

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

HELD ON TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2022 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), Councillor Andy Graham, (West Oxfordshire District Council), Emma Hill, (Environment Agency), Angus Horner, (OxLEP - business representative - science vale), Councillor Liz Leffman, (Oxfordshire County Council - remotely), Daniel Leveson, (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & West Berkshire ICB), Iain Littlejohn, (Oxford Skills Board), Jeremy Long, (OxLEP - Chair), Simonetta Manfredi, (Universities representative), Miranda Markham, (OxLEP - business representative - Bicester), Councillor David Rouane, (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Emily Smith, (Vale of White Horse District Council) and Catherine Turner, (Homes England).

Officers: Lorna Baxter, (Oxfordshire County Council), Ian Boll, (Cherwell District Council), Becky Chesshyre, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Emma Coles, (Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership), Andrew Down, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Caroline Green, (Oxford City Council), Susan Harbour, (South and Vale Councils), Giles Hughes, (West Oxfordshire District Council), Babatunde Ogundele, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Yvonne Rees (Cherwell District Council), Nigel Tipple, (OxLEP), Matt Whitney, (Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership) and Beth Wilks, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership).

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

Guests: Richard Benwell, (Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership), Baroness Royall, (Oxfordshire Local Inclusive Economy Partnership)

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

Apologies for absence were submitted by Professor Alistair Fitt, Universities representative (substituted by Professor Simonetta Manfredi), and Peter Nolan, OxLEP business representative – Oxford City.

It was acknowledged that Councillor Liz Leffman was attending the meeting remotely and, therefore, was not entitled to vote (if a vote was required). The Chair welcomed Professor Manfredi to her first Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Chair asked the Partnership to note that Kevin Jacob, its Senior Democratic Services Officer, had recently completed the Diploma in Local Democracy qualification awarded by the Association of Democratic Services Officers.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Tom Beattie and David Shepherd from the Local Government Association Peer Review Team to the meeting.

27. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership held on 27 September 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

28. Public participation

Full written responses to public questions and addresses made at the meeting can be found [here](#).

George Curtis, on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO), referring to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision commented on the need for it to have measurable outcomes if it was to be a document that 'walked the walk' as well as 'talked the talk'. The Partnership was asked to engage with the work being undertaken at Oxford University which was looking to redefine economics to include sustainability and wellbeing. In particular, Mr Curtis drew members attention to the Doughnut Economics Action Lab and the Doughnut Economics Urban Development events being held on 7 December 2022.

The Partnership was asked:

- How did the Partnership intend to move from aspirations to achievement?
- How would the Vision be transformed into a series of achievable projects with measurable outcomes?
- How soon would the Partnership have the system of measurement in place?
- Could the Partnership please review how it responded to questions from civic groups and ensure that the issues raised were discussed?

Responding to Mr Curtis' final question, the Chair commented that the Partnership's common practice was to respond in writing so that a fuller explanation could be provided. While it was also possible that draft verbal answers could be given, due to the detail of some issues this could have an impact on meeting time management. The Chair, nevertheless, stated that the current procedures could be reviewed.

In relation to the measurement of the delivery of the Strategic Vision outcomes, the Chair specified that the Partnership recognised the ambitious nature of the document and acknowledged that it would require a sustained commitment by not only the organisations

directly involved but also a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partners. In addition, to delivering on its own programme of work aligned to the outcomes of the Vision, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership also provides a forum in which key place-shaping organisations could discuss how their own individual plans support its realisation.

With regards to the economic work being undertaken by Oxford University, Mr Curtis was thanked for providing this information. Several members of the Partnership suggested that they would consider attending the event if possible.

Ian Green, on behalf of Oxford Civic Society (OCS), referred to the three recommendations that he had made at the Partnership meeting in September. Mr Green expressed his disappointment that the written response had omitted to cover the main points of the recommendations in relation to the importance of public involvement in countywide strategic planning following the end of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The public had been encouraged to engage with the preparation of the Plan and a lot of innovative steps had been taken to achieve this.

The OCS was concerned that there was now a void in public engagement, especially in regard to how integrated strategic plans (e.g. the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan) would be coordinated with district and city-level Local Plans. The Partnership's response that public statutory consultations would take place as part of the Local Plan process did not, in their view, address the issue of engagement with the more strategic level plans. The Partnership had also indicated that the proposed Planning Advisory Group would take a coordinating role, but again the matter of continued public engagement remained uncertain.

