

South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council.

Response to the Boundary Committee's questions on concepts for unitary local government

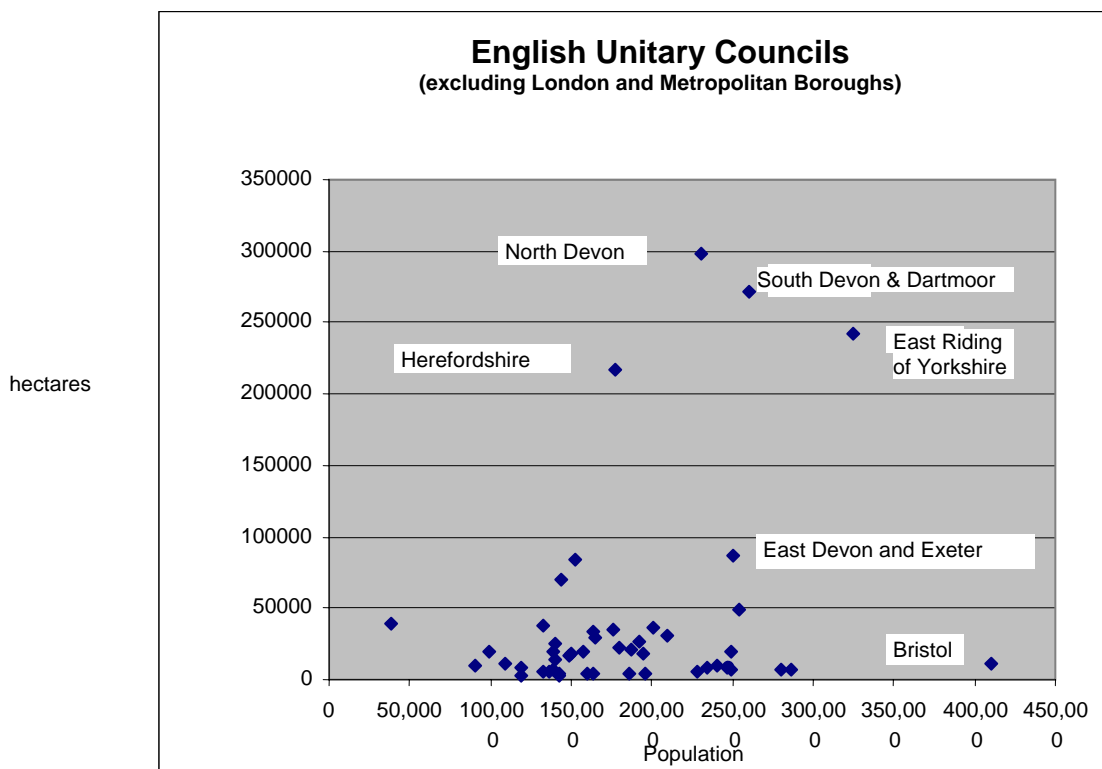
Introduction.

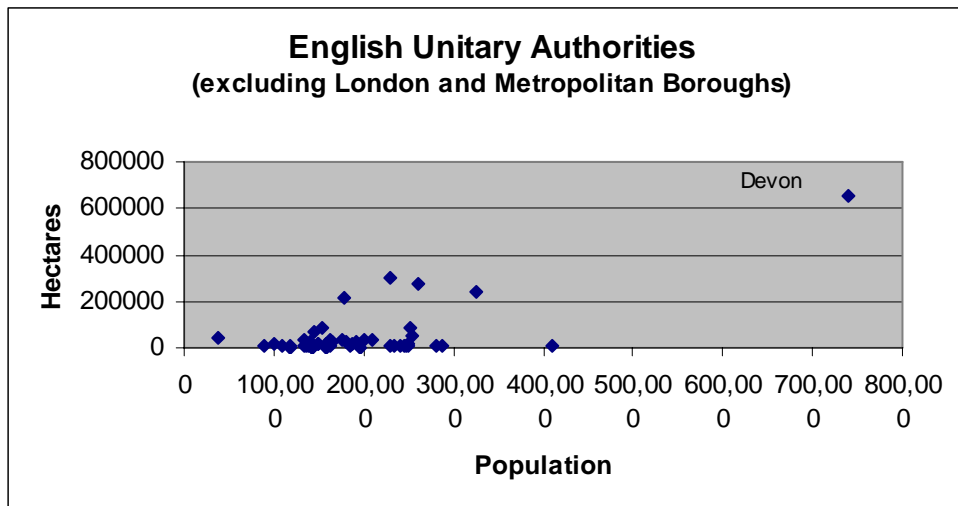
We are reluctant to propose detailed boundaries for other areas in Devon as we feel local stakeholders, who are familiar with their local areas, should be the ones to make representations about detailed local boundaries.

However in conceptual terms our proposal is based on the assumption that approximate populations of our suggested unitary concepts based on existing boundaries would be:

- Northern Devon – 230,000
- East Devon and Exeter – 250,000
- Rural South Devon and Dartmoor – 260,000
- Plymouth – 250,000
- Torbay – 130,000.

The following table indicates that our proposal for the three new unitaries would be comparable in scale with the larger of the English Unitaries and create authorities which are viable in terms of population and land area.





The table above illustrates that the creation of a Unitary Devon would establish an authority second only in size to Birmingham with ten times the land area.

Recent decisions by the Secretary of State indicate that the proposals within the South Devon and Dartmoor concept are in line with current thinking on population:

- Cheshire West and Chester - 326,500
- Cheshire East - 350,000
- Central Bedfordshire - 249,200.

Our proposal would give 5 unitaries each large enough in scale and focused on locally distinctive agendas within their areas. It reflects the diversity of challenges across Devon between not only the urban and the rural localities but also within the 2 main and intrinsically different rural areas in the north and south of the County.

It will allow an appropriate organisational response to the specific characteristics of place and facilitate the delivery of a focused place-shaping agenda. The Northern Devon agenda would be based on the key regional centre of Barnstaple and have rural economic regeneration as its key issue. East Devon and Exeter would focus on the regional growth agenda to the east of Exeter.

Our concept therefore enables effective unitary solutions for the whole of Devon as each authority would have the capacity to provide strategic leadership but be of a size that is sufficiently close to local people to provide credible and effective local government. In terms of 'flying the Devon flag' all the proposed new unitaries would do so whilst retaining their own particular identity. Identity is rooted in place not local government administration.

Questions to all proponents

1. Why would your proposed model best address the social and economic challenges of the Devon county area? In particular, please consider the following issues:

- **the social and economic challenges of the Exeter urban area**

South Devon and Dartmoor allows for an appropriate solution for Exeter to comfortably sit alongside other unitary arrangements for Devon. Rural areas have distinctive common

interests which are separate to those of the city.

Our proposed model responds to the social and economic challenges of the Exeter urban area by linking the city to its wider hinterland. They are identifiably and increasingly city influenced in character; the economy is strong and rapidly expanding. East Devon and Exeter's growth and associated infrastructure (e.g. airport, other transportation and strategic housing and economic expansion) supports and enables regional growth and a broader ripple affect across the current East Devon District Council area. This impact is less obvious in the rural areas to the north and west of the city.

The situation is different to Plymouth and Torbay where their economic and strategic influence is less expansive, being inwardly focused on urban areas and responding to the challenges of urban deprivation. The important developments of Sherford and Language within the South Hams are predominantly required to meet existing needs within the Plymouth sub-region, whereas growth East of Exeter is focused on regional expansion and inward migration. As a consequence our model enables an extension of the city to include the areas of East Devon which are directly linked and influenced by regional growth.

Northern Devon's need for rural regeneration, a priority for RDA investment, has been diluted within a County which has a diverse rural agenda between the north and south and an urban growth agenda around Exeter and extending into East Devon. A North Devon Unitary will enable it to focus on these issues through its economic development vehicle (North Devon Plus). It is also currently working with a Joint Local Strategic Partnership which provides a basis for greater strategic influence. It has experienced strong local political leadership, particularly within the County Council, and has vibrant centers at Barnstaple, Bideford, and Tiverton including a well established college of Further Education at Barnstaple.

- **the challenges of remoteness/communication links in rural areas**

Devon is a large and diverse county with poor transport/communication links particularly north/south. It can take more than 2.5 hours to travel from the county's north coast to the south coast by car. The rural areas of the county are very poorly served by public transport and good quality mobile telecommunications are often spasmodic.

On first reading one might conclude that this implies that there is a shared communications improvement agenda between the northern and southern rural areas. An example of where this has not been the case is the different approach taken between the two areas in relation to improving strategic transport links. The northern part of the county looks to Taunton and lobbied, successfully, for improvement to the A358 linking Taunton and Ilminster whereas southern Devon favoured the widening of the A303 / A30 link between Ilminster and Exeter to improve linkages to the South of the County.

Local government services need to be sensitive and responsive to these realities. Accessing services is a significant challenge for those most in need. Services and the democratic process therefore need to be strongly locality based if these key service users are not to be immediately disenfranchised by a large scale and distant unitary solution.

Service provision should not be driven from an urban centre into a large sparsely populated area as occurs under many traditional approaches. Given the sparseness of our rural areas we do not believe that equitable service delivery can be achieved by building a governance structure based on strategic communication links, as advocated by some of the other submitted concepts.

There are major differences in socio-economic demographics between the north and far west, the south and the east. There is a respective concentration of population along similar lines. The north of the county has its own dynamics and specific challenges which are distinct from those in the south and east and which do not relate easily to the rest of Devon. Barnstaple is recognized as the key regional centre for North Devon for strategic and structural planning purposes.

Any unitary solution must recognize that Devon is not a single entity and that the influence of size and socio-economic and physical characteristics has created distinct communities which need to be taken into account in any future governance arrangements. We therefore propose a merging of districts with those characteristics with no changes in existing boundaries between districts.

2. Why would your proposed model best reflect:

- **the economic significance of Exeter and its relationship with the rest of Devon (excluding Plymouth and Torbay)?**

The South Devon & Dartmoor model proposes no change to the boundaries of Plymouth and Torbay. This is the view supported by those living close to the respective boundaries and who might be encompassed if those boundaries were changed.

Exeter has an economic significance beyond its immediate borders but its influence does not extend throughout the rural northern and south / west of Devon. The city's economy is performing well and there is a clear need for areas currently outside the city boundaries to be allowed to be developed sustainably to support the demands of that growth. This is acknowledged in a number of the submissions.

The economic influence of Exeter is distinctly different from that of Torbay and Plymouth. Exeter's improving economy is a success story – strong and expanding - its growth and associated infrastructure has a broader ripple affect across the East Devon area, but it has not to date had a significant additional beneficial effect to the localities in the north or west of the county.

Exeter is identifiably and increasingly metropolitan in character. It draws people from the north, centre and east for work and recreation but is less significant in its draw from the south despite relatively good transportation links in comparison to most of Devon.

Plymouth and Torbay's economic and strategic influence is less extensive and inwardly focused on urban areas.

A Northern Devon Unitary would be very similar to South Devon and Dartmoor in respect of its rural base. Focused on the sub-regional centre of Barnstaple it would enable a systematic approach through this mostly rural area and in its concept is proposing a distinctive policy and service delivery response.

Barnstaple is North Devon's largest town and is closely linked to Bideford. Towns at more distance such as Tiverton will have more relevance to the retail, service and employment needs of the residents of those towns. In social terms the most urbanised areas of the north exhibit similar social challenges to the southern urban areas, e.g., youth offending rates are higher in Barnstaple than in Exeter, and both are much higher than in rural Devon.

The creation of a 5 unitary Devon (including the existing unitaries of Torbay and Plymouth) will reflect how local people live their lives and shape the services they require. Each will:

- have more cohesive housing market areas than Devon or any of the districts on their current boundaries
- have more coherent economic, cultural and leisure footprints reflecting the patterns in which people live work and play
- fundamentally reflect more accurately how the private sector and many government agencies work
- Be more coherent as places based on communities that already work closely and interact well.

A core belief underlining our model is that a greater sense of place is secured through local ownership and/or direct influence of the services and facilities that are experienced on a regular basis. This is best achieved either through the democratically elected Town or Parish Council owning the asset or having day to day operational influence over the delivery of the service, or a voluntary organisation comprised of local people who have joined together through recognition of a common need having the resources to deliver at a neighbourhood level.

Neighbourhood fora already exist over large areas of the proposed unitary authorities. They are designed to deliver the Local Strategic Partnership process and therefore the Local Area Agreement. This is a firm base to adapt and build on.

3. What specifically are the risks associated with a unitary authority with a large geographical area and population and how well does each concept address those risks?

A large geographic and sparsely populated unitary will be distant and remote from the people it serves. The democratic process will be less accessible to the people due to the increased demands on the elected Members of the new authority and elaborate arrangements will be required to provide any sense of locality working.

A Devon unitary council would have a population of approximately 750,000 spread over 2,500 square miles making it by far the largest rural unitary authority in England and second in population only to Birmingham. The Secretary of State recently concluded that a single unitary authority with a population of 675,000 spread over an area of 800 square miles was not a viable solution in Cheshire.

The South Devon and Dartmoor concept strikes the correct balance between critical mass, commonality of priorities and a tangible accessibility of the democratic process and the range of locality based services that people need from time to time.

A large Devon unitary would be seen as remote and would not lead to the outcome of greater interest in local elections which government seeks to promote. The opportunity of councillors to fully participate in such a large organisation may restrict the diversity of local representation and only those with the time to become full-time councillors. On the basis that one member is able to fairly represent a 4,000 population ward as proposed in the South Devon and Dartmoor concept, a county unitary would require up to 200 councillors. A unitary Devon council of 60 members would require each councillor to represent 12,500 people.

A simple view would suggest that the larger the authority the greater the opportunity to achieve efficiencies. History indicates that these opportunities have, in the past, rarely been taken and that beyond a certain scale authorities can become so large that they lack the ability:

- to respond to changing demands and circumstances,
- of stakeholders to influence.

and size and complexity may reduce both agility and the capacity for action.

4. What are the risks associated with smaller unitaries having the capacity and 'critical mass' to deliver affordable services, while retaining a strategic approach to more overarching issues across the county?

Recent research evidence (DCLG October 2006) has indicated that a large critical mass does not automatically provide value for money nor is it a guarantee of enhanced affordability and high performance. Success is more to do with leadership, a sense of common purpose between Members and staff and a positive organizational culture than it is about the size of the authority. High levels of performance, customer satisfaction and turnout at elections within the three districts forming South Devon and Dartmoor evidence this.

Evidence suggests that the term 'smaller' should not apply to any of the 5 unitaries within our concept. In terms of English Unitary Councils populations of fewer than 250,000 are the norm rather than the exception and as shown above, recent decisions concerning Cheshire and Bedfordshire are very much in line with our proposals.

With a slightly larger population of 325,000 The East Riding of Yorkshire is an example of a Four Star unitary council of a similar size and geographic spread to that proposed for South Devon and Dartmoor (259,900 population and 272,000 hectares) and indeed a North Devon unitary at 230,200 / 298,000. East Devon and Exeter would have a similarly sized population at 250,700 but with a smaller geographic area (86,000 hectares) and a thriving economy on which to build capacity and deliver affordable services.

The northern area is much more likely to obtain capacity and critical mass for strategic purposes by working with Taunton, West Somerset and North Cornwall as it is about collaborating with other Devon authorities. South Devon and Dartmoor will collaborate with Plymouth, Torbay, East Devon and Exeter, and where appropriate with North Devon. We do not preclude commissioning including Cornwall, Somerset, and Dorset.

5. A unitary county of Devon - including Exeter - is envisaged by a number of proponents - is it likely in your view to command a broad cross-section of support across the county?

It will inevitably attract some support from those who perceive, perhaps simplistically, that a larger single unitary would provide better value for money and be more affordable. Having large critical mass is by no means an automatic guarantee that value for money will be secured.

The criterion of securing genuine neighbourhood empowerment for the people of Devon is just as important in the consideration of what is most appropriate. A single Devon unitary will not secure the desired improvement in neighbourhood empowerment and the reality will be that local government is no longer "local" for a significant proportion of the population.

The creation of 28 community boards, plus a particular arrangement for Exeter, will reinvent the pattern of local government prior to 1974 but without a fully democratic processes and is likely to be expensive relative to any tangible benefits for the wider public that might accrue from that approach. In addition there will be the potential for confusion between the unitary county, community boards and the parish councils. The Community Boards will each be an additional interface with the county wide Local Strategic Partnership, which strategic partners will have to service at an appropriate level of seniority.

North Devon's concept includes evidence that its people and those of Torridge relate to North Devon not Devon County. Their concept rests on the argument that north and south Devon are different and should not be a part of the same unitary council. North Devon has indicated that if there is to be no change in the boundaries of Torbay and Plymouth then they would support the 5 unitary model within the South Devon and Dartmoor concept.

We do not believe that Exeter City Council and its key partners and stakeholders, having sought unitary status and triggered the current process, would support a unitary Devon that reduces the status of the city to a town council.

Questions for South Hams District Council & West Devon Borough Council

6. To what extent do you consider that smaller unitary authorities would have;

- **the capacity to act strategically?**

In terms of the English Unitary authorities a population of 260,000 spread over 272,000 hectares is far from small. Our concept suggests the other new unitary authorities within Devon would be of similar size.

We have an excellent record of winning external grant awards and acting strategically. We have successfully lobbied Government in the past and secured changes to government policy on issues such as rate relief for rural small businesses during Foot and Mouth and raised the profile of affordable rural housing and sustainable tourism through achieving Beacon Status. We have secured funding from sources that range from European Development Fund Objective 2, Interreg3 North West Europe, Devon Renaissance, Heritage Lottery, Defra Innovation Fund, Big Lottery Play and Beacon Status Funding.

Key strategic projects have included:

- the development of proposals for a new town at Sherford
- the development of the Langage Power Station and its associated business park
- the Morwellham Quay Project – heritage scheme
- recycling initiatives across all three authorities which has resulted in South Devon and Dartmoor having some of the best recycling rates in the country.

We believe this track record can be taken forward and operate even more effectively in the new authority.

Whilst we and each of our proposed unitaries have a very strong common focus on our priorities we all understand the need to engage with other bodies on addressing the overarching issues for the county and the region but importantly reflecting the particular distinctive perspective of those issues by its residents. Northern Devon for example will be pursuing their strategic links with Somerset and Cornwall, while South Devon and

Dartmoor will continue to build strategic links with Plymouth, Torbay and East Devon and Exeter.

- **achieve value for money in delivering services across the county?**

South Devon & Dartmoor would start with a long track record in its preceding authorities of achievement, value for money, customer satisfaction and accredited success.

There are a number of English Unitary Councils with populations below 250,000 that have achieved 4 star status and which are continuing to improve value for money ratings. Derby, Southampton, Warrington, Telford and Wrekin, Blackburn with Darwen, Redcar and Cleveland, Poole, Halton, Bracknell Forest and Darlington are all examples. Our three suggested new unitaries are of this scale and would have the critical mass to deliver value for money services.

Unitary status would enable a comprehensive focus on local issues such as:

- affordable housing
- the full spectrum of community based services to support vulnerable adults and children at risk
- integrated street scene functions
- business advice and related regulatory services
- integrated leisure and cultural services
- maximizing the beneficial use of assets across all agencies
- strategic and local transportation
- waste collection and disposal.

It would also provide quality of place through area based service delivery giving a better focus on efficiency, but also allowing commissioning of services, particularly in adult and young peoples services and back office functions across a wider region.

7. Please detail your considered boundary for a Greater Exeter

We have no strong views on where this boundary should be drawn but expansion of the Exeter boundary would seem to be more easily justifiable to the east of the city than it is to the west. There is a case for the inclusion of Cranbrook, the Airport and Exmouth. As our colleagues in East Devon are in favour of an East Devon and Exeter Unitary we have no wish to argue against it and with a population of approximately 251,000 it would fit neatly within our overall concept.

8. Based on the concept submitted, please explain why it is necessary for Exeter to expand on such a large scale?

As stated earlier Exeter has an economic significance beyond its immediate borders. The city's economy is performing well and there is a clear need for areas currently outside the city boundaries to be allowed to be developed sustainably to support the demands of that growth. The wider area is increasingly influenced by the city, the overall economy is strong and rapidly expanding and its growth and associated infrastructure has a broader ripple affect across its hinterland. As stated above local stakeholders in the area appear to support a significant expansion.

