

Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

Front Sheet:

Directorate and Service Area:

Resources

What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):

Better Oxfordshire Unitary Proposal

Responsible owner / senior officer:

Ben Threadgold

Date of assessment:

March 2017

Summary of judgement:

The 'A new council for a Better Oxfordshire' proposal, developed jointly between Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils sets out a proposal to replace Oxfordshire's county, district and city councils with a single, countywide unitary council, as this will be simpler for residents and businesses; better for services by joining up key functions; more local by devolving decision making; and lower cost by releasing net savings to protect and invest in services.

The decision to implement these proposals is for the Secretary of State for Local Government. The outline process for decision making is set out in detail in chapter 10 of the proposal. The proposals would be subject to considerable further work prior to implementation through discussion with government. Implementation itself is expected to be delivered through the establishment of an Implementation Executive with representation from all current councils to agree detailed plans. The full impact of the proposal will therefore only become apparent when more detailed service changes are put forward, as is usually the case, although the completion of an initial assessment at this stage is important in capturing potential risks, mitigations and benefits to inform decision-makers and the ongoing development of proposals. As such, specific impact assessments will be required at appropriate times that take full account of potential implications and mitigating actions.

However, some potential impacts for people who share protected characteristics (particularly age, disability), live in rural areas or areas of deprivation have been identified along with mitigating actions. These broadly relate to:

- Understanding, awareness and opportunity to help influence the proposals, mitigated by an extensive communication and engagement strategy and approach that includes groups of young people, older people and people with learning disabilities, and changes to the proposals to reflect feedback received, and additional work that is proposed in the bid document itself (for example regarding the establishment of a 'City Convention', with full involvement of local residents and stakeholders, to determine in detail the optimum governance arrangements for the city of Oxford).
- The potential for rationalisation of buildings to negatively impact people's ability to access services, mitigated by a strong emphasis on keeping services local, establishment of new community hubs that are more accessible to all, and on keeping best of all organisations within the new council
- A risk that a new, countywide council would be too remote from local people and not fully understand specific needs, mitigated by a strong local emphasis within the proposal, including presumption for local delivery of services wherever appropriate, retaining local presence in areas, and establishment of area executive boards with local decision-making powers, including an appropriate local council solution for Oxford City, that also ensure the existing City and district council's civic and ceremonial responsibilities are appropriately delivered by the new authority.

Potential implications for staff have also been identified based on uncertainty caused by proposing to replace the existing councils in Oxfordshire, and potential to negatively impact on recruitment, retention and service delivery as a result and during any transitional period. This is being mitigated by a strong communications and engagement strategy that will continue throughout any future transitional arrangements.

Detail of Assessment:

Purpose of assessment:

To assess the potential impact of the proposals to replace the county council and five district / city councils in Oxfordshire with a single, countywide unitary council, and any differential impact on particular individuals or groups that share characteristics.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person’s disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality

- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Social Value

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934¹ might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

Context / Background:

Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council are jointly proposing that a new, single, countywide unitary council is created in Oxfordshire; replacing the existing County Council and the district and city councils in the county.

The purpose of this assessment is to consider any potential differential impacts on individuals or groups who have or share particular characteristics, both in terms of the process of developing the proposals and the potential implementation of the new unitary council should the proposals be accepted by the Secretary of State.

Proposals:

Oxfordshire has six local authorities – one county council plus five district and city councils. This proposal is to replace the six existing councils with a single new unitary council for the whole of Oxfordshire. The full proposal is available at www.betteroxfordshire.org.

The proposal is to create a council with the scale and strategic scope to take the decisions required to meet future challenges, while remaining local enough to respond to the needs and aspirations of our diverse local communities.

In the current two-tier system, decisions in the interests of the whole of Oxfordshire are often not taken because council responsibility is unclear. There is no adequate mechanism currently for resolving differences. The allocation of housing is a good example of this.

¹¹ [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

A single unitary council for Oxfordshire will ensure strong and democratically accountable political leadership, with decisions taken at the most appropriate level.

Joining up the key strategic functions of planning, transport and housing is the best way to unlock Oxfordshire's nationally significant economic growth potential. The significant savings made by eliminating duplication from running six councils could be used to improve public services and protect them from future cuts.

As a result of changes in central government funding, English councils will soon be funded mainly from council tax and business rates. Local government in Oxfordshire should be in a strong position to fund public services locally, but reorganisation is needed urgently if we are to manage the big challenges;

- Meeting the demand for care services from a growing and ageing population
- Tackling an acute housing shortage
- Closing a £1.7bn gap in infrastructure funding

To ensure the new council could respond to different local priorities, significant powers and funding would be delegated to a number of 'area executive boards' based around the communities that people identify with.

New arrangements will be needed in the city of Oxford where governance will need to be designed which reflects the city's historic, political and cultural status and which reflects the centrality of Oxford to the economic success of the wider region.

A new unitary council would be:

Simpler for residents and business: a single point of contact with strong and locally accountable leadership

Better for services: by joining up key functions like housing and social services, and planning and transport;

More local by devolving local decisions and funding to area executive boards and enabling parishes and towns to influence the decisions that affect their own communities

Lower cost by releasing £100m of net savings over five years to protect and improve services in the first five years by eliminating duplication and waste

There is strong local support for change. These proposals have been developed with stakeholders, including an independent advisory group from other public service and business organisations; central government; parishes and town councils, and - most importantly – the people who live here.

Evidence / Intelligence:

The proposal has been developed based on significant evidence, analysis, and engagement with key stakeholders including the public.

About Oxfordshire

Significant analysis of the population and needs of Oxfordshire is undertaken on an annual basis in completing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This includes detailed consideration of the varying needs of different parts of the county, and different groups of individuals based on shared characteristics including those protected under equalities legislation. This information has been used to help develop the proposals, and to assess potential impacts later in this assessment.

The JSNA can be seen at: <http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/joint-strategic-needs-assessment>

In summary, key information about Oxfordshire includes:

As of mid-2015, the estimated total population of Oxfordshire was 677,900. Oxfordshire's population is changing:

- The number of residents is increasing - by more than 50,000 in the past 10 years. We expect to see significant future growth, particularly if housing is delivered as articulated in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment which sets out a need for 100,000 additional homes between 2011 and 2031
- The numbers of older people are growing rapidly (for example the numbers of people aged over 85 increased by 10% between 2011 and 2014, and are expected to continue to increase - with the population of those aged 90+ forecast to more than double between 2015 and 2030)
- The area is becoming more ethnically diverse with the numbers of black and minority ethnic residents nearly doubling between 2001 and 2011, and now forming 9.2% of the population

Overall, Oxfordshire has relatively low levels of deprivation. It is the 11th least deprived of 152 upper-tier local authorities in England. Residents largely enjoy an excellent quality of life, with good skills levels and employment prospects and higher life expectancy than the national average. While most of the county is relatively affluent, there are a number of small areas that are affected by deprivation levels amongst the highest in England; these are concentrated in parts of Oxford city and Banbury.

Race, ethnicity and language

The age profile of Oxfordshire's population differs significantly by ethnic group (Census 2011). The ethnic minority group with the largest number of people in the older population in Oxfordshire was 'other white' (including people with European backgrounds).

Over the past five years, there has been increase in the number and proportion of pupils age five in Oxfordshire with first language not English.

Religion and belief

Residents in older age groups were significantly more likely to identify themselves as Christian than people in other age groups (Census 2011)

Sexual orientation and gender reassignment

Local data on sexual orientation and gender reassignment remains unavailable

Marriage and civil partnership

Rates of marriage and civil partnership in Oxfordshire were above average (Census 2011)

Pregnancy and maternity

Long term ONS birth statistics for England and Wales show a change in fertility by age group with declining rates in the under 20s and 20-24 age groups and increasing fertility rates for women in their 30s

In 2015 Oxfordshire had a higher proportion of births to older mothers than the national average

Over half of births in Oxford in 2015 were to mothers born outside the UK, the highest proportion of which was to mothers born in Europe

Disability

Rates of disability vary significantly by age and by district.