The Chair stated that although a final written answer would be provided to the OCS, infrastructure requirements were linked to Local Plans and, therefore, remained the responsibility of each Local Planning Authority. The councils had collectively developed the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and expected this to continue to be a valuable strategic tool.

In addition, Local Plans provided a key mechanism allowing people to participate in the future planning of an area. As part of the preparation of Local Plans, there were several stages of consultation. Furthermore, all submitted plans are considered by an Independent Inspector through a public examination.

Professor Richard Harding, on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire, asked the Partnership to clarify its plans in relation to the provision of solar farms in the county. It was felt that there had recently been a wave of speculative planning applications to install solar farms on green field sites, including the Botley West proposal for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, many of which were generating considerable concern and anxiety from local communities. He commented that while the CPRE supported the provision of renewable energy, they were opposed to it being achieved in this chaotic and unplanned way.

Professor Harding also referred to the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) report. This document had identified potential four pathways, three of which attained scope 1 zero carbon emissions by 2050. These credible routes had a considerable range in their provision of solar power (ranging from 1,400 to 3,900 GWh/yr) as well as many other necessary actions and policies. The most ambitious pathway required a substantial devotion of land to solar farms and other renewable energy initiatives (such as biomass).

In addition, the report clearly identifies that ‘Smart land use planning with participation of all stakeholders is essential’.

The Partnership was, therefore, asked:

- What is the status of the PaZCO report? Is it/will it be guidance or adopted policy?
- What was the process that the Partnership (and constituent councils) would adopt to decide the preferred pathway to zero carbon?
- How would stakeholders (in particular, civic society) engage in this process?
- Would Oxfordshire produce a ‘smart’ land use plan which will balance the needs of renewable energy generation with those of food production, biodiversity, and the protection of the rural nature of the Oxfordshire countryside?

The Chair responded that while a written answer would be provided, there was a clear interconnection between each of the questions. He made clear that, in general, the Partnership very rarely sought to adopt a policy position that could impose on the sovereignty of individual councils – although it did make recommendations for local authorities to consider. The National Planning Policy Framework as it related to solar farms would also influence the Partnership’s final answer.

29. 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 held on 22 November 2022.

Councillor Miles outlined that the Scrutiny Panel’s recommendations were primarily related to the need for stronger evaluation frameworks in the delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and in monitoring the progress of the Oxfordshire Local Nature and Inclusive Economy Partnerships. The Panel had also referred to the importance of diversity and representation.

The Panel’s final recommendation asked the Partnership to consider asking the Infrastructure Advisory Group to co-opt an active travel representative to its membership.

The Chair commented that a full response would be provided in writing. He also stated that the Panel’s work and recommendations were valued and appreciated by the Partnership.

30. Delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

The Partnership considered a paper updating them on the progress made to identify new opportunities for joint working and outlining next steps. Beth Wilks, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager, gave a detailed presentation (available [here](#)) highlighting the main areas of the report, including the general alignment between the Strategic Vision outcomes and the priorities outlined in the corporate plans of Oxfordshire’s local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership. Plans for future stakeholder engagement on proposed areas for joint working were also outlined.

During discussion, the Chair commented that the report – and presentation – demonstrated the positive coordinating effect that the Partnership could have on the activities of its constituent members and stakeholders. It was, therefore, crucial that the priorities and outcomes contained within the Vision were compatible with the corporate

plans of the individual local authorities and OxLEP. The Chair also stressed the importance of implementing recommendation three relating to the wider socialisation of the Strategic Vision.

Councillor Emily Smith stated that it was reassuring to see that the Vision was aligned to the individual corporate plans. She also agreed with the Chair that its further socialisation was very important. It would, nevertheless, be necessary to prioritise and filter the areas in which the Partnership could and would operate so as to avoid duplicating existing activity. The identification of potential gaps in activity, deciding whether those gaps could best be addressed at a county or district level and coordinating workstreams would all be very important in helping to realise the ambitions of the Strategic Vision.

Councillor Andy Graham raised the importance of reviewing the delivery of the activities within the Vision and queried how this might be achieved. The Partnership was informed that as the Housing and Growth Deal concluded there had been an increasing focus on the nature of future activities. Undertaking this assessment had confirmed that a great deal of forward programming and review processes were already in place. It was, nevertheless, agreed that further information on the monitoring and delivery could be provided in writing to the Partnership.

Councillor Liz Leffman raised the possibility that HM Government could require Oxfordshire's authorities to submit something broadly equating to a 'County Deal' at some point in the future. She, therefore, suggested that some consideration needed to be given to what these asks might be. As a consequence, the various partners – as part of the strategic process – needed to think carefully about what collectively could/should be achieved and how they could work together to deliver them. It was important that Oxfordshire was not rushed into a deal which did not reflect its Strategic Vision priorities. As part of this work, it would also be necessary to engage with a wider pool of partners (e.g. the health sector) as part of the wider shaping of place.

Councillor David Rouane commented that while it was correct that the Housing and Growth Deal was coming to end, a significant amount of it had yet to be delivered and, therefore, it was important to also remain focussed on that.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership:

1. Note the progress made to identify opportunities for joint working aligned to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which also supports delivery of individual organisation corporate plans.
2. Endorse and encourage participation in proposed engagement sessions, to support in identifying opportunities for joint working aligned to the outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.
3. Support wider socialisation of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision with partners and a broader group of stakeholders, to raise awareness of the Vision, and encourage buy in and support for its delivery.

31. Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Update

The Partnership considered a report updating them on the progress of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP). This included the development and launch of the OIEP Charter and associated pledges on 24 January 2023.

The report was introduced – and a presentation given (available [here](#)) – by the Co-Chairs of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership, Jeremy Long and Baroness Jan Royall.

The Partnership was informed that although Oxfordshire was perceived to be generally affluent with many successful businesses, real inequalities did exist. The mission of the OIEP was, therefore, to create a more equal and sustainable county that provided opportunities and benefits for all. To help achieve this aspiration, the OIEP was working towards tackling some of Oxfordshire's biggest problems and, thereby, allow everybody to contribute and share in the county's success. Four working groups linked to educational attainment, inclusive employment, social value & procurement, and place-based interventions had been established to help drive this forward.

A key element of the OIEP was to work with local employers and wider community organisations to build a more inclusive economy – businesses would be key to the overall success of the project.

The OIEP Charter would be launched on 24 January 2023 and would represent a significant introductory step in its development. The Charter's purpose was to:

- Mobilise support for Oxfordshire inclusive economy and raise awareness of it.
- Publicly share commitments to inclusivity by individuals, businesses and organisations.
- Set and raise standards around inclusive economy.
- Encourage residents and businesses to work together to help protect Oxfordshire's economy with the aim to prevent money leaving the county.

Members of the Partnership were urged to attend the launch if possible and do all they could to promote it within their organisations.

The Chair stated that it was wrong that such inequalities existed within the county and, therefore, as part of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's ambition of creating a more equal and sustainable society it was fully supportive of the work of the OIEP.

Councillor Susan Brown thanked Baroness Royall, Jeremy Long and officers for the work undertaken to get to this point. She informed the Partnership that Oxford City Council had updated its own procurement policy to take account of the issues highlighted by the OIEP (which could be circulated to other council leaders if requested).

Councillor Brown also stated that it should be acknowledged that while Oxford is a city of great wealth, it has many areas of severe poverty. It was, therefore, important to recognise that economies worked best where there were higher levels of equality.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership notes the update report.

2. That members of Future Oxfordshire Partnership support and promote the launch of the OIEP Charter and engage local businesses and partners to commit to the pledges of the charter.

32. Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership Update

The Partnership considered a report providing an update on the progress of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (ONLP). This not only included information on the ONLP's areas of focus, but also set out details relating to the process for the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Richard Benwell, Chair of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, and Matt Whitney, Local Nature Partnership Manager, highlighted some of the key areas of focus within the report.

During the presentation of the report, reference was made to the upcoming 15th Conference for the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal. It was hoped that countries across the world would agree a global deal to:

- Halt the decline of nature by 2030
- Protect 30.0% of land and sea for the natural environment by 2030
- Mobilise significant investment and support for nature recovery across the world

The Partnership was informed that previous international deals of this type had, however, not been successful – this was in part due to a failure to translate international and national objectives into local actions and deliverables. Within the UK there had, nevertheless, at least been some movement towards setting legally mandated targets which could be translated down to the local level. These actions at the national level formed the starting point for the Local Nature Partnership as an organisation in terms of its influence (on matters such as local planning policy) and spending/investment decisions.

In discussion, the Chair commented on the need to concentrate on the delivery of nature recovery and protection – highlighting the importance of moving beyond rhetoric. He also stated that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, by bringing together key stakeholders, provided a strategic level forum to progress the required actions

Councillor David Rouane reminded members that he was the Partnership's representative on the OLNP Board and, therefore, could act as a conduit for any ideas and questions that they may have. He stressed the importance of the OLNP maintaining an appropriate balance between accurately analysing what needed to be done and delivering measurable outcomes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership endorses the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership' strategic approach, including the development of a county-wide framework of natural capital investment.
2. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership provides its endorsement for Oxfordshire County Council taking on the responsible authority role for the production of Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
3. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership provides its endorsement to proceed with the work of an Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy considering the information provided, under the proposed governance arrangement.

33. Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Financial Report Quarter 2, Year 5

The Partnership considered a report setting out the financial position for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (as of Quarter 2, 2022/23) in respect of the Housing from Infrastructure (Hfl) programme and the Growth Deal Capacity Fund. Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance, Oxfordshire County Council, in introducing the report, highlighted that the expected final Hfl payment of £30m by HM Government had still not been received – although an announcement was expected imminently. Without confirmation of the receipt of this money, no further Hfl schemes would be allowed to enter the construction phase.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership note the financial position as at the end of September 2022.

34. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Forward Plan

Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services Officer, presented the Partnership's Forward Plan. He commented that it was now expected that the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Route Map update would be brought to the Partnership's March 2023 meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Forward Programme be noted as amended.

35. Advisory Group Updates

(a) Infrastructure Advisory Group update

Councillor Liz Leffman referred to the notes of the meeting of the Infrastructure Advisory Group held on 5 September 2022 and 15 September 2022. The group had been examining the infrastructure elements of the Housing and Growth Deal, and the post-deal situation.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

(b) Housing Advisory Group update

Councillor Susan Brown referred to the notes of the Housing Advisory Group meeting held on 1 November 2022. She stated that the group was looking at both its forward programme and its aims/objectives and commented that views and suggestions from members of the Partnership would be very much welcomed. Councillor Brown also confirmed that the members of the Housing Advisory Group firmly supported its continuance given the importance of housing to Oxfordshire and the gravity of the current challenges the county faces.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

36. Environment Advisory Group update

Councillor David Rouane referred to the notes of the meeting of the Environment Advisory Group held on 20 September 2022. He stated that the group had continued to receive regular updates on the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire workstream and that a full

summary would be presented to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting in March 2023.

In relation to the potential possibility of a shared Oxfordshire approach to the provision of solar farms, Councillor Rouane suggested that the Environment Advisory Group should begin looking at this piece of work prior to the establishment of a new planning-related advisory group.

Giles Hughes, Chief Executive of West Oxfordshire District Council, commented that it was important that the policy implications and questions arising from solar farms were considered through the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and its advisory groups. Moreover, there was a need for affected councils to work together and coordinate. (Mr Hughes raised the specific example of the Botley West Solar Farm proposal, where the application met the criteria for a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and would, therefore, be determined by the Planning Inspectorate rather than the local authorities. He, nevertheless, made clear that local authorities still had a very important role to play in this proposal by providing impact reports).

Councillor Andy Graham stated that there seemed to be a gap in the planning of national energy policy around both generation and transmission infrastructure. He believed that this was something that should be considered in work planning locally. Furthermore, it was also an area where there was the potential to lobby at a national level for a more joined-up, holistic approach.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

37. Updates on matters relevant to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership

No matters were raised under this heading.

38. Reports from key strategic partnerships supporting delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

Councillor Liz Leffman reported that at a recent England's Economic Heartland (EEH) conference, funding had been confirmed by HM Government – as part of the Autumn Statement – for the East-West railway link (which forms part of EEH's wider Transport Strategy).

39. Dates of next meetings

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

The Chair commented that it was his understanding that Councillor Emily Smith had announced her intention to resign as Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council and that this was her last meeting of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Consequently, the Chair paid tribute to Councillor Smith for all her hard work and valuable contributions not only in support of the Partnership but also as the Chair of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Advisory Group.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

Chairman

Date

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