

## **COUNCIL**

Tuesday 25 November 2025

### **Present:**

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Anne Jobson (Chair)

Councillor Gemma Rolstone (Deputy Lord Mayor)

Councillors Asvachin, Atkinson, Banyard, Begley, Bennett, Bialyk, Cookson, Foale, Fullam, Haigh, Harding, Holland, Hughes, Hussain, Ketchin, Knott, Miller-Boam, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, Palmer, Parkhouse, Patrick, Payne, Pole, Read, Rees, Sheridan, Snow, Vizard, Wardle, Williams, R, Wood and Wright

### **Also Present:**

Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Strategic Director for People and Communities, Strategic Director for Place, Strategic Director of Operations, Democratic Services Officer(JM) and Democratic Services Manager

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Michael Mitchell and Ketchin declared an interest as serving members of Devon County Council for which they had both informed the Monitoring Officer and had received letters of dispensation.

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### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION: DRAFT SUBMISSION-PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST IN EXETER AND DEVON**

The Lord Mayor invited the Chief Executive to present the report, which she did making the following statement:

“Thank you Lord Mayor.

The report before Members this evening is the Council's final draft proposal for Local Government Reorganisation - the culmination of months of detailed work, evidence-gathering, engagement, modelling, and refinement.

It has been shaped by Members across this chamber, the voices of our residents, partners, neighbouring Parish Councils and businesses and it must be submitted by the end of Friday.

#### **Our Case for Change**

We know that local government is under pressure across the country and Devon is not immune to this. Demand for services and expectations from residents is growing, rising, costs are increasing, and the geography of our county- large, mostly rural with dispersed populations, and with three urban centres - makes delivering consistent, high-quality responsive services more challenging every year.

Councils have done their best within the two-tier system created in the 1970s but we can all recognise that this system is no longer suited to the scale of the challenges we face today.

Alongside that, Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay - our three principal urban areas in Devon - are constrained by boundaries that no longer reflect how residents live their lives and access council services and acts as a constraint to economic growth which could benefit the county. Our draft submission seeks to address those challenges.

It meets the government's six criteria by:

- 1) Firstly, proposing a single tier of local government – four unitary councils instead of the current 11 councils;
- 2) it sets out that each proposed council is of an appropriate size to provide financial resilience, with sustainable tax bases and a model that pays back the costs of transition within three years;
- 3) it identifies the approach and principles for delivering high-quality, sustainable services, designed around both urban and rural needs, with a specific focus on those crucial services of Adult Social Care and Children's Services and services for children and young people who need support for special education needs and disabilities (SEND);
- 4) the submission has been developed in collaboration with other Devon Councils, and in particular, Plymouth and Torbay Councils and also through extensive listening to local views;
- 5) it supports devolution, creating balanced authorities ready to drive growth, the skills agenda, enhance delivery of housing and infrastructure and ensure that the needs of Devon's urban, rural and coastal areas are considered equally and alongside each other with the four councils being principal authorities in the current combined authority or a future strategic mayoral authority; and the final criterion,
- 6) the submission enhances local engagement and influence in decision-making, through neighbourhood area committees and an enhanced relationship between upper tier authorities and parish and town councils.

I'd like to address two significant issues presented for the first time formally to members in the report. One is the number of councils being proposed in our submission and the second is the reference to 'a baseline proposal' and a 'modified proposal'.

#### **Four councils**

Firstly, on the number of councils. Members will recall that on 14 August, Members agreed the geography proposed for the new council serving Exeter and the surrounding area as well as the geography for two other proposed councils, so a three-unitary proposal.

Members' however, will also recall that the report referred to continuing to collaborate with other Devon councils, as government had asked us to, in order to identify where there may be synergies between different councils' positions and ours, to allow us to reflect the aspirations of members from other councils alongside our own.

Since 14 August, we have worked more closely with the existing unitary councils for Plymouth and Torbay recognising the synergy between the three cities. We also continued to analyse the financial and service data for local government across the area and listen to various views.

As a result, our proposal is now for four unitary councils:

- One for Exeter City and 49 neighbouring parishes as set out in the previous report;
- One for the existing Plymouth City Council and 13 adjacent parishes again as set out in the previous report;

- One council for the current area served by Torbay council plus 23 neighbouring parishes; and
- a fourth unitary council that serves the coastal and countryside area of Devon.

During this work Lord Mayor, the greatest synergy was evident between our emerging proposal and that of Plymouth City Council. Members will note that the submission references throughout the similarities between the two areas as major engines of growth, constrained by historic boundaries. Now that both councils have finalised our draft submissions, it has become clear that our individual proposals are essentially the same although expressed in different words and both proposals meet the government's criteria.

MHCLG has, from the start of this process, urged local areas to work together and where possible submit joint proposals which will streamline the government's statutory consultation process. That is why I would like to add a recommendation to the report before Members tonight. The wording has been circulated but for clarity the proposed recommendation reads,

***That Council supports a Joint Submission with Plymouth City Council to be presented as a shared Executive Summary with the two individual proposals as appendices. Members are asked to note that Plymouth City Council supported this approach, and its Cabinet agreed a similar recommendation at their meeting on 24 November 2025.***

### **Baseline and Modified proposals**

Turning now to the issue of the Baseline and Modified proposals: Members will also note that the report and draft submission before you introduces the terms 'baseline proposal' and 'modified proposal'.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 Act, any submission must begin with a baseline proposal which is based on existing district boundaries.

Councils must then demonstrate if that baseline proposal meets the Government's criteria, or whether modifications to those boundaries are justified. Where it can be proven that modifications to boundaries are justified, this must be expressed as a request to the Secretary of State for a modification to the boundary.

Our analysis demonstrates that our draft submission meets the test for justifying a request for the modification of existing district and unitary council boundaries.

While meeting some of the government's criteria, the baseline proposal does not meet a key test: it was not financially viable. Additionally, it will not unlock the amplification of economic growth for Exeter, Plymouth or Torbay. It leaves those areas constrained by historic lines that do not reflect how people live, work or access leisure and cultural services.

This is why we have developed a modified proposal which asks the Secretary of State to agree to boundary changes for Exeter, Plymouth and Torbay. Our submission explains clearly why boundary changes are necessary to better meet the government's criteria.

Our modified proposal is the strongest option for Exeter and the surrounding area, as it aligns our governance with our travel-to-work area, our housing market, our innovation zones, and our strategic economic footprint.

But crucially, it is also the strongest option for all of Devon, because it is a model that allows a focus on the needs of Devon's distinct communities and it protects the identity of rural and coastal communities;

- it aligns with functional economic geography; and
- finally, it ensures no authority is left financially advantaged or disadvantaged.

### **Engagement on developing the draft submission**

Lord Mayor, this proposal has been shaped by one of the most extensive engagement programmes Exeter has ever carried out.

We engaged with:

- over 2,000 residents across the city and surrounding parishes;
- businesses, anchor institutions and public sector partners;
- parish and town councils in the area surrounding Exeter; and
- voluntary and community sector organisations.

We held workshops, forums, online sessions, briefings, community events, and sector-specific discussions. We used surveys, interactive tools, and insight sessions to gather views and test ideas.

The key messages that came through consistently are:

- people want decisions to be made closer to where they live;
- they want simpler, clearer accountability and to know who does what;
- there was also clear support for aligning boundaries with how people live their lives;
- we heard a strong call about protecting local identity; and finally
- we heard loud and clear the need for public services that are joined-up, easier to navigate, and designed around people, not departments or districts.

This feedback has helped shape the modified proposal before you tonight and we believe that our submission is stronger and more resonant with local views because of that engagement.

The proposal also reinforces local democracy. Neighbourhood structures will be a core part of the new arrangements. Government expects strong local governance, and our proposal delivers this through Neighbourhood Area Committees, which will be co-designed with the communities they serve, not imposed upon them.

For example, in the unparished city of Exeter, it is proposed that Neighbourhood committees will create a vital link between communities and the new unitary council, addressing the issue of a democratic deficit, ahead of the proposed community governance review which may lead to the creation of new town and parish councils.

