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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP  
Deputy Prime Minister & Secretary of State  
For Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

30 September 2024

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

### **Devolution in Oxfordshire: our expression of interest**

All Oxfordshire councils are committed to creating a greener, fairer, and healthier county by empowering local communities, institutions, and businesses. We were therefore pleased to hear your commitment to transferring more powers out of Westminster and into the hands of local people. We believe that a new ambitious devolution framework can help unlock productivity and progress and that the opportunity is significant and timely. We would look forward to working with government and our neighbours to establish the most impactful geographies and agree clear and accountable governance arrangements.

Your government is seeking to transform the UK economy. With output of £23.5bn in terms of gross value added, we believe that we must be central to that mission. Oxfordshire is one of the most innovative and productive regions in the world. Our two universities, one of which has been ranked number 1 globally by the Times Higher Education World Rankings for eight years in a row, are at the centre of an outstanding research, development and innovation sector, driving progress across the country. We are at the forefront of the transition to net-zero and adaptation to climate change and are creating the conditions for locally led innovative investment in green infrastructure. We are home to significant industries across the county, with specific strengths in health and life sciences, space and mobility, motor sports,

energy, AI and robotics. Our cultural, rural and visitor economies make our place special, and our thriving SME, social enterprise and cooperative sectors are helping to build community wealth.

However, Oxfordshire is not without its challenges. Our strong economy and growing population have resulted in interlinked issues of increasing transport congestion and a lack of homes that are affordable for many in our community, driving inequality, meaning that the county's opportunities are not open to all. We face enormous pressure on public services, the natural environment and infrastructure, especially grid-capacity, water and sewage. All of these issues impact on Oxfordshire's ability to contribute to national missions.

Working together, we can offer leadership on inclusivity and inequality, environmental recovery and climate change, skills and employment, and the delivery of infrastructure. To have the most impact, we need longer-term certainty on funding to invest in infrastructure and the long-term prevention agenda, and the ability to agree priorities locally. We could deliver more with increased flexibility to make the most of our local assets, for example through tax increment finance or tourism levies where appropriate.

As Leaders, we are committed to reforming our local partnership governance to be ready for coming changes and we welcome your invitation to move forward with devolution. We look forward to the publication of the revised devolution framework and would welcome the opportunity to work with you or your officials as the framework is developed, to understand more of your thinking and contribute our ideas.

Yours sincerely



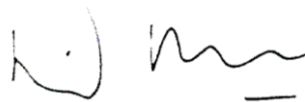
Cllr Liz Leffman,  
Leader, Oxfordshire County Council



Cllr David Hingley  
Leader, Cherwell District Council



Cllr Susan Brown  
Leader, Oxford City Council



Cllr David Rouane  
Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council



Cllr Bethia Thomas  
Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council



Cllr Andy Graham  
Leader, West Oxfordshire District Council