



# If three become one

**Combining OCHA, Westlea, and GreenSquare**



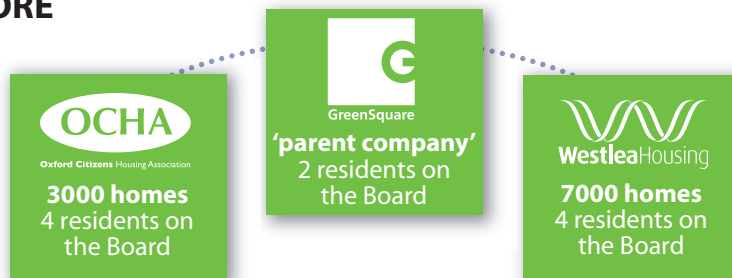
# If three become one

## An update for residents

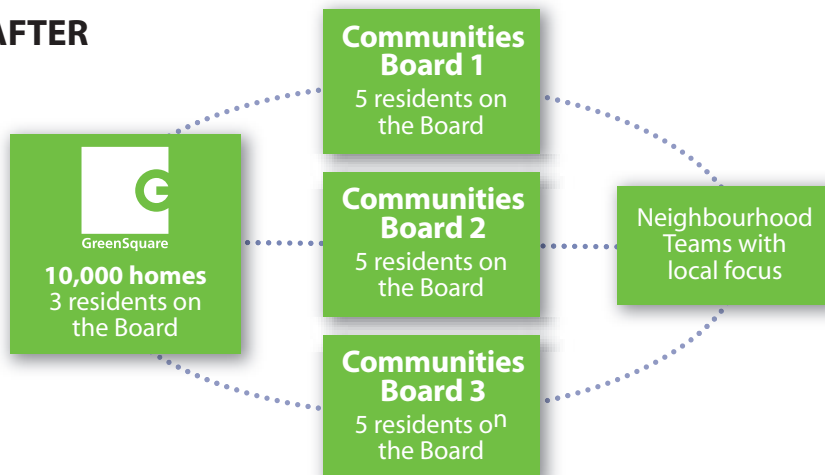
Earlier this year we sent a leaflet to all residents about a proposal to combine OCHA, Westlea, and GreenSquare into one organisation with one overall Management Board and three new Communities Boards\* – as illustrated below.

\*See page 8 for information about Communities Boards

### BEFORE



### AFTER



### Consultation with residents – summary of feedback

**Since we announced the proposal earlier this year, we have been talking to all those affected, including an extensive consultation programme with residents of both Westlea Housing and Oxford Citizens Housing Association.**

In addition to asking whether residents thought this was a good idea, we also asked whether they would be interested in joining the proposed Area Boards (now Communities Boards) or wanted more information about the Residents Academy.

*In order to include the views of as many residents as possible in our consultation, we carried out telephone surveys, online surveys, paper surveys, reply cards, and public meetings.*

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



Residents and staff at the recent consultation events.

## Area Boards become Communities Boards

Since we first published details of the proposal we have responded to feedback from residents that calling the new boards Area Boards would be confusing as some councils already have boards with this name. We are now proposing that these boards will be known as **Communities Boards**.

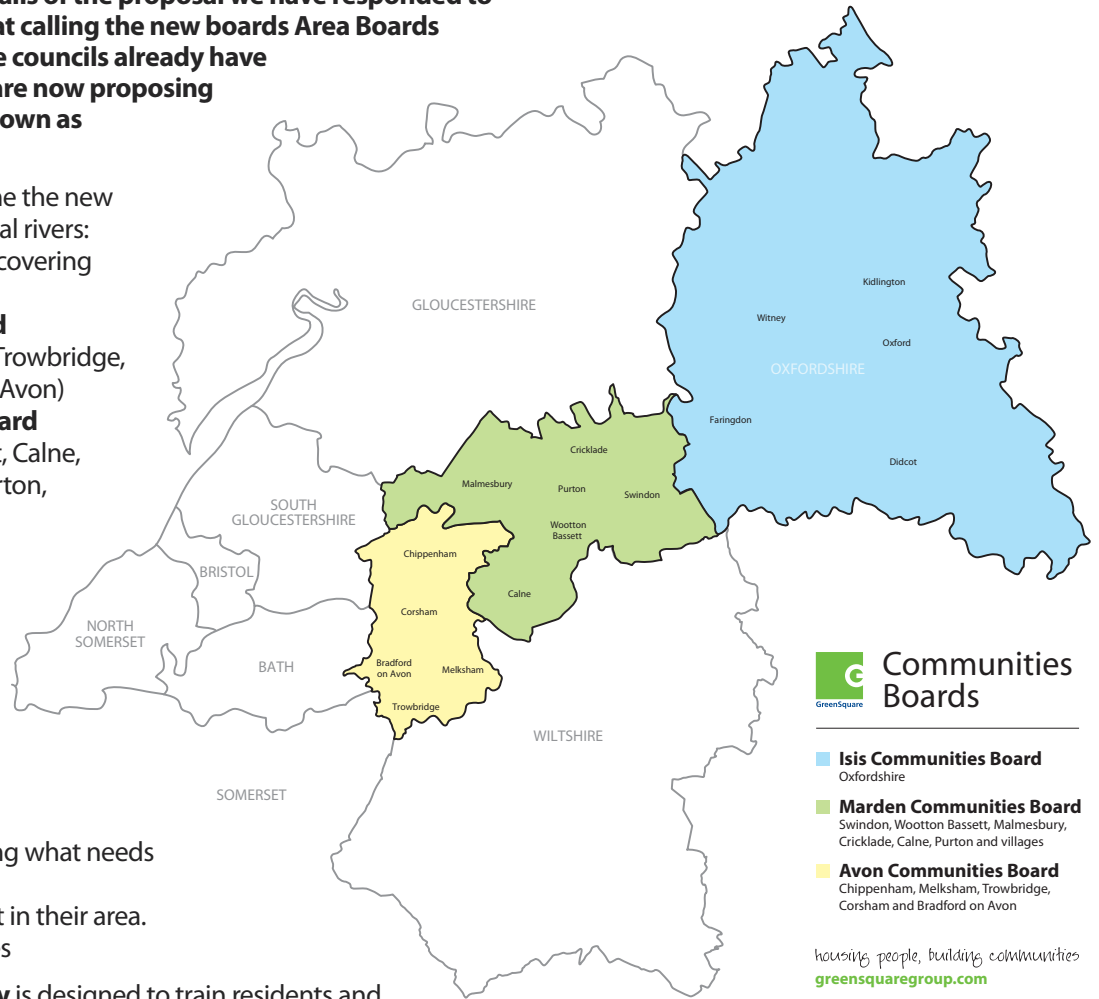
We are also proposing to name the new Communities Boards after local rivers:

- **Isis Communities Board** (covering the whole of Oxfordshire)
- **Avon Communities Board** (Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Corsham, and Bradford on Avon)
- **Marden Communities Board** (Swindon, Wootton Bassett, Calne, Malmesbury, Cricklade, Purton, and villages)

It's planned that **Communities Boards** will:

- Monitor value for money and check how well GreenSquare is performing.
- Work closely with Neighbourhood housing teams.
- Involve residents in deciding what needs to happen in their area.
- Be given a budget to invest in their area.
- Focus on local communities

The new **Residents' Academy** is designed to train residents and support them in becoming more involved with us, where they want to.



