

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Infrastructure Sub-Group

HELD ON MONDAY 11 MAY 2020 AT 1.00 PM

ON-LINE TEAMS MEETING

Present:

Councillors Ian Hudspeth (Chair), Yvonne Constance, Jeff Haine, Lynn Pratt, Judy Roberts, Linda Smith and David Turner

Officers: John Disley (Oxfordshire County Council), Kevin Jacob, (Oxfordshire Growth Board) and Owen Jenkins (Oxfordshire County Council)

40 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interest; Chair's announcements

There were no apologies for absence, declarations of interests or Chairs

41 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020 were received.

42 Updating the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

The subgroup considered a draft covering report to the 2 June 2020 Growth Board on the updating of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, (OxIS), draft project brief and scope of work. It was noted that the report would also be considered by the Growth Board Executive Officer Group on 12 May 2020.

The subgroup was informed that as part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, (OHGD) there was a commitment update (OxIS) originally produced by the Growth Board in 2017. In addition to the formal commitment to update OxIS in the deal, circumstances and priorities had changed since 2017 making an update timely. The milestones for the update anticipated stage 1 of the project being available for Growth Board consideration by December 2020 with stage 2 scheduled to begin in April 2021 subject to change in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 consultation timetable.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was important that whilst the County Council was to manage the update to OxIS, there was appropriate engagement with partner local authorities and other stakeholders. The subgroup was reassured that the document would be developed as a Growth Board document and that it was recognised that to be successful a

partnership approach was required. A cross authority officer steering group would help strength this and regular updates would be given to the subgroup which subgroup members welcomed.

- The impact of responding to the Covid-19 emergency in terms of officer resource to support the update and the potentially longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on the county's future infrastructure needs notwithstanding these effects were presently unknown.
- The relationship and links between OxIS and the Oxfordshire Plan were extremely important, particularly in respect of timetables.
- Assessment criteria for schemes would be updated and subgroup members expressed the view that the criteria should be need based rather than availability of funding based.
- Stakeholder engagement in para 7 of the project scope. It was suggested that this might be further strengthened and that there was a potential place for expert action groups as part of the stakeholder process. It was acknowledged that this could be considered further.

Members of the sub-group supported the recommendation to the Growth Board set out in the report that it endorse the OxIS project brief and scope of work for the update.

43 Growth Deal Infrastructure Update Year 2

Owen Jenkins provided the sub-group with a presentation setting out a summary of performance update against Year 2 of the Oxfordshire Housing and Deal Infrastructure programme. This include progress against Deal milestones and data on the delivery of homes accelerated by the Deal infrastructure programme on the basis forecast vs baseline figures.

It was also highlighted that:

- the provisions of the Deal represented part, but not all the activity undertaken and planned for.
- Delivery of homes accelerated by infrastructure across Oxfordshire was as of the date of the meeting above the baseline, but a sharp decline arising from the impact of Covid-19 on construction was expected and it was unclear how delivery would be affected in the longer term. It was noted that this information was also available at individual district and city council level.
- Forecast spend on Growth Deal schemes was forecast to be marginally up for 2019/2020 against spend in 2018/2019, but there was a risk that the situation could change significantly in the coming months and negotiations with national and local partners were continuing.
- There was continued concern regarding whether it was possible to deliver such a significant programme over a five-year period and whether it might be possible to profile elements of the programme into a sixth or seventh year. A significant proportion of spend on individual projects could not take place until towards the end of the programme and they were delivered on the ground, and this could be under further pressure due to the impacts of Covid-19.
- Ongoing improvements were continuing to be made with teams and resources building slowing and a total of five programme leads were now in place. A Programme Management Unit had been created and examples of performance dashboard for the each of the capital elements were shared with the sub-group. It was hoped that these would accessible by a range of partners and help provide a more live and holistic picture of performance.

- Risks to the programme including an anticipated significant impact of Covid-19 were set out.
- In discussion of the presentation, members of the subgroup raised the potential impact of recent statements by the Prime Minister in relation to construction, but this was not to be a significant departure from previous announcement and policy.

In respect of the Covid-19 on housing market generally it was noted that scale of the impact remained unclear and it was difficult to estimate how quick a recovery there would be. There were proposals to establish a developer forum.

Concern was expressed that HM Government might request unspent funding to returned and officers indicated that they continued to have positive conversations with HM Government and partners such as Homes England. A 'lessons learnt' exercise was also being undertaken.

Several members commented that although Covid-19 would have an impact, particularly around demand for homes to buy, there remained an accommodation need even if it was for tenures other than to buy. There continued to be a strong argument to make this case to HM Government and for appropriate stimulus.

The presentation was noted.

44 Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study Strategic Report

The subgroup was informed that the final Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study report had been signed off by Network Rail and it was expected that it would be published by the Department of Transport soon.

A discussion took place on whether it was necessary or potentially advantageous to revisit some aspects of the report because of the Covid-19 emergency, particularly in respect of passenger demand. However, the counter view was expressed that there could be risks in doing so and it was noted that there currently no statistical basis for a review.

Reference was made to the promotion by HM Government of cycling and walking as modes of transport arising from the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. It was felt that it remained difficult to travel with bicycles on trains and buses.

45 Housing Infrastructure Fund - Update

The subgroup received an update on bids to HM Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund, (HIF). It was noted that the details of the A40 Smart Corridor agreement were close to completion.

46 Date of next meetings

24 August 2020 14:00

26 October 2020 14:00

14 December 2020 14:00

The meeting closed at 2.30 pm