

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 17 December 2024

Report of: Chief Executive

Title: Council Appointment to the Team Devon Joint Committee

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The report seeks Council approval to appoint the Leader of Exeter City Council (“the Leader”), Councillor Philip Bialyk, to the Team Devon Joint Committee.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That the Council’s membership of and participation in the Team Devon Joint Committee be approved on the basis of the constitution appended to this report
- 2.2 That the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Council’s representative on the Team Devon Joint Committee;
- 2.3 That the Deputy Leader of the Council be appointed as the substitute for the Leader on the Team Devon Joint Committee
- 2.4 That any minor amendments to the constitution be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 The Leader has been an active member, both as Leader and as the Chair of the Devon Districts Forum, the informal Team Devon partnership, working with Devon County Council, District Councils, National Park Authorities, and the Devon Association of Local Councils to seek a joint approach to common issues and challenges for Devon.

3.2 At its full Council meeting 29 April 2024 Devon County Council resolved to “support the establishment of the statutory Team Devon Joint Committee to formalise the existing partnership, to address shared priorities and have a voice in the work of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA)”. Terms of reference were due to be presented in September 2024, but following a change in Government, had been delayed until December 2024. A copy of the Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix A.

3.3 Team Devon (Leaders and Chief Executives of Devon County Council and the district Councils in Devon) have agreed in principle that the establishment of a Team Devon Joint Committee to formalise the existing partnership would: improve partnership governance; enable transparent decision-making; create opportunities to take Team Devon’s work on shared priorities further forward; and enable it to inform the work of any future Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.

3.4 It is proposed that the Leader of each District Authority will have a seat on the Team Devon Joint Committee and therefore Council are being asked to formally ratify the appointment of the Leader for Exeter City Council to the formal Team Devon Joint Committee.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 There are no financial implications for Exeter City Council.

4.2 Devon County Council will be the Administering Authority for the Joint Committee and will be providing resources needed to service the committee for secretarial, legal and communications support.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no financial implications for Council to consider.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The purpose of this report is to formally appoint the Leader of the Council to the Team Devon Joint Committee and to make provision for the Deputy Leader of the Council to be appointed as the substitute for the Leader of the Team Devon Joint Committee..

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 Devon County Council has set up and approved the Team Devon Joint Committee as part of the Combined County Authority. The purpose of this report is to ensure that Exeter City Council is represented on the new committee.

8. Report details:

8.1 Local authority partners in Devon came together in 2018 to form the Team Devon partnership. The partnership consisted of Devon County Council, Devon's District, City and Borough Councils (East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council), and wider county stakeholders (including Devon's two national parks and the Devon Association of Local Councils which represents Devon's town and parish councils) formed an informal partnership which allowed for the pursuit and discussion of shared matters.

8.2 The Team Devon Joint Committee will comprise the Leader of each of the nine local authorities (i.e. the County Council and eight district, city and borough councils) and a member of the Dartmoor and Exmoor National Park Authorities. The Chair of the Devon Association of Local Councils will be an associate member together with representatives of the NHS and police.

8.3 The Joint Committee will operate on the basis of one member, one vote. Scrutiny will be undertaken by each of the constituent authorities' own scrutiny arrangements.

8.4 The proposed Terms of Reference for Team Devon Joint Committee is attached as Appendix A.

8.5 The proposed functions of the Team Devon Joint Committee are to:

- Support continuous improvement and value for money in the ways that Devon's National Park Authorities, parish, town, district, and county councils exercise their duties and responsibilities. This could include aligning performance measures and sharing or integration of services.
- Contribute to the following environmental, economic, and social wellbeing objectives for Devon's people and communities:
 - economic development (incorporating green growth);
 - housing and homelessness;
 - transport infrastructure;
 - climate change;
 - natural and cultural heritage;
 - health and wellbeing inequalities; and
 - Migration and asylum.
- Advise, inform, and support the work of any future Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.

8.6 The County Council's declaration of a housing crisis and the Devon Housing Commission's report highlight the significant role that the Team Devon Joint Committee could play in improving the availability, affordability, and accessibility of housing through a Devon-wide housing strategy. The Joint Committee could also have a focus, in the context of devolution to Devon and Torbay, on economic growth, employment and skills.

The Joint Committee will enable Devon's local government family as a whole to engage and work with Government and regional bodies.

8.7 No decision could be taken by the Team Devon Joint Committee which relates to any matter that is the sole preserve of a specific member body unless that body indicates its agreement with the proposal. In addition, no decision could be taken that is to the financial detriment of any member body unless that body indicates its agreement to the proposal.

8.8 The Joint Committee would meet in public on a quarterly basis, with the first planned meeting to be held on Wednesday 8 January 2025, to allow time for appointments to be made by member bodies.

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

9.1 The appointment will enable continued collaborative working with other local authorities to support the Council in addressing achieving the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2026, namely in achieving:-

- a Prosperous local economy;
- developing housing and building great neighbourhoods and communities;
- a Net zero carbon city;
- a Healthy and Active City; and
- a prosperous Local Economy.

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

10.1 There are no risks to the appointment of the Leader. The proposal from Devon County Council has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken / included to safeguard the Council's position.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies, and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage, and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

All public authorities involved in Team Devon Joint Committee are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duties (Equality Act 2010). The Committee will provide a positive opportunity to meet the shared duties to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations across through improved partnership working, benefitting Devon's diverse communities.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 There is the option to refuse the appointment, which may deprive Exeter City Council the opportunity to strengthen collaboration and joint working, at a time when increased focus is being placed on effective partnership in service delivery and outcomes.

Chief Executive, Bindu Arjoon

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Appendix A – Terms of Reference.

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