

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



## The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

HELD ON TUESDAY 6 JUNE 2023 AT 6.30 PM  
VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

### Present:

Councillor Katherine Miles (Chair), Councillor John Broad, Councillor Michael Brooker, Councillor Andy Cooke, Councillor David Cooper, Councillor Tiago Corais, Councillor Charlie Hicks, (Vice Chair), Councillor Lois Muddiman, Councillor Lynn Pratt, Councillor Jo Robb, Councillor Judy Roberts, Councillor Emily Smith and Councillor Sean Woodcock

### Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Emma Coles	Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager
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
Beth Wilks	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager

**Guest:** Jeremy Long, Co-Chair Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership

### 1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Panel for 2023/2024

Councillor Emily Smith proposed and Councillor Andy Cooke seconded Councillor Katherine Miles as Chair of the Panel. There being no other nominations, the nomination was agreed after being put to a vote.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Katherine Miles be elected as Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/2024 year.

Councillor Katherine Miles proposed and Councillor Tiago Corais seconded Councillor Charlie Hicks as Vice-Chair of the Panel. There being no other nominations, the nomination was agreed after being put to a vote.

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Charlie Hicks be elected as Vice-Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel for the 2023/2024 year.

## **2. Apologies for absence, substitutes; declarations of interest, Chair's announcements**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Julian Cooper, West Oxfordshire District Council, Councillor Leigh Rawlins, South Oxfordshire District Council, Councillor Liam Walker, Oxfordshire County Council and Councillor David Turner, South Oxfordshire District Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed new and existing members to the Panel.

## **3. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 were confirmed a correct record.

As a matter arising, Councillor John Broad commented that a number of recent responses to Panel recommendations had included references to various events and presentations and asked whether a list of such events could be provided. Kevin Jacob, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Senior Democratic Services Democratic Services Officer responded that this could be investigated, but that in respect of the specific engagement events hosted by OxLEP relating to the refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan, information had been circulated to Panel members.

## **4. Public participation**

It was noted that in this instance no public speakers had registered.

## **5. Future Oxfordshire Partnership response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations**

The Chair referred to the responses of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to the recommendations made by the Panel at its March meeting.

## **6. Updates to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference**

The Panel considered a report and attached appendices which set out proposed amendments to the Panel's terms of reference. It was noted that as the Panel had not been established as a formal committee under local government legislation it had agreed its own terms of reference at its first meeting in 2018. Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the amendments which were summarised as relating to:

- Updating of terminology to reflect the conclusion of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and advent of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.
- Updating of technical phrasing relating to the Panel's powers in order to reflect the non-statutory nature of the Panel more accurately.
- Overt reference that Panel meetings may be held on-line.
- Harmonisation of the Panel's public speaking arrangements with those of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

In discussion it was suggested that in future updates proposed amendments should be displayed alongside the original text version to make it easier for members to identify any changes.

A number of members queried the references in the Terms of Reference to the Panel's role in '*scrutinising plans, proposals, recommendations and decisions and actions to be taken*' by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on the basis that the Partnership was not a decision making body. Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director responded that whilst the Partnership had not to date exercised executive decision making powers it had been established as a formal Joint Committee under local government legislation whereby decision making powers could be delegated to it by the constituent local authorities if they choose to do so. For that reason, it had been felt appropriate to retain reference to the scrutiny of decisions within the previous and proposed terms of reference.

Councillor Hicks commented that whilst he accepted the formal technical position that the Partnership did not itself take decisions, his impression was that in a de facto sense it did in some cases and he suggested that the wider relationship between the Partnership and its constituent local authorities should be examined.

**RESOLVED:** That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel adopt the revised Terms of Reference set out in Appendix 1 of the report subject to clarification of wording relating to the decision making powers of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in consultation with the Scrutiny Panel Chair.

## **7. Progress Report from the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership**

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership which provided an update on the progress of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership, (OIEP) priorities, the OIEP Delivery Plan and Strategy and the launch and uptake of the OIEP Charter. Emma Coles, OIEP Manager gave a presentation [summarising the main points of the report](#).

Jeremy Long, Co-Chair of the OIEP added that in terms of progressing the priorities of the OIEP further there were three key areas where the organisations represented within the Future Oxfordshire Partnership could assist:

- Use of social value procurement policies so as to give local organisations as much opportunity as possible to bid for contracts for goods and services

- That for higher value procurement at scale, such as building works, requirements for organisations submitting tenders include requirements for those organisations to undertake good community engagement plans
- Communication and promotion of the OIEP priorities and the OIEP Charter, (for example via the networks of district and city council economic development officers)

In discussion the Panel was pleased to see the good progress made in the development of the OIEP which they fully supported. A number of Panel members commented that they would be happy to promote the work of the OIEP and opportunities for organisations to get involved through their own community contacts and networks and Emma Coles indicated that she was happy to provide some sample materials that could be used to explain and promote the OIEP.

With regard to a question regarding the relationship and possible crossover between the work of the OIEP and the refresh of the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan being led by OxLEP the Panel was informed that there was good knowledge and awareness of other complementary initiatives, particularly those matters to which OxLEP had a national mandate to lead on so as not to duplicate them.

**RESOLVED:** That the OIEP be asked through the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to consider the following summary feedback of points raised by Panel members:

1. Whilst supporting the expansion of initiatives such as Arch Readers in improving education attainment, problems in recruiting and retaining school staff, (for example Teaching Assistants) be recognised.
2. The importance of the promotion and support of co-operative enterprises as part of the OIEP's social value and procurement workstream
3. Importance of adult education and the challenges around adult numeracy and literacy, (for example amongst ex-offenders) in address inequality.
4. The importance of developing skills of young people in the emerging green sector such as retrofit and insulation as well as capturing skills and knowledge in traditional areas for the future.
5. The importance of access to low cost and local travel solutions for disadvantaged groups including young people.
6. Higher rates of youth unemployment
7. The importance of understanding and taking account of the needs of Oxfordshire's diverse urban and rural communities so as to reflect the county as a whole.
8. The role of placemaking and the value to be added by the support of local community start-ups in instilling a sense of community pride.
9. That factors relating to gender be recognised in the context of inequality, for example numbers of women and girls studying STEM subjects, menopause, and lower rates of educational attainment amongst some male cohorts.

## **8. A Place Narrative for Oxfordshire**

The Chair commented that she had been informed that the document had not yet been finalised and therefore would be carried over for a subsequent meeting.

## **9. Delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development**

Beth Wilks, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager gave an update presentation on the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development and progress made in the identification of additional opportunities to work collaboratively to support the delivery of the vision.

The presentation covered:

- Mapping and engagement exercises around opportunities for collaborative working undertaken and pending
- The process by which learning to inform improvements would be taken forward
- How the 50 additional opportunities so far identified together with existing workstreams would be taken forward as an 'ideas portfolio' and filtered to produce a refined list of additional opportunities for collaborative working.
- It was expected that the refined list of opportunities would be explored at an off-line workshop anticipated to take place in September 2023.
- That there was some Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal limited capacity funding such that if some of the ideas have funding implications, there may be the opportunity to request funding to support a project.

The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the update on work being undertaken to map and identify possible areas for joint working to deliver the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and noted the progress made. In discussion, members of the Panel referred to the importance of avoiding compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs as a consequence of filtering the list of potential opportunities for collaborative working based on the needs of the present. A motion on this subject had recently been adopted by Oxfordshire County Council.

In addition, concern was expressed that the issue of transport emissions and car dependent housing infrastructure as referenced in the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire report did not appear to have a defined place within the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision delivery workstream. The Chair asked that officers clarify where the issue sat within the emerging priority lists of opportunities for collaboration outside of the meeting and which grouping would have responsibility for it.

With regard to the potential establishment of an Oxfordshire Climate Champions Network, listed as an example of the type of opportunity for collaborative working identified on Agenda page 91, the view was expressed that such a grouping should include such organisations as the RSPB, CPRE, BBOWT etc.

The view was also expressed that modular housing should be considered as part of the drive to delivery new sustainable and affordable homes at a faster rate.

In response to these points, Beth Wilks indicated she was happy to meet with Councillor Charlie Hicks with regard to taking the needs of future generations into account as part of

the ideas filtering exercise. It was reiterated that all the suggestions captured were currently at high level and had yet to be assessed. The Climate Champions Network suggestion had not been specific about the organisations that should be invited to take part in such a network. Her understanding was that as envisaged, the proposed network could build on work undertaken by Climate Action Oxfordshire.

The Chair expressed the view that once a more refined and filtered list of potential opportunities for collaborative working had been produced that the Panel should have opportunity to comment on it.

**RESOLVED:** That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be requested to agree to add to the factors taken into consideration in filtering and selecting the list of future opportunities for joint working 'acting in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' [as referenced in a motion agreed by Oxfordshire County Council 28 March 2023](#).

## 10. Key Partnership Activity and Delivery in the Energy Space

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership providing an overview of key partnership activity and programmes of work within the Oxfordshire energy space aimed at realising net zero ambitions, and/or supporting to tackle local grid constraints. Beth Wilks, Future Oxfordshire Manager introduced the report and also [gave a presentation setting out:](#)

- The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development Net Zero ambitions and challenges in the electricity network
- A snapshot of the electricity network.
- Information on Project Local Energy Oxfordshire
- Local area energy planning
- The Energy Superhub Oxford project

Members of the Panel welcomed the update and supported the recommendations.

Councillor Hicks referred to the challenges around funding acting as a significant blocker to upgrading the electricity grid and referred to Bristol City Council's experience in securing private and climate finance for such infrastructure. Beth Wilks responded that green finance did form part of one of the prioritised actions within the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan for which a workstream was being developed. This would consider how to enable a decarbonised energy network at a local level and would include issues around finance.

In addition, the Panel was informed that it was intended to submit a response on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to the UK Parliament Environmental Audit Committee call for evidence relating to the enabling sustainable electrification of the UK and part of this response would include concerns around how Ofgem were approving sustainable electrification projects as well as funding issues.

In response to questions from Councillor Emily Smith regarding the end product of the energy work, its relationship to the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, (OES), land use strategy, and links to Local Plans, Beth Wilks commented that the Local Area Energy Plans are designed to be a deliverable technical document of what is needed to support Oxfordshire's overarching energy decarbonisation to support net zero ambitions rather

than a strategy, but there was an aspiration to refresh the OES and it would be necessary to ensure there was consistency and read across between the documents. A briefing document setting out information on Local Area Energy Planning was currently being drafted, and this could be circulated to the Panel when finalised.

With regard to a land use framework or land use principles, this had been an area of feedback coming out of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision engagement exercise in order to support the range of different ambitions around the use of land, be that around decarbonisation, food production, rewilding, access to green space etc. Currently there was not a framework or list of agreed land use principles across Oxfordshire. The suggestion was one of the ideas within the opportunities for joint working portfolio.

With regard to the funding used to support the Project LEO scheme, Officers agreed to look into this and respond to members outside of the meeting.

In further discussion, members suggested that opportunities around heat transfer in energy generation should be explored further, especially given the number of data centres being built across the county. It was also important for local planning authorities to take a more strategic approach to solar generation across the county as residents were more likely to be comfortable with such developments if they arose out of a structured process which took account of local concerns rather than speculative proposals.

Members of the Panel also reiterated its view that provision of rooftop solar on new and existing properties should be prioritised over provision on previously undeveloped land.

With regard to roof top solar, the Panel was advised that one of the prioritised actions within the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan was around developing a potential collective purchasing approach that would support the widespread deployment of roof top solar on existing buildings.

Finally, the Panel was informed that the initial scope of the next iteration of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy was currently being considered and it was recognised that currently there was a comparative lack of energy projects or projects that would support Oxfordshire's energy decarbonisation aspirations.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel recommended to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership that it agree the recommendations set out in the report with the following additions:

1. That through the Green Finance workstream of the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan, consideration be given to funding opportunities which support a decarbonised energy system; the Scrutiny Panel wishes for the workstream to consider [Bristol City Council's success in securing £1bn of investment to support its net zero ambitions as a potential example and model of this.](#)
2. That opportunities for the application of heat transfer technologies to energy management be investigated, for example use of heat generated from data centres.
3. That barriers and opportunities to community led projects and a demand side perspective be considered as part of activity in the energy space. For example, the Panel was concerned that the costs and complexity of the planning system could be acting as a barrier to community led solar energy applications.

4. Clarify how a land use framework or strategic land use principles could be developed and considered to support local area energy planning, and more generally, where it could sit as part of delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development. In the Panel's view this was a matter of urgency.

## **11. Work programme for the Scrutiny Panel and action log - 6 June 2023**

At this point it was noted that the meeting was no longer quorate as at least one representative of each represented council was no longer on the call. Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services Officer commented that for the purposes of information only members present could give a view on the remaining items, but no decision or further recommendations could be made in the Panel's name.

The members present reflected upon the Panel's work programme and action log (as set out in the Agenda). Kevin Jacob highlighted that a number of responses to outstanding requests for information had been circulated to Panel members via email and also highlighted the initial analysis of Partnership responses to the Panel's recommendations over the previous year. This indicated that the majority of recommendations had been accepted. He commented that a more detailed background paper listing the Panel's recommendation in full could be circulated.

Members suggested the addition of categories of response to indicate whether a recommendation was fully agreed, partially agreed, or not agreed.

Councillor Smith suggested the addition of an update on the Oxfordshire Food Strategy to the Panel's work programme.

Members present were encouraged to consider submitting additional work programme submissions via Kevin Jacob who added that the Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and advisory group Chairs could also be invited.

## **12. Advisory Group Updates**

### **(a) Infrastructure Advisory Group update**

The discussion at the April meeting of the advisory group relating to solar provision was noted by members of the Panel present.

### **(b) Housing Advisory Group update**

No comments were made by Panel members present.

### **(c) Environment Advisory Group update**

No comments were made by Panel members present.

## **13. Dates of next meetings**

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

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm