

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

14<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Report of: Chief Executive

Title: Local Government Reorganisation in Devon: Preferred Geography

### Is this a Key Decision?

No

### Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

## 1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information so that Council can confirm the preferred geography for the proposed new council covering Exeter and the surrounding area as part of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals for Devon. Following feedback from Government on the city council's interim submission in March 2025, officers are developing a final proposal to be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025. This report sets out a proposed geography based on the principles agreed by Council in March 2025. The city council will then undertake a programme of public and resident engagement, to assist in building a detailed proposal to bring forward to Council prior to submission to Government by 28 November 2025.
- 1.2 An explanation of the criteria set out in the English Devolution White Paper, the current structure of local authorities in Devon and a summary of the interim submissions made by the other councils in Devon can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## 2. Recommendations

That Council:

- 2.1 Notes the Government's response (**Appendix 2**) to Exeter's interim submission;
- 2.2 Agrees the proposed geography for Exeter City Council's Local Government Reorganisation proposal for Devon to enable officers to undertake a programme of public and stakeholder engagement to assist in building the detailed proposal to bring forward to Council for approval. The outcome of the engagement with residents and stakeholders will be shared with Members;
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to further develop the proposal; undertake the proposed engagement and prepare the final proposal for agreement prior to submission to Government; and
- 2.4 Notes that a request for any further budget required to complete the final proposal will be brought to Council for approval.

### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

- 3.1 In February 2025, councils in two tier areas were formally asked by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to submit final proposals for LGR in Devon by 28 November 2025. This letter also requested that councils prepare an interim submission by 21 March 2025.
- 3.2 As part of the interim submission, Council agreed to support the proposal for a unitary council for Exeter and the surrounding area.
- 3.3 The proposed geography has been based around those areas that have mutual connections to Exeter and includes existing strategic growth areas to the east and south of the city and some of the areas from where people travel to Exeter for work or for social and cultural activities.
- 3.4 The urban nature of Exeter demands a single unitary council that can focus its energy and resources to realise the community, cultural and environmental potential of the area and create resilience.
- 3.5 A new unitary council based on Exeter and the surrounding area will unlock economic benefits and enable the delivery of much needed housing, including affordable homes, and the required infrastructure to deliver inclusive, healthy and sustainable communities for Exeter, Devon and the wider region.
- 3.6 Creating three unitary councils for Devon will support the economies of our distinctive market towns and rural/coastal communities and drive continued growth of Devon's two major cities of Exeter and Plymouth. The shift to a single tier of local government with expanded geography for the urban centres of Exeter and Plymouth would mean that services could be better designed around the specific needs of local communities in urban, rural and coastal areas.
- 3.7 The new unitary council will underpin Exeter's strategic role at the heart of a major transport hub, vital for the economic growth of the whole area and connecting Devon to the rest of the UK.

### **4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources**

- 4.1 Exeter engaged Pixel Financial Management (Pixel) to provide an assessment of the likely financial resources that each of the councils will receive if the proposal is taken forward. It is important to note that the assessment is based on the existing funding formula, which will be replaced in 2026-27. The assessment is also based on the existing resources allocated to local government and does not make any assumptions around future resources or population growth. The financial model is also based on Plymouth's existing boundary and not Plymouth City Council's proposal for an extended Plymouth into South Hams. This does not materially change the funding available for the rest of Devon option identified in the proposal for Exeter and the surrounding area. Once a decision has been taken on the agreed boundaries, the work will be finalised.
- 4.2 The financial model includes all resources within the Government's Core Spending Power definition. This includes Business Rates, Revenue Support Grants and a range of specific grants, including the Better Care Grant and other Adults and Children's Care

specific grants. Council Tax is also included in the figures below. Some funding is excluded from Core Spending Power, for example, funding from the Extended Producer Responsibility and this is excluded from the analysis below. Some other forms of income are also excluded.

4.3 The table below sets out the key information:

Unitary	Total Resources* (£m's)	Per Capita (£k's)	Adult & Children's RNF per head (£'s)
Exeter and surrounding area	286,784	1,111.89	39.92
Expanded Plymouth	325,603	1,211.61	54.51
Rest of Devon	923,281	1,297.22	50.11

\*Total Resources includes council tax, specific grants, retained business rates, and SFA

4.4 The scale of the unitary council being proposed for the rest of the Devon means that it will be, in terms of the funding available to it, one of the largest unitary authorities in the country and therefore comfortably able to withstand financial shocks. Plymouth will also have the financial scale to be financially resilient. It is Pixel's view that on the key measures (population and total resources), and on local taxation revenues, a unitary council based on Exeter and surrounding area would have sufficient financial scale and resources to be financially resilient.

4.5 Pixel did highlight some potential risks in the city council's proposed geography. This will be addressed in the next stage of work where the city council will determine delivery models for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND services on the scale outlined in the analysis and assess their financial viability.

## 5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 The proposal put forward demonstrates financial resilience, but there is further work to do to understand the financial viability of the proposal.

## 6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The statutory provisions for the creation of unitary authorities are set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2000 which provides for the Secretary of State to invite or allow county or district authorities to submit proposals for restructuring into unitary authorities. This can involve the reorganisation of a county and district councils into one or more unitary authorities. The process involves consultation with affected parties and may also include taking advice from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in appropriate cases. Any restructuring order must be approved by both Houses of Parliament.

6.2 The Government introduced the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill to Parliament on 10 July 2025. The intention is that this will overhaul the existing system of local government under the 2007 Act and, in addition to other measures, aims to establish a standardised model of devolution to support the move to more

unitary authorities and to streamline how devolution powers are granted. Until the Bill becomes law, the 2007 Act continues to apply.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

- 7.1 In his letter dated 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution formally invited proposals for LGR based on the single tier unitary model to replace the existing County and District model.
- 7.2 Members unanimously approved the submission of interim proposals for LGR at the meeting of Extraordinary Council on 20 March 2025. The government responded to the interim proposals of Exeter City Council and other Devon authorities on 15 May 2025.
- 7.3 Authority is now sought from Members to proceed in accordance with the recommendations at paragraph 2 of this report. If approved, Members will note that the final proposal will be submitted for approval by Council prior to submission to Government.

## **8. Report details:**

### **Shaping Our Future: Putting People first in Exeter and Devon**

- 8.1 Following feedback from Government on our interim submission in March 2025, officers are developing a final proposal which will be submitted to government in November 2025. This report provides information to enable Council to confirm the preferred geography for the proposed new council covering Exeter and the surrounding area as part of reorganisation proposals for Devon. This will enable officers to then undertake a programme of public and stakeholder engagement to assist in building the detailed final proposal to bring forward to Council for approval prior to submission to Government in November 2025.

