

**To:** Council

**Date:** 18 April 2016

**Title of Report:** Motions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.17, as amended

## Introduction

This document sets out motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.17 by the deadline, as amended by the proposers.

All substantive amendments sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by publication of the briefing note are included below.

**Motions will be taken in turn from the Green, Labour, Liberal Democrat groups in that order.**

**Council is asked to consider the following motions:**

**1. Oxford City Council supports EU membership (proposed by Councillor Craig Simmons, seconded by Councillor Elise Benjamin)**

### Green member motion

Oxford is an international City, with three EU twin towns, and a proud City of Sanctuary. The last census in 2011 showed that 1 in 10 of its resident population were born in EU countries other than UK.

The City Council has benefited directly from more than £1m of EU funding and, in May 2015, the City's Finance Panel took evidence from three of the South East regions MEPs identifying more than seven other potential EU funding streams that the City Council could apply for.

Oxford's economy also benefits enormously from EU tourism (9 out of the top 10 countries of origin are other EU states), from EU funding to its Universities, and other institutions, and from European businesses, such as BMW, that have chosen to operate within the City and County.

Workers in Oxford are better off as a result of EU employment directives on equal rights, holidays, pensions, working hours, health and safety and so on.

Oxford residents have more opportunities and lower costs when travelling as a result of the EU, free movement, lower mobile phone charges, European health card, educational possibilities and so on.

Oxford's environment has also benefited from EU legislation and guidance on, for example, air quality, recycling and biodiversity.

This Council therefore believes that the case for staying within the EU is overwhelming beneficial for the City and urges those electors eligible to vote to back an 'IN' vote at the forthcoming EU Referendum and asks the Leader to write to Oxford's MPs setting out the Council's views.

Of course, the EU is not perfect. But neither is Westminster. It needs to be more democratically accountable, transparent and efficient. This Council, however, believes that reform will be easier if the UK remains within the EU.

## **2. Unitary Council proposal (proposed by Councillor Price)**

### Labour member motion

The City Council notes that the response from government to the devolution proposals for Oxfordshire that were presented to the Department of Communities and Local Government and Cabinet Office in December 2015 indicated that a different and stronger form of governance was required if the proposals were to make progress.

Council therefore welcomes the initiative from the five District Councils in partnership with South Northants and Cotswold District Councils for a revised proposal based on four unitary authorities. This proposal would restore city government to Oxford and create an effective partnership with the neighbouring unitary authorities.

The Council notes that a feasibility study covering the full range of possible unitary options is being commissioned, and urges the County Council to participate in the commissioning and management of this study rather than duplicating the work with a separate study that will cover the same ground.

## **3. Adopt an eco-village approach (proposed by Councillor Gotch)**

### Liberal Democrat member motion

Bicester eco-village is an exemplar of how energy efficient and low-carbon-footprint housing is being built now - helping to slow climate change for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

We call on the City to instruct its architects to design buildings of all types, on City owned sites, to adopt the eco-village approach and, by example, persuade / push / cajole private developers in Oxford to make their contribution to saving planet earth.

## **4. Climate Change and Government Policy (proposed by Councillor Simmons, seconded by Councillor Thomas)**

### Green member motion

In the light of the Paris Agreement drafted last December (open for signature from 'Earth Day' 22nd April 2016) which included, for the first time, a global agreement on stabilising and reducing damaging greenhouse gas emissions, this Council calls upon

the government to reconsider policy changes which have made it more difficult for the Council and other local authorities to take action to help tackle climate change.

For example:

- Reductions in government subsidies for solar panels and other green energy sources;
- The discontinuation of Green Deal funding for loans to homeowners and private landlords to install insulation and other energy efficiency measures;
- Recent changes to planning policy, which make it more difficult for Councils to require developers to build new homes to high environmental standards.

This Council is committed to playing its part in global efforts to limit the extent of future climate change, and local efforts to respond to the impacts of climate change on residents, businesses and the local environment. It recognises that, in cities like Oxford which it is predicted will suffer from increased flooding due to climate change, inaction carries a real human and economic cost.

