

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

## Oxfordshire Growth Board

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

HELD ON TUESDAY 31 JULY 2018 AT 2.00 PM

DIDCOT CIVIC HALL, BRITWELL ROAD, DIDCOT, OX11 7JN

### Present:

**Voting members:** Councillors Jane Murphy (Chairman), Roger Cox, Susan Brown, Ian Hudspeth, James Mills and Barry Wood

**Non-voting members:** Professor Alistair Fitt (Universities' Representative), Louise Patten (Clinical Commissioning Group Chief Executive), Lesley Tims (Environment Agency Strategic Planning and Engagement Manager for Thames Area), Catherine Turner (Homes and Communities Agency)

**Officers:** Peter Clark (Oxfordshire County Council Chief Executive), Adrian Colwell (Cherwell District Council), Steve Culliford (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils), Patsy Dell (Oxford City Council), Andrew Down (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils), Ahmed Goga (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership), Christine Gore (West Oxfordshire District Council Executive Director), Caroline Green (Oxford City Council), Susan Harbour (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils), Bev Hindle (Oxfordshire County Council), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council), Gordon Mitchell (Oxford City Council Chief Executive), Yvonne Rees (Cherwell District Council Chief Executive), Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Growth Board) and Mark Stone (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils)

**Other councillors:** Judith Heathcoat (Oxfordshire County Council) and Bill Service (South Oxfordshire District Council)

### 1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jeremy Long (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership - Chairman), Philip Shadbolt (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership – Business representative for Bicester), and Adrian Lockwood (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership – Vice-Chairman and Skills Board).

### 2 Declarations of interest

None

### 3 Minutes

The minutes of the Oxfordshire Growth Board's meeting held on 11 June 2018 were signed and adopted as a correct record.

### 4 Chairman's announcements

The chairman asked all present to silence their mobile telephones and advised of emergency evacuation arrangements.

### 5 Public participation

The Growth Board received a question from Jenny Hannaby and an address from Michael Tyce. The chairman thanked them both for their contributions.

**Question from Jenny Hannaby** (who had sent her apologies for absence):

"How will the Growth Board contribute to growth of the area to ensure the right mix of affordable housing and key workers are brought forward? Could they define key workers?"

The chairman read the following response and asked that it was sent to Jenny Hannaby:

"Growth Board partners recognise that the cost and availability of housing is a major issue for local employers in the recruitment and retention of staff, including but not confined to those providing essential public services. The solutions must lie in increasing the overall supply of affordable homes both for key workers and those on low incomes.

As part of its commitment to sustainable growth within Oxfordshire, Growth Board partners are working with key partner institutions such as Health Trusts and Universities to explore opportunities to bring forward housing developments that provide accommodation for their own employees and a balance of affordable homes. We are also keen to explore opportunities to link the Housing and Growth Deal affordable housing fund programme to employer-owned sites schemes that could provide affordable housing alongside key worker housing.

Key worker definitions are a matter for local planning authorities to decide in local plans and may be different in different areas. The Growth Board partners are engaged in collective work with partners to understand key worker needs and to examine and learn from best practice and innovation in the provision of key worker housing. It is anticipated that the Growth Board will consider the outcomes of this work later this year."

**Address from Michael Tyce, on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England:**

The Campaign to Protect Rural England supported the concept of the forthcoming Joint Statutory Spatial Plan as it gave the opportunity for the cohesive planning of new development across Oxfordshire. However, the Campaign urged caution that a balance would be required to protect the rural character of Oxfordshire.

Residents were keen to know the development options available and required effective and genuine consultation. The Growth Board must ensure that decision-making was transparent.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England would like to be permanent members of the Officer Project Board to ensure a balance between conflicting priorities and protection of the countryside. The Campaign had a lot to offer to the process and would aid the credibility of the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan outcome.

The chairman responded by welcoming the Campaign to Protect Rural England's engagement and interest in the work on the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan. The Growth Board would ensure that there were opportunities for the Campaign to Protect Rural England along with all interest groups to input to the plan throughout its development.

The Project Officer Team would be responsible for the technical work and evidence base, and ensuring the right processes were followed during the plan's development. It was not possible or appropriate to invite all the different interest groups to be members of the working team, but the Growth Board would need effective mechanisms to involve them in the process. The Joint Statutory Spatial Plan Project Lead, Rachel Williams, and Project Sponsor, Giles Hughes, had met with Helen Marshall of the Campaign to Protect Rural England earlier this month to discuss the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan. The chairman suggested that the team met the Campaign to Protect Rural England again in early autumn to discuss future engagement.

## **6 Local industrial strategy**

The Growth Board received a presentation from Ahmed Goga (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) on progress made in developing the Local Industrial Strategy. A copy of this presentation is published alongside the Growth Board agenda.

As part of the launch of the UK national industrial strategy, Oxfordshire had been invited to develop a local industrial strategy. This was an opportunity to build an ambitious programme for long-term economic growth in Oxfordshire. The strategy was focussed on:

- delivering economic growth and manufacturing and supply chain opportunities
- making Oxfordshire an attractive place to invest
- developing Oxfordshire's international potential to compete on a global level and in new emerging markets

The Local Industrial Strategy would align with the Growth Board's work on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, and the Local Transport Plan.

Work on the strategy had commenced in April 2018, and it was hoped that it would be submitted to the Government by December. There would be a consultation event during the autumn and regular check and challenge points with the Government, leading up to a final draft in early 2019. Once in place, the effectiveness of the strategy would be monitored, and the success of Oxfordshire's economy would be benchmarked, for example against global competitors.

The Growth Board welcomed the presentation and noted that a further update would be presented in the autumn.

## 7 Homes England presentation

The Growth Board received a presentation from Catherine Turner on the partnership role Homes England proposed to play in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. A copy of this presentation is published alongside the Growth Board agenda.

Homes England was a Government agency designed to use its finance, land and expertise to ensure new homes were built and to intervene to unlock development. Homes England would work with the Growth Board and its partner councils to help deliver the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

Homes England confirmed that it saw its role as an integral partner in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, not just in its capacity as the monitoring arm of Government but also as an equal partner in delivering the programme and addressing its challenges. Homes England would help the Growth Board to identify and understand barriers to development and help provide solutions.

The Growth Board welcomed Homes England's involvement in delivering the Growth Deal and welcomed the active support of the Government in addressing the challenges. The Growth Board welcomed the presentation, the continued partnership with Homes England, and looked forward to the help Homes England could offer to unlock difficult housing developments.

## 8 Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

Caroline Green, the interim Deal Delivery Director, presented a report on progress with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The Growth Board noted that officers had established the framework and work programme to implement the Growth Deal and were mobilising resources to deliver the year 1 programme and the programmes for years 2 to 5 for housing from infrastructure and years 2 to 3 for affordable housing. A governance framework and the necessary monitoring and reporting frameworks were also being developed.

**RESOLVED:** that the Growth Board notes the report and welcomes the progress to date.

## 9 Joint Statutory Spatial Plan

Giles Hughes, the officer lead on the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, presented a report on its progress. Work had been carried out on the draft project and preparation of key documents. These included the Local Development Scheme, which set out the work programme and timetable, the draft Statement of Community Involvement, which would be subject to public consultation in the autumn, and the scoping document for the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan. Drafts of these three documents were appended to the report and would require each council's approval in September.

The Growth Board noted that the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan would be a long-term strategic planning document for Oxfordshire, running to 2050. It presented an opportunity to shape the future of Oxfordshire. However, the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan would not allocate specific housing sites, this would be the role of the local plans prepared by the district councils.

**RESOLVED:** that the Growth Board welcomes and notes the progress report.

## 10 Oxfordshire planning freedoms and flexibilities

The Growth Board considered a report from Giles Hughes on the planning freedoms and flexibilities being offered by the Government as part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. These included introducing a temporary three-year housing land supply requirement, rather than five years, until the adoption of the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, and the introduction of a bespoke housing delivery test.

On 24 July the Government had published the revised National Planning Policy Framework. This allowed the Government to approve planning freedoms and flexibilities in certain circumstances, such as where a housing and growth deal had been agreed with councils.

The Growth Board had run a public consultation through its website on the proposed three-year housing land supply requirement. The majority of the respondents had supported the proposal. The responses would be sent to the Government to make the final decision, which was expected in early September.

The second of the negotiated freedoms and flexibilities was the housing delivery test. This would not be implemented until November 2020 and would apply for three years. It was hoped that the Government would agree that this would be at 50 per cent of adopted Local Plan housing numbers for Oxfordshire or the adopted Joint Statutory Spatial Plan housing numbers, not the 75 per cent national requirement.

**RESOLVED:** that the Growth Board welcomes and notes the report.

## 11 The Letwin Review

The Growth Board received an update on the stage 1 report from the Letwin Review. The Government had appointed Sir Oliver Letwin MP to identify the main causes why homes were not being built, despite having planning permission. His initial findings were set out in the report; policy recommendations would be forthcoming in stage 2, due later this year.

The intended conclusions of the review were that councils were provided with an enhanced toolkit to help the accelerated delivery of homes and allow further innovation through enabling policies. For example, Oxfordshire's councils could move away from relying on large sites to meet housing need, which would require longer lead-in time and greater infrastructure requirements towards smaller sites. Councils could also seek to secure an enhanced range of housing choice through the Local Plans. The Growth Board believed that, where housing developments had been subsidised, there should be a commitment from the developer to expedite their building programme. Homes England reported that through its funding streams, it could assist with housing infrastructure and assist where developments were only marginally viable.

**RESOLVED:** that the Growth Board welcomes the report from the Letwin Review and looks forward to the final review conclusions in the expectation that it will offer councils a range of options to assist with future housing delivery.

## 12 Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership update

The Growth Board received a verbal update from the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The Government had completed a review of local enterprise partnerships

across the country, making a series of recommendations to develop them further. These included:

- Strategic direction – the local enterprise partnerships should promote and enhance productivity in their areas (e.g. the development of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy).
- Improved governance – there should be limits to the terms of office of the partnership's chairmen, there should be good gender balance on the partnership's board, and two-thirds of the board should be private sector representatives (the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership would review this).
- Improved performance - local enterprise partnerships should hold their annual general meetings in public and should conduct annual performance reviews.
- Reduce geographical overlap – local enterprise partnerships should reduce geographical boundary overlap with neighbouring partnerships.

The Growth Board noted the report and welcomed the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's commitment to review the Government's review recommendations in detail.

### **13 Sub-national transport body**

The Growth Board received an update on the Government's intention to create a sub-national transport body. The aim was to consult on proposals in the spring 2019. The body would look at strategic transport but also digital technologies, including broadband internet.

The Growth Board also noted that the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership was working with other local enterprise partnerships across the Oxford to Cambridge corridor on a single cross-corridor local industrial strategy.

### **14 Rail connectivity update**

The Growth Board received a verbal update on progress with a rail connectivity study. The study had not been carried out, but the Growth Board's previously expressed views were still relevant. Oxfordshire was still a partner in this matter and was a funding authority. The East West Rail project had agreed to contribute funds also. The Growth Board considered it essential to work with partners to plan future rail connectivity across corridors.

**RESOLVED:** to request officers to provide an update to the next Growth Board meeting.

### **15 Updates on matters relevant to the Growth Board**

Growth Board members gave updates on the following matters:

- **Oxford to Cambridge expressway** – Barry Wood reported that he was the chairman of the Oxford to Cambridge cross-corridor leaders' group, which was developing collaborative joint working and avoiding duplication. A Government announcement on the Oxford to Cambridge expressway corridor was expected in the autumn.

- **The Environment Agency** – The Environment Agency offered to make a presentation to the next meeting on its role in supporting the Growth Board. This was welcomed.
- **NHS involvement in growth planning** – the Growth Board welcomed the engagement of the NHS in planning for Oxfordshire’s growth. It was suggested that the NHS could advise on better design of future housing stock to allow for full life-cycle accessibility, with walk to school, cycle routes and improved public transport, and community support all taken into account. The Growth Board welcomed all suggestions and more collaborative working and asked that this was added to its future agenda.
- **Growth Board forward plan** – no forward plan had been presented to this meeting as officers planned to hold a workshop in the autumn on the future direction of the Growth Board. An update would be given at the next meeting.

## 16 Dates of next meetings

The dates of future Growth Board meetings are set out below. All meetings will be held on Tuesdays at 2pm in Didcot Civic Hall.

- 25 September 2018
- 27 November
- 29 January 2019
- 26 March
- 4 June

The meeting closed at 3.41 pm

Chairman

Date