

District Report

Cllr Paul Arnott

January 2025

Devolution, and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

This month's report focussed wholly on the effects of the publication of the government's White Paper on the above published on 16th December

Devon County Council voted last Thursday to seek entry for its One Devon idea in Phase One of the LGR pathway. This is unlikely to be agreed by government because there is no unity as yet at such short notice between the county and the districts on the subject, and there is no unity with Cornwall about being in the same Strategic Authority (with a mayor).

I am especially disappointed that County, in seeking to be in Phase One, also passed a motion voted for by all Conservatives to cancel the county elections in May. Government is due to reply to their letter by end third week of this month

The districts reacted collaboratively and quickly, and at East Devon last Thursday an Extraordinary meeting of Council resolved as follows:

That Council;

Notes the key proposals arising from the English Devolution White Paper, including the proposed introduction of a new devolution framework and the plans for local government reorganisation

Endorses the;

1. a. Joint Leaders statement from the Devon Districts Forum
- b. Potential to promote the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority for the peninsula to cover Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall
- c. Need to engage with our communities, partners and stakeholders to develop considered and coherent proposals around changes to the current model of 10 councils in Devon to a smaller number of suitably sized unitaries rather than defaulting to a single unitary approach.
2. Belief that a preferred pathway should be explored which would create two Devon Unitary Authorities, one of which should be focused around the North Devon, Mid Devon, East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils, along with Exeter City Council.
3. Belief that the people of Devon would be best served after the abolition of the county

council by the two new unitaries, containing a city in each this being Plymouth to the west, and Exeter to the east.

4. Grants delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination to advance discussions around the form and coverage of future Principal Authorities.

5. Receives a further report in February providing an update on the negotiations before interim proposals are submitted to central government.

6. To lobby the government on the importance of a Devon-wide consultation to ensure that any revised local government structures meet the principles of devolved powers in local communities, towns and parishes rather than be imposed by Whitehall.

Next steps

- Govt to write to County in next few weeks confirming phase one of two. If one, elections cancelled
- Govt write to all councils in Devon asking for suggested new unitaries, said to be of a minimum of 500k people
- Councils to reply immediately, with greater detail by end March, and near final plans by autumn
- Please note that at EDDC under 6 above we are determined to protect the input of parishes and towns
- Devon District Leaders are meeting twice a week to pursue.