

Addendum to Annex 3 Report of the public and stakeholder engagement

Addition to Paragraph 2.20

West Oxfordshire (15 February, Corn Exchange Witney, attended by 18 people)

Initially four of the 18 participants favoured a reduction in the number of councils, only four were explicitly against and the remainder 10 people were don't knows. For those supporting a reduction this was on the grounds of efficiency, cost-effectiveness and the provision of more joined-up services. Those against were concerned that local identity and democratic accountability would be lost and that the needs of the "very different" areas of Oxfordshire could not be adequately served by one large unitary authority) while the rest were 'don't knows'.

After detailed discussions, the number favouring a reduction from six to one unitary council increased to 10 - whereas the remaining eight firmly disagreed. The former were persuaded that a single council would result in greater efficiency, large cost-savings and more joined-up services - and that the area boards have significant merits in promoting democracy at a local level. The latter, though, disagreed and felt the proposed change would result in the loss of democratic accountability locally and a lack of political diversity across the county more generally.