

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution
2 Marsham Street
London
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County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

Date: 8 January 2025

By email:
EnglishDevolutionLGENquiries@communities.gov.uk

Dear Minister McMahon,

RE: Devolution and Local Government Reform for Worcestershire

Further to your letter of the 16 December 2024 outlining the English Devolution White Paper and the Government's ambition, we write to inform you that Worcestershire County Council is keen to move at pace to deliver devolution and enable the county to achieve better efficiencies, economies of scale and improved outcomes for our residents and businesses.

Therefore, with the pace of change in mind, we are writing to ask you to exercise your Ministerial powers to postpone the County Council elections, which are due to take place in May 2025. This will give us the time to work with partners and stakeholders to put together proposals for local government reform that are necessary to unlock devolution for Worcestershire.

We have already identified additional capacity to develop the business case. We have also begun engagement with partners, including discussions with potential Strategic Authority partners. You can, therefore, be assured that, if you agree to the postponement of the elections, we will meet the March and May deadlines as set out in your letter and hold shadow authority elections in 2026. Without the postponement of elections, there will be a significant period where plans could not progress and, if we are unable to move forward quickly, there is also a potential for loss of key staff who will be important to support the change and could impact on service delivery.

Worcestershire currently operates in a two tier local government structure however, in line with the English Devolution White Paper, we are in no doubt that the process to unlock the footprint of a Unitary Authority, as soon as possible, is a key building block for a Strategic Authority and the additional opportunities this will bring.

In addition, many key services are already delivered on a county wide basis such as adult's and children's social care, highways, waste disposal and regulatory services. Over 80% of the total local authority spend for Worcestershire is county wide. By

maintaining this current geographical footprint, this will simplify the change process and protect the service delivery to residents, which is particularly important for the most vulnerable in society.

We will work with District and Borough councils, MPs, businesses, partners and stakeholders to build on our ambition of a more integrated set of public services across the county and we look forward to starting the conversation with you on the future of Worcestershire and devolution arrangements.

Kind regards,



Simon Geraghty
Leader of Worcestershire County Council



Paul Robinson
Chief Executive