

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

HELD ON TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

Present:

Councillor Katherine Miles (Chair), Councillor John Broad, Councillor Michael Brooker, Councillor Andy Cooke, Councillor Tiago Corais, Councillor Charlie Hicks, Councillor Lois Muddiman, Councillor Lynn Pratt, Councillor Leigh Rawlins, Councillor Jo Robb, Councillor Emily Smith and Councillor Richard Webber

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Richard Byard	Director of Business Development, OxLEP
Emma Coles	Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager
Becky Chesshyre	Partnerships Communications Officer
Andrew Down	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director
Paul Fermer	Paul Fermer, Director of Highways and Operations, Oxfordshire County Council
Susan Harbour	Strategic Partnerships Manager – Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Giles Hughes	Chief Executive, West Oxfordshire District Council
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Alex Jeffery	Asst Democratic Services Officer – Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Babatunde Ogundele	Asst Democratic Services Officer – Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Helen Ryan-Wallis	Programme Manager Strategy, OxLEP
Paul Staines	Interim Head of Programme – Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Other councillors: Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council and Chair of the Planning Advisory Group

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

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Yvonne Constance, Oxfordshire County Council, Councillor Debby Hallett, Vale of White Horse District Council, Councillor

David Turner, South Oxfordshire District Council and Councillor Sean Woodcock, Cherwell District Council.

The Chair emphasised the importance of inclusivity of participation by all members of the Panel that wished to make contributions and the need to balance this against the practicalities of a full agenda.

Councillor John Broad declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 4 of the agenda concerning Vision Zero on the grounds that he had attended a number of public meetings associated with the drafting of the vision as a representative of the motor cyclist community.

With regard to item 8, the Oxfordshire Visitor Economy and Destination Management Plan Councillor Broad declared a non-pecuniary interest on the grounds that he was a member of the Oxford Civic Society which had made comments as part of the engagement and consultation workshops associated with the Plan.

The Chair declared she was a member of Oxford Liveable Streets who had submitted a written statement to the meeting.

36. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

37. Public participation

It was noted that two written statements had been submitted and circulated to the Panel in advance of the meeting. [Full copies of the statements are available here.](#)

Robin Tucker gave a statement on behalf of the Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel, (CoHSAT) which emphasised the importance of making journeys safer for all road users and that as part of Vision Zero there was much more that the City and District Councils could do to make roads safer as the number of crashes related to the number of trips people had to make which could be reduced by:

- Make sure new developments are built round 15-minute principles.
- Work to add missing services to existing neighbourhoods.
- Ensure footways and cycleways are easy and safe to use.
- Make sure developments are not cut off from their host towns – ‘cowpat’ developments as Transport for New Homes calls them. Use CIL, S106 or S278 to deliver these vital connections.
- Recognised the importance of safe connectivity.

Concern was expressed that although good street design would make a difference to safety through the design guides to specific sites, opportunities for safer streets were being lost in gap in responsibilities between the Districts and the County Council. The coalition’s view was that the County Council’s latest Street Design Guide had not addressed the issue of connectivity and a revision was needed. Despite better design guides, development proposals were still often car dependent, with poor walking and cycling routes, and unsafe junctions.

As an active travel community with access to technical and local knowledge as well as practical expertise, CoHSAT was willing and able to help but often were not asked to contribute to designs or policies until it was too late to have any impact. There was a need for earlier involvement as part of the master planning process where CoHSAT could help identify problems and opportunities in time for them to be useful.

Danny Yee on behalf of Oxfordshire Liveable Streets had submitted a written statement which spoke to the importance of 'safe, healthy equitable mobility for all' within the statements contained in Vision Zero because historically, efforts to 'solve' road danger had involved deterring people, particularly children, older or disabled people from walking, wheeling or cycling.

Three main points were made: busy highways severed communities and impeded social connections; grade-separated crossings of such road were needed to enable safe, accessible and inclusive walking and cycling; and County Council policies and District Local Plans needed to be coordinated to deliver such objectives.

The need for grade separated crossings had been recognised by National Highways for the M40 and A34, but it was not just high speed roads which were a problem as when there were long delays, multi-stage crossings, and many traffic lanes to cross, signalled crossings did not provide an inclusive solution. It was stated that these created an unavoidable trade-off in the signalling between delays to people walking, wheeling or cycling, delays to motor traffic, and road danger. Examples were given of problems at Barton Park, Oxford ring road, the Oxford North and Water Eaton developments, Begbroke, Bicester and likely failure to secure underpasses to connect the Salt Cross development to Eynsham.

In order to address these problems, there was a need for clearer policy and better coordination and concern was expressed that the Local Travel and Connectivity Plan did not offer clear guidance on when grade separation was necessary or desirable. Local Plans needed to prohibit larger developments which did not provide for fully inclusive walking and cycling routes to community facilities.

The point was made that although underpasses had gained a bad reputation in the UK, they could be designed properly as was the case in Holland and had the advantage of requiring less elevation change for people, walking, wheeling or cycling and were more accessible than bridges.

38. 'Vision Zero' Briefing

The Scrutiny Panel considered a briefing paper as set out in the Agenda on Oxfordshire County Council's 'Vision Zero' agreed policy which aimed to *'eliminate all fatalities and severe injuries on Oxfordshire's roads and streets, to have a safer, healthier, and more equitable mobility for all. Work closely with partners and stakeholders to take a whole system approach, working together on infrastructure, behaviour, technology and legislation to achieve this change'*.

Paul Fermer, Director of Highways and Operations at Oxfordshire County Council presented the paper and highlighted areas where the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and through district councils could add value and assist in achieving Vision Zero, including through committing to the Construction Logistics and Community Safety, (CLOCS) and Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme, (FORS), particularly with regard to their own or commissioned vehicle fleets and through the planning system including Local Plans.

In discussion, members of the Panel raised detailed questions and points relating to:

- Clarification of what the contribution to Vision Zero would be from the Road Safety Strategy
- Concern was expressed that Vision Zero had sought to allocate users of different modes of transport, (pedestrian, cyclists, motorists, public transport) in separate categories when this could not happen in practice.
- More emphasis was needed on changing road user behaviour. The Panel was informed that there was activity such as road safety campaigns aimed at changing behaviour, balanced with other aspects of Vision. This would set out in the Vision Zero Strategy and Action Plan.
- The amount of funding for Vision Zero in the current and 2024/2025 budget. The Panel was informed there was £4m of capital funding within the County Council's programme profiled over three years for infrastructure safety improvements.
- Plans to limit HGV, Coaches etc outside densely populated areas. The Panel was informed that support from district councils would be required to help achieve the CLOC standard and work to understand the issues was underway including with the University of Oxford.
- It was important to recognise that given the predominately rural nature of Oxfordshire, Vision Zero and the need to reduce accidents was not confined to the City of Oxford or other built up areas because accidents were more likely to happen in rural areas. 'Rat Running' by freight HGVs was also a concern and it was felt that there were road safety improvements to roads such as the A4074 at relatively modest cost.
- There should be due emphasis within Local Plans and Policies to Vision Zero.

After further discussion it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that Oxfordshire County Council provide a cost estimate of the implementation of the Vision Zero targets within the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.
2. That in light of Vision Zero, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that Oxfordshire County Council place a higher priority on responding to planning applications to highlight where highways infrastructure from a development could be improved to improve the safety of vulnerable road users.
3. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that Oxfordshire County Council work with districts to coordinate the acceleration of the Mobility Hubs, Last Mile Delivery and Road to Rail workstreams with the objective of further reducing HGV traffic and associated risks to people through built up areas.
4. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that the district councils be encouraged to consider and submit additional requests to Oxfordshire County Council for the expansion of 20 mph zones within settlements, (potentially adopting the approach of the Welsh Government if legally permissible).
5. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that the district councils consider the specific adoption of Vision Zero and Construction Logistics and Community Safety, (CLOCS) standards generally and specifically within their Local Plans.

6. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that the district councils consider cooperating around the development of design guides which would incorporate Vision Zero and Construction Logistics and Community Safety, (CLOCS) principles for strategic developments to design out road danger and improve connectivity of places (e.g. layout of radii, type of kerbstones, guidance on grade separated crossings, underpasses etc).
7. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that the district councils consider Vision Zero, Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS), direct vision standards, and Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) principles in their approaches to the procurement of fleet or commissioned HGV vehicles.
8. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that the district councils proactively encourage developers of major sites within local areas to collaborate with one another on Construction Management Plans. It is noted that such collaboration, when it has taken place, has worked well and led to benefits for all parties.
9. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that in the context of Vision Zero, Thames Valley Police be written to and formally encouraged to accept evidence from vulnerable road users to inform its own highways safety enforcement.

39. Update from Councillor Andy Graham on the initial work of the Planning Advisory Group

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council and Chair of the Planning Advisory Group and Giles Hughes, Chief Executive of West Oxfordshire District Council and Senior Responsible Officer for the Planning Advisory Group provided a verbal update on the group's activities.

In summary:

- The Planning Advisory Group was a new group set up by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in June 2023.
- So far it had met twice, 21st July and the 15th September.
- Involves Planning Portfolio Holders from the City, Districts and County Council, and a Health Representative.
- The purpose of the Planning Advisory Group is to provide a forum in which local authority members can discuss county wide strategic planning matters.
- This supports delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development.
- The individual councils maintain sovereignty over the content of local plans through their own internal processes, as local planning authorities.
- As a result of the decision not to proceed with the Oxfordshire Plan in 2022, the local plans have a key role in planning the future development of the County.
- The Planning Advisory Group supports the Duty to Cooperate (Localism Act 2011) - a legal test that requires cooperation between local planning authorities and other public bodies.
- The group provides a forum to discuss matters of common interest.
- The work programme of the group was at an early stage, the following suggestions are currently being considered:

- Developer challenges to viability assessments.
- Implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain through the planning system.
- Modern methods of construction; and
- Planning for health infrastructure and the delivery of health projects alongside development.
- The next meeting of the group was scheduled for 15th of December and an update on officer work on the above topics was to be presented.
- The group was in its early stage and discussions were ongoing but was focussed on where the councils working together could add value and it was important that a mechanism existed for the councillor discussions on planning issues and to updates to be provided on each council's local plans.

Councillor Graham and Giles Hughes were asked whether modular housing would be included within the scope of the proposed modern methods of construction work programme suggestion. Councillor Graham indicated that it was felt that modular options would be included in scope of the item.

In response to a question about the role of the advisory group in terms of the Duty to Cooperate and documents such as the recent Housing and Economic Needs Assessment, (HENA) jointly produced by Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council, the Panel was informed that the advisory group was not the only mechanism for councils to demonstrate cooperation and formal cooperation as part of the Local Plan process between councils still needed to take place including the expression of a council's position to another proposals through the Plan consultation process. The advisory group had not held discussion on housing need and the different approaches councils were taking and it was noted that there were differing views on the subject. The focus of the group was on matters where there was potential agreement between the councils.

In discussion, a number of members of the panel expressed significant concerns and scepticism around the role and additional value that the Planning Advisory Group could bring by seeking to look at matters at Future Oxfordshire Partnership level, over and above existing informal and formal arrangements around planning cooperation which it was felt would still happen whether the advisory group existed or not. This was felt to be particularly important within the overall context of the general pressures on council budgets and resources and that the case for Future Oxfordshire Partnership level work on planning related matters needed to be compelling.

Concerns were also expressed around what was felt to be a lack of detail of the proposed work programme, potential duplication with the Housing Advisory Group relating to modern methods of construction and matters relating to Biodiversity Net Gain within the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership. A number of members also expressed the view that viability considerations were matters for consideration as part of Local Plans only and that they felt that considering them at Future Oxfordshire Partnership level would not add value.

RESOLVED: The update was noted.

40. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Work Programme

The Scrutiny Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership which asked for endorsement for a proposed Partnership work programme and which detailed the process by which projects were selected and might subsequently be prioritised, and where possible, offered an indication of timeline and resource requirements.

Paul Staines, Head of Programme presented the report commenting that the ending of the key parts of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and the cessation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, had enabled the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to reflect on what its future work programme and an engagement exercise with districts had been undertaken earlier in 2023 which had resulted in long list of potential joint working projects that had been further refined and tested at officer and councillor level. The current short list of projects represented a principled list of projects that it was felt could usefully be taken forward and had been arrived at applying principles of deliverability. The report gave indications around outcomes, timeline and resource implications and how governance of a project might be undertaken.

It was stressed to the Panel that it was acknowledged that further detail was required through a project plan. This would test the value added of taking forward a suggestion collectively, taking into account existing work and mechanisms for collaboration between the councils, cost benefit and whether Future Oxfordshire Partnership leadership of the project was appropriate.

In discussion, a number of members of the Panel referred back to the remarks and serious concerns they had expressed with regard to the Planning Advisory Group work programme with regards to duplication with existing mechanisms for collaboration between the councils and work the district councils were doing anyway. Members commented that they were yet to be persuaded that any additional costs would represent value for money on a cost benefit basis. The concern was also expressed that the scope of the programme was too wide.

In response to these points, the Panel was reminded that the Future Oxfordshire Focus and Delivery Workshop held in September had been undertaken partly with the objective of securing in principle high level member support. The projects were to be further examined to determine what the added value of a collaborative approach could be and the role that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership might play. That role might be limited to monitoring through the Partnership at a county level if for example delivery of a project was being delivered by a particular council.

After further discussion it was:

RESOLVED: That in considering and agreeing its future work programme the Future Oxfordshire Partnership must be fully cognizant of the additional costs to councils in terms of resources and officer time and only proceed with workstreams where it can be clearly demonstrated through project plans that there would be added value to council taxpayers in taking collaboration on the issues through the Future Oxfordshire Partnership structure without the risk of repetition or duplication. It is suggested that this might require cost benefit analysis.

41. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Annual Report

The Panel considered the annual report of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership for the period August 2022 to August 2023. Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director introduced the report commenting it was a compilation and summary of the Partnership's activity over the previous year and paid tribute to Becky Chesshyre, Partnerships Communications Officer for its production.

The Chair also paid tribute to the work of officers in supporting the Partnership and members for their contributions and time invested.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Annual Report be noted.

42. Oxfordshire Visitor Economy Vision and Destination Management Plan

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership as included in the Agenda which set out a final version of the Oxfordshire Visitor Economy and Destination Management Plan, (DMP) as approved by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Board at its meeting on 23 October 2023. The report asked that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership note the DMP as a shared statement of intent and endorse the proposed governance arrangements for DMP activity within the Partnership.

Helen Ryan-Wallis, Programme Manager Strategy at OxLEP introduced the report and responded to Panel member questions.

In discussion, members of the Panel raised the following issues and points:

- There was a lack of 'transport hubs' at locations such as train stations that would enable visitors to change to other forms of transport to reach their destinations in a more sustainable and which encouraged them to stay longer and spend more in the county. The Panel was informed that OxLEP was working collectively with council and transport authority partners and more detail would be added, but it was accepted that the transport hubs in the right locations were needed.
- There was a need to set out how the estimated annual economic benefit of £3.2.bn would be shared across the county in a way that supported the county's inclusivity aspirations and not concentrated in a few high profile, usually foreign owned locations. The Panel was informed that a big element of the Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme underpinning the DMP was how smaller visitor economy business and attractions could be supported, particularly start-ups across the whole county.
- Valuable research and work was being delivered at county level, but there was also a need for the approach to managing the visitor economy to be driven by a 'bottom up' approach, led and informed by the work that District councils were already doing.
- There was a link between the visitor economy, Active Travel and transport hubs. There were further opportunities to look at sources of funding for these initiatives.
- With regard to the evidence base for the DMP, the Panel was informed that although the volume and value data set used by Experience Oxfordshire did date back to 2019, they did commission other data on an annual basis and the wider evidence base itself was current.

- The Panel was informed that consultants were currently looking at short, medium and long term funding options including a potential tourist charge to look at how the industry could be helped to be self-sustaining.
- The Panel was informed that there was an aspiration within Oxfordshire to market to the UK domestic tourism market including residents of the county. The DMP and strategy would provide a mechanism for managing tourism within the county better.
- It was suggested that where it was felt that a planning application might have an adverse impact on tourism within a locality that there be a tourism objection, but the Panel was informed this would be a matter for local authority planners.

After further discussion, it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be recommended to endorse the proposed future governance arrangements for Destination Management Plan, (DMP) activity within the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
2. That it agrees that the delivery of the DMP should be a process that includes and recognises the important insight of the district councils on their own local tourist economy in a 'bottom up' process.
3. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership request that OxLEP in developing the funding strategy for the DMP include consideration and exploration of a tourist tax.

43. Community Employment Plans Evidence Paper 2023

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership which provided an update to the Community Employment Plan, (CEP) originally considered by the Oxfordshire Growth Board in 2017. The CEP was intended to support planning policy officers in the District Councils in including CEP policies within their council's local plans and in holding developers to account with regard to the employment of members of the local community where major development was proposed or taking place.

In discussion, the view was expressed that the CEP and evidence base could have focus more on apprenticeships in emerging zero carbon technological areas with a skills shortage, but also heritage based skills such as stone masonry.

At this point it was noted that the meeting had become inquorate and therefore the comments expressed were informal. Members present commented that they supported the report's recommendation that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership endorse the Community Employment Plan Evidence Paper 2023, and that Local Planning Authorities support CEP policies within Local Plans which are being updated.

44. Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal: Update at the end of Quarter 2 2023/24

Members present considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership which set an update on the Housing and Growth Deal Update as at September 2023 relating to the Housing from Infrastructure, (HfI) Programme and Growth Deal Capacity Fund.

Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director commented that Oxfordshire County Council as the accountable body for the delivery of the Hfl Programme was considering some changes to the programme which would be brought to the Panel and the Partnership in the New Year.

Members present noted the report.

45. Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan - update

Members present considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership which set out an update on steps taken to operationalise the actions agreed for the delivery phase of the Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan, (NZRMAP).

It was noted Action 2 of the NZRMAP was to address the retrofit skills gap and it was felt this underlined the importance of the contribution that Community Employment Plans potentially could make in increasing the number of people with retrofit skills.

Members present noted the report.

46. Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Annual Report

Members present considered the annual report of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership, (OIEP) which was being presented to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Emma Coles, OIEP Manager presented the report which gave an overview of the OIEP and highlighted progress to date.

A member made the point that because of the impact of technology such as AI and other factors, certain job types and skills would become less popular and therefore it would be necessary for those people to be supported to be redeployed into other areas. The Panel was informed that the future proofing of skills was being looked at by the OIEP's Inclusive Economy Working Group

Members present noted the report and paid tribute to the OIEP and Emma for its work over the previous year.

47. Advisory Group updates

(a) Infrastructure Advisory Group update

Members present noted the notes of the Infrastructure Advisory Group.

(b) Housing Advisory Group update

Members present noted the notes of the Housing Advisory Group.

(c) Planning Advisory Group update

Members present noted the notes of the Planning Advisory Group.

(d) Environment Advisory Group update

Members present noted the notes of the Environment Advisory Group.

48. Future Oxfordshire Partnership response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

Members present noted the response by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to the Panel's recommendations made at the Panel's 14 September 2023 meeting.

49. Work programme for the Scrutiny Panel and action log - November 2023

Kevin Jacob, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Democratic Services Officer commented that the comments made in relation to the length of some of the agenda items would be reflected upon.

The Chair commented that her view was that the Panel ought to focus its time on reports that sought approval or endorsement by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

50. Dates of next meetings

The dates of next meetings were noted as set out in the Agenda.

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm