

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Infrastructure Sub-Group

HELD ON MONDAY 24 AUGUST 2020 AT 2.00 PM ON-LINE TEAMS MEETING

Present:

Councillors: Pieter-Paul Barker, Yvonne Constance, Caroline Green, Jeff Haine, Tom Hayes, Lynn Pratt and Judy Roberts

Officers: Sue Halliwell, (Oxfordshire County Council), Bev Hindle (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Kevin Jacob (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Owen Jenkins, (Oxfordshire County Council), Rose Sutton, (Oxfordshire County Council).

1 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interest; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ian Hudspeth. In Councillor Hudspeth's absence it was agreed that Councillor Yvonne Constance would chair the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 11 May 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to the amendment of minute 42, 4th bullet to read 'Assessment criteria for schemes would be updated and subgroup expressed the view that the criteria should reflect *environmental and social aspects as well as being need based* rather than availability of funding based'.

3 Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Update

The subgroup received a presentation from Rose Sutton, Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator, Oxfordshire County Council providing an update on progress with the refresh of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, (OxIS). It was noted that following cross Oxfordshire authority working to develop a consultancy brief which reflected the priorities of clean and inclusive growth, the deadline for receipt of tenders had expired earlier that day. A tender evaluation process would now be followed, and it was expected consultants would be appointed mid to end September. Depending on the timeline of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 of which the OxIS would be an evidence base, endorsement by the Growth Board of a revised strategy was scheduled for July 2021. The subgroup would continue to

receive regular progress updates at each meeting as part of the governance arrangements for the update.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Members asked whether the refresh of OxIS would require or lead to the re-evaluation of projects within the current version. The subgroup was informed that under certain circumstances this might take place, but this would be a judgement call based on the specifics of an individual scheme. It was unlikely that if such a re-evaluation was to take place that a scheme would be looked at from scratch, rather the work undertaken as part of the current OxIS would form the starting point, but that the updated OxIS would be used to inform any refresh.
- It would be useful for there to be greater public visibility of OxIS related projects already completed.
- It was agreed that the defined objectives for the OxIS update, (as included in the tender documents) could be circulated to the members of the subgroup for information.
- Sharing of information around tender design – a general point not specific to the Growth Board was made that whilst councillors were involved and did consider the results of the tender processes there tended to be less involved in the tender design stages. However, the view was also expressed that it was also important for processes to be as streamlined as possible to avoid unnecessary delays.

The subgroup noted the OxIS update.

4 England's Economic Heartland's draft Transport Strategy

The subgroup considered a summary of England's Economic Heartland's Draft Transport Strategy. John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy & Policy Manager at Oxfordshire County Council introduced the summary. The subgroup was informed that the public consultation on the draft strategy ran to 6 October 2020 and that whilst responsibility rested with the County Council for a formal response as the transport authority, there was considered to be potential value in a joined up Oxfordshire approach to supplement this.

The subgroup discussed the likelihood of the EEH assuming statutory powers and any implications for this for Oxfordshire and the wider Oxford to Cambridge Arc including the potential for an Oxford to Cambridge Spatial Framework. The structural relationship between EEH and agencies such as Highways England was discussed. Appropriate consideration and planning for freight was important together with a shift towards greener modes of transport.

The subgroup agreed that there could be potential value in a Growth Board response to the EEH consultation and that the County Council's draft response might be a potential starting point for this, but was mindful that the districts and Oxford City Council might also wish to submit their own individual responses.

5 Active Travel Programme Presentation

Sue Halliwell, Director for Planning and Place gave a presentation which set out an update on the Active Travel Programme. The aim of the programme was to contribute to reducing pressure on the road network, contribute to economic growth and the reduction of emissions, improvements of quality of life and health and to link active travel with bus and

rail options by enabling sustainable door to door journeys combining cycling or walking with public transport.

The subgroup was informed that following recent HM Government initiatives, this existing broad framework had been looked at to see where delivery might be accelerated as part of the national emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly with regard to measures to support and enable social distancing. Building on the existing School Streets scheme which aimed to quieten roads around schools, expressions of interest had been sought from local schools with a view to developing a bid to HM Government as part of Tranche 2 of the Government's Emergency Active Travel programme which could see up to £2.3m allocated to projects across the county. Ideas submitted by schools would be considered at pace to see how they might support HM Government's response to Covid-19 and meet the strict criteria set by the Government prior to bids being submitted. Announcements were expected in September.

The subgroup noted that in the previous tranche of the Emergency Active Travel bids process, some £600,000, (£300k Department for Transport) and £300k Oxfordshire County Council funding) had been secured for schemes across Oxfordshire which could be implemented within only a 4-8-week delivery window. These included projects to cycle lanes, cycle parks and traffic signals.

In discussion, members were supportive of the programme and pleased to note the enthusiasm shown by schools. It was suggested that the request for potential scheme might be rolled out further. It was acknowledged that further work was taking place to encourage further requests from schools and more widely, but that it was important to remain mindful of the overall amount of funding available. Members also queried the degree to which responses given by the public to national consultations related to Active Travel were feedback by HM Government to Oxfordshire County Council and how local communities interested in the introduction of 20mph speed limits in their localities might take that interest further.

The subgroup noted the Active Travel Programme Update.

6 Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum Membership Request

The subgroup considered a request on behalf of the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum to the Growth Board Director which set out a case for a more direct relationship between the Forum and the Oxfordshire Growth Board. It was noted that this request had been previously considered by the Oxfordshire Growth Board Executive Officer Group who had been supportive of such a relationship being most appropriate via representation of the Forum on the Infrastructure subgroup.

In discussion, the subgroup supported the addition of a non-voting representative of the Forum to its membership. It was strongly felt that the value and insight which could be offered by the Forum as an organisation representing different transport providers across Oxfordshire could be very useful and add value to the subgroup's work.

7 Homes from Infrastructure Programme Update

Owen Jenkins, Director of Growth and Economy provided an update on proposed changes to the Homes from Infrastructure Programme which formed part of the wider Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. It was emphasised to the subgroup that:

- As with any infrastructure programme, the Homes from Infrastructure, (HIF) Programme was regularly reviewed, and it was to be expected that there would be alterations and flexes to it over time dependent on changing circumstances.
- Oxfordshire County Council was the formal accountable body for funds allocated to the HIF programme and change requests to the programme followed its processes although every effort was made to consult and engage with other partners, timing could make this difficult to achieve.
- The value of committed schemes in the programme could not exceed the total of £150m within the Housing and Growth Deal so schemes which included an element of funding from other sources, (such as S106 receipts) could not be included as committed until those funds had been received.
- Whilst Home Office and HM Government had indicated that there might be some flexibility around delivery in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, this did not alter the basis of the Housing and Growth Deal that the funding for infrastructure provided was to facilitate the accelerate the delivery of housing.

In discussion, the subgroup notes the update and asked several questions relating to specific schemes within their areas and it was accepted that more could be done around consulting with local councillors at the appropriate time in relation to changes to scheme in their areas.

8 Dates of next meetings

26 October 2020 14:00

14 December 2020 14:00

22 February 2021 14:00 (to be rescheduled)

26 April 2021 14:00

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm