determine the impact of reorganisation on the baseline, factoring in new costs, savings, investments and cost of change.

These figures show combined budget estimates for a unitary combining Crawley, Horsham, and Mid-Sussex footprints, taking local authority revenue expenditure and income, April 2025 to March 2026, broken down by service.

(income figures exclude any use of reserves to fund in-year deficits)

Expenditure by category	Amount (£m)
Council services (net of service income), see spend by service breakdown right	-435.7
Fire Service	-20.8
Education services	-361.4
Housing Benefit payments	-63.5
Levies less Trading Surplus	6.1
Financing costs (interest)	-15.6
Total Expenditure	-903.1

Income	Amount (£m)	
Ring-fenced grants	70.8	
General grants	113.8	
Schools' grants (including Dedicated Schools Grant)	319.8	
Business Rates (retained Income)	49.6	
Council Tax 25/26 (calculated)	338.5	
Total Income	892.5	
Spend by service (including disaggregated services)	Amount (£m)	Percentage
Adult Social Care	147.4	33.9
Children's Social Care	89.4	20.5
Environmental and Regulatory Services	65.3	15.0
Highways and Transport	28.8	6.6
Public Health	24.6	5.6
Cultural and Related Services	21.9	5.0
Central Services	20.8	4.8
Housing Services (GFRA only)	18.1	4.2
Planning and Development Services	16.2	3.7
Other Services	3.2	0.7

Design implications and considerations

Leadership and Governance

- Two full sets of statutory functions and leadership teams.
- Large-scale transition, organising eight councils into two. Governance, workforce, systems and service models would need to be redesigned end-to-end, with strong central leadership and sustained coordination.
- New governance structures and procedures that could be tailored to specific sub-regional needs and identities.

Harmonisation

- Integrated, tailored and preventative working between services such as social care, housing, and revenues and benefits.
- A focus on integrating a wide range of services that are currently delivered through diverse models, such as waste and planning.
- Services currently provided by multiple councils would be redesigned to achieve harmonisation.
- Aggregating and harmonising district and borough back-office functions such as legal, digital and finance together removes the need to completely duplicate the current county back-office functions.

Design implications and considerations

Priority services

- Disaggregating county-wide services like adult and children's social care adds complexity and transition risk.
- Operating model options, such as shared services, could be considered to provide a way to attain economies of scale, reduce duplication and manage risk.
- Easterly unitary would inherit a disproportionate share of children's social care and housing-related demand, and would require targeted resourcing, commissioning and workforce planning.
- Adult social care demand is disproportionately higher in the West with more sustained pressure from ageing populations and people retiring to the area.