This Council therefore calls upon the Council Leader, in collaboration with other Group Leaders, to write to Oxford's MPs asking them to lobby the Government to live up to the commitments it made at COP 21 and invest more in tackling climate change.

## **5. Oxford City Council support EU membership (proposed by Councillor Tanner)**

### Labour member motion

This Council strongly supports remaining in the European Union in the referendum and urges all Oxford's voters to use their vote to Remain.

Remaining in Europe will continue Oxford's free access to the world's largest single market, will allow Oxford citizens to live, work and holiday freely within the 27 other nations, and will demonstrate our solidarity with over 500 million Europeans.

Leaving Europe will be bad for jobs. It will threaten the BMW car plant, the universities and the science jobs at Culham. Remaining in Europe will guarantee rights at work, high environmental standards and a more democratic Europe.

The referendum is an unnecessary measure to please sections of the Conservative Party and threatens Oxford's future.

## **6. Independent review of unitary options (proposed by Councillor Fooks seconded by Councillor Gant )**

### Liberal Democrat member motion

Council notes that the devolution debate appears to have stalled due to the Government's insisting on specific forms of governance for any new authority. However,

Council further notes that

- the current financial position of the County Council is causing unacceptable budget cuts, especially to the most vulnerable

- there is a growing belief that unitary governance would provide the best way forward
- it is not clear what the optimum size of any unitary would be.

Council believes that the best way to inform a decision on what is best for the people of Oxford and Oxfordshire is a genuinely independent review of all possible options, not seen to be favouring any particular model.

Council therefore asks the Executive Board to work with all other interested parties to commission such a review, assessing all possible models including the status quo, to enable an evidenced-based discussion to guide the selection of the best model.

Any model must be able to command public support, and be shown to be able to

- fund the services needed by the people of Oxfordshire, especially the most vulnerable
- provide strategic direction in a form which is properly accountable and fully consistent with local decision-making
- support economic growth and sustainability alongside strong and balanced communities

Council recognises that any changes to the current two-tier structure will involve the dissolution of all existing authorities and a review of all current ward boundaries, but believes that a unitary structure of some kind will offer the best chance of better strategic leadership and the efficient delivery of public services to the people of Oxford.

## **7. Community Involvement in Community Centres (proposed by Councillor Wolff, seconded by Councillor Benjamin)**

### Green member motion

1. This Council believes that the essence of community work is not so much the delivery of services but the building of stronger, more cohesive and more resilient neighbourhood communities.
2. Recognising that the Council's proposed Tier 1 'community hubs' may also be places where a wide range of services are delivered, Council recognises the danger that the community work objectives may be sidelined or even undermined.
3. Council therefore welcomes the statement in the Community Centres Strategy (currently out for public consultation) "The Council's preferred position is that robust, sustainable community organisations manage the centres".
4. Council believes that independent and locally accountable Community Associations should have a key role in ensuring that all the Council centres deliver on the key community work objective described in para 1.

## **8. Scrapping of student grants and curbing of access to higher education for disadvantaged young people (proposed by Councillor Hayes, seconded by Councillor Hollingsworth)**

### Labour member motion

This Council supports fair access and widening participation in higher education, and believes that these are important for making society more equal, in Oxford and across the country.

Accordingly, this Council notes with concern the Government's plan to scrap maintenance grants for up to 500,000 of the poorest university students, including those attending our city's universities.

This Council further notes that the poorest 40% of university students in England will graduate with an extra £12,500 of debt for a three-year course, according to research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

This Council is concerned that scrapping grants risks putting many young people off applying to university, including many from disadvantaged backgrounds. A 2014 study by the Institute of Education has shown that a £1,000 rise in grants created a nearly 4% increase in participation.

This Council asks the Council Leader to write to Oxford's Members of Parliament to express our dissatisfaction with the abolition of grants and make representations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education about the impact of the loss of grants on students at our city's universities, particularly those from poorer backgrounds.

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