Cherwell District Council - July 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has today confirmed that Oxfordshire's current council structure will be replaced with three new unitary authorities, bringing an end to the existing county and district council system. While opinions will differ on the model that has been chosen, our priority is now to ensure this transition is delivered successfully and that residents remain at the heart of every decision.

The three new councils will be:

- **Greater Oxford Council** – covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings.
- **Northern Oxfordshire Council** – covering most of the existing Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.
- **Ridgeway Council** – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts, combined with West Berkshire.

The current County and District Councils will continue to serve residents until April 2028, with elections for the new shadow unitary authorities due to take place in May 2027. Throughout this period, our focus must remain firmly on delivering high-quality public services and ensuring residents do not suffer because of the reorganisation process.

We will work constructively with colleagues across Oxfordshire to help deliver a smooth transition, but we will also hold those leading the process to account. Local government reform must not become a distraction from fixing potholes, supporting vulnerable residents, collecting waste, determining planning applications, and delivering the many other services that people rely on every day.

This reorganisation presents an opportunity to simplify local government, reduce unnecessary duplication and improve value for taxpayers. However, these benefits will only be realised if the new councils are financially sustainable, locally accountable and focused on delivering better outcomes for residents rather than simply changing organisational structures.

For Cherwell, it is essential that Banbury, Bicester and our villages continue to have a strong voice within the new arrangements. Decisions should be made as close to local communities as possible, and we welcome the commitment to strengthening the role of town and parish councils as part of the new system. We will continue to make the case for strong financial management, better local services, and practical leadership that delivers results. We believe residents deserve a fresh start, and we will be asking residents to back a new Conservative

administration to bring back common sense and ensure their new council truly works for them.

That makes next May's local elections crucial. The councillors elected will play a major role in shaping the future of local government across Oxfordshire for years to come.

This announcement marks the beginning of a significant period of change. Conservative Councillors will keep residents updated and make sure North Oxfordshire's voice is heard every step of the way.

The actual text published was: "Oxfordshire: 6 councils being reorganised into 3 unitaries. This will address Oxford's housing constraints, better reflect the city's economic geography, and ensure Oxford has its own seat at the table when regional powers and funding are agreed with government."

I notice the Countryside and Market Towns didn't feature in the Government's announcement.

Cherwell Local Plan examination

Due to work commitments, Inspectors J Ayres BA Hons, Solicitor and D Hendley BA(Hons) MA MRTPI are no longer able to carry out the examination of the Cherwell Local Plan and Inspector D Spencer BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI has been appointed in their place. Inspector Spencer has written to the Council concerning the next steps in the Examination of the Local Plan and his letter can be viewed in the Examination documents here: https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18786/clpred62-inspectors-letter-to-the-council-7726.pdf

Or, the short version, decision on next steps delayed until mid-August.

Devolution

Email sent on behalf of Cllr Lesley McLean, Leader of the Council

I am writing to update you on the position regarding the proposed Thames Valley Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA).

As you will be aware, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has made it clear that progression to an FSA requires consensus from all Council Leaders across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon on the proposed geography.

While views differed on the way forward on the Government proposal, both Cherwell and West Oxfordshire remain supportive of the benefits a Foundation Strategic Authority could hold for our districts. It would bring increased investment and provide that strategic scale to proactively tackle key issues like economic growth, transport, net zero and skills, and would support the ambitions we jointly hold as councils to improve our districts.

With significant change coming imminently through Local Government Reorganisation, we will be focusing on making sure that process delivers for our residents and we are ready to revisit the strategic authority conversation in future when it is right for our area.

Kind Regards,
Lesley

Quite what happens next remains to be decided.

I hope that we have some say and control over these events and HM Gov don't simply impose a structure upon us.

At the Local Government Association Conference Will Garton, director general of local government, growth & communities at MHCLG announced a delay to the Devo program.

Primary Care

The 10-Year Capital Plan to modernise NHS buildings and upgrade GP surgeries was published on the 8th July.
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-year-capital-plan-to-rebuild-nhs-and-bring-care-closer-to-home

There is some good stuff in it but it relies on the ICB to have a plan….

I'm unaware of any bids or locations selected for Neighbourhood Health Centres in Oxfordshire.

There is £200 million more for the Primary Care Utilisation and Modernisation Fund during this Parliament of which £102million is already allocated for the 25/26 financial year. The rest is up for grabs.

Then there are the Neighbourhood Health Centres for which £200 million of public capital up to 2030 has been identified. There is an opening for private finance to co-fund these schemes and by 2020 the is an expectation for 130 or the 250 promised premises.
The NHC's will be ICB-led schemes and attempt to deliver large multi-service health centres (Darzi centres / poly clinics) but this time with PFI.

This is all capital. There is no mention of revenue. Unless the rents set by the district valuation service are also looked at, how will these capital projects be sustained?

Cllr David Rogers
Cherwell District Council