

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Infrastructure Advisory Group

HELD ON MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 10.00 AM

Present:

Councillors: Liz Leffman (Chair), Pieter-Paul Barker, Sue Caul, Duncan Enright, Donna Ford, Alaric Smith and Louise Upton

Officers: Andrew Bowe, John Disley, Paul Gambrell, Kevin Jacob, Tom Jarman, Valerie Lambrechts, Tina Mould, Lucy Murfett, Carolyn Ploszynski, Mark Saunders, Paul Staines, Andrew Thompson, Louise Wicks, Kathy Wilcox and David Yates.

Other councillors: None

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

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

89 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 were agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

90 Homes from Infrastructure (HFI) Programme

The advisory group considered a draft report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's September meeting which set out an update on progress, spend and housing delivery for schemes included as part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Financial Strategy, Oxfordshire County Council presented the paper on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council as a responsible authority. It was highlighted that as set out in the appendix to the report £1.274m of the Growth Deal Capacity Fund remained available with no actual spend during the first financial quarter of 2023/2024. It was noted that approximately half the remaining funding was currently committed towards

support for the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, (OxIS), staffing and the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan, (NZRMAP). Funding for the remaining balance of the fund would be determined later in the year.

The advisory group's attention was also drawn to the risk management section of the report which set out risks to the deliverability of capital schemes within the Homes from Infrastructure Programme, (Hfi). This included general pressures from the availability of workforce and materials and increases in contract prices. With regard to specific schemes, it was highlighted that there had been increases to the costs of the North Oxford Corridor scheme during construction and that further adjustments were needed to the budgets for the Benson Relief Road, North Oxford Corridor, Wantage Eastern Link Road and Banbury Road Roundabout schemes to allow them to go contract. As a result of these increases in costs, the Hfi programme was currently over-profiled by £2.65m, but it was expected that the position would be corrected through greater certainty around some of the schemes; land acquisition and the result of discussions with Homes England around additional funding for the A34 Lodge Hill scheme.

In discussion, a number of members raised queries with regard to specific schemes and what the potentially adverse consequences might be for the deliverability of the overall programme if the additional funding for the A34 Lodge Hill scheme was not secured. It was noted that a decision on the funding was expected in late September.

In response to a question from the Chair, officers from Oxford City Council provided an update on the progress of the Oxpens Bridge scheme.

The report was noted.

91 Mobility Hubs across Oxfordshire

The advisory group received a presentation setting out an update on the development of the Oxfordshire County Council Mobility Hub Strategy and its linkages to the wider Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, (LTCP) and the priority within the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision to increase digital connectivity and physical mobility in and between places in a way that would enhance environmental, social, and economic wellbeing with an emphasis on sustainable travel, including walking and cycling. The issue was being raised because of the importance of embedding Mobility Hubs LTCP Area Travel Plans and as part of the process of emerging Local Plans.

It was noted that the concept behind mobility hubs was that they brought together different mode of shared transport with public transport and active travel in spaces designed to improve the public realm for all. John Disley, Head of Transport Strategy, Oxfordshire County Council highlighted that there was a wide range of level of mobility hubs and the co-located features that might potentially be incorporated within them depending on their location. This could potentially include access in some sites to a wide range of onsite facilities such as cycle parking, car parking, high frequency bus and/or rail services, electric vehicle charging points, car sharing and car clubs, public toilets etc, but in other locations a much narrower range of facilities. The links between the development of mobility hubs and the provision of increased electric vehicle charging was an issue for consideration, perhaps through opportunities for charging hubs.

Councillor Enright spoke to the strategic importance of mobility hubs and the strong links to the objectives within the LTCP to reduce the need for people to use private cars and

reduce car related emissions by increasing the viability and attractiveness of non-car options whilst at the same time recognising the challenges arising from issues such as population growth.

In discussion, members of the advisory group were supportive of the objectives and concepts around mobility hubs and asked a number of specific questions. It was confirmed that the possibility of electric bike hire and provision was being considered as part of the development of the concept where this would be appropriate for the location.

Members asked about the relationship was between what might be considered to be existing mobility hubs, such as Park & Ride sites, and future mobility hubs. The advisory group was informed that there were similarities between them and that Park & Ride sites could be considered to be examples of one end of the mobility hub scale, but a mobility hub site did not need to have all the facilities of a Park & Ride or be designed like a Park and Ride to be considered as a mobility hub. Members did comment on the importance of communicating and informing the public about mobility hubs so as to avoid confusion.

In response to question regarding whether there should be reference in Infrastructure Delivery Plans and Local Plans to mobility hubs, the advisory group was informed that ideally there would be reference within individual Local Plans to mobility hubs, particularly for larger, site specific hubs.

Members spoke to the potential opportunity to locate retail provision or facilities such as cafés with mobility hubs.

It was noted that it was anticipated that there would be a mixture of redevelopment of existing sites into mobility hubs and new provision. Members spoke to the importance of involving local communities and in working with local partners in the project design and scoping process.

It was noted a more detailed update would be brought to a future advisory group meeting.

92 Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan (NZRMAP) Progress Overview

Members noted the progress of delivery of the two actions within the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan attributed to the Infrastructure Advisory Group; delivery of an ongoing local area energy planning function and collaboration with town and parish councils to accelerate the roll out of publicly available electric vehicle charge points.

93 EV Infrastructure Workstream - Spotlight Session

The advisory group considered a briefing paper which set out work being undertaken to plan for an application for Local EV Infrastructure, (LEVI) grant funding to the Office for Zero Emission in order to help deliver the NZRMAP action of working with town and parish councils to accelerate the roll out of publicly available electric charge points, particularly in rural, car dependent locations. Peter Gambrell, Team Leader ZEV & Energy Integration, Oxfordshire County Council introduced the paper and responded to member questions. It was highlighted that:

- It was intended that the funding bid would be submitted to the Office for Zero Emissions on 17 November 2023.

- If successful it was intended to grow the number of EV hubs from 20 across the county to at least 40 and also look at options around on-street provision of EV charging infrastructure.
- The application would be made with the support of all the county's city and districts councils and it was anticipated that these councils would be key delivery partners in all of the projects workstreams.
- Locations such as community hubs, parish halls and other community assets would be considered as potential EV micro hub locations. These were often located in centre of a community or residential area and be close to homes without ready access to off road parking.
- Oxfordshire County Council was looking to develop a grant scheme to which community groups could apply to for funding to finance the cost of installation a micro-hub.
- Oxfordshire County Council would procure a suitable supplier and fund the installation of the charging points and also cover the cost of an initial maintenance contract and back off functions.
- Revenue raised through fees for using the charge points would be retained by a community organisation and the organisation would be able to set their own fees.
- The model of owner-operated community EV micro hubs was based on a scheme piloted by Suffolk County Council and did rely on private investment.

A detailed discussion took place. Members queried whether there was any data from the Suffolk pilot around the proportion of charging sessions purchased by people resident to the immediate location versus other users such as tourists and whether there was also scope for commercial firm involvement. This was felt to be a pertinent consideration given Oxfordshire's status as a tourist destination and that access to faster charging connections might be preferable to this market. It was noted that it was expected that standard (7-22kW) connections aimed at overnight charging would be provided in the majority of cases, but faster connections would be considered if feasible. The areas being considered where those which were considered to be largely unattractive to commercial EV charging operators.

It was noted that a platform had been launched to gather information from interested town and parish councils and other community groups. There had been around 60 expressions of interest to date and the platform would be open to mid-September. The expressions of interest would be followed up and the necessary technical information obtained. It was confirmed that the existing usage and demand for electricity at a potential micro-hub site would be taken into consideration so as to ensure that existing use was not impacted upon.

Members referred to the need to contingency plan for the eventuality of micro-hub providers ceasing trading or being taken over by other providers and it was confirmed that this would be planned for.

A discussion also took place with regard to the provision of pop-up, on street charge point provision where off road connections were not possible. Paul Gambrell indicated that there had been some pilots of on-street charging points within Oxford and that consideration was being given to the best form of point that would inform any future tender exercise. It was noted that several new models of on street chargers were beginning to become available within the market which removed the trip hazard of trailing cables, but some planning issues needed to be overcome.

It was also noted that co-charging applications were also becoming more popular. These schemes allowed EV owners with their own off-street charger points to rent them out to other EV drivers when not in use.

The update was noted.

94 Local Area Energy Planning Workstream - Spotlight session

The advisory group considered a paper that set out an update and explanation of the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan priority of Local Area Energy, (LAE) planning and which also sought the advisory group's endorsement of the creation of an Executive Steering Board and Energy Planning Working Group to support local area energy planning governance and delivery. Mark Saunders, Home Retrofit Manager and Tom Jarman, Interim Energy Planning Lead, Oxfordshire County Council presented the report and responded to questions.

The advisory group was informed that LEA planning was not a technical exercise in its outlook but was intended to help develop optimal and efficient pathways to decarbonisation. It was not intended to set out funding solutions but could list of projects that were close to being investable. The process could adapt and take account of priorities, for example greater support for roof top solar rather than greenfield. An important consideration underpinning all energy planning in the county was that Oxfordshire's main carbon emissions were from heating and transport.

Engagement with all partners including electricity distributors was very important in developing the most efficient ways to decarbonise and the Chair referred to the positive discussion that had taken place between council Leaders and representative of the Distribution System Operators covering the county.

In response to a question regarding cross over with the Environment Advisory Group, officers responded that it was recognised that there would be areas of cross over between the groups in terms of the NZRMAP priorities, it was necessary at a practical level to allocate responsibility to a particular group, but this did not mean there should not be good communication between the advisory groups or joint working where appropriate. The Chair added that in terms of LAE planning there were strong links to infrastructure considerations.

The advisory group was also informed that the Energy Planning Working Group, reporting into the LAE Executive Steering Board would be delivery focussed and would be comprised of officers who also worked in other areas which would assist with the sharing of knowledge of ideas and avoidance of duplication.

The advisory group noted the briefing paper and endorsed the establishment of an Executive Steering Board and Energy Planning Working Group to support Local Area Energy Planning in terms of governance and delivery and to receive future reports and updates.

95 Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Update

The advisory group considered a briefing paper that provided an update on officer discussions on the scale and scope of the next iteration of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, (OxIS). This followed the commitment by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in

September 2022 to the OxIS project and confirmation of a budget to support it from the Housing and Growth Deal Capacity Fund. Paul Staines, Interim Head of Programmes presented the report and responded to member questions.

The advisory was referred to the different iterations of OxIS and the circumstance of the time dating back to 2017 as set out in the report. It was acknowledged that with the decision not to proceed with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 there was now a need to agree what the next iteration of OxIS would deliver for Oxfordshire and how it might add value to both local authorities and wider partners.

In discussion, it was suggested that there was a need for greater consideration of health and water infrastructure requirement and that the OxIS refresh process offered an opportunity for greater mutual consideration and liaison with NHS and water company partners around strategic infrastructure requirements. It was felt that these were areas that had not been addressed as well as they could have been in previous iterations and that there had been gaps.

Various members of the advisory group commented that the second iteration of the OxIS had been useful and that in many ways it had represented the infrastructure that people would expect councils to provide, but unfortunately there had not been necessarily the funding to deliver it. The next iteration would be relevant to Local Plans up 2035 and important.

Councillor Upton commented that there had also been discussion at the Planning Advisory Group regarding engagement with the NHS about future health needs planning and a representative of the Buckingham, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Car Board was now a member of that advisory group.

John Disley commented that part of the benefit behind the original iteration of the OxIS was that it demonstrated to HM Government and agencies that Oxfordshire had thought out plans in place to set out infrastructure needs and that this had contributed to funding for infrastructure being provided through the Housing and Growth Deal and the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

There was a need to broaden the focus from transport schemes to other areas and to remain mindful of the danger of creating a list that could not be funded unless other partners were involved. Officers also commented that it important to define clearly what Oxfordshire's infrastructure priorities were and the sequencing of those priorities in order to present a strong collective voice to potential funders. The Chair also referred to the need for Oxfordshire to be able to be in a position where other options could be explored is HM Government funding was not forthcoming.

It was noted that a proposal to engage with the development of the next phase of OxIS was one of the infrastructure themed ideas for joint collaborative working which would be considered at the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Focus and Delivery Workshop on 26 September 2023. If this was supported it was intended that the Infrastructure Advisory Group would act as the project sponsor and monitoring group. It was noted that further information would be brought back to a future meeting.

96 Horizon Scanning

John Disley spoke to the importance of the interface between the individual council Local Plans and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan which collectively had a big influence on local communities. Unfortunately, although HM Government had been expected to refresh its guidance from that last updated in 2009 it had yet to issue even a consultation draft. This meant there was a lack of certainty around the quantification of carbon emission issues and the relationship between LTCPs and Local Plans.

97 Chair's update from Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) meeting

The Chair updated the advisory group on matters of relevant to it arising from the meeting of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership held on 25 July 2023.

The Partnership had considered a report on proposals to develop a place narrative for Oxfordshire which was being initiated by Oxfordshire County Council. The idea was to develop a clear and consistent storyboard for Oxfordshire that set out the county's opportunities, assets and ambitions to be used to enhance the ability of key stakeholders to lobby across HM Government for significant funding to support the delivery of shared aspirations. It was stressed that this would be a partnership process.

The advisory group's attention was also drawn to the presentation given to the Partnership by Homes England in which representatives had set out an overview of the Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028. The Chair commented that her impression was that there was now a much stronger recognition within the document of Net Zero ambitions and in developing both homes and infrastructure compared to previous documents.

In discussion of the proposals regarding the development of Oxfordshire wide place narrative, a number of members of the advisory group members asked questions around funding of the work and some members of the group raised issues around the capacity of officers within the districts to support the work and in light of that, the need to be clear on the value a place narrative would provide.

The Chair reiterated the importance of being able to coherently and persuasively present Oxfordshire's asks and case for funding as had been the case in the run up to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Existing sources of funding from Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy contributions were not likely to be sufficient. The project would be commissioned and mobilised by the County Council.

98 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Advisory Group meeting notes

The advisory group noted the notes of the Environment Advisory Group meeting held on 7 July 2023 and Housing Advisory Group held on 11 July 2023 which had been included in the agenda for information.

99 Forward work programme

The future work programme was noted. Advisory Group members were encouraged to submit ideas for potential items if they wished to.

100 Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am