

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 1 April 2026

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Towards a Delivery Vehicle for Marlcombe and Wider Growth Corridor

Report summary:

The Marlcombe new community is one of twelve locations shortlisted by the New Towns Taskforce in September 2025 and is the key strategic proposal in the Local Plan review. It will grow to accommodate a population of approaching 25,000 people. Despite not being selected as one of the seven high priority location in the current consultation on the New Towns Draft Programme, it is vital that this community is supported by all the requisite infrastructure and services that residents will need. This report puts forward proposals to both strengthen governance arrangements and put in place dedicated delivery capacity with the objective of ensuring that an exemplar development comes forward that both learns the lessons from and is integrated with the wider growth programme.

The report sets out a three-stage model for strengthening governance arrangements that will ultimately culminate in the establishment of a locally-led development corporation. The first stage proposes both the creation of an Interim Growth Board, that will act in an advisory capacity with an independent chair, together with the establishment of a formal joint committee with the County Council. Alongside this a shared delivery team will be formed including resources from both the County Council and Homes England.

Effective governance and place leadership sits at the heart of successful delivery of the growth programme. The proposals in this report are designed to ensure that the ambitious vision for the Marlcombe new community is realised alongside the ongoing development of Cranbrook and bringing forward the large scale delivery of new employment opportunities. Through building strong and enduring partnerships with key stakeholders an integrated and inclusive growth programme can be delivered that supports the achievement of sustainable development and secures lasting benefits for local residents.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet;

- Supports the proposed governance structure and formation of the shared delivery team
- Nominates the Portfolio Holder for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning to be the Council's representative on the Interim Growth Board
- Nominates the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning to be the Council's representatives on the Joint Committee
- Delegates authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Governance and Portfolio Holders for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning and Council,

Corporate and External Engagement to finalise the terms of reference for the Interim Growth Board and Joint Committee

- Delegates authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Governance and Portfolio Holders for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning and Council, Corporate and External Engagement to recruit the Chair for the Interim Growth Board
- Receives further reports regarding the
 - response to the New Towns Draft Programme consultation
 - establishment of a locally-led development corporation as key milestones are reached

Reason for recommendations:

To ensure that effective governance and place leadership arrangements are in place to support the successful delivery of the Marlcombe new community and wider growth corridor.

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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

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report. The equality impacts of individual schemes will be considered through the proposed governance arrangements and through the production of detailed Impact Assessments where required.

Climate change Medium Impact. The sustainability credentials of the new community and wider growth programme will need to be carefully considered as part of the ongoing technical work..

Risk: Medium Risk; The establishment of a statutory delivery vehicle such as a development corporation very much aligns with both government policy and the learning from the delivery of Cranbrook but will require substantial technical work and stakeholder engagement to ensure that all procedural requirements are met and that a persuasive case is presented to the Secretary of State.

Links to background information ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Cabinet, 01/10/2025 18:00](#) item 9 [New Towns Draft Programme - GOV.UK](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- A supported and engaged community
- Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- Resilient economy that supports local business

1. Background and context

- 1.1 EDDC's Cabinet has to date received a series of reports regarding the development of the Marcombe new community. Most recently, at the October 2025 meeting, this included consideration of the Strategic Outline Business Case for establishing a delivery vehicle. A recurring theme has been the recognition of the need to set an assertive approach to delivery from the outset in order to ensure that the ambitious vision for the new community is translated into practical delivery on the ground thus ensuring that an exemplar development comes forward. As such the delivery vehicle will play a key role in transitioning from house building to town building, ensuring that new homes are supported by the timely delivery of critical infrastructure and that a strong sense of place and community develops from the outset.
- 1.2 The report puts forward recommendations intended to bolster place leadership and ensure careful oversight of the growth programme. This approach aligns with recommendations set out in the Report of the Devon Housing Commission, which describes a 'housing crisis' and an acute shortage of affordable homes for the next generation.
- 1.3 Alongside practical measures to strengthen governance and increase capacity it also has a wider symbolic significance in terms of forging a long term alliance to support the delivery of the wider growth programme for the benefit of local residents. This includes developing wider partnership working and collaboration including with Homes England and MHCLG.
- 1.4 As the delivery vehicle is expected to be overseen jointly by both the Council and Devon County Council, a materially similar report to this will also be considered by the County Council's Cabinet.

2. Vision for Marcombe

- 2.1 The vision for Marcombe is to create a self-sufficient, climate-resilient, and infrastructure-first town. Key pillars of the vision are;
- **Scale and community:** The town is planned to accommodate **10,000 homes**, with a significant target of **40% affordable housing** to support local families and young people.
 - **Infrastructure-first approach:** A Development Corporation will oversee the project to prioritise essential services (such as schools, health centres and wastewater treatment capacity) in step with residential development.
 - **Active travel:** The masterplan uses a "walkable" design where daily needs are met within a short walk or cycle. It aims for **58% internalisation of trips**, meaning most residents will live, work, and shop within the town rather than commuting out.
 - **Local employment:** An additional 40 ha of employment land has been allocated, building on the success of the Enterprise Zone, to help support self-containment.
 - **Connectivity:** Located between the A30 and A3052 (near Exeter Airport), the vision includes two park-and-ride facilities and a goal to double service frequency on the nearby rail lines.
 - **Sustainability & nature:** The town will be integrated with the **Clyst Valley Regional Park**, featuring extensive green corridors, allotments, and zero-carbon energy ambitions (including potential micro-grids and heat recovery).

2.2 Marlcombe sits as part of a wider growth corridor that began development 15 years ago. This is illustrated below;



3. Delivery Vehicle

3.1 Work to refine the proposals for establishing the delivery vehicle, in the form of a locally-led development corporation, has continued over the past six months. This has included consideration of the scope and coverage of the vehicle including the relationship with the ongoing development of Cranbrook and the wider Enterprise Zone area. With a total of around 15,000 new homes and over 500k square meters of new commercial space, this represents one of the largest growth programmes in the South West and is of national significance.

3.2 The work undertaken to date has been progressed jointly with the County Council and alongside close engagement with Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in the context of Marlcombe being identified as one of the twelve shortlisted locations in the UK Government's New Towns Programme. The New Towns Taskforce specifically identified Development Corporations (DCs) as the primary and most effective vehicle for delivering the next generation of new towns.

3.3 This report represents the next step in progressing towards the establishment of a statutory delivery vehicle. The report sets out proposals to formalise governance arrangements and to stand up a shared delivery team. This is a precursor to further reports setting out the Outline Business Case for the development corporation and the establishment of an Interim Vehicle which again will need to be considered jointly by the District and County Councils.

4. Economic Impact

4.1 Further work has been undertaken recently to understand the economic impact of the growth programme through the development of an Outline Economic Impact Assessment. This helps to reinforce its significance. The main economic findings of this study are as follows:

- 4,000 new jobs to be created in East Devon by 2042, rising to 12,000 once employment sites are fully developed.
- 7,000 new jobs to be created in the South West by 2042, rising to 25,500 once employment sites are fully developed.
- £262m annual GVA uplift in East Devon by 2042, increasing to £764m once employment sites are fully developed, equivalent to a 20% increase.
- £467m annual GVA uplift for the South West by 2042, increasing to £1.5bn once employment sites are fully developed, equivalent to a 0.8% increase.
- 5,000 annual construction jobs from housing and employment development across the South West up until 2042.
- £294m regional GVA uplift from housing and employment construction up until 2042.
- £114m annual salaries from workers of new employment sites expected by 2042.
- £3.3bn total household income cumulated from new residents up to 2042.

4.2 The large-scale delivery of new homes and jobs creates the potential to tackle deep seated structural challenges such as housing affordability. It can also promote the development of new sectors, including those at the forefront of promoting the transition to a low carbon economy. Through the creation of associated education and training pathways, there is also the potential to ensure that residents can both access and benefit from a wide range of employment opportunities, helping to promote inclusive growth and ensure access to well paid jobs. This approach aligns with the Council's Economic Development Strategy and also builds on the success of existing initiatives such as Building Greater Exeter.

5. Governance arrangements – a three stage model

5.1 The sheer scale and duration of the development programme requires a wide range of partners to come together to help shape and inform the development of investment plans, from public transport services to waste water treatment infrastructure. Marlcombe alone has a gross development value in excess of £2bn including circa £700m of investment in infrastructure being required. Building collaborative advantage will therefore be a key determinant of how successfully Marlcombe and the wider growth programme is implemented.

5.2 It is estimated that it will take 18-24 months to establish a Development Corporation. In order to ensure that the project does not lose momentum during that period, it is proposed to implement a three-stage governance pathway to allow relevant stakeholders to actively engage in the project in a positive way. These are:

- establishment of an **Interim Growth Board** (advisory only), overseen by a **Joint Committee** of East Devon District Council and Devon County Council (executive power, capable of making binding decisions), with a **Shared Delivery Team** to deal with operational matters.
- over the coming months, it is proposed to establish an **Interim Vehicle** (structure to be determined, but likely to be a company owned and overseen by the two Councils) which will take on operational responsibility for the project [(including the Shared Delivery Team)], effectively acting as a “shadow” development corporation.
- finally, once the **Development Corporation** is established, the activities of the Interim Vehicle will be transitioned to the Development Corporation itself.

5.3 The first two stages of this model (ie the Interim Growth Board and Interim Vehicle) are intended to be transitional and will not fetter the future discretion or statutory functions of the Development Corporation once established. The Shared Delivery Team will be responsible for ensuring that all arrangements put in place during prior to the Development Corporation being established will be capable of transferring across to the Development Corporation. This will include the development and maintenance of a Transition Strategy.

5.4 The proposed arrangements reflect recognised best practice for largescale new town delivery by clearly separating advisory leadership, executive decision making, and operational delivery, while preserving flexibility to transition cleanly to a statutory locally led development corporation.

Status of the Interim Growth Board and the Joint Committee

As an advisory body, the Interim Growth Board:

- cannot bind the councils,
- cannot commit expenditure,
- cannot give directions to officers other than via agreed work programmes.

The Joint Committee:

- must have clearly delegated functions,
- must operate within each council's constitutional framework.

The proposed arrangements are considered further below.

Interim Vehicle

Any proposal to establish an Interim Vehicle will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet. Whilst the detailed structure for the Interim Vehicle is still to be developed, it is proposed that:

- it will be jointly owned initially by East Devon District Council and Devon County Council
- it will operate under a constitution (shareholders' or members' agreement and articles of association) aligned with public law duties; and
- its constitution will anticipate future transfer of ownership/control to the Development Corporation.

Interim Growth Board

In order to further develop and formalise governance arrangements it is proposed to create an Interim Growth Board that will act in advisory capacity, pending the establishment of an Interim Vehicle and, later, a Development Corporation. The purpose of the Board is to;

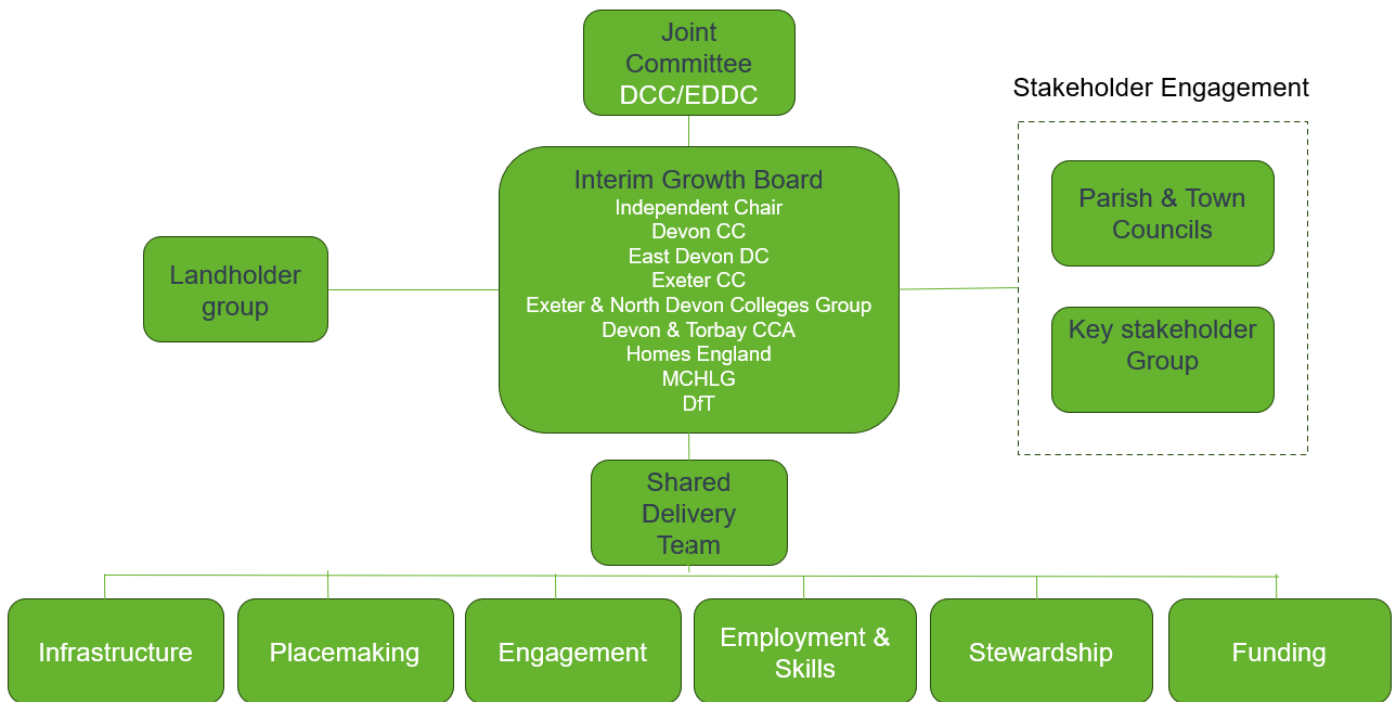
- **Act as the guardian of the vision:** The Growth Board will bring together multiple partners to align housing, employment, and environmental goals to achieve exemplar development across the growth programme.
- **Secure investment and funding:** The Board will help to create a single, unified voice when "bidding" for funding and also assist in influencing and aligning wider investment plans. Furthermore, the Board will help to ensure that funds are carefully deployed and in line with clear priorities.