9. What are your thoughts on an expansion of Torbay and Plymouth and its effect upon your citizens?

We do not consider it is in the best interests of the residents of either Torbay or Plymouth to expand. Torbay and Plymouth's focus is on urban regeneration. Key rural challenges of affordable housing, rural economy, environmental protection of nationally designated landscapes, such as the National Park and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), would deflect from the urban agenda to the disadvantage of both urban and rural delivery. Urban and rural agendas are very different, equally challenging and require different policy and service delivery responses.

Torbay's problems are not based on population size. There are a number of very successful English Unitaries of similar size to Torbay – Blackburn with Darwen, Redcar and Cleveland and Poole. It has been suggested that an expansion of Torbay would address some of its perceived problems but there is no evidence to support such an assertion.

We believe that Torbay is turning the corner and is showing improvement in performance; it is developing a commissioning model, has a Care Trust and Elected Mayor (no rural authority has one!) and consider that any upheaval in respect of boundary change would put its progress at risk and deflect it from addressing its current challenges. Extending the role of the existing mayor to a wider geographic area would need to be resolved.

Torbay at present are managing three separate but closely linked towns which have different challenges and pressures – Torquay, Paignton and Brixham – if the boundaries were expanded this could increase to five or more towns and merely serve to exacerbate the existing problems.

We do however believe that creating a Rural South Devon and Dartmoor unitary adjacent to Torbay would provide a neighbour of a comparable scale, where cross agency agreements could be developed to address cross boundary issues. A large scale neighbouring Devon unitary of 750,000 may undermine the opportunity for mutual cooperation because of the difference in scale of the respective organisations.

Although Plymouth is the twelfth largest city, it is largely self contained. It is completely urban with issues that are very different to the rural issues in its surrounding areas. Plymouth is committed to improving its economy through extensive regeneration and growth inside the city. The focus is job creation supported by housing development which primarily takes place within or immediately adjacent to the city boundary. The addition of surrounding rural areas where there is no strategic plan for significant further growth has little logic.

Extending Plymouth's boundaries into the adjoining parishes would result in Plymouth being part of the National Park. The South Devon and Dartmoor concept places the whole of the National Park within one authority and enables a more simplified liaison to be achieved in respect of planning, countryside management, affordable housing and the LSP.

There would be significant adverse public reaction to transfer from a more rural focused authority because of the widely held perception that urban areas and rural areas have significantly different agendas to address.

We understand that the Boundary Committee will only look at changes to the boundaries of Plymouth and Torbay if it is not possible to create a unitary solution for Devon within

the existing two tier area. We believe our concept achieves the Boundary Committee's objectives without the need for Torbay and Plymouth to expand.

10. Can you comment specifically on the arguments put forward by the proponents of fewer (one or two excluding Plymouth and Torbay) unitary authorities?

We believe that two larger unitary authorities in addition to Plymouth and Torbay would result in the public being unable to identify, engage and become involved with local government as their boundaries would be unrelated to how they live their lives or the way the county of Devon functions.

Exeter on its existing boundary has already failed the affordability test so would therefore need to be considered on an enlarged basis alongside another very large rural Devon authority. As stated above, this will not result in the necessary improved community engagement that one of the 5 criteria clearly require.

The size of the county raises concern as to the possible number of councillors required to serve residents of a county unitary authority. Estimates appear to start at 'at least' 100 councillors – one to 7,460 residents. If the same ratio were to apply in Devon as is being recommended by the new Cornwall authority (one to 3700) this would amount to 201 councillors. Such a number is wholly unrealistic, unwieldy and likely to be unmanageable and succeed only in failing to effectively serve and represent the public.

With, at best, 10 councillors forming the executive it is possible that not a single councillor from some of the current rural districts would achieve a position of influence. More effective strategic leadership and cost effectiveness will be achieved with the South Devon and Dartmoor concept.

A Devon wide unitary would not add strength to the democratic process but would, in effect be a very large council arranged for administrative convenience. It would not be "local government". We are concerned that 28 boards plus Exeter would be going back to pre 1974 urban and rural district councils but without the requirement to be fully democratically elected.

In addition there would need to be particular 'board' arrangements established to take account of the status of Exeter and future board arrangements for the new communities of Cranbrook and Sherford. In our view a Board arrangement for Exeter would not establish the necessary strategic leadership for a city of such importance and relegate it to the status of a town council.

Broad Cross Section of Support

11. Does Teignbridge DC support this concept? What do you consider would be the level of support for this concept from parish and town councils?

Teignbridge District Council featured two South Devon and Dartmoor concepts within their preferred options and our shared services work and other joint initiatives have been strongly supported by them. It provides an excellent platform for moving forward positively.

Parish and Town councils across South Devon & Dartmoor are developing their views on the proposals having received information of the concepts submitted. Some have already declared their support in correspondence. We believe that there is a growing level of interest for our concept amongst parish and town councils including those within

Teignbridge.

12. Can you provide details of who at present supports a three unitary Devon and who you envisage would support a three unitary Devon in the foreseeable future?

South Devon & Dartmoor features as a second supported concept by Exeter and features within two of the Teignbridge proposals. We understand that our concept would be supported within the second concept for Torbay.

East Devon's position is:

"In the event of the Committee concluding that a revision to the existing boundaries of Plymouth and Torbay is not necessary to meet their terms of reference, we support the South Devon and Dartmoor Concept"

Torbay have stated:

"Torbay Council believes that a three unitary model in the context of an expanded Torbay is the right way forward for an all unitary Devon. However, should the boundaries of Torbay remain the same, the Council would wish to engage with neighbouring authorities at a sub-regional level on relevant topics e.g. economic development. Torbay Council is also willing to consider forms of joint working with neighbouring authorities for service delivery where there are clear benefits to all Councils concerned and all Council customers."

North Devon have confirmed their conditional support should the Boundary Committee not accept the need for a revision of the boundaries of Torbay and Plymouth.

Strategic Leadership

13. Please provide a diagram of your executive model, explaining what portfolios would be held centrally and explaining what would be devolved from the executive

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14. Please detail how the executive arrangement would be able to take a long term strategic view and deliver upon this

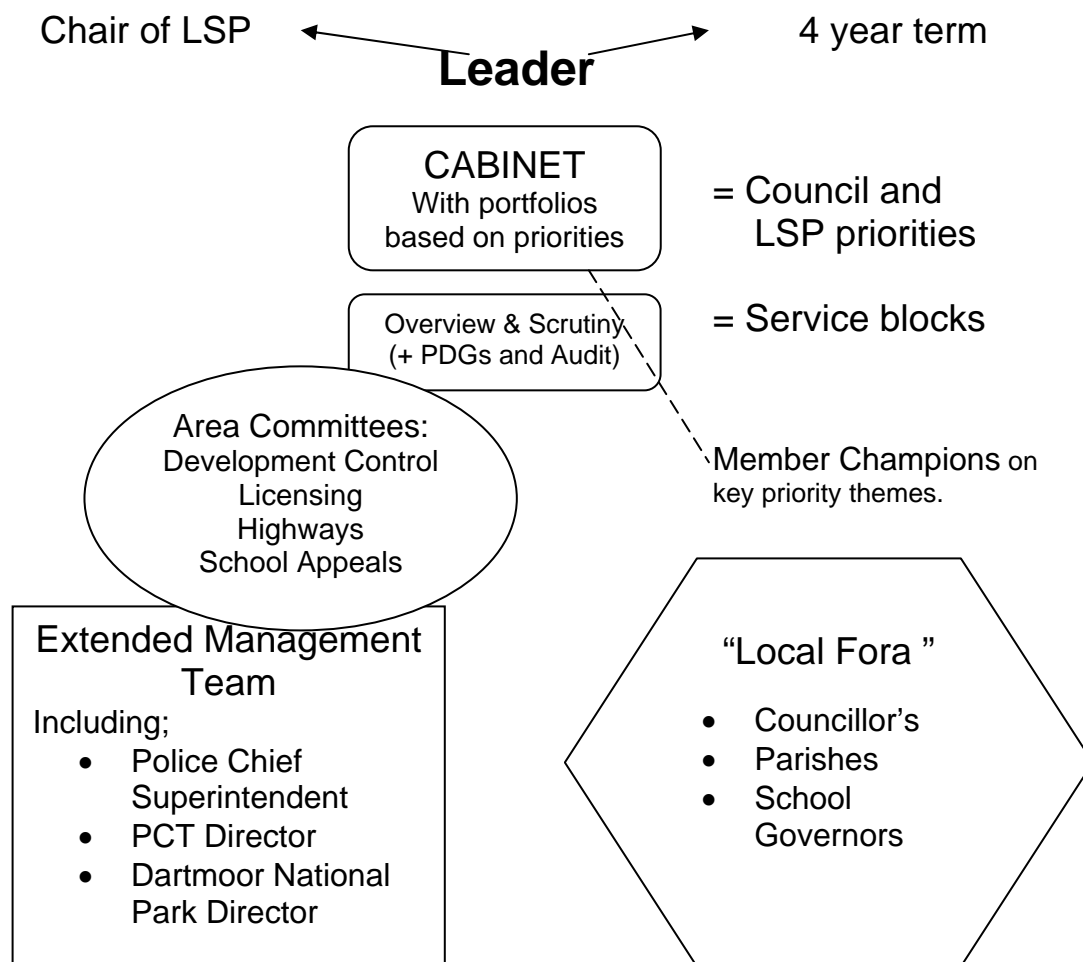
Under the provisions of the 2007 Act the new Unitary will need to choose one of three options. Of these we are proposing an indirectly appointed Leader and Executive/Cabinet structure with appointments for 4 years rather than annual appointment to ensure clear responsibility for decision making and to create capacity to develop the strategic agenda.

Rural areas value their democratic access to local government and look to a system where Councillors have wards that are of a size to permit them to adequately understand and represent local interests. It is important that the number of Parish Councils per ward is such that a Unitary Councillor can reasonably attend most meetings.

With a population of 260,000 we propose 60* members with all out elections every four years. Each councillor will represent approximately 4,000 residents. All 60 members would be involved in either the Executive, one of the four Policy Development Groups, Overview and Scrutiny or Audit Committee.

(* number will depend on population at time of review and in particular the stage that Sherford new community has reached).

More effective strategic leadership and cost effectiveness will be achieved in this way as opposed to an estimated 180 plus councillors within a Devon Unitary authority.



To deliver the place shaping agenda more effectively we believe the new unitary and other service delivery agencies need to further develop existing joint working arrangements. This could be achieved by more effective linkages of the LSP, Members and Strategic Management Teams.

The Leader could also be the chair of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - not as a form of control of the partnership but to demonstrate community leadership, with the LSP setting priorities, captured in the Sustainable Community Strategy and working with partners to deliver through the LAA.

The Executive will consist of approximately 8 Members. All Executive portfolios will be linked to corporate priorities, to be established by the new Unitary. Without prejudging their conclusions, Executive portfolios could be:

- Sustainable Communities and Transportation (streetscene, highways)
 - Housing (particularly rural affordable housing)
 - Rural economic development
- Children and Young People (healthy, safe, enjoying and achieving)
- Healthier Communities and Older People (quality health and adult care)
- Environment (including waste and climate change)
- Safer and Stronger Communities (including community safety)

- Access to Services (outward focused to include services provided by other agencies as well as managing for a successful service delivery organisation)

We believe we have the commitment to innovation, learning and development to explore opportunities through the new unitary to improve the quality of life for our rural communities.

15. In regards to paragraph 43 please detail how the scrutiny arrangement would operate and be sufficiently robust.

Whilst the Executive portfolios would be based on priority themes, Scrutiny through a combination of Overview and Scrutiny and Policy Development Groups would be arranged on a service delivery basis whether provided by external agencies, directly by the council or through contractors. Our proposals are as follows:

Overview and Scrutiny Group:

- Reviewing Executive decisions
- Reviewing External agencies performance in terms of place shaping/improving the quality of life for local people
(Agencies could include South West Water, Environment Agency, Dartmoor National Park Authority, PCT, Hospital Trust, RDA, Fire and Rescue, Voluntary sector, Public Transport providers, Contractors etc.)

Policy Development Groups (Service Scrutiny Groups) to challenge services and review and develop individual services policy, budgets, targets and outcomes:

- Communities – Strategy development, Planning and Regeneration
- Corporate – Resources and Corporate Policy
- Children, Family and Adult Services
- Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Audit Committee

- Internal corporate performance (corporate overview)

Area Committees would also be in place for:

- Development Control
- Licensing
- Highways
- School appeals

The Senior Management Team could be based on the following Directorates:

- Communities – Sustainable Community Strategy, Community Involvement, Engagement and Development, Forward Planning, Housing Enabling, Economic Development, Strategic Transportation, Development Control, Building Control
- Corporate – Strategic Partnerships, Procurement, Finance, ICT, Human Resources, Equality and Diversity, Asset Management, Performance, Legal and Democratic, Business Development,
- Children, Family and Adult Services – Education and Life-long Learning, Adult Services, Family Services, Children and Young People, Benefits, Housing options
- Environment and Neighbourhood Services – Street Scene (inc. Highways, Waste Collection and Disposal and Public Spaces) Public Protection, Climate Change, Culture, Leisure, Community Safety, Customer Services and Information

- Public Health – a shared role with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) which would develop the Care Trust

We will introduce an Extended Management Team to include representatives of other key public agencies within the LSP. We see this as placing the LSP at the heart of the management of the new organisation, rather than operating in tandem with local government, as currently happens

Linkages to Local Fora will be developed according to the requirements of each area. – see Neighbourhood Empowerment.

In addition to facing the challenges within our local area - local priorities and issues - the authority will have to address challenges of a global and national nature:

- Global warming and climate change, Pressure on energy resources including petrol, world-wide migration and shifting employment patterns through outsourcing
- Community engagement, involvement and empowerment
- Skill shortages in private and public sector provision
- Tackling waste – European Landfill Directive / Landfill Tax
- Health – tackling obesity, smoking, alcohol abuse, drug misuse with a shift from reactive to preventative measure with integrate health and social care
- New Technologies – to support flexible working and access to services
- Engaging and involving the Voluntary Sector in contracting

Neighbourhood Empowerment

16. How do you envisage communities engaging with localised budget setting?

The principle of subsidiarity will apply and local communities will be engaged in budget setting, service development and the use of resources primarily through local fora.

Local Fora will be developed from and built upon the existing Link Committee (West Devon model) and Parish Clusters (South Hams model). We plan to discuss this model with the Towns and Parishes within Teignbridge.

These forums will be:

- Built on existing Quality Parish arrangements and administer devolved budgets
- Be open public meetings
- Respond to important local issues best tackled at a local level
- Provide real local accountability from the organisation's representatives to the people it serves
- Assess performance against customer charters and declared service standards
- Be supported by innovative use of ICT to enable information and data to be exchanged, analysed and monitored to raise, and track the resolution of, local issues
- Enable effective engagement and partnership between the statutory and voluntary sector
- Be a vehicle for the Councillor Calls for Action process.

17. Please explain what is to be devolved to neighbourhood level, with particular reference to services

Communities will be engaged in both localised budget setting and devolved services through direct delegation of appropriate services with minimum service levels guaranteed to parish councils either individually or through local fora;

- Subject to financial quality issues
- Subject to negotiation with each parish about their local needs and issues
- Community budget pots to enhance service levels where a local priority requires localised budget setting – a community could pay more for enhanced service or take over the delivery of the service altogether.

Large scale procurement e.g. education, social services, waste, will be undertaken by collaboration across a number of authorities and agencies.

18. How would you consider bringing together public sector partners, voluntary sectors, community sectors and local people?

Area Committees will be in place to ensure local rather than strategic decisions are taken closer to the affected communities. Service areas could include:

- Development Control
- Local Highways and traffic considerations
- Licensing
- School Appeals.

We recognise that one size will not fit all and variations of the theme of Local Fora will be appropriate to different circumstances:

- There will be approximately 12 fora representing populations of up to 20,000
- They will provide an opportunity to assess the performance and challenge all aspects of Local Government
- Fora will be attended by strategic and operational managers and neighbourhood representatives of public service agencies - including Police and PCT

Neighbourhood empowerment will be better linked to access to services. We will build upon the highly successful multi-agency outreach services already provided in West Devon. These take place at minimal cost using existing community buildings or library transport and bring services to people to answer direct service based queries.

With an aging population and low take up/availability of ICT this approach has been proved to be very successful. A Unitary Authority developed around our model where service delivery is not driven from an urban centre would be able to extend the range of services available.

Value for money

The new Unitary would inherit a high reputation for financial efficiency from the County Council and the three Districts. West Devon has achieved the best Use of Resources score of all the 51 Local Authorities in the South West Region (Big is not always best!).

It is the right solution for the nature of our area as it places rural issues at the top of the agenda. Service delivery developed on a parish cluster basis and focused on a rural delivery model.

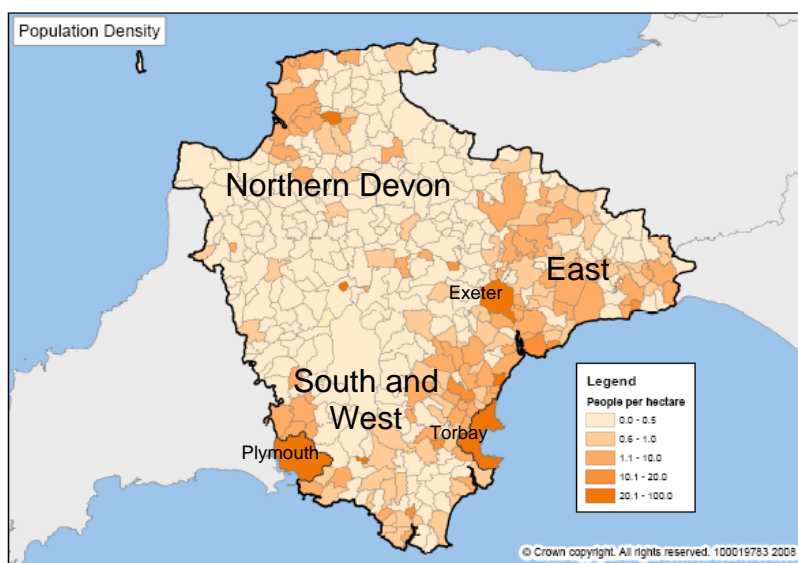
19. Why do you consider that a three unitary Devon would improve the provision of services? Would it be better than a county unitary, or a two unitary pattern? If so, why?

Three Unitary Authorities would be an evolution from the Integrated Devon approach and reflects the way many existing services are delivered as a response to the problem of ensuring front line service delivery on a county wide basis.

Already “our cluster” has an impressive track record of shared services and shared posts. The cost of change can be very expensive and the amount of change in moving to a three unitary model would, for many services, be less than moving to a single Unitary, e.g., in services that are already joined additional expenditure will be avoided. The latter does of course envisage working on 29 sub-platforms and travelling across Devon is both time consuming and expensive.

Service provision should not be driven from an urban centre to support a large sparsely populated area as occurs under many traditional approaches. Given the sparseness of our rural areas we do not believe that equitable service delivery can be achieved by building a governance structure based on strategic communication links to a main urban area as proposed in a number of other concepts.

There are major differences in socio-economic demographics between the north and far west, the south and the east. There is a respective concentration of population along similar lines as illustrated in the map below.



The north of the county has its own dynamics and specific challenges which are distinct from those in the south and east and which do not relate easily to the rest of Devon.

Barnstaple is recognized as the key regional centre for North Devon for strategic and structural planning purposes. Exeter would perform this role in East Devon. South Devon and Dartmoor will adopt a more innovative approach in the absence of a single centre.

20. How would you ensure that services in a three unitary Devon better meet the needs of local people and the wider community?

Any unitary solution must recognize that Devon is not a single entity and that the influence of size and socio-economic and physical characteristics has created distinct communities which need to be taken into account in any future governance arrangements. We therefore propose a merging of districts with those characteristics with no changes in existing boundaries between districts.

There is a common interest between the rural communities of South Devon and Dartmoor – affordable housing, diversification and development of the rural economy to provide more permanent and better paid employment, concern for the future of young people to secure a balanced population, protection of the environment and the provision of effective rural transport.

At 260,000 a rural South Devon and Dartmoor unitary will be small enough to operate at a scale local people can relate to, but with sufficient strategic capacity to influence regional, national and European agencies. With its partners in the surrounding rural and urban areas – including North Devon and East Devon and Exeter it will be able to procure / commission services with sufficient critical mass to achieve efficiency savings to benefit local people and the wider community.