

## Appendix B

The need for Publica is clear:

A survey of councils, earlier this year, found that three-quarters had little or no confidence in the sustainability of local government finances and more than one in 10 believed they were in danger of failing to meet legal requirements to deliver core services. More than 40% of all councils anticipated making “cuts in frontline services, which would be evident to the public” – rising to 71% among social care authorities.

Just last night we hear the news that Swindon Borough Council is to cut 420 staff. This Council has not had to make cuts to services. This Council has invested, is investing and will invest in its local community.

We know that there are Oxfordshire Liberal Democrats who believe in unitary councils as the best way to save money and we know that there are liberal democrats who believe in car parking charges to manage demand.

This Conservative Group believes that there is a better way to serve our local community and retain local democracy.

This latest carping from the liberals really is surprising. Where have they been over the last few years? Let us consider the valuable input by both Councillors and officers working up the concept of a single delivery body allowing individual Councils to retain their democratic accountability and sense of place which evolved over a number of years.

Many of us can remember former Cllr Booty’s refrain of evolution not revolution. Well now I would like to thank Cllr Dingwall for his foresight.

Back on December 3rd 2014, as chairman of FMOS, he suggested, and it was agreed, that the committee should monitor the 2020 vision project with further updates being provided as appropriate.

On the 4th February 2015 FMOS received a presentation from the Chief Executive on the 2020 Vision Project. The Chief Executive indicated that it was important that the project received scrutiny across all partner authorities as it progressed. Broad engagement of all Members was necessary to achieve a long term solution to the challenges facing local government and to put appropriate measures in place to ensure its success.

At the FMOS meeting on Wednesday 1 February 2017 Mr Postan sought reassurance that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue to have the ability to scrutinise the operation of the company. In response, Mr Neudegg confirmed that the ability to call the company’s Officers to account would be enshrined in the articles of association. He advised that the letting of contracts would require shareholder approval but it was for individual authorities to establish the mechanism for liaison between shareholders and the Councils. The Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service confirmed that the authority would maintain a procurement approach to contracts between the Council and suppliers.

As can be seen there has been scrutiny involved in the whole process of the establishment of Publica having been discussed at nearly every Finance and Management Scrutiny meeting since 2014.

Additionally, there has been a publicly open Joint Committee of Councillors from all partners who have overseen the process of the establishment of the Company.

Furthermore, once Publica has been launched the three existing scrutiny committees at West Oxfordshire will continue to exercise their rights to scrutinise the operation and performance of the company in exactly the same way as they did last month when it was provided by West Oxfordshire employees. In addition the Audit Committee will also provide oversight of any governance issues with the company.