### **Determining Exeter City Council's Preferred Geography**

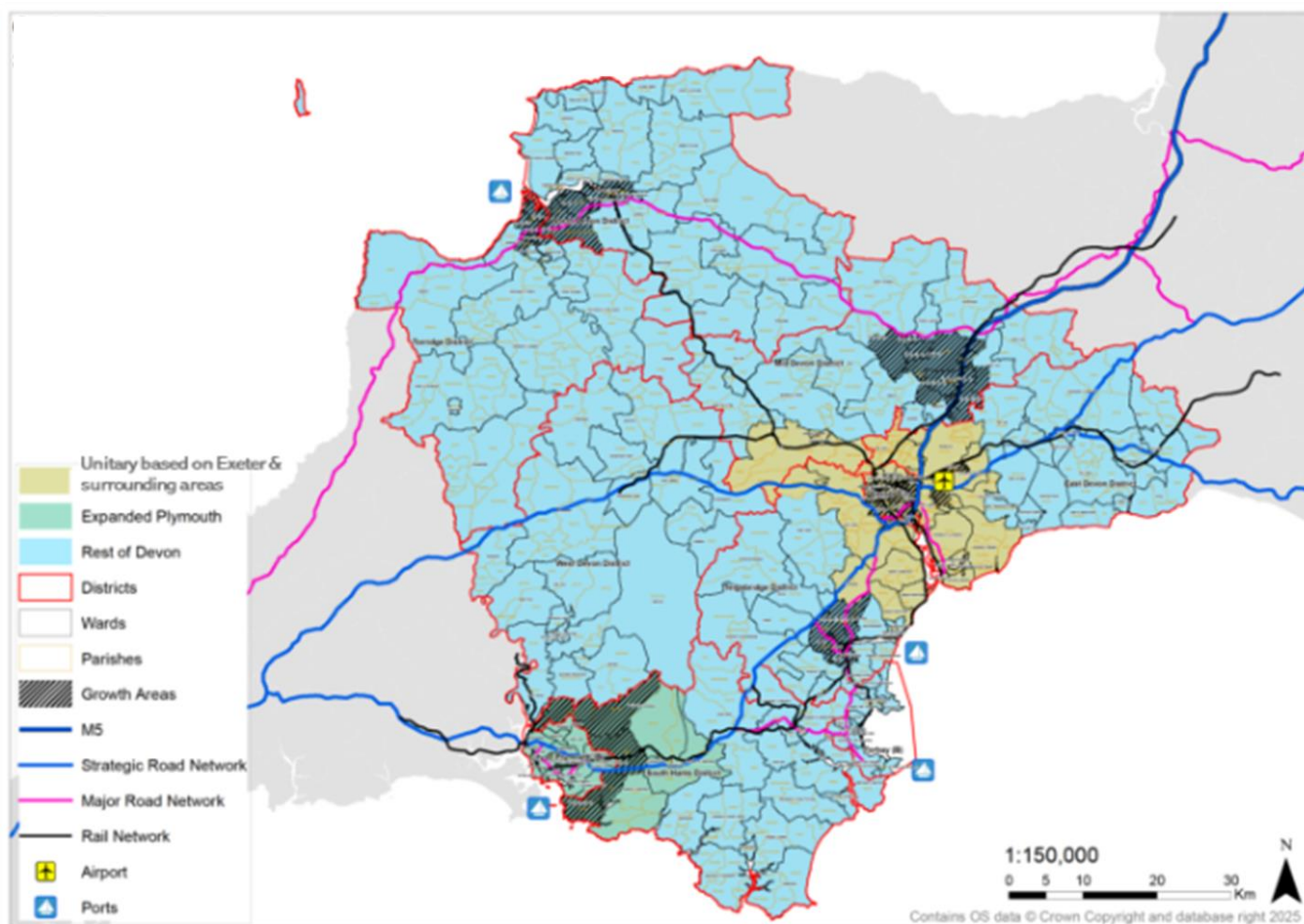
- 8.2 A single unitary council for Exeter and the surrounding area which reflects the housing and economic growth, set out in the emerging Local Plans in adjacent areas, has been a long-held ambition of the city council. In submitting the interim submission to Government in March 2025, Council was explicit in its view that a unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area is a critical step towards unlocking further economic and housing growth for Exeter, Devon, and the wider region.
- 8.3 Devon is a large geographical area with small, dispersed populations. Within it are two major urban areas - Exeter and Plymouth. The city council is clear that LGR must reflect the unique characteristics of cities that drive growth for the benefit of the whole county.
- 8.4 Following stakeholder feedback, the interim submission proposed up to four unitary councils for Devon with a distinct focus on market towns and rural communities as well as Devon's two major cities of Exeter and Plymouth. Council was clear that this will benefit Devon by reflecting our communities' sense of place and identity and vitally, prioritising economic growth.

8.5 Based on further work and the steer given by Members, the proposal before Council is for:

1. **An urban unitary council, based on the city of Exeter and surrounding area** expanding the current district council boundary into Parishes surrounding the city. Serving a population of around 256,401 rising to 294,079 by 2040.
2. **An urban unitary council, based on the city of Plymouth and adjacent Parishes.** Serving a population of around 301,000 rising to 318,612 by 2040.
3. **A rural and coastal unitary council incorporating the rest of Devon.** Serving a population of around 675,179 rising to 765,834 by 2040.

*NB Population figures are based on ONS 2022 population data and will be updated once the latest ONS data set is published and there is consensus on methodology.*

8.6 The map below sets out the proposed geography, that if approved by Council will form the basis of the next phase of the work to develop a proposal for submission to Government in November 2025. If approved by Council, the map below sets out the geography that will inform the next phase of the work to develop a final proposal.



- 8.7 This proposed geography includes Exeter City and 49 Parishes: 15 from within the current Teignbridge District Council area, 28 from the current East Devon District Council area and six from the current Mid Devon District Council area. It is acknowledged that breaking down existing district council boundaries adds complexity in the detailed financial analysis of the costs of the proposed new authorities as the relevant data is not routinely disaggregated at ward or Parish level. These issues will be more fully explored in the next stage of the development of the proposal.
- 8.8 The table below sets out the 49 Parishes within the proposed new geography of a new unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area. During the engagement exercise over the summer, the city council will be seeking the views of residents and Town and Parish Councils in the affected areas. This will include outlining the proposal and listening to views about issues that are important for the new council to consider.

<b>15 Parishes from within Teignbridge District Council</b>	<b>28 Parishes from within East Devon District Council</b>		<b>6 Parishes from within Mid Devon District Council</b>
Dawlish Town Ashcombe Mamhead Starcross Kenton Chudleigh Town Powderham Exminster Kenn Dunchideock Shillingford St George Ide Holcombe Burnell Whitestone Tedburn St Mary	Exmouth Woodbury Lypstone Otterton East Budleigh Budleigh Salterton Colaton Raleigh Bicton Upton Pyne Brampford Speke Stoke Cannon Nether Exe Rewe Huxham	Poltimore Broadclyst Clyst Hydon Clyst St Lawrence Whimble Cranbrook Rockbeare West Hill Aylesbeare Farringdon Clyst Honiton Sowton Clyst St Mary Clyst St George	Cheriton Bishop Hittisleigh Colebrook Crediton Town Crediton Hamlets Newton St Cyres

## 8.9 Torbay Unitary Council

Officers are to date unclear about the intention of Torbay Council. It was a signatory to the Devon Districts proposal of the “1-5-4” model:

- Unitary Plymouth as is.
- A North East Devon Unitary created by the merger of North Devon, Torridge, Mid Devon, East Devon District Councils and Exeter City Council.
- A South West Devon Unitary created by the merger of West Devon, Teignbridge, South Hams District Councils and Torbay Unitary Council.

However, Torbay also made a separate submission to Government with three options for maintaining a unitary Council for Torbay:

- Unitary Torbay as is
- A South Devon and Torbay unitary council created from Torbay plus catchment area of the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust (50% South Hams and 80% Teignbridge)

- A Southern Devon Council: created by the merger of Torbay Unitary council and South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge District Councils

Officers will continue to work with Torbay and other Devon Councils over the coming months to understand their positions and to ensure a full understanding of the implications of a potential four unitary councils for Devon option, so this can be considered in the final proposal.

### **Rationale for a three unitary model**

- 8.10 Exeter and Plymouth, as urban areas, have dense populations and clear identities and are service centres for the surrounding rural and coastal communities. These cities provide opportunities for economic growth, housing, education and employment as well as access to public services, sports, leisure and cultural facilities that can only be provided on this scale. Cities are critical transport hubs for the whole region providing access to rail, air and road hubs that connect the county to the UK and beyond.
- 8.11 As a thriving city, Exeter is well placed to accelerate growth for all of Devon. With a strong base of business startups and world leading knowledge, health and climate science sectors, Exeter will bring resilience to the UK and strengthen the region against economic shocks.
- 8.12 Creating three unitary councils for Devon will support the economies of our distinctive market towns and rural/coastal communities and drive continued growth of Devon's two major cities of Exeter and Plymouth. The economic importance of Exeter and Plymouth – and their unique, yet complementary roles will sustain growth for the entire county. A functional, urban based unitary authority, including the City of Exeter and surrounding areas will:
  - Sustain growth in new businesses and jobs
  - Deliver much needed homes, including affordable housing and a mix of tenures, and create inclusive, healthy and sustainable communities
  - Underpin Exeter's strategic role at the heart of a major transport hub, vital for the economic growth of the whole of Devon. Exeter is only 2 hours from London and has the second largest Travel to Work Area (TTWA) in the UK. With an international airport, two highspeed train lines and the M5 motorway on its doorstep, Exeter connects Devon to the rest of the UK
  - Support Exeter's vibrant education ecosystem of learning, research and development through leading institutions, including a world-class university, the outstanding Exeter College and Exeter Maths School, the Met Office and the pioneering Exeter Science Park
  - Take action to tackle climate change, drive sustainability and demonstrate nature recovery for future generations
  - As a UNESCO City of Literature and home to regionally important cultural and leisure attractions, Exeter acts as the retail and cultural hub for the surrounding area
  - Strengthen the relationship between the new council and Town and Parish councils

- 8.13 Two urban-focussed unitary councils covering a similar population, and a third larger unitary council serving dispersed communities, provides a resilient, financially resilient model enabling each authority to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- 8.14 To assist in establishing financial viability models for new unitary councils, Devon councils jointly commissioned Pixel Financial Management to undertake a Financial Viability Model based on existing District Council boundaries. Subsequently officers commissioned a further analysis on the three unitary model which involved disaggregating funding for new unitary councils based on non-district boundaries. The financial information that has been used in this initial analysis has come from the Financial Viability Model developed by Pixel that will be used by all Devon councils in assessing income.
- 8.15 This model does not include financial projections based on population growth, nor does the model comment on costs and affordability of any new unitary council. The number of unitary councils in final proposals and the models of public service delivery envisaged will be key factors in estimating the affordability of any proposed council. For example, the more unitary councils in an area, the higher the delivery costs for that area will be and the more rural an area, the higher the unit costs of services such as home care, waste etc. are likely to be. The more disaggregation across boundaries there is, the higher the costs of transition. Analysis on costs will be undertaken at the next stage.
- 8.16 Different population modelling methods were used in interim submissions; to ensure consistency in approach and to enable comparison between different Devon submissions, Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2022 population estimates have been used for all the existing district and unitary councils: estimates for the three split districts use the mid-2021 population estimates, because these are the only ones available at ward level. This means population growth estimates may be subject to change as a common methodology is agreed going forward. This is why Members may note difference between the population data here and previously presented.
- 8.17 On balance, Pixel's view was that a proposed new unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area has sufficient financial resilience to justify taking this option forward for further development.
- 8.18 On the key measures (population and total resources), and on local taxation revenues, a proposed new unitary to cover Exeter and the surrounding area would have sufficient financial scale and resources to be financially resilient.
- 8.19 However, Pixel highlighted potential risks in any proposed new unitary Exeter and the surrounding area option that will need to be addressed. In the next stage of this process, work will be undertaken to determine how Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities or 'SEND' services on the scale outlined in the analysis would be financially viable, and what delivery models would need to be developed.



- 8.20 By creating three unitary councils based on the specific needs and characteristics of the places and communities they serve, underpinned by the city council's track record of effective strategic and operational partnerships, this model provides a backdrop for further integration and more effective delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- 8.21 Rising demand, cost and complexity in critical public services such as adult and children's social care and SEND is creating financial pressure for many councils. LGR offers an opportunity to break free of this cycle. It gives a unique chance to do things differently: to inject new ideas and localised, place-based approaches. The city council already specialises in prevention with exceptional investment in discretionary preventative services such as leisure, the focus on social prescribing within Wellbeing Exeter and the Sport England sponsored Place Partnership. Becoming an urban unitary council creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reset the system: to hardwire prevention into local services, to embed housing and community support into commissioning strategies, and to build services that reflect the unique needs and strengths of local people.
- 8.22 A recent report from Impower commissioned by the District Councils' Network (DCN)<sup>1</sup> highlights the importance of place in this context: "This is where districts and smaller councils have a natural advantage - with a strong localised focus on communities and close knowledge of their people and places. These attributes should be essential ingredients of redesigned and reimaged social care services".
- 8.23 The research commissioned specifically to support councils in their responses to LGR, concluded that "Local connection is a prevention superpower, and new unitary authorities should preserve and build on this capability through layered, place-based models of delivery". The research also highlights that whilst being bigger may make it easier to absorb fixed costs, there is no clear link between scale and overall quality of delivery. For example, in Adult Social Care there are no economies of scale in delivering relational personal care, and in some cases, there is evidence that larger systems introduce diseconomies. Impower offer an evidence-based framework of organisational attributes, not structural outcomes, that can be nurtured at different scales alongside three system design principles. These will be used to develop a blueprint for designing delivery models for high quality, accessible and sustainable public services within the context of the preferred option.
- 8.24 In relation to a single unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area; this proposal will strengthen the role of Town and Parish Councils where there is a local desire to do so. The city council has ambitious plans, based on over a decade of investing in, and learning from, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), and feedback from the annual residents' survey, to co-produce a system of Neighbourhood Area Forums to enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

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<sup>1</sup> *The power of prevention and place in new unitary councils: Adult Social Care and Local Government Reorganisation. Impower and DCN June 2025*

- 8.25 Following the clear steer from Council, officers have focused on an urban-based unitary for Exeter and the surrounding area; a tight boundary based on viable population estimates and an approach to service delivery which focuses on localised provision of services. A high-level assessment has then been undertaken using the Government's criteria and the six Exeter principles (see Appendix 1). The assessment is set out in the table below. This will be reviewed in September 2025, following further analysis and feedback from the public and stakeholder engagement.

Model	Government Criteria					
An urban unitary based on the city of Exeter and surrounding areas	Single tier of local government for the area	Right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity & withstand financial shocks.	Prioritise the delivery of high quality & sustainable public services to citizens.	Councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs & is informed by local views.	Must support devolution	Enable stronger community to engagement & deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.
An urban unitary based on the city of Plymouth						
A rural and coastal unitary for the rest of Devon.	Exeter City Council Principles					
	Growth, housing, transport, & connectivity	Urban and rural issues – addressing inequality & local needs	Accessibility to public services	Sense of place & community	Balance population size & demographics	Financial viability & value for taxpayers

Assessment Criteria

	High degree of compliance with the criteria
	Some degree of compliance with the criteria
	Fails to comply with the criteria

- 8.26 This geography is assessed as having a high degree of compliance with the two Government criteria related to *devolution and creating a single tier of government for Devon*. It is also assessed as having a high degree of compliance in relation to the Government criteria: “*Prioritise the delivery of high quality & sustainable public services to citizens*” and “*Enable stronger community to engagement & deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment*”. It also scores highly against the city council's principles “*Accessibility to public services*”, “*Urban and rural issues- addressing inequality and local needs*” and “*Sense of place and community*”. This is due to the size and geographical spread in relation to delivering critical public services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The prevailing narrative is that “big is beautiful” and brings economies of scale. There is, however, a growing body of evidence that what matters is proximity to people and the places they live in, staying close to families and vulnerable adults and supporting them. This is where smaller councils can

have a natural advantage, and it is this evidence base that has influenced this assessment.<sup>2</sup>

