

Wiltshire's Journey to Unitary



Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE

Our journey ...

- More than 10 years ago we believed unitary was the best option for the people of Wiltshire
- Our vision to create stronger and more resilient communities has been the focus
- 5 councils merged – 1 county and 4 districts
- Huge support from partners and key stakeholders - MOD and business community
- Our case was based on:
 - Devolution and working locally
 - Improved customer focused
 - More efficient – save millions
- Council budget spend - approx. £865 million



Our journey - we had to change...

- Money and resources getting tighter
- Change in demographics – more older people and young people needing services
- Public confusion – who did what?
- We know that we could improve public confidence and satisfaction levels
- Partnerships and working together challenging in two-tier system
- Wanted local communities to engage and influence
- We knew we had to create stronger communities that would be more resilient for the future and less reliant on public services



One Wiltshire Campaign

- Campaign gained support from one district, businesses, diocese and parish and town councils
- More than 250 meetings in communities - supermarkets, leisure centres, libraries etc.
- Published leaflets on issues of particular interest - development control and community area partnerships
- Commissioned Ipsos MORI to host a citizens' workshop
- Highlighted variations across the county - Housing Benefit admin cost variance £1.19 to £11.87, Planning £9.86 to £21.28 and Local Tax collection where cost varied from £3.47 to £12.68 ➔
- Partners lobbied government – Police, Fire, Army, Chambers, Business
- Went from 5 chief executives to one (NO CEO now 3 corporate directors)
- Five management teams to one



Wiltshire Council...

- Ninth largest council and third largest planning authority
- 500,000 residents and 15,000 businesses – third largest collector of local income
- 99,490 people 65yrs + (third largest older population)
- 113,100 young people between 0 and 19 years of age
- Largest MOD rebasing, one third of British Army by 2020
- 18 towns and Salisbury City
- Average house prices 11 x local income



