

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

## Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny

### Panel

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

HELD ON THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 6.30 PM  
OLD LIBRARY, OXFORD TOWN HALL, OX1 1BX

#### Present:

Councillors Andrew Gant (Chair), Nick Carter, Andy Cooke, Julian Cooper, Peter Dragonetti, Ted Fenton, Sarah Gray, Damian Haywood, Shaida Hussain, Sarah Medley, Alex Postan, Craig Simmons, Anne-Marie Simpson, John Tanner and Richard Webber

#### Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Amit Alva	Project and Scrutiny Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Caroline Green	Assistant Chief Executive – Oxford City Council
Giles Hughes	Chief Executive – West Oxfordshire District Council
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Aaron Rosser	Growth Deal Service Delivery Manager
Paul Staines	Growth Deal Service Delivery Manager
Rachel Williams	Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Lead

#### Other councillors:

Councillor Susan Brown, (Leader of Oxford City Council and member of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Councillor Emily Smith, (Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council and Vice-Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

### 15 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes; Declarations of Interest; Chair's Announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted from:

Councillor Matthew Barber, Vale of White Horse District Council  
Councillor Derek Cotterill, West Oxfordshire District Council, (substituted by Councillor Alex Postan)  
Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne, Vale of White Horse District Council, (substituted by Councillor Sarah Medley)  
Councillor Sean Woodcock, Cherwell District Council (substituted by Councillor Shaida Hussain)  
Councillor Lucinda Wing, Cherwell District Council.

## Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sarah Medley declared an interest in item 5.c (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report Q1) on the grounds that she was an employee of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) – the UKAEA was referred to in paragraph 51 of the report in relation to Harwell Land Remediation. She remained for the discussion of the item.

## Chair's Announcements

With the Panel's permission, the Chair stated that he intended to change the order of the Agenda to consider item 5.c (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report Q1) before items 3 and 4. This would allow Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council and Chair of the Growth Board Housing Advisory Sub-Group, to take part in the discussion and answer any questions from the Panel.

## **16 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2019 were approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to two minor typographical corrections.

### Matters arising from the minutes:

Agenda page 8: The review of the Growth Board referred to by Councillor Sue Cooper in her remarks to the previous meeting was expected to start on 24 September following the discussion at the Growth Board meeting that day.

Agenda page 13, 10<sup>th</sup> bullet point: At its previous meeting, the Panel had requested the production of annualised housing and affordable housing trajectories. This would include a graph comparing actual versus forecast housing (4-year plan) and affordable housing stated as a percentage of overall housing completions – this information would be derived from the Annual Monitoring Reports. The Chair asked the Panel to consider whether the briefing note they had received outside of the meeting had answered this request.

## **17 Public Participation**

The Panel heard one public statement and two questions from members of the public.

Daniel Scharf MRTPI, had submitted the following statement which was noted in his absence:

Homes England is the Government's housing accelerator and attends the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

Home England is committed to the building of sustainable housing (advice from the Home England Policy Analyst – Strategy, Performance & Delivery Unit). Given that the carbon embodied in the housing built just last year was at 30x (thirty times) the level necessary to reach net zero carbon, what measures will be taken to ensure that all new housing will now only be permitted to be constructed in ways that ensure this target will be met?

Councillor Ian Middleton, Cherwell District Council asked the following questions:

---

I very much welcome the imminent review of the roles of the Growth Board, however I am concerned about how the consultation will be handled. There's little information about how widely the review will be publicised and it seems the public and councillors will to have actively 'apply' to take part in the consultation rather than be invited. Phrases such as "first come first served" also suggest a degree of limitation. I'd be grateful for some clarification on this.

I'm also encouraged that the Board is now receiving more scrutiny, but I'm still concerned about how effectively Oxfordshire is represented by a body that is not directly elected and wields far more influence than it appears to admit to.

The Board's claim to democratic accountability is that it is made up of the elected leaders of various local government bodies in Oxfordshire, but that's a somewhat reductionist interpretation of democracy.

Moreover, the dominance of any one party across member councils leads to a position whereby the collective decisions of the Board become county-wide policy by default.

I would, therefore, urge you to seek further democratic involvement perhaps by direct election of additional members of the Board by public vote – by allowing members of the public to sit on the Board via random selection (as with a people's assembly), and by ensuring more cross-party representation on the Board and the Scrutiny Panel.

It's also encouraging for me as a Green to see that the Board plans to take more account of climate change issues. With several councils in Oxfordshire recognising the climate emergency, we should no longer be pursuing growth for its own sake, but currently this seems to be the main function of the Board.

I think instead the Board should become more of a curator and moderator of organic growth, rather than a stimulator of extra growth. It's arguable that further expansion in an already oversubscribed area like Oxfordshire should be controlled rather than encouraged.

The impact of the Board on the local environment is evidenced by its stimulation of housing expansion, most recently to help meet Oxford's projected un-met housing need.

As you know, this resulted in a so-called 'working assumption' of need that has been used by all district councils to develop or review local plans, in turn putting extensive areas of green belt under threat.

Green spaces have a vital role in sequestering carbon and reducing climate change. Their replacement by housing, roads, car parks etc has a direct impact on the environment, in terms of loss of habitat, carbon sinking capability and increased emissions.

Oxford's housing figures have been criticised as an over-estimate by both the planning inspectorate and other planning consultants (including one commissioned by the city council itself). By implication this also throws doubt on the 'working assumption'.

When the assumption was arrived at, it was promised that it would be subject to review as new evidence became available, and of course the only way to be absolutely sure of the numbers would be for Oxford's local plan to be tested and agreed.

---

In view of the questions surrounding the 'working assumption', and with the Oxford plan examination only 2 months away, will the Board now commit to re-examine the working assumption, and if it's found to be an over-estimate, signal local councils that they should also reconsider their own plans before unnecessary and irreversible damage is done to vital green infrastructure?'

Sue Haywood on behalf of Need not Greed Oxfordshire, (NNGO) asked the following question:

Need Not Greed Oxfordshire welcomes the proposed review of Growth Board processes, especially with regards to governance & transparency.

We ask Scrutiny Panel to ensure that this includes consideration of the mandate of members appointed to the Growth Board and its sub-bodies.

For example, we note that the Growth Board did not agree to the Panel's recommendation that it should clarify how the Joint Declaration of Ambition (for the Oxford Cambridge Arc) would be subject to public scrutiny and debate.

Specifically, the response says the support came from the Leaders and there will be no public scrutiny of that particular support.

However, it is a fact that the Leaders of each Council signed the Joint Declaration of Ambition about the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, alongside four Cabinet Ministers, on behalf of their local authorities, but without local councillors being aware of that Declaration's content nor even, in some cases, of the existence of such a document.

Any subsequent debate on the merits, purpose and direction of the Arc has, therefore, already been compromised.

The consultation mentioned in the Growth Board's response to Scrutiny, due to take place over this summer/autumn, has also apparently vanished without trace.

The Director of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (Update for 24 Sept meeting) acknowledges that linked projects such as the Arc and the Local Industrial Strategy will need to be taken into account in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

This means that it is vital that the mandate for those representing Oxfordshire's local authorities on these projects is clearly defined and understood, especially at the earlier strategic decision-making points.

In discussion about the issues raised the Scrutiny Panel commented:

- That in relation to Councillor Middleton's remarks about the potential role of the Growth Board in moderating growth, there needed to be consideration of the current consumption of resources and production of carbon. This would require a baseline knowledge (for example, the carbon emitted in the production of concrete), which could then be compared to alternative construction materials. It was suggested that HM Government data could be used to facilitate this.
  - That there was support for more democratic engagement within the Growth Board.
-

The Chair stated that the issues raised by the public, and the comments of the Panel in discussion, could be taken into consideration in the course of the meeting.

## **18 Growth Board response to Growth Board Scrutiny Panel recommendations - May 2019 meeting**

The Panel noted the Growth Board's responses to recommendations from the meeting on 30 May 2019, as set out in the Agenda. In addition, the Chair updated the Panel on his attendance at the Growth Board on 4 June 2019.

In respect of Recommendation 3 relating to the commissioning of a review of the Oxfordshire Green Belt, which had been agreed in part, the Chair queried the Growth Board's response. He indicated that he would ask the Board which methodology and HM Government guidance would be used to inform any update to the review of the previous Green Belt work.

The Growth Board's response to Recommendation 4 had, in part, stated that it was not for the Board to inform HM Government how its programmes should be signed off. The Chair disagreed with this statement and indicated he felt that clarification should be given as to why.

The Growth Board had not agreed with Recommendation 6 relating to clarification of how the Joint Declaration of Ambition between HM Government and local partners would be subject to public scrutiny and debate. The Chair queried whether the public engagement exercise, referenced in the response, had in fact taken place over the summer period. In reply, Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive of Oxford City Council, commented that it had been HM Government's original intention for the engagement to take place over the summer, but that the process had been delayed.

The Chair indicated that he would raise this issue as part of his next report to the Growth Board at its meeting on 24 September.

## **19 Oxfordshire Growth Board Papers 24 September 2019 for Discussion**

### **a England's Economic Heartland (EEH) Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement**

James Gagg, OxCam Corridor Co-Ordinator, and John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy and Policy Manager at Oxfordshire County Council, presented a report (and supporting appendix) to the Growth Board. This summarised progress on the development of a Transport Strategy for England's Economic Heartland (EEH). The report also asked the Board to comment on the strategy and to consider the principle of a joint Oxfordshire Authority response to the current engagement exercise on the Outline Transport Strategy.

It was noted that the approval of the detail of any joint response would be a matter for each local authority through its own processes and it would remain open for each authority to make its own response instead of, or as well as, the joint response. Oxfordshire County Council was due to consider its response at its Cabinet meeting of 15 October.

In discussion, the Panel commented:

---

- That the outline strategy did not make enough reference to road pricing and automatous vehicles.
- That the ambition to have a zero-carbon transport system by 2050 was incompatible with the aims around economic growth. It was, therefore, unclear how this goal would be translated into reality. Further, the Panel made clear that in its' opinion an Expressway would be in direct conflict with any ambition to achieve a zero-carbon transport system.
- That improvements in the rail network such as East West Rail and the Cowley Branch line were supported.
- That the main purpose of the Strategy should be to achieve a zero-carbon transport system by 2050. Moreover, this objective should be the starting point in designing a transport strategy, rather than an additional requirement to be considered at a later date.
- It was sensible for the strategy to plan for infrastructure to lead to housing rather than housing being provided prior to infrastructure.

**RESOLVED:** That the Growth Board feedback to England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy consultation, that the central and main purpose be to achieve a Zero-Carbon transport system by 2050, to first use it as a starting point rather than later taking steps to reduce zero carbon.

#### **b Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report Q1**

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board which set out an update on progress at Quarter 1, Year 2 (2019/2020) of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Aaron Rosser and Paul Staines, Growth Deal Service Delivery Managers, presented the report to the Panel.

The following points of the report were highlighted to the Panel:

- The Housing from Infrastructure Programme (HFI) included a commitment to spend £30m per annum on infrastructure projects that have been identified as enabled for planned growth in Oxfordshire. The total value of the programme was £150m.
- This expenditure would accelerate the delivery of 6,549 planned homes.
- The Year 1 target had been achieved. This had been partially assisted by several previously developed projects that had reached a point where they could be moved quickly into the delivery phase. The outlook for Year 2 was more challenging. This was because activity on the design and research of schemes was relatively low cost at the beginning of the programme, whereas higher cost construction could be delivered later.
- Work was in progress to maximise as much spend in Year 2 as possible and to better understand a realistic cost profile of the programme as it matured. As this work continued, officers would be better able to predict the progress of schemes.
- The trajectory for the programme was positive, with an estimate of 8,584 homes for the HFI element of the Growth Deal by Year 5. This was not, however, without risk and, therefore, efforts were being directed to assess and mitigate against any blockages which could stop this forecast from being achieved.

The Panel referred to the section of the report relating to the Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Programme (OAHP) and noted that in para. 19, the current predicted total budget drawdown was £50.755m against an indicative budget of £60m. Officers acknowledged the challenges to the OAHP and that this reflected a reduction in grant spending. There had been a reduction in spending towards supporting social renting in comparison to

---

shared ownership, but a key focus of officers remained to ensure full spend against the budget.

The Panel noted the challenges to the OAHP, including the competitiveness of the current grant rates, which ongoing discussions with Homes England were trying to address. Grant rates for supporting social renting, whilst felt to be optimum at the time of the agreement of the Deal, had not proved to be as attractive as anticipated to registered providers of social housing. Potential mitigations included that partner registered providers might use recycled capital grant funds obtained when homes were sold under right to buy that were retained for recycling into new affordable housing alongside OAHP, use of Retained Right to Buy Receipts for councils with such receipts and the Homes England Strategic Partnership arrangement.

The Panel queried whether it would be legally permissible to use Section 106 funds secured for affordable housing to support OAHP. It was felt that this could only be for the offsite provision of affordable housing. In response, officers clarified that it was felt that funds could potentially be used in this way, but that it would be a matter for individual councils.

The Panel requested a list of infrastructure projects to support homes linked to the HFI (and their associated housing developments) so that progress might be tracked. Officers agreed to provide a table to set this out.

It was queried whether the HFI and OAHP had been revisited considering the passing of Climate Emergency motions by several Oxfordshire partner authorities. The Panel was informed that this had not explicitly been undertaken to date. The Growth Deal was a summation of all the partner authority ambitions, and it was clear that there was an ambition to promote affordable housing with a lower carbon footprint. If a requirement for lower carbon affordable homes was stipulated in local plans, then this would be what was delivered, but the potential effect on delivery trajectory had not yet been analysed. This might be a future potential item for consideration by the Growth Board Housing Advisory Sub-Group.

In relation to the risk management of the Homes from Infrastructure Programme (set out in paras. 15 and 16 of the report), the Panel requested further detail of the mitigation activities planned in relation to the identified key risks to the programme. Officers agreed to provide this information.

A general comment was made that although it was accepted that it would be impractical for the Panel to consider all the available information on the HFI and OAHP, it would be helpful to the Panel to have access to information such as notes, risk register etc. This would help to facilitate a much greater degree of analysis. Officers responded that the report had been written at a strategic level for the Growth Board, but that a more bespoke report could potentially be produced for the Panel if it wished.

**RESOLVED:** That officers be asked to provide:

- 1) information on Investment of infrastructure to support homes (HFI) in a table format linked to a list of housing developments.
  - 2) further detail of the mitigation activities planned in relation to the identified key risks to the HFI programme.
-

The Panel also held a short discussion about a previous request for information regarding the delivery trajectory of affordable housing. Officers were thanked for drafting the response provided, but it was felt that a clarification was required. Officers were, therefore, tasked with producing annualised housing and affordable housing trajectories, with a graph comparing the actual versus forecast (4-year plan) and affordable housing as a percentage of overall housing completions. This information would be derived from the Annual Monitoring Reports.

### **c Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study Update**

John Disley, Infrastructure Strategy and Policy Manager at Oxfordshire County Council presented a report to the Growth Board which summarised progress on the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study and set out the emerging conditional outputs which would form the basis of ongoing work.

The Panel noted in the update and their discussion that:

- That the Growth Board had endorsed the remit for the study and agreed to make a £200,000 contribution towards the study's second stage.
- The study was in two parts. The first stage was a strategic study to assess changes in rail travel demand arising from planned housing and economic growth up to 2031.
- The emerging conclusions from the study were that there was a current need and opportunity for more rail provision – including freight and connectivity infrastructure – to increase capacity. The next step would be to develop a Train Service Specification.
- The emerging conclusions would help provide a solid evidence base for future business cases.
- The study provided a pointer for future development of four potential new stations. Moreover, good progress had been made in respect of the outline definition for the fast-tracked Cowley Branch Line.
- The Panel felt that there were potential opportunities to exploit the unused rail track around the Didcot A Power Station to improve capacity.
- The Panel expressed its strong support for further improvements to rail. Some concerns were, however, expressed that although Oxford was well served with rail services, this was not the case with other parts of the county's rail network – particularly in regard to the resilience of services and infrastructure. This was important, as it would not be possible to persuade residents to use public transport (including rail) if they were not reliable.
- The Panel expressed some reservations that the report did not refer to new lines e.g. to Witney. They did, however, note that the study was focussed on what improvements were realistically achievable given the existing infrastructure and current financial circumstances. Schemes, such as a line to Witney, would require significantly greater resources.
- Although comparing well to car travel, rail also produced carbon emissions and there was a need to look for cleaner forms of propulsion. There was also the potential to utilise advances in technology to facilitate ease of use, e.g. around ticketing.

The Panel **noted** the report.

### **d Growth Board Review Scope**

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board presented by Stefan Robinson, Growth Board Manager, which set out the proposed scope of the Growth Board review. It set out what the themes of the review would be, who would be involved and what would not be included.

---



The Panel noted in the report and their discussion:

- The review would look at the role and function of the Growth Board; its capacity and resources; and its structures and processes.
- The Panel commented that it was a good report and noted that it was intended that any changes arising from the review would be implemented from the 2020/2021 Growth Board year.
- Engagement with the public would take place through a survey available on the Growth Board website, via email and a public workshop. There would also be a press release to seek to highlight the review.
- It was noted that engagement by the Panel in the review process and submission of a joint Panel response was strongly encouraged and welcomed. It was suggested that the Growth Board Scrutiny Officer could collate responses from individual members of the Panel and formulate a draft Panel response which could be considered by the Panel at its November meeting.
- Various members of the Panel made specific comments in relation to the themes of the review and were invited to submit these as their comments.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Smith, Vice Chair of the Growth Board, commented that she was happy that the review was taking place. She stated that it was very important that the Panel engaged with the process and fed its' views into the review.

**RESOLVED:** That the Growth Board Scrutiny Officer seek comments from individual members on the review and draft a proposed response on behalf of the Panel for consideration at the November meeting.

#### **e Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Revised Programme**

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board presented by Rachel Williams, Oxfordshire Plan Lead, and Giles Hughes, Chief Executive of West Oxfordshire District Council, on the progress of producing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. It set out the work done to date, the next steps, and provided programme and timing information. The Panel was also referred to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 update within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report Quarter 1.

The Panel noted that:

- The task of producing a single, statutory spatial plan for the whole of Oxfordshire was a complex and challenging task. Nevertheless, a great deal of progress had already been achieved.
  - The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was a new type of plan. This meant that there were few examples of best practice to follow and of the individual approval decisions required by each of the partner councils at the different stages of the programme. The Oxfordshire Plan would require an examination in public.
  - A revised programme had been produced, with the adoption of the plan now expected in March 2022 – an increase of one year to the project timeline. This would give the opportunity for further consultation and engagement. In addition, it would allow for collaboration with other projects that would have a bearing on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.
  - Agreement to the revised programme would be required from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
-

The Panel noted in the update and their discussion:

- The Panel queried the effect of the revised programme on other dates and milestones in the Growth Deal, and whether seeking to extend the date of the adoption of the Oxfordshire Plan might open up other areas of the deal – for instance if a Local Plan was withdrawn and resubmitted. It was noted that the Growth Deal had required the submission of individual district council local plans by April 2019. The Oxfordshire view was this requirement had been met and there was no impact on further milestones in the deal relating to local plans, but HM Government would come to its own view on that.
- The Panel expressed concern that there was a risk it would not be possible to stick to a timeline if several vital components were not in place;
- It was acknowledged that the process and weight of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 mirrored the process followed in the adoption of local plans. At the point of submission, therefore, the Plan would be considered to have formal weight in respect of decisions on individual planning applications.
- It was a strength of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 project that decisions on issues such as levels of annualised growth were decided collectively.
- That a particular issue facing the development of the Plan was that the programme did not align with that of the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The Panel queried whether the extension of the Plan programme had made this challenge easier to overcome. It was noted that the proposed extension would assist in overcoming this difficulty by allowing for more details of the Expressway project to emerge.
- The overall scope of the Plan project had not changed as a result of the extension of the timeline. There would, however, be an impact upon staff time and, therefore, costs. While more detailed work to fully assess these implications was needed, the intention was to try to keep as much as possible within the parameters of the existing Growth Deal.

Following further discussion, the Scrutiny Panel resolved to recommend that:

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) The Growth Board reflect on the implications of the revision in Oxon Plan 2050 timelines would have on the future work for Local Plans;
- 2) The Growth Board consider the implications of the revised timelines on staffing and study (research) costs;
- 3) The Growth Board acknowledge that the revised timetable would help Ox - Cam expressway project and use this opportunity to help align it with Local Plans.

**f Oxfordshire Local Plans Update**

The Panel considered a report to the Growth Board which set out current progress towards Local Plans adoption across the county.

The Panel's discussion focussed upon the future of the South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan and the potential implications and risks that could arise if it were to decide to withdraw its submitted Plan on 10 October. In doing so, the Panel was mindful of the advice of officers to remain within the remit of their terms of reference. Any decision on the future of the South Oxfordshire's Local Plan was a sovereign matter for the Council, although the Panel did feel that the issue was of such significance to both the Growth Board and Growth Deal that it was appropriate for it to be discussed.

