

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

HELD ON MONDAY 13 MARCH 2023 AT 6.30 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

Present:

Councillors Councillor Katherine Miles (Chair), Councillor Samantha Bowring, Councillor John Broad, Councillor Andy Cooke, Councillor Tiago Corais, Councillor Peter Dragonetti, Councillor Victoria Haval, Councillor Charlie Hicks, Councillor Emily Kerr, Councillor Richard Langridge, Councillor David Turner, Councillor Liam Walker, Councillor Richard Webber and Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Andrew Down	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director
Sarah Gilbert	Head of Climate Action, Oxfordshire County Council;
Susan Harbour	Strategic Partnerships Manager – South and Vale District Councils
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer, Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Alex Jeffery	Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Suzanne Malcolm	Suzanne Malcolm, Deputy Chief Executive – Place, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils;
Babatunde Ogundele	Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Nigel Tipple	Chief Executive, OxLEP
Kathy Wilcox	Head of Financial Strategy, Oxfordshire County Council.

44. Apologies for absence, substitutes; declarations of interest, Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Brad Baines, (substituted by Councillor Charlie Hicks), Oxfordshire County Council, Councillor Nathan Boyd, Vale of White Horse District Council, Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Cherwell District Council, and Councillor Charlie Maynard, West Oxfordshire District Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair referred to the engagement sessions held in February on the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and thanked members and officers for their input into that process.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the first Future Oxfordshire Partnership newsletter which had recently been distributed to members via e-mail and aimed to provide a regular summary of Partnership-related events and activities for members and officers.

45. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

46. Public participation

The Scrutiny Panel considered two public questions.

George Curtis on behalf of Bioabundance asked a question relating to the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan agenda item. Quoting from the report, Mr Curtis referred to the scale of the challenge to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the need to embed climate change into decision-making across Oxfordshire. He noted that reducing Scope One and Two carbon emissions were a key focus of the document and a critical priority for Oxfordshire in the decades ahead. He also highlighted the report's finding that Scope Three emissions, such as embodied carbon in materials, would likely form a continually growing proportion of the county's total emissions.

Mr Curtis expressed the view that the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan would be invalid if it did not include Scope Three emissions arising from the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and indicated that councils would be faced with difficult decisions around housing (e.g., numbers, density and occupancy). He, therefore, suggested that this was an opportunity to employ the Doughnut Economics model which would enable wellbeing and prosperity for existing residents while minimising environmental harm.

The Scrutiny Panel was asked to recommend to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership that:

1. Before its acceptance, the Net Zero Route Map & Action Plan be reworked to include the Scope Three emissions of building development and new roads in the County.
2. The Economic Strategy should include the use of Doughnut Economics measures. It should also present plans/strategies designed to enable prosperity for existing residents while minimising environmental harm.

Suzanne McIvor on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire asked a question related to the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and the current Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) agenda item.

She stated that the priority behind the LIS (and its investment plan) had been purely economic growth and had failed to give consideration to the natural world. In the view of Need Not Greed, it was shocking that the LIS, given its ambition and potential impact on Oxfordshire, had not been subject to public consultation.

Furthermore, while the proposed SEP did include mention of inclusivity and net zero carbon, it overlooked/ignored biodiversity and the natural environment. She stated that a SEP prepared along these lines would not be acceptable and that the economic growth

that it would generate would create a housing need that not all of Oxfordshire's councils would welcome. It was, therefore, suggested that a better balance between economic growth and the natural environment was required and that the Doughnut Economic model could be an example of how to achieve this.

The Scrutiny Panel was asked to recommend to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership that:

1. Any Strategic Economic Plan must balance economic growth with our natural environment and biodiversity. The briefing relating to this must, therefore, be amended accordingly.
2. The Strategic Economic Plan is the subject of a full public consultation.
3. The effect of any Strategic Economic Plan on Oxfordshire's housing need is clearly explained as part of the plan.

The Chair commented that the issues referred to in both questions formed part of the agenda for the meeting and that the Panel would take these submissions into consideration as part of their discussions regarding those items.

47. Future Oxfordshire Partnership response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

The Chair referred to the response of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to the recommendations made by the Panel at its January meeting. These were noted.

Councillor Hicks queried whether there was a process for the Panel to follow up on the status and implementation of their recommendations. In response, it was agreed that officers would bring a summary of this information to the next meeting.

48. Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Joint Action Plan

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership setting out a Net Zero Route Map and Joint Action Plan for achieving the emission reductions required by 2050. This work had been initiated in response to the Partnership's request that officers develop a route map and identify areas for joint working following its receipt of the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO) report in 2021.

Sarah Gilbert, Head of Climate Action, Oxfordshire County Council; Suzanne Malcolm, Deputy Chief Executive – Place, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils; and Laurence Oakes-Ash (on behalf of City Science, the authors of the route map and action plan) presented the report and answered member's questions.

In discussion, the Panel commented that they were very pleased to be considering the Net Zero Route Map and Joint Action Plan. They felt that it represented a significant step forward in delivering a zero carbon Oxfordshire and expressed their appreciation for the considerable amount of complex work undertaken by officers and City Science in the development of this important document. Nevertheless, there were several areas where the Panel felt that the Route Map and Joint Action Plan could be strengthened further. They also suggested that there was a requirement for clarifications to be made to sections within City Science's report. Specific points were raised in relation to the following:

- The alignment of the transport Net Zero Route Map to the latest Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).
- The need for a workstream to investigate the evidence of effective mechanisms to reduce car use. This would include decisions on capital infrastructure, road building and traffic demand management policies.
- The accuracy of the data and statements in para 3.3.2 of the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan relating to trip reduction targets and align with the LTCP.
- The inclusion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to cycleway delivery.
- That there was insufficient reference made to certain aspects of electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure e.g., EV bikes and EV car sharing clubs.
- That the reporting frequency of the delivery of the Route Map should be increased from six monthly to quarterly.
- The opportunities for re-examining the potential of onshore wind power for electricity generation.
- Encouraging the provision of solar panels on the roofs of properties (including through the Local Plan process).
- That motor bike journeys tended to be shorter and generate less emissions than those undertaken by car. They should, therefore, be classified separately.
- That freight should be moved to rail.
- Rail improvement schemes should be based on electrification.
- That any campaign linked to reducing emissions from school transport should have a wider focus on potential alternatives than simply school buses.
- There was a need to apply the use of Climate Change Impact Assessments across a wider range of local authority policy and decision making.
- Emissions from Scope Three sources should be considered prior to 2023.
- Education and training would be required in order to achieve the route maps requirements around retrofitting.
- Endorsing green finance was welcome.

RESOLVED: The Panel recommended to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership that:

1. The report and Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan be noted.
2. The proposed joint actions and recommended prioritisations as set out in the report be endorsed to form a programme of work reporting to the Partnership subject to:
 - a. The addition of a workstream to examine and establish the evidence base for additional measures to reduce private car use. This should include development of an approach to making decisions on capital infrastructure, road building and traffic demand management policies that in addition to the encouragement of behavioural change include potential fiscal measures. (It is suggested that [The Future of Road Investment in Wales](#) report commissioned by the Welsh Government advising it on current road projects and how to consider future projects could provide a possible example for elements of this).
 - b. Increased consideration and inclusion of Scope Three emissions within the route map and action plan to ensure indirect emissions are managed. Given the urgent nature of the climate emergency and need to consider all possible ways to the reduce carbon emissions.

- c. Re-examination of the potential contributions of wind and hydro forms of carbon free energy generation. This is so as to not place an over reliance on solar energy generation. The use of previously developed land for solar generation, (for example through solar canopies above carparks) to be encouraged over previously undeveloped land.
 - d. There be a re-examination of the benefits of e-cargo bikes in addition to the focus on electric vans in order to support efforts to reduce emissions generated from 'last mile' deliveries.
 - e. The development of a transport hierarchy that gives greater priority to delivery of EV infrastructure that can be used to support the expansion of shared EV use, for example through a network of car clubs, over private EV infrastructure, and that public EV charging infrastructure also includes provision for e-bikes.
 - f. Greater recognition that:
 - i. trips undertaken by motorcycle tend to be lower total mileage with a proportionally smaller level of emissions. Motorcycles are part of the solution, not the problem.
 - ii. emissions from motorcycles should be regarded as a separate heading from cars. Motorcycles are not two wheeled cars.
 - g. That as part of the development of a Strategic Active Travel Network, specific KPIs around the total length of new cycleways and other measures to encourage Active Travel be introduced in addition to a KPI relating to the total length of footpaths delivered.
 - h. That City Science be asked to recheck and clarify the wording of paragraphs and tables relating to the alignment of Transport Route Map targets with the most recent version of the Local Transport and the Connectivity Plan, (para 3.3.2) in light of concerns by the Panel that there were inconsistencies in the figures given.
 - i. That the report acknowledges the opportunity of removing HGV traffic by encouraging more rail freight, and passenger rail transportation (e.g. East / West Rail).
3. The governance and reporting proposals set out in the report be endorsed subject to the implementation of a quarterly reporting cycle, rather than a six monthly reporting cycle.
 4. The Partnership endorse the development of a briefing open to members of the Partnership, members of the Scrutiny Panel, members of the advisory group and supporting officers around the potential contribution of Doughnut Economics to the delivery of reduced emissions and a sustainable economy in support of the objectives of PaZCO and the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.

49. Arrangements for Managing the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

The Scrutiny Panel considered a report providing an update on the arrangements for managing schemes funded through the Housing from Infrastructure (Hfl) programme. It was presented to the Panel by Kathy Wilcox, Head of Financial Strategy, Oxfordshire County Council.

The Scrutiny Panel was reminded that a revised Hfl programme had been endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in September 2022. At that time there had been some uncertainty around the release by HM Government of the final tranche of funding. In December 2022, a letter had been received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, (DLUHC) setting out the conditions for the release of this final payment. The report asked the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to request that the Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council write to DLUHC to accept these terms and agree that the County Council would be the accountable body, and in consultation with the relevant city and district councils, take decisions to manage the programme. The Partnership was also alerted to the fact that their Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Association would need to be amended.

In discussion, members of the Panel commented that the matters addressed by the report were largely procedural – the acceptance of HM Government’s terms were a necessary pre-condition for the release of funds. It was stressed that failing to receive this money would have a materially adverse impact on the Hfl programme and, therefore, securing an agreement was important.

The Panel noted that the National Audit Office had highlighted the significant inflationary cost pressures, project delays and inaccurate initial forecasts affecting HM Government’s Road Investment Strategy. Members expressed concerns that this would likely have an impact on both the Hfl budget and the deliverability of the programme. They, therefore, asked officers to confirm the date of the inflation indexes being used as a way of reassuring the Partnership that the level of contingency remained sufficient in light of current circumstances and rising capital costs. It was agreed that this would be confirmed outside of the meeting.

Comments were also made regarding Oxfordshire County Council’s recent review of its Capital Programme which was intended to ensure that it aligned with the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (including targets for a reduction in car mileage). When officers were asked whether this had also been applied to the Hfl programme they responded that it remained in the revised format endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in September.

Several members of the Panel also raised questions relating to specific Hfl schemes. These queries were responded to by officers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

50. Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Financial Report: Update at end of Quarter 3 2022/2033

The Scrutiny Panel received a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership setting out the financial position for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. This provided an update

on the Housing from Infrastructure (Hfi) programme and Growth Deal Capacity Fund and was considered in tandem with the paper on arrangements for managing the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

While the Panel noted the advice of officers that sufficient contingency provision had been made for inflation within the revised Hfi programme, they, nevertheless, requested further information regarding the date of the inflation indexes being used (this would help to provide reassurance that the level of contingency remained sufficient in light of current circumstances and rising capital costs).

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, in noting the financial update as of quarter three, satisfy itself on the level of contingency within the Hfi programme.

51. Oxfordshire's Visitor Economy

The Scrutiny Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership setting out progress in relation to the Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme (VERP) and the future landscape of the Oxfordshire visitor economy. Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive, OxLEP, presented the paper and addressed questions from the Panel.

Members of the Panel asked that the VERP gave consideration – perhaps linked to the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan – to the management of tourist flows around key tourist destinations. It was also felt that there should be more recognition within the vision for the Programme of the importance of leisure cycling and active travel in reducing car journeys.

The Panel was informed that the management of demand flows around key tourist destinations within Oxfordshire was being actively thought about as part of the development of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Oxfordshire. The challenges of the existing transport infrastructure to the management of tourist flows, particularly within Oxford, and the potential for innovative solutions were appreciated but these did not form part of the DMP's remit – these issues would be better framed within the wider context of strategic transport planning. Nevertheless, it was intended that there should be greater emphasis and links between the promotion and marketing of tourism and the management of visitor flows through the DMP.

There is an intention to hold several public workshops as part of the process of developing the DMP – these would be circulated to the Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in noting the forthcoming VERP Vision and Destination Management Plan for Oxfordshire request that the vision and plan includes a focus on:
 - a. approaches to managing the flow of tourist coaches into and out of key tourist destinations, and the provision of appropriate layover parking for coaches.
 - b. approaches to communicate to tourists about transportation options to and from destinations including the use of park and rides; and

- c. an explicit focus to facilitate an active travel-based visitor economy through the promotion and creation of a network of bike repair stations, e-bike charging points, and bike parking at key tourist destinations for leisure cyclists.

52. Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan 2023

The Scrutiny Panel considered a presentation on the development of an Oxfordshire Strategic Plan (SEP) by OxLEP and SQW. The Chair reminded members of the contributions made by the public speakers earlier in the meeting and their relevance to this Agenda item.

The Panel was informed that previous economic plans and accessible funding arrangements had been driven and shaped by HM Government policy. While efforts had been made locally to consider other issues, the primary focus had been the achievement of economic growth.

The current economic review shaping the SEP had been underway for some time and was examining the opportunities and challenges facing the county – including the possibility of doing things differently in relation to climate change, good growth, net zero etc. In terms of public engagement, three public workshops had been scheduled to take part in different parts of the county and it was hoped that a broad range of contributors would participate (it was also stressed that the brief for the review had been consulted upon with a wide range of stakeholders).

Although it was highlighted that Doughnut Economic model was not formally part of the SEP, there was a willingness to engage with its principles.

It was agreed that details of the workshops could be circulated to the members of the Panel.

After further discussion it was:

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership that, in noting the Strategic Economic Plan update, acknowledgment is given in the further development of the plan to the cross-cutting contribution of ecosystems services and biodiversity to the economy within Oxfordshire. The economic plan needs to be driven by climate change considerations and the loss of biodiversity.

53. Work programme for the Scrutiny Panel and action log - March 2023

The Panel reflected upon its work programme and action log (as set out in the Agenda). The Chair commented that in light of the elections it was possible that different members would be considering these items in future (Beth Wilks, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager would, however, be continuing to consider the inputs made as part of the engagement process arising from the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision).

Councillor Hicks expressed concern that the second action relating to the request by the Panel for further information on the methodology and criteria used in determining the revised Housing from Infrastructure (Hfi) programme was still outstanding from September 2022. Councillor Turner followed up on a request for further information on the district and

city councils' delivery against the agreed Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal overall housing targets.

Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director, responded it would be necessary to go back to officers at Oxfordshire County Council for details regarding the methodology used in determining the current Hfl programme. As it was necessary to report progress against the programme, this might provide an opportunity to seek to build in a reminder of the criteria.

In relation to delivering against housing targets, as part of monitoring the last tranche of Hfl funding there was a requirement to supply quarterly returns to HM Government – with the expectation that these would include housing numbers. If this was the case, the requested information would be available in due course to members.

Councillor Hicks commented that it was his understanding that significant changes had been made to the County Council's capital prioritisation framework in its capacity as the responsible authority for the Hfl programme. It was important that there was transparency around the decision-making criteria, as, in his view, it was not clear that the decisions taken by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership were consistent with the County Council's policies.

54. Infrastructure Advisory Group update

The Scrutiny Panel considered the notes of the Infrastructure Advisory Group (IAG) held on 9 January 2023.

Councillor Turner referred to the advisory group's receipt of a presentation on the Vision Zero aspects of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). He queried whether, as indicated in the notes, only fatal road accident statistics were recorded as it was his understanding that personal injury data was also documented. Officers agreed to follow this up outside of the meeting.

Councillor Broad stated that Vision Zero should encompass all forms of transport including motorcyclists.

In response to a question, Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director, commented that it was his expectation that further work taking account of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) would be undertaken to update the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS). Further, some of money from the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Capacity fund would be used for this purpose. It was also accepted that given the shift back to individual Local Plans, this needed to be taken forward.

Councillor Hicks wondered whether the car journey reduction targets within the latest LTCP objectives would be considered as part of this work. His point was noted and would be taken away for consideration from the meeting.

The Chair referred to the recommendations of the advisory group to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. She suggested that the Panel would wish to support all the IAG's recommendations.

In addition, the Chair noted a recent development in relation to an earlier Scrutiny Panel recommendation regarding the co-option of an active travel representative to the

membership of the IAG. Active Travel England had announced its capability ratings for active travel and Oxfordshire had only scored two out of a possible four. It was, therefore, felt that the open offer from Active Travel England to assist local authorities in improving their score should be accepted.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership recommends that the IAG take up the offer of support by Active Travel England to help Oxfordshire to its capacity rating.

55. Dates of next meetings

The dates of future meetings as set out in the Agenda was noted.

Considering that it was their final meeting before the 2023 local elections, the Chair thanked members and officers for their contributions over the previous year. In turn, members congratulated the Chair for her service to the Panel.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm