



Exeter  
City Council

**Local Government Reorganisation:  
Findings from engagement  
activities**

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## Context and Purpose:

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is the process of changing how local councils are organised and what they are responsible for. The Government plans to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with fewer single tier unitary councils that deliver all local services and can cover counties, towns, or cities.

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon, wrote to all councils in remaining two-tier areas and neighbouring small unitaries to set out plans for a joint programme of devolution and local government reorganisation.

In response to the White Paper, the Exeter City Council sent a Letter of Intent to Government on 10 January 2025, expressing Exeter's intention to submit interim plans for unitary status for Exeter, following approval by councillors at an Extraordinary Council meeting.

Exeter's interim submission was unanimously approved by councillors at an Extraordinary Council meeting on 20 March 2025. At an Extraordinary meeting on 14 August 2025 councillors agreed the initial geography for a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon.

With LGR representing the biggest reforms to devolution in generations, developing a deep understanding how people living in Exeter and the surrounding areas think and feel about it was an essential pillar to help inform a final proposal to submit to Central Government. This report details the steps taken to achieve this deep level of understanding, and the findings of the research undertaken by Exeter City Council, ensuring that people's voices help in shaping the future of devolution.

This report sets out the findings of the six-week public engagement period.

## Process:

In line with Exeter City Council's policies and processes, the LGR engagement period was open six weeks. The team delivering the engagement work included the People and Communities Team, the Executive Office, the Communications Team, and members of the Senior Management Board. Some of the engagement activities were delivered by an external research partner ([Enventure Research](#)). An internal task and finish group of multi-disciplinary staff from these teams held weekly meetings throughout the engagement period to ensure all planned engagement activities were delivered.

## Methods:

A mixed methods approach was used during the six-week engagement period. Quantitative data was collected through the delivery of two surveys, to understand the views of residents in and around Exeter. Qualitative data was collected through the delivery of a series of focus groups and obtaining written feedback to broad topic areas from service user groups in and around the city, a series of webinars with Parish and Town Councils, and an in-person event with the local business community.

## Surveys

A representative survey was carried out with people living in Exeter and the surrounding areas (i.e. within the boundary area in the Councils proposal). The representative survey was delivered primarily over the phone, but also face-to-face, to ensure that representative participant quotas were reached. Throughout the geographical areas surveyed, the quotas of interest were age and sex, measured against the population sizes of the different geographical areas, broken down to ward level. For more detail on the representative survey, refer to the full report from Enventure Research. The representative survey questions can be found in [Appendix 1](#)

***A total of 1100 people took part in the representative survey***

A self-referral online survey was also conducted over the six-week engagement period. This was delivered using Sanp Survey software. The survey was made available online via the Exeter City Council website advertised on Exeter City Council's website and social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Next Door). Furthermore, the online survey was advertised in print media (The Exeter Citizen). For more detail on the self-referral online survey, refer to the full report from Enventure research. The self-referral online survey questions can be found in [Appendix 2](#)

***A total of 956 people took part in the self-referral online survey***

## Focus Groups

A series of five focus were carried out with users of community-based services, many of whom intersected with users of local and county council services. The aim was to better understand the views and opinions of seldom heard from people in relation to LGR. To access service users, we contacted local VCSE groups via email, informing them of the LGR engagement work and the purpose of wanting to carry out focus groups with seldom heard from service users.

In total five focus groups were delivered. All five focus groups took place in settings used frequently by the VCSE groups and lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. The focus groups were limited to a maximum of 10 attendees to ensure smooth management and running, allowing time for all attendees to participate effectively.

***The following broad topics were covered in the five focus groups.***

- Understand experiences of council services (local and county council)
- Exploring and understanding unmet local needs (e.g. in service provision)
- Potential benefits/ challenges of more joined up services in the future
- Potential benefits/ challenges of more local decision making in the future
- How to ensure a stronger voice for the local area

***The focus groups were carried out with the following.***

- ECC tenants and lease holders: 8 attendees
- [Inclusive Exeter](#) (ethnically diverse group of service users) 5 attendees
- [Westbank](#) (volunteers supporting a range of service users around health and wellbeing, including carers in an around Exeter) 6 attendees
- [Common Ground](#) (people with lived and ongoing experience of homelessness, mental health challenges, substance misuse and recovery) 11 attendees
- [Age UK Exeter](#) (older people accessing Age UK services and support in and around Exeter) 5 attendees

The topic areas were shared with focus group attendees ahead of each session. During the focus groups ECC staff introduced the concept of LGR and spoke about the national and local implications of the process, and the opportunities offered by it. The introductory slides can be found in [Appendix 3](#). The attendees were then given the opportunity to briefly ask questions related to the introductory slides.

The focus group facilitator then re-introduced the topic areas that were shared ahead of the session, and asked for views, insights, opinions, and personal stories related to each topic area in turn. At the end of each focus group, attendees were told how their insights would be used to help shape ECC's final submission regarding LGR to Central Government. They were also given the timelines for achieving this and informed that they would be informed of when the final report would be available for them to view. Extensive notes were taken by ECC staff during each focus group on the topics and themes that were discussed by each participant group. The focus group with Common Ground was also audio recorded, and the transcript later shared with ECC staff with the permission of all focus group attendees.

***In total the five focus groups were attended by 35 people***

## Obtaining Written Feedback

In contacting local VCSE groups, it became clear that when we were targeting young people, some of whom were vulnerable, we would be unable to carry out focus group activities with them. The main reason for this was because some of the young people were under the age of 16, meaning that we would have required parental/ guardian consent to speak with those young people, and would require DBS checks for ECC staff facilitating focus groups. Because it was not possible to achieve this within the engagement period, we instead shared the LGR introductory slides ([Appendix 3](#)) and broad topic areas (those used to guide the focus groups, outlined above) so that of young people could provide us with written feedback.

This method was used with a group of 22 young people from Grecians Generation Z – an independent fan group of Exeter City FC, who advise the Club and Trust on issues of importance (linked to the club and wider local area) impacting young fans.

## Parish and Town Council Webinars

In total, 49 Town and Parish Councils were included in ECCs proposed geography for LGR, served by 377 Parish Councillors. All 49 Councils were contacted to make them aware of the webinars and to register their interest in attending.

There were three webinars held in total. Of the 49 Town and Parish Councils invited, 24 attended and 25 did not attend, meaning we engaged with 49% of the Parish and Town Councils we targeted.

Town and Parish Council engagement focused on:

1. Communicating and informing
2. Asking and listening

## Key Messages

1. Town and Parish Councils are not changing and will continue to serve their communities as they have always done.
2. LGR offers an opportunity for new unitaries to strengthen relationships with Town and Parish Councils and work together in new ways.
3. Your voice is important; What are the things that matter to you about your place that you would like any new unitary council to know about?

4. LGR and Devolution could unlock exciting opportunities for Town and Parish Councils to take on greater powers and have a bigger impact on outcomes for residents.
5. We will listen to local views to help shape the best possible proposal for Devon, but the decision will be made by Government.
6. The Government will lead a public consultation in early 2026, so there will be more opportunity to have your say.

## Local Business Community – In-Person Event

At the in-person event there were a total of 50 attendees from across Exeter businesses and industry associations, including senior representatives from local businesses and anchor institutions.

The event was held to engage local business leaders on the future of local government in Devon. The aim was to share emerging proposals for LGR, gather business perspectives, and explore how LGR could support economic growth, simplify services, and strengthen Exeter's role as a regional driver.

ECC's CEO and the Council Leader gave a short presentation outlining the LGR proposals, followed by an open Q&A session. Attendees discussed the potential impact on business support, local decision-making, and service delivery. The session provided a platform for feedback and helped shape the final submission.

## Findings

Findings from the focus groups, Parish and Town council webinars, and the local business in-person event are presented below. The findings from the representative survey and the self-referral online survey are presented in a separate document produced by Enventure Research.

### Focus Groups

The notes taken from each focus group were analysed individually using principles of thematic analysis, to identify common themes that were discussed by the different user groups in attendance. The written feedback from the group of young people from Grecians

Generation Z was also analysed in this way. After this, all separate focus group and written feedback themes were considered together to identify any overarching recurring themes that existed between the user groups. The themes are presented separately for each of the focus groups, and written feedback. The overarching themes are then presented.

***N.B. Quotes from the focus groups were limited because note taking focused on capturing the content and direction of the conversations, rather than verbatim transcripts. See [Appendix 5](#)***

### Themes: Tenant and lease holder focus group

#### 1. Concerns About LGR

There were general concerns from the group that LGR brings with it unanswered questions around the potential financial implications of reorganisation. Central Government financial modelling of the costs associated with LGR was brought into question, as was what would happen to Devon County Council's existing debt when a final decision on LGR is taken. There was fear that LGR could bring about risks to services with cuts possible due to financial pressures on a single unitary. Furthermore, there was concern at a perceived lack

of consideration to tenant housing in LGR documentation, and apprehension that LGR could lead to the loss of good structures and support staff for tenants. Related to this, the tenant group also felt that they would want to retain ECC's current tenant housing strategy, as it is well regarded. Finally, there were real concerns that if there was no continuity of service, they may be forced into becoming housing association tenants rather than council tenants.

## **2. Tenant Voice & Involvement**

The group were worried that there would be a potential risk that their voice as tenants would be diluted in a county-wide and large unitary authority, as their needs may be different or specialised to their geographical area. There was a desire that in a post-LGR setting, that tenants have an expanded remit and influence to be included in service design and delivery, and work around contact renewals and housing decisions impacting them.

## **3. Service Delivery**

The group highlighted that there would be a potential risk to services during a transitional period brought about by the LGR process. It was felt this could lead to gaps in service provision and service continuity – impacting some of the most vulnerable people in society. This was seen to be particularly the case for children's services, SEND children, and housing tenants with complex needs. Additionally, there was a sense of frustration around the difficulties in knowing currently which Council is responsible for all the service that affect them, and also how to navigate those service providers. There was a desire for services to be managed more efficiently in the future.

## **Themes: Inclusive Exeter focus group**

### **1. Local Government, Inclusion & Accessibility**

The attendees who access and navigate services, perceived Devon County Council as being less culturally aware and more bureaucratic than Exeter City Council. Exeter City Council was also seen as being more focused on the customer, however there was a strong desire to see all services become much more culturally inclusive and accessible to ensure that institutional and navigational barriers to services are broken down. In terms of accessibility, the group highlighted language barriers and low IT literacy as the most pressing issues facing them, meaning there is often a preference for face-to-face service offerings. There was also a strong view that many services that have traditionally offered advice to support culturally diverse people and families to access support are now putting the onus on the individual(s) being responsible for accessing services, increasing vulnerabilities.

### **2. Education & Schools**

The group highlighted the difficulties for migrant families around school admissions and the overlapping responsibilities that currently exist for these processes between Devon County Council and Exeter City Council. It was felt that this factor, and the difficulties in assessing schools around measures of inclusivity leaves people whose first language is not English at a disadvantage.

### **3. Public Transport**

The group highlighted that many people accessing benefits and low income families are reliant on public transport, but the cost of that transport is prohibitive to regular usage. Furthermore, it was clear that the reliability of public transport, particularly buses is an issue. Affordability and reliability were seen as barriers for people to get to work or attend job interviews, which again can disproportionately impact migrant families.

### **4. Employment, Migrant Workers & Exploitation**



There was specific insight from the group around taxi drivers working in Exeter, many of whom are migrants. It was felt that it is currently difficult for Exeter registered drivers to compete with other drivers registered outside of the city, but who come into the city to work.

The cost and licencing requirement differential between neighbouring authorities has created an uneven playing field for Exeter based taxi drivers. There was a consensus that migrant workers face insecure employment options, with many taking on cash-in-hand work which is often below the minimum wage, particularly when working in restaurants, salons, and farms in the local area. Additionally, it was felt that many migrant workers lack access to pension schemes, further deepening inequality. While migrant workers will often work long hours for low pay in roles that are insecure, more severe levels of exploitation also exist, with some workers threatened with loss of sponsorship and withholding of passports by employers.

## Themes: Westbank focus group

### **1. Local Governance & Participation**

There was a certain amount of concern around how local governance would work because of LGR, with many attendees raising the issue of council tax and whether this would rise for people in Exeter and the surrounding areas, whatever the outcome of LGR. There was a strong desire from the group that they have continued representation from local councillors. Furthermore, the group were keen to have a strong voice in decision making that impacts them and be spoken to directly by the council. People were keen for there to be a one-stop-shop approach to local services to reduce confusion of who to go to for what service.

### **2. Transport & Connectivity**

There was widespread agreement within the group that public transport, particularly buses are unreliable and expensive, and the unreliability is compounded in rural areas around Exeter. Furthermore, the buses can represent accessibility barriers for some people, with a switch to digital ticketing systems and cashless payments. It was felt that these issues of connectivity in the local area creates issues of social isolation, especially for older residents.

### **3. Digital Inclusion & IT Skills**

The group spoke strongly about the need for more thought from local authorities around digital inclusion and IT skills, particularly for older residents. It was acknowledged that while some older people and those with complex needs are tech-savvy, many people will struggle with confidence around digital technologies, impacting their access to support services. The attendees felt that a move to digital only services excludes people and removes the rights of those who are not or cannot be digitally engaged.

### **4. Health, Welfare & Social Isolation & Community Support**

The attendees described real issues in being able to access GP appointments, which can ultimately end up causing acute situations for people, putting greater strain on emergency services. There was also agreement that there are risks to vulnerable people on discharge from hospitals, with people often going back to poor living conditions which highlighted a frustration with a lack of clarity around who is responsible for ensuring that this does not happen. Linked to this, the group stated the great need for joined up thinking between service providers. Finally, the attendees were keen to point out that social isolation is an issue for their service users, and this is true for people across different age groups and can be felt more in rural areas and new neighbourhoods around the city, many of which have been built without thought to creating community hubs.

### **5. Data & Early Intervention**

The group felt strongly that now and into the future, councils need to do more with data and data sharing across services. For multiple reasons, this was seen as beneficial to residents,



particularly vulnerable residents. It was felt it would allow better identification of gaps in service provision and would support the identification of vulnerable people (e.g. ill health, risk of poverty, etc) sooner allowing for early intervention and the avoidance of acute situations more detrimental to health and wellbeing, while being more financially costly.

## Themes: Common Ground focus group

### **1. LGR & The Local Area**

The group were keen for LGR to actually offer benefits to residents in reality, and not just in theory. To this end there was some concern raised about the motivations for LGR from Central Government being solely about cost savings, and it was questioned whether cost savings would be reinvested locally. Attendees also focussed on the differing needs between urban and semi-urban needs compared to rural needs, with very different priorities for Exeter compared to the largely rural rest of Devon. For some there was also concern that LGR would bring significant job losses and threaten the running and continuity of services people rely on.

