

Record of Decisions

Local Government Reorganisation - Interim Plan

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 18 March 2025.

Decision

1. in accordance with Standing Order D11, that in light of the Government's deadline for submission of the Interim Proposals the Cabinet's decision (set out in 2. below) is determined to be urgent. Therefore, Cabinet determines that Call-in shall be waived as any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would prejudice the public's and the Council's interests. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator was consulted on 7 March 2025; and
2. that the Chief Executive, in consultation with Leader of the Council, be authorised to submit an interim plan for local government reorganisation impacting on Torbay to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on or before 21 March 2025.

Reason for the Decision

To enable Torbay's initial views on future potential local government reorganisation in Devon to be shared with Government and, therefore, for Torbay Council to receive feedback from the Government on the same.

Implementation

The decision in respect of the Local Government Reorganisation – Interim Plan will come into force immediately as the decision maker has decided that any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would prejudice the public's and the Council's interest. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator was consulted on 7 March 2025.

Information

On 5 February 2025, the Government issued a Statutory Invitation to the Leaders of all of the two-tier councils and unitary councils in Devon to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government in Devon.

As part of the Invitation, the Government asked that an interim plan should be submitted on or before 21 March 2025 which sets out the progress that had been made in developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance provided.

Since the invitation from Government was received, the Leader of the Council had been working with the Leaders of all the other authorities in Devon to understand their positions. Discussions had been held internally between the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet of Torbay Council, as well as with all other members of the Council, our strategic partners within our Place Leadership Board, our Members of Parliament, and with interested members of our community who attended a public engagement event.

The draft interim plan sets out four potential options for local government reorganisation and provided the details that the Government had asked to be included in a non-binding interim plan.

At the meeting, Councillor David Thomas proposed and Councillor Chris Lewis seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

The interim plan was an opportunity for the Council to provide MHCLG with an update on the progress being made on the options that were being explored. The options which it was proposed to be considered further in developing final proposals that were to be submitted in November 2025 are:

1. Torbay Council remains as it is;
2. a new unitary council is created covering Torbay, approximately half of South Hams and most of Teignbridge (i.e. covering the South Local Care Partnership of the NHS); and
3. a new unitary council is created covering the areas of Torbay, South Hams, West Devon and Teignbridge, plus a new unitary council in the east and north of Devon, and Plymouth remaining as is (or with a slightly enlarged border).

A fourth option had been discounted, namely a single Devon unitary authority (with or without Plymouth). It was felt that a unitary authority of that size would be too large for it to be efficient and effective whilst retaining a sense of place and community. There was also a significant risk that those most vulnerable in the Torbay community who rely on crucial services such as adult social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness would be negatively and disproportionately impacted if Torbay became part of a single Devon unitary council.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

No

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None

Published

21 March 2025

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet