

**Teignbridge District Council  
Full Council  
25 November 2025  
Part i**

**Local Government Reorganisation: Full Proposal**

**Purpose of Report**

For Full Council to review the 'Case for Change' for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon, referred to as 'Reimagining Devon – Believe in Better', the accompanying appendices and background documents, and to endorse the recommendations as set out below.

**Recommendation(s)**

The Council RECOMMENDS to Executive that:

- (1) Teignbridge District Council endorse the submission of 'Reimagining Devon – Believe in Better' (Appendix 4) as the Council's response to the invitation from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon, with two new unitary authorities and Plymouth as a 'continuing authority';
- (2) Teignbridge District Council supports proposing the option of the '4/5/1+' modification, extending the current boundary of Plymouth City Council to incorporate adjacent parishes in South Hams, but including parts of parishes that are located within Dartmoor National Park within the new '4' authority, and acknowledge the potential to amend this further should the Secretary of State consider an expansion necessary to implement the '4/5/1' proposal; and,
- (3) Delegated power be given to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Executive Member for Local Government Reorganisation to submit the proposals and covering letter (Appendix 5) to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government by the deadline of 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

**Reason for Recommendation(s)**

To ensure that the Council responds to the invitation to submit proposals for a single tier of local government and continues to influence future Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon.

**Financial Implications**

Section 4 of this report contains a detailed overview of financial implications.

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Head of Financial Services and Audit

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**Legal or Governance Implications**

The invitation for proposals for Local Government Reorganisation and the Council's proposals in response fall under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public

Involvement in Health Act 2007. This is not referred to within the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) and is, consequently, an Executive function.

Accordingly, responsibility for agreeing proposals cannot be discharged by the Council or another committee. However, this can be discussed at Full Council to seek the consensus of all councillors and inform Executive's response to the ministerial letter.

The final decision on a proposed restructure is made by the Secretary of State. A restructure does not require the affected councils to give formal consent. There is no mechanism for the public to support or oppose restructuring through a petition or a referendum.

Section 8 contains more information on other legal implications.

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### **Risk Assessment**

The future configuration of local government will have a substantive bearing on service delivery. There are currently a number of competing proposals being developed. The lack of a single preferred option at present necessarily creates uncertainty and ambiguity. The need to commit resources to developing the options and subsequently to focus on implementation of the preferred option creates a further risk of detracting from core service delivery.

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### **Environmental / Climate Change Implications**

All Devon local authorities have declared a climate emergency and are signatories to the Devon Climate Declaration.

Local Government Reorganisation provides an important opportunity for service delivery that further integrates environmental stewardship, the protection of landscapes and assets, and the promotion of key sectors such as clean energy. It therefore has the potential to address both climate and biodiversity objectives and the achievement of a zero-carbon future.

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## **Equalities Assessment**

An Equalities Impact Assessment is included see Appendix 2 to this report.

This is a proposal that affects all of our communities equally. It is not considered that any particular group or class of individuals will be any more affected than others at this point, and nor is it considered that it will impact on any protected characteristics.

However, the future design of the new authorities will need to take these matters into account to ensure they are fit for purpose to meet the needs of all residents as well as being legally compliant.

## **Corporate Priorities**

The report deals with LGR and its implementation. Approval of any model of LGR by government will have impacts on the Council's delivery of its recently agreed corporate priorities. It is likely that these will need to be reviewed in the light of the work required to implement LGR.

## **Report Author**

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## **Executive Member**

Cllr Charles Nuttall

Executive Member for Local Government Reorganisation

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Secretary of State formal invitation

**Appendix 2:** Equalities Impact Assessment

**Appendix 3:** Executive Summary Case for Change

**Appendix 4:** Case for Change – 'Reimagining Devon – Believe in Better'

**Appendix 5:** Draft letter to the Minister

**Appendix 6:** Collated consultation feedback

## **Background papers**

**Background paper 1:** [Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 25th February, 2025, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#) – item 97 – LGR report

**Background paper 2:** [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 9th September, 2025, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#) – item 164 – LGR update

