Plymouth City Council's Local Government Reorganisation Engagement Report

November 2025

Plymouth City Council Devolution and Local Government Reform Team

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is a UK Government initiative to simplify council structures and devolve more power to local areas. Plymouth City Council has responded to this call by proposing a modest expansion of its boundary to include 13 neighbouring parishes currently within South Hams District Council. This proposal aims to create a more sustainable, efficient, and strategically aligned local authority that better reflects the economic and social realities of the region.

The Council has already submitted its interim proposal to Government and is now developing a detailed proposal, due in November 2025. As part of this process, Plymouth City Council undertook a second phase of engagement to ensure the proposal is informed by local perspectives and reflects the needs and aspirations of communities across the proposed new boundary. At the time the engagement was undertaken Plymouth City Council was developing proposals for the wider Devon and therefore engagement was focused on Plymouth's immediate neighbours and City. Engagement was designed to respond to the Government's formal request that:

"New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

● *Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.*

● *Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement."*

This report summarises the engagement activity carried out with residents and other key stakeholders on the Council's LGR proposals and their vision for the future of their local areas. It provides an overview of the feedback received during the engagement period and the conclusions which can be drawn.

Overview of the engagement process

The engagement process section of this report sets out the detailed activities that were undertaken to raise awareness and gather feedback.

The awareness raising mechanisms included: social media posts by Plymouth City Council and through CAN-Digital; emails to stakeholder contacts; briefings with stakeholders, the local MPs, political parties and councillors; facilitated conversation events with residents, press releases, hardcopy surveys available on request; and poster and leaflet distribution to businesses, schools, community buildings, GPs, dentists and pharmacies.

Information was shared and feedback was gathered through the dedicated project website, 19 community facilitated conversations, a survey hosted online and in hard copy format; presentations and 1-2-1 meetings with stakeholders.

The Gunning principles

The approach to the engagement was designed to be in-line with the Gunning principles:

1. **Was the engagement carried out a formative stage?**
   ● **Yes:** The engagement is taking place while Plymouth City Council is still developing its detailed proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), ahead of a formal submission in November. Therefore, the process is still open to influence.

2. **Was sufficient information provided?**
   ● **Yes:** The communications provide a clear explanation of what LGR is, what the Council's proposal is, FAQs addressing concerns and queries from the initial round of engagement early in the year. Detailed web pages continued to be updated throughout the engagement when additional enquiries were submitted.

3. **Was there adequate time for consideration and response?**
   ● **Yes:** Events were held over multiple weeks, in different venues, at different times of day, to enable people to attend at a time and location suitable for them. The survey was online for four weeks.

4. **Was their conscientious consideration of the feedback?**
   ● **Yes:** Resident engagement activity in this phase had concluded before the summer period to give adequate time for evaluation so the feedback could influence the final submission in November.

Summary of findings

The engagement process undertaken by Plymouth City Council between May and August 2025 has provided a rich and detailed picture of public sentiment across both Plymouth and the 13 South Hams parishes proposed for inclusion in an expanded Plymouth. The findings reveal a complex landscape of shared aspirations, divergent concerns, and clear expectations for how local government should evolve to better serve communities.

The views from residents

Shared themes across Plymouth and South Hams

Across both Plymouth and the South Hams parishes, there is a strong sense of place and pride in local identity. Residents value their communities for their natural beauty, social cohesion, and access to essential services. There is widespread support for the principle of local decision-making, with many respondents expressing a desire for governance that is responsive, transparent, and rooted in local knowledge.

Service quality is a recurring theme. Waste and recycling services, healthcare access, education, and transport infrastructure are consistently highlighted as priorities. While digital services are appreciated for their convenience, there is a clear expectation that councils must continue to offer face-to-face and telephone options, particularly for vulnerable residents and those in rural or digitally excluded areas.

Environmental protection is another unifying concern. Respondents across both areas emphasise the importance of safeguarding green spaces, promoting sustainability, and ensuring that future development does not compromise the character or ecological integrity of their communities.

Differences in feedback between Plymouth and South Hams

The most striking difference in feedback relates to the proposed boundary expansion. From those we spoke to in South Hams, there was significant resistance to being absorbed into Plymouth City Council. Many residents fear that their rural identity will be diluted, that urban priorities will dominate decision-making, and that services tailored to small communities will be lost. There is also concern about planning pressures, overdevelopment, and the potential erosion of local representation.

In contrast, Plymouth residents are more focused on the opportunities that reorganisation might bring. They express a desire for improved infrastructure, more affordable housing, better public transport, and enhanced cultural and economic vibrancy. While concerns about service quality and governance persist, the tone is generally more optimistic and future-oriented.

These differences underscore the need for Plymouth City Council to approach the final proposal with sensitivity and nuance. The proposal must demonstrate how the needs of both urban and rural communities will be met, and how governance structures will ensure fair representation and service delivery across the expanded area.

Youth perspectives

Young people in Plymouth provided thoughtful and forward-looking feedback. They value the city's green spaces, cultural venues, and sense of safety, but they also want more youth-led spaces, better transport, and improved mental health support. Their vision for Plymouth in 2050 includes a city that is inclusive, well-connected, and full of opportunity, with affordable housing, strong job prospects, and a vibrant cultural life.

This feedback highlights the importance of engaging younger residents in the planning process. Their priorities reflect long-term aspirations that should inform the design of services, infrastructure, and community engagement strategies.

Local governance and representation

Feedback from South Hams residents strongly emphasised the importance of parish councils in maintaining local identity, accountability, and community cohesion. Many expressed concern about the future role of these councils under any new governance arrangements, seeking reassurance that their influence and autonomy would not be diminished. There was a clear desire to preserve the hyper-local governance that parish councils provide, especially in rural settings where community ties are strong. Additionally, the engagement revealed widespread confusion about the current two-tier system of local government. Many participants conflated the roles of parish, district, and county councils, often attributing responsibilities incorrectly. This highlights a need for clearer communication and education around governance structures, both in the current system and any proposed changes, to ensure residents feel informed and empowered.

Accessing services

The engagement revealed a clear preference for a blended model of service delivery. Residents want the flexibility to access services digitally, by phone, or in person, depending on the nature of the issue and their personal circumstances. Libraries and community hubs are seen as vital access points, particularly in rural areas.

Plymouth City Council must ensure that any future service model is inclusive and adaptable. This includes investing in digital infrastructure and skills, maintaining physical service locations, and designing systems that are intuitive and accessible to all.

Communication and engagement preferences

Effective communication is essential to building trust and ensuring meaningful participation in local government. Throughout the engagement process, residents across both Plymouth and South Hams consistently expressed a desire to be genuinely involved in shaping decisions that affect their communities. There is a clear distinction made between meaningful engagement and what many perceive as tokenistic or "tick-box" exercises. People want to feel that their voices are not only heard but also acted upon, and that their input has a tangible influence on outcomes.

Face-to-face engagement was particularly valued. Many participants highlighted the importance of being able to speak directly with council officers in community settings, where conversations could be open, honest, and responsive. These interactions were seen as more personal and trustworthy than digital or written communications alone. The facilitated conversation events were widely praised for creating space for dialogue, and there is a strong appetite for these to continue beyond the current phase of engagement.

In the South Hams, Parish Councils emerged as a vital conduit for communication and representation. Residents view their Parish Councils as trusted, accessible, and deeply embedded in the fabric of local life. They want to see these councils empowered and actively involved in any future governance arrangements. Many respondents indicated that they would prefer to receive updates and participate in consultations through their Parish Councils, which they see as more attuned to local needs and concerns than larger, more centralised bodies.

To meet these expectations, Plymouth City Council must have an inclusive and flexible approach to engagement, recognising that different communities and individuals have different preferences and levels of access. Transparency, responsiveness, and follow-through will be critical. Residents want to see how their feedback is being used and to be kept informed of progress and decisions in a timely and accessible manner.

Ultimately, the success of the Local Government Reorganisation proposal will depend not only on the strength of the proposal but also on the quality of the relationships built with communities. Engagement must be ongoing, not episodic, and rooted in a genuine commitment to co-design and collaboration.

The views from stakeholders

The feedback gathered from stakeholders throughout the engagement process reflects a wide range of perspectives, but can largely be grouped under a set of consistent themes. These themes; governance and representation, service equity, financial transparency, planning and development, and community engagement including youth voice, mirror those identified through resident engagement and provide a useful framework for understanding the priorities, concerns, and aspirations expressed by partners across sectors. While each stakeholder brought a distinct lens shaped by their role or industry, there is a clear convergence around the need for strategic clarity, inclusive decision-making, and a commitment to delivering tangible benefits for communities across the proposed expanded authority.

Governance and representation

Stakeholders broadly recognised the potential for a more strategic and coherent governance model, with benefits in national influence and operational alignment. However, concerns were raised about democratic representation, particularly for rural communities, and the future role of parish councils. Questions around boundary choices and the risk of centralised decision-making highlighted the need for reassurance that local voices would remain influential.

Service equity

There was strong support for improving service consistency across the region, especially in housing, education, health, and safeguarding. The expansion was seen as a chance to better coordinate delivery, but stakeholders warned that growth must be matched by infrastructure and funding. Concerns included the sustainability of emergency services, health inequalities, and the risk of rural areas being underserved. In education, particular emphasis was placed on the implications for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, with questions around capacity, funding (including the High Needs Block), and the ability to meet statutory responsibilities. School leaders highlighted the need for clear planning to avoid delays in specialist placements, ensure continuity in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) processes, and prevent resource dilution across a wider catchment.

Financial transparency

Financial clarity was a recurring theme. Stakeholders sought reassurance that the reorganisation would deliver value for money, with clear plans for council tax harmonisation, funding allocation, and cost-efficiency. There were questions about whether the scale of change justified the investment, and whether rural service costs might outweigh projected savings.

Planning and development

Planning was one of the most discussed areas. Stakeholders saw opportunities in unlocking land-led development, attracting investment, and aligning infrastructure strategies. However, there were concerns about the loss of rural planning expertise and the risk of marginalising smaller communities. The need for integrated planning across housing, health, and emergency services was widely emphasised.

Community engagement and youth voice

The Council's engagement efforts were welcomed, with calls for continued dialogue and broader inclusion. Stakeholders encouraged the use of varied communication channels and more targeted forums, particularly for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and sector-specific groups. Youth voice was highlighted as a priority, with suggestions to embed generational perspectives into future planning and investment.

Additional considerations

Some feedback extended beyond these core themes. Environmental and recreational partners called for better liaison and coordination, particularly around the coast path. The construction sector advocated for a local capability hub and stronger procurement strategies. Concerns were also raised about implementation timelines, regional collaboration, and the capacity of Plymouth's leadership to manage the expanded authority effectively.

Considerations for the final proposal

As Plymouth City Council prepares its final submission to Government, it must address several critical considerations:

Governance and representation: The proposal must outline how rural communities will be represented within the expanded authority. This includes exploring models which maintain and enhance parish councils, or advisory fora.

- **Service equity:** The proposal should demonstrate how services will be maintained or improved across all areas, with particular attention to rural needs, transport connectivity, healthcare access, and waste management. In education, stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity and resourcing to meet increased demand, particularly for SEND provision. The transition must be carefully managed to avoid disruption to statutory responsibilities and ensure continuity for families and professionals.

- **Financial transparency:** Concerns about council tax harmonisation, funding allocation, and debt inheritance must be addressed clearly and credibly. Stakeholders want to understand how resources will be managed, including the financial implications of absorbing additional responsibilities such as SEND, and whether the reorganisation will deliver value for money without compromising service quality.

- **Planning and development:** The proposal should promote strategic planning that respects local character, protects green spaces, and ensures infrastructure keeps pace with growth to meet the needs of the expanded authority.

- **Community engagement:** Ongoing engagement must be built into the governance model. Residents want to be part of the decision-making process, not just consulted at key milestones. Mechanisms for feedback, participation, and accountability should be embedded in the proposal.

- **Youth inclusion:** The views of young people must be reflected in the final proposal. Their priorities for housing, transport, education, and wellbeing are essential to shaping a future-ready city.

- **Local capability and procurement:** Consideration should be given to how the expanded authority will support local economic resilience through procurement and investment.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The engagement launched on 29 May 2025 with Plymouth City Councilissuing a press release announcing the engagement. This also included the launch of the engagement platform (Have Your Say Today - Big Community Conversation - Commonplace)

Engagement website

The LGR engagement website was launched on 29 May 2025 to communicate information about the Council's proposals and the engagement opportunities, including the online survey.

From the launch, anyone could register to stay informed on the Council's plans by subscribing to email updates. This was done through the project website homepage.

A detailed Frequently Asked Questions section was updated throughout the engagement in response to questions raised from the community. Project updates were communicated through a 'Latest News Post' and this was emailed to all registrants of the project website.

For example, on the 12 June, those signed up for updates received an alert signposting them to additional FAQs that had been added to the website regarding 'Understanding Local Government', 'More about Plymouth City Council' and the impact our proposals will have on the local parish/town councils in South Hams.

From 29 May until 4 August there were 816 subscribers to the project website and 11,431 visitors.
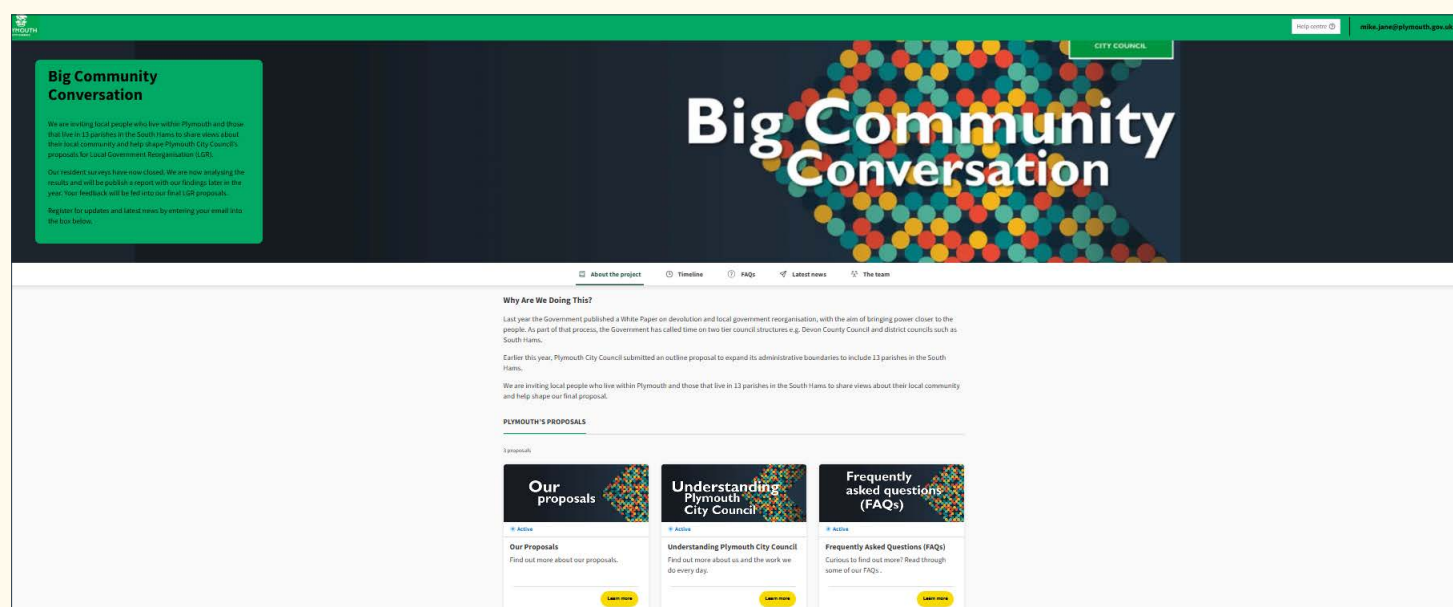
Surveys

Two separate surveys were conducted, one for residents living within Plymouth's existing boundary, and another for those in the 13 South Hams parishes. The South Hams survey ran from 29 May to 10 July, while the Plymouth survey was open from 1 July to 3 August.

While both surveys were broadly similar, they were tailored slightly to reflect the different contexts and existing knowledge about each area. Their shared aim was to explore residents' perceptions of their local area and their aspirations for the future. Each survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative feedback, not only on the Council's proposals but also on wider community priorities.

Open-text responses were included throughout and have been thematically coded. The survey findings section includes tables showing the number of mentions for each theme.

An online survey was hosted on the Big Community Conversation website and printed copies of the survey were also available on request or at the facilitated conversation events.

A total of 824 people had their say across both surveys.

Facilitated conversation events

A series of Big Community Conversation events were held between May and July 2025. These events were designed to gather insights from residents and stakeholders to help shape the Council's detailed proposal for submission to Government.

A total of **19 events** were held:

- **13 events** in each of the proposed parish areas in South Hams
- **6 events** in the centre / north / south / east and west of Plymouth city boundaries and a specific event for young people in Plymouth.

All events were held in accessible community venues and were open to any resident, regardless of location, allowing flexibility for attendees to choose the most convenient session.

South Hams Parish Events

- **Shaugh Prior:** (Monday 9 June) at Lee Moor Village Hall, 10am to 12noon
- **Sparkwell:** (Tuesday 10 June) at Sparkwell Parish Hall, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
- **Cornwood:** (Monday 16 June) at Cornwood Village Hall, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
- **Harford:** (Tuesday 17 June) at Lukesland Gardens, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
- **Ugborough:** (Friday 20 June) at Ugborough Village Hall, 7pm to 9pm
- **Ivybridge:** (Saturday 21 June) at The Watermark Centre, 3pm to 5pm
- **Brixton:** (Tuesday 24 June) at Brixton Community Centre, 2.30pm to 4.30pm
- **Yealmpton:** (Wednesday 25 June) at Yealmpton Methodist Church, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
- **Ermington:** (Thursday 26 June) at Ermington Community Hub, 10am to 12noon
- **Wembury:** (Saturday 28 June) at Wembury War Memorial Hall, 10am to 12noon
- **Newton and Noss:** (Wednesday 2 July) at Newton and Noss Village Hall, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
- **Holbeton:** (Thursday 3 July) at Holbeton Village Hall, 6.30pm to 8.30pm
- **Bickleigh:** (Thursday 10 July) at Woolwell Centre, 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Plymouth city events

- **City Centre:** (Monday 21 July) at the Council House, Armada Way, PL1 2AA
- **Plympton:** (Tuesday 22 July) at the Rees Centre Family and Wellbeing Hub, Mudge Way, PL7 2PS
- **Estover:** (Thursday 24 July) at the ELM Wellbeing Hub, Leypark Walk, PL6 8UE
- **Barne Barton:** (Monday 28 July) at The Barn Family Hub, Kit Hill Crescent, PL5 1EJ
- **Elburton:** (Tuesday 29 July) at Coombe Dean Academy, Charnhill Way, PL9 8ES

Plymouth youth event

- **City Centre:** (Wednesday16 July) at the Council House, Armada Way, PL1 2AA open for all young people aged 12-18 years old.

In total: 489 people attended events

Meetings with other stakeholders / representatives of organisations, businesses and groups

A series of meetings with representatives of organisations, businesses and groups in the South Hams and within Plymouth who were willing to provide qualitative feedback on the proposals. Notes of these meetings were captured and fed into this report. This included:

- Parish Councils
- Plymouth Growth Board
- Local Care Board Executive Group and Delivery Group
- Fred Thomas MP
- Devon Chamber of Commerce
- Plymouth Housing Development Partnership
- Luke Pollard MP
- Plymouth Regeneration Forum
- Plymouth Manufacturers Group
- Local universities / schools
- Rebecca Smith MP

Media and building awareness

A media and digital communications campaign was launched, which included issuing press releases to the local media, inclusion in resident newsletters, organic social media campaign. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness and to encourage attendance at the events and the completion of survey responses by using targeted digital advertising across Facebook, Instagram and Google Ads.

Our multi-channel approach ensured broad visibility and effective targeting, significantly boosting participation in the LGR consultation. For example:

Thirteen Parishes: Delivered via CANN Digital and in-house ads, with strong performance on Meta and Google Display.

Plymouth Residents: Area-specific ads (e.g. Estover, Barne Barton, Elburton) generated high reach and engagement.

Youth Engagement: Snapchat ads reached over 30,000 users, with the highest impressions among 18–24s and most clicks from 25–34s.

Community Promotion: Posts in 19 local Facebook groups supported in-person event attendance.

This resulted in:

- Platforms Used: Meta (Facebook and Instagram), Google Display, Snapchat, Nextdoor, LinkedIn, and local Facebook groups.
- Total Impressions: Over 2.1 million across all platforms.
- Total Reach: Over 100,000 individuals engaged.
- Total Clicks: More than 9,000 direct link clicks to the consultation.

In addition:

- Three press releases were issued, resulting in media coverage in publications e.g. The Herald and online at Plymouth Live / Devon Live / BBC Spotlight etc.
- Promotion was included in four editions of Plymouth City Council's weekly e-newsletter, which is distributed to 26,000 residents
- Social media posts on Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and Nextdoor.
- Staff communications to encourage Plymouth City Council staff to participate in the consultation in their capacity as residents who live and work in Plymouth or the South Hams.
- Posters and flyers were distributed to community venues, schools, dentists, GP surgeries, libraries and pharmacies.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

A series of meetings have been held with stakeholder to capture their views on the proposals. Industry specific presentations were created to outline the benefits of LGR to each sector. A number of the meetings, due to the large number of people attending, interactive feedback software was also used to capture feedback. Below is a summary of the discussions:

Parish Councils

Over the course of our engagement programme, Plymouth City Council has held one-to-one meetings with clerks and chairs from all 13 affected parish councils – Bickleigh, Shaugh Prior, Sparkwell, Brixton, Wembury, Cornwood, Harford, Ugborough, Ivybridge, Ermington, Yealmpton, Holbeton, and Newton and Noss. These discussions were followed by a Parish Conference on 19 March 2025, providing a platform for collective dialogue and feedback.

Over the past few months, Plymouth City Council also encouraged further participation, with many Parish Council's attending the Big Community Conversation events held in their local area. Some parish councils have expressed dissatisfaction with the LGR process and have formally requested that Plymouth City Council cease future direct engagement. Whilst efforts to build an ongoing relationship have not been successful there has been productive dialogue.

While an initial approach to neighbourhood governance proposals was discussed, further announcements from the Government relating to "Area Committees" means that our approach will be developmental, which parish councils will be welcomed to join. The parishes we met expressed a preference for a parish council forum with their future principal authority, along the same lines as was recently started by the South Hams District Council.

While there was recognition of the potential for improved service delivery – particularly in areas such as transport, housing, and economic development – they emphasised the importance of maintaining a rural-urban balance. The Parish Councils acknowledged the strategic economic ties between Plymouth and surrounding areas but stressed the need for any transition to respect the distinct character of rural communities. Practical concerns were also raised around council tax harmonisation, service continuity, and staffing, highlighting the need for clear planning and communication throughout the reorganisation process.

Luke Pollard MP (22/08/25)

Luke Pollard MP expressed strong support for Plymouth City Council's LGR proposals. He welcomed the engagement efforts, particularly the Big Conversation events, and appreciated the Council's coordination with other medium-sized, boundary-constrained cities. Mr Pollard also emphasised the importance of Plymouth remaining a Continuing Authority.

Marjon University (28/08/25)

Marjon's feedback sought clarity on the regional picture and raised questions about devolved skills funding, which is particularly relevant to them as an education provider. While they acknowledged the potential benefits of economies of scale and coherent planning, they cautioned that boundary changes might simply shift existing problems. Specific concerns were raised around education, including school places and SEND provision.

Plymouth Manufacturers Group (29/08/25)

The Plymouth Manufacturers Group provided a pragmatic and strategically focused perspective on the LGR proposals reflecting its businesses are located in Plymouth and the 13 parishes. Their feedback centred on the potential implications for business operations, future business support packages, investment confidence, and infrastructure development. A key concern was the continuity of services during the transition, particularly regarding planning applications, and how the reorganisation might affect access to central government grants. The group also highlighted a perceived tension between urban and rural priorities, questioning how the proposal would support future planning opportunities, including energy provision and hydrogen infrastructure.

Participants saw opportunities in clearer governance structures, reduced bureaucracy, and more joined-up infrastructure planning. Concerns were raised about the cost of delivering rural services potentially outweighing efficiency gains. There was strong interest in improving transport links, both regionally and nationally, to support industrial growth and international connectivity. The potential to leverage the Freeport, attract Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) investment, and develop industrial business parks on the city's fringes was seen as a positive step toward economic resilience.

The group emphasised the importance of maintaining and enhancing existing communication channels with the Council. They praised current engagement mechanisms and relationships with Council officers, and recommended continued support for forums and roundtables that include SMEs as well as larger firms.

Suggestions included appointing dedicated liaison officers, developing a well-informed online business hub, and ensuring that procurement practices support local companies. Overall, the group expressed cautious optimism, with a clear desire for strategic clarity, inclusive engagement, and tangible benefits for the business community.

Plymouth Housing Development Partnership (01/09/25)

The Plymouth Housing Development Partnership (PHDP) identified clear opportunities in aligning infrastructure, housing, and service delivery across a wider geography. The expansion was seen as a chance to unlock land-led development, improve coordination with utility providers, and build investor confidence, particularly in the delivery of affordable housing and strategic planning for schools, SEND provision, and homelessness services.

There was strong support for the idea that a larger authority could enable more consistent and efficient service delivery, with better economies of scale and shared learning. Stakeholders highlighted the potential for new towns and larger-scale developments, while also emphasising the importance of maintaining a focus on smaller rural sites that make a meaningful difference to local communities. The proposal was viewed as a way to extend Plymouth's proactive and "can-do" approach to planning and development across a broader area.

However, concerns were raised about the pace and sequencing of infrastructure delivery, with fears that housing growth could outstrip essential services such as transport, utilities, and education. The potential loss of rural planning expertise and the centralisation of decision-making in Plymouth were seen as risks, particularly for smaller villages. The identity of rural communities was a recurring theme, with some stakeholders expressing discomfort at the idea of being absorbed into a city-led authority that may not reflect their distinct character or priorities.

There were queries around the implications for Local Housing Allowance (LHA) calculations and the continuity of services during the transition. The partnership called for enhanced collaboration with developers and service providers, and for mechanisms such as S106 agreements to be used strategically to support local priorities. Communication was a key theme, with strong support for the existing PHDP forum and calls to use a range of channels, including social media, local media, interactive mapping tools, and in-person meetings - to keep stakeholders informed and engaged. The group also urged the Council to consider the generational dimension of the project, ensuring that the needs of young people are reflected in future planning and investment.

Devon and Cornwall Police (03/09/25)

Chief Constable Vaughan provided a clear endorsement of unitary local government from a policing perspective. He noted that single tier governance could simplify operations and partnerships, particularly safeguarding, and enable clearer alignment. While some structural adjustments would be needed, such as estate planning and some safeguarding service reconfiguration, the overall assessment was that unitary governance was operationally sound.

Plymouth Regeneration Forum (04/09/25)

Participants explored the rationale behind the use of parish boundaries rather than district ones, queried the minimum population size required by government, and asked whether there was sufficient political consensus to support the proposal. Concerns were voiced about the democratic implications of reorganisation, the potential impact on staffing and service continuity, and the risk of smaller communities being overlooked during the transition.

A recurring theme was the frustration within the construction sector regarding the lack of recognition of local capability. Stakeholders called for the creation of a Construction Capability Hub and a more strategic approach to procurement that prioritises local expertise and protects the "Plymouth pound."

Participants identified opportunities for a stronger collective voice at the national level, improved infrastructure planning, and more cohesive development across the region. The proposal was seen as a chance to reduce duplication, streamline service delivery, and attract both government and private investment - particularly in housing, jobs, and environmental infrastructure.

However, concerns remained about resourcing, the time lag for implementation, and the risk of decision-making vacuums. Participants warned that prioritising cost savings could undermine service delivery if not matched by adequate staffing and investment.

Participants emphasised the need for a joined-up regional approach that fosters collaboration rather than competition between cities like Plymouth and Exeter and stressed the importance of balancing growth with sustainability and resilience.

LCP Delivery Group (NHS) (04/09/25)

 NHS colleagues raised important questions about population growth, funding settlements, and health inequality. They queried whether the government would increase funding to match the expanded population and whether the proposal would genuinely reduce deprivation or simply shift statistics. Concerns were also raised about wellbeing hub capacity and the need for ongoing involvement in planning.

South West Coast Path Association (04/09/25)

The association welcomed the opportunity for improved engagement with Plymouth City Council, noting that the expanded boundary would include more of the coast path. They highlighted missed grant opportunities and the need for better liaison arrangements.

University of Plymouth (09/09/25)

The University appreciated the briefing and expressed a strong civic commitment to the city. They asked detailed questions about governance, boundaries, and political implications, including whether parts of West Devon had been considered and how services would be managed post-expansion. They were interested in whether formal support was being sought and offered to engage further.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (12/09/25)

The Fire Service found the meeting helpful but raised concerns about the sustainability of services and the lack of coterminous boundaries. They noted that this could be costly in the long term. However, they saw opportunities in a more aggregated service model and expressed interest in strategic partnerships, including with Cornwall.

Rebecca Smith MP (11/09/25)

Rebecca Smith MP expressed scepticism about the proposal and raised concerns about the timetable. She highlighted worries about the status and impact on parish council assets and services, particularly around precepts and service duplication and reflected a preference for a smaller expansion.

Plymouth Growth Board (18/09/25)

The Plymouth Growth Board expressed clear and unequivocal support for Plymouth City Council's proposals around Local Government Reorganisation. Members highlighted that the move would simplify service delivery and infrastructure development, particularly in areas where people live and work across current administrative boundaries. The proposal was seen as a logical step that aligns with the city's economic footprint, housing targets, and travel-to-work patterns. It was also noted that the inclusion of the 13 parishes made geographical sense and would help reduce duplication and complexity in services such as planning, education, and care.

While there was some concern about the logistics of transitioning to a unitary authority and the potential disruption to statutory services, the Board acknowledged that financial modelling and risk assessments were underway to address these issues. Questions were raised about the overlap with devolution plans, particularly the proposed Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority, and the exclusion of Cornwall from current discussions. Despite these complexities, the Board concluded that the Plymouth proposition is well-founded and should be unequivocally supported, as it complements the city's long-term economic strategy and ambitions for growth.

Arts University Plymouth (AUP) (22/09/25)

Expressed strong support for the proposals. The university welcomed the opportunity for greater coordination between Plymouth's three universities and City College and saw potential for a more unified regional approach to education.

They considered this critical, noting that while institutions are national providers, there is a risk of overlooking regional needs. Strengthening reach into the wider region and engaging a broader demographic was seen as fundamental, and the expansion of Plymouth aligns well with this priority. AUP would support further consolidation of education provision, believing the proposals could help broker deeper collaboration between universities and colleges.

They also recognised wider issues affecting Plymouth as a coastal city, particularly transport challenges that impact students' ability to access education. There was hope that the proposals could accelerate improvements to city centre links and infrastructure, especially for those from rural communities. The university highlighted that its current 9 to 4 culture is shaped by these limitations, and expanding the city's borders could create opportunities to make studying more accessible. They also noted the potential for job creation and improved ability to service employment needs across a larger area. AUP encouraged consideration of the positive implications for the wider region, suggesting that even a modest population increase could reflect the city's ambition.

Schools Headteacher and Trust Leads Briefing (26/09/25)

Schools expressed a mix of cautious optimism and a number of questions regarding the potential impacts of Plymouth City Council's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on education delivery, particularly in relation to SEND provision. There was recognition that the reorganisation could simplify processes for families living on the fringes of Plymouth, who currently navigate between two local authorities.

A key theme is the anticipated increase in the number of pupils with SEND and the potential transfer of SEND schools from Devon to Plymouth. Headteachers identified the need for clarity on whether these schools will remain under Devon's jurisdiction or move to Plymouth, and the implications for existing plans to expand specialist placements. The timing of these developments in relation to needs assessment and planning processes was noted as requiring careful consideration.

The financial implications were discussed, particularly around the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Designated Schools Grant (DSG), which is under pressure due to costly independent placements. The transfer of Devon's HNB deficit and the approach to managing this within the new authority structure formed part of the discussion.

Operational considerations were also highlighted, including the increased demand on school transport, the transition of EHCPs to Plymouth's system, and the associated statutory responsibilities. The capacity and resourcing requirements for the Plymouth Education Team to manage a wider geographical remit, including outreach, health services, and multi-agency coordination, were identified as areas requiring planning. The need for clear processes during the transition period - particularly around EHCP reviews and funding agreements - was noted to ensure continuity for families and professionals.

Fred Thomas MP (03/10/25)

Fred Thomas MP was supportive of the proposals and highlighted the positive impact that Plymouth's expansion could have on the work being undertaken around HM Dockyard. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that the future expanded council maintains its focus on all communities across Plymouth, recognising that growth should not come at the expense of existing residents and neighbourhoods. He stressed the need for balanced investment and attention to both new and established areas within the expanded Plymouth.

Chamber of Commerce (08/10/25)

The overall sentiment from businesses attending the Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce meeting was cautiously optimistic, with many recognising the potential benefits of Plymouth City Council's Local Government Reorganisation proposal, while also raising important concerns about implementation and long-term impact.

Businesses saw clear potential in the proposal to streamline public services and achieve economies of scale, particularly in transport, housing, and infrastructure.

Many welcomed the idea of a stronger, more unified voice for Plymouth at the national level, which could attract greater investment and improve regional visibility. There was enthusiasm for improved support for start-ups, apprenticeships, and local procurement, alongside hopes for a more joined-up skills agenda and better access to business support across the wider geography. Some also highlighted the opportunity to simplify service structures and reduce red tape, making it easier to do business locally.

Despite the optimism, several concerns were raised. Businesses questioned whether Plymouth City Council could effectively represent and support rural areas, noting the risk of urban-centric decision-making. There were worries about the financial implications of absorbing new areas, particularly around debt and infrastructure costs. Some feared a dilution of focus on growth and innovation during the transition period, and others highlighted the need for inclusive governance structures to ensure all voices are heard. The potential for disruption to existing business support services and the need for clearer strategic alignment across the region were also noted.

Looking ahead, businesses expressed a desire for more global-facing opportunities, improved transport links, and a stronger regional brand that benefits all areas. There was a call for greater collaboration between unitary authorities, consistent support for multi-location businesses, and a focus on local recruitment and skills development. Importantly, businesses want to see continued engagement, with open channels for feedback, early involvement in decision-making, and communication that is inclusive, responsive, and transparent.

SOUTH HAMS SURVEY (DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS)

The following section presents the demographic information that was collected from respondents to the full survey. The survey recorded key demographic data that aids the project team's understanding of who took part in the engagement exercise. Demographic data was collected in an optional personal information section of the survey.

It is important to note that none of the below questions were compulsory.

Which parish do you live in?

When completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide their postcode. The total number of survey respondents for this question was 403. Most respondents were from Ivybridge (which has the largest population of the 13 parishes).

Your Parish	Count	Percentage
Ivybridge	104	25.81%
Newton and Noss	50	12.41%
Brixton	47	11.66%
Ugborough	33	8.19%
Bickleigh	32	7.94%
Wembury	30	7.44%
Ermington	24	5.96%
Holbeton	21	5.21%
Yealmpton	14	3.47%
Cornwood	12	2.98%
Plymouth	10	2.48%
Sparkwell	9	2.23%
Shaugh Prior	6	1.49%
No parish identified	4	0.99%
Harford	2	0.50%
Modbury	1	0.25%
Cullompton	1	0.25%
South Brent	1	0.25%
Kingsbridge	1	0.25%
Saltash	1	0.25%
Grand Total	403	

Age

The table below demonstrates a wide range of respondents from different age groups. Of those who provided their age, the age groups with the largest number of respondents were people aged between 55-64 (21 per cent) and people aged between 65-74 (15 per cent)

Age	Count	Percentage
Not given	95	23.57%
16-19	1	0.25%
20-24	3	0.74%
25-34	18	4.47%
35-44	38	9.43%
45-54	55	13.65%
55-64	85	21.09%
65-74	62	15.38%
75-84	36	8.93%
85+	4	0.99%
Prefer not to say	6	1.49%
Grand total	403	

Work status

The table below demonstrates the working status of each participant. Of those who responded to this question in the survey, the majority (37 percent) are working full time. However, many (32 per cent) were retired.

Work status	Count	Percentage
No answer	54	13.40%
In full-time education	4	0.99%
In part-time education	1	0.25%
Not in employment	8	1.99%
Not in employment but actively looking	2	0.50%
Retired	127	31.51%
Working full time	148	36.72%
Working part time	59	14.64%
Grand Total	403	

Care experience

Plymouth City Council recognises that care experience is an additional protective characteristic. Of those who answered the question, 35 people stated that they have experience of the children's social care system.

Care experience?	Count	Percentage
No answer	80	19.85%
No	267	66.25%
Prefer not to say	21	5.21%
Yes	35	8.68%
Grand Total	403	

Armed Forces

As part of our commitment to the Armed Forces, Plymouth City Council asks people if they currently or have previously served in the Armed Forces. Of those who answered the question nearly eight per cent have served, or are currently serving in the Armed Forces.

Armed Forces	Count	Percentage
No answer	93	23.08%
No	266	66.00%
Prefer not to say	12	2.98%
Yes	32	7.94%
Grand Total	403	

Sex

We asked all participants what their sex at birth.

Sex	Count	Percentage
Female	164	40.69%
Male	137	34.00%
Prefer not to say	12	2.98%
No answer	90	22.33%
Grand Total	403	

Gender

We asked all participants if their gender identity is the same as the sex they were registered with at birth.

Gender	Count	Percentage
Yes	296	73.45%
No	2	0.50%
Prefer not to say	8	1.99%
No answer	97	24.07%
Grand Total	403	

Disability

We asked all participants if day-to-day activities are limited due to a health problem or disability expected to last 12+ months.

Disability	Count	Percentage
Yes, limited a lot	11	2.73%
Yes, limited a little	35	8.68%
Prefer not to say	14	3.47%
No	250	62.03%
No answer	93	23.08%
Grand Total	403	

Ethnicity

We asked all participants to define their ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
White	288	71.46%
Prefer not to say	5	1.24%
Other (not stated)	6	1.49%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2	0.50%
Asian or Asian British	2	0.50%
No answer	100	24.81%
Grand Total	403	

South Hams survey key LGR questions (Online and Paper)

The total number of responses to the full survey was 403. The following section sets out the full analysis. Any demonstrable differences in findings by respondent type are stated within the commentary for those questions.

Qualitative data has been coded for themes and one response may contain multiple themes. This means that the number of themes mentioned in a thematic table may exceed the number of responses to that question.

Responses in this section include feedback received from the online and paper survey.

Again, none of these questions were compulsory.

What do you consider your local area?

This was a free text question, to enable the participants to define the 'place' in which they live and identify with. While the survey was targeted at residents in South Hams, the responses show that people tend to define their local area in terms of specific parishes and towns rather than broader regional labels – highlighting a place-based identity rooted in immediate communities.

Answer	Count	Additional commentary provided
Ivybridge and Surrounding Areas	122	Ivybridge is overwhelmingly the most frequently cited local area. However, it was often mentioned alongside nearby villages: Bittaford, Ugborough, Ermington, Modbury, Cornwood, Lee Mill, and South Brent. Indicates a strong sense of local identity tied to the town and its immediate rural surroundings.
South Hams (General or Multiple Locations)	84	Many respondents refer to "South Hams" either generally or in combination with specific towns and villages. Reflects a regional identity that encompasses multiple communities. Some explicitly state "South Hams NOT Plymouth," showing resistance to urban association.
Brixton, Yealmpton, Wembury, and Newton and Noss Cluster	63	These villages are frequently grouped together, suggesting a shared community or travel-to-work area. Newton and Noss and Yealmpton are often mentioned with Holbeton and Battisborough Cross.
Plymouth and Surrounding Urban Areas	27	A minority of respondents identify Plymouth or its suburbs (Plymstock, Crownhill) as their local area. Some mention the "Plymouth travel-to-work area," suggesting functional ties rather than cultural ones. A few responses explicitly reject Plymouth as part of their local identity.
Woolwell, Roborough, Bickleigh	22	Woolwell is a prominent local identifier, often linked with Roborough and Bickleigh. Some respondents associate Woolwell with Plymouth, while others distinguish it from the city. Reflects a semi-urban fringe identity.
Modbury, Kingsbridge, Totnes, Salcombe	18	These towns are often mentioned in combination. Reflecting a broader South Devon identity, especially in coastal and market town contexts.
Holbeton and Surrounding Villages	17	Holbeton is frequently grouped with Newton and Noss, Yealmpton, and Battisborough Cross. Indicates a strong rural community cluster.
South Devon / Dartmoor / National Landscapes	12	Some respondents refer to South Devon or Dartmoor National Park as their local area. Highlights environmental and landscape-based identity.
Other Villages and Parishes	11	These are often mentioned in combination with larger towns like Ivybridge or grouped by parish. Reflects dispersed rural identities.
Sherford	8	Sherford is emerging as a distinct local area, often mentioned with Elburton, Brixton, and Plympton. Reflects its growing role in regional development.
General Radius-Based Definitions	5	A few respondents define their local area by proximity rather than named locations. Indicates a functional or travel-based understanding of locality.
Not Plymouth	4	This was where people are explicit in their answer and don't provide any other detail.
Other	2	Didn't provide an exact location – but said 'countryside' or 'moors'

Where is your work or education based?

This was a free text question, to enable the participants to define where they work and identify the links between the parishes and Plymouth. The majority of respondents who are in work or education are based in Plymouth, underscoring the city's role as a key employment and education hub for South Hams residents. This highlights strong functional ties between rural parishes and the urban centre. However, a notable number also work from home or in nearby towns like Ivybridge, reflecting the impact of hybrid working and the importance of local centres. The diversity of responses, including national and online roles, shows that while Plymouth dominates, work and education are increasingly decentralised and flexible.

Answer	Count	Additional commentary provided
Plymouth	76	Many respondents gave further details (eg Derriford)
Other named locations outside of South Hams or Plymouth	60	Numerous other locations are mentioned, including towns, villages, and institutions across the UK such as Paignton, Teignbridge, Tavistock, Torbay, London, and nationwide or online roles.
Work from home	27	A substantial number of respondents work or study from home, showing the impact of remote arrangements and hybrid working models.
Ivybridge	24	Ivybridge is a significant local centre for work and education, with many respondents based here, including voluntary and hybrid roles.
Other South Hams towns and villages	14	Many respondents work or study in South Hams towns and villages such as Modbury, Brixton, Yealmpton, Wembury, Holbeton, and Newton Ferrers, indicating strong local ties.
Kingsbridge	6	Kingsbridge is mentioned as a work or education base, showing its role in the local economy and services.
Totnes	7	Totnes and Dartington are cited for work and education, reflecting their cultural and educational institutions.
Cornwall	4	Cornwall appears in a few responses, indicating cross-border commuting or study.
Exeter	3	Exeter is mentioned occasionally, likely due to its university and regional services.

Where do you do most of your shopping?

Shopping habits show a strong reliance on Ivybridge and Plymouth, with Ivybridge slightly ahead as the most frequently cited local destination. Lee Mill also features prominently, especially for supermarket access. The results highlight a blend of local loyalty and urban convenience, with many respondents also shopping online or in nearby towns and villages. This suggests that while South Hams residents value local options, they also depend on larger centres and digital platforms for variety and accessibility.

Answer	Count	Commentary
Ivybridge	84	Ivybridge is a key local shopping destination, frequently mentioned for its convenience and range of stores including Tesco and local shops.
Plymouth	78	Plymouth is a major urban shopping centre, cited for its city centre, supermarkets, and retail parks including Plymstock and Plympton.
Lee Mill	61	Lee Mill is popular for its large Tesco store and proximity to surrounding villages, often mentioned alongside Ivybridge.
Online	56	Online shopping is widely used for convenience, accessibility, and delivery services, especially among those with mobility needs or preferences for remote shopping.
Remainder; local, own village, smaller town	28	Many respondents shop locally in South Hams villages such as Modbury, Yealmpton, Wembury, Newton Ferrers, and South Brent, supporting small businesses and local convenience.
Plymstock/ Plympton	22	These suburban areas within Plymouth are popular for supermarket shopping and are often mentioned alongside Plymouth or Lee Mill.
Other named locations	18	Includes less common or more dispersed shopping areas such as Saltash, Yelverton, Elburton, and Marsh Mills, as well as general terms like "local" or "varied."
Totnes	14	Totnes is known for its independent shops and market town atmosphere, attracting shoppers from nearby areas.
Exeter	10	Exeter is a regional shopping destination with large retail outlets and services, mentioned by those willing to travel further.
Woolwell/ Roborough	10	Woolwell and Roborough serve as local shopping hubs for nearby communities, with mentions of Tesco and Lidl.
Tavistock	7	Tavistock is mentioned occasionally, likely for its market and traditional shopping experience.
Kingsbridge	7	Kingsbridge offers local shopping options for nearby rural communities and is occasionally mentioned alongside Totnes and Modbury.
Not Plymouth	2	This is where people have been explict with their answers.

Where do you spend the most time socialising or taking part in cultural activities?

The responses show a balance between local engagement and regional travel, with many participants socialising or taking part in cultural activities across Devon, including Plymouth and Ivybridge. This suggests that while local towns and villages provide accessible options, residents are willing to travel for broader cultural experiences - highlighting both the value of nearby amenities and the importance of regional connectivity for leisure and social life.

Answer	Count
Across Devon for restaurants, pubs, theatres, beaches, outdoors etc	67
Ivybridge	63
Plymouth	59
Wider South Hams	48
Stay local for pubs, walks, cafes, beaches	24
Not Plymouth	3

What is good about the area where you live?

This was a free text question. The responses highlight a deep appreciation for community spirit and the natural environment, with many residents valuing the friendliness, supportiveness, and social cohesion of their local areas. The beauty and tranquillity of the countryside, coastline, and Dartmoor are also central to people's sense of place. A strong rural identity, combined with access to essential amenities, contributes to a balanced lifestyle. While fewer respondents mentioned governance or transport, the overall sentiment reflects pride in living in a safe, clean, and well-connected area with a strong sense of belonging.

Theme	Count	Commentary
Community spirit	114	Residents consistently praised the friendliness, supportiveness, and strong social bonds within their communities. Many highlighted local groups, activities, and the sense of knowing one another, which contributes to a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere.
Natural environment	100	The beauty of the countryside, coastline, Dartmoor, and green spaces was a dominant theme. Respondents valued the peacefulness, access to nature, and the unspoilt character of their surroundings.
Rural identity	85	Many emphasized the importance of maintaining a distinct rural character, separate from urban development. Living in small towns or villages, away from city noise and congestion, was seen as central to their lifestyle and identity.
Access to amenities	38	Respondents appreciated being close to essential services such as shops, schools, healthcare, leisure facilities, and public transport. The balance of rural living with convenient access to amenities was seen as a key strength.
Safety and cleanliness	24	Low crime rates, clean and tidy environments, and a general sense of safety and peace were frequently mentioned. These qualities were seen as vital to the quality of life in South Hams communities.
Local Services and facilities	11	There was recognition of the value of well-maintained local services such as GPs, schools, recycling, and council-run amenities. Respondents appreciated the role of the council in maintaining these facilities and ensuring they meet community needs.
Transport and connectivity	5	Some respondents highlighted the importance of good transport links, particularly to the A38 and nearby cities, as well as ease of commuting while maintaining a rural lifestyle.
Governance and representation	3	A few comments touched on the role of South Hams District Council, expressing satisfaction with its governance and concern about being absorbed into Plymouth City Council.

What is not so great (about the area in question) and you would like to see improved, including Council Services?

This was a free text question. The most common concerns raised by residents relate to public transport and road conditions, highlighting a need for improved connectivity, infrastructure maintenance, and safer travel options. Access to services and amenities – particularly healthcare, leisure, and youth facilities – was also frequently mentioned, alongside frustrations with council coordination and governance. Issues around housing development, safety, and environmental stewardship reflect deeper anxieties about preserving rural identity and quality of life. These insights suggest that future planning should prioritise transport, infrastructure, and community services, while ensuring that growth respects the character and needs of South Hams communities.

Theme	Count	Commentary
Public transport	93	Dissatisfaction with infrequent and unreliable bus and train services, particularly in evenings and weekends.
		Poor connectivity to Plymouth and key destinations like hospitals and cultural venues.
		Limited options for non-drivers and elderly residents, and lack of footpaths or cycle paths.
Roads and potholes	92	Widespread concern about potholes, poor road surfaces, and lack of maintenance.
		Requests for bypasses (e.g. Lee Mill), safer walking and cycling conditions, better traffic management, and improved road layouts (especially in Ivybridge).
		Speeding traffic, congestion, and inadequate infrastructure such as slip roads and roundabouts were frequently mentioned.
Access to services and amenities	38	Lack of shops, leisure facilities, healthcare services, and community spaces.
		Poor internet and postal services, limited recycling options, and concerns about affordability and rising costs.
		Desire for more community events, youth clubs, and better use of local parks and green spaces.
Governance and Council services	28	Frustration with multiple overlapping councils and lack of coordination.
		Concerns about poor communication, planning enforcement, and representation.
		Resistance to merging with Plymouth City Council and fears of losing rural priorities and identity.
Housing and development	17	Concerns about overdevelopment, urban sprawl (especially in Sherford and Newton), and the impact on infrastructure and the environment.
		Frustration with second homes, lack of affordable housing, and insufficient planning for supporting services like schools and roads.
Safety and anti-social behaviour	9	Issues included rising crime, lack of police presence, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, and poor waste management in communal areas.
		Pavement parking and unsafe traffic conditions were also noted.
Healthcare	6	Limited access to GP appointments and broader health services.
		Long referral times, lack of dental provision, and concerns about merging healthcare services with Plymouth.
Financial concerns	4	High council tax, parking fees, and general cost of living were mentioned as areas needing improvement.
		Desire for fairer banding and better value for money in service delivery.
Cleanliness and maintenance	4	Poor upkeep of public spaces, overgrown vegetation, and inadequate waste collection services.
		Requests for better landscaping and tidier village environments.
Environmental concerns	2	Loss of green space, poor environmental protection, and concerns about pollution and biodiversity.
		Desire for more sustainable planning and better stewardship of natural assets.

What do you really value about the services (e.g. waste and recycling collection / leisure facilities / roads management / parks) your current councils provide?

People could submit more than one answer – the first four were suggested answers and then participants could also add their own. Residents most value councils that demonstrate local understanding and accessibility, with the highest praise given to councillors who are easy to reach and responsive to community needs. High-quality services, particularly waste and recycling, are also appreciated, alongside recognition of councils that understand the challenges facing rural areas. These responses suggest that trust and satisfaction are closely tied to visibility, local knowledge, and service reliability, reinforcing the importance of maintaining strong local representation and tailored service delivery.

Answer	Count
Easy access to my local councillor	139
Council understands my area	190
High quality services	132
Understands the challenges facing the area	96
Other answers:	
Other with no narrative	26
Recycling	20
Understanding rural area	14
Good quality schools	2
Good quality roads	2

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

People could submit more than one answer – the first three were suggested answers and then participants could also add their own. The majority of respondents expressed hope that reorganisation would lead to more locally made decisions and improved services, with clearer accountability. However, this optimism was strongly tempered by widespread opposition to being absorbed into Plymouth City Council. Many voiced concerns about losing rural identity, autonomy, and tailored service delivery. A significant number also expressed satisfaction with current arrangements and scepticism about the motives and benefits of change. Key themes included fears over council tax increases, environmental degradation, and urban-centric planning. Overall, the feedback highlights a desire for reform that strengthens local representation and rural priorities – rather than centralisation or urban alignment.

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Improved services	125	
Decisions that impact you will be made locally	168	
Clearer who is responsible for what service	33	
Other answers:		
Strong Opposition to Joining Plymouth City Council	56	Clear and repeated rejection of being absorbed into Plymouth. Concerns about urban priorities dominating rural needs. Emotional appeals to preserve identity, autonomy, and local governance. Frequent use of phrases like "leave us alone," "we don't want this," and "not part of Plymouth."
Satisfaction with Current Arrangements / Desire for No Change	22	Belief that current systems work well and do not need change. Scepticism about the need for reorganisation. Concerns that change will bring disruption without clear benefits. Calls to "leave South Hams alone" and maintain the status quo.
General Distrust, Scepticism and Lack of Faith in the Process	21	Deep scepticism about the motives and benefits of reorganisation. Perception that the plan is ill-conceived and politically driven. Belief that it will benefit officials rather than communities. Frustration with lack of clear problem statement or justification.

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Preference for Local Decision-Making and Representation	18	Desire for decisions to remain with South Hams or local councils.
		Support for Parish and Town Councils having more influence.
		Frustration with boundary confusion and lack of accountability.
		Emphasis on rural voices being heard and respected.
Concerns About Council Tax, Precepts and Financial Transparency	13	Anxiety over potential increases in council tax and uncapped precepts.
		Lack of clarity around financial implications of reorganisation.
		Perception of a "stealth tax" and fears of paying more for fewer or less relevant services.
		Calls for clearer communication and justification of costs.
Environmental and Planning Concerns	10	Distrust in Plymouth's environmental record and planning decisions.
		Fears of overdevelopment, especially in rural and coastal areas.
		Desire to protect natural beauty, wildlife, and village character.
		Support for sustainable building practices and infrastructure planning.
Rural Identity and Way of Life	9	Strong desire to preserve the rural character and lifestyle of South Hams.
		Concerns that urban governance will erode rural values and traditions.
		Emphasis on understanding the unique needs of dispersed, small communities.
Efficiency, Value for Money and Service Delivery	7	Support for streamlining services and reducing waste.
		Desire for better budget management and spending decisions.
		Criticism of expensive schemes with little perceived benefit.
		Hope for more joined-up service delivery across borders.
Public Transport Improvements	3	Hope that reorganisation could lead to better transport links.
		Desire for more joined-up thinking across travel-to-work areas.
		Specific mentions of bus and taxi services needing improvement.
Healthcare and Social Services Concerns	3	Worries about merging with Plymouth affecting GP access and healthcare equity.
		Concerns about inconsistent support across boundaries (e.g., Devon Carers vs Plymouth services).
		Fear that rural healthcare will be deprioritised.

What has been your experience of children's social care services in your local area - thinking about things like how approachable staff are, waiting times, quality of support provided, and communication with families?

Among those who have used children's social care services, experiences are evenly split between positive, neutral, and negative, suggesting a mixed picture of service delivery. While some families report high-quality support and approachable staff, others highlight issues with communication and waiting times else where in the survey. However, the vast majority of respondents (over 280) indicated they do not use these services, which reflects the demographic profile of survey respondents. Many participants are retired or not currently engaged with children's services.

Answer	Count
Very positive	12
Positive	12
Neither	13
Negative	12
Very negative	7
Don't use children's services	284

How would you describe the quality of adult social care services where you live - considering factors like availability of advice and information, being able to contact someone, range of services offered, quality of care, and support for maintaining independence? (select one option)

Among those with experience of adult social care services, feedback is mixed, with a fairly even spread of positive, neutral, and negative responses. While some residents appreciate the quality of care and support for independence, others report issues with accessibility, communication, and service range, else where in the survey. However, the majority of respondents (over 250) do not use these services, reflecting the demographic profile of the survey and suggesting that broader engagement with service users is needed to fully understand strengths and areas for improvement.

Answer	Count
Very positive	16
Positive	28
Neither	18
Negative	21
Very negative	7
Don't use adult social care services	252

What should be the top priorities when deciding what the future model of local government should be for Devon?
People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

When asked to rank their top priorities for the future model of local government in Devon, respondents placed the highest value on councils that understand local issues and deliver high-quality services. Local decision-making was also a key concern, reflecting a strong desire for governance that is responsive and rooted in community needs. While some participants emphasised cost-saving and reducing bureaucracy, these were generally ranked lower than priorities focused on service quality, local representation, and planning.

Interestingly, climate change and sustainability – though selected by fewer respondents – was consistently ranked as a top priority by those who did choose it, suggesting a passionate minority with strong environmental concerns. Overall, the results highlight that residents want a model of local government that is efficient, locally informed, and capable of delivering meaningful services without losing sight of rural identity and long-term sustainability.

Priority	Understanding of local issues	High quality services	Local decision making	Supporting Local Businesses	Transport and infrastructure	Easy access to Councillors	Creating jobs and economic growth	Saving money	Reducing bureaucracy	Housing and planning	Climate change and sustainability	Council Offices Nearby
Count	89	108	46	6	20	2	5	8	3	5	17	1
	60	47	117	14	29	6	3	7	16	2	7	2
	77	51	59	29	19	13	13	8	13	8	13	7
	37	33	29	86	28	10	14	11	13	18	22	9
	22	21	18	63	23	70	29	10	21	17	13	3
	8	21	14	37	36	41	29	18	14	19	20	53
	5	16	11	27	24	28	82	12	26	27	26	26
	7	5	8	28	16	36	53	27	63	26	15	26
	4	4	7	14	9	29	44	78	57	22	10	32
	1	3	1	4	17	34	24	52	47	81	21	26
		1		1	76	32	10	46	29	51	11	52
					13					34	135	73
Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Are there any other priorities which haven't been mentioned above, that you would like us to consider as part of our work to develop our final proposal for local government reorganisation?

This was an open question. However, the answers that people provided could be gathered together in a number of clear themes. Many respondents used this open question to reinforce strong opposition to being incorporated into Plymouth, with repeated calls to preserve South Hams' autonomy and rural identity. There was also a clear desire for greater clarity around which council is responsible for which services, and for maintaining the current structure of South Hams District Council. Environmental protection and safeguarding the rural character of the area were recurring themes, alongside calls for improved access to services and infrastructure – particularly transport, healthcare, and waste facilities. These responses underline the importance of transparency, local control, and protecting what residents value most about their communities.

Themes	Count
Strong opposition to being incorporated into Plymouth	52
Clearer who is responsible	33
Remain as South Hams	28
Environmental protection and rural character	25
Greater access to services and infrastructure e.g. better transport links, road maintenance, and access to essential services like libraries, healthcare, and waste facilities.	21
More accessible services e.g. family hubs / adult social care	1

How would you like your local authority to engage with you in the future?

Participants could select multiple options for this. However, it is clear that the most popular route is through their local parish council, closely followed by email communication.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Through my local parish council	140	26.42%
Email communication	135	25.47%
Through regular communication, consultation and engagement activity	124	23.40%
Through my local ward councillor	73	13.77%
Through local groups and organisations	58	10.94%
Grand total who responded to this question		

South Hams Big Community Conversation events

Between June and July 2025, Plymouth City Council held 13 facilitated conversation events across the South Hams parishes proposed for inclusion in the Plymouth Growth Area. These sessions were led by Council staff trained in facilitation techniques, including Trauma-Informed approaches and Appreciative Inquiry, to ensure respectful, inclusive, and constructive dialogue. Held in accessible community venues, the events encouraged open and anonymous participation, allowing residents to share their views freely. The feedback gathered has been thematically analysed and plays a key role in shaping the final proposal

Question 1: How do you think LGR will impact you and/or your community?

Across all parish engagement events, participants voiced a wide range of concerns about the potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation, with consistent themes emerging across the South Hams. There was a strong and heartfelt emphasis on the importance of parish councils in preserving rural identity, ensuring local representation, and maintaining community cohesion. Many residents expressed scepticism about the proposed changes, fearing a shift toward urban-centric governance that might overlook the distinct needs of rural communities. Concerns were raised about the quality and funding of services, increased planning and development pressures, and a perceived lack of trust in Plymouth City Council's ability to manage rural priorities effectively. Additionally, the engagement highlighted widespread confusion about the current two-tier system of local government. Many participants conflated the roles of parish, district, and county councils, often attributing responsibilities incorrectly. This underscores the need for clearer communication about existing governance structures and any proposed changes, to ensure residents feel informed, reassured, and genuinely represented.

Common themes across all 13 parishes

Representation and governance	- Fear of diluted rural voice: Many parishes worried that decisions would be dominated by urban councillors, with rural concerns sidelined. - Loss of local knowledge: Concerns that existing councillors and staff with deep local understanding would be replaced or marginalised. - Democratic deficit: Repeated mention of the imbalance in councillor numbers (e.g. 10 councillors for 13 parishes) and fears of being outvoted. - Concern about the role and impact on Parish Councils
Planning and development	- Urban sprawl: Strong opposition to increased housing developments, especially if driven by Plymouth's needs. - Loss of green space: Many feared that rural landscapes would be sacrificed for urban expansion. - Infrastructure strain: Worries that roads, schools, and health services are already stretched and would worsen under LGR.
Financial concerns	- Council Tax (CT) disparities: Questions about whether CT would rise or be harmonised, and whether rural areas would subsidise urban ones. - Funding allocation: Fears that money raised in rural areas would be spent in Plymouth. - Debt inheritance: Concerns about taking on Plymouth's financial liabilities.
Services and infrastructure	- Waste and recycling: Many praised current SH services and feared they would decline under PCC. - Transport: Poor public transport was a recurring issue, with hopes that LGR might improve it – but scepticism prevailed. - Health and social care: Concerns about current access, especially for elderly and SEND populations. - Lack of understanding about which council currently provides which services.
Identity and community	- Loss of rural character: Strong emotional attachment to village life and fear of becoming "just another suburb." - Community cohesion: Many felt their communities were tight-knit and self-sufficient, and worried LGR would disrupt this.

Area-specific feedback (that were not a strong theme in the other areas)

Bickleigh

- Concerns about Woolwell urban extension and dual carriageway construction.
- Specific issues with cross-boundary services (Devon vs Plymouth).

Cornwood
- Unique concerns about mineral rights and planning around mines.
- Strong preference for one unitary authority across the whole of Devon but not to include Plymouth.

Harford
- Desire for health hub in Ivybridge.
- Specific mention of Dartmoor National Park planning authority.

Shaugh Prior
- Mining operations and renewable energy planning.
- Concerns about Dartmoor planning jurisdiction and identity.

Sparkwell
- Tungsten mine and its impact on roads and environment.
- Strong distrust of Plymouth City Council due to past planning and environmental decisions.

Yealmpton
- Concerns about sewage infrastructure and beach pollution.
- Strong emphasis on maintaining rural peace and safety.

Contradictions or differing views between areas

Ivybridge vs Smaller Parishes: Ivybridge showed mixed feelings, with some seeing potential benefits in better services and representation, while smaller parishes were overwhelmingly negative.

Waste Services: Some parishes praised South Ham's recycling system; others preferred Plymouth's simpler approach.

Transport: While most parishes criticised poor public transport, a few (e.g. Ivybridge) noted good train access and ring and ride services.

Planning: Some areas (e.g. Yealmpton) feared overdevelopment, while others (e.g. Sparkwell) were more focused on protecting specific assets like mines or greenbelt.

Question 2: What is good about the area where you live?

Residents across the South Hams parishes expressed deep appreciation for their communities, highlighting a strong sense of rural identity, natural beauty, and social cohesion. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with many describing their areas as peaceful, safe, and well-connected to nature. There was a clear pride in local amenities, community spirit, and the quality of life afforded by living in these rural settings.

Common themes across all 13 parishes

Natural environment and rural identity	• Scenic beauty: Dartmoor, coastlines, estuaries, green spaces, and wildlife were frequently mentioned. • Peace and quiet: Many valued the tranquillity and low noise levels compared to urban areas. • Rural character: Residents felt strongly about maintaining their countryside lifestyle and resisting urbanisation.
Community spirit and social cohesion	• Close-knit communities: People described knowing their neighbours, helping each other, and feeling safe. • Local events: Village fairs, pantomimes, remembrance services, and seasonal celebrations were cherished. • Volunteering and clubs: WI, gardening clubs, sports teams, and youth groups were seen as vital to community life.
Local services and amenities	• Health services: Local GP surgeries and pharmacies were praised, especially where they were responsive and accessible. • Schools: Primary schools were frequently mentioned as excellent and central to village life. • Waste and recycling: Many appreciated the current waste collection systems, especially food and garden waste services.
Accessibility and location	• Proximity to nature and urban centres: Many valued being close to Plymouth, Ivybridge, or the A38 while still enjoying rural life. • Walking and cycling routes: Access to footpaths, moors, and coastlines was a major benefit. • Transport links: Train stations, ring and ride services, and bus routes were appreciated where available.
Local identity and pride	• Unique village character: Residents felt their areas had distinct identities worth preserving. • Local governance: Parish councils were seen as effective and responsive, contributing to a sense of empowerment.

Area-specific feedback (that were not a strong theme in the other areas)

Bickleigh
- Strong pride in Woolwell in Bloom and community centre awards.
- Emphasis on green space and nature on the doorstep.

Cornwood
- Historical significance of the village hall and American soldier mess hall.
- Oldest WI in Devon and strong interest in renewables.

Harford
- Lukesland and church community as central to social life.
- Ability to walk directly onto Dartmoor from home.

Shaugh Prior
- Mining heritage and community management of industrial impacts.
- Unique mix of industry and housing with strong local governance.

Sparkwell
- Dartmoor Zoo and parish hall as cultural anchors.
- Strong equestrian community and seasonal events like flower festivals.

Yealmpton
- Yealmpton Show and active community groups.
- Strong support from local landowners and vibrant village centre.

Contradictions or differing views between areas

Urban proximity: Ivybridge and Yealmpton appreciated being near Plymouth for services, while others (e.g. Sparkwell, Wembury) saw proximity as a threat to rural identity.

Waste services: Some praised SH's detailed recycling system; others preferred simpler systems like Plymouth's.

Transport: Ivybridge and Yealmpton noted good access; more remote parishes like Cornwood and Harford highlighted poor connectivity.

Question 3: What do you really value about the services your current Council provides?

Residents across the South Hams parishes expressed strong appreciation for local council services, particularly those that are visible, responsive, and community-oriented. There was a clear emphasis on the value of waste collection, local governance, and access to health and education services. Many responses reflected a fear that these well-functioning services could be lost or diluted under Local Government Reorganisation. Often confusion as to which council provides which services.

Common themes across all 13 parishes

Waste and recycling Services	• Highly valued: Weekly or fortnightly collections, food and garden waste services, and responsive bin replacement. • Concerns about change: Many feared losing the current system, especially where South Hams was seen as better than Plymouth City Council.
Health and social care	• Local GP surgeries and pharmacies: Praised for accessibility and responsiveness. • Adult and children's social care: Devon's provision was often seen as good, with concerns about how it would be managed under Plymouth City Council.
Education and school transport	• Primary schools: Frequently mentioned as excellent and central to community life. • School buses: Valued especially in more rural areas where walking isn't feasible.
Infrastructure and maintenance	• Road repairs and gritting: Appreciated where done well, though patchiness and delays were noted. • Drainage and fly-tipping: Some parishes highlighted proactive responses from SH.
Local Governance and communication	• Parish councils: Seen as responsive, accessible, and deeply embedded in the community. • District councillors: Praised for attending meetings and resolving issues quickly. • Direct contact: Residents valued being able to speak to someone locally rather than navigating complex systems.
Community facilities and services	• Libraries, leisure centres, and youth clubs: Frequently cited as important and well-used. • Community centres and village halls: Central to social life and often supported by the council.

Area-specific feedback (that were not a strong theme in the other areas)

Cornwood
- Recycling shop and quick bin replacement.
- Concerns about losing funding for the local shop.

Ermington
- Ivybridge police hub and SEND school opening.
- Strong praise for Ivybridge waste recycling.

Harford
- Better relationship with Devon County Council than South Hams due to specific officers.
- Recycling issues when contracted out, later resolved.

Sparkwell
- Praise for proactive district councillors and bin collection.
- Concerns about mining impacts and environmental health.

Yealmpton
- South Ham's handling of Anti Social Behaviour and dog mess.
- Youth club funded by parish council.

Contradictions or differing views between parishes

Waste services: Some parishes (e.g. Ivybridge, Yealmpton) praised SH's detailed recycling system, while others (e.g. Sparkwell) preferred simpler systems like Plymouth City Council's.

Health services: Mixed reviews – some found local surgeries excellent, others struggled with access and appointments.

Council responsiveness: While many praised South Hams and Devon County Council for being accessible, a few noted difficulties in contacting the council or getting timely responses.

Question 4: What is not so great (about the area in question) and what would you like to see changed, including Council services?

Residents across the parishes identified a range of local challenges, with many expressing frustration over infrastructure, transport, planning, and access to services. There was a strong desire for better communication, more responsive governance, and improved facilities, especially for young people and the elderly. Concerns about overdevelopment, loss of rural character, and insufficient investment in local amenities were widespread.

Common themes across all 13 parishes

Infrastructure and roads	• Potholes and poor road surfaces: A near-universal complaint, especially in rural areas affected by heavy vehicles or mining. • Drainage and flooding: Several parishes reported blocked drains and waterlogging. • Street lighting and signage: Requests for better lighting and clearer road signs.
Transport and connectivity	• Limited public transport: Many areas suffer from infrequent or non-existent bus services, especially on Sundays. • School transport: Concerns about accessibility and safety for children. • Cycle lanes: Poor maintenance and underuse were noted, with calls for better upkeep and promotion.
Planning and development	• Overdevelopment fears: Strong opposition to new housing developments, especially where infrastructure is lacking. • Loss of green space: Concerns about urban sprawl and environmental degradation. • Sherford cited frequently: As an example of poor planning and pressure on services.
Health and social services	• GP and hospital access: Long waits, limited facilities, and lack of local provision were common issues. • SEND and elderly care: Worries about service quality and accessibility, especially under a larger authority.
Safety and policing	• Lack of police presence: Many felt their communities were underserved. • Speeding and traffic safety: Calls for better enforcement and safer road design.
Youth and community services	• Few activities for young people: Requests for youth clubs, sports facilities, and evening entertainment. • Community centres and parks: Need for upgrades and better maintenance.
Waste and recycling	• Fly-tipping: Linked to restrictive tip access and lack of enforcement. • Bin collection: Desire for simpler systems and more frequent pickups.

Area-specific feedback (that were not a strong theme in the other areas)

Bickleigh
• Concerns about dual carriageway construction and Woolwell development.
• Lack of secondary schools and poor infrastructure planning.

Cornwood
• No village shop and sparse bus service.
• Fears of becoming like Plympton or Plymstock.

Harford
• Ivybridge health facilities lacking; frequent power cuts and poor mobile signal.

Shaugh Prior
• Mining impacts on roads and planning.
• Renewable energy concerns and lack of clarity on Dartmoor planning jurisdiction.

Sparkwell
• Heavy traffic from the mine and poor road conditions.
• Fears of becoming a suburb of Plymouth.

Yealmpton
• Sherford development pressure and lack of safe cycling routes.
• Concerns about Anti Social Behaviour and youth safety.

Contradictions or differing views between parishes

Transport: Ivybridge and Yealmpton noted some good services, while others (e.g. Cornwood, Sparkwell) reported severe limitations.

Waste services: Some praised Soth Ham's system; others found it overly complex and preferred Plymouth's approach.

Planning: While most opposed further development, a few saw potential for growth if infrastructure matched.

Question 5: How would you like your Local Authority to engage with you in the future?

Across the parishes, residents expressed a strong desire for meaningful, transparent, and accessible engagement with their Local Authority. There was a clear preference for face-to-face communication, localised meetings, and ongoing dialogue – especially in light of the proposed changes under Local Government Reorganisation. Many felt that current engagement was insufficient and wanted to ensure their voices would be heard and respected in future decision-making.

Common themes across all 13 parishes

Communication channels	• Face-to-face engagement: Strong preference for in-person meetings, drop-in sessions, and local surgeries. • Digital and traditional media: Use of email, social media, newsletters, and parish magazines was encouraged, but with recognition of digital exclusion. • Printed materials: Posters, flyers, and hard copies in community hubs and libraries were seen as essential for reaching all demographics.
Localised representation	• Parish councils: Seen as vital conduits for communication; residents want them to remain empowered and involved. • Councillor visibility: Requests for councillors to attend parish meetings regularly and be accessible to residents. • Local knowledge: Emphasis on the importance of representatives understanding the specific needs of rural communities.
Transparency and responsiveness	• Clear information: Residents want clarity on proposals, impacts, and timelines. • Timely responses: Frustration with slow replies from councils, especially around planning and service queries. • Consultation before decisions: Strong opposition to "tick-box" exercises; people want genuine involvement before changes are made.
Inclusive engagement	• Digital exclusion concerns: Many noted that elderly or rural residents may not use online platforms. • Accessible formats: Calls for large print, physical noticeboards, and inclusive venues. • Community-led engagement: Suggestions to use local events, pubs, and community centres as engagement points.

Area-specific feedback (that were not a strong theme in the other areas)

Harford
- Wants council meetings held locally, not just in Plymouth.
- Emphasis on equal representation and justification when decisions differ from community views.

Shaugh Prior
- Interest in citizen panels and feedback boxes.
- Engagement during popular parish events and through local pubs.

Sparkwell
- Strong emphasis on transparency and trust-building.
- Specific concerns about the mine and desire for ongoing dialogue with environmental health officers.

Yealmpton
- Requests for regular meetings and better telephone access.
- Emphasis on maintaining visibility of councillors and safeguarding local identity.

Contradictions or differing views between parishes

Digital vs. physical communication: Some parishes embraced email and social media, while others stressed the need for printed materials due to digital exclusion.

Engagement satisfaction: Ivybridge appreciated early engagement on LGR, while others (e.g. Sparkwell, Wembury) felt the process had been poorly advertised or underhanded.

Preferred venues: While some suggested formal settings like community centres, others preferred informal spaces like pubs or local events.

PLYMOUTH SURVEY (DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS)

The following section presents the demographic information that was collected from respondents to the full survey. The survey recorded key demographic data that aids the project team's understanding of who took part in the engagement exercise. Demographic data was collected in an optional personal information section of the survey.

It is important to note that none of the below questions were compulsory.

Age

The table below demonstrates a wide range of respondents from different age groups, reflecting a diverse demographic profile. The largest proportions of respondents are in the 55–64 and 65–74 age brackets, each representing 19.71% of the total. This suggests strong engagement from older adults.

Age	Count	Percentage
Not given	101	23.99%
16-19	2	0.48%
20-24	3	0.71%
25-34	17	4.04%
35-44	36	8.55%
45-54	54	12.83%
55-64	83	19.71%
65-74	83	19.71%
75-84	39	9.26%
85+	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	3	0.71%
Grand total	421	

Work status

The table below outlines the employment status of survey participants. Among those who responded, the largest group – 33.97% – reported working full time, indicating strong representation from the employed population. A significant proportion, 39.90%, identified as retired, reflecting notable engagement from older individuals no longer in the workforce. Additionally, 14.73% reported working part time, while smaller percentages were in education or seeking employment.

Work status	Count	Percentage
No answer	20	4.75%
In full-time education	3	0.71%
In part-time education	1	0.24%
Not in employment	19	4.51%
Not in employment but actively looking	5	1.19%
Retired	168	39.90%
Working full time	143	33.97%
Working part time	62	14.73%
Grand Total	421	

Care experience

Plymouth City Council recognises that care experience is an additional protective characteristic. Of those who answered the question, 15 people stated that they have experience of the children's social care system.

Care experience?	Count	Percentage
No answer	244	57.96%
No	153	36.34%
Prefer not to say	9	2.14%
Yes	15	3.56%
Grand Total	421	

Armed Forces

As part of our commitment to the Armed Forces, Plymouth City Council asks people if they currently or have previously served in the Armed Forces. Of those who answered the question 40 have served, or are currently serving in the Armed Forces.

Armed Forces	Count	Percentage
No answer	99	23.52%
No	273	64.85%
Prefer not to say	9	2.14%
Yes, in regular armed forces	36	8.55%
Yes, in reserve armed forces	4	0.95%
Grand Total	421	

Sex

We asked all participants what their sex at birth.

Sex	Count	Percentage
Female	177	42.04%
Male	132	31.35%
Prefer not to say	17	4.04%
No answer	95	22.57%
Grand Total	421	

Gender

We asked all participants if their gender identity is the same as the sex they were registered with at birth.

Gender	Count	Percentage
Yes	305	72.45%
No	3	0.71%
Prefer not to say	14	3.33%
No answer	99	23.52%
Grand Total	421	

Disability

We asked all participants if day-to-day activities are limited due to a health problem or disability expected to last 12+ months.

Disability	Count	Percentage
Yes, limited a lot	27	6.41%
Yes, limited a little	77	18.29%
Prefer not to say	21	4.99%
No	196	46.56%
No answer	100	23.75%
Grand Total	421	

Ethnicity

We asked all participants to define their ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
White	290	68.88%
Prefer not to say	12	2.85%
Other (not stated)	4	0.95%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	3	0.71%
Asian or Asian British	3	0.71%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	1	0.24%
No answer	108	25.65%
Grand Total	421	

Plymouth survey key LGR questions (Online and Paper)

The total number of responses to the full survey by close was 403. The following section sets out the full analysis. Any demonstrable differences in findings by respondent type are stated within the commentary for those questions.

Qualitative data has been coded for themes, and one response may contain multiple themes. This means that the number of themes mentioned in a thematic table may exceed the number of responses to that question.

Responses in this section include feedback received from the online and paper survey.

Again, none of these questions were compulsory.

Where is your work or education based?

The responses highlight Plymouth's dominant role as a centre for work and education, with nearly a quarter of participants based there. This suggests strong local engagement and a concentration of institutions and employers in the city.

The presence of remote working and international/UK-wide roles reflects evolving work patterns, especially post-pandemic, and points to a more flexible, dispersed workforce.

Smaller clusters like Derriford, City Centre, and surrounding areas such as South Devon and Plympton show that while Plymouth is central, the wider region also contributes meaningfully to the local economy and education landscape.

Answer	Count	Additional commentary provided
Plymouth	100	• This is by far the most common response, reflecting Plymouth's central role in the region's work and education landscape. Responses include specific locations like Ballard House, City College, and various neighbourhoods (e.g., Crownhill, Estover, Stoke). It also includes broader mentions like "Plymouth and surrounding area" and "Plymouth University," showing a strong local identity and concentration of institutions.
Other	48	• This group includes unique or less frequent responses that don't fit neatly into other categories. It includes specific buildings, job titles, and niche locations.
Home/remote working	20	• This group reflects the shift toward flexible and remote working arrangements. Many responses simply state "home," while others mention hybrid setups or working from home internationally. This trend is consistent with post-pandemic work culture.
City Centre	9	• These responses specifically mention Plymouth's city centre, indicating a hub for business, education, and public services. The repetition of "City Centre" shows its prominence as a workplace location.
Derriford	7	• Derriford is another key employment area, especially for healthcare and business. Responses include Derriford Hospital and business parks, highlighting its role in public services and corporate activity.
South Devon	6	• This group includes towns like Ashburton, Bovey Tracey, Dartmouth, Dartington, and Torbay. These responses reflect rural and semi-urban work or education settings, possibly linked to arts, education, or local services.
Plympton	5	• Plympton responses reflect residential and educational settings, with mentions of schools and broader community areas.
International/UK wide	5	• These responses reflect roles with a broader geographic scope, including global consultancy and UK-wide operations. They highlight the reach of some professionals beyond the South West.
Crownhill	4	• Crownhill appears as a smaller but notable cluster, likely reflecting residential and educational institutions in the area.
Plymstock	4	• Plymstock is another residential area with educational and community ties. It's part of the wider Plymouth urban area.
Devonport	4	• Devonport responses suggest ties to naval, educational, and community services. It's a historically significant area with ongoing relevance.
Cornwall / Devon	4	• Includes places like Saltash, Tavistock, and South Hams. These are close to Plymouth and may represent commuter zones or regional service areas.
Estover	2	• Estover is mentioned in relation to business parks and volunteer work, indicating a mix of commercial and community engagement.
Exeter	1	• Only one direct mention of Exeter, suggesting limited representation from this city despite its regional importance.

Where do you do most of your shopping?

The data shows that Plymouth is the dominant shopping location, with most respondents identifying it as their primary area – highlighting the city's strong retail presence and local identity. The City Centre also stands out as a key destination, valued for its variety and convenience.

A notable number of respondents shop online, reflecting a shift toward digital retail, likely driven by convenience and accessibility. Suburban areas like Plymstock and Plympton are well-represented, showing the importance of local retail hubs.

Smaller clusters such as Derriford, Saltash, and Mutley point to more community-focused shopping habits, while out-of-town retail parks attract shoppers seeking specific stores or easier access.

Overall, the responses reveal a diverse mix of shopping behaviours, balancing city centre convenience, local loyalty, and digital flexibility. This suggests that retail strategies should consider both central and neighbourhood-based approaches, as well as the growing role of online platforms.

Answer	Count	Additional commentary provided
Plymouth	139	• This dominant group includes general mentions of Plymouth without specifying a shop or area. It reflects a strong local identity and suggests that many respondents shop broadly across the city.
City Centre Shopping	40	• With responses referencing locations like Armada Centre, Drake Circus, Union Street, and the broader Plymouth city centre, it's clear that the heart of the city remains a vital shopping destination. These responses reflect a preference for the convenience and variety offered by central retail hubs, where high street stores, department chains, and independent outlets converge. The city centre is not just a place to shop – it's a social and cultural focal point for many residents.
Online Shopping	49	• A significant number of respondents indicated that they shop online, using platforms like Amazon or general internet retailers. This trend highlights the growing reliance on digital convenience, especially for non-grocery items or when time and accessibility are factors.
Plymstock	19	• Plymstock emerged as a popular shopping area, pointing to locations such as Broadway and Marsh Mills. These responses suggest a blend of local and out-of-town shopping habits, where residents enjoy the accessibility of nearby retail parks while still supporting community-based stores. The area's mix of supermarkets and high street shops makes it a versatile choice for everyday needs.
Local Shops and Independent Retail	18	• Responses referenced shopping at local or independent outlets, including areas like Mutley Plain, Ridgeway, and charity shops. This theme reflects a strong community ethos, where shoppers value the personal touch, uniqueness, and ethical appeal of smaller businesses. These choices often go beyond convenience, representing a conscious decision to support local economies and sustainable retail practices.
Plympton	18	• Plympton stands out as a well-supported suburb for shopping. Respondents likely frequent Ridgeway and other local centres, showing a preference for familiar, accessible retail environments. The area's mix of supermarkets and independent shops caters well to residents who value proximity and a sense of community in their shopping routines..
Out-of-Town Shopping	21	• Responses pointed to shopping destinations outside the immediate city, such as Lee Mill, Marsh Mills, Transit Way, Roborough, and Saltash. These locations are typically home to larger supermarkets and retail parks, suggesting that many shoppers are willing to travel for bulk purchases, better parking, or specific stores not found in the city centre. This pattern reflects a practical approach to shopping, often tied to weekly routines or family needs.
Mixed / General Responses	10	• Respondents gave broad or non-specific answers, such as "a mix of supermarkets," "depends on what I'm buying," or "various places." These responses suggest flexible shopping habits, where choices are driven by convenience, availability, or specific needs rather than loyalty to a particular store or location. It reflects a pragmatic approach to retail, shaped by circumstance rather than routine.
Saltash	4	• Saltash represents a cross-border shopping option for those living near the Tamar. Its proximity to Plymouth makes it a convenient alternative, especially for those seeking specific stores or avoiding city centre congestion. These responses highlight the fluidity of regional shopping habits, where boundaries are less important than accessibility.
Mutley	2	• Mutley Plain holds significance as a local high street with a mix of independent shops and supermarkets. It's a place where community and commerce intersect, offering a more personal shopping experience. These responses suggest that for some, shopping is as much about connection and familiarity as it is about products.

Where do you spend the most time socialising or taking part in cultural activities?

Answer	Count	Additional commentary provided
City Centre and waterfront	181	• Plymouth's city centre and waterfront areas – such as the Barbican, Hoe, and Central Park – remain the most popular destinations for social and cultural engagement. These locations offer a vibrant mix of leisure, heritage, and entertainment venues, making them central to the city's social life.
Local suburbs	41	• Suburban areas like Plymstock, Plympton, Elburton, Ernesettle, Kingsbridge, Mutley Plain, and Ridgeway are popular for socialising. These reflect a strong connection to local community spaces, pubs, and green areas outside the city centre.
Cultural venues	26	• Churches, pubs, gyms, theatres, and arts societies are important hubs for structured social and cultural activities – from worship and fitness to live performances and dining.
Devon and Cornwall region	21	• Respondents indicated that they socialise across the wider Devon and Cornwall region. This reflects a regional lifestyle where cultural and social engagement extends beyond Plymouth's boundaries.
Nature and outdoors	19	• Dartmoor, beaches, parks, and other natural settings continue to be highlighted as preferred places for socialising and cultural engagement. These areas offer tranquility and open space, appealing to those who enjoy outdoor recreation and informal gatherings.
Home-based socialising	17	• A consistent number of people reported spending most of their social time at home. This reflects a preference for comfort, affordability, or necessity, with some combining home life with religious or family-based cultural activities
Do not socialise / barriers	10	• A small but notable group expressed that they do not participate in social or cultural activities, often citing barriers such as time, affordability, or personal circumstances.
Out-of-town or travel	5	• A few responses described travel-based socialising, including trips across the UK and Europe or following sports teams. These individuals engage with culture and community through mobility and exploration.

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

The responses show that Plymouth's city centre and waterfront are the most popular areas for social and cultural engagement. This highlights the importance of spaces like the Barbican, Hoe, and Central Park as vibrant hubs for leisure and community life. Suburban areas such as Plymstock, Plympton, and Mutley Plain also play a key role, reflecting strong ties to local pubs, parks, and community venues. Cultural institutions – including churches, theatres, and gyms – are valued by many for structured activities. A notable number of respondents engage with nature and outdoor spaces like Dartmoor and local beaches, showing a preference for informal, open-air socialising. Others socialise at home, suggesting comfort, affordability, or accessibility as key factors. Smaller groups mentioned regional travel across Devon and Cornwall, or cited barriers to socialising, such as time or cost. Overall, the data reflects a diverse mix of social habits, shaped by geography, lifestyle, and personal circumstances.

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Improved services	270	• Responses focus on tangible improvements in public services and infrastructure. Suggestions include better transport, cleaner environments, and more cohesive service delivery that meets everyday needs more effectively. The large number of responses indicates a strong public desire for practical, visible improvements in how services are delivered.
Decisions that impact you will be made locally	135	• Responses highlight the importance of empowering local communities. People hope that reorganisation will bring decision-making closer to the community level, fostering more relevant and responsive governance that reflects local needs and priorities.
Clearer who is responsible for what service	56	• Responses reflect a strong desire for transparency and accountability in local governance. Respondents want clearer delineation of responsibilities and better oversight of decision-making processes, ensuring that those in power are held to account.
Other answers:		
Opposition or scepticism	40	• Responses capture scepticism or opposition to local government reorganisation. Respondents express concerns about the competence of current leadership, fear of negative impacts, and a general lack of confidence in proposed changes.
Improved financial management	27	• These responses point to concerns about how public funds are managed. Respondents are calling for better prioritisation, reduced waste, and more efficient use of resources to ensure that public money delivers real value to communities.
Public engagement and communication	19	• These responses emphasise the need for better communication between local government and residents. People want to be consulted and informed before decisions are made, ensuring that governance is inclusive and transparent.
Improved public voice and participation	4	• Respondents highlighted the need for greater public involvement in decision-making, including calls for consultation and democratic leadership selection. These views emphasise the importance of inclusive governance.
Efficiency and reform	2	• Respondents called for more efficient governance, reduced bureaucracy, and coherent policy implementation. These views suggest frustration with current administrative processes.

Imagine it's 2050 – what five words or short phrases would you use to describe the Plymouth you'd love to live, work or be educated in?

The responses paint a clear and aspirational vision for Plymouth's future. Safety and green, sustainable living top the list, showing a strong desire for a city that is both secure and environmentally responsible. People want clean air, accessible green spaces, and a community where safety is built into everyday life.

Themes of community and inclusivity reflect a longing for a city that welcomes everyone, supports wellbeing, and fosters civic pride. Culture and heritage remain central, with calls for vibrant arts, events, and preservation of Plymouth's unique identity. Improved transport and connectivity, affordable housing, and economic opportunity are also key priorities, alongside better healthcare, education, and governance. Together, these responses suggest a future Plymouth that is resilient, inclusive, and thriving – a place where people feel proud to live, work, and learn.

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Green and sustainable living	122	Respondents overwhelmingly envision a greener Plymouth – one that is clean, biodiverse, and environmentally responsible. There is a strong desire for more trees, green spaces, and nature woven into the urban fabric. Sustainability is a recurring aspiration, with calls for carbon neutrality, clean air, and eco-conscious infrastructure. People want a city that not only looks green but lives green – through active travel, renewable energy, and environmental stewardship. Examples: • "Green, clean, connected, welcoming, thriving" • "Cleaner! Much cleaner! A centre to be proud of!" • "Greenery. More accessible and frequent bus services. Local businesses." • "Green, safe, vibrant, social care thriving, improved sustainably led infrastructure" • "Trees everywhere, affordable homes"
Safety and crime prevention	144	Safety is one of the most frequently mentioned priorities. Respondents want a city where people feel secure in their homes, streets, and public spaces. This includes visible and approachable policing, low crime rates, and protection for vulnerable groups. Safety is also linked to cleanliness, lighting, and the design of public areas. Many envision a Plymouth where safety is a shared community value, not just a policing issue. Examples: • "Safe, clean, vibrant, successful, very low crime rate." • "Safe place to live, lowest crime rate nationwide and community police approachable" • "Safe, inclusive, healthy with a road network designed to reduce illegal speeding" • "No drugs or addicts. Better connected (airport). Prosperous" • "Safe, clear, friendly, green, accessible."
Community and inclusivity	108	A strong, inclusive community is at the heart of many people's vision for Plymouth. Respondents want a city where everyone feels welcome, supported, and able to thrive – regardless of age, background, or ability. There's a desire for intergenerational connection, civic pride, and a culture of mutual care. Community-led initiatives, social cohesion, and inclusive design are seen as essential to a thriving future. Examples: • "Community led, vibrant, healthy population, good standard of living for all" • "Inclusive, caring, vibrant, thriving, diverse" • "Community orientated. Young people focused. Social activities" • "Vibrant multi cultural thriving community with ample opportunities" • "Everyone is valued. Everyone is cared for."
Culture and heritage	94	Plymouth's cultural identity and heritage are deeply valued. Respondents want to see the city celebrate its maritime history, invest in the arts, and become a destination for creativity and cultural experiences. There's a strong call for more events, music, theatre, and public art, as well as the preservation of historic buildings and spaces. Culture is seen as a source of pride, tourism, and community connection. Examples: • "Valued and recognised heritage… dockyard, 20th century buildings, Hoe" • "A dynamic arts and cultural city" • "Keep live entertainment, poetry and art and music, and look after nature." • "Leading city for arts and culture" • "Vibrantly cultural, fair, accessible and inclusive"

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Transport and connectivity	84	Efficient, affordable, and sustainable transport is a top priority. Respondents want better public transport, improved road infrastructure, and the reopening of the airport. There's a desire for a city that is easy to navigate – on foot, by bike, or by bus – and well connected to the rest of the UK. Transport is seen as essential to economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Examples: • "Transport links. Airport open" • "Excellent public transport befitting a city meaning cars are rarely needed" • "Better transport out of town. Lower parking price" • "Transport-hub connections community business destination-shopping" • "More cycle paths, much better bus services, more free busses"
Housing and urban development	78	People want a city that is clean, well-maintained, and thoughtfully developed. Affordable housing, revitalised neighbourhoods, and vibrant city centres are key aspirations. Respondents call for fewer empty shops, better public spaces, and more mixed-use developments. Maintenance of streets, pavements, and green areas is seen as essential to civic pride and quality of life. Examples: • "Affordable housing for people born in the city" • "Well kept parks, roads, pavements, grass cut and trees maintained." • "Cleaner streets free of litter, no fly tipping" • "Lively city centre with plenty of new homes and people" • "No empty shops in town centre"
Economic growth and business	66	A thriving economy is central to the vision for Plymouth. Respondents want more high-quality jobs, support for local businesses, and investment in innovation. Economic growth is closely tied to education, infrastructure, and housing. Many envision Plymouth as a place where people can build careers, start businesses, and enjoy financial stability. Examples: • "Economically vibrant, scenic and a pleasure to live in" • "Open for business, culture rich, community led" • "Strong economy. Good services. Shops. Public transport. Cycling links" • "Financially stable, well equipped and well maintained" • "More good shops"
Accessibility and infrastructure	64	Accessibility is about more than physical access—it's about equity, inclusion, and ease of living. Respondents want well-maintained infrastructure, accessible services, and inclusive design. This includes everything from public transport and digital access to clean streets and well-lit paths. Infrastructure is seen as the backbone of a fair and functional city. Examples: • "Accessible well maintained biodiverse green spaces for all" • "Better transport systems. Make better use of the Hoe and Plymouth Sound" • "Accessible, tolerant, clean, vibrant, inclusive" • "Where everyone's overall wellbeing needs are met (stopping littering is one of them)" • "Infrastructure actually cleaned, maintained and invested."
Healthcare and Social Care	54	Health and wellbeing are seen as fundamental to a good life in Plymouth. Respondents want better NHS services, more support for the elderly and vulnerable, and improved mental health care. There's a strong desire for a system that is accessible, responsive, and preventative—one that supports people to live well at every stage of life. Examples: • "Hospitals where you don't wait to near death before you're attended to" • "Safe place to live. Good access to healthcare. Help for those who need it" • "Well cared for spaces… good social care" • "Excellent health services… funded police services" • "Improved health facilities"

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Education and opportunities	47	Education is seen as a pathway to opportunity and a cornerstone of a thriving city. Respondents want high-quality schools, accessible lifelong learning, and strong links between education and employment. There's a desire for a city where young people can succeed without needing to leave, and where education is inclusive and future-focused. Examples: • "Reputation for excellent education – at all levels" • "Good schools. Low crime" • "Schools accountable to LA not run by trusts" • "Educational powerhouse, welcoming place to visit" • "Equal access to quality education across the city"
Governance and civic engagement	26	People want a council that listens, leads with integrity, and puts residents first. There's a call for more transparency, better consultation, and leadership that reflects the city's diversity and ambition. Respondents want to feel heard, respected, and involved in shaping Plymouth's future. Examples: • "Council that listens" • "More accountability by the council" • "Well managed, caring, efficient. Schools back under LA control" • "To go back to what the town looked like before the council decided to change it"

What one thing would you most like to see change about your local neighbourhood?

The most common concern among respondents is the cleanliness and upkeep of public spaces, with residents calling for cleaner streets and better waste management. This reflects a strong desire for improved civic maintenance and pride in local environments.

Transport and connectivity also emerged as a key theme, with calls for better public transport, new infrastructure, and improved access across the city and region. Safety and policing followed closely, highlighting concerns about antisocial behaviour and the need for more visible community protection. Respondents also expressed a desire for more green spaces and better maintenance of existing ones, alongside improved access to healthcare and education, and affordable housing, pointing to broader issues of wellbeing and inclusion. Smaller but meaningful themes included support for local shops and services, activities for young people, and accessibility for disabled residents. These responses show that while priorities vary, there is a shared vision for neighbourhoods that are cleaner, safer, better connected, and more inclusive.

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
More affordable housing	30	Concerns about affordability, overcrowding, and the need for more social housing and better housing stock. Sample items: • Less HMOs / multi occupancy houses • Less overcrowding, being able to park near your house • More affordable housing
Better public transport or connectivity	47	Strong interest in improving transport infrastructure, including rail, airport access, and overall connectivity. Sample items: • A new railway station at Plympton • An airport and technological connectivity • Better public transport or connectivity
Improved safety and policing	44	Concerns about antisocial behaviour, drug control, and the need for stronger policing and safety measures. Sample items: • Better control of drugs • Heavy clampdown on antisocial behaviour • Improved safety and policing

Answer / Theme	Count	Commentary
Cleaner streets and better waste management	62	A dominant theme, with widespread concern about street cleanliness, waste management, and general upkeep of public spaces. Sample items: • Better kept verges and streets • Cleaner streets and better waste management • Cleaner streets and better waste management
More green spaces or better maintenance of existing ones	44	A clear desire for more green spaces and better maintenance of existing ones, reflecting environmental and wellbeing priorities. Sample items: • Independent cafes, shops and parks • More green spaces or better maintenance of existing ones • More green spaces or better maintenance of existing ones
More local shops, cafes or services	21	Interest in enhancing local retail options, including shops, cafés, and city centre experiences. Sample items: • Better higher standard of shopping in the city centre • Better shops on Albert Road • More local shops, cafés, or services
Better access to healthcare or education	37	Calls for improved access to healthcare services, especially NHS dental care, and better educational opportunities. Sample items: • Access an NHS dentist • Better access to healthcare or education • Better access to healthcare or education
More activities for young people or families	20	Desire for more recreational and social opportunities for young people and families.
Improvements accessibility for people with disabilities	13	Feedback highlights the need for better accessibility for disabled people and improved parking options.
OTHER		
Active travel	3	Support for safer cycling infrastructure and active travel options. Sample items: • Better Active Travel provision • Improved infrastructure for active travel especially cycling • Safer cycle routes and traffic calming
Urban Planning and Infrastructure	3	Calls for better road planning, pothole repairs, and infrastructure investment. Sample items: • Better planning on roads and developments • Better roads • Potholes fixed quickly

Rank the top three things you love most about your local neighbourhood?

People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

In our local neighbourhood, the most cherished aspect is undoubtedly the access to green spaces and parks. With respondents placing it as their top choice, it's clear that the ability to enjoy nature, unwind outdoors, and engage in recreational activities is a cornerstone of community life. Coming in second is the friendly and supportive community, reflecting the strong social bonds and neighbourly spirit that make the area feel welcoming and safe. The third most loved feature is the local shops and amenities, which not only provide convenience but also foster a sense of local identity and connection. Together, these top three elements paint a picture of a neighbourhood that values nature, community, and accessibility – making it a truly special place to live.

Count by position	Access to green spaces and parks	Friendly and supportive community	Local shops and amenities	Safety and low crime levels	Good public transport links	Clean and well-maintained environment	Access to schools and healthcare	Quiet and peaceful atmosphere
1	95	83	31	63	29	18	17	31
2	96	49	39	44	45	34	27	30
3	57	45	61	44	77	30	18	28
4	41	92	73	26	61	30	18	18
5	42	34	62	80	61	30	30	24
6	27	30	56	57	42	103	24	16
7	12	23	35	34	24	80	118	20
8	4	14	14	21	22	36	98	20
9	3	7	6	8	16	16	27	190
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

What are the things you love most about Plymouth as a city?

People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

Plymouth's most beloved feature is its access to the waterfront and stunning coastal views, with respondents ranking it as their top choice. The city's connection to the sea clearly resonates deeply, offering both beauty and a sense of identity. In second place is Plymouth's proximity to nature, including Dartmoor and nearby beaches, which highlights the value residents place on outdoor exploration and natural escapes. The third most appreciated aspect is the city's green spaces and parks, providing peaceful retreats and recreational opportunities within the urban landscape. Together, these top three reflect Plymouth's unique blend of coastal charm, natural beauty, and accessible green spaces - making it a city that truly celebrates its environment.

Count by position	Access to the waterfront and coastal views	Proximity to nature (e.g. Dartmoor beaches)	Green spaces and parks	Rich maritime and cultural heritage	Vibrant arts events and festivals	Friendly and welcoming community	Access to education and universities	Good transport links and connectivity	Range of shops restaurants and cafés
1	176	60	10	15	4	16	2	4	6
2	61	136	32	14	9	16	5	8	5
3	22	39	58	82	32	24	3	13	15
4	19	27	31	75	60	28	8	21	16
5	5	13	29	42	67	72	21	21	14
6	6	8	22	21	44	62	15	72	26
7	2	7	18	16	30	36	14	73	32
8	1	0	8	7	23	18	36	37	86
9	1	1	12	10	15	17	89	23	82
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

What would you most like to see change about Plymouth as a city?

People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

The most desired change among respondents is the creation of more inclusive and accessible public spaces, with most people ranking it as their top priority. This reflects a strong community interest in making Plymouth more welcoming and usable for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background. In second place is a call for improved road maintenance, highlighting concerns around infrastructure and everyday mobility. The third most requested change is the need for more affordable and diverse housing options, pointing to growing pressures around cost of living and housing availability. These priorities suggest a collective vision for a more equitable, functional, and liveable city.

Count by position	More inclusive and accessible public spaces	Improved road maintenance	More affordable and diverse housing options	Better public transport within and beyond the city	More job opportunities and support for local businesses	Improved cleanliness and waste management	Safer streets and reduced crime	Improved education
1	6	39	53	50	28	24	32	2
2	5	35	27	52	35	39	42	5
3	10	28	38	34	45	43	36	5
4	12	20	45	36	55	43	28	5
5	5	21	26	45	42	52	30	5
6	9	11	23	34	38	46	32	7
7	14	11	12	18	20	30	49	16
8	17	9	14	13	12	9	26	86
9	13	14	11	7	9	4	17	97
10	31	81	18	5	4	5	1	47
11	173	26	28	1	7	0	2	20
Overall Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

How can we plan for homes, jobs, and green spaces in a way that supports wellbeing?

People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

The top priority for supporting wellbeing in future planning is to build more affordable and energy-efficient homes, with most respondents ranking it first. This reflects a strong desire for housing that is both accessible and environmentally sustainable. Second on the list is the need to ensure new developments have good access to green space, highlighting the importance of nature in everyday life and mental health. The third most valued approach is to protect and enhance existing green spaces and natural habitats, showing a clear commitment to preserving Plymouth's environmental assets. These responses suggest that residents envision a city where housing, nature, and community wellbeing are thoughtfully integrated.

	Build more affordable and energy-efficient homes	Ensure new developments have good access to green space.	Involve communities in planning decisions from the start	Create mixed-use neighbourhoods with homes shops and services nearby	Prioritise access to public transport and active travel (walking cycling)	Protect and enhance existing green spaces and natural habitats	Design inclusive spaces that are accessible to all ages and abilities	Support local job creation through business hubs and training centres
Count	48	21	60	30	26	56	4	12
	49	60	39	30	34	39	13	7
	35	62	27	41	44	30	16	13
	55	55	17	45	41	28	17	18
	30	48	14	50	57	11	53	13
	20	18	10	52	43	42	70	16
	17	13	10	24	18	45	67	78
	15	5	76	6	16	29	33	92
Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

What services do you most value having face-to-face?

People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

The most valued face-to-face service is adult social care or support for vulnerable adults, with respondents ranking it as their top priority. This highlights the importance of personal interaction in delivering compassionate and effective care. In second place is housing advice and support, reflecting the need for tailored guidance in navigating housing challenges. The third most valued in-person service is children's services and family support, underscoring the significance of direct engagement when supporting families and young people. These results show that when it comes to sensitive or complex issues, residents strongly prefer the reassurance and clarity that face-to-face services provide.

Count by position	Adult social care or support for vulnerable adults	Housing advice and support	Children's services and family support	Reporting neighbourhood or anti-social behaviour concerns	Waste and recycling issues	Benefits and financial support	Council tax or rent queries	Planning and building control advice	Help with digital services or online forms
1	89	42	51	80	42	12	11	8	19
2	96	44	65	47	39	23	13	22	5
3	50	77	66	44	26	28	17	27	19
4	41	98	37	20	30	75	29	15	9
5	48	41	54	15	22	65	79	18	12
6	15	23	46	10	77	60	92	17	14
7	8	14	15	11	80	53	62	99	12
8	5	10	9	103	31	25	44	103	24
9	2	5	11	24	7	13	7	45	240
Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

What services do you most value having by phone?

People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

When it comes to phone-based services, residents most value the ability to report neighbourhood or anti-social behaviour concerns, with respondents ranking it as their top choice. This suggests that speed, discretion, and convenience are key when addressing community safety issues. In second place is housing advice and support, indicating that many prefer the immediacy and personal connection of a phone call when navigating housing challenges. The third most valued service by phone is adult social care or support for vulnerable adults, showing that even outside of face-to-face settings, people still seek direct and empathetic communication for sensitive matters. These preferences highlight the importance of accessible and responsive phone services for issues that require timely and personal support.

Count by position	Housing advice and support	Adult social care or support for vulnerable adults	Waste and recycling issues	Reporting neighbourhood or anti-social behaviour concerns	Council tax or rent queries	Children's services and family support	Benefits and financial support	Planning and building control advice	Help with digital services or online forms
1	35	28	43	71	36	20	8	14	19
2	41	56	53	33	30	17	17	19	8
3	43	45	20	38	31	41	20	22	14
4	85	43	18	7	18	42	40	14	7
5	37	55	10	10	39	51	56	6	10
6	13	22	49	2	56	60	53	13	6
7	6	14	56	13	41	18	57	64	5
8	6	4	21	78	23	14	15	96	17
9	8	7	4	22	0	11	8	26	188
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

What would make it easier for you to use digital services confidently?
People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

The most important factor in helping residents use digital services confidently is having a clear and simple website or app design, with respondents ranking it as their top choice. This highlights the value of intuitive, user-friendly platforms that reduce frustration and make navigation straightforward. In second place is access to a device, such as a smartphone, tablet, or computer, showing that having the right tools is essential for digital inclusion. The third most valued support is telephone assistance alongside online services, reflecting the need for reassurance and help when navigating digital systems. These responses suggest that confidence in digital services grows when they are easy to use, well-supported, and accessible to all.

Count by position	Clear and simple website or app design	Access to free or low-cost internet or data	Telephone support alongside online services	Access to a device (e.g. smartphone tablet computer)	Step-by-step guidance or tutorials	In-person support or digital help hubs	More trust in how my data is used and protected	Services available in multiple languages or accessible formats
1	114	12	44	49	5	12	30	5
2	57	31	51	40	32	26	31	3
3	45	36	33	60	29	42	23	3
4	33	64	17	69	56	25	6	1
5	13	69	13	31	71	57	14	3
6	7	30	75	14	62	72	11	0
7	1	22	35	6	13	36	144	14
8	1	7	3	2	3	1	12	242
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

How can we make sure everyone benefits from modernised services?
People were asked to rank with the most important at the top.

The most important factor in ensuring everyone benefits from modernised services is to keep non-digital options – like phone and face-to-face – available, with respondents ranking it as their top priority. This reflects a strong desire for inclusivity and choice, especially for those who may struggle with digital access. In second place is the need to design services that are easy to use for people of all ages and abilities, highlighting the importance of intuitive and accessible design. The third most valued approach is to provide digital skills training and support in local communities, showing a commitment to empowering residents to confidently engage with modern services. These responses point to a clear vision: digital transformation must be inclusive, accessible, and supportive of everyone's needs.

Count by position	Keep non-digital options (like phone or face-to-face) available	Design services that are easy to use for people of all ages and abilities	Provide digital skills training and support in local communities	Ensure affordable access to devices and internet	Involve residents in designing and testing new digital services	Offer services in multiple languages and accessible formats	Build trust by being transparent about how data is used
1	151	43	37	14	20	4	19
2	54	116	55	19	24	5	15
3	36	64	72	30	44	19	23
4	27	44	75	41	32	58	11
5	14	18	35	87	19	82	33
6	5	3	12	76	37	46	109
7	1	0	2	21	11	74	78
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How can we keep you better informed and involved in decisions?

The most preferred way for residents to stay informed and involved in decision-making is through regular email updates or newsletters, with respondents ranking it as their top choice. This reflects a strong appetite for consistent, direct communication. In second place is making information available in multiple languages and formats, highlighting the need for inclusivity and accessibility. The third most valued method is community meetings or local forums, showing that many still appreciate face-to-face engagement and dialogue. These responses suggest that a mix of digital and in-person communication – tailored to diverse needs – is key to building trust and encouraging active participation in local decisions.

Count by position	Regular email updates or newsletters	Information available in multiple languages and formats	Community meetings or local forums	Social media updates and engagement	Clear and accessible information on the council website	Online surveys and feedback forms	Opportunities to join community panels / forums or advisory groups	Better promotion of engagement opportunities in local areas
1	149	2	29	42	55	12	25	36
2	65	3	83	59	49	47	21	23
3	46	3	67	65	57	49	27	36
4	47	4	88	65	28	65	25	28
5	21	1	58	65	70	86	23	26
6	12	12	17	31	63	62	139	14
7	8	139	8	13	27	22	87	46
8	2	186	0	10	1	7	3	141
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Plymouth Big Community Conversation events

Between July and August 2025, six community events and one youth-specific session were held across Plymouth to gather feedback on the proposed boundary expansion. Facilitated by Council staff trained in Trauma-Informed and Appreciative Inquiry methods, these events created space for meaningful conversations and active listening. Residents were invited to attend without signing in, and the sessions were designed to be informal, inclusive, and responsive to local concerns. The insights captured reflect a wide range of perspectives and have been carefully analysed to inform the development of the final proposal.

Question 1: What concerns or opportunities do you see in PCC's proposal for an expanded local authority?

The conversations reveal a community that is open to change but deeply cautious. While there is no strong ideological opposition to the idea of an expanded local authority, there is a clear demand for evidence, equity, and engagement. People want to understand how the proposal will tangibly improve their lives, especially in terms of infrastructure, services, and representation.

The urban-rural divide is a central tension – participants fear that rural needs may be overlooked in a city-led model. However, there is also recognition of shared challenges and interdependencies, such as healthcare, transport, and housing pressures that cross current boundaries.

To move forward, the proposal must demonstrate clear, mutual benefits, address concerns about identity and access, and ensure that local voices are not only heard but empowered. The success of the expansion hinges on trust, transparency, and tailored delivery that respects the diversity of the communities involved.

Common themes

Infrastructure and services	There is concern that existing infrastructure (roads, transport, utilities, healthcare) is already under strain and may not cope with additional demand. Participants questioned whether the expansion would bring improvements or further dilute services.
Funding and financial transparency	Questions were raised about how the expansion would be funded, how council tax revenue would be allocated, and whether economies of scale would truly deliver savings. There's a desire for clarity on financial projections and equitable distribution of resources.
Representation and governance	People expressed a need for stronger local representation, especially in rural areas. The idea of town or parish councils for areas like Plympton was seen as a potential opportunity. Concerns were also raised about political shifts and the risk of rural voices being drowned out.
Identity and community cohesion	A recurring concern was the potential loss of identity for South Hams communities. There's a strong sense of distinctiveness between urban Plymouth and rural South Hams, and fears that expansion could blur or erase these differences.
Access and inclusion	Digital exclusion, transport limitations, and service accessibility were highlighted, particularly for older residents and those in outlying parishes. People want assurance that access will improve, not worsen.
Urban vs rural needs	There's a perceived mismatch between urban policy models and rural realities. Participants fear that a city-centric approach could lead to service closures or neglect in rural areas.
Opportunities for integration	Some saw the expansion as a chance to better align services, improve funding models (e.g. healthcare), and address cross-boundary issues like Sherford's impact on Plympton. There's cautious optimism if benefits are clearly demonstrated.
Planning, housing, and growth	Concerns about housing developments outpacing infrastructure were common. People want assurances that planning will be strategic, with adequate provision for GPs, schools, and transport.
Public engagement and trust	Scepticism exists due to past unfulfilled promises. There's a call for genuine engagement, especially with young people and digitally excluded groups, and a need to build trust through transparency and delivery.

Question 2: What do you love most about the city and your neighbourhood, and what would you most like to see change in the future – try to think long term, not just in the next couple of years?

Plymouth is a city with deep emotional and cultural roots, where people feel connected to their environment, their neighbours, and their shared history. The city's natural beauty, compact character, and community spirit are its greatest strengths and residents are keen to protect these as the city evolves.

However, there's a clear appetite for thoughtful, long-term change. People want better transport, more vibrant cultural life, fairer governance, and stronger economic opportunities. They're not resistant to growth but they want it to be sustainable, inclusive, and respectful of Plymouth's identity.

The challenge for future planning is to balance ambition with authenticity: to grow without losing what makes Plymouth special, and to ensure that all neighbourhoods (urban and rural) feel heard, valued, and empowered in shaping the city's future.

Common themes

Natural environment and location	The sea, moors, coastlines, and green spaces are deeply cherished. Plymouth's proximity to nature is seen as a defining asset, contributing to quality of life and identity. There's a desire to preserve and enhance these features, not compromise them through overdevelopment.
Community and identity	A strong sense of community and neighbourhood pride came through clearly. People value knowing their neighbours, grassroots action, and the diversity of the city. There's concern that expansion or rapid change could dilute this cohesion.
Transport and connectivity	Transport is both a strength and a frustration. While some areas are well connected, others suffer from infrequent services and poor infrastructure. Long-term aspirations include better rail links (e.g. to London), a second rail route, improved bus services, and even tram systems. Connectivity with Cornwall and Europe (via ferry) was also mentioned.
Culture, creativity and heritage	Plymouth's cultural assets – theatres, universities, historic sites – are appreciated but under-promoted. There's a call to celebrate the city's maritime history more visibly and to invest in creative industries and venues that bring vibrancy to the city centre.
Housing and urban development	Concerns were raised about housing affordability, management fees, and the character of new developments. People want more housing in the city centre, but with thoughtful planning that respects existing communities and infrastructure limits.
Public services and amenities	Libraries, healthcare, education, and leisure services are valued, but there's a desire for more consistency and investment. Issues like drainage, sewage, and access to adult social care were flagged as needing attention.
Economic opportunity and skills	There's a sense that Plymouth hasn't fully realised its economic potential. Calls were made for better job opportunities, skills development, and leveraging assets like the Freeport and waterfront to attract investment and tourism.
Governance and fairness	Frustrations around parking permits, solar panel grants, and perceived inequalities (e.g. Devonport vs other areas) suggest a need for more transparent and equitable decision-making. People want to see where money is spent and feel fairly treated.
Youth voice and future generations	A few comments highlighted the absence of young people's perspectives. There's a recognition that long-term planning must include their voices and address their needs – from education to housing to cultural life.

Question 3: Which services do you need to be delivered in person or over the phone or digitally because they are personal or more effectively delivered that way?

The community recognises the benefits of digital services; speed, convenience, and efficiency but is clear that digital cannot be the only option. People want a blended approach that respects individual needs, abilities, and preferences.

There's a strong desire for equity in access, whether that's through better-designed websites, more responsive phone lines, or the preservation of in-person services. Libraries and local offices are seen as untapped assets that could play a bigger role in bridging the digital divide.

Ultimately, residents want a council that is easy to reach, responsive, and inclusive. One that listens to feedback and designs services around the real-life experiences of its communities.

Common themes

Digital access and inclusion	While many are comfortable using digital services, there's a strong awareness of digital exclusion, especially among older residents and those in rural areas like South Hams. Poor internet coverage, lack of digital skills, and inaccessible websites were frequently mentioned. People want choice, not compulsion, in how they access services.
In-person services still matter	Libraries, local offices, and the former One Stop Shop were praised as vital community hubs. In-person contact is especially valued for complex, sensitive, or urgent issues (e.g. adult social care, SEND, anti-social behaviour). There's a desire to retain face-to-face options, particularly for those who struggle with digital or phone-based systems.
Telephone access and responsiveness	Many expressed frustration with the lack of phone numbers, long wait times, and unclear call prioritisation. A good telephone service is seen as essential, especially for those who can't or don't want to go online. People want clearer communication and faster response times.
Website and digital services	Experiences with the council website were mixed. Some found it user-friendly for tasks like reporting bins or renewing bus passes, while others described it as confusing, poorly designed, or inaccessible. There's a call for improved usability, mobile-friendliness, and clearer navigation.
Channel flexibility and user choice	A recurring theme was the need for multiple access routes: digital, phone, and in-person, to suit different needs and preferences. People want to opt in to digital communications (e.g. letters), not be forced into them. Services should be designed around the user, not the system.
Libraries as community access points	Libraries were frequently mentioned as trusted, accessible spaces that could be better used for service delivery, digital support, and community engagement. Plymstock Library was singled out as an excellent example.
Equity and accessibility	There's concern that current systems disadvantage people with disabilities, those without internet access, or those unfamiliar with digital tools. Accessibility (both physical and digital) needs to be reviewed and improved across all services.

Question 4: How can the council be better to listen to residents and keep you informed?

Residents want a council that is visible, approachable, and proactive in its communication. They appreciate opportunities to engage in person and want these to be more frequent, better advertised, and inclusive of all communities.

There's a clear call for transparency and clarity. Not just in what decisions are made, but why. People want to understand the rationale behind council actions and feel confident that their voices are being heard and considered.

To build trust and improve engagement, the council must embrace a multi-channel strategy that includes digital, print, broadcast, and face-to-face methods. It must also actively seek out diverse voices, including young people, disabled residents, and those who are digitally excluded. Ultimately, good communication is not just about broadcasting information, it's about building relationships, closing feedback loops, and making residents feel part of the city's journey.

Common themes

Face-to-face engagement	Events like the facilitated conversations were widely praised. People value personal interaction, saying it's the best way to feel heard and understood. There's a strong call for more in-person forums, especially for major decisions or proposals.
Clear, accessible communication	Residents want plain-language explanations of decisions, especially around taxation, planning, and proposals like the expansion. There's frustration with speculation and misinformation, often from third-party sources like Plymouth Live, and a desire for the council to get ahead of the narrative.
Multi-channel information sharing	Suggestions included radio slots, posters, billboards, newsletters, TV interviews, and school-based engagement. People want a mix of digital and non-digital channels to reach different demographics, including those who are digitally excluded or geographically distant.
Digital inclusion and website usability	The council website was described as difficult to navigate, especially for finding updates or reporting issues. There's a need for better design, clearer structure, and mobile-friendly features. Digital exclusion remains a barrier for many, especially older residents and those in rural areas.
Listening and feedback loops	Residents want to feel that their input leads to action or change. There's a perception that feedback is sometimes ignored or dismissed. Suggestions included surveys, customer experience sharing, and clearer follow-up on what's been done in response to public input.
Youth and diverse voices	There's a desire to hear from young people and under-represented groups, and to ensure that engagement reflects Plymouth's diverse population. Schools, community groups, and cultural organisations were suggested as partners.
Localised and timely updates	People want more notice about decisions, events, and service changes. Suggestions included apps, Friday email roundups, and printed newsletters like those used in Exeter. Timely updates on issues like roadworks, waste collection, and local projects are especially valued.

Plymouth Youth Big Community Conversation event

Young people aged 13-19 were invited to attend a facilitated conversation event to discuss the future of Plymouth. Attendees included members of the Plymouth Youth Parliament.

Question 1: What do you like about your area?

Young people in Plymouth shared a strong appreciation for the local environment, highlighting the city's green spaces, seafront, and proximity to Dartmoor as key features that support wellbeing and offer opportunities for outdoor activities. The presence of parks and skateparks, particularly Central Park, was noted as important for recreation and socialising.

Transport was another positive theme, with several mentioning that public transport – especially buses and the train station – is generally reliable and well-connected, making it easier to get around the city.

There was also a clear sense of value placed on community and opportunity. Free cultural venues like The Box, youth groups, and organisations such as cadets were praised for providing spaces to connect, learn, and grow. These opportunities contribute to a feeling of belonging and safety, with some respondents noting that the area feels "relatively safe."

Finally, Plymouth's rich culture and heritage were recognised as part of what makes the city unique and engaging for young people.

Question 2: What would you like to see change in your local area

Young people in Plymouth expressed a clear desire for more things to do, especially youth centres and leisure options like swimming pools, ice rinks, and music venues. They want spaces that are engaging, inclusive, and not just run by the council – places that feel genuinely youth-led and community-driven.

Transport was another key theme, with calls for more reliable and frequent bus services, especially to outer boroughs. Respondents highlighted issues with buses not following timetables or failing to stop, which affects their ability to travel independently and access opportunities.

There's also a strong interest in improving the local environment, including more benches, bins, and better lighting, especially in darker months. Concerns were raised about abandoned buildings and the need for cleaner, safer public spaces.

Community and wellbeing featured prominently. Young people want a stronger sense of community, with more volunteering opportunities that are well-promoted and incentivised – such as discounts on concert tickets. They also called for better SEND and mental health services, and lower waiting times in emergencies, showing a need for more responsive and inclusive support systems.

Finally, there were suggestions for more residential homes in the city centre, greater retail and dining variety, and development of district centres to bring services and activities closer to where people live.

Question 3: What do you want Plymouth to look like in 50 years

Young people envision a future Plymouth that is better connected, more inclusive, and full of opportunity. A key theme is transport, with aspirations for trams, improved train links, and even air travel, making the city more accessible both locally and nationally. They also want greener transport options and a push for eco-friendly infrastructure.

Housing and affordability are central to their vision. Young people want more housing options, especially affordable homes that allow them to stay in Plymouth long-term. They also hope to see fewer empty buildings and a focus on building on brownfield sites to protect natural spaces.

Employment and opportunity are vital. There's a desire for great job options, more apprenticeships, and work experience across diverse sectors, including law and creative industries. They also want youth services available city-wide, and part-time jobs for 16-year-olds that can fit around school.

Community pride and wellbeing matter too. Young people imagine a city with more celebratory events, stronger community identity, and better access to public services, including SEND and mental health support. They'd like to see purple help points distributed across Plymouth for safety and assistance.

Finally, they want Plymouth to grow into a bigger, more vibrant city that attracts investment, while still preserving its green and blue spaces and the distinct character of its neighbourhoods.

Question 4: What would make you want to stay living here?

Young people in Plymouth shared a clear vision for what would encourage them to build their futures in the city. Better job opportunities and affordable housing – including rent control – were top priorities, reflecting a desire for stability and independence. Many also emphasised the importance of access to healthcare, especially mental health support, dentists, and primary services like GPs, which they feel are currently lacking.

Education and career development are also key motivators. Respondents highlighted Plymouth's strengths, such as its three universities and military pathways, but called for improvements in SEND support and more opportunities for young people, including platforms like UK Youth Parliament.

The city's natural beauty and open spaces were appreciated, especially in comparison to other urban areas. However, young people also want improved transport links to other cities, so they can live in Plymouth while accessing opportunities elsewhere.

Finally, safety was a recurring theme. Suggestions included more lighting, help points, and general awareness, all aimed at making Plymouth feel safer and more welcoming.

C

**Plymouth City Council Devolution
and Local Government Reform Team**

Plymouth City Council
Ballard House
West Hoe Road
Plymouth PL1 3BJ