

**To:** Oxfordshire Growth Board  
**Date:** 28 July 2020  
**Report of:** Growth Board Scrutiny Panel  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 22 July 2020

<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 22 July 2020 to the Growth Board.
<b>Scrutiny Lead:</b>	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Oxfordshire Growth Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.

## **Introduction and overview**

1. The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank Nigel Tipple (Chief Executive–Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership), Bev Hindle (Growth Board Director), Owen Jenkins (Director of Growth and Economy – Oxfordshire County Council), Hannah Doney (Head of Corporate Finance – Oxfordshire County Council), Stefan Robinson (Growth Board Manager), Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnerships Manager - South and Vale District Councils), Anita Bradley (Monitoring Officer – Oxford City Council) for attending the meeting to answer questions.
2. The Panel considered a report from Nigel Tipple – Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Bev Hindle – Growth Board Director on the Covid – 19 economic recovery approach across Oxfordshire. The Panel showed its support towards collective action in line with the principles of recovery as agreed by the C40 Mayors. The Panel also debated the need to focus on renewal of economic plans rather than recovery with regards to transportation, infrastructure, environment, public health, essential workers, climate change, businesses and tourism.

**Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board, in considering its role in the Post-Covid-19 recovery, supports the principles of recovery as agreed by the C40 Mayors:**

- The recovery should not be a return to 'business as usual' - because that is a world on track for 3°C or more of over-heating;
  - The recovery, above all, must be guided by an adherence to public health and scientific expertise, in order to assure the safety of those who live in our cities;
  - Excellent public services, public investment and increased community resilience will form the most effective basis for the recovery;
  - The recovery must address issues of equity that have been laid bare by the impact of the crisis – for example, workers who are now recognised as essential should be celebrated and compensated accordingly and policies must support people living in informal settlements;
  - The recovery must improve the resilience of our cities and communities. Therefore, investments should be made to protect against future threats – including the climate crisis – and to support those people impacted by climate and health risks;
  - Climate action can help accelerate economic recovery and enhance social equity, using new technologies and the creation of new industries and new jobs. These will drive wider benefits for our residents, workers, students, businesses and visitors;
  - We commit to doing everything in our power and the power of our city governments to ensure that the recovery from COVID-19 is healthy, equitable and sustainable;
  - We commit to using our collective voices and individual actions to ensure that national governments support both cities and the investments needed in cities, to deliver an economic recovery that is healthy, equitable and sustainable;
  - We commit to using our collective voices and individual actions to ensure that international and regional institutions invest directly in cities to support a healthy, equitable and sustainable recovery.
3. The Panel also emphasised its view on the importance of science & technology industries aiding economic recovery and renewal especially those sectors contributing towards the environment and healthy living in a post Covid-19 Oxfordshire.

**Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board, in considering its role in the Post-Covid-19 recovery, champions the role of the science and technology industries in delivering economic recovery and renewal, especially where those sectors can contribute towards our local environmental and healthy living ambitions; areas that the Panel felt were not sufficiently recognised within the report presented to them.**

4. The Panel received a report from Bev Hindle – Growth Board Director on the implementation of the Growth Board Review Stage 1. On the protocol for Freedom of Information requests the Panel felt that this process should be autonomous to the input of other authorities and should not permit consultation

with other authorities in a bid for more transparency and highlighting gaps in governance as a result of differing responses.

**Recommendation 3: That the Growth Board revise its Freedom of Information Request Procedure to remove references that permit local authorities to consult other local authorities on how they intend to respond; this would ensure the responses are transparent and highlight any gaps in governance or policy related issues.**

5. The Panel requested an update from the Growth Board on the Local Nature Partnership specifically on timelines, remit and content, as this would be a part of an emerging wider environmental workstream. The Panel also would like more clarity on the conduit role of representatives to the Sub-groups and how this would be carried out within their local authorities.

**Recommendation 4: That the Growth Board provide the Scrutiny Panel with an update at its next meeting concerning the development of a Local nature Partnership for Oxfordshire**

**Recommendation 5: That the Growth Board provides clarity about how members of its Advisory Sub-Group will be expected to carry out their conduit role between that group and their local authority, as suggested in the Terms of Reference for those groups.**

6. The Panel also made a couple of requests to the Growth Board with regards to transparency and ease of access to Growth Board related meetings.

**Recommendation 6: That the Growth Board ensures that the Advisory Subgroups have access to the minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meetings.**

**Recommendation 7: That the Growth Board make visible on its website's home page how the public can register to speak at future meetings of the Board.**

7. The Panel revisited its discussion on the definitions of Affordable Housing and arrived at a conclusion that current definitions do not reflect truly affordable houses; according to NPPF affordable houses should be 80%(or lower) of market rate which could be up to 8 times annual household income, where in the current mortgage market lenders terms usually only allow for lending to be made up to 4.5 to 5 times of annual household income. The Panel would like to ask the Growth Board to further investigate this matter ensuring more realistic figures are depicted in its reports.

**Recommendation 8: That the Growth Board in its reporting for the Housing Sub-group categorise Affordable Housing in two sub-categories:**

- i) **Affordable Housing: 80% market rate (NPPF)**
- ii) **Affordable Housing: 5 x median household income (mortgage rates)**

Thus, giving the actual number of affordable houses as per the median household income in Oxfordshire.

8. The Panel also discussed the impact of housing developments in Green Belt protected areas especially in reference to Oxford City urban sprawl leading to higher risk of flooding in neighbouring rural countryside areas. The Panel emphasised the need for Flood risk areas to be revisited within the environmental issues covered in Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

**Recommendation 9: That the Growth Board in its work with Oxfordshire Plan 2050 re-examine the boundaries of Green Belt with a focus on countryside housing developments and its impact on flood risk areas.**

9. The Panel discussed the need to attract capital investment from private sector organisations to fund public Infrastructure Projects with the help of concessions and incentives. This kind of collective investment from the private sector would reduce financial pressures on these projects.

**Recommendation 10: That the Growth Board investigate ways of funding public infrastructure projects by incentivising private sector organisations in order to attract private capital investment; decreasing budgetary pressures on these projects.**

#### **Future Work**

10. As well as reviewing the Growth Board's response to these recommendations at its next meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the Panel will also be considering in detail:
  - The Growth Board Review Stage 2
  - Supporting Oxfordshire's Tourism and Visitor Economy
  - Oxford-Cambridge Arc Update
  - Q1 Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report and Financial summary

<b>Report authors</b>	Councillor Andrew Gant Chair of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel <a href="mailto:Cllragant@Oxford.gov.uk">Cllragant@Oxford.gov.uk</a>
<b>Officer contact</b>	Amit Alva Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Officer <a href="mailto:amit.alva@southandvale.gov.uk">amit.alva@southandvale.gov.uk</a>