Oxfordshire County Council News October/November 2026

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Local Government Reorganisation

In the latest instalment of the thrilling saga that is Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) we heard on 29th October that the Three Councils Plan is back – and now, weirder than ever!

If you can't remember the plot details, we heard of a minded-to decision from national government concerning the controversial structure for three new unitary councils in Oxfordshire in July.

This was then 'paused' for review by Angela Rayner one month ago, and now it returns in altered shape, delayed by one year and with 'interesting' new boundaries.

As these boundaries now stand, they mean that from this County Division, Nuneham Courtenay, Burcot, Culham, Clifton Hampden and Marsh Baldon will now be in the Ridgeway Council, while Berinsfield, Sandford, Drayton St. Leonard and Garsington will be in Greater Oxford Council.

The joint LGR implementation board, made up of all chief executives and the system LGR programme director, will be meeting on 2nd November to discuss the next steps.

Just to remind you, these 'next steps' takes place after those same leaders, "*Sent a legal letter to the government and also issued a protective claim in court in relation to a potential judicial review of LGR in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.*

The county council has been asking government to provide the evidence and analysis that informed its minded-to decision in July for this area.

We will now consider any information shared by the government that has informed its new minded-to decision, assess our position and any further appropriate actions".

So, that's all clear then. More instalments in the saga will no doubt follow but for now:

District Council elections will definitely happen in **May 2027** with potentially Unitary Council elections in **May 2028** – (depending on the actions the County Council decides to take).

Under current plans the Unitaries will come into force on (the highly auspicious date?!) of **1st April 2029** after a year shadowing the district and county councils.

Devolution

And, just to assist with the simplification of local government and the removal of unnecessary layers of local government:

John Healey, MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his Autumn Budget Statement of 29th October that the Thames Valley region, alongside nine others across the country including Surrey, Hertfordshire and Wessex, will progress with plans for a **Mayoral Strategic Authority** (MSA).

The announcement came with a proposed allocation of £9.1 million of funding from the government's "Good Growth Funds" for investment in growth priorities as the MSA is developed.

Earlier in the week beginning 26th October, leaders across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon, wrote to Jim McMahon, OBE, MP, Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth, confirming their aspiration for an MSA for the region.

Following the Chancellor's announcement, the 13 councils within the region will now develop the proposal in advance of a stakeholder consultation planned for the new year.

Subject to approval of the proposal for consultation by councils across the region in December and consideration of the consultation response, the formal proposal would then be submitted to government in spring next year.

A new MSA in shadow form would then be established later in 2027 following the statutory decision-making process. This would then be followed by mayoral elections in 2028.

A Thames Valley MSA is **intended to give local leaders more funding and control over areas like transport, skills and employment support, inward investment and affordable housing**.

A new MSA would be led by an elected mayor and board comprised of representatives from all upper tier authorities. The MSA would bring new powers and funding opportunities to the region.

Local councils would continue to be responsible for delivering day to day services such as waste collections, social care, housing, schools, leisure and local planning.

Meanwhile….in daily life….

Berinsfield

At Full Council on Tuesday 3rd November I am asking Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People how many Berinsfield families have applied for, been refused, or appealed against a refusal of home-to-school transport in each of the last five years.

Given that Berinsfield has no secondary school, many pupils attend school in Abingdon and yet families can be refused funded transport where the County Council determines that a different school is 'the nearest suitable school'.

Baldons

At Full Council on Tuesday 3rd November I am asking Gareth Epps, the Cabinet Member for Transport if The Baldons will be formally recorded as a named stakeholder in the Berinsfield to Oxford Greenway project given over 50% of the non-A4074 route is via their Parish and uses existing Public Rights of Way in the villages of Marsh Baldon, Toot Baldon and Little Baldon and how and when the residents will be consulted and given opportunities to ask questions on the developing plans.

8th December 2026 Full Council

As the year draws to a close there is another full council shortly after the November meeting. Please would all parishes forward me their concerns by third week of November at the latest to be sure of a Question for Cabinet.