Notes

OF AN INFORMAL MEETING OF

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

HELD ON TUESDAY 22 MARCH 2022 AT 2.00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING

 Link to watch the meeting

Present:

Councillor Michele Mead (Chair), (West Oxfordshire District Council),
Councillor Susan Brown, (Oxford City Council), Dr David Chapman, (Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group), Councillor Duncan Enright, (Oxfordshire County Council), Louise Guy, (Environment Agency), Prof. Linda King, (Universities representative), Adrian Lockwood, (Oxfordshire Skills Board Chair), Jeremy Long, (OxLEP Chair), Miranda Markham, (OxLEP - business rep - Bicester), Councillor David Rouane, (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Emily Smith, (Vale of White Horse District Council), Catherine Turner (Homes England) and Councillor Barry Wood, (Cherwell District Council).

Officers: Andrew Bowe, (Cherwell District Council), Sarah Coates, (South and Vale District Councils), John Disley, (Oxfordshire County Council), Andrew Down, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Caroline Green (Oxford City Council CEX), Susan Harbour, (South and Vale District Councils), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council CEX), Candida Mckelvey, (Democratic Services, South and Vale District Councils), John McLauchlan, (Oxfordshire County Council), Michael Oatway, (South and Vale District Councils), Babatunde Ogundele, (South and Vale District Councils), Yvonne Rees (Cherwell District Council CEX), Michele Smith, (Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Team), Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Growth Deal Team), Nigel Tipple (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and Kathy Wilcox, (Oxfordshire County Council).

Other councillors: Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel.

Guests: Dr. Phil Clare (University of Oxford), Prof. Chas Bountra (University of Oxford), Dr. Helen Carstairs (University of Oxford), Stuart Wilkinson (University of Oxford), Phil Southall (Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum)

64.   Apologies for absence; declarations of interest and Chair's announcement

Apologies were received from Councillor Liz Leffman from Oxfordshire County Council. Attending as substitute was Councillor Duncan Enright. Professor Alistair Fitt sent

apologies and attending as substitute was Professor Linda King. Emma Hill from the Environment Agency sent apologies and attending as substitute was Louise Guy. Angus Horner, OxLEP business representative Science Vale sent his apologies. Peter Nolan, (OxLEP business representative Oxford City sent his apologies).

There were no declarations of interest.

Under Chair's announcements, Councillor Mead welcomed members and guests and explained that the meeting was informal and no formal decisions were required from today's agenda items. Members were reminded of the standard housekeeping rules for a virtual, informal meeting.

Councillor Mead explained that she needed to reorder the agenda in order to allow participation from attendees who needed to leave early. There was no objection from the members. Therefore, the item to be discussed first would be the scrutiny panel update.

65.   Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were noted with no further comment. They would be approved formally at the next meeting.

66.   Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel update

Councillor Andrew Gant opened this item. The minutes were provided of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel meeting which took place on 15 March 2022. Members were asked to consider these and the recommendations within. There was a typographical error on page 56: 25 January 2022 should have been today's date, 22 March 2022.

Summarised below are the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel, and the response of the FOP.

Firstly, Councillor Gant informed the FOP that the Scrutiny Panel had a lengthy discussion regarding the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 consultation, after hearing the feedback from Scrutiny Committees from the councils partnered in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 consultation
Recommendation from Scrutiny Panel:
1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be requested to:
a. Undertake a further Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 consultation
b. Provide a detailed update on the timetable for the production of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050
c. Initiate a peer review of the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment
d. Set out how decisions relating to future housing numbers within the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will be taken in an open and transparent way

Comments from FOP:
FOP noted that decision making on the Oxfordshire Plan is a matter for the Local Planning Authorities. There will be written responses given to all recommendations as they are lengthy responses.

Oxfordshire's Innovation Ecosystem
The Scrutiny Panel were presented to by Oxford University's Prof. Chas Bountra, on the Oxfordshire's Innovation Ecosystem. Below are the resulting recommendations.

Recommendation from Scrutiny Panel:
2. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be requested to liaise with Oxfordshire's universities to promote innovation.
3. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership support the need for gender inclusivity in innovation and STEM

Comments from FOP:
Written response to follow.

Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum
Four recommendations were made in response to a presentation from the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum:

Recommendation from Scrutiny Panel:
4. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be requested to
a. Support the planning and delivery of real time passenger information system on an Oxfordshire wide basis, taking into account the difference in needs between rural and urban bus users and bus frequency.
b. Investigate the potential of bus interchanges in encouraging greater use of buses, particularly off peak.
c. Support the acknowledgement within the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership of the comparative lack of scheduled bus provision within the districts to the City of Oxford.
d. support the involvement of school bus providers within the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership

Comments from FOP:
Agree with the recommendations, written response to follow.

Items closed, with thanks given to Councillor Gant and Scrutiny Panel. It was noted the final response of the Partnership to the Panel's recommendations could be found here.

67.   Public participation

Suzanne McIvor, from Need Not Greed Oxfordshire, submitted a question but could not attend the meeting. Chair read out the question as follows.

"As the Government has indicated that the Oxford-Cambridge Arc is no longer a part of the central government policy will the Growth Needs Assessment need to be revised to reflect this?"

FOP response:
Currently there was no clear indication that the Oxford-Cambridge Arc was no longer a part of Central Government policy. The Growth Needs Assessment was locally driven in line with National Planning Policy Framework, and therefore does not need to be revised in light of Central Government policy on the Arc.

68.   Oxfordshire's Innovation Ecosystem Update

A presentation was given on the Oxfordshire Innovation Ecosystem. Dr. Phil Clare from Oxford University shared a presentation on screen. It was noted that a copy of the presentation could be found [here.](here)

Innovation had been important in Oxfordshire for a long time. Dr. Clare explained that there were a large number of partnerships, reports, strategies and policies created with the aim of driving innovation.

Key documents include Innovation Engine report in 2012, the Oxford Green Paper (also focused on liveability and social inclusion) and Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy. Collective efforts by Partners – University, OxLEP. Plans had led to funding to create bridging between universities and industry. The Local Industrial Strategy included 5 foundations of productivity:
- Ideas
- People
- Innovation
- Business environment
- Places

The ecosystem was distributed across the county, not just the research parks and University. Hub and cluster work had developed and were emerging. There was a breadth of activity.

Prof. Bountra from Oxford University continued the presentation. He went onto explain that the University had a wide global reach and past alumni all over the world. There was a focus on global impact and collaboration to tackle problems.

Comments were as follows from the FOP:
- A member welcomed the presentation and acknowledged the collaborative and innovative work going on and that Oxfordshire had a unique position with two universities and expertise that drew in interest from around the world.
- Commercial planning applications / enterprises had increased – a bounce back from the pandemic. This was felt to be optimistic, but it needed to be done well.
- It was noted that the past publications were still current for referring to. The work was ongoing from all quarters.
- How do we draw the universities in? Oxfordshire issues – Inclusive employment, educational attainment, sustainable procurement, social procurement. Engage with schools and colleges to improve aspirations.

Chair asked for clarity on what was needed from the FOP. Chair suggested the University could go back to OxLEP to get a steer on what the University requires from FOP, or they could approach local councils.

Presenters were thanked.

69. Enhanced partnership with local bus operators

Phil Southall, Chair of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum (OSTF), gave his presentation to the FOP. The presentation was an update on the Enhanced Partnership with Local Bus Operators, including progress of setting up the partnership, potential areas of work and current funding bids. The slides were included in the agenda document pack, which can be found here.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum would like
- To make transport matters more visible to the FOP and its IAG and create a two-way dialogue.
- To work with the FOP to ensure that policies are developed and implemented that deliver what it is responsible for delivering e.g. Net Zero, BSIP, LTCP, OxIS, OP2050 etc.
- Would like a mandate from FOP that they would like the OSTF to provide a professional, cross-modal view on any transport matters that they are concerned with.
- Would like the FOP to make recommendations on matters they feel the OSTF should develop on their behalf and recommend courses of action

The enhanced partnership will form a Board with voting rights, split 50:50 membership with bus operators and local authorities. This was currently planned for October 2022. There will be a forum to aid engagement with stakeholders, and a variety of proposed working groups. Aiming to work together to find out what was possible in the areas proposed for working groups.

Regarding funding, local bus use had declined due to the pandemic, averaging 75%, which was lower than the national position. Therefore, network cuts could be 20-30%. We needed strong messaging to increase bus use post-pandemic. Buses are crucial to economic success of the County amongst other benefits. DfT funding had been given for bus capability. There were other funding stream opportunities, like ZEBRA and OxIS scheme. Behaviour change was an important part of this, not just technology.

Chair thanked Phil Southall and added that she felt it was important that we ensure bus services aren't cut, not just for urban areas but for people in rural areas.

The update was welcomed by committee. Connectivity across the district (as indicated in maps from this presentation and the presentation from Oxford University) was important and a view was expressed that these presentations highlighted the need to connect market towns and villages to Oxford etc.

It was asked whether rural services, which were just as crucial, were more at risk from cuts. Mr Southall explained that the rural mobility fund bid was not successful for Oxfordshire. There was a raft of solutions but they required funding and information on need. Oxford was important in the transport strategy, which could dominate thinking. A track record was needed to increase funding opportunities and it would start with the track record being built in Oxford.

The transport and connectivity plan had been consulted on. Buses were at the heart of it and increasing active travel.

A comment from Councillor Enright was made about the challenges faced to bus services, including fears from the pandemic and rising fuel costs. He was in support of creating an efficient, capable, effective, cheap and plentiful bus service across the county with infrastructure to support. Local bus companies had been helpful in informing a community transport plan.

Phil Southall added a suggestion of creating a mobility hub, including rural hubs, e.g. Bampton.

The comments provided from FOP members were positive, viewing buses as an invaluable service that needed to be used more effectively and supported.
It was asked whether hybrid buses help the fuel cost issue. Mr Southall responded that from an operator's perspective, fuel requirements are hedged which helps. The important aspect was getting people back onto buses, as we were risking loss of funding for services. For example, reduced use by concessionary passengers was a risk, as services could be cut.

Mr. Southall asked how can buses be more central to the planning system? He also reminded the FOP that it was assumed Oxford had good bus links, but there were offices in the outskirts that don't have the best service. Mobility hubs were a way to connect these areas to services. The enhanced partnership aimed to ensure involvement of all partners to keep the momentum to strengthen the bus network.

Mr Southall was thanked for the update and further updates welcomed in the future.

70.   Housing and Growth Deal Reports

Two reports were presented as follows (Items 70.a and 71). There were 2 advisory group updates, under item 71 (a and b).

> **(a)   Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report - Year 4, Quarter 3**

Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report - Year 4, Quarter 3
Paul Staines introduced the report. His view was that it was a broadly positive report and commended it to the Partnership. Highlights were identified on paragraphs seven and eight of the report - the successful drawdown of the £30 million target for infrastructure for the year, and the graphs following paragraph 13 highlight that if we took up a two-year extension to the Homes from Infrastructure programme, we could comfortably meet the targets we agreed to in the original Deal.

71.   Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Financial Report - Year 4, Quarter 3

Kathy Wilcox introduced this item. The financial update was given for quarter 3, which was up to the end of December 2021. Full details were in the report.

Three strands for Housing and Growth Deal:
- Housing Infrastructure Fund: £150 million in total. The full list of schemes and latest profile of spend over the programme was set
out in Annex 1. The total forecast expenditure on Growth Deal schemes reported for 2021/22 is £29.3m with actual spend of £10.6m at 31 December 2021.

- Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Programme: A further 213 units were planned in 2021/22 with a combined grant requirement of £10m funded by DLUHC. 86 units with combined grant requirement of £4.7m have been delivered in Quarters 1 to 3 of 2021/22. The remaining 127 units with a combined grant requirement of £5.3m were expected to be delivered in the final quarter of the year.
- Growth Deal Capacity Fund: there was a carry forward of £2.4m into 2021/22. Previous reports identified that the future profile of spend remains under review and this remains to be the case. There should be an update reflected in the next report. After the forecast planned spend of £0.8m in 2021/22, the carry forward into the next financial year was estimated at £1.6m to support future activities.

(a)   Infrastructure Advisory Group update
This was covered in agenda item six, so the Chair moved the meeting onto the next item.

(b)   Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Advisory Group update
Councillor Emily Smith updated the FOP.

There had been two meetings held since the minutes provided in the meeting pack, so Councillor Smith provided an update.

Using spatial options from the Regulation 18 consultation, officers had been creating maps, to show a visual where growth could be concentrated, using the existing transport corridors option (which had been supported in the consultation). Data layering and various options were presented. Councillor Smith felt it was useful way to guide discussion on spatial options, and work will be continued.

Two extra meetings, to be held in April and June, were planned. These would be a meeting of Council Leaders, planning Portfolio Holders and CEOs with an independent facilitator, to establish common ground on key policy options. A political steer from constituent councils on numbers and spatial options was needed to progress planning policies.

The plan making process was taking longer. An extension may be needed, and officers were discussing this with civil servants at present.

72.   Environment Advisory Group update

Councillor Rouane updated the FOP. He raised communications as an issue, it was an important part of behavioural change, so there was a separate plan for the EAG.
Trees will be the next topic for the EAG.

73.   Future Oxfordshire Partnership Forward Plan

Susan Harbour updated the FOP. The next meeting will be in person, post elections. The FOP manager role was out to advert currently, and the new postholder would be responsible for updating this work programme.

74.   Oxford to Cambridge Arc Update

Andrew Down updated the FOP. Since the last meeting, the Levelling Up White Paper was issued, but there was no mention of the Arc, however the soft indication from civil servants was that the Arc was still of interest to the Government, possibly with a shift towards

locally led collaboration. More clarity was required from Central Government (Levelling Up), post-elections.

75.   Updates on matters relevant to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership

None.

76.   Dates of next meetings

The next meeting will be held on 13 June 2022, in person – venue will be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 3.38 pm

Chairman   Date