

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT FOR 24TH FEBRUARY 2025 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING CLLR KIM BLOXHAM, CLLR KEVIN BLAKEY, CLLR SAM HAWKINS.

Planning newsletters update

The Council's planning newsletters are automatically generated from the information on the council's planning portal webpages. Unfortunately, a tech error has prevented these newsletters from being generated in recent weeks.

At the time of writing this issue is being investigated. When the tech issue has been fixed, the newsletter will once again be sent to registered subscribers. In the meantime, recent planning applications and decisions can be viewed on the council's website.

Local Plan Update - Regulation 19 version consultation

The consultation will be hosted using Commonplace, the council's citizen engagement platform, which all respondents are encouraged to use when submitting comments. Regulation 19 consultation is to ascertain whether or not the draft Local Plan has met all the necessary legal requirements, rather than having the more general 'have your say' approach the Regulation 18 consultation had. The consultation is live as of 13th February and finishes on 31st March 2025.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) – (Devon and Torbay) – is now official.

The Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Jim McMahon, signed the legislation on behalf of the Secretary of State, under power delegated by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, legally bringing the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) into being as of Wednesday 5 February 2025.

Members of the Devon and Torbay CCA will meet formally at the inaugural meeting on Wednesday 19 March 2025 at the offices of West Devon Borough Council in Tavistock.

The CCA members are drawn from Devon County Council, Torbay Council, Devon's District, City and Borough Councils. The Police and Crime Commissioner is also a member alongside a representative from the business community and skills providers. Councillor Paul Arnott, Leader East Devon District Council will be one of two representatives of the Devon Districts, the other being Cllr Bialyk from Exeter City, to be a member of this new organisation from the outset.

The Chair elect is Cllr David Thomas (Leader of Torbay) and the Vice Chair elect is Cllr James McInnes (Leader of Devon County Council).

The Devon and Torbay CCA will be responsible for making decisions about the powers and funding devolved to it from Whitehall through the devolution deal that was agreed in January 2024.

The establishment of the Devon and Torbay CCA is distinct and separate to other government announcements in relation to local government reorganisation and the formation of Strategic Authorities. The Devon and Torbay CCA will progress in parallel with the government's plans to reform local government, although both are seen as instrumental to devolving decision-making powers and funding from Whitehall to local areas.

The Government has turned down Devon County Council's request to postpone its elections in May which was made following the publication of a Government's White Paper which set out its ambition for devolution.

The Government wants to see two-tier local government (where district councils and county councils deliver different public services in same areas) combined to become unitary councils that deliver all council public services in those areas, and for those unitary councils to work together under strategic authorities, led by elected Mayors. Deadlines are set for submitting both interim plans (21st March) and final proposals (28th November) and the criteria that these will need to consider.

It is expected that each unitary council will serve approximately 500,000 people and that each strategic authority, headed by the elected mayors who will have significant funds under their control for infrastructure and large strategic projects, will work with 3 unitary authorities, i.e. around 1.5m people. In our part of the southwestern peninsula the logical strategic authority would cover Devon and Cornwall, the population numbers are a neat fit, but Cornwall Council have made it clear that they want no part of being governed by an authority that includes Devon or anyone else, so it may be for central government to decide how our SA is to be structured.

The current best guess as to when the new structure will commence is 2028 but these are early days, much can change.

Community Governance Review

Full Council on 26th February will include a report on reactivating the Governance Review. The report will also include the proposed Terms of Reference for the Review. A notification has been sent to Broadclyst, Clyst Honiton, Rockbeare and Whimble Parish Councils to inform them that this is forthcoming.