

Cllr Liz Leffman
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Councillor Bethia Thomas
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Via email:
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Dear Liz,

When we had a chance to chat last week, you reported that the Heart of Wessex (HoW) SA Proposal had been rejected from the first tranche of government reorganisation as their original bid had not included Swindon Borough Council.

I was aware that Wiltshire and the other authorities were willing to include Swindon, but Swindon was not as keen on the prospect, with their Leader, without any invitation, looking instead to the East, towards Oxfordshire and the Berkshires rather than its home county of Wiltshire.

I had not realised however, that HoW were intending to resubmit their proposals at the earliest possible opportunity this time including Swindon, whether it was in agreement or not, which I understand is likely to be the case.

As you know, I am keen that Swindon finds a home with a better fit to pre-existing services including the BANES ICB for the area and the Wiltshire Police Service, the Wiltshire and Dorset Fire and Rescue Service and the recent move of the [Wiltshire and Swindon Growth Unit](#) (their LEP) back to Wiltshire Council, with it being transferred there as late as June 2024.

While we are preparing for the next regional summit in Reading later this month, where I will be again rejecting Swindon's inclusion in the SA Footprint that we have suggested for Oxfordshire, I was interested in seeing how we could support Wiltshire and the Heart of Wessex Authorities to encourage Swindon to feel as though it would be a valuable addition to this geography, noting that the majority of public sector bodies, already reflect Swindon being inherently linked to Wiltshire.

As so many things are, this would need to be led by you, but I wanted to offer my support and any assistance in encouraging the Heart of Wessex partnership with Swindon. If required, Vale officers would be happy to contact Wiltshire Council

officers and those of Dorset Council directly, as we have many common staff linkages, notably Matt Prosser, the current Dorset Chief Executive previously being one of our officers.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

cc:

Martin Reeves, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council