

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel

HELD ON TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2021 AT 6.30 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

Present:

Councillors Matthew Barber, Andy Cooke, Derek Cotterill, Peter Dragonetti, Mike Gotch, Sarah Gray, Jenny Hannaby, Damian Haywood, Dan Levy, Alex Postan, Craig Simmons, John Tanner, David Turner, Richard Webber and Sean Woodcock, (Vice-Chair)

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Amit Alva	Project and Scrutiny Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Andrew Down	Chair of the Growth Board Executive Officer Group
Susan Harbour	Strategic Partnerships Manager – South and Vale District Councils
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Stefan Robinson	Growth Board Manager – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Rosie Rowe	Lead Officer for Healthy Place Shaping
Paul Staines	Interim Head of Programme - Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal
Martin Tugwell	Programme Director – England's Economic Heartland

42. Apologies for absence, substitutes; declarations of interest and Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Nick Carter, Oxfordshire County Council; Councillor Julian Cooper, West Oxfordshire District Council (who was substituted by Councillor Dan Levy); Councillor Andrew Gant, Oxford City Council (who was substituted by Councillor Mike Gotch); Councillor Tom Wallis, Cherwell District Council; and Councillor Lucinda Wing, Cherwell District Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2020 were approved as a correct record.

44. Public participation

It was noted that on this occasion no requests for public participation had been submitted.

45. England's Economic Heartland Briefing

The Panel received a presentation from Martin Tugwell, Programme Director, England's Economic Heartland (EEH). This detailed the work of EEH in promoting, with strategic partners, the economic potential of the region, while responding to challenges such as climate change and pressure on infrastructure. The Panel was briefed on the development of the EEH Transport Strategy and the accompanying consultation. They were also informed of EEH's ambition to support sustainable growth through a world class, decarbonised transport system.

In discussion, members of the Panel explored issues around the promotion of rail vs autonomous private vehicles and the need to consider the accessibility of transport options in rural areas. The need for improved electric vehicle charging infrastructure was also stressed

A view was expressed that an inherent tension existed between the aim of decarbonisation and a reduction in journeys, and the EEH Transport Strategy's assumption that private vehicle mileage would continue to increase (with a consequent need to build more roads). The Panel was informed that the challenges of realising a decarbonisation agenda were fully recognised, and that further measures and targets would be needed to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040. Several members also expressed the view that clear and consistent political leadership would be needed to persevere with the more controversial green infrastructure schemes (e.g. bus gates) so that the longer-term benefits of these projects could be realised.

It was also important that HM Government as part of its 'levelling-up' agenda continued to invest in Oxfordshire. This was not just because of the county's importance to the national economy, but also due to the economic and life expectancy inequalities that exist within Oxfordshire. The Panel was informed that for these reasons it was crucial that a strong case be made to HM Government that infrastructure investment within Oxfordshire and the wider EEH region would help the whole UK economy.

The Panel noted the presentation and thanked Martin Tugwell for attending and answering their questions.

46. Growth Board response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

The Panel noted the Growth Board's response to the recommendations from the meeting held on 17 November 2020 as set out in the Agenda.

A member of the Panel referred to the Growth Board's response to Recommendation 3 (which had asked the Board to recommend to HM Government that it adopt the UK Green Building Council definition of Net Zero-Carbon). It was felt that they had missed the Panel's emphasis that this definition should be adopted and that, therefore, this needed to be reiterated. The Vice-Chair indicated that he would raise this point when he attended the Growth Board.

Discussion also took place regarding the further information provided by the Environment Agency in response to Recommendation 1 (which had sought clarification of whether plans had been made by the Growth Board and Environment Agency to assess flood risk in rural areas). Several members of the panel expressed the view that rural flooding concerns across the county were not being taken seriously. Andrew Down, Chair of the Growth Board Executive Officer Group, clarified that the Environment Agency had indicated that they had undertaken a strategic generalised assessment of flood risks across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. Moreover, detailed flood risk assessments of specific areas would be undertaken as part of the local planning process.

After further discussion, and an acknowledgment of the financial constraints facing the Environment Agency, it was agreed that the Growth Board should be asked to lobby HM Government on the urgent need for greater focus and investment in flood prevention – especially in rural areas of Oxfordshire.

RESOLVED: That the Growth Board be requested to write to the Department for Food and Rural Affairs requesting greater focus and investment in preventative measures to address flooding in Oxfordshire.

47. Update on Healthy Place Shaping

The Panel considered a report – presented by Rosie Rowe, Lead Officer for Healthy Place Shaping – providing the Growth Board with an update on the activities undertaken to embed healthy place shaping into their workstreams and strategies. The Board was also asked to endorse the use across Oxfordshire of a Health Impact Assessment Tool.

In discussion, the Panel was pleased to note the work undertaken around healthy place shaping given the variation in health outcomes within the county. They also supported the recommendation to endorse the Health Impact Assessment Tool.

In addition, the Panel recognised that there was a balance to be struck in the development of a Health Impact Assessment Tool between creating a document that was overly proscriptive and one that was too general. They also felt that there needed to be a clearer emphasis that the use of the Assessment Tool applied to both existing and new communities and developments.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Panel recommend to the Growth Board that the Health Impact Assessment Toolkit (and supporting text) be amended to emphasise that it can apply to existing developments as part of both ongoing and new place shaping initiatives.

48. Community Led Housing

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board requesting it to endorse a letter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asking for a continuation of the Community Housing Fund.

RESOLVED: The Panel supported the recommendation to endorse the letter. There were no further comments.

49. Housing and Growth Deal Reports

(a) Infrastructure sub-group update

The Panel noted the summary notes of the Infrastructure sub-group held on 14 December 2020.

RESOLVED: That the summary notes be noted.

(b) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 sub-group update

The Panel noted the summary notes of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 sub-group held on 17 December 2020.

RESOLVED: That the summary notes be noted.

50. Work Programme for the Scrutiny Panel and Action Log - January 2021

The Panel's work programme and action log – as set out in the Agenda – were considered. Attention was drawn to the appendix to the action log which contained a report from the Oxford to Cambridge Arc and OxCam Local Natural Capital Plan: 'A snapshot of the value of nature – The OxCam Arc'.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

51. Dates of next meetings

The Panel noted the dates for scheduled meetings as follows:

- Tuesday 16 March 2021 6.30 pm
- Tuesday 1 June 2021 6.30 pm

It was agreed that the meeting scheduled for 16 February 2021 be cancelled. This was due to the cancellation of the Growth Board scheduled for 22 February.

RESOLVED: That the Panel meeting scheduled for 16 February 2021 be cancelled.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm
