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To: Local Government Leaders

6 August 2026

Dear Leader,

Last week, the Cabinet set out how this government will rewire the way our country works to deliver good growth in every part of the United Kingdom and public services that meet people's needs.

Supporting strong, capable local authorities

At the core of this mission is a commitment to empower you, as local leaders, by moving power out of Westminster to local and strategic authorities, so you can create jobs, build homes, and improve public services for your residents. You know what it takes to drive growth in your local area, and how best to bring people and organisations together to deliver it – our job is to back you to do that.

Many of the initial steps we set out on Friday are about devolving more power, funding and control to local leaders within strategic authorities as well as regional mayors. This reflects the positive change we have seen local leaders come together to deliver in their regions.

Strong local authorities will be the bedrock of our rewired state, both as the frontline for delivering for local people and improving local areas, and as the foundation on which strategic authorities are built. We will continue the good work undertaken since the 2024 General Election: establishing strong unitary authorities across England through local government reorganisation; ensuring funding reflects the challenges of deprivation, continuing the principles established through the Fair Funding Review; and resetting the relationship between central and local government, so that you are trusted, empowered and supported to deliver. We will go further, delivering a programme of reform to support the financial sustainability of all local authorities, including considering increasing the local retention of business rates instead of receiving government grants, and reforming the highest cost services – adult and children's social care, homelessness, and special educational needs and disabilities – with an emphasis on prevention.

Ensuring every area in England has a strategic authority

For some local authorities that do not already form part of a strategic authority, we know that you and your officers have been working closely with government in recent months to shape the future of devolution in your areas. We want to thank you for the leadership and ambition you have shown so far. There is an opportunity now to build on that work, establish a clear route forward, and enable you to play a full and active part in this generational project to reshape how our country, economy and democracy work.

We are writing to all areas without strategic authorities to confirm their preference as to whether the strategic authority for their area should be mayoral or not. The Ministry of

Housing, Communities and Local Government will begin working with local authorities over the summer to agree the future arrangements for a strategic authority. For those areas with discussions already underway, we will begin these conversations immediately and seek a clear statement of the local position, including the preference on mayoral or non-mayoral devolution by the end of August, with announcements for the next wave of strategic authorities from September. We will also engage with existing non-mayoral Foundation Strategic Authorities on your thinking about a future mayoralty. We will engage local Members of Parliament on their views too.

For other local authorities outside of strategic authorities where conversations on devolution have not happened in recent months, there will be more to work through, and we are committed to taking that journey with you. We recognise that devolution will take different forms in different places, from our towns and villages to our biggest cities. We also accept that places are starting from different positions, and we will work closely with each area to support the right path forward.

While we continue to believe strongly in the benefits of the mayoral model, we are committed to taking a pragmatic and partnership-based approach. Therefore, where a mayoral arrangement is not the right step for an area at this stage, the government will work with you to agree a non-mayoral Foundation Strategic Authority, providing a strong foundation for future devolution. We will ensure that this provides the powers you need to deliver visible change.

We hope that the increased ambition, pace and scale announced by the Prime Minister so far will act as a catalyst for areas to go further. The opportunities offered through devolution will be significant, and when we publish the final programme in a White Paper in the autumn, we expect many areas will have chosen to go further than they might previously have considered possible, taking advantage of this moment to take on new powers.

Next steps

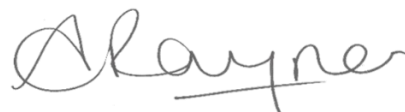
We do not underestimate the scale of the reform. That is why we have set out this vision, just weeks after taking office, so that we can move forward in partnership to deliver it. While preparing this reform, the Prime Minister has been strongly influenced by his time working with local government and is determined to both empower local areas to deliver and to tackle the long-term challenges councils face. But while the Cabinet Statement released on Friday provides the blueprint, we do not pretend to have all the answers. The work starts now to deliver the change the country needs, and we look forward to working closely with you to turn this vision into lasting change for the people and places we represent.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will hold a Leaders' Council meeting in September to discuss this once-in-a-generation opportunity to rewire the way our country works and make sure that we deliver good growth for every postcode.

Yours sincerely,



RT HON. LOUISE HAIGH MP
First Secretary of State and Chancellor of the
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Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
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