**Proposals for Governance in Oxfordshire**

Our members will be very aware of the ongoing discussions over what local governance will look like in Oxfordshire in the coming years. The changes that are coming are necessary to meet the plans laid out in the UK Government’s White Paper on devolution released in December 2024.

*What changes will we see?*

The White Paper sets out the Government’s intention to create a number of Strategic Authorities across the country. These will sit above the current councils and either be designated as a Foundation Strategic Authority or Mayoral Strategic Authority. The latter will be led by an elected mayor.

In the areas – like Oxfordshire – where a two-tier system for principal authorities remains, this must be abolished for a single unitary authority. The two-tier system is when two different councils handle different services, as is the case in Oxfordshire (i.e. we have a District Council and a County Council, both handling different responsibilities.)

The various Councils that operate in Oxfordshire have been discussing options and are preparing proposals for what the single unitary authority could be and how areas/populations can be divided. Proposals must be submitted by November.

*What are the proposals?*

There are currently three options being developed for local government in Oxfordshire. It is likely that all three proposals will be submitted to the Government, which will ultimately make the decision for our area.

Option 1: One authority

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing a single unitary authority for the county of Oxfordshire. More details about the rationale and potential benefits of this approach are available here: [County council continues to endorse one council as best option for future local government in Oxfordshire](https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/)

Option 2: Two authorities

Five councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire have collaborated on the proposal for two authorities. The proposal would divide the five existing councils into two new authorities: Oxford & Shires Council and Ridgeway Council.

Oxford & Shires Council would include Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire. Ridegway Council would include South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.

More details are available on this proposal on the website: [Home - Two Councils](https://twocouncils.org/home)

There is a public consultation open until 16 July on this proposal and a number of public engagement sessions are happening across the area. The details are available on the website. Once the consultation closes, a revised proposal will be produced.

Option 3: Three authorities

Oxford City Council is proposing three unitary authorities be created to cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire:

Oxford Council - comprising Oxford on expanded boundaries

Northern Oxfordshire Council - comprising much of the existing West Oxfordshire and Cherwell districts

Ridgeway Council - comprising much of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts combined with the existing West Berkshire unitary

More information about the proposal and its potential benefits is available on this website: [A greater Oxford | Oxford City Council](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/future-local-government/greater-oxford)

*When will all this happen?*

The proposals are currently being developed and will be submitted by 28 November 2025, with decisions expected to be made during 2026. Shadow councils will be established during 2027 to start the transition process, with the new councils being formally created (or vested) in 2028.

*What should we do now?*

Keep an eye out for updates from the various councils or on our website. The principal authorities are engaging with their communities and we’d encourage you to get involved, ask questions and find out more about what is planned and what it will mean.

At this stage, little has been said explicitly about the role of town and parish councils within these future governance structures but we will keep monitoring the situation.

*Keep an eye on our website (*[*www.oalc.org.uk*](http://www.oalc.org.uk)*) and follow us on Facebook @oxonalc for more news and further updates.*