

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 4 July 2016

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor C Holliday (Chairman)

Councillors: S E Bartington A K Beames
 C Brown H W Chirgwin
 D Temple B J Churchill
 C K Woodward

Officers: Town Clerk Responsible Financial Officer

342 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

All West Oxfordshire District Councillors and Oxfordshire County Councillors were excused from attending the meeting given the potential conflict in interest and opinion of the unitary proposals. Standing apologies from Cllr King were recorded.

343 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

344 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present.

345 **UNITARY COUNCIL CONSULTATION**

The Council received and considered a consultation from Oxfordshire County Council and the recommendations made are attached at Appendix A.

The meeting also raised the question of allowances for Town and Parish Councillors in the event of any changes as it is extremely likely that the changes will put greater pressure on both councillors and officers.

RESOLVED: that the response on behalf of the Town Council be submitted to Grant Thornton LLP UK the consultants conducting an independent study into the future of local government structures in Oxfordshire, as contained in the attached appendix.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Chair.

Appendix A

Review of Local Government Structures in Oxfordshire – Survey Questions

1. *Please rank the criteria you consider the most important (*1 being the most important) in relation to the future role of your council.*

	Ranking
a. <i>The efficiency and quality of the services delivered</i>	2
b. <i>Cost savings and Value for Money</i>	3
c. <i>The strength of leadership in the community</i>	4
d. <i>Supporting economic growth and infrastructure development</i>	1
e. <i>Engaging and empowering local people</i>	5

2. *Please comment here if you wish to:*

The council considers that all the points covered in question one are equally important.

3. *Which of the options for the future of local government is most likely to improve the quality of services, particularly for the most vulnerable, and why?*

Option 4: a single new unitary authority covering the current administrative area of Oxfordshire

The Council considers that this is the stronger model for health services, social services, education, planning and other over- arching departments. This is because the expertise and knowledge currently exists within the County Council and a single unitary authority would have a clearer strategic vision and provide a cohesive approach. It would also cause the least disruption to existing ‘co de minimus’ services which in itself would save money.

4. *Which of the options for the future of local government is most likely to enable cost savings and give tax payers value for money, and why?*

Option 4: a single new unitary authority covering the current administrative area of Oxfordshire

The Council considers that this model with the support and direct feed of information from Town and Parish Councils (working in partnership) would enable costs savings and ensure that tax payers would get value for money.

5. *Which of the options for the future of local government will enable stronger and more3 accountable leadership – both on behalf of local communities and nationally?*

Option 4: a single new unitary authority covering the current administrative area of Oxfordshire

6. *Which of the options for the future of local government will best support improvements to local economic growth and infrastructure, and why?*

Option 4: a single new unitary authority covering the current administrative area of Oxfordshire

The Council considers this model will allow Town and Parish Council's better access to funding direct from government and a greater voice at county level to ensure the understanding of the effects of strategic decisions on local areas. This model would also allow neighbourhood plans to be more accountable. In addition this model allows for greater buying power with centralised budgets which can be accessed by all and a cohesive overall vision.

7. *Which of the options for the future of local government is most likely to improve engagement with communities and empowerment of local areas, and why?*

Option 4: a single new unitary authority covering the current administrative area of Oxfordshire

This model would give neighbourhood plans more value and therefore local people a greater voice in what happens in their area.

8. *Do you live in Oxfordshire?* Yes
9. *Please let us know which district area you live in.....* West Oxfordshire District Council
10. *Please select the boxes that best describes your employment.....* I am a town or parish councillor or clerk
11. *Do you have any further comments that you would like Grant Thornton to consider?*

In the event that option 4 was the option taken the Town Council would expect there to be a clear consultative role for Town and Parish Councils. It should also be remembered that a greater onus will be put on Town and Parish Council which will therefore put greater pressure on councillors (who are volunteers) and officers.