

# Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council



## **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) & Implications for Tidmarsh with Sulham** **An opportunity to meet West Berkshire Council (WBC) &** **Reading Borough Council (RBC) to discuss LGR Proposals**

### **Background**

You may well have heard that the Government wishes to reduce the number of tiers of local government in England from 2-tier structures to single tier unitary authorities. The aim was set out in the English Devolution White Paper (16 December 2024): “Unitary councils can lead to better outcomes for residents, save significant money which can be reinvested in public services, and improve accountability with fewer politicians who are more able to focus on delivering for residents. .... New unitary councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. For most areas this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more”. This is known as Local Government Reorganisation or LGR.

### **Which authority does Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish (TwS) come under?**

As you know, TwS falls under the jurisdiction of WBC, a unitary authority created in 1998 following the abolition of Berkshire County Council. WBC currently serves about 170,000 people and provides services including Education & Transport, Planning Applications, Fire & Public Safety, and Rubbish Collection & Recycling.

### **Legal identity of TwS and its role**

Parish Councils have been legally established for many years as the first tier of government closest to residents; their governance and constitution are based on the Local Government Act 1972 and Localism Act 2011 and any abolition of them would require an Act of Parliament. TwS operates at a level below WBC and like the latter, is run by councillors who are elected every 4 years coinciding with WBC’s elections (or co-opted during the intervening period, with appointments voted on by existing councillors). The number of councillors elected or co-opted is dependent on the number of parish residents; for TwS, 5 councillors are appointed to represent Tidmarsh, and 1 to represent Sulham.

TwS fulfils various duties and supports residents affected by a number of local issues i.e. lobbying WBC to address key concerns such as speeding, reporting defects or problems with footpaths/highways, being consulted on and making representations regarding planning applications, providing a play area on the Millennium Green, and has installed dog and waste collection bins. It holds monthly meetings at which residents can attend and voice issues. TwS receives a “Precept” each year from WBC, this being an amount of money raised through WBC’s Council Tax. The Precept is used to meet the costs of the Council’s administrative and other activities relating to the Parish e.g. maintenance of the Millennium Green, repairs to fencing or play equipment, emptying of dog and waste collection bins, Parish Clerk’s monthly salary (its sole employee), Parish Website hosting, required Council and Millennium Green insurances, as well as supporting community events and initiatives.

### **What do the reforms mean for TwS?**

There are currently 2 draft proposals for LGR that would affect the unitary body under which TwS falls: one from WBC and the second from RBC. Both Councils are seeking residents’ views before progressing to formal approval by their respective Council members and submission to the Government no later than 28 November 2025. The Government will then review submitted proposals, decide which it wishes to progress to statutory consultation, implement selected proposals and create new unitary authorities, abolishing the old ones. There is a chance that neither submitted proposal from WBC or RBC would be progressed to formal consultation process; if progressed, any implementation is unlikely to occur until at least 2026/2027.

### **Proposal 1**

WBC has taken the step (in line with the White Paper’s statement regarding a minimum population size for each unitary council) to approach South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council (both of which presently form part of a 3-tier structure with Oxfordshire County Council) with a view to combining into a single authority, known as Ridgeway Council. All 3 existing Councils share similar geographic, economic and demographic traits and all have Parish Councils.

To read more, visit: [https://ridgewaycouncil.org/media/62114/Ridgeway-Council-Interim-proposal/pdf/Ridgeway\\_Interim\\_Proposal.pdf](https://ridgewaycouncil.org/media/62114/Ridgeway-Council-Interim-proposal/pdf/Ridgeway_Interim_Proposal.pdf)

## **Proposal 2**

RBC has recommended that 6 parishes [TwS, Holybrook, Pangbourne, Purley, Theale and Tilehurst (Birch Copse)] located on the eastern end of WBC's region become part of RBC, on the grounds of existing economic and transport links between them and Reading, involving an amendment to the existing boundary line between RBC and WBC. The remainder of WBC's region would move to Ridgeway Council. RBC has Wards but not Parish Councils and no experience of how they operate. RBC's proposal can be found at: <https://reading.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/your-council-your-say>.

## **YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH WBC & RBC TO DISCUSS LGR PROPOSALS**

LGR will affect our Parish, our identity and our way of life. WBC and RBC are coming to Tidmarsh to carry out engagement sessions with residents and answer questions; this is **YOUR** opportunity to listen to their views of TwS's future and to ask questions regarding their LGR proposals. The Parish Council encourages you to attend and have your say. The dates are as follows:

**Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 between 4p.m. & 7p.m (drop in at any time during this period)** at Tidmarsh Village Hall. Cllr Liz Terry, Leader of RBC, and the Deputy Leader of RBC will be attending.

**Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025 at 7.30p.m.** at Tidmarsh Village Hall during an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council. Cllr Jeff Brooks, Leader of WBC, and Cllr Justin Pemberton, Executive Member for Devolution & LGR will be attending.

**From Tidmarsh with Sulham Parish Council**