

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

HELD ON MONDAY 23 JANUARY 2023 AT 2.00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER, CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL, BODICOTE HOUSE, BODICOTE, BANBURY, OX15 4AA

Present:

Councillor Barry Wood (Chair), (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Susan Brown, (Oxford City Council), Professor Alistair Fitt, (Universities representative).
Councillor Andy Graham, (West Oxfordshire District Council), Emma Hill, (Environment Agency), Angus Horner, (OxLEP - business representative science vale),
Councillor Liz Leffman, (Oxfordshire County Council), Dan Leveson, (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & West Berkshire ICB), Iain Littlejohn, (Oxfordshire Skills Board),
Jeremy Long, (OxLEP Chair), Miranda Markham, (OxLEP - business representative Bicester),
Councillor David Rouane, (South Oxfordshire District Council),
Councillor Bethia Thomas (Vale of White Horse District Council) and Catherine Turner, (Homes England)

Officers: Ian Boll, (Cherwell District Council), Becky Chesshyre, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Andrew Down, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council), Kevin Jacob, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Yvonne Rees (Cherwell District Council), Mark Stone, South Oxfordshire and Vale of Whitehorse District Councils), Nigel Tipple (OxLEP) and Beth Wilks (Future Oxfordshire Partnership)

Other councillors: Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel.

Guests: Mark Child, Consultant Co-ordinator, and Fran Ryan, Secretary, Oxfordshire Community Land Trust (OCLT)

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

An apology for absence was submitted by Peter Nolan, OxLEP business representative – Oxford City.

Councillor Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 (Oxfordshire Place-based Partnership update) on the grounds that she is an employee of Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

It was stated that the meeting was being livestreamed and that a recording would be available [here](#) for a period of 12 months.

41. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership held on 29 November 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

42. Public participation

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

Helen Marshall, on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire, commented that they had been pleased to note that the Partnership's Environment Advisory Group had started work on considering issues related to solar farm development within Oxfordshire. She expressed the view that the current proposals (such as those at Tetsworth, Nuneham Courtenay and Botley West) were speculative in their nature and detrimental to local communities. It was highlighted that, even under the most ambitious scenario within the Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) report, only 1.0% of the county's land area would be needed for solar energy production. It was also suggested that much more of Oxfordshire's solar energy production needs could be accommodated on existing roofs – thereby, reducing the requirement for utilising undeveloped land.

Ms Marshall made the case for the urgent creation of a county-wide strategy in relation to renewable energy. She also stated the need for the public to be fully engaged during its development. The Partnership was, therefore, asked to:

1. Develop a county-wide strategy for renewable energy (if necessary, delivered by embedding in individual Local Plans)?
2. Fully engage with the public in the development of the aforementioned strategy?
3. Set out an ambitious timetable to put these actions in place as quickly as possible?

In response, the Chair said that the councils were currently developing a route map of realistically achievable actions arising from the PaZCO report. An update on this work was scheduled to be presented to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting in March and would provide more detail on their approach to renewable energy.

43. 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 of 18 January 2023.

Councillor Miles set out the context for their formal recommendations relating to solar panel provision and the engagement by councils in the current National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

The Partnership was also informed about other topics that the Panel had discussed. For example, they had considered the work of the Oxfordshire Place-based Partnership and

suggested that an independent health sector representative was added to its membership – concerns were also expressed over access to GPs and whether NHS facilities were in the right locations.

In relation to the update on the Housing from Infrastructure (Hfi) programme, the Scrutiny Panel reiterated its previously expressed position that where schemes either could no longer be funded, or had seen reductions in their budgets, alternative strategic funding needed to be put in place.

The Chair thanked Councillor Miles for her summary and stated that the Partnership's response to the formal recommendations would be given in writing. (Available [here](#))

44. Presentation from the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust on the Crofts Court development

The Chair welcomed Mark Child, Consultant Co-ordinator, and Fran Ryan, Secretary, from the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust (OCLT) to the meeting. The Partnership received a presentation (available [here](#)) setting out the role of community land trusts as non-profit organisations typically established to provide local affordable housing. The issue of the affordability of housing within Oxfordshire, the OCLT's community share offer and the success of the Crofts Court development (which had received grant funding from the Partnership) were also highlighted.

Members commented that they were pleased to see the Crofts Court project come to fruition and congratulated the OCLT on its achievement.

During the discussion of this item, questions were asked relating to the characteristics of the investors signing up to the OCLT's community share offer and the key challenges that the Trust saw in relation to both the scaling up of community-led housing and the sharing of best practice. In response, the Partnership was informed that it was possible for people to participate in the community share offer as individuals or in combination with others. Investors (which included those living both inside and outside of Oxfordshire) had committed varying amounts of money, with the most popular sum being around £1,000. With regards to the challenges faced by the OCLT in relation to the scaling up of community-led housing, there had been some issues in achieving registered provider status – without which it was difficult to access funding – but these had not been insurmountable.

The OCLT also raised the issue of accessing land as a key barrier to future projects. Due to the disparity in financial resources available to the Trust compared to mainstream developers, it was more difficult to obtain sites for development. As a result, the OCLT considered that it was more likely that existing properties, small garage sites etc would be pursued for community-led housing projects going forwards – it was already in discussions with Oxford City Council over one such location.

The OCLT did, however, have an advantage over other registered providers in that their community-led homes could be retained as affordable in perpetuity.

Catherine Turner, on behalf of Homes England, stated that it wished to support community land trusts where possible – including assisting them with the registered provider process.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

45. Homes from Infrastructure Programme Update

Councillor Liz Leffman provided an update to the Partnership about the Homes from Infrastructure (Hfl) programme – which formed part of the wider Housing and Growth Deal.

Members were informed that Oxfordshire County Council, as the accountable body under the terms of the Housing and Growth Deal, had received a letter during December 2022 from the Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This had referred to the release of the final £30m tranche of funding for the Hfl programme, subject to the following conditions:

- Confirmation that recycled funds had been returned to the Hfl programme.
- Payments would be made by HM Government quarterly in arrears. This would mean that the Partnership would have to commit financially to the programme before receiving payment for actual spend.
- Regular monitoring information had to be provided by and signed by the relevant officer of Oxfordshire County Council as the accountable body.
- Reporting of any changes to the profile of housing delivery to be reported quarterly along with any updates to council's Local Plans.
- No funding would be available beyond 31 March 2025.

Considering the contents of the letter – and the stipulated conditions – individual discussions would be held between the county, city and district councils to review the current position within the Hfl programme and to guarantee the deliverability of the schemes within the available time period.

The Partnership asked officers to clarify whether the letter from DLUHC had contained any inaccuracies, and if it had, whether these had been responded to.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

46. Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group Terms of Reference and appointment of Chair

The Chair informed the meeting that the item had been deferred to a future agenda.

47. Oxfordshire Place-based Partnership Update

The Partnership considered a report updating them on the major changes to the way in which health and social care is organised in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West following the establishment of the following: an Integrated Care System, an Integrated Care Partnership, an Integrated Care Board and the Oxfordshire Place-based Partnership. Dan Leveson, Place Director for Oxfordshire and the representative of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, introduced the report – he also responded to any questions and comments.

Mr Leveson highlighted that the 2022/23 winter period was widely regarded as the toughest winter in the NHS' history with unprecedented levels of demand for services and severe capacity constraints. Working together, the NHS, local authorities and other

stakeholders tried to effectively mitigate the worst of the issues facing the health and social care system, for example, by the provision of additional care packages to enable more people to have their needs met in their own homes rather than in a hospital setting.

The draft Integrated Care Partnership Strategy, which seeks to identify priorities to respond to issues such as winter pressures and the cost-of-living crisis, is currently out for consultation. Several workshop events, including with the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board, have been organised to feed into this work. It was stressed that the creation of good relationships between all parties in the Integrated Care Partnership was a key priority. This would not only help in the identification of actions that could be better delivered jointly but also create new ways of working together that would be more effective.

In discussion, Professor Fitt stressed the importance of the workforce across the various sectors of the health and social care system in successfully delivering the type of desired outcomes highlighted. While a high proportion of the posts required to affect these changes needed at the very least undergraduate degree level qualifications, there appeared to be no mention within the report of education at school, further education or university level. He stated that without the input and cooperation of the education sector it would be difficult to achieve the skilled workforce that would be required.

In response, members were informed that many areas of NHS workforce planning were undertaken at either a national or regional level and was, therefore, not within the direct remit of a place-based partnership. However, how it linked into education was important.

Professor Fitt, while acknowledging the national and regional aspects of workforce planning, nevertheless, highlighted the importance of local organisations in the training of doctors and nurses. He highlighted that their education could not take place without placements organised by further and higher education institutions within Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West. Professor Fitt, therefore, suggested that within these new partnership arrangements there was a significant opportunity for collaborative work to be undertaken in this area and that the importance of the workforce and education should form a central part of the new strategy. Mr Leveson recognised these points and suggested that it could be picked up at the integrated care partnership level.

After reminding those present of her declared non-pecuniary interest as an employee of the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Councillor Susan Brown raised the unaffordability of housing within Oxfordshire as a key constraint on the recruitment and retention of workers across all economic sectors (and in particular amongst those employed in health and social care). Due to the negative impact that this issue has on the county's economy, a system wide response was, therefore, required. Further, it was known that inequalities in health were exacerbated by poor housing. Consequently, it was necessary to provide more housing across Oxfordshire and in particular more affordable housing.

Councillor Brown also stressed the importance of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board inputting into the local plan processes of the city and district councils. She suggested that this might include submissions regarding the location and provision of primary and secondary care facilities – this would enable local authorities to take account of the health needs of their populations. It was also proposed that this could also potentially be a subject that the Planning Advisory Group could investigate/examine.

When replying, Mr Leveson commented that the lack of affordable housing for key workers was recognised by the NHS as barrier for the recruitment and retention of staff across the entire region. He acknowledged the need for the Integrated Care Board to engage with the local plan processes – the role and purpose of these were now better understood across the NHS and, therefore, Mr Leveson hoped that he would be better able to facilitate cooperation in this area.

The Chair provided an example of how a council might consider a planning application for an urban extension where it was important for a council to have an awareness of the implications of the development on local health needs and capacity.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

48. Advisory Group updates

(a) Infrastructure Advisory Group update

Councillor Liz Leffman provided a verbal update on the meeting of the Infrastructure Advisory Group hold on 9 January 2023. At this event, the group had considered four key items: the Housing from Infrastructure (HfI) programme (referred to earlier in this meeting), Vision Zero, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) and the Local Area Energy Strategy.

Councillor Leffman informed the Partnership that Vision Zero was a County Council initiative aimed at reducing – and eventually eliminating – fatalities related to the various systems of transport that residents used across Oxfordshire (with a particular towards pedestrians and cyclists). Although the initial focus of the initiative had been on more urban areas, the subject had been brought forward for consideration by the Infrastructure Advisory Group as it was believed that it was an approach that needed to be applied across the whole of Oxfordshire.

The advisory group supported the principle that minimising road danger was fundamental to the creation of an environment where, irrespective of the mode of the mode of transport they used, everyone felt safe. They also believed that the adoption of Vision Zero would enhance work already being undertaken around road safety. After noting that a broad range of partners have a role in delivering better road safety, Councillor Leffman commented that the advisory group felt that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership should be asked to consider the addition of Vision Zero to its work programme.

The Chair of the Partnership commented that the mechanism for incorporating Vision Zero into future development planning was a topic that the Planning Advisory Group (once it was established) may wish to consider as the issues were interconnected and cross-authority.

The Infrastructure Advisory Group had been updated on the status of OxIS Part 2 – which had originally been contingent on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. They discussed how this work might, within the context of the individual council's local plans, be taken forward. The advisory group suggested that the Partnership should in due course also consider an update on OxIS Part 2 based on the context of local plans.

A presentation on the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy had also been received by the advisory group. It was felt that the delivery of the strategy would be dependent on the provision of

connections to the electricity distribution network – the scarcity of these were currently delaying renewable energy generation schemes across the county. The Chair commented that he was aware of such constraints and gave the example of warehouse developers who had wished to generate solar power on the roofs of their properties.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(b) Environment Advisory Group update

In providing his update, Councillor David Rouane referred to the notes of the Environment Advisory Group meeting held on 12 December 2022. He stated that significant discussions had taken place at this gathering regarding the issues around solar farms and, that given the links to development management and planning, it had been suggested that these matters should be considered jointly by the Environment Advisory Group and the Planning Advisory Group (once established).

The most substantial piece of ongoing work for the advisory group was the Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) workstream. This represented a methodology to achieve zero carbon which focused on the issues and actions that could be delivered in practice locally. The Partnership was reminded that a report on the PaZCO would be brought to its next meeting. This would set out 15 proposed actions, grouped around key themes, which would set out what needed to be done to achieve zero carbon. The resources and funding requirements to progress these proposals would be a key challenge that needed to be considered and addressed going forwards – a plan would, therefore, be needed to secure the requisite financial support.

The Environment Advisory Group had also received a presentation on climate resilience. This had set out the measures that would be required to mitigate the impacts of global warming.

Councillor Rouane also addressed the issue of public access to advisory group documents. Although the summary notes of their meetings were publicly available through the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agenda, the papers considered by the groups were regarded as private documents and were not accessible. He commented that often there were reports or papers of wider interest that he felt should be disseminated more widely and, therefore, he suggested that officers be asked to look into this – a request supported by Councillor Susan Brown.

Councillor Brown also commented that due to the number of groups working within the climate change space, it was important for the different pieces of work to be coordinated. This would help to avoid duplication and ensure that individual projects remained distinctive. In addition, she also supported the need for climate change resilience planning. This would be needed to cover a broad range of issues including the insulation of buildings from extreme heat events. Councillor Rouane agrees that this was important.

Angus Horner referred to the interconnectivity of the issues raised during the meeting. He highlighted the need, notwithstanding the local plan process, to take urgent action to address not just the issue of climate change but also of housing and health. In addition, Mr Horner expressed his concerns around the serious delays faced by major projects in connecting to the electricity distribution grid and suggested that the Partnership, perhaps through the Infrastructure Advisory Group, explore options around what grid measures might be investable and how the funding to do that could be secured. He also commented that there might be areas of the county where grid infrastructure schemes or projects

(similar to the ground source scheme at Oxford Brooks) could effectively be self-financed with stakeholders rather than relying on the existing distribution network operator process.

In discussion, the Partnership considered the constraints and opportunities relating to energy generation and connectivity – particularly given the anticipated increase in demand for electricity resulting from the greater usage of electric vehicles. After Councillor Liz Leffman suggested that it might be appropriate to arrange a workshop on the issue, the Chair proposed that the topic could be explored further outside of the meeting. He also advised that it might be helpful to produce a briefing note setting out some of the key facts and issues given the complexity of the subject.

Nigel Tipple spoke to the work currently in progress with the distribution network operators to reduce delays. He commented that the scale of some of the required projects were so significant as to require national grid reinforcement. Mr Tipple commented that he would work with Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director, and others to contribute to the possible briefing note suggested by the Chair.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

49. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Forward Plan

Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services Officer, presented the Partnership's Forward Plan.

Beth Wilks, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager, gave a presentation (available [here](#)) updating members on the work undertaken since the previous meeting to identify additional opportunities for joint working to deliver the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development – this had included a series of stakeholder engagement sessions.

Councillor Susan Brown commented that if there was value that could be added to tackling an issue on a county-wide basis through the mechanism of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership then it was right to do so. A good example of this was the joint work around issues affecting the private rented sector.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan and update on the delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision be noted.

50. Updates on matters relevant to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Councillor Liz Leffman provided an update on the work of England's Economic Heartland (EEH). Several connectivity studies had been undertaken on different transport corridors which aimed to boost the local economy while reducing transport emissions. The delivery of the measures arising from these studies (including the Oxford to Swindon Connectivity Study) was now subject to the availability of funding – it was important to note that East West Rail has been allocated financial support by HM Government.

Members were also informed that at its last meeting the EEH received a presentation from Emma Ward, a director at the Department for Transport (DfT) with responsibility for bus strategy. Councillor Leffman indicated that she had been able to discuss with Ms Ward some of the initiatives that the Partnership might want to bring forward e.g. electric busses. They had also touched upon the impact of the Oxford station redevelopment works with

Councillor Leffman raising the need for better coordination between different section with the DfT.

Finally, the EEH was preparing to conduct a review of its work to assess its value for money. Councillor Leffman, therefore, invited comments to her from any interested parties.

Jeremy Long, as Co-Chair of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP), reported that the launch event for the OIEP Charter was due to take place on 24 January – where several successful inclusivity initiatives were due to be showcased. The event was at full capacity, and it was hoped that attendees would be inspired to consider becoming charter signatories themselves.

RESOLVED: That the updates be noted.

51. Verbal reports from key strategic partnerships supporting delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

The Chair updated the Partnership that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had confirmed HM Government's support for the establishment of an Oxford to Cambridge pan-regional partnership. It was explained to members that pan-regional partnerships were initiatives such as the Western Gateway or Midlands Engine and that their remit did not extend to strategic or local planning.

The Secretary of State's announcement followed the submission of a proposal by various council leaders, local enterprise partnerships, the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Universities Group and England's Economic Heartland. HM Government's approval of the pan-regional partnership would unlock access to £2.5m of funding to support the delivery of sustainable growth and environmental enhancements. The initial programme of work was intended to develop a set of propositions to attract international investment, raise the profile of the region globally and continue to embed shared environmental principles.

Councillor Andy Graham spoke of West Oxfordshire District Council's support for the new pan-regional partnership. He stated that West Oxfordshire was focussed on looking for opportunities and outcomes within the global economy. Councillor Graham also commented that appropriate governance arrangements, based upon collective responsibility, would be needed. It was his belief that real pragmatic steps were required to unlock the Oxford to Cambridge region's potential.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

52. Dates of next meetings

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

The meeting closed at 3.52 pm