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Anne Gwinnett
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SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Anne

Thank you for your letter of 12th January regarding the response to the letter from Alison McGovern MP seeking views on the postponement of the City council 2026 elections and the impact on capacity to deliver LGR.

Firstly, to be clear, the council is not being asked to take a decision on the postponement of the elections, that will be a decision for the Secretary of State. Procedurally, therefore, there is no decision (key or otherwise) for the council to take.

The letter is clearly addressed to the Leader of the council asking her *“to set out your views on the postponement of your local election and if you consider this could release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation in your area and so allow reorganisation to progress effectively”*.

I recognise, as you have highlighted that the letter makes references to wanting to listen to councils' views on the matter. The term 'council' is commonly used in a general sense and does not mean Full Council by default. Government frequently uses the term "council" when referring to functions which in legislation rest with the Cabinet, for example.

The Leader does have the power to respond to government consultations and to decide how such responses are informed. That is the case here since the council is not being asked to take a decision about the election but to provide views to the Secretary of State about the impact postponing elections would have on capacity to deliver LGR.

That said, the Leader has been clear and stated publicly that she wants all councillors to have the opportunity to express views on the matter so that she is able to reflect the full range of opinions in her response.

Other councils across the country, including others in Oxfordshire, are taking a similar approach, that it is for the Leader to respond having listened to the views from members. In some instances, this is through holding formal council meetings, in others through informal channels.



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Your letter also made reference in the constitution to the Returning Officer's "powers to do with holding elections". These relate to powers to ensure that elections are planned and delivered effectively and in compliance with the law. The response to the government's request for views about the postponement of elections and impact on capacity for LGR is not a matter for the Returning Officer.

I hope that clarifies the position.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Green
Chief Executive



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