

**NEW FOREST ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL COUNCILLORS AND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS
(NFALC)**

Your Council is invited to attend the **GENERAL MEETING** of NFALC to be held on **Tuesday 22nd September 2026** at **6.00pm** in the **Council Chamber, New Forest District Council, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst SO43 7PA.**

Graham Flexman
Co-ordinator

10 September 2026

AGENDA

1. Chairman's Welcome / Announcements

2. Minutes

To approve Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held 23 July 2026 (**Appendix 1**)

3. Matters Arising

To consider any matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

4. New Forest Cultural Council

Update on Steering Group's 3 initiatives: NF Flag, Dialect Survey, Arts & Crafts project.

5. LGR WITHDRAWAL LETTER

Letter from Jim McMahon Government Minister to council Leaders (**Appendix 2**)
The government has now published information supporting the announced review, which has been launched to streamline local government, to ensure it is robust and aligns with new government priorities. And to reassure local leaders and communities while this review takes place, the government has confirmed that local elections in May 2027 will go ahead on existing council boundaries and remains committed to effective and sustainable local government and simplifying these structures. The government's *Rewiring the State* White Paper on devolution will also set out plans to rewire the country and ensure effective and sustainable local government in future: [SLCC update](#)

6. LGR UPDATE FROM NALC

Latest news from NALC calling for certainty as Govt reviews LGR. (**Appendix 3**)

7. New Forest District Council

Update on matters of interest within the district.

8. New Forest National Park

Update on matters within the national park area.

9. HALC – National Scheme of Delegation

HALC's useful summary of scheme taking effect from 31 October (**Appendix 4**)

10. Next Meeting

To be held on **Wednesday 18 November 2026** from **6.00pm** at **NFDC Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst SO43 7PA.**

Local government reorganisation: programme review and decisions withdrawal letter to council leaders

To: Council leaders in local government reorganisation areas

From: Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth

Date: 7 September 2026

Dear Leader,

I am writing to update you on the Local Government Reorganisation programme following the comments by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons last week that the government was prepared to look at decisions.

We set out in the Cabinet Statement on Rewiring the State that local government structures are key to our devolution ambitions and filling the map. Effective and sustainable local government is vital to meeting our ambitions.

However, the government has also listened to representations about the approach and pace of reorganisation. Those relate both to the specific decisions announced in March and July and to the scale and pace of the programme more broadly. While we recognise there will always be a wide range of divergent views on the structure of councils, and so achieving perfect consensus will never be possible, now is the time to pause and reflect. It is important that this is done right.

The Secretary of State will announce later today that we are undertaking a review of the Local Government Reorganisation programme and following updated legal advice (for the avoidance of doubt no privilege is waived) that she has withdrawn the decisions made in March this year for 4 areas:

- Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock
- Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton
- Norfolk
- Suffolk

The review, which I will lead, will look at the programme as a whole and this will include reviewing the 14 decisions made in July. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and West Sussex, where decisions have not yet been taken, will be considered as part of the review. The new councils for East Surrey and West Surrey are unaffected and outside of this process because they are already established in law.

Until this review has concluded, I am asking you, together with your partners, to cease work on implementing the decisions that were announced in July. I want to acknowledge the work that your teams have undertaken on local government reorganisation. This decision in no way reflects the work done locally in developing plans, building consensus where it can be found, and marshalling your organisation and partners for the change ahead. But I do believe this reduces the risk of nugatory work if, after further review, we decide to change course.

While the current timetable for reorganisation envisages local elections scheduled for May 2027 being replaced by elections to the new councils, this review means elections scheduled to take place in May 2027 will go ahead to existing council boundaries.

I appreciate that this position will feel uncomfortable, but I believe it is right to consider these matters seriously and deeply given the significance of the decisions. I want to assure myself that this process is being done correctly and robustly. It will also afford the opportunity for the Devolution White Paper, which will set out our plans to rewire the state, to address the question of the role of local government in a devolved country.

I know you will be pressing for certainty as quickly as possible, so you have clarity over the future and to allow the work required to implement reorganisation. I am committing to you that I will ensure that next steps are communicated early and clearly to the sector.

I do not take this lightly and recognise the huge amount of work that has already gone into progressing reorganisation, for which I am very grateful. My officials will contact your officials shortly to discuss next steps, and I am copying this letter to your Chief Executives and MPs.

Yours sincerely,

Jim McMahon OBE MP

Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth

NALC News – 07.09.26

NALC CALLS FOR CERTAINTY AS THE GOVERNMENT REVIEWS THE LGR REORGANISATION PROGRAMME

We have called on the government to provide clarity and certainty for parish and town councils following the launch of a review into parts of its local government reorganisation programme.

In a statement today, Angela Rayner MP, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, announced the launch of a review into plans to streamline local government, to ensure it is robust and aligns with new government priorities, following updated and privileged legal advice.

The review follows legal challenges and concerns about the process used to reach earlier decisions on new unitary council structures in Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The government has confirmed that implementation in those areas will be paused while the review takes place.

Plans for 14 other areas, along with Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Sussex, are also being reviewed and paused while this is carried out. Surrey's reorganisation programme will continue as planned. Local elections in May 2027 are now expected to proceed under existing arrangements.

Responding to the announcement, NALC expressed disappointment that the future direction of local government reorganisation has become uncertain, particularly given the significant time and effort parish and town councils and county associations have already invested in engaging with the process.

We have consistently supported the government's ambition to simplify local government structures where this can strengthen local services, improve accountability and support effective devolution.

However, we have stressed that the government should use the review as an opportunity to reaffirm the role of parish and town councils within the wider programme of local government reform, and that they must be recognised as essential partners in delivering local services, representing communities and ensuring that devolution reaches the neighbourhood level.

We will continue to engage with ministers and officials throughout the review. We will work to ensure the interests of parish and town councils are reflected in any future decisions.

Review launched into plans to streamline local government, to ensure it is robust and aligns with new government priorities.

From: [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) and [The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP](#)

Published: 7 September 2026

A review of plans to streamline local government has been announced to ensure the process is robust and aligns with the new government's plans to rewire the state.

Following updated and privileged legal advice, ministers will review plans for Local Government Reorganisation.

The review – which was announced by the Secretary of State in Parliament – includes decisions on Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, which have been withdrawn in light of new legal advice.

Plans for 14 other areas, along with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and West Sussex, are also being reviewed and paused while this is carried out.

To reassure local leaders and communities while this review takes place, the government has confirmed that local elections in May 2027 will go ahead on existing council boundaries and remains committed to effective and sustainable local government and simplifying these structures.

The government's Rewiring the State White Paper on devolution will also set out plans to rewire the country and ensure effective and sustainable local government in future.

This comes on the back of the push to shift power out of Westminster and into communities, led by No10 North.

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government Angela Rayner said:

As we are now determined more than ever to devolve power closer to the people we represent, it's only right that as the new Secretary of State I make sure that everything we do is working towards that plan to change Britain.

The Prime Minister told the House last week, he was 'prepared to look at local government reorganisation' and he asked me as his Communities Secretary to 'do that'.

In that context, in light of legal advice, I want to satisfy myself firstly that the right process is in place, that it is robust, and of course complies with the law. And secondly, I want to fully test whether our proposals for local government reorganisation meet the priorities of a new administration and the new Prime Minister and any additional considerations.

I do not take this lightly. I recognise the huge amount of work that has already gone into progressing reorganisation in each of these areas, and I am very grateful for it.

Reorganisation in Surrey will not be affected by the review and the two new unitary authorities – East and West Surrey – will go live in April 2027.

Planning Committees: National Scheme of Delegation in England

A new National Scheme of Delegation for planning committees in England will take effect from 31 October 2026, although some local authorities have already begun introducing the new arrangements.

The scheme is intended to create a more consistent approach to deciding which planning applications are handled by officers and which may be considered by planning committees.

Applications will broadly fall into two categories:

◇ Schedule 1: Mandatory Officer Delegation

Applications in this category must be determined by planning officers and cannot be referred to committee through councillor call-in procedures or because of public objections.

◇ Schedule 2: Presumed Officer Delegation

These applications will normally be determined by officers, although there may be circumstances where they can be referred to a planning committee or sub-committee.

The changes do not affect the role of parish and town councils as statutory consultees. Existing arrangements for councils to be consulted on planning applications within their area will continue.

However, some local arrangements, including councillor call-ins and automatic committee referrals based solely on the number of objections received, may no longer be possible.

Members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements and any information issued by their district or borough council.

Further information is available on the Hampshire ALC website.