

To: Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Title of Report: Developing a Place Narrative for Oxfordshire
Date: 13 June 2023
Report of: Bill Cotton, Corporate Director for Environment and Place, Oxfordshire County Council
Status: Open

Executive Summary and Purpose:

There is an opportunity to develop a new place narrative for Oxfordshire. This report seeks to give FOP an early-stage view of the project and its purpose and invites FOP to engage further.

How this report contributes to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision Outcomes:

By crystallising and focussing on our common purpose and what binds us together as a County, developing an Oxfordshire narrative will support momentum and progress across all of the outcomes if the Strategic Vision.

Recommendations:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership supports the intention to commission a place narrative for Oxfordshire, to be owned collectively by partners
2. That a detailed timeline of engagement and outputs is brought back to the July meeting of FOP
3. That the County Council works with the Executive Officer group and other relevant officers and partnerships to develop plans and approach
4. That plans once developed are reviewed by the FOP Scrutiny Panel in the July round

Introduction

1. Together through FOP, and separately within our own organisations, we are all working for a better Oxfordshire and to deliver the outcomes in the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The Vision and other partnership documents, for example the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Strategic Economic Plan,

set out for their own audiences Oxfordshire's assets and opportunities as well as the challenges we face. However, given the range and scope of our priorities and the differences between our places and institutions, there is understandable complexity to the overall picture of what Oxfordshire is about.

2. There is an opportunity to bring our collective story together in a place narrative. This will help us see, share, and communicate that bigger picture of what binds us together in Oxfordshire, why this place matters, what we offer and what we need.

Developing a Place Narrative

3. Developing a place narrative would allow us to reiterate our shared identity and articulate what is most distinctive and most valued now, looking confidently to the future. There is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity and difference of communities within Oxfordshire as well as telling the most positive story about our strengths and challenges.
4. The intention is to develop a storyboard that helps partners across the public, private and community sectors speak consistently about Oxfordshire to broader stakeholders within and beyond Oxfordshire, including to government. Such a narrative should generate civic pride and excitement, setting out clearly what is unique about Oxfordshire, the diversity of interests and needs across the county, and how our different places and sectors complement each other. It must clearly show our role within the wider region and Oxfordshire's place on both the national and international stage. It will also tell a positive story about change and growth pressures, changing demography, access to public services and responding to the challenge and impacts of climate change.
5. The place narrative will not be a new strategy, vision document or delivery plan. Rather, it is intended to crystallise and bring focus to the delivery of plans already agreed and to be agreed in the future, and so is not intended to replace or change anything already agreed. It will seek to condense complex information into a form that can be held beyond the specific facts of individual issues and that is simple enough to be communicated to wider groups.

Next Steps

6. Effective place narratives are co-designed to create a collectively owned outcome. We will need to consider and discuss our individual perceptions of place and come to a broad agreement about which elements are most important, trusting each other to allow different views and priorities on the details, while focussing on what brings us together. The process would engage a broad range of stakeholders across business, the public and community sectors and develop a visual and compelling storyboard and collectively owned narrative.
7. The County Council (OCC) is content to commission and mobilise this work, for simplicity and practical reasons, but would invite FOP to take an ownership role of the narrative development as the senior place shaping partnership already leading in Oxfordshire. If FOP is supportive, OCC would commit to bringing regular updates and reports back to the FOP board and support

engagement as advised, for example with the FOP Scrutiny Panel and the Executive Officers Group. The project will start now, with delivery over the summer and early autumn. A detailed timeline of engagement and products would be brought back to the FOP board.

8. OCC will fund the majority of the narrative development but will work with FOP partners if supported to identify whether additional contributions could enhance the activity and secure ownership and support.

Financial Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications to FOP from the recommendations of this report.

Financial Implications

10. There are no legal implications to FOP from the recommendations of this report.

Conclusion

11. An Oxfordshire Place Narrative, supporting partnership plans including the 2050 Vision, will celebrate Oxfordshire's incredible assets and opportunities as well as maintaining focus on the challenges we face together. FOP is invited to engage in the development of the narrative as a current and future facilitator of our collective place leadership role.

Report Author:	Robin Rogers, Programme Director (Partnerships & Delivery) Oxfordshire County Council
Contact information:	robin.rogers@oxfordshire.gov.uk