### **Charter Trustees**

Lord Mayor, throughout the discussion on the impact of the change in local government, the issue has been raised of Exeter's historic status and strong support for it to be preserved in the absence of a town or council parish for Exeter. This issue is addressed by proposing the creation of Charter Trustees for Exeter when the new unitary councils are legally enacted in 2028. This will protect Exeter's city status, that is, our Lord Mayoralty, civic traditions, regalia and historic rights. This ensures that while the governance structure changes, that aspect of the city so cherished by so many, does not.

Trustees are typically councillors from newly created unitary councils but they do not have any powers over local services or governance like a parish or town council

would. The intention would be that Charter Trustees would be in place until replaced by any future town council for Exeter. An example of this was Taunton which was an unparished area and after the local government restructure in Somerset that created Somerset Council, Charter Trustees were appointed in Taunton, funded by a local precept. These were subsequently replaced by the creation of Taunton Town Council.

### **Transition Plan**

A transition to a new system of local government of this scale must be steady and safe.

Our plan sets out a clear sequence: early work led by Chief Executives and Leaders across the county, Implementation Teams in place before the Structural Change Order, and Joint Committees once the Order is made.

Critical services such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND will be prioritised throughout. Workforce, finance and digital planning will run in parallel to ensure continuity from day one.

It is a careful, phased approach, grounded in learning from other LGR transitions across the country, and designed to keep services safe, legal and stable at every stage.

### **Sustainability**

On the key issue of sustainability Lord Mayor, this is a thread woven through the draft submission, rather than an add-on.

The proposal supports net-zero planning, resilient transport, nature recovery, and environmentally responsible growth. It aligns with regional climate priorities and puts Exeter's global leadership in climate science at the centre of a county-wide system.

Moving towards the conclusion Lord Mayor. An immense amount of work has gone into this draft submission, both from elected members and officers for which I am grateful. I would especially like to thank the council's Strategic Directors - Jo Yelland, Dave Hodgson, Ian Collinson and Adrian Pengelly, as well as Lorraine Betts and Judith Wellings and other officers who have played their part in shaping this draft submission. I would also like to thank the Leader of the Council for his steer, support and constructive challenge throughout, although I won't be disappointed if I don't hear reference to the Redcliff Maud report for a while. I would also like to acknowledge and thank elected members and our heads of service and their teams who have kept a firm grip on business as usual throughout this year when the Strategic Directors and I have necessarily focused on LGR.

On a personal note, yesterday marked 20 years to the day that I was offered my first position at Exeter City Council. Shortly after I arrived, we began work on a bid for unitary status. It's a reminder that the debate about the appropriate structure of local government in Exeter - how we build something simpler, more accountable and more effective has been with us for decades. That case back then, after various twists and turns was not to be.

Despite that, the officers and members of the council carried on working with partners under sometimes challenging circumstances to deliver great things for the city and its residents.

Twenty years on, I hope that members feel that we have developed a robust, evidence-led proposal that meets the government's criteria and is informed by listening to voices across Devon and my hope is that we are now close to getting

the local government structure right for Devon in service to our communities, current and future residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

I commend this draft submission to Council Lord Mayor, and my colleagues and I are happy to take questions.”

The Chief Executive and Strategic Directors answered questions from Members as follows:

- the views of young people aged under 16 had been gathered by external agencies and unfortunately these had not been received and therefore may not be able to be included in the final submission;
- Plymouth and Exeter City Councils had shared their draft submissions the previous week and identified similarities. They had reminded themselves of the government’s request for collaboration and noted both cities were constrained by current boundaries.
- it was impossible to know what precept would be set as Charter Trustee status did not exist yet but unlike parish councils they could only cover costs of administration of trusteeship therefore they would be low;
- preparatory work for transition would begin in the new year and would be based on learning from others and guidance from MHCLG. Resource to take on this work would be planned by the Strategic Management Board in the new year. There would be a focus on business as usual and also the future regardless of the government decision;
- Charter Trustees were not like parish or town councils they were simply for the ceremonial aspects of the city. Public accountability of these was not known;
- sustainability issues had been addressed. There would be an election to a shadow authority and it would be up to them to determine detail regarding environmental stewardship; and
- the population numbers provided were those to be considered. The Executive would look to make a decision and the hope would be to have more detail from Plymouth by that point.

The Lord Mayor invited the Leader to speak to the report which he did, making the following statement:

“Thank you, Lord Mayor. And good evening, Members, colleagues, and members of the public here tonight.

