

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2023 AT 6.30 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

Present:

Councillor Katherine Miles (Chair), Councillor Nathan Boyd, Councillor John Broad, Councillor Andy Cooke, Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Councillor Peter Dragonetti, Councillor Victoria Haval, Councillor Damian Haywood, Councillor Jemima Hunt, Councillor Emily Kerr, Councillor Richard Langridge, Councillor Charlie Maynard, Councillor David Turner, Councillor Liam Walker and Councillor Richard Webber

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Andrew Down	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director
Susan Harbour	Strategic Partnerships Manager – South and Vale District Councils
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Alex Jeffery	Asst, Democratic Services Officer, Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Babatunde Ogundele	Asst, Democratic Services Officer, Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Paul Staines	Interim Head of Programme - Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal
Beth Wilks	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager

Guests: Dan Leveson, Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Car Board

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

Apologies were submitted from Councillor Brad Baines, Oxfordshire County Council, (substituted by Councillor Damian Haywood), Councillor Tiago Corais, (substituted by Councillor Jemima Hunt) and Councillor Sean Woodcock, Cherwell District Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair referred to the holding of a number of engagement events for the Panel regarding the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. Members were reminded to respond to an email sent regarding their availability.

35. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 were confirmed as subject to the addition of Councillor Charlie Maynard, West Oxfordshire District Council to the list of apologies.

36. Public participation

It was noted that on this occasion no requests for public speaking had been received.

37. Future Oxfordshire Partnership response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

The Panel considered the responses of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to the recommendations arising from its meeting on 22 November 2022. Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services Officer, highlighted that the Panel's recommendations had been noted and supported by the Partnership, but that the Infrastructure Advisory Group had not agreed to the recommendation that it co-opt a non-voting representative from Active Travel England to its membership. This was on the grounds that the remit of the existing representative from the Oxfordshire Strategic Forum included the Active Travel issues.

RESOLVED: That the response be noted.

38. Homes from Infrastructure Programme Update

Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director provided a verbal update on the Homes from the Homes from Infrastructure, (Hfi) Programme. The Panel was informed that the programme remained as agreed in September 2022 and there was currently nothing to add.

A number of members reiterated previously expressed concerns that housing was being built in the absence of supporting infrastructure. In some cases, the removal of these schemes from the Hfi programme was felt by Panel members to be leading to serious pedestrian safety issues, for example the Milton Heights pedestrian footbridge. Andrew Down reiterated that with regard to the Milton Heights scheme, alternative sources of funding were being actively explored, but it was not possible to give a definitive positive update.

The Chair commented that the Hfi programme remained of interest to the Panel and that the Panel would wish to receive a further update on the Hfi programme at a future meeting as soon as it was possible to do so. This should include where possible to do so, alternative funding sources for essential schemes which had been removed from the programme or scaled back and further details of scaled back scheme to show what was now proposed.

Councillor Broad asked for an update on the status of the Banbury Tramway bridge scheme and officers indicated that this would be followed up with Oxfordshire County Council officers outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

39. Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group Terms of Reference

It was noted that this item had been deferred.

40. Oxfordshire Place-based Partnership Update

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership updating it on changes to the way in which health and care is organised in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire following the establishment of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire Integrated Care Board, (ICB) and Integrated Care System, (ICS). Dan Leveson, Oxfordshire Place Director for the ICB introduced the report and responded to councillor comments and questions.

It was explained that in addition to the establishment of the integrated care board, an integrated care partnership and place based partnership was to be established for each of the county areas covered by the ICB. The place based partnership which had a broad membership including representatives from both the county and city/district council levels, provided an opportunity to join up health and social care provision in a way that joined up services and reduced inequalities as both health and social care began to move on from what was regarded to be the toughest winter period on record.

The Integrated Care Partnership Strategy which set out the proposed themes and priorities for the ICS was currently out to consultation and a workshop and other events planned with stakeholders. This would align with the ICB's five year plan.

In discussion, individual members of the Panel raised questions relating to the future of palliative care provision in South Oxfordshire and the important role of the NHS in responding as a consultee to individual planning application consultations as well as crucially contributing to the development of Local Plans within the statutory periods.

With regard to longer term capacity and infrastructure planning, the Panel was informed that whilst it was recognised that numbers of GPs and GP capacity was very challenged, it was a more complex issue than simple physical accommodation constraints alone. For instance, GPs had to be trained, a lengthy process.

Members also referred to and discussed with Mr Leveson the reasons behind delays in discharging patients from hospital and the opportunities to care for some patients in their own homes through new technologies and the use of 'virtual wards'.

With regard to the Joint Five-Year Forward Plan referred to within the report, Members commented that it was not clear what this would involve. The Panel was informed that there would be engagement with Partners on the Plan when it was ready, but a key document for engagement between NHS and local authorities locally would be the annual plan relating to pooled NHS and local authority budgets, (known as Section 75 budgets) which would be considered by the Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board in April 2023.

Management of communications between local NHS organisations and the wider public on issues such as the shortage of GPs, rather than GP surgeries was also raised by the Chair. The Panel was informed that individual practices had their own practice participation groups, and Healthwatch was active within Oxfordshire, but that the ICB was planning a new communications and engagement platform and members of the ICB including its Chair were seeking to meet and engage with local communities. It was however, recognised that there was more to do, albeit capacity and resources were real constraints.

With regard to maternity services, these were organised by a local maternity network which covered a Thames Valley rather than BOB ICB geography.

It also noted that maternity services did not appear to be covered within the areas set out in the report.

Finally, the Chair asked how sustainability was being considered in a holistic way. The Panel was updated that NHS recognised that it was one of the largest generators of carbon across the public sector and for this reason each NHS Trust published their plans to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2030. One of the major challenges to this objective was the need to improve NHS property. Technology, such as virtual appointments and the use of digital and data to improve prevention of illness could have a part to play in reducing journeys.

RESOLVED: That the update report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be noted.

41. Work programme for the Scrutiny Panel and action log - January 2023

The Panel considered its work programme and log of outstanding actions as set out in the Agenda. Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services Officer, updated the Panel that a response to the second action relating to the definition of 'affordable housing' and average prices of shared ownership housing had now been circulated to members and therefore the action was completed.

Councillor Andy Cooke who had requested the information thanked officers for the answer but commented that in his view a 20% reduction to the market housing rate was still some nine times average household income and therefore not affordable in practice. He reiterated his view that it would be useful to track affordable housing based on a calculation of four to five times average household income and that a definition linked to a more realistic assessment of affordability was needed.

Councillor Cooke also highlighted that the Office for National Statistics website contained useful information based on the most recent census information that could be searched by locality to provide a range of useful and tailored data ([here.](#)) For instance, housing numbers and types of housing provision by number of bedrooms etc. A search he had conducted had indicated that many more five bedroom houses were being built across Oxfordshire than two bedroomed ones which had implications for the development of Local Plans, higher than the national average.

Other members of the Panel supported these comments and commented that their experience was that developers were reluctant to provide smaller homes such as terraced or flats more intensively, (despite their carbon reduction benefits) and that even if Local

Plan policies were in place to require a reasonable amount of affordable housing provision, developers challenged them on affordability grounds. Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director reminded members whilst the concerns expressed were acknowledged, affordable housing requirements were a matter for the individual district and city councils and not the Partnership.

Councillor David Turner requested that the next progress Housing and Growth Deal Progress include how the district and city councils were performing against the overall housing targets set as part of the Deal.

At this point Beth Wilks, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager, provided a short presentation which provided an update on work to identify opportunities that would contribute as a collective of local authorities and other stakeholders to the delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and add value, (available [here](#)). High level information on the results of engagement exercises with various stakeholders held to date were set out, although it was stressed the ideas submitted had not been agreed and would subsequently be subject to a filtering exercise before a decision by the Partnership on which ones would be taken forward to delivery. Finally, members of the Panel were encouraged to register for the Panel's own engagement sessions.

RESOLVED: That the Panel

1. Notes its work programme and updated action log.
2. Notes the updated position on the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.

42. Advisory Group updates

(a) Housing Advisory Group update

The Panel considered the notes of the Housing Advisory Group held on 1 November 2022. Paul Staines, Interim Head of Programme, introduced the notes and highlighted that advisory group's meeting had included a broad discussion by its members of future opportunities for collaboration in support of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The officer group supporting the advisory group was working on developing some of the ideas generated into a framework and ongoing forward work programme.

With reference to self-build and custom build housing, the Chair asked what the differences were between two types and whether they such dwellings could be considered to be affordable in nature? The Chair also asked whether more could be done to boost the visibility of self-build and custom build as options to the general public whilst also addressing the shortage of suitable plots. Paul Staines undertook to provide a written answer, but responded that in general terms, self-build homes were those where individuals were directly involved in the dwelling constructions whereas custom built homes were those where individuals were involved in the dwellings' design. It was possible that such homes could be affordable and examples of this existed in Cherwell District at Graven Hill.

The Panel was informed that as part of their Local Plan processes, the district and city councils would be inviting people interested in self and custom build to register so that consideration could be given to the level of demand. However, the Chair made the point that awareness of this amongst the public was low and that often the period available for people to register was quite short.

Councillor John Broad stressed the importance of self and custom build homes meeting zero carbon standards and the challenge of applying zero carbon standards to the private rented sector. The Panel was informed that measures to achieve zero carbon formed part of the plans and strategies of all the Oxfordshire councils including Local Plan policies around energy efficiency and this was an example of collaborative working and thinking to support the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.

The Chair also referred to the discussion at the advisory group around retrofitting and the importance of collaboration amongst the councils on that issue.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(b) Environment Advisory Group update

The Panel considered the notes of the Environment Advisory Group held on 12 December 2022.

Arising from the consideration in the advisory group notes of the issues around solar farms, members of the Panel had a discussion around the best approach to encouraging solar panel provision whilst prioritising such provision on existing buildings or car parks as it was understood was now the policy of the French government. It was also noted that the draft National Planning Policy Framework which was out for consultation by HM Government included a paragraph that indicated that to support energy efficiency improvements significant weight should be given to the need to support energy efficiency improvements through the adaptation of existing buildings, particularly large non-domestic buildings to improve their energy performance including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels.

After further discussion it was felt that a recommendation to the Partnership was an appropriate step and it was:

RESOLVED:

1. The Partnership write to HM Government asking that it strengthen the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) so as to:
 - a) Make the provision of solar panels a NPPF requirement in all new domestic or commercial developments unless there are strong technical reasons not to do so.
 - b) Prioritise the use of existing space, (for instance through using warehouse roofing or the addition of canopies above car parks) for the provision of new solar panel installations over previously undeveloped land.
2. Encourage Partnership members to submit individual responses to the current national consultation review of the NPPF concerning the provision of solar panels and other zero carbon energy technologies in domestic and commercial development.

43. Dates of next meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted as set out in the Agenda.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm