

Growth Board response to recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel Recommendations made on 22nd July 2020

The Growth Board is requested to provide a draft response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel, to be published as a supplement collectively with the Scrutiny Panel’s report, for decision at its meeting on 28 July 2020.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; 	<p>Yes (in principle)</p>	<p>The Board supports these principles, however the decision to specifically commit to these principles’ rests with the constituent partners of the Growth Board. Importantly, Oxfordshire is a rural county with many towns and villages as well as City.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		
<p>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.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The strategic direction set out in the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), which is a key element of our Housing and Growth Deal, makes clear the importance of local science and technology sectors in Oxfordshire’s future. It explains <i>“Oxfordshire wants to be a pioneer for clean and sustainable growth, known as the location which harnesses the dynamic potential of its science and technological innovation for the benefit of local residents, business and improved public services which is an exemplar for contemporary living and design, and delivers sustainable and flourishing communities.”</i> The strategy continues throughout to give great emphasis to the importance of local innovation in contributing to a sustainable and healthy future for Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The LIS is focused on certain sectors of our local economy and both executive and associate members of the Growth Board have responsibility to support all sectors, small and large to participate and respond to the challenges and opportunities the post-Covid, post-Brexit world presents.</p> <p>The Board notes this was only an update report and was not setting out an exhaustive or exclusive strategy for recovery – the Board recognises the role this sector needs to play when the Economic Recovery Plan for Oxfordshire takes shape.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Board has sought Monitoring Officer advice, and where FOI or EIR requests relate to the Growth Board’s work, they will by their nature affect all of the local authorities in Oxfordshire as constituent members of the Board. Therefore, it would be courteous and good practice to notify those other affected Councils. This practice is consistent with the S45 Code of Practice. The Panel should be assured that it is the receiving authority’s legal duty to apply its own mind in responding, even after such consultation, which is what the</p>

		<p>Protocol reflects. It is explicit that “achieving a ‘consistent’ response cannot be the primary aim.” It is expected however that this approach will lead to a more meaningful outcome for the requester.</p> <p>The Protocol summarises that it “provides a legally compliant means of dealing with such requests while providing a degree of mutual consultation whilst also ensuring the identity of requesters is not disclosed to other members of the Growth Board... This process is on the basis that, while each authority is an FOI authority, consultation between authorities on a proposed response does not breach that principle.”</p>
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.	Yes	Agreed, as part of the Growth Board Review Stage 2 Report.
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.	Yes	As lead executive members for their respective portfolios, it is expected that members of the Advisory Subgroup will be well networked into their Council. Since these groups were set up, councils have adopted their own approach to this. Some provide updates through their Cabinets and some have pre-meetings involving officers to discuss upcoming agendas. There is no uniform approach, and no current central resource available to support members in undertaking their conduit role, but support can be provided through their own councils. To support members, public summary notes are provided for each meeting and published online, which will be a useful resource.
Recommendation 6. That the Growth Board ensures that the Advisory Sub-groups have access to the minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meetings.	Yes	These are made available online after each meeting as part of the Growth Board’s agenda packs.
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.	Yes	The Board will ask that the Oxfordshire Growth Board website be updated before its next meeting to raise the profile of the opportunity for the public can take part in our meetings.
<p>Recommendation 8: That the Growth Board in its reporting for the Housing Sub-group categorise Affordable Housing in two sub-categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Affordable Housing: 80% market rate (NPPF) ii) Affordable Housing: 5 x median household income (mortgage rates) 	In Part	The Growth Board will ask officers whether this information can be made available for the Sub-group.

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

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.

In part

The Oxfordshire Plan will be developed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework which sets out that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Consideration will need to be given to any local flood risk management plans, strategic flood risk assessments and a wide range of studies that will form part of the Plan's evidence base. A Green Belt study was commissioned in 2015 on behalf of all the Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities, and there have also been a number of recent local studies to support individual Local Plan evidence bases, for which the Oxfordshire Plan will need to take into account. Throughout the project we will review all the available evidence base materials and update and/or supplement that as appropriate to ensure that the Oxfordshire Plan is based on the best available evidence. Changes to the Green Belt boundaries can only be made in exceptional circumstances, as defined in the NPPF, through the Plan making process.

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

In part

While we do work closely with private sector developers to ensure we are maximising private sector investment and supplementing that where mitigation requires it with further legal agreements (e.g. S.106 or CIL), and indeed have used public funding to leverage significant private sector investment through programmes such as City Deal and Local Growth Fund, there is no specific mechanism to "incentivise" the private sector to deliver publicly beneficial capital investment for infrastructure. We have as a group of local authorities lobbied Government to create greater long term funding certainty so that we can continue to leverage and attract private sector investment – we have also suggested that we could look to "incentivise good growth options if we were afforded local determination over the release of that funding –

		<p>something that is very difficult to do under traditional Green Belt business cases whilst also avoiding any perception or actual contravention of state aid law. This is something though the Growth Board should continue to lobby for as the principle raised by Scrutiny is a good one.</p>
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