

To: The Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Title of Report: Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal: Update at the end of Quarter 4 2023/24

Date: 30 July 2024

Report by: Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer,
Oxfordshire County Council
(Accountable Body)

Status: Open

Executive Summary and Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to update the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) 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 Quarter 4 2023/24:

- Housing from Infrastructure (Hfi) programme
- Growth Deal Capacity Fund

The report is prepared by the Director of Finance for Oxfordshire County Council in the capacity of Section 151 Officer of the Accountable Body for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and gives assurance over the grant funding and expenditure.

How this report contributes to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision Outcomes:

The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal has a key role to play in delivering well-designed infrastructure and homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure, and affordability to meet the needs of the county, as set out in the Strategic Vision [here](#).

Recommendation:

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership are asked to note the financial position as at the end of March 2024.

Appendices:

Annex 1: Housing from Infrastructure (Hfi) Programme. (finance)

Annex 2: Schemes status & milestones, including overall housing numbers

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the financial position for the remaining two strands of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal as at the end of March 2024.

- Housing from Infrastructure (Hfi) Programme.
- Growth Deal Capacity Fund.

1.2 Housing numbers were shared in the report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in February 2024 and an update on the latest figures provided by the district and city councils has been prepared for this reporting cycle. (Annex 2)

1.3 The report is prepared by the Director of Finance for Oxfordshire County Council (the County Council) in the capacity of Section 151 Officer of the Accountable Body for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and gives assurance over the grant funding and expenditure.

2. Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Fund Financial Governance

2.1 In accordance with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Delivery Plan, the County Council is the accountable body for the financial management of the remaining two financial streams. A quarterly report is provided to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Responsibility for the management of each financial stream is held by the programme lead.

2.2 The Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership have been updated to reflect the conditions set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities ([DLUHC](#)) in [December 2022](#).¹ Specifically in relation to the Homes from Infrastructure programme, being the remainder of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, Oxfordshire County Council shall:

- make all decisions on the allocation of the remaining grant funding agreed by Government.
- prioritise and allocate funding and be accountable for the delivery of projects funded by this funding stream.
- act reasonably and in good faith, modelling positive partnership behaviour specifically by making no changes to the programme without careful consultation with affected district partners, and by not seeking to remove schemes from the programme or to reduce their scope as long as they remain on track for delivery on time and within budget.

2.3 The County Council also holds the risk should Government require funding to be repaid if it is unspent or deemed to have been misused.

¹ See Item 6 of the agenda for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on 20 March 2023.

3. Expenditure as at the end of Quarter 4 2023/24 and update on scheme progress

3.1 Housing from Infrastructure Programme

- 3.1.1 £150.0m grant funding supporting the Housing from Infrastructure Programme was agreed on the basis it would accelerate the provision of at least 6,549 planned homes that might not otherwise have come forward at this pace. The programme comprises schemes covering road, rail, cycle routes and footpaths, as well as a school. Schemes may be either fully or part funded via the programme.
- 3.1.2 £120.0m of the grant funding was received by the end of 2021/22. The remaining £30m will need to be claimed retrospectively and is subject to the conditions set out by [DLUHC in December 2022](#).² In response to this letter, and following discussions with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council wrote to DLUHC and Homes England in March 2023 confirming acceptance of the final funding and agreement to the associated governance and reporting requirements.
- 3.1.3 Grant funding of £143m is expected to be used to support capital expenditure and £7m has been used to fund revenue costs associated with the Housing from Infrastructure programme.
- 3.1.4 In accordance with the new conditions, funding already received along with amounts available as a result of previous funding switches has to be utilised before the remaining £30m growth deal funding can be claimed. These switches, for which alternative funding sources were in place, amount to £49m. This means that spend of £169m in total must be demonstrated before any further funding can be claimed.
- 3.1.5 Annex 1 sets out the total expenditure on the capital element of the Growth Deal programme up to 31 March 2023 (excluding previous funding switches) of £66m compared to the capital funding received to date of £113m (£120m less £7m revenue funding). Expenditure to the end of Quarter 4 of 2023/24 was £20.5m meaning the overall total spend up to 31 March 2024 was £86.5m
- 3.1.6 To utilise all of the grant funding a further £56.3m needs to be spent in 2024/25. An additional £1.5m will be retained for safety audits after 31 March 2025.
- 3.1.7 Because of the deadline grant funding has been prioritised towards schemes entering construction phase that can meet the grant deadline and have other funding sources that can be utilised after the grant deadline.
- 3.1.8 Annex 1 sets out the grant allocation against each scheme. To maximise the use of the grant funding the overall programme is currently over-profiled by £1.6m compared to the available capital grant funding of £142.727m.

² See Item 6 of the agenda for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on 20 March 2023.

3.2 Scheme delivery update and risk management

- 3.2.1 As previously reported, and as shown in Annex 1, the Growth Deal programme remains over-profiled by £1.594m. This is currently managed within the contingencies held across the schemes and is under constant review to ensure full use is made of the entire growth deal funding envelope.
- 3.2.2 Construction is ongoing for Benson Relief Road (anticipated completion September 2024), Wantage Eastern Link Road (anticipated completion August 2024), Kidlington Roundabout (anticipated completion August 2024) and Banbury Road Roundabout (Bicester, anticipated completion February 2025). The North Oxfordshire Corridor scheme at Cassington completed earlier in 2024.
- 3.2.3 Construction contracts have been agreed and entered into for Abingdon, Lodge Hill, (construction anticipated to start October 2025) and Steventon Lights (construction start September 2024). Since the Growth Deal funding element needs to be spent and claimed by March 2025 other funding sources, including Section 106, will be utilised to complete the schemes beyond March 2025.
- 3.2.4 The planning decision for Watlington Relief Road is anticipated later this year. Work is ongoing to assess the impact of this and the ongoing deliverability of the scheme.
- 3.2.5 A final update on the schemes will be shared with FOP as part of the report for Quarter 1 of 2024/25 in September 2024.

3.3 Growth Deal Capacity Fund

- 3.3.1 The Growth Deal Capacity Fund totals £5.0m. The first instalment of £0.5m was received in 2017/18, followed by £2.5m in 2018/19 and £2.0m in 2019/20.
- 3.3.2 The funding was expected to be used over the life of the programme which was originally planned to run from 2017/18 to 2022/23. Costs expected to be met from the Capacity Fund were:
- Housing Delivery: Staff costs for the core Housing and Growth Deal team.
 - Delivery of the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan including staff costs.
 - Feasibility: costs of feasibility works including Rail Connectivity Study (part funding) and Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) refresh.
- 3.3.3 At each year end, funding that has not been spent has been carried forward through the County Council's earmarked reserves.
- 3.3.4 Actual spend up to quarter 4 of 2023/24 was £0.115m. The remaining available balance as at 31 March 2024 is £1.159m.
- 3.3.5 A considerable amount of work has been done on the business case for Local Area Energy Planning, which is subject to a separate report on the FOP agenda. There is a further report on a potential social value brokerage scheme to be led by the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership. Business cases are also in progress for the provision of resources to promote and facilitate community led housing

projects. If all of these four business cases are approved then most of the remaining capacity fund will have been committed.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The report sets out the financial update at the end of Quarter 4 of 2023/24 for the remaining two strands of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and an update on the latest position with the remaining schemes in the programme.
- 4.2 Remaining recycled funds totalling £26.2m as at 31 March 2024 need to be fully utilised in 2024/25 before any further grant funding can be claimed. On that basis it is anticipated that the remaining grant allocation of £30m will be claimed retrospectively in the last quarter of 2024/25.
- 4.3 Since the Housing & Growth Deal Grant funding will not be available beyond the 2024/25 financial year, action will be taken by Oxfordshire County Council as the Accountable Body, in consultation with the relevant district as appropriate, to manage the programme to ensure that any increases in project/programme spend can be met within the available funding and that there is no unfunded spend after 31 March 2025. Also, as the funding is currently overprogrammed to maximise potential spend, changes to grant funding allocations will have to be determined in the report to FOP in September 2024 to bring the programme to a balanced position.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 In accordance with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Delivery Plan, the County Council is the accountable body for the financial management of the two remaining key financial streams.
- 5.2 Revised Terms of Reference and the Memorandum of Understanding were endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on 13 June 2023 and approved by all of the constituent local authorities during July 2023.
- 5.3 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This report sets out an update on the actual and forecast spend against the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal funding streams at the end of Quarter 4 2024/25.
- 6.2 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is asked to note the updates set out in the report.

Report Author:	Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources & S151 Officer
Contact information:	Kathy Wilcox, Head of Financial Strategy