- **Integrate infrastructure:** A key role for the Board will be to ensure that "infrastructure leads development." Coordination with agencies like National Highways, Network Rail, and utility providers will help to ensure that roads, rail links, and energy networks are planned *before* the first houses are built. Successful placemaking also requires the coordinated delivery of a wide range of supporting infrastructure, from country parks and sports pitches to new shops and schools.
- **Manage risk:** By helping to forge a partnership between the public and private sectors, the Board will help to provide certainty to private investors. Developers are more likely to commit capital if they know exactly where, when and how public funds will be deployed. This will also help to realise wider placemaking ambitions including high quality design.
- **Provide oversight and accountability:** The Board will act in an advisory capacity and provide a forum where local leaders can have oversight of the growth programme, helping to inform decisions around policy and resourcing including monitoring progress with the work programme for the shared delivery team.

5.5 The Interim Growth Board will act strictly in an advisory capacity and will not exercise executive functions, enter into contracts, commit expenditure, or bind the Councils or any future delivery vehicle. The Interim Growth Board will make recommendations to the Joint Committee, which will be the sole body authorised to take binding decisions on behalf of the Councils. Nothing in the interim governance arrangements should prejudice or pre-determine the statutory functions, governance, or decision-making arrangements of the locally-led development corporation once established.

5.6 The proposed governance architecture is set out below. It is anticipated that the Growth Board will include representation from the District, City and County Councils and Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority alongside Homes England, MHCLG and DfT. The inclusion of the Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group will help to ensure a focus on skills development and establishing clear employment pathways including existing initiative such as Building Greater Exeter.

5.7 An independent Chair will be recruited, initially on an interim basis prior to the recruitment of a longer-term chair alongside the appointment of non-executive directors as part of the formation of the interim Growth Vehicle. The Chair will act as an ambassador for the Board, helping to build and develop collaborative strategic partnerships that support and promote the vision including influencing key stakeholders and decision makers. This will be a remunerated role with a salary benchmarked against equivalent roles nationally. The terms of appointment for the Chair will make clear that they owe their duties to the Councils and they will be subject to a tailored code of conduct, aligned to The Seven Principles of Public Life (the "Nolan Principles").



Joint Committee

A further key aspect of the governance proposals is the formation of a formal joint committee with the County Council. The purpose of the committee will be to oversee and drive the delivery of the major development programme including providing strategic and operational governance including supporting planning and infrastructure delivery. It will be able to take binding decisions on behalf of both organisations. This will help to both ensure an integrated approach and speed decision making. The approach is based on the successful South East Devon Habitat Mitigation model.

The Joint Committee will be established under sections 101(5) and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. It will not be a separate legal entity but rather a joint committee of the participating authorities, exercising only those functions expressly delegated to it which are expected to include;

- monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the current plans and agree changes where necessary
- securing the cooperation of all stakeholders
- liaising between partner organisations and sharing of best practice
- monitoring of risks, progress, and effectiveness of delivery
- identifying, lobbying for, and securing complementary funds
- establishing and maintaining a financial model that ensures delivery of developments in the designated area
- identifying requirements for refreshing the evidence base used to determine the Planning and Delivery Strategy and Development Plan
- reviewing developer contribution charges.

