

From: Graham Hunt
To: [Bob Austin](#); [David Bretherton](#); [Don Butler](#); [Nigel Champken-Woods](#); [Paul Cowell](#); [Mike Deacock](#); [Nichola Dixon](#); [David Dodds](#); [Mike Dyer](#); [Linda Emery](#); [Helena Fickling](#); [Catherine Jones](#); [Peter Lambert](#); [Ann Midwinter](#); [Mary Stiles](#); [Tom Wyse](#)
Cc: [Staff](#)
Subject: FW: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils media release - COUNCILS AGREE PROPOSAL FOR A NEW COUNCIL FOR A BETTER OXFORDSHIRE
Date: 03 March 2017 11:50:00
Attachments: [Better Oxfordshire launch release.pdf](#)

Hi

Here is a further Unitary update, following on from the “consultation” / survey that closed on Tuesday.

Regards

Graham Hunt
Town Clerk
Thame Town Council
www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk
Town Hall, High St, Thame, OX9 3DP
T: 01844 260495 F: 01844 216094

From: Communications [<mailto:communications@southandvale.gov.uk>]
Sent: 03 March 2017 10:15
To: Communications
Subject: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils media release - COUNCILS AGREE PROPOSAL FOR A NEW COUNCIL FOR A BETTER OXFORDSHIRE

COUNCILS AGREE PROPOSAL FOR A NEW COUNCIL FOR A BETTER OXFORDSHIRE

- Revised proposals for unitary council published today
- More powers for local communities
- City will be local council in its own right
- Survey shows 70% public support for new unitary council

A new proposal for better local government for Oxfordshire is published today – offering real power and influence to every local community in the county.

The joint proposal: ‘A new council for a Better Oxfordshire’, makes the case for abolishing the existing two-tier structure of six councils - replacing them with one single council for Oxfordshire.

The detailed plans, revealed today for the first time by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and Oxfordshire County Council, are the result of joint working on a revised proposal, following engagement with thousands of residents and community groups across the county – who support a new council, providing it is more local and offers better joined up services.

Seventy per cent of Oxfordshire residents agree with the draft proposal to abolish all six councils and replace them with one unitary council for the whole of Oxfordshire. This result is based on an independent representative household survey commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council.

With the local communities of Oxfordshire at its heart – the Better Oxfordshire proposal sets out how parish and town councils will play a bigger role under a new single council.

Once established, the council will set up between 15 and 20 local area boards covering market towns and surrounding areas across Oxfordshire – giving communities a strong voice and ensuring local matters are heard. They will have significant budgets and the ability to make important local decisions such as prioritising investment in local transport and tackling anti-social behaviour.

There will be fewer councillors, with each unitary councillor representing their community as a local area board member and as a councillor for the new council, giving them a much greater say in their services than under the current two-tier system.

Parish and town councillors will also have a place on their local area board, along with other public service representatives, such as the police - to enhance community safety.

The revised proposals also recognise that the city of Oxford is central to Oxfordshire's economic and cultural success, and under the new council will become a local council in its own right, with area boards embedded across the city – taking responsibility for community and environmental issues.

Most significantly, the local Oxford council will be able to raise a separate city-wide council tax (or 'precept'), with funding going directly to community based services such as community centres. To reflect the level of interest in this issue, the revised proposal includes the creation of an 'Oxford City Convention' of residents and other stakeholders to agree detailed plans for local government in Oxford.

Cllr Matthew Barber, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council said:

"The Better Oxfordshire proposal will ensure Oxfordshire continues to be a great place to live, work and bring up a family. Importantly it will join up important services such as housing, social care and homelessness, enabling the new council to prioritise people's needs and plan effectively.

We are working jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to ensure local communities play a big role with the new council."

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council said:

"We have responded to issues raised during the nine month public engagement exercise in the new proposal, particularly in improving local involvement in Oxford. There is an opportunity to create a new local government for Oxford that reflects the city's economic and cultural importance to the whole county.

"The survey results show that despite the noisy opposition whipped up by opponents of change, there is a silent majority who support the idea of new council for a better Oxfordshire."

Cllr John Cotton, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council said:

"A single council for Oxfordshire will be simpler, more local and will deliver better services at a lower cost. We have ensured that these revised proposals provide for more local area boards, so that communities across Oxfordshire can have their say on important local issues, from setting car parking charges and tackling anti-social behaviour."

The survey results show that overall 70% of people surveyed agreed with abolishing the

six councils and setting up a unitary council, and 20% disagreed. The majority agreed with abolishing the six councils and setting up a unitary council in all district and city council areas, including those districts which are actively campaigning who disagreed:

- 78% in West Oxfordshire
- 75% in South Oxfordshire
- 69% in Oxford
- 67% in Vale of White Horse
- 63% in Cherwell.

Over 500 face-to-face doorstep interviews were carried out between 5 – 19 February 2017 by independent social research firm, Opinion Research Services, who also designed the research methodology and ensured that the survey was representative of the county's residents.

Face-to-face personal interviews are considered to be the best approach for surveys (the 'gold standard') as this is the most inclusive method and does not suffer from the same problems as telephone or online surveys, where some residents will inevitably be excluded from the sample.

This method is particularly suited to issues where respondents need to be provided with detailed information before being asked questions.

Before being asked about the draft proposal, survey respondents were informed about the current two-tier system of local government in Oxfordshire and given details about the draft proposal.

Respondents were then asked a straightforward question about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the six councils should be abolished and replaced with one new unitary council.

Notes to editors

- You can read the full proposal: A new council for a Better Oxfordshire at: www.betteroxfordshire.org

About the survey

- 502 quota controlled interviews of residents aged 16+ were conducted between 5 and 19 February 2017.
- To correct for response bias, statistical weighting has been applied to the completed dataset at both a district and county level to ensure that the survey is representative of the entire population aged 16+.
- Overall, the results are statistically reliable to around +/- 5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means that 19 times out of 20 the survey findings will be within 5% points of the result that would have been achieved had everyone in the population been interviewed. On this basis, whilst the survey identified that overall support in the county is 70%, the actual level of support could be as high as 75% or at the lower end, 65%.
- The survey results for individual districts are subject to wider confidence intervals, but even when taking these into account there remains absolute majority support (with more than 50% agreement) across all districts.

Media enquiries

For all media enquiries about the proposal, please contact:

Emily Reed, Oxfordshire County Council, on 07770 701139
emily.reed@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Patsy Cusworth, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council on 01235
422400
patsy.cusworth@southandvale.gov.uk