### **2. Service Integration & Accessibility**

There was hope among the group that because of LGR, services could be joined up with simplified pathways with no fragmentation, offering greater wrap around support to users. People spoke about falling victim to siloed working in the past and interacting with services across multiple providers with inconsistent safeguarding processes. Many attendees also spoke about the need to overcome bureaucratic hurdles when accessing services and support, which hinders the accessibility of those support services. This was said to be particularly true of accessing mental health support, as well as equipment for disabilities. It was hoped that as well as more joined up services, there would be better data sharing between service providers, avoiding unnecessary bureaucratic barriers.

### **3. Mental Health Services**

There was a particular focus from the group about the lack of robust mental health, siting Devon as being one of the worst performing counties in England. The group spoke about the regularity at which people are falling through the gaps and remain dangerously isolated because of the severe gaps in mental health service provision. There was also concern about the loss of mental health services that used to be provided by organisations such as Mind and Bridge Collective, and a call for more community-based support and networks.

### **4. Housing & Homelessness**

There was a level of frustration within the group about the housing pathway, banding system, and lack of transparency in how the processes work. This led to calls for a simpler process and an aid to help people navigate the processes. There was further frustration with a perception that to move quickly through the housing banding system, you would need to be at a point of crisis (e.g., suicidal) to qualify for support, which was seen as deeply problematic. Attendees also spoke about house building in the city, with a tension between student housing taking away the potential for affordable and social housing. The building of housing outside of the city, meanwhile, was seen to lack a focus on building communities and community infrastructure, with essential services missing, putting a greater strain on services within the city.

### **5. Community & Social Isolation (peer support)**

Attendees focused on the difficulties many people across different age groups who access drug and alcohol services can face a loss of community and social isolation when they are in recovery and beyond. They spoke about the importance of community centres, warm places, community cafés and volunteer led initiatives to help combat this and offer greater support to people. Many of the attendees spoke about how they are involved in delivering such support

services now, but until they received support themselves, they would have been unable to play an actively supportive role within the community.

## **6. Opportunities & Optimism**

Despite the clear issues highlighted by the attendees in relation to their experiences of being service users across a range of services, there was also optimism about the potential opportunities LGR could bring. With the reimagining of structures to focus on local issues, the group insisted that there needs to be an emphasis on co-design, amplifying local voices and implementing community driven change. It was also hoped that with clearer governance structures, it should become easier for community-based organisations to obtain funding from council, have a greater impact locally, and drive sustainability – reducing duplication and improving coordination.

## **Themes: Age UK Exeter focus group**

### **1. Concerns About Representation**

The attendees did mention the difficulties in balancing council led decisions that would benefit urban areas over rural areas and vice versa. However, there was also a strong sense that large and growing areas outside of Exeter such as Cranbrook do not currently contribute financially to Exeter, but they feel part of the wider city, and the people living there use Exeter based services. There was a clear desire for much greater clarity around who is responsible for what in and around the city and calls for processes and services to be simplified to benefit users. However, there was some caution that LGR could cause a loss of continuity, service gaps, and loss of expertise in the transition away from current structures.

### **2. Social Care Accessibility**

The attendees focused on the current state of social care and the struggles in accessing appropriate support for older aged people, particularly for those living alone who are socially isolated. It was felt that there was a lack of clarity in terms of responsibilities and a lack of joined up thinking between agencies. There was hope that LGR might offer an opportunity to improve social care funding and access, but that service users should be involved in creating new structures.

### **3. Transport & Transport Infrastructure**

Public transport in and around Exeter was seen as a major issue within the group, particularly related to buses. It was stated that there is a lack of clarity around who is responsible for transport in the city as it stands. Furthermore, Stagecoach was seen as a poor provider for the area, with very unreliable services, infrequent buses in the rural areas serving Exeter, and high costs associated with travelling – all of which were said to have a greater impact on older aged people. There was also a strong desire for there to be much better coordination in transport planning in the area.

### **4. Digital Inclusion & Participation**

The group felt that the digitisation of services, and the digital processes to access those services risks isolating older aged people. Many of the attendees spoke about the transition towards cashless parking in and around the city, the reliance on apps, and the unaffordability of smart technologies being a barrier for many older people. The group felt that there should be non-digital option available for reasons of inclusivity, and a desire for meaningful involvement and consideration of older people's views.

### **5. Planning & Development**

The attendees also focussed on the current and future need of better planning to take place in and around Exeter. This was particularly true for ensuring that new areas outside of the city are built with developing a sense of community in mind, alongside more joined up

thinking about new infrastructure, including roads to service those communities and take the strain off roads in and around the city that were never designed for heavy traffic use.

## Written Feedback – Young People

The written feedback from groups of young people who we could not engage through focus groups is displayed below.

### Grecians Generation-Z

#### 1. Greater voice for younger people

“Give young people a proper voice – It would be great if the Council could set up regular meet-ups where teenagers and young adults can get to know how the Council works and ask questions. Most of us don’t really know where to start, so something friendly and face-to-face would help.”

#### 2. Build greater community links

“Work together with community groups Please keep building links with Exeter City Community Trust (CCT) and arrange a bigger meeting with all interested parties. Having the Council take an active place within the Trust would show you’re serious about working with the whole city, not just running services from a distance.”

#### 3. Look after the environment

“Look after the environment. Keep eco issues high on the list: better buses and trains so we don’t have to rely on cars, and making sure green spaces are protected.”

#### 4. Feeling safe

“Keep Exeter safe – We want to feel safe walking around the city, especially at night. Working with the police, schools and community groups to keep streets and public areas safe really matters.”

#### 5. Simplified structures

“Make it [council structures and services] easy to understand. Not everyone is online all the time, so please make sure any new council set-up is explained in ways everyone can follow.”

## Overarching Themes – From Focus Groups & Written Feedback

Below are the overarching themes which highlight the common sentiments from across the user groups we engaged with.

### 1. Access, Inclusion & Equity

- Barriers due to language, digital exclusion, and low IT literacy.
- Need for culturally inclusive services and non-digital options.
- Preference for face-to-face support, especially among older and migrant communities.
- Concerns about accessibility in transport, housing, and services.

### 2. Service Integration & Clarity

- Fragmented service delivery across councils and sectors.
- Confusion over current roles and responsibilities for services.
- Calls for joined-up working, simplified service pathways, and clearer guidance.
- Bureaucratic hurdles in accessing support (e.g., disability equipment, housing).

### 3. Housing, Homelessness & Development

- Lack of transparency in housing systems and banding.

- Frustration with temporary housing and supported living transitions.
- Desire for community-focused building development and clearer housing strategy.

#### **4. Health, Community & Early Intervention**

- Fear of individuals falling through the cracks, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Need for joined-up services to identify and support vulnerable people earlier.
- Collapse of key services and lack of emergency support, particularly around mental health.
- Social isolation across all age groups has far reaching consequences for health and wellbeing.
- Importance of grassroots initiatives and volunteer networks.

#### **5. Local Governance & Representation**

- Strong desire for local voices to be heard and represented in decision-making.
- Concerns that larger unitary structures may dilute representation, especially for tenants and people living urban and rural communities.
- Concerns about job losses for existing ECC staff, leading to a loss of expertise, provision of services and local voice.
- Confusion over boundaries and council responsibilities.

#### **6. Transport, Infrastructure & Environmental Concerns**

- Poor public transport access, especially in rural areas.
- Accessibility issues with buses and taxis.
- Desire for eco-friendly transport and standardised recycling.
- Frustration over unclear infrastructure responsibilities.

#### **7. Greater Community Voice**

- Increased engagement with communities and service users
- Clear pathways for influencing decisions
- Opportunities for meaningful co-design

## **Parish and Town Council Webinars**

Below are the key interests and themes that were established from the 3 webinars carried out with Parish and Town Councils.

### **Key Interests**

1. Maintaining strong local representation and avoiding dilution of their voices.
2. Ensuring financial sustainability and equitable service delivery.
3. Preserving existing boundaries and respecting local and neighbourhood plans.
4. Strengthening relationships with upper-tier councils and exploring opportunities for greater local service provision.
5. Addressing concerns about urban-rural balance and the impact of development on rural areas.

### **Themes: Arising from Questions and Answers**

#### **1. Engagement and Communication:**

- Desire for earlier and more in-person engagement.
- Importance of meaningful consultation and ensuring all voices are heard.

- Concerns about how insights will shape the final proposal.
- 2. Benefits and Opportunities:**
  - Interest in the benefits of the proposal for Town and Parish Councils.
  - Concerns about smaller parishes being overlooked in a larger council.
  - Questions about the potential transfer of locally based assets to Town and Parish Councils.
- 3. Local Priorities and Representation:**
  - Ensuring local priorities are reflected in the new arrangements.
  - Balancing urban and rural needs, particularly in areas like Exeter and its surroundings.
  - Concerns about the dilution of parish voices in a larger council.
- 4. Governance and Structure:**
  - Questions about the role of Neighbourhood Area Forums and their relationship with existing councils.
  - Clarification on whether parish boundaries or structures will change.
- 5. Financial and Service Delivery:**
  - Concerns about financial sustainability and service delivery in rural areas.
  - Questions about efficiency gains, financial shocks, and funding for services like social care and transport.
- 6. Boundaries and Geography:**
  - Questions about how boundaries were determined and the inclusion/exclusion of specific areas.
  - Concerns about splitting closely connected communities.
  - Clarification on the timeline for boundary changes.
- 7. Strategic and Regional Issues:**
  - Interest in how the new council will interact with Devon-wide strategic authorities.
  - Concerns about the impact on existing partnerships and regional collaboration.
  - Questions about the potential for a mayoral devolution model.
- 8. Housing and Development:**
  - Concerns about housing development in rural areas and its alignment with local plans.
  - Questions about the impact of the proposal on urban sprawl and rural character.
- 9. Support for Service Provision:**
  - Interest in support for parish councils taking on new services.
  - Questions about staff transfers and capacity building for service delivery.
- 10. Town-Specific Concerns:**
  - Specific questions about the inclusion of towns like Chudleigh and their relationship with Exeter.
  - Concerns about preserving the rural character of certain areas while addressing development needs.

A full list of the question and answers can be found in [Appendix 4](#).

## Local Business Community (In-Person Event)

Below are the key questions asked by the business community, with the responses given by the ECC CEO and Council Leader.

1. **What happens if the Government doesn't approve your preferred model?**  
*We'll need to adapt. The Council has a clear rationale for its proposal, but if the ideal structure isn't accepted, we'll work within the approved framework to protect Exeter's interests and ensure services remain effective.*
2. **How will Exeter's voice be protected in a larger unitary council?**  
*The proposal includes a dedicated Exeter-based unitary to ensure strong local leadership. This avoids Exeter being overshadowed by rural priorities and allows the city to speak with one voice on economic and strategic issues.*
3. **What criteria will the Government use to assess proposals?**  
*Government will assess against legal requirements and core criteria: financial sustainability, service delivery, local representation, and collaboration. While growth isn't a formal criterion, our proposal embeds it throughout.*  
**Is Exeter big enough to be a standalone unitary authority?**  
*Yes. While the original benchmark was 500,000 population, the Government has moved away from rigid thresholds. What matters is strong local leadership and the ability to deliver joined-up services effectively.*
4. **How will the new model address planning and infrastructure bottlenecks?**  
*By consolidating planning, transport, and infrastructure under one council, we remove duplication and delays. This enables faster decision-making and unlocks funding opportunities from bodies like Homes England.*

# Appendix 1: Representative Survey Questions

## Putting people first in Exeter and Devon: Residents Survey

### CONTACT FOR COUNCIL

Council website: [www.exeter.gov.uk](http://www.exeter.gov.uk)

If they can't find the answer they want here, then the Council's main number is 01392 277888.

This covers (but is not limited to):

Bins and Recycling

Housing, (ECC tenants and homelessness)

Council Tax

Planning Services

Benefits & welfare, (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Household Support Fund)

Car Parks, (not on road)

Parks

Clean, safe City (e.g. graffiti, noise complaints, pests, littering)

Leisure & Culture

Licensing

As it is a two-tier set up, there are things Exeter City Council doesn't cover, but instead are covered by Devon County Council [exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/website-help/what-we-don-t-do/](http://exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/website-help/what-we-don-t-do/)

Devon County Council website: [www.devon.gov.uk](http://www.devon.gov.uk). Council main number is call to 0345 155 1015.

### INTERVIEWER NOTE

1. Speak to residents aged 16 or over according to your given quota
2. Read the introductory text "READ OUT" where it is provided, before asking the questions
3. Do not read out the 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' category in questions

**READ OUT:** Good morning / afternoon / evening my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from Enventure Research on behalf of Exeter City Council, who have asked us to carry out a survey to help them understand the views of residents in Exeter and the surrounding area about local government reorganisation.

At an Extraordinary meeting on 14 August Exeter City councillors agreed the initial geography for a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon, which recognises the distinct needs and identities of urban and rural areas:

-Urban unitary for Exeter and surrounding areas

-Urban unitary council for Plymouth and adjacent

Parishes -Rural and coastal unitary for the rest of Devon



**Reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to reshape public services to improve outcomes for residents, address inequalities and deliver value for money.**

The 3-council model for Devon will enable critical services including those for children and young people, vulnerable adults, public health and housing to be designed around local needs and be aligned with services from other agencies like the NHS and police. Exeter City Council thinks this will deliver better outcomes for local people and best value for money for the taxpayer.

**The 3 unitary proposal supports growth, resilience, and service delivery for cities, coastal towns and dispersed rural areas.**

**As a resident within the area proposed for an urban unitary for Exeter, it is essential that we know what you think.**

**Exeter City Council's community and stakeholder engagement will inform the final proposal that will be submitted to Government in November 2025.**

**Your answers will be anonymous and confidential and the interview should take around 12 minutes to complete.**

**Would you have time to take part in the survey?**

**All information provided will be analysed by Enventure Research, an independent research agency, and treated in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Enventure Research will only use information you provide to inform the research. Enventure Research is registered with the Data Controller and is a Market Research Society Company Partner. For our privacy notice, please refer to our website [www.enventure.co.uk](http://www.enventure.co.uk)**

**If resident seems unsure...**

**You do not have to answer any questions if you don't want to, and you can end the interview at any time. Are you happy to proceed?**

**About you**

**S1 S1. Please tell me which of the following age bands you fall into**

- ☐ 16 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**S2** S2. How do you describe your sex? The next question gives the option to tell us if the gender you identify with is different from your sex registered at birth, and, if different, the option to tell us what term you prefer to use

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**S2a** S2a. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**S3** What is your postcode please? (Use capital letters and a space between the two parts)

**E.G. EX2 4NG**

**READ OUT:** These questions are based around the outcomes which the Government expects the Council to consider when looking at the structure of councils in Devon.

**Q1** Where do you consider your local area to be? **READ OUT AND WRITE BELOW**

**Q2** What is your connection to your local area? **READ OUT, MULTI-CODE**

- ☐ I live here
- ☐ I work here
- ☐ I run a business here
- ☐ I represent a community organisation here
- ☐ I study here
- ☐ Other

**Your local area**

**Q3** What do you like about your local area? **READ OUT AND WRITE BELOW**

**Q4** What would you like to be improved in your local area? **READ OUT AND WRITE BELOW**

## Your community

**READ OUT:** You have a key role in shaping Council decision-making related to your community and wider area.

**Q5** How would you like to be involved in future local decision making? **READ OUT, MULTI-CODE**

- ☐ Through a Town or Parish Council
- ☐ Through existing community forums and/or organisations
- ☐ Involvement in focus groups and consultations run by the Council
- ☐ I want to be kept informed but don't want to get involved
- ☐ I don't want to be involved or kept informed [DO NOT READ OUT]
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Don't know/unsure [DO NOT READ OUT]

## Your Council

**Q6** How much do you value each of the following aspects of how your local council serves your community? Please rate each one on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all valuable' and 5 means 'very valuable'  
**READ OUT, SINGLE CODE**

	1 - not at all valuable	2	3	4	5 - very valuable	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Being responsive to local needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being inclusive and accessible to all residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaborating effectively with other public services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protecting the environment and promoting climate action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Delivering services efficiently and reliably	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating clearly and keeping residents informed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q7 How important are each of the following when thinking about how local government reorganisation could impact you and your community? Please rate each one from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 5 means 'very important' READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

	1 - not at all important	2	3	4	5 - very important	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Improved understanding of the issues facing your local area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supportive and accessible local ward councillor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy access to the council services you need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decisions that impact you will be made locally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Efficient services which offer value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q8 How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government in Devon? Please rate each one from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 5 means 'very important' READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

	1 - not at all important	2	3	4	5 - very important	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of affordable, warm and secure housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working to mitigate the consequences of climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q9** How important do you think each of the following should be when shaping the future of local government services? Please rate each one from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'not at all important' and 5 means 'very important' **READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

	1 - not at all important	2	3	4	5 - very important	Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]
Keeping children safe from harm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education services, and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building-related services such as planning applications, planning enforcement, building control, protecting old buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support with housing needs, council tax and benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping people stay healthy, including support for drugs, alcohol and health checks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### About you

**READ OUT:** The following questions ask for some more information about you. These questions are voluntary. You can say 'Prefer not to say' if you do not want to answer a question. Your answers will only be used so we can analyse differing views, opinions and attitudes and make sure that we hear from a cross-section of people. They will not be used for any other purpose.

**Q10** What is your ethnic group? **READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British | <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British African                            |
| <input type="radio"/> White Irish   | <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British Caribbean                          |
| <input type="radio"/> White Gypsy or Irish Traveller                      | <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British Somali                             |
| <input type="radio"/> White Roma  | <input type="radio"/> Any other Black/African/Caribbean background           |
| <input type="radio"/> Any other White background                          | <input type="radio"/> Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British Indian                          | <input type="radio"/> Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Black African   |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British Pakistani                       | <input type="radio"/> Mixed/multiple ethnic groups White and Asian           |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi                     | <input type="radio"/> Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background             |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British Nepali                          | <input type="radio"/> Arab   |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British Vietnamese                      | <input type="radio"/> Any other ethnic group                                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British Chinese                         | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ OUT]                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Any other Asian background                          |  |

**Q11 What is your employment status? READ OUT, MULTI-CODE**

- ☐ Working full time
- ☐ Working part time
- ☐ Not in employment
- ☐ Not in employment but actively looking
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ In full-time education
- ☐ In part-time education
- ☐ Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ OUT]

**Q12 Do you consider yourself to have a long-term health condition and/or disability? READ OUT, SINGLE-CODE**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ OUT]

**Thank and close.**

**READ OUT: Thank you for taking the time to take part in the survey. Your views are greatly appreciated.**

**READ OUT: As part of our quality checking process, we contact a proportion of people to check you were interviewed in a friendly and professional manner and in accordance with the MRS code of conduct. It will only be used for this purpose and WILL NOT be passed on or used in the future.**

**Please click the tick button to send the interview.**

# Appendix 2: Online (Self-Referral) Survey Questions

## Putting People First in Exeter and Devon

### What is the survey about?

This survey gives you the opportunity to share your views and opinions relating to local government reorganisation. The questions are based around the outcomes which the Government expects us to consider when looking at the structure of councils in Devon.

At an Extraordinary meeting on 14 August Exeter City councillors agreed the initial geography for a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon, which recognises the distinct needs and identities of urban and rural areas:

- Urban unitary council for Exeter and surrounding areas
- Urban unitary council for Plymouth and adjacent areas
- Rural and coastal unitary council for the rest of Devon

Reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to reshape public services to improve outcomes for residents, address inequalities and deliver value for money.

The 3-council model for Devon will enable critical services including those for children and young people, vulnerable adults, public health and housing to be designed around local needs and be aligned with services from other agencies like the NHS and police. Exeter City Council thinks this will deliver better outcomes for local people and best value for money for the taxpayer.

The 3 unitary proposal supports growth, resilience, and service delivery for cities, coastal towns and dispersed rural areas.

As a resident within the area proposed for an urban unitary for Exeter and surrounding areas, it is essential that we know what you think. Exeter City Council's community and stakeholder engagement will inform the final proposal that will be submitted to Government in November 2025.

The survey will take around 12 minutes to complete and is open until 26 September 2025. Taking part in the survey is voluntary, but your feedback is really valuable.

### Taking part in the survey

To navigate through this survey, use the arrow buttons at the bottom of each page. DO NOT use the back/forward options in your browser. To remove your answers to a question, click on the reset button.

You can save your answers at any point and return to them later. To do this, you will need to use the save button at the bottom of the page and provide your email address. You will then be sent a link to use to complete the survey.

If you have any questions about completing this survey, please call the helpline on 0800 0092 117 or email [helpline@enventure.co.uk](mailto:helpline@enventure.co.uk)

### How we will use your information and your rights

Exeter City Council has asked an independent organisation, Enventure Research, to collect responses to the survey so that your responses remain confidential. The Council will receive a report on the aggregated survey findings, and no one will be able to identify individual responses.



For information about your data rights and who to contact please read Exeter City Council's privacy notices.

Enventure Research will use the information you give in your survey response as described above. Your data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

To take part in the survey, click the arrow button to go to the start of the survey.

## About you

The following question will allow us to provide context to your responses. They will not be used to identify you personally.

**Q1 What is your connection to Exeter and the surrounding area?**  
Select all that apply

- ☐ I live here
- ☐ I work here
- ☐ I run a business here
- ☐ I represent a community organisation here
- ☐ I study here
- ☐ Other please specify

**Q2 In what capacity are you responding?**  
Select one answer

- ☐ Resident
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Parish or Town Council
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Voluntary or community sector organisation
- ☐ Other e.g. school, health provider, housing association please specify

**Q3 Where do you consider your local area?**  
Please tell us below

## About you

**Q4 What is your home postcode?**  
e.g. EX2 4NG

**Q5 Where is your work or education based?**  
Please tell us below

**Q6** Where do you do most of your shopping?  
Please tell us below

**Q7** Where do you spend most time socialising or taking part in cultural activities? Please tell us below

**Your area**

**Q8** What do you like about the area where you live, work, study or represent? Please tell us below

**Q9** What would you like to be improved in this area?  
Please tell us below

**Q10** What are your hopes and dreams for your local area?  
Please tell us below

**Q11** What are the biggest challenges in your local area?  
Please tell us below

## Your community

You have a key role in shaping Council decision-making related to your community and wider area.

**Q12 How would you like to be involved in future local decision making? Select as many as apply**

- ☐ Through a Town or Parish Council
- ☐ Through existing community forums and/or organisations
- ☐ Involvement in focus groups and consultations run by the Council
- ☐ I want to be kept informed but don't want to get involved
- ☐ I don't want to be involved or kept informed
- ☐ Other please specify
- ☐ Don't know/unsure

## Your Council

Now we'd like you to think about how you'd like your council to work for you in the future.

**Q13 Which of the following Councils delivers services, such as waste collection and Council Tax, in your area?  
Select one answer**

- ☐ East Devon District Council
- ☐ Exeter City Council
- ☐ Mid Devon District Council
- ☐ North Devon Council
- ☐ Plymouth City Council
- ☐ South Hams District Council
- ☐ Teignbridge District Council
- ☐ Torbay Council
- ☐ Torridge District Council
- ☐ West Devon Borough Council
- ☐ Don't know

**Q14 Thinking about your local council or councils, which of the following do you most value in the way it serves your community?  
Select up to three answers**

- ☐ Being responsive to local needs
- ☐ Representing the community fairly and transparently
- ☐ Providing opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions
- ☐ Offering good value for money
- ☐ Supporting long-term growth and sustainability
- ☐ Being inclusive and accessible to all residents
- ☐ Collaborating effectively with other public services
- ☐ Protecting the environment and promoting climate action
- ☐ Delivering services efficiently and reliably
- ☐ Having a clear vision and leadership for the future
- ☐ Communicating clearly and keeping residents informed
- ☐ Other please specify
- ☐ Don't know

**Q15 How do you hope that Local Government Reorganisation will impact you and/or your community?**

**Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
A good understanding of the issues facing your local area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A supportive and accessible local ward councillor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clear, open and honest decision-making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decisions that impact you are made locally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Council decisions are made within easy travelling distance of your area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q16 How do you hope that Local Government Reorganisation will improve Council Services in your area?**  
**Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Easy access to the council services you need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved quality of services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clear understanding of who is responsible for delivering services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Efficient services that offer good value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Council offices are located nearby	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q17 What should be the top priorities when shaping future people and community services for Devon?**  
**Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Keeping children safe from harm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education services, including school admissions and transport, and support for those with SEND	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of truly affordable, warm and secure housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support with housing needs, council tax and benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping people stay healthy, including support for drugs, alcohol and health checks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q18 What should be the top priorities when shaping future place-based services for Devon?**

Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Local facilities like libraries, public toilets and sports centres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building-related services such as planning applications, planning enforcement, building control, protecting old buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and bike paths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community safety and standards, such as trading standards, food safety, licensing, noise and air quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting and empowering local groups to improve their communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q19 What should be the top priorities when shaping the future of the environment and economy for Devon?**

Drag each item from the left and drop on the right to order in terms of importance, with the top being most important

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Protecting the environment and keeping it clean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working to mitigate the consequences of climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q20 Do you have any final comments? Please tell us below**

## About you

The following questions ask for information about you. These questions are voluntary. You can say 'Prefer not to say' if you do not want to answer a question. Your answers will only be used so we can analyse differing views, opinions and attitudes and make sure that we hear from a cross-section of people. They will not be used for any other purpose.

**Q21** Please select which of the following age bands you fall into.  
Select one answer only

- ☐ 16 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**Q22** How do you describe your sex? The next question gives the option to tell us if the gender you identify with is different from your sex registered at birth, and, if different, the option to tell us what term you prefer to use.  
Select one answer only

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**Q23** Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? Select one answer only

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say



## Appendix 3: Focus Group Introductory Slides



What is Local  
Government  
Reorganisation  
or “LGR” all  
about?

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is the process of changing how local councils are organised and what they are responsible for

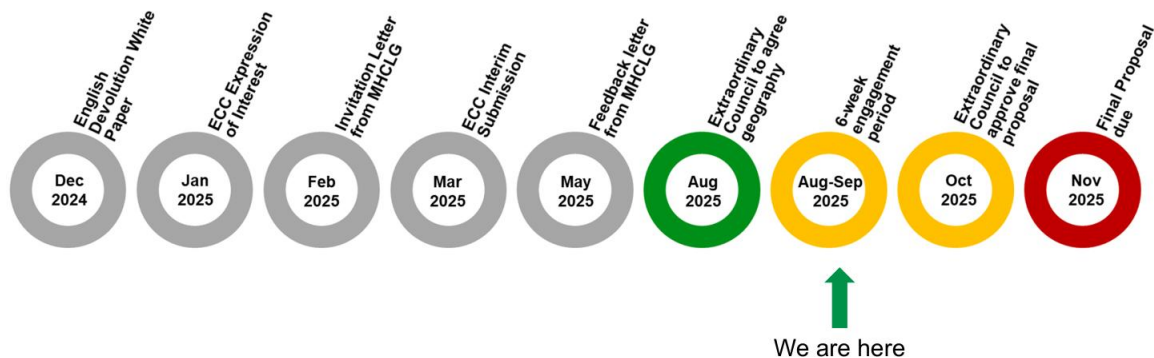
The Government plans to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with fewer single tier unitary councils that deliver all local services and can cover counties, towns, or cities

The aim is to simplify local government and make structures more sustainable

This is a mandatory process, as stipulated by the Government.



# Timeframe



**ONE EXETER**  
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



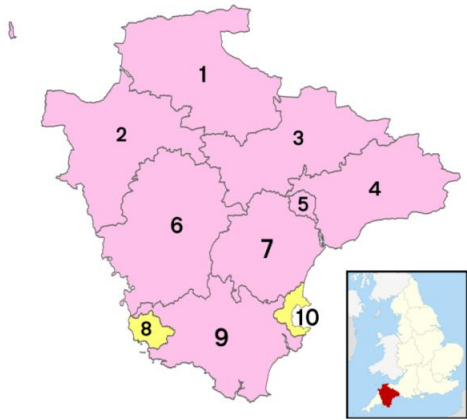
## LGR: A once in a generation opportunity

- **Simpler and clearer:** one council will deal with all your services except in parished areas, where there will be two
- **Better, more efficient services:** combining services under one roof will be easier to manage and more joined-up
- **Better value for money:** reducing the number of councils will reduce duplication and bring efficiency savings
- **More local empowerment:** LGR links to Devolution which aims to shift power out of Westminster
- **Improves outcomes and tackles inequalities.**

**ONE EXETER**  
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



# What does this mean for Devon?



- Devon has 11 different authorities delivering services for residents:
  - Devon County Council
  - 2 unitary authorities; Plymouth and Torbay
  - 8 District Councils
- Under Local Government Reorganisation plans, all 11 authorities will be replaced with a smaller number of new unitary councils

**ONE EXETER**  
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



## ECC proposal

### 3 new unitary councils:

- A unitary council based on Exeter and surrounding area
- A unitary council for Plymouth and adjacent areas
- A unitary council for the rest of Devon



**ONE EXETER**  
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



## Today's topic areas

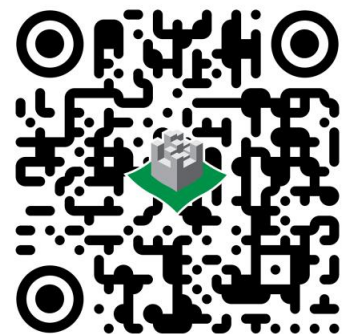
- Understand your experiences of council services –delivered by ECC and Devon CC
- Exploring and understanding any unmet local needs
- Potential benefits of more joined up services in the future
- Potential benefits of more local decision making in the future
- Thoughts on having a stronger voice for the local area

**ONE EXETER**  
ONE COUNCIL • ONE TEAM



## More ways you can be involved

1. Complete our online survey  
[www.exeter.gov.uk/lgr](http://www.exeter.gov.uk/lgr)
2. Participate in the representative survey if you are contacted
3. Look out for the Government led Public Consultation in Spring 2026



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## Appendix 4: Q&A Arising from Parish & Town Council Webinars

### Engagement and Communication

#### **Why not talk to us sooner?**

We needed time to look at the data and evidence to model different options – not all would be viable against the government criteria.

We wanted to ensure everyone heard the same message at the same time. This has helped us be clear on who might be affected and how so that we could embark on meaningful engagement.

We have initiated a broad programme of engagement aiming to speak to as many stakeholders and residents as possible.

#### **Why do webinars - in person engagement is more meaningful?**

We agree and would love to be able to visit each town and parish but within the timeframe, this is not possible. We're keen to hear your views and would encourage you to complete the online survey.

#### **How will the insights inform the final proposal?**

We recognise that parish and town councils are closest to their communities and have a deep understanding of local needs and priorities. The insights and feedback you share – whether through these sessions, surveys, or direct conversations – will be carefully considered as we shape the final proposal. We're committed to reflecting what we hear from you, and your expertise will help ensure that the new arrangements are responsive to the realities of each area.

#### **Have you consulted with parishes that would be left in the “rest of Devon” authority, and do you think government will accept this arrangement?**

Ideally, all councils would agree a model together, but this hasn't been possible. The proposal must be financially sustainable for all of Devon” but detailed modelling is still underway. We are assuming that parish areas that sit outside of the council's proposed geography will be engaged by their district councils as part of their building of their submission to government as of course we have done for those parishes within our proposal.

### Benefits and Opportunities for Town and Parish Councils

#### **What are the benefits for us?**

Our proposal is about strengthening relationships between upper tier councils and Town and Parish Councils. We think there is opportunity to look at new ways of working and



the potential for local parish councils to take on delivering more services if they have an appetite to do so.

**How will your proposal benefit parishes compared to other options, and how will you ensure small parishes aren't overlooked in a larger council?**

The proposal is for a smaller unitary than alternatives being supported by the other district councils and the county council. We believe that the size of the council is less important than the political and managerial leadership working with communities to understand local needs. We will be proposing that the new council has a specific focus on positive engagement and working with parish councils.

**How will you work with existing neighbourhood plans?**

The new council will honour existing local and neighbourhood plans, which have legal status. Over time, a new local plan will be developed, but current plans will be respected.

**How will your proposal improve finances for services like social care and transport, given the population is only just enough for resilience?**

The proposal is still being modelled for financial sustainability.

There is evidence that both small and large unitaries can deliver social care well – it's not just about size, but about leadership and local responsiveness.

**Are you concerned about dilution of parish voices in a larger council?**

We recognise the importance of parish voices. The team is seeking feedback on what would make a better relationship between parishes and the new council. They want to learn from current experiences and reflect improvements in the proposal.

**Is there an intention to parish urban areas in Exeter to ensure equitable opportunity to deliver local services?**

The government has made it clear that the existing town and parish council structure will remain unchanged, and they do not expect new ones to be set up. However, our proposal will strengthen the role of Town and Parish Councils where there is a local desire to do so. The city council are exploring ways to co-produce a system of Neighbourhood Area Forums within Exeter (which doesn't have parishes) to enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

**Will there be an opportunity for the town councils to take some of the assets that are more sort of locally based assets that currently run by the town councils?**

There will be an opportunity for the new unitary council, once established, to discuss with parish and town councils the potential transfer of locally based assets.

This would be a matter for negotiation, depending on the appetite of both the parish councils and the new authority, but it is certainly possible.

## Local Priorities, Representation, and Governance

### **How will you differentiate between and reflect local priorities?**

By listening, learning, and using data. There's already a lot of information on local priorities from previous community engagement.

The new council will need to differentiate between urban and semi-urban priorities and tailor support accordingly.

### **What support is there for parish councils who might be looking to move into service provision that they don't currently have experiencing?**

There would be support available. If parish councils take on services currently provided at the upper tier, there would need to be consideration of staff transfers (under TUPE regulations).

Support would be provided both from the new council and from external bodies to help parish councils build capacity and expertise.

### **How will you balance dealing with more rural parish areas, given Exeter is predominantly urban? How would a Greater Exeter unitary benefit rural residents?**

The new council will have political representation from both urban and semi-urban areas.

At least half the population in the proposed area is from outside of the current Exeter city so elected members and parish/town councils will ensure appropriate services for all.

### **Does driving growth mean more houses in rural areas?**

No, the proposal is not about increasing housing in rural areas beyond what's already planned in local and neighbourhood plans.

The new council will have to respect existing plans and go through statutory processes for any new local plan.

### **Will Exeter be allowed to build everywhere under the new arrangements?**

No. Development will continue to be guided by agreed Local Plans. Concerns were raised about a proposed new town in East Devon and the lack of adequate transport links.

We recognise the importance of ensuring new development is well-connected and does not worsen traffic or reduce anyone's sense of place.

### **How will you learn from challenges faced by authorities like Somerset (e.g., staff restructures and savings)?**

The team is working with other councils and consultants to learn from Somerset's experience, including the challenges of funding and restructuring. They aim to be open and honest about what's achievable.



**When you say that town and parish councils will exist, will exist in the same number in the same geographies, will there be any border changes or would you be considering that they will remain as they are now?**

The government has made it clear there will be no change to parish and town councils – their number and boundaries will remain as they are. Parish boundaries are being used as the building blocks for the new unitary proposals

**In your proposal, you mentioned something called Neighbourhood Area forums, and I wondered whether you could just address what they are in relation to town and parish councils.**

Neighbourhood Area Forums are used in some areas (e.g. Wiltshire, Cornwall) to give a local voice to neighbourhoods.

In areas with parish councils, these forums are unlikely to duplicate existing governance.

They may be piloted in Exeter, which does not have parishes.

## **Boundaries, Geography, and Inclusion**

**How did you determine where to draw the lines on the map?**

The proposed boundary was drawn to include areas with strong connections to Exeter – places where people regularly travel for work, study, culture, and leisure.

We included existing growth areas to the east and south of the city, as well as communities that naturally look to Exeter for services.

As we move through this engagement period, we'll use data, evidence, and feedback to refine the boundary, ensuring it reflects real patterns of daily life and meets the government's financial sustainability requirements.

The aim is to create a structure that supports both the unique needs of urban Exeter and the wider rural and coastal communities across Devon.

**To amend boundaries will require a formal process, how many years is it anticipated to take?**

The timeline will be determined by the Minister and Local Government Boundary Commission England – it is likely to take several years.

We expect more clarity once proposals are submitted and reviewed nationally.

**Of the rural Devon remaining – are there other unitary counties without a city as there would be no true centre if Exeter removes itself from the County of Devon?**

Yes, it's not unprecedented. For example, in Cornwall, Herefordshire, Wiltshire, and Westmorland and Furness

Many of these local authorities resemble Devon in terms of landscape, economy, and market towns etc and have unitary authorities that function as counties – but do not include any official city.

It's worth noting that all Devon proposals include at least one unitary without a city centre.

**Changes to postcodes will impact on those wishing to attend Torbay Grammar Schools who give preference to Torbay postcodes and are the closest selective state schools– has this been considered.**

Postcodes will not change as part of this process.

We're aware of school access concerns and welcome further input on how best to address them.

**Why isn't Ottery St Mary included in the proposed boundary?**

We're aware of the strong links between Ottery, West Hill and Aylesbeare – including shared schools and councillors.

The current proposal reflects a range of factors, but we understand the concern about splitting closely connected communities and will continue to review this.

### **Financial and Service Delivery Implications**

**What would happen logistically and financially to the vast rural area in terms of delivering its services such as Waste, Care Provision, Transport of children requiring special provision/taxi, etc– would savings be made or only in areas of dense population?**

This is something that we are currently modelling as our task is to demonstrate that our proposal is in the best interest of all of Devon. Efficient models of service delivery would need to be developed by all of councils putting forward proposals.

The aim is to design high quality services with better outcomes for residents.

**The driver for this proposal is to make/keep Exeter as the main driver for the Devon economy which is fine, but the larger area involved is the rural economy, how does this plan move that forward?**

The proposal recognises the importance of both urban and rural/coastal economies.

A dedicated rural and coastal unitary council is part of the model to ensure tailored support for rural communities.

The aim is to design services and investment strategies that reflect the distinct needs of rural areas, not just urban centres.

Improved coordination between councils will help unlock growth across the whole county, including farming, tourism, and small business sectors.

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**Will more money be available for services under the new boundary?**

We are still working through the financial information.

The aim is to ensure services are sustainable and responsive, but no final decisions have been made yet.

**What percentage savings or efficiency gains are expected, and what is meant by “financial shock”?**

Efficiencies are expected over a five-year period, not immediately.

“Financial shock” refers to the council’s ability to withstand unexpected financial pressures, such as changes in funding or demand.

**Strategic and Regional Issues**

**Do you have any details of how you still propose to stay in contact, discuss with and manage the pan Devon decisions of greater strategic importance which affect all of Devon in a major way when many of the previous county wide assets are now locked away and controlled in the relatively small unitaries of Plymouth and Exeter and may even be Torbay yet?**

Our submission to Government will focus on achieving better outcomes for all residents in Devon.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) champions the interests of its residents and the area as a whole, both nationally and internationally.

The Leader of the City Council is currently a member of the Devon and Torbay CCA Board and the Housing Advisory Board, albeit without full voting powers.

If our proposal was agreed by Government, the unitary council for Exeter and the surrounding area would work as one of the Constituent authorities within the DTCCA, with full voting powers and participate in Devon-wide outcomes through shared frameworks on housing, transport, economic growth, skills, net zero, and infrastructure investment.

**What will happen to existing partnerships across Devon?**

Many partnerships are working well, and we don’t want to disrupt what’s already effective. The intention is to build on existing strengths, not dismantle them.

**What is your opinion on the effectiveness of the/a Strategic Combined Authority and how will you officially interact with it which may even be mayoral in the future?**

As you may be aware, all Leaders across Devon recently united behind a call for the creation of a South-Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority.

In terms of the opportunities that devolution will bring in the future, I believe that our region has presented a compelling case for a mayoral devolution model that would

enhance local control, drive economic growth, and improve outcomes for our residents and businesses.

**I feel the 'rest of Devon' are being disadvantaged with a postcode lottery after paying the same as those advantaged in the city areas over many years.**

Local Government Reorganisation will result in changes to constituent authorities, but we think the benefits of an MSA are clear as it will:

- Maximise the potential of our exceptional environmental assets and internationally significant research capacity to position the UK as a leader in environmental intelligence and clean marine innovation.
- Leverage our significant tourism economy (worth over £2 billion annually) more effectively through coordinated investment and promotion. The visitor economy in Devon and Torbay supports nearly 33,000 local jobs.
- Address the specific housing pressures faced by our communities with a strategic approach to housing affordability and availability.
  - Create an integrated transport network that connects rural and coastal communities with our urban centres and beyond.
  - Develop coordinated skills provision that meets the needs of our key growth sectors and addresses productivity challenges.
  - Support the vital national security role of Devonport dockyard, which maintains the UK's Continuous at Sea Nuclear Deterrent capability and will see £4.4 billion of investment over the next decade as part of the MoD's long-term commitment.

### **Town-specific questions**

**How will your proposal improve things for Chudleigh compared to other proposals?**

The team is seeking feedback on what would make a better relationship between parishes and the new council. They want to learn from current experiences and reflect improvements in the proposal.

The final decision will be made by the Minister, not by a local vote.

**Is the plan to include the whole of Chudleigh Town? Where would the border lie?**

Yes, Chudleigh Town is a logical inclusion due to strong links with Exeter – with people already commuting for work, leisure, study and services.

The border will be along the parish boundary. We're not proposing to include all of Chudleigh Ward, as this would mean splitting Hennock Parish, which sits in Teign Valley ward.

**Chudleigh Ward would be split leaving out the most rural elements of Hennock Parish, Chudleigh is an ancient wool town surrounded by farmland how does this**

**fit into the city scape of Exeter? Would it be anticipated that further housing development sprawl would travel towards Chudleigh?**

Chudleigh has strong functional links to Exeter, which supports its inclusion. We're not proposing to include all Chudleigh to avoid splitting Hennock Parish.

Future development will be guided by planning policy, not by this boundary proposal alone.

## Appendix 5: Quotes from Focus Groups



**N.B. Quotes from the focus groups were limited because note taking focused on capturing the content and direction of the conversations, rather than verbatim transcripts.**

*“Friends not coming into Exeter anymore because of digital/app-based parking meters.”*

*“Health, digitalisation and loneliness have come out as the top three challenges for older people locally for two years running.”*

*“Six years later, I still couldn’t get an electric wheelchair. I didn’t meet the criteria. Eventually, they gave me the wheelchair — and it changed everything.”*

*“There needs to be a clear flowchart [for housing banding]. Forget the jargon.”*

*“Nobody knows the process for getting housing. We still don’t really know.”*

*“Sometimes Mid Devon doesn’t connect with Exeter. Exeter connects with East. This will build a bigger system.”*

*“Different safeguarding processes wherever you go — it gets confusing.”*

*“You shouldn’t have to be on death’s door for someone to listen to you.”*

*“I’ve been on the list for social housing for over four years... I’m nowhere near the top.”*

*“I was in supported living. The contract ended. I was moved to Band D. To get back to Band B, I’d have to go backwards.”*

*“They keep building houses. But are they building communities?”*

*“There’s no clear pathway. Even professionals don’t know how the system works.”*

*“Student accommodation was taking over the city somewhat”*

*“Since I’ve lived in Devon, all I’ve seen is a collapse [in mental health services]. Mind in Exeter and East Devon is no longer there.”*

*“There is no emergency service geared towards addiction of any description within our communities.”*

*“How does this actually benefit the person on the street? Changing government boundaries doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s going to benefit the person on the street.”*

*“Reducing the number of councils will reduce duplication and bring efficiency savings... Local empowerment links to devolution.”*

*“Transport is not within the current council’s remit and this is frustrating.”*

*“Lack of infrastructure with local developments that put pressure on existing old roads.”*

*“Look after the environment. Keep eco issues high on the list [of priorities] and have better buses and trains so we don’t have to rely on cars.”*