 **Communities Boards**

- **Isis Communities Board**  
Oxfordshire
- **Marden Communities Board**  
Swindon, Wootton Bassett, Malmesbury, Cricklade, Calne, Purton and villages
- **Avon Communities Board**  
Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Corsham and Bradford on Avon

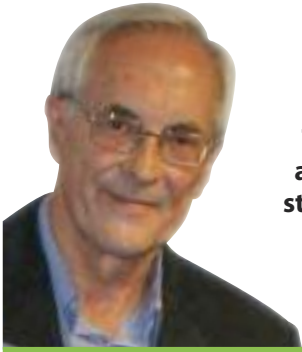
housing people, building communities  
[greensquaregroup.com](https://www.greensquaregroup.com)

# If three become one

## What residents need to know

As outlined above, we have been talking to residents about the proposal using lots of different methods and have provided answers to a whole range of questions asked. The following key points focus on giving clear information about the issues that most residents have asked about. If the proposal is approved and goes ahead:

- Residents will benefit because at least half the ten members of each new Communities Board will be residents, and the Residents Academy will help them get the skills and confidence they need to be involved.
- The combined organisation will save about £460,000 each year.
- Residents will not be required to sign new tenancy agreements, their existing agreements remain valid.
- Residents will still be able pay their rent at the same place they have always done.
- We will not be closing our local offices at Swindon, Oxford, and Chippenham.
- Residents will have more chance to impact on what happens locally and help shape services more focused on their neighbourhood. (We are already re-organising our staffing at all levels so that there will be more resource where it's most important: front-line staff rather than managers.)
- Residents will still have access to senior staff when issues are of a more strategic nature – however we see the majority of contact resting with staff working at a neighbourhood level and able to make appropriate, relevant decisions backed up by delegated budgets.
- Communities Boards will be accountable to the GreenSquare Board, but we see their main line of accountability to be directly to residents of the area for which they are responsible.



## Proposed changes will strengthen residents' influence say panel

**The proposed governance changes announced earlier this year, will further strengthen residents influence and control over the groups business, say members of GreenSquare's Resident Scrutiny Panel in their latest inquiry report.**

The panel looked closely at the first stages of the resident consultation process which for most residents began when they received the 'If three become one' information leaflet. Since then, there have been telephone and online surveys, drop-in sessions and community events to give residents an opportunity to voice their opinions on the planned changes which would begin next year.

"The most influential factor in the proposals, is the setting up of the three new Communities Boards and the new Residents Academy," said panel member Keith Fellows who led this first inquiry because of his governance role.

Kerry Law, who chairs the panel agreed. "There will be fifteen new resident board members serving on the Area Boards and three residents on the GreenSquare Board. If training support is needed, existing staff and the new academy will be in place to help residents in their new roles," said Kerry.

The Scrutiny Panel believes that the new board appointments will have a much greater appeal to residents than ever before, because residents will be directly involved with housing issues which are interesting and important to them in their local communities.

**Keith Fellows**

## What next?

Shareholders will be asked to vote on the proposals in Autumn 2011, with the Communities Boards and new structure – if approved – starting in April 2012.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 Consultation with residents – summary of feedback

An information leaflet was sent out to every household – approximately 10,000 homes – containing a tear-off section where residents could ask for more information, confirm if they will attend any of the drop in events and make any other comments / pose questions.

During public drop-in sessions for residents held during April in Calne, Oxford, and Wootton Bassett, residents were asked to complete paper surveys. 16 paper surveys were received.

400 Westlea residents were randomly selected and phoned. Contact was made with 178 people. 44 residents completed online surveys.

In Oxfordshire, 212 members of the Citizens Panel were surveyed. 66 returned completed surveys, either by telephone, email, or post.

In terms of the overall survey responses, we found that 62% of people who responded thought that the proposal was a good idea, whereas only 10% felt it was a bad idea. Others were unsure at this stage or didn't respond.

Nearly a third of our residents who responded were interested in joining a new Communities Board – that's 90 people willing to fill the 30 places available. A further 41 people were not sure about joining at this stage.

It was pleasing to find that half the people who completed surveys wanted more information about the new Residents Academy.



Pictured: Resident Michael Jaremczuk at one of the drop-in information sessions for residents