

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 19 March 2025**

**Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.18 pm

90 **Apologies**

Apologies received from Councillors Jess Bailey, Colin Brown, Jenny Brown, Iain Chubb, Anne Hall, Matt Hall, Sam Hawkins, Mike Howe, Stuart Hughes, Vicky Johns, Geoff Jung, John O'Leary, Yehudi Levine, Sophie Richards and Henry Ridell.

91 **Declarations of interest**

92 **Public speaking**

None.

93 **Matters of urgency**

None.

94 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

None.

95 **Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution**

The Leader of Council presented a report setting out an update on progress of proposals for local government in Devon to be reorganised into a single tier of local government. Members noted that the report set out proposals to submit an interim plan to Government by 21 March 2025.

During consideration of the item the following comments were made:

- Importance of ensuring that any work on a final bid to Government should be adequately resourced and not impact on business as usual at the Council.
- Engagement with Town and Parish Councils should be included in any proposals.
- Public consultation on any proposals should be carried out.
- Need to understand the net costs for running a new authority.

Members were informed that the districts proposal has been developed with a shared belief that a single unitary council for the whole of Devon would be too large and remote to best serve the interests of its residents and communities.

It was noted that the interim plan was essentially an initial expression of interest, and that extensive, detailed work would need to be undertaken before a detailed business case was developed that will enable thorough consideration of the risks and opportunities of the proposal. This would need to include extensive stakeholder engagement before the deadline for final proposals to be submitted to government on 28th November 2025.

The Leader of Council confirmed that seven district councils in Devon issued a joint statement on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation on 28th February stating that stated that initial agreement had been reached to work towards the formation of two new councils that combine existing areas as follows:

- A unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon areas with Torbay
- A unitary including East, Mid and North Devon alongside Torrridge District and the City of Exeter

Members were presented with a draft interim plan reflecting this agreement which sets out a high level business case which accords with the guidance issued by government in terms of size, working to existing local authority boundaries changes and viability. The draft had been agreed in principle by leaders and chief executives but, importantly, is subject to different governance arrangements at the relevant councils and maybe subject to change right up until the submission deadline.

The Leader of Council recognised the comments from councillors and highlighted the importance of East Devon District Council having a say and being able to participate in any discussions around the future of local government in Devon.

Councillor Paul Arnott proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor John Loudoun and having been put to the vote was carried by a majority show of hands.

## **RESOLVED**

That Council approve that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Council Leader, to submit an Interim Plan based on the proposals set out in this report in response to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution's letter dated 5th February 2025 by the deadline of 21st March 2025.

## **Attendance List** **Councillors present:**

P Arnott	P Faithfull	J Loudoun
A Bailey	P Fernley	D Mackinder
B Bailey	C Fitzgerald	M Martin
I Barlow	S Gazzard	C Nicholas
K Blakey	M Goodman	T Olive
K Bloxham	D Haggerty	H Parr
A Bruce	M Hartnell	M Rixson
C Burhop	P Hayward	E Rylance
M Chapman	N Hookway	A Toye
B Collins	B Ingham	S Westerman
R Collins	S Jackson	J Whibley
O Davey	R Jefferies	D Wilson
T Dumper	D Ledger	E Wragg

## **Officers in attendance:**

Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager  
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health  
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Andrew Wood, Director of Place

**Councillor apologies:**

- J Bailey
- C Brown
- J Brown
- I Chubb
- A Hall
- M Hall
- S Hawkins
- M Howe
- S Hughes
- V Johns
- G Jung
- Y Levine
- J O'Leary
- S Richards
- H Riddell

Chair .....

Date: .....