**Background paper 3:** [Agenda for Governance Committee on Thursday, 2nd October, 2025, 2.00 pm - Teignbridge District Council](#) – item 26 – dispensation to vote for 'dual hatters'

**Background paper 4:** [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 7th October, 2025, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#) – item 173 – LGR update

## **1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 1.1. The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, set out the government's commitment to ending the existing two-tier system of District and County Councils.
- 1.2. In February 2025 the Secretary of State formally invited councils to submit proposals for a single tier of local government in Devon (see Appendix 1 to this report). A more detailed overview can be found in the report for Council in February 2025, included as Background Paper 1 to this report.
- 1.3. Following the Council resolution in February, officers and members have been working closely with colleagues across the County to develop a proposal. This has included engagement with local organisations, residents and representative groups, as well as key stakeholders such as the NHS, Police, Fire, educational establishments and infrastructure providers.
- 1.4. The 'Case for Change', attached as a summary document as Appendix 3 and in full as Appendix 4 to this report, marks the culmination of that collaborative process.
- 1.5. The proposal before Council reflects the shared approach of the District and Borough Councils. While Torbay worked closely on this submission, their preference is to retain Torbay on its current boundary, and they will be submitting their own proposals. Devon County Council, Exeter City Council and Plymouth City Council have not been an active part of creating this proposal.
- 1.6. The Council is asked to support the submission of the full proposal for the 4/5/1 model of local government reorganisation (Appendix 4), which includes a proposed extension to the current boundary of Plymouth City Council, referred to as 4/5/1+ but the inclusion of all of Dartmoor National Park Authority within the new '4' authority. The draft covering letter to the Minister is included as Appendix 5 to this report.
- 1.7. The deadline for submission is 28 November 2025. Each Council can only support one option.

## **2. THE FULL PROPOSAL**

- 2.1. The invitation to submit proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon set out 6 criteria that form the basis for any submission. The Case for Change document is structured to respond to the criteria (Section 4 of the document, pages 83-236).
- 2.2. Over the course of the summer considerable time and effort has been invested in to developing this model into a complete full proposal. This has included securing input from over fifty officers drawn across the District and Borough Councils in Devon and including support from Torbay Council.

- 2.3. Specialist support has been commissioned in relation to finance matters (Pixel) and to develop the business case (KPMG). A key strength of this process has been the scope for both peer support, such as input from Torbay in relation to adult and social care, and challenge to ensure that the case has been developed in the most robust way possible.
- 2.4. Alongside the collaboration between the Councils there has been extensive consultation and engagement with external stakeholders.
- 2.5. In Teignbridge we held 11 drop-in sessions, had an online survey and worked with Teignbridge Community and Voluntary Services to engage with local representative groups. In total 206 people attended the events, and the survey received 1,753 responses. A detailed summary is included as Appendix 6 to this report, which provides strong feedback on the issues that matter most to those who live and work in Teignbridge.
- 2.6. The combined engagement campaign by the District and Borough Councils received nearly 6,000 responses across Devon from residents, businesses, and community groups, helping to directly shape the final proposals. A series of briefings and engagement events have also been undertaken with statutory organisations, Members of Parliament, local businesses and parish and town councils.

### **3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

- 3.1. Devon is a large county covering over 6,000 sq. km and with a population more than 1.2m people. Invariably there are a number of potential options as to how local government can be configured in relation to the government's criteria, each with their own advantages and disadvantages.
- 3.2. The full options appraisal is summarised in pages 56-59 of the Case for Change, with the full appraisal in Appendix 3 of that document (pages 280-293).
- 3.3. In total eight options have been considered including combinations of two, three and four unitaries across Devon. Whilst these were based on the building blocks of existing local government boundaries in the first instance, options that include boundary changes have also been considered and tested to consider proposals being promoted by other Councils in Devon.
- 3.4. Each option was tested against the government's six criteria. The methodology employed by KPMG ensured that the assessment was mapped across to identifiable metrics and data sources to ensure transparency and auditability. This includes considering relative population sizes both today and projected forward to 2040 to ensure that a lasting equilibrium is struck.
- 3.5. Alongside both the quantitative and qualitative assessment, three strategic filters were also applied: Avoiding the grouping of Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay into a single unitary; Limiting boundary changes to Plymouth's

immediate neighbouring parishes; and Protecting National Park areas. This helped to ensure alignment with Devon's unique geography and governance landscape.

