

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Infrastructure Advisory Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2024 AT 2.00 PM

Present:

Members: Councillor Liz Leffman (Chair), Donna Ford, Judy Roberts, Louise Upton, Sue Caul and Charlie Maynard.

Officers: John Disley, Ian Boll, Tim Oruye, Kim Hudson, Carolyn Ploszynski, Paul Staines, Valerie Lambrechts, Kathy Wilcox, Kevin Jacob, Paul Gambrell, Mark Saunders and Babatunde Ogundele.

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

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker, South Oxfordshire District Council (Substituted by Councillor Andrea Powell)

There were no declaration of interests.

113 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 was agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

114 Forward work programme

Not Discussed.

115 Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Update

The Advisory Group was provided with a report by Paul Staines, Head of Programme Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal which provided an update on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

Paul Staines highlighted that the report was to note progress with the OxIS and make sure all the Councils are content with the brief and the new iteration of OxIS.

Paul Staines highlighted that paragraph 8.16 of the report sets out the key messages of the new OxIS brief.

Councillor Liz Leffman highlighted that under the Energy Infrastructure (Paragraph 9 – 12) Members are aware of the challenges of energy infrastructure in the County and an energy plan is needed for the County, thus expressed satisfaction with it being included in the report.

Councillors queried if the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) and the OxIS plan would run in parallel. It was highlighted that the connection between both would be that the LAEP is setting out a district/county journey to Zero Carbon emission which may bring about some infrastructure requirements in which OxIS could highlight and promote. However, it is likely that OxIS would be procured in advance of the LAEP, but they would be closely aligned.

Paul Staines highlighted that the Advisory Group would be well informed on challenges and achievements as work progresses.

Councillor Louise Upton highlighted that in the Oxford City Council Local Plan Policy new developments are minimising energy need and generating what is needed on site. Councillor Liz Leffman emphasised the importance of ensuring consistency with this throughout the entire county.

Councillors referred to the need for drainage resilience across the county. It was highlighted that there is a separate Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) project to look at water supply security, water resilience and drainage and work is in progress with this amongst officers.

Action: Paul Staines confirmed the Advisory Group would be provided with a quarterly update on work done.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair thanked Paul Staines for his report to the Advisory Group.

116 Home from Infrastructure Programme

The Advisory Group was provided with a report by Valerie Lambrechts, Infrastructure Portfolio Manager, Transport and Infrastructure, Oxfordshire County Council and Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance, Oxfordshire County Council on the Homes from Infrastructure (HFI) programme with details on progress to date regarding deliverables within the programme.

The purpose of the report is to update the Advisory Group on progress and spend for schemes included as part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The report provides updates on the following funding streams as at the end of Q3 23/24:

- HFI Programme
- Growth Deal Capacity Fund

Kathy Wilcox highlighted that there is £54M in the scheme that must be spent in 24/25 with a deadline set on 31 March 2025 which has been agreed with Homes England and the only work that can be retained after this is £1.5M for safety audits and residual work. It was

also pointed out that the programme is currently under profiled by £1.6M to maximise the overall use of funding.

Kathy Wilcox highlighted that there is £1.3M available in the capacity fund from the previous year and there is longer time to utilise funding as opposed to the HFI programme with a stricter deadline.

Councillors acknowledged the good work done with the Benson Relief Road scheme, however queried the impact and reason for the allocation being reduced for the Didcot Central Corridor, Jubilee Way Roundabout and A4074 Golden Balls Roundabout Junction Schemes. It was confirmed that feasibilities were completed with less money hence the reduction.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair thanked Valerie Lambrechts and Kathy Wilcox for their report to the Advisory Group.

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

Kevin Jacob, Senior Democratic Services, Future Oxfordshire Partnership highlighted that it is a consolidation of all workstreams that are related to Net Zero with Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) and Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure relating to the Advisory Group.

Action: Kevin Jacob highlighted that it would be reformed before the next Advisory Group meeting to make it more comprehensible.

118 Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Workstream - Spotlight session

The Advisory Group was provided with a report by Paul Gambrell, Team Leader – ZEV and Energy Integration iHub Innovation Team, Oxfordshire County Council which focused on the Community Micro EV Charging Hubs.

Paul Gambrell highlighted that there are 3 main aspects of what would be funded through the grant:

1. Highway Chargers
2. Second Lot, which focuses on provided chargers in suitable District Council car parks.
3. Community Micro Hub, which focuses on providing charging infrastructure to community buildings, village halls and parish halls largely in rural areas.

Paul Gambrell highlighted that there was a discussion with Suffolk County Council about a grant programme for community groups to become owner operators of chargers. Unfortunately, Suffolk County Council confirmed that the model did not work as they hoped due to insufficient funds for ongoing use and maintenance, as well as the time it took to manage and coordinate with charge point operators. It was confirmed that Suffolk County Council will implement a concession model for such chargers, which will also be adopted by Oxfordshire County Council.

Councillor Louise Upton enquired about the possibility of extending the concession model to include Oxford City Council car parks. It was confirmed that the Oxford City Council car parks will be managed through the second lot and the Oxford City Council officers have been actively involved and kept informed about the progress made.

