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Dear Member

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - WEDNESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2025

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Wednesday, 5 November 2025 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item	Page
7.	Local Government Reorganisation in Devon To consider the report of the task-and-finish group alongside the feedback received during the Council's engagement with residents and stakeholders on the potential options for local government reorganisation in Devon and make recommendations to the Cabinet.	(Pages 3 - 100)

Yours sincerely

Governance Support
Clerk

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Local Government Reorganisation in Devon – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report to Cabinet on 18 November 2025

Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board met on 9 July 2025 to consider a report on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon and established a Task and Finish Group to explore the options in detail and then present their recommendations to the Cabinet via the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 5 November 2025.
2. Councillors Brook, Bryant, Cowell, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Harvey, Johns, Law, Spacagna, Tolchard served on the Local Government Reorganisation Task and Finish Group which was Chaired by Councillor Long.
3. The Task and Finish Group met on 8 August 2025 to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the options under consideration and a report summarising their discussions was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 13 August 2025 and forwarded to the Council's Project Team to help to inform the Council's Options Appraisal.
4. The background papers, and the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board can be found at [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Board on Wednesday, 9 July 2025, 5.30 pm](#) and [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Board on Wednesday, 13 August 2025, 5.30 pm](#).
5. The Task and Finish Group met again on 29 September 2025 to take an appraisal of each option for LGR the Council was considering for the whole of Devon and score it against the criteria the Government had set for the full proposals that were due to be submitted on 28 November. On 27 October 2025 the Group considered the draft of Part 1 of the Council's proposal for local government reorganisation Devon and discussed in detail the summary scores for the four options and the data which informed the scoring. The draft of Part 1 of the proposal can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.
6. The Panel reflected and debated the information provided to them throughout the three workshop sessions, both verbal and written, taking into account the data provided and the viability of each option being considered. They also had regard to the feedback from the consultation and engagement which demonstrated a clear desire for Torbay Council to remain as a Unitary Council

on its existing boundaries as highlighted in the draft Proposal. The Panel noted the risk that a reconfiguration resulting on one or two unitary authorities for Devon would lose local connection and accountability, and they did not feel these options would meet the objectives set by the Government on Local Government Reorganisation.

7. The Panel formed the following recommendations to the Cabinet which were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 5 November 2025. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared [.....] (to be updated after the Board).

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That the Cabinet be informed:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommend the Cabinet/Council to support Option 3.1 (namely a four unitary council option comprising Torbay Council (on its existing boundaries), an expanded Plymouth City Council and two new unitary councils covering Greater Exeter and Devon respectively).

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Draft of Part 1 of Torbay Council's proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon
- Appendix 2 Evaluation Report: Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Torbay Council's Public and Stakeholder Engagement (July – October 2025)

DRAFT Focused on place. Growing with purpose. Together for Devon.

Torbay Council's proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (November 2025)

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Executive summary.....	2
Introduction	3
Structure of our proposal	3
Development of our proposal	3
Part 1: The future of local government in Devon.....	6
Devon – the people and the place	7
Our ambitions	7
Devon's population	8
Devon as a place to live, learn and work	10
Innovative solutions to meet the challenges	10
Options Appraisal.....	12
The options.....	13
Discounted option.....	16
Our approach	16
Options summary scores.....	19
Full appraisal of the options.....	20
Options appraisal conclusion.....	49
Base Proposal.....	50
Compliance statement.....	50
Base Proposal configuration.....	50
Assessment against the Government's criteria	50
Our Modified Proposal – Four unitary solution	52
Rationale for our four unitary model	53
Government criteria at a glance: our four unitary model.....	54
Request for ministerial modification to Base Proposal	56
Advantages of the Modified Proposal	56

Foreword

Executive summary

Introduction

Our proposal sets out a new vision for a single tier of local government in Devon – with unitary councils across Devon that are focused on their place and growing with purpose to build a better Devon for everyone.

It builds on what works well today and looks forward to what will be needed in the future to best protect, support and enhance all our communities, our built and our natural environments.

Together with the shared aspiration for a new Mayoral Strategic Authority for Devon, this proposal lays the foundations for giving the people of Devon much greater control over the outcomes that matter to them most.

Structure of our proposal

Our proposal is divided into two parts:

Part 1 describes the future of local government in Devon; why we need to reorganise local government, the challenges and opportunities our county faces and what we believe to be the optimal unitary model for Devon's future.

This includes a detailed options appraisal that sets out the strengths, weaknesses and financial feasibility of each viable unitary model against the Government's criteria for local government reorganisation; an overview of our base and modified proposals in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007; and establishes why we are proposing a four unitary solution for Devon.

Part 2 sets out our case for change; providing an in-depth assessment of the preferred option against each of the Government's six criteria within their invitation letter.

Development of our proposal

Our proposal has been developed through joint working, meaningful dialogue and insight building. Throughout its development we have prioritised open collaboration and evidence; and ensured our direction is informed by the perspectives of local people and partners.

Open collaboration and evidence

Local government reorganisation is already a force for change. It has brought all of Devon's authorities into closer communication, creating brilliant opportunities for ongoing cooperation and paving the way for further shared services and joint commissioning. Torbay Council has been an active and solution focused partner in discussions with Plymouth City Council as a fellow existing unitary authority as well as with the County Council and the Districts and Boroughs, including Exeter City Council.

We led on putting in place an information sharing agreement between Devon's 11 councils and, jointly with Plymouth City Council, on establishing a shared data repository housed at Plymouth City Council. Data collected from across Torbay Council's directorates has been made openly available to all.

We researched best practice around local government reorganisation (LGR) by studying proposals developed in other areas in previous rounds of LGR as well as the recent proposals that have been prepared in the Devolution Priority Programme areas.

We developed a methodology for our options appraisal that combines qualitative and quantitative assessment, and rigorously tested our insights through repeated evaluation and scoring exercises with councillors and senior officers.

We sought the right external support and contributed to work commissioned by others. We commissioned PeopleToo to provide a check-and-challenge on our key assumptions around children's and adult's services. Devon's Section 151 Officers have worked closely together and alongside Pixel Financial Management to gather and develop financial insights. We benefited from the expertise of Newton Consulting, KPMG and Newtrality by fully participating in workshops, meetings and output development enabled by the County Council, the District and Boroughs and Exeter and Plymouth City Councils.

From the outset we have placed a premium on being a sensible broker and mature partner, sharing resources, seeking agreement and leading with openness and respect.

Led by the views of our communities and partners

Collaboration has also been at the heart of our engagement with our communities and stakeholders. Torbay Council has worked with its district and borough colleagues to co-ordinate engagement activity, share feedback and best practice, and deliver consistent messaging. Surveys, engagement events and briefings have taken place across Devon and Torbay.

Alongside that, Plymouth City Council undertook its "Big Community Consultation" on its proposals for local government reorganisation. This included facilitated consultation events across Plymouth and South Hams as well as two surveys.

Further, Exeter City Council hosted an online survey as well as an enhanced representative survey for the residents in the rural and coastal wards within their proposed area (conducted by external market researchers).

The existing unitary councils and the district and borough councils all ran wide-ranging information sharing and awareness raising campaigns, to encourage as broad a response as possible to the engagement.

With ten out of the eleven councils across Devon sharing the broad basis of an engagement questionnaire, we have based our proposal on what our communities have told us matters most about their places and local government.

Key themes from the surveys include:

- Residents expressed a **strong emotional and cultural connection to their local areas**, emphasising the importance of preserving distinct community identities.
- There was widespread concern that larger, centralised councils would be **disconnected from local needs and diminish local representation**.
- Respondents overwhelmingly supported governance models that **enable decisions to be made locally, with councillors and services accessible within their communities**.
- There was a desire to maintain the **rural and coastal character of towns and villages**, with many expressing fears that being absorbed into larger authorities would lead to a loss of identity and neglect of local priorities.

Specifically, from Torbay Council's engagement survey, there is support for Torbay Council remaining as a continuing unitary authority with 64% of respondents to an engagement survey¹ in favour of this option.

People have confidence in Torbay Council. Among those who feel Torbay should remain as a continuing unitary authority on its current boundaries, the Council is seen as:

- Functioning well
- Financially stable
- Responsive
- Delivering regeneration to the area

People felt that Torbay Council was already delivering well against the Government's LGR criteria.

Throughout the development of our proposal, we have actively engaged with our partners across Devon. We have sought to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the options under consideration, the challenges and outcomes our partners would wish to see, and how we can better align all of our strategic priorities to deliver together for our communities.

Full details of how we have worked together to understand and meet local needs (Government's Criteria 4) is set out in our case for change.

¹ Our engagement survey ran from 1 July to 2 September 2025 and received 1430 responses. The full engagement report is available at Appendix X

Part 1: The future of local government in Devon

In this section we explain the challenges and opportunities faced by Devon and describe the strengths, weaknesses and financial feasibility of the options for local government reorganisation which we have considered.

We then set out the outline case for our proposed four unitary solution for the future of local government in Devon.

Devon – the people and the place

Our ambitions

The County of Devon is a unique place to live and work – where people feel a sense of connection to their environment and their communities.

As a large geographic area, Devon is made up of dispersed populations with three major urban areas – the two cities of Plymouth and Exeter, and the conurbation of Torbay (the second largest south-west of Bristol).

Two National Parks and two stunning coastlines set the tone for our environment and, as a result, we're a magnet for tourists. We have good schools across the County and fantastic universities and further education colleges.

Our outstanding environment has shaped the development of our business base with our blue and green infrastructure significantly contributing to the visitor economy. It has also created substantial opportunities in industries such as fishing and agriculture, maritime, defence, and energy. The area is typified by a sense of enterprise, innovation and ambition – with sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering, electronics and photonics, and health and pharmaceutical manufacture having the potential for significant growth.

Across Devon, however, there are major challenges such as an ageing population placing huge pressure on public services, significant pockets of deprivation, skills gaps, low wages, and the migration of young people out of the area, demonstrating a need to create more opportunities for them to stay and thrive.

Collectively, the ambitions which we all have for Devon to grow with purpose while sustaining our unique places are summarised as:

1. Safe, Healthy, and Thriving Communities

We want all residents, including children and young people, to feel and be safe, live well, and thrive in happy, healthy, and resilient communities.

2. Quality Homes for All

We want to increase the availability of good quality, affordable, and permanent housing that meets local needs, including for vulnerable and care-experienced individuals.

3. Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth

We want to create the conditions for a strong, sustainable economy that supports diverse industries, attracts investment, and offers good employment and learning opportunities for all.

4. A Connected and Prosperous Region

We want infrastructure and connectivity that ensures our residents, businesses and visitors can reliably access learning, work and leisure opportunities.

5. Environmental Stewardship

We want to protect and enhance our natural environment, whilst responding to the climate emergency and working towards a net zero carbon future.

6. Fairness, Opportunity, and Wellbeing

We want to tackle poverty and inequality and support health and wellbeing across all our communities.

As existing unitary authorities, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council have both demonstrated how services, such as housing, community safety and leisure, can work much more closely with children's services and adult social care to provide proactive early intervention delivering better outcomes for local people. The subsequent reduction in long-term demand on services means that services are more effective, efficient and sustainable.

Unitary local government across the whole of Devon will mean that the rest of the population can benefit from these advantages. Reorganisation is an opportunity to reshape services across Devon so that we can all deliver our shared ambitions for our communities.

Devon's population

Situated on the south west peninsula of England, Devon covers an area of 6,709 km² or 2,591 square miles. The 2024 population is 1,254,506 people with 530,181 households (2021 Census). Key facts about Devon's population are shown in Table 1.

Largest local authority by population	Plymouth: 272,067
Smallest local authority by population	West Devon: 58,923
Devon's population density against the South West and England	Devon: 187 residents per km ² South West: 247 residents per km ² England: 449 residents per km ²
Current population (2024)	1,254,506
Projected population by 2043	1,397,029
Largest populations by age	Aged 55 to 59: 89,920 Aged 60 to 64: 88,995 Aged 50 to 54: 79,736
Birth rate decline	22% decline between 2015 (11,635) and 2024 (9,099).
Life expectancy at birth (data for the period 2021-2023)	Male: 80.0 Female: 84.0
Highest v lowest life expectancy by district (data for the period 2021-23)	Male Lowest: Torbay – 78.3 years Highest: South Hams – 82.1 years Female Lowest: Plymouth – 82.4 years

Leading causes of mortality for under 75s (data for the period 2019 – 2023)

Highest: South Hams – 85.9 years

Cancer: 39%

Cardiovascular disease: 22%

Respiratory disease: 8%

Table 1: Key Facts about Devon (Sources: ONS Mid-year population estimates and subnational population projections, ONS Geoportal Statistics, NOMIS, OHID Fingertips, Primary Care Mortality Database)

Census predictions from 2022 estimate that Devon's population will grow to 1,397,029 by 2043, an 11% increase from 2024 population figures. These predictions suggest the older population will increase substantially, particularly in relation to those aged 80 years and over whose numbers are projected to increase by 80%. Conversely, the number of those aged under 20 are projected to fall by 9%.

Migration into Devon from other areas of the UK also remains higher than migration out. It contributed approximately 25,000 people to population growth over the last 3 years. A further factor in growth will be a requirement for Devon to increase new homebuilding under National Planning Policy Framework reforms. In 2024 under the previous methodology Devon was targeted to deliver 6001 new homes per year. In December 2024, under the revised standard method, targets rose to 7950 new dwellings and are expected to continue to trend upwards under the model of twice yearly revisions.

In recent years, Devon's birth rate has declined by 22% from 11,635 births in 2015 to 9,099 in 2024. This means the proportion of people living in Devon in older age groups will rise, with increased likelihood of impacts on health and care services due to increased prevalence of long-term health conditions.

Within Devon's population, people aged 55 to 59 and 60 to 64 years old are the two largest five-year cohorts by age. The population profile is significantly different to England with higher proportions in all age groups from 55 to 59 years and older, a much smaller proportion of 25 to 49 year-olds and those aged 14 years and younger. Nearly one in four residents are aged 65 and over, with the highest proportion of older people living in East Devon and the least in Exeter.

There is very high demand for children's services in Plymouth and Torbay. In 2024, there were 121 children looked after (CLA) per 10,000 children in Torbay and 99 CLA per 10,000 in Plymouth. Demand in the Devon County Council area is lower (59 CLA per 10,000 children) but still towards the upper end of the England average (70 CLA per 10,000). Similarly, across all three upper tier authorities there is high demand for services to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

Around 4.2% of people in Devon are from a minority ethnic group that is not white. 1.6% of the population reported their ethnicity as Asian. Around 1.5% of the population reported as mixed ethnicity and 0.5% reported their ethnicity as Black, 0.6% reported their ethnic group as 'Other'. There is also a lower rate of Gypsy or Irish Travellers at 0.8 per 1,000 residents in Devon compared to England.

Historically, there has been a trend of rising life expectancy at birth for males and females across Devon, mirroring the rest of the country. For example, children born between 2021 and 2023 are expected to live longer than children born between 2001 and 2003. However, data collected over the last decade shows life expectancy has been broadly static during this period across Devon, the South West and England.

Devon as a place to live, learn and work

Devon, including Plymouth and Torbay, benefits from a broad and varied economic geography. Exeter is home to a knowledge-led and high-value economy; the towns of Torbay combine high-value electronics technologies with traditional strengths across the visitor economy and healthcare; and Plymouth's marine economy is central to its economic identity.

The area brings together a range of nationally significant businesses and assets from the Met Office in Exeter to supporting the UK's Continuous at Sea Deterrent at Devonport in Plymouth. As home to around 30% of the UK's dairy industry and England's largest fishing port by value of catch in Brixham, the County is famous as an agricultural and food production hub and important for food security for the nation.

We benefit from two world class universities and four nationally significant further education colleges which provide research and training excellence. The area is famous for its broader rural and coastal geography, with much of our population living within the stunning Devon landscape which incorporates the two national parks of Dartmoor and Exmoor, three UNESCO designations and five National Landscapes.

With a GVA of over £33 billion per-annum (2023), Devon offers enormous potential. It has over 40,000 businesses providing around 500,000 jobs. It is a coherent economic area and has significant sectors with potential for growth, including advanced manufacturing and engineering, environmental technologies, data and clean industries; digital business, electronic and photonics activity; health and pharmaceutical manufacture and wider defence industries, as well as traditional strengths in areas such as tourism and agritech and food production.

But Devon faces challenges which impact on productivity levels as well as the ability for all our residents to have a good quality of life. Rural, urban and the coastal areas of Devon suffer from nationally significant levels of poverty, with parts of Torridge and Northern Devon amongst the bottom 5% worst affected areas of England, and West Devon and Torbay having among the lowest workplace-based wages of any authority in the country.

Around 40% of all young people leave the area due to a lack of available housing or to pursue education or employment opportunities. For young people remaining in the area our ambition for inclusive and sustainable economic growth addresses significant challenges with skills and educational performance. There are pockets of nationally significant educational need and some of the lowest Level 4 achievement rates in the country across its urban, rural and coastal areas.

Innovative solutions to meet the challenges

Continuous improvement is at the heart of local government with innovative solutions required to achieve the ambition we have for our communities.

As we have appraised options and developed proposals, consideration has been given to the increasing demand for high-cost services, the funding of local government and the approach that councils across Devon are taking to these competing challenges.

The funding of local government remains highly uncertain and insufficient to address increasing demand for vital services. The expected review of the funding formula for local government and the re-introduction of multi-year settlements is highly awaited. Weighting the formula more towards deprivation means consideration needs to be given to ensure that less deprived areas do not mask the pockets of deep deprivation across Devon.

With early intervention and prevention at the heart of our local services, local government reorganisation will bring together services to ensure people can live well and independently within their communities. The Torbay Community Helpline, which acts as the front door to adult social care, shows how successfully co-designing localised solutions can have a positive impact of people's lives, whilst reducing the demand for statutory services.

Focusing on the localised needs of different areas and using their assets to best advantage provides solutions which provide value for money and can be scaled across the area and the region. Torbay's Hotels to Homes programme focusses on turning empty hotels into affordable housing for local key workers and those with highest housing need. Alongside creating new affordable housing, Torbay's Housing Options team are working to prevent homelessness through joined up working with children's social care, education and youth services; showing that preventative support can lead to lasting change.

Working with businesses and education settings is critical to inspiring our children and young people, as well as supporting economically inactive residents back into work. Collaborative working and cross referral is key to success. For example, through Build Torbay, the construction sector is developing engaging materials for schools to raise awareness of career opportunities, including the Minecraft challenge for primary pupils and practical solutions for disadvantaged secondary learners as well as initiatives such as Foundations for Work to support the economically inactive. The Sound Futures programme uses creative digital media, music, and radio to inspire and support young people currently not in education, employment or training, helping dozens transition into education including university, training, and employment.

Designing and delivering solutions that focus on prevention, early intervention and innovation is vital and lessons learnt in the existing unitary councils of Plymouth and Torbay will be hugely beneficial. Taken with the changes underway within the NHS this is a time of huge change for our communities. Our focus will always remain on our residents, businesses and communities having the best outcomes.

Options Appraisal

In this section we set out our options appraisal for local government reorganisation in Devon, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of five credible unitary models for Devon. The options we have considered have been developed and tested within Torbay Council and with our partners.

Our recommended option is a four unitary solution for Devon described in option 3.1 below:

- Torbay Council to remain as a continuing authority on its existing boundaries,
- Plymouth City Council to remain as a continuing authority on the expanded boundaries,
- The creation of a new Greater Exeter council, and
- The creation of a new Devon Council.

We conclude this is the best option for Devon to meet the Government's criteria.

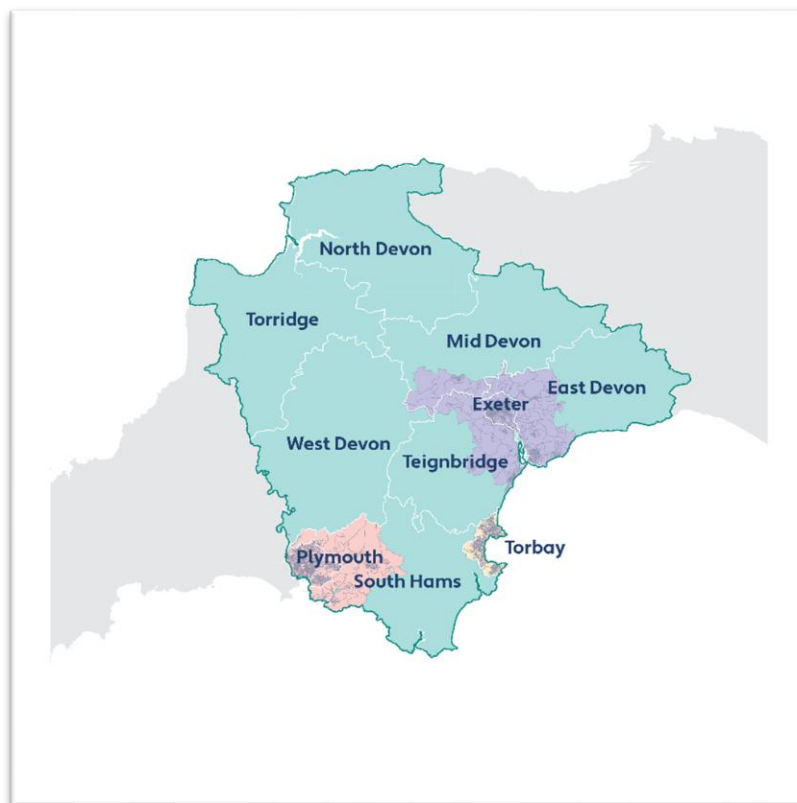


Figure 1: Option 3.1: Torbay Council's preferred four unitary model for single tier local government in Devon

The options

Based on the Government's criteria, subsequent guidance, the dynamics of collaborative working across Devon councils to meet the Government's robust outcomes, and the current makeup of local government in Devon, the following options have been appraised.

Option 1: Two unitary councils (Devon and Plymouth)



Plymouth City Council would continue as a unitary council.

The rest of Devon, including Torbay, would be served by a new Devon unitary council.

Plymouth UC population: 272,067 (22%)²
Devon UC population: 982,439 (78%)

² Unless otherwise stated, population estimates are based on ONS mid-year population estimates released 24 June 2025.

Option 2.1: Three unitary councils (the 4-5-1 Model)



Plymouth City Council would continue as a unitary council.

The areas of Torbay, South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge would be served by a new South Devon unitary council.

The areas of Exeter, Torridge, Mid Devon, North Devon and East Devon would be served as by a new North and East Devon unitary council.

Plymouth UC population: 272,067 (22%)
Southern UC population: 429,745 (34%)
Northern and Eastern UC population: 552,694 (44%)

Option 2.2: Three unitary councils (Devon, Plymouth and Torbay)



Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council would continue as unitary authorities.

The rest of Devon would be served by a new Devon unitary council.

Plymouth UC population: 272,067 (22%)
Torbay UC population: 140,126 (11%)
Devon UC population: 842,313 (67%)

Option 3: Four Unitary Councils



Option 3.1: Torbay, expanded Plymouth and new Greater Exeter and Devon authorities.

Torbay Council would continue as a unitary authority on its existing boundaries.

Plymouth City Council would continue as a unitary council on expanded boundaries.

A new Greater Exeter Council would be formed to serve an expanded Exeter area.

The rest of Devon would be served by a new Devon unitary council.

<u>Current boundaries</u>	<u>Modified case proposed boundaries</u>
Plymouth UC population: 272,067 (22%)	<i>(Based on 2022 OA population estimates)³</i>
Torbay UC population: 140,126 (11%)	Plymouth UC population: 300,727 (24%)
Exeter UC population: 138,399 (11%)	Torbay UC population: 139,409 (11%)
Devon UC population: 703,914 (56%)	Exeter UC population: 256,422 (21%)
	Devon UC population: 536,022 (43%)

Option 3.2 Expanded Torbay and Plymouth and new Exeter and Devon authorities

Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council would continue as unitary authorities on expanded boundaries.

A new Greater Exeter Council would be formed to serve an expanded Exeter area.

The rest of Devon would be served by a new Devon unitary council



<u>Current boundaries</u>	<u>Modified case proposed boundaries</u>
Plymouth UC population: 272,067 (22%)	<i>(Based on 2022 OA population figures)</i>
Torbay UC population: 140,126 (11%)	Plymouth UC population: 300,727 (24%)
Exeter UC population: 138,399 (11%)	Torbay UC population: 220,205 (18%)
Devon UC population: 703,914 (56%)	Exeter UC population: 256,422 (21%)
	Devon UC population: 445,226 (37%)

³ 2022 population estimates provide the most recent set of Output Area level data at the time this report was prepared.

Discounted option

Within our Interim Plan stage, we discounted a single unitary council option.

With a population in excess of 1.25 million people distributed across 6,709 km², the geographic County of Devon (including Plymouth and Torbay) is the fourth largest by area and 12th largest by population in England.

In considering local government reorganisation, changes to structures and service delivery arrangements need to achieve the right balance of population size and economies of scale with the practicalities of the geography, culture, society and economy of Devon. Change should also reflect and enhance the communities that have developed under present boundaries whilst optimising efficiencies in service delivery.

Nationally, experience points to the fact that Devon is far too large to enable a single authority to be efficient and effective whilst retaining a sense of place and community.

Therefore we have continued to discount this option.

Our approach

Principles

The options presented here were reached through extensive engagement and discussion with all of Devon's councils as well as in discussion with members and senior officers of Torbay Council. From the various configurations of unitary local government in Devon that have been explored, these are the options we believe are the most viable for Devon's communities.

Alongside the Government's six LGR criteria and other guidance provided over the last year, we adopted the three overarching principles to help guide our approach:

1. Any option should be in the best interests of Devon's communities, including maximising the benefits of the existing unitary authorities in Devon.
2. Options that have the potential to align with the footprints of other public sector partners would be preferred.
3. No new council should be set up to fail. Across any new unitary configuration financial resilience and sustainability, service level demand and economic prospects should have relative equity and parity from day one.

Criteria

Each option was then assessed against the Government's [criteria and sub-criteria for LGR](#) which we summarised as:

■ **Criteria 1: Establishing a single tier of local government**

Proposals should:

- create a single tier of local government across the area,
- be based on sensible geography and economic viability, and
- be supported by robust evidence and expected outcomes.

▪ **Criteria 2: Efficiency, capacity and withstanding financial shocks**

New councils should:

- improve efficiency and resilience, and
- be the right size to improve financial stability.
- Proposals should show how transition costs and existing council debt will be managed.

▪ **Criteria 3: High quality and sustainable public services**

Proposals should show how reorganisation will:

- enhance public service delivery,
- avoid fragmentation, and
- improve outcomes in key areas like social care, children's services, and public safety.

▪ **Criteria 4: Working together to understand and meet local needs**

Proposals must show how councils have meaningfully collaborated and engaged. They will reflect community identity and show how we have addressed public concerns.

▪ **Criteria 5: Supporting devolution arrangements**

Proposals should enable devolution. They should give details of how governance structures will adapt to support strategic authorities.

▪ **Criteria 6: Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment**

Building on existing arrangements, proposals will include strong community involvement and neighbourhood empowerment.

Scoring

We scored each option against each of the six criteria using the following scale:

Low – the option meets very few or none of the criterion's requirements

Medium – the option meets some of the requirements of the criterion

High – the option meets most or all of the requirements of the criterion

The Government's criteria is unweighted so no weighting was applied to our scores.

Method

Our appraisal has included a financial and qualitative assessment.

Criterion 1 and 2 have been scored through a financial appraisal based on the indicators set out below:

1. Establishing a single tier of local government

Population
Projected population growth to 2040
Council Tax band D average
Council Tax band D maximum
Council Tax base
Council Tax Base per unit of population
Council Tax income per unit of population
Business rates per unit of population

2. Efficiency, capacity and withstanding financial shocks

Balancing inequity:

Grant funding per unit of population
Non-earmarked reserves⁴
Non-earmarked reserves per unit of population
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue
Total funding/resources 26/7 per head
Estimated savings from people services (Newton model)⁵
RAG ranking of potential set up costs

Within each assessment, we have highlighted areas of particular concern or strengths with a RAG rating and then provided each option with an overall score based on assessment against the Government criteria.

Most assessments have been made by reviewing relevant figures for each potential unitary council and considering the range and imbalance between them. The transition cost assessment was based on the Torbay Council's Chief Financial Officer's assessment of estimated cost levels across the options considering any proposed changes to existing Unitary Councils and services, expansion areas and changes to existing council boundaries.

Qualitative evaluations were completed iteratively in workshops and engagement sessions we held with councillors and our Senior Leadership Team. In these sessions consideration was given to insights emerging from residents and stakeholder engagement and geographic, demographic and service level data.

⁴ Figures for Non-earmarked reserves have been taken from published documents but need checking with S151s. In particular Plymouth's figures need checking. (to be updated before submission)

⁵ The Newton model has been used to estimate potential savings relating to people services for each of the options. This utilised the interactive model commissioned and published by the County Council Network in 2025. The model considers both placement costs and staffing costs.

Options summary scores

The table below presents the summary scores of the options appraisal supporting our preferred option of a four unitary model (option 3.1) with Torbay Council continuing on its existing boundaries, the continuing authority of Plymouth City Council on expanded boundaries, and new Exeter and Devon unitary councils on revised boundaries.

In the remainder of this section we present the data and insights behind these scores.

	Two unitary councils	Three unitary councils		Four unitary councils	
Government Criteria	Option 1 Plymouth and Devon	Option 2.1 Plymouth, South Devon and North-East Devon (5-4-1 Model)	Option 2.2 Torbay, Plymouth and Devon	Option 3.1 Torbay, Greater Plymouth, Greater Exeter and Devon	Option 3.2 Greater Torbay, Greater Plymouth, Greater Exeter and Devon
1. Single tier local government	Low	Medium	Low	High	High
2. Efficiency and capacity	Low	High	Medium	High	High
3. High quality public services	Low	High	High	High	High
4. Understanding local needs	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
5. Supporting devolution	Low	High	Medium	High	High
6. Community empowerment	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

Full appraisal of the options

Option 1: Two unitary councils. Plymouth and Devon.



1. ESTABLISHING A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Devon	Plymouth	Range	Financial Assessment
Population	982,439	272,067	-	Strengths
Projected population growth to 2040	113%	104%	-	The model shows a good balance across Unitaries for some the metrics around Council Tax and Business rates with lower variances for the rates per head of population.
Council Tax band D average	2,398	2,325	-	
Council Tax band D maximum	2,471	2,325	-	
Council Tax base	368,699	76,557	-	
Council Tax Base per unit of population	2.66	3.55	0.89	Weaknesses
Council Tax income per unit of population	770	580	-190	There is imbalance across Unitaries when looking at population and tax base sizes and concerns about the overall size of the Devon unitary.
Business rates per unit of population	203	245	42	
OVERALL SCORE	Low			

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Provides more land for economic growth and housing within the new Devon Unitary Council.

The potential expansion of Plymouth City Council is based on the Plymouth Growth Area and aligns well with its distinct Travel to Work Area.

Weaknesses

Without an expansion of Plymouth City Council's boundary, the natural growth potential for Plymouth City Council would be limited.

There could be competing resource allocation priorities between the coastal, rural and urban areas of a new Devon Unitary Council.

Extreme imbalance in geographic size (Plymouth at 80 sq km and Devon at 6,627 sq km) with the new Devon Unitary Council being much larger than housing market and travel to work areas.

The very large population of a new Devon Unitary Council (approx. 1 million people) could obscure distinct needs, in particular combining Torbay's urban deprivation with the rural service frailty of the rest of Devon.

The geographic scale of a new Devon Unitary Council creates risks with a lack of connectivity across the area, and risks diluting visibility of Torbay's distinct high-demand/low-cost profile for services.

2. EFFICIENCY, CAPACITY AND WITHSTANDING FINANCIAL SHOCKS

	Devon	Plymouth	Range	Financial Assessment
Grant funding per unit of population	305	452	146	Strengths The Newton model suggests a high level of potential savings is possible. The model provides the best balance of Financing costs to net revenue budget.
Non-earmarked reserves	27,960,000	-60,138,000	-88,098,000	
Non-earmarked reserves per unit of population	28	-221	-249.50	
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue	5%	8%	3%	Weaknesses It shows the largest imbalance in reserves and funding per head, placing continuing challenges on the viability of Plymouth, without any expansion. Transition costs are expected to be reasonably high due to changes across Devon and to Torbay as an existing Unitary, but helped by no change in Plymouth.
Total funding/resources 26/7 per head	1,530.53	1,260.82	269.71	
Estimated savings from people services	£43.67m		-	
RAG ranking of potential set up costs				
OVERALL SCORE	Low			

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Could deliver economies of scale and financial efficiencies in service delivery across a large area and through a significant reduction in administrative duplication and cost.

Weaknesses

The populations of the two authorities would not be equal, with the size of the new Devon Unitary Authority well above the Government’s guiding principle of a population of 500,000 or more.

The new Devon Unitary Council may be too large and lose some of the efficiencies available from more local working.

There could be false economies, with costs within the new Devon Unitary Council likely to harmonise upwards towards Devon averages, eroding Torbay’s lower long term care costs.

Fragile local care markets in Torbay and South Devon could be obscured, with centralised commissioning frameworks likely to inflate costs and reduce responsiveness.

The creation of a new Devon Unitary Council could blur financial clarity by merging areas with very different income and deprivation profiles and financial challenges.

Theoretical financial sustainability and resilience, but experience from elsewhere, for example Somerset Council and Birmingham City Council, shows that larger local authorities are not as efficient as smaller authorities.

3. HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Strengths

Existing Devon children’s services and adult social care would not need to be disaggregated enabling a focus on improving children’s services and services for children and young people with SEND.

Opportunity to help shape the market for children’s services and adult social care in a wider geography.

Weaknesses

Increased difficulties in trying to manage and improve complex systems such as children’s services and adult social care across a large geography, with a “one-size-fits-all” approach failing to address divergent challenges.

Children’s services and adult social care within Torbay would need to be aggregated into the new Devon Unitary Council with the risk that current Good services are negatively impacted.

Whilst administratively simpler, the creation of new Devon Unitary Council risks masking Torbay’s improvements and compounding Devon’s current financial and performance-led challenges, blurring distinct profiles into averages (especially in relation to children’s services, adult social care and SEND).

The creation of a new Devon Unitary Council could weaken the strategic focus on deprivation and increase the risk of under-resourcing high-need urban populations.

Low

4. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL NEEDS

Services over a larger geography would have to be carefully and sensitively created, otherwise they would not be relatable to place, with the scale of a New Devon Council introducing complexity in terms of service delivery and coordination across a diverse and geographically expansive area.

Difficult to undertake effective co-production across a bigger geographic area, making it more difficult to have really good service design.

Extreme difference in population density (Plymouth: 3,366 people/sq km vs Greater Devon: 147 people/sq km) may lead to service delivery challenges.

The creation of a Devon Unitary Council would likely see the end of the groundbreaking Integrated Care Organisation which currently delivers joined up health and social care to the residents of Torbay, including the community support model which supports residents without the need for statutory services.

The impact of combining authorities with and without Housing Revenue Accounts into a new Devon Unitary Council would need to be considered carefully.

Strengths

New Devon Unitary Council blends urban, rural and coastal communities which could reflect the pan-Devon sense of belonging.

New Devon Unitary Council closely mirrors the footprint of many county-level public services (such as Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Devon Integrated Care Board).

Plymouth retains its strong urban identity.

Plymouth's standalone status aligns with existing arrangements in health and policing, as well as its distinct Travel to Work Area.

Weaknesses

Combining Torbay (with its existing unitary authority) with rural districts may create tensions in prioritisation.

A large unitary council would average out local need, reducing alignment between service models and community demand, and risks weaker integration with health and community safety.

A new Devon Unitary Council does not fit well with people's local sense of identity and their connection to their local town and community.

Low

5. SUPPORTING DEVOLUTION

Devon wide unitary includes multiple Travel to Work Areas, which may dilute alignment with specific commuting patterns.

There would be a loss, or dilution, of local tourism identities including the English Riviera, Jurassic Coast, North Devon's Adventure Coast and Dartmoor.

Difficult to have a strong, coherent Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector across a large geography, the VCSE being vital for supporting preventative work within communities.

Strengths

There is the potential for a two unitary option to enable a Strategic Authority across the county footprint.

Weaknesses

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority would cease to exist.

The new Devon Unitary Council would need to articulate the exceptional circumstances by which Secretary of State would use their power to designate the Council as a Foundation Strategic Authority.

If the new Devon Unitary Council is designated a Foundation Strategic Authority, it will not have access to the full range of devolved powers and funding as a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended, there would be democratic disenfranchisement for those parts of the current South Hams District Council which would no longer be covered by the devolved powers the Foundation Strategic Authority.

Alternatively, the new Devon Unitary Council and Plymouth City Council could work together to create a Strategic Authority, however there would be an unequal population size ratio between the two authorities.

The difference in size between the two unitaries could raise concern about equity of representation and strategic influence within any future Strategic Authority.

Unless Plymouth City Council wished to work with the new Devon Unitary Council to create a Combined Authority, Plymouth City Council would become a "devolution island".

Low

6. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Strengths:

Potential for greater financial capacity to invest in community engagement.

Low

Neighbourhood committees would be essential within the new Devon Unitary Council, but may lack proximity to communities.

Plymouth City Council has existing voluntary and community sector partnerships, but would need neighbourhood forums to represent local voice.

Weaknesses:

Potential for democratic deficit in the new Devon Unitary Council due to large geographic spread, with the potential of struggling to maintain meaningful local engagement due to scale.

Communities in Exeter, Paignton and Torquay are not currently served by parish councils which could lead to disparity of representation and services across a new Devon Unitary Council.

More difficult for communities to have access to their local councillors and the democratic process in a new Devon Unitary Council due to poor connectivity in a large geographic area.

The new Devon Unitary Council would be further away from communities and would need to mitigate this through effective neighbourhood governance.

Complexity and scale risk weakening neighbourhood empowerment and accountability.

Option 2.1: Three unitary councils. The 4-5-1 Model



1. ESTABLISHING A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Plymouth	South	North-East	Range	Financial Assessment
Population	272,067	429,745	552,694	-	Strengths
Projected population growth to 2040	104%	111%	115%	-	The model provides the least disparity around population which helps to provide a good balance across the Unitaries for some of the metrics around Council Tax and Business rates with lower variances for the rates per head of population.
Council Tax band D average	2,359	2,400	2,396	-	
Council Tax band D maximum	2,392	2,471	2,433	-	
Council Tax base	82,499	162,440	200,317	-	
Council Tax Base per unit of population	3.30	2.65	2.76	0.65	Weaknesses
Council Tax income per unit of population	599	822	772	223	
Business rates per unit of population	243	218	191	52	

OVERALL SCORE

Medium

Estimates of 2040 population suggests the very low growth rate for Plymouth continues, despite a small expansion -suggesting financial challenges due to low Council Tax base. This also presents itself in the low CT income per head for Plymouth and large imbalance across the Unitaries.

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Provides more land for economic growth and housing within the two new unitary councils.

The areas covered by the new North-East Unitary Council already look to Exeter as a centre, especially as a centre for commerce.

Creates an urban/rural balance with Plymouth preserved as an urban centre and the two new unitary councils relatively balanced as urban/rural/coastal areas.

Retains clearer local responsiveness and accountability.

Provides coherence with the new Southern Devon Council sharing demographic pressures (including frailty and statutory reliance), and scale provided within the new Northern Unitary Council.

Provides resilience through scale whilst keeping local profiles visible.

Weaknesses

Within the new Southern Unitary Council, there is no centre of commerce or economic activity at the scale of the Devon's cities with no current consensus on the primary or principles centre of commerce.

On existing Plymouth City Council boundaries, there is a significant difference in geographic size (Plymouth: 80 sq km, Northern Unitary Council: 3,844 sq km, Southern Unitary Council: 2,783 sq km)

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries were expanded, this would have a negative impact on the growth potential for the new Southern Unitary Council.

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries are not expanded, it limits that Council's ability to grow.

2. EFFICIENCY, CAPACITY AND WITHSTANDING FINANCIAL SHOCKS

	Plymouth	South	North-East	Range	Financial Assessment
Grant funding per unit of population	439	325	294	114	Strengths The model shows a good balance across the Unitaries with a smaller range for criteria such as grant funding and overall resources per head of population. Estimated people services savings are reasonable although not as high as other models.
Non-earmarked reserves	-59,844,305	12,617,305	15,049,000	-74,893,305	
Non-earmarked reserves per unit of population	-220	29	27	-249.32	
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue	8%	5%	5%	3%	
Total funding/resources 26/7 per head	1,242.54	1,320.86	1,401.11	158.57	Weaknesses Transition costs are estimated to be relatively high due to changes across all Councils including Torbay as an existing Unitary Authority. Although savings estimated remain at a reasonable level they are the
Estimated savings from people services	£32.93m			-	
RAG ranking of potential set up costs					

OVERALL SCORE	High	lowest of all models. Plymouth financial challenges not improved.
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QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

The population numbers of the proposed new unitary councils, together with the population of Plymouth, are close to the guiding principle of councils having a population of 500,000 or more.

Smaller organisations based in smaller geographies help to support local innovation.

Balances local responsiveness with some economies of scale, with most opportunities for ongoing service budget savings.

Whilst there will be some upwards harmonisation of costs, these present significantly less risk than Option 1 and are contained in the sub-region.

Weaknesses

The demography of the new Southern Unitary Council has an older, and ageing, population base which could lead to increased demand for adult social care and the associated costs.

3. HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Strengths

Opportunity to help shape the market for children's services and adult social care in a wider geography.

Allows targeted approaches to different levels of income deprivation (Plymouth: 14.8%, North-East Unitary Council: 9.7%, Southern Unitary Council: 12.2%⁶)

Allows for regional variation to be visible while pooling resilience across sub-regions, including opportunities for regional commissioning.

The new Northern Devon Unitary Council would have a stronger, sustainable base within the adult social care market, with the market in Southern Devon more fragile, although a local focus would help tackle accessibility issues.

Creates a balanced footprint across the existing Devon and Torbay areas which enables the improvement of children in care sufficiency.

Weaknesses

High

⁶ As per the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This document was produced before the release of the latest IMB on 30 October 2025.

4. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL NEEDS

Services over a larger geography would have to be carefully and sensitively created, otherwise they would not be relatable to place.

Both new unitary councils would need to develop delivery models which serve both rural and urban areas.

There would be challenges in disaggregating children's services and adult social care into the new Southern and Northern Unitary Councils, with the added challenge of also aggregating the existing children's services and adult social care of Torbay Council into the Southern Unitary Council.

The creation of a Southern Unitary Council would likely see the end of the groundbreaking Integrated Care Organisation which currently delivers joined up health and social care to the residents of Torbay, including the community support model which supports residents without the need for statutory services.

The impact of combining authorities with and without Housing Revenue Accounts into a new Northern Unitary Council would need to be considered carefully.

Strengths

New North-East Unitary Council comprises, North Devon & Torridge with a shared coastal/rural identity, Mid Devon which bridges rural and urban; East Devon which connects Exeter.

New Southern Unitary Council contains Dartmoor and coastal synergy with a diverse economy in marine, tourism, agriculture, and digital innovation.

Northern and Southern unitaries reflect some existing service groupings, but Exeter's inclusion in the north may complicate alignment with NHS and police zones.

Northern unitary aligns well with Exeter Travel to Work Area and rural commuting flows.

Southern unitary reflects Plymouth and Torbay Travel to Work Areas and their economic hinterlands.

Plymouth's standalone status aligns with existing arrangements in health and policing and aligns well with its distinct Travel to Work Area.

Protects the distinct trajectories of each area, including Torbay's children's services improvements, Plymouth's urban safeguarding pressures and the rural dementia and adult social care challenges in Devon.

Weaknesses

The new Southern and Northern Unitaries are larger than how people see their communities.

Medium

5. SUPPORTING DEVOLUTION

Strengths

It would be relatively straightforward for the existing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority to be transferred into a Devon Combined Authority with the new Northern and Southern Unitary Councils being constituent members (if Plymouth City Council remains on its existing boundaries).

All existing Leaders of the Devon Authorities are in favour of pursuing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the whole of Devon. This option would enable such an Authority on a whole county footprint, including Plymouth City Council.

There would be equality of population size ratios between constituent authorities of any new Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Weaknesses

It could be more difficult transfer from a County Combined Authority to Combined Authority if Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended.

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended, there would be democratic disenfranchisement from the Combined Authority for those parts of the current South Hams District Council which would no longer be covered by the devolved powers the Combined Authority.

If the Devon Combined Authority wishes to remain as a Foundation Strategic Authority and Plymouth City Council does not wish to join (as per the option with the CCA's Constitution), Plymouth City Council would become a "devolution island".

High

6. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Strengths

Strong parish networks in Northern and Southern unitaries could support area committees.

Potential for greater financial capacity to invest in community engagement.

Existing VCS partnerships in Torbay and South Hams can be built upon.

Plymouth City Council has existing voluntary and community sector partnerships, but would need neighbourhood forums to represent local voice.

Enables some scale for investment and innovation whilst retaining local responsiveness.

Weaknesses

Communities in Exeter, Paignton and Torquay are not currently served by parish councils which could lead to disparity of representation and services in both the new Southern and Northern Unitary Councils.

Medium

Option 2.2: Three unitary councils. Devon, Plymouth and Torbay



1. ESTABLISHING A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Devon	Plymouth	Torbay	Range	Financial Assessment
Population	842,313	272,067	140,126	-	Strengths
Projected population growth to 2040	114%	104%	106%	-	Limited but include a more unified voice to central government.
Council Tax band D average	2,405	2,325	2,340	-	
Council Tax band D maximum	2,471	2,325	2,340	-	
Council Tax base	319,445	76,557	49,254	-	Weaknesses
Council Tax Base per unit of population	2.64	3.55	2.84	0.92	The model does not show a good balance across Unitaries for some metrics around Council Tax and Business rates with high variances for the rates per head of population. There is imbalance across Unitaries when looking at population and tax base sizes and concerns about the overall size of the Devon unitary. Estimates of 2040 population also suggests imbalance and a very low growth rate for Plymouth, suggesting financial challenges due to low Council Tax base.
Council Tax income per unit of population	808	580	726	-229	
Business rates per unit of population	193	245	261	69	
OVERALL SCORE	Low				

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Retains clearer local responsiveness and accountability.

Reflects the distinct socio-economic, demographic, and service delivery realities across Torbay, Plymouth, and the rest of Devon CC.

The potential expansion of Plymouth City Council is based on the Plymouth Growth Area and aligns well with its distinct Travel to Work Area.

Weaknesses

Extreme imbalance in geographic size (Torbay at 63 sq km, Plymouth at 80 sq km and Devon at 6,627 sq km) with the new Devon Unitary Council being much larger than housing market and travel to work areas.

The geographic scale of a new Devon Unitary Council creates risks with a lack of connectivity across the area.

2. EFFICIENCY, CAPACITY AND WITHSTANDING FINANCIAL SHOCKS

	Devon	Plymouth	Torbay	Range	Financial Assessment
Grant funding per unit of population	270	452	514	244	Strengths The Newton model suggests a high level of potential savings is possible. Transition costs are expected to be relatively low as both Plymouth and Torbay would; continue unchanged as existing Unitaries.
Non-earmarked reserves	21,560,000	-60,138,000	6,400,000	-81,698,000	
Non-earmarked reserves per unit of population	26	-221	46	-246.64	
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue	4%	8%	9%	5%	
Total funding/resources 26/7 per head	1,277.76	1,260.82	1,501.36	240.54	Weaknesses It shows a large imbalance in reserves and funding per head, placing continuing challenges on the viability of Plymouth, without any expansion. It also presents a large variance and imbalance in the rate of grant funding per head.
Estimated savings from people services	£42.16m				
RAG ranking of potential set up costs					
OVERALL SCORE	Medium				

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Protects Torbay Council's lower long term care costs from a potential significant uplift if merged into a Devon Unitary Council.

Avoids potential cost uplifts in Torbay and Plymouth from harmonisation.

More transparent financial planning and accountability, allowing resources to be aligned to differing socio-economic needs.

Preserves visibility of very different financial profiles in relation to children's services enabling tailored local strategies.

Weaknesses

The populations of the authorities would not be equitable, with the size of the new Devon Unitary Authority well above the Government's guiding principle of a population of 500,000 or more.

3. HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Strengths

Maintains the groundbreaking Integrated Care Organisation which currently delivers joined up health and social care to the residents of Torbay, including the community support model which supports residents without the need for statutory services.

Reflects the distinct profiles of the three areas in relation to high-cost services, enabling local support dependant on need.

All three areas face age-related pressures but with Plymouth and Torbay on sharper trajectories; this option enables localised support dependant on need.

Supports a more tailored services model responsive to urban versus rural contexts.

Children's services and adult social care would not need to be disaggregated in Plymouth or Torbay enabling a focus on improving children's services and services for children and young people with SEND.

Preserves accountability for local performance variations, especially in relation to children's services, enabling tailored improvement.

Preserves visibility of very different demand, practice and cost profiles across the three upper tier authorities.

Preserves visibility of different SEN profiles, enabling the adoption of tailored improvement strategies.

Enables joint commissioning where appropriate, including for market-shaping, but preserves clear local accountability for managing costs.

Enables local solutions to be found for different workforce pressures and retains local responsiveness to these pressures.

Weaknesses

Services over a larger geography within the new Devon Unitary Council would have to be carefully and sensitively created, otherwise they would not be relatable to place.

High

4. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL NEEDS

Difficult to undertake effective co-production across a bigger geographic area, making it more difficult to have really good service design.

The impact of combining authorities with and without Housing Revenue Accounts into a new Devon Unitary Council would need to be considered carefully.

Strengths

Supports local authorities' abilities to meet the distinctive needs of their communities better.

New Devon Unitary Council blends urban, rural and coastal communities which could reflect the pan-Devon sense of belonging.

Plymouth and Torbay retains their strong urban identity, including the identities of Britain's Ocean City and the English Riviera.

Plymouth and Torbay's standalone status aligns with existing arrangements in health and policing, and reflects Plymouth's distinct Travel to Work Area.

Maintains the strong, coherent Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors within Plymouth and Torbay, vital for supporting preventative work within communities.

Protects the distinct trajectories of each area, including Torbay's children's services improvements, Plymouth's urban safeguarding pressures and the rural dementia and adult social care challenges in Devon.

Weaknesses

A new Devon Unitary Council does not fit well with people's local sense of identity and their connection to their local town and community.

Devon wide unitary includes multiple Travel to Work Areas, which may dilute alignment with specific commuting patterns.

Medium

5. SUPPORTING DEVOLUTION

Strengths

It would be relatively straightforward for the existing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority to be transferred into a Devon Combined Authority with the new Devon Unitary Council and Torbay Council being constituent members (if Plymouth City Council remains on its existing boundaries).

All existing Leaders of the Devon Authorities are in favour of pursuing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the whole of Devon. This option would enable such an Authority on a whole county footprint, including Plymouth City Council.

Weaknesses

There would be inequality of population size ratios between constituent authorities of any new Mayoral Strategic Authority.

It could be more difficult transfer from a County Combined Authority to Combined Authority if Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended.

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended, there would be democratic disenfranchisement from the Combined Authority for those parts of the current South Hams District Council which would no longer be covered by the devolved powers the Combined Authority.

If the Devon Combined Authority wishes to remain as a Foundation Strategic Authority and Plymouth City Council does not wish to join (as per the option with the CCA's Constitution), Plymouth City Council would become a "devolution island".

Medium

6. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Strengths

Torbay Council has an existing network of Community Partnerships which could form the basis of neighbourhood committees.

Plymouth City Council has existing voluntary and community sector partnerships, but would need neighbourhood forums to represent local voice.

Communities in Plymouth and Torbay would maintain closer access to local councillors and the democratic process.

Compact unitaries sustain local voice and alignment with residents' needs.

Weaknesses

Potential for democratic deficit in the new Devon Unitary Council due to large geographic spread, with the potential of struggling to maintain meaningful local engagement due to scale.

Medium

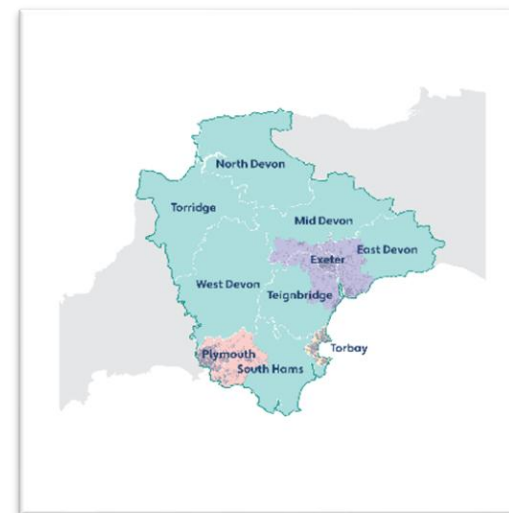
More difficult for communities to have access to their local councillors and the democratic process in a new Devon Unitary Council due to poor connectivity in a large geographic area.

The new Devon Unitary Council would be further away from communities and would need to mitigate this through effective neighbourhood governance.

Complexity and scale within the new Devon Council risk weakening neighbourhood empowerment and accountability.

The following two variations of option 3 – 3.1 for Torbay to remain within its current boundaries and 3.2 for Torbay to expand its boundaries – share much of a common rationale. They scored very similarly, only differing on criterion six- Community Empowerment. Therefore the tables below present much of the same information. We have presented them here separately for ease of reference and to highlight the distinctive aspects of their financial evaluation.

Option 3.1: Four unitary councils (Torbay, expanded Plymouth and new Greater Exeter and Devon authorities)



1. ESTABLISHING A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Devon	Plymouth	Torbay	Exeter	Range	Financial Assessment
Population	536,022	300,727	139,409	256,422	-	Strengths This model has a good balance across the four Unitaries and provides the best balance in the Council tax base per head of population and good balance across the Council Tax income and business rates per head of population. With an expanded Plymouth the Council Tax base issues are improved with estimated growth figures.
Projected population growth to 2040	115%	105%	106%	114%	-	
Council Tax band D average	2,405	2,359	2,340	2,394	-	
Council Tax band D maximum	2,433	2,392	2,340	2,433	-	
Council Tax base	212,752	92,984	49,254	90,266	-	
Council Tax Base per unit of population	2.52	3.23	2.83	2.84	0.71	Weaknesses

Council Tax income per unit of population	837	630	726	720	-207	Limited. Separation of the three major urban centres may result in some economic challenges for a rural Devon, although Council Tax base and rates per head of population appear reasonable.
Business rates per unit of population	201	238	261	178	60	
OVERALL SCORE	High					

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Retains clearer local responsiveness and accountability.

Reflects the distinct socio-economic, demographic, and service delivery realities across Torbay, Plymouth, Exeter and the rest of Devon.

Bases three unitary councils around the urban areas of Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay with dense populations and clear identities, and being service centres for the surrounding rural and coastal communities. The fourth unitary council has a clear rural focus.

Weaknesses

The geographic scale and fragmentation of a new Devon Unitary Council creates risks with a lack of connectivity across the area.

2. EFFICIENCY, CAPACITY AND WITHSTANDING FINANCIAL SHOCKS

	Devon	Plymouth	Torbay	Exeter	Range	Financial Assessment
Grant funding per unit of population	259	419	514	309	255	Strengths The Newton model suggests a high level of potential savings is possible. Transition costs are expected to be relatively low due to the two current Unitary Councils continuing - Torbay would remain unchanged and Plymouth with a slight expansion.
Non-earmarked reserves	11,588,748	-59,326,065	6,400,000	9,159,316	-71,433,053	
Non-earmarked reserves per unit of population	22	-97	46	36	-243.18	
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue	4%	7%	9%	6%	5%	
Total funding/resources 26/7 per head	1,271.28	1,242.54	1,501.36	1,314.72	258.82	Weaknesses The imbalance between the level of funding per head of population is high with Torbay remaining unchanged and could continue. Although Plymouth expands it still has some financial
Estimated savings from people services	£38.17m				-	
RAG ranking of potential set up costs						
OVERALL SCORE						

Green

challenges with the lowest rate of funding per head and low reserves per head.

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Protects Torbay Council's lower long term care costs from a potential significant uplift if merged into a Devon Unitary Council.

More transparent financial planning and accountability, allowing resources to be aligned to differing socio-economic needs.

Preserves visibility of very different financial profiles in relation to children's services enabling tailored local strategies.

Weaknesses:

The new Devon Unitary Council may be too large and fragmented and therefore lose some of the efficiencies available from more local working.

3. HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Strengths

Maintains the groundbreaking Integrated Care Organisation which currently delivers joined up health and social care to the residents of Torbay, including the community support model which supports residents without the need for statutory services.

Reflects the distinct profiles of the three areas in relation to high-cost services, enabling local support dependant on need.

Supports a more tailored services model responsive to urban versus rural contexts.

Enables joint commissioning where appropriate, including for market-shaping, but preserves clear local accountability for managing costs.

Enables local solutions to be found for different workforce pressures and retains local responsiveness to these pressures.

Children's services and adult social care would not need to be disaggregated in Plymouth or Torbay enabling a focus on improving children's services and services for children and young people with SEND.

Weaknesses

Children's services and adult social care would need to be disaggregated to create the new Exeter and Devon Unitary Councils with the risk of losing focus on improving children's services and services for children and young people with SEND.