- 3.6. Whilst the 4/5/1 proposal performs well against the six criteria, the option that achieves the most balanced outcome includes an extension to the existing Plymouth City area to incorporate parts of the adjacent parishes that are the focus for development as part of the Joint Local Plan performs even better. This is known as the Plymouth Policy Area.
- 3.7. Subsequently it is a specific recommendation of this report that this option, known as 4/5/1 'plus', is supported.

#### **4. FINANCIAL CASE**

- 4.1. The second of the Secretary of State's criteria is that '*Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks*'.
- 4.2. Whilst the government's stated position is that each of the six assessment criteria carry equal weight, there is no doubt, given the challenges facing local government, that the financial case will be a vital component of the proposal and will be very influential in terms of informing the government's preferred choice of option. This has certainly been the case in the recent decision regarding Surrey which is in the vanguard of current LGR proposals.
- 4.3. The appraisal against this criterion is set out in pages 113-129 of the Case for Change, with a more detailed analysis is set out in Section 5 of the document, pages 237-252. The financial case was developed with assistance from national experts Pixel and KPMG, and input from the Section 151 Officers of each authority.
- 4.4. The conclusion of the report provides assurance that the 4/5/1 model delivers the efficiencies, increases capacity and has the necessary scale and financial resilience to withstand shocks. It does this by providing supporting data and undertaking a range of analysis on tax base, borrowing, reserves and population size.
- 4.5. The headlines are that implementation costs are expected to be repaid in 2.75 years in the base case and 2.93 years for the stretch case (the difference being due to higher upfront costs for the latter) and that savings over 10 years will be between £500m and £800m for base and the stretch case respectively. The assumed savings figure equates to a highly prudent 3.5% of net revenue budgets.

#### **5. GOVERNANCE, CLLR NUMBERS AND LOCAL REPRESENTATION**

- 5.1. Ensuring effective representation in the new unitaries has been a key concern in developing the case. The guidance from the Local Government

Boundary Commission is that each authority should have representation that matches its unique characteristics.

5.2. The consultation responses received (Appendix 6) show a strong desire from residents, businesses, community groups and organisations for meaningful local representation. There is a fear that a large organisation will mean less focus on the issues that matter most to communities.

5.3. Whilst no fixed ratios are put forward, proposals showing more than 100 or fewer than 30 councillors to an authority would require 'an extremely strong and compelling case'.

5.4. Analysis has been undertaken to consider different ratios that stay within these ratios. This is presented in the table below:

Councils		Current					Wards - Electorate/member				
		Members	Total wards	Multi wards	Population	Electorate	3000	3500	4000	4500	5000
5	East Devon	60	30	18	150,800	126,436	42	36	32	28	25
	Mid Devon	42	22	15	82,800	65,778	22	19	16	15	13
	North Devon	42	25	12	98,600	79,672	27	23	20	18	16
	Torridge	36	16	15	68,100	54,073	18	15	14	12	11
	Exeter	39	13	13	130,800	91,121	30	26	23	20	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>531,100</b>	<b>417,080</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>83</b>
4	South Hams	31	20	9	90,842	71,693	24	20	18	16	14
	Teignbridge	47	24	18	137,074	106,864	35	31	27	24	21
	Torbay	36	16	15	139,385	104,753	35	30	26	23	21
	West Devon	31	18	11	58,754	44,363	15	13	11	10	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>426,055</b>	<b>327,673</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>364</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>957,155</b>	<b>744,753</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>148</b>

5.5. For the proposed authority that includes the Teignbridge area the 4,500:1 ratio gives a total number of councillors of 73 of which 24 would be elected from the Teignbridge area. If the 4/5/1 option is selected, the proposed councillor numbers could form the basis for elections to the shadow authority in May 2027 and for the first term of the new authority.

5.6. More information and analysis on community engagement and representation is included in pages 225-235 of the Case for Change.

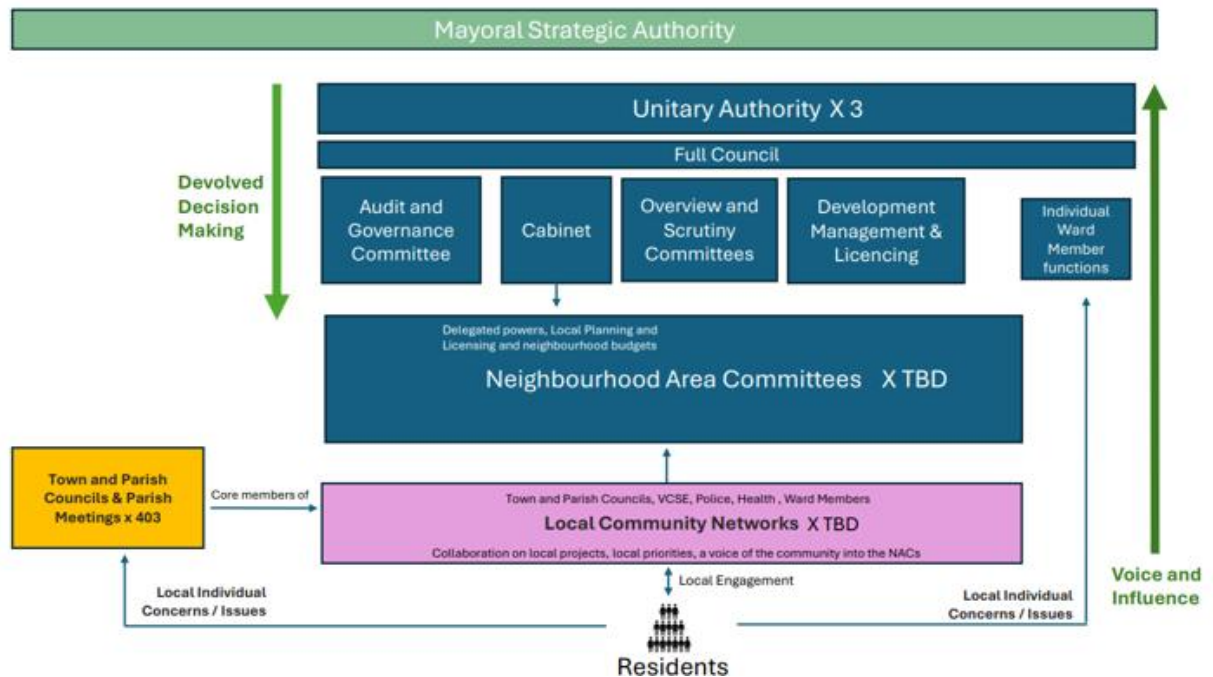
5.7. Alongside councillor numbers, to maintain effective governance arrangements and enhance democratic participation within this elevated context, there is a need to consider 'hyper-local' arrangements. In the full proposal these are comprised of the following:

- Neighbourhood Area Committees – these include statutory function of the authority such as planning and licensing and which are organised on sub-geographies, such as existing District boundaries to provide

continuity. These can then be shaped by how local area would want it to work for them.

- Local Community Networks - these can focus on areas such as community governance, developing community action plans and local service delivery and spending issues.

5.8. The full proposal does not put forward a template approach that would apply to all areas. There is a commitment to co-create future arrangements, working with local parish and town councils and communities to respond effectively to local circumstances. This is set out in the diagram below.