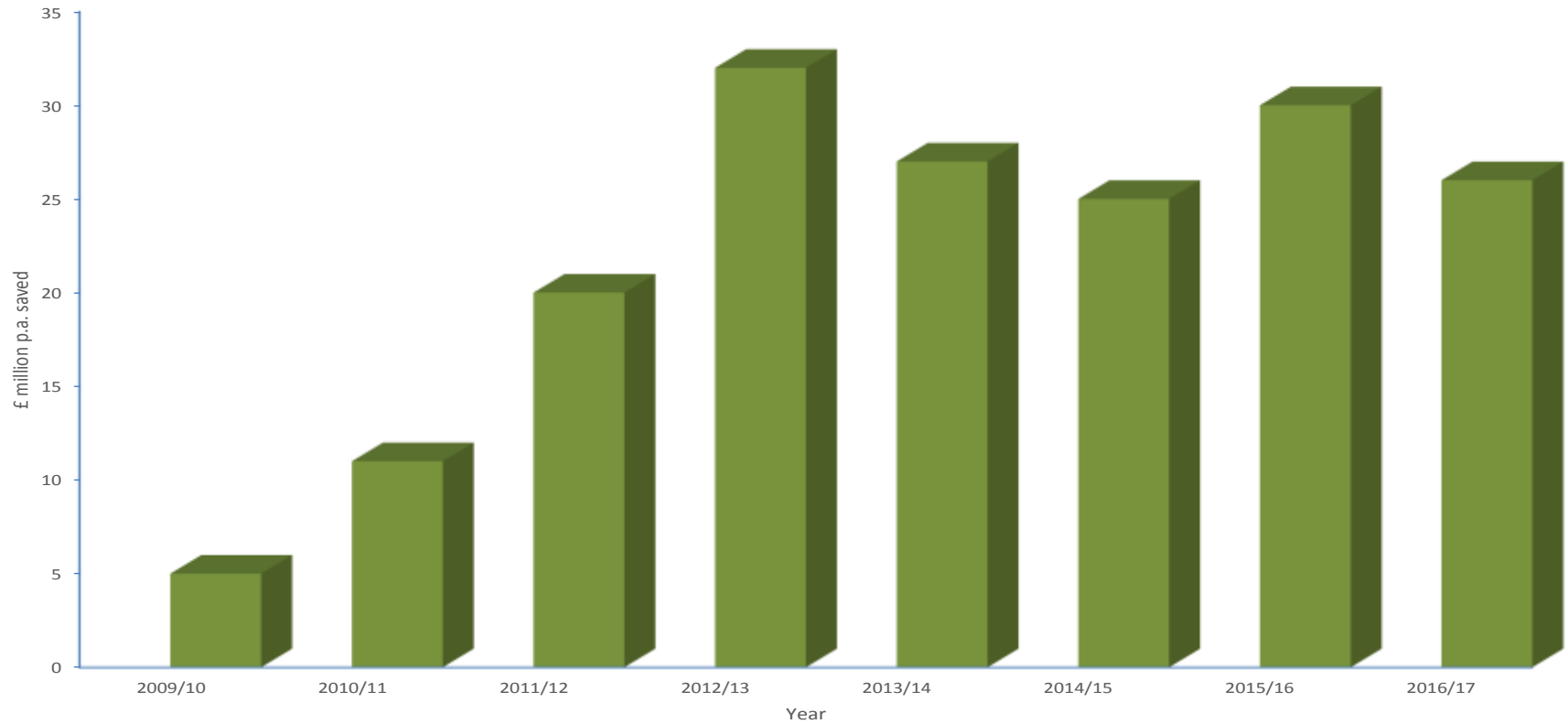


Our journey – the changes

- £25m savings pa recurring and non-cashable savings in more efficient processes
- Back office costs reduced to 9% (now 7%) of total budget - 19% for predecessor bodies
- Procurement savings - £36 million through increased buying power and stronger market position
- Rationalised 105 premises to 3 modern office hubs – saving £5m pa in running costs and generating £85m capital receipts
- Share space - police stations at 2 main hubs and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service HQ at Salisbury campus
- 250 county and district councillors to 98 unitary councillors
- Service teams amalgamated and harmonisation programme completed
- Culture – framework for values and behaviours agreed

Money saved since 2009

Recurring savings 2009-17 = £176 million



Our journey - how we changed

- Established 18 Community Area Boards – devolved funding and services – youth activities, highways, older people wellbeing – looking at link schemes and lunch clubs
- Engaged and empowered communities to deliver local services and assets
- Managed decrease in central government funding
- Froze council tax and delivered over £100m of savings to pay for this
- Customers – increase in performance and satisfaction
- Created Salisbury City Council
- Published long term vision and plan



Other benefits

- Harmonised waste collection and disposal
- Transformed development services - single core strategy and development of neighbourhood plans
- 15% reduction in CO² emissions - council buildings
- Created IT solutions for remote and flexible working
- Opportunity for devolution to towns and parishes and communities
- Abolition of chief executive post in 2011 and restructured senior management team in 2013 - £831,000 saving



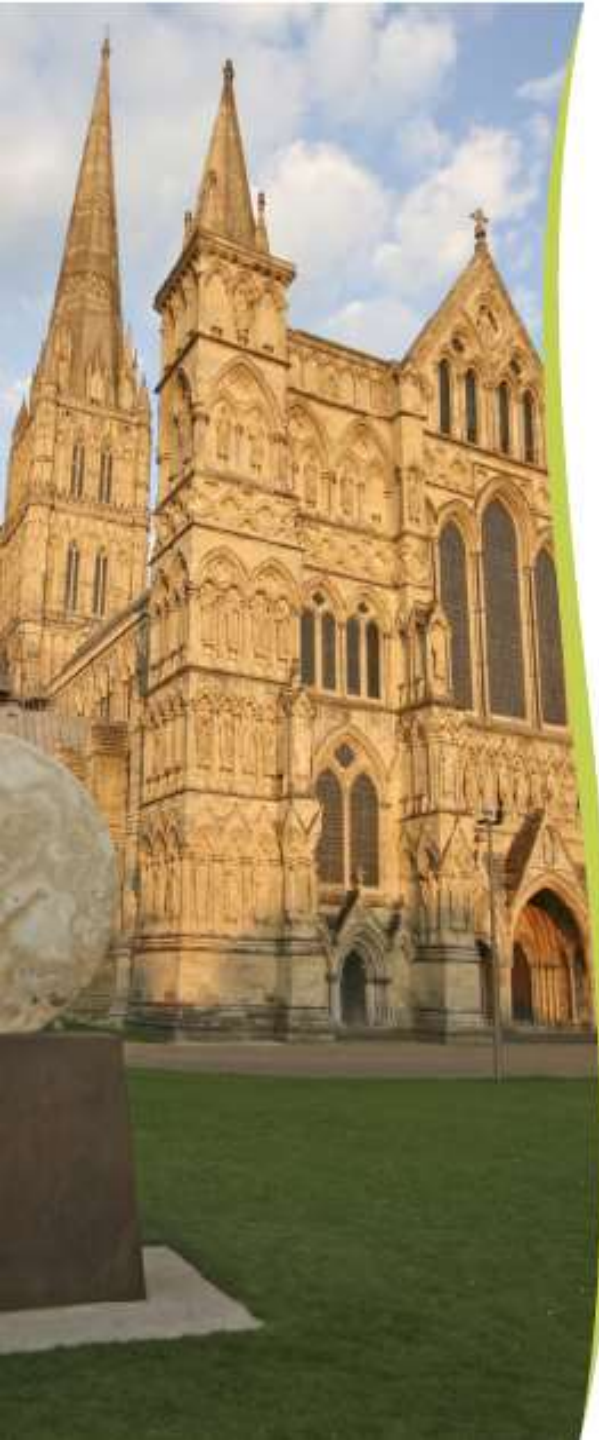
Delivered innovative projects

- Seven new campuses - £80m investment – services in one place
- Strategic partnership with police – joint services and co-location in Chippenham, Salisbury, Corsham and MASH in Trowbridge - Salisbury Police Station converted to £8.5m UTC
- Army basing – preparation for 4,000 troops and their families from Germany to Salisbury Plain
- One Public Estate partnership set up - £700k from cabinet office
- 6,000 volunteers - libraries (868), children's centres, working with refugees, footpaths, digital literacy



Delivered innovative projects

- Working with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership secured £45m in Local Growth Funding to benefit communities in Wiltshire
- Wiltshire is a good place to do business – 15% increase in workforce jobs, thousands of jobs safeguarded, low unemployment
- Local companies growing and staying in Wiltshire - Good Energy
- Internationally recognised companies: Dyson, Boeing, Apetito, TJ Morris, Hermann Miller, Babcock
- We've provided superfast broadband to more than 83,000 homes and businesses



Lessons learnt

- Financial imperative to drive change
- Clear vision throughout
- Build a broad base of support - prepared for opposition
- Deliver quick wins (savings in transition phase)
- It takes time – to embed one council culture and transformation
- Early and on-going engagement with local MPs to ensure best outcomes at national level
- Have as much direct contact with the Secretary of State, as possible
- Local public consultation and stakeholder involvement will mobilise public opinion
- Build a team with the right skills, knowledge and capability to deliver a complex mergers



Lessons learnt

- You need strong, consistent and effective communication and media management
- Have sufficient leadership capacity to manage the critical relationships and 'champion' the change
- You will need robust programme management to deliver a major change programme
- Share resources (One Public Estate) with the NHS, Fire and Police
- Enable greater digital access to all services – we are shifting to 24/7, on line, digital by choice
- We are working with communities to encourage them to do more for themselves
- We are focusing on commercialisation opportunities



Almost 10 years on –
our journey continues...

