

# Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Public Briefing

3 March, 2025

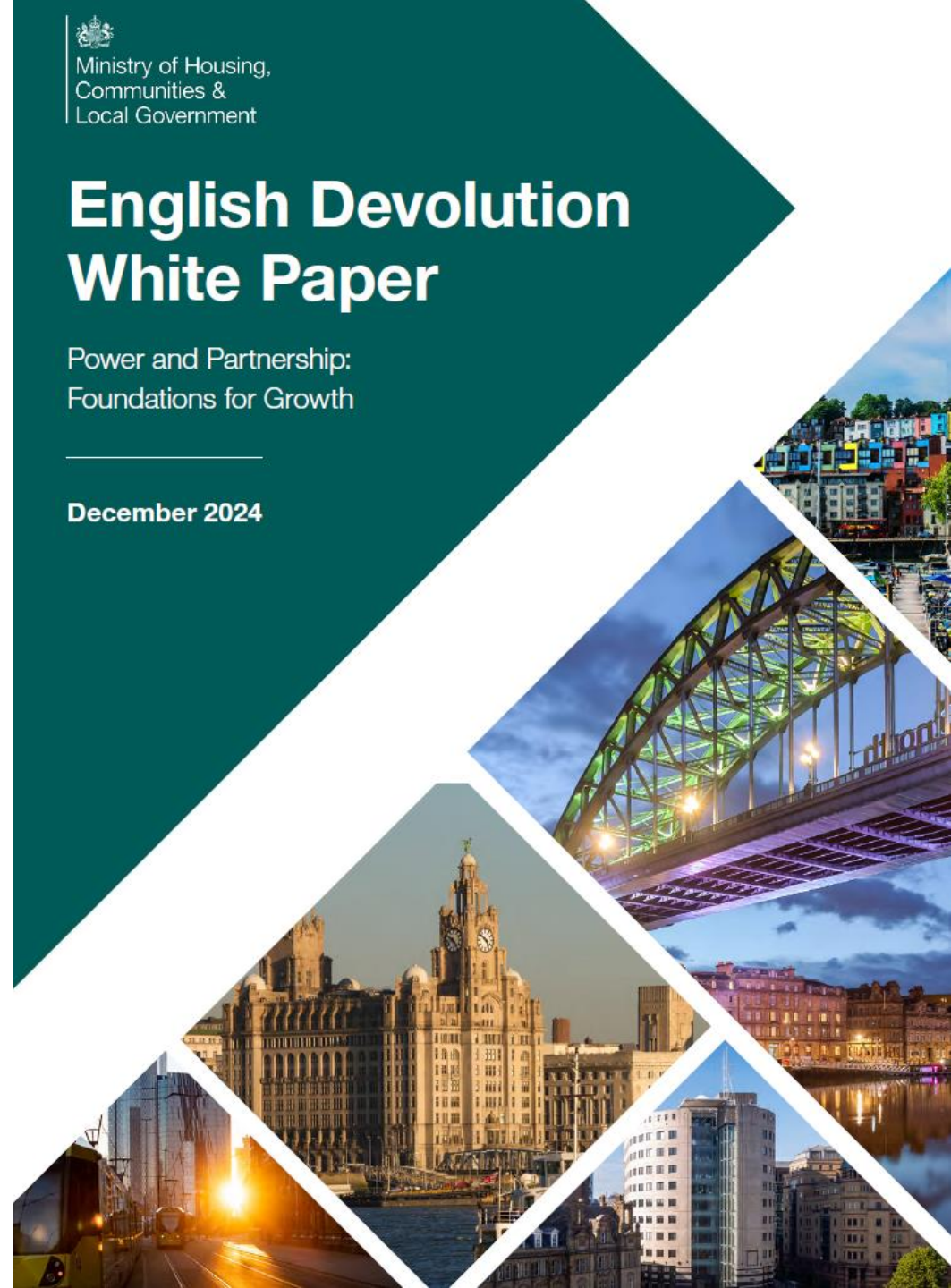


  
Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

## English Devolution White Paper

Power and Partnership:  
Foundations for Growth

December 2024



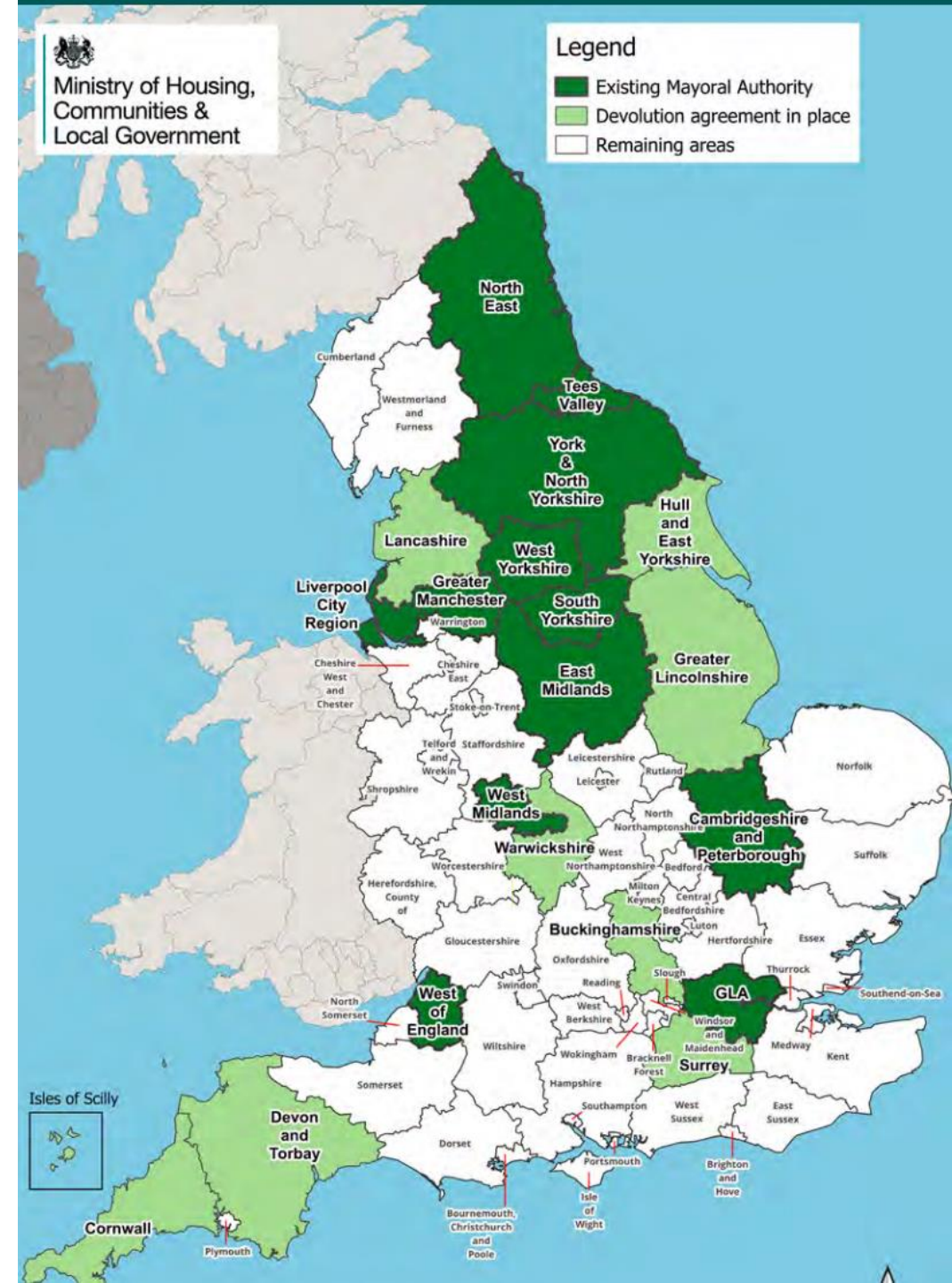
# Outline

- Devolution & a Combined Authority for Hampshire Solent
- Local Government Reorganisation
- Parish & town councils
- Open Issues
- What's important to you?

# English Devolution White Paper

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# Current English Devolution 2024



# Greater Manchester Combined Authority

(Mayor + 10 unitary authorities)

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Mayor of Greater Manchester	Leader, Bolton MBC
	Leader, Bury MBC
	Leader, Manchester CC
	Leader, Oldham MBC
	Leader, Rochdale MBC
	Mayor, Salford MBC
	Leader, Stockport MBC
	Leader, Tameside MBC
	Leader, Traffic MBC
	Leader, Wigan MBC



# Peterborough & Cambridgeshire Combined Authority

(Mayor + 1 county, 1 unitary and 5 district authorities)

Mayor of  
Cambridgeshire  
and  
Peterborough

Leader, Peterborough City Council (unitary)

Leader, Cambridge County Council

Representative, Cambridge City Council (district)

Leader, East Cambridgeshire District Council

Leader, Fenland District Council

Leader, Huntingdonshire District Council

Leader, South Cambridgeshire District Council

Chair, Peterborough & Cambridgeshire Business Board (LEP)



# Powers and Budgets for Mayors & Combined Authorities



**Transport**



**Skills and  
Employment**



**Housing and  
Planning**



**Environment  
and Climate**



**Business and  
Research**



**Health and  
Wellbeing**



**Public Safety**



**Public Service  
Reform**



# ‘A seat at the table’

Membership:

- Council of Nations and Regions
- Mayoral Council for England

Direct voice:

- Homes England
- Great British Railway
- National Highways
- Great British Energy
- Arts Council England



# Devolution locally

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# Hampshire / Portsmouth / Southampton / Isle of Wight councils

- Submitted Expression of Interest on August 30, 2024
- Following their Full Council and/or Cabinet Meetings, all applied for 'Devolution Priority Programme' on January 10, 2025.
- Ministers agreed with the proposal on February 5, 2025 – including delay of 2025 elections to 2026.
- **New Mayor of Hampshire Solent to be elected in May 2026.**



# Devolution Letter

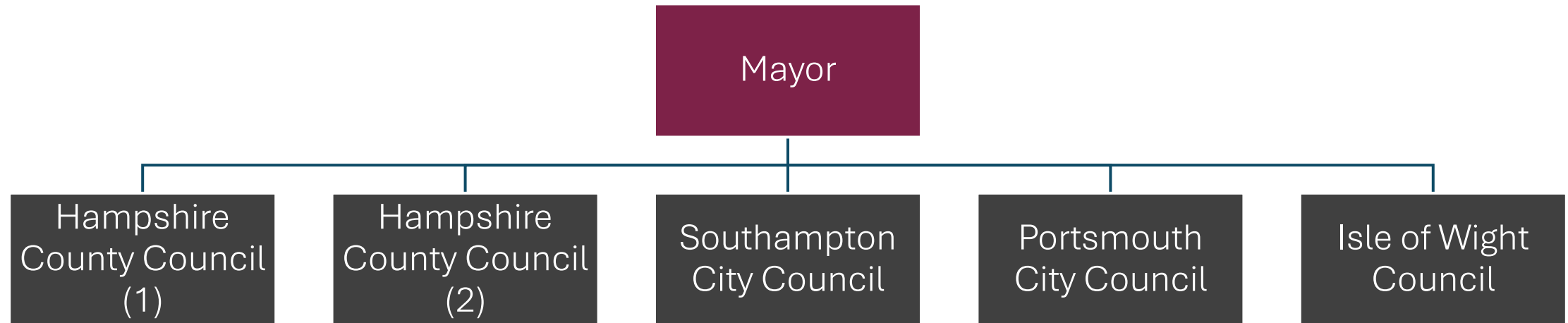
**“I am pleased to confirm Hampshire and Solent has been selected to join the Devolution Priority Programme.”**

“By agreeing to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme, you have agreed to seek to deliver devolution and reorganisation to the most ambitious timetable.”

