

## Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 14 July 2025 at 5.00 pm**  
**Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton**

**Next ordinary meeting**  
**Monday, 18 August 2025 at 5.00 pm**

**Please Note:** This meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the public and press are able to attend via Teams. If you are intending to attend in person please contact the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

**The meeting will be hybrid and an audio recording made and published on the website after the meeting.**

To join the meeting online, [click here](#)

Meeting ID: 330 315 512 51

Passcode: vW99sk7i

### Membership

Cllr S Robinson  
Cllr C Adcock  
Cllr D Broom  
Cllr E Buczkowski  
Cllr A Cuddy  
Cllr G Czapiewski  
Cllr M Farrell  
Cllr C Harrower  
Cllr L Knight  
Cllr J Poynton  
Cllr R Roberts  
Cllr G Westcott

## A G E N D A

*Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place*

- 1 **Apologies and Substitute Members**  
To receive any apologies for absence and notices of appointment of substitute Members (if any).

- 2     **Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct**  
To record any interests on agenda matters.
- 3     **Public Question Time**  
To receive any questions from members of the public and replies thereto.  
  
Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is allowed for this item.
- 4     **Minutes of the previous meeting** *(Pages 5 - 14)*  
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on Monday 9 June 2025.
- 5     **Chair's Announcements**  
To receive any announcements that the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee may wish to make.
- 6     **Decisions of the Cabinet**  
To consider any decisions made by the Cabinet at its last meetings on 17 June and 8 July that have been called-in.
- 7     **Annual Corporate Performance Report 2024/25** *(Pages 15 - 46)*  
To receive a report from the Head of People, Governance and Waste and the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager on the Annual Corporate Performance for 2024 - 2025.
- 8     **Leader of the Council's Annual Report**  
To receive a verbal report from the Leader of the Council relating to the State of the District, the Cabinet's priorities for the coming year and its performance in the previous year.
- 9     **Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution** *(Pages 47 - 94)*  
To receive a report from the Chief Executive regarding the latest developments on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution.
- 10    **Work Programme** *(Pages 95 - 120)*  
To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the committee's future consideration, taking account of:
  - a) Any items within the Forward Plan for discussion at the next meeting;
  - b) Suggestions of other work for the committee in 2025/26 including two proposals;
    - National Planning Policy Framework and Mid Devon District Council's 5 Year Housing Plan
    - Extending/Enriching Apprenticeship Opportunities in Mid Devon District Council.

## **Guidance notes for meetings of Mid Devon District Council**

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Teams. If the Council experience technology difficulties at a committee meeting the Chairman may make the decision to continue the meeting 'in-person' only to conclude the business on the agenda.

### **1. Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at [Committee@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:Committee@middevon.gov.uk)

They can also be accessed via the council's website [Click Here](#)

Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

### **2. Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership.

The Code of Conduct can be [viewed here](#):

### **3. Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. Minutes of meetings are not verbatim.

### **4. Public Question Time**

Residents, electors or business rate payers of the District wishing to raise a question and/or statement under public question time are asked to provide their written questions to the Democratic Services team by 5pm three clear working days before the meeting to ensure that a response can be provided at the meeting. You will be invited to ask your question and or statement at the meeting and will receive the answer prior to, or as part of, the debate on that item. Alternatively, if you are content to receive an answer after the item has been debated, you can register to speak by emailing your full name to [Committee@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:Committee@middevon.gov.uk) by no later than 4pm on the day before the meeting. You will be invited to speak at the meeting and will receive a written response within 10 clear working days following the meeting.

Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible

### **5. Meeting Etiquette for participants**

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

For those joining the meeting virtually:

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.

- Switch off your camera if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using camera then please state your name)
- Switch off your camera and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called “turn on live captions” which provides subtitles on the screen.

## **6. Exclusion of Press & Public**

When considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act. If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed. They will be invited to return as soon as the meeting returns to open session.

## **7. Recording of meetings**

All media, including radio and TV journalists, and members of the public may attend Council, Cabinet, PDG and Committee meetings (apart from items Media and Social Media Policy - 2023 page 22 where the public is excluded) you can view our Media and Social Media Policy [here](#). They may record, film or use social media before, during or after the meeting, so long as this does not distract from or interfere unduly with the smooth running of the meeting. Anyone proposing to film during the meeting is requested to make this known to the Chairman in advance. The Council also makes audio recordings of meetings which are published on our website [Browse Meetings, 2024 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#).

## **8. Fire Drill Procedure**

If you hear the fire alarm you should leave the building by the marked fire exits, follow the direction signs and assemble at the master point outside the entrance. Do not use the lifts or the main staircase. You must wait there until directed otherwise by a senior officer. If anybody present is likely to need assistance in exiting the building in the event of an emergency, please ensure you have let a member of Democratic Services know before the meeting begins and arrangements will be made should an emergency occur.

## **9. WIFI**

An open, publicly available Wi-Fi network is normally available for meetings held in the Phoenix Chambers at Phoenix House.

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 9 June 2025 at 5.00 pm

**Present**

**Councillors**

S Robinson (Chair)  
C Adcock, D Broom, E Buczkowski,  
G Czapiewski, M Farrell, C Harrower,  
L Knight, J Poynton, R Roberts and  
G Westcott

**Apology**

**Councillor**

A Cuddy (online)

**Also Present**

**Councillor**

J Lock

**Also Present**

**Officer(s):**

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Lisa Lewis (Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement), Ewan Girling (Senior Information Officer) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

**Councillors**

**Online**

J Buczkowski, A Cuddy, G Duchesne, M Fletcher,  
A Glover, L Taylor and D Wulff

**Officers Online**

Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

**1 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (0:04:06)**

The Chair of the Committee invited nominations for the election of a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/26.

**RESOLVED** that Cllr G Westcott be elected Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and Seconded by Cllr R Roberts).

## 2 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (0:05:43)**

The Committee **AGREED\*** to meet at 5.00pm for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr E Buczkowski)

Note: \*Cllr R Roberts voted against.

## 3 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0:11:20)**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Cuddy who joined the meeting on-line.

## 4 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chair brought forward Item 7 Chair's Announcements.

## 5 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0:12:20)**

The Chair thanked her Colleagues for voting her into the position of Chair and mentioned:

- The Liberal Democrats had appointed one of their own to the position of Scrutiny Committee Chair because they believed that this arrangement had worked for the past 2 years and so it should continue.
- The Scrutiny Committee were there to service the needs of the widest Mid Devon community. What would be important was to find consensus in decision making.
- The core of the Committee's work should be to dig down into the roots of issues that came before them – to ask the most searching of questions that they could – in order to establish what the truth was.
- There were some hefty and important agenda items through the next 10 months – not least of which was decentralisation and local government reorganisation. Tasks that now resided with the County Council would need to be appropriately shared between the Unitary Authorities that were to be created – whilst still ensuring that the existing District Council carried out their duties to the best of their abilities.
- Parish and Town Councils would have a huge part to play, in any new models, so the Council needed to work even more closely with them, and to more fully understand their key concerns and issues.
- Utility companies and their failure to meet the demands of new developments, in servicing what was needed, and in future proofing, would need the Committee's Scrutiny. Serious concerns over infrastructure, needed to come well in advance of development, may well need the attention of the Scrutiny Committee, plus roads, schools etc. actually being built, rather than being on approved plans and then not being delivered.
- How did the Council move towards Net Zero by their target date of 2030 most effectively?
- New Planning Laws were now in place, with building challenges that were pretty daunting, and very worrying for us in a rural county that also needed farm land from which to feed our country's inhabitants. Developers were sitting on tracts of land that they owned, not building on it. The District was challenged, in physical geographical terms, by exactly where it was going to

be possible to build new homes in mid Devon. The District had so much beautiful and important landscape that cried out to be cared for, not built upon. By contrast it also had a huge demand for more social housing, in particular, but the Committee must never lose sight of what their residents most wanted, which was safe, economical to run, homes of their own, where they felt safe and secure and part of a community.

- Those residents from the District who chose to come and join Scrutiny Committee meetings, to prod at decisions the Committee were in the process of making, were welcome. They, should be accepted as ‘critical friends’ to the Council – taking the time, as they did, to read documents, talk to fellow residents, and to have the courage to come here and express their views. The Chair thanked them for their commitment to working with the Council, not against it, to find the correct solutions for residents.
- The Chair wanted the Committee to move forward, not backwards, in their endeavours, and asked that the Committee refrained from any attempt to dig up the past, beyond having lessons to learn from mistakes made, and also from successes achieved.
- Generally, the Committee’s agenda would include an item on decisions from Cabinet – it had been omitted, deliberately from this meeting, since Cabinet had not met since the last Scrutiny meeting.

## 6 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0:20:01)**

No declarations were declared under this item.

## 7 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0:20:23)**

**N Quinn** Regarding Agenda Item 9: The FOI Annual Report for 2024-25.

Paragraph 3.2 of this report, describes the partially upheld Decision Notice by saying: *“information was considered subject to legal professional privilege, but two of the five individual names redacted would have had a reasonable expectation of their name being placed in the public domain”*.

I think that this sentence could be considered as “Economical with the Truth”.

It says the some redactions were allowed and the release of two names was ordered - but that is not all...

It does not say that the Council was also ordered to release additional, wrongly redacted, information - or that 78 pages of information was released, on the advice of the Commissioner, prior to the Decision Notice being issued.

I have it on good authority that the request for a report was made in May 2024, but the Council said *“it was all exempt”*. When asked to review, the Council maintained that nothing would be released.

A complaint was sent to the Information Commissioner, who contacted the Council about how the request had been handled.

The Council then released:  
a 14 page report (with some redactions);

a 38 page Appendix (with minor redactions);  
a 24 page Appendix (with very minor redactions);  
and a 2 page Appendix (with no redactions at all).

Then in February 2025, after a total of nine months, the Decision Notice was issued.

**Question 1:** Does the Committee consider that this sentence, in the report, accurately reflects that 99% of the requested information was released?

**Question 2:** Does the Committee consider that this report informs Members of the problems that the public can have in obtaining information from this Council?

**Question 3:** Does the Committee consider it acceptable that a requester has to call in the Information Commissioner and wait nine months, in order to get 99% of the information requested?

The Chair thanked Mr Quinn for his questions and stated that he would receive a response within ten working days.

**Barry Warren** Regarding agenda items 8 and 9.

Firstly Madam Chair may I please compliment the Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement for the positive intentions set out in the report and I hope that they are progressed and achieved and will therefore make the whole system so much more available and transparent to members and the public.

**Question 1.** Is the time schedule set out in paragraph 3.1 in agenda item 8 report still considered to be achievable?

Moving to item 9, I must declare an interest in the cases set out at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5 and the questions I now raise would benefit from an answer but I would hope that in researching the answer the officer could assure members that lessons could be learned to prevent a repeat of the issue in the future.

**Question 2.** In the case at 3.3 the original request was for two documents and the response made no reference to one of them. A review was sought and again that document was not dealt with. Why was this request for a document completely ignored twice?

After the intervention of the Information Commissioner the ignored document appeared before the release of his final decision on the main document. Redactions were made to the main document contrary to the instruction of the Information Commissioner and the Council applied to a Tribunal to retain the redactions. The Tribunal did not take its full course as there was no point since the information redacted was elsewhere in the report unredacted.

**Question 3.** What procedures are being put in place to ensure that more care is being taken over understanding the requests made and ensuring all matters raised are addressed rather than some being ignored?

The case referred to in 3.5 resulted in the Information Commissioner issuing a Decision Notice for compliance by MDDC who did not fully comply with it. The case has been referred back to the Information Commissioner and given a new reference. I am aware that the Information Commissioner's Office has contacted MDDC and a new Decision is still awaited.

**Question 4.** How will this case be reported to Scrutiny Committee as it is not closed at this stage?

The Chair thanked Mr Warren for his questions and stated that he would receive a response within ten working days.

**Paul Elstone –** Regarding Agenda Item 10 Modular Home Value for Money Benchmarking Report.

I feel certain the Housing Officer will provide this Committee with a raft of reasons as to why he considers this Councils investment in Zed Pod's modular homes has provided net best value and come across as convincing when doing so.

I maintain a position Benchmarking Report being used to justify this position is fundamentally (fatally) flawed.

I hope you all have taken the opportunity to read the document plus attachments I have provided well in advance, and which details these fundamental flaws.

**Question 1**

The net cost calculations per square metre show that the Bristol Category 2 MMC development is by far the best value.

That the net cost per square metre of the Croft Estate – Sandford Development is 66% more expensive. Shapland Place is 58% more expensive.  
This when everything including grant funding is normalised.

The gross Internal floor area for the Bristol Development is 1,350 square metres yet the report calculation only equates to 900 square metres.

There are similar and very major calculation errors for the Eastleigh development seriously impacting the accuracy of the value for money benchmarking results.

Please explain the full reason for the 900 square metre calculation error. An error which seriously distorts benchmarking results?

## **Question 2**

This Council has a recent history of making disastrous financial decisions and related to Housing Projects.

3 Rivers including but not limited to St George's Court

Post Hill - Land acquisition and disposal.

Knowle Lane - Land acquisition.

Answers to questions asked at a Parliamentary Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> March this year stated the following:

"I have just come out of a meeting yesterday looking at Councils use of MMC and what the barriers were. They had a pretty negative view. Almost all council development people around the table had tried and were not going to do it again".

Also, and I again quote "we've been bitten. We are not doing that again". This with regard to build cost, financial exposures plus build quality.

I contend this Council has already been 'bitten' and by both cost and quality. That it has not given full consideration to its financial exposures.

Why does this relatively small council with limited technical resources plus financial reserves think it can deliver something very different compared to larger Councils and in doing so guarantee there will not be yet another financial mistake? A disaster.

## **Question 3**

My final question and one Chair I hope you will allow me to complete uninterrupted given it relates to health and well-being concerns for infants, the infirm and the elderly.

I have previously raised concerns about the potential of high temperature, overheating risk, at the Shapland Place development. Concerns which have been dismissed.

Concerns raised given resident's experiences at a Zed Pod development in Bristol and after internal temperatures of over 36 degrees C being reported.

At the Homes PDG meeting a Shapland Place resident and who is a single parent with a young child advised that they had already suffered uncomfortable temperatures as high as 30-degree C. Even feeling it necessary to fix a thermometer to an internal wall.

High temperatures this despite them opening windows. Windows known to have limited cross air (cooling) ventilation capacity.

With an internal temperature of 30 degrees C in May what will it be in a July or August heatwave?

It may not be commonly known but room temperatures above 22 degrees C have been attributed to sudden infant death syndrome.

The Report Table at paragraph 2.3 states Zed Pods “Meet or Exceed Overheating standards” Why is this stated if the Council does not have the proof of compliance in its possession?

The Chair thanked Mr Elstone for his questions and stated that he would receive a response within ten working days.

## 8 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0:33:11)**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 14 April 2025 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

## 9 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DASHBOARD FOR 2024/25 QUARTER 4 (0:33:49)**

The Committee received and **NOTED** the Freedom of Information (FOI) Dashboard\* for 2024/25 Quarter 4.

The Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement presented the Freedom of Information Dashboard for 2024/25 Quarter 4.

The following was highlighted:

- The Information Commissioner had closed two cases in the quarter, one was not upheld and the other was partially upheld and the relevant disclosures made.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The format for the disclosure logs to provide responses had now been agreed, it was currently in testing and would be available by the end of June 2025.
- An alert would be sent using social media, general communications and the Council’s website, letting members of the public know that the format of the disclosure logs had been amended.
- The work to update the publication scheme to allow the public to more easily locate information already publicly available was work in progress but should be available in late September 2025.

Note: \* Dashboard previously circulated.

## 10 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024-25 (0:38:20)**

The Committee received and **NOTED** the Freedom of Information Annual Report\* for 2024-25.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The 22 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests that had been received and not responded to were all for Devon County Council (DCC) and were passed on to DCC.
- There was a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the Council which stated the Council had to respond to requests within 20 days.

- The Lessons Learned Log was not available to Councillors or members of the public.
- The link on the Council website to FOI logs, referred to the number of clear working days (final column) that it took the Council to respond to the request. If a figure was marked zero it meant that the Council had responded the same day.
- The distinction between Environmental Information Requests (EIR) and FOI Requests and whether it was possible to separate the two types of request on the dashboard.
- A request to Benchmark FOI and EIR requests against other comparable Councils in Devon.
- FOI and EIR were two legislative frameworks with different origins that aimed to serve a similar purpose. FOI being of UK origin and EIR being of European Union origin. FOI covered the vast majority of information that was held and processed by the Council. EIR was designed to cover information that fell into environmental elements. In general terms; information that related to land, water, flora, fauna, air or air quality. The definition was quite broad and could cover information that was vicariously linked. For example the financial details of a business that affected the environment could if requested fall under EIR or FOI.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

## 11 **VALUE FOR MONEY AND BEST PRACTICE IN MID DEVON HOUSING MODULAR SOCIAL HOUSING AND DELIVERY REPORT (0:52:32)**

The Committee had before it a report \* from the Head of Housing & Health providing it with the strategic and policy context supporting the delivery of modular (modern methods of construction, MMC) social housing in Mid Devon.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The report had been considered at Homes Policy Development Group on 3 June 2025.
- The report provided strategic and policy context supporting the delivery of modular, modern methods of construction, (MMC), Social Housing in mid Devon. It provided further information in respect of value for money relative benchmarking with traditional and other types of schemes. It also set out the wider context in terms of the benefits of the programme with regard to regeneration, zero carbon, added or social value and sustainment of the Council's tenancies.
- Benchmarking was very difficult for construction projects; no two schemes were the same.
- This fair benchmarking exercise included external information supported by independent and authoritative sources such as Homes England, Other information came from publicly available sources, for example planning documents.
- Typically the Council's Zed Pod schemes were around 6 units in size, vying for brown field sites. Therefore, the wider schemes that had been used to benchmark had been selected to be as similar as possible in that context with regard to scale and the type of location.

- When it came to external grant requirements, external grant funding requirements with Homes England and the wider Ministry of Housing were very robust and independent.
- Section 5 of the report (Benchmarking) was a summary of one of the annexes which set out the data in more detail. The report tried to be as transparent as possible, and showed gross costs for the schemes as well as net costs after introductions for grants that had been awarded, for example, under the full homes programme. It was the cost to the Council that mattered, so the net cost was the most valid benchmark.
- The reduced cost to the Council was achieved by bringing forward the types of schemes the Council did, at the specification they were producing in relation to the Zed Pod modular schemes or similar, that way the Council were able to draw down that extra grant funding to bring down the net cost to the Council.
- Table 1 within the report showed how the schemes benchmarked in relative terms; almost all of the schemes were either in the top five or top seven of those two comparators.
- With regard to the Kingsland scheme in Bristol, whichever figure that was used in terms of metres squared for development, that scheme still fell within the bottom end of value for money in the table.

Consideration was given to:

- Homes England did not release the benchmarking data they used. The qualitative feedback from Homes England had been that the schemes this Council put forward were at the higher end of the value for money assessment.
- Some of the funding that the Council were very successful in securing was tailored towards specifically problematic sites, like the Brown Field Land Release Fund. That was there because the Government knew that those sites were viability challenged, they knew that they were problem sites and they knew that unless they intervened in them to support and give funding then, they would not come forwards because the viability did not work.
- The value for money element had three aspects: the cost net; the value to add to Mid Devon and the value add to UK Plc. Developing the building industry locally was one of the big benefits. Decreased carbon emissions, nationally improved household insulation, national adherence to building regulations.
- When MMCs, were discussed it would be useful to mention the category: complete build, partial build etc.
- Concerns with regard to the overheating of modular properties. The Council had only had one poor experience in the schemes that had been brought forward so far. Two factors had been identified; one there was an issue between two different people in the house adjusting the temperature, one person wanting it very high the other person wanting it a bit lower, the Council had also identified a potential fault with one item, which meant the heating was on a little bit too much and engineers were due to visit to remedy the fault
- A lot of the concern went back to one report in respect of one of the early Bristol schemes that Zed Pods put together and it was down to misinformation, in that one particular tenant misunderstood how the heating should be used. There was a lesson there for Bristol Council and for Zed Pods around how Council's on board new tenants, because the heating systems were a little different. As a result of that, a completely new tenant pack had been designed.

- Had any mid Devon building companies been approached to tender for the construction of those types of buildings? Unfortunately, at the moment with the approved procurement frameworks that the Council had to access for those type of projects, none of the companies on those frameworks were local companies. However, the Council had received approaches from a couple of companies which were starting up locally and were showing an interest in modular or forms of MMC building whereby the Council had supported them and, the Council had guided them in terms of how the procurement process worked, the quality control mechanisms that had to be in place to be awarded on a framework. Alternatively the Council would encourage working with some of the broader national manufacturers to see a manufacturing base in the southwest if that was possible.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

- a) The report be **NOTED**.
- b) Cabinet continues to adopt an HRA development programme with a focus on delivering MMC, modular net-zero social housing where possible and viable as part of the Council's future Housing Strategy.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Note: (i) \* Report previously circulated.

(ii) Cllr Broom was unable to vote to as he had left the meeting room during the discussion of the item.

## 12 **WORK PROGRAMME (1:20:54)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** the \*Forward Plan and the \*Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

Members were requested to put any items for the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan on a Scrutiny Committee work proposal form and submit it to the Clerk.

Suggestions made for the Work Plan were:

- Rural Transport for Colleges and Places of Education.
- Local Government Reorganisation (to confirm this was a standing item – confirmed on the next July meeting).
- Cullompton and Wellington Train stations.

Note: the \*Forward Plan and the \*Scrutiny Committee Work Programme were previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 6.24 pm)

**CHAIR**

## **Report for: Scrutiny Committee**

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Date of Meeting:	14 July 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Annual Performance Report 2024/25</b>
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Luke Taylor, Council Leader
Responsible Officer:	Matthew Page, Head of People, Governance & Waste  Dr Steve Carr, Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Planning, Environment and Sustainability Appendix 2: Community, People and Equalities Appendix 3: Homes Appendix 4: Economy and Assets Appendix 5: Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement Appendix 6: Performance Dashboards Q4, 2024/25

### **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

To provide Members with an annual report on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2024/25.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1. Members review and scrutinise the Performance Indicators and information detailed in this report.**

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 was adopted in July 2024. It is a strategy that documents, communicates and provides a framework for the delivery of strategic priorities. It provides a shared understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve. This ensures the public are aware of the Council's objectives, and can therefore hold the Council accountable.
- 1.2 The Corporate Plan has five themes: Planning, Environment and Sustainability; Community, People and Equalities; Homes; Economy and Assets; and Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement. Performance is presented thematically at Section 2 of this report and at Appendix 1-5.
- 1.3 These thematic areas are the basis of the Council's five Policy Development Groups. For each theme the Council outlines its Aims and a statement of objectives within the Corporate Plan. Performance measures are included for each theme, with targets, baseline data, and other important contextual information. These performance measures are used to manage the performance of the Plan.
- 1.4 Alongside the performance reporting of the Corporate Plan, the Council also presents data on a wide range of service specific and corporate performance indicators, Appendix 6. This is based upon the Performance Dashboards that the Council has been using since 2023. Corporate Plan indicators are presented in yellow text on the Dashboards. A [glossary](#) for the Performance Dashboards is on the Council's website and provides a definition for each performance and finance measure. The definitions aim to provide a fuller understanding of what is being measured and how.
- 1.5 The Corporate Performance Report is presented to Scrutiny twice per year – the quarter 2 report, and the annual report.

### **2.0 Performance Analysis for 2024/25**

#### Theme 1: Planning, Environment and Sustainability

- 2.1 Data on the Council's carbon footprint for 2024/25 will be available in July/ August and will be reported through the quarterly performance report. The carbon footprint for the Council in 2023/24 was 16,454 t CO<sub>2e</sub>. Through the Corporate Plan, targets have been set to reduce the carbon footprint to 14,500 t CO<sub>2e</sub> by 2027/28.
- 2.2 "Carbon emissions avoided (renewables and green transport)" is an aggregated indicator, made up of two indicators as outlined. Through generating electricity through solar panels, the Council avoided 88 t CO<sub>2e</sub> in 2024/25. This is ahead of the annual target of 50 t CO<sub>2e</sub>. Through the use of

electric vehicles in its fleet, the Council avoided a further 21.3 t CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2024/25 against an annual target of 10 t CO<sub>2</sub>e. This result demonstrates that electric vehicles are becoming embedded and well used as part of our fleet.

- 2.3 In 2024/25 six electric car rapid charger points were commissioned and installed, two at William Street, Tiverton, two at Forge Way, Cullompton, and two at Market Street, Crediton. The Council exceeded its target of four new charging points in 2024/25, and now hosts 22 charge points on its sites. The charging points were used 5,230 times in 2024/25.
- 2.4 External funding secured to deliver carbon reduction in the district was £75,378 in 2024/25 against a target of £100k. The Green Enterprise Grants drew in £24,245 funding from a bid to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund). Businesses awarded grants invested in energy saving and solar projects, and match-funded the grants by at least 50% or more. Therefore the Council generated over £50k additional value, with over £75k invested to deliver carbon reduction in the district.
- 2.5 Householder planning applications determined within 8 weeks was 99.5% for the past 12 months, and minor applications overturned at appeal was 0.2%. Both are comfortably ahead of target.
- 2.6 The Planning Enforcement Policy was adopted in 2024. Alongside this, resources were increased in planning enforcement enabling the team to serve enforcement notices/ prosecute landowners and developers undertaking unauthorised development in order to protect landscape and heritage interests.
- 2.7 The Council approved a new Local Development Scheme in March 2025. This sets out the timetable for preparing a new Local Plan for Mid Devon. The timetable for the production and adoption of the new Local Plan is based on the introduction of a new plan making system under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and new regulations expected in summer 2025. The timetable will be subject to review once the new plan making regulations have been introduced.
- 2.8 The Council has approved three biodiversity habitat banks within the district which provides an opportunity for development both within the district as well as across Devon to acquire Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) "credits". As such, BNG improvements within Mid Devon are currently supporting development in excess of our own requirements resulting in greater than 10% biodiversity net gain delivery.

## Theme 2: Community, People and Equalities

- 2.9 The Council supported the development of five community emergency plans by towns and parishes in 2024/25 (Cullompton, Bradninch, Willand, Nymet Rowland and Tiverton), ahead of the target of four per annum.
- 2.10 The Council supported the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise Sector secure additional external funding of £253k in 2024/25, against a target of £200k.
- 2.11 110 homes were made safe under the Housing Assistance Policy in 2024/25, ahead of the annual target (60 for 2024/25).
- 2.12 There were 162 new subscribers to the Let's Talk Mid Devon platform in 2024/25 (Target for 2024/25 was 400). In the year there were 8,886 visits to the platform, 948 contributions, and an engagement rate of 14.1 %. There are ongoing discussions with services to ensure it is the best platform for their needs and this work will feed into future planning around the platform.
- 2.13 There were 495 complaints in 2024/25, 93% were responded to within the target timescales, against a target of 85%.

## Theme 3: Homes

- 2.14 29 homes became part of Mid Devon Housing in 2024/25. Performance is behind target (100 homes for 2024/25). There have been challenges in year delivering projects due to delays with third parties. As part of this housing delivery, 8 of the homes were net zero (modern methods of construction) homes (target of 50 for 2024/25).
- 2.15 In 2024/25, 57 affordable homes (gross) were built/ created in Mid Devon (target of 94 in 2024/25).
- 2.16 At the end of the financial year there were 536 applicants on the Devon Home Choice waiting list (Band A-C). This represents an increase from 470 in Quarter 1.
- 2.17 In May 2024, the Council joined with Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council, and Teignbridge District Council to host the collaborative Rent Smart Devon event. The evening saw over 150 private landlords, agents and property professionals from across Devon listen to talks from property related professionals, browse exhibition stands and network with specialist companies covering many aspects of property management, as well as support organisations, available to help smooth the tenancy pathway.
- 2.18 In 2024/25, 72% of tenants were satisfied with the overall repairs service (target: 70%). This measure is set nationally as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

- 2.19 Another TSM which is part of the Corporate Plan is satisfaction that the home is safe. In 2024/25, 79% of Council tenants agreed that they felt their home was safe, against a target of 70%.
- 2.20 Support was provided to 100% of those experiencing homelessness in 2024/25. There was a slight decrease in the number of homelessness approaches in 2024/25 compared to the previous year (771 in 2024/25; 802 in 2023/24), but the complexity of cases is increasing.

#### Theme 4: Economy and Assets

- 2.21 In 2024/25, the Council arranged support for 187 events in our town centres, and four tourism events. Both performance indicators performed ahead of target for 2024/25.
- 2.22 The number of regular traders at the Pannier market was 84% in 2024/25 against a target of 85%, and a quarterly breakdown is provided at Table 1.

Table 1: Regular Traders at the Tiverton Pannier market, 2023/24 to present

Financial Year	Quarter	Regular Traders
<b>2023/24</b>	1	89 %
	2	85 %
	3	88 %
	4	81 %
<b>2024/25</b>	1	87 %
	2	84 %
	3	85%
	4	81%

- 2.23 The Tiverton Work Hub project was successfully delivered through the Shared Prosperity Programme. The Work Hub will be launched in 2025/26. The Council also supported Petroc with its creation of a state-of-the-art Cotie Business Innovation Centre which provides advanced technology-based facilities also funded through the Shared Prosperity programme. This includes access to innovation space for businesses to meet and work and access the latest technological equipment.
- 2.24 Businesses supported (non-financial support) was 342 in 2024/25, ahead of the target of 250.
- 2.25 Works are progressing well with the delivery of the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road, which is anticipated to start in summer 2026. Land assembly is going well with the acquisition of four land parcels including the Tesco land. A Compulsory Purchase Order process to acquire other land parcels will commence imminently. Works continue to relocate the sports clubs that are

effected by the road. A final Business Case was submitted to Department for Transport Rail last year for the Cullompton Railway Station but the Restoring Your Railway programme was stopped by the new Government, thus affecting the target in the Corporate Plan to reopen the station by 2026.

- 2.26 The Council has commercial and retail properties available for lease in Tiverton and Cullompton, and also leases space at Phoenix House. 1.7% of the available commercial leases were vacant at the end of 2024/25, performing ahead of target (5%).

## Theme 5: Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement

- 2.21 Staff turnover at the Council for 2024/25 was 16.3%, Figure 2. Performance was ahead of target (17%) and is the lowest staff turnover recorded by the Council since 2020/21.

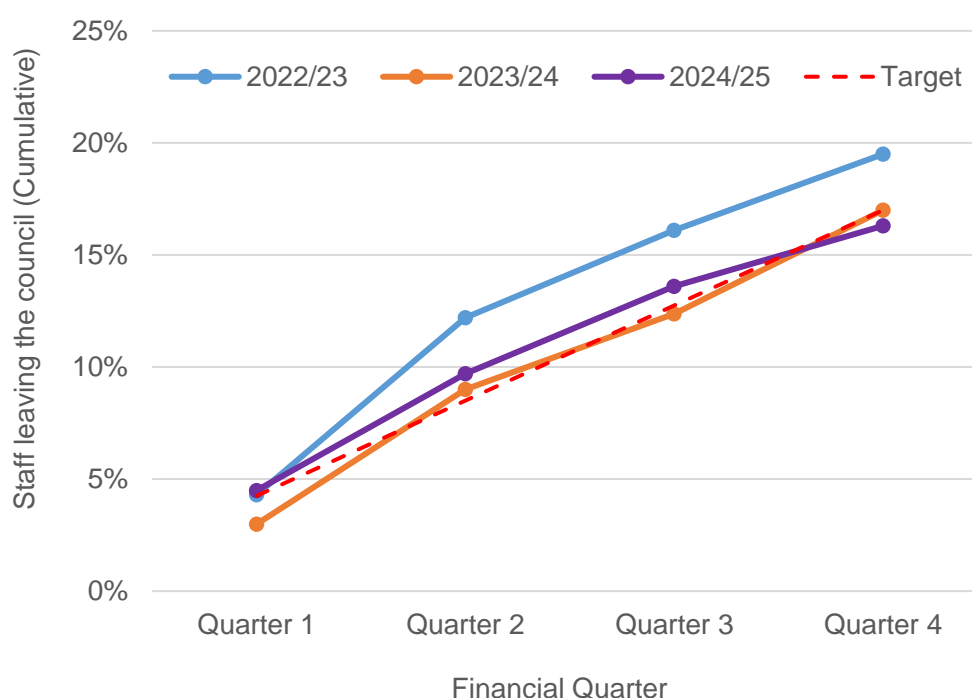


Figure 1: Staff turnover per financial quarter (Cumulative year to date), 2022/23 to 2024/25.

- 2.22 Levels of residual household waste collected performed very slightly behind target for the financial year, with 300.3 kg collected per household against a target of 300 kg. Performance continues to improve year on year, Figure 2.

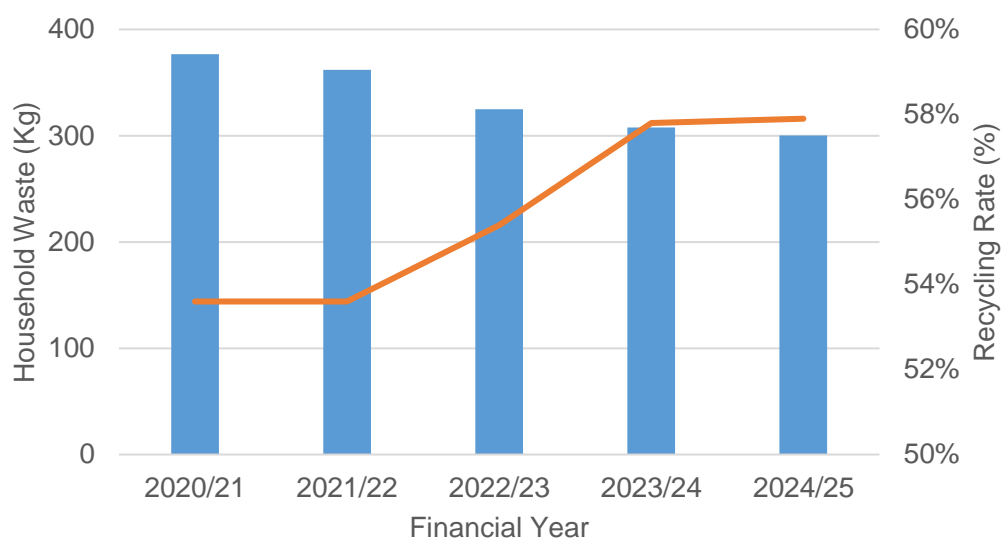


Figure 2: Residual Waste per Household (Kg) and Household recycling rate (%), 2020/21 to 2024/25.

- 2.23 Household waste recycled in 2024/25 was 57.9% and is behind the annual target (58.5%). This represents a similar recycling rate to 2023/24 (57.8%), however the total waste collected has decreased showing that residents are reusing and reducing their overall waste.
- 2.24 The total proportion of missed bin collections in the financial year was 0.031%, against a target of 0.03%.
- 2.25 There were over half a million visits to our Active Mid Devon facilities in 2024/25, representing a cost per visit of 84 pence, ahead of the target of £1.12. This performance represents not only the high number of visits to our centres, but also the associated high levels of income.
- 2.26 Council Tax collected in 2024/25 was 97.55%, slightly higher than last year (97.51%) and exceeded the annual target (97.5%).
- 2.27 National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) collected in 2024/25 was 99.83%, slightly higher than last year (99.4%) and exceeded the annual target (98%).
- 2.28 “Public survey engagement rate” is a new performance measure. Data was collected from Quarter 2, and shows an engagement rate of 9.4% for 2024/25, behind the target of 15%. This survey is being run against the small number of new processes on the CRM system, and only since August 2024. Once the monitoring has been proven it will be added to each process as it goes live and then cascaded to other services that are not processed through the CRM.
- 2.29 The overall Council approval rating is measured through the Residents’ Survey. The results of the Residents’ Survey 2024 showed that 51.8% of

residents are very or fairly satisfied with the way the Council runs things. This shows good progress from the 2023 survey (41.1%) and is broadly in line with independent research from LG Inform (56%), although is behind the target set in the Corporate Plan of 70% p.a.

### Corporate Indicators

- 2.30 Staff sickness absence was 7.35 days per FTE for 2024/25 against a performance target of 8.5 days. Sickness absence in the previous financial year was 10.45 days, Figure 3.

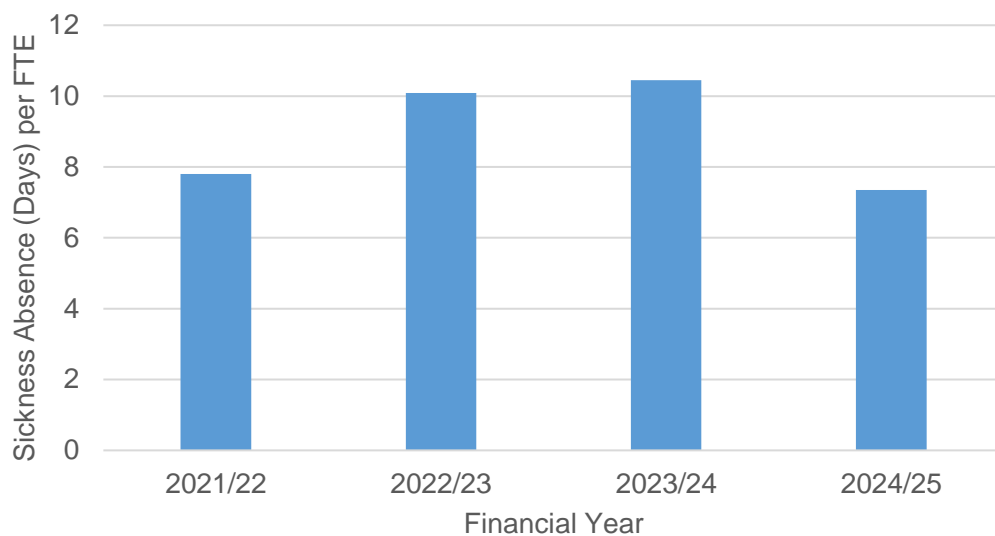


Figure 3: Staff sickness absence (days) per full-time equivalent, 2021/22 to 2024/25.

- 2.31 Council tax paid by direct debit was 77% at the end of 2024/25 (target of 80%), and Non-domestic rates paid by direct debit was at 49% (target of 50%).

### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, if performance is not at the expected or desired level then resources may need to be reviewed or redirected to improve performance. Policy Development Groups, Planning committee and Cabinet receive Performance Dashboards quarterly. These Dashboards present performance, finance, and risk information together to enable simultaneous consideration of these related aspects.

### **Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, if the performance of some indicators is not at required levels, there is a risk of legal

challenge. Performance management helps the council meet its duties in relation to Value for Money.

### **Risk Assessment**

If performance is not managed we may not meet our corporate plan targets or take appropriate corrective action. Equally risks may arise which impact the Council's ability to deliver its corporate priorities. Corporate Risks are identified through the Council's Corporate Risk Register and these represent the strategic risks most likely to impact on the Council achieving its corporate priorities.

### **Impact on Climate Change**

The Corporate Plan has numerous aims and objectives that relate to climate change. Given this, several performance indicators reflect our corporate ambition to reduce carbon emissions. Managing the performance of these can help evaluate the impact of Council interventions as well as guide future decisions on spend and investment.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

The Council has a duty to understand its residents, user groups and customers. Customer feedback (e.g. complaints) can help the council identify any groups of people who may potentially be experiencing a less satisfactory level of service. When reviewing performance and making recommendations on priorities, the Council should be mindful to consider how services might impact on different sections of the community. The council has reviewed and implemented a revised approach to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.

### **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

Corporate Plan priorities and targets are managed and scrutinised on a regular basis using appropriate performance indicators as detailed in this report.

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Date:** 25 June 2025

**Statutory Officer:** Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 25 June 2025

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

**Date:** 25 June 2025

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 11/06/2025

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes

**Report:** Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No

**Appendix:** Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No

#### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Dr Steve Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Email: [scarr@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:scarr@middevon.gov.uk)

Telephone: 3CX Extension: 4217

**Background papers:** [Corporate Plan 2024-28](#)

## Planning, Environment and Sustainability

### 1.1 Demonstrate climate leadership through achieving ambitious net zero targets

*We will take action to reduce our own emissions and attract funding to support our journey towards net zero. This includes further work to lower the carbon footprint from our homes, vehicles, leisure services and land in our management. We will seek support for the adoption and implementation of our Climate Action Plan*

- The Council's [Climate Change Strategy](#) 2024-2028 aligns with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028. An annual [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) 'roadmap to 2030' complements the Strategy, aiming to deliver corporate net-zero at the soonest opportunity. Early monitoring shows good progress in line with the CAP target to reduce the annual carbon footprint by 360 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) by 2026.

### 1.2 Support the district's response to the climate emergency

*We will continue to work with and support the implementation of the Devon Carbon Plan and look beyond our borders to exchange experience and find innovative ways of lowering emissions, generate renewable energy and increase sustainable travel options. We will provide leadership and support for communities to build resilience and adaptive capacity. We will work with community groups to share best practice, encourage learning and respond to the climate emergency together through partnership working.*

- [Energy Boost Mid Devon](#): A partnership project with charity ECOE Advice, launched in April 2025. Mid Devon residents will benefit from healthier homes thanks to independent advice, workshops and retrofit support funded by £45k from the climate and sustainability budget plus a £15k Energy Efficiency Fund to help those who can least afford the home improvements. More energy-efficient homes will have a lower carbon footprint.
- [Green Enterprise Grants](#): Launched in May 2025, offering grants £500 to £5k for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), the £30k scheme funded by the Council's climate and sustainability budget will drive local investment and attract match funding to help reduce emissions in Mid Devon.
- The Resilience Officer works with communities on emergency preparedness, which helps to support climate resilience. Many key risks and mitigations identified by Towns and Parishes relate to climate change, as extreme events are predicted to become more frequent or more severe.

### 1.3 We will work with stakeholders to introduce planning policy which reflects the key issues and challenges facing the district

*We will work with communities to bring forward the new local plan – Plan Mid Devon based around our top planning priorities, seeking to encapsulate and reflect the planning ambitions of the Council and its communities. As the Government increases its oversight on planning performance, we will ensure our planning decisions are timely, robust and defensible. We will continue to be a considerate planning authority*

- The Council approved a new Local Development Scheme on 4th March 2025. This sets out the timetable for preparing a new Local Plan for Mid Devon. The timetable for the production and adoption of the new Local Plan is based on the introduction of a new plan making system under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) and new regulations expected in the summer 2025. The timetable will be subject to a further review once the new plan making regulations have been introduced.
- Decision making on planning applications within Mid Devon continues to significantly exceed national targets, whilst our record of defending appeals against our decision making remains high reflecting robust decision making.

#### 1.4 We will ensure that biodiversity is increased across the district

*We will develop and implement our Biodiversity Duty Action Plan across all Council services. Through the planning system, we will encourage developers to exceed the minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, working with local communities where possible, in order to bring real enhancement to nature and landscapes across the district.*

- At a national level, a requirement for most new development to deliver a Biodiversity net gain (BNG) of 10% of the original land condition was introduced in 2024. In response, Mid Devon has approved three biodiversity habitat banks within the district (2 of which are currently delivered on site) which provide an opportunity for development both within the district as well as across Devon to acquire BNG "credits". As such BNG improvements within Mid Devon are currently supporting development in excess of our own requirements resulting in greater than 10% BNG delivery required through development management within the district.
- The Biodiversity Duty Action Plan is in place. Goals being implemented include:
  - Early stage reviews of Council land management and opportunities to enhance nature.
  - Consideration of potential to enhance conservation status for key areas, and liaison with managers of special sites such as Local Nature Reserves.
  - Actions to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Actively involved as the Supporting Authority while the Strategy is in preparation.
  - The Planning team records the number of Consents with BNG secured (and enforcement of action for nature).

#### 1.5 We will value and protect Mid Devon's natural and built environment

*We will work with our communities to address environmental damage and will look to prosecute those who cause harm through fly-tipping or littering on public land. We will also challenge those who fail to mitigate environmental impact, liaising with other statutory bodies as required to bring about change. We recognise the importance of the natural and built environment and will work to protect our cultural heritage.*

- During 2024/25, The Council increased its planning enforcement resource enabling it to serve enforcement notices/ prosecute landowners and developers that are undertaking unauthorised development in order to protect landscape and heritage interests. Also, Mid Devon has maintained an appropriate level of housing supply allowing it to afford full weight to Local Plan policies intended to protect the countryside from speculative development.

- The work of the Environment and Enforcement service in tackling enviro-crime across the district has resulted in an increase of Fixed Penalty Notice issuance by 75% compared to 2023/24. The service has further built on relationships with external partners to explore tactics to reduce and mitigate environmental crime (partners include the Environment Agency, Devon Authorities and local and rural Policing teams). Social media has been used to encourage community interaction and reporting of key hot spots challenges. In addition, high profile fly tipping prosecutions have been used to highlight impacts and the Council's stance on enviro-crime. A significant level of work has gone into community engagement to resolve local issues, which has seen significant reduction in offences and a greater community stance in supporting the service.

## Community, People and Equalities

### 2.1 We will work closely with town and parish councils

*We value and understand the importance and expertise of our town and parish councils. We will seek to develop closer collaborative working relationships through improved communications and engagement, and will measure our performance on this.*

- Throughout 2024/25, the Council have been actively working to strengthen relationships with towns, parishes, and local communities to foster greater whole society resilience. These efforts have been implemented through various initiatives, including:
  - State of the District Debate held on 20 March 2024 focused on collaborative working with Towns and Parish Councils
  - Town and Parish Charter adopted by Cabinet (09 July 2024)
  - Annual Meeting of the Parish Clerks held on 20 November 2024, including a presentation on resilience.
  - The Cabinet Member for Parish and Community Engagement has been created, and they have met with those Town and Parish Councils that have requested a meeting to listen to concerns and develop a closer working collaboration
  - Enhancing the communication and dissemination of severe weather alerts to District Councillors and Town/Parishes
  - Participating in Devon Communities Together (DCT) events, such as the Resilience Forum and a local Community Emergency Plan meeting.
  - Engaging with local groups, including attending Tiverton Town Council's Community Engagement Event.
  - Developing a Local Community Risk Register, incorporating risks identified by District Councillors and Town/Parish Councils, scheduled for publication in 2025/26.
  - Supported the development of five community emergency plans by towns and parishes in 2024/25 (Cullompton, Bradninch, Willand, Nymet Rowland and Tiverton)
  - Encouraged Town and Parish Councils to locate and develop an Emergency Hub as a first step towards creating and maintaining an Emergency Plan.

### 2.2 We value and will work closely with local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

*We recognise the vital role that voluntary, community and social enterprises play in our district. We will continue to support these organisations development including through the use of grant funding. We will support community events across the district and recognise the importance of youth services.*

- The adopted local plan promotes healthy communities through the delivery of social, educational, recreational and cultural facilities and services, access to high quality open space, public rights of way, recreational trails, accessible land and other green infrastructure, and opportunities for sport and recreation and the designation of Local Green Space.

- The Community, People and Equalities PDG are organising a "Meet the Funders" event to be held in Summer 2025 for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

### 2.3 We will support the health, wellbeing, and safety of our residents

*We will ensure that our leisure services continue to help improve peoples' health outcomes. We will keep the public safe through our rigorous public health inspections. And we will continue to enable people to stay in their homes by coordinating housing adaptations. We will work to ensure our places are planned to improve health and wellbeing*

- Active Mid Devon have expanded the ways in which we reach our residents through a more active outreach programme including activities such as free wellbeing walks, and helping to set up parkruns in the district.
- Update and ongoing delivery of our Food Safety Plan with focus on interventions at highest risk premises and moving towards full Food Standards Agency requirements across all groups of premises. 94.3% of 747 food business in Good (4) or Very Good (5) under Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- Wide range of interventions to protect public health and wellbeing across Public Health functions including ASB Community Protection Warnings and Notices, statutory nuisance actions, Licensing enforcement and interventions alongside enforcement of Private Sector Housing standards
- Successful delivery of Housing Assistance Policy with high number of Disabled Facilities Grant approvals and other support grants plus Home Improvement Loans

### 2.4 We will support our residents and communities through the cost of living crisis

*We recognise the challenges facing people brought about by the cost of living crisis. Through administrating benefit schemes and applying Council Tax Reduction schemes we will support the vulnerable in our communities. We will draw down grant funding to support businesses in our communities through these challenging times.*

- In 2024/25, Council Tax rebate applied totalling £4,582,250 to residents on low income. Also, discretionary housing payments totalling £77,202 were awarded and Exceptional Hardship payments totalling £15,186 applied to council tax debts. Housing benefit caseload reduced from 2024 due to Universal Credit migration.
- Our Revenues and Benefits Service help local businesses understand what business rates reliefs they may be entitled to e.g. small business; charitable; retail, hospitality and leisure; public lavatories; community amateur sports clubs. The value of these reliefs in 2024/25 was: £6,057,866 (mandatory reliefs); £87,187 (discretionary reliefs); £2,899,742 (Fully Government funded reliefs).
- The Economic Development team has supported businesses through running a number of grant schemes and facilitating a number of specialist business networks. Economic Development, working with the Council's Climate and Sustainability Specialist, successfully piloted in 2024/2025 a Green Enterprise Grant scheme to support businesses who wish to take action to reduce their carbon and in doing so reduce their costs. This has been launched again for 2025/26. Through Visit Mid Devon, the Council supports a network of

visitor economy businesses, these being predominantly small and micro businesses and include farm business diversification. Utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding, and working with Food Drink Devon, Mid Devon's food businesses were able to access this specialist business support network.

## 2.5 We will listen to and respond to feedback

*We value all feedback that the Council receives. We will maintain an effective complaints process and ensure that we respond promptly and appropriately. We will ensure that we consult and engage with stakeholders in an open and transparent manner*

- We continue to engage with residents through consultations around Planning, Budget and other areas and provide a digital platform, Let's Talk Mid Devon, to assist with this. The communications team attended the Mid Devon show and supported engagement activities for multiple services. The Customer Services team is also actively embedding a revised code of complaints to meet the requirements of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman to evidence effective learning from resident experiences of our services.
- A drive to improve engagement with our residents has seen our engagement platform Let's Talk Mid Devon utilised further. In the past year the platform has gained 162 registrations, been visited 8,886 times and had an engagement rate of 14%.
- The Council also uses social media as a free communication tool and have a total of 25,002 followers across the platforms.
- GovDelivery is the Council's e-bulletin system which is used to send out news stories and service changes directly to our customers who opt in to receive updates. There are 14,420 subscribers who regularly receive bulletins directly from the Council.
- A resident survey was undertaken in 2024 and was open to residents throughout the district. Although the response rate decreased on previous years the survey showed 59.6% of those who responded felt very or fairly well informed about the Council's work, an increase from 52.8% in 2023. We are continuing to explore ways to improve uptake of the survey across the district.
- Many Council services undertake consultations throughout the year, particularly planning, and these consultations can be viewed on our Let's Talk Mid Devon platform. All consultations are shared on this platform as well as through traditional press releases, with town and parishes and online.

## Homes

### 3.1 We will increase the delivery of quality designed, well built homes across the housing market to meet identified needs

*Mid Devon does not have enough homes. We will support the delivery of quality new homes built in the district. We will build and expand our own social housing, and encourage the delivery of new affordable homes built in the district.*

- The Council is continuing to secure the delivery of new homes in Mid Devon through policies in the adopted Local Plan and through the determination of planning applications. However, it is not directly responsible for building new homes with the exception of new Council homes through the Housing Revenue Account. The number of affordable homes delivered through the planning process will be subject to development viability. The Council has published a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan which details reasons affecting the delivery of new homes across the district and measures that the Council will take to help improve delivery.
- Review and production of our Housing Strategy post 2025 is underway including a focus on new housing delivery. This includes ongoing commitment to a rolling 5-year 500 unit social housing building programme for Mid Devon Housing.

### 3.2 We will build, promote, and encourage the building of energy efficient and low carbon homes and communities

*We recognise that our homes in Mid Devon need to be fit for the future. We will ensure our social housing meets high energy efficiency standards. Through planning and building control we will act so that homes in the district are energy efficient, low carbon, and resilient to climate change.*

- Successful implementation of zero-operational carbon, EPC A modular housing schemes to provide new social rent homes within the Council stock. This includes the opening of the St Andrews House scheme in Cullompton, Shapland Place in Tiverton and Crofts in Sandford which provide 19 new units. Number of live modular schemes across Bampton, Tiverton, Hemyock and Willand which will bring forward an additional 45 such units in 2025/26 alongside several traditional build EPC B rated schemes.
- Planning permission in place for a further 22 zero-operational carbon, EPC A modular housing with additional schemes under progress at feasibility, design or planning determination stage.
- Neurodiversity build standards and benefits also built into modular housing schemes.
- Through the preparation of a new local plan we will investigate the introduction of energy and water efficiency standards in new buildings that exceed the national requirements placed through the current Building Regulations.

### 3.3 We will invest in our homes

*We will upgrade our social housing by installing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy. We will maintain our high standards of maintenance across Mid Devon homes. We will monitor tenant satisfaction with maintenance and act on the feedback received.*

- Over 50% of our stock have at least one form of renewable technology installed.

- Over £3m a year planned maintenance budget for home improvements.
- 70% overall tenant satisfaction in Mid Devon Housing homes.
- 72% tenant satisfaction with repairs in Mid Devon Housing homes.
- 73% tenants satisfied that their Mid Devon Housing home is well maintained.
- 79% tenants satisfied that their Mid Devon Housing home is safe.
- 99.52% of Mid Devon Housing homes meet Decent Homes standards – just 14 do not, mainly to do to property access issues with actions in place to resolve these.
- 98.13% of Mid Devon Housing repairs completed on target (target is 95% of urgent and routine repairs and 100% of emergency repairs). Those emergency repairs not completed within 24-hours are a small number cases, typically impacting on communal areas rather than individual homes where priority is always given to ensure our tenants are safe.

### **3.4 We will work closely with our tenants to ensure they feel safe, secure and happy in their homes**

*We will monitor and continue to improve overall tenant satisfaction. We will work to ensure that cases of antisocial behaviour are kept to a minimum. We will work with our tenants through engagement events, and be guided by them to ensure they feel safe, secure, happy and satisfied in their homes*

- 2024/25 marked an exciting year of progress and community engagement across the district. Several new initiatives were launched, including our first-ever Rural Roadshow, where Housing Officers visited five rural locations to connect with tenants, address complaints, discuss repairs, and tackle local neighbourhood concerns.
- Our inaugural Damp and Mould Demonstration Day, featured live equipment testing, demonstrations, and the opportunity for residents to report issues first-hand. We also hosted our first Greener Homes event, where expert speakers shared practical advice on sustainable living, the work the Council are doing and the support available to tenants.
- Our regular coffee mornings in Crediton, Cullompton, and Tiverton continued to offer relaxed, accessible spaces for tenant engagement. We also increased collaboration with the Police and completed two successful neighbourhood walkabouts.
- We completed our second round of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), showing improved satisfaction across all areas. To build on this, we introduced Repairs Satisfaction Surveys, now carried out after each job is completed. These complement our ongoing New Tenant, Complaints, ASB, and Planned Maintenance surveys, helping us continuously improve our services.
- Our presence in the community remains strong, with a continued focus on reducing antisocial behaviour (ASB) in partnership with local stakeholders. As part of ASB Awareness Week 2024, we organised a mini walkabout, a Members Briefing, and a special street surgery in collaboration with Cullompton Police.
- We remain committed to amplifying tenant voices and driving positive change. This includes feedback gathered through our downsizing incentive survey, insights from TSM comments and complaints, our ongoing damp and mould survey and learning about our tenants through the 'Getting to Know You' survey. We've also been active in recruiting Co-opted Tenant Representatives to join the Homes

PDG from June 2025 and have consulted on various policies through the Let's Talk Mid Devon platform which we continue to grow as an engagement hub.

### **3.5 We will support and respond to people presenting as homeless**

*We will act compassionately to minimise rough sleeping in the district, ensuring people have a safe warm place to sleep. We will maximise homelessness prevention through the use of different types of accommodation, and increase the number of housing options available. We will provide support and guidance for people presenting as homeless.*

- 100% of all homelessness presentations into the Council receive full support and guidance
- All homeless presentations are determined against different duties and temporary accommodation is provided as required
- Meet the requirement to ensure no families are in hotel temporary accommodation after 6-weeks
- Using Local Authority Housing Fund funding to successfully acquire and convert existing empty properties in high-quality temporary accommodation for homeless use. Belmont Rd scheme is complete and fully occupied, St Pauls scheme is acquired and pending planning permission for conversion and Cabinet decision obtained to purchase a further property for conversion in Tiverton (current under acquisition)
- Trailing dedicated care leaver learning accommodation with a modern self-contained 1-bed unit with further three 1-bed units planned.

## Economy and Assets

### 4.1 We will work with local businesses, stakeholders and residents to regenerate our town centres

*We will act to secure and distribute grant funding to support our town centres. Events and projects will be used to encourage increased footfall and ensure vibrant high streets*

- Using Council funding, along with UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funding, the Council was able to offer an enhanced package of grant schemes under the Love your Town Centre umbrella. This has supported local businesses and organisations to bring forward town centre enhancements and improve vibrancy. These include the Shop Front Enhancement Scheme, Business Growth Fit-out grants and Digital High Streets (to support business to take up the latest Point of Sale technology and to connect digital to physical sales (driving sales through e-commerce e.g. website, social media etc.)). The Vibrant Town Centres scheme also supported a portfolio of events to drive footfall and dwell time in the town centres. In addition, grants supported improvements to public realm and refreshed wayfinding infrastructure.

### 4.2 We will build on successful commercial activity, working with our communities to ensure its success

*We will continue with prudent commercial ventures. This includes letting industrial units to local businesses, expanding electric vehicle charging points on council assets, and ensuring Tiverton Pannier Market continues to be a success.*

- We continue to have excellent take up of our commercial property, with only one void. This continues to provide a steady yield to the Council, supporting vital service provision.
- At the Tiverton Pannier Market a number of new regular traders have started trading, including on the traditional Tuesday market day which has been less successful in recent years than the Friday and Saturday markets. The market team has continued to run a variety of initiatives to encourage use of the market. Examples of these activities include: The Annual Christmas Craft Fair (run by the Market team for the first time), Market Hamper event – where anyone spending over £5 from any Market Stall had a chance of winning a market hamper donated by traders. The Hamper being worth over £250 there were 400 participants. The Electric Night events have continued with an increase in events planned for 2025. The team continues to run the market successfully following a restructure of the team to delivery greater efficiencies.

### 4.3 We will support local businesses set-up, develop and grow

*We will fully investigate the potential of establishing a co-working space for small businesses through the work hub project. We will drawdown and administer grants for local businesses to set up, develop and grow in the district.*

- The Tiverton Work Hub project was successfully delivered through the Shared Prosperity Programme. The Work Hub will be launched in 2025/26. We also supported Petroc with its creation of a state-of-the-art Cotie Business Innovation Centre which provides advanced

technology-based facilities also funded through the Shared Prosperity programme. This includes access to innovation space for businesses to meet and work and access the latest technological equipment. Through the Prosper programme, project managed by Devon County Council on behalf of Mid Devon, a broad package of business advice and support has been provided. This support has included: pre-start up advice, training opportunities, general support to small businesses and dedicated tailored advice to businesses on recruitment and employment issues.

#### **4.4 We will support business and economic development across Mid Devon, enabling job creation, and supporting sustainable tourism growth**

*We will build on our excellent track record of securing funding to support economic development projects and will support businesses develop into new markets. We will work to develop events and festivals in Mid Devon to encourage footfall into our communities to benefit our businesses, making Mid Devon a destination in its own right.*

- Using funding allocation through the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funding a number of business support programmes were established as well as business grant schemes. These included the Prosper Business support programme that offered free to access one to one business support as well training events; “Prosperity” business grants; specialist business network events and training for Farm businesses; food and drink business and visitor economy businesses.
- The Economic Development team, working with the Council’s Climate and Sustainability Specialist, has launched a Green Enterprise Grant scheme to support businesses who wish to take action to reduce their carbon footprint and in doing so reduce their costs. Through Visit Mid Devon, the Council supports a network of visitor economy businesses these being predominantly small and micro businesses and include farm business diversification. Utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding, and working with Food Drink Devon, Mid Devon’s food businesses were able to access this specialist business support network. Similarly Farm businesses were also able to access the Devon Agri-Tech Alliance(DATA) support programme through the SPF programme.
- Importantly the Economic Development Officer is liaising with businesses throughout the District having valuable conversations to assist in enabling businesses to access support and funding opportunities. This also includes facilitated access to networks, a recently launched e-newsletter (to connect businesses with latest opportunities) and continuing to champion the needs of our businesses with other agencies.

#### **4.5 We will work with partners to ensure that Mid Devon has the infrastructure it requires to meet its potential**

*We will play a key role in realising the major infrastructure the district requires to help it meet its potential. This includes the upgrade to J28 of the M5; the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road; Cullompton Station; Culm Garden Village; upgrading J27 of the M5; and the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension.*

- Funding has been secured for the provision of the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road from Homes England. There has been significant progress since the announcement of funding particularly with regard to land assembly. The Outline Business Case for Junction 28 improvements has been submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) and awaiting a decision from Government. A Final Business Case was submitted to DfT Rail last year for the Cullompton Railway Station but the Restoring Your Railway programme has

now been stopped by the new Government. It is hoped that there will be more positive news announced with regard to funding for Junction 28 improvements and the Railway Station at the June 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review.

#### **4.6 Work with our communities and stakeholders to ensure our car parks meet the parking requirement needs of our communities**

*We will continue to work in a collaborative manner with key stakeholders to review the use of our car parks. We will ensure that our parking charges are fair whilst maintaining a sustainable business model*

- The Council set up a Car Parking Consultation Group in 2023 to gather feedback and views from town and business representatives to help steer future tariff setting and also look at key issues of community value including enforcement and free Christmas Parking. Several papers have been taken on to the Economy and Assets PDG for member debate before formal recommendations have been made to Cabinet. The representatives who make up the Car Parking Consultation Group are very positive about the Group's discussions and positive impact on the local community.

#### **4.7 The Council is able to maintain its property and land and maximise the benefits of these assets to the Council and to the public**

*It is vital that we maximise income streams from our assets. We will explore opportunities for partners becoming commercial tenants in our existing properties.*

- Our asset base continues to benefit from enhancements, with new heat and power sources being implemented, and refurbishments to dance studios, offices and the flooring surrounding the swimming pools and changing rooms within our leisure centres. Our whole property estate have had detailed condition surveys to inform the future maintenance and investment programme. The announcement of Local Government Reform in Devon has put the possibility of letting to commercial tenants on hold.

## Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement

### 5.1 We will ensure that the Council remains the employer of choice in Mid Devon

*Against a set of challenging circumstances, we will ensure that our staff remain motivated and satisfied. We will ensure that staff development opportunities are available and that people choose to have long, productive, and happy careers with us.*

- We have developed our course catalogue to provide all staff at the Council with broad opportunities for development in addition to development offered within their service and by their manager/ immediate team. This runs in parallel with the development of the Learning Partnerships Group at the Council, which allows for a broad representation of services to contribute to and comment on learning and development plans. There has been a reduction in staff turnover and an increase in staff employed (full time equivalents) at the Council and planning has begun for the next all staff survey. We continue to review the benefits available, with 6 monthly health checks the latest inclusion.

### 5.2 We will further increase our recycling services, enabling our communities to achieve even higher levels of recycling

*Through education and enforcement, we will continue to reduce residual waste collected. Alongside this we will strive to have one of the highest recycling rates in England, and consider additional waste streams we can collect as recycling. Our services will remain excellent, with minimal missed bin collections, and a high opt-in rate to our garden waste service.*

- Education and enforcement is a key part of our strategy to reduce waste which is being supported with extra temporary resource. Our national performance for 2023/24 was a 57.9% recycling rate (12th nationally, top 6%) and residual household waste collected per household reduced to 307.8kg (9th nationally, top 5%). For 2024/25 the recycling rate increased slightly to 58% and the residual waste collected decreased to 300.3kg/household. Missed bin collections have remained at 0.03% and around 12,000 households have opted-in to our garden waste collections. A trial of pots and pans collections is currently taking place along with a review of how nappies, coffee pods and blister packs are collected. A review of soft plastic collections will take place with a view of implementation by 2027.

