

A stronger voice for DEVON

Devon
County Council

A guide to
Boundary
Committee
proposals
for local
government
reform in
the county

THE way your council services are provided looks set to change and residents across the county have never had a better opportunity to influence this to meet the needs of their local communities.

The change is important as council services affect everyone. From the roads we drive on to dealing with rubbish, from schools, housing and

libraries to helping us when we get older, council services play a big part in our lives.

Earlier this year, the Boundary Committee was asked by the Government to see if a new system of local government made up of one or more 'unitary' councils could replace the County Council and eight district, city and borough councils.

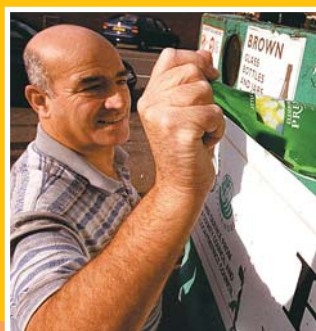
The Boundary Committee has now published its draft proposal for the county which recommends a single unitary council for Devon.

If the Government agrees with this advice, a new democratically accountable authority could be in place by April 2010.

This leaflet gives you an outline of the proposal as it affects Exeter, Exmouth and surrounding parishes.

Did You
KNOW
...?

more than **85%** of all your local government services are already provided by Devon County Council



One council for Devon

The Boundary Committee proposal is to create a single unitary authority for the whole of Devon with Exeter at its heart. This would have a population of 752,000.

The Boundary Committee says the benefits of this model are:

Big enough to cope

Its size and resources would give the capacity to provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership in tackling the big social and economic challenges facing Devon.

It would also be big enough to ensure the most expensive services such as education, social services and roads could be supported.

Stronger together

It will not divide the county with artificial boundaries. Instead it will unite Devon into a cohesive whole and give the county a stronger voice regionally and nationally.

More power to local people

The proposal sets out a range of ways to devolve power and budgets to local communities and ensure local people have a stronger voice in shaping their own areas.

This includes the creation of new Community Boards based on coastal and market towns, a powerful City Board for Exeter and a stronger role for town and parish councils.

More efficient

It would create economies of scale and enable greater efficiency and value for money to be achieved. Fewer councils means less bureaucracy and ending the duplication of services – such as eight different waste collection services – will cut costs, release money to improve local communities and keep council tax down.

Less disruptive

A unitary Devon wouldn't require the dismantling of some of the key services already provided by Devon County Council.

What is the Boundary Committee proposing?

THE Boundary Committee has backed the concept of a single unitary council for Devon as being 'best placed' to deliver a new form of local government for the whole county, replacing the existing County Council and eight district councils – the so-called "two-tier" system. This is the proposal on which it is consulting until 26 September.

The Boundary Committee says: "We consider that a county unitary authority would have the capacity to provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership to all of two-tier Devon..."

The new unitary council for Devon would keep Devon united and it would put the

capital city of Exeter at its heart.

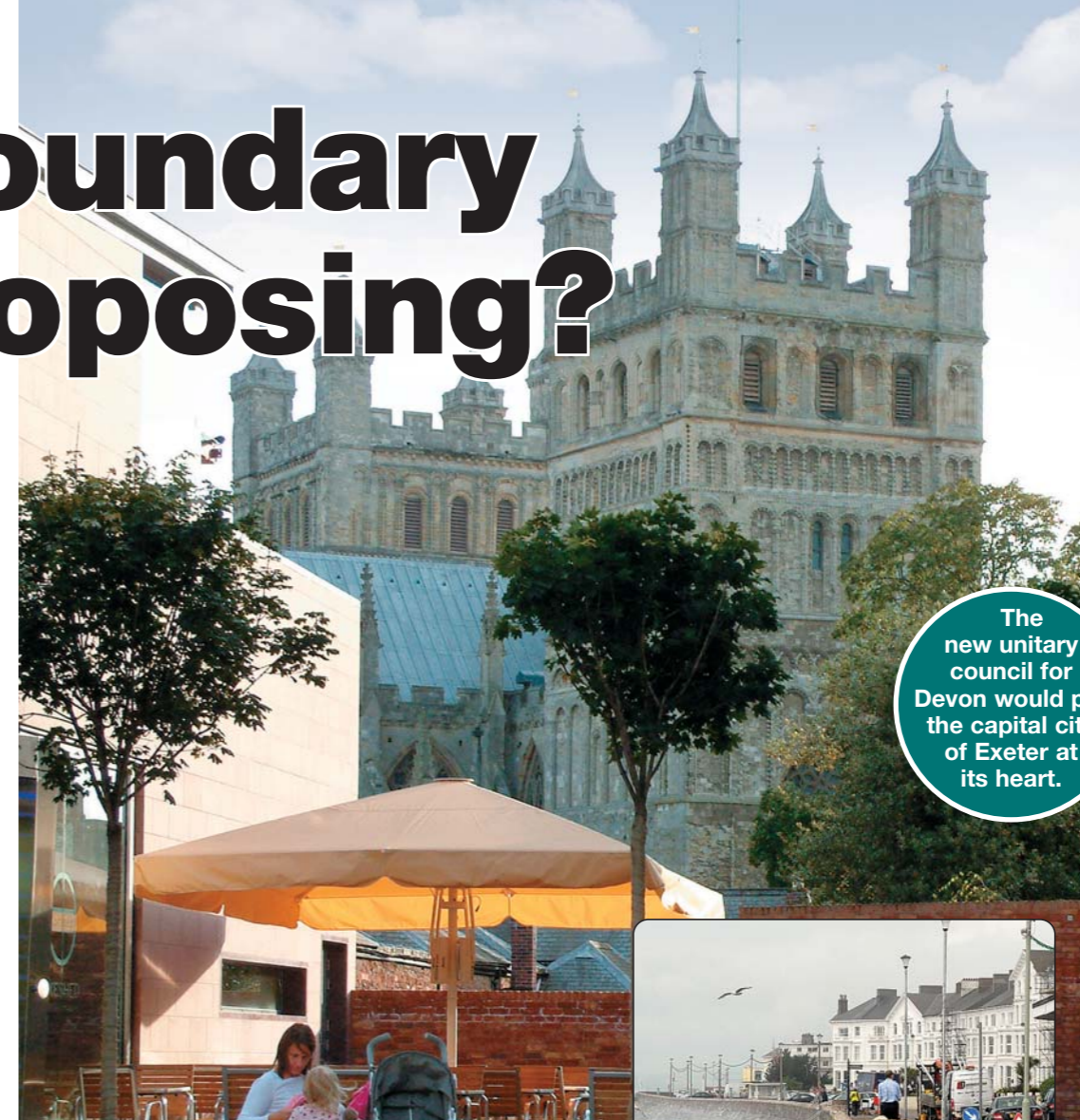
The Boundary Committee states: "We consider it an advantage that our draft proposal does not seek to divide the county area and create what might be regarded as artificial boundaries. Rather, we see the role of a single unitary council as bringing together the various communities, both rural and urban, and building a cohesive response to the challenges facing the county as a whole."

The Boundary Committee also believes a single unitary would provide a more strategic approach and could deliver more cost-effective services. It says: "We consider that the proposed county-wide unitary authority would have the capacity to be able to plan and

act strategically in tackling the social and economic challenges facing Devon, through having the necessary critical mass and resources."

It points out that merging the County and district councils into one new council would generate savings to provide more money to spend on improving local communities and help give an integrated approach to planning, transport and economic development, including delivering major strategic investment when needed and stabilising council tax.

The Boundary Committee says: "We consider that our draft proposal would provide the economies of scale that are considered necessary to deliver value-for-money services effectively,".



The new unitary council for Devon would put the capital city of Exeter at its heart.



Strengthening local democracy

AT the heart of the proposal is a desire to devolve power and resources to local communities and neighbourhoods in a new style of local democracy. The Boundary Committee sees this as a real strength.



▶ Putting Exeter at the heart of Devon

A NEW Devon unitary authority puts the economic powerhouse of Exeter at its heart. Exeter has a proud heritage and civic tradition. To recognise its status, the proposal is to create a powerful City Board based on the current city boundaries. This will have a significant budget to spend on priorities for Exeter people and also be directly responsible for managing key services across the city.

A Charter Trust would make it responsible for the Lord Mayoralty to ensure the city's civic traditions and guarantee its status. The Guildhall would also be retained.

The City Board would be made up of all of Exeter's directly elected unitary councillors as well as non-voting representatives from statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, business community and neighbourhood associations.

The proposal is also to work with city residents on what sort of democratic structure, if any, they would like to see operate within the city, such as local neighbourhood councils.

▶ A Community Board for Exmouth

IN Exmouth and its surrounding parishes the proposal is to devolve local power to a new Community Board. This will be one of possibly 28 such boards across Devon based on natural communities around market and coastal towns.

These local committees will be made up of elected unitary councillors working alongside existing town and parish

councillors, police, health service, voluntary sector, education and business community. Only elected unitary and town and parish councillors would have voting rights.

The Boards will be responsible for working with local people through Community Forums to respond to local issues and priorities.

They would also give local scrutiny on the performance of the unitary council and other service providers.

They will have devolved budgets and could commission local services. And each Board would publish a Local Charter to clearly set out priorities and action plans and would be responsible for keeping local residents involved.

▶ Stronger town and parish councils

TOWN and parish councils are the building blocks of this model and would have direct representation on their local community board. For parishes surrounding the city we want to work together to co-design good community governance arrangements which include establishing where the centre or centres for

their community board(s) may be based.

The new unitary council would also work with town and parish councils to identify opportunities for delegated services and co-design pilot schemes, such as the successful Parish Paths Partnership and Parish Lengthsman scheme.

Exeter and Exmouth model

The Boundary Committee also says it sees some merit in another unitary pattern which would create a smaller unitary council for rural Devon and a separate unitary council for Exeter and Exmouth.

This is not a formal proposal at this stage. It would bring together the city and 21 neighbouring parishes including the town of Exmouth.

However, the Boundary Committee notes many issues with this model including:

Increased Cost

Setting up two unitary authorities for Devon would add duplication, cost more and reduce the ability to achieve economies of scale.

More Disruptive

It would mean the break up of existing high-budget countywide services AND the merger of city and district services.

Reduced Capacity

This smaller authority may have reduced capacity and scope to provide a full range of value-for-money services or make major strategic investments.

No local empowerment

It is currently unclear how all local communities will be empowered, particularly those rural parishes outside the city of Exeter.

Impact on Devon

Extending the boundary of this new urban authority to include Exmouth, the county's second largest town, would throw into question the viability of a rural Devon authority.

A unitary Exeter and Exmouth authority would also weaken the focus on the unique urban issues in Exeter with its long civic tradition as the county's capital city.

For further information on the proposal see the Boundary Committee's website at:

www.boundarycommittee.org.uk

An open letter from Brian Greenslade (Lib Dem), Leader of Devon County Council, pictured right, and John Hart (Con), Shadow Leader.

Devon
County Council

FACT FILE

WE are Devon's local council, serving 752,000 people across the county and providing services such as schools, roads, street lighting, public transport, libraries, social services and waste disposal.

Devon's budget for 2008/9 is £1.1 billion

OUR INVESTMENTS INCLUDE:

- £349 million for schools
- £164 million for caring for the elderly and disabled
- £105 million for the environment, road maintenance, the local economy and Devon's cultural life
- £100 million for children and young people's services
- £185 million for new schools, road building, libraries and recycling centres
- £37 million for school and public transport

DID YOU KNOW...

We support 364 schools teaching over 90,000 children, **help 17,000 elderly and disabled adults to live at home**, provide residential care for 4,300 people, **provide 6,600 carers with a carers' break, other services and advice**, provide 8,000 people with housing-related support, **run 50 libraries and 11 mobile libraries**, maintain 8,000 miles of road, 3,120 bridges and 5,000 miles of public rights of way, **run 20 recycling centres**, maintain 71,000 streetlights and **provide over 300 public and community transport services.**

Stronger together

Dear resident,

When the previous leadership of Exeter City Council launched its failed bid to split from Devon no-one could have predicted the consequences.

Let's be clear, we did not ask for the current Boundary Committee review. But the result will affect people for many years to come and that is why it's so important to get involved.

If things are to change then we believe that a single unitary council for Devon is the best solution for residents and could deliver more consistent services, cut costs and **reduce the burden of council tax.**

We have long argued that dividing the county makes no sense. The County Council is already responsible for over 85% of local services including schools, roads and the care of the old and vulnerable. Breaking up these countywide services can only lead to disruption and add to the cost.

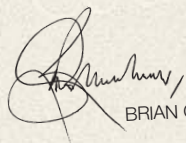
Reducing the number of councils, cutting bureaucracy and ending the unnecessary duplication of services will release resources to invest in frontline services and local communities.

Any new model of local government needs to connect strongly and directly with our communities and give local people the power to lead and shape their own areas.

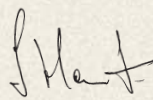
We think a strength of the Boundary Committee proposal is the devolution of power and resources to local communities and neighbourhoods with parish and town councils as the building blocks of a new style of local democracy.

There is still much to be done and we will continue to work hard with all our partners and residents to develop the detail and ensure the best possible outcome for all.

We believe we are far stronger together but, whatever your view, we urge you to get involved and join the debate.



BRIAN GREENSLADE



JOHN HART

HAVE YOUR SAY

The Boundary Committee is currently consulting organisations, businesses and residents on its proposals for the future of local government in Devon.

More information on these proposals is available from the Boundary Committee's website at: www.boundarycommittee.org.uk If you would like to express your view you

can write to: The Review Manager (Devon), The Boundary Committee for England, Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HW or email reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

All submissions will be shown on the Boundary Committee website. Closing date for submissions is 26 September 2008.

For help, advice and information about your local County Council services call MyDevon on **0845 155 1015**

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