

From: Phil Martin <phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk>

Sent: 30 July 2025 18:09

To: Sharon Groth <sharon.groth@witney-tc.gov.uk>; Astrid Harvey <Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk>

Cc: Town Clerk <townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk>; Loraine Harwood <loraine.harwood@witney-tc.gov.uk>; Phil Martin <Phil.Martin@WESTOXON.GOV.UK>

Subject: RE: Local Government Reorganisation: Two Unitary Council's for Oxfordshire

Good evening Sharon,

Thanks for your email regarding the development of a Two Unitary Authority proposal for Local Government Reorganisation for Oxfordshire. We are currently at the early stage of proposal development, and therefore it is not possible to give definitive answers to how the proposed Oxford and the Shires Unitary Model would impact Witney Town Council with regard to:

- The delivery and potential transfer of services currently provided by principal authorities;
- The financial implications for town and parish councils;
- The mechanisms proposed for engaging with local councils in the future governance structure.

That said, we are committed to developing a credible and compelling case for a Two Unitary Authority structure for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire to inform the Secretary of State's decision over which structure should be implemented for our County.

Based on the current government timetable the Secretary of State will make a decision following formal consultation this time next year, after which all the Councils across Oxfordshire will begin working to implement the structure that will include consideration of each the outcomes set out in your email and the point at which each of these will be known, either during the term of the Shadow Authority (from April 2027) or the new Unitary Authority (from April 2028):

1. Clear financial arrangements for any devolved services, including sustainable funding and fair transitional support.
2. Formal service level agreements ensuring that any transferred services come with appropriate resources, guidance, and accountability.
3. A defined role for town and parish councils within any new governance framework, particularly in the delivery of place-based services.
4. Representation in strategic planning processes that directly affect our community.
5. Support for capacity-building, training, and infrastructure to manage any increased responsibilities effectively.
6. Continued commitment to partnership working, recognising the strengths and knowledge of local councils in delivering locally responsive services.

This will require on-going engagement with all Town and Parish Council's across the District. At the point where decisions over implementation require input from specific localities we will engage directly with the Town or Parish Council for that geography.

I would encourage you, colleagues and Cllrs from the Town Council to attend the Local Government Reorganisation event we have arranged for Town and Parish Councils on 4th August 6.30 – 8pm that is being hosted in the Council Chamber at Woodgreen (please see invitation attached) as this will give you and peers an opportunity to feed into the Two Unitary Authority proposal at this early stage of its development.

Kind regards

Phil and Astrid

Phil Martin
Director of Place



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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