



Devon and Torbay
Combined County Authority

**DEVON AND TORBAY
COMBINED COUNTY
AUTHORITY
ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

For approval on 19 March 2025

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1. Preamble

This Assurance Framework was endorsed by the Shadow Devon and Torbay Combined Authority at its meeting on 31 January 2025.

The key elements of the DTCCA's governance framework (including its constitution) will be considered and formally ratified at its inaugural meeting being held on 19 March 2025.

2. Background

This Framework describes the checks and balances that will ensure the DTCCA uses public money responsibly, openly and transparently, and accountably, to achieve best value for money for the area.

The DTCCA is committed to ensuring accountability for its activities and spending, both to HM Government as well as businesses and residents.

The Assurance Framework is a reference document for use by all members, officers, local authority partners, businesses and residents. It sets out the local systems and arrangements, employed by the DTCCA, for ensuring public money is allocated in an appropriate manner, in accordance with legal, fiscal and best value requirements.

The Framework describes the arrangements for managing the Investment Programme and the systems to ensure that resources are spent with regularity, propriety, and value for money, whilst at the same time achieving intended outcomes. The Framework applies to all decisions, approvals, and funding bids, regimes, and projects.

The Framework sits alongside other documents:

- The [Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal](#) agreed in January 2024.
- The [final proposal for the DTCCA](#) that was submitted by Devon County Council and Torbay Council to Government in May 2024.
- The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority Regulations 2024.
- The DTCCA Constitution

The DTCCA is committed to ensuring the highest standards of governance, accountability and transparency across all aspects of its activities and will review this Assurance Framework on a regular basis.

The DTCCA has established Advisory Groups which form part of its operation but have no formal decision-making powers. They are:

- **Business Advisory Group** - to provide advice and support to the DTCCA on business and economy matters.

- **Skills and Employment Advisory Group** - to provide advice and support to the DTCCA on skills and employment matters.
- **Housing Advisory Group** - to build on the previous Devon Housing Task Force and its partnerships, working jointly with Homes England and housing authorities across Devon and Torbay.
- **Climate Change and Net Zero Advisory Group** - building on the work and structure of the Devon Climate Change and Emergency Response partnerships and groups.
- **Transport Advisory Group** - the voice of the transport industry to advise, guide, and inform the DTCCA in supporting it to fulfil its local transport authority function.
- **Investment Advisory Group** - to bring together representatives from each of the other Advisory Groups to provide advice and guidance to the DTCCA on funding and investment.

3. Constitution of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority

The Constitution of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority will be formally agreed by the Board at its inaugural meeting being held on 19 March 2025 after which it will be published on CCA website.

The DTCCA's constitution describes the CCA's membership, namely:

- Six constituent members appointed by the two Constituent Councils. Each Council has appointed one Lead Member (the Leader of the Council) and two further elected members.
- Four non-constituent members, of which two are members nominated by the Devon District Forum to act as district representatives. The Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is also a non-constituent member. There is a vacancy for the one remaining non-constituent member.
- Two associate members being the Chair of the Business Advisory Group and the Chair of the Skills and Employment Advisory Group. Associate members are to be non-voting members, in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2003.

The constitution sets out the voting arrangements of the CCA, including matters which can only be agreed or determined by the Constituent members (Reserved Matters). All other matters are general matters and the constitution sets out the voting requirements for each function and power.

Matters reserved for the Constituent Councils include:

Strategy and Policy

The adoption of, and any amendment to or withdrawal of any major strategy or policy of the DTCCA.

Frameworks

The adoption, amendment, or withdrawal of the following framework documents:

- Assurance Framework;
- Monitoring & Evaluation Framework;
- Performance Management Framework; and,
- Risk Management Framework.

Financial Matters

- Approving the DTCCA budget.
- Approving the estimates of income and expenditure and the setting of a transport levy pursuant to the Transport Levying Bodies Regulations 1992.
- Approving the borrowing limits of the DTCCA, including determining the borrowing limits of the DTCCA in relation to transport matters pursuant to section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- Approving the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy of the DTCCA.
- Approving the capital programme of the DTCCA and approving new transport schemes.
- The preparation of a local economic assessment under section 69 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

People

- Approving the appointment of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer (S73 Officer).
- Making decisions in relation to the establishment and remuneration of posts whose remuneration is, or is proposed to be, £100,000 and above (or pro rata thereto).
- Making decisions in relation to settlements and severance packages on termination of appointment in excess of £100,000.
- The determination of collective terms and conditions of staff.

Governance

Decisions related to:

- Membership and governance (including voting rights);
- The election of the Chair and Vice-Chair;
- Adoption and amendment of the Constitution (other than changes delegated to the Monitoring Officer) in line with the provisions of section 14 of the 2023 Act;
- Adopt the Member Code of Conduct and arrangements therein;
- Establishment and membership of Committees and Sub-Committees;
- Establishment and membership of Joint Committees and Commissions;
- Approve the nomination of Lead Member responsibilities and membership and chairs of committees and sub-committees;
- Approval of any allowance schemes;
- Appointment of an Independent Person of the Audit and Governance Committee;
- Delegation of functions to third parties;
- Establishment of Trading Companies;
- Any other matters reserved to the Group.

The DTCCA shall exercise the general power of competence in relation to any of its functions after having due regard to the advice of the Monitoring Officer and S73 Officer.

The DTCCA's Constitution includes sections relating to:

- Officer Code of Conduct
- The Local Government Association's "Model Councillor Code of Conduct"
- Arrangements for Appointment, Disqualification and Dismissal of Non-Constituent and Associate Members
- Member and Officer Protocol
- Complaints Procedure
- Consents Protocol (City, Districts and National Parks)
- Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy
- Officer Employment Procedure Rules
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Contract Procedure Rules (to include procurement)
- Financial Regulations
- Protocol for acquisition and disposal of land and property

The DTCCA will also adopt the following policies, procedures and schemes to underpin good governance, and high standards of integrity and transparency:

- Freedom of Information

- Information Governance and Data Protection
- Members' Remuneration and Allowances
- Anti-Money Laundering

The DTCCA will maintain a register of forthcoming decisions (“the forward plan”) in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. It includes a description of the item to be considered; who the decision maker will be; when the decision will be taken; details of any planned consultation; and contact details for further information (including reports and background papers).

4. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The DTCCA has appointed an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor the decision making of the DTCCA and ensure that the decision making is appropriately focussed on community needs, and that high quality delivery is taking place for the benefit of the area.

The members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are different individuals from those who are members of the DTCCA Board. The political balance of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reflects the political make-up of the constituent councils. It includes at least two members nominated from each constituent council as well as representatives from the district councils.

The DTCCA will consider how to best ensure wider relevant partners (such as from the business, education, skills community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors) are represented effectively on the Committee, though they will have no voting rights.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be an Independent Person as required by The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority Regulations 2025.

5. Audit and Governance Committee

The DTCCA has appointed an Audit and Governance Committee to support and monitor the authority in the areas of governance, risk management, external audit, internal audit, financial reporting, and other related areas to ensure that the financial and governance decision making is sound.

At least two members of the Audit and Governance Committee are nominated from each constituent council of the DTCCA. At least one member is nominated by the district councils.

The Audit and Governance Committee is politically balanced to reflect the political make-up of the Constituent Councils. Members of the Audit and Governance

Committee are not the same individuals as those representatives who are members of the DTCCA. The DTCCA will ensure that the Audit and Governance Committee has the appropriate membership (including an Independent Person) to ensure effective oversight CCA's overall assurance arrangements.

6. Internal Audit

Internal audit evaluates the effectiveness of an organisation's risk management, control and governance frameworks, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance. The role of internal audit is to:

- understand the key risks;
- examine and evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of risk management and the entire control environment as operated throughout the organisation; and
- contribute to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

The Devon Assurance Partnership is a shared service arrangement between Devon County Council, Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council, Mid Devon District Council, Torridge District Council, North Devon District Council, and the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority. It was constituted under Section 101 of the 1975 Local Government Act and later under Section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Partnership delivers internal audit and assurance services, including fraud and risk management, to its partners as well as external clients.

At its meeting on 14 November 2024, the Devon Audit Partnership Committee agreed that the DTCCA would join the DAP as a non-voting partner. Some of the Devon Assurance Partnership's internal auditing of Devon County Council's and Torbay Council's underpinning systems will be valuable to the DTCCA. During 2025/26, the Devon Assurance Partnership will audit the CCA's governance arrangements and risk register. This will inform the work it undertakes in subsequent years.

This will ensure that the DTCCA is subject to independent, objective assurance and consulting activities that add value and improve its operations. It will help the CCA accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

7. External Auditor

The DTCCA will have independently audited accounts to plan, make informed decisions, and manage services.

For audits of accounts from 1 April 2018, Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) is responsible for appointing an auditor to principal local government and police bodies that have chosen to opt into its national auditor appointment arrangements. The Appointing Person scheme operated by PSAA is covered by the following legislation:

[Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#) - (LAAA 2014)

[The Local Audit \(Appointing Person\) Regulations 2015](#) - (LA(AP) Regs 2015)

Under LAAA 2014, a newly established body can either appoint its own auditor or opt-in to PSAA's national scheme. As a newly established body, DTCCA is eligible to become an opted-in authority and following its inaugural meeting is expected to make the necessary arrangements to do so.

The auditor will produce an annual report confirming its opinion on the DTCCA's financial statements and any significant matters in relation to the CCA arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. The auditor will undertake its reviews under three main criteria:

- **Financial Sustainability:** it will confirm whether the CCA's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position at the end of each financial year.
- **Governance:** It will report its judgement on whether the CCA has proper arrangements in place regarding financial sustainability and governance
- **Best Value:** It will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the CCA's approach to improving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

8. Investment Programme and Project Appraisal

Identifying Projects

Projects for funding through the DTCCA Investment Programme will be identified by the CCA and, where relevant, the constituent councils through their alignment with the strategic and economic policy and plans for the area.

Project identification will be guided by a set of agreed objectives and investment principles for the Investment Programme. These are set out in an investment strategy and include the scope for funding to be repaid (in whole or part) or generate a return, in order that the Investment Programme has a greater impact. Where projects are not promoted by the DTCCA or the constituent councils, then an open, transparent, and evidence-based process will be used to identify projects for funding.

Project Prioritisation

Prioritisation will be undertaken based upon agreed thematic criteria to establish an Investment Programme. The detail of the thematic methodology used, including prioritisation process and metrics, will be agreed in advance of its application. The prioritisation will be based on a range of factors built around the business case for intervention. This will include:

- Location
- High yielding development
- Projected outcomes against policy and strategy objectives
- Deliverability
- Need
- Financial value for money, high and low risk factors

All projects will undergo review and refinement as part of developing the business case for each project. As project business cases are submitted, they will be assessed on their individual merits, but over time as a project pipeline emerges business case evaluations will also be subject to an overall prioritisation process.

Project Appraisal

Project appraisal for the Investment Programme will be consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book and Business Case Appraisal process, including supplementary and departmental guidance, such as the Department for Transport's (DfT) Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) appraisal guidance for transport schemes.

The DTCCA is committed to undertaking due diligence activities that support effective decision-making and project appraisal. This will naturally be undertaken as the investment business case applications progress through the options appraisal and shortlisting. Where it is necessary to undertake specific analysis, for example, complex projects or comparison of multilayered financial data, due regard will be taken of HM Treasury's Aqua Book guidance. This will ensure "fit for purpose" analysis underpins the CCA's decision-making throughout the evaluation stages.

Similar regard will also be applied where appropriate to HM Treasury's Magenta Book guidance to provide qualitative comparative analysis for different combinations of sometimes complex projects/investment decisions and the respective outcomes.

The DTCCA will be responsible for determining how to undertake its due diligence, but external agencies may also be commissioned to support this function as appropriate.

Risk Management

The DTCCA will identify and manage the risks for the overall Investment Programme (and its wider operations). Key risks for the Investment Programme will be added to the corporate risk register and will be monitored Audit and Governance Committee.

The DTCCA will establish a comprehensive Risk Management Framework, which supports the identification and management of opportunities and risks across the Investment Programme. This framework will be robust, transparent and invite and support challenge innovation and excellence across the Investment Programme and its deliverable outcomes.

Financial Management

The DTCCA will establish a Financial Management Framework which will ensure that there is regular financial reporting and management of the Investment Programme. This will include regular reporting to the CCA as well as its Overview and Scrutiny Committee and/or Audit and Governance Committee as appropriate.

9. Business Voice

The Devon and Torbay Business Advisory Group (DTBAG), as one of the DTCCA's Advisory Groups, is the voice of business. It advises, guides, and informs the DTCCA to make local decisions on strategic economic planning for Devon and Torbay

The overarching role of the DTBAG is to provide business with a meaningful role in developing, implementing, and monitoring the CCA's economic strategy. The Group has a role in setting annual priorities, securing investment and designing appropriate programmes to address business needs. In addition, the DTBAG provides expertise, insight, intelligence, and evidence from business to support the growth and economic ambitions of Devon and Torbay.

The DTBAG's terms of reference will be available on the Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal website -

The DTBAG membership includes a diverse range of businesses related to Devon and Torbay's economic strengths and priorities. It includes representatives of businesses of all sizes and businesses which are urban, rural, and coastal. The DTBAG members include representatives are listed on the website and they include representatives of the following sectors:

- Agriculture Support
- Business Support
- Construction
- Creative Industries
- Cultural Industries

- Culture / Hospitality, Social / Care
- Electronics
- Environmental / Conservation
- Technology / R&D
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise

The DTCCA will, via the DTBAG, involve business representative organisations, such as a local Chambers of Commerce and the Federations of Small Businesses in the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

The members of the DTBAG, alongside members of all the other Advisory Groups, will be bound by the DTCCA's Conflict of Interest policy.