

## **Upton Snodsbury District & County Cllr. report for Parish council on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2025 Latest Update on Devolution Proposals and Elections**

Wychavon has committed to exploring two options for local government reorganisation in Worcestershire.

At the beginning of February, the local government minister wrote to councils across Worcestershire requesting interim reorganisation proposals by 21 March, ahead of a full and final submission by 28 November.

Under the Government's proposed changes, Wychavon, along with the county council and five other district councils, will be abolished. They will be replaced by either a single tier of local government delivering all services across Worcestershire.

At a meeting on Wednesday, 26 February councillors discussed the Government's plans for the first time in public. While some councillors supported a single Worcestershire unitary authority, others expressed interest in exploring the potential benefits of a north-south division. Concerns were also raised about the speed of the Government's timeline and the lack of data needed to make an informed decision.

As a result, councillors agreed to instruct the Council Leader and Chief Executive to enter negotiations with their counterparts across the county to ensure both options are included in the interim plan and further explored.

The interim plan will allow ministers to provide guidance to councils as they develop their final proposals. The contents of the interim plan will be debated at a Special Council meeting on 19 March.

Feedback will be used to guide the full proposal to be submitted in November, which may include one or both options. The Government will make the final decision on which plan to implement. It is expected the new arrangements will be in place by April 2028.

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A £19,000 fund is being made available to help communities across Wychavon mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe.

Wychavon is making £250 available to town and parish councils to support activities on and around Thursday, 8 May, to celebrate a significant milestone in the nation's history. Parish and town councils will be contacted directly over the coming weeks with details about how they can claim the money.

As well as the dedicated fund, Wychavon is also scrapping fees for road closure notices for anyone holding a street party either on 5 May, 8 May, or over the weekend from 9 to 11 May 2025.

Wychavon will join communities nationwide by raising the VE Day 80 flag at 9am on 8 May. Churches are being asked to ring their bells at 6.30pm and communities are also invited to light a beacon at 9.30pm. At the same time, Chelsea Pensioner Colin Thackery will lead the nation in a rendition of I Vow To Thee My Country.

Although 8 May isn't a public holiday, communities are still encouraged to hold street parties on the Bank Holiday Monday before, on the day and over VE Day 80 weekend.

Residents are also urged to support their local fish and chip shop by enjoying the nation's favourite treat in tribute to the courageous fishermen who braved the German U-boats and the farmers and Land

Girls who cultivated the fields to keep the country fed. Fish and chips was among the few foods not rationed by the Government during the conflict.

### **Public Rights of Way**

I recently attended a LAF (local access forum) meeting and learnt from County's Public Rights of Way team that there is to be a ROWIP consultation in June. Questions will be about their network, how people use it and what their views and aspirations are. They welcome responses from parish councils so asked me to let you know in case you have any issues you may wish to raise.

### **Secondary School Places**

**Worcestershire County Council received 6,592 applications this year and everyone who made an application for a secondary school place has received an offer of a place.**

9 in 10 of Worcestershire's children will be starting secondary school in their first-choice preference in September.

Parents are also being reminded to apply for school transport for their child/children as early as possible for the September 2025 school term.

For more information, please visit the apply for school and college travel assistance pages of the county council website: [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schooltransport).