Oxfordshire had a slightly higher proportion of people aged 85 and over with a disability and the district with the highest rate of disability in this oldest age group was Cherwell followed by Vale of White Horse (Census 2011)

The number of recipients of Attendance Allowance (for people with disabilities) in Oxfordshire has declined in all age groups over the past 5 years, other than for those aged 90 and over. This is similar to the national trend.

Of the districts in Oxfordshire, Cherwell had the greatest number of Attendance Allowance claimants in each age group.

Rural population

As at mid-2015, a third of the total population of Oxfordshire lived in areas defined as “rural” by the Office for National Statistics.

Older people are more likely to live in rural areas than younger age groups.

West Oxfordshire had the highest proportion living in rural areas and the highest proportion of older rural residents.

Armed forces

The district with the largest number residents of Oxfordshire in receipt of Armed Forces Pension, War pension and Armed forces compensation scheme was West Oxfordshire

Carers

Census 2011 analysis shows:

- Oxford had double the national average of young carers (aged under 16)
- Oxford was above the regional South East average on the proportion of working age carers aged 35 to 49
- Cherwell was above the regional South East average on the proportion of carers aged 65 and over.
- Compared with all people aged 65 and over, older people providing significant amounts of care (50 or more hours per week) were more likely to be in “bad” health.
- Cherwell district had the highest rate of people combining full time work and caring (Census 2011).
- The proportion of people providing care by ethnic minority group appears to be lower in Oxfordshire than nationally. This is very likely to be influenced by the age profile of each ethnic group.
- By the end of March 2016, the Oxfordshire Young Carers Service had identified and supported a total of 2,281 children and young adults (aged 0 -25 years) who provide unpaid care to a family member.

Main studies

Grant Thornton and Price waterhouse Coopers LLP (PwC) were commissioned by the county and district councils respectively to consider the most appropriate model for local government in Oxfordshire. These reports both concluded that a single, countywide unitary council would release around £20m per year in running costs that could be better spent on improving local services. These reports, along with a range of other supporting documents, are available at: www.betteroxfordshire.org

Other evidence

In addition to the study commissioned from Grant Thornton, the County Council has undertaken additional research to inform its decision on the preferred approach and develop the proposals in this document.

Work that was undertaken to inform the discussion document that was published in January 2017 included:

- Taking advice from national stakeholders, including the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the County Council Network, the National Association of Local Councils, Centre for Public Scrutiny, and other advisors.
- Arranging ten meetings in Oxfordshire’s main market towns with local town and parish councils, attended by representatives of over 120 local councils, to consider opportunities around community empowerment and local

devolution. The headline conclusions were:

- * There was strong appetite for greater influence, tempered with scepticism that the voice of local communities can have more impact than it currently does
 - * Many parish representatives have reported feeling as if their views are ignored in the existing planning system
 - * Concern about the capacity to take formal decisions and procurement for delivering services, and call for indemnity to protect volunteers from liabilities
 - * Parishes do not want devolution of powers imposed; they want it offered with real choice
 - * Money is universally recognised as the central issue – improvements to communities and neighbourhoods will come at a cost
- Holding two focus groups with members of the public to understand their perceptions of the current system and what would be important to them in designing a new unitary model. The headline conclusions were:
- * Local accountability should be retained, with local service delivery and local representation by councillors
 - * Two tier council model leads to buck passing with some perception that one body will mean greater accountability
 - * Many see the potential for greater efficiencies, due to a perception that many services may well be duplicated across the different council areas
 - * Many see centralisation as providing an opportunity for economies of scale and combining related services e.g. waste collection with waste disposal
 - * Potential for clearer route of escalation for problems and issues
 - * Savings must translate into better services
 - * Infrastructure should precede housing development
- Engagement with the public at seven events in town centres through an initiative known as 'The great Oxfordshire shake up' to help residents to understand what was being considered. The main aim was check the publics' understanding of two tier local government (which was low); raise awareness of the possibility of change, and encourage people to take part in Grant Thornton's call for evidence
- Detailed discussions with many current county councillors, many of whom are also district councillors and have a good understanding across the breadth of local government services

Engagement activity to inform proposals and assessment of impact

Since the publication of the discussion document in January 2017 the county council (with involvement from South and Vale councils from February 2017 when they joined the county in this work) has undertaken a further wide-ranging engagement programme to inform Oxfordshire residents and stakeholders about the county council proposal and to provide a range of opportunities for responses and comments to help inform our proposal. This has included specific actions to directly engage with people from different geographic and demographic groups, including those that share protected characteristics.

Engagement methods

- A primary method of engagement was the One Oxfordshire website which includes contextual info, the proposal documents and background documents, FAQs, myth busters, media releases and online feedback form - www.oneoxfordshire.org -
- Summary discussion document (placed in all libraries, sent to all parishes and town councils, county hall)
- Easy read version (not on website but made available for specific meetings)
- Open survey on www.oneoxfordshire.org
- Hard copies of the open survey with Freepost response in all libraries and at County Hall
- 500 interview household survey using face-to-face interviews, including demographic sampling points and geographic weighting to ensure a cross-section of residents from across the county were interviewed
- 5 deliberative workshops, one per district council area, with 24 people recruited for each that were broadly representative of district on some demographic criteria. Accessible venues were used for all workshops.
- 42 drop-in events in libraries, giving the opportunity to raise awareness of proposal, answer questions and take feedback from people
- Specific events held for town and parish council representatives, including ad-hoc meetings/conversations with town councils who were unable to attend the formal meetings
- Workshop for children and young people to gather views
- Meeting with Oxford 50+ network
- Meeting with Carer's Oxfordshire and Age UK Panel
- Meetings with My Life My Choice and Unlimited (learning and physical disabilities user-led organisations)
- Range of workshops, meetings and communications with key local and national stakeholders, including establishment of a stakeholder advisory group. This has included many of the major public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations in the county and reflects the diversity of local business. The group also included organisations representing specific geographic groupings, and people who share protected characteristics under equalities legislation.
- A wide range of media releases and direct communications across a variety of paper and electronic channels, social media and so on to ensure awareness of the proposal and opportunities to be involved.

Alternatives considered / rejected:

The need for change is clearly articulated in the two reports published in summer 2016 by PwC (commissioned by the city and district councils in Oxfordshire) and Grant Thornton (commissioned by the county council). A short summary of the case for change is provided below:

Since 2010, central government funding for councils has steadily reduced and will continue to do so. In future, council services will mainly be paid for locally from council tax and business rates.

At the same time, the demand for many council services (particularly for children and adult social services) is rising as the county's population grows and people get older.

Oxfordshire currently has a two-tier system of local government. Some services are run by Oxfordshire County Council and others are run by the district or city council for a specific area.

This can be very confusing. For instance, the district councils collect bins and the county council disposes of their contents. The district councils are responsible for housing benefits and social housing, while the county council provides social services.

There are also over 300 town councils and parishes in Oxfordshire. They provide local services in some areas including allotments, cemeteries and crematoria, common land, community centres and village halls.

The proposal sets out the belief that the current six council system is not financially sustainable in the long term. Without change, important local services could be reduced and some may be cut altogether.

One council costs less to run than six councils, with one administration and fewer managers. Two independent studies for the county and the district councils show at least £100m could be saved in the first five years by creating a single council for Oxfordshire.

We believe one council for Oxfordshire would be simpler, better for services, more local and cost less.

Alternatives

Independent studies were commissioned by the county council, and city and district councils. They also looked at splitting the county into two, three or four smaller unitary councils, as well as the 'no change' option.

After looking at the evidence, the county council's Cabinet concluded that replacing the existing six councils with a single unitary council for Oxfordshire is the best way to save money and improve services. The city/district councils' own study accepted that the greatest savings were from a single unitary council for Oxfordshire.

There has been some local debate about the best way to reorganise local government, but One Oxfordshire, and now Better Oxfordshire, is the only firm proposal to have been produced.

More detail about the alternatives and reasons for their rejections can be seen in the proposal document.

Impact Assessment

Impact on Individuals and Communities:

Community / Group being assessed (as per list above – e.g. age, rural communities – do an assessment for each one on the list)

All individuals and communities

The main driver of the proposals is to improve the delivery of local services in Oxfordshire, by reducing running costs (particularly in back office services) to help protect and invest in frontline services. It is also anticipated that the creation of a single unitary council will provide further opportunities to innovate in future delivery of services.

The proposals also set out how bringing together key functions currently delivered across different councils will improve outcomes for people and communities, such as the preventative benefits of closer working between housing, leisure, public health and social care for example. Creating a single organisation would also make contacting the council simpler through a single point of contact.

The new council would also have a more local emphasis to decision-making and greater local accountability, ensuring that the specific needs and issues in different areas are understood and responded to appropriately, through the creation of local area executive boards based around the city of Oxford and the larger towns and villages in the county.

As such the proposals should have a positive impact for all individuals and communities, though clearly much of this will depend on the implementation of any changes that will be subject to detailed impact assessments at appropriate times / stages.

As set out in the previous sections, significant engagement activity has taken place to ensure that people are aware of the proposals, and have been given a range of opportunities to express their views. This has included extensive activity to target people in different geographic locations, and who share particular characteristics including those protected under equalities legislation.

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
Lack of support for proposals could lead to negative feelings towards the development of new council, and lack of confidence in the existing councils to continue delivering services / meet needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Extensive public and stakeholder awareness and engagement campaign including multiple routes to express views- Deliberative approach to engaging residents to ensure people had opportunity to understand proposals

	<p>before forming a view</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amendments to proposals as a result of feedback - Ongoing assurance about ability of council to deliver and effectiveness of existing services, including transformation of council to ensure it is fit for the future - Engagement exercise has generated a significant level of public debate locally with extensive media coverage, ensuring high levels of local awareness
<p>Changing boundaries and consolidation of some existing local services in creating a new council could change geographical and eligibility boundaries for some services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single countywide strategic view of a single organisation will enable better understanding and prioritisation of resources to meet needs including more joined up and improved service delivery - Detailed impact assessments will be undertaken at appropriate times if and when changes to service delivery are proposed
<p>New organisation may feel too remote from local communities, with people not believing they are able to access or influence services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong local emphasis within proposal, including presumption for local decision making wherever appropriate with joined up operational teams at the local level, retaining local presence in areas, building on existing local strengths. - Area executive boards able to make decisions based on understanding and prioritising local needs - Single organisation, rather than multiple councils in current format, will make it easier to understand who to contact about services, and single contact routes through a variety of channels (including online) will improve access to services.
<p>Transition to new council may impact on service delivery if not carefully managed, and if staff recruitment and retention is impacted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Careful transition planning will be in place and appropriately resourced, including establishment of shadow management team to ensure smooth transition
<p>Rationalisation of office buildings utilised by new council may make it more difficult for people to access services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposals include a strong emphasis on keeping services local and more accessible to all, and on keeping the best of all current organisations and service delivery

	<p>within the new council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single organisation, rather than multiple councils in current format, will make it easier to understand who to contact about services, and single contact routes through a variety of channels (including online) will improve access to services. - Specific impacts of any changes in the use of buildings will be the subject of individual impact assessments at an appropriate time
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In addition to the potential risks, mitigations and benefits set out above above, the following have also been identified for specific groups:

Age

The proposals are intended to have a significantly positive impact on people of all ages, by bringing together services and functions that are currently delivered by different organisations. For example, a single council with responsibility for public health, housing, leisure, and support for vulnerable children and adults (including older people) could have a more targeted approach to preventing the emergence and escalation of specific needs for care and support, and meeting needs as effectively and efficiently as possible. This will be the subject of detailed strategic and service planning, along with appropriate engagement and impact assessments, as part of transitional arrangements in the event of the proposal being approved.

