

Date: 21 March 2025

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Mr McMahon,

This letter accompanies the Interim Plan being submitted here from the Leaders of 7 of the 8 Devon District Councils. We have worked very hard across a wide geography and a range of political backgrounds to develop this plan.

However, we are deeply concerned with both the process and the timetable of Local Government Reorganisation being imposed on Devon, and we are aware that you and Baroness Taylor have been advised of this by many in local government. Moreover, the specific recent context of the financial settlement, and the withdrawal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant does not instil confidence.

We heard at the Districts' conference that government has identified a "two-tier premium" and that, in its understandable need to solve the existential financial crisis in Adult and Children Social Care, you expect savings by driving LGR through to cover this. We have been unable to find any evidence to support that claimed projected savings will be delivered, and are concerned that abolition of Districts to plug the financial gap is not a reality. If there is such evidence, we would request sight of relevant real-life examples. We feel sure that you are aware of the extreme risk using theoretical data from consultants with limited local government experience.

In Devon, the opposite of cost-saving is probable in this 'cliff-edge' approach to reorganisation. We estimate the true costs to be in the region of £100 million. If government is so confident that savings will be delivered, then we suggest these costs are paid to us up front to be recouped from the supposed savings in future years.

We would emphasise that efficiencies and savings can be delivered and that we are best placed to do that. Ironically, we were actively in the process of integrating services at a more strategic level particularly around waste and leisure centre provision. The inevitable upheaval of LGR has somewhat curtailed this constructive and positive action.

Given the chance, we can deliver a road map with tangible targets moving towards savings under a plan which will be less expensive to deliver and will deliver a much more resilient outcome. We share government aspirations around cost-saving but ask you that we are given the opportunity to achieve these outcomes.

As a group, we would be pleased to have the chance to meet with you for further discussion.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Paul Arnott, Leader of East Devon



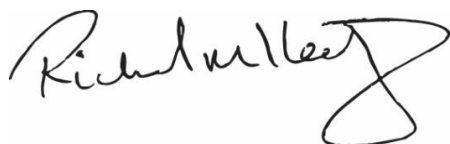
Cllr Luke Taylor, Leader of Mid Devon



Cllr David Clayton, Leader of North Devon



Cllr Julian Brazil, Leader of South Hams

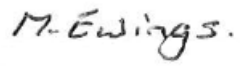


Cllr Richard Keeling, Leader of Teignbridge





CLlr Ken James, Leader of Torrington



CLlr Mandy Ewings, Leader of West Devon

