

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

HELD ON TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 2.00 PM VIRTUAL MEETING
VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

[\(recording of the meeting available here\)](#)

Present:

Councillor Emily Smith (Chair), (Vale of White Horse District Council), Councillor Susan Brown, Sue Cooper, David Crook, Professor Alistair Fitt, Louise Guy, Angus Horner, Ian Hudspeth, Adrian Lockwood, Jeremy Long, Miranda Markham, James Mills, Catherine Mountford, Peter Nolan and Barry Wood, (Cherwell District Council).

Officers: Richard Byard (Oxfordshire LEP), Andrew Down (South Oxfordshire District Council), Caroline Green (Oxford City Council), Sue Halliwell (Oxfordshire County Council), Susan Harbour, (South and Vale Councils), Bev Hindle (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council CEX), Kevin Jacob (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Owen Jenkins, (Oxfordshire County Council), Rebecca Moberley, (Environment Agency), Yvonne Rees (Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council CEX), Stefan Robinson (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Paul Staines, (Oxfordshire Growth Deal) and Mark Stone, (South and Vale District Council CEX).

Also present: Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.

26. Apologies for absence, declarations of interest and Chair's announcements

Dr Kiren Collison, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, (substituted by Catherine Mountford); Emma Hill, Environment Agency, (substituted by Louise Guy); and Catherine Turner, Home England (substituted by David Crook).

There were no declarations of interest. The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed.

27. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2020 be agreed for signing by the Chair as a correct record.

28. Public participation

Julia Benning submitted a question on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO). It asked for an update on the publication of the Terms of Reference of the Arc

Leaders/Arc Leaders Executive groups. It also requested information relating to the commissioning of Hatch Regeneris to help develop an economic prospectus for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc – specifically on the public funds allocated to this work, lines of accountability and whether similar work was being undertaken in respect of the environmental or social prospectuses.

In response, Bev Hindle, Growth Board Director and Director of the Arc Leadership Group, commented that the Terms of Reference of the Arc Leaders/Arc Leaders Executive groups were now available on the Agenda webpage for the meeting. The Arc Leadership Group had allocated £25,000 in commissioning the work on the economic prospectus, and through that Group, he (alongside lead representatives from the Arc's local enterprise partnerships and universities) was accountable on the client side. Environmental and social inclusion objectives were at the forefront of the Arc's thinking and, despite its title, these had been included within the economic prospectus.

Michael Tyce on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire made an address referring to HM Government's proposed Planning White Paper. He expressed serious concerns that the proposals would remove the ability of elected representatives to determine local housing numbers and locations for future development. Furthermore, the proposed nationally based formula for deciding numbers was not predicated on housing need. Lastly, it was unclear how housing numbers would interact with proposals in the White Paper around zoning. Mr Tyce, therefore, urged the Growth Board (and its constituent authorities) to respond strongly to the housing methodology and Planning White Paper.

The Chair stated that it was recognised that the Planning White Paper did raise some important issues. She was also aware that several local authorities in Oxfordshire would be responding individually to the consultation. Although there were currently no proposals to have a joint submission through the Growth Board, officers would be asked to consider the benefits of doing so – the Chair, nevertheless, acknowledged that this would be challenging to achieve in the time available.

Councillor Brown commented that she agreed with several of the concerns expressed by the speaker regarding the potential impact of the White Paper proposals – particularly in relation to affordability. She referred to a discussion at the recent meeting of the Housing Advisory Subgroup on HM Government's proposals. At this event, the Subgroup had expressed their wish to write to the Secretary of State regarding the potential effects of the White Paper on affordability issues.

29. Growth Board Scrutiny Panel update

The Growth Board welcomed Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel, to the meeting.

Councillor Gant referred to the outcomes and recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 15 September 2020 as set out in the circulated report. The Panel's discussions had focussed on issues arising from the extension of the Housing and Growth Deal flexibilities and the future of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The Panel had strongly endorsed the suggested draft response to the England's Economic Heartland's Draft Transport Strategy.

The Chair summarised the Growth Board's initial response to the recommendations. It was noted that the full formal response would be published [on the Agenda webpage](#).

30. Growth Board Continuous Improvement Programme

The Growth Board considered a report setting out the progress to date in implementing secondary actions arising from the Growth Board's review of its functions – with a specific focus on the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire. In addition, it also proposed that a representative of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum be co-opted onto the Infrastructure for the remainder of the Growth Board year.

In presenting, Stefan Robinson, Growth Board Manager, informed members that since their previous meeting, the revised Terms of Reference and Governance Documents had now been formally agreed by all the constituent local authorities and were, therefore, now fully in place. Notwithstanding this, it remained an objective of the Growth Board to continuously improve and further recommendations would be brought forward when/if appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the Growth Board:

1. Notes progress to date and provides comment on the paper as a whole; and,
2. Agrees to co-opt a representative of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum onto the Infrastructure Advisory Subgroup for the remainder of the 2020/21 Growth Board year.

31. England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy Consultation

Members considered a report setting out details of England's Economic Heartland's (EEH) Transport Strategy and a proposed submission on behalf of the Growth Board (as set out in Appendix 2).

In presenting, Bev Hindle, Growth Board Director, highlighted that the suggested response was split into sections. The first related to questions around whether the EEH had statutory sub-regional status, while the second built upon this point to suggest that the strategy would have the status of guidance and not policy. The third section related to the areas of the draft Strategy which were of most relevance to the Growth Board, particularly the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

In discussion, members supported the both the principle and actuality of a joint Growth Board response as set out in Appendix 2. The Chair asked that the comments of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel be taken into consideration in the production of the final submission. This document would then be agreed upon by the Chair in collaboration with the Growth Board Director.

RESOLVED: That the Oxfordshire Growth Board agrees that Appendix 2, subject to any agreed changes, be signed off and submitted by the Chair of the Growth Board in consultation with the Growth Board Director.

32. Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan

The Growth Board received a presentation on the preliminary findings arising from the Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) from Richard Byard, Director of Business Development, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). This was part of a

national recovery process to develop a programme of measures to support Oxfordshire's economy through a 3-year period of recovery/renewal post Covid-19. The programme, led by OxLEP, was being designed to complement existing proposals developed as part of the Local Industrial Strategy and HM Government's emerging policy agenda.

The presentation included headline data on the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic across the county. It covered a variety of pertinent topics including employment, Job Recovery Scheme applicant numbers, business impacts by sector and footfall. Interim recovery projections by economic sector and local authority area were also set out.

The Growth Board welcomed the ERP and in discussion considered both impact of the pandemic on the local economy and the potential measures necessary to recover and renew from its impacts. It was felt that the effects of Covid-19 varied considerably between different economic sectors. Some areas, e.g. tourism, were particularly affected, whilst others, such as healthcare, had seen strong growth. The impacts of Covid-19 were also varied in geographical terms within different parts of urban conurbations, for example within the City of Oxford.

The focus within the ERP on placemaking and building back better from the pandemic to achieve a mixed economy was warmly received by members. It was felt that Oxfordshire needed to be able and ready to recover when the situation normalised – although it was acknowledged that this might not be until 2023.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

33. OxCam Arc Local Natural Capital Plan presentation

The Growth Board received a presentation from Rebecca Moberly, Delivery Manager, Environment Agency, on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Local Natural Capital Plan. It was explained to members that Local Natural Capital Plan formed part of HM Government's 25-year Environment Plan. They were intended to provide an overarching, integrated approach to recognising environmental interventions, opportunities and risks. Partners would then use this information to work together to deliver environmental net gains and multiple benefits. The Oxford to Cambridge Arc had been identified as an area where there would be challenges in managing economic growth while protecting what was of environmental and natural value.

The Chair welcomed the presentation. In addition to emphasizing the growing importance of natural capital work within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, it had also covered several issues raised by the Scrutiny Panel in its recommendations to the Growth Board.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

34. Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

(a) Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report - Quarter One Year Three

The Growth Board considered a report setting out progress at Quarter One, Year 3 of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. This was presented by Paul Staines, Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Delivery Manager, and Owen Jenkins, Director of Growth and Economy, Oxfordshire County Council.

The Board's attention was drawn to the outcome of negotiations with HM Government where they had agreed to several amendments to the Housing and Growth Deal. These included extensions to time periods, changes to the contract affecting the Affordable Housing Programme and a commitment to further discussion around the form of the Oxfordshire Plan.

Proposed changes to the Infrastructure Programme were set out in the report. The Board was asked to endorse these as an additional recommendation. The change process and review of the Infrastructure Programme had been the most in-depth undertaken to date – although it was emphasized that change was a standard part of the annual management procedures. Discussions on the changes had been held with relevant officer and councillor groups and would also be held with Homes England.

Covid-19 had impacted on the Housing and Growth Deal by delaying the Infrastructure Programme, the Housing from Infrastructure Programme and the Affordable Housing Programme – no projects had, however, been lost from the Affordable Housing Programme as a result. The aforementioned agreement from HM Government to extend timelines was, therefore, a positive development.

In the Board's discussion of the paper, Councillor Cooper expressed her anxieties over the changes to the Infrastructure Programme relating to South Oxfordshire. She reiterated concerns expressed at the July Growth Board meeting in respect of the removal of the Thame to Haddenham Cycleway. Officers responded that while they understood Councillor Cooper's viewpoint, it was not possible to include the cycleway scheme given the specific criteria attached to funding from the Housing and Growth Deal. Work was, nevertheless, ongoing to find alternative funding streams and discussions with partners were continuing.

RESOLVED:

1. That progress at Quarter 1, 2020/21 towards the Housing and Growth Deal be noted.
2. That the updated Housing and Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme be endorsed.

(Note: Councillor Sue Cooper wished to be recorded as abstaining in respects of the endorsing the updated Housing and Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme. Councillor Hudspeth was temporarily absent from the meeting due to technical difficulties when a vote was taken).

(b) Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Financial Report - Quarter One Year Three

RESOLVED: That the Growth Board notes the 2020/21 Quarter 1 financial report.

(c) Infrastructure sub-group update

The Growth Board received the notes of the Infrastructure Subgroup held on 24 August 2020.

(d) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 sub-group update

The Growth Board received the notes of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Subgroup meetings held on 16 July 2020 and 20 August 2020.

35. Growth Board Forward Plan

Stefan Robinson, Growth Board Manager, set out the proposed Growth Board Forward Plan. In doing so, he updated members on several amendments.

Members were informed that, due to the delays in the publication of HM Government's devolution White Paper, it was unlikely that a report would be brought to their November meeting. An update would, however, be brought forward when appropriate.

The Board were advised that the proposed paper on the Oxfordshire Connectivity Study Stage 2 Outcome had been rescheduled to January 2021. In addition, discussions with officers were taking place regarding the timing of an update on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy.

They were also updated that an update on the Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan would also be scheduled in due course.

Councillor Brown referred to discussions undertaken by the Housing Advisory Subgroup regarding HM Government's planning reforms. They had requested an update on the issue and, therefore, it was important that any work undertaken for the Subgroup also complimented that of the Growth Board. Stefan Robinson agreed to raise this at the next meeting of the Growth Board Executive Officer Group and suggested that a paper might potentially be brought first to the Housing Advisory Subgroup before a Growth Board meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Growth Board notes its forward plan.

36. Oxford to Cambridge Arc Update

The Growth Board considered a report setting out work currently being undertaken in relation to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. In presenting the report, Bev Hindle, Growth Board Director, highlighted that good progress had been made in drafting the Oxford to Cambridge Economic Prospectus. This document would be considered by the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Leadership Group shortly before being submitted to HM Government by the end of September.

While the Prospectus, in accordance with HM Government's requirements, did have an economic focus, it would also reflect wider sustainability, environmental, inclusivity and placemaking issues. Mr Hindle also confirmed that it would be brought back to the Growth Board in due course.

The Board was also informed that officials from HM Government were shortly expected to contact lead officers within the county in order to progress discussions about the Arc Spatial Framework and its relationship with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

RESOLVED: That the Growth Board notes the report.

37. Updates on matters relevant to the Growth Board

The Chair referred to the announcement by Councillor Mills of his intention to step down as Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council at the end of October. Consequently, consideration would need to be given to the roles currently held by Councillor Mills within

the Growth Board governance arrangements. It was, therefore, requested that this be added as an agenda item for their next meeting.

The Chair and other members of the Board thanked Councillor Mills for his service. They paid tribute to his work, particularly as Chair of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Subgroup. In response, Councillor Mills thanked everyone that he had worked with across the Growth Board and remarked that its partnership nature was one of its key strengths.

38. Dates of next meetings

The Growth Board noted the dates of the future meetings as set out below:

- 24 November 2020
- 26 January 2021
- 22 February 2021
- 23 March 2021
- 8 June 2021.

The meeting closed at 16:00

Chairman

Date