---

In its discussion, the Panel commented that:

- Oxfordshire had delivered much through the Housing and Growth Deal in the national context. The Growth Board should take this into consideration in its discussions with HM Government.
- Whilst recognising the sovereignty of South Oxfordshire District Council, the Panel was supportive of what it was trying to achieve and its motivations in reviewing the future of its submitted local plan – particularly around environmental issues.
- The Panel was mindful of the potentially significant county-wide implications of a withdrawal decision. They felt that the Growth Board should be mindful of this and clarify the potential impacts of such a decision – including on the Growth Deal and Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

**RESOLVED:**

The Chair be delegated authority, in consultation with the Scrutiny Officer, to formulate the exact wording of recommendations to the Growth Board. This should reflect the Panel's discussions and concerns and take into account officer advice.

## **20 Work Programme for the Scrutiny Panel and Action Log-September 2019**

The Panel considered its work programme as set out in the Agenda. Members of the Panel were encouraged to consider potential items and to submit them to the Panel Scrutiny Officer.

## **21 Growth Board Forward Programme**

This item was not discussed.

## **22 Growth Board Advisory Sub-Group Notes**

### Housing Advisory Sub-Group

The Panel considered the notes of the meeting of the Housing Advisory Sub-Group held on 3 September. Councillor Brown, Chair of the Sub-Group, summarised their discussions, particularly highlighting those that had taken place in respects of a skills shortage in the construction sector and the issue of incomplete planning applications. The issue of incomplete planning applications was particularly important as local planning authorities would need to be much more proactive in monitoring them in the future.

The Panel noted in the update and its discussion with Councillor Brown:

- The Sub-Group in its discussion had considered the barriers holding up the delivery of planning applications and potential mitigations. The recommendations of the Letwin review which would increase the powers of local planning authorities were yet to be implemented by HM Government and, therefore, options were limited.
  - The Panel had noted a map of major development sites linked to Housing Infrastructure Fund bids.
-

- The predominantly negative image and perception of construction as a career choice was discussed. It was agreed that the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Oxfordshire Skills Board had a role in improving this – linked to the Local Industrial Strategy. The Panel felt that the negative perceptions around a career in construction needed to be confronted, and that one of the key challenges was a shortage of places offered by colleges.
- The Panel felt that the development of zero-carbon construction skills was important, noting that this had been discussed by the Sub-Group. Moreover, the Sub-Group had acknowledged that there were potential trade-offs between the cost and the delivery of homes in following a zero-carbon ambition.
- The position of Oxford City Council with regards to the trade-offs needing to be considered within the amount of borrowing headroom available in its Housing Revenue Account was noted.

Arising from its discussion, the Scrutiny Panel resolved to recommend that:

**RESOLVED:** The Growth Board and its advisory sub groups should acknowledge the impact of its growth strands such as Housing, Infrastructure, Oxon plan 2050 and Productivity have on trying to achieve net Zero Carbon. Given the partner councils climate and environmental ambitions the GB should support research into smarter and greener construction methods and include it as a part of its core strategy in all areas of growth.

#### Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sub-Group

The Panel considered the notes of the meeting of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sub-Group held on 25 July – Giles Hughes, Chief Executive of West Oxfordshire District Council, highlighted the main points which had included presentations on the use and mapping of natural capital as part of the spatial planning process.

The Panel noted in the update and its discussion:

- That issues such as accessibility of airspace had not yet informed thinking around natural capital.
- That work around natural capital was likely to feed into and inform the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 linked to ecological issues.

Councillor Nick Carter referred to para 21 of the Sub-Group notes which referred to the passing by several Oxfordshire local authorities of motions opposing an Oxfordshire to Cambridge Expressway. He suggested that an Expressway would be contrary to the achievement of carbon neutral targets and that the Growth Board's view on the issue should be sought.

After an extensive discussion, a proposal was duly put to a vote and carried by 13 votes to one.

**RESOLVED:** That the Growth Board acknowledge the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project is in contradiction to the environmental ambitions of the Local Authorities with regards to Climate Emergencies being declared. The Panel would like to ask the Growth Board take steps to communicate this to the media and HM Government.

(Note: Councillor Alex Postan wished to be recorded as voting against the motion).

---

## **23 Dates of meetings**

The Panel noted the dates of meetings as follows:

21 November 2019  
23 January 2020  
26 March 2020  
28 May 2020.

All meetings at 18:30 to be held at Oxford Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chairman

Date

---