This City Council together with other Local Authorities have been given a chance by government to make changes that will last for generations to come.

I believe we can’t as a city and surrounding area miss this opportunity to keep those communities in and around Exeter at heart of economic and sustainable growth, to continue the tradition that Exeter is and will be a centre of civic administration. We have articulated our ambition for the city of Exeter to come under a new unitary council, one that recognises the unique role of the city in driving the economy of the sub-region, and as leader it has been good to see the council united in our ambition for a unitary council.

Our proposals for a Unitary council in Exeter demonstrate we are still a city of ambition, we recognise that residents need jobs, reliable transport and a sense of wellbeing to thrive.

Exeter has the economic potential to power the region, but realising that potential requires infrastructure, resources and powers.

Tackling the structural inequalities in our communities and strengthening education and skills is essential to realising potential and achieving our outcomes.

More of the same from a Unitary Devon Council will not do. Therefore, this coming year will be about achieving a balanced financial discipline with looking ahead to realising potential and improving prospects.

One thing we can all agree on here is that we live in a very special part of Britain. Whether you grew up in Devon, or you moved here, or work here, however you chose to make it home, this county gets into your blood.

It's proud, it's distinctive, and it's full of potential. I am also proud that we a proud and inclusive city and one that welcomes everyone in Exeter.

Exeter is also a place that knows how to get things done – quietly, practically, without fuss. From investing in future infrastructure, which would normally be the responsibly of an upper tier council to building the country's first Passivhaus leisure centre.

That's what this proposal is about. It's about the Devon we know, and the Devon we want to hand on to future generations.

Now yes, Exeter has led this work. And I'm proud of that.

But let me be clear – this isn't just a plan *for* Exeter alone.

It's a plan for Devon as a whole.

For cities and towns, for coastal communities and rural villages alike. The 49 parishes and towns are all connected to Exeter and Exeter to them.

What we're putting forward tonight is a model that strengthens what already works and fixes what doesn't.

It's about local decision-making, simpler structures, better value for money, and a stronger voice for our communities. Re-enforcing a commitment to work with towns and parishes and communities with Exeter itself being a benefit of us all.

Because the truth is, the further away decisions are made, the less they understand the people they affect.

Lord Mayor, not long ago, I was waiting for a bus at Lichfield Road, in Exwick – and like many people in this city, I waited longer than I should have. A woman next to me turned and said, *"If they had to run this from London, we'd be here all week."* Happily I wasn't there all week but there is truth in that.

Local challenges need local solutions. And that's exactly what this proposal is trying to get us back to – decisions made by the people who understand them and know what needs fixing.

Our proposal is practical, it's evidence-based, and yes, it's ambitious. We've never been afraid of ambition in Exeter.

Because we want more for our city, our county, and our country. More opportunity, more sustainable growth, and higher living standards for everyone who calls this place their home.

We've shown how to grow responsibly, how to bring partners together, how to invest in homes, culture, skills, and sustainability.

And those lessons shape this plan – one that gives Devon the space to grow, to innovate and of course, to lead.

Our cities will play a huge role in that. Cities like Exeter and Plymouth drive ideas, investment, and jobs. We're the engines of regional prosperity. But the countryside, the coast, and the market towns matter every bit as much – they're the heart of our county.

This proposal gives space for all parts of Devon to thrive. It unlocks potential while protecting character. It's bold, balanced, and built to last.

I wish to thank Plymouth City Council and indeed Torbay Council, for both having ambitions of their own, but both recognise the importance of an Exeter Unitary authority and support the city and surrounding areas.

Torbay slightly different but does recognise Exeter and Plymouth.

It's a plan that can deliver real savings, create stability, and put the focus back on people. Housing that's affordable. Transport that works. Services that people can trust.

The submission before you reflects genuine common ground – across political groups, partners, and communities – all backing the same belief: that Devon's future can and should be stronger.

Before I finish, I want to say something important.

This submission didn't appear out of thin air. It has taken real graft, real leadership and real expertise.

I want to thank our Chief Executive, Bindu, for her presentation this evening and for steering this work with clarity and calm.

Her understanding of the detail and her commitment to getting this right for Exeter and Devon has been outstanding.

