

**To:** Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel  
**Title of Report:** Role and remit of the Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 22 January 2024  
**Report of:** Andrew Down, Director  
**Status:** Open

**Executive Summary and Purpose:**

To confirm the role and remit of the Scrutiny Panel.

**Recommendations:**

That members note the contents of the report.

**Appendices:**

1 – Scrutiny Panel terms of reference

**Introduction**

1. There have been discussions at recent meetings of the Scrutiny Panel which have touched on questions of the Panel's remit and scope of work. This brief report aims to provide clarity.

**Remit of the Panel**

2. Officers have obtained advice from the Monitoring Officer at Oxfordshire County Council, with the intention of helping to answer questions regarding the Panel's remit. That advice is as follows:

*The Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) Scrutiny Panel was established as set out in its Terms of Reference (ToR) Purpose and Objectives to:*

***review and scrutinise plans, proposals, recommendations, decisions to be taken and actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's functions in support of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development and the delivery of the remaining elements of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.***

*So my view is that the Scrutiny Panel's scope should be narrow in interpretation linked solely to the actions and deliberations of FOP.*

*As it is a Panel which does not have the statutory basis of a Committee the Panel is not free to commission its own research papers or work. This would*

*be better undertaken under the auspices of any particular Council's scrutiny function where the work can be considered by that particular Committee but it will not be part of the work of the Scrutiny Panel.*

*I concur with your view that the Panel does not exist as an additional body to scrutinise the individual council policies. That 'power' is exclusively reserved to individual partner authority overview and scrutiny committees.*

3. The Scrutiny Panel's role in reviewing and scrutinising the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership is important. Through deep engagement with the work of the Partnership, and through considered feedback and recommendations, the panel can influence the work of the Partnership for the better.
4. Although the advice from Monitoring Officer at Oxfordshire County Council provides a helpful explanation of the scope of matters which may come to the Scrutiny Panel, there may still on occasion be matters on which the boundaries are unclear, and a discussion between officers and the Chair will be required in order to agree interpretation.

### **Terms of Reference**

5. The Scrutiny Panel last updated its terms of reference at its meeting of 6 June 2023. The current version is attached as Appendix 1.
6. It is likely that the role of the FOP itself will continue to evolve in the coming months, for example in relation to the transition of OxLEP to new control and governance arrangements. Such changes are likely to require an update to the terms of reference of the FOP, and correspondingly may also prompt amendments to those of the Scrutiny Panel which would be the subject of a future report. This would provide an opportunity to consider any other changes in the way that the Panel operates.

### **Conclusion**

7. Advice has been obtained which provides clarity on the scope and remit of the Scrutiny Panel, and members are asked to keep this advice in mind.

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