

Cabinet

Monday 24 November 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Laing, Vice-Chair in the Chair.

Councillors Aspinall, Briars-Delve, Dann, Haydon, Lowry, Penberthy, Cresswell and Stephens.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Evans OBE

The meeting started at 7.30 pm and finished at 7.52 pm.

Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast of the City Council meeting at www.plymouth.gov.uk. At a future meeting, the Council will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

56. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

57. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

58. **Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

59. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

60. **Plymouth City Council's Local Government Reorganisation Proposal for Devon**

Councillor Stephens (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) He was pleased the proposal had received a high level of support from Councillors at Plymouth City Council;
- b) The proposal aimed to deliver authorities that were strong enough to plan strategically with partners, but local enough to deliver services that responded to the needs of every community;
- c) Three key arguments supported the proposal:

- i. Decisions must be made close to communities, not in distant council chambers and the proposal would protect the culture and identity of all communities across an expanded Plymouth through local decision-making;
- ii. The two-tier system had failed Devonians as it cost too much with many core services in significant difficulty, which had a serious impact on residents;
- iii. Plymouth needed room to grow and develop and benefit from Freeport and Langage opportunities, and to take full advantage of Team Plymouth and the defence dividend.

Councillor Stephens (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport) responded to comments made by Councillors at City Council:

- d) Specific issues raised regarding social care, integration skills, education alignment, environmental focus, and financial stability and sustainability were fully reflected in the proposal;
- e) A communication strategy was being developed for the next stage of local government reorganisation (LGR), which was also in response to a recommendation made by the Scrutiny Management Board;
- f) Transport and development issues at Deep Lane could be addressed when a new local plan was prepared, as set out in the proposal;
- g) They were open to further discussions about the possibility of a new town council for Plympton, which could take place as part of the development of neighbourhood networks;
- h) There was a commitment to working collaboratively and the issues raised regarding the importance of parishes, historical identity and the vital necessity of resident engagement, were all reflected in the proposal;
- i) A consultation on all proposals in Devon would be run by the Government and Plymouth City Council (PCC) would be clear in how members of the public would be able to access this;
- j) In response to a query about involving Tavistock in the proposal, and principles of including a wider geography, Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) would be asked under delegated powers to review the options appraisal;
- k) The proposals had always sought to minimise the impact on the National Park and PCC was confident on its ability to work constructively with affected communities, and the National Park Authority, to ensure the proposal worked for all stakeholders.

Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) added:

- l) This was a generational opportunity;

- m) PCC had tried to engage with as many people as possible;
- n) There had been a lot of involvement from staff, many of whom lived either within the city, or the 13 surrounding parishes;
- o) PCC had worked with other Councils across Devon, particularly with Exeter and Torbay;
- p) PCC had hosted a data room to ensure consistency in data in propositions;
- q) Subject to an agreement later in the week at Exeter City Council, the proposals would be submitted as one, to minimise any confusion from the public in the upcoming consultation, as they were the same;
- r) Thanked the team who had done a fantastic job working on the proposal, working well with colleagues from across the county.

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) added:

- s) Thanked the team for getting the proposal to this point and for facilitating important engagement sessions.

During discussion the following points were discussed:

- t) PCC had made the decision to intensify the density of housing in the city centre in order to protect green spaces;
- u) The importance of ensuring decisions remained community-focused and not overly centralised;
- v) Plymouth was made up of small areas that used terminology such as 'the village' because it was made up of places that retained their identity, and the 13 parishes would add to this and community identity would be strengthened;
- w) The 13 parish chairs had all been invited to civic events for 2026/27, if not already invited;
- x) Recognition that the LGR document would need to evolve over time to reflect changing circumstances;
- y) Feedback from parishes and residents had been considered and would continue to inform the proposal;
- z) The significance of the proposal in shaping the future governance of Plymouth and its surrounding areas;
- aa) It was momentous and the submission could be made in confidence that Cabinet believed it was what was right for Plymouth and the 13 parishes they hoped to welcome in the future.

Having considered all relevant information, including the report, the Scrutiny recommendations, the Full Council debate, the alternative options, and the statutory, legal, financial and equalities implications and being satisfied that the decision is reasonable, proportionate, and in the best interests of the Council, Cabinet agreed:

1. The “Plymouth City Council’s Local Government Reorganisation Proposal for Devon” document as set out in Appendix A and approves its submission to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government;

Reason: To respond to the statutory invitation issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to Plymouth City Council on 05 December 2024 and to comply with the requirement to submit final proposals by 28 November 2025

2. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to make any final changes to the “Plymouth City Council’s Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon” before the deadline for submission;

Reason: To enable the Chief Executive to make any necessary final changes to the City Council’s proposal as necessary in order to meet the Government’s submission deadline of 28 November 2025;

3. Subject to agreement by Exeter City Council at a meeting of their Executive (Cabinet) on 26 November 2025, this proposal and Exeter's proposal be submitted to the Government as a single proposal comprising a shared Executive Summary and the detailed rationale for the Plymouth and Exeter position as appendices.

Reason: To acknowledge that the Plymouth and Exeter proposals are in essence the same; to streamline the future consultation process; and to send a strong message to Government that the urban centres of Devon are united in their support of the Four Unitary Model.