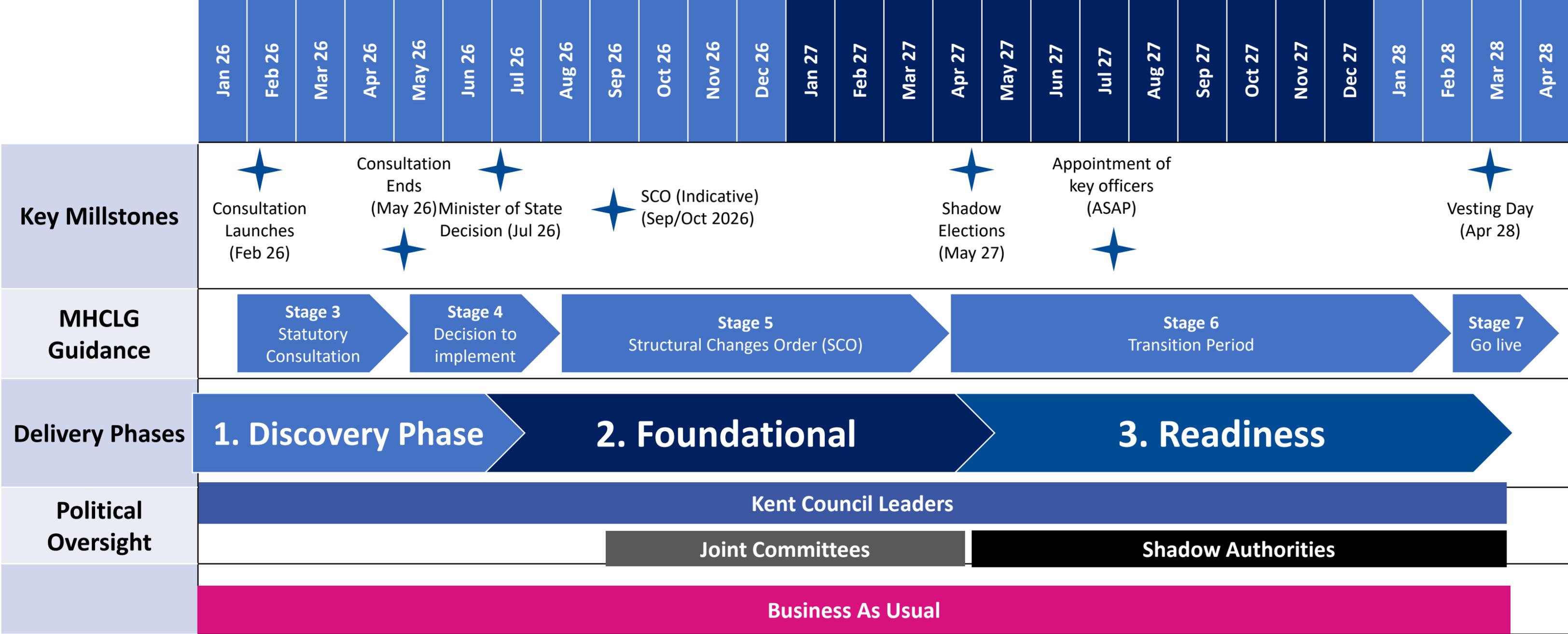


Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Jim Martin

Leader, Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Timeline to the new Unitary



5 Models

Separate structure and content using shared evidence base

Single unitary (1A)

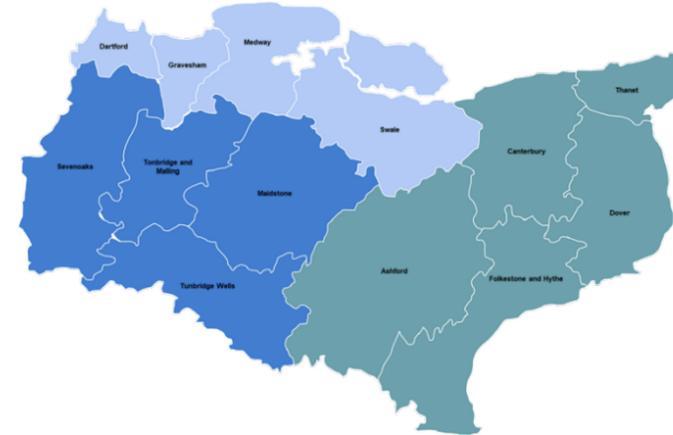


Kent
1,931,684

Single unitary with three area assemblies

Shared structure and significant shared content across all four business cases

Three unitaries (3A)



A three unitary option with a north, east and west unitary.

