

Devon County Councillor report

September 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

Devon County Council will consider proceeding with a Judicial Review (JR) of LGR in Devon at its Cabinet meeting on 9th Sept 2026. It has already submitted its draft arguments to government, which were meant to be answered two weeks ago, delayed by MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) till 4th September. The JR can only argue for flaws in the processes during the government's conduct of this matter. On the 9th, DCC Cabinet will decide if its own arguments about process are worth pursuing in the light of government's proposed counter arguments. It is anticipated that all districts bar Exeter would write in support of the JR if submitted formally.

Meanwhile, an immense pan-Devon collaborative process to prepare for the proposed new unitaries in May 2027 and Vesting Day in April 2028 is being led by a Senior Responsible Officer appointed by government, Donna Manson the CE of DCC. Each CE of the district councils has a leadership role working to her on an identified workstream. It is estimated that LGR is creating at least 30% more work for council officers at the moment, who are also having to maintain business as usual, with very little extra government funding. At DCC a Scrutiny Committee meets regularly to discuss and scrutinise these processes as they unfold.

The response letters from all Devon Councils to the proposed warding arrangements for the new unitaries were completed on time. They were given three weeks and four days to submit to MHCLG's warding proposals, a process which would usually take 18 months. This flows from government's decision to give the Boundaries Commission no formal role at this stage, meaning that a number of glaring errors may not be corrected for five years. Discussions with government on this are ongoing.

A letter has been sent co-signed by the leaders of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Councils to government indicating a readiness to have a Devon Strategic Mayoral Authority for the 1.25 million people in Devon. It is understood that Cornwall may be offered a bespoke non-mayoral agreement. An indicative response from government is likely within a few weeks

Town and parish involvement: Town and parish councils will not be represented on the initial statutory joint committees overseeing the creation of new authorities. A more formal role is expected later when neighbourhood governance arrangements are developed. However, calls have been made for the scrutiny committee to engage directly with DALC and with parish and town councils that are not DALC members. Parish councils may face requests to take on additional services, assets or responsibilities, with costs falling on the local precept. Any such changes should be properly funded and agreed rather than passed down by larger authorities seeking savings.

Assets: No agreement has been reached on how local authority assets – including buildings, land, depots, vehicles and community facilities – will be divided between successor councils. A Devon-wide assets group is being established. This will be important for town and parish councils with an interest in community asset transfer. Local councils

should receive clear information before decisions are made and should not take on buildings or services without understanding long-term liabilities.

Elections and representation: Interim warding arrangements for shadow authority elections in May 2027 must be submitted by 17th August – a process in a few weeks that would normally take 18 months. Concerns have been raised about the proposed number of councillors and the risk that rural areas will have less effective representation. Rural councillors already cover larger areas, more roads and more town/parish councils than urban counterparts. Interim wards may divide communities or place neighbouring villages in different authorities. County councillors are being asked to identify communities that could be affected.

Service continuity: The committee has agreed that continuity of public services must be the central measure of success. Regular scrutiny of service continuity, workforce capacity, staff retention and the LGR risk register has been requested. The aim is to create four functioning, financially sustainable councils without weakening services or shifting unfunded pressures onto town and parish councils.

Devon Four Cornerstones

This month DCC will begin to explore together what the Four Cornerstones and partnership work with families should look like in schools. DCC's Four Cornerstones approach is reshaping how teams work with families by embedding evaluation, coproduction, impact measurement and oversight into everyday practice. Recent work includes parent carers helping train SEND staff, rewriting statutory letters, shaping communication guidance, improving commissioning feedback, and strengthening partnership working. Families can get involved via the Parent Carer Forum Devon. <https://parentcarerforumdevon.org/get-involved/>

New adult education courses in Devon

Learn Devon has launched its new 2026/27 adult education programme, with around 200 free courses available.

Courses cover English, Maths, ESOL, digital skills and job-specific training, helping adults gain qualifications, build skills and improve career prospects. Please share this opportunity with friends and family who may benefit.

Find out more [here](#).

Devon's Best Start Family Hubs & Best Start in Life programme

Devon County Council has secured £6.028m of government funding (2026–2029) to expand its Best Start Family Hubs & Best Start in Life programme, designed to improve early childhood development and school readiness. The programme supports families from pregnancy to age 19 (25 for SEND) and aims to ensure every Devon family can access joined-up, early help through a “hub without walls” model that reaches rural and isolated communities.

The funding will strengthen parenting support, home learning, SEND pathways, and partnership working across health, education and community organisations. Devon County Council leads delivery through Public Health, with councillors asked to promote Family Hubs locally and help identify emerging needs.

For families, this means earlier support, better access to services, stronger parent-child relationships, and more consistent help regardless of where they live — ultimately improving children's development and reducing inequalities across Devon.

Devon Youth Council

Devon Youth Council has advanced its Places to Go, Things to Do campaign while driving major action on bus affordability and access. Their feedback to Devon County Council and national leaders helped shape a forthcoming national under-15 bus scheme and secured £500k of DCC investment for 16–19-year-olds not in education or employment. They also presented proposals to improve rural transport at the Devon Community Transport Day, suggesting local day trips and regular minibuses links to train stations. Discussions on rural solutions continue, aiming to improve access and opportunities for young people across Devon.

Buses

There have been a raft of bus timetable changes affecting the division:

55 (Exeter – Tiverton – Cowley Moor) – Part Financially Supported by DCC

Monday – Saturday daytime journeys will be extended beyond Tiverton Bus Station to Cowley Moor, providing a loop via Morrisons, Lea Road, Beech Road, Cowley Moor Road, Pinnex Moor Road, Carew Road, Brickhouse Hill, Lea Road and Morrisons.

This will provide new direct links to Exeter, as well as more frequent services for Pinnex Moor Road.

343 (Tiverton Town Circular)

This route will be revised to cover what is presently the 349 route between Beech Road and Tiverton Bus Station.

The service will operate Tiverton Bus Station – Palmerston Park – Cotteylands – Morrisons – Tiverton Bus Station – then via Heathcoat Way to Beech Road, before returning as per the current service 349.

The section of route along Longmeadow, Pinnex Moor Road and Lea Road will no longer be served, and is covered in part by new service 55.

348/349 (Tiverton Town Circular)

This service will no longer operate. Revised services 55 & 343 provide alternative journey options.

352/353 (Tiverton Town Circular)

This service will now be operated by Redwoods, with minor changes to the timetable.

398 (Tiverton – Bampton)

This service will now be operated by Stagecoach, with minor changes to the timetable.