- 8.27 It is assessed as having a degree of compliance with the Government's criterion "*right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity & withstand financial shocks*". It has also scored the same against the city council's principle of "*Financial viability and value for taxpayers*". The initial assessment has identified a single unitary for Exeter and the surrounding area on a disaggregated district boundary as being financially resilient. It is currently not possible to undertake an assessment of costs as this information is not yet available. Once officers have completed the required work on costs, the assessment of the level of compliance with the criterion will be possible. This initial assessment is based on the principle of the size and focus on urban characteristics rather than an absolute reflection of the exact boundary set out in the map
- 8.28 This geography has been assessed as having a degree of compliance with the criterion "*Councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs & is informed by local views*" as this is an area where Devon is not yet fully working together. The geography has also been assessed as having a high degree of compliance with the city council principle of "*Growth, housing, transport and connectivity*" for all of the reasons set out in this report.
- 8.29 At this point, the appraisal can only be high level, and further appraisals will be undertaken as the delivery and cost models are built. With reference to the Government Assessment Criteria, the principles agreed by the Council and the data currently available, this geography appears likely to achieve a positive creation of a single tier of local government for Devon. From this high-level analysis this geography best reflects the city council's six principles and therefore the unique characteristics of the two cities that drive economic growth for the benefit of the whole county, whilst bringing together the dispersed rural and coastal towns and communities of Devon.
- 8.30 Between August and September 2025, using the principles set out in the city council's Consultation Charter, residents and other stakeholders in Exeter and other affected areas will be engaged in conversations about the Exeter proposal of three unitary councils for Devon including an urban unitary council, based on the city of Exeter and surrounding areas.
- 8.36 Officers contend that a new unitary council, based on Exeter and the surrounding area, that recognises the mutual connections with areas around the city, is an essential step towards further unlocking economic and housing growth for Exeter, Devon, and the wider region. Officers are now in the early stages of developing a final proposal for a proposed new unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area and are committed to engaging proactively with stakeholders and communities to ensure their voices are heard and their priorities understood in the design of this new authority. The urban nature of Exeter demands an authority that can dedicate its energy and resources

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<sup>2</sup> *The power of prevention and place in new unitary councils: Adult Social Care and Local Government Reorganisation. Impower and DCN June 2025. Building the Best Places for Children and Families: Children's Services in New Unitary Councils Staff College and DCN July 2025*

to realise the community, cultural and environmental potential of the area and create a resilient economic hub at the heart of its wider rural setting.

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

- 9.1 Approval of the recommendations contained in this report will contribute to the city council's priority of leading a well-run council.

## **10 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

- 10.1 The criteria states that existing district areas should be the building blocks for proposals. More complex boundary changes are possible but must have a strong justification. This risk is mitigated by the evidence set out in this report.
- 10.2 MHCLG has also cautioned that any district boundary changes could lead to delays. The city council will work with MHCLG to understand what this may mean in relation to timescales.
- 10.3 In terms of financial assessment, it has only been possible to assess financial resilience based on predicted income levels. Pixel analysis confirms this proposal is financially resilient (sufficient income to withstand financial shocks) but are unable to say if it is financially viable (enough money to deliver services in the longer term), as the delivery costs are not yet available. Further work will be needed to understand the costs associated with delivering a proposed new unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area.

## **9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

- 11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
  - advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
  - foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.
- 11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status.

- 11.4 Whilst Government is clear that amongst other outcomes LGR must deliver better quality and more integrated public services, at this stage in the Government-led process, consideration of these new models of service delivery has not yet started. Identifying proposed boundaries for the new unitary councils for Devon is a first step in the process. As the work progresses to develop a final proposal and the city council is clearer in its approach to delivering services and engaging with communities and neighbourhoods, an EQIA will be developed.

## **10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

- 12.1 A full assessment of the impact on delivering the city council's carbon reduction target will be undertaken when the final proposal is submitted to Council.

## **11. Are there any other options?**

- 13.1 The alternative option is that the city council does not submit a proposal for a new unitary council to cover Exeter and the surrounding area. However, this would result in Exeter being subsumed into a wider unitary geography that would not deliver the essential economic and housing growth that will benefit the whole of Devon or provide the localised provision of services.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

English Devolution White Paper

Letter from Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

The power of prevention and place in new unitary councils: Adult Social Care and Local Government Reorganisation. Impower and DCN June 2025.

Building the Best Places for Children and Families: Children's Services in New Unitary Councils Staff College and DCN July 2025

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