

Project Scope – Scrutiny of devolution plans for Oxfordshire

Review Topic	'Devolution plans for Oxfordshire'
Lead Member Review Group	To be appointed by the Scrutiny Committee on 4 July 2016 (the Lead Member should be a member of the Scrutiny Committee)
Review Group Members	To be appointed by the Scrutiny Committee on 4 July 2016 in accordance with membership guidelines in the Scrutiny Operating Principles. Nominations received are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Van Coulter • Cllr Andrew Gant • Cllr Tom Hayes • Cllr Craig Simmons • Cllr Marie Tidball
Officer support	Scrutiny Officer support approx. 3-4 days per month for up to 4 months between August and December 2016. Additional support from the Assistant Chief Executive and other Council Officers.
Background	<p>Government is actively offering areas in England the chance to have additional funding and devolved powers in exchange for elected mayors of streamlined governance structures.</p> <p>In order to support the Oxfordshire devolution deal bid which would see over £1bn of additional infrastructure funding from Government, the District Councils in Oxfordshire are proposing to abolish all six existing Councils and create new unitary councils with responsibility for all local government services within their areas. The unitary councils would form a combined authority, which would facilitate joint working and joint commissioning where services needed to be managed over a wider geographical area and would have powers over transport, economic development and regeneration. The District Councils have commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to undertake an independent study into the options for unitary government. The PwC report is expected by early July (a member briefing is scheduled for 11 July 2016) and will inform the District Council's thinking as they develop plans ahead of making a firm proposal to Government in autumn 2016.</p> <p>The County Council is developing an alternative proposal based on one unitary council for Oxfordshire (with a combined authority area also including Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire). The County Council has separately commissioned Grant Thornton to consider options for future models of local government across Oxfordshire.</p> <p>All this work is taking place against a backdrop of considerable political uncertainties.</p>

<p>Rationale</p>	<p>Devolution is one of the biggest issues facing the City Council and local government in Oxfordshire. The public would expect the development of the Councils proposals to be subject to independent oversight and challenge from elected representatives. Due to the complexity of the issues and the timeline, this detailed work would need to be undertaken by a review group over a series of meetings.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee prioritised a review of ‘devolution proposals for Oxfordshire’ when agreeing its 2016-17 work plan.</p>
<p>Purpose of Review / Objective</p>	<p>Scrutiny has been advised that the scope of the review should remain flexible and responsive to developments but key lines of inquiry or themes for individual meetings could include:</p> <p><i>How would a combined authority operate in practice? What democratic and decision making controls would be retained by its constituent Councils and what would the lines of accountability and scrutiny look like?</i></p> <p><i>What arrangements would provide the best opportunities for service transformation, cost savings and improved outcomes in the high-spend, high-risk services, such as Adult Social Care, Health and Children’s Services?</i></p> <p><i>How would strategic planning work in a unitary model of local government and is there any prospect of the long standing differences between Local Plans being resolved?</i></p> <p>During its deliberations, the Review Group may wish to come to a considered view as to which model(s) of local government being proposed by Oxfordshire Councils would facilitate the best outcomes for service users, residents and tax payers in Oxfordshire, as well as which model(s) present the biggest risks.</p>
<p>Indicators of Success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust independent scrutiny of devolution proposals; • Detailed consideration of specific issues / lines of inquiry; • High quality engagement with key stakeholders; • Recommendations / contributions that influence and strengthen / add value to devolution proposals; • The majority of recommendations are agreed; • The production of an evidence based report (if necessary).
<p>Methodology/ Approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing reports and engagement feedback; • Inviting written and verbal evidence from witnesses and stakeholders; • Consideration of case study examples from other areas; • Desk research / literature review.

Specify Witnesses/ Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Sloman - Chief Executive • Caroline Green - Assistant Chief Executive <p>Witnesses could also include representatives of the following organisations (this list is not necessarily exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire County Council; • Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; • Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group; • Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership; • Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board. <p>The Review Group may wish to speak with PwC report authors.</p>		
Specify Evidence Sources for Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PwC report; • Grant Thornton report; • Written submissions provided by witnesses and stakeholders; • Engagement feedback; • District and County Council devolution proposals; • Relevant academic / policy papers. 		
Site Visits	N/A		
Projected start date	July 2016	Draft Report Deadline	27 Oct 2016 or 25 Nov 2016
Meeting Frequency	Monthly	Projected completion date	17 Nov 2016 CEB or 15 Dec 2016 CEB

Draft outline of meetings (to be held in private session)

Meeting one – 14 June 2016
Scoping meeting to consider purpose of the review and approach.
Meeting two - July / August 2016 (TBC)
Possible meeting in July/August to consider PwC report and any other developments if deemed necessary. Review Group members will be encouraged to attend a member briefing on 11 July 2016.
Meeting three – w/c 12 September 2016 (TBC)
Themed evidence session 1 – combined authority
Meeting four – w/c 19 or 26 September 2016 (TBC)
Themed evidence session 2 – transforming high-risk services
Meeting five – w/c 10 October or 24 October 2016 (TBC)
Themed evidence session 3 – strategic planning

This page is intentionally left blank