Services over a larger geography within the new Devon Unitary Council would have to be carefully and sensitively created, otherwise they would not be relatable to place.

High

4. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL NEEDS

Difficult to undertake effective co-production across a bigger geographic area, making it more difficult to have really good service design.

The impact of combining authorities with and without Housing Revenue Accounts into a new Devon Unitary Council would need to be considered carefully.

Strengths

Supports local authorities' abilities to meet the distinctive needs of their communities better.

Plymouth and Torbay retains their strong urban identity, including the identities of Britain's Ocean City and the English Riviera.

New Unitary Exeter Council recognises Exeter's growing role as a regional hub for employment, education, and transport.

Maintains the strong, coherent Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors within Plymouth and Torbay, vital for supporting preventative work within communities.

New Devon Unitary Council provides focus on delivering services to rural communities.

Weaknesses

A new Devon Unitary Council does not fit well with people's local sense of identity and their connection to their local town and community.

Separate (expanded) unitaries for Exeter and Plymouth introduce complexity and misalignment with existing service footprints.

High

**5. SUPPORTING
DEVOLUTION****Strengths**

The existing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority would be transferred into a Devon Combined Authority with the new Devon and Exeter Unitary Councils and Torbay Council being constituent members (if Plymouth City Council remains on its existing boundaries).

All existing Leaders of the Devon Authorities are in favour of pursuing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the whole of Devon. This option would enable such an Authority on a whole county footprint, including Plymouth City Council.

There would be equality of population size ratios between constituent authorities of any new Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Weaknesses:

It could be more difficult transfer from a County Combined Authority to Combined Authority if Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended.

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended, there would be democratic disenfranchisement from the Combined Authority for those parts of the current South Hams District Council which would no longer be covered by the devolved powers the Combined Authority.

If the Devon Combined Authority wishes to remain as a Foundation Strategic Authority and Plymouth City Council does not wish to join (as per the option with the CCA's Constitution), Plymouth City Council would become a "devolution island".

High

**6. COMMUNITY
EMPOWERMENT****Strengths**

Torbay Council has an existing network of Community Partnerships which could form the basis of neighbourhood committees.

Plymouth City Council has existing voluntary and community sector partnerships, but would need neighbourhood forums to represent local voice.

Communities in Plymouth and Torbay would maintain closer access to local councillors and the democratic process.

Weaknesses

The new Exeter Unitary Council would need to consider new area governance arrangements which balances the needs of parished and unparished areas.

High

More difficult for communities to have access to their local councillors and the democratic process in a new Devon Unitary Council due to poor connectivity in a large geographic area.

The new Devon Unitary Council would be further away from communities and would need to mitigate this through effective neighbourhood governance.

Option 3.2: Four unitary councils (Expanded Torbay and Plymouth and New Greater Exeter and Devon authorities)



1. ESTABLISHING A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Devon	Plymouth	Torbay	Exeter	Range	Financial Assessment
Population	445,226	300,727	220,205	256,422	-	Strengths This model has a good balance across the four Unitaries. With an expanded Torbay the Council Tax base improved and is more balanced and the Council Tax income and business rates per head of population are also good. With an expanded Plymouth their growth by 2040 is slightly better than other models and Torbay significantly improves due to their expansion.
Projected population growth to 2040	114%	105%	110%	114%	-	Weaknesses Although the Council Tax base levels improve and are much less imbalanced, there is a relatively high range and imbalance between the CT Base per head of population.
Council Tax band D average	2,400	2,359	2,400	2,394	-	
Council Tax band D maximum	2,433	2,392	2,471	2,433	-	
Council Tax base	182,395	92,984	82,356	90,266	-	
Council Tax Base per unit of population	2.44	3.23	2.67	2.84	0.79	
Council Tax income per unit of population	837	630	767	720	207	
Business rates per unit of population	201	238	227	178	60	
OVERALL SCORE	High					
QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL						
Strengths						

Retains clearer local responsiveness and accountability.

Reflects the distinct socio-economic, demographic, and service delivery realities across Torbay, Plymouth, Exeter and the rest of Devon.

Bases three unitary councils around the urban areas of Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay with dense populations and clear identities, and being service centres for the surrounding rural and coastal communities. The fourth unitary council has a clear rural focus.

Weaknesses

The geographic scale and fragmentation of a new Devon Unitary Council creates risks with a lack of connectivity across the area.

2. EFFICIENCY, CAPACITY AND WITHSTANDING FINANCIAL SHOCKS

	Devon	Plymouth	Torbay	Exeter	Range	Financial Assessment
Grant funding per unit of population	259	419	392	309	161	Strengths
Non-earmarked reserves	9,625,747	-59,326,065	8,363,001	9,159,316	-68,951,812	The Newton model suggests a high level of potential savings is possible. This model provides a good balance of funding per head across all the 4 Unitaries, although Plymouth's remain low.
Non-earmarked reserves per unit of population	22	-197	38	36	-235.25	
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue	4%	7%	8%	6%	4%	Weaknesses
Total funding/resources 26/7 per head	1,275.76	1,242.54	1,404.24	1,314.72	161.70	Transition costs are expected to be higher than option 3.1 due to expansion and change to Torbay, but still relatively low due to the two current Unitary Councils continuing Although Plymouth expands it still has some financial challenges with the lowest rate of funding per head and low reserves per head.
Estimated savings from people services	£38.17					
RAG ranking of potential set up costs						
OVERALL SCORE	High					

QUALITATIVE APPRAISAL

Strengths

Protects Torbay Council's lower long term care costs from a potential significant uplift if merged into a Devon Unitary Council.

More transparent financial planning and accountability, allowing resources to be aligned to differing socio-economic needs.

Preserves visibility of very different financial profiles in relation to children's services enabling tailored local strategies.

Weaknesses:

The new Devon Unitary Council may be too large and fragmented and therefore lose some of the efficiencies available from more local working.

3. HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Strengths

Maintains the groundbreaking Integrated Care Organisation which currently delivers joined up health and social care to the residents of Torbay, including the community support model which supports residents without the need for statutory services.

Reflects the distinct profiles of the three areas in relation to high-cost services, enabling local support dependant on need.

Supports a more tailored services model responsive to urban versus rural contexts.

Enables joint commissioning where appropriate, including for market-shaping, but preserves clear local accountability for managing costs.

Enables local solutions to be found for different workforce pressures and retains local responsiveness to these pressures.

Children's services and adult social care would not need to be disaggregated in Plymouth or Torbay enabling a focus on improving children's services and services for children and young people with SEND.

Weaknesses

Children's services and adult social care would need to be disaggregated to create the new Exeter and Devon Unitary Councils with the risk of losing focus on improving children's services and services for children and young people with SEND.

Services over a larger geography within the new Devon Unitary Council would have to be carefully and sensitively created, otherwise they would not be relatable to place.

Difficult to undertake effective co-production across a bigger geographic area, making it more difficult to have really good service design.

The impact of combining authorities with and without Housing Revenue Accounts into a new Devon Unitary Council would need to be considered carefully.

High

4. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL NEEDS

Strengths

Supports local authorities' abilities to meet the distinctive needs of their communities better.

High

5. SUPPORTING DEVOLUTION

Plymouth and Torbay retains their strong urban identity, including the identities of Britain's Ocean City and the English Riviera.

New Unitary Exeter Council recognises Exeter's growing role as a regional hub for employment, education, and transport.

Maintains the strong, coherent Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors within Plymouth and Torbay, vital for supporting preventative work within communities.

New Devon Unitary Council provides focus on delivering services to rural communities.

Weaknesses

A new Devon Unitary Council does not fit well with people's local sense of identity and their connection to their local town and community.

Separate (expanded) unitaries for Exeter and Plymouth introduce complexity and misalignment with existing service footprints.

Strengths

The existing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority would be transferred into a Devon Combined Authority with the new Devon and Exeter Unitary Councils and Torbay Council being constituent members (if Plymouth City Council remains on its existing boundaries).

All existing Leaders of the Devon Authorities are in favour of pursuing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the whole of Devon. This option would enable such an Authority on a whole county footprint, including Plymouth City Council.

There would be equality of population size ratios between constituent authorities of any new Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Weaknesses:

It could be more difficult transfer from a County Combined Authority to Combined Authority if Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended.

If Plymouth City Council's boundaries are extended, there would be democratic disenfranchisement from the Combined Authority for those parts of the current South Hams District Council which would no longer be covered by the devolved powers the Combined Authority.

High

6. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

If the Devon Combined Authority wishes to remain as a Foundation Strategic Authority and Plymouth City Council does not wish to join (as per the option with the CCA's Constitution), Plymouth City Council would become a "devolution island".

Strengths

Torbay Council has an existing network of Community Partnerships which could form the basis of neighbourhood committees.

Plymouth City Council has existing voluntary and community sector partnerships, but would need neighbourhood forums to represent local voice.

Communities in Plymouth and Torbay would maintain closer access to local councillors and the democratic process.

Weaknesses

The expanded Torbay Council would need to consider new area governance arrangements which balances the needs of parished and unparished areas.

The new Exeter Unitary Council would need to consider new area governance arrangements which balances the needs of parished and unparished areas.

More difficult for communities to have access to their local councillors and the democratic process in a new Devon Unitary Council due to poor connectivity in a large geographic area.

The new Devon Unitary Council would be further away from communities and would need to mitigate this through effective neighbourhood governance.

Medium

Options appraisal conclusion

Based on our assessment, we believe that Option 3.1 is the best option for Devon.

A four unitary configuration that would maintain Torbay Council on its existing boundaries, see Plymouth City Council as a continuing authority and expand its area to cover the Plymouth Growth Area, establish a Greater Exeter Council and establish a Devon Unitary Council serving the rural communities of Devon.

This would create more financially resilient and sustainable local government, maintain services that are currently strong and lay foundations for improved services – whilst providing the conditions for the formation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the whole of Devon.

Base Proposal

As per the requirements of Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, a Base Proposal is required and is presented here for compliance. The base proposal does not represent the proposal we are advancing. Our substantive proposal (Modified Proposal) as set out in [in Chapter X/under the section heading Y], seeks a ministerial modification to refine the Base Proposal into a four unitary model for Devon.

Compliance statement

This section constitutes our Base Proposal on whole district boundaries, prepared in accordance with Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the Act) and the 5 February 2025 statutory invitation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation. It is a statutory base proposal we are advancing. Our substantive proposal (Modified Proposal), which requests ministerial modification, is set out in [the second part of this section/chapter].

Base Proposal configuration

The Base Proposal groups existing principal authorities into four unitary councils without any changes to existing district or borough council boundaries.

Unitary A: Exeter City Council (Type B proposal)

Unitary B: Plymouth City Council (As a continuing unitary authority)

Unitary C: Torbay Council (As a continuing unitary authority)

Unitary D: East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torridge District Council, North Devon District Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council (Type B proposal)

Assessment against the Government’s criteria

Criteria	Base Proposal Assessment
1. Sensible geographies	- Creates four unitary councils using existing principal authorities as building blocks. - Meets the government’s invitation to set out a base case on whole districts.
2. Efficiency and resilience	- Removes the existing two-tier arrangements in Devon. - Reduction of the number of councils from 11 to 4 would provide efficiency savings through the rationalisation of senior roles and governance and consolidation of systems and estates. - Commissioning essential services on a smaller scale creates opportunities to address higher unit costs in the current county area.
3. High quality public services	- Establishment of single tier local government removes duplication and confusion of service delivery - Maximises opportunities to maintain service continuity, especially in the areas of SEND and social care.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4. Working together to understand and meet local needs | • Provides for recognised and legally coherent administrative boundaries. |
| 5. Supporting devolution | • Creates a group of constituent councils across Devon to form a South West Peninsular Mayoral Strategic Authority (which could include Cornwall Council). |
| 6. Community empowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains a foundation of existing governance arrangements in each of the unitary authorities enabling a transition to the new arrangements set out in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill being enacted.• Enables a Local Government Boundary Commission review of ward boundaries to be undertaken after Vesting Day. |

Our Modified Proposal – Four unitary solution

This section sets out the modified proposal we are asking government to consult on and consider. The proposal is a modification of our Base Proposal which is based on whole districts in accordance with section 2 of the Local Government and Local Involvement in Health Act 2007.

We show the precise areas that would be involved in boundary changes, set out the rationale for change and provide an overview of how the option performs against the Government's criteria.

The Modified Proposal groups existing principal authorities into four unitary councils with the changes to existing district or borough council boundaries as described.

Unitary A: Greater Exeter Council (Type B proposal)

A new unitary council based on the current Exeter City Council boundary with population of 134,811 with a Ministerial modification to extend this with 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid-Devon District Council resulting in a population of 256,422.

Unitary B: An expanded Plymouth City Council (As a continuing unitary authority)

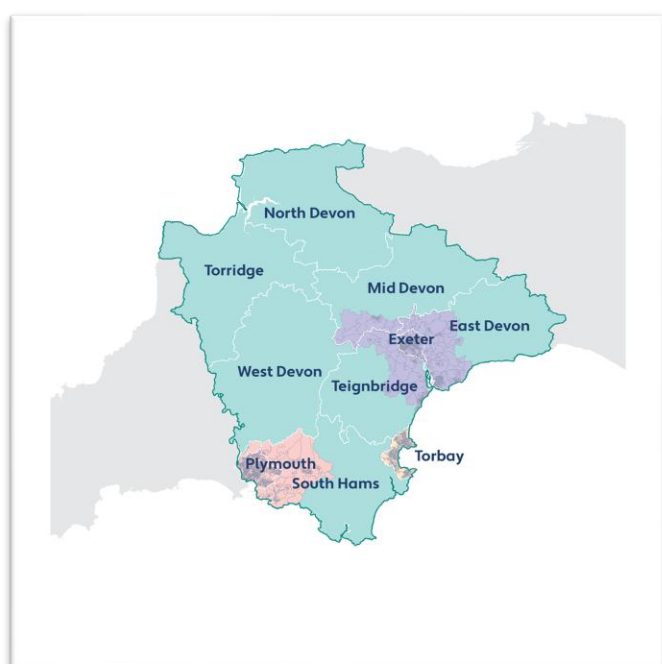
The continuing unitary council of Plymouth City Council with a population of 267,023 with a Ministerial modification to include 13 parishes all within the current district of South Hams District Council of Bickleigh, Shaugh Prior, Sparkwell, Brixton, Wembury, Cornwood, Harford, Ugborough, Ivybridge, Ermington, Yealmpton, Holberton and Newton and Noss resulting in a population of 300,727.

Unitary C: Torbay Council (As a continuing unitary authority)

The continuing unitary council of Torbay Council with a population of 139,300.

Unitary D: Devon Council (Type B proposal)

A new unitary council covering the rest of the former Devon County Council area resulting in a population of 536,131



Rationale for our four unitary model

Our Modified Proposal sensibly reflects Devon's geography, topography and ways of life – three coherent economic areas aligned to key corridors and one larger rural authority. It provides a credible single tiered local government solution to Devon's unique mix of coastal, urban and rural communities.

Torbay, Plymouth and Exeter will be empowered to lead on urban priorities while the new Devon authority can focus on the distinct needs of dispersed rural communities, market towns and villages.

It demonstrates how tailored governance can better meet distinct local needs and can deliver achievable service and organisational savings within five years. Our modified proposal is a locally grounded, future-ready solution that delivers best value for residents and places Devon on a firmer financial footing.

Our proposal supports high-quality, locality-based services by implementing structures which best reflect the distinct profiles of our areas. It avoids unnecessary fragmentation by building on the existing capacity of the existing unitary councils serving Plymouth and Torbay, while ensuring that the new unitary councils are operationally viable.

Using the existing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority as a strong first step, our modified proposal provides sensible population ratio sizes between constituent authorities as we move to a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority. We see the future MSA as the key to unlock the power of combining localism with regional scale for both the four unitary model and the wider peninsula.

Community empowerment is at the core of our proposal. It will deepen local engagement by aligning governance with community identity and lived experience. It builds on existing innovative and inclusive approaches to community engagement in Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay. And sets a framework for the development of new approaches to neighbourhood empowerment across Devon with the existing network of parish and town councils as a strong and established foundation.

With each authority having tailored councillor representation to ensure fair and accessible governance, we will reduce administrative complexity and enhance responsiveness to local needs—urban, coastal, and rural alike.

Government criteria at a glance: our four unitary model

Criteria	Modified Proposal Assessment			
	Unitary A Greater Exeter Council	Unitary B Expanded Plymouth City Council	Unitary C Torbay Council	Unitary D Devon Council
1. Sensible geographies	- Greater Exeter Council will be one of the four new unitary councils in Devon. - Allows for Exeter City Council to be the principal authority building block. - Removes the existing two-tier arrangements in the Greater Exeter area.	- The expanded Plymouth Council will be one of the four unitary councils in Devon. - Allows for Plymouth City Council to be defined as a “continuing authority” to minimise organisational disruption. - Removes the existing two-tier arrangements in the expanded Plymouth area.	- Torbay Council will be one of the four unitary councils in Devon. - Torbay Council as a continuing authority eliminates organisational disruption.	- Devon Council will be one of the four new unitary councils in Devon. - Allows for Devon Country Council to be the principal authority building block (excluding the modifications areas in Exeter and Plymouth) - Removes the existing two-tier arrangements in the whole of Devon.
2. Efficiency and resilience	- Creates a growth-orientated unitary council with a population of 256,422. - Allows for better coordination of critical infrastructure in the wider area. - Council size reflects the dispersed settlement pattern in the South West and those towns and villages most functionally linked to Exeter. - Tax base which is sustainable and large enough to resist financial shocks	- Creates a unique, nationally significant growth-orientated unitary council with a population of 300,727 growing to 324,585 by 2050. - Allows for better coordination of critical infrastructure in the wider area. - Council size reflects the dispersed settlement pattern in the South West and those towns and villages most functionally linked to Plymouth. - Over 5% increase in the tax base which is sustainable and large enough to resist financial shocks.	- Maintains Torbay Council's lower long term care costs - Allows resources to be aligned to the specific socio-economic needs of Torbay. - Tax base which is sustainable and large enough to resist financial shocks.	- Creates a rurally focussed unitary council with a population of 455,226. - Council size reflects the dispersed settlement pattern in the Devon but retains most of the priority towns in the new authority. - Keeps market towns and most rural areas together at a sustainable scale. - Tax base which is sustainable and large enough to resist financial shocks.
3. High quality public services	- Creates coherent service geography based on a new localised, place-based model of provision in relation to adult and children's social care, SEND and other critical public services. - Maximises the opportunities for growth, given Exeter's strategic role as a major transport hub and as a UNESCO City of Literature. - Simplifies access for residents to services. - Reduces administrative duplication. - Provides service reform opportunities. - Enables strategic planning to be better coordinated within the Mayoral Strategic Authority.	- Maximises the opportunities for growth, linked to HM Naval Base at Devonport and Defence Growth Deal. - Creates coherent service geography. - Simplifies access for residents to services. - Reduces administrative duplication. - Provides service reform opportunities. - Enables strategic planning to be better coordinated within the Mayoral Strategic Authority.	- Existing coherent service geography with the ability to focus on coastal renewal. - Maintains existing innovative and integrated approach to health and social care. - Maintains simplified access for residents to services. - Provides service reform opportunities. - Enables strategic planning to be better coordinated within the Mayoral Strategic Authority.	- Creates coherent service geography focussed on delivering services in a rural area. - Enables a single local approach to rural prevention and family support. - Simplifies access for residents to services. - Reduces administrative duplication. - Provides service reform opportunities. - Enables strategic planning to be better coordinated within the Mayoral Strategic Authority.
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	Discussions between Leaders and Chief Executives across all authorities in Devon have regularly taken place during 2025.	Discussions between Leaders and Chief Executives across all authorities in Devon have regularly taken place during 2025.	Discussions between Leaders and Chief Executives across all authorities in Devon have regularly taken place during 2025.	Discussions between Leaders and Chief Executives across all authorities in Devon have regularly taken place during 2025.

Criteria	Modified Proposal Assessment			
	Unitary A Greater Exeter Council	Unitary B Expanded Plymouth City Council	Unitary C Torbay Council	Unitary D Devon Council
	Comparable size to other proposed unitary councils in Devon.	- Directly responds to concerns and issues raised during public engagement on reorganisation. - Transitional arrangements easier to implement. - Comparable size to other proposed unitary councils in Devon	- Keeps coastal towns together reflecting character and identity. - Maintains the strong, coherent Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector vital for supporting preventative work within communities. - Responds directly to the concerns and issues raised during public engagement on reorganisation.	Potential to build upon existing Devon County Council local partnership working arrangements, including the Health and Wellbeing Board for Devon, the Devon Association of Local Councils, and the Local Civil Contingencies Partnership.
5. Supporting devolution	- Creates a group of constituent authorities across Devon to form a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (which could include Cornwall Council). - Provides a strategically complementary growth role by allowing for early identification of opportunities in the future Peninsula Spatial Development Strategy.	- Creates a group of constituent authorities across Devon to form a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (which could include Cornwall Council). - Provides a strategically complementary growth role by allowing for early identification of opportunities in the future Peninsula Spatial Development Strategy.	- Creates a group of constituent authorities across Devon to form a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (which could include Cornwall Council). - Provides a strategically complementary growth role by allowing for early identification of opportunities in the future Peninsula Spatial Development Strategy.	- Creates a group of constituent authorities across Devon to form a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (which could include Cornwall Council). - Provides a strategically complementary growth role by allowing for early identification of opportunities in the future Peninsula Spatial Development Strategy.
6. Community empowerment	- Supports proposal for the creation of Neighbourhood Networks Area Forums approach. - Protects existing parish and town council arrangements. - Enables a Local Government Boundary Commission review of ward boundaries to be undertaken after Vesting Day.	- Supports proposal for the phased creation of Neighbourhood Networks and a “Test, Learn Grow” pilot approach. - Protects existing parish and town council arrangements. - Enables a Local Government Boundary Commission review of ward boundaries to be undertaken after Vesting Day.	- Enables the existing Community Partnerships in Torbay to form the basis of further community empowerment. - Protects existing town council arrangements. - Enables a Local Government Boundary Commission review of ward boundaries to be undertaken after Vesting Day.	- Protects existing parish and town council arrangements. - Enables rurally focussed governance arrangements building upon the VCSE Assembly and existing Devon County Council Civic Agreement. - Enables a Local Government Boundary Commission review of ward boundaries to be undertaken after Vesting Day.

Request for ministerial modification to Base Proposal

We request that the Secretary of State modifies the statutory Base Proposal outlined in Part 1 of this section, incorporating the boundary refinements detailed above. These adjustments more effectively meet the Government's criteria by enhancing the coherence of public services, strengthening financial sustainability, supporting local identities, and achieving the right balance of partners for devolution.

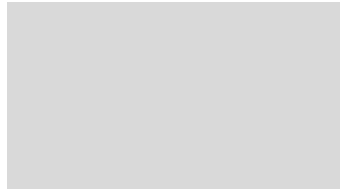
Advantages of the Modified Proposal

Whilst our Base Proposal for four unitary councils meets the very basics of the government's criteria, our Modified Proposal strikes the right balance to make the most of the once in the generation opportunity to create local government that is:

- **Focused on place and delivering with purpose-** councils designed around real places, communities and economies.
- **Based in sensible geographies-** focused on distinct places and able to better manage resources, attract investment and deliver value for money.
- **Providing smarter services-** reducing duplication and complexity, deliver better decision making and improved customer experiences.
- **Has the right financial foundations** – based on a fair and balanced tax base to support financial resilience and equitable service delivery.
- **Serving our environment-** from our coasts, to cities, towns and villages, to our countryside.

The following table shows the advantages of our Modified Proposal over and above our Base Proposal.

Criteria	Base Proposal	Modified Proposal
1. Sensible geographies	- Creates four unitary councils using existing principal authorities as building blocks. - Meets the government's invitation to set out a base case on whole districts. - Removes the existing two-tier arrangements in Devon.	- Reflects the true nature of place enabling the planning, investment and infrastructure decisions to made consistently across the wider area. - Aligns with functional economic areas. - Drives growth in three urban-based councils and allows complete focus on delivery of services to rural communities in the fourth unitary area.
2. Efficiency and resilience	- Reduction of the number of councils from 11 to 4 would provide efficiency savings through the rationalisation of senior roles and governance and consolidation of systems and estates. - Commissioning essential services on a smaller scale creates opportunities to address higher unit costs in the current county area.	- Allows for better co-ordination of critical infrastructure in the wider area. - Tax base of each authority is sustainable and large enough to resist financial shocks.
3. High quality public services	- Establishment of single tier local government removes duplication and confusion of service delivery - Maximises opportunities to maintain service continuity, especially in the areas of SEND and social care.	- Creates coherent service geography based on a new localised, place-based model in either urban or rural areas. - Reduces administrative duplication. - Provides service reform opportunities. - Enables strategic planning to be better coordinated within the Mayoral Strategic Authority.
4. Working together to understand and meet local needs	Provides for recognised and legally coherent administrative boundaries.	- Directly responds to concerns and issues raised during public engagement on reorganisation. - Builds on existing good partnerships and relationships with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.
5. Supporting devolution	Creates a group of constituent councils across Devon to form a South West Peninsular Mayoral Strategic Authority (which could include Cornwall Council).	There would be equality of population size ratios between constituent authorities of the new Mayoral Strategic Authority.
6. Community empowerment	Maintains a foundation of existing governance arrangements in each of the unitary authorities enabling a transition to the new arrangements set out in the	Protects existing parish and town council arrangements.



English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill being enacted.

- Enables a Local Government Boundary Commission review of ward boundaries to be undertaken after Vesting Day.

- Enables existing partnerships to form the basis of Neighbourhood Networks, ensuring further community empowerment.

Evaluation Report: Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Torbay Council's Public and Stakeholder Engagement (July – October 2025)

Contents

Consultation Feedback - Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)	1
Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
Engagement survey responses.....	6
Section One – Yes/No responses	6
Section Two – Recurring themes	6
Section Three – Top priorities	18
Section Four – Respondent demographics	20
Condensed engagement survey responses:.....	22
Stakeholder Engagement	23
Appendix: Raising awareness of engagement.....	30
Social media engagement	33
Acknowledgements.....	38

Executive Summary

Engagement on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) took place between 1 July and 31 October 2025. Between 1 July and Tuesday 2 September 2025, residents, businesses and stakeholders had the opportunity to complete and submit a survey asking what they think about LGR. There were several ways that the community could find out about the questionnaire and share their views:

- Online via the council's engagement website: www.torbay.gov.uk/lgr/
- Visiting any of the four local libraries in Torbay to complete a paper copy survey.
- By attending one of three in-person engagement events (Sunday 10 August, Tuesday 12 August, Wednesday 20 August).

The questionnaire sought to determine whether respondents were in favour of Torbay Council remaining as it is, and if not, what their preferred choice was. 1430 responses were received. The survey was promoted via numerous internal and external engagement channels, including the Council's social media channels, and responses to those posts have been collated and included within the analysis in this report.

During this period, a range of stakeholders were invited to online meetings to share their views and provide feedback on what LGR would mean for their sectors. This included local stakeholders from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector, Business Representative Organisations, Housing Developers and Registered Providers, and Local Businesses. Statutory stakeholders were also engaged with throughout the process. This group comprised key figures from Higher Education institutions, Health sector organisations, and emergency services including the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The LGR questionnaire revealed that 64% of respondents support Torbay Council remaining as it is, while 36% favour change. Among alternative options for unitary local government in Devon, Option 2 (for an enlarged Torbay covering the area of the Local Care Partnership) emerged as the most preferred after maintaining the current structure.

When asked about the most important aspects of local government, participants highlighted a strong understanding of local issues, efficient services offering value for money, and transparent decision-making. As for priorities in shaping Devon's future governance, the top concerns were maintaining local amenities (such as libraries and parks), ensuring safe and well-kept infrastructure (like roads and pavements), and protecting the environment.

The key themes from our engagement with our stakeholders is summarised as follows:

- **Local Identity & Representation:** Strong emphasis on preserving Torbay's distinct identity and ensuring decisions remain locally accountable.
- **Preserving momentum:** A desire to ensure that the current momentum Torbay has in its regeneration programme is not lost.
- **Concerns About Larger Structures:** Worries that merging into a wider Devon authority could dilute local focus, increase bureaucracy, and reduce access to councillors.
- **Support for Current Structure:** Many stakeholders, especially smaller VCSE organisations and local businesses, favoured Torbay remaining as it is due to effective partnerships and manageable scale.
- **Opportunities for Collaboration:** Some saw potential benefits in aligning with NHS and education boundaries, improving SEND services, and unlocking funding.

- **Risks of Reorganisation:** Concerns included financial costs, disruption to services, and loss of democratic engagement.
- **Housing & Inequality:** Highlighted as critical issues, with poor housing linked to health outcomes and inequality across coastal and rural areas.

Introduction

The purpose of the engagement was to give insight into what outcomes stakeholders, including residents and businesses, would most like to see from local government reorganisation (LGR).

This phase of engagement built on the early public engagement which took place at the Princess Theatre in Torquay on 11 March 2025 as part of the Council's preparation of its Interim Plan for local government reorganisation (which was submitted to Government at the end of March 2025).

Ahead of the official launch on 1 July and the wider engagement activities planned across Torbay in August; engagement happened at the English Riviera Airshow from 30 May to 1 June.

Attendance at the English Riviera Airshow was considered the ideal opportunity to take advantage of the high footfall and increased numbers. The weekend event offered the opportunity to meet a diverse sample of the local population.

Local Government Reorganisation was a core element on the stand with interactive panels and an opportunity to gather information. Colleagues from the Engagement and Communications Team at Torbay Council attended across the weekend. LGR information was displayed across the panels and on the tabletops. Printed comment forms were made available allowing people to make comments and complaints, as necessary. Other topics included: Paignton and Preston Sea defence scheme, One Torbay, Night Bus, and the My Bay scheme.

Several meaningful conversations took place with members of the public. Officers engaged with approximately 200 unique visitors, in addition to an estimated 50 individuals who approached the stand for event-specific information or directions but were not formally recorded. It's important to note that these interactions were not exclusive to LGR but spanned a broad range of topics.

Visitors also browsed the information on the boards and took away leaflets and copies of the One Torbay flyers.

To build momentum ahead of the event, a series of scheduled social media posts were launched alongside early promotional efforts through One Torbay. The Airshow went on to secure a place among the top three most engaging posts across Torbay Council's social media platforms during May and June 2025. LGR's presence at one of Torbay's flagship events marked a significant and strategic beginning to the wider engagement process.

A key part of the engagement was an online survey which was publicised on a dedicated LGR web page on the Council's website, through internal communications, and through social media. It was open between 1 July 2025 and 2 September 2025.

The survey was originally due to close on Sunday 10 August, however this was extended to Sunday 31 August to attract a larger number of responses and to enable further engagement at events across Torbay in August. An additional extension to Tuesday 2 September was given when there was a technical error with the survey, which was identified and rectified on the afternoon of 31 August. This decision, made on 1 September, aimed to ensure that anyone affected by the error had sufficient time to submit their responses and share their views.

During the consultation, the Council received 1403 responses directly to the online survey. There were also 27 paper copy forms completed.

An additional 5 paper forms in a shorter format were completed from an engagement event in Paignton, and there were 2 responses as emails or letters which have been included in the appendix.

Alongside the public engagement, a wide range of stakeholders were actively invited to participate in a series of online meetings. These sessions were designed to gather insights, perspectives, and constructive feedback on the potential implications of LGR for their sectors. The engagement process sought to reach a diverse array of local stakeholders in Torbay. These included representatives from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector, Business Representative Organisations, Housing Developers, Registered Providers, and Local Businesses. Each session successfully brought forward unique concerns, priorities, and aspirations, with key themes emerging from each.

In addition to local voices, statutory stakeholders from across Devon were also consulted throughout the period to ensure that essential public services and institutional perspectives were also represented. This group comprised key figures from Higher Education institutions, Health sector organisations, and emergency services including Police and Fire authorities. Their participation was instrumental in identifying cross-sectoral impacts, operational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration under any potential proposed changes. The feedback collected during these engagements played a crucial role in shaping the broader dialogue around LGR, helping to inform decision-makers and ensure that the reorganisation process remains responsive to the needs of all affected parties. Some of these conversations took place with colleagues from South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council.

This report provides summaries of the feedback to the engagement questionnaire, the short form survey and from the engagement with stakeholders.

In terms of the engagement questionnaire, given the varied nature of the responses, ranging from Yes/No answers to detailed free-text comments and ranked priority selections, the results have been organised into distinct sections for ease of interpretation. The results are a summary of the 1430 responses:

- **Section One** examines the Yes/No responses.
- **Section Two** explores recurring themes identified within the free-text submissions.
- **Section Three** presents the findings from questions where participants selected their top priorities from a predefined list.
- **Section Four** provides an overview of respondent demographics.

Microsoft Copilot was used to assist in the analysis and summarisation of community feedback. Copilot, an AI-powered tool, reviewed the free text comments from the provided dataset, identifying key themes to inform the findings presented.

Engagement survey responses

Overall, 1403 online responses to the consultation were received and 27 paper copies which were added to the online survey, to make the overall total of 1430 responses. The average time for completion was 19 minutes and 52 seconds. The summary below is of the 1430 responses.

Section One – Yes/No responses

The only Yes/No question included in this survey asked respondents if they supported Torbay Council remaining as it is.

Question: Based on the information provided, are you in support of Torbay Council remaining as it is?

- **Yes** 915 (64%)
- **No** 516 (36%)

Section Two – Recurring themes

This leads onto looking at the themes of people's comments that occurred within the free box questions.

Question: What alternative option(s) for unitary local government in Devon would you prefer?

In our interim plan we set out three options:

1. Torbay Council remaining as it is
2. A new unitary council covering Torbay, approximately half of South Hams and most of Teignbridge
3. A new unitary council covering the areas of Torbay, South Hams, Teignbridge, and West Devon

Option 2 is the most frequently cited as the favourable alternative to Torbay Council remaining as it is, often linked to merging Torbay with parts of South Hams and Teignbridge.

Option Referenced	Number of Mentions	Common Terminology Used
Option 2	87	"Option 2", "South Devon Unitary", "Torbay + South Hams + Teignbridge"
Option 3	61	"Option 3", "South Devon with West Devon", "Torbay + South Hams + Teignbridge + West Devon"

In addition to direct mentions, many responses described preferences that align with Option 2's structure—a new unitary authority combining Torbay, South Hams, and Teignbridge—even if they did not use the label "Option 2." This further strengthens its popularity.

Interpretation:

- **Option 2** is the more frequently cited of the two, often preferred for its alignment with existing service footprint perceived manageability.
- **Option 3** appeals to those wanting broader geographic coverage, but some respondents flagged concerns about scale and cohesion.

Why Option 2 Was Popular

- It reflects the South Devon NHS Trust footprint, which many respondents saw as logical and efficient.
- It avoids merging with Plymouth or Exeter, which some viewed as too large or disconnected.
- It was seen as a balanced compromise—larger than the current Torbay Council, but not as sweeping as a full Devon-wide authority.

References to a Single Devon Unitary Authority: 26

Based on the document, only 26 respondents explicitly referenced a preference for a single Devon-wide unitary authority.

Question: Please explain your main reason(s) for your choice.

Key findings & themes

Confidence in Current Structure

- Dominant sentiment: Torbay Council is functioning well and should remain unchanged.
- Many cite financial stability, local responsiveness, and regeneration success.
- Staff and residents express concern about disruption, cost, and loss of control.

Local Identity and Unique Needs

- Strong emphasis on Torbay's distinctiveness as a coastal, three-town tourist area.
- Unique demographics: aging population, deprivation, seasonal economy.
- Concerns that merging would dilute local focus and reduce tailored service delivery.
- Desire to protect Torbay's identity, culture, and place-based governance.

Financial Management and Sustainability

- Mixed views on financial viability and cost-effectiveness.
- Many praise Torbay's budgeting, grant success, and lack of deficit.
- Others argue Torbay is too small to be cost-effective and would benefit from economies of scale.
- Concerns about implementation costs, unclear savings, and increased taxation.

Strategic Integration and Regional Alignment

- Minority support for merging with neighbouring authorities to:
- Align with NHS, care boundaries, and transport infrastructure.
- Improve commissioning, funding access, and regional voice.
- Enable joined-up planning for environment, education, and tourism.

Governance and Democratic Representation

- Strong belief that local democracy is best served close to the people.
- Concerns about decision-making shifting to Exeter or Plymouth.
- Fear of losing local engagement and accountability.
- Others argue larger councils dilute representation and increase bureaucracy.

Criticism of Council Performance

- Polarised views on Torbay Council’s effectiveness.
- Specific concerns include neglect of Brixham, poor youth services, lack of scrutiny, and ineffective leadership.
- These views support arguments for structural change or merging.

Summary of Themes

Theme	Description
Support for Current Structure	Strong belief that Torbay Council is functioning well and should remain unchanged.
Local Identity & Unique Needs	Emphasis on Torbay’s distinctiveness as a coastal, tourism-driven area with unique demographics.
Financial Management & Viability	Mixed views on cost-effectiveness, council tax, and funding—some praise stability, others cite limits.
Strategic Integration & Alignment	Views on merging with neighbouring areas to align with NHS, transport, and planning boundaries.
Governance & Representation	Desire for local control, accountability, and proximity to decision-makers.
Criticism of Council Performance	Concerns about service quality, leadership, transparency, and treatment of vulnerable groups.

Residents

Question: Where do you consider to be your ‘local area’?

When asked about local identity and where respondents considered their ‘local area,’ 32.8% answered Torbay, 23% Paignton, 19% Torquay, 14% Brixham, 5.2% South Devon, with numerous Torquay areas receiving small percentages and then 1% answering Newton Abbot.

Key Themes & Findings

- **Strong Shared Identity:** Most respondents define their local area as *Torbay* or “*the Bay*,” reflecting a unified sense of place across Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham.
- **Town & Neighbourhood Attachment:** High frequency of town-level responses (Torquay, Paignton, Brixham), often paired with specific neighbourhoods like Wellswood, Chelston, Preston, and St Marychurch—indicating deep local familiarity.
- **Regional Extensions:** Many extend their local area to include *South Devon*, *Teignbridge*, *South Hams*, or *Devon* more broadly.

Grouped Mentions:

- “Torbay” alone: 472
- “Torquay, Paignton, Brixham” together: 138
- “The Bay” / “English Riviera”: 42
- Total Bay Identity Mentions: 652

This suggests a strong regional identity that transcends town boundaries, especially for those who travel or work across the area.

Question: Where is your work or education based?

Key Findings

- **Torquay Dominates:** Torquay is by far the most frequently mentioned location, with 384 direct mentions. It appears across a wide range of contexts—active employment,

volunteering, retirement, and remote work—indicating its vital role in the local economy and identity.

- **Strong Local Concentration:** Most responses are clustered within Torbay, including Paignton (123 mentions) and Brixham (54 mentions). This suggests that most respondents live and work within a tight geographic radius, reinforcing the area's self-contained nature.
- **Remote and Home-Based Work Is Significant:** There are 58 mentions of working from home or remote arrangements. These include phrases like “home,” “WFH,” “remote,” and “home-based,” reflecting a shift in work patterns, especially among professionals and semi-retired individuals.
- **High Retirement Rate:** A substantial portion of responses are variations of “retired,” “not applicable,” or “N/A.” This points to a large, retired population in the area, many of whom still identify with their former workplaces or contribute through volunteering.
- **Regional and National Reach:** While most responses are locally focused, a minority mention broader geographies such as Exeter (66 mentions), London (3 mentions), and even national/international roles. These outliers often reflect remote work, consultancy, or past careers.
- **Multi-location and Flexible Roles:** Several entries combine locations (e.g., “Torquay and Newton Abbot,” “Paignton and Global”), indicating flexible or mobile work arrangements. This is especially common among self-employed individuals and those in regional service roles.

Emerging Themes

- **Local Identity and Pride:** Even among retired or remote workers, many still cite Torquay or Torbay as their base, suggesting strong local affiliation.
- **Workforce Transition:** The mix of retired, semi-retired, and remote workers points to a community in transition, with traditional employment giving way to flexible, post-career engagement.
- **Service Sector Anchors:** Mentions of hospitals, councils, and schools (e.g., Torbay Hospital, South Devon College) highlight the public sector as a major employer.
- **Volunteerism and Civic Engagement:** Numerous retired respondents mention volunteering, especially in Torquay, indicating a prominent level of community involvement.

Summary of Priorities

Category	Key Issue
Torquay Dominates	Central hub for work, education, retirement, and volunteering (384 mentions).
Strong Local Concentration	Most respondents are based within Torbay, reinforcing a tight local footprint.
Remote/Home-Based Work	58 mentions show a shift toward flexible, non-traditional work arrangements.
High Retirement Rate	Large, retired population still engaged locally through identity and volunteering.
Regional/National Reach	Minority work beyond Torbay, including Exeter, London, and remote roles.
Flexible/Multi-location Roles	Many combine locations, reflecting mobile and hybrid work patterns.
Local Identity and Pride	Strong place-based affiliation, even among retired and remote respondents.
Workforce Transition	Traditional employment giving way to flexible, post-career engagement.
Service Sector Anchors	Public sector institutions are major employment and identity drivers.
Civic Engagement	High volunteerism, especially among retired residents in Torquay.

Question: Which area do you do most of your shopping?

Key Themes from Shopping Area Mentions

- **Dominance of Paignton and Torquay:** These two towns are the clear shopping hubs, frequently mentioned either individually or together, indicating strong local reliance on their retail offerings.
- **Retail Parks as Preferred Destinations:** The Willows stands out as a popular choice, suggesting that large-format stores and easy parking are major draws for residents.
- **Online Shopping as a Growing Alternative:** With 84 mentions, online shopping is as popular as Exeter, reflecting a shift toward convenience and dissatisfaction with local options.
- **Out-of-Town Shopping for Variety:** Locations like Exeter, Plymouth, and Totnes are cited for broader retail needs, implying that residents often travel for more diverse or specialized shopping.
- **Fragmentation Within Torbay:** Mentions of “Torbay” alongside individual towns like Paignton, Torquay, and Brixham suggest overlapping identities and shopping patterns within the area.
- **Local Identity and Loyalty:** Smaller areas like St Marychurch, Wellswood, and Plainmoor appear in the data, showing that some respondents shop hyper-locally and value neighbourhood-level retail.
- **Negative Sentiment Toward Town Centres:** Many comments in the dataset express frustration with parking, store closures, and lack of variety, driving people toward retail parks or online options.
- **Functional vs. Experiential Shopping:** The data hints at a divide between utilitarian shopping (groceries, essentials) and more experiential or discretionary shopping, often done out of town or online.

Summary Table of Shopping Area Mentions

Theme	Summary
Dominance of Paignton and Torquay	Most frequently mentioned areas, showing their vital role in local retail.
Retail Parks as Preferred Destinations	The Willows is highly popular, valued for convenience and parking.
Online Shopping as a Growing Alternative	Strong presence in responses, reflecting a shift toward digital retail.
Out-of-Town Shopping for Variety	Exeter, Plymouth, and Totnes are cited for broader shopping options.
Fragmentation Within Torbay	Mixed mentions of “Torbay” and individual towns suggest overlapping habits.
Local Identity and Loyalty	Smaller areas like St Marychurch and Wellswood show neighbourhood-level loyalty.
Negative Sentiment Toward Town Centres	Frustrations with parking and store closures push shoppers elsewhere.
Functional vs. Experiential Shopping	Clear divide between essential shopping and leisure-driven retail trips.

Question: Which area do you spend most time socialising and taking part in cultural activities?

Key Findings

- **Torquay is the dominant location**, with 342 mentions—frequently cited for its harbour, town centre, and surrounding neighbourhoods like Wellswood, St Marychurch, and Babbacombe.
- **Paignton and Torbay follow closely**, with 228 and 213 mentions, respectively. Paignton is often linked to beachside areas like Goodrington and Preston, while “Torbay” is used as a catch-all for the three main towns.
- **Brixham holds strong appeal**, with 162 mentions, especially among those who prefer quieter or scenic settings. Galmpton and Churston are often included.
- **Exeter and Plymouth are top out-of-area destinations**, cited for cultural events, shopping, and festivals (54 and 26 mentions respectively).
- **South Hams and Teignbridge are notable regional alternatives**, with 38 and 27 mentions. Totnes and Dartmouth are especially popular within South Hams.
- **Sub-areas matter**: Places like Babbacombe (19), St Marychurch (18), and Wellswood (10) show that respondents often think in terms of neighbourhoods, not just towns.
- **General terms like “Torbay” or “Devon” reflect regional identity**, with 213 and 17 mentions respectively suggesting some respondents view their social life as spread across multiple towns.

Key Themes

- **Coastal and Harbour Appeal**: Seafronts, harbours, and promenades are consistently popular—especially in Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham.
- **Multi-Town Socialising**: Many respondents referenced combinations like “Torquay and Paignton” or “All of Torbay,” indicating fluid movement across the bay.
- **Cultural vs. Casual**: Exeter, Totnes, and Plymouth are often mentioned for cultural events, while Torquay and Paignton dominate casual socialising.
- **Local Identity**: Neighbourhood-level references (e.g. Wellswood, Chelston) suggest strong local attachment and nuanced perceptions of place.
- **Out-of-Area Aspirations**: Some respondents prefer socialising outside Torbay, citing safety, variety, or quality of amenities.

Summary table of Themes & Findings

Key Findings	Summary
Top Mentioned Area	Torquay leads with 342 mentions
Other High Mentions	Paignton, Torbay, and Brixham are frequently cited
Out-of-Area Destinations	Exeter, Plymouth, and South Hams are popular for cultural and leisure events.
Sub-Area Popularity	Smaller zones like Babbacombe, St Marychurch, and Wellswood show strong local identity.
General Regional Terms	“Torbay” and “Devon” used broadly, reflecting regional pride or fluidity.
Combination Mentions	Many respondents referenced multiple towns, indicating cross-area socialising.
Coastal Preference	Harbours and seafronts are consistently popular for social and scenic appeal.
Cultural vs Casual Split	Exeter and Totnes for culture; Torquay and Paignton for everyday socialising.
Local Attachment	Frequent neighbourhood-level references suggest strong place-based identity.
Aspirational Mobility	Some prefer socialising outside Torbay for better amenities or safety.

Common Themes	Summary
Coastal and Harbour Appeal	Coastal settings are central to social life, especially in Torquay and Paignton.
Multi-Town Socialising	Respondents often move between towns, seeing the bay as a connected social space.
Cultural vs. Casual Activities	Cultural outings tend to happen outside Torbay; casual socialising is local.
Local Identity and Nuance	Specific neighbourhoods are named, showing detailed perceptions of place.
Out-of-Area Aspirations	Some respondents seek cultural depth or safety in places beyond Torbay.

Businesses

Question: Where are your customers generally based?

46 respondents

Torbay itself mentioned 20 times, making it the most frequently cited location. Within Torbay, Torquay appears 5 times, followed by Brixham (3 mentions) and Paignton (once). The surrounding regions also feature prominently, including South Hams (3 mentions), South Devon (2), and Devon more broadly (2). Broader geographic references include the Southwest (once), UK-wide (5 mentions), and International or global customers (3 mentions). There are also general descriptors like “locally in the Bay” and “all over the country,” which suggest a mix of local and national reach.

Question: Where are your suppliers generally based?

46 respondents

The supplier location data reveals a strong local sourcing pattern, with Torbay—including references to Torquay, Brixham, Paignton, and “the bay”—mentioned 20 times, making it the most frequently cited area. Broader regional references such as Devon (including “Devon and Cornwall”) appear 7 times, while the Southwest is mentioned 5 times, reinforcing the prominence of suppliers within the immediate geographic vicinity. Additionally, local, or locally based suppliers are noted in 5 responses, suggesting a preference for proximity even when not tied to a specific town. On a wider scale, national or UK-wide sourcing is mentioned 5 times, with regional and national coverage appearing in 2 entries. Less commonly, suppliers from the Midlands or Birmingham are cited twice, and international or EU-based suppliers also receive 2 mentions. A single response references Newton Abbot, and 3 entries indicate either no suppliers or that the question was not applicable.

Question: Where are your clients / customers / service users generally based? 13 respondents

Torbay was the most frequently mentioned location, appearing nine times in various forms such as “Over Torbay,” “Across Torbay,” and “Within the borough of Torbay.” Paignton and Torquay were jointly referenced once, while Brixham appeared once as a standalone mention. Broader regional terms like “South Devon” and “Torbay and surrounding areas” were each cited once, indicating occasional recognition of a wider service reach beyond the core Torbay area.

Question: Where are your partners generally based? 13 respondents

Torbay was the most frequently mentioned location, appearing in 10 entries. This includes varied phrasing such as “Within the borough of Torbay” and “Over Torbay,” all consolidated under a single category for clarity. Each of the following areas—South Hams, Plymouth, Exeter, Bristol, Teignbridge, Cornwall, East Devon, and Devon were mentioned just once and by one respondent, indicating a much lower level of representation. One response did not specify a location. This distribution highlights a strong geographic concentration of partners in Torbay, with only limited references to surrounding districts.

Question: What do you like about the area where you live, work, or represent?

What Residents Value About Living in Torbay

- **Natural Beauty Is Central:** The coastline, beaches, and countryside are overwhelmingly cited as the area’s greatest assets. This theme is tightly linked to quality of life and wellbeing.
- **Community Connection Matters:** Respondents value knowing their neighbours, local events, and grassroots initiatives. Brixham and St Marychurch are frequently mentioned as having strong community identities. There is a desire to preserve this local character amid broader changes.
- **Quiet and Peaceful Living:** Many respondents appreciate the calm and safety of the area. Key elements cited: low crime, slower pace of life, quiet streets, and a sense of security. Demographic nuance: This theme is especially common among older residents and families.
- **Accessibility Enhances Liveability:** Many appreciate being able to walk to shops, parks, and the seafront. Good bus and rail links are noted, especially for older residents and those without cars.
- **Local Services & Amenities:** Residents appreciate having essential services nearby. Key elements cited: local shops, schools, healthcare, libraries, and council services. Positive mentions: SWISCo, clean streets, well-maintained parks, and responsive local staff.
- **Distinct Identity:** There’s pride in Torbay’s uniqueness and cultural heritage. Key elements cited: fishing heritage, independent shops, local traditions, and sense of place. Place-specific highlights: Brixham’s working harbour and Paignton’s seaside character are often mentioned.

Challenges Highlighted by Residents

- **Economic Concerns:** Views on regeneration and investment are mixed, with both optimism and frustration expressed, including lack of job opportunities, seasonal economy, reliance on tourism, and uneven development. Regeneration is slow, superficial, or focused on the wrong areas.
- **Criticism / Neglect:** Some residents feel their area is overlooked or poorly maintained. Rundown town centres, empty shops, poor maintenance, and lack of council responsiveness. Frustrated but constructive—many respondents offer ideas or express hope for improvement.

Summary Table of Priorities

Theme	Summary
Natural Beauty Is Central	Coastline, beaches, and countryside are key assets linked to wellbeing.
Community Connection Matters	Strong local ties in areas like Brixham and St Marychurch; desire to preserve character.
Quiet and Peaceful Living	Low crime, calm streets, and safety valued—especially by older residents and families.

Accessibility Enhances Liveability	Walkability and public transport praised, especially by non-drivers and older adults.
Local Services & Amenities	Appreciation for nearby shops, schools, healthcare, and clean public spaces.
Distinct Identity	Pride in Torbay's heritage, traditions, and unique seaside character.

Challenge	Summary
Economic Concerns	Mixed views on regeneration; concerns about jobs, seasonal economy, and uneven investment.
Criticism / Neglect	Frustration over rundown areas, poor maintenance, and lack of council responsiveness.

Question: What would you like to be improved in your area?

Key findings & Themes:

Town Centre Regeneration

- Revitalize Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham town centres.
- Address derelict buildings, empty shops, and stalled projects.
- Improve retail mix, reduce parking costs, and support local businesses.
- Restore heritage sites like Oldway Mansion and the Pavilion.
- Ensure regeneration benefits residents, not just tourists.

Anti-Social Behaviour & Safety

- Tackle drug use, street drinking, vandalism, and noise.
- Increase visible policing and community patrols.
- Enforce speed limits, parking rules, and public space standards.
- Improve lighting and safety in residential and town centre areas.

Housing & Homelessness

- Expand affordable and social housing for locals.
- Prioritize brownfield redevelopment over greenfield sprawl.
- Improve housing quality and hold landlords accountable.
- Provide compassionate support for homeless residents and vulnerable groups.

Roads & Transport

- Repair potholes, resurface roads, and improve signage.
- Expand bus routes and Sunday services, especially for non-drivers.
- Improve cycling infrastructure and pedestrian access.
- Address congestion, parking pressures, and poor connectivity—especially in Brixham.

Council Services & Governance

- Improve transparency, accountability, and resident engagement.
- Reduce bureaucracy and political infighting.
- Ensure fair planning decisions and better use of community assets.
- Strengthen local representation and consider restructuring Brixham Town Council.

Healthcare & Public Services

- Increase access to NHS dentists, GPs, and hospital services.
- Reopen Paignton Hospital with A&E and diagnostics.
- Improve mental health, social care, and SEND support.
- Address infrastructure gaps tied to housing growth.

Children, Youth & Community

- Invest in youth clubs, play parks, and low-cost activities.
- Improve SEND services and intergenerational engagement.

- Create safe, inclusive spaces for young people across the Bay.

Economy & Employment

- Attract year-round, well-paid jobs beyond tourism.
- Support small businesses, independent shops, and local enterprise.
- Encourage tech, blue economy, and remote work sectors.
- Reform developer contributions to support community infrastructure.

Cleanliness & Environment

- Increase street cleaning, weed removal, and bin provision.
- Improve recycling systems and reduce visual clutter.
- Protect green spaces, seagrass beds, and wildlife areas.
- Address sewerage spills, flooding, and environmental neglect.

Accessibility & Public Realm

- Improve disability access across pavements, beaches, and transport.
- Maintain communal areas, parks, and street furniture.
- Ensure inclusive design and compliance with the Equality Act.
- Restore pride in the Bay's appearance—from gateways to green spaces.

Community Priorities Summary Table

Theme	Main Points
Town Centre Regeneration	Revitalize Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham centres; address derelict buildings; support local shops; complete stalled projects; restore heritage sites.
Anti-Social Behaviour & Safety	Tackle drug use, street drinking, vandalism, and noise; increase visible policing; enforce speed limits and parking rules; improve safety in public spaces.
Housing & Homelessness	Expand affordable housing; prioritize brownfield sites; improve housing quality; support homeless residents; stop overdevelopment on greenfield land.
Roads & Transport	Repair potholes and resurface roads; improve bus services (especially Sundays); enhance cycling and walking infrastructure; address congestion and parking.
Council Services & Governance	Improve transparency and accountability; reduce bureaucracy; ensure fair planning; engage residents in decision-making; restructure Brixham Town Council.
Healthcare & Public Services	Increase access to GPs, dentists, and hospital services; reopen Paignton Hospital; improve mental health and SEND support; address infrastructure gaps.
Children, Youth & Community	Invest in youth clubs, play parks, and low-cost activities; improve SEND services; create inclusive spaces; support intergenerational engagement.
Economy & Employment	Attract year-round, well-paid jobs; support small businesses; encourage tech and remote work sectors; reform developer contributions; diversify local economy.
Cleanliness & Environment	Increase street cleaning and weed removal; improve bin systems; protect green spaces and wildlife; address flooding and sewerage spills; enforce litter rules.
Accessibility & Public Realm	Improve disability access across pavements, beaches, and transport; maintain communal areas; ensure inclusive design; comply with Equality Act standards.

Question: Are there any other aspects of local government that are important to you, which are not included in the previous question?

Key themes & findings:

Local Representation & Accountability

- Strong desire for councillors who live locally, understand the area, and are not bound by party politics.
- Calls for greater accountability of councillors and council staff, including transparency in decision-making and justification of expenses.
- Frustration with political infighting and lack of responsiveness to residents.

Communication & Engagement

- Repeated emphasis on meaningful consultation, feedback loops, and resident involvement in decisions.
- Requests for face-to-face contact, easier access to council departments, and less reliance on digital-only systems.
- Desire for clear communication about council activities, spending, and planning decisions.

Efficiency & Service Delivery

- Concerns about bureaucracy, slow planning processes, and wasteful spending.
- Calls for value for money, streamlined services, and better responsiveness.
- Suggestions for improved digital services, AI use, and smarter working models.

Infrastructure & Environment

- Frequent mentions of road maintenance, street cleanliness, fly tipping, and public toilets.
- Desire for preservation of green spaces, heritage buildings, and local identity.
- Criticism of vanity projects and neglect of non-tourist areas.

Social Issues & Public Safety

- Strong concern about homelessness, drug use, and anti-social behaviour, especially in town centres.
- Requests for visible policing, support for vulnerable groups, and better social care.
- Emphasis on mental health, SEND provision, and affordable housing.

Economic Development & Tourism

- Mixed views on tourism; some see it as vital, others feel it diverts resources from residents.
- Calls for support for local businesses, job creation, and balanced investment across the Bay.
- Suggestions for more events, better transport links, and revitalized town centres.

Summary table

Theme	Condensed Core Concerns & Priorities
Local Representation & Accountability	Preference for locally rooted, independent councillors; demand for transparency and responsiveness.
Communication & Engagement	Desire for genuine consultation, in-person access, and clearer, more inclusive communication.
Efficiency & Service Delivery	Frustration with bureaucracy and delays; calls for smarter systems and better value for money.
Infrastructure & Environment	Concerns over maintenance and cleanliness; support for preserving green spaces and avoiding vanity projects.
Social Issues & Public Safety	High concern about safety and vulnerability; emphasis on policing, mental health, and housing support.
Economic Development & Tourism	Mixed views on tourism; calls for balanced investment, local business support, and town centre renewal.

Question: Are there any other priorities of local government that are important to you, which are not included in the previous question?

- **Policing & Public Safety:** Strong demand for visible policing, crime prevention, and tackling anti-social behaviour.
- **Town Centre Regeneration:** Desire for cleaner, safer, and more vibrant shopping areas and public spaces.
- **Roads & Infrastructure:** Frequent complaints about potholes, poor road conditions, and drainage issues.
- **Healthcare Access:** Concerns about NHS services, especially Torbay Hospital, mental health, and dental care.
- **Housing & Affordability:** Issues with affordable housing, second homes, and rogue landlords.
- **Youth Services & Opportunities:** Requests for youth clubs, leisure centres, and better support for young people.
- **Environmental Protection:** Interest in climate action, clean beaches, green spaces, and net zero goals.
- **Transport & Connectivity:** Need for improved public transport, cycle lanes, and integrated travel options.
- **Local Governance & Transparency:** Calls for more local decision-making, accountability, and open communication.
- **Support for Local Businesses:** Suggestions for lower rates, incentives, and revitalization of retail and tourism.
- **Social Care & Vulnerable Groups:** Support for elderly, disabled, SEND, and those facing addiction or homelessness.
- **Cleanliness & Maintenance:** Complaints about litter, weeds, public toilets, and general upkeep.
- **Community Engagement & Identity:** Emphasis on civic pride, cultural promotion, and stronger community voice.

Additional Findings

- Many respondents felt the previous question's limit of five priorities was too restrictive.
- Safety concerns were often linked to economic and social wellbeing.
- Respondents want visible, tangible improvements—not just strategic plans.
- There is a strong desire for local pride and identity to be reflected in council actions.

Question: Do you have any final comments for us to consider?

Key findings and themes:

- **Local Identity and Autonomy:** Respondents expressed strong pride in Torbay's distinct character and recent achievements. Many voiced concerns about losing local control and representation if governance structures change, emphasizing the value of maintaining a locally focused council.
- **Mixed Views on Reorganisation and Merger Opinions were divided:** some saw potential benefits in efficiency and service integration, while others feared increased bureaucracy, reduced accountability, and disruption to progress. A few suggested modest boundary changes over full-scale merger.
- **Council Performance, Trust, and Transparency:** Several comments criticized political infighting, lack of professionalism, and perceived bias in consultation processes. There were calls for clearer communication, more inclusive engagement, and stronger leadership.
- **Public Safety and Cleanliness in Town Centres:** Concerns centred on antisocial behaviour, drug use, and poor maintenance in areas like Castle Circus and Paignton.

Respondents urged more visible policing, enforcement, and investment in town centre regeneration.

- **Infrastructure and Local Services:** Feedback highlighted the need for improved roads, public toilets, parking, and transport links. Many called for practical upgrades to everyday services that directly impact residents' quality of life.
- **Youth Services, Leisure, and Employment Opportunities:** Respondents advocated for more activities and support for young people, including leisure facilities, job creation, and entertainment options. These were seen as vital for community wellbeing and retention of local talent.
- **Equitable Treatment Across Torbay Towns:** There was a perception that Torquay receives disproportionate investment compared to Paignton and Brixham. Calls were made for fairer distribution of resources and attention across all towns.
- **Local Decision-Making and Resident Engagement:** Many emphasized the importance of keeping decisions local and involving residents meaningfully. Suggestions included better consultation methods, clearer communication, and more accessible council services.
- **Concerns About Consultation Design and Bias:** A subset of respondents questioned the neutrality of the survey itself, suggesting it was designed to favour the status quo. This eroded trust and highlighted the need for more transparent engagement processes.
- **Desire for Visible Improvements and Practical Action:** Across themes, there was a consistent call for tangible, visible changes—whether in infrastructure, safety, or services. Respondents want to see real outcomes from consultations and policy decisions.

Summary Table of Priorities

Theme	Summary
Local Identity and Autonomy	Pride in Torbay; concerns over losing local control.
Reorganisation and Merger	Mixed opinions: some support, others fear disruption.
Views	
Council Performance & Transparency	Criticism of leadership; calls for clearer communication.
Town Centre Safety & Cleanliness	Issues with antisocial behaviour; need for policing and upkeep.
Infrastructure & Services	Requests for better roads, toilets, parking, and transport.
Youth, Leisure & Employment	More jobs, activities, and spaces for young people.
Fairness Across Towns	Perception of unequal investment; calls for balance.
Local Decision-Making & Engagement	Support for resident-led decisions and better consultation.
Consultation Design & Bias	Concerns about survey neutrality and trust.
Visible Improvements & Action	

Section Three – Top priorities

Question: Based on the information provided above, to what extent do you think Torbay Council remaining as it is meets the outcomes Government expects us to consider?

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Supporting local identity	639	246	144	160	217	24

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Sensible geography for economic and housing growth	469	311	153	197	268	32

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Enabling stronger community engagement	657	256	156	144	202	15

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
High quality and sustainable services	509	327	134	151	287	22

Question: Of the following, what aspects of local government are most important to you and your community? Please select at most 5 options.

Rank	Statement	References
1	Good understanding of the issues facing your local area	1131
2	Efficient services which offer value for money	951
3	Clear, open, and transparent decision-making	909
4	Decisions that impact you, being made locally	756
5	Easy access to the council services you need	749
6	Improved service delivery	640
7	Supportive and accessible local ward councillor(s)	409

8	Clarity around who is responsible for different services	407
9	Easy access to in-person support	214
10	Council offices being nearby	158
11	Council decisions being made in easy travelling distance to my local area	156

Question: What should be the top priorities when deciding the future model of local government for the whole of Devon? Please select at most 5 options.

Rank	Service Area	Reference Count
1	Local places (libraries, parks, toilets, sports centres, beaches)	795
2	Safe and maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking, bike paths	759
3	Protecting the environment and keeping it clean	754
4	Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities	684
5	Keeping children safe from harm	676
6	Recycling, rubbish collection, and waste disposal	560
7	Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults	489
8	Education services (school admissions, transport, SEND support)	487
9	Building-related services (planning, building control, heritage, housing)	350
10	Supporting and empowering local groups	290
11	Helping people stay healthy (drug/alcohol support, health checks)	270
12	Community safety and standards (trading standards, licensing, air quality)	258
13	Support with housing needs, council tax, and benefits	195

Section Four – Respondent demographics

1324 respondents lived in Torbay. 450 worked in Torbay and 113 ran businesses in Torbay. 59 represented community organisations in Torbay. 10 respondents studied in Torbay.

The five most common postcodes of respondents were:

- TQ2 covering Torquay (304 mentions),
- TQ1 representing central Torquay (303 mentions),
- TQ4 which covers central Paignton (235 mentions),
- TQ5 represents Brixham (195 mentions), and
- TQ3 which includes parts of Paignton (174 mentions).

There were 28 postcodes from other local areas, and 192 respondents did not list a postcode.

93% responded in their capacity as a Torbay resident, 3% were businesses and 1% were voluntary sector organisations.

The **sex** of respondents:

- 47% male
- 46% female
- 6% prefer not to say

The **age** of the respondents:

- 16 to 24 years old: 1.24%
- 25 to 34 years old: 3.89%
- 35 to 44 years old: 8.36%
- 45 to 54 years old: 15.06%
- 55 to 64 years old: 24.84%
- 65 to 74 years old: 25.08%
- 75 years old or above: 14.74%
- Prefer not to say: 6.79%

The **ethnic background** of respondents:

- White: 89%
- Prefer not to say: 8%
- Other: 2%
- Mixed ethnic background: 1%
- 4 people said they were Asian or Asian British
- 1 person said they were Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African

The **employment status** of respondents:

- Retired: 39.45%
- Working full-time in Torbay: 24.15%
- Working part-time in Torbay: 7.86%
- Self-employed (full-time or part-time): 7.53%
- Working full-time elsewhere in Devon: 6.95%
- Prefer not to say: 5.13%
- Other: 3.06%
- Working part-time elsewhere in Devon: 1.41%
- Temporary / Long Term Sick: 1.82%
- Looking after family / Unpaid Carer: 1.57%
- Student 0.83%
- Unemployed: 0.25%

The **disability** status of respondents:

- No: 76%
- Yes: 17%
- Prefer not to say: 7%

Condensed engagement survey responses:

The questionnaire asked the following questions:

- Please select all that apply - I live in Torbay, I work in Torbay, I run a business in Torbay, I represent a community organisation in Torbay, I study in Torbay, Other
- What is the postcode of your home / business / organisation
- Based on the information provided, are you in support of Torbay Council remaining as it is?
- What alternative option(s) for unitary local government in Devon would you prefer
- All demographic monitoring questions: sex, age, ethnic background, employment status, disability

All participants were residents of Torbay, with three currently working in the area and two representing local community organisations. Four out of five respondents supported Torbay Council remaining as it is, while one expressed a preference for an alternative arrangement—suggesting merging with Teignbridge.

These responses further support the views of those who answered the main survey.

Among the respondents, three identified as female and two as male. Age distribution was diverse: one participant was aged 25–34, one was 55–64, two were 65–74, and one was 75 or older. All individuals identified as white. Three were employed part-time in Torbay, while the remaining two were retired. One respondent reported having a disability; the other four did not.

Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2025, local government reorganisation has been a standing item on the agenda for the **Torbay Place Leadership Board**. This Board includes Torbay's Members of Parliament, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, South Devon College, and the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have discussed the Government's invitation and the potential options for Torbay and the rest of Devon.

Partner views were largely around how to preserve the momentum for Torbay, of which the Torbay Place Leadership Board has been a key driver. It was felt that Torbay offers very different services compared to other areas and this is a strength. Trusted relationships, knowledge, and understanding are already in place. Questions on behalf of the hospitality and tourism sector focussed on how to enable one voice into Government.

To ensure as wide a range of views from our stakeholders, between July and October 2025, a further series of meetings were conducted to gather insights. Those participants who could not attend were given the opportunity to provide digital feedback. The contributions are summarized below.

Monday 7 July 2025 – All Community Partnerships Meeting

The Leader of the Council attended the meeting of all the Community Partnerships facilitated by Torbay Communities. He outlined that all Devon councils had received identical letters requesting new proposals for local government reorganisation based on strong public engagement and robust financial modelling. He explained that, although a 500,000-population threshold was previously suggested, the Minister had clarified there is no fixed minimum with each case will be judged individually. Torbay must demonstrate why it should remain independent. He went on to explain the options currently under consideration.

Points raised by the attendees were around the potential loss of 90% of councillors with the associated increased workloads and shift toward full-time paid roles. The need to keep Torbay's local identity was raised, especially around the VCSE partnerships and integrated care system.

The financial risks were identified including the potential for Council Tax increases and Devon County Council's perceived financial instability. There were concerns about service quality and accountability, not least in respect of maintaining improvements in Children's Services and SEND provision.

Tuesday 15 July 2025 - Torbay Inclusion Partnership

A briefing note was shared with organisations who are part of the Torbay Inclusion Partnership beforehand with a summary on LGR to give individuals the opportunity to have some background understanding prior to the meeting. During the discussion, the following organisations fed back their thoughts on LGR: Eat That Frog, Intercom Trust, and Autistic After Hours. Feedback included broader engagement and outreach of the consultation, concerns about political representation and potential shifts in council values, and that the LGR process was too complex. Notes following the meeting were shared on 23 July and all actions completed to help address concerns.

The partnership organisations were keen for demographic monitoring to be collected, which was already included in the consultation. Communication with these organisations continued and social media posts about LGR were shared with them to help distribute amongst their networks.

Wednesday 3 September – Health and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector
(held with colleagues from South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council)

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust and Torbay, Plymouth and Devon VCSE Assembly

The size of local authorities (or any organisation), whilst important, never solves all the problems; there will always be a need for specialised services and co-operation. Similarly, whilst structure is important, the processes and relationships will always be more important and there is a need for conversations at grass roots. The NHS are already working across boundaries, and the boundaries of the NHS organisations are also changing.

The creation of unitary councils will make it easier to engage with education leaders to address services for those with SEND. There are opportunities around premises and estates as the NHS look to create Health and Wellbeing Centres with integrated neighbourhood teams which could be linked to council services.

NHS organisations would want to work with local authorities to help them achieve financial sustainability including considering the degree to which efficiencies can be shared. Collaboration is required, including in managing the market for adult social care, in order to provide the best public services. The ability to deliver collectively and have greater alignment between local authorities and the NHS would be welcomed.

There is really good positive working between some of the current local authorities and the VCSE sector which have been built up during and since Covid. There needs to be more structured input and support for VCSE infrastructure organisations and this needs to be built on, rather than lost, through the transition to unitary councils. We want the efficiencies of unitaries but built on the existing strengths.

There is a need to consider inequality of access, derived from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and which are strongly impacted by the coastal and rural dimension. There are staggering inequalities existing across quite small geographies.

Housing (e.g. rural housing, delivery of affordable housing, homes for young people, home for those with mental health issues) is one of the most transformational things you can do - there is a need to provide people with a good quality safe home. Poor housing is the biggest indicator of ill health after smoking.

Monday 8 September – Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay Communities, Citizens Advice, Healthwatch Torbay

The Leader of Torbay Council gave an overview on how the options were put together and the communication occurring across Devon with other authorities about boundaries and population sizes. He also discussed nearing the end of the process before the proposal is submitted and highlighted that more conversations are happening.

Healthwatch Torbay questioned how realistic it is to stay as we are. They said that Devon is a vast geographical area, and it could be a testing ground to try new things. However, they argued that a

smaller area is better to be innovative and supported Torbay remaining as it is. Highlighted that the Government haven't done any costings on what LGR would look like and keeping as we would reduce these costs. Their fall-back position would be to merge with Teignbridge and South Hams Citizens Advice emphasised that Torbay is approaching this in a radically different way compared to other Councils from conversations they have heard and expressed gratitude for being given the opportunity to contribute. Their biggest fear is a Torbay Unitary that won't even make it to the next stage.

Torbay Communities is fully in support of Torbay remaining as it is and said there are lots of partnerships working well for them due to Torbay's current size. They emphasised that going larger would undermine their ability to have strong relationships and build trust. From conversations, they said larger organisations are happy to stay as we are but that smaller organisations are less clear. They raised it is difficult to give an overview of the sector as there are over 800 organisations in VCSE. There is good integration between voluntary and statutory sector.

Voluntary sector partners have expressed concerns regarding future funding models, debating whether to pursue a unified Devon approach, seek additional funding, or maintain existing arrangements. Areas with high deprivation are seen as advantageous for securing funding, and there is a preference for simplified funding mechanisms, including greater involvement from parish councils. However, the absence of town councils in Paignton and Torquay is viewed as a disadvantage under a single Devon structure. The concept of forming a Mayoral Combined Authority (MSA) is seen as a strategic step toward collaboration among unitary authorities, offering enhanced powers and funding for transport, skills, and climate initiatives—without requiring structural change. Access to elected members and local democratic processes remains a concern, particularly for those in remote areas who face logistical challenges. Additionally, the importance of democratic representation, councillor workloads, and the ability to co-produce services effectively is emphasized, with concerns that larger geographic governance may hinder high-quality service design.

Tuesday 9 September – Business Representative Organisation

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay Hi Tech Cluster and Torquay Chamber of Commerce

Torquay Chamber of Commerce raised concerns about the potential transition to a Combined County Authority, suggesting estimated costs reaching £30 million according to Devon County Council. They raised Council Tax and housing figures. They also stated if Children's Services in Torbay are improving, why would we want to merge with areas of poorer practice. Also raised was Torbay Hospital and if we lost it then it could lead to redundancies and housing pressures.

Torbay Hi Tech Cluster raised that the potential of losing the Combined County Authority if Torbay became part of a wider Devon authority would be a concern, with the risk that this would diluting Torbay's distinct identity which is having a positive impact. This is of particular concern given its ageing workforce and unique economic profile.

The importance of Torbay's Hi-Tech Cluster was highlighted and its alignment with the Industrial Strategy, with a warning that broader governance could divert investment to larger cities like Plymouth and Bristol, undermining our "Spine of Innovation".

Maintaining separate identities for Devon, Torbay, and Plymouth is seen as vital for infrastructure support and strategic clarity. Priority outcomes include preserving low Council Tax rates, continuing improvements in Children's Services, and amplifying the voices of small businesses.

Torbay's strengths in creative industries, life sciences, and health—alongside assets like its nationally ranked cardiac unit - must be highlighted to secure future government investment and reinforce its relevance in national policy.

Tuesday 16 September - Torbay Trade Unions Joint Consultative Committee

Torbay Council's Director of Corporate Services gave a briefing to the Trade Union representatives, although no specific feedback was provided.

Wednesday 17 September – Housing Developers and Registered Providers

Stakeholders in attendance: Westward Housing, Baker Estates Ltd and Sanctuary

The Leader of Torbay Council gave an overview on how the options were put together. The only option that was currently ruled out by the council was the One Devon model as it would be too big. He discussed the challenges with the singular unitary council option and how this can impact sign off on planning matters.

There was an acceptance that areas are better served by unitary councils as they are more effective at moving things forward. There is also a need to unlock funding from government to help with housing challenges.

Queries were raised concerns with long term resilience for Torbay, with a recognition that there needs to be economic opportunities in Torbay as well as a need to expand the population.

The importance of identity of the population was raised alongside how that identity attracts tourism into the area. It would be important for this to be kept. Further, there are needs within Torbay which may not align with other areas.

The current scale of Torbay was highlighted as a strength meaning that communication with councillors is good. It was felt that as councils get larger it gets more difficult to liaise/communicate with councillors.

Thursday 18 September – Local Businesses

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Princess Theatre and The Federation of Small Businesses

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) highlighted that Torbay, Plymouth, and Devon are vastly different. Torbay has its own identity and is focused on tourism and leisure – the locations need to be separated based on this identity. They said that businesses across the county want equal access to support services, without the inconsistency of a postcode lottery. They're calling for streamlined processes and reduced red tape to make it easier to operate and grow. FSB said there is a strong push for local businesses to break out of their geographic silos and collaborate more widely, fostering stronger connections and unlocking new opportunities across the region.

Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust noted Plymouth's dynamic development and questioned Exeter's role, which the Leader of Torbay Council clarified and shared they have announced their position with plans to expand its population to around 300,000. The Trust said Torbay's key priorities include protecting its countryside, supporting tourism, and managing landscape pressures through strong partnership working. They state there is deep local pride in its identity, with concerns that it could be diluted under wider regional changes. However, while there is a risk of Torbay's voice being overshadowed, there is also a clear opportunity to strengthen its influence and amplify its voice through collaborative working across the Bay. There were concerns the

transition period would pose a risk due to the time it will take for changes to settle. However, a smooth and fast transition could be a significant advantage.

