

PARISH PARTNERSHIP PANEL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Cllr Matt Boughton, Leader of the Council
Damian Roberts, Chief Executive

27 AUGUST 2026

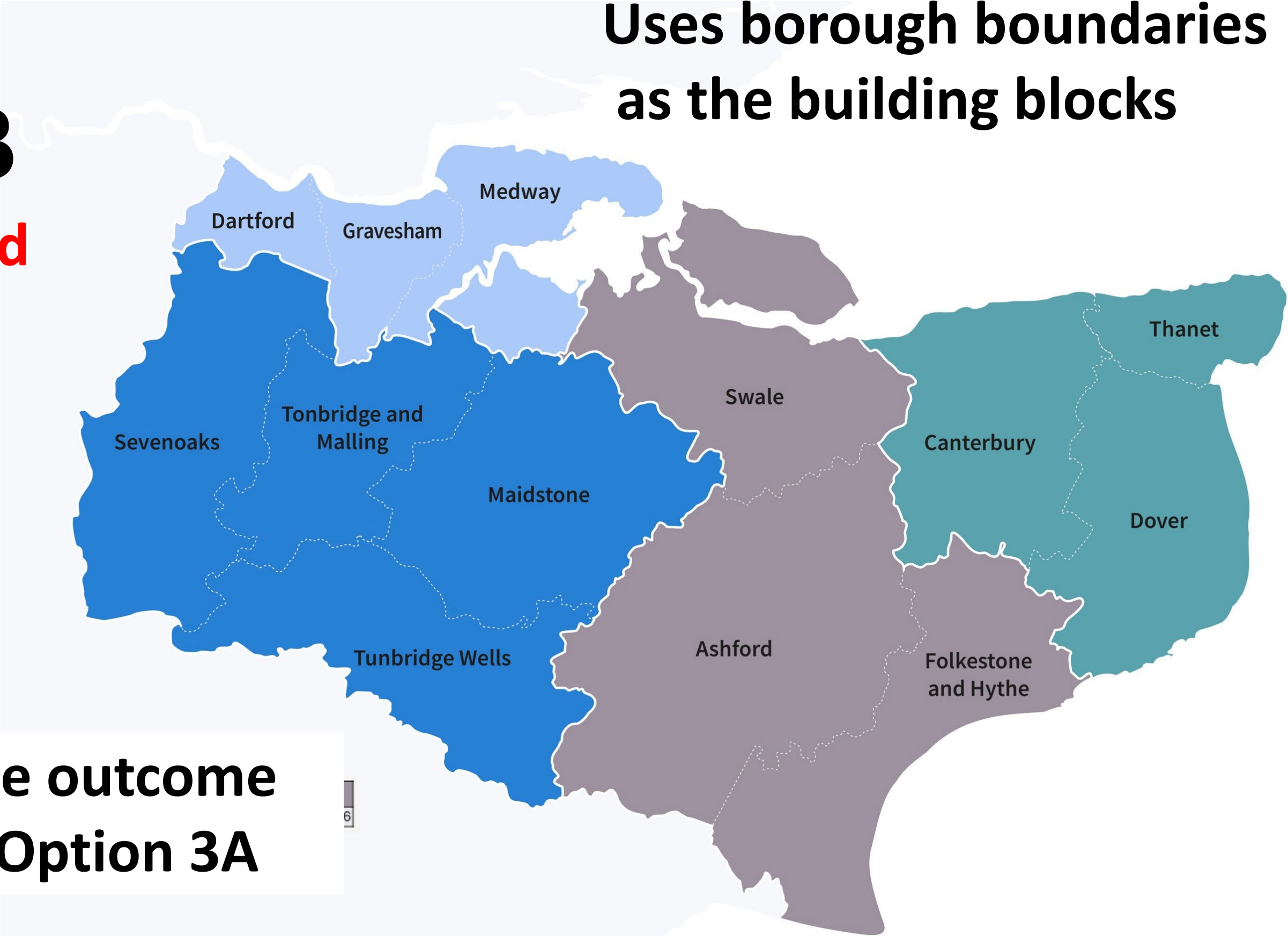


**YOUR
COUNCILS
CHANGE IS
COMING...**

Option 4B

The option agreed
by Government

Uses borough boundaries
as the building blocks



Provides the same outcome
for West Kent as Option 3A

How do we compare in size?

36 new unitary councils being created across the 13 regions

West Kent - 567,000 population – will be the largest Unitary in Kent

Nationally new unitaries average population: **405,127, median of 366,306**

Smallest: 159,911 (North East Lincolnshire)

Largest: 659,000 (Gloucestershire)

Nationally 8 of July's 14 decisions cut across exiting borough & district and/or parish boundaries:

- 1. Derby and Derbyshire**
- 2. Plymouth and Torbay**
- 3. East Sussex and Brighton & Hove**
- 4. Hertfordshire**
- 5. Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland**
- 6. Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire**
- 7. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire**
- 8. Oxfordshire and West Berkshire**

Two areas have had their decision delayed

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

Whilst East Sussex received a decision, but West Sussex decisions are delayed until the autumn.

Town and Parish Elections

- **Government confirmed in July that Parish Elections will be aligned with the elections of the new Unitary Councils**
- **Most likely this will mean elections in May 2027 followed by a five year term, with next Parish & Unitary elections in 2032**

Warding

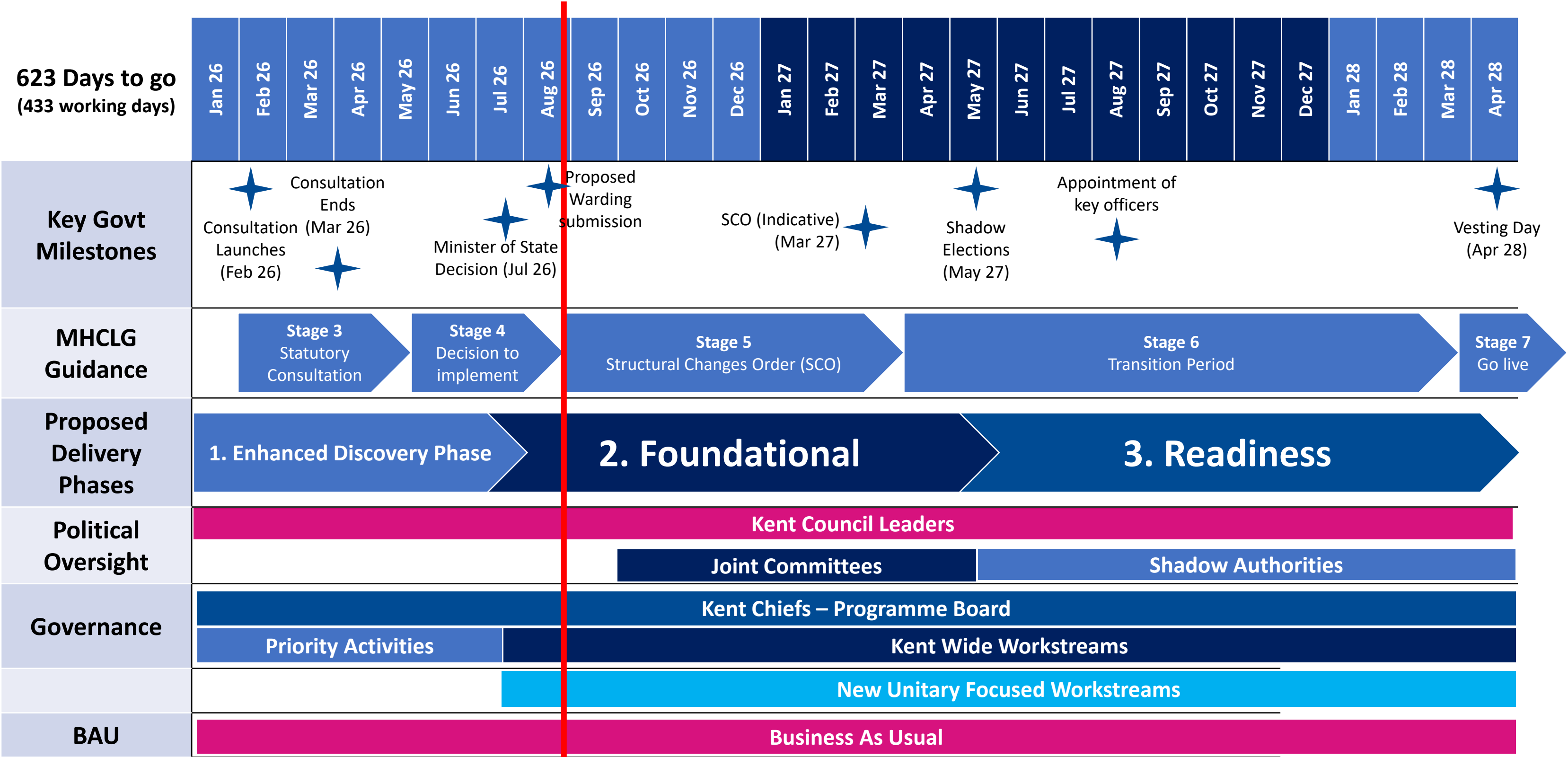
New Unitary Council	Number of Councillors	Number of Councillors from District/Borough	
North Kent	84	Dartford	19
		Gravesham	17
		Medway	48
West Kent	84	Maidstone	27
		Sevenoaks	18
		Tonbridge & Malling	21
		Tunbridge Wells	18
Mid Kent	60	Ashford	21
		Folkestone & Hythe	18
		Swale	21
East Kent	65	Canterbury	24
		Dover	20
		Thanet (<i>Draft</i>)	21

Warding within Tonbridge & Malling

Tonbridge & Malling		
Malling Central	Malling Central County Council Division	3
Malling North	Malling North County Council Division	3
Malling <u>North East</u>	Malling <u>North East</u> County Council Division	3
Malling Rural East	Malling Rural East County Council Division	3
Malling West	Malling West County Council Division	3
Tonbridge North	Made up of Higham & Trench Ward	2
Tonbridge South	Made up of Judd and Vauxhall Ward	2
Tonbridge Central	Made up of Cage Green & Angel and Hildenborough East	2
	TOTAL	21

For circulation to Parish and Town Councils in Tonbridge & Malling only

Timeline to Vesting Day



Joint Committees

- **Joint Committees are formal requirement of the LGR process**
- **One Joint Committee per new Unitary Area. (8 from KCC, 8 from B&Ds)**
- **Oversees preparations for the new Unitary Council and hands over to new Shadow Authority immediately following the May 2027 elections.**
- **Focus on preparing the following key documents:**
 - **Draft Unitary Constitution and Standing Orders**
 - **Draft Member code of conduct**
 - **Draft Scheme of Members Allowances**
 - **Draft Medium Term Financial Outlook**
 - **Draft Council Tax Harmonisation modelling**
 - **Draft overall implementation Plan**

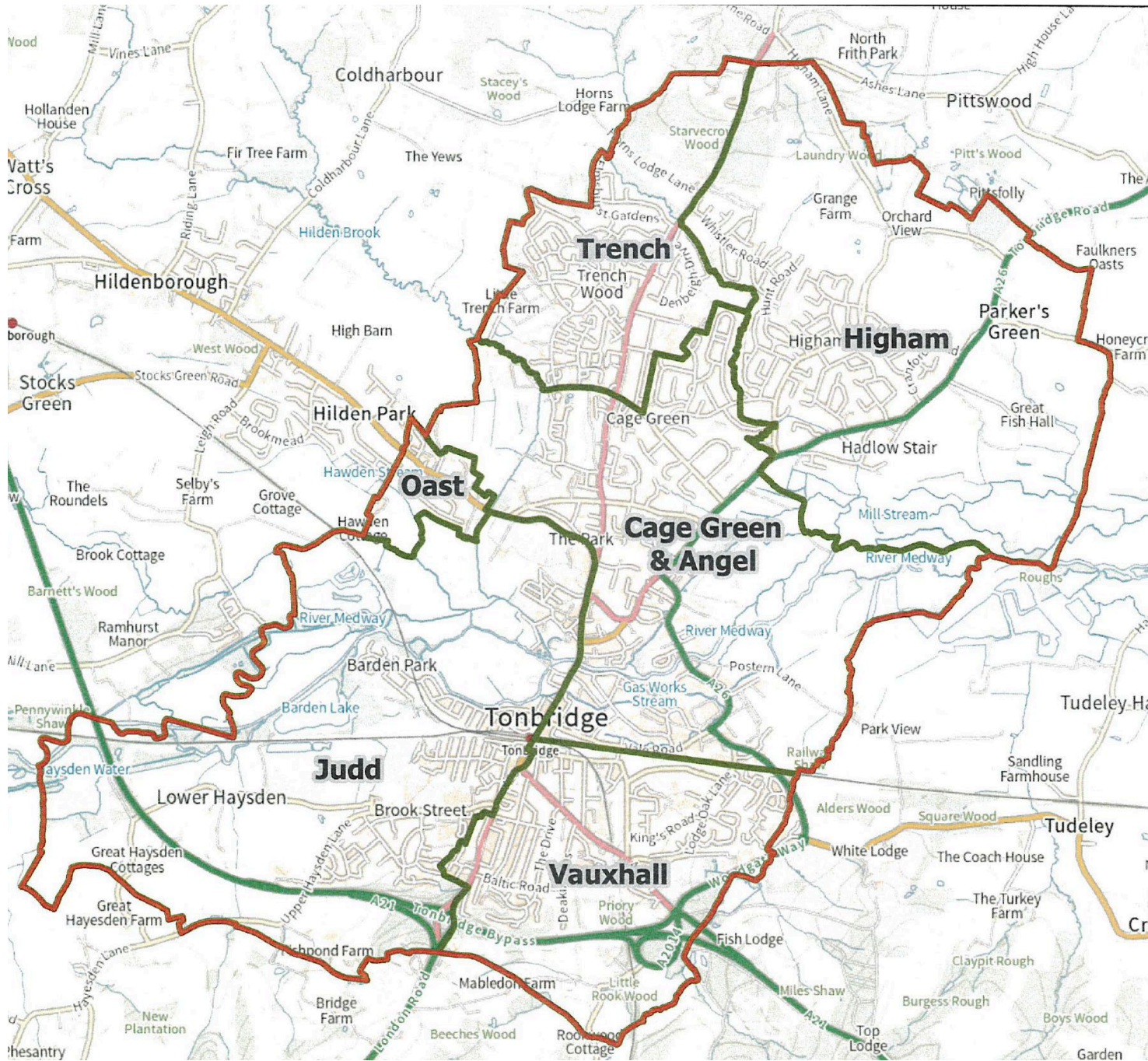
Structural Changes Order (SCO)

- **Finalised by the Government by March 2027**
- **Confirms the final Unitary geographies**
- **Names of new Councils**
- **Arrangements for appointing to Joint Committees**
- **Arrangements for elections including timing and warding**
- **Alignment of Parish Council elections**
- **Appointment of Single Responsible Officer (SRO)**
- **Appointment of Unitary Place Leads (Deputy SRO)**
- **Expenditure Controls during transition to new Councils**

Tonbridge Town Council

- **Elections due to take place as planned in May 2027**
- **Initial budget and precept to be agreed by full Council in February 2027**
- **Initial meeting space to be identified**
- **An experienced temporary Clerk appointed ahead of elections to provide support to the new Town Council in its first few months**
- **Recruitment of a permanent Clerk etc to be determined by the new Town Council.**

Tonbridge Town Council



SCHEDULE 1

WARDS OF THE PARISH OF TONBRIDGE

NAMES OF WARDS AND NUMBERS OF COUNCILLORS

<i>Column (1)</i>	<i>Column (2)</i>
<i>Name of Ward</i>	<i>Number of Councillors</i>
Cage Green and Angel	Four (4)
Higham	Three (3)
Oast	One (1)
Judd	Three (3)
Trench	Three (3)
Vauxhall	Four (4)

Transfer of assets

- **The Government, and their appointed External Auditors have made it clear that they do not want to see Councils transferring assets from existing Councils ahead of Vesting Day**
- **The only responsibilities that existing Councils must transfer to new Parish or Town Councils relate to allotments.**
- **The Government will be issuing a Section 24 Notice formally restricting any such transfers over a fixed amount (assumed to be £100k).**

What happens to any money not spent by the existing Councils?

- **All remaining balances and reserves must be transferred in full to the new Unitary Council**
- **Through the Structural Changes Order, the Government will tightly control any expenditure and resource transfers to stop existing Councils doing anything that might not be in the best interests of the new Unitary Council.**

Future for Parish Partnership Panel

- **Decision for the new West Kent Unitary once established**
- **The Unitary Council will need a mechanism for continued engagement with Towns and Parishes in West Kent, the other 3 Unitary Areas and Kent-wide under the new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA)**
- **Clear logic for having both Unitary level engagement, and Kent-wide engagement mechanisms.**

Concluding thoughts

- **Overall the Unitary decision is positive for West Kent**
- **Brings to an end a long period of uncertainty**
- **Lots to do between now and vesting day for new Unitary**
- **We are in a strong place & will manage the process well**
- **Over time, should make Town and Parish Councils more significant as truly local, highly responsive, community level local government.**