

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Scrutiny Panel

HELD ON MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024 AT 6.30 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIEWABLE BY WEBLINK

Present:

Councillor Katherine Miles (Chair), Councillor John Broad, Councillor Michael Brooker, Councillor Andy Cooke, Councillor Debby Hallett, Councillor Charlie Hicks, Councillor Lois Muddiman, Councillor Leigh Rawlins, Councillor Jo Robb and Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Becky Chesshyre	Communications Coordinator - Oxfordshire Partnerships
Andrew Down	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director
Glenys Lemming-Bott	Temporary Democratic Services Administrator- Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Susan Harbour	Strategic Partnerships Manager – South and Vale District Councils
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Future Oxfordshire Partnership
David Munday	Deputy Director of Public Health - Oxfordshire County Council
Rosie Rowe	Head of Healthy Place Shaping – Oxfordshire County Council
Paul Staines	Interim Head of Programme - Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal
David Yates	Policy and Project Officer - Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Other councillors: Councillor David Roane, Chair of the Environment Advisory Group

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

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Yvonne Constance, Oxfordshire County Council, Councillor Tiago Corais, Oxford City Council, Councillor Lynn Pratt, Cherwell District Council, Councillor Emily Smith, Vale of White Horse District Council and Councillor David Turner, South Oxfordshire District Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

52. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record subject to amend the resolved action at the end of the minute 39 to include reference to the Panel's comments made the item as follows:

'RESOLVED:

1. That the update on the Planning Advisory Group from Councillor Andy Graham and Giles Hughes be noted.
2. That the comments and issues raised by the Panel during its discussion of the update be noted as feedback to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

Under this item the Chair also reminded members of the Panel of the importance of treating guest attendees and speakers in a respectful way.

53. Public participation

It was noted that on this occasion no public speakers had registered.

54. Role and remit of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

The Panel considered a report from Andrew Down, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director which set out advice from the Monitoring Officer of Oxfordshire County Council regarding the role and remit of the Panel as set out in its current Terms of Reference. The advice had been sought by officers following discussions by members at previous meetings.

The Panel was informed that the advice had confirmed that the Panel did not have the same statutory powers as a Scrutiny Committee in any of the councils represented on it to commission its research work and that the Panel's remit should be interpreted narrowly and linked solely to the actions and deliberations of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, (FOP).

It was highlighted that the terms of refence of the FOP would continue to evolve as its role and remit changed. This would have a consequential impact on the terms of reference and remit of the Panel.

A summary of points and questions raised by members during discussion:

- Flagging of items not in scope - Was there a way in which agenda items to the Panel which could only be investigated by the individual authority scrutiny committees were flagged in advance? A note could also be made in the Panel's minutes so it was clearer when the Panel could not take an issue further and was referring it to a scrutiny committee/s. Officers indicated that they could be clearer regarding which items were or were not in the Panel's scope.
- Duty to Cooperate – What was the role of the FOP in facilitating this, particularly around the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision? Officers confirmed that the FOP had no formal role or status in the Duty to Cooperate, but it was an environment where best practice could be shared between the councils and strong relationships maintained.

- Purpose and scope of the Panel and use of resources – a member of the Panel commented that they were disappointed with the response of the Monitoring Officer as in their view, the language used within paragraph 1.1 of the Panel's Terms of Reference around its role was broad did allow for a fuller Panel role. Taking the Monitoring Officer's interpretation, the Panel had very limited teeth. It was also felt that officers had a conflict in that they were deciding the scope and constraints of the Panel, contrary to overview and scrutiny best practice. Agenda setting powers were a key component of good scrutiny practice without which scrutiny on behalf of taxpayers was effectively being constrained.
- If the role of Panel was to partly assist in the coordination between the district and the county council, the interpretation of the Panel's scope limited its ability to fulfil this aim. A considerable amount of officer and member time had already been spent on issues such as Vision Zero which officers had initially said was in scope.
- Future of the Panel – a member commented that if the Panel did not have the powers it needed to undertake its role, one solution could be to transfer its role to the County Council's Place Scrutiny Committee which did have statutory powers and that advice from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny should be sort on how the Panel could best deliver its role for taxpayers. Officers agreed that it was sensible to look at future development options going forward and to seek appropriate scrutiny best practice advice and to also seek the collective views of the Monitoring Officer Group.
- Ability to make recommendations- a member of the Panel commented that they were clear that the Panel could respond to the papers it considered and could if it was so minded make recommendations to the FOP.
- End of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal – a members commented that it was clear that the Panel had been set up as part of the governance around the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal with its remit linked to the Deal.
- Meeting virtually – comment was made that meeting virtually limited the remit of the Panel, but it was noted that that the Panel's powers were the same whether it met virtually or not.
- The FOP was also not a formal committee. Officers responded that the FOP had been established as formal Joint Committee under local government legislation. It was able to take formal decisions if those decisions were delegated to it by the partner local authorities. In practice, this power had not been exercised but it could be.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair suggested that given the concerns raised by members regarding what was considered to be some inconsistency between advice received on the Panel's remit and its terms of reference the terms of reference should be reviewed in time for the new municipal year.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership notes that the Panel has asked Officers to initiate a review of the Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Panel prior to the first meeting of the 2024/2025 municipal year. The review to take account of:

