

DEDDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special Meeting of Council held on 30th March,
1994

Present:- Councillors Clinch (Chairman), Bowen, Clarke, Mrs Lee, O'Brien, Mrs Stevens and Mrs Swash. County Councillor Matthews, District Councillor Davis and Messrs G Handley (Chief Executive, Cherwell District Council) and Mr T Stock (Senior Officer, Oxfordshire County Council) in attendance.

211/93 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Councillors ~~Canning~~^{Canning}, Mrs Garvey, Miss Hill, Oddy, Reed and Todd.

212/93 Local Government Review for Oxfordshire.

The Chairman introduced Messrs Handley and Stock and asked them to make their presentations supporting each of their Councils as the ideal unitary authority for this area.

Mr Stock set out the basis of the Local Government Commission's task in reviewing the local authorities in Oxfordshire and then stated the case for an Oxfordshire Unitary Authority providing costings showing a lesser cost than those which would appertain should there be 4 Unitary Authorities based on the present District Councils with a merger of West Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. Should the decision be to form unitary authorities of either construction there would be additional costs, the variation being in the number of years which it would take to pay back such additional costs. His calculations showed that with 1 Unitary Authority, the County Council, annual costs would be reduced by £12.2m and a pay back of the initial indirect costs would be achieved in 1 year. However with 4 Unitary Authorities the annual costs would show an increase of £400,000 and the indirect costs would never be paid back. He gave several examples based upon existing County Council services e.g. Education and Public Libraries where in his view a single authority could manage the services more efficiently and at a cheaper cost.

Mr. Handley then set out the case for a "North Oxfordshire" Unitary Authority based upon the present Cherwell District Council. He strongly disputed the costings set out by Mr Stock, and stated that each of the 4 authorities will give a pay back of indirect costs of 4½ years. The Audit Commission had stated that size had no effect on efficiency - what was important was political direction and officer management. Mr Thomas the Commissioner for Oxfordshire had stated that he expected the solution for Oxfordshire to be 2 to 4 Councils. In Mr Handley's view the County Council had been profligate with its assets quoting the fact that Cherwell had realised £19.4m from underutilised assets whereas the figure for the County Council was £11 to £12m. The sale of the County Council offices would pay for the additional costs. The Mori survey of peoples identification with their County had shown that of all Counties Oxfordshire was 3rd lowest, only Humberside and Avon being

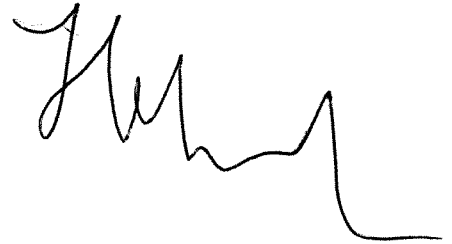


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below. The Community Analysis showed that North Oxfordshire rates highly and separates itself from the rest of Oxfordshire. There would need to be few joint arrangements, few services need to be strategic and he promised a new relationship with Parish Councils - a clarity of demarcation and an enhanced role on consultation.

The meeting was then opened to questions, many members taking part, following which Mr Handley and Mr Stock were thanked by the Chairman and withdrew from the meeting.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that the way forward should be the formation of a "North Oxfordshire" unitary authority based upon the present Cherwell District Council and that the Commissioner be informed that the main reason for this decision was that this would bring decision making closer to the parishioners and would enable them to identify more closely with such new Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Handley', written in a cursive style. The signature starts with a large 'J', followed by 'Handley' in a fluid, connected script. The final letter 'y' has a long, horizontal tail that extends to the right.