Decisions taken by the Joint Committee are legally decisions of the constituent authorities.

Stakeholder Engagement

The governance framework provides the opportunity for more structured engagement with key stakeholders. As highlighted above, building a strong partnership is critical to successful delivery. There are a number of challenging aspects to the growth programme, such as the realisation of an ambitious transport strategy and securing significant modal shift to active travel and public transport, that require all relevant partners to collaborate together. The ability to secure win-win outcomes, such as utilising improved park and ride facilities to support the operation of the County Show, which will benefit multiple partners is an example of the type of collaborative advantage that the Board will help to generate.

The governance structure anticipates two main channels for stakeholder engagement. The first is with parish and town councils in the locality. This is an existing forum and the proposals will help to ensure a timely flow of information and to understand and address concerns from local communities. The second is the establishment of a key stakeholder group which is expected to bring together the following organisations;

- South West Water
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Live West
- SNG
- Stagecoach
- Exeter Airport
- Sport England
- Integrated Care Board
- National Highways
- Network Rail
- GWR
- South Western Railway
- Active Travel England
- Local Members of Parliament
- Exeter College
- Bicton College
- Devon Agricultural Association
- Exeter Chiefs
- Exeter City Football Club
- Exeter Science Park

It is important to emphasise that the establishment of these two groups will be in addition to ongoing wider public consultation and engagement, for example in relation to the development of key planning documents.

The final aspect of the governance structure is the landholder group. A key point of learning from the delivery of Cranbrook has been that we have been working with house builders rather than town builders. In essence there has been market failure where a commercially-led alone simply will not deliver the type of vibrant, high quality new community to which we all aspire. Having said that the vast majority of the investment that is required to deliver major developments will come from private sources. The ability to forge an effective public/private partnership is therefore a key role for the board. Mechanisms such as the use of revolving infrastructure funds can help to deliver both a commercial benefit, in terms of managing cash flow and sharing risk, whilst also realising key placemaking and community development objectives.

Heads of Tems have been developed with the landholder group and these have been signed in conjunction with the County Council and Combined County Authority. The

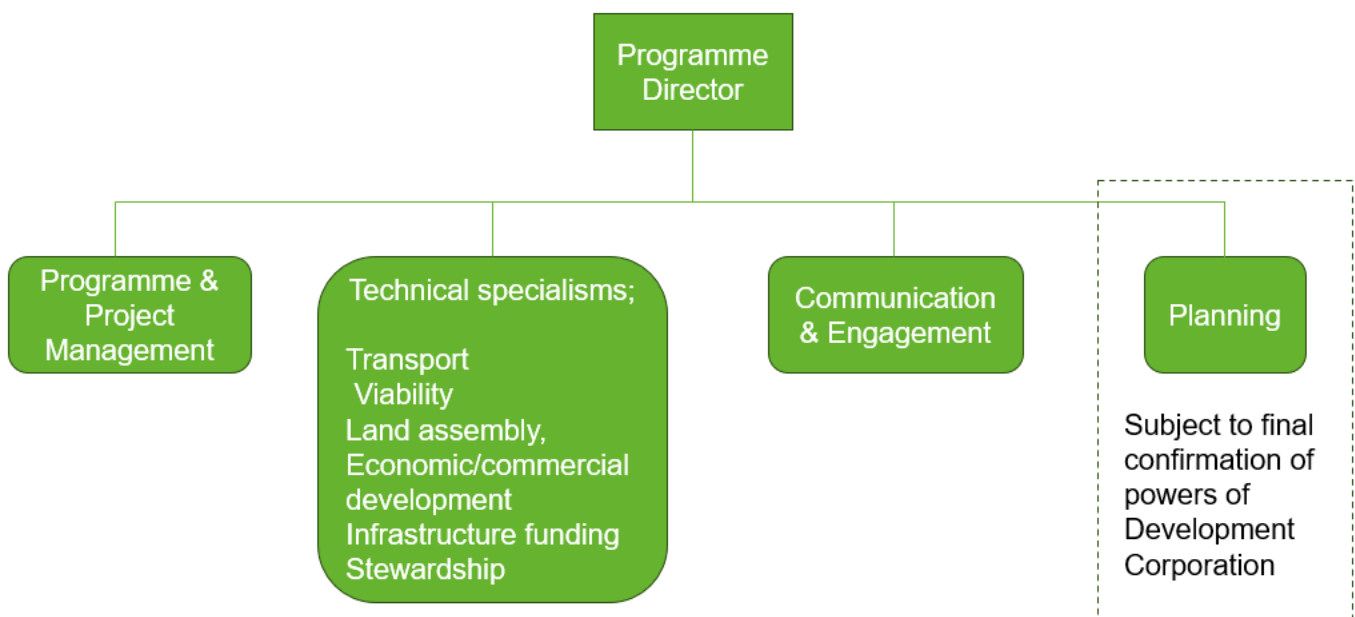
purpose of this is to provide a pathway for the delivery of shared objectives and to support the development of a delivery strategy. The proposed governance structure provides the opportunity to further develop this approach and to continue to forge an effective public/private partnership. This will require ongoing engagement and coordination with the landholder group.

