

Supplementary Papers

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

held in the Council Chamber, Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House,
Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA
on Tuesday, 29 November 2022 at 2.00 pm

3. **Public participation** (Pages 68 - 70)

Received public questions and addresses.

10. **Advisory Group Updates**

(b) **Housing Advisory Group update** (Pages 71 - 74)

For information: Summary notes from the meeting held on 1 November 2022 are now attached.

Public speakers

29 November 2022

1. George Curtis has asked the following question on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

At the last Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting several groups including NNGO asked questions of the partnership. Cllr Wood, as Chair, took the questions and said that some of them would be covered by other items on the agenda. However, the NNGO question was not then discussed. Instead, we received a written response which was presumably drafted by an officer. We ask questions because we would like to know what the leaders of the councils are thinking and we would like to see where there is agreement, and where there are alternative views within the partnership. **Can the Future Oxfordshire Partnership please review how they respond to questions from civic groups and ensure that the issues raised are discussed?**

Meanwhile, in relation to Agenda Item 5, Delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, we note the following text within the Vision:

“Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed to achieve continual improvement, will be an important part of our approach to delivering the Strategic Vision.”

We agree entirely that setting up the processes to measure and report on progress is crucial to the successful delivery of the Vision. We encourage the FOP to engage with the parts of Oxford University that are at the heart of International work to redefine economics to include sustainability and well-being, in particular the Doughnut Economics Action Lab, which is already making significant progress on this in Amsterdam, and the University of Oxford’s Environmental Change Institute. (Perhaps some of our Councillors and Officers might be interested in attending the Doughnut Economics Urban Development event on 7th Dec - <https://doughnuteconomics.org/events/218>)

Measuring and reporting is the vital step to convert a Vision which ‘talks the talk’ to a Programme of work with measurable outcomes that ‘walks the walk’! Although the Vision outcomes have been designed to be achieved by 2050, shorter term objectives, actions and milestones must be set so that action to satisfy short-term ambitions of growth are not permitted to prejudice the longer-term achievement of sustainability. It is important for all stakeholders to understand how this long-term vision will be achieved through shorter term county and district plans.

Questions:

- **How does the FOP intend to move from aspirations (talking the talk) to achievement (walking the walk)?**
- **How will this Vision be transformed into a series of achievable projects with measurable outcomes?**
- **How soon will you have the system of measurement in place?**

2. Ian Green has asked to make the address on behalf of the Oxford Civic Society

At the most recent Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting I asked three questions. One of the main thrusts of the questions was public participation in countywide strategic planning, following the abandonment of the preparation of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan. The written responses to two of the three questions miss the main thrust:

- **Recommendation # 2** - OCS recognises that to update the Local Plans of the districts and city, some kind of agreement on Oxfordshire growth rate and distribution is still necessary: without evidence that the Local Plans have been prepared in cooperation with neighbouring local authorities (the 'Duty to Cooperate'), the Local Plans will not be approved by the Planning Inspectorate / Secretary of State.

Optimisation of strategic infrastructure investment could be a major casualty of the abandonment of the 2050 Plan – care needs to be taken to limit the damage.

OCS recommends that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership identifies and makes public the strategic infrastructure investment implications of each local planning authority establishing its own rate, pace and distribution of employment and housing growth.

Response: The Councils have each adopted the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and remain committed to working together on strategic infrastructure issues. The update report on the agenda about the Oxfordshire Plan includes as one of its principles that we continue to work together on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, and officers are considering how this will sit alongside and support Local Plan processes. The question remains – how can the public participate?

- **Recommendation # 3** - As noted in an OCS report published just before the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan abandonment, the links between the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (and its Travel Plans), the Local Industrial Strategy, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and Pathways to Net Zero need to be carefully considered. Public discussion needs to continue on strategic (inter-local planning authority) planning matters and OCS will be pleased to contribute to this.

OCS recommends that as Oxfordshire strategic plans still need to be well coordinated and synchronized with, and integrated into, the local plans, the future Oxfordshire partnership should publicly debate how this is done.

Response: The update report on the agenda about the Oxfordshire Plan outlines how the Councils can continue to work together and engage with each other on strategic planning issues. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership agreed the recommendation that it should retain an Advisory Group on Planning involving relevant Cabinet Members from each of the County, City, and District Councils. This will be a useful forum for the Councils to update each other on their respective plans as they are prepared, and for discussion on strategic planning issues, thereby helping coordination and synchronisation. The question remains – how can the public participate?

3. Prof. Richard Harding has asked the following question on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire

CPRE Oxfordshire would like to ask to clarify FOP's plans with regard to the provision of solar farms in Oxfordshire. FOP will be aware that we are facing a wave of speculative

planning applications to install solar farms on green field sites (including the West Botley proposal for a National Infrastructure Project). Many of these proposals are generating considerable concern and opposition from local communities. CPRE supports the provision of renewable energy but not in a chaotic way as a result of unplanned and speculative developments.

The PaZCO report identifies four pathways, three of which attain scope 1 zero carbon emissions by 2050. The three credible pathways have a considerable range in their provision of solar power (ranging from 1400 to 3900 GWh yr⁻¹), as well as many other necessary actions and policies. The most ambitious pathway requires a substantial devotion of land to solar farms and other renewable energy initiatives (such as biomass). The report also clearly identifies that 'Smart land use planning with participation of all stakeholders is essential' (page 8).

CPRE Oxfordshire therefore asks:

1. What is the status of the PaZCO report? Is it/will it be guidance or adopted policy?
2. What is the process that FOP (and constituent Councils) will adopt to decide the preferred pathway to zero carbon?
3. How will stakeholders (and, in particular, civic society) engage in this process?
4. Will Oxfordshire produce a 'smart' land use plan which will balance the needs of renewable energy generation with those of food production, biodiversity and the protection of the rural nature of the Oxfordshire countryside?

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Housing Advisory Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 6.30 PM

Present:

Members: Councillors Susan Brown (Chair), Robin Bennett, Judy Roberts, Geoff Saul, and Barry Wood.

Officers: Alex Jeffery (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Nicola Riley (Cherwell District Council), Dave Scholes (Oxford City Council), Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal) and Beth Wilks (Future Oxfordshire Partnership).

35 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes; declaration of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Nick Mawer, Cherwell District Council, (substituted by Councillor Barry Wood), Councillor Linda Smith, Oxford City Council and Councillor Pete Sudbury, Oxfordshire County Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers present at the meeting and invited Members and Officers to introduce themselves as there were a number of new attendees.

36 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 5th July 2022 were agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

37 Discussion around the shape of future Housing Advisory Group meetings and potential opportunities to work collaboratively

The Chair opened the discussion noting that the Housing Advisory Group (HAG) is the only forum that brings together elected members with responsibility for housing across Oxfordshire. Housing is a significant issue in Oxfordshire, particularly affordable housing, and as such there is plenty that can be learnt from each other, and Forward Plan

proposals will support the sharing of good practice and generate useful and interesting discussions.

The Chair then invited members to share their thoughts on the work of the group to date and both their general and specific thoughts on potential items for future meetings.

Councillor Judy Roberts encouraged members to consider what they want the Housing Advisory Group to achieve and suggested combining meetings with the Infrastructure Advisory Group to ensure a fuller agenda and because many of the topics discussed straddle both housing and infrastructure issues. Through the following discussion it became clear that members considered housing and infrastructure linked but separate workstreams.

The Chair was not concerned about agendas with few items and noted she is keen not to make the HAG a burden to officers or members. It was proposed and agreed that the frequency of the Housing Advisory Group meetings should be reduced to quarterly.

On the point of joint meetings between the HAG and Infrastructure Advisory Group, Paul Staines (Oxfordshire County Council) agreed there is probably a case for occasional joint meetings when members deem appropriate as there will be planning policy discussions that relate to affordable housing provision that the HAG may wish to consider collaboratively.

The Chair noted that although correlation between housing and infrastructure is important, in this context, there are pure housing issues for which there is no other forum in which to discuss. Councillor Barry Wood supported this, noting that the HAG is the only forum where lead members responsible for delivering important aspects of housing can meet. Councillor Wood highlighted that there is a housing crisis in Oxfordshire not just limited to urban areas therefore, to move away from a partnership that focuses solely on the very important issue of housing would be a mistake.

On social housing, Councillor Robin Bennett noted that both he and Councillor Judy Roberts have been leading on a housing delivery strategy for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council and a joint paper will be presented next week. He added that there is a lot for rural areas to learn from the city on social rent, delivery and managing private rental standards. Councillor Bennett noted that a lot has already been learnt together and good workstreams developed like community led housing. Moving beyond OP2050 Councillor Bennet noted that it would be useful if the group could have some specific and useful outputs to monitor progress and taking into our individual councils to use, to avoid the group becoming a "talking shop".

Councillor Geoff Saul noted that West Oxfordshire District Council have identified a self-owned site to develop for housing and the HAG could facilitate the sharing of knowledge and learning opportunities from authorities that are well ahead in this field. The Chair agreed that there is still a need for this group, and this was one such opportunity for collaborative working and sharing knowledge.

In addition to building affordable housing and the regulation of the private rented sector, an issue not yet discussed is zero carbon housing. Councillors noted specific projects that could be useful case studies including 12 zero carbon housing units in South Oxfordshire and although in its infancy, Councillor Geoff Saul noted funding recently approved for net zero carbon custom build homes in Chipping Norton. Dave Scholes (Oxford City Council

officer) recommended that members be clear on the definition of zero carbon for this item moving forwards. Paul Staines (Oxfordshire County Council) noted a Growth Board report by Caroline Green in 2018 on the Council's ambitions to deliver zero and low-carbon housing and the recommendation that council's role could be to enable and promote exemplar schemes. HAG offers an opportunity to bring a report demonstrating the current situation.

As the discussion concluded, Paul Staines noted the need to capture the thinking from the meeting and produce, a draft Forward Plan to bring back. Paul noted there is a HAG officer group through which officers could collectively develop this Forward Plan. HAG was also reminded of the work that officers, led by Beth Wilks are doing to relate the Strategic Vision and how that will guide the future of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and that the HAG officer group should seek to encapsulate the Strategic Vision within the forward programme.

The Chair summarised the discussion by concluding that members do feel there is a need and reason for the HAG to meet and that it does still sit under the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

The Chair suggested that the Terms of Reference are re-visited, not least because the frequency of the meetings was agreed to be changed, but also because the nature of the topics the group are considering is clearer and should be reflected in the Terms of Reference. The Chair concluded that the purpose of the group should be to share best practice, to learn from each other, and build relationships and partnerships between Councils and Council leads in housing area.

38 Forward work programme

The Chair noted that the item to receive a presentation from officers at Cherwell District Council on Graven Hill custom build housing has been on the forward programme for some time. The Chair reiterated that this Group does not seek to create more work for Officers therefore the idea is to have a light-touch presentation which is then a springboard for discussion and questions. Nicola Riley (Cherwell District Council Officer) invited members to visit Graven Hill and speak to residents that have built their own homes. The invitation was accepted by the chair who also asked for a presentation or talk beforehand so that members have that knowledge and foresight before they visit the site. The presentation was scheduled for the next meeting of the Housing Advisory Group.

Action: Alex Jeffery to organise date for Graven Hill site visit with Nicola Riley.

Another legacy item on the forward programme is Housing Revenue Accounts. It was agreed that Dave Scholes (Oxford City Council) would give a succinct presentation on the pros and cons of HRAs and a broad-brush of the legal requirements. If individual Officers or Members want more information, they were invited to approach Dave Scholes to discuss their individual circumstances.

The Chair felt that following comments from Councillors during the meeting that a progress report on community led homes was required and could be scheduled for the next meeting. The Chair emphasised the importance of each of the member authorities providing the relevant information to the report author, Paul Staines, in order to provide a worthwhile update.

On First Homes, the Chair noted that there was still nothing to update. Assuming that first homes policy continues then the group might have a paper in the future, but the item should stay on the list as a future discussion to have.

The Chair picked up a potential item mentioned by Councillor Robin Bennett, the Oxford City Council selective licensing scheme. The Chair noted that the City Council would be happy to talk to the group but having only been introduced in September 2022, there is not much learning yet to reflect on and this item should be scheduled for late spring/early summer.

The Chair raised the County Council's housing responsibilities and how they impact on the Districts and City areas and relate to the issues they have as an item for future discussion. Such issues include housing vulnerable people in the private rented sector, sheltered housing and care leavers. Nicola Riley (Cherwell DC officer) requested that the new Terms of Reference include references to the housing of most vulnerable residents.

Councillor Judy Roberts suggested an item for the forward programme and an area for collaborative working could be building relationships with housing associations and how we can work together and establish best practice across Oxfordshire.

39 Dates of future meetings

On the matter of timings for future meetings, the Chair suggested quarterly which was agreed by members. Members of the group agreed that the next meeting should be in March 2023 (early to mid-March to avoid elections) and then in June 2023.

Action: Alex Jeffery, Paul Staines, and Beth Wilks to coordinate the next meeting of the Housing Advisory Group for March 2023.

The Chair requested the following items be scheduled for upcoming meetings:

- Draft Terms of Reference for review
- A presentation on Housing Revenue Accounts
- A report/presentation on community led housing
- Presentation on Graven Hill (March) with a view to visit in the following months (June).

Revised Terms of Reference would be drafted for consideration at the March 2023 meeting of the Housing Advisory Group and would then be recommended to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership for their approval.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm