

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (DRAFT)

20 March 2026

Miatta Fahnbulleh MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Devolution, Faith and Communities

BY EMAIL

Dear Minister,

We are writing on behalf of XYZ councils in response to your letter of 12 February 2026, inviting councils without an existing devolution agreement to put forward Expressions of Interest to form a Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA) as part of the Government's next wave of devolution.

We welcome the opportunity to submit an Expression of Interest and are ready to work collaboratively with Government and local partners to pursue a Foundation Strategic Authority on a Surrey footprint for April 2027.

A Shared Ambition for Further Devolution in Surrey

Surrey is a county of national economic importance, home to globally significant businesses, outstanding natural assets, and a highly skilled workforce. However, parts of Surrey experience deprivation, alongside significant pressures on transport, housing and social infrastructure, requiring coordinated, strategic leadership across the area to support sustainable growth and resilient communities.

Surrey is well-placed to benefit from devolution. Not only are we undertaking reorganisation at the fastest pace anywhere in England, the devolution of power to local leaders is already underway through the Level 2 Foundation Devolution Deal, enabling some adult education, housing and regeneration powers to be transferred locally.

The Government's ambition for Foundation Strategic Authorities to empower places with coherent geographies to lead strategic planning, transport, skills, infrastructure and economic development aligns strongly with our own aspirations. We believe Surrey is well placed to form a Foundation Strategic Authority that will:

- provide unified strategic leadership across an economically coherent area;
- support delivery of the forthcoming Spatial Development Strategy requirements under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025;

- strengthen the integration of transport, housing, skills, economic development and net- zero initiatives; and
- enable long- term decision- making to support sustainable and inclusive growth.

We particularly value the Government's recognition that FSAs can act as a stepping stone toward deeper devolution, including future mayoral arrangements.

Building on Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey

We recognise the Government's emphasis on aligning devolution with strong unitary structures and simplified governance. Surrey has already embarked on a significant transition programme designed to create a more coherent and sustainable system of local government. This ongoing work provides a strong foundation for further devolution and we want to grasp the opportunity presented to us through being on this accelerated pathway to enable the formation of a strategic authority on a Surrey footprint for April 2027.

Forming a Foundation Strategic Authority for Surrey would directly complement and reinforce this reform of local government and would support the shift to long- term, strategic planning across a geography that is meaningful to communities and consistent with existing public service alignment.

Surrey stands ready to progress at pace. We are confident that this is the right moment to build a governance model that will unlock Surrey's full potential, strengthen local accountability, support national growth, and deliver for our communities.

We look forward to receiving Government's reply to this expression of interest and working together to help realise the benefits of devolution locally.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr [Names]