Councillors enquired about the allocation of profits from operating the chargers under the community concession offer and whether any of the funding will be directed towards fast charging sites. It was confirmed that there will be a fee for using the chargers, which will be paid to the community group. Additionally, the cost of energy consumed will be covered. It was also highlighted that the chargers may not generate significant profits in the short term. However, any profits that do arise will be allocated as grants for future environmentally focused projects. At present the funding is primarily intended for standard 7KW chargers for longer charging sessions. It was also pointed out that there may be a few locations where rapid chargers are the only viable option and, in such cases, they would be implemented.

Councillors queried if funding covers all the sites identified in the report. It was highlighted that the number of chargers will play a role in this, and the purpose of utilising the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) grant funds is to attract investment from the commercial operator that Oxfordshire County Council collaborates with.

Councillor Liz Leffman enquired about the plans to proceed with the Gul-e pilots. She sought clarification on whether there were any intentions to move forward with them. It was confirmed that there has been funding to the sum of £698K from OZEV to do further work with the Gul-e.

Action: Paul Gambrell confirmed that there would be an outreach programme in Summer 2024 offering anyone who meets the criteria to have a Gul-e the opportunity to apply for one.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair thanked Paul Gambrell for his report to the Advisory Group.

119 Budget for Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plans

The Advisory Group was provided with report by Mark Saunders, Energy Systems and Investment Manager, Oxfordshire County Council on the budget for Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plans.

Mark Saunders confirmed that this had been worked on for the last 6 months and the governance structure has been in place for even longer.

Mark Saunders confirmed that the report was presented to the Executive Officers Group (EOG) on 29 February 2024. He confirmed the EOG expressed general support for the proposed plans. However, they raised concerns regarding the requested amount of funding and the potential alternative uses for the funds, which had not been fully explored. He confirmed these concerns will now be addressed at the FOP meeting on 25 June 2025 and during this meeting a comprehensive business case will be presented to request additional funds, and the Chief Executives will explore other potential opportunities for funding allocation.

Mark Saunders highlighted that another key area that needs to be considered is the impact of Project Local Area Energy Oxfordshire Neighbourhoods (LEON) which is currently in a bidding phase for the next round of strategic investment funds from the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM). Mark Saunders also pointed out that the bid is predicated on Oxfordshire having a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) in place.

Andrew Down, Director, Future Oxfordshire Partnership emphasised that the LAEP stands as the largest and potentially most influential project. Nevertheless, he also noted that all the projects outlined in the November 2023 report to the FOP can be funded using the capacity fund.

Councillors enquired about the allocation of resources between Project LEON and LAEPs in terms of enhancing Oxfordshire's resilience and reducing dependence on the national grid. It was confirmed that this would be uncovered by the Local Area Energy Plans, which will give more details to the Distribution System Operators (DSOs) and will in turn inform their investment decisions. However, it was pointed out that they are unable to invest ahead of need due to government legislation that would be reviewed in due course. The importance of quality data from Local Energy Planning was emphasised.

Councillor Charlie Maynard referred to what he felt was a significant increase in the budget and then need to develop software for the project. He enquired about the investigation into Local Area Energy Plans conducted in other regions. It was confirmed that the average cost for LAEPs for a District Council is £150,000 - £200,000 per council area and if all districts did this separately it was estimated it would cost above £1M as they are currently being implemented across the county. Furthermore, it was confirmed that better value for money and reducing delivery gap between getting the plan and implementing it are key objectives.

Mark Saunders also confirmed that there is existing software in place, developed by a company called Advance Infrastructure Technology because of Project LEON. This project software is currently being utilised by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council.

Councillors raised inquiries regarding the ownership of the data and whether the Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator (LENZA) tool is owned by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE). They also queried how long-term access to the data is safeguarded. It was confirmed that an agreement has been established with UK Power Networks (UKPN) and the National Grid. This agreement entails the provision of data through LENZA, marking the first instance in the country where they have mutually agreed to collaborate and make all the data accessible through a single platform. It was also confirmed that the County owns the data.

Councillors enquired about the possibility of allocating a portion of the £100,000 used to build local authority capability to the District Council to pay for officer time and to develop the LAEPs. It was confirmed this approach will be implemented and the objective is to collaborate with the selected contractor, as outlined in the contract, to enhance the skills of council staff and utilise it as a valuable learning opportunity.

Councillor Andrea Powell highlighted a comment in the report that alludes to a joint plan for South and Vale District Councils. However, she suggested that a separate plan for each council would be more ideal.

Councillor Liz Leffman confirmed that this report would not go to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership until 25 June 2024, thus asked Councillors if they would support this project to move things forward with Project LEON. All the Council representatives agreed to this.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Chair thanked Mark Saunders for his report to the Advisory Group.

120 Horizon Scanning

John Disley, Head of Transport Policy, Oxfordshire County Council expressed that due consideration would be given to FOP agenda items beyond July 2024. Additionally, he emphasised the importance of welcoming views and suggestions from all the councils.

121 Chair's Update from Future Oxfordshire Partnership Meeting

Councillor Liz Leffman highlighted that the main item from the last FOP agenda was the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and it is of interest to work in the IAG as a lot of work is around the provision of green infrastructure.

122 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Advisory Group Notes

Councillors and Officers in the Advisory Group reviewed notes provided.

123 Dates of future meetings

Meetings at 14:00 unless otherwise stated.

- 06/06/24 (Extraordinary meeting)
- 17/07/24
- 09/09/24
- 04/11/24
- 13/01/25
- 03/03/25
- 07/07/25

The meeting closed at 3.52 pm