

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 4 February 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Appointment of Specialist Support in Relation to Local Government Reorganisation

Report summary:

This report seeks approval for to appoint specialist advisers in relation to supporting the development of the 'Reimagining Devon' proposals for local government reorganisations including initial preparatory work to support implementation. This work is being commissioned as part of the Council's role in providing programme management support for these proposals. The costs will be met equally between the seven District and Borough Councils promoting this option.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet;

- approves the appointment of specialist advisers on behalf of the constituent Councils progressing the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation
- delegates authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Council, Corporate and External Engagement to conclude the associated legal agreement

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation continues to be developed in the most robust way possible and to support initial implementation planning.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: High Risk; The future shape and form of local government structures will be a key determinant of how funds and powers flow from central government which will ultimately impact directly upon how services are delivered to residents.

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☒ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
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1. Background and context

1.1 Cabinet has to date received a series of reports in relation to the development of proposals for local government reorganisation. This culminated in the submission of the full proposal for the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation, as set out in 'Reimagining Devon: Believe in Better', to the Secretary of State in November 2025. This was one of five proposals submitted in total.

1.2 A consultation exercise in relation to all of the proposals, to be run by MHCLG, is expected to commence in early February. A final decision as to which option has been chosen is then expected to be made in July.

2. Proposal

2.1 The development of the Reimagining Devon proposals benefited significantly from the appointment of specialist advisers in the form of KPMG. It is now proposed to commission further support to cover the period through to July and a final decision being made. This will focus on four key areas including helping to frame a response to the consultation exercise, providing support for ongoing engagement with MHCLG, collecting data and initial implementation planning. The latter will be progressed on an options agnostic basis.

2.2 The total cost for this work over the course of the next six months is expected to be £175k. This will be met equally between seven District and Borough Councils supporting the 4-5-1 proposals. The cost to this Council of £25k will be met from existing budgets. The work will be commissioned through a pre-tendered framework and approval is sought from Cabinet to enter in to the associated contract.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Proposals for local government reorganisation have now entered a new phase. Commissioning further support from KPMG will enable the 4-5-1 model to be presented in the best possible way and also help to ensure that initial implementation can be undertaken.

Financial implications:

Financial details are contained in the report with costs being met from existing budgets.

Legal implications:

This support is being procured through a Framework and is therefore in accordance with Contract Procedure rules.