

PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 APRIL 2026

Devolution Update: Thames Valley Strategic Authority

Report by Martin Reeves, Chief Executive

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - NOTE progress on the Devolution Programme since December 2025; and
 - NOTE how the draft Cabinet report (annexed) responds to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recommendations agreed in December 2025.

Executive Summary

1. This report provides the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress of the Devolution Programme since the Committee considered the initial Expression of Interest (EOI) for a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) in December 2025. It is intended to respond directly to the Committee's recommendations in December 2025 that the Cabinet ensures that members, stakeholders, and the wider public are kept informed about progress and outcomes, recognising the uncertainty inherent in the devolution process.
2. Since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in December 2025, two Expressions of Interest have been submitted to Government. The first was sent in December 2025 following the recommendation supported by the Scrutiny Committee to open discussions with Government for a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the Thames Valley area.
3. Subsequently, Government clarified its expectations through a Ministerial Statement indicating that Foundation Strategic Authorities (FSAs) are the route through which areas may progress towards an MSA. A second EOI was therefore submitted on 20 March 2026 in line with this guidance and expanding on the EOI submitted in December 2025.
4. This report also notes that Leaders from the Thames Valley undertook a Ministerial visit on 10 March 2026 with the Minister for Devolution, Faith and Communities to outline our continued intent for a Mayoral Strategic Authority. The Leaders gained a greater understanding of Government expectations,

next steps, and timescales. Leaders were advised that the only means to a MSA is through a FSA. The Minister further assured the Leaders that, she would welcome further discussions on progress from an FSA to an MSA in due course.

Background

1. In December 2025, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered a report on a proposed Expression of Interest to Government for a Mayoral Strategic Authority and agreed recommendations to Cabinet intended to:
 - ensure consistency and clarity in messaging on the benefits and implications of devolution; and
 - strengthen communication and transparency for councillors, stakeholders, and the public, given the uncertainty of the national devolution process.
2. Cabinet considered the Committee's comments and provided a formal response, accepting the importance of clear communications, stakeholder engagement, and transparency as the programme develops.
3. The Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the draft Cabinet report and make any recommendations to Cabinet as it proceeds through the devolution process.
4. Any future proposals will return to members through the Council's governance and scrutiny arrangements before decisions are taken.

Annex: Draft Cabinet report for consideration on 21 April 2026 and accompanying annexes.

Background papers: Devolution White Paper December 2024
English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Contact Officer: Kim Sawyer
Programme Director for Devolution
07547 867004
Kim.sawyer@oxfordshire.gov.uk