

## **Annex D- Draft Terms of Reference: Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group**

### **Purpose**

To receive updates on and provide a sounding board for the development of proposals for local government reorganisation and devolution.

To consider how the district's needs and preferences may be met and catered for in future local government arrangements.

### **Background**

The Government has set out its intention to significantly reform, at great pace, local government structures and implement devolution across England:

- The Government wishes to see successor councils emerge from the current two-tier system of district and county councils and that those successor councils and the existing unitary -structured councils of England must join a Strategic Authority.
- The Government also wishes to see all areas of England covered by strategic authorities, involving a number of councils working together to deliver the Government's enhanced devolution framework.

### **Approach**

The Working Group will meet with senior officers and may with the agreement of the Chief Executive Officer engage with external stakeholders. The Working Group will examine the issues and provide feedback to officers but won't make reports or recommendations to Council.

The Council will also hold member briefing sessions on local government reorganisation and devolution, which will be open to all members. Ultimately any decisions on proposals for reorganisation and devolution will be a matter for the Executive.

### **Membership**

The Working Group will comprise 9 Members based on nominations made by political groups and appointed at the Annual Meeting of full Council.

The membership does not have to be politically proportionate to the Council as a whole but the principle of proportionality will be applied, subject to all political groups being represented on the 9-Member Working Group.

The quorum for a meeting is any three Councillors, who may be in attendance in person or remotely.

Substitute members will be permitted on the Working Group, with members being substituted by a member from the same political group.

The Leader of the Council will be an ex officio member and chair the Working Group.

### **Meetings and access to information**

Meetings will be scheduled as required with the first meeting taking place in June or July 2025. The frequency of meetings is expected to be every six to eight weeks but this may vary and meetings will be called as and when required.

The Working Group is not a formal Committee or Sub-Committee and is not subject to access to information regulations. To ensure that all attendees feel that they can speak openly about the issues, meetings will not be open to the public but will be open to all West Oxfordshire District Councillors. The content of the meetings is to be treated as confidential and not shared beyond the membership of the Council.

Meetings will generally take place either remotely via Teams, or will be Hybrid meetings, or in person meetings. Meetings will not be webcast.

### **Officer support**

The Working Group will be primarily advised by the Chief Executive Officer but may be advised by other officers as required.

Democratic Services will attend meetings and make a note of the key points and actions arising, which will be presented at the next suitable meeting of the Working Group.

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