**Appendix 2 - Assessment of Proposed Governance Models for Oxfordshire**

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| ***Model*** | ***Strong, accountable governance*** | ***High quality service delivery*** | ***Assessment*** |
| **Two-tier status quo**   * Current model with county and 5 district councils. * Growth Board provides a forum for joint working on growth, infrastructure & planning. | Strengths   * Councils are accountable for decisions they take that affect their area.   Weaknesses   * Responsibility & accountability can be confusing to the public in two-tier areas. * Elected representatives aren’t accountable for all council services. * Deadlocks in strategic decision making. * Growth & progress have been constrained. * Joint working needs strengthening. * Growth Board has no mechanisms for enabling a fast and effective collaborative planning process that meets the housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Growth Board is not directly accountable to the public. | Strengths   * Local and county-wide services provided at appropriate scale. * No need to disaggregate county-wide services or merge district services.   Weaknesses   * Lack of responsiveness to significant challenges from rising demands, reducing budgets, etc. * Related services are provided by different bodies e.g. housing/social care. * Synergies & efficiencies have not being maximised. * Need to manage multiple relationships. * Concerns about cuts to homelessness, bus subsidies & children’s centres. * Structure not best placed to deliver against current & future needs of Oxfordshire. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: No likelihood  Degree of local support: Wide recognition that this model is not optimal for meeting current challenges  Responsiveness to communities: High |
| **Two-tier with mayoral combined authority (CA)**   * Current model with county and 5 district councils with the addition of a directly elected mayor and CA. * CA takes on devolved powers and funding for transport, infrastructure and housing delivery. * Mayor would chair CA with CA members (e.g. LEP chair & council leaders) acting as mayor’s cabinet. * County Council cedes some transport powers to CA. | Strengths   * Builds on existing structures. * Mayor would provide a single accountable figurehead & voice for Oxfordshire & act as an ambassador nationally & internationally. * Strong & accountable county-wide strategic decision making. * Provides a mechanism for joint working & pooling of funds and resources with strategic partners e.g. health. * Precedents elsewhere. * Model preferred by government.   Weaknesses   * Unlikely to be much public appetite for additional layers of decision makers, administration & complexity unless there are clear and significant benefits. * Responsibility & accountability likely to be made more confusing than status quo. * Mayor’s decisions may not be supported by representatives of all affected councils. * No precedents for combined authorities operating over a single upper-tier council area. * Adds democratic costs. | Strengths   * Strategic, county-wide & local services provided at the appropriate scale. * No need to disaggregate county-wide services or merge district services. * Provides for collaborative county-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges.   Weaknesses   * Does not address issues around the long term sustainability of current structures. * Related services still provided by different councils. * Synergies & efficiency savings may not be maximised. * Additional relationships to manage. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High  Degree of local support: High  Responsiveness to communities: High |
| **1 Unitary Authority (UA)**   * One council responsible for delivering all local government services in Oxfordshire. * Could be led by a council leader or a directly elected mayor. * Enhancements to the roles of parish & town councils. | Strengths   * Builds on existing county structure. * Simplifies accountability with one body responsible for delivering all local government services. * Removes scope for friction and deadlock between competing sovereign bodies. * One paid service. * Elected representatives responsible for all local government services. * Provides a single voice for Oxfordshire. * Overall reduction in cost of democracy.   Weaknesses   * No precedent for a very large UA including a medium sized city & rural areas. * Does not recognise City and Districts as democratically distinct bodies. * Potential for a ‘democratic deficit’ and lack of responsiveness to local needs. * Risk to legitimacy & accountability if democratic mandate of urban areas (where need is concentrated) is diluted. * Not all areas have parish councils. * Does not provide a mechanism for joint working and pooling of funds and resources with strategic partners e.g. health. | Strengths   * Allows transformation of council services within a single body. * Efficiencies from economies of scale. * No need to disaggregate county-wide services. * County-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Fewest relationships to manage. * Shared boundaries with some strategic partners. * Resilient & able to absorb unexpected pressures.   Weaknesses   * Centralisation of district services. * Risks remoteness from communities & a lack of responsiveness. * Services may not be tailored to different needs of urban & rural areas over a large geography. * Historical preferences of different areas may not be reflected in decision making & service delivery. * Local Plan making likely to be problematic. * Large bureaucracy may be less flexible & agile than alternatives. * Potential lack of capacity in town & parish councils to take on more responsibilities. * Disruptive period of reorganisation. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High with a mayor, low without a mayor  Degree of local support: Low  Responsiveness to communities: Low |
