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Council Reports April 2026

District

2025/26 has been a civic year of change at East Devon District Council:

- This month the excellent Waste & Recycling service, a nationally recognised contract, with Suez comes to an end. In order to help plan for developing an East Devon based service across other council areas, we have taken the service into arms-length internal control with a new Local Authority Trading Company. It is hoped that residents will not see any difference, but in the climate of Local Government Reorganisation, there is the potential for economies of scale across a number of current council footprints
- Similarly, the long-running contract with LED to provide sports and leisure services has only another year to run, and after many discussions and meetings and with the help of external experts the service has been put out to tender. The replies are currently in the process of being assessed.
- Although it was not officially selected as one of the 7 new towns in the recently announced tranche by government, Marlcombe has now established a forward looking civic-led governance structure endorsed at both district and county cabinets last week. Discussions have been had about drawing down funding from MHCLG to help develop the concept further. Two comments here: without another new town, the pressure on towns and villages across Devon to take hundreds more homes because of the government's housing targets would be irresistible. And Marlcombe has already made a study of the failings of the developer-led model of Cranbrook, and via a civic-led model looks to deliver in the public interest

County/Local Government Reorganisation

- It is now expected that Devon will hear which option has been decided by the Secretary of State, Steve Reed, by the end of July. In my view, the only two viable options are 911 or 451 but Mr Reed has already signalled that the schemes such as the enlarged Exeter are favoured (having just approved the enlarged Norwich and Ipswich.)
- Across the country, district CEs have realised that on Labour's current plan there would be 25 extra CEs. But there would also need to be 25 extra directors of children's services. And adults' services. Children's Directors do not fall out of the trees, and poor appointments or badly managed disaggregation risk the wellbeing of children.

- Moreover, with either 451 or the Labour Devon idea, the only way to save this would be for the new unitaries to contract the Devon-wide service from current DCC for the first five years. Is anyone talking about this? I worry that we are wasting time waiting for a July "decision" which was decided a year ago
- Where this would end up is 1. The new 250-300k unitaries will fail in social services from the first year, and it will be impossible to conceal. 2. Government will then transfer those responsibilities up to Strategic Mayors, whose powers they are improvising on the hoof monthly. 3. It will bed down in the end in England with Mayors answerable every four years to the electorate but with toothless internal scrutiny having far reaching powers from Transport to Police, NHS to Children, New Towns to Environmental. 4. There will be two other tiers ... Unitaries of about 100k bigger than currently, defanged, planning permission and licensing and probably advisory only re development. Performative only. And the lovely parishes and towns muddling through as per usual
- My conviction is that it is in the public interest of the people of East and wider Devon that LGR, never in the manifesto, be cancelled. But we have to play the hand we currently hold