

Appendix 1



Leader's Office
Ref:
8 January 2025

Jim McMahon, OBE, MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution
Via email: PSJimMcMahon@communities.gov.uk

Copy to: The Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE
Via email: taylor@parliament.uk

Dear Minister

Devolution – East Sussex Elections

As the Leaders of four District and Borough Councils in East Sussex we are writing to share our views on the implications for our area arising from the government's white paper on devolution. We welcome the commitment within the White Paper to transfer power closer to communities with the aim that all areas can reach their potential.

We have been working positively with the Leader of East Sussex County Council, Keith Glazier, and we have expressed to him that we understand the short timescales that Government have offered, and we share the ambition - in so far that it is appropriate - to ensure that our area is within the priority programme.

We support increased regional powers, particularly around public transport, climate action, skills, energy, and spatial planning as they relate to infrastructure, and understand that the Government expects creation of unitary and strategic authorities. However, we believe that this should not be at the expense of local democracy, and without consulting with residents, businesses and stakeholders on the future of local Government for the region.

Therefore, we do not agree to the request to the government to suspend elections. Counter to the belief that delaying elections will assist delivery, we believe it will actually create significant risk as decisions may be perceived by the public as being made without an appropriate democratic mandate.

We do not believe East Sussex County Council have met the test which Government have set out, which was reiterated yesterday in the call with Baroness Taylor. Additionally, civil servants have made clear that authorities can submit a priority programme request and not include suspension of elections.

We believe it is important that all levels of local government work together to implement the changes in the white paper. We therefore write to request that you do not approve the suspension of elections in East Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Zoe Nicholson

Leader of Lewes District Council

Councillor Julia Hilton

Leader of Hastings Borough Council

Councillor Stephen Holt

Leader of Eastbourne Borough Council

Councillor Rachel Millward

Leader of Wealden District Council

Copied to: MPs for East Sussex – Chris Ward, James MacCleary, Mims Davies, Josh Babarinde, Helena Dollimore, Nusrat Ghani, Kieran Mullan

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