6) Shared Delivery Team

6.1 Delivery of the growth programme is not something that can be left to chance. It demands dedicated capacity over the longer term and requires a wide range of capabilities, from community engagement to funding and project management. A significant part of the rationale for establishing a locally-led development corporation is that it will have a singular focus on the successful delivery of the growth programme and bring dedicated capacity and expertise. With the anticipated start on site for Marlcombe being 2029, it is vital that a range of complex workstreams are progressed to an agreed programme.

6.2 As an initial step towards ensuring that the right capacity is in place, it is proposed that a shared delivery team be formed through seconding staff from the District and County Councils and Homes England. In total this will comprise up to eight full time equivalent (FTE) roles. It is anticipated that these roles will bring together skills and expertise in the following disciplines;

- **Programme and project management expertise** for complex, multi-phase delivery.
- **Technical specialisms** including transport, viability, land assembly, economic/commercial development, infrastructure funding and stewardship, plus the ability to commission work through pre-tendered frameworks.
- **Communication and stakeholder engagement** to help develop strong working relationships



6.3 The delivery team will be accountable to the Growth Board including establishing a work programme. Six initial areas of focus have been identified, ranging from infrastructure delivery through to ongoing stewardship. It is proposed that office space is provided near to site in order to ensure proximity to the growth programme and to help to develop shared purpose.

6.4 Standing up the team now will help to develop a strong alliance between the partner organisations. A key focus for the team will be on ensuring that the vision for the growth area is delivered, including identifying potential barriers and bringing forward associated solutions.

At present there is no specific planning resource within the team. It will be one of the design choices in establishing the Development Corporation as to whether it has planning powers.

6.5 Staff will remain employed by their host authorities, reporting to a single Programme Director, with escalation routes to the Joint Committee only.

7) New Towns Draft Programme

7.1 While Marlcombe was one of the 12 locations originally recommended by the New Towns Taskforce in September 2025, it has not been included in the initial shortlist of seven priority new towns. The government has categorised it as one of six "additional locations" that are deemed "credible development opportunities" but will not be designated as a formal national New Town at this stage. The associated consultation runs until the 19th May.

7.2 This is clearly a disappointing development. Despite its exclusion from the top seven, the national consultation sets the benchmark for Marlcombe's development. To remain a credible candidate for future national status and funding, it must align with the programme's objectives:

- **Scale:** Plans for Marlcombe already align with the 10,000-home goal (initially 8,000, rising to 10,000).
- **Economic Linkages:** Its proximity to the Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone (including Skypark and Science Park) is a major factor in maximising the impact of the proposals and ensuring a balance of new homes and employment opportunities.
- **Infrastructure Requirements:** The consultation highlights that Marlcombe faces significant deliverability hurdles, specifically regarding wastewater treatment and transport upgrades, which must be addressed to unlock its full potential.

7.3 Marlcombe can continue as a locally-led strategic project with the possibility of being upgraded to a full New Town status. Negotiations continue with MHCLG and Homes England to ascertain what package of support might be available.

7.4 It is part of the recommendations of this report that the response to the current consultation is reported back to Cabinet. An essential part of the work programme over the next 6 weeks will be to galvanise the support of local partners and stakeholders to respond to the consultation.

