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Surrey Mayor? Not so fast, says East Surrey leader

12 November 2026



The incoming East Surrey council's leader has said there is still "a lot of detail" to iron out before Surrey gets its own elected mayor.

Councillor Steve Wotton (Liberal Democrats: Horley West, Salfords & Sidlow) said Surrey's two new unitary councils would look at next steps towards adopting a county mayor once the proposed details are clearer.

At last month's Budget, it was revealed the government is in the "final stages" of creating a regional mayor for Surrey, similar to those seen in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.

But speaking at a meeting of East Surrey's cabinet, Councillor Wotton said: "There is still quite a lot of detail to work through – particularly around the funding and the powers.

"We will be engaging with the government to explore the potential of a mayor for Surrey once we have further detailed proposals."

Elected regional mayors have varying powers across England depending on specific devolution deals each area strikes with central government.

They will typically oversee big strategic issues across council boundaries such as economic development, transport and policing.

"A mayor of Surrey could help secure strategic leadership and investment in Surrey, including opportunities around transport and infrastructure, skills and economic growth," Councillor Wotton added.

"There are good examples elsewhere in the UK of mayors helping improve public services and driving economic growth.

"But obviously we would need to understand what that would change in Surrey and how it will improve lives for the people we represent."

The Budget also outlined further fiscal devolution measures including giving regional government a greater share of business rates income and allowing mayors to charge a tourism tax.

East and West Surrey councils will replace Surrey County Council and the 11 district councils from April 2027, a move that is aimed at streamlining and simplifying local government structure.

Once established, the two new councils plan to combine forces on some major issues through a framework called a Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA).

Councillor Wotton said that setting up FSA "could be the first step" towards creating a mayor of Surrey.

The outgoing Surrey County Council leader Tim Oliver (Conservative: Weybridge) has championed the creation of a mayor for Surrey.

He previously said: "Surrey needs to grab this opportunity with both hands to unlock the funding, infrastructure investments, and local decision-making powers that our residents deserve."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Steve Wotton speaks at the meeting (Credit: East Surrey Council)

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