

Supplementary Papers

Contact Officer: Kevin Jacob, Growth Board Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01235 422191

FOR THE MEETING OF

Oxfordshire Growth Board

held in the Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN

on Tuesday 28 January 2020 at 2.00 pm

The reports marked 'to follow' on the agenda published on Wednesday 15 January 2020 are attached. Please bring these with you to the meeting.

7 **Growth Board Review** (Pages 133 - 155)

To consider the findings of the review approved by the Growth Board on 24 September 2019 and to agree any recommendations for implementation or further development.

13 **Infrastructure sub-group update** (Pages 156 - 159)

Draft notes from the meeting held on 14 January 2020 marked to follow are attached.

To: Oxfordshire Growth Board

Title of Report: Growth Board Review: Consultation Summary and Initial Findings

Date: 28 January 2020

Report of: Bev Hindle, Oxfordshire Growth Board Director
Stefan Robinson, Oxfordshire Growth Board Manager

Status: Public

Executive Summary

This report sets out the results of the consultation undertaken as part of the review of the Growth Board's role and functions, together with initial findings and recommendations for the Board's consideration.

The Board and its predecessors have played a pivotal role in bringing local authorities, major institutions, business and Government departments and agencies together to collaborate on planning for, and managing the impacts of, growth. Having an established board which discusses growth related subjects was also key in helping Oxfordshire secure not only the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal, but also two Housing & Infrastructure Fund bids providing funds for vital infrastructure in excess of £500m.

The extensive engagement undertaken confirms the value of having such a collaboration, whilst helping identify where we can build on our success and improve how the Board works.

The Board has evolved over time to ensure it is fit for purpose and will continue to evolve. Major shifts in national priorities such as climate change will make the need for collaboration even greater.

Reflecting on the experience and feedback from Board members, their organisations, key stakeholders and the wider community, a set of recommendations for short term improvements and longer-term development are included in this report for the Growth Board's consideration.

If agreed, the changes will be implemented over the coming year and will result in updated terms of reference being produced.

Purpose of the Report:

1. This report sets out the results of the consultation undertaken as part of the review of the Growth Board’s role and functions, together with initial findings and recommendations for the Board’s consideration.

Recommendations:

That the Growth Board:

- 1) Notes the results of the consultation at Annex 1 which have been fundamental in shaping the detailed recommendations to take forward;
- 2) Instructs the Growth Board Director and Manager, with the support of the Board’s Executive Officer Group, to develop detailed draft Terms of Reference for the Board which incorporate the key initial changes set out in this report between paragraphs 25 and 41 and return those for endorsement by June 2020;
- 3) Instructs the Growth Board Director and Manager, with the support of the Board’s Executive Officer Group, to further develop the proposals from paragraph 42 to 55 and report back further suggested improvements by Autumn 2020.

Introduction and background

2. The Oxfordshire Growth Board (‘the Board’) was established in 2014 as a Joint Committee¹ of the six councils of Oxfordshire (‘the partner authorities’), together with key strategic partners. It was set up to facilitate and enable joint working on matters concerning economic development, strategic planning and growth. The Board’s establishment was premised on strengthening partnership arrangements across Oxfordshire for pragmatic working on key strategic issues. It has successfully done this by overseeing the delivery of cross-county projects that the councils of Oxfordshire were seeking to deliver in a collaborative way – between local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partners and stakeholders.²
3. On 24 September 2019, the Board agreed to carry out a formal review of its role and function to ensure that the most pragmatic and effective arrangements are in place to enable collaboration and delivery on Oxfordshire wide priorities. The review was also tasked with reflecting on some of the administrative and communication challenges that have been apparent in the Board’s work. This has meant reflecting on how the Board has operated to date and whether its structures and processes remain fit for the future.
4. This review welcomed the views of the public, partners and councillors through several engagement exercises involving members of the public, councillors, officers and other stakeholders. This report provides a summary of the consultation responses received, together with recommendations for implementation in two parts: Part 1 sets out improvements from paragraph 25 to 41 which we can initiate over the coming few months which will see a sharper

¹ under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.

² As a Joint Committee, the Board may discharge executive functions, but each constituent authority retains the ability to exercise all executive and non-executive functions generally and specifically in relation to economic development including where applicable provision of housing, strategic spatial planning and strategic transport planning.

focus of the Growth Board on its core functions related to its core purpose in planning for and managing strategic and sustainable growth and supporting infrastructure.

5. Part 2 proposes that the Board agrees the exploration of further opportunities for improvement as set out in the report from paragraphs 42 to 55 and reported back to a future Board meeting to be considered for implementation. This will involve working closely with all existing members and additional partners from other major boards in the County. and would be something to explore and develop further in 2020.
6. Some of the key recommendations in this report, if supported, will require further developmental work to be undertaken. Support for any such recommendations will not be agreed until formal proposals have been received and agreed through the relevant decision-making structures.

Engagement and Feedback

7. The formal engagement activity for the review concluded in December 2019. The following activities have been undertaken through the review process:
 - A workshop with the Growth Board
 - Interviews with board members, in addition to informal discussions
 - Several developmental discussions with the Executive Officers Group
 - A public survey receiving 247 responses
 - Three workshops, engaging with councillors and members of the public
 - An informal discussion with the Scrutiny Panel Chair and Vice-Chair
 - Formal submissions from Scrutiny Panel members and local groups
 - Meetings with the Oxfordshire Monitoring Officers group
8. A summary of the consultation feedback can be found at Appendix 1. These highlight some key areas for improvement. The main messages received can be summarised as follows:
 - a) Collaboration between Local Authorities and major strategic stakeholders is of value and has been helpful and necessary to deliver joint working on matters of strategic importance;
 - b) There needs to be more effective communication with councillors, partners and the public about what the Growth Board is and what, if any, decisions it takes. Ambiguity on this front has led to a series of detrimental misunderstandings.
 - c) There needs to be greater consideration of environmental issues through appropriate structures (for example, membership, experts and work-streams);
 - d) There should be widespread public and stakeholder engagement (not just communication) in any vision setting for the county;
 - e) The Growth Board has a function (to collaborate) but it appears not to have aims or a vision – this is often assumed to be growth for growth's sake;

- f) The Growth Board's current strategic coordination function is uniquely important for representing Oxfordshire's joint interests and co-leadership, but it must remain flexible enough to meet future opportunities from Government;
- g) The Growth Board is currently seen as a space for public engagement and also a strategic coordination group. Undertaking these two roles through one forum has been challenging, and would be best separated but remain informed by each another;
- h) Some viewed the group does not have democratic accountability and that some members of the Board (non-local authority) are perceived to have a conflict of interest.

