**Briefing on Better Oxfordshire household survey**

**Summary**

* 70% 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 resident’s survey commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council.

* 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.

* 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.

* The survey results show there is majority support for the proposal in all district council areas including those districts which are actively campaigning against the proposal:
* 78% in West Oxfordshire
* 75% in South Oxfordshire
* 69% in Oxford
* 67% in Vale of White Horse
* 63% in Cherwell.
* The table shows the percentage of people who agreed with (or indicated the importance of) each of the main questions, with a confidence interval of around +/- 5 % at the 95% confidence level at county level. The statistical confidence intervals applied for the results at city/district council area are larger and will vary, but even when looking at the lower end of the range indicated by the confidence interval there is majority agreement (or importance indicated) for each question across all city/district areas.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **County** | **Cherwell** | **Oxford** | **South** | **Vale** | **West** |
| ***The case for change****To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a need to reorganise local government in Oxfordshire?* | 70% | 70% | 70% | 67% | 70% | 73% |
| **The principle of unitary council governance***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle that a ‘unitary council’ should provide all council services in your particular area?* | 67% | 66% | 68% | 67% | 70% | 62% |
| **If local government was changed in Oxfordshire, how important or unimportant would the following be to you?** |
|  | **County** | **Cherwell** | **Oxford** | **South** | **Vale** | **West** |
| Simpler local government | 87% | 90% | 81% | 88% | 86% | 89% |
| Better services | 92% | 90% | 98% | 89% | 89% | 90% |
| More local accountability | 88% | 88% | 89% | 90% | 86% | 85% |
| Lower running costs | 87% | 88% | 84% | 92% | 85% | 86% |
|  | **County** | **Cherwell** | **Oxford** | **South** | **Vale** | **West** |
| **The case for a single unitary council***To what extent do you agree or disagree with Oxfordshire County Council’s draft proposals to ABOLISH six councils and replace them with ONE new ‘unitary council’s for the WHOLE of Oxfordshire?* | 70% | 63% | 69% | 75% | 67% | 78% |

Notes on methodology

* 502 quota controlled interviews of residents aged 16+ were conducted between 5 – 19 February 2017.
* To correct for response bias, statistical weighting has been applied to the completed data-set 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.
* 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.