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
Rationalisation of office buildings utilised by new council may make it more difficult for people to access services, which could be exacerbated for older people, or people with young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposals include a strong emphasis on keeping services local and more accessible to all, and on keeping the best of all current organisations and service delivery within the new council. - Single organisation, rather than multiple councils in current format, will make it easier to understand who to contact about services, and single contact routes through a variety of channels (including online) will improve access to services. - Specific impacts of any changes in the use of buildings will be the subject of individual impact assessments at an appropriate time.

Disability

The proposals are intended to have a significantly positive impact on people with mental health needs, learning and physical disabilities, by bringing together services and functions that are currently delivered by different organisations. For example, a single council with responsibility for public health, housing, leisure, and support for vulnerable children and adults (including those with disabilities) could have a more targeted approach to preventing the emergence and escalation of specific needs for care and support, and meeting needs as effectively and efficiently as possible. This will be the subject of detailed strategic and service planning, along with appropriate engagement and impact assessments, as part of transitional arrangements in the event of the proposal being approved.

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
<p>Rationalisation of office buildings utilised by new council may make it more difficult for people to access services, which could be exacerbated for people with disabilities (particularly those with mobility issues)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposals include a strong emphasis on keeping services local and more accessible to all, and on keeping the best of all current organisations and service delivery within the new council. - Single organisation, rather than multiple councils in current format, will make it easier to understand who to contact about services, and single contact routes through a variety of channels (including online) will improve access to services. - Specific impacts of any changes in the use of buildings will be the subject of individual impact assessments at an appropriate time.

Race

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
<p>New organisation does not have sufficient understanding of and focus on specific needs and issues of people with ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality – this could particularly apply in Oxford City given it is significantly more diverse than many other parts of the county, but this could also apply in other areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single organisation able to think strategically across county and prioritise resources accordingly, including more joined up and improved service delivery - Area executive boards able to make decisions based on understanding and prioritising local needs - Continued focus on identifying specific needs through Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including specific chapters for different localities - Appropriate service planning and full consideration of any impacts of changes to delivery in these areas will be undertaken at an appropriate time

	as proposals are developed
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Urban communities

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
<p>Particular concern has been raised throughout the engagement exercises about the need to recognise the different priorities and challenges in the city of Oxford, the largest urban area in the county that is effectively the main economic and cultural heart but also has the most diverse population. There is therefore a risk that the new organisation does not have sufficient understanding of and focus on specific needs and issues in the City, and other urban areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single organisation able to think strategically across county and prioritise resources accordingly, including more joined up and improved service delivery - Area executive boards able to prioritise local needs - Development of specific governance arrangements in the city of Oxford that reflect the city’s historic, political and cultural status and which reflects the centrality of Oxford to the economic success of the wider region. The establishment of a City Convention with full involvement of residents and stakeholders to guide this new approach. - Continued focus on identifying specific needs through Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including specific chapters for different localities - Appropriate service planning and full consideration of any impacts of changes to delivery in these areas will be undertaken at an appropriate time as proposals are developed

Rural communities

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
<p>New organisation does not have sufficient understanding of and focus on specific needs and issues in these areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single organisation able to think strategically across county and prioritise resources accordingly, including more joined up and improved service delivery - Area executive boards able to prioritise local needs - Continued focus on identifying specific needs through Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including specific chapters for different localities - Appropriate service planning and full consideration of any impacts of changes to delivery in these areas will

	be undertaken at an appropriate time as proposals are developed
Rationalisation of office buildings utilised by new council may make it more difficult for people to access services, which could be exacerbated for people with living in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposals include a strong emphasis on keeping services local and more accessible to all, and on keeping the best of all current organisations and service delivery within the new council - Single organisation, rather than multiple councils in current format, will make it easier to understand who to contact about services, and single contact routes through a variety of channels (including online) will improve access to services. - Specific impacts of any changes in the use of buildings will be the subject of individual impact assessments at an appropriate time

Areas of deprivation

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
New organisation does not have sufficient understanding of and focus on specific needs and issues in these areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single organisation able to think strategically across county and prioritise resources accordingly, including more joined up and improved service delivery - Area executive boards able to prioritise local needs, focused on Oxford City and larger market towns and villages in the county. - Continued focus on identifying specific needs through Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including specific chapters for different localities - Appropriate service planning and full consideration of any impacts of changes to delivery in these areas will be undertaken at an appropriate time as proposals are developed
Rationalisation of office buildings utilised by new council may make it more difficult for people to access services, which could be exacerbated for people on low incomes if required to travel further for example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposals include a strong emphasis on keeping services local and more accessible to all, and on keeping the best of all current organisations and service delivery within the new council - Single organisation, rather than multiple councils in current format, will

	<p>make it easier to understand who to contact about services, and single contact routes through a variety of channels (including online) will improve access to services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific impacts of any changes in the use of buildings will be the subject of individual impact assessments at an appropriate time
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No additional, specific differential potential impacts have been identified at this stage for people who share the following protected characteristics:

- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Impact on Staff:

The main potential impact on staff is the risk of increased uncertainty, stress and loss of pride in working for an organisation that may no longer exist, and the risk that this may impact on service delivery and the recruitment and retention of staff during a transitional period.

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
Development of proposals to abolish existing councils, including potential reductions in overall number of people employed, risks creating uncertainty, stress and loss of pride in working for the council, potentially leading to impact on service delivery and increased turnover / challenges in recruiting and retaining staff during transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular email communications with staff - Briefing sessions for managers, staff led by the Chief Executive - Signposting to public websites and regular press briefings to ensure access to accurate information - Access to range of staff support mechanisms, including training in managing and dealing with change
Significant public debate, including media coverage that is critical of the County Council, risks creating uncertainty, stress and loss of pride in working for the council, potentially leading to impact on service delivery and increased turnover / challenges in recruiting and retaining staff during transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Briefing sessions for staff led by the Chief Executive - Regular email and Yammer communications with staff - Regular press briefings and statements to ensure accuracy of public information - Signposting to One Oxfordshire / Better Oxfordshire website including

	<p>FAQ's to ensure access to accurate information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to range of staff support mechanisms, including training in managing and dealing with change
<p>Uncertainty about the future of the County Council could lead to difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, increasing pressure on other staff in maintaining service delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular email communications with staff - Briefing sessions for managers, staff lead by the Chief Executive - Signposting to One Oxfordshire / Better Oxfordshire website and regular press briefings to ensure access to accurate information - Access to range of staff support mechanisms, including training in managing and dealing with change - Continued emphasis on positive messages about the Council being a high performing authority and a good place to work
<p>Rationalisation of office buildings may change office bases for staff, and therefore may impact more on certain staff (eg low paid, part-time, those with caring responsibilities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This may be offset by an increase in flexible working and opportunities to work closer to home at buildings not currently shared across organisations - Full consideration of impacts and mitigations, including communications and consultation with staff as appropriate, will be developed if and when specific proposals are brought forward
<p>Reduction in staffing as a result of moving to a single unitary may disproportionately affect specific groups (eg older people, women) given make up of respective workforces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full consideration of impacts and mitigations, including communications and consultation with staff as appropriate, will be developed if and when specific proposals are brought forward
<p>Any differences in terms and conditions across the existing councils in Oxfordshire could mean that working for the new council could impact on staff with consequential impacts on recruitment and retention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous guidance issued by government (and any new guidance) on staffing issues through transition should be followed including on following the principles of TUPE - Issues of equal pay across the councils will need to be identified and managed appropriately as part of any transitional arrangements, and may lead to increased pay for some. - Full consideration of impacts and mitigations, including communications and consultation

	with staff as appropriate, will be developed if and when specific proposals are brought forward
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Impact on other Council services:

The proposals will affect all council services equally, in proposing that existing councils are abolished and a single, countywide unitary council established.

As such it is not possible to assess any differential impacts on services until transition to and implementation of the new council, whilst recognising that implementing a new council may lead to differential impacts on services delivered in all councils (such as finance, HR, legal) as opposed to front line services only delivered by one council (such as social care, fire and rescue).

As set out above, it is also possible that uncertainty around the future of the County Council could impact on recruitment and retention of staff, which in turn could have a negative impact on service delivery.

This will be mitigated through regular communications with all staff and the public as set out above, and full engagement in transitional arrangements as appropriate.

Impact on providers:

The most significant potential impact on providers is uncertainty about the security of any contracts beyond the next 2-3 years, ie the likely period of transition to a new authority assuming agreement by the Secretary of State to the proposals.

Potential risks	Mitigations and potential benefits
<p>It is possible that uncertainty about the future of the council, and the future security of any existing or newly procured services, could impact on the ability and willingness of providers to honour existing contracts or to bid for new ones, with potential impact on service delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular communications with all providers as well as the general public / in the press, including emphasis on the continuing need for the existing range of services irrespective of the model for local government in the county - Engagement of major providers on reference group to ensure concerns are understood and addressed where possible - Appropriate legal advice as transition progresses about arrangements for existing and future contracts - Potential to consolidate existing contracts across multiple organisations both during and

	after transition could provide greater certainty and increased opportunity in having larger and/or more secure contracts
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Social Value

If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.

How might the proposal improve the economic well-being of the relevant area?

The proposals will mean approximately £20 million per annum is available for reinvestment as determined by the Implementation Executive and new council in frontline services in the local area, infrastructure investment and/or minimising council tax levels, rather than being spent on back office services. This will have a positive impact on the economic wellbeing of the local area, protecting local services and creating more local employment opportunities, offsetting the relatively small reduction in staff numbers employed by the new council that is anticipated.

Chapter 5 of the bid document sets out in detail how the proposals will improve economic well-being. This includes:

- Changing the way we plan – taking decisions at the strategic level that relate to the whole functional economic area of Oxfordshire and its relationship regionally, and using local knowledge to make better local decisions, rather than having multiple strategic plans for smaller areas
- Bringing together decision-making on infrastructure and planning to maximise housing delivery and ensure that associated infrastructure is fit for purpose, directly linking the decisions about where people will live and work in the future with decisions about how they will travel between the two, and where school places will be provided
- Ensuring a strong and accountable decision-making process that is able to take difficult decisions, in the interests of the whole of Oxfordshire
- Taking a far more active role in bringing forward housing developments, clearing barriers, forming new partnerships and housing delivery vehicles, directly delivering homes inside and beyond the HRA and using public land and property strategically
- Finding new ways to invest in infrastructure, including talking to government about the devolution of nationally held funds and pump-priming local financing models and creating a revolving infrastructure fund that could support £1bn of investment

How might the proposal improve the environmental well-being of the relevant area?

At this stage it is not possible to identify any specific improvements to the environmental wellbeing of the area as a result of the proposals, though it is likely

that bringing together services such as planning and waste will enable this to be fully considered in all future decisions and service planning.

Action plan:

Action	By When	Person responsible
Ongoing review of impact assessment as proposals develop, and before submission to Government to ensure implications are mitigated where possible	April 2017	Ben Threadgold
Impact assessment to be reviewed if and when transitional arrangements are instigated	Review in Autumn 2017, if not before	Ben Threadgold

Monitoring and review:**Person responsible for assessment: Ben Threadgold**

Version	Date	Notes (e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
1	24 February 2017	Initial Draft