### 5.3 We will maintain our leisure services and ensure they are fit for the future

*We recognise the need to continue to reduce the environmental impact of our leisure services and will work to reduce the carbon emissions of our leisure centres. We will also strive to move the service to having less financial dependence on the Council, whilst ensuring our leisure users are satisfied.*

- The service continues to improve and invest in reducing its carbon footprint with technology such as Combined Heat and Power, battery storage and more. The target to reduce subsidy is going in the right direction with significant improvement, while continuing to invest in improving facilities and offering the community more ways to be active.

#### 5.4 Council finances remain sustainable despite difficult financial conditions

*Prudent financial management is critical in the testing financial environment. We will build up our financial reserves, maximise income collection, and ensure that debt remains at an appropriate level*

- A balanced budget for 2025/26 has been agreed. The future year estimated deficits remain at over £3m with significant uncertainty around Local Government funding following announcements of fundamental changes to grant funding formulae and the Business Rates retention scheme. Medium Term Financial Plan discussions are in progress with a strategy being developed that will mitigate longer term shortfalls.
- 2024/25 Outturn shows a healthy underspend position for the General Fund which will be placed into Earmarked Reserves to help mitigate the implications of future funding uncertainties. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn position was an overspend, this was due to a number of one-off year-end adjustments. On an ongoing day-to-day basis the HRA remains financially healthy.

#### 5.5 We will continue to improve and transform our services

*We will continue to take the opportunities that arise from digital transformation to improve our services. Where appropriate we will consider opportunities for shared services or new ways of working with our partners. We will seek to improve our overall productivity to ensure value for money*

- The Digital Services team are busy rewriting online forms to improve self-service options, reviewing website content, and working with Waste to further improve waste collection efficiency through improved real-time response to collection issues.
- The announcement of Local Government Reform in Devon has delayed the possibility of collaborative or partnership working in the short term whilst the future vision is identified. Once agreed, the pace of joint working will increase significantly as we form the new entity.

#### 5.6 Ensure that the public have a good understanding of council services, and that they are satisfied that the services are efficient and effective

*We will strengthen our public communications to ensure clarity on the services that we are responsible for. We will measure public satisfaction and act on the results to ensure residents are satisfied with our performance*

- Our Communications team continues to support services with sharing positive news about the council, and any changes to service delivery, to our residents and businesses. Over the past year there has been a focus on highlighting the continued success of the waste and recycling service, the benefits of the new CRM system and more recently communication support for the launch of Active Mid Devon. The Communications team ran a public satisfaction survey at the end of 2024 and this was open to all residents, both in digital and paper format. While the response rate was down on previous years, the satisfaction rates showed improvement with overall satisfaction with the council increasing from 41% the previous year to 52% in 2024. The Communications team is continuing to look at how we can increase the response rate for future surveys.

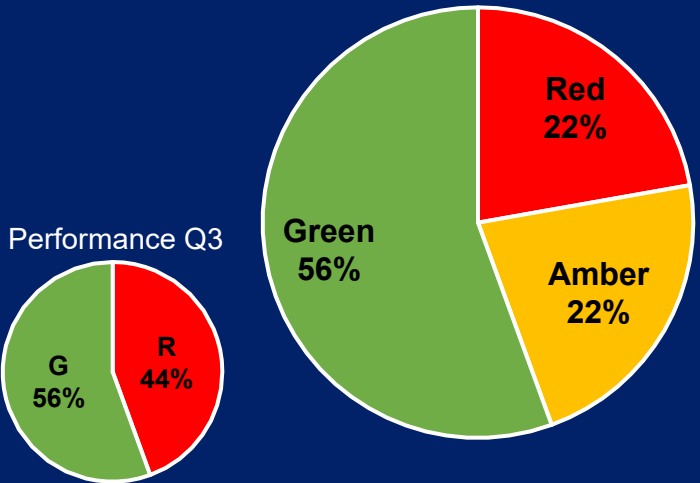
Planning, Environment & Sustainability PDG Performance Dashboard – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Own fleet CO2e avoided (YTD)	21.3 t CO <sub>2</sub> e	10 t CO <sub>2</sub> e	G
Solar panel performance – corporate estate (YTD)	114 t CO <sub>2</sub> e	50 t CO <sub>2</sub> e	G
Electric car charger points installed across MDDC sites (YTD)	6	4	G
Householder planning applications determined within 8 weeks (Past 12 months)	100 %	70%	G
Minor applications overturned at appeal (Past 12 months)	0.2 %	10%	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
PE&S PDG – Outturn	£1,443k	£1,403k	A
PE&S PDG – Capital Outturn	£0	£80k	R
PE&S PDG – Capital Slippage % of projects (Current)	100%	0%	R
Building Control Income – Projected Outturn	(£211k)	(£221k)	A

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Failure to meet Climate Change Commitments by 2030	15 (No Change)

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

In 2024/25 six electric car rapid charger points were commissioned and installed, two at William Street, Tiverton, two at Forge Way, Cullompton, and two at Market Street, Crediton. The Council has exceeded its target of four new charging points in 2024/25, and now hosts 22 charge points on its sites.

In 2024/25 there were 5,230 uses of EV charging points on Council facilities, with 1,416 uses in Q4.

Data on the Council’s carbon footprint for 2024/25 will be available in July/ August.

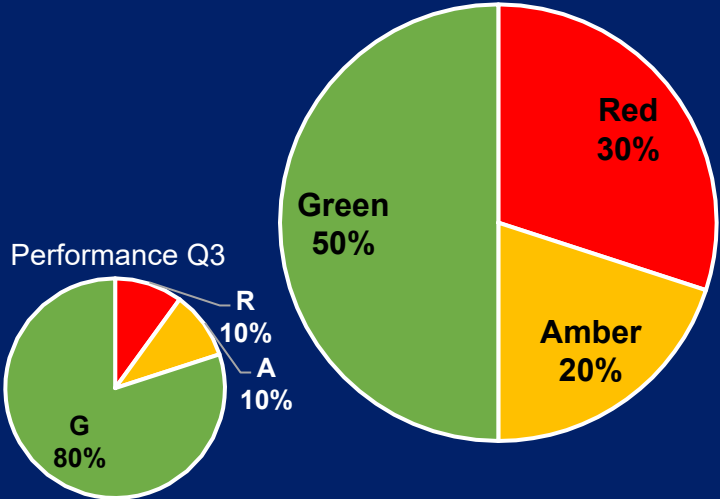
Economy & Assets PDG Performance Dashboard – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	Rating
Pannier market occupancy rate (Average YTD)	84 %	85 %	A
Businesses supported – non financial support (YTD)	342	250	G
Commercial property voids (YTD)	1.7 %	5 %	G
Events supported in our town centres (YTD)	187	6	G
Tourism events supported (YTD)	4	2	G
Business rateable value (Current)	£54,792,704	N/A	
Empty business properties (Current)	232	N/A	
Funding secured to support economic projects (YTD)	£1,318,995	£400,000	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	Rating
E&A PDG – Outturn	£27k	£980k	R
Car Parking Income – Outturn	(£1,065k)	(£1,102k)	A
Pannier Market Income – Outturn	(£87k)	(£108k)	R
E&A PDG – Capital Slippage % of projects (Current)	22%	0%	R

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Culm Garden Village – Loss of capacity funding	9 (No Change)
Culm Garden Village – Project delays/ impacts due to infrastructure delays	15 (No Change)
Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road	15 (No Change)

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

The 2025 Green Enterprise Grant is now available to small and medium businesses in the district. It offers capital grants from £500 to £5,000, covering up to 50% of eligible project costs. <https://letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/green-enterprise-grants-2025>

The Outturn underspend is mainly related to maintenance which has gone back into the Earmarked Reserve to fund future maintenance. The underspend reflects that the asset base is in a relatively good condition. Condition surveys are in place and future planned maintenance will increase.

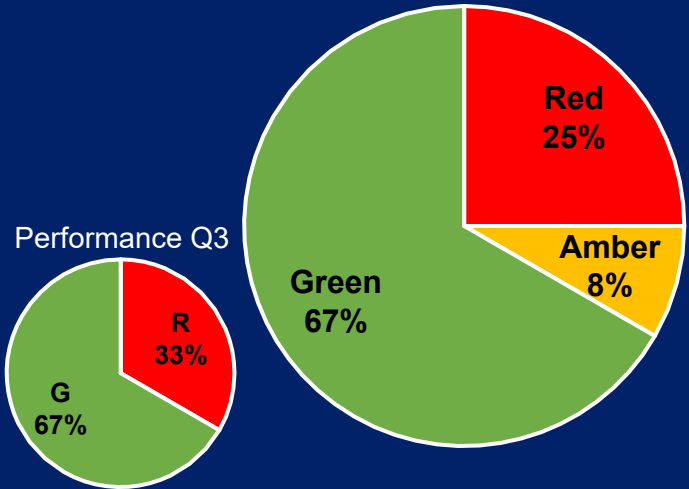
Community, People & Equalities PDG Performance Dashboard – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Homes made safe under the Housing Assistance Policy (YTD)	110	60	G
Complaints resolved within target timescales (YTD)	93 %	85 %	G
New Subscribers to Let's Talk Mid Devon (YTD)	162	400	R
Support towns and parishes to develop their Community Emergency Plans (YTD)	5	4	G
Support VCSE sector by securing external funding (YTD)	£252,973.09	£200,000	G
Licenced vehicle inspections (YTD)	47	40	G
Food Service - Total Inspections completed (Current QTR)	67.8 %	100 %	R
Private water supply sampling (YTD)	80	120	R
Environmental protection service requests (Average YTD)	97.8 %	95 %	G
Engagement rate on Let's Talk Mid Devon (Current)	15.0 %	16.0 %	A

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
CP&E PDG – Outturn	(£50k)	£1,018k	G
CP&E PDG – Capital Slippage % of projects (Current)	0 %	0 %	G
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Current)	£4,861,539	N/A	

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Severe Weather Emergency Recovery	12 (No Change)

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

The Council supported the development of five community emergency plans by towns and parishes in 2024/25 (Cullompton, Bradninch, Willand, Nymet Rowland and Tiverton), ahead of the target of four per annum.

There were 495 complaints in 2024/25. Of these 93% were responded to within the target timescales, against a target of 85%.

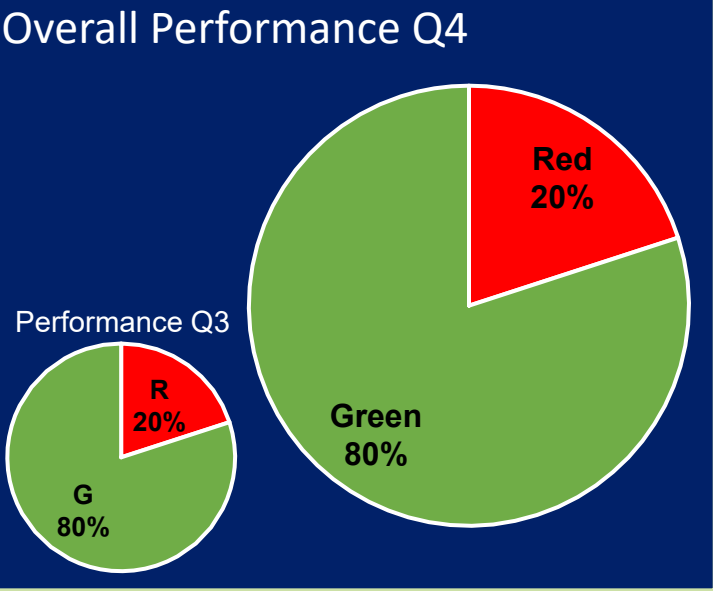
The Outturn is showing as (£50k) for 2024/25. This is due to the late S106 of £1m received for air quality around the Cullompton Relief Road.

Homes PDG Performance Dashboard (General Fund) – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Providing support to those experiencing homelessness	100 %	100 %	G
Applicants on the Devon Home Choice waiting list (Band A-C)	536	N/A	
Households in Hotels (Current)	15	N/A	
Households placed in interim or temporary accommodation this quarter	77	TBC	
Home Improvement Loans sanctioned (YTD)	13	10	G
Private rented sector improvements (YTD)	12	10	G
Private sector housing service requests response rate (Av. YTD)	95.3 %	95 %	G
Unoccupied and unfurnished empty homes (Current)	479	N/A	

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Homes PDG – Outturn	£224k	£393k	R
Spend on external interim and temporary accommodation (Q4)	£463k	N/A	

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Homes for Ukraine Scheme	4 (No Change)



**In Focus**

Support was provided to 100% of those experiencing homelessness in 2024/25. There was a slight decrease in the number of homelessness approaches in 2024/25 compared to the previous year (771 in 2024/25; 802 in 2023/24), but the complexity of cases is increasing.

The Homes PDG (General Fund) is showing an underspend due to the late Homelessness Prevention Grant of £241k being received in 2024/25. Without that the service has slightly overspent, hence Red RAG status.

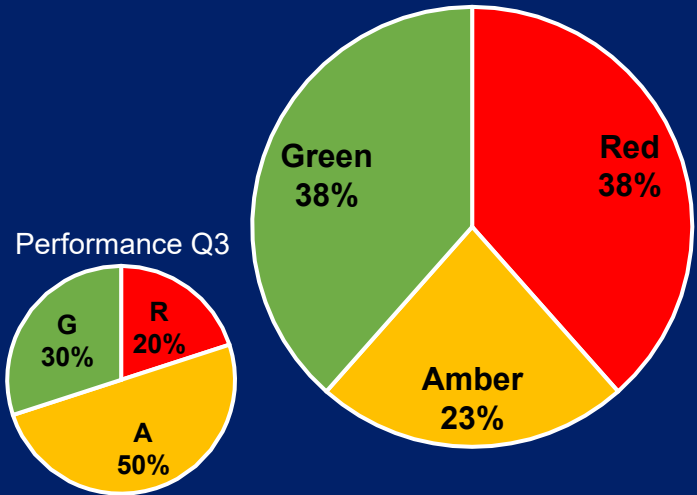
Homes PDG Performance Dashboard (HRA) – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
MDH Satisfaction that the home is safe (TSM – TP05)	79 %	70 %	G
MDH Delivery of new Social Housing (YTD)	29	100	R
New MDH net-zero MMC properties (YTD)	8	50	R
Tenant satisfaction with the overall repairs service (TSM – TP02)	72 %	70 %	G
Market delivery of new affordable homes (YTD)	57	94	R
MDH Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM - TP01)	70 %	TBD	
MDH Complaints responded to within Complaints Handling Code timescales (TSM-CH02; Average YTD)	98.8%	100 %	A
MDH Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (TSM – NM01; YTD)	9.82	TBD	
MDH Housing stock occupancy rate (YTD)	97.5 %	97 %	G
MDH Routine repairs completed on time (Average YTD)	99 %	95 %	G
MDH specific tenant engagement events (YTD)	109	100	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
HRA – Outturn	£1,698k	£0	R
HRA – Tenant Income (Outturn)	(£14,320k)	(£14,641k)	R
HRA – Capital Outturn	£14,131k	£14,816k	A
HRA – Capital Slippage % of development projects (Current)	24%	0 %	A

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)	Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Housing Crisis	12 (No Change)	Housing Rent Correction Error	8 (No Change)

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

In 2024/25, 72% of tenants were satisfied with the overall repairs service (target: 70%). This measure is set nationally as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Another TSM which is part of the Corporate Plan is satisfaction that the home is safe. In 2024/25, 79% of Council tenants agreed that they felt their home was safe, against a target of 70%.

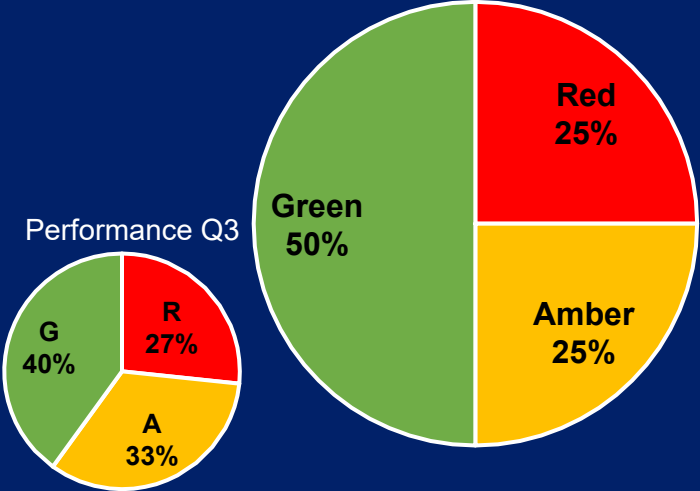
Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement PDG Performance Dashboard – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Household waste collected per household (YTD)	300.3 Kg	300 Kg	A
Household recycling rate (Average YTD)	57.9 %	58.5 %	A
All council complaints resolved within timescales (Average YTD)	93 %	85 %	G
Staff turnover (YTD)	16.3 %	17.0 %	G
Missed Bin Collections - All (YTD)	0.031 %	0.03 %	A
Leisure cost per visit (YTD)	£0.84	£1.12	G
National non-domestic rates collection rate (YTD)	99.8 %	98 %	G
Council Tax collection rate (YTD)	97.6 %	97.5 %	G
Public survey engagement rate (YTD)	9.4 %	15.0 %	R
Households on chargeable garden waste (Current)	12,150	12,200	A
Response to FOI/ EIR requests within 20 working days (YTD)	99.6 %	97%	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
SD&CI PDG Outturn	£4,347k	£5,447k	G
Income received from recycled material (YTD)	(£600k)	(£437k)	G
Agency Spend 'v' Budget (SD&CI; YTD)	£278k	£110k	R
SD&CI PDG – Capital Outturn	£2,160k	£3,274k	R
SD&CI PDG – Capital Slippage % of projects (Current)	63%	0%	R

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
None related to PDG	

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

Staff turnover for 2024/25 was 16.3%. This is the lowest staff turnover recorded by the Council since 2020/21.

Council Tax collected in 2024/25 was 97.55%, slightly higher than last year (97.51%) and exceeded the annual target (97.5%).

Household waste recycled in 2024/25 was 57.9% and is behind the annual target (58.5%). This represents a similar recycling rate to 2023/24 (57.8%), however the total waste collected has decreased showing that residents are reusing and reducing their overall waste.

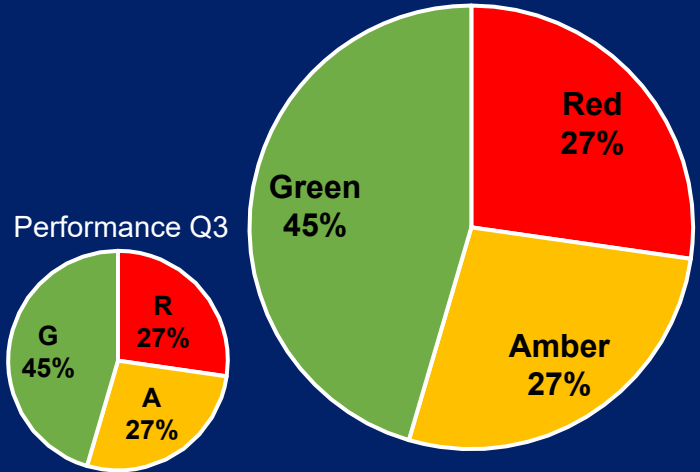
Corporate Performance Dashboard - Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Sickness absence (working days lost YTD)	7.4 days	8.5 days	G
Number of projected FTE filled (Average YTD)	90.3 %	90.0 %	G
Council Tax paid by Direct Debit (Current)	77 %	80 %	A
Non-domestic rates paid by Direct Debit (Current)	49 %	50 %	A
Cyber security awareness training uptake (Current)	91 %	90 %	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Cabinet Services – Outturn	£6,538k	£6,071k	R
No of Procurement Waivers required (QTR)	3	0	A
Treasury Income – £ return (YTD)	(£927k)	(£1,059k)	R
Invoices Paid on time (YTD)	99.5 %	98.0 %	G
Sundry Debt recovery rate (YTD)	97.9 %	95.0 %	G
Agency Spend ‘v’ Budget	£200k	£0	R

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)	Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Cyber Security	20 (No Change)	Corporate Property Fire Safety	9 (No Change)
Information Security	12 (No Change)		
Financial Sustainability	16 (No Change)	Devolution and Local Gov. Reorganisation	20 (No Change)
Cost of Living Crisis	16 (No Change)		

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

Staff sickness absence was 7.35 days per FTE for 2024/25 against a performance target of 8.5 days. Sickness absence in the previous financial year was 10.45 days.

Invoices paid on time by the Council was near to a record high in 2024/25 at 99.5%. This demonstrates that the Council is a good organisation to do business with.

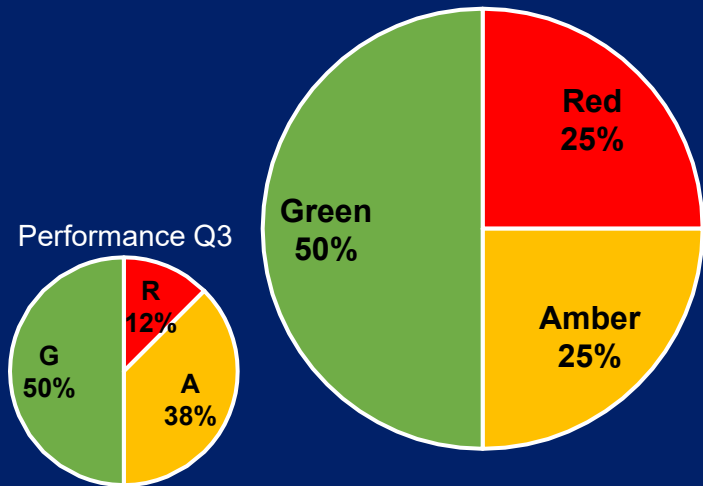
Planning Dashboard – Quarter 4 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Major applications overturned at appeal (Past 24 months)	0.3 %	10 %	G
Minor applications overturned at appeal (Past 24 months)	0.2 %	10 %	G
Major Planning applications determined within 26 weeks (Past 12 months)	92 %	100 %	A
Minor and other planning applications determined within 16 weeks (Past 12 months)	93 %	100 %	A
Householder planning applications determined within 8 weeks (Past 12 months)	100 %	70 %	G
Planning applications over 13 weeks without a decision (Current)	59	N/A	
Planning Enforcement: Total Open Cases (Current)	383	N/A	
Planning Enforcement: New Cases received in quarter	48	N/A	
Planning Enforcement: Cases Closed in quarter	42	N/A	

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Cost of Planning Appeals (YTD)	£68k	£0	G
Planning fees income – Statutory (YTD)	(£802k)	(£908k)	R
Planning fees income – Discretionary (YTD)	(£141k)	(£175k)	R
S106 income (YTD)	(£1,439k)	N/A	
S106 spend (YTD)	£413k	N/A	

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Quality of Planning Committee Decisions	6 (No Change)
Building Control Service Viability	12 (No Change)

Overall Performance Q4



In Focus

In 2024/25 we received 1,136 applications (1,082 determined). Some delay in processing applications resulted from the new requirement to secure Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for many applications. This has required extra documentation and closer working with the county ecology team to assess BNG submissions. We approved 3 off site habitat banks within the district that allow developers to acquire credits in the event that they cannot deliver improvements on site.

Over the same period we received appeal decisions on 21 cases with a 57% success rate in having appeals dismissed.

## **Report for: Scrutiny Committee**

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Date of Meeting:	14/07/2025
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Update</b>
Cabinet Member:	Leader – Cllr Luke Taylor
Responsible Officer:	Stephen Walford – Chief Executive
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Initial Plan Submission (March 2025)  Appendix B – Initial Plan MHCLG Feedback letter

### **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

This report provides members of the committee with an update on the latest situation with regards to local government reorganisation (LGR) and wider devolution.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1. It is recommended that the report and update be noted.**

### **Section 2 – Report**

#### Background

- 1.0 The committee will recall the background to this item, being covered in detail at the Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (please see that report for details of the White Paper and Minister’s letter that initiated this process).
- 1.1 Further, members will be aware of the subsequent Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025, where members agreed the proposal tabled by the Leader as being the one of maximum collaboration across council partners, and which went on to be submitted as the council’s ‘interim plan’

submission in accordance with that decision. This interim plan in full can be found at Appendix A.

#### Progress since March

- 2.0 After the submission of the interim plan, a brief hiatus was experienced as feedback was awaited from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), together with the occurrence locally of the Devon County Council (DCC) elections.
- 2.1 Such feedback from government was delayed numerous times and, upon arrival, was sufficiently generic as to be of limited assistance. Indeed, the lack of specificity was acknowledged in multiple settings as being a necessity in order to minimise the future threat of legal challenge to Ministerial decision making. The feedback letter has been made public and is available from the government's website, however a copy is enclosed as Appendix B for the committee's ease of reference.
- 2.2 It is worth noting that the feedback was made available to all Chief Executives across the Devon local government system as a group and covered all the various submissions and options proposed (in excess of 10 different options were submitted). I.e. no specific feedback was received on any one proposal.
- 2.3 Despite the delay in providing feedback, the government has confirmed repeatedly that the final date for submitting proposals will not be moved – this remains as 28<sup>th</sup> November for our area (other parts of the country do have earlier dates dependent upon devolution priority programme status).
- 2.4 There has been one further meeting of all council leaders since the appointment of the new administration at county hall. This was held in Mid-June and sought to clarify whether the substantial number of interim plan options could be refined down to a smaller number, sought to clarify the approach to partnership working, and, importantly, sought to reinforce the leaders' collective expectations around collaborative data sharing across the councils.
- 2.5 The need for data sharing transparency is vital. It is recognised that while opinions on the ideal outcome from the LGR process may differ, the establishment of a common, fact-based, evidential understanding of current provision, demand and service costs across the whole of Devon is imperative. The success of proposals being put to MHCLG should not be based upon assumed positions because certain councils have refused to share data – MHCLG have been explicit about this.
- 2.6 A signed data sharing agreement has been circulated to all Chief Executives in w/c 23/06/25. It has now been signed by all councils.

### Policy Positions

- 3.0 The committee will be aware of this council's current policy position on supported proposals, but for clarity it appears that there are broadly three or four likely proposals being worked up by Devon authorities for final submission.
- a) The 1/4/5 model, supported by 8 of the 11 councils (possibly 9 of 11 as the county council position is awaiting clarification)
  - b) The Plymouth proposal, which sees them wish to expand to take over 13 parishes currently within the South Hams area (this is clearly opposed by South Hams)
  - c) The Exeter proposal, which sees Exeter wishing to become a unitary council on its own with some as yet undefined expansion (this is opposed by neighbouring councils and the county council)
- 3.1 It should be noted that Torbay council has aspirations of remaining as it is and their submission will likely refer to this. However, in recognising that this is unlikely to meet the government's criteria, they are also working in collaboration with councils on the 1/4/5 proposal to ensure the best possible outcome under either scenario. Exeter has chosen a different approach and is not engaging with councils on wider proposals. (It should be noted that ongoing relationships on non-LGR matters remain practical and cohesive.)
- 3.2 The county council's position is awaiting formal decision by the new administration at county hall. It would clearly be beneficial to see this resolved as a policy position in order that maximum collaboration was achieved and the project team strengthened by utilising their expertise in certain areas. However, this is a matter for the county council.

### Practicalities

- 4.0 A project team has been initiated with two project managers reporting into a Project Director to coordinate input and drafting. This is being supported by expertise from across the 8 different councils in order to pull together the strongest possible proposition. These project groups are working across specific strands to ensure that we maximise contribution and collaboration from all partner councils, while ensuring we have enough time for collation and review prior to submission. The project plan will need to reflect each council's dates for approval and sign off. For Mid Devon, the Full Council before the submission date is scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> October, therefore it is likely that the plan will be brought before council at that point, although clearly an Extraordinary meeting could be considered nearer to the submission date if desired.

- 4.1 There will likely be a need to commission some small packages of expert input to strengthen the proposal; likely to include confidence on financial modelling and forecasting (building on the work undertaken for the interim plan submission), some expertise specifically on Children's services to ensure we use this structural change in a transformative way given the 'inadequate' performance of the current model, and potentially a critical friend review before submission. However, the intention is to do most of the preparation across council teams without incurring significant cost on consultants.
- 4.2 The government has made a limited amount of funding available to support the production of proposals and the clear intent is that this council maintains a policy position of spending none of its own funds on consultants. The Chief Executive will keep this under review and will advise members if this cannot be achieved. However, the current expectation is that this stance can be maintained without compromising the quality of the submission. The intended approach will be to share costs among the partners in order to ensure maximum value and minimum cost to individual councils.
- 4.3 The committee will be interested in the opportunities for public engagement, following on from council's recommendation to include this. An initial public engagement exercise has already gone 'live' in South Hams and is being rolled out across the Southern Devon area. This was accelerated by the need to respond to Plymouth's public appetite to assimilate certain parishes into a wider Plymouth area. As such, the initial engagement approach was less coordinated than we might have liked. However, the same approach is being prepared for use across the whole of the project area and an invitation will be extended to Exeter to run the same public engagement – with the offer of having access to the results for the whole county, should they accept. If Exeter was agreeable to this, then results could be amalgamated across the whole of the wider Devon and Torbay area, giving far greater weight and relevance.
- 4.4 Across the Exeter and Northern area grouping, the public engagement process was rolled out in the week commencing 30/06/25, with it going live in Mid Devon on 01/07/25. Press releases will be issued across the period of engagement to highlight the opportunity to comment, and it will also be promoted via the council's social media channels.
- 4.5 As the reference to public engagement, above, demonstrates. This is a 'messy' process given the different ambitions of councils across the wider Devon geography. This is to be expected since, unlike in previous waves of LGR, there has been no local sentiment as a strong advocating lobby for unitarisation to which the government eventually accedes (potentially after many years), triggering the formal process.

- 4.6 In this instance, LGR is being driven from the top-down on the back of a White Paper that was published forgoing the usual consultation process. The pace and expectations placed upon councils from a standing start has therefore been considerable. However, it is worthwhile noting that councils in priority areas fared even worse, trying to design a new system of local government within weeks. As such, in a large county like Devon where clearly one single authority may be perceived as too remote for many communities in future, thoughts moved quickly to how best to divide the county into sensible-sized administrative units that would meet the government's criteria, with all the implications of that consideration.
- 4.7 Local councils that had for many years worked well as a coordinated team, used to blending strategic coordination and economies of scale, with the agility and local differentiation of district-level provisioning, suddenly found themselves at odds with government intent, and potentially against each other as a way to comply with mandated government criteria. In short, councils are less prepared than they might have been to make plans and are having to respond accordingly.

#### Devolution

- 5.0 Finally, amongst all the talk of LGR, top-down instruction, and central government criteria and mandate, it is worth remembering that the stated intent of LGR is to make new council structures work better in future within a system of Mayoral Strategic Authorities. The majority of the government's White Paper was on devolution and the benefits this could bring, and yet, inevitably, the greater focus in the immediate-term has been on how to plan for and manage LGR given the implications for what could be the next 50 years of local government service provisioning.
- 5.1 The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (a non-mayoral entity) was brought into being in March 2025 and has held its first couple of board meetings. When the government agreed to its inception, it was made clear that it intended a review after 3 years, which left no doubt that it saw the CCA as a stepping-stone to a full mayoral authority in due course. This is relevant to Mid Devon and the council, as the CCA will have remit over things like the Local Growth Plan (recently consulted upon) and will help to coordinate the Spatial Development Strategy for the wider area. As such, continuing to link and liaise with the CCA and its various advisory groups will be a priority for all councils in order to ensure that appropriate decisions are made, and outcomes achieved for the long-term benefit of our residents and businesses.

#### **Financial Implications**

None arising from this report; no decisions are being recommended.

## **Legal Implications**

None arising from this report; no decisions are being recommended.

## **Risk Assessment**

The corporate risk register contains an item on local government reorganisation, which is updated monthly in accordance with normal risk management protocols.

## **Impact on Climate Change**

None arising from this report; no decisions are being recommended.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

None arising from this report; no decisions are being recommended.

## **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

The local government reorganisation process seeks to abolish the county council and all district councils in Devon. Once this process is formally initiated, public service provisioning will continue, but they will be under the remit of a new organisation and new council entity.

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

### **Statutory Officer:**

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 01/07/25

### **Statutory Officer:**

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 01/07/25

### **Performance and risk:**

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** N/A

**Cabinet member notified:** YES

### **Contact:**

Stephen Walford, Chief Executive

Telephone: 01884 255255

## **Background papers:**

The report refers to previous Extraordinary Meetings of Full Council – agendas available online. Appendices enclosed as referenced within the report.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

## Response to Invitation to Submit Proposals for a Single Tier of Local Government

### Finding the Balance, Building the Future



## Finding the Balance, Building the Future

### Foreword

The submission of this Interim Plan responds to the formal invitation received on the 5<sup>th</sup> February to submit proposals for a single tier of local government. It addresses the intent, as outlined in the English Devolution White Paper, for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the replacement of existing district and county councils and smaller unitaries with larger unitary authorities.

We, the Leaders of seven of the district councils of Devon together with the Leader of Torbay Council, acknowledge the government's intent and are committed to responding constructively to this. We have collaboratively developed interim proposals to meet the government's initial deadline. We propose the creation of two new unitary councils (alongside the retention of Plymouth City unitary): one encompassing South Hams, Teignbridge, West Devon, and Torbay, and the other uniting East, Mid, North Devon, Torridge, and Exeter. We believe this model better serves the interests of Devon and Torbay's nearly one million residents rather than a single 'mega-council'.

Despite the progress made in developing these proposals, we have significant concerns and reservations regarding the proposed scale and timeline for LGR, particularly its potential for financial unsustainability. The existing system, while imperfect, delivers effective, locally tailored services and possesses established community connections and a strong sense of place. We believe the government's proposals fail to address the critical funding challenges facing Devon and Torbay, notably in Adult and Children's Social Care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and in the NHS.

This submission represents an initial framework for how two new local authorities could be formed. There is considerable further work required to develop these proposals. We are actively engaged in this further development, including ongoing dialogue with Torbay Council, and are mindful of the need for flexibility and agility as the LGR process evolves. We are committed to maintaining local distinctiveness while pursuing service improvements and we will engage extensively with residents, partners, and stakeholders throughout this process.



## Executive Summary

This Interim Plan responds to the government's invitation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) towards a single tier. Acknowledging the English Devolution White Paper's intent to replace existing councils with larger unitary authorities, this submission proposes a balanced two-unitary solution for Devon and Torbay, alongside Plymouth City as a retained unitary authority, aiming to meet LGR objectives while preserving local identity and ensuring sustainable service delivery.

The proposed two-unitary model aligns with the six criteria for unitary government, using existing district areas as building blocks and aiming for populations near 500,000 for each authority. The proposed model anticipates the creation of a;

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

This offers a comprehensive solution for the whole area, establishing a credible alternative to a single 'mega' Council whilst guarding against the creation of an urban/rural divide

The Interim Plan recognises that significant further work is required to develop these proposals. A programme is set out for how this will happen through to November 2025. This includes extensive stakeholder engagement.

## Structure

The structure of this submission seeks to address the criteria set out in the Minister of State's letter of the 5th February. Specific sections are as follows;

Section 1: Introduction and context

Section 2: Vision for public service delivery and case for change

Section 3: Design principles, options assessment

Section 4: Local distinctiveness

Section 5: Response to criteria a) – h) in the Minister of State's letter

Section 6: Conclusion and next steps

**NOTE: Within this document reference to the "county" or "Devon" refers to the area covered by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. Devon County Council will always be referred to as such.**

## **1. Introduction and context**

This submission is presented by the Leaders of seven of the District Councils of Devon together with the Leader of Torbay Council in response to the UK Government's invitation to propose a single tier of local government, as outlined within the context of the English Devolution White Paper. We recognise the government's ambition to streamline local governance and drive regional economic growth through enhanced devolution.

Whilst the Leader of Torbay Council is a signatory to this response, Torbay Council is submitting a range of options which it wishes to explore in developing a full proposal. It is important to also recognise that separate proposals are being submitted on behalf of Exeter City Council as well as Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council.

The county of Devon is home to world leading research institutions and innovative companies. Its cultural scene is equally diverse, with a thriving arts community, numerous festivals, and a rich culinary tradition. The population of Devon continues to grow faster than the national average with housing developments including three new towns. It is also renowned for its outstanding natural beauty, charming villages, and rich agricultural heritage. This includes two National Parks – Dartmoor and Exmoor.

Devon possesses significant potential for clean growth, driven by its unique natural assets and strategic initiatives. The region is poised to capitalise on its maritime heritage through advancements in clean maritime technologies, particularly within North Devon and Torridge, where projects like the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre are fostering innovation. Furthermore, the development of offshore renewable energy, including floating offshore wind in the Celtic Sea, presents substantial opportunities for job creation and economic stimulation. Coupled with ongoing research and development at institutions like the University of Exeter, focusing on areas such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and the circular economy, Devon is establishing itself as a key player in the UK's transition to a low-carbon future.

Devon also has scope and scale to deliver significant housing growth in future years through a variety of identified and strategic sites. The recent Devon Housing Commission evidences the strategic collaboration of the authorities behind this proposal and the new authorities proposed would be empowered to take maximum advantage of the opportunities as identified by Lord Best in his report. Crucially, the boundaries proposed would allow each of the new authorities to meet their own growth ambitions and deliver truly sustainable, balanced growth, rather than seeking to hive off strategic growth opportunities through limited boundary expansions of city areas.

This housing growth will complement our economic ambition for the whole of Devon and has the potential to address a number of our local housing challenges as well as unlocking significant economic activity.

Devon's district councils have a proud history of delivering high-quality, locally tailored services to our diverse communities. We understand the unique needs of our residents and have fostered strong partnerships with local stakeholders over many years. This deep-rooted connection to our communities is fundamental to our approach and wider sense of place.

While we acknowledge the government's desire for structural reform, we are also acutely aware of the significant challenges facing public service delivery in Devon, particularly in areas such as adult and children's social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the funding pressures confronting the NHS. This is coupled with deep seated constraints including below average levels of productivity, above average house prices and variable levels of connectivity. We believe that any reorganisation must address these critical issues, rather than risk destabilising the existing structures that currently deliver essential services.

This submission outlines our considered response, reflecting our commitment to both the government's objectives and the best interests of the 1.25 million residents across the historic county of Devon. It details our collaborative efforts to develop proposals that strike the right balance - to maintain local distinctiveness, enhance service delivery, and ensure long-term financial sustainability within the evolving landscape of English devolution. Our preference is for a well-planned, bottom-up approach to further integrate services and to realise the associated savings and efficiencies.

## **2. Vision for public service delivery**

Our forward-thinking vision for public service delivery in Devon centres on creating a connected, resilient, and responsive system that prioritises the well-being of all our residents. Key aspects of this vision include:

- **Local distinctiveness:**
  - Ensuring that future arrangements maintain a strong sense of place including an ability to meet the unique needs of individual communities and to harness distinctive opportunities
  - Strengthening the role of parish and town councils as the most local tier of government.
- **Digital Transformation:**
  - Leveraging technology to enhance accessibility and efficiency, with online platforms providing seamless access to services.

- Bridging the digital divide to ensure all residents, particularly those in rural areas, can benefit from digital services regardless of location, age or wider socio-economic factors.
- **Integrated Care:**
  - Fostering closer collaboration between health, social care, and other public services to provide holistic support.
  - Focusing on preventative measures and early intervention to improve long-term health and well-being.
- **Community Empowerment:**
  - Strengthening local partnerships and empowering communities to play a more active role in shaping service delivery.
  - Promoting citizen engagement and feedback to ensure services are responsive to local needs.
- **Sustainability:**
  - Integrating environmental sustainability into all aspects of public service delivery.
  - Supporting the region's transition to a low-carbon economy and as a leader for clean growth
- **Resilience:**
  - Building strong, adaptable services that can respond effectively to future challenges, including climate change and economic uncertainty.
  - ensuring that vulnerable individuals are given the support they need during times of crisis.

This vision emphasises a people-centred approach, where public services are not just delivered, but co-created with the communities they serve.

### **Case for change**

The case for change in Devon's local government public service delivery rests on several converging factors demanding a more agile, efficient, and citizen-centric approach. These are detailed below;

- 1) Demographic shifts, including an aging population and increasing rural isolation, necessitate tailored services that address complex social care needs and ensure equitable access, regardless of location.

- 2) The climate crisis demands rapid decarbonisation and adaptation, requiring local government to lead in sustainable development, integrating environmental considerations into all service areas.
- 3) Fiscal pressures and rising demand necessitate innovative solutions to deliver more with less, leveraging technology and community partnerships to enhance efficiency and reduce costs.
- 4) Evolving citizen expectations, driven by digital literacy and a desire for greater transparency and participation, require a shift towards more accessible, responsive, and digitally enabled services.
- 5) The need to build community resilience in the face of economic uncertainty and potential future crises necessitates a more integrated, preventative, and locally empowered approach to public service delivery.

Therefore, a fundamental transformation is vital to ensure Devon's local government remains effective, sustainable, and responsive to the evolving needs of its communities.

### **3. Design Principles**

In considering the potential options for the reorganisation of current structures, we have first sought to draw upon two key guidelines, as set out in the Minister of State's letter, as foundations upon which to develop wider principles. These keystones are that;

- existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals
- new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more

Further to these, the following design principles have helped to shape and influence the development of our proposals;

- The new authorities and services will be built from an understanding of people and place
- Reflect established functional relationships and markets (including travel to work, shopping patterns, hospital catchments, education provision etc) as well as the cultural and historic context
- Recognise the important influence of existing strategic road and rail networks and associated connectivity
- Provide for a polycentric approach, recognising the important role of local service centres particularly in serving wider rural areas
- Harness the role of the main urban centres as key economic drivers
- Underpin future financial resilience and sustainability by ensuring broad parity between different constituent parts of any options in terms of

- key baseline metrics (such as resources per head),
- a similar share of social care and other “needs” ensuring that no area is left behind

#### 4. Options assessment

With a population in excess of 1.25 million people distributed across 6500 km<sup>2</sup>, the historic county of Devon is the fourth largest by area and 12th largest by population in England. The two tier area covered by Devon County Council includes eight District Councils. Torbay and Plymouth City Councils are existing unitaries.

Future changes to local governance 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.

Over the course of the last 3 months since the Devolution White Paper was published five main options have emerged. These are;

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1) A single unitary council covering the Devon County Council and Torbay areas |                          |
| 2) Two unitary councils covering the Devon County Council and Torbay areas     | Without boundary changes |
| <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed #0070C0;"/>                                  |                          |
| 3) An expanded Plymouth City unitary   | With boundary changes    |
| 4) An expanded Torbay unitary  |                          |
| 5) A new Exeter City unitary   |                          |

Options 1 and 2 use existing local government units as the building blocks for the proposals as the clear preference of government. However, options 3-5 inclusive necessarily involve significant boundary changes. These have not been considered as part of this assessment.



*Figure 1: Map showing Option 2*

Nationally, experience points definitively 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. The largest existing unitary authority by land area, North Yorkshire, has a population of 627,000 just over half of Devon's. Most unitary authorities are much smaller with populations between 100,000 and 300,000. The English Devolution White Paper sets a guiding principle for new councils of 500,000 but recognises that in certain scenarios this figure may not make sense for an area. A single unitary council would serve a population that is well in excess of the upper limit of 700,000-800,000 previously indicated in Government guidance.

For Devon, this clearly points towards the creation of two new unitary authorities alongside Plymouth City Council. The geography, population distribution, strategic transport infrastructure and existing local authority boundaries across Devon lend itself to a natural division into two areas whilst retaining Plymouth City Council unitary on its existing footprint. The proposals set out below firmly accords with the guiding principles.

This interim plan therefore focuses on a two unitary authority solution (alongside the existing Plymouth unitary authority). This also creates the opportunity to establish a fresh culture that develops new and dynamic capabilities and can better implement transformational change to ensure that, together, the two new unitary Councils are able to both secure efficiency savings and adapt to the changing service needs of residents.

### **Benefits assessment**

The initial conclusion from independent financial modelling by Pixel is that the two unitary councils would be sustainable based upon an analysis of disaggregated costs.

This will require thorough testing through the business case development phase. Both authorities would have population sizes that are close to the 500,000 threshold; both would have a similar share of social care and other “needs”; and both would also have large council tax income per head, with the potential to generate substantial future increases in revenue. Both unitaries would be larger than 90% of the existing single-tier authorities – so they would be substantial even by the single measure of population.

Total estimated resources for the two authorities alongside Plymouth are set out in the table below;

Type	Exeter and Northern Devon (£m)	Southern (£m)	Plymouth (£m)
Total Business Rate income	137.8	101.4	84.2
Total Council Tax	384.4	320.0	145.7
Total grant funding	126.6	127.2	95.7
Total resources	648.9	548.6	325.6
Total resources (per head)	1,322.04	1,383.41	1,254.50
Total resources (share %)	43%	36%	21%

Table 1: Total Estimated Resources

Source: [www.pixelfinancial.co.uk](http://www.pixelfinancial.co.uk) 2025

This table demonstrate that resources are evenly distributed on a per capita basis across the three authorities. This is considered to be a fundamental benefit of the proposal, enabling a balanced approach from the outset.

The proposed two-unitary council structure offers several distinct advantages, including:

- Creating two equally sized and balanced councils, each serving a manageable population
- Enhancing local accessibility and accountability compared to a single, large entity
- Better reflecting existing community structures and resident lifestyles
- Generating potential for significant cost savings
- Decentralising key upper tier service delivery, bringing them closer to communities
- Facilitating devolution and enabling the establishment of a Mayor for a broader Peninsular Strategic Authority

- Optimising the balance between strategic planning and operational execution, aligning seamlessly with a new strategic authority
- Promoting wider collaboration by aligning with existing local public service boundaries

## 5. Local distinctiveness

This section sets out the distinctive attributes of the two proposed authorities. We anticipate that there will be both opportunities for shared service delivery across the two authorities and a significant role for parish and town councils. These aspects will be developed further as part of the final proposals. In some areas we are united by our differences – the current stock holding authorities (Housing Revenue Account) are solely in the Exeter and Northern area for example.

### Southern Devon Authority

The proposed Southern Devon authority would combine South Hams, West Devon, Teignbridge, and Torbay Council, creating a new administrative entity with a population of around 430,000. This aligns with the English Devolution White Paper and aims to enhance service delivery without boundary changes.

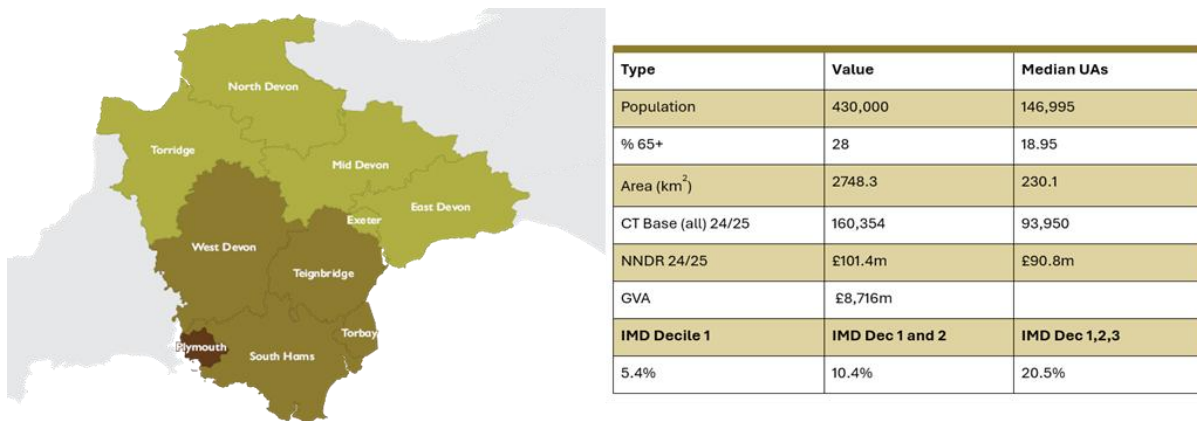


Figure 2: Key data for Southern Devon Authority

### Geographical and Economic Synergies

The area is characterised by natural synergies, with Dartmoor National Park to the north and coastal communities to the south. The economy is diverse, with strengths in marine, tourism, agriculture, and environmental digital innovation. The region also has significant potential for clean growth technologies. Torbay's combination of established companies, specialised facilities like the Electronics and Photonics Innovation Centre (EPIC), and a strong industry cluster makes it a prominent centre for photonics.

## **Operational Synergies and Efficiencies**

The four councils have a history of collaboration in areas like building control, procurement, emergency planning and community safety. The new authority will aim to further integrate services, delivering savings and efficiencies. Shared service models, like those between South Hams and West Devon, with a single workforce and fully integrated systems and processes, will be expanded. This provides a blueprint for change which is both sustainable and cost-effective. None of the four existing councils have a Housing Revenue Account which simplifies operational synergies.

## **Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity**

The new authority will benefit from strategic road and rail networks, supporting both local and regional economies. There are already plans to align concessionary bus travel within the context of an approved a Joint Local Transport Plan for Devon and Torbay.

## **Health and Social Care Integration**

Torbay's integrated health and social care model has been successful in reducing staff shortages and speeding up hospital discharges. This successful approach could be part of the answer to the Government's challenge of reforming NHS and social care and it is hoped that appropriate support is available from the Government to retain integration in Torbay and, ideally, expand the integration to cover the wider geography of a new unitary authority.

## **Educational and Training Opportunities**

South Devon College offers a range of courses aligned with key sectors like marine, construction, and green technology. The new authority will leverage these educational resources to support economic growth.

## **Alignment with Health and Safety Services**

The new authority will align with the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust and existing police and fire services. The council will align with the West Devon and South Devon Local Care Partnerships, providing a platform to deliver stronger- place based interventions with NHS and health system partners. Overall, this alignment will enable improved person-centred care and deliver stronger place-based interventions.

## **Environmental and Clean Growth Initiatives**

The area has significant potential for clean growth, with initiatives in renewable energy and environmental innovation. The new authority will support the UK's ambition to become a clean energy superpower.

## **Community and Place-Making**

The proposals emphasise preserving the unique identities of the cities of Plymouth and Exeter, our towns and villages in Southern Devon. The new authority has the potential to drive sustainable growth and improve the quality of life for residents.

### Exeter and Northern Devon Authority

The proposed Exeter and Northern Devon authority would cover what is currently an area of five district councils, North, Mid and East Devon along with Torridge and Exeter City. This new authority would have a population of over 542,000, making it the third largest authority in the South West and within the ten largest in the country by population. It would become the largest authority in the region by area.

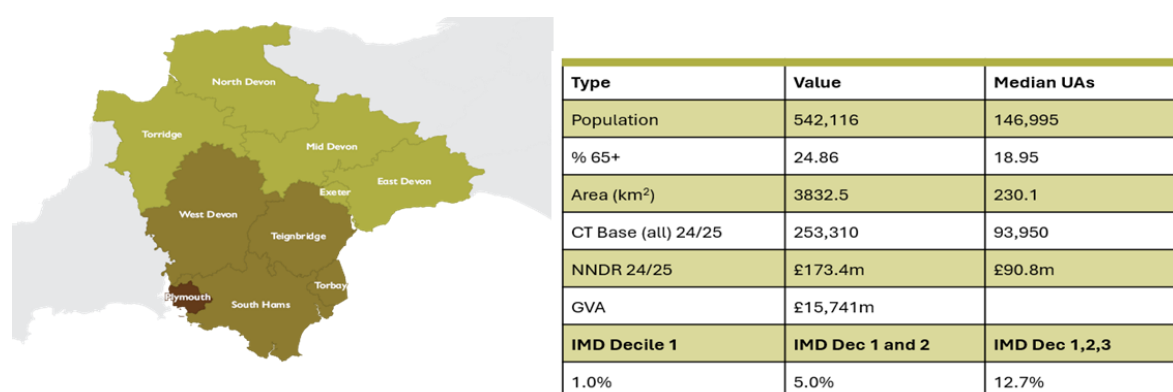


Figure 3: Key data for Exeter and Northern Devon Authority

### Place and Place-Making

Exeter has the second largest travel to work area in the country. The area covered by the new authority has a strong history of shared place-making and visioning amongst its partners. There exists a commonality of experience across market town revitalisation and addressing coastal deprivation and associated challenges.

### Operational Synergies and Scope for Efficiencies

There is clear scope for efficiency in delivery and greater resilience within this new authority. Shared service arrangements already exist amongst a number of the current councils, including shared procurement, economic development or joint customer-facing entities such as the joint North and Mid Devon building control function. The new authority will generate structural savings through simplified management arrangements.

### Alignment with Relevant Geographies

The new authority would see broad alignment of its geography with the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The new authority would cover the areas

of the One Northern Devon health locality partnership as well as the One Eastern Devon health locality partnership.



Figure 4: Current configuration of health services

## Broad and Diverse Economy

The economy of this new authority area will be mixed, providing a balance between emerging knowledge and data industries alongside bedrock sectors such as agriculture, food production, tourism and a range of manufacturing – from the dockyard of Appledore to the advanced fabric manufacturing in Tiverton whose parachutes help NASA land rovers on Mars. Importantly, these are myriad strengths from which to tackle our structural productivity challenges, where persistent physical and digital connectivity issues stifle growth, and where skills deficits strangle ambition. The new authority will be at the forefront of data-led activity in the field of climate science.

## Educational and Training Opportunities

Exeter, Petroc and Bicton Colleges all serve the area covered by the new authority, providing high quality training and skills development opportunities. The University of Exeter is also a member of the Russell Group of Universities and an anchor institution in supporting the transition to a knowledge driven economy.

## Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity

Key road strategic corridors such as the M5, A30/A303 and A361 are all matched by adjacent rail corridors. These have a fundamental bearing on the functioning of housing and labour markets and provide opportunities for geographically focused service delivery from area offices. The presence of Exeter Airport also has the potential to increase international connectivity as well as supporting in-bound tourism.

## **5. Response to criteria**

The following section details the response to criteria a) to h) as set out in the Ministerial letter of the 5<sup>th</sup> February;

### **a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.**

Within a largely rural county the potential for economic and housing growth needs targeted support to unlock its potential. Support that is most effectively provided by authorities with a firm understanding of place and local connection to its businesses and communities. As explained, a single Devon Unitary Authority is too large to deliver effective, efficient services whilst ensuring that services are connected to place. Therefore, in developing proposals for multiple unitary authorities, careful consideration will need to be given to the potential for economic and housing growth which does not disadvantage the other unitary authorities.

In working together, it is essential that the data held by Devon County Council on its upper tier functions is shared openly at the lowest possible level. This has not yet been forthcoming, so current modelling has been based on pro-rata disaggregation simply to test financial sustainability. This more refined data will help to ensure that the final proposals are based on accurate information about the needs of the populations and communities of the new authorities. We are committed to ensure a single, comprehensive data set is available.

The potential impact, or otherwise, on the delivery of National Park Authority functions will need to be considered and, in the case of Exmoor National Park Authority, how the relationship with Somerset Council is maintained and strengthened.

Two areas where additional help would assist in expediting the development of the proposals would be the identification of a single point of contact/sponsor in central government to enable timely decision making alongside the provision of capacity funding to support ongoing analysis and testing of options. In addition to this we have identified the following areas where additional support and clarity would be helpful;

### **Financial Framework:**

- Clarification of long-term funding models for new unitary and combined authority structures, including revenue and capital funding.

- Detailed guidance on the treatment of existing debt and assets across the current councils.
- Support in modelling and forecasting the financial impact of various reorganisation options – this will build upon the disaggregation analysis undertaken to date.
- Confirmation of how implementation costs will be funded including provisions around capital directions.

#### **Legislative Framework:**

- Confirmation of likely consultation arrangements.
- Clear and timely legislative guidance on the powers and responsibilities of new structures, particularly regarding planning, housing, and social care.
- Guidance on the transition process, including staff transfer, contract management, and data migration.

#### **Service Integration:**

- Support in developing robust service integration plans to ensure seamless transition and avoid disruption to frontline services.
- Availability of a single data set for service costs which is tailored to the preferred geographies.
- Guidance on best practices for aligning IT systems and data management across merged entities.

#### **Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

- Clarification of impact of any potential review to Plymouth City's boundaries including availability of resources and likely timescales

#### **Rurality and Coastal Needs:**

- Recognition of the unique needs of Devon's large rural and coastal areas

- b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.**

As outlined above, our analysis demonstrates that the proposed formation of two unitary councils covering Southern Devon and Exeter and Northern Devon would best match the ambitions and criteria set out in the English Devolution White Paper. The key metrics for these authorities are set out in the table below including benchmarking against the median for current unitary authorities in England;

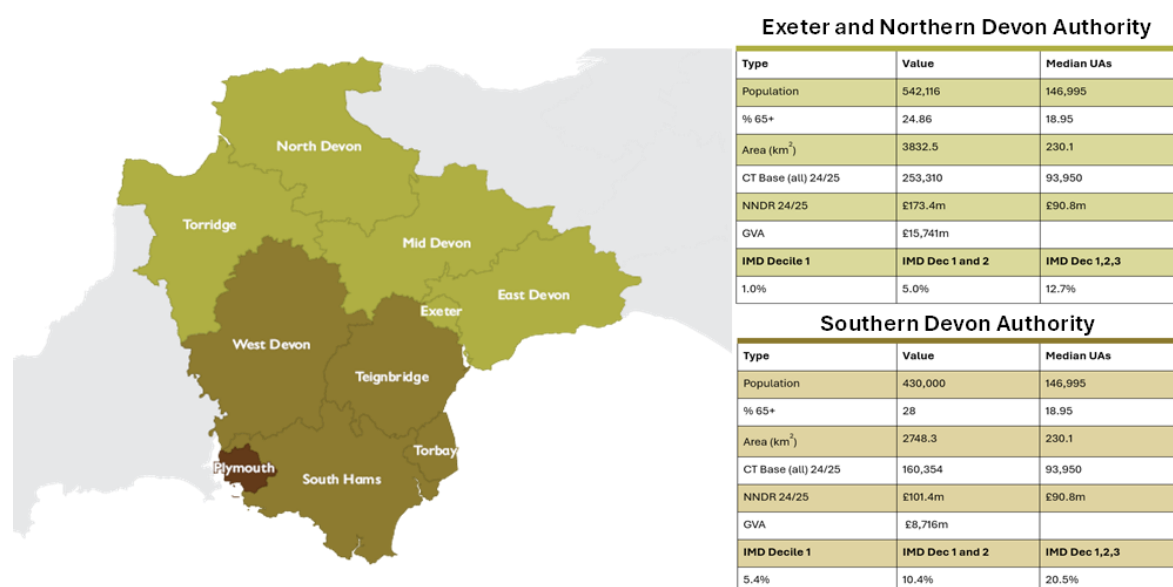


Figure 5: Key data for the two proposed Authorities

We have commissioned initial independent financial analysis and have considered potential costs and benefits by using various financial benchmarks. Given the uncertainty around the savings that have been achieved in previous unitary rounds, we have sought to stress-test these savings and cost assumptions.

**c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.**

Potential transformation costs are difficult to estimate but we consider these to be at least £5m per district, potentially up to £10m.

This is an area of work that will need considerable further development, testing and verification including considering how difficult areas such as debt are treated. Given the number of alternative options that are being put forward across Devon, we are mindful that all financial analysis needs to be underpinned by a single, agreed data set and we are committed to supporting the establishment of this.

- d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.**

Our starting point has been to compare potential arrangements with other large rural unitary authorities. This gives a range of between 4500 and 5000 electors per councillor to ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of the area in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.

#### **Comparison of other large rural Unitary Authorities:**

In North Yorkshire (the largest in England by area (8,053 km<sup>2</sup>)) the average number of electors per councillor was 5,374 when formed in 2023. Cornwall had a ratio of 4,994 registered electors per councilor.

Cumberland, another new unitary has a ratio of 4,569 registered electors per councillor. In general terms County Councils have higher levels of electors per Councillor. The average number of registered electorate per councillor for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in 2023 was 4,852. Locally Devon County Council in 2023 had 10,432 electors per Councillor.

We believe that in line with the above a total of 230 to 250 Cllrs would improve the democratic representation by over 50% (compared to the existing Devon County Council figures) and allow councillors to continue to undertake effective decision making, scrutinise decisions and provide effective community leadership.

Based on the number of electors on the two new Unitary Councils these would be split as follows (with Plymouth remaining at 57):

	<b>Electors per Councillor</b>	
	4,500	5,000
Exeter and Northern Devon	120	108
Southern Devon	73	65

Table 2: Electors per councillor

We are mindful that both proposed authorities include large rural areas that are characterised by dispersed populations. We will therefore continue to refine this analysis to ensure that benchmarks for the geographical area being served are also considered, including drawing on the recent practical experience of Westmorland and Furness Council. This may lead to a further reduction in the number of electors per councillor. We also anticipate a strengthened role for parish and town councils in maintaining local democracy and addressing the specific needs of their communities.

**e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.**

The proposal for two new unitary authorities alongside the retention of Plymouth City Council on its existing boundaries, directly supports the Government's wider devolution ambitions. The existing eight district, one county (Devon) and one unitary (Torbay) councils would form into the two new authorities providing local representation, accountability and an effective service delivery platform for the future 'strategic' mayoral combined authority.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) was formally established on the 5th February as part of devolution deal for the area. The two proposed unitary authorities align to the same geography and can therefore work seamlessly to support the CCA.

Looking forward, our preference is for a Mayoral Combined Authority serving the wider peninsular area including Plymouth and Cornwall. The proposed structure of unitary councils would again nest neatly within this wider geography with the MCA including voting representation from the four authorities. This would bring more equal voting representation per head of population than single large unitary with both of the proposed unitary authorities having a population that is more akin to the population current served by Cornwall Council (at circa 570,000 people).

**f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.**

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on 16th December 2024 and the subsequent receipt of the invitation to develop proposals for local government reorganisation on 5th February 2025, Leaders and Chief Executives across Devon have been in discussion about potential proposals.

We need to work across all existing local authorities across Devon to gather all the necessary information in order to prepare an options appraisal for all councils to consider ahead of the deadline for the submission of final proposals at the end of November 2025.

We are committed to engaging extensively with our residents, partners and stakeholders. The limited time available to prepare this interim plan has necessarily meant that this engagement has not been able to be as extensive as we would all prefer. Nonetheless the following activity has been undertaken;

- Online engagement events with Parish and Town Councils
- Engagement with Members of Parliament
- Reports to local strategic partnerships
- Torbay has facilitated a discussion with the Place Leadership Board together with holding an in person engagement event

Once feedback is received from Government on the interim plans submitted by the Devon local authorities, a cohesive approach to engagement across the whole of Devon will need to be determined and implemented. This will enable us to show how the councils in Devon have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views. We anticipate that this will include structured engagement with the following partners and stakeholders;

- Members of Parliament
- Town and Parish Councils
- Town Mayors and Clerks
- Education
- Integrated Care Board
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Dartmoor and Exmoor National Park Authorities
- Voluntary and Community Sector

**g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.**

We are mindful of the likely costs of developing proposals fully in order to give the Minister confidence in the comprehensive nature of our plan when it is submitted in November. This is one of the many benefits of working in collaboration with 8 of the 11

councils in the Devon system; costs and resources can be shared, and collaboration maximised, for the benefit of our residents. While we have scoped the legal and procedural requirements and recognise the potential cost of proposal preparation as being in the order of £250-300k, equally as important will be the practicalities of aligning public engagement and consultation over the summer months.

The county council has identified a range of option proposals it is considering, and this proposals is referenced within their intended 'interim' submission. There is the potential that their 'holding' position may well be resolved once the elections have taken place, potentially bringing the numbers to 9 of the 11 councils in support and working together in the common interest. We remain hopeful that, following the March interim submissions, other single-authority concepts might be steered onto a path of joint working through formal or informal channels. We recognise the availability of capacity funding from government might be a way to encourage this. Nevertheless, we will wish to coordinate our intended public engagement such that, if there are to be competing propositions being worked on through to November, then the public consultation and engagement on these are coordinated as best we can in order to maximise credibility with our residents, business and other key partners.

Clearly, once we move to the implementation phase, an appropriate form of governance, oversight and project delivery will be initiated, potentially using an expanded 'Team Devon' board as a sponsoring entity, but decisions on this will be made at the appropriate time. The Devon system of local government has a long history of working together and across administrative borders; productive discussions have taken place across all 11 council leaders, and we are confident that such discussions will continue in the spirit of positivity, even to the pursuance of different ends, should the remaining outlying proposals continue beyond this 'interim' stage.

- h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.**

There is a long history of local partners working together proactively and collaboratively. This spans a wide range of activity from community safety to joint planning and formal shared service delivery. We fully expect future arrangements to adopt this same ethos.

Of particular note are the following voluntary arrangements;

- Team Devon – this brings together the Leaders and Chief Executives from the eight Districts and the County Council. It provides a forum for sharing information and for discussing key proposals, not least in relation to local

government reorganisation. This grouping is also in the process of being constituted as a formal joint committee to support the operation of the Combined County Authority.

- Devon Districts Forum – the brings together the Leaders and Chief Executives of the eight Districts alongside the Devon Association of Local Councils. This has enabled the sharing of ideas and perspectives alongside the joint commissioning of initial financial analysis.

Depending upon feedback to initial Interim Plans, we would anticipate a single grouping including representation from Plymouth City and Torbay Councils alongside the County Council and District Councils would provide oversight of the development of final proposals through to November 2025. Whilst we cannot guarantee that this would necessarily mean that all partners necessarily align behind a single preferred option, it would nonetheless ensure that all proposals are explored consistently including utilising the same data sets.

## **6. Conclusion and next steps**

We have moved at pace to develop and agree this Interim Plan submission. Using the keystones of the 500k population size and existing administrative areas as building blocks together with the benefit of the initial financial analysis, we believe that the two unitary proposal enables a balanced approach and provides the best fit with the objectives of the Devolution White Paper whilst retaining a place-based and locally distinctive approach.

We recognise that considerable further analysis is required to test and develop these proposals through to November of this year. This is particularly important in the context of a large and complex area such as Devon. We are mindful of the need to remain agile and open to different ideas in order to ensure the best possible local government arrangements are put in place. We are committed to working proactively and collaboratively in order to progress this.

Our headline programme going forward is as follows;

**Project Timeline:** March 2025 - November 2025

**Project Goal:** Develop and deliver comprehensive, evidence-based proposals for local government reorganisation in Devon, ensuring they are financially sustainable, operationally efficient, and aligned with the needs of residents and stakeholders.

**Phase 1: Interim Plan Development & Foundation (March - May 2025)**

- **Objective:** Establish project governance, define scope and establish key areas of focus.
- **Activities:**
  - **1.1 Project Setup:**
    - Establish project steering group and working groups, allowing for outcome of Devon County Council elections.
    - Define roles and responsibilities.
    - Set up project communication channels.
  - **1.2 Initial Stakeholder Mapping:**
    - Identify key stakeholders (residents, businesses, community groups, existing councils, etc.).
    - Begin initial contact and gather preliminary viewpoints.
  - **1.3 Interim Plan Development:**
    - Conduct initial research and evidence gathering
    - Develop assessment criteria (e.g., financial sustainability, service delivery, democratic accountability).
    - Consider wider alignment of wider public service delivery e.g. police, fire & rescue
  - **Deliverables:**
    - Project Charter.
    - Stakeholder mapping document.

## **Phase 2: Testing and Development (May - June 2025)**

- **Objective:** Conduct rigorous testing, and refine proposals based on analysis.
- **Activities:**
  - **2.1 Financial Modelling:**
    - Develop financial models to assess the costs and benefits
    - Analyse potential impacts on council tax and other revenue streams.
    - Model long term savings and costs.
  - **2.2 Service Delivery Impact Assessment:**

- Assess the potential impact on key service areas (e.g., social care, education, waste management).
- Identify potential service delivery improvements and efficiencies.
- Consider scale of deliver and what works best, some large scale some very local services
- Consider place-based approach and role of area offices/committees
- **2.3 Legal and Governance Analysis:**
  - Assess the legal and governance implications including Councillor representation and role of parish and town councils
  - Identify any legislative changes required.
- **2.4 Initial Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement:**
  - Present the initial options to the public via online platforms and public meetings.
  - Undertake targeted engagement with key stakeholder groups
  - Gather feedback on proposals
- **Deliverables:**
  - Detailed reorganisation option document.
  - Financial models and reports.
  - Service delivery impact assessments.
  - Legal and Governance analysis documentation.
  - Public consultation and stakeholder engagement report (Phase 1).

### **Phase 3: Refinement & Stakeholder Engagement (July - September 2025)**

- **Objective:** Refine reorganisation proposals based on analysis and stakeholder feedback, and conduct extensive stakeholder engagement.
- **Activities:**
  - **3.1 Option Refinement:**
    - Refine option based on financial modelling, service delivery impact assessments, and public feedback.
    - Develop detailed implementation plan.

- **3.2 Enhanced Financial Modelling:**
  - Refine financial models with data gathered from public consultations and option adjustments.
  - Stress test financial models.
- **3.3 Targeted Stakeholder Engagement:**
  - Conduct targeted engagement with specific stakeholder groups (e.g., businesses, community groups, voluntary sector).
  - Organise workshops and focus groups.
- **3.4 Second Phase of Public Consultation (Phase 2):**
  - Present the refined option to the public.
  - Provide detailed information on the potential impacts
  - Conduct online surveys and public meetings.
- **3.5 Risk Assessment:**
  - Conduct a full risk assessment.
  - Create risk mitigation plans.
- **Deliverables:**
  - Refined reorganisation option documents.
  - Updated financial models and reports.
  - Stakeholder engagement reports.
  - Public consultation report (Phase 2).
  - Risk assessment document.

#### **Phase 4: Final Proposal & Reporting (October - November 2025)**

- **Objective:** Finalise reorganisation proposals, prepare comprehensive reports, and present to decision-makers.
- **Activities:**
  - **4.1 Final Proposal Development:**
    - Develop a final reorganisation proposal based on analysis and stakeholder feedback.
    - Develop five case outline business case

- Prepare a detailed implementation plan.
- **4.2 Final Financial Report:**
  - Produce a final financial report detailing the predicted costs and benefits.
- **4.3 Final Report Preparation:**
  - Prepare a comprehensive report summarising the reorganisation proposals, analysis, and stakeholder feedback.
  - Include a clear explanation of the chosen option and its rationale.
- **4.4 Presentation to Decision-Makers:**
  - Present the final proposals to the relevant decision-making bodies
  - Address any questions and concerns.
- **4.5 Publication of Final Report:**
  - Publish the final report and reorganisation proposals for public access.
  - Submission to Minister of State by 28<sup>th</sup> November
- **Deliverables:**
  - Final reorganisation proposal document
  - Final financial report.
  - Comprehensive final report including outline business case.
  - Presentation materials.



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

15 May 2025

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

### **INTERIM PLAN FEEDBACK: DEVON, PLYMOUTH AND TORBAY**

To the Chief Executives of:

Devon County Council  
East Devon District Council  
Exeter City Council  
Mid Devon District Council  
North Devon District Council  
South Hams District Council  
Teignbridge District Council  
Torridge District Council  
West Devon Borough Council  
Plymouth City Council  
Torbay Council

#### **Overview:**

Thank you for submitting your interim plans. The amount of work from all councils is clear to see across the range of options being considered. For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.

Our aim for the feedback on interim plans is to support areas to develop final proposal(s). This stage is not a decision-making point, and our feedback does not seek to approve or reject any option being considered.

The feedback provided relates to the following interim plans submitted by Devon, Plymouth and Torbay councils:

- Interim Plan submitted by 7 of the 8 Devon district councils (East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon District Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council) and Torbay Council
- Devon County Council Interim Plan
- Exeter City Council Interim Plan

- North Devon District Council Interim Plan
- Plymouth City Council Interim Plan
- Torbay Council Interim Plan

We have provided feedback on behalf of central government. It takes the form of:

1. A summary of the main feedback points,
2. Our response to the specific barriers and challenges raised in your plans,
3. An annex with more detailed feedback against each of the interim plan asks.

We reference the guidance criteria included in the invitation letter throughout, a copy can be found at [Letter: Devon, Plymouth and Torbay – GOV.UK.](#)

Our central message is to build on your initial work and ensure that the final proposal(s) address the criteria and are supported by data and evidence. We recommend that final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.

We welcome the work that has been undertaken across proposals to develop local government reorganisation plans for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. This feedback does not seek to approve or discount any option or proposal, but provide some feedback designed to assist in the development of final proposal(s). We will assess final proposal(s) against the guidance criteria provided in the invitation letter and have tailored this feedback to identify where additional information may be helpful in enabling that assessment. Please note that this feedback is not exhaustive and should not preclude the inclusion of additional materials or evidence in the final proposal(s). In addition, your named area lead, Christian Denison, will be able to provide support and help address any further questions or queries.

### **Summary of Feedback:**

We have summarised the key elements of the feedback below, with further detail provided in the annex.

1. We welcome the steps some councils have taken to come together to prepare proposals (as per criterion 4).
  - a. **Effective collaboration between all councils across the invitation area will be crucial; we would encourage you to continue to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will support the development of a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposal(s).**
  - b. **It would be helpful if final proposal(s) use the same assumptions and data sets.**
  - c. **It would be helpful if your final proposal(s) set out how the data and evidence supports all the outcomes you have included, and how well they meet the assessment criteria in the invitation letter.**

- d. **You may wish to consider an options appraisal that will help demonstrate why your proposed approach in the round best meets the assessment criteria in the invitation letter compared to any alternatives.**
2. The final proposal(s) must specify the area for any new unitary council(s). If boundary change is part of your final proposal, then you should be clear on the boundary proposed and the justification.
  3. The criteria ask that a proposal should seek to achieve for the whole area concerned, the establishment of a single tier of local government (see criterion 1). **For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.**
  4. We recognise that plans are at an early stage and further analysis is planned in the run up to submitting the final proposal(s). **Further detail and evidence on the costs, efficiency savings and outcomes that are expected to be achieved would be welcomed.**
  5. In some of the options you are considering populations that would be above or below 500,000. As set out in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more. This is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. **All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.**
  6. The criteria asks that consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children’s services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety (see criterion 3). **For any options where there is disaggregation, further detail will be helpful on how the different options might impact on these services and how risks can be mitigated.**
  7. With reference to the current Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), further information would be helpful on the implications of the proposed local government reorganisation options for the governance arrangements in the Devon and Torbay CCA. It would also be helpful to outline how each option would interact with the CCA and best benefit the local community.

#### **Response to specific barriers and challenges raised**

Please see below our response to the specific barriers and challenges that were raised in your interim plans:

**1. Reaching agreement in Devon and information sharing between councils**

We note concerns raised about information sharing, and welcome commitments to collaborate across all councils, and commitment to share information. Data sharing is crucial to support the development of a robust and consistent evidence base to underpin final proposal(s).

**2. Boundary changes and population size**

We note your concerns on the 500,000 population figure and possible boundary changes. As explained above, in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more, this is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.

In relation to potential boundary changes, as the invitation letter sets out boundary changes are possible, but “existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered”.

The final proposal must specify the area for any new unitary council(s). If a boundary change is part of your final proposal, then you should be clear on the boundary proposed, which could be identified by a parish or ward boundary, or if creating new boundaries by attaching a map.

Proposals should be developed having regard to the statutory guidance which sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed (including that listed above).

If a decision is taken to implement a proposal, boundary change can be achieved alongside structural change. Alternatively, you could make a proposal for unitary local government using existing district building blocks and consider requesting a Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR) later. Such reviews have been used for minor amendments to a boundary where both councils have requested a review – such as the recent Sheffield/Barnsley boundary adjustment for a new housing estate. PABRs are the responsibility of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England who will consider such requests case-by-case.

**3. Impact on National Park Authorities**

We note your concerns about the potential impact of local government reorganisation on the delivery functions of the National Park Authority, and we

would welcome further details on potential issues to understand what support may be needed.

#### **4. Proposal Development Contributions**

You asked about the provision of funding to enable ongoing analysis and testing of proposals. £7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly.

#### **5. MHCLG and Government capacity**

We note your concerns around central Government support for areas through the reorganisation process. You also asked for a single point of contact in central government to enable timely decision making and ongoing support. Christian Denison has been appointed as your MHCLG point person and is ready to engage with the whole area on issues you wish to discuss further.

#### **6. National funding reforms**

We note your concerns on the implication of funding reforms. Government recently consulted on funding reforms and confirmed that some transitional protections will be in place to support areas to their new allocations.

Further details on funding reform proposal(s) and transition measures will be consulted on after the Spending Review in June.

We will not be able to provide further clarification on future allocations in the meantime but are open to discussing assumptions further if we can assist in financial planning.

#### **7. Transitional costs and financial frameworks**

You have sought clarity on transitional costs and future funding frameworks and have sought guidance on the treatment of debt and assets. In terms of transitional costs, as per the invitation letter, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects. In relation to debt, as per the invitation letter, the default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils.

#### **8. Elections**

We note your concerns about the potential impact of the elections in May on timelines for local government re-organisation. We would be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss the feedback with all councils at a suitable time, though our working assumption is that elections will take place as planned.

## **9. NHS Settlement Locally**

We note your concerns that the level of funding within the NHS locally will impact on local government. In the development of your final proposal(s), it would be helpful to evidence the impact on health and care service delivery in local government, including identified risks (along with a plan for mitigating those risks) and a consideration of workforce challenges.

## **10. Consultation**

We note the interim plan sets out a range of engagement with stakeholders. Expectations on engagement and consultation are set out in the invitation letter.

Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. The Secretary of State may not implement a proposal unless she has consulted with other councils affected by it and any other appropriate person. We are happy to engage further on these consultation requirements and the likely process for areas undergoing reorganisation in due course.

## **11. Legislative Framework & Consultation**

You asked for confirmation of likely consultation arrangements, and guidance on the powers and responsibilities of new structures. Expectations on consultation and legislation are set out in the invitation letter. We are happy to engage further on the consultation requirements in statute and on the legislative arrangements for new councils.

## **12. Service Integration**

You asked for support in developing robust service integration plans. We recognise that areas going through local government reorganisation will want advice and guidance on practical transition issues. The current sector support offer is outlined on the LGA's website. As the local government reorganisation programme evolves, we recognise the need to address more niche and complex matters. We are collaborating with the LGA and sector bodies to develop this. We encourage you to continue working with the LGA and sector bodies to identify and outline your future support needs, so these can be considered in the development of the long-term support offer. We would also encourage you to consider partnership options for joint working across the new unitaries for the delivery of social care services.

## **13. Rural and Coastal Needs**

We note your concerns on the unique needs of Devon's large rural and coastal areas. Any proposal(s) will need to balance the needs of different areas and consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

#### **14. Role of cities and major urban centres in unitary authorities.**

You asked for clarity on the approach to specific issues faced by small cities in the context of local government reorganisation. Your proposal(s) should clearly set out the challenges faced and how the proposal(s) address these. Any proposal(s) will need to balance the needs of different areas and consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

#### **15. Guidance and template for November business case**

You asked about a template or guidance on the structure of the final proposal. We will support you to develop your final proposal(s). You can also draw on the support of the LGA. The current sector support offer is outlined on the LGA's website. As the local government reorganisation programme progresses, we recognise the need to address more niche and complex matters. We are collaborating with the LGA and sector bodies to develop the offer. We encourage you to continue working with the LGA and sector bodies to identify and outline your future support needs, so these can be considered in the development of the long-term support offer.

#### **16. Continuing Authority**

You asked for Government to confirm that Plymouth City Council would be a continuing authority in relation to your preferred option. You should set out in your final proposal how implementation would work and the assumptions underpinning this. Decision on the appropriate implementation and transition arrangements will be considered following final decisions on the proposal to be implemented.

#### **17. Transitional Flexibilities**

You asked for clarification over any transactional flexibilities regarding council tax harmonisation. Restructured councils often inherit different council tax levels from their predecessors. There is an established flexible system in legislation for the harmonisation of council tax levels over seven years.

#### **18. Devon County Council's Safety Valve**

You asked for clarification on the treatment of Devon County Council's Safety Valve agreement and residual Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block deficit.

The government has provided a £1 billion increase to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision funding in 2025-26. This is an important step in realising the government's vision to reform England's SEND provision to improve outcomes and return the system to financial sustainability. The government will work closely with parents, teachers and local authorities to take forward this work.

We recognise the impacts that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits are having on councils' finances and will work with the sector on a way forward.

The government intends to set out plans for reforming the SEND system in further detail this year. This will include details of how the government will support local authorities to deal with their historic and accruing deficits and any transition period from the current SEND system to the reformed system. This will inform any decision to remove the DSG Statutory Override.

#### **19. Assets and Liabilities**

You asked for further information regarding assets owned and managed by individual councils, as well as any liabilities that may exist. The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils. There is existing legislation that makes provisions for the transfer of assets and liabilities in the context of local government reorganisation, namely. The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transfer of Functions, Property, Rights and Liabilities) Regulations 2008.

#### **20. Children's Services and SEND**

You have noted your concern that as part of a larger unitary authority, the challenges currently being experienced by Devon County Council in relation to SEND will have a detrimental impact on children and young people in Torbay. In your final proposal(s) it would be helpful to see analysis, including potential benefits, risks and mitigations for the impact of local government reorganisation on SEND services.

**ANNEX: Detailed feedback on criteria for interim plan**

<b>Ask – Interim Plan Criteria</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<p>Identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>1 c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement and</p> <p>2 a-f) - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks and</p> <p>3 a-c) Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens</p>	<p>We welcome the initial thinking on the options for local government reorganisation in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, and recognise that this is subject to further work. In your final proposal(s) we would welcome further detail that addresses the criteria in the invitation letter, and we note that this work has started.</p> <p>You may wish to consider an options appraisal against the criteria set out in the letter to provide a rationale for the preferred model against alternatives.</p> <p>For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.</p> <p>Where there are proposed boundary changes, the proposal should provide strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for the change.</p> <p>Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs, including future housing growth plans. All proposals should set out the rationale for the proposed approach</p> <p>Given the financial pressures you identify it would be helpful to understand how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity.</p> <p>We recognise that the options outlined in the interim plans are subject to further development. In final proposal(s) it would be helpful to include a high-level financial assessment which covers transition costs and overall forecast operating costs of the new unitary councils.</p> <p>We will assess final proposals against the criteria set out in the invitation letter. Referencing criteria 1 and 2, you may wish to consider the following bullets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high level breakdowns for where any efficiency savings will be made, with clarity of assumptions on how estimates have been reached and the</li> </ul>

	<p>data sources used, including differences in assumptions between proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity.</li> <li>• information on the counterfactual against which efficiency savings are estimated, with values provided for current levels of spending</li> <li>• a clear statement of what assumptions have been made, and if the impacts of inflation are taken into account</li> <li>• a summary covering sources of uncertainty or risks with modelling, as well as predicted magnitude and impact of any unquantifiable costs or benefits</li> <li>• quantified impacts, where possible, on service provision as well as wider impacts</li> </ul> <p>We recognise that the interim plans acknowledge further work is needed on the financial assessment. The bullets below indicate where further information would be helpful across all options. As per criteria 1 and 2 it would be helpful to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional data and evidence to set out how your final proposal(s) would enable financially viable councils, including identifying which option best delivers value for money for council taxpayers</li> <li>• further detail on potential finances of new unitaries, for example, funding, operational budgets, potential budget surpluses/shortfalls, total borrowing (General Fund), and debt servicing costs (interest and MRP); and what options may be available for rationalisation of potentially saleable assets</li> <li>• clarity on the underlying assumptions underpinning any modelling e.g. assumptions of future funding, demographic growth and pressures, interest costs, Council Tax, savings earmarked in existing councils' MTFs</li> <li>• financial sustainability both through the period to the creation of new unitary councils as well as afterwards</li> </ul> <p>We welcome the information provided in the plans on the potential impact and opportunities for service delivery from reorganisation. We would welcome further details on how services can be maintained where there is disaggregation, such as social care, children's services, SEND, homelessness, and for wider public services, including public safety.</p>
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	<p>Under criterion 3c) you may wish to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how each option would deliver high-quality and sustainable public services or efficiency saving opportunities</li> <li>• what are the potential impacts of disaggregating services?</li> <li>• what would the different options mean for local services provision, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do different options have a different impact on SEND services and distribution of funding and sufficiency planning to ensure children can access appropriate support, and how will services be maintained?</li> <li>• what is the impact on adults and children's care services? Is there a differential impact on the number of care users and infrastructure to support them among the different options?</li> <li>• what partnership options have you considered for joint working across the new unitaries for the delivery of social care services?</li> <li>• do different options have variable impacts as you transition to the new unitaries, and how will risks to safeguarding be managed?</li> <li>• do different options have variable impacts on schools, support and funding allocation, and sufficiency of places, and how will impacts on school be managed?</li> <li>• what impact will there be on highway services across the area under the different approaches suggested?</li> <li>• what are the implications for public health, including consideration of socio-demographic challenges and health inequalities within any new boundaries and their implications for current and future health service needs. What are the implications for how residents access services and service delivery for populations most at risk?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>We welcome the desire to maximise the opportunity for public service reform, and it would be helpful for you to provide more details on your plans so we can explore how best to support your efforts.</p>
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<p>Include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>2d)Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>	<p>We welcome the indicative views, where provided, on the potential costs and the type of activity that this will fund.</p> <p>As per criterion 2, the final proposal(s) should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within this it would be helpful to provide more detailed analysis on expected transition and/or disaggregation costs and potential efficiencies of proposals. This could include clarity on methodology, assumptions, data used, what year these may apply and why these are appropriate</li> <li>• detail on the potential service transformation opportunities and invest-to-save projects from unitarisation across a range of services -e.g. consolidation of waste collection and disposal services, and whether different options provide different opportunities for back-office efficiency savings</li> <li>• where it has not been possible to monetise or quantify impacts, you may wish to provide an estimated magnitude and likelihood of impact</li> <li>• summarise any sources of risks, uncertainty and key dependencies related to the modelling and analysis</li> <li>• detail on the estimated financial sustainability of proposed reorganisation and how debt could be managed locally</li> </ul> <p>We welcome the joint work you have done to date and recommend that all options and proposals should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference (linked to criterion 1c).</p>
<p>Include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will</p>	<p>As per criterion 6 in the invitation letter, we welcome the early view where that has been provided of councillor numbers, which we will be sharing with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.</p>

