

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Housing Advisory Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 6.30 PM

Present:

Members: Councillors Susan Brown (Chair), Robin Bennett, Judy Roberts, Geoff Saul, and Barry Wood.

Officers: Alex Jeffery (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Nicola Riley (Cherwell District Council), Dave Scholes (Oxford City Council), Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal) and Beth Wilks (Future Oxfordshire Partnership).

35 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes; declaration of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Nick Mawer, Cherwell District Council, (substituted by Councillor Barry Wood), Councillor Linda Smith, Oxford City Council and Councillor Pete Sudbury, Oxfordshire County Council.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers present at the meeting and invited Members and Officers to introduce themselves as there were a number of new attendees.

36 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 5th July 2022 were agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

37 Discussion around the shape of future Housing Advisory Group meetings and potential opportunities to work collaboratively

The Chair opened the discussion noting that the Housing Advisory Group (HAG) is the only forum that brings together elected members with responsibility for housing across Oxfordshire. Housing is a significant issue in Oxfordshire, particularly affordable housing, and as such there is plenty that can be learnt from each other, and Forward Plan

proposals will support the sharing of good practice and generate useful and interesting discussions.

The Chair then invited members to share their thoughts on the work of the group to date and both their general and specific thoughts on potential items for future meetings.

Councillor Judy Roberts encouraged members to consider what they want the Housing Advisory Group to achieve and suggested combining meetings with the Infrastructure Advisory Group to ensure a fuller agenda and because many of the topics discussed straddle both housing and infrastructure issues. Through the following discussion it became clear that members considered housing and infrastructure linked but separate workstreams.

The Chair was not concerned about agendas with few items and noted she is keen not to make the HAG a burden to officers or members. It was proposed and agreed that the frequency of the Housing Advisory Group meetings should be reduced to quarterly.

On the point of joint meetings between the HAG and Infrastructure Advisory Group, Paul Staines (Oxfordshire County Council) agreed there is probably a case for occasional joint meetings when members deem appropriate as there will be planning policy discussions that relate to affordable housing provision that the HAG may wish to consider collaboratively.

The Chair noted that although correlation between housing and infrastructure is important, in this context, there are pure housing issues for which there is no other forum in which to discuss. Councillor Barry Wood supported this, noting that the HAG is the only forum where lead members responsible for delivering important aspects of housing can meet. Councillor Wood highlighted that there is a housing crisis in Oxfordshire not just limited to urban areas therefore, to move away from a partnership that focuses solely on the very important issue of housing would be a mistake.

On social housing, Councillor Robin Bennett noted that both he and Councillor Judy Roberts have been leading on a housing delivery strategy for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council and a joint paper will be presented next week. He added that there is a lot for rural areas to learn from the city on social rent, delivery and managing private rental standards. Councillor Bennett noted that a lot has already been learnt together and good workstreams developed like community led housing. Moving beyond OP2050 Councillor Bennett noted that it would be useful if the group could have some specific and useful outputs to monitor progress and taking into our individual councils to use, to avoid the group becoming a “talking shop”.

Councillor Geoff Saul noted that West Oxfordshire District Council have identified a self-owned site to develop for housing and the HAG could facilitate the sharing of knowledge and learning opportunities from authorities that are well ahead in this field. The Chair agreed that there is still a need for this group, and this was one such opportunity for collaborative working and sharing knowledge.

In addition to building affordable housing and the regulation of the private rented sector, an issue not yet discussed is zero carbon housing. Councillors noted specific projects that could be useful case studies including 12 zero carbon housing units in South Oxfordshire and although in its infancy, Councillor Geoff Saul noted funding recently approved for net zero carbon custom build homes in Chipping Norton. Dave Scholes (Oxford City Council

officer) recommended that members be clear on the definition of zero carbon for this item moving forwards. Paul Staines (Oxfordshire County Council) noted a Growth Board report by Caroline Green in 2018 on the Council's ambitions to deliver zero and low-carbon housing and the recommendation that council's role could be to enable and promote exemplar schemes. HAG offers an opportunity to bring a report demonstrating the current situation.

