

A new vision for Oxfordshire from Matthew Barber Leader of the VOWH

Many of you will have already heard about the proposal put forward by seven district councils for a new devolution deal for Oxfordshire. The plans include government devolving more funding and powers to local authorities and the reorganisation of local councils themselves. We are proposing the abolition of the existing district and county councils to be replaced by three or four new Local Unitary Councils. In our part of the world that would mean a new council covering the area of the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire that would provide all of the local services for residents.

We firmly believe that these services could be delivered more efficiently and to a higher standard if we remove the inevitable waste that comes for a two tier system of local government. It would mean just one single point of contact for the public for virtually all services and much closer working between the emergency services; NHS and social care.

We are grateful for the support of local MPs including Ed Vaizey and Nicola Blackwood and of course the Prime Minister David Cameron. They all recognise that our scheme has merit and we are keen to complete the detailed work on our plans in order to present it to residents in a public consultation later this year.

Discussions are continuing with government on how to progress these proposals as quickly as possible, but the whole process is still likely to be measured in months and years. You can read some more details about our plans at www.oxfordshire.vision.