<p>balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>6) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p>	<p>New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p> <p>Additional details on how the community will be engaged, specifically how the governance, participation and local voice will be addressed to strengthen local engagement and democratic decision-making would be helpful.</p> <p>In final proposal(s) we would welcome detail on your plans for neighbourhood-based governance, the impact on parish councils, and the role of formal neighbourhood partnerships and area committees.</p>
<p>Include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.</p> <p>Relevant Criteria:</p> <p>5) New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.</p> <p>a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.</p>	<p>We note the general consensus for an MCA on a Devon or South West peninsula footprint.</p> <p>With reference to the current Devon and Torbay CCA, further information would be helpful on the implications of the proposed Local Government Reorganisation options for the governance arrangements in the Devon and Torbay CCA. It would also be beneficial to outline how each option would interact with the Devon and Torbay CCA and best benefit the local community. If final proposals envisage different devolution structures, it would be helpful for final proposals to clearly set out how these could work.</p>
<p>Include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local</p>	<p>We welcome your interim update against criterion 6, and the engagement undertaken so far and your plans for the future.</p> <p>It is for you to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way with residents, voluntary sector, local community groups,</p>

<p>engagement to help shape your developing proposals.</p> <p>Relevant criteria: 6a&amp;b) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Boards, Parish councils, public sector providers such as health, police and fire, and local businesses to inform your proposals.</p> <p>For any option for two or more unitary councils, you may wish to engage in particular with those who may be affected by disaggregation of services.</p> <p>It would be helpful to see detail that demonstrates how local ideas and views have been incorporated into the final proposal(s).</p>
<p>Set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.</p> <p>Relevant criteria: Linked to 2d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>	<p>We welcome the indicative cost as set out in some plans. We would welcome further detail in your final proposal(s) over the level of cost and the extent to which the costs are for delivery of the unitary structures or for transformation activity that delivers benefits.</p> <p>£7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly.</p>
<p>Set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p>	<p>We welcome plans to work together on the development of final proposal(s) (see criterion 4). Effective collaboration between all councils will be crucial; areas will need to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing.</p> <p>This will enable you to develop a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposal(s) (see criterion 1c).</p> <p>In particular, as for the final proposal(s), as each council can submit a single proposal that must be a clear single option and geography for the area as a whole.</p>

4 a-c) Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views	We recommend that final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.
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## MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL – NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS

June 2025

The Forward Plan containing key Decisions is published 28 days prior to each Cabinet meeting

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
<b>July 2025</b>					
<b>Waste Depot Remodelling</b> To consider the future of the tenancy at Carlu Close	Cabinet	8 Jul 2025	Darren Beer, Operations Manager for Street Scene	Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement	Open
<b>Value for Money Report - Traditional versus Modular Build</b> To receive a report analysing the value for money in traditional builds versus modular builds.	Homes Policy Development Group  Cabinet	3 Jun 2025  8 Jul 2025	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open
<b>Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan</b>	Planning, Environment & Sustainability Policy Development Group	10 Jun 2025	Tristan Peat, Forward Planning Team Leader	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Open

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
	Cabinet	8 Jul 2025			
<b>Corporate Risk Report</b>	Audit Committee Cabinet	24 Jun 2025 8 Jul 2025	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Annual Performance Report</b>	Cabinet	8 Jul 2025	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Community Engagement Strategy (Including Action Plan)</b> Community Engagement Strategy	Cabinet	8 Jul 2025	Jane Lewis, Communications and Engagement Manager	Cabinet Member for Parish and Community Engagement	Open
<b>August 2025</b>					
<b>HRA &amp; SEA Screening &amp; Draft Area B Masterplan for Stage 2 public consultation</b>	Cabinet	5 Aug 2025	Christie McCombe, Area Planning Officer	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Open

<b>Title of report and summary of decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Officer contact</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)</b>
<b>Car Parking Report</b>	Cabinet	5 Aug 2025	Luke Howard, Environment and Enforcement Manager	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>MDDC202504-001- ASHP 2 ASHP upgrades 2025/26 - 2027/28</b>	Cabinet	8 Jul 2025	Stephen Bennett, Building Surveyor	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open
<b>Waste and Recycling Options- Pots and Pans trail</b>	Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group  Cabinet	23 Jun 2025  5 Aug 2025	Luke Howard, Environment and Enforcement Manager	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>2025/26 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 1</b>	Cabinet	5 Aug 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>Draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy</b>	Planning, Environment & Sustainability Policy Development Group	10 Jun 2025	Tristan Peat, Forward Planning Team Leader	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change	Open

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
	Cabinet	5 Aug 2025			
<b>Plan Mid Devon- Draft Policies and Site Options</b>	Cabinet	Not before 31st Aug 2025	Tristan Peat, Forward Planning Team Leader		Open
<b>September 2025</b>					
<b>MDFTP Report</b>	Cabinet	2 Sep 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>October 2025</b>					
<b>Unauthorised Encampment Policy</b> To consider the report	Cabinet	7 Oct 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open
<b>MDH Mobility Scooter in Flats Policy</b> To receive and approve the new MDH Mobility Scooter in Flats Policy which sets out the conditions under which tenants and their visitors may use, store,	Homes Policy Development Group	9 Sep 2025	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open
	Cabinet	7 Oct 2025			
	Council	29 Oct 2025			

<b>Title of report and summary of decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Officer contact</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)</b>
and charge mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs within MDH flats and communal areas.					
<b>Economic Strategy 2024 - 2029</b>	Economy & Assets Policy Development Group  Cabinet	18 Sep 2025  7 Oct 2025	Adrian Welsh, Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Open
<b>Destination Management Plan for Mid Devon</b>	Economy & Assets Policy Development Group  Cabinet	18 Sep 2025  7 Oct 2025	Adrian Welsh, Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Open
<b>Asset Management Plan</b> To receive the revised Asset Management Plan.	Economy & Assets Policy Development Group  Cabinet	18 Sep 2025  7 Oct 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>Housing Strategy</b> To receive the revised Housing Strategy.	Homes Policy Development Group  Cabinet	9 Sep 2025  7 Oct 2025	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
<b>Play Area Inspection Policy</b> To receive and approve the revised Play Area Inspection Policy.	Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group  Cabinet	15 Sep 2025  7 Oct 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement	Open
<b>Corporate Risk Report</b>	Audit Committee  Cabinet	30 Sep 2025  7 Oct 2025	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Corporate Performance Q1</b>	Cabinet	7 Oct 2025	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Draft Budget Report 2026/2027</b>	Cabinet	7 Oct 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>Data Policy (NEW) for MDH</b>	Homes Policy	Not before 9th	Simon Newcombe,	Cabinet Member for	Open

<b>Title of report and summary of decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Officer contact</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)</b>
To receive the new Data Policy for Mid Devon Housing	Development Group  Cabinet  Council	Sep 2025  Not before 7th Oct 2025  Not before 29th Oct 2025	Head of Housing & Health	Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	
<b>November 2025</b>					
<b>Draft Budget Report 2026/2027</b>	Cabinet	4 Nov 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>2025/26 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2</b>	Cabinet	4 Nov 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	
<b>Corporate Recovery Policy</b> To receive the updated Corporate Recovery Policy.	Audit Committee  Cabinet	30 Sep 2025  4 Nov 2025	Dean Emery, Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>Tax Base Calculations</b>	Cabinet  Council	4 Nov 2025  17 Dec 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
<b>2025/26 Treasury Management Report - Qtr 2</b>	Cabinet	4 Nov 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	
<b>December 2025</b>					
<b>MDDC Council Tax Rebate Policy</b>	Community, People & Equalities Policy Development Group  Cabinet	11 Nov 2025  2 Dec 2025	Fiona Keyes, Operations Manager for Revenues Benefits & Recovery	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	
<b>Tenancy Strategy</b> To receive the revised Tenancy Strategy	Homes Policy Development Group  Cabinet	18 Nov 2025  2 Dec 2025	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open
<b>Strategic Grants Review 2025</b> To consider requests from external organisations for grants.	Cabinet	2 Dec 2025	Zoë Lentell, Economic Development Team Leader	Cabinet Member for Parish and Community Engagement	Open
<b>Draft Budget Report 2026/2027</b>	Cabinet	2 Dec 2025	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
<b>Corporate Performance Q2</b>	Cabinet	2 Dec 2025	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Corporate Risk Report</b>	Cabinet	2 Dec 2025	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	
<b>Corporate Anti-Social Behaviour Policy</b> To consider the report.	Community, People & Equalities Policy Development Group  Cabinet	11 Nov 2025  2 Dec 2025		Cabinet Member for Quality of Living, Equalities and Public Health	Open
<b>January 2026</b>					
<b>Shopfront Enhancement Schemes</b> To receive a report setting out the Shopfront Enhancement Scheme for approval.	Economy & Assets Policy Development Group  Cabinet	27 Nov 2025  13 Jan 2026	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Open

<b>Title of report and summary of decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Officer contact</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)</b>
<b>Infrastructure Funding Statement</b>	Planning, Environment & Sustainability Policy Development Group  Cabinet	25 Nov 2025  13 Jan 2026	Richard Marsh, Director of Place & Economy		Open
<b>Draft Budget Report 2026/2027</b>	Cabinet	13 Jan 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>Fees and Charges Report</b>	Cabinet	13 Jan 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>February 2026</b>					
<b>Pay Policy Report</b>	Cabinet  Council	10 Feb 2026  18 Feb 2026	James Hamblin, Operations Manager for People Services	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Draft Budget Report 2026/2027</b>	Cabinet  Council	10 Feb 2026  18 Feb 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open

<b>Title of report and summary of decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Officer contact</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)</b>
<b>2025/26 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3</b>	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	
<b>Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2026/27</b>	Cabinet Council	10 Feb 2026 18 Feb 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>2026/2027 Capital Strategy and 2026/2027 Capital Programme</b>	Cabinet Council	10 Feb 2026 18 Feb 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>Establishment Report</b>	Cabinet Council	10 Feb 2026 18 Feb 2026	James Hamblin, Operations Manager for People Services	Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement	Open
<b>Policy Framework</b>	Cabinet Council	10 Feb 2026 18 Feb 2026	Laura Woon, Democratic Services Manager	Leader of the Council	Open

<b>Title of report and summary of decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Officer contact</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)</b>
<b>Business Rates Tax Base</b>	Cabinet Council	10 Feb 2026 18 Feb 2026	Paul Deal, Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience	Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk	Open
<b>April 2026</b>					
<b>Single Equalities Policy and Quality Objective</b> To consider the report.	Cabinet	7 Apr 2026	Matthew Page, Head of People, Performance & Waste, Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Cabinet Member for People, Development and Deputy Leader	Open
<b>Corporate Risk Report</b>	Cabinet	7 Apr 2026	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager	Leader of the Council	Open
<b>Corporate Performance Q3</b>	Cabinet	7 Apr 2026	Dr Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance & Improvement	Leader of the Council	Open

Title of report and summary of decision	Decision Taker	Date of Decision	Officer contact	Cabinet Member	Intention to consider report in private session and the reason(s)
			Manager		
<b>Customer Care Policy</b> To received the revised Customer Care Policy.	Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group  Cabinet	23 Mar 2026  7 Apr 2026	Lisa Lewis, Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement	Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement	Open
<b>Tenancy Fraud (NEW)</b> To receive and approve a new policy in relation to Tenancy fraud.	Homes Policy Development Group  Cabinet  Council	17 Mar 2026  7 Apr 2026  22 Apr 2026	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open
<b>Aids and Adaptations policy</b> To receive a report updating and reviewing the Aids and Adaptations Policy.	Homes Policy Development Group  Cabinet	17 Mar 2026  7 Apr 2026	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing & Health	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader	Open

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## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2025-2026

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
<b>14 July 2025</b>				
	<b>Annual Corporate Performance Report</b> To consider the Report		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Steve Carr	
	<b>Leader of the Council's Annual Report</b> Report from Leader of the Council on the State of the District, the Cabinet's priorities for the coming year and its performance in the previous year.		Chief Executive	
	<b>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution</b> How are the developing proposals affected by the elections?		Chief Executive	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>18 August 2025</b>				

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
<b>8 September 2025</b>				
	<b>Freedom of Information Dashboard for 2025/26 Quarter 1.</b>		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Lisa Lewis Ewan Girling	
	<b>Devon Highways - Junction 28 of the M5</b> Invitation to the Devon County Council Member for Highways to address the Scrutiny Committee regarding progressing work on Junction 28 of the M5.		Director of Place and Economy David Parker	Alternative Date 29 <sup>th</sup> September
Page 110	<b>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution</b> How are the developing proposals affected by the elections?		Chief Executive	
	<b>Whistleblowing - 6 month update</b> To receive the report		Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Matthew Page	
	<b>Establishment - 6 month update</b> To consider the report.		Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Matthew Page James Hamblin	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
	<b>Community Safety Partnership</b> To consider the report.		Director of Place and Economy Simon Newcombe Tanya Wenham	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>29 September 2025</b>				
	<b>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution</b> Update on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution following the report over the Summer		Chief Executive	
	<b>Devon Highways - Junction 28 of the M5</b> Invitation to the Devon County Council Member for Highways to address the Scrutiny Committee regarding progressing work on Junction 28 of the M5.		Director of Place and Economy David Parker	Alternative date 8 <sup>th</sup> September
	<b>Housing Repairs and Maintenance</b> To receive a report on House Maintenance, general and emergency repairs, pollution monitoring, and resident safety.		Director of Place and Economy Simon Newcombe	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
	<b>S106 Review</b> To receive a report explaining the procedure and processes that the Council went through and append the December 2024 Infrastructure Funding List		Director of Place and Economy	
	<b>Review of Responses and Actions from South West Water</b> To review Actions taken by South West Water in response to questions asked of them on 17 March 2025		Director of Place and Economy David Parker	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>20 October 2025</b>				
	<b>Freedom of Information Dashboard for 2025/26 Quarter 2.</b> To receive the Freedom of Information Dashboard		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Lisa Lewis Ewan Girling	
	<b>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution</b> How are the developing proposals affected by the elections?		Chief Executive	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>17 November 2025</b>				
	<b>Annual Report of Complaints and Compliments</b> To consider the report.		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Lisa Lewis	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>15 December 2025</b>				
	<b>Interim Corporate Performance report to Quarter 2</b> To consider the report.		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Steve Carr	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>26 January 2026</b>				

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
	<b>Budget Update</b> To consider the initial draft 2026/2027 Budget and options available in order for the Council to set a balanced budget.		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Paul Deal	
	<b>Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Annual Report</b> To consider the report.		Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Maria De Leburne	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
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	<b>Freedom of Information Dashboard for 2025/26 Quarter 3.</b>		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Lisa Lewis Ewan Girling	
	<b>Whistleblowing Annual Update</b> To consider the report.		Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Matthew Page	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
	<b>Establishment Report</b> To consider the report.		Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Matthew Page, James Hamblin	
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>16 March 2026</b>				
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	
<b>20 April 2026</b>				
	<b>Freedom of Information Dashboard for 2025/26 Quarter 4.</b>		Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Lisa Lewis Ewan Girling	
	<b>Scrutiny Chair's Annual Report</b> To receive a report from the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee on the work the Scrutiny Committee has conducted over the last year.		David Parker	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
	<b>Work Plan</b> To review the existing Work Plan and consider items for the Committee's future consideration including a) Any items within the Forward Plan, b) Suggestions for future work.		David Parker	

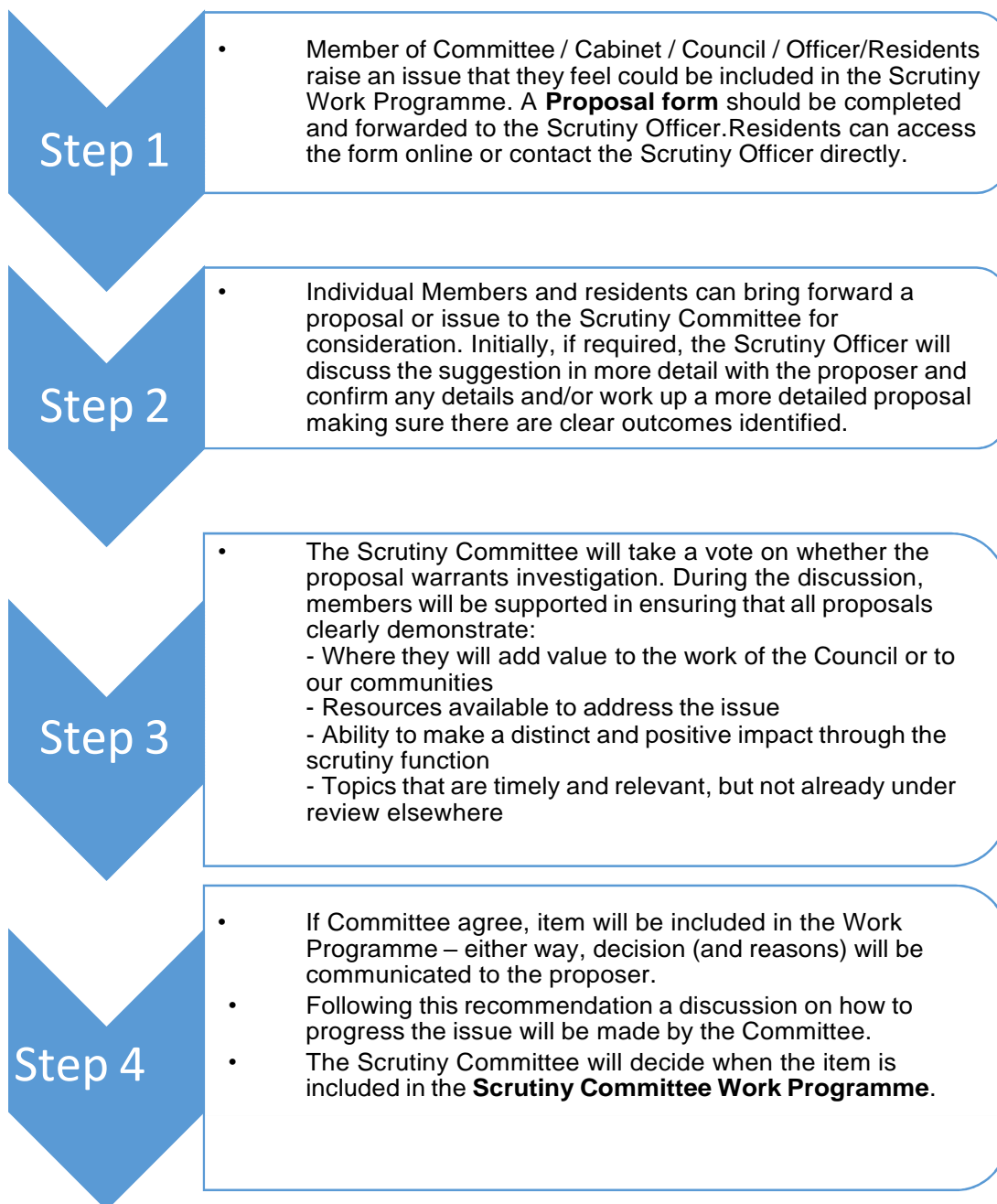
## **Mid Devon District Council Scrutiny Proposal Form**

(This form should be completed by Member(s), Officers and / or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny).

**Note:** The matters detailed below have not yet received any detailed consideration. The Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the District Council's remit.

Proposer's name and designation	Cllr Sue Robinson Scrutiny Committee Chair	Date of referral	20/06/2025
Proposed topic title	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and MDDC's 5 Year Housing Plan		
Link to national, regional and local priorities(Corporate Plan) and targets	The most recent NPPF (2025) and its implications for MDDC over the next 5 years (2025 -2030) and beyond.		
Background to the issue	<p>Our most recent 5 year housing plan is due to expire in June 2025.</p> <p>The NPPF has imposed 180 houses per annum upon the previous target, which we were only just proving able to meet.</p>		
List main points this report should cover (What do you want to achieve?)	<p>How can the Council move towards rectifying this problem with planning consent?</p> <p>(i) Existing developers who own land within MDDC but aren't currently building – how to progress this?</p> <p>(ii) New call for sites and how to proceed?</p> <p>(iii) MDDC owned land and how to accelerate planned work.</p>		
Should this be referred to the appropriate PDG/ Committee?	PPAG is expected to consider this topic in depth, but when?		
What degree of priority is this issue? 1 = Urgent    2= High 3=Medium    4=Low	1		

## Proposing an item for the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme



## **Mid Devon District Council Scrutiny Proposal Form**

(This form should be completed by Member(s), Officers and / or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny).

**Note:** The matters detailed below have not yet received any detailed consideration. The Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the District Council's remit.

Proposer's name and designation	Cllr Sue Robinson	Date of referral	20/06/2025
Proposed topic title	Extending / Enriching Apprenticeship Opportunities in MDDC		
Link to national, regional and local priorities(Corporate Plan) and targets	There is very limited 16+ provision within MDDC's area. There is a high demand for skilled workers particularly in "trowel trades" – bricklaying, plumbing, electrician etc. at NVQ L1 and L2.		
Background to the issue	MDDC offers apprenticeships throughout the organization but these practical apprenticeships have been challenging because of the need to find day release / block release for the education aspects.		
List main points this report should cover (What do you want to achieve?)	(i) An increase in career opportunities via apprenticeships amongst MDDC's workforce. (ii) Closer links with NVQ Education providers in the area to accommodate the needs of new apprentices.		
Should this be referred to the appropriate PDG/ Committee?	SD&CI PDG should be asked for this to be a substantial item.		
What degree of priority is this issue? 1 = Urgent    2= High 3=Medium    4=Low	2.		

## Proposing an item for the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