Princess Theatre said that from a young person's perspective, opportunities in Torbay can be limited, though the area feels stable and well-established. They said there is interest in supporting neighbouring areas like Salcombe, especially around off-season tourism and trade. Concerns were also raised about the future of cultural projects, such as theatre expansion, and the fate of council-owned buildings. In a larger authority, these issues may face delays and reduced local focus, with worries about Torbay's voice being lost and slower coordination among officers.

It was recognised that joining a larger authority could reduce focus on Torbay due to competing priorities. Some areas of Devon lack town councils, meaning Torbay might inherit wider financial burdens without local structures to devolve services. This shift could lead to greater emphasis on statutory services, potentially at the expense of local needs and initiatives.

Friday 19 September – Further education providers

(held with colleagues from South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council)

Stakeholders in attendance: Exeter College

There is a need for certainty about a future model of local government in Devon as well as joined up thinking across local government, education settings and agencies such as Homes England. There is a need for a local voice under a regional banner.

A reduced number of councils across Devon would help focus conversations, but there's a balance between economies of scale and local knowledge. Better join up between schools and further education would be welcomed, and councils can help facilitate this. There needs to be a forum where multi-agency conversations can happen, and a shared data source would be a further advantage

Friday 3 October - Torbay Association of Secondary Schools

An in-person meeting was attended by the Director of Corporate Services at Torquay Academy. The Association did not state a strong preference for any potential proposal but highlighted the risks of a wider Devon model.

Wednesday 22 October - Torbay Association of Primary Schools

An in-person meeting at Mayfield School was attended by the Director of Corporate Services. The Association noted the difficulties facing Torbay primaries arising from falling birth rates that Torbay and the wider area are experiencing. While the Association expressed a willingness to consider some expansion, they acknowledged that it carries increased risk and preferred a wider expansion if one was necessary. There was a clear message that SEND improvement must be considered carefully, especially in light of the challenges across the county.

Thursday 30 October – Statutory Stakeholder Engagement Event

Stakeholders in attendance: Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, University of Exeter, NHS Integrated Care Board, South Devon College, Devon Partnership NHS Trust, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority, and Torbay Communities

There was a wide-ranging recognition that, whatever new structure is put in place across Devon, there is a need for collaborative working across partner organisations. From NHS partners in particular, the need to work on both a wider scale and in communities was highlighted, as was the link between council services and improving people's physical and mental health.

There was a recognition that once final proposals were submitted, councils across the county would need to come together to both plan for transition and continue to develop proposals for a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

In addition to engagement meetings listed above, the Chief Executive continues to hold regular meetings with Brixham Town Council and local government reorganisation has been discussed. Subsequently, Brixham Town Council shared the following letter on 24 July 2025:

Dear Anne-Marie,

Thank you for inviting Brixham Town Council to respond to Torbay Council's engagement on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), launched on 1st July 2025. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important process, and the Town Council has considered the proposals in detail.

We understand that Torbay Council's preferred option is to remain as a standalone unitary authority. While we acknowledge the strengths that underpin this position — including local service improvements, a strong health and care partnership, and current financial stability — we believe there are broader considerations that warrant reflection as part of the final proposal to Government.

We take this opportunity to raise the following key points:

- Torbay's population (approx. 139,000) falls significantly below the Government's stated preference for new unitary authorities to serve populations of around 500,000 or more.
- Remaining unchanged may hinder Torbay's long-term ability to meet its strategic planning obligations. According to a recent appeal decision, Torbay Council has only a 1.7-year housing land supply, well below the Government's five-year requirement. This has weakened Torbay's ability to defend both its Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plans, placing additional development pressure on communities.
- The English Devolution White Paper (December 2024) highlights the importance of strategic geographies, collaborative governance, and avoiding "devolution islands." These principles may have implications for the sustainability of Torbay as a standalone authority.
- We agree that larger council structures do not automatically lead to better outcomes. However, we believe there is a strong case for exploring a 5-4-1 South Devon model,

where Torbay Council, South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge District Councils could come together to form a single, coherent unitary authority. This model may better align with Government expectations while remaining rooted in local identity. In addition, Brixham Town Council respectfully requests that Torbay Council:

- Recognise the value of broader community governance within Torbay, including the potential creation of additional town and parish councils. We note that areas such as Surrey are actively progressing the establishment of new parish councils as part of their reorganisation, which may offer useful lessons.
- Includes a review of Brixham's boundaries as part of any future Community Governance Review. Development is already being proposed on land bordering the current boundary, and it is likely that new residents will rely heavily on Brixham's services and infrastructure. It is therefore appropriate and timely to assess whether the existing boundary continues to reflect the community Brixham serves.
- Ensure any future changes in local government structure or decision-making improve local representation and help services be delivered more effectively by and for the community.
- Ensure that Brixham Town Council is actively engaged in ongoing discussions, particularly where potential service or asset devolution is concerned, so that we can reflect this appropriately in our forward planning and budgeting.

We hope our response contributes to a constructive and forward-looking dialogue as Torbay Council develops its final proposal to Government.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hallett
Town Clerk

Appendix: Raising awareness of engagement

The engagement was widely promoted across a range of Torbay Council channels to encourage participation.

Press release

At significant milestones through the development of proposals, media releases were issued for onward sharing through online news outlets, newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio. This has been complemented by articles, interviews, and quotes from the Leader of Torbay Council, including the Leaders Columns in local newspapers.

The first press release was issued on Friday 1 July launching the consultation. A copy is published on Torbay Council's website: www.torbay.gov.uk/news/pr9238-1/

The second press release was issued on Thursday 31 July extending the consultation to 31 August. A copy is published on Torbay Council's website: www.torbay.gov.uk/news/pr9343/

Newsletters

The consultation was promoted through several council led newsletters internally and externally. Existing internal engagement channels within Torbay Council will be used to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the key milestones in the development to proposals, to seek their input as well as providing reassurance about the impact or otherwise on their existing roles. These were used to share information with residents and businesses across Torbay.

External

- From 1 July to 2 September 2025, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **One Torbay** residents' e-newsletter 7 times. Subscribers clicked through to the consultation webpage 638 times and to the survey directly 300 times.
- On 1 July and 1 September, there were two **One Torbay Special Edition's** sent. In the first newsletter, the Torbay interim plan link was clicked 392 times, Princess Theatre Presentation 126 times, webpage 83 times and the survey 170 times. On the second newsletter, the survey link was clicked 505 times.
- On 29 July, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **Business News** newsletter. The link to the LGR survey received 3 clicks.
- On 24 July, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **SEND newsletter**. The link to the LGR survey received 3 clicks.
- On 25 July, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation was featured in the **Carers Newsletter**.

Internal

- The consultation was featured every week in Torbay Council's weekly **Staff News** email throughout the consultation period to keep staff updated and reassured. A bulletin was circulated on 1 July when the consultation was launched. The survey was clicked 181 times and the LGR webpage 56 times.
- The consultation was also shared at an **All Colleague's Briefing** which is an open forum from the Chief Executive who provided an update on the consultation and LGR.
- The results of the feedback were shared with colleagues at an **All Colleague's Briefing** along with an overview of the timeline taking colleagues through the key decision points until 28 November.

- We also held monthly **Ask Us Anything** sessions where smaller groups of staff come together online to ask any questions of our senior leaders. LGR was a topic of discussion as all of these forums during and since the consultation period.
- **All Colleague's Briefing** was filmed and shared for those staff members who missed the Chief Executive update.
- Managers were kept up to date through a monthly **managers forum** along with frequent manager briefings and sharing information on a dedicated Teams channel.
- All colleagues were asked to give any feedback via the survey or direct through our engagement inbox.
- There were five **Members' Briefings** circulated throughout the LGR consultation. The open rate was good throughout, with 53 and 52 opens out of a possible 54 on the first two briefings, respectively.

Existing internal engagement channels within Torbay Council have been used to make sure that all colleagues are aware of the key milestones in the development of proposals. We have constantly sought their input, encouraging them to share with their peers, and providing reassurance about the impact or otherwise on their existing roles.

Website

A dedicated page on the Council's website was established (www.torbay.gov.uk/lgr/) and has included information about the development of proposals for local government reorganisation. It has also included an informative FAQ section. This has been updated on a regular basis. We have been able to signpost stakeholders to the website for more detailed information throughout the consultation and engagement period. The statistics presented below are based solely on website visitors who consented to cookie tracking upon accessing the Council website. Consequently, the data reflects only a subset of total site traffic and may not represent the full spectrum of user activity.

Traffic Acquisition Reporting: data 12 September. This highlights the sources driving website sessions to the LGR webpages, capturing insights on both new and returning visitors.

- 149 visits came from organic Google searching
- 49 visits came from organic Bing searching (likely Council staff)
- 23 visits came from the BBC website
- 16 visits came from a link shared in Teams (likely Council staff)
- 9 visits came from a link shared on Facebook while on desktop
- 8 visits came from a link shared on Facebook while on mobile
- 7 from a paid Facebook post
- 4 from organic Ecosia searching
- 3 from the Adelante app
- 3 visits to the trackable QR code on the LGR leaflet. A copy is shared after this section.

Furthermore, 169 visits came from direct / none. This means that Google Analytics does not know exactly where they came from, but this could be:

- By directly typing the URL in the browser
- Through a saved link
- Through a link from an offline document (Word or PDF)
- From a link shortener (e.g. bit.ly)
- From people using an ad blocker
- From redirects

An LGR leaflet was designed and launched on 11 August. It was distributed at engagement events held in Brixham and Paignton, at the reception area of Torquay Town Hall, and throughout all four libraries across Torbay. This encouraged participants to complete the survey when it was convenient for them. Circa 300 leaflets were distributed.



Engagement Events

Face-to-face communication and engagement are important to allow for discussion on specific topics, ensuring that feedback is captured and used to demonstrate open, transparent democratic accountability. During the consultation period for LGR, the team participated in three public engagement events across each of Torbay's towns to raise awareness and encourage community input. Senior Leadership and Council Members were present at each event, offering support and addressing political questions surrounding the potential restructure. Below are details of each of the events:

- Sunday 10 August – Babbacombe Fayre, Torquay
- Tuesday 12 August – Public Meeting at Brixham Town Hall
- Wednesday 20 August – Children's Week on Paignton Green

The Brixham event featured a comprehensive presentation on LGR, delivered by the Leader of the Council, opposition members, and the Council's Chief Executive. A total of 37 attendees were present, including 25 members of the public. Following the presentation, a short break was provided ahead of the Q&A session to give attendees time to complete the survey. Many residents had already submitted their responses prior to the event, with an additional 8 surveys completed on the night.

At the events in Torquay and Paignton the footfall was large, and the events were busy. Due to this nature, it was difficult to entice residents to discuss LGR and complete a long survey. To overcome this, printed leaflets with QR codes linking to the online survey were distributed to encourage digital participation. A shorter survey with key questions was also distributed at the event in Paignton to encourage participation. This received 5 submissions. There were 5 printed forms of the full survey completed at the event in Torquay. Social media posts were shared following each of the events, recognising community engagement.

Champions Network

On Friday 18 July, the Torbay Champions Network met at the Redcliffe Hotel in Paignton for an event with key speakers sharing updates from across the Council. A newsletter promoting the

event was sent on Friday 4 July. There was a total of 25 clicks to the dedicated LGR webpage on the Council webpage.

The Leader of the Council shared a presentation on LGR at the event. It welcomed 35 attendees, and three printed surveys were completed on-site, contributing valuable feedback.

Torbay Place Leadership Board

LGR has been a topic of discussion at Torbay Place Leadership Board meetings. Chaired by Jim Parker (Editor, Torbay Weekly), the Board brings together a diverse group of stakeholders representing sectors across both Torbay and Devon. Among its committee members are Torbay Council's Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond, and the Council Leader, Councillor David Thomas.

The full list of committee members is available online:

www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1988

Other communications:

- Library screens for whole of July and August
- Hot topic on council website for whole of July and August
- Article in Beach Hut for the months of July and August
- Place Leadership Board – email sent on 2 July with the link to survey and a request to share via networks
- Regular discussion at the MPs briefing meetings

Social media engagement

Brand Sentiment on social media

The consultation was promoted across the Council's corporate social media channels – Facebook, LinkedIn and Next-door. The LGR campaign reached 42.6K, with 59.9K impressions, 555 clicks, 123 comments, 164 likes and 61 shares.

The top performing posts for each channel can be seen in the following images.

Facebook top 3 by reach:

View post

torbaycouncil 

22 Aug 2025 | 17:03

 Local Government

Reorganisation (LGR)
Consultation Update

 We're currently in our consultation process on LGR, and we've been receiving a wide range of questions from our community. To help address these, we've created a series of short [read more...](#)



LIKES	26	SHARES	8
COMMENTS	19	CLICKS	16
REACH	3.7K	IMPRESSIONS	4.7K
ENG. RATE	1.54%	REACTIONS	30
		SAVES	NA



1

3.7K
REACH

View post



torbaycouncil

14 Aug 2025 | 14:01

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

On Tuesday, our community came together for an engagement event in Brixham discussing Local Government Reorganisation. Councillor David Thomas, Leader of Torbay Council, was joined onstage by



[read more...](#)

LIKES	11
COMMENTS	8
REACH	2.9K
ENG. RATE	1.06%

SHARES	2
CLICKS	11
IMPRESSIONS	3.2K
REACTIONS	13
SAVES	NA



View post



torbaycouncil

26 Aug 2025 | 13:40

Let's Talk Council Tax – What LGR Means for Torbay

We're continuing our Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) video series to answer your top questions and help explain what these changes could mean for our community.



[read more...](#)

LIKES	9
COMMENTS	13
REACH	2.8K
ENG. RATE	1.54%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	24
IMPRESSIONS	3.5K
REACTIONS	16
SAVES	NA



LinkedIn top 3 by reach

View post



torbay-council

14 Aug 2025 | 14:02

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

On Tuesday evening, we hosted an engagement event in Brixham focused on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Leaders, residents, and stakeholders gathered to explore LGR and what it means for



[read more...](#)

LIKES	6
COMMENTS	1
REACH	536
ENG. RATE	1.03%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	1
IMPRESSIONS	780
REACTIONS	6
SAVES	NA



[View post](#)

torbay-council in
28 Aug 2025 | 11:02

 What Does Local Government Reorganisation Mean for Torbay's Regeneration? In the penultimate episode of our Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) video series, Councillor David Thomas, Leader of Torbay Council, explores the bold regener [read more...](#)



LIKES	6
COMMENTS	0
REACH	352
ENG. RATE	2.63%

SHARES	1
CLICKS	6
IMPRESSIONS	495
REACTIONS	6
SAVES	NA

2
352
REACH

[View post](#)

torbay-council in
30 Aug 2025 | 11:01

 Final Call: Help Shape Torbay's Future A huge thank you to everyone who's already shared their views on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and what it could mean for Torbay. Your input is helping us shape a proposal that will be subm [read more...](#)



LIKES	2
COMMENTS	1
REACH	310
ENG. RATE	2.33%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	6
IMPRESSIONS	430
REACTIONS	3
SAVES	NA

3
310
REACH

Next-door top 3 by clicks (reach not available):

[View post](#)

Torbay Council n
26 Aug 2025 | 13:41

 Council Tax & Local Government Reorganisation - What It Means for Torbay Big changes could be coming to how local services are run—and how council tax is managed. Councillor David Thomas, Leader of Torbay Council, explains what might cha [read more...](#)



LIKES	1
COMMENTS	7
REACH	0
ENG. RATE	2%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	14
IMPRESSIONS	1.1K
REACTIONS	1
SAVES	NA

1
14
CLICKS

[View post](#)

Torbay Council 

21 Aug 2025 | 20:36

🌟 Thank You, Paignton!

We had a fantastic time meeting residents on Paignton Green during Children's Week. It was great to chat with so many of you about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and what it will mean for Torbay's future. Don [read more...](#)



LIKES	0
COMMENTS	4
REACH	0
ENG. RATE	1.02%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	6
IMPRESSIONS	979
REACTIONS	0
SAVES	NA



[View post](#)

Torbay Council 

30 Aug 2025 | 11:01

🔔 Final Reminder: Have Your Say on Torbay's Future! Thanks so much to everyone who's already shared their views on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Your feedback is helping shape the proposal we'll submit to the government by 28 Nov [read more...](#)



LIKES	0
COMMENTS	0
REACH	0
ENG. RATE	0.9%

SHARES	0
CLICKS	6
IMPRESSIONS	663
REACTIONS	0
SAVES	NA



The Communications Team have evaluated various aspects of the reception of the proposals on different social media platforms, and these results are summarised in this section. Our social media channels have many subscribers/users. Specific templates for social media posts relating to local government reorganisation have been developed (see section on branding). Posts have signposted stakeholders to events and engagement activity as well as being a means to collect views.

As seen above, there was far more engagement on Facebook than on other social media channels which demonstrates that this is the preferred channel of information for a lot of our residents.

Throughout the consultation period on **Torbay Council's Facebook** page (1 July – 2 September), across 16 Facebook posts, there was a total reach of 31,300, with 120 comments, 40 shares, 154 likes, and 46,500 impressions. Torbay Council's Facebook page currently has 17,828 followers with 83.4% living in Torbay and the rest locally, extending to Exeter and Plymouth.

Mixed feedback was received on the social media posts, particularly on Facebook. Time was spent responding to individual comments on the comments where genuine questions were asked, resulting in positive feedback and promptness of replies. In most cases, answers to questions were available on the FAQ section of the consultation webpage.

Social media paid advert

A paid social media ad was live from 14 August to 31 August. This included posts, stories and reels on Facebook and Instagram. It received a total of 3,723 clicks and helped to further engage with social media users.

YouTube Campaign

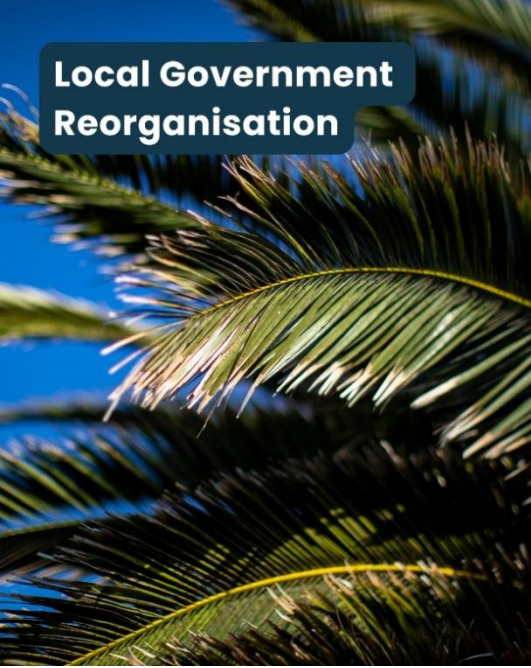
A YouTube film of the Leader of Torbay Council was shared, answering some of the most frequently asked questions by residents. The film had 164 views on Torbay Council's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/watch?v= tn6md00wu0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn6md00wu0)

Six shorter films were shared across Torbay Council's social media platforms during August, answering individual questions. The films received mixed responses, with positive and negative interactions from the public. These films received 1,552 views. Time was taken to answer genuine questions.

Branding

LGR digital branding was created and used across internal and external channels. Examples in different sizing is shown below:





Local Government Reorganisation

Acknowledgements

The author of this report acknowledges the assistance of Microsoft Copilot in the analysis and summarisation of community feedback. Copilot's capabilities in natural language process and data synthesis were instrumental in efficiently extracting and summarising key insights from the dataset.