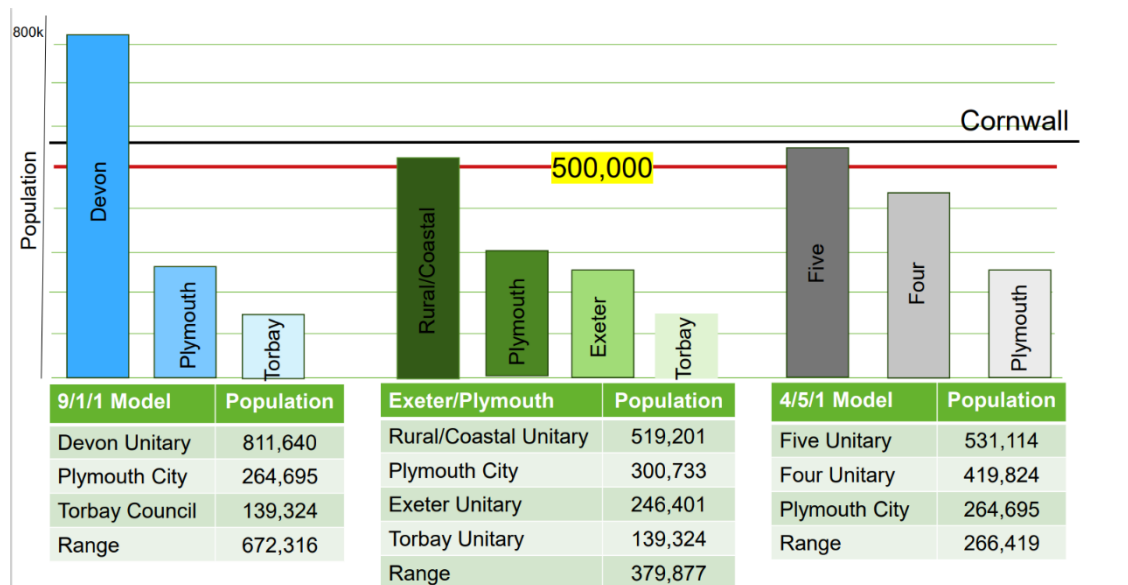
5.9. The intent of these proposals is to give local people a stronger voice in the decisions that affect them, empowering them to shape services that truly reflect their aspirations and priorities.

## 6. DEVOLUTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAYORAL STRATEGIC AUTHORITY

6.1. All Devon authorities wrote to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution in July expressing a joint interest in future devolution opportunities. The letter proposed the creation of a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). The proposed MSA would encompass a population of more than 1.2 million people and a diverse economy worth over £25 billion annually.

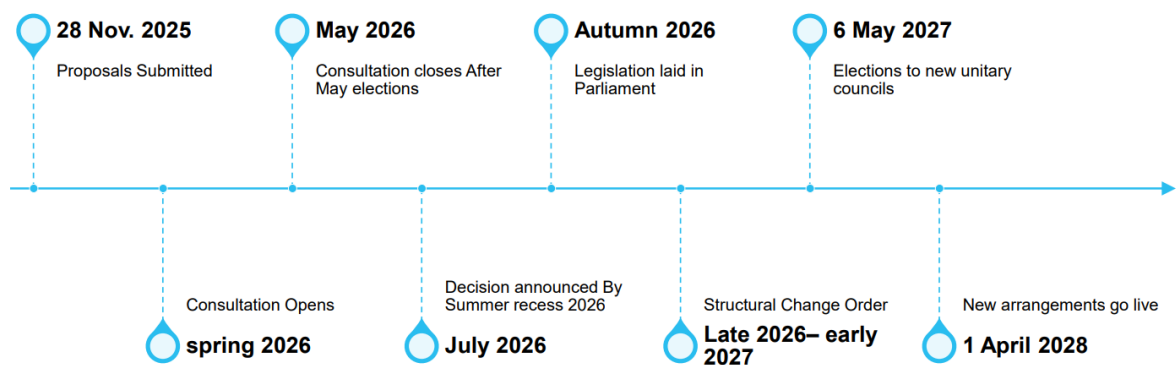
6.2. The Leaders stated their commitment to working at pace including a desire to discuss the proposals further at Ministerial level. It is also highlighted that whilst Cornwall Council has declined to participate at this time, the door would be left open for them to join in the future.

6.3. The full proposal for the 4/5/1 model has been mindful of the need to successfully facilitate future devolution. According to the 2021 census the population of Cornwall was just over 570,000 people. The two new principal authorities would be broadly aligned with this figure, and the chart below shows the balance relative to the three main options that are expected to be submitted.



## 7. NEXT STEPS

7.1. The overall timeline is set out below:



7.2. Following the submission of full proposals the process will be led by MHCLG. The focus will change to implementation, requiring all Councils to work together to progress this work, ideally through a single Programme Management Office. This will help to lay the foundations for successful reorganisation irrespective of which option is chosen.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The English Devolution White Paper sets out an expectation that all two-tier areas such as Devon will develop proposals for reorganisation. In his letter

dated 5 February 2025, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution outlined that the Secretary of state for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), invited any principal authority in the area of the County of Devon, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

- 8.2. This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:
- 1) Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
  - 2)
  - 3) Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
  - 4) Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
  - 5) Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.
- 8.3. Whilst is not mandatory to respond, given the publication of the White Paper, the proceedings of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill in Parliament and the Government's clear direction to proceed with Local Government Reorganisation, the Council has agreed to respond to the invitation.
- 8.4. If the Council does not respond and submit a proposal, the Secretary of State can still make proposals of their own without the Council's involvement.
- 8.5. Under the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) ("the 2000 Act"), any function of the local authority which is not specified in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) ("the Functions Regulations") is to be the responsibility of an Executive of the authority under Executive arrangements.
- 8.6. Any function which is the responsibility of the Executive (Leader and Executive) is to be regarded as exercisable by the Executive on behalf of the authority and may be discharged only in accordance with Executive arrangements provided for within the 2000 Act.
- 8.7. **Voting Dispensations**
- 8.8. Teignbridge District Council has 47 Members. At the time of this Committee meeting, 5 Members were also Members of Devon County Council and one Member who is a Member of Parliament.

- 8.9. Such dual-hatted members, and on the basis they would declare an interest by virtue of being dual hatters, would have to not take part in any discussion or vote on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution or apply to the Monitoring Officer for dispensations ahead of each and every meeting over the coming years to enable them to take part in the discussions and debate.
- 8.10. At the meeting of the Governance Committee on 2 October 2025 it was agreed to grant dispensation to Members of the Council to enable them to take part in matters relating to Devolution and/or Local Government Reorganisation.
- 8.11. The dispensation also applies to any Members who are employed by or are a spouse/partner of an employee of another District or County Council in Devon.
- 8.12. The link to the report for this committee is included as Background Paper 3 to this report.

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1. Local Government Reorganisation represents a seminal opportunity to reimagine and improve future public service delivery in Devon. The chosen option is likely to endure for many decades. Considerable time and effort have been invested in developing the full proposal for the 4/5/1 model in conjunction with the other District and Borough Councils in Devon. This is considered to represent a credible and persuasive option that responds to all six of the government's criteria for unitary authorities. It is focused on achieving tangible improvements to service delivery and provides the necessary strategic coherence, financial sustainability, and local accountability to unlock Devon's full potential.
- 9.2. In summary it is considered to represent the best option for local government reorganisation in Devon for the following reasons:
- Enables every area of Devon to thrive and to retain local identities
  - Puts communities at the heart of decision-making, ensuring services are designed and delivered in the most appropriate way
  - Large enough to be sustainable, small enough to be responsive to community needs.
  - Aligns governance with functional economic areas and local strengths
  - Respects natural boundaries like Dartmoor National Park, National Landscapes and World Heritage sites
  - Unlocks the ability for greater devolution of powers from government
- 9.3. Whichever option is progressed, it will be important for the local government family in Devon to pull together to ensure the best possible outcomes for Devon residents and businesses with the focus needing to quickly shift to preparatory work to support successful implementation. Further reports will come to Executive and Full Council as key milestones are reached.



## APPENDIX 1 – SECRETARY OF STATE’S FORMAL INVITATION LETTER

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

#### INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Devon, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **28 November 2025**.
2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State..
3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F Kirwan".

**F KIRWAN**

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025