8) Budget and Wider Asks of Government

8.1 The Council has made a significant investment over the past four years to develop both the masterplan for Marlcombe and the business case for the associated delivery vehicle. Valuable support has to date also been received from both Homes England and MHCLG. A proposal has been made to the latter for revenue support to continue this work through 2026/2027 with a total expected cost of £2.4m. This is clearly a very substantial sum and at present there is no certainty as to whether all or some of this funding will be forthcoming.

8.2 This creates a dilemma as to how to proceed. There is currently no allowance in the MTFS to progress this work. Given the challenging financial outlook that the Council faces over the next two years, extraordinary measures would need to be taken in order to find the necessary funds, for example through disposing of a high value asset.

8.3 The cost of not proceeding with this work should also be borne in mind. The experience at Cranbrook demonstrates the potential for market failure, where a purely commercial approach does not realise key placemaking objectives and risks an overt focus on house building as opposed to town building. The Council has adopted a more interventionist approach over the past 5 years, particularly to secure the development of the town centre, but this has been at considerable cost.

8.4 There have though been notable successes at Cranbrook, not least the early use of revolving infrastructure funds to overcome a key barrier to delivery, namely high upfront costs, that has helped to accelerate the delivery of key transport and education infrastructure. The funds are repaid on a roof tax basis as homes are sold. The overall effect is to improve cash flow and share risk between the public and private sectors whilst delivering exceptional value for money. It is a current proposal to MHCLG to extend this approach to Marlcombe to again deliver transport and education infrastructure upfront. This is alongside a proposal to extend both the geographical extent and end date for the Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone designation. The ability to borrow against ring fenced business rate income is again a powerful and innovative means of providing infrastructure funding that does not rely on grant monies alone.

8.5 Alongside these innovative funding mechanisms there are also a number of non-financial asks of government. This includes for a safeguarding direction to be implemented that will protect the new community from speculative competing or piecemeal development proposals. The ability to harness the convening power of government departments will also help to resolve key delivery issues. These asks accord with the recommendations of the New Towns Taskforce.

9) Local Government Reorganisation

9.1 With the consultation period having ended on the 26th March, the next key stage in relation to progressing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation will be the decision as to which of the five options for establishing a single tier of unitary government moves forward. This is expected in early summer 2026. Regardless of the outcome of this, a key risk is that the process of transitioning to the new authority(s) over the period to April 2028 creates a distraction at a critical point in the wider development programme.

9.2 Establishing both dedicated governance and delivery team arrangements is a means of mitigating this risk. Experience from elsewhere reveals that, together, these maintain a focused approach that continues to ensure progress towards key milestones. More widely it is important that the delivery vehicle is embraced by the forthcoming shadow authority and also fits within, and benefits from, future devolution arrangements.

10) Next Steps

10.1 The proposals put forward in this report represent the next steps in formalising governance and capacity arrangements as a precursor to establishing a dedicated delivery vehicle. There is considerable activity currently ongoing to develop the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the delivery vehicle. This is expected to be an early item of business that will be considered by the Interim Growth Board. The OBC is being developed on the basis of the five case model. The management case will be particularly important in terms of refining governance arrangements and charting a course forward.

10.2 Subject to consideration of the OBC, the next steps are then anticipated to be as follows;

- (1) To establish an Interim Vehicle – this will likely need to be established as a legally constituted company
- (2) Formation of a statutory locally-led development corporation – this will require the formal submission of a proposal to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government jointly by the District and County Councils. This will subsequently require secondary legislation to legally establish the Corporation.

10.3 It is a recommendation of this report that Cabinet receives further reports as these key milestones are reached.

11)Conclusion

11.1 Effective governance and place leadership sits at the heart of successful delivery of the growth programme. The proposals in this report will not only support the ongoing development of Cranbrook but will also help to ensure that Marlcombe comes forward as an exemplar development alongside the large scale delivery of new employment opportunities. The formation of the Interim Growth Board will serve to strengthen existing arrangements and forge an enduring partnership moving forward. It will provide oversight of the work of the shared delivery team. Overall these proposals represent an important step towards establishing a statutory development corporation that will ultimately drive the delivery of this nationally significant programme.

Financial implications:

The recommendations in this report can be met within existing budget approvals and external support received to date. There is a pressing need however to determine future funding early in the new financial year 2026/27. As highlighted previously the level of funding required is beyond the financial capacity of this Council, particularly at time when we face a significant funding gap from the implication of the Fairer Funding Review. The report states further reports will be forthcoming and these will need to address the funding position.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are dealt with in the body of this report. Due to the complexity of this project, the Council has secured external legal advice.