

Council

04 September 2025

Local Government Re-organisation – Outcome of Options Appraisal Work

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sharon Harvey Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Senior Officers	John Leach, Chief Executive Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
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Wards Affected	All
Ward Consulted Councillor(s)	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	All Council Priorities
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to RESOLVE to: -

- 1.1 NOTE the matters set out in this report and the findings of the Options Appraisal carried out by Mutual Ventures attached at Appendix 1; and appendices associated with the Mutual Ventures report listed within their report as Appendix A - Financial modelling and assumptions, Appendix B – Shape Worcestershire: outputs from public engagement, staff surveys and focus groups and Appendix C – Place profiles.**

RESOLVE

- 1.2 Which model of Local Government re-organisation be selected as the Council's preferred option to be progressed to be developed into the final proposals for submission to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government by the deadline of 28th November 2025. Members are asked to select from one of the following options: -**

OPTION A: One Unitary Authority for the whole of Worcestershire made up of the six district/borough areas of Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest (currently covered by the six Worcestershire District Councils and Worcestershire County Council).

OPTION B (Presented as Options B1 and B2 in this report): Two Unitary Authorities made up of North Worcestershire (covering Bromsgrove District, Redditch Borough and Wyre Forest District) and South Worcestershire (covering Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District) providing the former district/borough and county council local government services for each area.

- 1.3 That having selected Option A or Option B, that Members instruct officers: -**
- 1.3.1 To undertake further analysis and development of the option selected under Recommendation 1.2 above: and**
- 1.3.2 To bring back to Members at a Council meeting in November a set of final proposals for their consideration representing the Council's draft submission on Local Government Re-organisation; and**
- 1.3.3 In recognition of the requirement to collaborate with other authorities when putting forward plans for Local Government Reorganisation, to work with the Leader of this Council and Leader or Leaders of any other authorities which have chosen the same option to develop joint final proposals for consideration at the meeting referred to in 1.3.2,**
- 1.4 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive following consultation with the Leader to work with other councils and consultants as necessary.**
- 1.5 To agree a supplementary budget estimate of up to £100,000 to allow further work on the Council's proposal for Local Government Reorganisation. This is in two tranches of firstly £50,000 with a second tranche of £50,000 to be drawn only if required, under authority delegated to the Chief Executive following consultation with the Leader of the Council.**

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 On 17th March 2025 members considered a report on the interim plan proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Worcestershire. The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the proposals for Local Government devolution and re-organisation as set out in the Government White Paper titled English Devolution published on 16th December 2024 (referred to in this report as the “White Paper”) by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (“MHCLG”).

2.2 In the White Paper, the Government set out its ambition to create new Strategic Authorities (the new name for Combined Authorities). The establishment of the new Strategic Authorities would enable increased levels of devolution to take place in locations not currently covered by a Combined Authority. It is the Government’s intention that Strategic Authorities will have the ability to perform functions in the following areas: -

- transport and local infrastructure
- skills and employment support
- housing and strategic planning
- economic development and regeneration
- environment and net zero
- health, wellbeing and public service reform
- public safety

These are referred to as a Strategic Authority’s “areas of competence” and are outlined in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. A link to the guidance to the Bill has been included in the background papers for this report.

2.3. Alongside the extension of Strategic Authorities to all areas, the Government announced its intention to carry out Local Government Reorganisation (“LGR”). This applies to all remaining areas of two-tier Local Government, i.e. areas where there are both County Councils and District Councils. The two-tier structures will be abolished and replaced with one tier Unitary Councils.

2.4 On 5th February 2025 the Minister wrote to all the Worcestershire authorities inviting the council leaders in the area to develop a proposal for single tier re-organisation in exercise of powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The timetable imposed by the Government required interim proposals to be submitted by 21st March 2025 and final proposals by 28th November 2025.

2.5 At the time of meeting on 17th March the Leaders of the authorities in Worcestershire had been holding joint discussions through the Worcestershire Leaders Board, supported by their respective Chief Executives. The focus had been to prepare a Draft Interim Plan setting out proposals for a unitary model or models covering Worcestershire as a whole. The draft interim plan would then be subject to agreement by each of the Councils in Worcestershire.

- 2.6 It emerged from the discussions that there was no one model on which all Councils could agree, and the final position reached was that the Draft Interim Plan would cover two options as follows: -
- OPTION A: One Unitary Authority for the whole county of Worcestershire.
 - OPTION B: Two Unitary Authorities made up of North Worcestershire (covering the footprint of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest) and South Worcestershire (covering the footprint of Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon) together with associated County Council functions for each area.
- 2.7 By the date of the meeting on 17th March, Members had been supplied with the approved version of the Draft Interim Plan and this document was discussed at some length. It was noted that there had not been a great deal of time between January 2025 and March 2025 to fully investigate and evaluate the options for LGR in Worcestershire. Some aspects required further detailed analysis particularly around the costs of the two alternative models of either a single unitary council or two separate unitaries for the North and the South of Worcestershire.
- 2.8 The final decision taken by Members was to support the submission of the Draft Interim Plan for Worcestershire which committed to further exploration of the two options of either a single county wide unitary or two separate North and South unitaries. It should be noted that unanimous agreement was not achieved across the county to investigate both options further.
- 2.9 At the meeting on 17th March, Members also discussed the report that had been commissioned by Worcestershire County Council from PricewaterhouseCoopers ("PwC"). This was a document that set out forecasts of the estimated costs of different models of single tier organisations for Worcestershire. At the meeting Members expressed concerns about the lack of transparency about the assumptions on which the PwC report had been based.
- 2.10 Following the meeting officers investigated commissioning a fresh options appraisal to assess the different models in the Interim Plan and how this piece of work could be combined with carrying out a public engagement exercise. As set out in the Ministerial Guidance issued on 5th February 2025, local leaders are expected to "ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and the representatives and businesses on a proposal".
- 2.11 Noting the fact that there was not unanimous agreement, Redditch Borough Council agreed to work in collaboration with the other District Councils in Worcestershire (excluding Wyre Forest District Council, which opted not to take part). A project was put together to jointly commission a piece of work, and following a procurement exercise, Mutual Ventures were selected to produce an Options Appraisal. Members are referred to the Options Appraisal issued by Mutual Ventures dated 26th August 2025 which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.12 This report therefore sets out an update for Members of events that have occurred since 17th March 2025, and the outcomes of the Options Appraisal undertaken by Mutual Ventures including an analysis of the results of the public and staff consultation. Members are being

asked to consider the options appraisal provided through this report and decide which of the options (Option A or Option B (named as B1 and B2)) should be further developed to final proposal stage in order that a further report can be brought with this work to a meeting of Council prior to the deadline for submission of final proposals on 28th November 2025.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 Introduction and background

3.1.1 The report to Members for the meeting on 17th March set out the full background of the Government's plans to widen and deepen devolution across England by the introduction of strategic authorities, and as a pre-cursor to this, the decision to launch a new round of re-organisation in two tier areas. These concepts were first set out in the English Devolution White Paper which was published on 16th December 2024. Subsequently on 5th February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution ("the Minister of State") wrote to all the Leaders in Worcestershire to formally invite them to work with each other to develop a proposal for Local Government re-organisation. The invitation set out: -

- Further detail on the criteria.
- Guidance for the development of proposals.
- The timeline for the process.

3.1.2 As referred to at paragraph 2.4, the invitation to submit proposals has been made under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and invites Worcestershire County Council and the six District Councils in Worcestershire to submit a proposal for a single tier of Local Government. These proposals must be submitted to the Secretary of State by 28th November 2025.

3.1.3 There has been a strong emphasis from the Government on the need for the principal authorities in each County area to work together. The Minister's letter of 5th February states "We therefore expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals. This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary Local Government across the whole of your area."

3.1.4 The outcome of the Council meeting on 17th March was that Members agreed to adopt the Interim Plan for Worcestershire and that this be submitted to the MHCLG as the Council's interim response. A copy of the final version of the Interim Plan for Worcestershire as submitted to the MHCLG is attached at Appendix 2. Formal feedback on the interim Plan was received from MHCLG on 3rd June 2025 a copy of which is attached at Appendix 3 of this report. This feedback will need to be used to develop any final proposals for submission in November 2025.

3.1.5 In terms of other significant events relating to this report, the County Council elections took place on 1st May 2025 and this has resulted in a new administration taking over the running of Worcestershire County Council. Although the outcome of the election left no single political

group in overall control, the Reform Party now holds the greatest number of seats on the Council and has therefore set up a new administration. The County Council has continued to pursue a single county option since the elections. The most up to date information available was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board Meeting of Worcestershire County Council held on 24th July 2025. A link to the papers for and the recording of that meeting has been included in the background papers to this report.

- 3.1.6 On 10th July 2025 the Government issued the first draft of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill which is the document that will bring into law the ideas set out in the White Paper. The level of detail on LGR was not as great as some observers expected. The Government has indicated that where the Bill is silent on certain matters these areas will be the subject of secondary legislation and regulations at a later stage. It is not known what the timetable for the passage of the Bill through Parliament will be.

4.0 The Options Appraisal

- 4.1 This report provides feedback on a Local Government Reorganisation (“LGR”) options appraisal that focused on two options (A and B) for the unitarisation of Local Government in Worcestershire. Option A is a new unitary council for the whole county of Worcestershire and Option B provides two unitary councils in Worcestershire (North Worcestershire: comprising the current districts of Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest and the borough of Redditch and South Worcestershire: comprising the current districts of Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon). Option B consists of two variants: Option B1 provides for two unitary councils to be established across Worcestershire; North Worcestershire (covering the current district areas of Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest and Borough of Redditch) and South Worcestershire (covering the current district areas of Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon). It involves the disaggregation and transferring of all statutory and non-statutory services, functions and operating model from Worcestershire County Council to the new unitary councils and the aggregation and transferring of all statutory and non-statutory services, functions and operating models from district councils to their respective new (north or south) unitary council. Option B2 provides two unitary councils established across Worcestershire; North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire. It offers a shared service/hybrid model across both new unitary councils, with specific services (i.e adult social care, children’s services, education, adult education and transport) jointly delivered and commissioned. All other services would be delivered and commissioned by each new unitary council, including prevention and early help. The exact arrangement would be determined during the development of the full LGR proposal. The criteria used within this appraisal cover six key areas identified by the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution in relation to Local Government Reorganisation in his letter to the Leaders of all councils in Worcestershire (dated 5th February 2025), including further updates as they have been received from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG). The areas covered are: -

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

2. Unitary Local Government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
 3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
 4. 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.
 5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
 6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.
- 4.2 The options appraisal was commissioned by Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council and Wychavon District Council. Mutual Ventures whose aim **“is to make public services better, more sustainable and more connected to communities”** secured the commission and have been working with the commissioning councils to develop the options appraisal.
- 4.3 The approach taken in appraising each option was to consider against the Government’s six criteria for LGR qualitative and quantitative information. The qualitative information considered was acquired through 32 engagement sessions, a countywide public survey for residents and other interested parties and staff surveys at the commissioning councils. The outputs from these engagements have been compiled and used to develop a series of design principles (see below). These principles demonstrate where broad consensus was achieved in terms of the key ambitions and characteristics that should inform and underpin Local Government structures, services, culture and priorities post-LGR.
- 4.4 Further work is required to develop the design principles and intended benefits into a comprehensive list of outcomes aligned to the Government’s Local Government Outcomes Framework. This work would take place as part of any phase two work to develop a final proposal for consideration for submission to Government by 28th November 2025.
- 4.5 **Design Principles**
- 4.5.1 In developing the design principles **a transformation period of ten years** was utilised in recognising that although there will be a vesting day, change will take time. To this end it was determined that for LGR to be considered a success in ten years’ time, services delivered by Local Government should effectively cover the following themes/activities: -
1. **Relationship with the council(s)**
 - Be consistently high quality – whether I live in an urban or rural area
 - Represent good value for money – so I can be confident in my council
 - Be accessible, reliable and responsive – through a single front door to public services
 - Be accountable – so I know who to talk to and how I can influence decisions that affect me and my community/business

2. Social

- Raise aspirations and improve life chances – irrespective of where I live and my background
- Catalyse pride in place – by investing in, protecting and celebrating our area, heritage and culture
- Reflect the needs of residents and communities by providing person centred support, rather than standardised services
- Empower communities to support themselves – we know what the problems are and how to solve them

3. Economic

- Create the conditions for economic growth and shared prosperity – aligning ambitious growth plans with the needs of residents, communities and businesses
- Provide connected infrastructure – that links communities, public services, businesses, community infrastructure and education/skills provision

4. Environmental

- Protect our environment – prioritising net zero, climate and flood resilience, air quality, nature recovery and protecting biodiversity
- Align increased housing supply with investment in public service provision – to manage the pressures on schools, GPs, roads and community services

4.5.2 Members in considering their preferred LGR option are encouraged as a guide to consider which model best aligns to this feedback alongside the feedback provided in this report against the Government's six criteria.