N	W	E
686,716	567,062	677,906

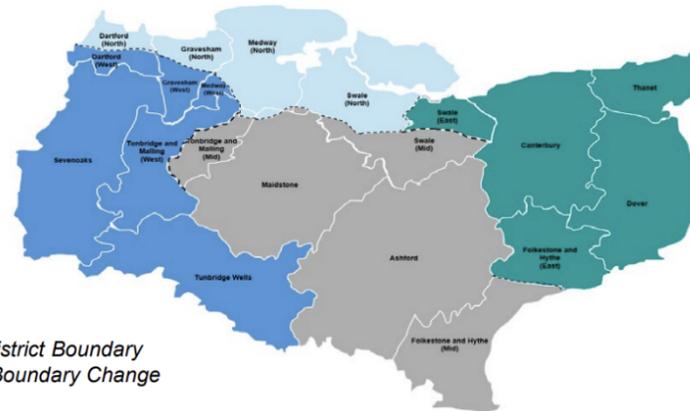
Four unitaries (4B)



A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east.

N	W	E	M
528,337	567,062	424,559	411,726

Four unitaries (4D)*

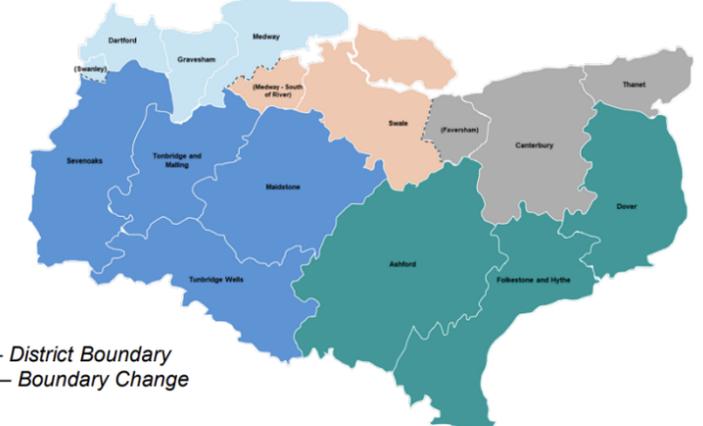


Key:
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

A four unitary option with unitaries in the north, west, centre and east, including boundary changes.