My thanks also go to our Strategic Directors, to the teams across the Council who have put in the hours in every way, and all contributed in their own way.

You've balanced day-to-day pressures with this enormous task, and you've done it with professionalism and pride.

And finally, I want to thank our elected Members – across all groups – for their steer, your challenge and your support. This is what working together looks like.

Also, thanks to my Executive and my group, who many of them will note I have become a bit obsessive on this subject.

Colleagues, we know the challenges local governments face.

But we also know who we are – and what we can achieve when we work together.

This proposal doesn't pretend to solve everything overnight.

But it's a step – a strong, confident step – towards a better, fairer, greener Devon. A Devon that's proud of its people, confident in its purpose, and ready for what comes next.

Let's take that step together, Lord Mayor.



Before I move the recommendations, I have received an amendment from Councillor Moore, which I am more than happy to accept as a friendly amendment. The amendment will change the recommendations to read as follows:

2.1 That this Council endorses, **in principle**, the Draft Final Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (Appendix A) in Devon prior to consideration by Executive on 26 November 2025.

**To insert 2.2 That the Executive considers the matters raised in the debate at Council, when it meets on 26th November 2025, as part of its decision-making process to finalise the proposal.**

Furthermore, I wish to move an additional recommendation as an amendment as follows:

**2.3 That the city council supports a Joint Submission with Plymouth City Council to be presented as a shared Executive Summary with the two individual proposals as appendices. Members are asked to note that Plymouth City Council supported this approach and its Cabinet agreed a similar recommendation at their meeting on 24 November 2025.**

Lord Mayor Thank you very much.”

The Lord Mayor asked for a show of hands of those opposed to the addition of the additional recommendation. As there was an opposition Councillor Wright seconded recommendation 2.1 and 2.2. The Lord Mayor opened debate on the addition of recommendation 2.3 upon which Councillor Payne withdrew his opposition and the amended recommendation as proposed by the Leader and seconded by Councillor Wright became the substantive.

During debate councillors made the following comments in support of the recommendations:

Councillor Wood

- a recent parliamentary constituency review brought three Exeter wards into a new constituency where common issues could be seen and he was conscious that this went beyond current boundaries which were no longer relevant;
- Exeter City Council had control of the River Exe which ran through the middle of the proposed area;
- thanked those councils who had worked with the city council and contributed to the draft submission; and
- he would take on board all that was said without predetermining the decision to be made the following evening.

Councillor Michael Mitchell:

- related the current situation to other historical governance changes and believed that this was an opportunity to get things right;
- that the Minister would make the decision;
- it was positive that there were only three submissions in Devon and that the 1-4-5 model did not appear the best option;
- existing boundaries did not solve problems for the city as demonstrated on the boundary of the Alphington ward where dwellings lay in Teignbridge;
- the One Devon submission would bring continuity and scale to deliver key services but this could bring drawbacks;

- supported the principle of localism and local decision making which gave better representation, especially to rural areas;
- elected members must be considered and constituencies should not be so large that there was no connectivity and ways of working could evolve to allow more working people to be involved; and
- he hoped to work together and cooperate in the interests of the residents of Devon.

Councillor Ruth Williams:

- would reserve her comments for the Executive meeting on 26 November;
- was here to listen with an open mind in order not to be predetermined; and
- was disappointed at the amendment's suggestion that the Executive would not consider all that was said at this meeting.

Councillor Palmer:

- had concerns about the continuation of Neighbourhood plans and St James had been the first urban plan in the UK which was incredibly important as it brought together a fractured community;
- was disappointed that government had de-funded neighbourhood planning and was concerned that government would take control of issues around planning and would seek reassurance that residents voices would carry on making a difference; and
- was concerned that decisions could be made by a councillor 30 miles away, a Strategic Mayor 100 miles away or even in Westminster.

Councillor Vizard

- thanked officers for their cross-party work and unity of purpose and be believed it was clear that everyone wanted the best for our city and the whole of Devon;
- he welcomed work on engagement and the shared responsibility for the environment;
- there was interest in greater participation in decision-making;
- the views of young people would be valuable when they arrived as this was their future and their voices needed to be heard more;
- there was an opportunity to get things right and be bold and innovative; and
- he would listen to debate carefully and welcome all contributions.

Councillor Hughes:

- thanked officers not only for their work on the submission but for how accessible they had made the information provided;
- that they were proud of the active choice to remain a city of sanctuary for many marginalised groups;
- it was disappointing not to hear the voices of young people; and
- that they support the proposals and trust the Executive to make the right decision.

Councillor Knott:

- from a planning perspective he had grown frustrated by planning applications in neighbouring authorities attached to Exeter's borders meaning those authorities obtained the council tax and CIL but residents accessed services within Exeter;
- the proposal would allow the green belt to be controlled and a more thoughtful approach to development; and
- neighbourhood plans would be supported.

Councillor Parkhouse:

- as a newly qualified teacher she was aware that SEND and adaptations within the classroom were a top priority for residents;
- need was rising fast but the system was not keeping pace and the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) being completed was amongst the worst in the country with 30% being completed within the legal timeframe, causing distress and costing money;
- Devon had received an inadequate rating which was no criticism of staff or schools but of the system; and
- SEND must be at the heart of a new authority with better integration between education and health and a system which served children better must be built.

Councillor Miller-Boam

- the proposal would support the city to drive growth which the other proposals would dilute;
- the proposal was not for Exeter alone and was shaped by meaningful engagement which sought to reach beyond current boundaries; and
- local voices would be heard and represented, fragmentation would be removed and services would be efficient and reliable.

Councillor Atkinson:

- the proposal would replace an outdated system where no one understood who was responsible for what;
- there were failings in Devon County Council's Adult Social Care with some older people waiting three years for assessment;
- had spoken to other local authorities where things had been done differently and saw this as an opportunity to make a difference here;
- there would be an opportunity to have more neighbourhood plans;
- councillors from the proposed authorities would have a seat on the Torbay and Devon Combined County Authority rather than current situation where they were only able to listen;
- was excited that Alphington would be united;
- it was disappointing not to hear from young people but government would be consulting with them on giving the vote to 16 and 17 years olds; and
- the proposal represented value for money.

Councillor Cookson:

- wanted to design a system which matched a modern city;
- the case rested on three principles – decisions closer to the communities they serve, strong partnership and growth;
- he was tired of making excuses for poor Devon County Council services and apologising that he could not influence SEND provision and potholes; and
- this was a chance for residents to have one councillor to get things done.

Councillor Moore:

- welcomed her amendment being accepted as friendly;
- work on the proposal had not been supported financially by government other than a small grant;
- welcomed the stated intention of stronger local engagement and empowerment, working jointly with communities to improve lives and localities;
- the role, purpose and budget of Neighbourhood Area Committees needed to be clear;

- the proposal stated that a Community Governance Review 'could' be undertaken rather than 'should' be undertaken in order to address the democratic deficit in Exeter;
- there had been a critical challenge around geography and the move to a 4 unitary model was welcomed although there remained concern at the large size of the coastal and rural area;
- a neighbourhood of 30-60,000 was large and it would be preferential for neighbourhoods to be the size of a local WhatsApp group;
- the current model drove money away and it would be good to focus on building wealth within our communities and keeping it there;
- comments about social enterprise were welcomed;
- increased prosperity, decent pay, ensuring that those who can contribute and invest in our community and environment and create an economy good for our climate would be a good principle for a strategic mayoral authority to model on if done well;
- consider strategic housing as there was no mention on what would happen to Exeter's housing stock, which the Council should be proud of. Request clear commitment to Exeter growing the number of council houses it has and recognise the number of people sleeping rough or homeless and the difficulties some in communities face;
- ambitions for Homelessness should go beyond safe and legal;
- request to ask government to fund transitions in order to be realistic about significant debt, that forecast savings can only come after redundancies whilst SEND and social care will remain high costs; and
- a modern unitary authority was needed and to learn from rural areas by having Neighbourhood Area Committees and would love to see a youth council created.

Councillor Patrick:

- would reflect tomorrow and agreed with Councillor Knott regarding planning that she did not believe that there was a risk in becoming a unitary authority;
- the Local Plan had been submitted to the Inspectorate, comprising years of work not only by this authority but with engagement with stakeholders and community groups, which would not be lost. The adopted plan would be the authority's guide; and
- planning must be done strategically but local people and communities would have a voice.

Councillor Kevin Mitchell:

- that all districts and Devon County Council would go and new authorities would be created rather than a new Exeter City Council;
- this was an opportunity to create a new structure for the city and surrounding areas to the benefit of communities in and around the city;
- hoped that the Executive would reflect on what community was;
- St James had a unique status which should be treated in a distinct way and a Community Governance Review would be welcomed;
- it was important to maintain civic life and ensure a structure for the Lord Mayoralty and ensure that cultural life remained in place; and
- supported a joint proposal with Plymouth.

Councillor Wright:

- was present to listen and would reserve comment until the meeting of the Executive on 26 November;
- she believed all present were behind the devolution of power, funds and decision making and that Devon County Council was too large and yet held all the funds; and

- the neighbourhood plan in St James may be a good starting point on how to address democracy from the bottom up.

Councillor Harding:

- was proud of the city already and that pride must be taken forward into the new council;
- that everyone was welcome in Exeter no matter their background, diversity or circumstances; and
- hoped it was clear that this was not an Exeter takeover but a coming together of communities.

Councillor Wardle:

- it was a long time since Exeter had control over their own transport; and
- he hoped that possibilities for transport would be considered including bus services, in line with the Bus Service Act, and re-doubling of railway lines to increase services and therefore remove congestion on roads.

All members who spoke thanked officers for the tremendous amount of work undertaken on the proposal before them.

In summing up the Leader, Councillor Bialyk made the following remarks:

- there had been a disappointing degree of collaboration with other Leaders in the county;
- some councils had reached out and good discussions were had and he had been prepared to amend where possible;
- this was not a Labour proposal and cross-party engagement and support had been received throughout;
- the Plymouth and Exeter proposals matched and therefore they had come together;
- he was disappointed that there was no provision for an elected city council with town council powers;
- detail surrounding neighbourhood plans, and parish councils would be for a future authority to decide and he was reluctant to state what may come forward;
- governance would be considered within a review and for planning purposes there were plans for Exeter, Teignbridge and East Devon which would be followed until the new council had its own plan;
- he found it interesting who responded to engagement and it was not the younger generations;
- Exeter was a city of sanctuary and welcomed everyone even if we disagreed with their views;
- SEND services could be a lot better and the failure of adult services was noted;
- Neighbourhood Area Committees would be for the new authority to consider;
- bins were important but he would look to parishes and towns as it would not be possible to address everything within the new authority;
- a governance review would be key;
- communities must be engaged and the role of councillors was also important for local democracy;
- he would be visiting Crediton next week to look at issues they are dealing with and what they are able to take on and he would not be diminishing the role of parish or town councils – some would be asked to take on more and he would want to work with them to see what they were able to deliver;
- his personal view was that a new form of council structure was needed in Exeter;

- the Government questions before the council had been answered in the following terms:
  - Economic performance – work with partners to drive the economy, including social partnerships;
  - Housing – the new authority would be part of the Combined County Authority and work would take place with communities and the third sector;
  - Costs – he was not looking to make redundancies but if there were any, appropriate packages would be offered and costs must be considered;
  - Viability and council cost – if the new authority was not what this council requested then these issues would remain. There would be a new funding arrangement and it may not be appropriate to make demands but he would ask officers;
- he had suggested that concessionary bus fares be extended but as a non-constituent Member of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority, he had little influence; and
- he requested that Councillors M Mitchell and Moore email their comments in order that he give them full consideration ahead of the Executive meeting on the 26 November.

The Leader called for a roll call vote, a named vote was recorded as follows:

Voted For: Councillors Asvachin, Atkinson, Banyard, Begley, Bennett, Bialyk, Cookson, Foale, Fullam, Haigh, Harding, Holland, Hughes, Hussain, Knott, Miller-Boam, Mitchell K., Mitchell M., Moore, Palmer, Parkhouse, Patrick, Payne, Pole, Read, Rees, Rolstone, Sheridan, Snow, Vizard, Wardle, Williams M., Wood, Wright and The Lord Mayor, Councillor Jobson.

Voted Against: none

Abstentions: Councillor Ketchin

Absent: Councillors Darling and Williams, M.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.24 pm)

Chair