

AGENDA ITEM 5

NOTES of the Meeting of the **DEVOLUTION/LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION WORKING GROUP** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock at 6.15pm on **TUESDAY 29th APRIL, 2025**

Present: Councillor P Ward (Chair)
Councillors Ms M Ewings, A Hutton, Mrs A Johnson, J Moody

In Attendance: Councillor B Smith (Ward Member)
Town Clerk, Assistant to the Town Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors S Hipsey and R Poppe.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made:-

Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson and J Moody declared personal non-prejudicial interest by virtue of membership of West Devon Borough Council (and in the case of Councillor Ms Ewings, also serving as Leader).

3. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED THAT the Notes of the Meeting of the Devolution/Local Government Re-organisation Working Group held on Monday 3rd March, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION IN DEVON

The Working Group proceeded to consider, in principle, the next steps in connection with the above and, in particular:

- i) the current position insofar as reorganisation in Devon was concerned – there being no fixed timeline from Government as yet;
- ii) associated uncertainties, also including as regarded the positions of extant principal authorities – feedback from other areas and recent webinars being reported;
- iii) work presently being undertaken by Officers to review practice elsewhere, in collaboration with sector partners (DALC and SLCC Devon);
- iv) prospective challenges and opportunities as might be presented by the General Disposal Consent (England) Order 2003;
- v) the past decision of the Council that assets/liabilities and/or services should only be considered to be taken on if they were of value to the

community. Also, the importance attached to equity in dealings as between local authorities (both principal and Town) - and with the community they represented, in taking any proposals forward together;

- vi) linking to the above, acknowledgement that in practice it was prudent to anticipate that, in most circumstances, any devolution would likely carry an associated capital or revenue cost (or both) to the Town ratepayer;
- vii) anticipated arrangements for a prospective exploratory meeting with WDBC, (arrangements with DCC awaiting the outcome of Local Government Elections);
- viii) the differing scenarios as might arise in circumstances where either:
 - o principal authorities were minded to collaboratively engage with the sector prior to reorganisation;
 - o or not, when negotiations could be several years ahead and with a larger and less locally connected successor body.
- ix) the importance attached to open, collaborative and partnership-based discussions to best understand the options and constraints which might apply.

It was therefore prudent to plan for the possibility of early collaborative work with principal authorities, to support the community and grow resilience, whilst adopting a measured and proportionate approach that acknowledged the more general and continuing uncertainty for all. The Committee considered how best to proceed, arising from which, it was:

RESOLVED THAT the Meeting adjourn in order to undertake an informal workshop to consider those matters which might appropriately form the basis of preliminary discussions with sector-based stakeholders.

A broadly-based preliminary consensus was achieved, following which the Working Group reconvened at 8.15pm. Subject to developments, a further Meeting would be scheduled toward the end of June.

The Meeting closed at 8.16pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN