

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Infrastructure Advisory Group

HELD ON MONDAY 28 JUNE 2021 AT 2.00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MS TEAMS

Present:

Members: Councillors Liz Leffman (Chair), Duncan Enright, Alex Hollingsworth, Lynn Pratt and Judy Roberts

Officers: Hannah Battye (Head of Infrastructure Delivery, Oxfordshire County Council), John Disley (Infrastructure Strategy and Policy Manager, Oxfordshire County Council), Daisy Gladstone (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Melissa Goodacre (Oxfordshire County Council), Kevin Jacob (Oxfordshire Growth Board) and Owen Jenkins (Senior Responsible Officer, Housing and Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme, Oxfordshire County Council)

9 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Barker, Councillor Haines and Phil Southall (Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum representative).

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 26 May 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

11 Local Transport and Connectivity Plan - Overview of Program

John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy and Policy Manager, Oxfordshire County Council, gave a presentation setting the context for LTCP and drawing attention to some points incorporated as a result of the LTCP Vision Consultation. The need to keep the policy framework up to date in a fast changing environment was touched on, with reference to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) parts 1 and 2, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework and Local Plan updates. The LTCP will be split into two parts, with the first focussing on overall county wide strategy and modal strategies (2021) and the second on area and corridor strategies (2022).

There was discussion about the importance of continuing to engage with regional partners such as England's Economic Heartland to identify and promote freight networks to reduce the use of unsuitable roads by heavy goods vehicles.

Bridleways and waterways were identified as good examples of how the transport and connectivity needs of rural areas of the county differ from more urban environments.

The challenge of moving from strategy to delivery whilst simultaneously moving from a modal strategy to an area strategy was discussed. It was agreed that the optimum strategy was one which was funded, realistic and deliverable within two to five years, particularly as items such as Local Plans are developed under the presumption that infrastructure set out in LTCP will have been delivered. It was acknowledged that well developed strategies play a vital part in securing funding, but that short-term funding initiatives from HMG could also cause priorities to be recentred at short notice. There was a request for greater reference to strategy documents such as LTCP when officers gave planning decisions.

There was a discussion about how to make the LTCP more relatable by the development of phrases similar to "twenty-minute neighbourhoods" for various LTCP aims.

12 Infrastructure Programme Delivery & Housing update

Owen Jenkins, Senior Responsible Officer, Housing and Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme, Oxfordshire County Council, explained that there was no update on housing numbers as figures from some districts were outstanding. On the proposed Infrastructure Programme changes it was explained that Oxfordshire County Council are the accountable body so the changes are subject to their internal governance processes, however endorsement is sought from the Infrastructure Advisory Group and the Growth Board as a means of promoting collegial working. The Infrastructure Programme is regularly updated to account for changes to time and cost, and in order to ensure a deliverable programme of completed schemes within the limits of the Deal. Although the funding is due to end in March 2023, there is scope to agree extensions to individual schemes in consultation with Homes England. Hannah Battye then went through the list of proposed changes, noting the current volatile environment for construction materials and labour created by Brexit and Covid.

There was discussion about the Loop Farm link road and the need for further assessment of the costs and benefits of the scheme before it could be brought forwards. Further rebalancing is likely to be due on the 'Relief to Rowstock' item and 'Milton Enterprise Bridge' regarding both time and cost, however these remain part of the Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme at present. There is a similar watching brief on 'Oxpens Bridge'. Detailed scrutiny is also taking place on 'Howes Lane realignment' as it appears there will be a significant shortfall and a potential delay in the associated 6,000 houses coming forwards, which could affect the justification for the infrastructure. More detail is expected in the autumn.

The Advisory Group agreed to endorse the proposed changes.

13 Growth Board Scrutiny Panel Task & Finish Group - Private Investment in Public Infrastructure Projects

Kevin Jacob introduced the Task and Finish Group paper, initiated by the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel, and the Growth Board's subsequent recommendations which were noted by the Advisory Group.

In response to recommendation 5, the Advisory Group were keen to invite someone to speak from the UK Infrastructure Bank when established.

In response to recommendations 3 and 4, John Disley felt that the work done by the Task and Finish Group would be beneficial to feed into the OxIS part 2.

It was discussed whether there were opportunities for delivery of LTCP items through private infrastructure, and how the model developed by the local Low Carbon Hub could be scaled up across the county for larger infrastructure projects. Support was expressed for co-operative business models. It was agreed that an opportunity for local authorities to share learnings and best practice would be beneficial.

14 Co-option of a representative of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum to the Advisory Group for 2021/2022

The Advisory Group agreed that a member of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum be co-opted as a non-voting member to the Infrastructure Advisory Group for the year 2021/2022, and that Phil Southall should continue in this role.

15 Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings in the Agenda were noted, in particular the rescheduled meeting from 31 August to 7 September 2021, which was adjusted to better align with the next stage of OxIS.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm