

**Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group
Draft Terms of Reference
January 2023**

1. Purpose and Objectives

- 1.1 The purpose of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group is to provide a forum in which local authority members can discuss county wide strategic planning matters, to support delivery of the [Oxfordshire Strategic Vision](#), which sets out the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's long term ambition for what the county will be like in 2050.
- 1.2 Local Plans for the City and District Councils now provide the framework for long term planning across Oxfordshire; nothing contained in these Terms of Reference affects the primacy and legitimacy of Local Plan decision making. The individual councils maintain sovereignty over the content of local plans through their own internal processes, as local planning authorities. The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group and wider Future Oxfordshire Partnership arrangements do not possess the ability or statutory footing to control the content within local plans, however they do offer a mechanism through which to work cooperatively and constructively in developing respective Plans and other key strategies.
- 1.3 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will operate within the remit agreed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and its voting members. The role of the group is to:
 - 1.3.1 Work collectively to support delivery of the outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, identifying opportunities for collaborative working to address key planning challenges, offering recommendations to inform policy development where appropriate to do so.
 - 1.3.2 Support the Duty to Cooperate (Localism Act 2011) - a legal test that requires cooperation between local planning authorities and other public bodies, in efforts to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation within the context of strategic cross boundary matters. Notwithstanding this support, each Local Planning authority retains its obligations under the Act.
 - 1.3.3 Enable Local Planning Authorities and the County Council to continue to work cooperatively in developing the respective Local Plans and other strategies.
 - 1.3.4 Enable a smooth transition from an Oxfordshire Plan to Local Plans, ensuring that invaluable information generated during the Oxfordshire Plan process is fed into support the districts with their own local planning as appropriate.

- 1.3.5 Provide a forum for the Councils to update each other on their respective local plans and strategies as they are prepared.
 - 1.3.6 Develop and improve understanding of district and county-wide issues and priorities, to support in identifying collective solutions, which help to tackle challenges preventing delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision; where appropriate understanding of countywide issues and priorities, can be used to support the preparation of local plans and strategies.
 - 1.3.7 Work collaboratively with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Infrastructure Advisory Group on updates to the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS).
 - 1.3.8 Broaden engagement and involvement in county wide discussions re: strategic planning matters, providing a councillor forum in which to examine and discuss relevant issues in more detail.
 - 1.3.9 Ensure that the benefits and learning gained by the Oxfordshire authorities, through their long history of joint working and collaboration on planning and infrastructure matters, continue to be valued in seeking to achieve both common and individual goals.
 - 1.3.10 Consider any additional matters that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership requires of them.
- 1.4 Whilst not a formal decision making body, the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group has the ability to offer recommendations and advice to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, aimed at tackling strategic planning issues; the decision as to whether to act upon the recommendations resides with the individual planning authorities.
 - 1.5 The Advisory Group will work on the principle of consensus in advising the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, whilst at the same time each member will act as the individual lead and conduit for the authority they represent.
 - 1.6 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will be supported by a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), as well as an officer Group, comprising an officer representative from each of the six councils.
 - 1.7 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group should be mindful of the work of the other Advisory Groups for housing, environment, and infrastructure, to avoid any duplication of work in areas of mutual interest.

2. Membership and appointments

- 2.1 The Advisory Group will comprise one executive member from each of the partner authorities, plus a chair appointed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. The partner authorities are as follows:

- Cherwell District Council
- Oxford City Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council
- Oxfordshire County Council

- 2.2 Although not a Local Planning Authority, Oxfordshire County Council is recognised as a central partner in discussions regarding strategic planning across the county, as the mineral planning authority, waste planning authority and key infrastructure provider.
- 2.3 The Chair of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will be drawn from the voting membership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 2.4 Each partner authority shall appoint one executive substitute member for the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group, who can substitute for their member as required. The substitute member shall have the same rights as the member for whom the substitution is made. In the event of the appointed executive member and executive substitute member both not being available, the advisory group Chair shall have discretion to agree to another executive substitute member for that meeting only.
- 2.5 Representatives of other relevant organisations will be invited to participate in meetings as the agenda requires.
- 2.6 Co-opted non-voting members may be appointed for specific items or a period of up to a year by the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group, with the agreement of the voting membership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 2.7 Where the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, but still wishes for it to progress, the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group may elect a Chair for that meeting only.

3. Role of the Chair

- 3.1 The Chair must act in an independent and facilitative capacity to organise the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group's activities in support of the objectives of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. At all times, the Chair must use their discretion to act in the interests of Oxfordshire and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and not of their own political group or local authority area.
- 3.2 The Chair will manage meetings in accordance with the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group's terms of reference, and provide leadership and direction to the group in an open and transparent manner.
- 3.3 The Chair will report directly into the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on the work of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group as agreed. In

reporting to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, the Chair will present the views of the group, and thus not necessarily their own views.

- 3.4 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group is not a decision making body, and the Chair should aim to reach a consensus agreement on matters under discussion. Where a consensus cannot be reached, the Chair shall present the split views of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

4 Role of Members

- 4.1 In addition to contributing to the overall role of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group, members will be a proactive conduit between the work of the group and their respective council. This might include, for example, providing regular updates to their own council on the work of the advisory group.
- 4.2 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group should be mindful of the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel and any other Advisory Group to avoid any duplication of work. The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group should also be mindful of any work it may require of officers, and the impact this may have on existing priorities.

5. Meeting Arrangements & Structure

- 5.1 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will meet in accordance with an agreed schedule of meetings. The summary notes of meetings will be drafted and included in the agenda for the next available Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting.
- 5.2 Meetings may be rearranged, cancelled, or additional meetings scheduled with the agreement of the Chair.
- 5.3 The quorum for a meeting shall be three members. Non-attendance of partner authorities shall not affect the legitimacy of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group's conclusions.

6. Access to information

- 6.1 It is expected that the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will have the right to see the same information as that of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership when advising on any given issue, in order that an informed view can be made.
- 6.2 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will meet in private. However, the conclusions of the Group shall be conveyed in public to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at each of its meetings, except in circumstances where the matter under consideration contains exempt or confidential information, as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

- 6.3 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group agendas and associated reports will be circulated to the members of the Advisory Group, and the designated officers of the respective partner authorities, at least three clear working days before the meeting. Nonadherence to this principal however will not invalidate a meeting.
- 6.4 The work of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will not be subject to scrutiny by the Joint Scrutiny Panel, although its reports to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and the summary notes of meetings will be available to Scrutiny to comment on as published reports to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

7. Work Plan

- 7.1 The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will establish a forward Work Plan of matters and items to consider, and the date at which they are to be deliberated.
- 7.2 The development and management of the Work Plan will be led by the Chair, having regard to the requirements of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, the wishes of the Advisory Group, and the advice of the Senior Responsible Officer, and Planning Officer Support Group.
- 7.3 The work plan will be reviewed at each meeting.

8. General principles

- 8.1 Each partner authority agrees to support the purposes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group by ensuring that they collaborate and cooperate with one another in an open and accountable manner in the interests of the whole of Oxfordshire, whilst acting in good faith and adhering to the relevant statutory requirements.
- 8.2 The joint management of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group will be conducted in such a way that no authority's capacity to deliver day to day services is disadvantaged more so than another through their commitment to the Advisory Group.
- 8.3 The normal rules as to declarations of interest will be applied to local authority members in accordance with the respective Council's Code of Conduct.
- 8.4 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership may amend these Terms of Reference or discontinue the work of the Oxfordshire Strategic Planning Advisory Group at any time.