Success and Opportunity

9. Throughout the review, many contributors maintained that it was important to have a joined-up partnership voice for Oxfordshire that seeks to address the challenges and opportunities for Oxfordshire in the future. This was often expressed as macro-level planning for increased service demand, demographic change and collective ambitions for the future, with a preference for consensus building (over decision making) on key strategic issues and demonstrating collective leadership and unity, whilst being shaped by the views of local people. This has been widely supported through the review by councillors, members of the public and other stakeholders. The Centre for Public Scrutiny sets out how a platform for joint working, such as the Growth Board, can bring benefit to each partner and the locality. It put systems in place to:
- Allow leaders to take the initiative, informed by a wide range of other people
 - Develop and analyse shared evidence
 - Manage debate and constructive dialogue
 - Prioritise effectively
 - Identify common interests
 - Share out responsibility for making improvements.³
10. This is not dissimilar to what the Growth Board has been seeking to achieve since it was established in 2014, though the review has shown that there are some challenges in executing this approach, such as communication and engagement. A review of recent work shows that, as the first partnership of its kind, the Growth Board has been pivotal and innovative in securing additional government investment for much needed infrastructure improvements in the County. It has been a template innovator which other regions have sought to emulate in their own partnerships. It has done this largely by drawing on the existing resources of each partner council and the LEP to position Oxfordshire as a place for much needed investment in a highly competitive national context.
11. Whilst there is some clear frustration about the mechanistic approach of the Growth Board meetings themselves, and communication and outreach has not been sufficient in effect, there is a view from some contributors that the Growth Board has significant value and that Oxfordshire has benefitted from, and

³ Centre for Public Scrutiny. 2014. Growth through good governance. Available at: <https://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Growth-through-Good-Governance.pdf>

continues to need this form of, collaboration to bring the varied elements of Local Government and major stakeholders together. A key challenge for the Growth Board's physical meetings however has been in trying to provide this holistic and generalist coordination function, whilst also providing robust oversight of specific projects agreed by the Councils of Oxfordshire, such as the Housing and Growth Deal.

12. This cooperation between councils and partners has helped to share information, align and develop key strategic planning documents across Oxfordshire, and secure additional investment for the county, such as through the City Deal, Housing and Growth Deal, Housing Infrastructure Fund and the Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study. Over the years of close working on managing the impact of growth and infrastructure delivery, local councils have secured alongside their partners over £500m of investment, including the Housing and Growth Deal. In addition to the £215m provided by Central Government, The Deal has provided much needed planning flexibilities for local planning authorities, such as through a reducing the 5-year housing land supply requirement to 3 years as we develop the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This has all been achieved against a backdrop of financial austerity over the last decade.
13. The Board has provided a public space through which collective representations can be made to regional and national bodies, such as England's Economic Heartland and Homes England. The Board has also provided a clearer and stronger local voice to Government strengthening our ability to be heard and to be a credible partner of Government. Feedback from partners has also showed support for the work to date, in that the Board provides space for information sharing and cross-service thinking about planning for Oxfordshire's future.

Ways to Improve

14. The review feedback demonstrated that many people believe that regularised decisions are taken by the Growth Board on behalf of local councils on a range of issues, which are in fact outside of the Board's remit, but nonetheless came under criticism. For example, many believed that the Growth Board has a role in deciding housing site allocations. This is not the case. Subsequent engagement with the review however seems to have been based around this misunderstanding. In almost all criticisms that were received of the Growth Board, the origin could be traced back to a cause of ineffective communications. Accordingly, the need for improved communication is perhaps the most significant issue that needs addressing. Historically, significant energy has been expended trying to retrospectively explain as much what we have not done as what we have.
15. There is a clear view that the public need to be better engaged but that there also needs to be room and space for Local Authority leaders and other system leads to meet and discuss their council's agendas – not only to see where there is common ambition and ground, but as regards the Growth Board specifically, to better understand how it needs to respond to this ambition in the future.
16. The negative connotations of the word 'growth' in the Board's title were also considered by many to be problematic, and an accelerant to misunderstandings about the Board's role. Accordingly, many believe the Board's overriding priority is growth for growth's sake, above or ignorant to environmental, social or other

needs. Stating, or reforming its purpose would go a significant way to providing clarity to all. The engagement work has shown that the issues and concerns of the majority are with how the Board operates and communicates, more than whether or not local councils should be collaborating with each other and their partners. Accordingly, the consultation has offered support for the continuation of a clear collaborative platform for Oxfordshire which can evidence joined up thinking and working, whilst also securing much-needed Government investment in key infrastructure projects.

17. In many ways the Growth Board has been a trailblazer in local authority collaboration and has secured success from this collaboration (meeting the statutory Duty to Cooperate, providing a sound evidence base for defending Local Plans) where others have failed to do so. Its purpose and perhaps its name and priorities would benefit from being more closely aligned to what it legitimately seeks but does not always do well to communicate – sustainable growth for the whole of Oxfordshire through partnership. Improved communication and messaging will be fundamental to improved operations in future.
18. Feedback and observation show that we do not take advantage of our key relationships and that more informal discussion about what major organisations and institutions are doing and planning would be helpful to inform longer-term planning across all partners. Many feel this informal approach of information gathering and consensus building could achieve more than we do through the formality of the Board itself. It has been suggested that the Board explores more effective ways of including and engaging system leaders and subject experts in discussions and forward planning so that when we do have open public meetings, these are more rounded in their content and potentially more inclusive of the wider stakeholder community.
19. In terms of the mechanics of the Growth Board itself, this is where there is a lot of general frustration from members and non-members alike. Many have said the Board meeting itself is not as effective as it could be and lacks effective engagement between members and with the public. For interested stakeholders, it is at best confusing; at worst, they feel this is a pre-determined arrangement fronting what really gets decided elsewhere and a place where their voice is not heard.
20. While there has been some level of public disquiet about access to the work of the Board, this concern has increased significantly since the Housing and Growth Deal was agreed by constituent partners in 2018. This disquiet is also amongst some councillors across the county who feel they do not know enough about what is happening. The Sub-groups and Scrutiny Panel were attempts to create a more inclusive arrangement for consensus building and we heard some positive feedback about this and in particular, how there is a need to bring together cross-party and cross-county representation across our workstreams. Indeed, the sub groups and Scrutiny Panel offer 36 additional seats for locally elected councillors to be involved in the process. There were also calls for more routine briefings and engagement to and within each of the councils.
21. There is however some concern that a large scrutiny function has been created with very few decisions to review. Whilst it has been set up in a similar way to other local government scrutiny functions, it does not have the same frequency of

decisions to review, in line with the Growth Boards' limited powers. The Panel has already given the Board key recommendations to help improve its processes, performance and operations, but there has been limited opportunity to influence the Housing and Growth Deal Programme, for example, because regular decisions are not required. The Panel is subsequently providing oversight of a Board that principally provides oversight itself.

22. There was a majority of feeling, particularly from the public, that the Board needs to pay more attention to the environment and in particular, ensure that our ambitions are set within the context of committed climate change actions as they emerge. The vast majority of respondents do not like the name of the Board, particularly the negative connotation that follows the term "growth". But they also feel it is not accurate to call it a board, which implies it is where decisions are taken. There have been many suggestions, but generally there is a will for this body to be positive, forward looking and thinking – something which references the future and facilitates the collective ambition of partners and the public.
23. As for democratic accountability – it is true that wherever statutory decisions are to be taken, they are taken through proper procedures within each council and it is also true the only votes within the Board itself rest with the locally elected leaders who sit on the Board. There was however a clear feeling that while it may take limited decisions directly, it may have an influence on decisions to be taken and in some respects, should be capable of leading our approach to our shared vision and ambition.
24. Pragmatically it still should be designed in such a flexible way that if changes regionally or nationally emerge, that it is capable of taking decisions, should the individual councils wish it to do so. Those decisions would benefit significantly through more open forward planning and communication. There continues to be greater opportunity through a collective voice to promote our issues and possible solutions with Government and other existing and emerging regional bodies.

Part 1: Recommended Short Term Improvements

A Restatement of Purpose

25. There appears to be merit in clarifying the Growth Board's functions for the purposes of role clarity and business expedience. Focussing the Growth Board's Terms of Reference and membership to create a purpose-built forum for oversight and monitoring for strategic planning, managing growth and major infrastructure projects can bring clarity to the process and clearly demonstrate to the public its democratic accountability. This does not suggest that wider issues cannot be explored through the Board (e.g. climate change) specifically where the subject matter has a demonstrable impact on future planning for the county.
26. The review has shown that the Board should focus specifically on: strategic planning; performance and financial management of the Housing & Growth Deal and any successors; and, collaboration on joint funding bids to central government as they relate to longer term planning and infrastructure needed to deliver sustainable development in Oxfordshire. Any formal agreement being sought relating to statutory local government matters will still be left to the leaders of the

councils and where necessary their constituent councils. As for all other matters related to the Board, the will and views of the Board as a whole will be sought. No member will be able to bind another to policy, contracts or expenditure unless such powers have been delegated to this partnership.

27. It is suggested this group meets quarterly in public to ensure it is progressing and monitoring the business of its forward plan. This will allow more effective quarterly performance monitoring process to take place, which the current six meetings each year does not favour. In this way we can be very clear about what it does, when it meets, how the public can see the work it is doing and to engage as necessary on the elements of public interest.
28. In this context, it is recommended the Growth Board adopt a statement of common purpose for its work, which will add to the public understanding of its role. Without the need for additional powers, the Growth Board's common purpose should be articulated as follows:

The growing local economy will create challenges and opportunities for Oxfordshire related to housing, infrastructure, public services and the environment. These issues will best be addressed through joined up planning between local councils which prioritises sustainable development and quality of life. Collective planning where it makes sense to do so will be the most effective means of minimising the unwanted impacts of a growing economy, whilst leveraging the maximum benefit from the opportunities it brings for our existing and future communities.

The Growth Board will:

- a) *Coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits;*
 - b) *Support the development of local planning policy that moves towards zero carbon and carbon positive development, and contributes to biodiversity gain, embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world; and,*
 - c) *Coordinate local efforts to secure funding in the pursuit of these aims.*
29. This purpose should be clearly stated in the Board's communication channels, for example through the Growth Board's website, a statement on openness and transparency, and eventually the terms of reference. This would provide a more refined steer to inform the Board's forward plan. A restatement of purpose could be supported over the short term by a series of engagements designed to reset the narrative about what the Board is and what it does. This work need to form part of an agreed Communications Strategy supporting the Board's work.
30. While many comments were received about the name, we also heard support for retaining the name as it has an established identity and has gained support and legitimacy nationally. While we are seeking to improve how we work, the model we use here is an innovative and unique approach others are seeking to replicate, supported by Government as being necessary to help manage sustainable growth in future. It is recommended that any review of the name of the Board be considered as part of the work to develop the vision and purpose of the Board moving forward.

31. On a more minor level, meetings of the Growth Board would benefit from the Chair introducing each meeting setting out the role of the Board and business of the meeting so that there is clarity in the business to be transacted.

Scrutiny

32. The Scrutiny Panel currently has a role in overseeing the decisions and actions taken by the Growth Board. In practice, it has had almost no formal decisions to scrutinise. The premise of its role is crucial for the Housing and Growth Deal in providing cross-party scrutiny for a significant joint programme, and any other joint programmes that are overseen. However, the nature of Growth Board meetings has left limited opportunity for scrutiny (in the conventional local government way) to take place.
33. A more effective construct for scrutinising partnership matters, including the Growth Board, could be a corresponding group constituted of one Overview and Scrutiny Chair from each authority, potentially along with one further member from each authority, forming the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel. Scrutiny Chairs are well networked in their councils, often with significant experience in their role. The creation of this panel could support a network and systematic approach to scrutiny across the county. It would also make clear who the relevant local authority scrutiny representatives are and promote the dissemination of information into local committees as required. This group could have a specific remit to check and challenge the Housing and Growth Deal.
34. It is recommended Growth Board officers working closely with the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel look at this approach to implement this change, as well as seek to investigate any longer-term development opportunities as identified in Part 2 below.

Environment

35. Bringing more environmental consideration to our work was a key theme arising from the engagement of members and the public. The Growth Board should recognise there are significant and diverse elements related to its purpose which by their nature cannot be identified through one voice such as the environment. However, there is merit in developing the idea of an Environment Working Group associated with the Growth Board. This will bring environmental issues, debate and discussion to inform and support the development and delivery of the Board's work programme, rather than as a consultee later. It will take time to develop this so related recommendations are identified under Part 2 of this report.

Work Planning

36. The Growth Board should hold an annual work planning event each June. This would aim to set a high-level agenda for the year and help to prioritise issues and allocate roles for undertaking such work. The Board could then take a view on what was core work for the Board and what work involved other partners and invite dialogue with those to develop the programme further. The work programme

would be finalised in the autumn to ensure resources and revenue implications were picked up in annual budget reviews as required.

Public Participation

37. Several respondents to the review said the public participation procedures are not satisfactory and serve to create divisions between the Board and the Public, and that there needs to be a more effective way of engaging the public and channelling their input. While we should improve the practice of public participation at meetings (inevitably these are and will be somewhat formulaic and regulated), there is an opportunity to be more innovative about creating more engagement with the public. Part 2 of this report sets out a new space in which this can happen, but there are minor changes that have been identified and recommended for the public participation procedures at meetings in the short term, as set out below:

- The Chair should direct questions to the most relevant person on the Board (rather than it always being the Chair) or indeed a Board member can seek support or assistance from professional officers in attendance;
- Any written responses to questions will be published on the Board's website;
- Notice for questions and statements from the public should be aligned to have the same deadline: 3 clear working days before meetings. This is currently three and one respectively. This allows for the fact that addresses often require a response, but provide limited time for a response to be prepared;
- More active engagement between Board members and the public speaker would be welcome;
- Supplementary questions should be allowed, dependent on time available, at the discretion of the Chair.

Executive Officer Group

38. There is confusion over the role of the Executive Officers Group (EOG), what it does and who should sit on it. The role, members and attendees of EOG should be clearly defined as they will effectively help to steer and manage the overall work programme. As effectively the Operational Board of the Growth Board, EOG members should be active in informing and delivering the Forward Plan, the agenda for the Board and its content. They should also be present in support of the Board when it meets. A senior officer from each Local Authority, OxLEP and the Oxfordshire Environment Board should be active members of EOG.

39. Other officers from supporting Government agencies and departments, partners and stakeholders should also be invited to take part in this group. The Programme Board for the Housing and Growth Deal will be comprised of the Local Authority Executive Officers, a senior LEP officer and chaired by , the Director of the Growth Board with Homes England as observer.

Meetings Schedule

40. The short timeframe between Scrutiny Panel meetings and the Growth Board has been challenging. Officers recommend moving the Scrutiny Panel meetings from the Thursday before the Board to the Tuesday to allow more time for the Scrutiny Panel's report and recommendations to be developed. The publication date will

also be brought forward by a further two days to address criticisms of the time available to read reports. In practice, this has already started happening. A calendar for 2020/21 including Advisory Sub-group meetings has been drafted and the website updated with provisional dates.

Terms of Reference

41. Any substantive changes to the Growth Board's Terms of Reference will need to go back through each Council's Cabinet. Subject to agreement from the Growth Board at its meeting on 28 January 2020, the Director and Manager of the Growth Board, supported by EOG, will turn any agreed proposals for improvements into a formal set of terms of reference. The terms of reference will be presented back for agreement to proceed to local councils no later than June 2020. Subsequent agreement will be sought from Councils by September 2020. Any alterations to the terms of reference affecting the Housing and Growth Deal will need to be discussed with Central Government as the programme sponsor before any changes can take effect.

Part 2: Areas for Further Development

42. In addition to the short-term improvements identified above, there are several areas for further potential improvement which have been developed in response to the review. Focussing the Board on strategic planning and infrastructure with a clear remit for securing devolved funding to support our work still leaves space for wider and more strategic discussions between public service leads and the public on county-wide priorities which may be related to, but extend well beyond, a housing and infrastructure discussion; a space to discuss and develop joint programmes related to health, the environment and the economy, for example.

Oxfordshire Leadership Conference

43. This review has shown significant enthusiasm from partners and the public to be more involved in joint planning for the future of Oxfordshire. A public Oxfordshire-wide forum (for the purpose of this report referred to as Oxfordshire Leadership Conference) could take up this space. This could be established to provide a more effective space for public engagement and debate outside of any Growth Board or formal committee-type structure. This is not envisaged as having a committee or board approach but rather a more inclusive space for vision and strategy development and testing through an annual conference for example, with workshops, debates and exhibitions. It would provide a space for clear place-based civic leadership and debate (as shown conceptually to the right⁴) – and an opportunity for deeper and richer engagement



⁴ Hambleton and Sweeting, 2015. The Impacts of Mayoral Governance in Bristol.

on the most important strategic issues for Oxfordshire. This also supports general feedback concerning the need for greater democratisation and engagement in strategic thinking for the whole of the county.

44. This Oxfordshire-wide conference could, for example, focus specifically on collective planning for tackling climate change, and hosting expert and participant forums to inform the discussion. It would be the responsibility of all constituent partners to take actions from this however as a non-decision-making forum.
45. The Board is recommended to endorse further exploration of this concept with other community partnerships across the county. Proposals would be then brought back for the Board to agree later in 2020, but would only be delivered following agreement from each council
46. The Growth Board has run a risk of addressing too many issues to allow for detailed discussion. This is reflected through busy agendas, calls for a wider membership and more work streams. The creation of Oxfordshire Leadership Conference would allow bi-directional communication between it and a cross-section of existing partnership bodies – a network of networks - helping to inform, debate and identify ongoing shared areas of priority work.
47. For example, Oxfordshire Leadership Conference could recommend issues to the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider, and vice versa. The same could be said for the LEP, Oxfordshire Environment Board or the Growth Board. This is a strictly reciprocal and horizontal structure where work can be recommended to existing groups – not hierarchical in any way.

Vision and Ambition

48. Through the consultation, some of those engaged have asked for a vision to be developed setting out the Board's ambitions for Oxfordshire as a whole. We think this has merit and should be explored further as an extension of restating our purpose and as part of our improved approach to communication. This is something we could jointly explore with all of our members and through engaging other Boards in the county under the Oxfordshire Leadership Conference work.

Stand-alone environment body (e.g. Local Nature Partnership)

48. A significant volume of the responses concerned the Board's role in protecting the environment and addressing climate change. Many said this needed to be the Board's top priority. It is important that the Board acknowledges and welcomes this as a short-term message; however, developing a Working Group and a collaborative approach to the environment, and indeed to such a wide-ranging subject as climate change, will take time and should be inclusive of other voices across the county.
49. It is recommended that the Growth Board and its constituent Local Authorities work with the Oxfordshire Environment Board, the DEFRA family and other interested groups exploring the potential for stronger collaboration, including the opportunities that may be realised from establishing a Local Nature Partnership.

50. The key ambition here is to ensure that the environment, including natural capital, biodiversity, nature recovery and resilience and human interaction with greenspaces is placed at the heart of the Board's vision, purpose and actions. This will take some time to establish but it is recommended developing this as soon as possible.

Working Groups

51. Generally, there is support for the role the Sub-Groups are playing and there is no proposal to significantly alter this. These groups were set up to guide specific elements of the Housing & Growth Deal.

52. It is recommended that officers are tasked with exploring the idea of establishing 3 new thematic groups which would guide the Growth Board's overall agreed workplan. These are the emerging themes for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc and basically represent the three pillars of sustainability. These could be phased in and comprised potentially of a wider membership of councillors and system leaders in the subject matter. More work and discussion would be needed with partners through this process, but as a starter, we recommend developing the following thematic groups:

- Economy and Productivity
- Place Shaping and Social Inclusion
- Environment

Scrutiny – Further Improvements

53. It is recommended in addition to the short-term improvements noted previously, that opportunities for more effective use of the group and its time be explored involving the Panel. This may involve deeper dives into very specific issues related to the Housing & Growth Deal, for example. These more detailed pieces of work outside of the formal committee setting are often regarded as the most effective means of scrutiny by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, and the additional support can benefit the work of the Growth Board.

54. The option of attracting non-member involvement in the scrutiny function should also be investigated. This could be in the form of inviting specific technical advisers to participate where a topic warranted this, or indeed bring other perspectives to the table if it was considered appropriate to do so. Ensuring we have the resources available for this critical function is an area we recommend could use further review. It is recognised however that the Scrutiny Panel is still relatively new in its operation, and a wider discussion would be needed with its membership through this process.

55. Part of the reason for developing a large scrutiny panel was to find ways in which to involve more elected members in the work of the Board. This may not have been the most effective way to do this in hindsight, but the intention is a good one and it is recommended ways of gaining wider involvement and support from all elected members across the county are explored. This could be, for example, through very specific task and finish groups or through extended local scrutiny "deep dives" into specific subjects.

Timescales

- 56.** It is recommended that the Growth Board accepts the review's findings and agrees to implement the proposals in two stages: Part 1 being a set of improvements to the operation of the Growth Board implemented as soon as possible; Part 2 being to develop proposals to engage and explore a further set of improvements that would be best considered and shaped by a more inclusive group of participants across the Growth Board membership.
- 57.** Assuming agreement, officers will seek to get revised Terms of Reference for the Part 1 changes back to the Growth Board by June 2020 and seek agreement to these with each council as soon as possible but most aiming for Autumn 2020 (allowing for local elections to be completed and the time to run through local decision-making cycles).
- 58.** Following engagement and development of the Oxfordshire Leadership Conference proposals, along with the other Part 2 improvements, detailed proposals will be presented no later than September 2020 to the Growth Board and any other relevant body for views and support in principle, with subsequent approval and programme development sought from local authorities and partners by the end of 2020.
- 59.** It should be noted that the recommendations set out in this report are that of the report authors and not the Growth Board itself. Accordingly, it is expected that more discussions will be needed with each constituent member over the coming months to develop a consensus and support for the detailed next steps.

Report Authors:

Bev Hindle, Director Oxfordshire Growth Board

Stefan Robinson, Growth Board Manager

Contact:

bev.hindle@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Stefan.robinson@southandvale.gov.uk

Annex 1

Oxfordshire Growth Board Review **SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED**

December 2019

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SUMMARY

1. This report provides a summary of the responses received to the Growth Board Review which commenced on 24 September 2019 and ended on 6 December 2019. The purpose of the engagement activities carried out through this review was to gather the views of members of the public, councillors and stakeholders about the current functioning of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, and how it might improve its processes and administration going forward.
2. In total, 247 responses were received to an online public survey, together with feedback from 42 people across three workshops. Seven written submissions were also received via the Growth Board's email inbox. All responses have been considered in producing this report.

BACKGROUND

3. The Oxfordshire Growth Board was established in 2014 as a Joint Committee¹ of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners. It was set up to facilitate and enable joint working on matters concerning economic development, strategic planning and growth. The Board's establishment was premised on strengthening partnership arrangements across Oxfordshire for pragmatic working on key strategic issues. It has done this by overseeing the delivery of cross-county projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver in a collaborative way – between local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partners and stakeholders.²
4. The Board replaced the former Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership, the Local Transport Board, and incorporated oversight of the 2014 City Deal with Government. The Board's operation has sought to align these strategic meetings under a single Terms of Reference and governing body³. The work of the Board also tangibly demonstrates the partner authorities' willingness to cooperate on strategic planning matters as required under the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
5. The Board considered at its meeting on 24 September 2019 that it was timely to review its role and function to ensure that the most effective arrangements are in place to enable collaboration and delivery on Oxfordshire wide priorities.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

6. An online public survey was developed and issued as part of the review. The survey asked a series of questions concerning how respondents viewed the Board in its current form, and if, why and how it should change. The survey was open between 24 September 2019 and 26 November 2019; one meeting cycle of the Growth Board. To draw attention to the survey, invitations to complete were sent to all District and County Councillors and promoted through a staff and councillor newsletter, and invitations sent to all those signed up to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 mailing list. Local press releases and follow up releases were issued drawing attention to the Survey, which were also promoted through the Growth Board's website, and the survey was highlighted via the Growth Board's social media pages.

¹ under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.

² As a Joint Committee, the Board may discharge executive functions, but each constituent authority retains the ability to exercise all executive and non-executive functions generally and specifically in relation to economic development including where applicable provision of housing, strategic spatial planning and strategic transport planning.

³ Oxfordshire Growth Board. 2014. Terms of Reference.

7. Three feedback sessions were held; two for district and county councillors (19 attendees) and one for members of the public (23 attendees). These sessions were set up in a semi-structured way to enable broad discussion about the Board, lasting approximately two hours. Respondents' comments from across the engagement exercises have been collated into key themes, with the strongest themes discussed within this report.
8. Responses to the review were not significant enough in number to be considered a representative sample of Oxfordshire's residents. However, the results do provide a valuable insight into the views that some people hold about the Growth Board. Appendix 1 sets out demographic data of respondents compared to the Oxfordshire Population. The two data sets show that the survey received:
 - A significant underrepresentation of people aged 16 - 34
 - An overrepresentation of people aged 55-64
 - An underrepresentation of Asian or Asian British respondents
9. Whilst a total of 247 responses were received to the survey, not all questions were mandatory, and therefore some statistics presented in this report may not total with the overall number of respondents.

Figure 1: Survey Respondent type	Number
An individual*	171
A parish, district or county councillor, or officer	54
A business or organisation	22

**NB - it is evident that some councillors identified as responding as an individual, rather than as a councillor.*

10. This report summarises responses to the Growth Board review, and it is not intended to make conclusions about the actions which should be taken as a result of the review. Example responses are presented as standard or indicative of wider themes within the overall responses to the review. Recommendations will be presented separately to the Board on 28 January 2019, alongside this paper.

Part 1: Perceptions of the Growth Board

11. The survey set out to ask how respondents perceived the Growth Board in its current form, and how it should be perceived in the future, if it is to change. Whilst terminology differed between respondents, the most frequently mentioned comments about the current Board was that it was viewed as undemocratic and unaccountable. Key suggestions for improvement concerned being more environmentally focussed, transparent and accountable. The survey asked respondents to set out in three words how they perceived the Growth Board, and how they would ideally see the Growth Board operating in a further three words. The figures below set out the most frequently used words in each case:

Figure 2: Perceptions of the <u>current</u> Growth Board	Frequency
Undemocratic	36
Unaccountable	15
Unknown	15
Opaque	13

Figure 3: Perceptions of an <u>ideal</u> Growth Board	Frequency
Sustainability / environmentally focussed	45
Democratic	26
Transparent	26
Accountable	22

12. Respondents were then asked to explain what changes, if any, they would like implemented by the Growth Board to move them from the first set of words to the second. Example standard responses are listed below:
- *The Growth Board needs to listen to the views of residents and take them into consideration when making future plans. It also needs to recognise that growth is not always good. The impact of growth on climate change and on quality of life of the county's residents should be central to any decisions made by the Board.*
 - *An important group like this should be known to the electorate they represent including members, recommendations, reports, decisions and achievements. The electorate should have the means of engaging with the group more easily via their councillors.*
 - *The Growth Board has evolved into a vital strategic voice for Oxfordshire. Nowhere else does local government, NHS, Universities, business, Environment Agency and transport providers come together to consider how best to plan for the county's future success. If it didn't exist, everyone would demand we had it.*
 - *The Growth Board seems unaccountable for its actions.*
 - *The work of the growth board is relatively unknown to the majority of council staff and residents. Aside from the aim of supporting the growth deal, I would not be able to explain further than that what its aims are.*

Part 2: Priorities and purpose

13. There were mixed views regarding the Growth Board's future role and function. Many contributors suggested that the Board should expand or refocus its work on wider issues affecting Oxfordshire, such as health, active and public transport, social inclusion and more frequently, environmental preservation and climate change. Several said that it should be entirely environmentally focussed, and some that its structure should be bolstered with environmental experts or representatives. There was general support for the county having a strategic forum where local priorities could be discussed, and work apportioned. Example standard responses are listed below:
- *The aim should be for a joined-up approach to supporting and improving well-being and quality of life in the region and its natural environment.*
 - *We are convinced across the county that there has to be something around collaboration. Terminology is very important. Rethink the title.*
 - *I would like sustainability and the reduction of carbon emissions to be at the heart of all discussions and decisions. What does the county actually need to make it a better place to live? Consider what needs people have within the context which we are currently living. We need to be helped to make more sustainable choices. Better public transport, better cycling links into to Oxford and the towns. Growth should have a positive impact on the environment and peoples' wellbeing.*
 - *The focus should be on creating a sustainable future that protects our local and global environment.*
 - *The key strategic function should be ensuring the co-location of jobs, homes and appropriate services and facilities in a sustainable pattern of development.*

Part 3: Consensus, influence and decision-making

14. Feedback showed general support for having a joint forum of council and system leaders for the purposes of pooling knowledge and building consensus on key strategic issues across Oxfordshire. However, there were different views on how that structure should operate and the means by which any objectives are set. Consensus building and information sharing are key elements of the Growth Board’s existing role, but feedback suggested that this is not clear, or that it could be demonstrated more effectively.
15. A significant number of responses inferred that the Growth Board has planning powers, or other powers which are usually reserved for local authorities. This is a misunderstanding which often related to the production of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, for which local planning authorities hold the sole responsibility for adoption through their own democratic processes. The Growth Board provides a monitoring and oversight role in this process, but this was expressed as unclear.
16. Feedback suggested that the formal processes surrounding the Growth Board gave an impression of regularised decision-making. For example, the formal structure of meetings, its name, the use of a scrutiny function, and voting and non-voting terminology typifies decision-making structures seen elsewhere in local government. Respondents also highlighted how the endorsement and support given to formal reports can be confused with decision-making. The sometimes brief discussion of an issue was also highlighted as implying decision-making. Example standard responses are listed below:
- *The perception is widespread that it is a decision-making body – embed that or make clear it is not.*
 - *The Board needs to get bigger and take decisions or become smaller but communicate clearly that it is nothing more than that. It can’t be somewhere in between.*
 - *There is clearly some confusion as to what the Growth Board does and what powers it holds. There is a need to be clear about what, if any, powers are held by the Board and what impact it has. Ongoing issues with the Growth Deal and Growth Board cause confusion. How are these linked?*
 - *The purpose should include continuing to act as the vehicle for cooperation between councils in order to secure, for example, regional infrastructure funding. Purpose should not include receiving and noting reports not for decision... A new item should be clearly added to Purpose and Objectives, which is to act as and take responsibility for public engagement with regional-level decision-making.*

Part 4: Communication

17. 92% of respondents said they did not receive enough information about the Growth Board, and social media, print media and e-newsletters were the recommended routes of communication. Just under half of the respondents were unaware that they could attend a meeting of the Growth Board. 39 respondents said they had attended a meeting of the Growth Board. There was a strong message throughout the responses that the Board should improve its communication with the public and councillors. This was couched in terms of making clear its role, its vision and / or priorities, and how the public could be involved. An updated structure and staff chart was also requested.
18. There were frequent requests for the Board to undertake engagement activities with local communities, such as with parish councils, schools and community groups. Many

respondents were unaware of when and where Growth Board meetings were held, or that it had a website.

19. The responses showed that the Growth Board was understood by different people in different ways, by the public, councillors and council officers. Several responses asked that the Board develop a clear vision for its work and for Oxfordshire, whilst others said the Board was not the right forum for this to be achieved; or perhaps it could be with a new structure and approach. Example standard responses are listed below:

- *There should be better, simpler and clearer communication, proactively engaging and reaching out to all of Oxon's diverse residents and all ages.*
- *There is clear confusion between the Growth Board and the Growth Deal.*
- *It is evident that the Growth Board administration is significantly under-resourced. To improve communications and public awareness requires an ongoing proactive and properly funded communications programme. Principally newspapers, newsletters, council websites and social media.*
- *More input from people of Oxfordshire of how they would like the county to develop. Oxfordshire 2050 consultation provides an excellent basis for this.*
- *I think that it works fine, but a better publicity job needs to be done*
- *More publicity about what it is, what it does, who it is responsible to, what it is expected to achieve.*
- *Greater clarity should be given around the growth boards long term aims and directions. This could be a simple communications exercise.*

Part 5: Name Change

20. There were a number of suggestions for renaming the Growth Board to better reflect its current or possible future role and function. To those who saw the Board as a wide-ranging forum considering a cross-section of issues, the Oxfordshire Partnership or Vision Oxfordshire were considered appropriate titles. Others suggested that sustainability should be in the title, alongside planning, infrastructure and / or development. Alongside numerous requests to remove *Growth* from the title (on the basis it implies that 'growth' takes priority over other interests), the *Board* element of the title was also highlighted as inappropriate, given that it rarely takes decisions. Some respondents felt that the Board's name was right for its purpose however and should not change.

Figure 4: New names proposed for the Oxfordshire Growth Board	
The Oxfordshire	Group Board Partnership Forum Assembly Conference Panel
The Oxfordshire Prosperity	
The Oxfordshire Sustainability	
The Oxfordshire Future <i>or</i> Vision	
The Oxfordshire Sustainable Planning / Development / Infrastructure	
The Oxfordshire Strategic Planning / Development / Infrastructure	
The Oxfordshire Wellbeing	
Vision Oxfordshire	
Leadership Oxfordshire	

21. Example standard responses are listed below:

- *The name needs to change to reflect the nature of growth which is desired: achievable, sustainable, green, etc, rather than just Growth.*
- *In name and nature, it should be rising to the challenge of the climate emergency.*

- *There should be a new name. Maybe wellbeing forum or Oxon Futures Group*
- *There is a fantastic opportunity here to make the Growth Board truly inclusive and representative and turn it into a deliberative democracy process that could transform decision making and serve as a model for amazing localism in a true sense. It needs a change of name of course; Growth is hardly the key issue.*
- *You should be trying to increase peoples' overall happiness, but we appreciate you can't call it the 'Happiness Board.' Perhaps 'Prosperity or 'Well-being'.*

Part 6: Membership

22. A principal request from respondents was for additional environmental representation within the Growth Board's Structure. Some suggested that this should involve a seat on the Board for an environmental group, and others asked for expert environmental officers to be employed to support specific projects. There were equally regular requests for community representatives to have a seat on the Board, though there was no uniformity in where that person should be recruited from. The majority of responses on the issue of membership called for an increased membership to include ecological, parish, community, business, voluntary and youth representation, for example.
23. On the question of whether the membership was appropriate for each group, the following answers were given:
- Growth Board: Yes (56) No (121)
 - Growth Board Scrutiny Panel: Yes (74) No (91)
 - Growth Deal Advisory Sub Groups: Yes (50) No (112)
24. Example standard responses are set out below:
- *It should either only contain elected representatives or it should widen its base to encompass, at the very least, environmental and citizens groups.*
 - *The Growth Board and its sub-bodies (including officer/executive committees) must have representatives with meaningful environmental knowledge and skills as voting members, able to input to strategic debate and decision making.*
 - *The Board should be more democratic - including democratically elected people who are experts in ecology, sustainability and climate change.*
 - *I would like to see 2 additional board members - one from a community perspective, the other representing the environment.*
 - *You should promote community representatives on to the board for real local feedback.*
 - *Young people need representation.*

Part 7: Citizen Involvement

25. Underpinning a significant number of responses was a request for establishing a platform for citizen involvement in planning for the future of Oxfordshire. This was often linked back to the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (Joint Statutory Spatial Plan) which the Growth Board currently monitors, but for which formal decision-making powers lay with each local planning authority. Integral to many responses were suggestions of developing a wider forum for local residents, businesses and stakeholders to engage with and influence future planning for the county.
26. Some said this could be achieved through an expansion of the membership of the Growth Board, whilst others championed the establishment of a new form of citizen assembly, or

through more consultations and workshop opportunities. This also extended to informing a possible vision for the county as a whole. Example responses are listed below:

- *For practicality, perhaps there should be a 'Citizens Assembly' or some other panel rather than consultations.*
- *I would like the Growth Board to set up a People's Assembly to discuss the Climate Emergency and what measures can be taken to reduce carbon emissions and protect habitats, wildlife and diversity.*
- *Growth boards could be turned into citizens assemblies*
- *Get normal people involved, a bit like the citizens assemblies, where we can input into what happens in our communities... People are engaging right now... Cogs are turning too slowly... This board has an opportunity to capture the moment... And it's so very important.*
- *Work with citizens, citizens groups, employers and campaign groups to find solutions that meet the need of Oxfordshire based on data and facts.*

CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of the feedback received to the Growth Board Review. Responses will be used to help inform any changes to the operation of the Board's work. A report will be presented to the Board on 28 January 2020 setting out recommendations for change and improvement.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the results presented in this report, please contact:

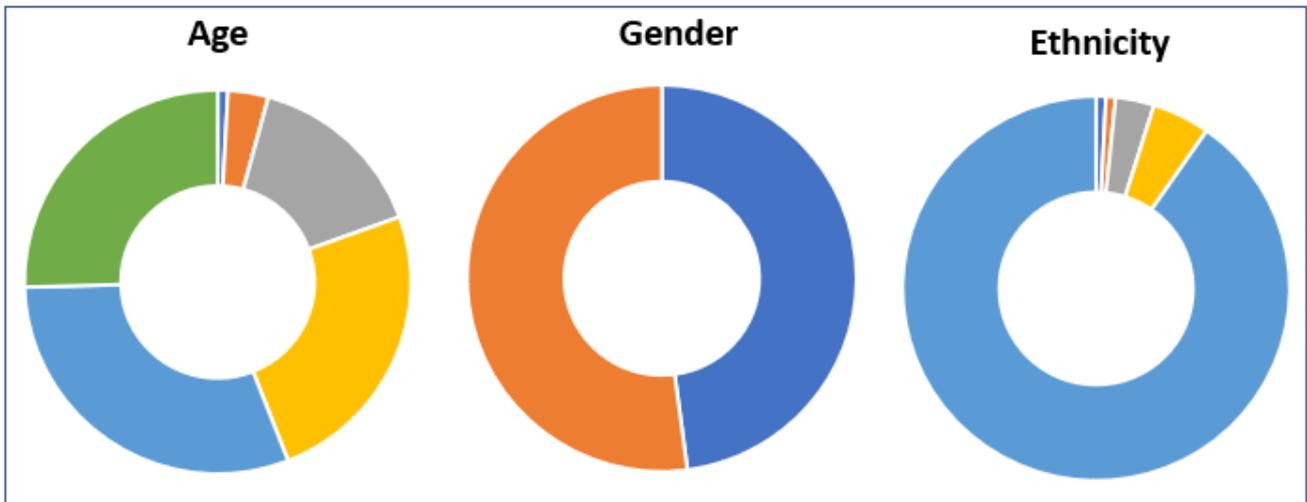
democratic.services@oxfordshiregrowthboard.org

For information about the Growth Board, please visit:

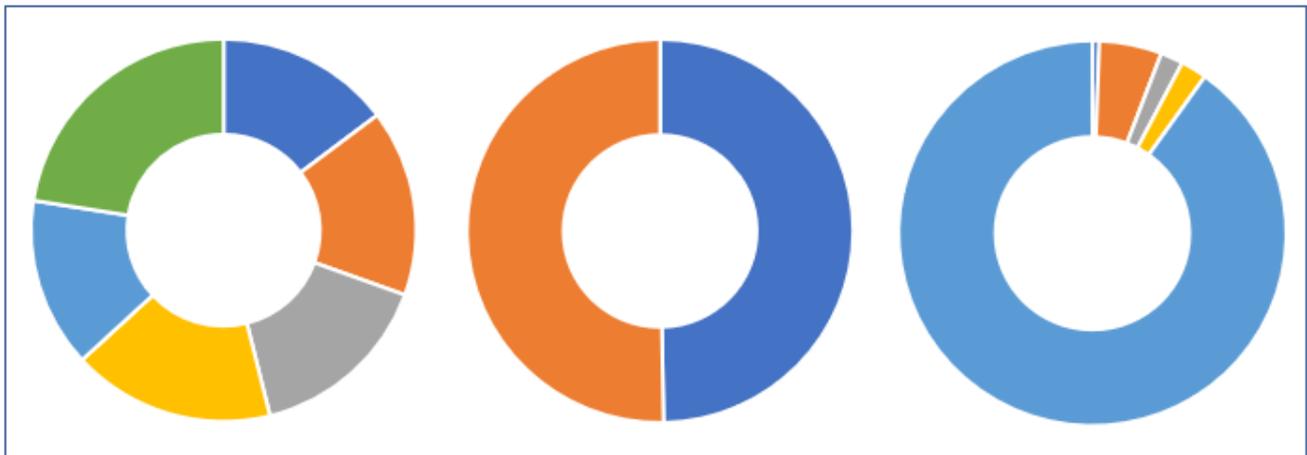
<https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/>

Appendix 1

Survey Demographic



Oxfordshire Demographic



- 16 - 24 ■ 25 - 34 ■ 35 - 44
- 45 - 54 ■ 55 - 64 ■ 65+

- Male ■ Female

- Other
- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White

**Age and gender statistics are based on ONS Mid-year estimates 2018/19*

**Ethnicity statistics are based on the 2011 Census.*

**Graphs on survey respondents do not account for those who did not answer.*

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Infrastructure Sub-Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2020 AT 1.00 PM
 MEMBERS BOARD ROOM, COUNTY HALL, OXFORD, OX1 1ND

Present:

Councillors , Yvonne Constance, Jeff Haine, Lynn Pratt, Judy Roberts, Linda Smith and David Turner

Officers: Sue Halliwell, Kevin Jacob, Owen Jenkins and John Disley

32 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interest; Chair's announcements

Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Hudspeth, (Chair, Oxfordshire County Council). In the absence of Councillor Hudspeth it was agreed that Councillor Constance would chair the meeting.

33 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 were received.

34 Digital Infrastructure Strategy

The sub-group considered a draft report to the Growth Board and draft Oxfordshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan. The subgroup noted that the Growth Board was to be asked to welcome the Strategy and to request that each Growth Board local authority partner consider adoption of the strategy through their own decision-making procedures. This was already in process and it was expected that Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet would consider the Strategy in February.

The sub-group was informed of the following key points:

- A clearer mandate in respect of full fibre connectivity was emerging
- Community engagement to facilitate an environment supportive of the implementation of the strategy would continue to be important.
- The strategy could provide a bedrock for future digital investment
- The strategy contained ambitious targets and it was important to recognise that there would be challenges in rolling out infrastructure such as full fibre and 5G in difficult to access urban environments such as the City of Oxford.

- As a county, Oxfordshire would be in a stronger position with HM Government to seek to influence future digital infrastructure decisions if there was an agreed position on digital infrastructure across local authorities.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- The Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme had been very successful in improving broadband connectivity and internet speed, but provision remained poor in some locations and in future more capacity and speed would be required. It was noted that broadband roll out was now at the point of trying to connect the hardest to reach and most remote areas.
- The Better Broadband Contract operated on a gain-share principle which it was felt had been a beneficial arrangement for Oxfordshire. The Digital Infrastructure Strategy would help leverage in further investment which would need to be applied in systematic way.
- It was hoped that if agreed by Oxfordshire local authorities, the Memorandum of Understanding associated with the strategy would represent a mutual recognition of the importance of digital infrastructure to Oxfordshire's future and help facilitate a general consistency of approach to the consideration by local planning authorities to the provision of digital infrastructure, whilst acknowledging local sovereignty of planning matters.
- Members felt that in some locations, even those relatively close to urban areas, it was likely to remain uneconomic or unaffordable to put in place full fibre connectivity and queried whether satellite broad band had also been considered. It was noted that this had not been ruled out, but that at this stage such provision was not expected to be generate enough return on investment for providers. It was not felt that the existing presence of satellite provision to some communities or individual users would slow down or act as an inhibitor to full fibre provision in those areas in the future.
- Although 5G represented the next stage in mobile infrastructure provision, not all areas had access yet to a reliable 4G provision. New arrangements between mobile providers would facilitate greater sharing of infrastructure like masts.
- Members commented on the importance of effective public engagement around full fibre and 5G mobile connectivity, particularly in respect of making sure accurate information was available to address potential public concerns. Officers were asked to take this into consideration.

The sub-group welcomed the paper and supported the recommendations to the Growth Board. A further update in June/July was requested.

35 Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study

The sub-group considered a draft report to the Growth Board which set out the findings of the first stage of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study which had been part funded by the Growth Board. The report also summarised a specific report undertaken in respect of the Cowley branch line and set out a proposed approach in respect of second stage of the programme. It was noted that the final published version of the report would include an Executive Summary of the study.

Key findings from the first stage of the strategy included:

- There was a need for more rail capacity and connectivity in Oxfordshire in the future.

- A significant proportion of the future provision would be required prior to 2028, earlier than previously estimated.
- East West Rail Phase 2 (Oxford to Bedford and Milton Keynes) would significantly increase demands at key stations including Bicester village.
- The study had the need for around 20 priority connections and the need for better connectivity through Oxford.
- Further business cases would be required and the challenges in moving forward were fully recognised.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members of the sub-group queried and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of submitting a series of individual business cases relating to individual rail projects or a combined business case encompassing several projects. It was noted that it was likely that a balanced approach would be needed, but it was difficult to tie different projects together.
- Member queried the alignment of the study with Network Rail infrastructure programmes in terms of extra lines, signalling improvements etc. It was noted that the paper had taken account of this.
- Increasing or providing new rail capacity also had implications on wider access to station issues, such as the provision of carparking which would be a separate piece of work.
- Bicester Village Outlet had seen a significant amount of its customers travel by rail.
- Consideration had been given to the linkages between the rail study and ongoing work on the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, (LTCP5).
- It was noted that the study did not in itself lead to any automatic commitment of funding and it was important that expectations were managed. It did strength Oxfordshire's case.
- Although the boundaries of the study were roughly focussed on Didcot Parkway in the South and Banbury in the North, the impact and potential opportunities arising from other studies and projects further afield would continue to be assessed and considered.

Members of the sub-group welcomed the paper and supported the recommendations.

36 Housing Infrastructure Fund Update

The sub-group received an update on bids to HM Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund, (HIF).

A40 Smart Corridor

Work was continuing to progress the draft Heads of Terms agreement, and it was hoped that agreement on this might be reached in February leading to a funding agreement in early spring.

Didcot Garden Town

It was noted that correspondence and discussions were continuing between South Oxfordshire District Council, (SODC) and HM Government in respect of the future of the SODC Local Plan. Oxfordshire County Council's position was that it remained ready to sign the Didcot Garden Town HIF project funding agreement, however Homes England are still waiting for MHCLG to confirm they are content that all the conditions of the funding

agreement have been met i.e. SODC have a submitted Local Plan. Due to the level of the financial exposure, if no agreement was reached by 31 January work by Oxfordshire County Council would have to cease with an impact on the project's timelines.

37 Growth Deal Infrastructure Delivery Programme Update

The sub-group received an update on the Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme. Key points included:

- Whilst accepting the challenge of meeting the spend profile from a standing start, Growth Deal infrastructure spend had been below expectations and work had taken place to accelerate this by a conducting a through end to end review of the systems in place from initial project feasibility to delivery.
- Where appropriate the programme had been reprofiled to prioritise delivery and discussions with the supply chain were taking place.
- Additional staff resource and expertise was now in place to support the programme and a more linear process adopted.
- Leadership and management of projects had been further strengthened by managers having overall oversight and responsibility for a coordination of a transport corridor, (including all the individual schemes and funding streams within in).
- It was acknowledged that communication with local communities and stakeholders could be improved.

In discussion, members of the sub-group commented that they would wish to see the detail of the revised programme. The sub-group was informed that a report would be brought to a future meeting as well as the Growth Board itself.

38 Indicative Forward Plan

The subgroup considered an indicative forward programme. It was noted this did not yet include provisional meeting dates considering the potential need to change the date of the March meeting. The following topics were noted:

- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
- Natural Capital
- Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, (LTCP5)
- England's Economic Heartland, (EEH) – Transport Strategy for the South East – update on emerging strategies.
- HIF Delivery Programme
- Digital Infrastructure Strategy Update.

39 Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was scheduled for 13 March 2020, but that it might be necessary to find an alternative considering the rescheduling of the Growth Board to 11 March 2020.

The meeting closed at 2.30 pm