



Notes of the meeting of Leadership Gloucestershire held on  
Thursday, 25 February 2016

**1 Welcome, introduction and apologies**

| <i>Name</i>                 | <i>Organisation</i>  | <i>Apologies</i>  |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Cllr Mark Hawthorne (Chair) | Gloucestershire County Council   |                   |
| Pete Bungard                | Gloucestershire County Council   |                   |
| Cllr Geoff Wheeler          | Stroud District Council  |                   |
| David Hagg                  | Stroud District Council  |                   |
| Cllr David Norman           | Gloucester City Council  | Cllr Paul James   |
| Jon McGinty                 | Gloucester City Council  |                   |
| Cllr Christopher Hancock    | Cotswold District Council  | Cllr Lynden Stowe |
| David Neudegg               | Cotswold District Council  |                   |
| Cllr Patrick Molyneux       | Forest of Dean District Council  |                   |
| Peter Hibberd               | Forest of Dean District Council  |                   |
| Cllr Steve Jordan           | Cheltenham Borough Council   |                   |
| Pat Pratley                 | Cheltenham Borough Council   | Andrew North      |
| Cllr Robert Vines           | Tewkesbury Borough Council   |                   |
| Mike Dawson                 | Tewkesbury Borough Council   |                   |
| Richard Bradley             | Police and Crime<br>Commissioner's Office  | Martin Surl       |
| Suzette Davenport           | Gloucestershire Constabulary   |                   |
| Dr Andy Seymour             | NHS Gloucestershire Clinical<br>Commissioning Group                                    | Dr Helen Miller   |
| Ellen Rule                  | NHS Gloucestershire Clinical<br>Commissioning Group                                    | Mary Hutton       |
| David Owen                  | GFirst LEP   | Diane Savory      |
| Jane Burns                  | Gloucestershire County Council   |                   |
| Simon Harper                | Gloucestershire County Council   |                   |
| Katie Jenkins               | Government representative –<br>Department for Business,<br>Innovation and Skills (BIS) |                   |

## **2 Last meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 7 January 2016 were approved.

## **3 Cotswold unitary proposals**

The Chair advised that he had just become aware that Cotswold DC and West Oxfordshire DC were about to announce their intention to consider a unitary bid as part of a wider bid for unitary local government across Oxfordshire. He believed that there was little point in considering progress with the devolution deal when it had effectively been 'hijacked' by one of the partner authorities. He invited David Neudegg, Chief Executive of Cotswold DC and West Oxfordshire DC, to address the meeting.

David explained that as part of Oxfordshire's discussions on devolution it had become clear that any deals would require either an elected mayor or unitary local government. Initial proposals had been put together in recent weeks to explore unitary councils as an elected mayor was not supported. The proposals would see the abolition of Oxfordshire County Council, with its functions transferring to four new local unitary councils working together in partnership with the National Health Service, police and the local enterprise partnerships.

Four new unitary authorities could be created:

- Southern Oxfordshire unitary authority covering the area currently administered by Vale of White Horse DC and South Oxfordshire DC.
- An Oxford City unitary authority would be formed in the centre of the county, covering the area currently administered by Oxford City Council.
- A West Oxfordshire-Cotswold unitary authority covering the area currently administered by West Oxfordshire DC and Cotswold DC.
- A Cherwell-South Northants unitary authority covering the area currently administered by Cherwell DC and South Northamptonshire DC.

The councils were commissioning independent experts to work with them and other stakeholders to produce detailed and costed plans for the preferred option. These would be tested against other appropriate options to ensure the best and most cost effective solutions were identified. Detailed proposals would be considered by each of the councils prior to public consultation in the Summer. It was expected that the Secretary of State would make a decision in the Autumn.

Cllr Christopher Hancock who was in attendance at the meeting on behalf of Cllr Lynden Stowe, Leader of Cotswold DC, advised that he had become aware that an announcement would be made the night before.

Concern was expressed around the table that none of the Leadership Gloucestershire partners had been informed about the proposals or involved in the extensive discussions that had been taking place with the Government and other agencies. It was evident that plans had been put forward for the delivery of a range of services including adult social care, children's services and highways.

David Neudegg and Cllr Christopher Hancock left the room at 10.30am to allow the other members of Leadership Gloucestershire to consider the impact of the potential loss of Cotswold DC to an Oxfordshire focused unitary council.

The nine remaining public sector organisations were united in their view that the proposals would result in disruption to public services and they were opposed to any moves in this direction. The Clinical Commissioning Group had recently agreed a Gloucestershire 'footprint' with NHS England which allowed the county to take a national lead on health initiatives and provided early access to transformation funding. Gloucestershire Constabulary had strong working relationships with the County Council in a number of areas, including safeguarding vulnerable adults and children and road safety. These arrangements would have to be provided across more than one council if the Cotswold proposals went forward.

There was concern that the impact of the proposals on wider public services had not been thought through properly. Not only would there be a deterioration in services but the cost to the tax payer was likely to rise significantly. In simple terms for Cotswold residents, council tax would increase (estimated at £80 per Band D property) as the county council precept was much higher in Oxfordshire than Gloucestershire.

Following a lengthy discussion, the partners around the table unanimously agreed that the following public statement should be made on behalf of Leadership Gloucestershire:

*The historic county of Gloucestershire has existed for 1,000 years and the Cotswolds is an integral part.*

*Our residents and businesses have a strong affection for our fantastic county and are proud to live and work in Gloucestershire.*

*Public services and outcomes for local people work best when boundaries align. Gloucestershire public services are already working together. Our geography and structures already match. At the moment we have fantastic alignment of the county boundary with our seven councils, our health and social care services, our Constabulary and its Police and Crime Commissioner, a single local enterprise partnership, all of which benefit Gloucestershire residents.*

*The aspiration of our devolution bid 'We are Gloucestershire' – which we continue to support - is to work ever closer on issues such as integration of health and social care services, children's safeguarding, investing in our roads and promoting economic growth. The possible loss of Cotswold District would be a step in the opposite direction.*

*We all remain committed to retaining Gloucestershire as the place that we live, work and do business, including the Cotswolds which is so much part of our historic county."*

#### **4 Joint working update**

The Chair invited Mike Dawson to provide an update on a number of areas of joint working. Mike advised that at a recent meeting of district chief executives there was strong support for moving on with joint working around housing and planning, economic development (in partnership with GFirst LEP), enabling active communities (in partnership with Gloucestershire CCG) and community safety (in partnership with Gloucestershire Constabulary).

He said that the proposals to appoint a Strategic Planning Commissioner would be brought to the next meeting of Leadership Gloucestershire.

**Action** – *Mike Dawson*

Partners were anxious that joint working was not paralysed by the disruption caused by the Cotswold announcement and they were pleased to see continuing progress on a number of fronts.

#### **5 CCG sustainability and transformation plans**

A PowerPoint presentation had been circulated to everyone present at the meeting. Ellen Rule stated that it was important that the health community and its partners in Gloucestershire moved forward in developing a sustainability and transformation plan for the whole county.

It was evident that NHS England was unaware of the Cotswold proposals as a Gloucestershire 'footprint' had just been announced for new initiatives and transformation funding. This was a major achievement for the health community in the county.

#### **6 Next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for 31 March but, in light of the Cotswold announcement, the Chair requested that efforts be made to arrange an earlier meeting.

**Action** – *Jane Burns*