

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

HELD ON TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 1.30 PM
THE LONG ROOM, OXFORD CITY COUNCIL, TOWN HALL, ST ALDATE'S,
OXFORD, OX1 1BX

Present:

Members: Councillor Susan Brown (Chair), (Oxford City Council), Alex Betts, (OxLEP Universities representative), Councillor Andy Graham, (West Oxfordshire District Council), Neil Hook, (Homes England), Angus Horner, (OxLEP business representative), Councillor Liz Leffman, (Oxfordshire County Council), Daniel Leveson, (Bucks, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire ICB), Miranda Markham, (OxLEP business representative), Peter Nolan, (OxLEP business representative), Councillor David Rouane, (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Bethia Thomas, (Vale of White Horse District Council) and Councillor Barry Wood, (Cherwell District Council)

Officers: Lorna Baxter, (Oxfordshire County Council), Ian Boll, (Cherwell District Council), Andrew Down, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Caroline Green (Oxford City Council), Susan Harbour, (South and Vale District Councils), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council), Kevin Jacob, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Babatunde Ogundele (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Martin Reeves (Oxfordshire County Council), Nigel Tipple (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and David Yates, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership)

Other councillors: Councillor Katherine Miles, (Future Oxfordshire Scrutiny Panel Chair)

33. Apologies for absence; declarations of interest and Chair's announcement

Apologies for absence were submitted by Professor Alistair Fitt, Emma Hill, (substituted by Lucy Manzo) and Professor Irene Tracey, (substituted by Professor Alex Betts).

There were no declarations of interest.

[It was noted that the meeting was being live streamed and that a recording would be available for a period of 12 months.](#)

34. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

35. Public participation

[The full text as submitted and the written response to the question asked below can be found here.](#)

George Curtis on behalf of Bioabundance expressed the concern that the draft Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, (SEP) failed to prioritise the overriding need for policies to minimise carbon emissions and to properly monitor the county's progress towards future wellbeing and sustainability.

The draft SEP introduction indicated that there was a heightened awareness of the imperatives around the transition to net zero carbon and that economic growth as measured by Gross Value Added, (GVA) was an unsatisfactory indicator of effective local prosperity, but the rest of the document gave precedence to traditional 'Economic Growth'. There was no framework within the SEP to balance the complexities and sometimes competing priorities of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and the argument was expressed that zero carbon could only be achieved if work to deliver the outcomes of the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire work predominated over the other nine strategies.

There had been an opportunity for Oxfordshire to use globally relevant 21st century economic principles such as Doughnut Economics to measure progress, but the overriding principles of wellbeing and zero carbon had not been reflected in the SEP's section on measuring progress.

The Oxfordshire councils were asked to support the creation of a Strategic Economic Partnership for Oxfordshire which would be a cross sector, multiple stakeholder community place based partnership connecting into existing activity and networks with the purpose of generating an economic strategy that meets everyone's needs within the means of the living planet.

Concern was expressed that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership was only asked to note the SEP draft and that there was a conflict between obligations of council Leaders to plan for the wellbeing of future generations and the obligations of council leaders as directors of OxLEP.

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership was asked the following questions and the response given by the Chair is set out below.

1. What further evidence of climate change did decision makers need to justify setting the wellbeing of future generations as the over-riding top priority in the Strategic Economic Plan?

Response: The Partnership fully appreciated the importance of addressing climate change to future generations and agreed that this should be taken into account by OxLEP in the drafting of the Strategic Economic Plan.

2. What legal and material influence does the Strategic Economic Plan have on Local Plans?

Response: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which had the status of guidance and not legislation, required Local Plans to set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encouraged sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration. In this context new Local Plans in Oxfordshire would need to have regard to the Strategic Economic Plan when it is finalised. In addition, many district councils had already written their own local economic plans and these would also need to be had regard to.

3. Why was the Strategic Economic Plan being rushed through for adoption by OxLEP in advance of the central government changes to LEP funding and devolution of responsibility for Strategic Economic Plans to local authorities?

Response: The Strategic Economic Plan process led by OxLEP commenced in February 2023 supported by SQW with a review of existing strategies followed by an open call for evidence, stakeholder interviews, and 7 public ½ day workshops held across the county between March and June. It has been supported throughout by a senior officer working group with representatives drawn from all Oxfordshire Local Authorities, Universities, FE College engagement and HM Government representation.

Following the workshops and evidence gathering process, OxLEP's consultants SQW prepared a first working draft in August and then following initial comment from the Officer working group prepared Version 2 which was circulated to all stakeholders, OxLEP Board and Sub-Groups, Future Oxfordshire Partnership and Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny, all registered workshop participants, Business Representative Organisations and MPs on the 12/13th September. Following consideration at Board and the Partnership, OxLEP would review any further comments during October and early November before preparing a final draft for consideration at the OxLEP Board in December.

4. How would local authorities and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership take advantage of the opportunity in April 2024 for local leadership and local residents to determine their own economic strategies rather than defer to the vested interests of business led OxLEP?

Response: Guidance for the integration of Local Enterprise Partnership, (LEP) functions into local authorities was issued during August 2023 and the development of the future model for the delivery of current LEP functions was at an early stage of development. The August guidance stated that further specific guidance on business representation and local economic planning would be issued by January 2024.

36. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel update

The Chair invited Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel, to present the recommendations from the Panel's meeting held on 14 September 2023.

Councillor Miles commented that some concern had been expressed by the Panel around what was felt to be a lack of ward level communication with councillors around the status of individual schemes within the Housing from Infrastructure Programme, (Hfi) and that

there was a need for the Partnership to restate the importance of good communications between Oxfordshire County Council and the districts and city council in the event the programme had to be amended. It had also been felt that that a 'lessons learnt' review of the programme should be undertaken once it had been completed.

At this point the Chair responded that both recommendations had been agreed. The expectation as set out in the Partnership's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Association was that there would continue to be a good level of communication and discussion between the County Council and the districts regarding the Hfl Programme. Consideration would need to be given as to where a lesson learnt review would most appropriately be undertaken within the Partnership's governance arrangements.

Councillor Miles then spoke to the Panel's recommendations relating to the draft Strategic Economic Plan. The Panel whilst welcoming the opportunity to comment on the document and acknowledging the timetabling constraints faced by OxLEP, had been disappointed to have receive the draft approximately two days before the meeting which had constrained councillors' ability to read and consider the Plan prior to the Panel meeting.

In discussion, Panel members had expressed concern regarding the framing, content, approval, and oversight of the Plan and whilst recognising its status as an OxLEP sponsored document had recommended to the Partnership that it not be endorsed or noted. If despite this, the Partnership was minded to note the Plan, the Panel asked that detailed feedback be given to OxLEP relating to measurement metrics, the prioritisation of sustainable growth and the wellbeing of residents, the need for a balance between job creation and provision of homes, communication linked an approach based on Doughnut Economics and consistency of language, particularly in relation to references to Local Plans.

The Chair responded that the Partnership noted the Panel's recommendations regarding the Strategic Economic Plan which as recognised by the Panel itself, had been brought to the meeting for information and comment and not endorsement. The comments had been passed to OxLEP for a response and it was understood that the recommendations had been accepted by OxLEP.

[It was noted that a full copy of the text of the recommendations and responses could be found here.](#)

(a) Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal: Update at the end of Quarter 1 2023/24

The Partnership considered a report on the progress, spend and housing delivery for schemes included as part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal including the Housing from Infrastructure (Hfl) programme and Growth Deal Capacity Fund as of Quarter 1 2023/2024.

Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance for Oxfordshire County Council as the accountable body for the Housing and Growth presented the report highlighting that:

- Spend of £4.1m had been incurred with an expectation that £24.7m would be spent during 2023/2024.
- On the basis of spend to date the remaining £30m of Housing from Infrastructure Funding would not be claimed until 2024/2025 where planned spend was estimated to

be £53.5m. These forecasts were based on the grant allocations of project delivery programs that had been previously agreed and set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

- There had been no spend to the Growth Deal Capacity Fund as of Quarter 1.

RESOLVED: That the financial position of Housing and Growth Deal be noted as of June 2023.

37. Refreshing the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan

The Partnership considered a report setting out a status update in respect of latest Strategic Economic Plan refresh process and attached as an Annex A, the second draft the Strategic Economic Plan. Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, (OxLEP) introduced the documents, highlighting the following points:

- The development of the Plan had been in progress since February 2023 and OxLEP had held collaborative discussions with Future Oxfordshire Partnership members and beyond.
- Prior to publication of the latest version of the Plan, every effort had been made to respond to and incorporate as many of the comments made by partner councils as possible which had impacted on the draft's publication. Notwithstanding this, the concerns of the Scrutiny Panel around the time it had had to consider the report were acknowledged.
- Every individual or organisation who had registered an interest in attending one of the workshops held to develop the Plan had been sent a copy of the 2nd draft, as well as all partners, sub-groups etc
- The revised draft sought to take into account the challenges received to the content of the Plan, but also set out the opportunities that existed. This included looking at the potential contribution of a Doughnut Economics approach and focussing the Plan on sustainability in the context of the productivity of individuals and business, not a growth in overall job numbers.
- The Plan sought to recognise the productivity of existing jobs and balancing that productivity against the growth that already existed within the Oxfordshire economy and growth projections set out within Local Plans.
- Further comments and suggestions on the draft were encouraged by 6 October 2023. An action plan would then be developed prior to final consideration by the OxLEP Board of Directors in December 2023.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that where it had not been possible to reflect all of the comments from partners within the 2nd draft of the Plan, but these would be incorporated in the next version and that a version showing tracked changes would be presented to the OxLEP SEP Steering Group. The Chair also commented that it was important to understand that the Plan remained a work in progress.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership notes the report and the latest version of the Strategic Economic Plan attached at Annex A.

38. Advisory Group Updates

(a) Infrastructure Advisory Group update

Councillor Liz Leffman referred to the notes of the meeting of the Infrastructure Advisory Group held on 3 July 2023 and also spoke to the group's most recent meeting on 4 September 2023.

The agenda for the meeting on 4 September had included items on mobility hubs, the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan, electric vehicle infrastructure and local area energy planning.

These items spoke to the important task of meeting the challenge of converting transport modes to green transport and the meeting had also considered items on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy in the context of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and other related countywide policies.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(b) Housing Advisory Group update

Councillor Barry Wood referred to the notes of the Housing Advisory Group held on 11 July 2023 and also spoke to the group's most recent meeting on 12 September. Advisory group members had received a briefing on the Oxfordshire migration landscape and further updates were planned as required.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(c) Environment Advisory Group update

Councillor David Rouane referred to the notes of the Environment Advisory Group held on 7 July 2023. At this meeting, items had included a paper and discussion on best practice around the consideration of solar farms.

At its meeting on 8 September 2023 the advisory group had received briefings from external speakers from Good Food Oxfordshire in connection to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy and an item on domestic retrofit to meet zero carbon priorities which had included the challenge of a lack of skills in green technologies and how this might be mitigated. This piece of work was being led by OxLEP.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(d) Planning Advisory Group update

Councillor Andy Graham referred to the notes of the Planning Advisory Group held on 21 July 2023 and commented verbally on the most recent meeting of the advisory group held on 15 September 2023. He highlighted that the group was still in its formulative stages, but that subject to the Partnership Focus and Delivery Workshop, its work programme was likely to include potential opportunities for joint working around issues such as viability, biodiversity, engagement with NHS colleagues around future health needs planning and health infrastructure and modern methods of construction.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

39. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Forward Plan

Kevin Jacob, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the Forward Programme as set out in the Agenda subject to the addition of

consideration of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Annual Report and the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Annual Report at the November meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Programme be agreed subject to the addition of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Annual reports to the November meeting.

40. Dates of next meetings

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

The meeting closed at 2.05 pm