

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

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| Risk Code | CDP15 (2024/25) | Risk Title | Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution |
| Risk Owner | Ian Couper | Updated By | Ian Couper |
| Year Identified | 2025 | Council Objective | All |
| Risk Description | <p>The Government have published a White Paper and written to all Local Authorities. This requires Local Authorities to work together to come up with a proposal that results in unitary rather than 2-tier Councils. It also seeks a Combined Authority structure that allows devolution of powers to a Mayor. Those powers including “housing, planning, transport, energy, skills, employment support and more”. The risks relate to this being a very substantial project requiring significant change.</p> <p>Specific risks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work to get to a proposal on a unitary structure (noting the need for this to be agreed across 11 Councils) is significant in terms of the negotiations needed and the collation of information and analysis to support that decision making process. • If there is an inability to agree a new structure, it may prolong the period above, or lead to a structure being imposed upon Hertfordshire. • After a new structure is agreed, there would be even more significant work to move towards the implementation of that new structure. • Efficiency is mentioned as one of the reasons for moving to a unitary structure. This may lead staff to believe that their job may be at risk. Alternatively, the additional work of moving to unitary status may be seen as too much. • Focusing on a new structure may lead to decision making that is too short-term (getting things done before they can be de-prioritised by a new larger Council with wider priorities) or too long-term (avoid making decisions and leave them to the new unitary Council). • Ensuring that the views of stakeholders continue to be heard during the transition process and within the new structure. | | |
| Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an opportunity to shape the new structure and also play a key part in how a new Unitary would operate to take advantage of what we (North Herts) do well. ▪ A Unitary structure avoids the confusion over which services are delivered by which Council and may make sense to residents. | | |
| Consequences | <p>Failure to address the risks could lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resourcing: The additional work affects the delivery of our services and leads to projects being delayed or needing to be abandoned. If staff decide to leave due to the workload/ uncertainty then that will further exacerbate the problem. ▪ In addressing/ preventing the above there may be a need to use consultants to deliver reorganisation work which comes with a financial impact. This may also be needed where specialist knowledge or skills are needed. ▪ A focus on short-term decision making leads to sub-optimal decisions, which could fail to take account of the resources available both before and after a new structure is in place. ▪ A focus on delaying decisions could (for example) result in a failure to address sustainability (financial or environmental) or deliver responsible growth. | | |
| Work Completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council is part of the County-wide White Paper Working Group, which aims to provide the information required for a decision on future structure. ▪ Staff have been provided with regular updates and chances to ask questions, this has included reassurance that services will still need to be delivered under any structure. | | |
| Ongoing Work | <p>Controls and Further Mitigating Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To support White Paper Working Group sub-groups with providing relevant information for North Herts. ▪ Continued support for staff. ▪ Engagement and communication with stakeholders to seek views on outcomes and explain outcomes. | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain processes for decision making and ensure decisions are taken in the best interests of North Herts (irrespective of future structure). | | |
| Current Overall Risk Score | 9 | | |
| Current Impact Score | 3 | Current Likelihood Score | 3 |
| Current Risk Matrix | | Target Risk Matrix | |
| Date Reviewed | 09-Feb-2025 | Next Review Date | 09-May-2025 |
| Latest Note | New risk entry created. | | |