

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny

Panel

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

HELD ON TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 6.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

Present:

Councillors Andrew Gant (Chair), Andy Cooke, Peter Dragonetti, Sarah Gray, Jenny Hannaby, Damian Haywood, Liz Leffman, Alex Postan, Craig Simmons, John Tanner, David Turner, Richard Webber, Lucinda Wing and Sean Woodcock, (Vice-Chair)

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Amit Alva	Project and Scrutiny Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Hannah Doney	Head of Corporate Finance - Oxfordshire County Council
Andrew Down	Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Partnerships – South and Vale Councils
Ahmed Goga	Director of Strategy and Programmes - OxLEP
Caroline Green	Assistant Chief Executive – Oxford City Council
Susan Harbour	Strategic Partnerships Manager – South and Vale District Councils
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Gordon Mitchell	Chief Executive - Oxford City Council
Stefan Robinson	Growth Board Manager – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Paul Staines	Interim Head of Programme - Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

29. Apologies for absence, substitutes; declarations of interest and Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Nick Carter, Oxfordshire County Council, Councillor Matt Barber, Vale of White Horse District Council, Councillor Julian Cooper, West Oxfordshire District Council, (who was substituted by Councillor Liz Leffman) and Councillor Derek Cotterill, (West Oxfordshire District Council).

There were no declarations of interest.

It was agreed that the order of the agenda would be altered to consider substantive items of business prior to information items.

30. Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 15 September 2020 and 21 October 2020 were approved as a correct record subject to the correction of reference to 'housing supply' on under minute 14 to 'housing land supply'.

It was also brought to the attention of the meeting that minute 25 included a hyperlink to a written answer provided to Dr Peter Collins, CPRE Oxfordshire, which also formed part of the record of the meeting.

31. Public participation

It was noted that on this occasion no requests for public participation had been submitted.

32. Growth Board response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

The Panel noted the Growth Board's response to the recommendations from the meetings held on 15 September 2020 and 21 October 2020 as set out in the Agenda.

The Chair referred to Recommendation 2 from the Panel's 15 September meeting which related to the Local Natural Capital Plan in detail. Stefan Robinson, Growth Board Manager confirmed that the response had been drafted working with the Environment Agency and that they would be happy to follow up further if the Panel wished to clarify any of the responses further.

The Chair asked for further clarity in respect of Recommendation 2.i, making the point that natural capital was about natural capital and ecosystem services and not monetary value. In further discussion, it was not felt that the response to recommendation 2.viii was specific enough on actions being taken by the Environment Agency and it was agreed that this recommendation should be restated.

In response to a question relating to Recommendation 2 from 21 October about the engagement of councillors with the public engagement undertaken through the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive, Oxford City Council commented that a common report on the Vision engagement was to be presented to each Oxfordshire authority and each council could build further on this if it wished to.

RESOLVED: That the Panel recommends that the Growth Board clarify what plans have been made with the Environment Agency to assess the flood risk in rural areas such as Chalgrove, as a part of the Local Natural Capital Plan.

33. Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group Suggestion Form - private investment in infrastructure

The Panel considered a proposal as set out in the Agenda to establish a Task and Finish Group to assess the options available to the Growth Board partners to generate means and ways of securing private investment in public infrastructure projects. Councillor Alex Postan presented the proposal to the meeting and Amit Alva, the Panel's Scrutiny Officer explained the process that would be followed and that a minimum of three members of the Panel would be required to sit on the Task and Finish Group.

After discussion, the establishment of the Task and Finish Group was supported, and several members put themselves forward sit on the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED:

1. That the establishment of a Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group as set out in the proposal form be agreed;
2. That Councillors Alex Postan, John Tanner, Craig Simmons and Peter Dragonetti be appointed to the Task and Finish Group.

34. Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan

The Panel received a presentation from Ahmed Goga, OxLEP Director of Strategy and Programmes on work being undertaken by OxLEP and partners to develop an Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan, (ERP) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic's effect on the Oxfordshire Economy. The presentation covered headline issues around the current economic picture, insights from business and industry experts and emerging themes in the draft ERP.

In discussion, members welcomed the development of the plan, but felt that the plan needed to go further than seeking to restore previous levels and patterns of economic activity. There was an opportunity and pressing need to build back better, acknowledging and responding to the challenges presented by the Climate Emergency and it was suggested that C40 Cities 'Build Back Better' model might be such an approach. A range of view were expressed regarding what this might mean in practical terms to the future of the tourism sector with some members expressing the view that there should be less reliance on international tourism compared to domestic tourism.

Comment was also made that given the likely long-term impact of Covid-19 on government borrowing it was important for there to be more investment in research and development within Oxfordshire to support manufacturing and innovation. It was also important to ensure that the ERP took account of and reflected to the needs and contribution of all the areas of Oxfordshire and did not become overly Oxford focussed.

Members noted Oxfordshire was particularly important to the public purse as one of a small number of net contributors and were informed that it was acknowledge and recognised as part of the ERP development process that there was a need to do things differently and build back better.

RESOLVED: That the Panel recommends that the Growth Board ensure the Economic Recovery Plan does not seek to build back in the same way and instead looks to build back in a way that is inclusive of all areas such as climate change, manufacturing and international tourism.

35. The promotion of Low/Zero Carbon Housing in Oxfordshire

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board providing an update on the promotion of low/zero carbon housing within Oxfordshire. This followed the agreement by the Growth Board of several recommendations with this objective at its meeting in March 2020. Paul Staines, Interim Head of Programme, Oxfordshire Growth Deal introduced the report as the first of a series of periodic updates and drew the Panel's attention to a draft letter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government attached to the report

concerning the need for higher building standards and to progress by district and city authority.

The Panel welcomed the report and the proposed letter whilst making several suggestions to the letter. It was recognised that definitions around 'low' and 'zero carbon' were very important and it was felt that the Growth Board needed to be clear around the definitions it was referring to because of the numerous different interpretations in use. It was suggested that a national definition of zero carbon housing which included carbon generated during construction should be used as set out by the UK Green Building Council. Finally, it was suggested that given the serious concerns expressed by many Oxfordshire councillors regarding HM Government's Planning White Paper, reference to the welcoming of the broad thrust of the White Paper should be removed.

The Panel was informed that a webinar organised by the Growth Board to promote greater provision of zero carbon housing was to take place on 9 December 2020 and members were asked to do what they could to promote this within their own organisations and to the public.

RESOLVED: That the Panel recommends that the Growth Board in the letter to the Secretary of State recommend that there be a national standard for Zero-Carbon housing which reflects the Net Zero-Carbon Buildings Framework Definition as outlined by the UK Green Building Council

36. Oxford to Cambridge Arc Update

Andrew Down, Acting Deputy Chief Executive - Partnership, South and Vale Councils and Chair of the Growth Board Executive Officer Group provided a verbal update on issues arising within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. He highlighted that the Oxford to Cambridge Economic Prospectus discussed at the previous Panel meeting had been submitted to HM Government with the aim of informing the Comprehensive Spending Review. Other ongoing pieces of work included work around economic recovery and the concept of the Green Arc. It was expected that following further expected announcements relating to the CSR, that HM Government would begin to lead a piece of work around the development of the Arc Spatial Framework and plans for a public engagement exercise around the Arc's work. Finally, the Panel was updated that following the start of his full-time role as Oxford to Cambridge Arc Director, Bev Hindle was putting together a small central Arc resource.

37. Inclusive Economy Seminars Summary Report

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board summarising the findings of the Inclusive Economy Seminars and learnings as well as the report's recommendations to help inform next steps to establish an Inclusive Economy Commission. Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive Oxford City Council presented the report and highlighted that previous discussions within the Growth Board had recognised the challenge of tackling inequalities in income and economic opportunities within Oxfordshire despite the county's position of having a strong economy within the UK. Addressing this challenge had been reflected in the Growth Board's revised purpose agreed earlier in 2020 as part of maximising both social as well as environmental gain from growth and within the Local Industrial Strategy and draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.

The Panel was informed that the report identified a number of areas for focus in the future around the use of combined purchasing power of organisations for social value, more

place based projects to bring together 'soft' infrastructure around skills support for business with investment in community infrastructure, closing educational attainments gaps and securing social and community benefits from investment in infrastructure. Collective action was required to bring the key players together and the drive the establishment of an Inclusive Economy Commission Forward.

In discussion, the Panel welcomed the report and recommendations. It was felt that the report did have an Oxford City centric focus, but it was acknowledged that this would be addressed in any future work at a county level. Support for the narrowing of educational outcomes was welcomed and the Chair commented that he felt this extend into the Early Years sector. The Panel also discussed world famous industries located in Oxfordshire such as motorsport which some members felt had been overlooked and underutilised in the past and the need for such industries to be a part of Oxfordshire Inclusive Economies.

RESOLVED: That the Panel recommends that the Growth Board endorse and support Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy summary report findings but also:

1. clarifies what are the Early Years Education initiatives (pg.5, para 3 of summary report) in order to boost education in Oxfordshire?
2. looks into matters of eliminating child poverty in Oxfordshire.
3. looks into building local industries in certain economies around Oxfordshire that have been overlooked and underutilised such as Motorsport.

38. Investment in improved rail connectivity for Oxfordshire

The Panel considered an urgent report to the Growth Board asking for its support for a joint letter to HM Government backing Network Rail's application for funding for significant rail infrastructure in the Oxford Rail Corridor. It was noted that the Chair had agreed to add the item to the Panel agenda as an urgent item after the publication of the agenda.

The report was presented to the Panel by Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive Oxford City Council who highlighted that the Stage 1 Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study had identified a growing demand for rail travel within the county, but in order to deliver this new rail infrastructure was required to increase capacity and improve Oxford station. The Growth Board was to be asked to support Network Rail's bid for funding.

Members of the Panel strongly supported the need for new rail infrastructure in the county and the proposal that the Growth Board should write in support of Network Rail's application for funding. It was also suggested by a member that over the longer term, autonomous vehicles would have a greater role than rail and by another that the reopening of lines such as the Caterton to Oxford line should also be investigated. However, it was acknowledged that a phased approach needed to be taken and that securing funding for the schemes set out in the Network Rail bid was the current priority.

39. Housing and Growth Deal Reports

(a) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Update

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board which set out an update on work to produce the Oxfordshire Plan and outlined proposals for a new Plan timeline.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the report.

(b) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 sub-group update

The Panel noted the summary notes of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 subgroup held on 17 September 2020 and 15 October 2020.

(c) Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report - Quarter Two Year Three

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board which set out progress at Quarter 2, Year 3 with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the report.

(d) Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Financial Report Quarter 2 2020/21

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board which provided an update on the 2020/2021 financial position at the end of Quarter 2 for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Hannah Doney, Head of Corporate Finance Oxfordshire County Council presented the report.

It was confirmed to the Panel that the HM Government Growth Deal Infrastructure Grant Payment of £30m due in September as referred to in para 3.1.4 of the report remained outstanding. Although this would be closely monitored, payment was expected it was not felt to be a cause for concern at this stage. If the situation changed the Growth Board would be informed.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the report.

(e) Housing Advisory Sub-group update

The Panel noted the summary notes of the Housing Advisory Subgroup held on 27 October 2020.

40. Work Programme for the Scrutiny Panel and Action Log - November 2020

The work programme and action log were considered as set out in the Agenda. The Chair drew members' attention to the officer response to the Panel's request for further information around definitions of affordable housing and whether affordable housing developed by partner councils and registered providers was affordable in practice for local people. A full and comprehensive report had been produced and Panel was encouraged to read it in detail.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

41. Dates of next meetings

The Panel noted the dates for scheduled meetings as follows:

- Tues 19 Jan 2021 6.30 pm
 - Tues 16 Feb 2021 6.30 pm (to be cancelled)
 - Tues 16 Mar 2021 6.30 pm
 - Tues 1 June 2021 6.30 pm
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The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Chairman

Date