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Peter Clark
Head of Paid Services
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
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18th March 2016

Dear Peter

I am writing to update on the study because the City Council has been delegated to undertake its procurement on the behalf of the five Oxfordshire Districts and two partner Districts. I ask you to involve the County by feeding into this rather than undertaking work which will duplicate and add the costs.

The District Councils have sought advice from DCLG on the study we are commissioning into options for unitary government in Oxfordshire and the proposal for a combined authority.

We have involved the main consultants in developing a brief for the study and have created a scope for the project which takes account of their feedback and government requirements. In drafting the brief I looked at your publically suggested scope and included all the suggestions you have made.

The brief is now on the procurement portal and bids have been invited.

The study is to be done independently by an industry leading company and the scope is non-controversial and based as I said on your suggestions and best practice.

The study includes an assessment all possible options and whilst indicating publically stated positions of District Leaders that a Council Unitary is not a preferred option, it does ensure all options are examined including a unitary county and analysed against the criteria government has given us.

I enclose the tender documents and the advice from government. We have sent the final document to DCLG and have asked them for any input during the tender process. We are more than happy to have your input and consider revising the brief in light of your views.

We would strongly urge you not to duplicate this work which was well underway before your suggestion of a parallel study. We agree with you that we have to be careful with public money and the fact a study is underway we would suggest you feed your views into it on the brief, and meet and provide evidence to the consultant during the study. It is then always open to you to do more work at a later stage if you feel the study is incomplete in any way.

The District Leaders have made it clear that they will not propose any unitary options until the study is complete and they feel the evidence supports an option they are comfortable with and meets the government criteria. Before any such proposal is made to Government there will be extensive public involvement and consultation.

I hope this approach addressed the fears you raise of the work not examining all the options and your desire to be involved, it is notable that seven District Councils have agreed to the study and it would be good to have your co-operation with the work.

Yours sincerely



Peter Sloman
Chief Executive