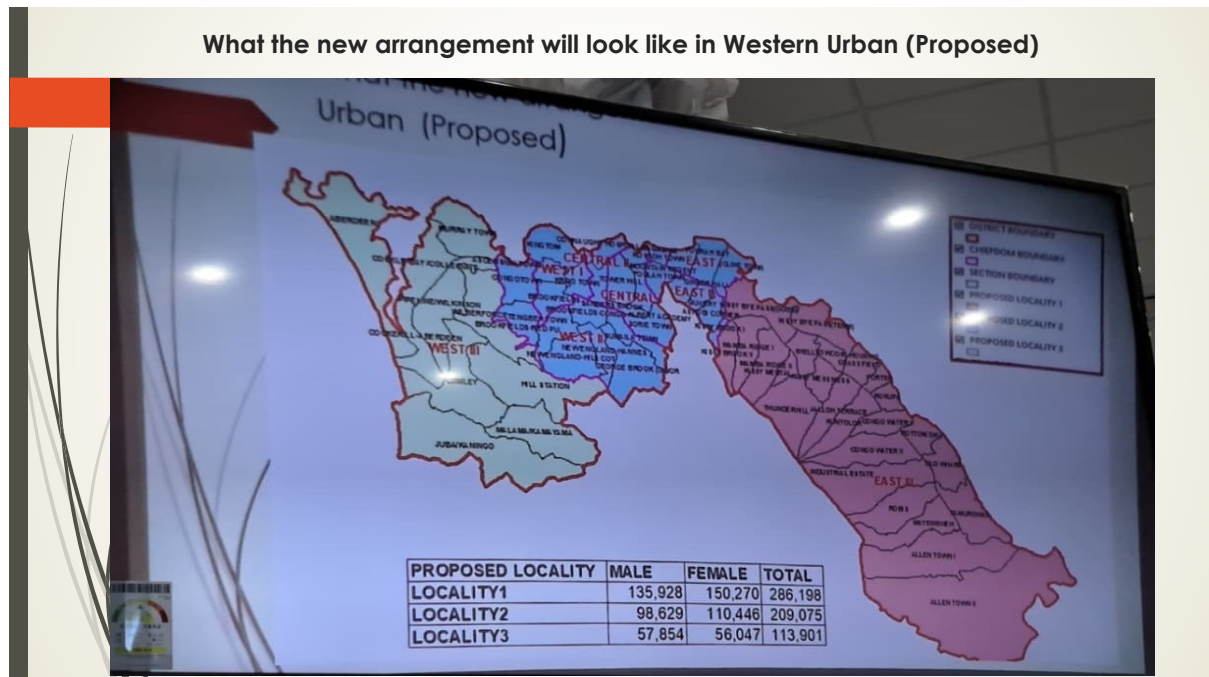


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PROPOSED PLANS TO DIVIDE FREETOWN AND CREATE THREE LOCAL COUNCILS WITH THREE MAYORS

What is proposed: The Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs has presented plans to replace Freetown City Council with 3 Local Councils, with 3 Mayors and 3 Administrations

How will Freetown be divided in the proposed plans: From **Orogu to Up Gun**; From **Up Gun to Congo Cross**; From **Congo Cross to Levuma Beach**, as shown in the map below.



What will be the cost implications for Freetown of having 3 Local Councils: The administrative costs for Freetown will increase considerably as each Local Council will require an office space, staff, vehicles and other operating costs. Additionally, economies of scale will be lost making the operating costs of each Local Council higher.

How will these additional costs be paid for: Freetown City Council's budget is principally funded from Own Source Revenue with **only 23% of the 2025 budget projected to come from Government**. However, as at 9th October 2025, Freetown City Council ("FCC") had only received funds for the last quarter of 2024 which represents less than 20% of the Government allocation to FCC for 2025.

It is therefore clear that the operating costs of the new Local Councils in Freetown will be borne by the residents of Freetown, diverting funds raised as Own Source Revenue that should be allocated to sanitation, market construction, cemeteries etc to the running costs of the new Local Councils.

Will dividing Freetown help or hinder Freetown's revenue collection: Own Source Revenue was 43% of FCC's budget in 2018; in 2025 Own Source Revenue had increased

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to 77% of FCC's budget. This is the result of investments in the digitalisation of FCC's property rate and business licence systems in 2020, which immediately increased revenue potential fivefold. Dividing Freetown and creating new Local Councils will render FCC's digitized MOPTAX property rate and business license system obsolete, destroying the revenue mobilisation infrastructure, mechanisms and capacity that have been built and institutionalised over the past 5 years.

In a letter to all Local Councils dated 15th September 2025, the Financial Secretary stated that "Central government transfers, on average, account for about 80% to 90% of local councils' budgets. This over-reliance has created a cycle of fiscal vulnerability that severely constrains the ability of local councils to deliver on their core mandates".

Freetown's relative outstanding performance with 77% of the Council's budget coming from Own Source Revenue and only 23% coming from the Government, should be supported and not jeopardized. The new Local Councils will have to develop expensive customised revenue mobilisation infrastructure and capacity and will then have to fund their own budgets without a reliance on Central Government transfers. The historical experience of the average Local Council, as stated in the letter from the Financial Secretary, reflects the challenges associated with achieving the fiscal independence required in enable Local Councils to deliver on their core mandates. Dividing Freetown will weaken own source revenue mobilisation.

How will the division of Freetown impact the East End of Freetown: Property rates and business licences account for 70% of FCC's budgeted Own Source Revenue. In 2024, 80% of property rates and 85% of business licences were collected by FCC from the West End of Freetown. **In contrast, only 20% of property rates and 15% of business licenses were collected from the East End of Freetown.**

FCC pools revenue collected from the East and the West so that services can be delivered and development interventions made across the entire city for the common good of all Freetonians. Dividing Freetown **will significantly disadvantage communities in the East End of Freetown** as the new Local Council in the East will clearly not have the financial resources to operate independently, nor to provide services to residents in the East. FCC is committed to improving conditions in the East which in turn will lead to a better city for all.

Does Freetown City Council currently deliver services in the East End of Freetown: Yes. FCC delivers services right across the city. A few examples of FCC's interventions in the East include the construction and operation of the Congo Water Early Learning Adventure Centre, a free pre-school for children under the age of 5 built at the Congo Water Market to serve the children of market traders who would otherwise not have access to education; the construction of water kiosks, water wells and boreholes in Mayenkinah, Rokupr, Jalloh Terrace, Shell etc; drainage construction at Shell Old Road, Melon Street, Water Street, Caulker Street, Macauley Street Kissy Market etc; mangrove planting that employs over 200 youth as planters and trackers at Ojuku; an upgrade of the



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Moyiba, Coconut Farm and Portee Rokupr neighbourhoods with the installation of 81 public toilets, roads construction, solar lights and tree planting will commence later this year; and funding has been secured for the construction of a waste water treatment plant in Allen Town. Of the 836 sweepers who keep our streets clean every day, over half of them are deployed to sweep streets in the East End. FCC has undertaken and continues to undertake development interventions and delivers services across the entire city.

How will the creation of two additional Local Council affect businesses and organisations: Operating costs and coordination issues for businesses will increase significantly. For example, if a business or a church has branches on Wilkinson Road, Kissy Road and Bai Bureh Road, that business or church will now be required to engage with 3 different Local Councils in respect of property rates, business licenses, CBO registration and other matters. The charge rates may differ and the time cost of these additional interfaces and engagements with 3 different Local Councils will also negatively affect businesses and organisations operating in Freetown.

What will be the legal implications of dividing Freetown City Council: Freetown City Council is a legal entity that has entered into contracts, has creditors, has debtors, owes pensions to former workers etc. There will be significant legal challenges and associated costs with determining the liabilities and assets of the new Local Councils. For example, Freetown City Council is currently in court in a dispute concerning Allen Town Market which is in the far east of the city. With the proposed split of the city, which Local Council will be the party to the court action and proceed with this matter? Similarly, which of the 3 Local Councils will be liable to pay pensions to retired staff of Freetown City Council bearing in mind that with this fragmentation, none of councils will have the same revenue generating capacity that Freetown City Council currently has.

The division of Freetown City Council will create a myriad of unnecessary legal challenges that will be costly to resolve, diverting financial resource and administrative time away from the delivery of services to Freetonians.

Will the division of Freetown City Council into 3 Local Councils with 3 Mayors deepen decentralisation: No. Decentralisation will not be deepened by dividing Freetown and creating 3 Local Councils with 3 Mayors. Decentralisation can only be deepened by devolving functions from the Central Government to the Local Councils. Decentralisation will be deepened when devolution is accompanied by regulations which clearly spell out the mandates and responsibilities of the Local Councils in respect of the devolved functions and when financial resources are either provided to the Local Councils by the Central Government for the execution of the devolved functions or Local Councils are enabled to generate the necessary funding for the execution of the devolved functions.

Deepening decentralisation is a national imperative which cannot be achieved by creating new Local Councils in targeted parts of the country.



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Will the division of Freetown City Council into 3 Local Councils with 3 Mayors decongest Freetown: No. Freetown can only be decongested if people move out of the city. Dividing the city into 3 localities with 3 Mayors and 3 Local Councils will not reduce the population and therefore will not decongest Freetown. It would be advisable for Government to invest in the development of other urban centres and the decentralisation of government services to other districts and regions in order to incentivise people to move out of Freetown. The creation of a new administrative capital city, similar to the creation of Abuja and Yamoussoukro would be an effective option for decongesting Freetown.

Was any data or research presented by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs (MLGCA) to justify the proposed plans to divide Freetown: No financial, socio-economic, infrastructure or any other data has been presented by MLGCA to justify the proposals.

What are the reasons presented by MLGCA for the division:

	MLGCA presented the following reasons for the proposed division	Reality in Freetown
1.	Improved service delivery: Managing services (waste, health, market, fire force, etc.) for millions of people requires smaller administrative units	Key services are under Government's mandate (e.g. Land use planning, building permits, road construction and maintenance, water provision, electricity, education, health) therefore dividing Freetown will not improve these services. Dividing Freetown will increase the challenges of coordination that already exists with one Local Council Significant progress in Sanitation services has been made by FCC since 2018 in spite of the challenges - including the withdrawal of \$20m World Bank funding for a new sanitary landfill because the required land was not provided by Government. Over 100 streets are swept on a daily basis. FCC has this year passed a new sanitation bylaw that requires every household, business and institution to be registered for waste collection and contracts have been signed by FCC with 6 approved waste service providers. Already 15,000 units have



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	MLGCA presented the following reasons for the proposed division	Reality in Freetown
		registered and we expect all residents to be registered by end of 2026. An MOU for plastic recycling at the Kingtom Dumpsite has been signed and that will be operational within months. In 2021 FCC opened and now continues to operate Sierra Leone's first ever waste water treatment plant. Improved sanitation requires improved systems and processes and massive financial investment. FCC has steadily and consistently been building institutional sanitation capacity over the past 7 years which will be lost if the institution is divided.
2.	Population growth and density and urban expansion and settlements: When a section of the city grows too large for effective management by one council, new LGAs may be carved out. As new residential, commercial and industrial areas develop, new LGAs may be created to serve them.	At 82sq km, Freetown represents less than 1% of the 74,000sq km of Sierra Leone. There are currently 21 Local Councils covering the remaining 73,918 sq km of land. The proposed plans to have 3 Local Councils in Freetown, 3 Local Councils in Western Area Rural District and 2 new Districts in the South East, means that there would be 25 Local Councils outside of Freetown. In Freetown each Local Council would on average cover approximately 27 sq km whilst each Local Council outside of Freetown would on average cover approximately 2,956 sq km. If bringing development closer to the people is the argument then it would appear that the increase in Local Councils should be happening outside of Freetown and not inside of Freetown. Freetown's coastal position, located on a peninsula and surrounded by mountains, provides limited space for the city to expand, and as a result Freetown is a fairly compact city. A World Bank Report (2018) suggests



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		that Freetown has a strong central business district with high levels of demand for land, which strongly indicates that Freetown is a monocentric city with a single core surrounded by suburbs that are inextricably linked to the centre; it is therefore, particularly essential to keep the entire city under one local government authority and avoid splitting it up. According to the 2021 Mid-Term Census there are only 609,000 people in Freetown. All other population numbers are estimates and projections and it would be unwise for the Government to rely on anecdotal evidence for such an important decision.
3.	Political Representation: Communities may demand their own LGA so they can elect their own local leaders and have a stronger political voice.	Freetown has 48 wards and previously each ward had a councillor and a ward development committee that provided communities with direct local political representation. For the 2023 PR elections, the number of Freetown councillors was reduced to 40 and the distribution of those councillors was no longer linked to wards. There are wards with up to 3 councillors in the same ward and there are now many wards with no councilors depriving communities of local political representation. Ward development committees were also discontinued further reducing the channels for communities to make their voices heard. There is no need to divide Freetown to increase political representation. This can simply be achieved through the reintroduction of councillors and ward development committees for all wards without the high costs and disastrous consequences of dividing Freetown.

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	MLGCA presented the following reasons for the proposed division	Reality in Freetown
4.	Security & Law Enforcement Manageable administrative units enhance the ability of law enforcement agencies to maintain security and public order. It makes it easier to establish police stations, courts, and other security apparatus closer to the communities they serve	Policing in Sierra Leone is a national government responsibility and the Sierra Leone Police is under the jurisdiction of the Sierra Leone Ministry of Internal Affairs. The mandate of the FCC Metropolitan Police is limited to the enforcement of FCC's byelaws.
5.	Abuja, Nairobi and Kampala sighted as examples of cities that have been divided into several local councils	The sub-national governance structure of Nigeria is not easily comparable to that in Sierra Leone. Nigeria follows a federal republic system with power shared between the federal government, 36 States, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) which comprises area councils. While the FCT contains the national capital, Abuja, it is directly administered by the federal government via the FCT administration and is headed by a Minister of State nominated by the President of Nigeria. Nairobi is governed by the Nairobi City County, which is one authority for the entire city. The Nairobi City County governs a population of 4.6 million people. Nairobi City County was consolidated and created by the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. Administratively, the Nairobi City County is divided into 17 constituencies/sub-counties and 85 wards, but these are not separate authorities, the entire area is administratively governed by the Nairobi City County, which is charged with the responsibility of providing a variety of services to residents within its area of jurisdiction.

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	MLGCA presented the following reasons for the proposed division	Reality in Freetown
		While it is correct that Kampala is divided into five, the divisions are administrative subdivisions of the city under the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA). Kampala Capital City has a 2025 population of 4.2 million inhabitants (World Population Review, 2025). According to the Kampala Capital City Act (KCCA, 2011), the KCCA “is the governing body of the Capital City and shall administer the Capital City on behalf of the central government”. The Lord Mayor is the political head of the Capital City. The five divisions are not fully autonomous local government areas in their own right, as their powers are limited and subordinate under the KCCA.

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Map of Sierra Leone Showing Distribution of Local Councils

Based on the proposed plans, Freetown **with only 82sq km, is to have 3 Local Councils.** Each Local Council will cover an **average of 27sq km**

Based on the proposed plans, the **rest of Sierra Leone with 73,918sq km will have 25 Local Councils**. Each Local Council will cover an **average of 2,956sq km**

