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Dear Liz

First of all, I would like to reiterate my thanks to you and all at Oxfordshire County Council, as the upper-tier authority in our area, for including the districts in discussions around a future Mayoral Strategic Authority for our area.

My Cabinet has now endorsed the submission of the Expression of Interest to government for the Thames Valley to be in the next wave of Mayoral Strategic Authorities. We want to see a strategic authority that builds on the strong links between Oxfordshire and Berkshire, giving clarity and confidence to our residents and businesses while unlocking opportunities for sustainable growth.

While the geography of a Thames Valley MSA is yet to be agreed, I think we have a robust case for being in the next wave having demonstrated strong partnership working across Oxfordshire and Berkshire in a number of areas, and we have always risen above different points of view to work in the best interests of our communities.

Our vision for a Thames Valley geography is in harmony with the government's strong preference for aligning MSA areas as closely as possible with the existing boundaries of organisations like the ICBs and local policing. The Thames Valley is a long-established and coherent region, with strong economic and demographic ties, and a long history of working collaboratively across the full range of sectors.

On that note, I remain of the view that, Swindon's inclusion in our MSA would not make much sense – it has never been part of the Thames Valley because it lacks integration with our police, health, and economic infrastructure, and its commuting patterns and collaborative history align westward rather than with us.

We are also issuing a press release along with colleagues at South Oxfordshire to reiterate these points as there seemed to be some public confusion, with some

mistakenly believing the submission of a joint expression of interest was confirmation of a consensus or agreement on geography. Thank you for your helpful recent comments on this topic that were mentioned in a BBC article on this last week.

And finally, I am pleased to see support for this expression of interest coming from across the region, as it is vital that we are in the next phase of this work – a new MSA must come into effect in conjunction with the creation of new unitary councils in our area, to minimise transition disruption and ensure our communities benefit from the natural synergies that the model is intended to deliver.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council