
Report of Urgent Action: Regulation 19

- 1** Under regulation 19 of the The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 the County Council must receive a report from the Leader on any decisions taken under regulation 11. These are key decisions which were not in the Forward Plan and which needed to be taken with less than five clear days' notice. Such decisions can only be taken with the agreement of the relevant scrutiny committee chairman or, in his or her absence, the Chairman of the County Council.
- 2** Such action is avoided wherever possible as it circumvents the normal mechanism for notification of proposals for ensuring that members have the opportunity to comment before decisions are taken. On occasion this is not possible.
- 3** The County Council is asked to note the following decision which has been taken under Regulation 11 under advice from the Director of Law and Assurance.

Local Government Devolution and Reorganisation

- 4** The Government published a White Paper on 16 December 2024 providing detailed proposals for English devolution that would involve the creation of new mayoral combined authorities. The paper included proposals for local government reorganisation aligned with the implementation of the devolution plans based on the geography of upper tier local authorities comprising a new combined authority.
- 5** The ministerial letter accompanying the White Paper invited upper tier local authorities to work together in their area to develop combined authority proposals in line with the criteria set out in the White Paper and to submit those proposals to the Government for consideration no later than 10 January 2025. All members were provided with a briefing on the matter.
- 6** At its meeting in public on 9 January 2025, after seeking comments from scrutiny chairmen and minority group leaders, the Cabinet approved the sending of a letter by the Leader, jointly with the leaders of East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council, to the Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution:
 - (1) Confirming the County Council's commitment to devolution and local government reorganisation as part of the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, based on a proposal for the devolution of powers to a new combined authority for Sussex covering the areas of the three upper tier authorities (West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove).
 - (2) Confirming the County Council's commitment to developing proposals for unitary councils across the area including West Sussex to be included in the proposed combined authority for Sussex.
 - (3) Inviting the Government to postpone the County Council elections due in May 2025, for a year, to enable the proposals for local government reorganisation to be developed and to enable the early implementation of the proposed devolution arrangements.
- 7** Due to the need for this matter to be determined as soon as possible within the timescale set by the Government the Cabinet secured agreement from the County

Council Chairman for the key decision to be taken without prior notice in the Forward Plan of key decisions (Part 4, Section 1, Standing Order 3.57) (Regulation 11) because delay would have prejudiced the County Council's interests. The decision was published on 9 January 2025.

Paul Marshall

Leader

Contact Officer: Helen Kenny, Head of Democratic Services, 033 022 22532, helen.kenny@westsussex.gov.uk