

Local Government Reorganisation: Our Lancashire, Our Councils



Recap - English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Two key structural changes aimed at decentralizing power:

- Introduces three types of **Strategic Authorities (SA)** with high-level responsibilities on issues such as transport, economic development and skills to cover all areas of England:
 - **Foundation** (e.g. Lancashire)
 - **Mayoral** (e.g. Hull and East Yorkshire)
 - **Established Mayoral** (e.g. Manchester).
- **Unitary Councils** are also being introduced, to simplify the structure of Local Government. The new unitary councils will be constituent members of the Strategic Authorities. Parish and Town Councils are unaffected.
- In March, the Secretary of State invited affected Councils to propose an option for local government structure.

Our Lancashire, Our Councils



Bill started in the House of Commons

- ✓ 1st reading
- ✓ 2nd reading
- ✓ Committee stage
- Report stage
- 3rd reading



Bill in the House of Lords

- 1st reading
- 2nd reading
- Committee stage
- Report stage
- 3rd reading



Final stages

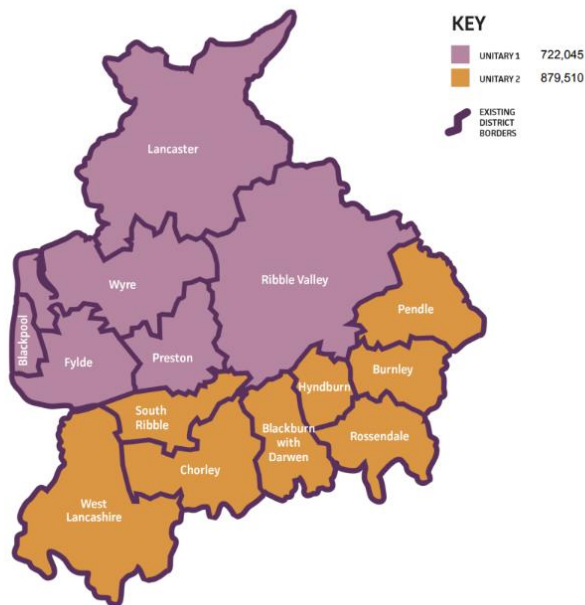
- Consideration of amendments
- Royal Assent

Government Guidance

The new Unitary Councils should:

- Cover sensible economic areas and geographies
- Be sustainable, and able to withstand financial shocks
- Enable stronger community engagement and empowerment and be informed by the needs and wishes of people in the local area
- Deliver high-quality services particularly in crucial areas such as Social Care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Children's Services and Homelessness
- Have a clear geographic identity which makes sense to local people, considering identity, culture and historic importance

Two-Council Option



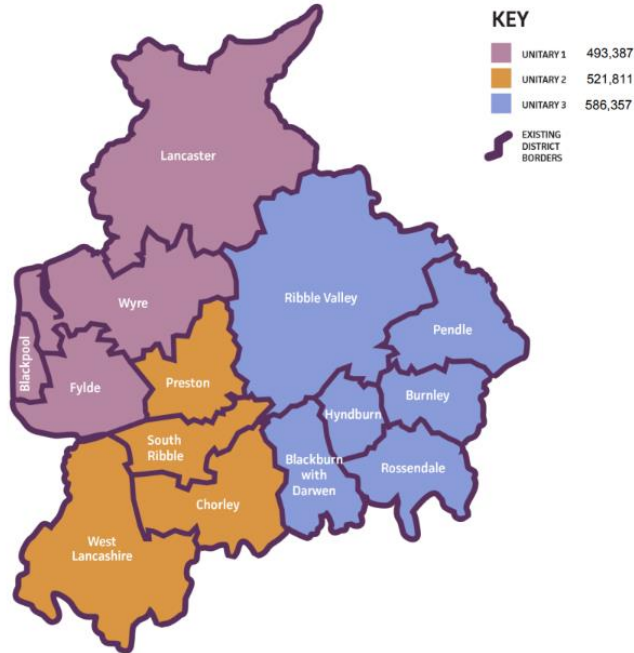
Developed by Lancashire County Council

- Could deliver significant savings
- Balances urban, rural, affluent and deprived areas
- Simpler transition (in theory)
- Larger population than guideline
- 50% of population near the border: local differences in service delivery
- Decision-making is remote from communities
- Cumbersome organisations
- Loses focus on local needs and issues
- Not a recognisable geography
- Potential for the strategic model to confuse the role of the LCCA
- Public scepticism about larger Councils

Our Lancashire, Our Councils

Blackpool Council

Three Council Option



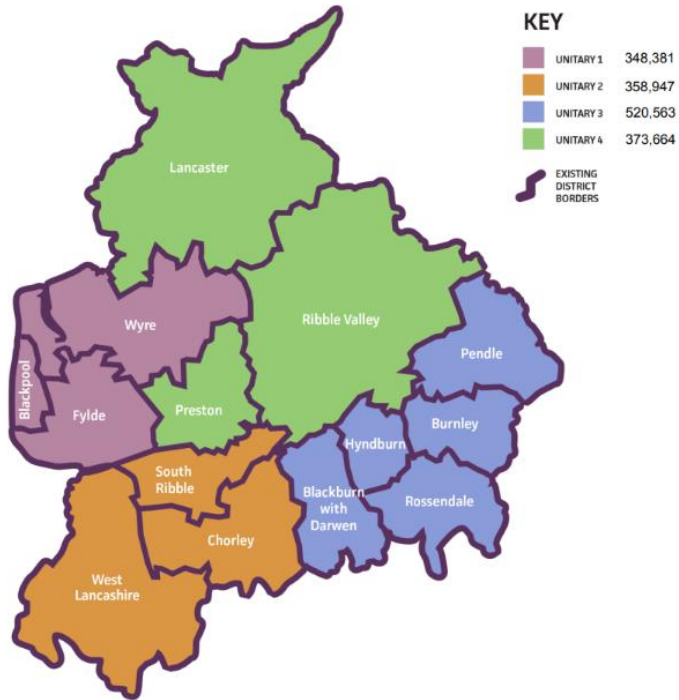
Developed by various Councils

- Best fit with Government population criteria
- Separates current Upper Tier authorities – potentially an easier transition
- Likely to deliver savings
- Two recognisable geographies, some common urban coastal issues in the Northern Unitary
- Strong support for “south of the Ribble” model excluding Preston
- Decision-making is more remote from communities
- Less focus on local needs and issues
- Public scepticism about larger Councils
- Requires LCCA constitutional change

Our Lancashire, Our Councils

BlackpoolCouncil

Four Council Option (A)



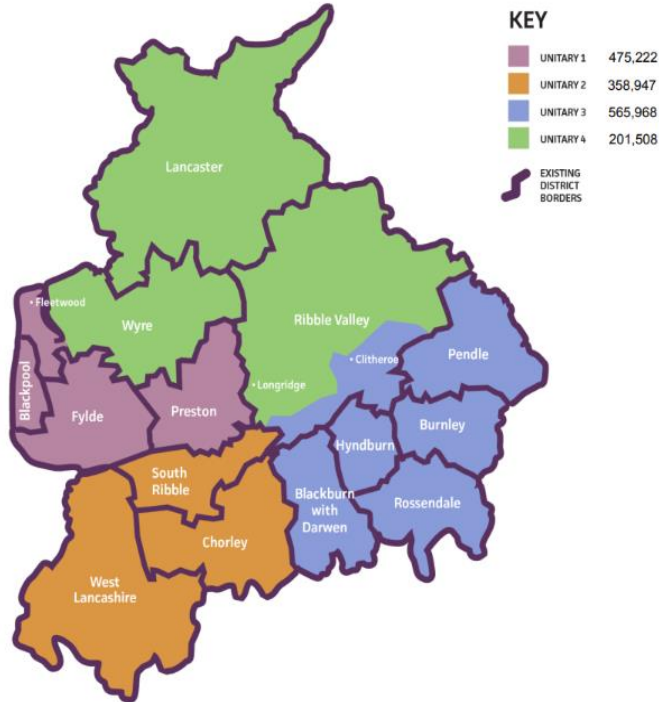
Developed by various Councils

- Good governance fit with LCCA's strategic agenda
- Closer to public preference for a smaller Local Authority
- Reflects travel to work data, but not meaningful communities
- Uneven and multi-centred population distribution in Lancaster/Preston plus Ribble Valley model, weakening rural voice
- Deprivation issues diluted in Blackpool and Preston, but concentrated in East Lancashire
- Significant differences between population sizes without corresponding benefit
- Less potential for savings and heightens budgetary issues around the Eastern Council

Our Lancashire, Our Councils

Blackpool Council

Four Council Option (B)



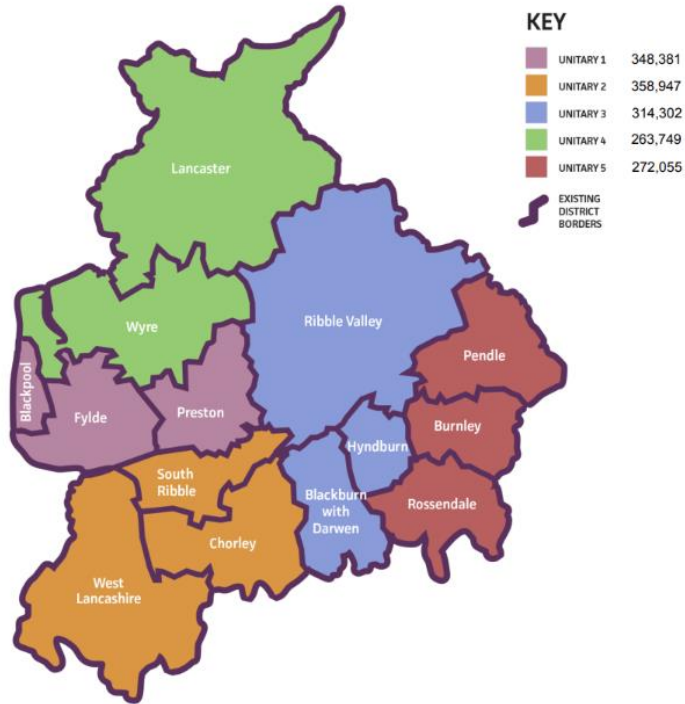
Our Lancashire, Our Councils

Developed by Blackpool Council

- Good fit with local communities and real lives
- Balances working age population with economic dependents
- Fits Fylde Coast travel to work data
- Strong Preston travel links via Kirkham offer growth opportunities; Northern Council can link better to Cumbria
- Best fit with LCCA's strategic agenda - four distinctive coastal, industrial, urban and rural Councils
- Strategic policy options on HMOs & regeneration in urban areas
- Similar savings potential as four Council (A) option but with transformative opportunities
- Housing delivery and employment strong in new Western area, but less balanced than other options
- Large differences between population sizes
- Boundary change requires consent

Blackpool Council

Five Council Option



Our Lancashire, Our Councils

Developed by Burnley & Pendle Councils

- Addresses local concerns with recognisable geographies
- Stronger link to community representation
- Some good fits with existing partnership working
- Potential for agile local authorities
- Creates less financially sustainable Authorities (especially in the East), and a costly transition
- Weakens strength of Lancashire voice via LCCA: two East Lancs LAs
- Housing Delivery significantly below Local Housing Need level in East
- Fleetwood continues to be peripheral to new LA – with less potential for boundary change

Blackpool Council

Resident and Business Engagement

Residents - 13,414 responses

Want

- Reliable services
- Value for money
- Clear decisions
- Joint work across public sector (NHS)
- Residents involved in decisions

Concerns

- Reorganisation into larger Unitaries. Only PR1 postcode sector supported
- Loss of Local Voice and Identity
- Unfair Resource Distribution
- Under-estimations of transitional costs of setting up new Unitaries

Stakeholders – 237 responses

Want

- Meaningful involvement of Parish/Town Councils
- All parts of Lancashire to benefit equally from investment and services
- Better roads
- Faster planning decisions
- Clearer communication and specific points of contact
- Reduced business rates

Don't Want

- Unnecessary duplication of services
- Representation to be reduced

Financial Position Forecast by 2028



By 2028 the financial position is forecast as: (£m millions)

£2	-£7.8	-£0.7	-£6.4	-£3.5
-£39	-£3.7	£4.3	£4.3	£4.3
	-£25.4	-£43.3	-£35.1	-£6.9
		£2.7	£0.1	-£12.4
				-£18.6
*Minus = deficit				

Overview of Western Authority

- Best potential to preserve Blackpool's identity
- A balanced dependency ratio
- One authority administering the Tramway
- Better alignment with MP constituencies
- Net delivery of housing in the new area has been exceeding target
- High level of learner achievements
- High level of NEETs and rising currently at 7.6% 2025
- Only proposed authority to have a higher level of high-growth businesses in 2023 compared to 2018
- A rise in total employment 2019-23
- Western has the second highest unemployment rate at 3.7%
- Reflects the Fylde Coast Travel to Work area
- Doesn't align with other service delivery areas e.g. health, police
- Significant concentrations of deprivation – a large issue to tackle
- Western has the 2nd highest percentage of neighbourhoods in the top 3 most deprived deciles nationally
- Has the biggest private renter sector with a quarter of all households, and a fifth of homes classed as non-decent, with 31% of private renter homes also classed as non-decent

Opportunities for Service Transformation

- Unitary Authorities offer financial and process efficiencies
- Need to balance this with arrangements which work for local communities
- Guiding approach is to be “safe and legal” on Vesting Day, but to explore options for service alignment and transformation where possible
- Can build on existing joint working (e.g. Blackpool and Fylde on ICT, HR, Benefits)
- Opportunity to replicate best practice from other areas
- Potential for growth of our Wholly-Owned Companies
- Consideration of how assets fit with priorities and outcomes

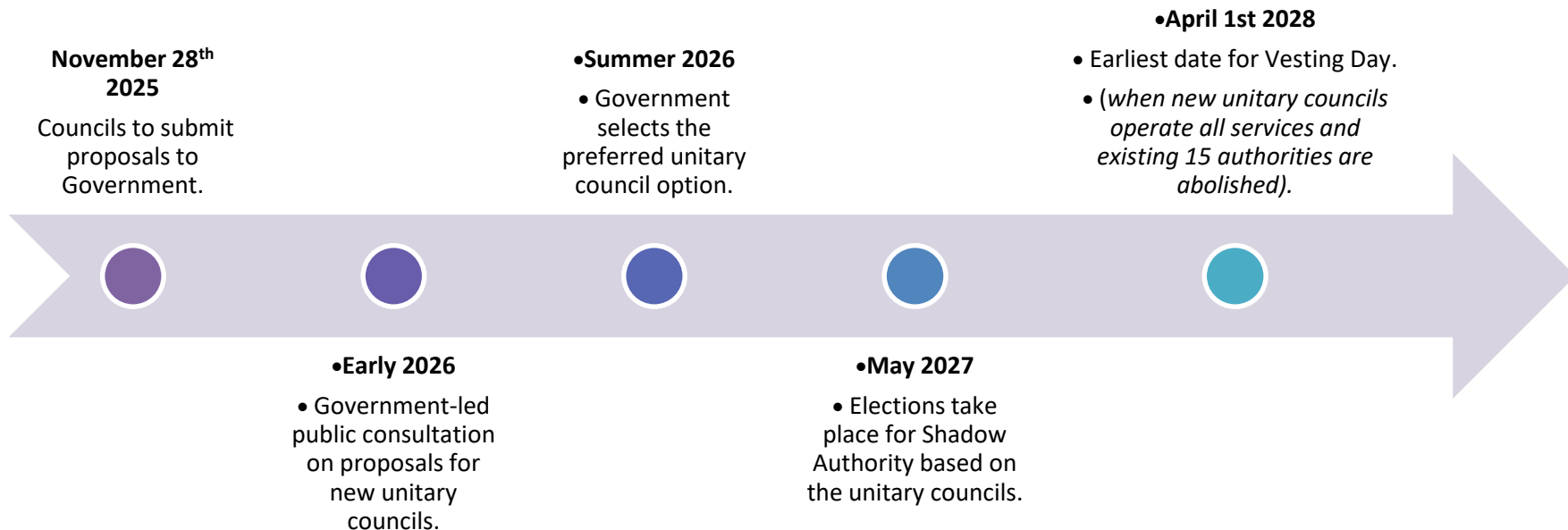
An improved approach to Engagement

- Existing Parish and Town Councils across Lancashire will continue
- Public meetings can rotate between venues
- Increasing opportunities for public influence in decisions could include:
 - Co-production, building on the ongoing legacy of the HeadStart Blackpool programme
 - Citizen's Assemblies, such as the Climate Assembly held to develop our action plan
- Digital engagement, making it easier for those with full-time work and families to get involved
- Face-to-face arrangements at existing customer service points
- Regular opinion-gathering exercises and representative surveys
- Anything which makes it easier for more different types of resident to get involved in decisions, in a way which works for them

However, there will be fewer elected members overall, with a usual maximum of 99 councillors allowed for the new authorities. The initial boundaries used will be reviewed by 2030.

Elections would be held in May 2027 for the “shadow authority”, based on existing wards. Current Councillors will continue in post and can stand for election to the shadow authority.

Timeline



New Unitary Authority

- Vesting day ('go live' day) would be 1 April 2028
- New authority assumes responsibility for delivery of services and predecessor Councils will cease to exist
- Staff will be employed by new Council from that date

Annual Council Budget Survey

Two surveys – residents and stakeholders

To inform budget discussions

Closes 15th December

Visit: www.blackpool.gov.uk/BCB26-27

Or scan the QR code opposite



Our Lancashire, Our Councils