| **1 UA with area boards (Grant Thornton’s ‘Option 6’).**   * One council responsible for delivering all local government services in Oxfordshire. * Could be led by a council leader or a directly elected mayor. * Powers & funding delegated to district area boards. * Enhancements to the roles of parish & town councils.   . | Strengths   * Simplifies accountability with one body responsible for delivering all local government services. * Removes scope for friction & deadlock between competing sovereign bodies. * One paid service. * Elected representatives accountable for all local government services. * Provides a single voice for Oxfordshire. * Could balance local & strategic decision making. * Could recognise City & Districts as democratically distinct bodies.   Weaknesses   * No precedent for a very large UA including a medium sized city & rural areas. * Risk that area boards become a poor imitation of the status quo. * Need to carefully design appropriate level of autonomy for area boards. * Need to design & implement new & complex governance arrangements. * Lack of precedents elsewhere for area boards. * Added complexity in decision making. * Area boards add democratic costs. * Strategic decisions may not be supported by area boards and vice versa. * Not all areas have parish councils. * Does not provide a mechanism for joint working with strategic partners e.g. health. | Strengths   * Allows transformation of council services within a single body. * Efficiencies from economies of scale. * No need to disaggregate county-wide services. * Allows for better tailoring of services to local areas than 1UA. * County-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Could provide for Local Plan making at district area level. * Shared boundaries with some strategic partners. * Resilient & able to absorb unexpected pressures.   Weaknesses   * Large bureaucracy may be less flexible & agile than alternatives. * Lack of clarity about what services would be controlled by area boards & how responsible & flexible they would be. * Potential lack of capacity in town & parish councils to take on more responsibilities. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High with a mayor, low without a mayor  Degree of local support: Supported by the County Council but not the District leaders  Responsiveness to communities: Low. |
| **2 UA**   * Two unitary councils, one for the city on existing boundaries & a ‘donut’ authority covering the remainder of the county. * Services could continue to be delivered on a county-wide basis through a CA or a contracted agreement. * Could involve greater devolution of funding & powers to town & parish councils. | Strengths   * Simplifies responsibility & accountability. * City has its own democratic mandate reflecting urban geography & concentration of need. * Overall reduction in cost of democracy.   Weaknesses   * Structure creates the 9th largest single tier authority in England, but also one of the smallest. * Does not recognise Districts as democratically distinct bodies. * Large donut authority does not reflect diversity of district areas, diluting accountability & risking ‘democratic deficit’ - may require sub-structures. * Geographic, population & financial imbalance between urban & rural UAs. * Risks entrenching urban - rural divide. * Does not provide for a single point of accountability & voice for Oxfordshire without a mayor & CA. * Continued scope for friction & deadlock between sovereign authorities. * Contracted agreement dilutes accountability. * Does not provide a mechanism for joint working & pooling of funds and resources with strategic partners e.g. health without a CA. | Strengths   * Services could be tailored to urban & rural geographies. * CA or contracted agreement could negate need to disaggregate county-wide services. * Considerable scope for service transformation & efficiencies. * Fewer relationships to manage.   Weaknesses   * Delivery of local services over a very large & diverse geography in donut UA risks lack of responsiveness to local needs. * Need for agreed mechanism to equalise funding & need. * Contracted agreement would limit responsiveness of City UA. * Risk City UA may be unviable if social care services disaggregated. * Does not provide for county-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Local Plan making at across an area the size of four districts likely to be problematic. * Requires disaggregation or new delivery models for county-wide services and centralisation of some district services. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High with a mayor, low without a mayor  Degree of local support: Low  Responsiveness to communities: High for the city, lower for other areas |
| **2UA+**   * Two unitary councils, one City UA with an expanded boundary & one for the remainder of the county. * Services could continue to be delivered on a county-wide basis through a CA or contracted agreement. * Could involve greater devolution of funding & powers to town & parish councils. | Strengths   * Simplifies responsibility & accountability. * Largely addresses financial and geographical imbalances of 2UA. * Overall reduction in cost of democracy. * Reduced need for county-wide services to be delivered through a contracted agreements.   Weaknesses   * Does not build on existing structures or recognise City & Districts as democratically distinct bodies. * Complexity of resolving the boundary issue - rural areas may not want to be subsumed into a ‘Greater Oxford’ UA. * ‘Greater Oxford’ & residual ‘donut’ authority may lack a coherent sense of place – risk to legitimacy. * Does not provide for a single point of accountability & voice for Oxfordshire without a mayor & CA. * Does not provide a mechanism for joint working with strategic partners e.g. health. | Strengths   * Considerable scope for service transformation & efficiencies. * ‘Greater Oxford’ UA could viably deliver social care services (although a county-wide solution may be preferable). * No need for an agreed mechanism for equalising funding & need across the two UAs. * Resolves issues around the constraints of a tight city boundary. * Fewer relationships to manage.   Weaknesses   * ‘Greater Oxford’ UA would need to tailor services to rural & urban areas. * Requires disaggregation or new delivery models for county-wide services & the merging / reorganisation or district services. * Does not provide for county-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Local Plan making across large areas may be problematic. * Boundaries not coterminous with partners. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High with a mayor, low without a mayor  Degree of local support: Some support among elected members  Responsiveness to communities: Fairly high |
| **3 UA with mayor & CA**   * Three unitary councils, one for the city, one for South & Vale, one for West & Cherwell. * CA takes on devolved powers and funding for transport, infrastructure and housing delivery. * Mayor would chair CA with CA members (e.g. LEP chair & council leaders) acting as mayor’s cabinet. | Strengths   * Builds on existing district structures and relationship in southern Oxfordshire. * More balanced & responsive to local needs than 1UA or 2UA. * Recognises city & districts as democratically distinct bodies. * City has its own democratic mandate reflecting urban geography & need. * Mayor would provide a single accountable figurehead & voice for Oxfordshire & act as an ambassador nationally & internationally. * Could provide for strong & accountable county-wide strategic decision making. * Simplification of responsibility & accountability. * Provides a mechanism for joint working & pooling of funds & resources with strategic partners e.g. health. * Overall reduction in cost of democracy.   Weaknesses   * Responsibility for Children’s Services at CA level is technically possible but unprecedented. * Contracted agreements for delivery of county-wide services could dilute accountability, as would elevating services to a CA. * Mayor’s decisions may not be supported by representatives of all affected councils. | Strengths   * Allows for tailoring of services to urban & rural geographies. * District-level services provided at an appropriate scale. * Scope for transformation & efficiencies. * County-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Elevating social care to CA level or a needs-based contracted agreement would negate need to disaggregate services. * Reduced number of relationships to manage. * Local Plan making over three manageable geographic areas.   Weaknesses   * Requires disaggregation or new delivery models for county-wide services. * Risk City UA may be unviable if social care services disaggregated - need for agreed mechanism to equalise funding & need. * Lower efficiency savings than 1UA or 2UA. * Some duplication of functions is inevitable. * City boundaries remain constrained. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High  Degree of local support: Supported by district leaders but not county council.  Responsiveness to communities: High |
| **4 UA with mayor & CA**   * Four unitary authorities covering South & Vale, Oxford City, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire. * CA takes on devolved powers and funding for transport, infrastructure and housing delivery. * Mayor would chair CA with CA members (e.g. LEP chair & council leaders) acting as mayor’s cabinet. | Strengths   * Builds on existing district structures and relationship in southern Oxfordshire. * More balanced & responsive to local needs than 1UA or 2UA. * Recognises City & Districts as democratically distinct bodies. * City has its own democratic mandate reflecting urban geography & need. * Mayor would provide a single accountable figurehead & voice for Oxfordshire & act as an ambassador nationally & internationally. * Could provide for strong & accountable county-wide strategic decision making. * Simplification of responsibility & accountability. * Provides a mechanism for joint working & pooling of funds & resources with strategic partners e.g. health. * Overall reduction in cost of democracy.   Weaknesses   * Three small UAs would be unequal to Southern Oxfordshire. * Contracted agreements for delivery of county-wide services could dilute accountability, as would elevating services to a CA. * Mayor’s decisions may not be supported by representatives of all affected councils. | Strengths   * Allows for tailoring of services to urban & rural geographies. * District-level services provided at an appropriate scale. * Scope for transformation & efficiencies. * County-wide planning to meet housing delivery and infrastructure challenges. * Elevating social care to CA level or a needs-based contracted agreement would negate need to disaggregate services. * Local Plan making over four manageable geographic areas.   Weaknesses   * Requires disaggregation or new delivery models for county-wide services. * Risk City UA may be unviable if social care disaggregated - Need for agreed mechanism to equalise funding & need. * Need to manage multiple relationships. * Lower efficiency savings than 1, 2 or 3UA. * Most duplication of back office functions. * City boundaries remain constrained. * Small authorities less resilient to unexpected pressures. | Likelihood of delivering a substantial devolution deal: High  Degree of local support: Low  Responsiveness to communities: High |