1. The evolving role of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and impact of this on the scope and role of the Panel, and the Panel's Terms of Reference.
2. Appropriate professional advice on overview and scrutiny best practice.

55. Healthy Place Shaping Update and the new Health & Wellbeing Board Strategy for Oxfordshire

The Panel considered a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership which set out an update on progress with delivery of healthy place shaping across Oxfordshire and which presented the new Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy for Oxfordshire.

Rose Rowe, Head of Healthy Place Shaping and David Munday, Deputy Director of Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council presented the report, a summary presentation and responded to member questions.

Member questions and comments included:

- Monitoring of the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy – a member asked how progress and performance would be managed in order to identify the impact of specific schemes? Members were informed that a draft delivery plan and outcomes framework including high level metrics would be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2024.
- Healthy Place Shaping and supporting ongoing work between health and planning – a member expressed concern regarding what was felt to be a lack of coordination between the County and districts councils around responsibility for street design guides. It was felt street design code were preferable as they made clear what developers had to do to help deliver healthier outcomes. Officers indicated this could be followed up, but there was a preference for codes where possible.
- Supporting models of care and community activation in healthy place shaping – a member commented that his observation was that there appear to be significant levels of duplication between the NHS and adult social care. It was important to do everything possible to improve integration with the Bucks, Oxon and West Berks ICB in order to get better outcomes and value for money. Officers responded that the best opportunity for coordination was around early intervention work, for example through the mapping of social prescribing and community connections.
- Finance and commissioning linked to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy – were the finance and commission targets aligned to outcomes-based commissioning being considered? Officers responded that the Health and Wellbeing Board had responsibility for the sign off and utilization of the [Better Care Fund](#) which represented the intersection of health and social care spending.
- Provision of primary health care facilities – a member commented that there was a lack of primary care facilities in communities despite funds generated from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy being earmarked for this use because the ICB had very limited powers to own estate. This was a major issue which did not appear to be addressed within the Strategy. Officers commented that they shared many of these frustrations. It was a topic that was being looked into by the Planning Advisory Group.
- Coordination between the delivery of healthy place shaping, delivery of Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the FOP and individual councils' local planning responsibilities – a member questioned how duplication and conflict would be avoided. Officers responded that one of the objectives of monthly discussions between public health representatives and planners from around the county was to mitigate this risk. Responses were given to Local Plan consultations and councils were encouraged to include a requirement for developers to undertake Health Impact Assessment as part of major planning applications.
- People and activation programmes- the Chair asked whether programmes to encourage healthy lifestyles and modes of travel were also being promoted within

NHS organisations. Officers confirmed that they were, and they had regular contact to promote this with NHS colleagues.

- Problems with shared ownership homes – the Chair made the point that although poor standards of maintenance and the impact of this on health had been recognised within the Strategy in terms of issues for social housing, it was an issue that faced shared ownership as well as social renters.
- Climate change and health - the Chair asked whether things like cool rooms as part of climate adaptation were being factored into future plans. Officers confirmed that this was considered as part of heatwave and community resilience planning.

In response to a number of common points around delivery, the Panel was informed there had been good levels of engagement and agreement across, the public, voluntary and private sectors and it was expected that this co-production would help with delivery.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be recommended to endorse the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Oxfordshire.
2. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership be recommended to continue to support healthy place shaping as a strategic priority in enabling the regeneration of existing communities and the development of new communities.
3. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership note the feedback of the Panel to officers, which is that as next steps and the delivery plan for the Strategy are developed:
 - a. A robust monitoring and performance framework needs to be put in place.
 - b. There is a need to review commissioning structures to ensure commissioning is aligned to the outcomes and KPIs set out in the performance framework, (i.e., around use of the Better Care Fund and pooled budgets perhaps using an output based approach).
 - c. That the importance of street design in encouraging healthy lifestyles should be recognised and foregrounded. The Panel would like to highlight the potential for street design codes rather than guides, in promoting high standards in design.
 - d. There is a need to ensure a high degree of coordination between local authority and NHS partners as part of the financing of infrastructure to support healthy place making.
 - e. That the potential impact of issues around the delivery and provision of primary care facilities such as local health centres and new GP surgeries on the delivery of the strategy be noted.

56. Future Oxfordshire Partnership response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

The Panel considered the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's response to the Panel's recommendations arising from the meeting on 22 November 2023. The Chair drew members' specific attention to the feedback of the FOP to the recommendations made by the Panel relating to Vision Zero which had not been agreed by the FOP and suggested that the Panel might wish to consider directing to the recommendations to a FOP advisory group rather than the FOP itself.

In discussion, various members of Panel reiterated their concerns and disappointment made earlier in the meeting that the recommendations had not been agreed on the basis that Vision Zero did not fall within the FOP remit and suggested that the FOP should be asked what it felt its own role was in relation to Vision Zero in light of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.

Officers commented that the paper on Vision Zero had previously been brought to the Panel at its request, but it had not been on a FOP agenda. It was accepted that the issue was complex, but even if an issue did involve joint working between the County Councils and districts, this did not automatically make it an issue within FOP's remit.

The view was also expressed that in future it was important in terms of agenda planning that the Chair and officers worked together to only put forward items within the FOP and the Panel's remit.

After further discussion it was:

RESOLVED:

1. The Scrutiny Panel noted with regret the response of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership: that it declined to comment on the Panel's recommendations regarding Vision Zero on the basis that Vision Zero did not fall within its remit. In the Panel's view, there is a relationship between Vision Zero and the delivery of the outcomes within the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. As such, Vision Zero can be seen to fall within the spirit of the Partnership's general scope and remit. There are multiple opportunities for the sharing and coordination of best practice around Vision Zero between Oxfordshire local authorities. Working towards its objectives, the FOP could play an important part in making Vision Zero a success.
2. The Panel recommends that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership asks the Infrastructure Advisory Group and Planning Advisory Group to consider adding Vision Zero to their work programmes so that the Panel's recommendations to the Partnership relating to Vision Zero can be considered.

57. Environment Advisory Group update

The Panel considered the notes of the Environment Advisory Group, (EAG) which were introduced by Councillor David Rouane as its Chair.

Councillor Rouane commented that the focus of the advisory group was around carbon reduction aspects of environment and therefore the group confined itself to matters linked to the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan, (NZRMAP), and did not consider issue linked to nature and nature recovery which were in the remit of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership. Regular monitoring of the NZRMAP was a central part of its work as referred to in the notes.

In discussion, members raised a number of points:

- Transport emissions and pollution – a member commented that the links between spatial planning, the distances that residents needed to travel and the impact of this travel on transport emissions were not being considered by any of the advisory groups

as a top priority despite this being identified in the Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire study and it being the top source of emissions across all the district council areas. Councillor Rouane responded that it was his understanding that the NZRMAP was being taken account of by all the district councils as part of their Local Plan development.

- Local Area Energy Planning Function – a member commented on the reference in the EAG notes to the establishment of governance arrangements for a local area energy planning function through an Executive Steering Board and Energy Planning Working Group and asked for the names of the members of those groups where known. He expressed concern that the membership might have a narrow energy focus and become siloed and suggested that other organisations such as environmental or community groups should also be involved and that this would increase buy-in within a community for green energy projects. Councillor Rouane responded that the work being undertaken was of a technical nature, but that the groups did report back to the advisory group.

RESOLVED: The Panel received the notes of the Environment Advisory Group.

58. Work programme for the Scrutiny Panel

The Panel received the work programme for forthcoming meetings.

59. Dates of next meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted as set out in the agenda.

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm