

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading



Report of Deputy Chief Executive - Partnerships

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To: CABINET

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Updates to Terms of Reference of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet approve the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.

Purpose of report

1. Recent changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal require some adjustments to the working of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP), and this report proposes corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference. This council is a member of the FOP and its approval is needed before the amendments can be adopted.

Contribution to the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire

2. The proposed changes to governance documents will result in the Strategic Vision being explicitly mentioned in the Terms of Reference for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Future FOP work programmes will be expected to contribute to the delivery of the outcomes in the Strategic Vision which was adopted by this council in April 2021.

Introduction

3. The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal is entering its final phases, and the governance documents for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) now need to be updated to reflect the current position.
4. The **Terms of Reference** were originally drafted in 2014 at the formation of what was then known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board, and were last subject to substantive change in 2020 following a review. Since then there have been minor drafting changes reflecting the change of name to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
5. The **Memorandum of Understanding** was introduced in 2018 as a requirement of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, and sets out operational aspects of decision making and responsibilities in relation to the deal. As with the Terms of Reference, the last substantive change was made in 2020 and subsequent updates have replaced references to the Growth Board with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
6. Three particular areas of change have arisen which are described in the following paragraphs.

Cessation of Oxfordshire Plan 2050

7. Following the decision in August 2022 to cease work on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, it is proposed to remove references to that work programme from the Terms of Reference.

Homes from Infrastructure Programme

8. The final tranche of funding for the Homes from Infrastructure Programme, the last remaining major element of the Housing and Growth Deal, is subject to a number of governance and reporting requirements which were set out in a letter dated 5 December 2022 from the then Housing Minister.
9. These requirements and their implications were described in detail in a report presented to the 20 March 2023 meeting of the FOP by the Director of Finance, Oxfordshire County Council, and are not repeated here. Oxfordshire County Council has subsequently written to DLUHC and Homes England confirming acceptance of the final funding and agreement to the associated governance and reporting requirements.
10. The changes which are proposed to the Terms of Reference are intended to reflect the new requirements from government which have now been agreed.
11. Corresponding changes are proposed to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which sets out responsibility for decision making on matters of funding and work programmes. Although it is now a requirement that Oxfordshire County Council should be held accountable for delivery of the remaining programme, the MoU sets out some

commitments to positive partnership behaviour and in particular to consultation with partners over any proposed changes to the programme of infrastructure delivery.

12. It should be noted also that the district councils are expected to provide quarterly updates to the county council regarding housing delivery on sites which benefit from this investment in infrastructure. In turn the county council will provide the data to DLUHC as part of its quarterly reporting regime.

Adoption of the Strategic Vision

13. Finally, an overhaul of the Terms of Reference provides an opportunity to include reference to Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development which was endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting of 22 March 2021, and subsequently in April 2021 by each individual council.
14. It was agreed that the Strategic Vision should be a basis for informing partners' future work planning and strategy. It is therefore appropriate to make reference to this document in the Terms of Reference for the partnership, without seeking to repeat details which are contained in the vision document itself.

Climate and ecological impact implications

15. There are no climate and ecological impact implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Financial implications

16. There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Legal implications

17. There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference. At its March 2023 meeting the members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agreed to accept the final instalment of Housing and Growth Deal funding, and these amendments are required to capture the new governance and reporting obligations.

Other implications

18. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding are matters reserved for decision by each local authority's Cabinet / Executive.
19. The amendments were endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting on 13 June 2023, and indicative dates for these governance updates to be considered by individual partners' cabinets are as follows:

Authority	Cabinet date
Cherwell District Council	3 July 2023
Oxford City Council	12 July 2023
Oxfordshire County Council	18 July 2023
South Oxfordshire District Council	22 June 2023

Vale of White Horse District Council	23 June 2023
West Oxfordshire District Council	12 July 2023

Conclusion

20. The revised governance documents are required to set out how the councils will meet the requirements set out in DLUHC's letter dated 5 December 2022, securing the final £30 million of funding for infrastructure to support the accelerated delivery of new homes.
21. Cabinet is asked to approve the proposed changes.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Revised FOP Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: Revised FOP Memorandum of Understanding