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Local Government Reorganisation – Peacehaven Town Council response to consultation.

We strongly disagree that the proposed modification to the East Sussex local government reorganisation proposal would deliver new councils that meet the stated criteria. The evidence available suggests that transferring Peacehaven, Telscombe and surrounding areas into a Brighton & Hove unitary authority would weaken rather than strengthen local government arrangements, create additional transition risks, and fail to deliver improved outcomes for residents.

Sensible geographies and economic areas

The proposed modification does not reflect the existing geography, identity or functional relationships of the affected communities. Peacehaven and Telscombe are historically and geographically connected to the Ouse Valley and the wider Lewes and East Sussex area. The natural geography of the area, including the watershed and drainage patterns, links the communities eastwards rather than towards Brighton & Hove. Flooding and environmental issues are connected to the Ouse catchment, not Brighton.

The proposed transfer would also create a council where Peacehaven and Telscombe sit at the eastern edge of Brighton & Hove rather than within a coherent geographic area. Access is heavily constrained by the A259, which is already congested, creating practical difficulties in delivering services from Brighton & Hove.

The economic case is also weak. While some residents commute to Brighton, this does not mean that Brighton & Hove is the most appropriate economic or service area. Local economic links are increasingly focused around Newhaven, Lewes and the wider Ouse Valley, including opportunities linked to the Newhaven Enterprise Zone.

Ability to deliver the outcomes described in the original proposal

There is no evidence that the modification would improve outcomes for residents. The affected communities already receive valued services through Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council, including housing support, youth services, libraries and leisure provision. No clear analysis has demonstrated that transferring these communities to Brighton & Hove would produce better outcomes.

Instead, the modification would require significant service disaggregation and restructuring, creating avoidable disruption and diverting resources away from frontline delivery. The estimated cost of disaggregation has been identified as potentially exceeding £3.5 million.

Right size, efficiency, capacity and resilience to financial shocks

The modification appears to prioritise population numbers over effective service delivery and resilience. The proposed boundary change would only create a relatively small population difference and does not materially alter the overall scale of either authority.

While transferring these areas may assist Brighton & Hove in meeting population expectations, it would do so at the expense of the sustainability and capacity of the wider East Sussex unitary arrangement. The change would also increase concentration of risk in a heavily coastal authority rather than creating a more balanced geography.

Putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing

The modification risks weakening local government across the wider area. Peacehaven and Telscombe currently have a meaningful voice within Lewes District and East Sussex structures. Within Brighton & Hove, these communities would become peripheral and risk being dominated by the priorities of the city centre.

East Sussex would also lose an important coastal community voice, reducing the balance and effectiveness of the proposed new authority.

High quality, sustainable public services

There is a significant risk that service quality would decline rather than improve. Existing arrangements benefit from local delivery networks, including youth and family services, voluntary sector support, community transport, and social infrastructure across the Havens and Lewes area.

Moving services into Brighton & Hove would create practical difficulties. For example, social care and community services often require local knowledge and frequent travel; increased travel distances and congestion on the A259 could reduce efficiency and increase costs.

Meeting local needs

The modification does not reflect local views or needs. Residents in Peacehaven and Telscombe have repeatedly expressed opposition to being transferred into Brighton & Hove. Previous consultations showed strong support for remaining within East Sussex, including 86% opposition to changes affecting the Lewes District boundary.

There is no clear evidence that residents' needs would be better met through Brighton & Hove. In contrast, moving services would disrupt established local partnerships and community networks.

Supporting devolution arrangements

The modification would not strengthen devolution arrangements. It would create unnecessary complexity, require significant transition costs, and divert attention and resources away from delivering the intended benefits of reorganisation.

A successful devolution approach requires strong, sustainable local government structures built around communities and functional areas. The evidence suggests the East Sussex proposal already provides a more coherent foundation.

Community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

The proposed change risks reducing rather than increasing community influence. Peacehaven currently has established local partnerships and a leadership role in delivering community services, including youth and family support. Moving into Brighton & Hove risks weakening these relationships and reducing local accountability.

Strong local government should be built around communities that identify with their area and can effectively influence decisions. The modification does not meet this test.

Overall conclusion

The proposed modification does not provide a stronger public service or financial sustainability case. It does not create a more sensible geography, does not demonstrate improved service outcomes, would certainly incur substantial transition costs, social as well as financial, and does not reflect local identity or community preference. The East Sussex unitary proposal provides a more coherent and sustainable basis for delivering effective local government.