

Proposal

- Southern Devon Authority: South Hams, Teignbridge, West Devon and Torbay
- Exeter and Northern Devon Authority: East, Mid, North Devon, Torridge and Exeter.

Context

- Recognise the government's ambition to streamline local governance and drive regional economic growth.
- County of Devon is home to world leading research institutions and innovative companies. Its cultural scene is equally diverse...thriving arts community, numerous festivals, and a rich culinary tradition.
- Population of Devon...grow faster than the national average...outstanding natural beauty, charming villages and rich agricultural heritage.
- Significant potential for clean growth....capitalise on its maritime heritage...clean maritime technologies....offshore renewable energy...in the Celtic sea....substantial opportunities for job creation and economic stimulation...renewable energy, sustainable agriculture...circular economy...key player in the UK's transition to a low-carbon future.
- Scope and scale...significant housing growth...identified and strategic sites...strategic collaboration...allow each of the new authorities to meet their own growth ambitions and deliver truly sustainable, balanced growth.
- Housing growth...complement our economic ambition for the whole of Devon...address a number of our local housing challenges....unlocking significant economic activity.
- History of delivering high-quality, locally tailored services to our diverse communities...unique needs of our residents....fostered strong partnerships...deep-rooted connection to our communities is fundamental to our approach and a wider sense of place.
- Significant challenges facing public service delivery in Devon...adult and social care, special educational needs (SEND)...funding pressures confronting the NHS....below average levels of productivity, above average house prices and variable levels of connectivity...any reorganisation must address these critical issues.
- To maintain local distinctiveness, enhance service delivery and ensure long-term financial sustainability...well-planned, bottom-up approach to further integrate services.

Vision

Local Distinctiveness

- Connected, resilient and responsive system that prioritises the well being of all our residents.
- Local distinctiveness...future arrangements maintain a strong sense of place... ability to meet the unique needs of individual communities...harness distinctive opportunities
- Strengthening the role of parish and town councils

Digital

- Leveraging technology to enhance accessibility and efficiency
- Bridging the digital divide...all residents, particularly those in rural areas, digital services regardless of location, age or wider socioeconomic factors

Integrated Care

- Closer collaboration between health, social care, and other public services
- Preventative measures and early intervention to improve long-term health and well-being

Community Empowerment

- Strengthening local partnerships and empowering communities
- Promoting citizen engagement and feedback...responsive to local needs.

Sustainability

- Integrating environmental sustainability
- Transition to a low-carbon economy...leader for clean growth.

Resilience

- Strong, adaptable services...respond effectively to future challenges, including climate change and economic uncertainty
- Vulnerable individuals are given the support they need
- People-centred approach, where public services are not just delivered but co-created with the communities they serve.

Case for Change

- More agile, efficient, and citizen-centric approach.
- Demographic shifts...aging population and increasing rural isolation...tailored services that address complex social care needs...equitable access, regardless of location.
- Rapid decarbonisation and adaptation, sustainable development, integrating environmental considerations into all service areas.
- Innovative solutions to deliver more with less, leveraging technology and community partnerships to enhance efficiency and reduce costs.
- More accessible, responsive and digitally enabled services.
- Build community resilience...more integrated, preventative, and locally empowered approach to public service delivery.
- Effective, sustainable and responsive to the evolving needs..

Principles

- Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals
- New councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
- Built from an understanding of people and place
- Reflect established functional relationships and markets.....as well as the cultural and historic context.
- Important influence of existing strategic road and rail networks and associated connectivity
- Important role of local service centres particularly in serving wider rural areas
- Harness the role of the main urban centres as key economic drivers
- Financial resilience and sustainability...broad parity between different constituent parts of any options in terms of... key baseline metrics...a similar share of social care and other 'needs' ensuring that no area is left behind.

Why the Proposal

- The geography, population distribution, strategic infrastructure and existing local authority boundaries across Devon lend itself to a natural division into two areas whilst retaining Plymouth City Council unitary on its existing footprint.
- Enhancing local accessibility and accountability
- Reflecting existing community structures and resident lifestyles
- Significant cost savings
- Decentralising key upper tier service delivery, bringing them closer to communities.
- Enabling the establishment of a Mayor.
- Balance between strategic planning and operational execution
- Promoting wider collaboration by aligning with existing local public service boundaries.

Local Distinctiveness

- Opportunities for shared service delivery across the two authorities and a significant role for parish and town councils.
- Natural synergies, with Dartmoor National Park to the north and coastal communities to the south...economy is diverse...strengths in marine, tourism, agriculture, and environmental digital innovation....potential for clean growth technologies...established companies.

Southern Devon Authority

- Four Councils have a history of collaboration....new authority....further integrate services, delivering savings and efficiencies...shared service models....will be expanded...sustainable and cost effective.
- Strategic road and rail networks, supporting both local and regional economies...already plans to align concessionary bus travel..
- Torbay's integrated health and social care model...successful in reducing staff shortages and speeding up hospital discharges...appropriate support....from the Government to retain integration in Torbay and, ideally, expand the integration.
- South Devon College offers a range of courses....marine, construction, and green technology....support economic growth
- Platform to deliver stronger-place based interventions with NHS and health system partners...improved person-centred care...stronger place-based interventions.
- Significant potential for clean growth...initiatives in renewable energy and environmental innovation...clean energy superpower
- Preserving the unique identities of the cities of Plymouth and Exeter, our towns and villages in Southern Devon...drive sustainable growth and improve the quality of life..

Responses to Criteria

- Largely rural county, with the potential for economic and housing growth needs targeted support to unlock its potential...most effectively provided by authorities with a firm understanding of place and local connection to its businesses and communities.
- Delivery of National Park Authority functions will need to be considered.
- 230 to 250 councillors...improve the democratic representation by over 50%
- Both proposed authorities include large rural areas...characterised by dispersed populations...may lead to a further reduction in the number of electors per councillor...a strengthened role for parish and town councils in maintaining local democracy...addressing the specific needs of their communities.
- Local representation, accountability and an effective service delivery platform...

- The two proposed unitary authorities align to the same geography and can therefore work seamlessly to support the Combined County Authority.
- Engaging extensively with our residents, partners and stakeholders.
- Public consultation and engagement
- Devon system of local government has a long history of working together and across administrative borders...working together proactively and collaboratively.
- Balanced approach...best fit with the objectives of the Devolution White Paper whilst retaining a place-based and locally distinctive approach.