

Public speakers

25 July 2023

1. Ian Ashley on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

Ref Agenda Item 9: Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan

Given the significant concerns about the approach to the emerging Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, raised by NNGO and now FOP scrutiny, will you now recommend a pause and a full review of the process and approach?

In asking questions about the opaque approvals process for the SEP, we have also been informed that, on the OxLEP Board, council leaders are obliged to vote in the interests of OxLEP, not necessarily in the best interests of their Councils. This seems to us to be a conflict of interest and anti-democratic. Does the FOP understand why members of the public might think this completely inappropriate?

Our local authorities say funding for the SEP comes from the FOP and is not a matter for them. The FOP says it is not a decision-making body. Does this mean that OxLEP alone can agree the SEP, even though the SEP will go on to have a significant influence on emerging Local Plans?

Is that why the SEP is due to go to the OxLEP Board in September, but only be discussed by FOP in November?

Can the FOP please help the public to understand the exact decision-making process and time-table for the SEP and explain where the democratic scrutiny takes place?

Response

The Strategic Economic Plan is being developed by OXLEP with the active engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, supported by a dedicated officer working group drawn from Local Authority, University, Business, Health and Government representation. The engagement process has been held in public with open access to workshops at each stage of the development phase, supplemented by an open call for evidence, written representation and dedicated interviews, briefings with stakeholders throughout.

The Scrutiny panel feedback on the update presentation from June was helpful. We note the comments, challenges and concerns raised; this feedback is being taken on board as we prepare the first draft SEP document over the coming weeks. Our intention is for that document to go back into the September FOP cycle for further consideration and information. Noting the timing of meetings, our intention would be to allow time to reflect on that further feedback from FOP before taking any final decision on the SEP at the OXLEP Board.

For clarity, the SEP is being prepared with stakeholders, is framed within the existing planning assumptions set by the Local Plan process, OXIS and associated strategies.

The timetable for consideration of the final SEP by the OXLEP Board recognises the importance of continued FOP partner input. We will allow time for FOP to have considered the document and provided feedback through its September meeting cycle before any final decision on the SEP and Action Plan is taken.