

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)