**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 likelihoodDegree of local support: Wide recognition that this model is not optimal for meeting current challengesResponsiveness 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: HighDegree of local support: HighResponsiveness 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 mayorDegree of local support: LowResponsiveness 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 mayorDegree of local support: Supported by the County Council but not the District leadersResponsiveness 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 mayorDegree of local support: LowResponsiveness 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 mayorDegree of local support: Some support among elected membersResponsiveness 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: HighDegree 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: HighDegree of local support: LowResponsiveness to communities: High |