



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

# Community Leaders

Record of Early Engagement on devolution  
and local government reorganisation

The Shoreham Centre

March 6th 2025

RESILIENT > ADAPTABLE > PARTICIPATIVE



## 28 local groups and organisations represented

- Adur Churches Forum
- Adur Voluntary Action
- Andy's Angels
- Carer Support
- Citizen Advice
- Community transport sussex
- Electric Storm
- Figment Arts
- Findon Valley
- Findon Valley resident Association
- Friends of old shoreham
- Friends of Shoreham Beach
- Goring Resident Association
- Green tides Wildflower trail
- Guildcare
- Heene cemetery
- Lancing Manor SE
- Marine Gardens
- Shoreham Society
- Shoreham Wordfest
- Shoreham-by-cycle
- Sussex Bay +SDNP
- Time to Talk Befriending
- Transition Time Shoreham
- Transition Town Worthing
- Worthing Community Chest
- Worthing Soup Kitchen
- WTM

# Key messages from Council Leaders



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

“Place and identity is important

We want to understand what devolution means for people and our local places.

We want to hear from local people about how we design local government better.

We want a stronger voice in Sussex.”

**Cllr Sophie Cox**

*Leader of Worthing Borough Council*



“This is an exciting time.

We want to serve the community better.

We need to look at the data and have a conversation with our communities.

I want to see a focus on tackling inequalities.”

**Cllr Jeremy Gardner,**

*Leader of Adur District Council*



RESILIENT > ADAPTABLE > PARTICIPATIVE

# Roundtable discussions

1. What's the biggest opportunity and your greatest hope?
2. What is the most difficult trade-off?
3. How do we hold the conversation with our communities?

# 1) What's the biggest opportunity and your greatest hope?

- Better governance & decision making
- Better community engagement and participation
- Better services
- Better infrastructure & sustainable resources
- Strong place identity

## Summary

Overall, a positive and forward-looking discussion focused on creating a more responsive, efficient, and community-driven local environment.

A central theme is the desire for increased local empowerment and autonomy, with a focus on devolving power and decision-making to the community level. There is a strong emphasis on improving services and efficiency, streamlining processes, and removing barriers to effective governance.

Participants envision a collaborative and community-focused approach, with greater coordination, planning, and local involvement in shaping the future.

There's a clear vision for transformation and innovation, including embracing radical change, exploring new governance models, and fostering a strong sense of regional identity.

Finally, the discussion highlights the importance of effective resource management and infrastructure development, ensuring sustainability and meeting the needs of the community.

## 2) What is the most difficult trade-off?

### Representation and Governance:

- We want local representation – knowledge and experience of place
- More councillors, smaller ward areas vs town councils
- Getting the right representation to ensure local decision making.

### Balancing Needs and Priorities

- Differentiate between community wants and essential needs.
- Tailor approaches to address the diverse needs of different communities.
- Carefully balance competing priorities, such as environmental preservation versus housing development.

### Challenges and Risks

- Acknowledge and address the potential inheritance of debts.
- Ensure that the voices of vulnerable and marginalized residents are heard and considered.
- Recognize potential disparities in effectiveness between urban and rural areas.

### Summary

The discussions on "Trade-offs" reveal significant complexities associated with devolution and local government reorganisation.

There was a strong emphasis on ensuring **fair and effective representation, balancing diverse needs and priorities** within the community, and **mitigating potential risks** and challenges.

Participants are particularly worried about excluding vulnerable populations, inheriting existing financial burdens, and navigating the complexities of different local contexts.

## 3) How do we hold the conversation with our communities?

### 1. Identifying and reaching diverse Communities:

- Seek out and connect with a wide range of community leaders and groups, including those typically less engaged.
- Target specific demographics, such as young people through schools and social media, and use varied methods like face-to-face meetings and digital platforms.
- Utilize existing community hubs and networks, such as community centers, food groups, local businesses, and council teams, to reach people where they are.

### 2. Ensuring inclusive and effective Engagement:

- Make engagement accessible by considering timing, location, and communication styles, catering to different preferences (visual, audio) and keeping language simple.
- Go to where people are instead of expecting them to come to you, use neighborhood teams and street-based approaches.
- Prioritize listening to all voices, including the quieter ones, and identifying community champions and activists to facilitate dialogue.

### 3. Building trust and establishing communication channels:

- Develop clear and relevant messaging about the decision-making process
- Establish trust through equal conversations between local authorities and volunteers, by learning from the experiences of other authorities, establishing mechanisms for ongoing feedback and two-way communication.
- Create mechanisms for smaller communities to feel represented and network, and develop accessible platforms for gathering ideas and feedback, such as citizen assemblies and online tools.

### Summary

Discussion emphasised the importance of **reaching diverse communities** through targeted outreach and leveraging existing networks.

**Inclusive and accessible engagement** is crucial, requiring adaptability in communication and a focus on listening to all voices.

Finally, **building trust and establishing clear communication channels**, particularly about decision-making processes, is vital.