4.6 Shape Worcestershire Survey (See also Appendix 1.B)

4.6.1 The Shape Worcestershire public engagement campaign and survey was carried out for a month from 1st June to 29th June 2025. All borough, city and districts were involved including Wyre Forest District Council, but not the county council.

4.6.2 4,249 responses in total were received from across the county. The majority (94% or 4,009) were from residents. Some businesses, parish and town councils, and voluntary and community sector organisations also responded. The 'other' category of responses included police, church groups, housing associations, colleges, GPs, and some council employees and councillors.

4.6.3 The headline results were as provided in the table below: -

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

04 September 2025

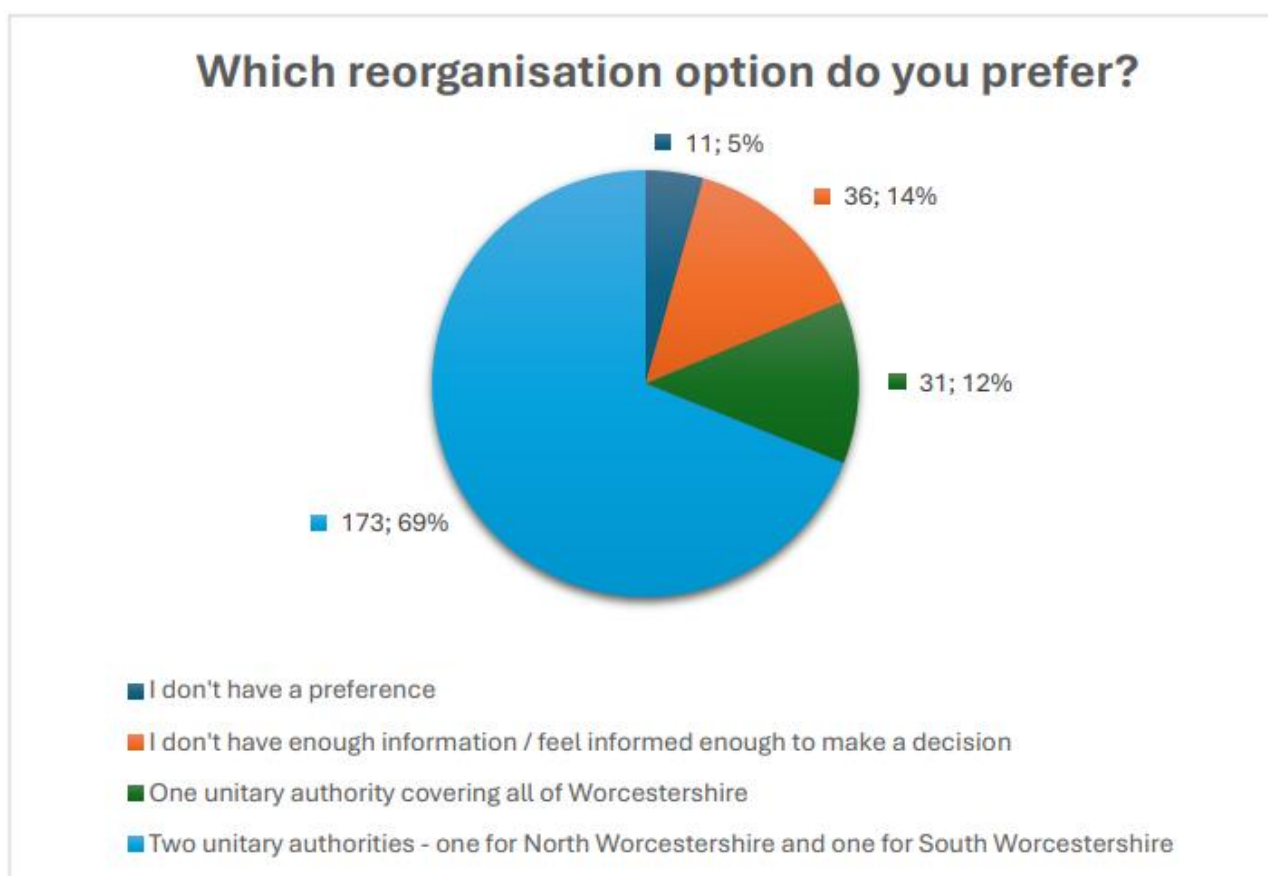
Based on the information provided, which option do you currently prefer?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	One unitary council covering all of Worcestershire		28.7%	1215
2	Two unitary councils - one for North Worcestershire and one for South Worcestershire		47.8%	2026
3	I don't have a preference		4.2%	176
4	I don't support reorganisation of local councils in Worcestershire		18.9%	799
5	I'm not interested		0.5%	20
			answered	4236
			skipped	13

4.6.4 The Shape Worcestershire results by district council area were as follows: -

By local area - Based on the information provided, which option do you currently prefer?						
	Bromsgrove DC	Malvern Hills DC	Redditch BC	Worcester CC	Wychavon DC	Wyre Forest DC
One unitary authority	34%	24%	15%	46%	22%	40%
Two unitary authorities	46%	58%	41%	42%	57%	39%
I don't have a preference	2%	4%	6%	4%	3%	6%
I don't support reorganisation	18%	14%	37%	8%	17%	15%
I'm not interested	<0.2%	<0.5%	<1%	0	<1%	<0.5%

4.7 Staff Survey Results

- 4.7.1 The Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC) staff survey was launched on Wednesday 25th June and ran for three weeks, closing on Wednesday 16th July to the BDC and RBC workforce. The survey remained open a further two days until 18th July for staff members at Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS). In total the survey received 251 responses.
- 4.7.2 The chart below (Appendix B – page 11), shows responses to the question “As an employee of Bromsgrove District and/or Redditch Borough Councils, considering the needs of your area, which reorganisation option do you prefer? Represented as a pie chart. Data callout = tally; percentage of set.



- 4.8 When considering the six criteria against the options set out at Paragraph 4.1 the below scores have been provided utilising the following key and are shown in table 1 on the next page: -

Key

- **High probability** - analysis provides demonstrable evidence that the option can meet the criterion.
- **Medium probability** - analysis provides partial evidence

that the option can meet the criterion.

- **Low probability** - analysis indicates that the option is unlikely to meet the criterion.
- **Unclear** - further information is required to assess the performance of the option against the criterion.

Table 1: Option Performance Against LGR Criteria (Appendix 1 – page 27 of the Mutual Venture report)

Summary - option performance against LGR criteria																					
	1. The establishment of a single tier of local government						2. The right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks					3. Prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens			4. A view that meets local needs and is informed by local views		5. Ability to unlock devolution		6. Engage & empower		
	Single tier of local government	Sensible economic area	Appropriate tax base	Increase housing supply	Identify intended outcomes, informed by local engagement	Positive cost / benefit ratio	Effective democratic representation	Meet 500k population guiding principle	Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances *	Identification of transition costs and how these will be managed	Right size to withstand financial shocks - measure 1	Right size to withstand financial shocks - measure 2	EFS - local government on a firmer footing	Improved service delivery & avoidance of service fragmentation	Deliver public service reform & VIM	Consideration for the impact on crucial services	An explanation of how local concerns will be addressed	Local identity and cultural and historic importance	How proposals will help unlock devolution	Sensible population size ratios	Enable stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment
Option A	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Option B1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	N S	N S	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Option B2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	N S	N S	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		OPTION A – SINGLE UNITARY				OPTION B 1 – TWO UNITARY				OPTION B2 – TWO UNITARY HYBRID											
	Green	Amber	Red	Grey	Green	Amber	Red	Grey	Green	Amber	Red	Grey	Green	Amber	Red	Grey					
TOTAL *	14	6	0	1	12.5	6.5	1	1	14.5	5.5	0	1									

Please note whilst the criteria is not weighted by the Government it would be incorrect to assume the option with the most green dots automatically is the best option. It will be important for Members to determine what weight they place on the Red, Amber and Green ratings (“RAG ratings”) attracted by each option against each element of the criteria.

- 4.9 The following provides a summary description of each option as considered through the options appraisal conducted by Mutual Ventures.

Option A

- 4.9.1 **A new single unitary council for the whole county of Worcestershire. This would be achieved by the transferring of the county council’s statutory and non-statutory services, functions and operating model to a new unitary council. Additionally, the transferring of all statutory and non-statutory services, functions and operating models from the six district councils to the new unitary council.**

(i) Single Tier of Local Government

- 4.9.2 This option offers the creation of a single tier of Local Government across Worcestershire that falls within the areas of West Mercia Police, fire and rescue services and the current Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board. It provides the foundations for coordinated economic development across council service directorates (economic development, housing, transport, skills, planning etc.) to address local economic challenges. Options B1 and B2 provide a greater opportunity to ensure effective democratic representation. Should option A establish the maximum number of councillors permitted for a unitary council (i.e. 100 councillors, as per the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) guidance), this would result in 6,142 residents per councillor. For options B1 and B2, a new North Worcestershire unitary council would require 63 councillors (4,619 residents per councillor) and a new South Worcestershire unitary council 70 councillors (4,617 residents per councillor) to broadly align with the national average (4,600 residents per councillor for unitary councils).

(ii) Efficiencies, Savings and Size

- 4.9.3 Option A meets the LGR criteria’s guiding principle for population size of 500,000 residents per new unitary council with a population of c614,000. This is a guiding principle, rather than a hard target. Councils are permitted to submit a case for exception within their final LGR proposal. Option A is forecast to achieve the highest level of financial savings over 10 years (£89.269m). However, as referenced in Appendix A of the Mutual Venture report research by the District Councils Network (“DCN”) has shown that there is evidence that larger systems can introduce diseconomies of scale. Option A is forecast to achieve the shortest payback period (3 years) of all options. The LGR guidance does not provide a specific target in terms of the required/maximum duration of the payback period.

- 4.9.4 It is important to note that the calculations provided in the report do not take into account the impact of the Fair Funding Formula (which, for example, indicates increased future funding levels for Redditch), the allocation of Exceptional Financial Support (“EFS”) liabilities, the sale of land or properties and any future additional borrowing.

(iii) High Quality, Sustainable Public Services to Citizens

- 4.9.5 This option aims to avoid service fragmentation, with services either aggregated or transferred to the new unitary council. Continuation of existing single discharge pathways (social care/health), Better Care Fund and Special Educational Need and Disability (“SEND”) arrangements. There are benefits to system partners in terms of the reduced number of partners, relationships and joint working arrangements required (compared to options B1 and B2).
- 4.9.6 Under option A there are significant opportunities for public service reform at a system and council level.
- 4.9.7 Option A provides reduced levels of disruption to services including adult social care, children’s services and SEND compared to option B1. Service disruption may be experienced across homelessness services and other service areas that would have to be aggregated and transferred from the district councils to the new unitary council. There would be added complexity for those services being aggregated/ transferred that are currently delivered as shared services between district councils.
- 4.9.8 The risks under option A associated with the new unitary council operating at scale and across multiple systems would require mitigation. Ensuring clear lines of accountability between neighbourhood governance structures and councillors would be crucial in offsetting the loss of local representation that would result from the deletion of district and county councillor posts (which is inherent within all options for LGR). The ability of residents to influence and understand decisions, and the transparency of decision making, were identified as critical characteristics of any new unitary council by local stakeholders during the engagement process.

(iv) A view that meets local needs and is informed by local views

- 4.9.9 The loss of localism (including the removal of district councils) and requirement to provide clear lines of accountability and governance structures would need to be addressed by option A. During the Shape Worcestershire public engagement process 47.8% of respondents (2,026) highlighted their preference for a two unitary model due to a view that the model would better reflect the diverse needs of urban and rural areas, while also believing that two smaller councils would be more responsive to and maintain local connections. This compared to 28.7% of respondents (1,215) preferring a single new unitary council option. Concerns regarding a single new unitary model focussed on diminishing community involvement and remote decision making.

(v) Ability of new unitary structures to unlock devolution

4.9.10 Option A would establish a single unitary council with a significant population (c614,000) and economy. The new unitary would possess significant economic power/assets and the capacity/scale to deliver regional priorities. Under option A a single new unitary council would maintain joint working relationships with all public service system partners (Integrated Care Board ('ICB'), Police and Crime Commissioner, West Mercia Police, the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue etc.), in addition to housing providers, colleges and the university. However, there will be a requirement for a new single unitary council and strategic authority model to mitigate the challenges posed in relation to the north/south and urban/rural splits that exist across the county. The ability to ensure that ambitious growth plans align with the needs of all residents and businesses, over a large and diverse geographic area, represents a significant challenge, particularly across areas of the county that currently feel underserved by current arrangements.

(vi) Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

4.9.11 Option A would require clear lines of governance and accountability between neighbourhoods and the council which would serve a population of c614,000 residents. Establishing these arrangements at such a scale, in a way that strengthens each community's trust in decision making while providing transparency and clear lines of accountability, represents a challenge. Effective local engagement and empowerment would require a culture of ceding control to be embedded within the new unitary council. Local, visible and accountable leaders would be required to work with communities to develop innovative approaches to neighbourhood empowerment, potentially including (for example) the devolution of power, decision making, assets and budgets. All supported by trusting and strong local connections.

Option B1

4.9.12 **Option B1 provides for: -**

- **two new unitary councils to be established across Worcestershire; North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire.**
- **the disaggregation and transferring of all statutory and non-statutory services, functions and operating model from Worcestershire County Council to the new unitary councils.**
- **the aggregation and transferring of all statutory and non-statutory services, functions and operating models from district councils to their respective new (north or south) unitary council.**

(i) Single Tier of Local Government

4.9.13 Option B1 (and B2) offers a unitary model for Local Government Reorganisation that potentially brings decision making and democratic accountability closer to the respective communities of north and south Worcestershire than option A.

- 4.9.14 Under option B1 both new unitary councils would fall within the organisational boundaries of system partners (West Mercia Police, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue service and the current Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board). Each system partner would be required to hold separate relationships with each new unitary council in relation to adult social care, children's services, prevention and early help etc.
- 4.9.15 The creation of two new unitary councils would reflect the varying characteristics of Worcestershire's economic geography (i.e. the 'north/south split'). Each council would possess a strong understanding of their local economies, allowing for the development of tailored and specific economic development strategies. The councils would maintain strong connections with local businesses, skills and housing providers given the increased focus on place and reduced number of relationships required with local stakeholders (i.e. from six district councils and a county council to two unitary councils).
- 4.9.16 Options B1 and B2 provide a greater opportunity to ensure effective democratic representation. Should option A establish the maximum number of councillors permitted for a unitary council (i.e. 100 councillors, as per LGBCE guidance), this would result in 6,142 residents per councillor. For options B1 and B2, a new North Worcestershire unitary council would require 63 councillors (4,619 residents per councillor) and a new South Worcestershire unitary council 70 councillors (4,617 residents per councillor) to broadly align with the national average (4,600 residents per councillor for unitary councils). Opportunities would also exist to establish closer links with existing town and parish councils as part of a more localised approach to community capacity building.
- (ii) Efficiencies, Savings and Size
- 4.9.17 Option B1 is anticipated to realise the lowest level of efficiencies / financial savings across all options. Over a 10 year period, option B1 is anticipated to realise £1.685m of savings, compared to £89.269m for option A and £16.786m for option B2. However, as referenced in Appendix A of the Mutual Venture report research by the District Councils Network ("DCN") has shown that there is evidence that larger systems can introduce diseconomies of scale.
- 4.9.18 Option B1 is anticipated to take the longest period of time to pay back the cost of LGR transformation (10 years). By comparison, option A is forecasted to have a 3 year payback period, while option B2 has a 7 year payback period. The LGR guidance does not provide a specific target in terms of the required/maximum duration of the payback period. The new South Worcestershire unitary council demonstrates the anticipated ability to withstand financial shocks (high probability of meeting both liquidity measures), while the new North Worcestershire unitary council demonstrates a medium to high probability. It is important to note that calculations that relate to Appendix 1 of this report do not take into account the impact of the Fair Funding Formula (which, for example, indicates increased future funding levels for Redditch), the allocation of EFS liabilities, the sale of land or properties and any future additional borrowing.
- 4.9.19 Option B1 does not meet the MHCLG guiding population principle of 500,000 residents per new unitary council. North Worcestershire would possess a population of 290,991, while

South Worcestershire's population would be 323,194. These figures are predicted to increase to 300,133 for North Worcestershire and 345,035 for South Worcestershire by 2032.

(iii) High Quality, Sustainable Public Services to Citizens

4.9.20 Given the structural characteristics of option B1, this option would possess the agility to deliver change at pace. Under this option place based services, close connections to communities and deep local insights would provide the conditions to achieve significant and meaningful public service reform, particularly at a neighbourhood level.

4.9.21 Establishing option B1 would result in significant service disaggregation, including a splitting of the county councils adult social care and children's services offers. It would however provide the basis for longer term service transformation, with services in the future designed and delivered across a neighbourhood model of working. This level of disaggregation though represents a complex process involving a range of core functions and statutory services. Under this option the commissioning arrangements (adults and children's services) would be disaggregated, potentially creating pressures in relation to the cost and availability of internal and market provision. The process may also represent a risk to service continuity, in addition to creating complexity, cost and challenges relating to single discharge pathways, Better Care arrangements and the children's services improvement journey. From a place services perspective this option offers better service continuity, as many of the services delivered across north and south Worcestershire are already shared/jointly delivered by district councils.

(iv) A view that meets local needs and is informed by local views

4.9.22 During the Shape Worcestershire public engagement process 47.8% of respondents (2,026) highlighted their preference for a two unitary model; comments by respondents stated that this was due to a view that the model would maintain local focus, democratic accountability and community connections.

4.9.23 45.7% of respondents (1,924) identified a two unitary model as best supporting local identity (compared to 20.3% (855) for a single unitary model). Additionally, the characteristics of option B1 provide the conditions to address several of the main concerns expressed by respondents in relation to the impact of LGR (given services would be delivered locally and decisions, informed by strengthened local insights, would be made closer to communities): -

- A loss of localism and representation - Concerns regarding diminished community involvement, loss of local facilities and remote decision-making.
- Clear accountability and governance - A desire for clear, transparent governance with councillors who live in the areas they represent.
- Allocation of services and resources - Concerns include potential marginalisation of rural areas, unequal resource allocation and fears that rural needs (e.g. isolation, transport) will be overlooked.

(v) Ability of new unitary structures to unlock devolution

4.9.24 Should option B1 be implemented, several approaches to devolution could be considered: -

- **A combined approach to devolution**, involving both new unitary councils joining the same strategic authority as constituent members. Other unitary constituent members may include (for example) unitary councils in Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Staffordshire.
- **Separate approaches to devolution**, reflecting the different social, economic and environmental profiles of north and south Worcestershire. The two new unitary council option provides the opportunity for North Worcestershire to consider associating itself more closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), while South Worcestershire may consider a strategic authority that contains (for example) South Warwickshire (should that be available) and unitary councils in Gloucestershire. At the moment however, it is understood that WMCA is not currently available to North Worcestershire.

(vi) Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

4.9.25 Under this option a neighbourhood delivery model and governance structures would create the conditions for clearer and more localised lines of accountability, enabling residents to influence decisions and hold decision makers to account. Given the greater place focus, a culture of ceding control could be embedded within each new unitary council. Local, visible and accountable leaders from the council and communities would be in a position to work together to develop innovative approaches to neighbourhood empowerment, including (for example) devolved decision making and agreeing a social contract between the council and communities.

Option B2

4.9.26 **Option B2 provides two new unitary councils established across Worcestershire; North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire. It offers a shared service/hybrid model across both new unitary councils, with specific services (i.e. adult social care, children's services, education, adult education and transport) jointly delivered and commissioned. All other services would be delivered and commissioned by each new unitary council, including prevention and early help. The exact arrangement would be determined during the development of the full LGR proposal.**

(i) Single Tier of Local Government

4.9.27 The new unitary councils under option B2 would create a single tier of Local Government across Worcestershire. Both new unitary councils fall within the organisational boundaries of system partners. System partners would hold relationships with the care partnerships (e.g. adult social care and children's services), while also supporting neighbourhood area committees (or equivalent) via the neighbourhood health service. The creation of two new

unitary councils would reflect the varying characteristics of Worcestershire's economic geography (i.e. the 'north/south split'). Each council would possess a strong understanding of their local economies, allowing for the development of tailored and specific economic development strategies. Each unitary council would be well placed to maintain strong connections with local businesses, skills and housing providers given the increased focus on place and reduced number of relationships required with local stakeholders (i.e. from six district councils and a county council to two unitary councils). The likelihood of adoption of inherited plans is considered to be greater for options B1 and B2, given that the South Worcestershire Development Plan has been jointly developed by the district councils that would form the new South Worcestershire unitary council. Across north Worcestershire, Redditch and Bromsgrove currently share strategic functions and collaborate on housing delivery while maintaining their own separate Local Plans. Additionally, the opportunity exists for a place-based approach to balancing local character and infrastructure.

4.9.28 Options B1 and B2 provide a greater opportunity to ensure effective democratic representation. Should option A establish the maximum number of councillors permitted for a unitary council (i.e. 100 councillors, as per LGBCE guidance), this would result in 6,142 residents per councillor. For options B1 and B2, a new North Worcestershire unitary council would require 63 councillors (4,619 residents per councillor) and a new South Worcestershire unitary council 70 councillors (4,617 residents per councillor) to broadly align with the national average (4,600 residents per councillor for unitary councils). Opportunities would also exist to establish closer links with existing town and parish councils as part of a more localised approach to community capacity building.

(ii) Efficiencies, Savings and Size

4.9.29 Option B2 does not meet MHCLG guiding population principle of 500,000 residents per new unitary council. North Worcestershire would possess a population of 290,991, while South Worcestershire's population would be 323,194. These figures are predicted to increase to 300,133 for North Worcestershire and 345,035 for South Worcestershire by 2032.

4.9.30 Recent updates relating to the MHCLG guidance state that the population guiding principle is not a hard target, with commissioning councils having the opportunity to demonstrate a compelling case for exemption during the development of the full LGR proposal.

4.9.31 Option B2 is forecast to achieve £16.786m of financial savings over 10 years, less than the financial savings forecast to be realised by option A (£89.269m) but more than option B1 (£1.685m). However, as previously set out at paragraphs 4.9.3 and 4.9.17 as referenced in Appendix A research by the District Councils Network ("DCN") has shown that there is evidence that larger systems can introduce diseconomies of scale. Option B2 is forecast to achieve a payback period of 7 years, representing a longer period than the 3 years anticipated for option A, but shorter than the 10 year payback period for option B1. The LGR guidance does not provide a specific target in terms of the required/maximum duration of the payback period. The new South Worcestershire unitary council demonstrates the anticipated ability to withstand financial shocks (high probability of meeting both liquidity measures), while the new North Worcestershire unitary council demonstrates a medium to high probability. The calculations as previously indicated do not take into account the impact of the Fair Funding

Formula (which, for example, indicates increased future funding levels for Redditch), the allocation of EFS liabilities, the sale of land or properties and any future additional borrowing.

(iii) High Quality, Sustainable Public Services to Citizens

- 4.9.32 Option B2 would avoid the fragmentation of key services (adult social care, children's services, education, public health, adult learning and transport), given that shared services arrangements would account for c80% of the county council's current annual expenditure.
- 4.9.33 The establishment of option B2 would create numerous conditions and likely advantages, centred on a model that combines the benefits of a place based approach to the delivery of services with the structural efficiencies of shared service models (leading to better value for money and financial sustainability) and levels of integration associated with public services operating across geographies.
- 4.9.34 Both new unitary councils under option B2 would be responsible for the delivery of prevention and early help services and they would provide opportunities to align preventative services to neighbourhood area committees (or their equivalent), the neighbourhood health service and community led initiatives. These arrangements provide the basis for targeted and timely support to communities, through a strengthened understanding of local needs and effective investment of additional funds via the Fair Funding Formula.
- 4.9.35 Given the structural characteristics of option B2, this option would possess the agility to deliver change at pace. Place based services, close connections to communities and deep local insights provide the conditions to achieve significant and meaningful public service reform, particularly at a neighbourhood level. Opportunities also exist in relation to each unitary council's role as a place leader; by establishing strong working relationships with neighbourhood area committees (or their equivalent), town and parish councils and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, the conditions required for long term planning and investment, tailored to the needs of local communities, would be established.
- 4.9.36 Given the increased place focus of option B2, a culture of ceding control could be embedded within each new unitary council. Local, visible and accountable council representatives would work with communities to develop innovative approaches to neighbourhood empowerment, potentially including (for example) the devolution of power, decision making, assets and budgets.
- 4.9.37 Evidence demonstrates that new unitary councils created through LGR are able to realise service delivery improvements via a shared services model. For example, following LGR in Cumbria in 2023, Westmorland and Furness Council's Adult Learning Service, which also provides learning programmes on behalf of Cumberland Council, was rated as 'good' by Ofsted in July 2025, with two service areas rated as 'outstanding'. This represents an improvement from 'good' in all areas at the last inspection (2018). Ofsted found that courses *'are aligned to meet the needs of these communities to help learners develop skills, pick up a new hobby, enhance their CV, or improve their health and wellbeing'*.

(iv) A view that meets local needs and is informed by local views

4.9.38 As previously stated during the Shape Worcestershire public engagement process 47.8% of respondents (2,026) highlighted their preference for a two unitary model; some respondents stated that this was due to a view that the model would maintain local focus, democratic accountability and community connections. 45.7% of respondents (1,924) identified a two unitary model as best supporting local identity (compared to 20.3% (855) for a single unitary model). Under this criteria option B2 is considered to outperform options A and B1, given that the model would blend local service delivery with the realisation of financial efficiencies through a shared services model (providing improved value for money). Residents would also benefit from system and service level integration associated with public services operating across geographies, resulting in single front doors into public services.

(v) Ability of new unitary structures to unlock devolution

4.9.39 Please refer to the summary of findings for option B1.

(vi) Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

4.9.40 Please refer to the summary of findings for option B1.

4.9.41 In overview the headlines might be seen as: -

- All options deliver a single tier of Local Government. Options A and B2 have a high probability of prioritising the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens. Option B2 offers the dynamic of operating at size and scale for large services such as adults and children services whilst being able to also deliver placed based services at the locality level. Both options B1 and B2 offer a higher probability than option A of being able to deliver to meet local needs as informed by local views.
- **Option A:** This option achieves significant savings but is believed to perform less well when it comes to empowering local communities and meeting people's expectations/views in terms of what kind of local authority they want to serve them and their local area.
- **Option B1:** Whilst this option with option B2 gives the opportunity to provide stronger local community engagement/neighbourhood empowerment than option A it delivers the least efficiencies of all of the options and includes the risks and costs of disaggregating adults and children's services.
- **Option B2:** Under this option adults and children services are not disaggregated and place services remain focussed on localities and prevention. This option whilst making more savings than option B1 does not perform as well as option A when looking at efficiencies but performs better than option A when it comes to empowering local communities and meeting people's expectations/views in terms of what kind of local authority they want to serve them and their local area.

5.0 Summary of Local Government Reorganisation Process and Next Steps

5.1 The Local Government Reorganisation process is following seven key steps as follows: -

- a) **Stage One: Inviting Unitary Proposals.** The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to 21 two tier areas and their neighbouring small unitary authorities on 5th February 2025 inviting proposals for unitarisation.
- b) **Stage two: Submission of formal unitary proposals.** As specified in the invitation, each council can only make one formal proposal for unitary Local Government, and a proposal can either be submitted individually by a council or jointly with other councils that were invited. To meet the terms of the invitation, the proposal must be for the whole of the area concerned and provide the information requested in the invitation. If councils within an area cannot agree on a single proposal and want to submit separate proposals, the Government's preference is for these to be submitted together, as a single submission for the area, which includes all proposals being put forward by councils, and is supported by a shared evidence base used by all proposals.
- c) **Stage three: Statutory consultation.** The Government will carry out a statutory consultation in accordance with the requirements of the legislation, which is that the Secretary of State must first consult any council affected that has not submitted the proposal, as well as any other persons considered appropriate, before a proposal can be implemented. The consultation is also clear that the views of any persons or bodies interested in these proposals are welcome.
- d) **Stage four: Decision to implement a proposal.** Once a statutory consultation is concluded, Ministers will decide, subject to Parliamentary approval, which, if any, proposal is to be implemented, with or without modification. In taking these decisions, Ministers will judge proposals in the round against the criteria. The decision taken by Ministers will be subject to collective agreement across Government.
- e) **Stage five: Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO).** Once a decision is taken on which proposal to implement, the Department will prepare the necessary legislation (the SCO) for Parliamentary approval. The SCO establishes the new single tier of Local Government in the relevant area and makes provision to abolish the predecessor councils. It will replace any currently planned elections with new elections for the new councils with appropriate wards/divisions for these new elections, amend the terms of office of current councillors as required, and give any preparatory functions needed. This means, for example, any councillors elected in local elections in May 2026 will be elected for a normal term but, if the council is abolished during that term through the reorganisation process, their terms would be reduced in this legislation.
- e(i) **The Order:** will specify arrangements for the first elections for the new unitary council/s, councillor numbers, the functions the new council has in the transition period and establish suitable governance arrangements for the transition period before new councils go live, by giving powers to the relevant executive or joint committee overseeing the transition.

- e(ii) **Elections:** Typically, the first elections to new unitary councils take place on electoral arrangements specified in the SCO, and which are built using a mixture of existing wards, divisions or, in some cases, parishes. The names of wards/divisions and the numbers of councillors to be elected are also specified in the legislation. After the first elections, it is usual for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (“LGBCE”) to undertake an electoral review to put in place longer-term arrangements. A councillor can stand in elections for the new unitary authority at the same time as serving their term in the existing council. If elected to the new unitary council, this will be for a new term as set out in the SCO. They can simultaneously serve out the remainder of their term as a councillor for the existing local authority until such time as the existing local authority is abolished – this may be a reduced term, or in some cases their term may be extended to provide for the transition.
- e(iii) **Transition period arrangements:** The SCO will specify the governance arrangements for the new unitary councils in the transition period.
- f) **Stage six: Transition period:** Once the SCO has been made, the existing councils carry on delivering services and fulfilling their duties until vesting day, while preparing to transfer all assets, functions and staff on vesting day when the predecessor councils are dissolved and the new unitary authority takes on the legal duties and powers for providing Local Government to the area. The relevant transition body will focus on getting ready for the go-live day for the new unitary authority and will be responsible for taking any decisions relating to the preparation for new unitary authority to be safe and legal on day one. MHCLG will require an Implementation Plan from the relevant transition body, which will set out what steps and decisions the body needs to take in order for the new unitary council to be ready for vesting day.
- g) **Stage seven: New unitary authority goes live.** This is vesting day. While preparatory work may start with the development of proposals and continue through the process, a minimum of around a year is allowed to enable safe and legal transfer of key services from the point the legislation is made, to when the new unitary council/s goes live. Elections to the new unitary councils, in the transition year ahead of vesting day, aid a safe and legal transition by ensuring those who will be responsible for governing the new authority/ies are accountable for decisions on transition arrangements. In Worcestershire a 1st April 2028 vesting day is being aimed for. A 1st April start date is necessary for financial arrangements.

6.0 Our Indicative Timetable for Local Government Reorganisation

- Options appraisal considered at early September Full Council Meetings
- Development of preferred option working with consultants and potentially other commissioning councils.
- November Full Council Meetings consider the final proposal for submission to Government.
- Final proposals submitted by 28th November 2025.
- Government consultation could be launched in the New Year, and it would likely close after the local elections in May.
- Following this, decisions on which proposal to implement could be announced before the summer 2026 recess.

- Secondary legislation would then be prepared, to be laid in the House after the summer recess.
- The legislation could then be made, subject to Parliamentary approval. This would allow for elections to the new unitary authority or authorities on 6th May 2027.
- The new authority or authorities would then go live on 1st April 2028.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Depending on the decision taken from this report, it is possible that further work will be required to move to phase 2 (preparation of a final LGR proposal). Additional consultancy would be required to deliver this phase of work. The costs of the extra work will be met by all the authorities who wish to partake; until it is confirmed how many councils will be contributing, it is therefore difficult to set a budget that may cover all the costs.
- 7.2 Therefore this report seeks Council's agreement for an in-year and one-off supplementary estimate of up to £100,000 in order to commission consultants to assist in the production of the final proposal to be considered by Council prior to any submission to Government by 28th November 2025. It is further suggested that this is split into £50,000 agreed and a second £50,000 to be agreed and only drawn-down if other partner councils are not forthcoming. Council is asked to delegate use of the additional draw-down to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
- 7.3 This supplementary estimate will be funded from the balance of the Government grant already received and from general fund balances in year.
- 7.4 Although not directly requested in this report, Members are advised to note that whatever option is chosen, it is likely that additional costs to transition may also need to be met if Government support is not forthcoming.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The existing legislation which enables Local Government reorganisations to be implemented is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This is the legislation which has been used previously to create county unitary authorities and was the legislation under which the invitation to submit plans for unitary local authorities was made by the Government in February 2025.
- 8.2 As explained to Members in the previous report on LGR dated 17th March 2025, the Government was intending to issue new legislation to support Local Government reorganisation and the introduction of Strategic Authorities and other aspects of devolution as described in the White Paper.
- 8.3 On 10th July 2025 the first draft of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill ("the Bill") was published. It is not known what the timetable for the passage of the Bill through Parliament will be.

- 8.4 Whilst the Bill contains detailed provisions in relation to the creation of Strategic Authorities, there is less detail on the issue of Local Government reorganisation. Some key points to note are: -
- The power to “direct” as well as invite councils to submit proposals for re-organisation has been re-introduced.
 - It will no longer be possible for councils to operate a committee system and all councils currently operating under it will have to adopt new constitutions featuring leader and cabinet arrangements.
 - Local authorities in England will be under a duty to make “appropriate arrangements” to secure the effective governance of any “neighbourhood area”. The Secretary of State will have the power, by way of regulations, to define a neighbourhood area and to specify the parameters of what arrangements will be appropriate to meet this duty.
- 8.5 The Secretary of State has passed a series of generic regulations applicable to all re-organisations, under section 14 of the 2007 Act. These cover the common practical issues that arise when implementing a re-organisation including finance requirements, the transfer of assets and employees and other transitional arrangements and can be listed as follows: -
- The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008/2867 (Transition Regulations).
 - Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transfer of Functions, Property, Rights and Liabilities) Regulations 2008/2176 (2008 Regulations).
 - Local Government (Structural and Boundary Changes) (Staffing) Regulations 2008 (Employment Regulations).
 - Local Government (Structural Changes) (Finance) Regulations 2008/3022 (Finance Regulations)
- 8.6 When a proposal for a new unitary council has been agreed, the Secretary of State will issue specific regulations and orders under section 7 of the 2007 Act to create local arrangements to ensure a smooth implementation. These local regulations will cover a number of matters including: -
- Effective dates
 - Establishment of a shadow authority and its membership
 - Governance arrangements for shadow authority
 - Duty to produce an implementation plan
 - Duty of all councils to co-operate
 - Arrangements for first elections
 - Treatment of any specific assets or liabilities

9. OTHER – IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Local Government Reorganisation

9.1 The whole of this report deals with Local Government Reorganisation.

Relevant Council Priority

9.2 All.

Climate Change Implications

9.3 None as a direct result of this report

Equalities and Diversity Implications

9.4 None as a direct result of this report. An equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the work associated with any final proposal to be made available to Full Council prior to any final submission to Government by 28th November 2025.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

10.1 None as a direct result of this report. A risk assessment exercise will be conducted as part of the development of any final proposal to be made available to Full Council prior to any final submission to Government by 28th November 2025.

11. APPENDICES, BACKGROUND PAPERS AND GLOSSARY

11.1 Appendices

- Appendix 1: Options Appraisal by Mutual Ventures and associated appendices referred to as:
 - Appendix A - Financial modelling and assumptions,
 - Appendix B – Shape Worcestershire: outputs from public engagement, staff surveys and focus groups
 - Appendix C – Place profiles, in the Mutual Ventures report.
- Appendix 2: Interim Plan for Worcestershire as submitted to the MHCLG
- Appendix 3: Formal feedback on the interim Plan from MHCLG dated 3rd Jun 2025

11.2 Background Papers

- Report to Council dated 17th March 2025 – Local Government Re-organisation - Interim Plan Proposals for Worcestershire – Redditch.
- English Devolution White Paper - [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/english-devolution-white-paper)

- Letter to all two-tier councils from Jim McMahon MP dated 16th December 2024
- English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill published on 10th July 2025 – [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - GOV.UK](#)
- Link to meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board of Worcestershire County Council held on 24th July 2025 - [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on Thursday, 24th July, 2025, 10.00 am - Modern Council](#)
- Link to the guidance for the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

11.3 Glossary

DCN	District Councils Network
ICB	Integrated Care Board
LGR	Local Government Re-Organisation
LGBCE	Local Government Boundary Commission for England
RAG ratings	Red, Amber and Green rating
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government
SEND	Special Educational Need and Disability

Council

04 September 2025

12. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Sharon Harvey	.
Lead Director / Assistant Director	John Leach - Chief Executive Claire Felton – Assistant Directors of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	
Financial Services	Bob Watson - Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer	
Legal Services	Claire Felton - Assistant Directors of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	