As the discussion concluded, Paul Staines noted the need to capture the thinking from the meeting and produce, a draft Forward Plan to bring back. Paul noted there is a HAG officer group through which officers could collectively develop this Forward Plan. HAG was also reminded of the work that officers, led by Beth Wilks are doing to relate the Strategic Vision and how that will guide the future of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and that the HAG officer group should seek to encapsulate the Strategic Vision within the forward programme.

The Chair summarised the discussion by concluding that members do feel there is a need and reason for the HAG to meet and that it does still sit under the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

The Chair suggested that the Terms of Reference are re-visited, not least because the frequency of the meetings was agreed to be changed, but also because the nature of the topics the group are considering is clearer and should be reflected in the Terms of Reference. The Chair concluded that the purpose of the group should be to share best practice, to learn from each other, and build relationships and partnerships between Councils and Council leads in housing area.

38 Forward work programme

The Chair noted that the item to receive a presentation from officers at Cherwell District Council on Graven Hill custom build housing has been on the forward programme for some time. The Chair reiterated that this Group does not seek to create more work for Officers therefore the idea is to have a light-touch presentation which is then a springboard for discussion and questions. Nicola Riley (Cherwell District Council Officer) invited members to visit Graven Hill and speak to residents that have built their own homes. The invitation was accepted by the chair who also asked for a presentation or talk beforehand so that members have that knowledge and foresight before they visit the site. The presentation was scheduled for the next meeting of the Housing Advisory Group.

Action: Alex Jeffery to organise date for Graven Hill site visit with Nicola Riley.

Another legacy item on the forward programme is Housing Revenue Accounts. It was agreed that Dave Scholes (Oxford City Council) would give a succinct presentation on the pros and cons of HRAs and a broad-brush of the legal requirements. If individual Officers or Members want more information, they were invited to approach Dave Scholes to discuss their individual circumstances.

The Chair felt that following comments from Councillors during the meeting that a progress report on community led homes was required and could be scheduled for the next meeting. The Chair emphasised the importance of each of the member authorities providing the relevant information to the report author, Paul Staines, in order to provide a worthwhile update.

On First Homes, the Chair noted that there was still nothing to update. Assuming that first homes policy continues then the group might have a paper in the future, but the item should stay on the list as a future discussion to have.

The Chair picked up a potential item mentioned by Councillor Robin Bennett, the Oxford City Council selective licensing scheme. The Chair noted that the City Council would be happy to talk to the group but having only been introduced in September 2022, there is not much learning yet to reflect on and this item should be scheduled for late spring/early summer.

The Chair raised the County Council's housing responsibilities and how they impact on the Districts and City areas and relate to the issues they have as an item for future discussion. Such issues include housing vulnerable people in the private rented sector, sheltered housing and care leavers. Nicola Riley (Cherwell DC officer) requested that the new Terms of Reference include references to the housing of most vulnerable residents.

Councillor Judy Roberts suggested an item for the forward programme and an area for collaborative working could be building relationships with housing associations and how we can work together and establish best practice across Oxfordshire.

39 Dates of future meetings

On the matter of timings for future meetings, the Chair suggested quarterly which was agreed by members. Members of the group agreed that the next meeting should be in March 2023 (early to mid-March to avoid elections) and then in June 2023.

Action: Alex Jeffery, Paul Staines, and Beth Wilks to coordinate the next meeting of the Housing Advisory Group for March 2023.

The Chair requested the following items be scheduled for upcoming meetings:

- Draft Terms of Reference for review
- A presentation on Housing Revenue Accounts
- A report/presentation on community led housing
- Presentation on Graven Hill (March) with a view to visit in the following months (June).

Revised Terms of Reference would be drafted for consideration at the March 2023 meeting of the Housing Advisory Group and would then be recommended to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership for their approval.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm