



Devon County Councillor Report September 2025



@louise4devon



Louise Wainwright

I serve communities in the parishes of
Bigbury, Kingston, Modbury, Ringmore
Aveton Gifford, Loddiswell, Churchstow,
Buckland-Tout-Saints, West Alvington
Halwell & Moreleigh, Woodleigh, South Huish
Malborough, South Milton, Salcombe and Thurlestone

Your DCC Councillor



Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Q: Why is it important for parish councils to keep abreast of developments on Local Government Reorganisation and what is being discussed at local authority level?

A: Because they (District and County Councils and national Government) are talking about us (parish and town councils) and we are not currently engaged in this process. We are mentioned as a possible partner in the emerging 'new' level of local government – Neighbourhood Area Committees. Have you heard of these?

Timetable for LGR boundary decisions.

We won't know what the new boundaries will be until Government decides which proposal from Devon to accept (**July 2026**).

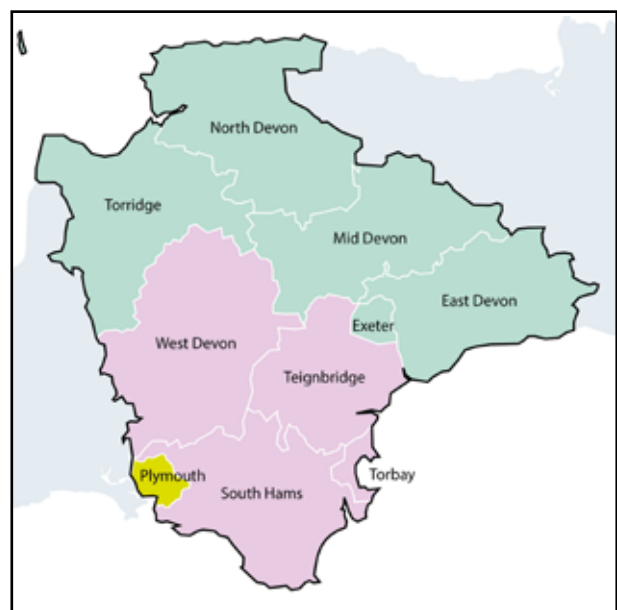
March 2025 – Five separate Unitary boundary proposals were submitted to Government as an **early indication** of the ambitions of these authorities. The Government would have preferred one proposal but there was **lack of consensus in Devon** so five initial ideas were presented. SHDC submitted the **1/4/5** proposal and DCC submitted the **1/1/9** proposal (called **One Devon**) and other groups submitted the other three proposals.

This was done **WITHOUT any detailed analysis** of the financial implications and, more importantly, how this would directly affect the level of service delivery. Less money from council tax territory = less money to pay for local services. Boundaries matter!

March to November 2025 – The Officers at SHDC and DCC are working very hard to model the income and service delivery costs for the two preferred models by DCC and SHDC (1/4/5 and 1/1/9) so that they can finally advise the Elected Members what the actual implications (finance and service levels possible) are for each model.



One Devon : 1/1/9 proposal



1/4/5 proposal

Aveton Gifford, Bigbury, Buckland-tout-Saints, Churchstow, Halwell & Morleigh, Kingston, Loddiswell, Malborough, Modbury, Ringmore, Salcombe, South Milton, South Huish, Thurlestone. West Alvington, Woodleigh

and could be knocking on your doors from Sept 2026 to May 2027.

These proposals will also include how the Unitary proposes to **engage parish and town councils**- which could be through **Neighbourhood Area Committees**. Expect an indication in next few weeks about whether NACs will be included in the proposals from SHDC and DCC.

Your **Elected Members** will then **vote** on what model to back and submit to Government. Elected Members and the Executives will decide – not Officers.

Officers will be gathering evidence and calculating – “What level of local services will need to be delivered within these boundaries and what is our estimated income from businesses and households in that area. Are they balanced – or woefully not balanced?” None yet knows. The modelling is on -going. I am prepared to back whichever of these two models demonstrates how best local services will get funded.

November 2025 – DCC and SHDC (and other competing bids) will submit their final proposals and their financial modelling justifications to Government.

Early 2026 – The formal Government consultation on the proposals will begin.

July 2026 – The Government aims to announce which proposal to implement in Devon.

Sept 2026 – Secondary legislation laid in Parliament to allow the boundary changes to happen.

The '**Wards**' for each **Unitary Councillor** might be bigger than the current 'Divisions' served by your current County Councillors (i.e. 16 parishes in the Salcombe Division served by Cllr Louise Wainwright) . There could be **TWO Unitary Councillors** for each new Unitary Ward.

Unitary Councillors will step forward and will be **seeking election** as your Unitary Councillor

May 2027 – Elections to the new Unitary Council take place

SHDC and DCC continue to operate in parallel.

SHDC elected Members who would normally have come to the end of their 4-year tenure in May 2026 will have to stay on for another year.

April 2028 – New Unitary authorities go live

DCC and SHDC and all District Councils cease to exist.



@louise4devon

updates on Facebook page

Aveton Gifford, Bigbury, Buckland-tout-Saints, Churchstow, Halwell & Morleigh, Kingston, Loddiswell, Malborough, Modbury, Ringmore, Salcombe, South Milton, South Huish, Thurlestone. West Alvington, Woodleigh

Making the figures add up!

Why are services poor?

The main reason why DCC services are not covering our needs is because DCC has experienced a **72% cut in core funding from Government** in real terms (2010 to 2022)

DCC has **lost the Rural Services Delivery Grant** which took account of the higher cost of delivering services to a rural area with a spread-out population (**£10 million a year**).

My big question is – will Government use LGR as an excuse to further erode the level of Government Grants and shift even more of the financial burden to the new Unitary Authorities which raise the balance of their funding from Council Tax? We don't know. But their track record is not good!

In the full knowledge of County Council's financial pressures, Government requires County Councils to '**balance their books**' at the end of each year.

County Councils **cannot raise Council taxes by more than 5% per year**. Within the context of perilous cuts in Government Grants since 2010 – savings will inevitably come from:

- Cuts to **non-statutory services**
- Lower quality service provision
- Setting priorities by defining what the level of a problem is (i.e. if it qualifies as a DEFECT)
- Selling off assets.
- Delaying projects
- Raiding their capital reserves (which should be kept for emergency measures – not spent on operations!).

DCC and SHDC have certain **Statutory Services** which they **MUST** deliver.

Serving Children with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** is a statutory responsibility.

No County Council in the country can meet the needs of their SEND provision. Our new **DCC has made CHILDREN our priority**. Whatever the new boundaries are – it must enable us to fund all children's services. Officers are calculating this now.

County Councils face bankruptcy from SEND costs due to spiralling demand for services, insufficient government funding that hasn't kept pace with costs, and accumulated deficits allowed by a temporary "statutory override" in accounting.

This has created a £4 billion deficit that is expected to grow, potentially leading to widespread council insolvency when the temporary measure expires in 2026/2027 if not addressed by government reform.

Projected Gross Income DCC 2025/2026

Government grants
£1,144 million (58%)

Council tax
£593 million (30%)

Business rates
£111 million (6%)

Fees and charges
£149 million (8%)

Neighbourhood Area Committees

Can parishes influence decisions?

Neighbourhood Area Committees (NAC) are proposed as a new level of local government – rather like the current South Hams Highways and Traffic Order Committee – HATOC).

It could be composed of the

- **locally elected Unitary Councillors,**
- **Representatives from parish and town councils,**
- **Health and Police services.**

Parish and Town Councils should be lobbying to have their say now about how they want to be represented on the NAC (if they are set up).

It's unlikely in my view, that all parish councils will be represented on a NAC because this would make it unwieldy. If this is so, some level of **cooperation between parish & town councils** would be a good plan.

The purpose of a NAC is to address the highly likely alienation of parish and town councils from the decision-making Unitary Authority. Without a NAC how will the 'voice' of local people be heard when decisions are taken about local priorities for spending the already inadequate budget?



@louise4devon

updates on Facebook page

Salcombe Division Assembly

I am discussing with potential hosts about a possible meeting involving all **16 parish councils in the Salcombe Division.**

The purpose of the meeting is to hear from **Cllr Paul Arnott** - DCC cabinet member for LGR - about what benefits an NAC could bring to local representation from the parishes.

Parish Council representatives will discuss what the implications are for them and whether any cooperation is needed to ensure parish optimise their involvement and opportunities.

Please save the date -

Saturday 29th November

Programme and Venue to be announced

River Summit

River Water Quality Groups

Parish Councils have been invited to send a representative to the River Summit to be held at Kingsbridge Community College on Saturday 4th October.

This is an opportunity to express and interest in being part of a bid to the Water Restoration Fund in March 2026 for funding to assist ambitions of the parish councils to undertake any activity or host any event that could have an impact on water quality.

The three catchments involved are the

- **River Gara & Slapton Ley,**
- **River Avon**
- **Salcombe Kingsbridge Estuary.**

We will endeavour to set up three **River water Quality Groups** which link up parish councils within a river or estuary catchment to work together on water quality and engage in river-sensitive planning.

More information on
www.blueprint-for-rivers.org



Salcombe Division

Collaboration

It feels inevitable to me that we can achieve more (improved local services) if we collaborate and recognise that this could enable us to draw in more funding to improve life for residents.

Some of our parishes are very small, few households or businesses and have small budgets and therefore less funding.

No parish HAS to collaborate. It can be 'business as usual'. It's up to you. You are invited to the party. Your inputs are valued.

Louise4Devon website

I have been collating information about each parish and town council so that we can see what our neighbours have achieved and where there might be opportunities to collaborate more.

It would be very helpful if Clerks could kindly also send me up to date information on the following so that we can see clearly what our overall financial situation is.

This information is in the public domain and published in your minutes but it would really be helpful if Clerks would kindly send the info to me at Louise4Devon@gmail.com to save me a lot of time. Thank you