

## **The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Advisory Group Terms of Reference June 2022**

### **1. Purpose and Objectives**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Environment Advisory Group is to act in an advisory and consultative capacity to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and provide strategic oversight in the development and delivery of key projects and programmes within its remit.
- 1.2 The Advisory Group will work on the principle of consensus in advising the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, whilst at the same time each member will act as the individual lead and conduit, both to and from the authority and sectors they represent.
- 1.3 The Advisory Group will operate within the remit set by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Their role is to:
  - 1.3.1 Broaden engagement and involvement of the constituent councils in key areas of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's work and ownership of each constituent council's part in the delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership programmes.
  - 1.3.2 Provide strategic oversight and advice in the development and delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's programmes, helping to align cross cutting activities and priorities across.
  - 1.3.3 Provide a councillor forum in which to examine and discuss strategic environmental issues in more detail and develop understanding and knowledge, drawing on opportunities to co-opt and engage with wider partners and sector experts to inform the Future Oxfordshire Partnership programmes.
  - 1.3.4 Horizon scan across the breadth of environmental issues, enabling the identification of gaps in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's approach to its climate and ecological ambitions, and to advise in addressing those gaps.
  - 1.3.5 To develop areas for joint work across the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to address key growth challenges and inform policy development.
- 1.4 As an advisory body, the group does not have decision making powers but will advise and make recommendations to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on the areas outlined

### **2. Membership and appointments**

- 2.1 The Advisory Group will comprise of at least one executive member from each of the partner authorities which has relevant responsibilities, plus a chair appointed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. The partner authorities are as follows:
  - Cherwell District Council

- Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxford City Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council

2.2 The Chair of the Advisory Group will be drawn from the voting membership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

2.3 Each partner authority shall appoint one executive substitute member for each Advisory Group, who can substitute for their member as required. The substitute member shall have the same rights as the member for whom the substitution is made. In the event of the appointed executive member and executive substitute member both not being available, the advisory group Chair shall have discretion to agree to another executive substitute member for that meeting only.

2.4 Given the breadth of issues under the environment umbrella, it is expected that the group will engage, and operate in partnership with, wider partners and experts as required.

2.5 Co-opted non-voting members may be appointed for specific items or a period of up to a year by the Advisory Group with the agreement of the voting membership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

2.6 Where the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, but still wishes for it to progress, the Group may elect a Chair for that meeting only.

### **3. Role of the Chair**

3.1 The Chair must act in an independent and facilitative capacity to organise the Group's activities in support of the objectives of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. At all times, the Chair must use their discretion to act in the interests of Oxfordshire and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and not of their own political group or local authority area.

3.2 The Chair will manage meetings in accordance with the Group's terms of reference, and provide leadership and direction to the Group in an open and transparent manner.

3.3 The Chair will report directly into the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on the work of their Group as agreed. In reporting to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, the Chair will present the views of the Group, and not necessarily their own views.

3.4 The Advisory Group is not a decision making body, and the Chair should aim to reach a consensus on matters under discussion. Where a consensus cannot be reached, the Chair shall present the split views of the group to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

3.5 The Advisory Group should be mindful of the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel and any other Advisory Groups to avoid any duplication of work. The Group should also be mindful of any work it may require of officers, and the impact this may have on existing priorities.

## **4 Role of Members**

- 4.1 In addition to contributing to the overall role of the Advisory Group, members will be a proactive conduit between the work of the Group and their respective council. This might include, for example, providing regular updates to their own council on the work of the Group.

## **5 Meeting Arrangements**

- 5.1 The Advisory Group will meet in accordance with a schedule of meetings that satisfies the requirements of the relevant programmes of work. The notes of a meeting will be drafted and included in the agenda for the next available Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting.
- 5.2 Meetings may be rearranged, cancelled or additional meetings scheduled with the agreement of the Chair of the Advisory Group.
- 5.3 The quorum for a meeting shall be three members. Non-attendance of partner authorities shall not affect the legitimacy of an Advisory Group's conclusions. However, where the effect of a particular consideration would give rise to contractual or financial implications for a partner authority that is not in attendance, or if their views cannot be obtained, then this fact will be reported to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

## **6 Access to information**

- 6.1 It is expected that the Advisory Group will have the right to see the same information as that of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership when advising on any given issue, in order that an informed view can be made.
- 6.2 The Advisory Group will meet in private and the meetings will not be subject to the provisions of s100 of the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. However, the conclusions of the Advisory Group shall be conveyed in public to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at each of its meetings, except in circumstances where the matter under consideration contains exempt or confidential information, as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
- 6.3 The Advisory Group's agendas and associated written reports will be circulated to the members of the Advisory Group, and the designated officer of the respective partner authorities, at least three clear working days before the meeting. Non adherence to this principal however will not invalidate a meeting.
- 6.4 The work of the Advisory Group will not be subject to scrutiny by the Joint Scrutiny Panel, although their notes will be available to Scrutiny to comment on as published reports to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

## **7 Work Plan**

- 7.1 The Advisory Group will establish a forward Work Plan of matters to consider, which will be reviewed at each meeting. The development and management of the Work Plan will be led by the Chair, having regard to the requirements of the Future

Oxfordshire Partnership, the advice of the Housing and Growth Deal Programme Board and Executive Officer Group, and the wishes of the Advisory Group.

7.2 The Work Plan will set out the matters to be considered, and the date at which they are to be considered. Through its work plan, the Advisory Group will have a specific role in:

- a) Horizon scanning, seeking to identifying opportunities for collaboration on joint projects and programmes which support the delivery of the Board's Vision, and specifically its environmental ambitions.
- b) Providing advice concerning the delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's programmes.
- c) Provide advice on strategy and vision, and how this translates into the delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's work
- d) Acting as a conduit for new innovative thinking, sharing best practice and catalysing partnership working.
- e) Advising on and involving external environmental contributions to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's work
- f) Acting as a sounding board in the development of Executive Officer Group proposals for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership
- g) Providing advice to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership concerning forthcoming issues, acting in support of the objectives of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and considering any additional matters that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership requires of them.

7.3 In prioritising its work plan, the group should consider the full breadth of environmental issues. This includes, but is not limited to, for example: air quality, water, woodlands and trees, agriculture, nature recovery, waste, transport, green space, carbon reduction, energy, retrofitting buildings and biodiversity.

## **8 General principles**

8.1 Each partner authority agrees to support the purposes of the Group by ensuring that in their own decision making, they collaborate and cooperate with one another in an open and accountable manner in the interests of the whole of Oxfordshire, whilst acting in good faith.

8.2 The joint management of the Advisory Sub Groups will be conducted in such a way that no authority's capacity to deliver day to day services is disadvantaged more so than another through their commitment to the Advisory Sub Groups.

8.3 The normal rules as to declarations of interest will be applied to local authority members in accordance with the respective Council's Code of Conduct.

8.4 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership may amend these Terms of Reference or discontinue the work of the Advisory Sub Group at any time.