N	W	E	M
615,931	374,269	523,642	417,842

Five unitaries (5A)*



Key:
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

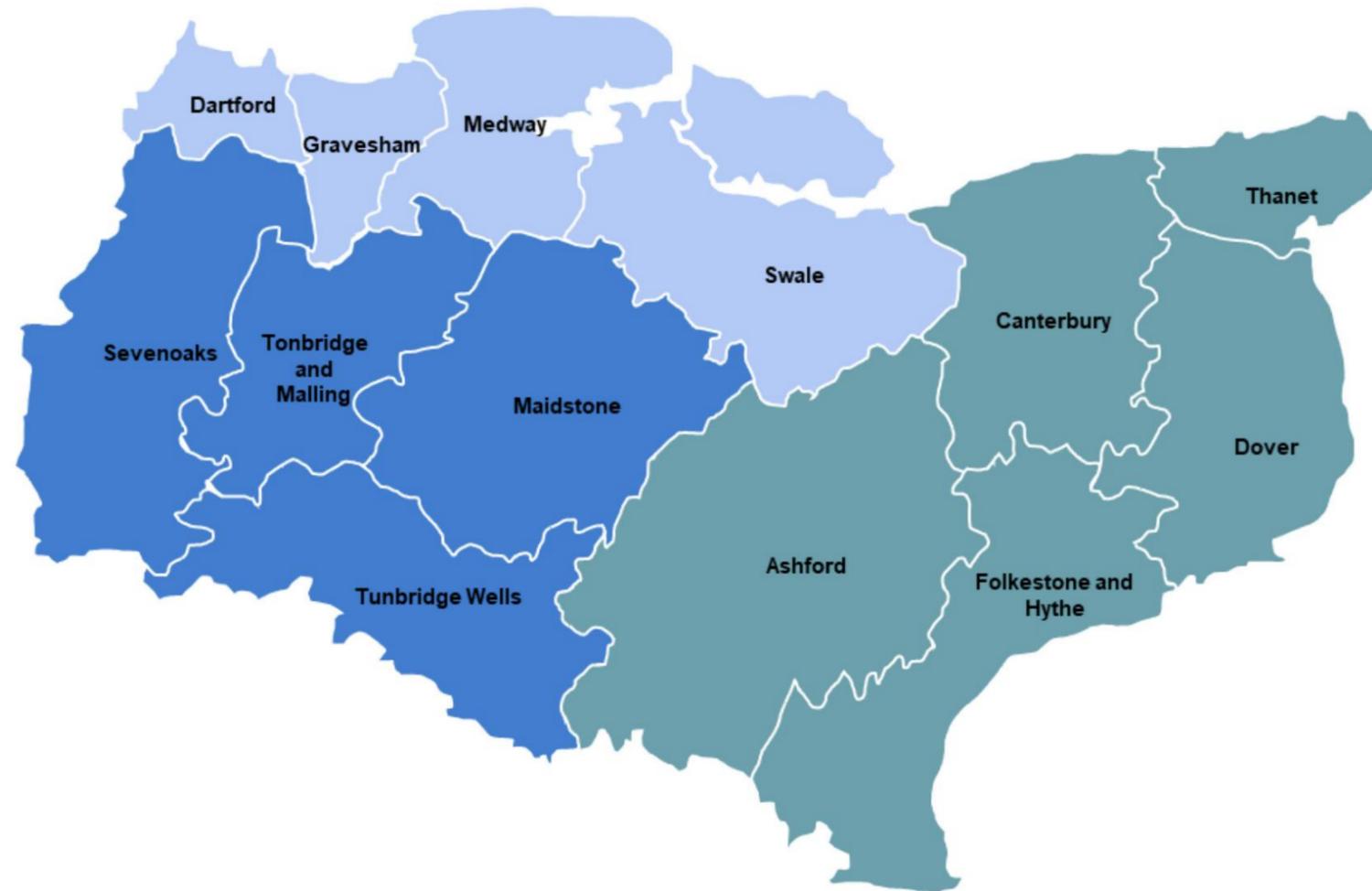
A five unitary option, including boundary changes.

N	W	E	M	S
330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115

Options 3A and 4B are the only ones being paid for from the Government's LGR allocation for the whole of Kent

*Option 4D and 5A propose boundary changes

Our Three Unitary Proposal



- Balanced populations
- Sufficient scale to withstand financial shocks
- Respects local identities and your existing boundaries
- Aligns closely with existing partner geographies
- Creates building blocks for Devolution & a strategic authority
- Cost effective with the best pay-back period of any multi unitary option

This option has the support of the greatest number of Boroughs and Districts – Folkestone & Hythe, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells.

Concerns with other models

- Any option that breaks existing borough and parish boundaries (4D and 5A) would add significant and unnecessary risk, complexity and cost to the new Councils.
- Any option that breaks existing borough and parish boundaries would also create significant problems for other service providers adding to their costs and complexity. (4D and 5A)
- Any option with more than 3 Unitary Councils may not be financially viable or big enough to withstand financial challenges/shocks (4B, 4D and 5A).
- A single unitary (1A) the size of Kent and Medway could be unwieldy to manage, completely out of step with the rest of Local Government trying to serve a 2 million population, be too remote from the communities it serves, and would be incompatible with devolution

Government's Consultation Website

Consultation opened 5 February and will continue for 7 weeks

Deadline 26 March

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/kent-and-medway/consultation/subpage.2026-02-03.9571411642/>

Or write to the Government: Email - LGRconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk



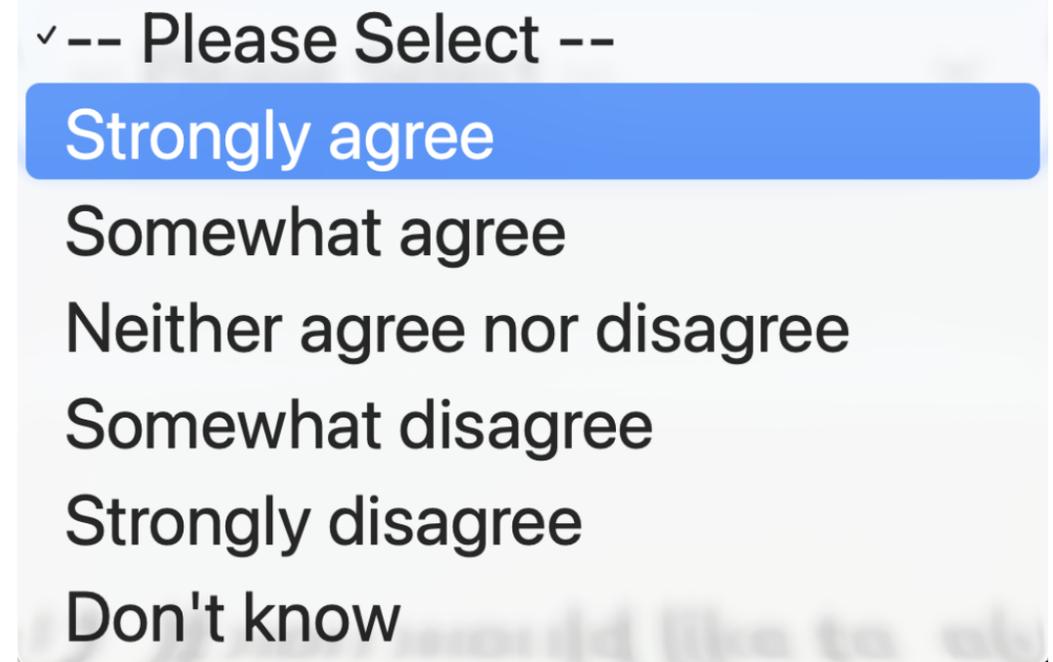
Write to:

LGR Consultation
Fry Building 2NE
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Survey Questions

12 Questions for each of the 5 Models

9 of the questions ask that you select from the following scale



✓ -- Please Select --

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

The Government has also recently announced:

On 12th Feb 26: the Minister for Devolution, Faith and Communities and the Minister for Housing and Planning wrote to all Chief Executives with regards English Devolution and Strategic Planning, outlining:

- a non-statutory consultation on the geographies for **Spatial Development Strategies** (SDSs), areas across which the new system of strategic planning will operate;
- and inviting expressions of interest from authorities without an existing devolution agreement (Kent & Medway do not have an existing agreement) to be part of a new wave of **Foundation Strategic Authorities (FSAs)** across England

Spatial Development Strategies (SDS):

- For parts of the country currently without mayoral devolution, SDSs need to be developed across ‘sensible geographies’ in line with the principles of the English Devolution White Paper.
- Consultation has been launched on what these sensible geographies might be. This non-statutory consultation will last from **12 February to 26 March 2026**
- In areas without mayoral strategic authorities or non-mayoral foundation strategic authorities, the responsibility for producing SDSs will sit with **upper tier county councils** and unitary authorities. Through Local Government Reorganisation the duty to prepare an SDS will shift to the new unitary authorities.
- A new strategic planning board will therefore need to be established for April 2028: Vesting day for new unitary authorities (or April 2027 in the case of Surrey). In practical terms, the strategic planning authorities should work with the shadow unitary authorities to ensure a smooth handover of the SDS.

Foundation Strategic Authorities:

- The Government is inviting all areas in England without an existing devolution agreement to come forward with their neighbours to take on devolution through an FSA over a sensible geography.
- **Expressions of interest are welcomed over the coming weeks, with responses reviewed from 20 March 2026**
- For areas currently without a Strategic Authority (Kent and Medway) the development of Spatial Development Strategies footprints (likely to be Kent and Medway) will be useful to agree the shape of devolution geographies.
- FSAs will have devolved powers over local transport and skills, as well as other devolved arrangements listed in the English Devolution White Paper: [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation

Any questions?