

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Housing

Advisory Sub-Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 21 MAY 2019 AT 6.00 PM

PLOWMAN ROOM, OXFORD TOWN HALL, OXFORD OX1 1BX

Present:

Councillors: Robin Bennett, (South Oxfordshire District Council), Liz Brighthouse (Oxfordshire County Council), Susan Brown (Oxford City Council) (Chair), John Donaldson (Cherwell District Council), Jeff Haine (West Oxfordshire District Council), and Mike Rowley (Oxford City Council)

Officers: Caroline Green, Kevin Jacob, Paul Staines and Aaron Rosser

1 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutions; declarations of interest; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Neil Fawcett, (Vale of White Horse District Council).

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting noting that it was Councillor Robin Bennett's first meeting as a representative of South Oxfordshire District Council.

2 Notes of the meeting held on 11 March 2019

The notes of the meeting held on 11 March 2019 were received.

In respect of the Group's forward programme it was noted that:

- A presentation from a representative of OxLEP on how it could assist in addressing the potential skills shortage caused by the growth agenda had been finalised for the Group's July meeting.
- Work by officers within the district councils to collate further information on unfulfilled planning applications was ongoing due to the yearend reporting process and would not be available until the September meeting.

Whilst fully acknowledging the challenges in providing data on unfulfilled planning applications the Group stated that the receipt of the information was an important priority for it. It was noted that in future it might be possible to integrate the Group's request with

the data that districts already provided as part of the annual monitoring report process and it was agreed that this should be explored.

3 Summary of the year end position for the Growth Deal's Affordable Housing Programme and future challenges

The Group considered a report and presentation setting out progress with the Growth Deal Affordable Housing Programme, (AHP) and summarising the key points of discussion anticipated with Homes England at the end of May. It was noted that a programme for the delivery of 191 affordable housing units had been delivered for Year One against a target of 148.

Areas for Councils to consider as potential mechanisms to enhance the programme in the future included:

- Additional funding streams, S106 contribution arrangements and other funding
- Direct delivery of homes by councils or partners
- Using finance to unlock development- strategic infrastructure/investment fund
- Changes to our planning processes to speed up decisions, aid clarity and certainty
- Changes to planning to offer greater diversity of homes
- Contribution of the public estate
- How to ensure capacity in the building industry
- Developing a programme of engagement with landowners, the construction industry and register social housing providers

Areas for future discussion with Homes England included how the Growth Deal could compete in the market more effectively and make the AHP attractive to partners, for example:

- Grant rates- how to make them attractive compared to other HE programmes.
- How the AHP might work in tandem with Home England's strategic partnerships
- Longer Term arrangements –affordable housing as a key element of plan for 100,000 homes.

Members noted that in terms of encouragement to developers and registered providers to provide more affordable housing, the levers were not just linked to financial incentives, but were also linked to issues such as the ease of the planning system and encouraging greater diversity. It was felt that further engagement with register providers, perhaps by way of a focus group might help identify and ideas about what councils could do better on that might increase affordable housing delivery.

Although the use of public estate had yet to impact on the Year 2 AHP it was felt that it could potentially play an important role in the future and act as a beacon for provision of affordable housing.

Members also discussed how councils might work with other publicly funded partners such as the NHS and universities to facilitate and encourage the use of surplus public estate land for key worker housing and affordable housing provision. It was noted that an working group is already established to look at key worker housing provision. It was suggested that that outcome of this work should be brought to the Group at an appropriate stage.

Members discussed what was felt to be a need for step change in the availability of workers with the building and technical skills required to support housing growth. If there were insufficient number of such workers available development would be inhibited and the quality of housing could also suffer. Skills will be discussed further at the next meeting with representation from OxLEP.

In terms of the Years 2-3 of the AHP Members queried whether it might be possible to accelerate the delivery of schemes currently scheduled for years 3-4 into the Year 2 and asked for information on the percentage of year 1 units where physical works on site had begun.

4 Summary of the year end position for the Growth Deal's housing from infrastructure programme and future challenges

The Group received a presentation on the year end position of the Homes from Infrastructure Programme. It was noted that the focus of the homes from infrastructure workstream was to set out how the £151m funding provided by the Oxfordshire Growth Deal would support a programme of transport and related infrastructure related infrastructure schemes to support planned housing development in the county over a 5-year period from 2018/19 to 2022/23. The original deal target was to the acceleration of the delivery of 6,549 homes.

Achievements from Year 1 of the programme included successfully hitting the ground running and establishing and agreeing a programme of Year 1 projects, a programme of projects for Years 2-5, creation and formalisation of a quarterly reporting process and an agreed Housing Attribution Methodology.

It was noted that the development of the Housing Attribution process was one of the first of its kind without an existing framework and consequently HM Government would be looking to the Oxfordshire process for lessons that could be applied to other areas.

Members considered the Oxfordshire Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) trajectory and Oxfordshire Growth Deal accelerated homes trajectory. It was noted that in mapping the accelerated home data, trajectories had been set out with a baseline for the number of all tenures of homes, a forecast based on accelerated growth based on the HIF programme and a forecast applying an optimum bias reduction of 20%.

In discussion, Members felt that it would be important for the Group to monitor the data on a quarterly basis - an annual report would not provide timely enough information. Members also felt it would be helpful to see a map setting out major development sites that were linked to the HIF programme and it was agreed that this could be produced for the next meeting.

5 Member discussion on each councils' approach to a low carbon housing agenda

Members held a discussion on each council's approach to the low carbon housing agenda and how the provision of low carbon housing could be facilitated and encouraged across Oxfordshire.

The discussion centred on how the provision of low carbon housing could be encouraged whilst at the same time maintaining rates of housing delivery and affordability and within the context of the declaration of climate emergencies by several district councils.

Examples of low carbon developments in progress or planned from around Oxfordshire were shared. It was noted that low carbon and zero carbon technology was evolving rapidly, and costs had fallen significantly in recent years.

Some members are organising a visit to Norwich to see how they are delivering on this agenda and Brighton was mentioned as another local authority that councils should seek to learn from.

6 Dates and times of future meetings

The date of the next sub-group was noted as Tuesday 16 July 2019 at 18:30