**“You have therefore requested for your local elections to be postponed from May 2025 to May 2026.”**

“I agree that this delay is necessary to facilitate both reorganisation and devolution to the most ambitious timetable.”

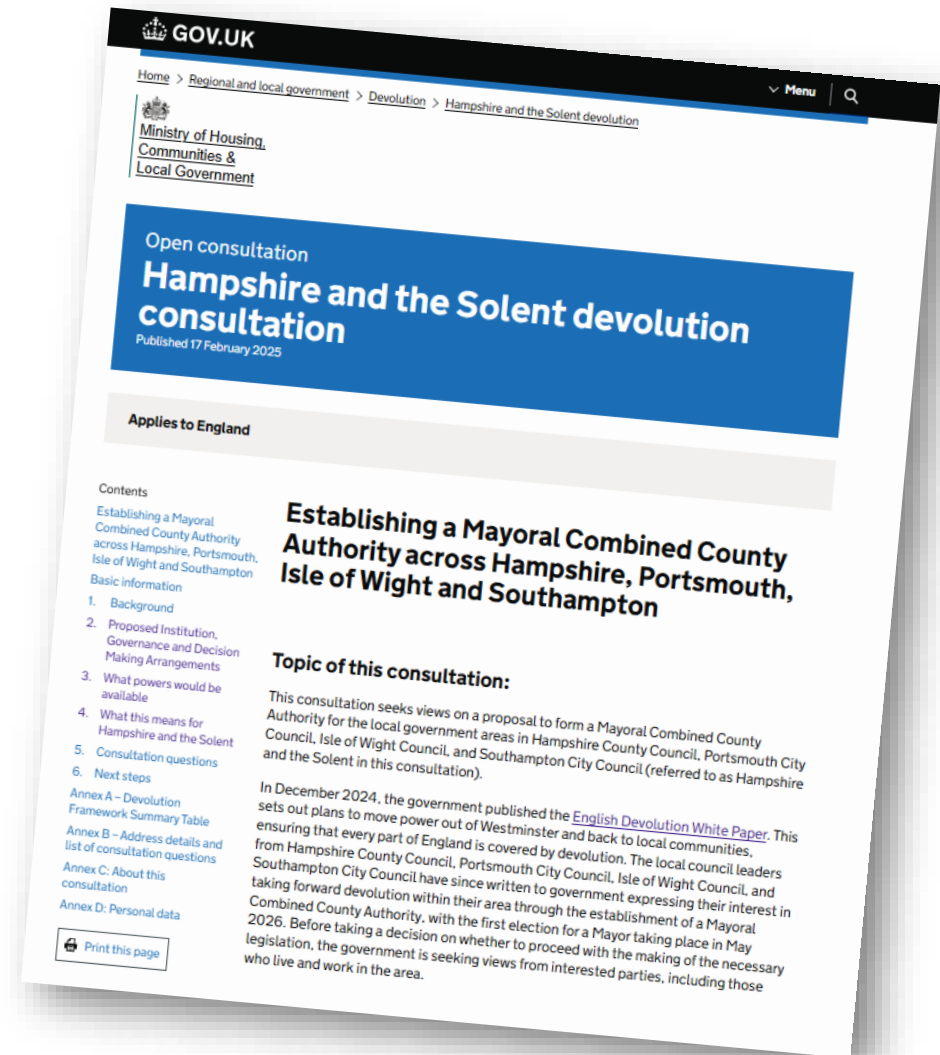
# Mayoral County Combined Authority: Government's Proposed Governance



+ up to 5 Non-Constituent and Associate Members

# Government Consultation – till April 13, 2025

- Do you agree or disagree that the MCCA will:
  - deliver benefits to the area
  - support the economy
  - improve social outcomes
  - improve local government services
  - Improve the local natural environment
  - support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities
- Do you agree or disagree with the Governance Arrangements?



**Mayoral/County Election**

**May 7, 2026**

# **Local Government Reorganisation**

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# Local Government Reorganisation

**“I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation,** and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process.”

“My department will work with your area to take forward both devolution and reorganisation to the most ambitious timeline possible. Government will be consulting across your area in February and March on the benefits that devolution will bring, and to allow sufficient time for you to also carry out engagement necessary to develop robust and evidenced unitary proposals, **I will expect any full proposal to be submitted by 26 September.**”



# Local Government Reorganisation

- Letter received by all Hampshire/Solent councils on 5 February asking for proposals
- Combine county, district and, where appropriate, unitary services into new authorities
- Interim plans: March. Final proposals: September.
- Reorganisation should not delay devolution, plans should be complementary
- As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
  - There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.
- Do not expect competing proposals

# 2024 Population Estimates

District	Population
Basingstoke and Deane	189,334
East Hampshire	129,741
Eastleigh	142,172
Fareham	116,119
Gosport	83,593
Hart	104,553
Havant	128,658
New Forest	179,469
Rushmoor	101,627
Test Valley	136,998
Winchester	136,529
Isle of Wight	142,433
Portsmouth	214,147
Southampton	266,322



# Criteria

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.**

# Interim plans – March 21, 2025

- Identify any **barriers or challenges**
- Identify the likely options for the **size and boundaries** of new councils
- Include **indicative costs and arrangements** in relation to any options
- Include early views as to the **councillor numbers**
- Include early views on how new structures will **support devolution ambitions**
- Include a **summary of local engagement** that has been undertaken along with your further **plans for wide local engagement**
- Set out **indicative costs** of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team
- Set out any **voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved** in discussions as this work moves forward

# Timetable

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# Timetable

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Event</b>
December 16, 2024	White Paper published
January 9, 2025	Hampshire Extraordinary Council
January 10, 2025	Upper tier deadline for submission to MHCLG for Combined Authority/Mayor incl. potential request for delayed elections
February 5, 2025	Decision on election delay. Start of CCA consultation. Formal invitation to submit LGR proposals.
<b>March 21, 2025</b>	<b>Areas submit interim plans for reorganisation</b>
<b>September 26, 2025</b>	<b>Areas submit final proposals for new unitaries</b>
May 2026	Mayoral Election
May 2027 <i>or later</i> (tbd)	If agreed, shadow elections to unitaries
April 2028 <i>or later</i> (tbd)	If agreed, new unitary councils replace county and districts

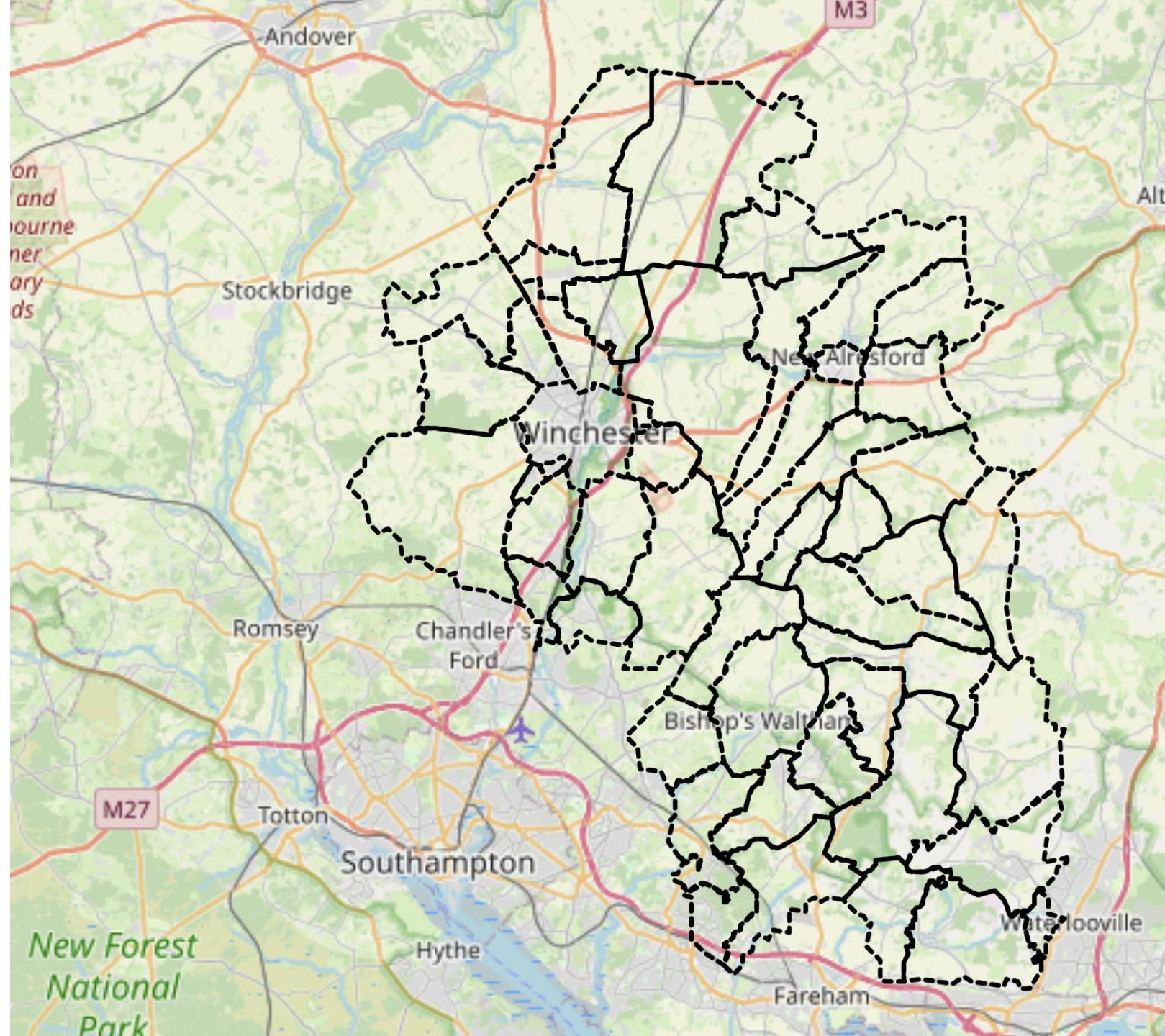
# **What does the paper say about parishes?**

“We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice.”

“We will also work with the town and parish council sector to improve engagement between them and Local Authorities.”

# Parishes

- Everyone in the Winchester district is in a Parish Council, except for people living in the urban area of Winchester





# Parish Briefing – February 5, 2025:

*Questions given to take away and think about*

- Councillors in the unparished area of the city have asked the City Council to consider starting the process to create a Town Council.

**Could being part of a new Town Council make sense for your parish?**

- Some parishes are interested in consolidating with neighbours to create scale in the context of new very large unitaries.

**Is this something of interest to you?**

- Unitaries are likely to face major financial challenges.

**Are there district functions or assets you would like to take on or protect?**

- Some areas of the district may feel closer to a neighbouring unitary (e.g. an enlarged Southampton or Portsmouth).

**Would you want this to be considered for your parish?**

**Cabinet Members, Councillors and Officers will be happy to attend parish council meetings to hear your views and discuss these points further.**

# Open Issues – for discussion:



**Finances**



**Boundaries**



**Number of  
Councils**



**Timing**



**Identity**

# What's important to you?

[www.winchester.gov.uk/devolution-and-local-government-reorganisation](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/devolution-and-local-government-reorganisation)

