

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Infrastructure Sub-Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 23 JULY 2019 AT 10.00 AM
MEMBERS MEETING ROOM, OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, COUNTY HALL, NEW ROAD, OXFORD. OX1 1ND

Present:

Councillors Ian Hudspeth (Chair), Amos Duveen, Jeff Haine, Linda Smith and David Turner

Officers: Caroline Green, Sue Halliwell, Rachel Wileman, Melissa Goodacre, Simon MCEney and Kevin Jacob.

8 Apologies for absence and notifications of substitutions; declarations of interest; Chair announcements

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lynn Pratt, (Cherwell District Council) and Yvonne Constance, (Oxfordshire County Council).

There were no declarations of interest.

9 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 28 May 2019 were agreed.

No matters arising were raised.

10 Thames Valley Flood Scheme

The sub-group received a pre-circulated presentation from Joe Cuthbertson, Project Officer, Environment Agency on the Thames Valley Flood Scheme and measures to mitigate the risk of future flooding.

Points raised during the presentation included:

- Key infrastructure coming at risk of flooding and costal change was increasing due to climate change.
- Property areas at risk in the Thames catchment.
- Existing defences put in place since the 1970's.

- Current and future schemes planned to include Flood Water Storage Area schemes in the Thames Upper reaches.
- Some locations that were at risk of flooding had potential flood alleviation schemes that were technically possible but were not viable on a cost benefit basis whereas some schemes were not technically viable.
- The National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, River Thames Scheme and National Infrastructure Assessment.
- The Environment Agency wanted engagement with Oxfordshire local authority partners around the Thames Valley Flood Scheme and next steps in planning for future growth.
- Provision of flood alleviation infrastructure could be potentially be provided at the same time as other infrastructure improvements to help reduce cost and reduce disruption to residents.
- Flood alleviation schemes were felt to compare well in cost benefit terms to other significant national infrastructure schemes, but a partnership approach would be needed to provide funding given the scale of the sums involved.
- Upland flood management schemes had a place in mitigating or preventing floods downstream.

In discussion, members of the sub-group questioned whether in designing potential flood alleviation schemes, solutions would be developed and approved which would represent the best technical solution available i.e. capable of dealing with 1 in 500 year level flooding events as it would not represent best value to spend money on infrastructure that would obsolete in short period of time. The sub-group was informed that all the design of scheme represented the best technical solution, but this impacted on the overall cost and affordability of the Thames Valley Flood scheme.

With regard to the potential positive impact of upper Thames flood alleviation schemes on downstream locations in the tidal Thames, there was discussion on whether this represented a case that contributions to the cost of the schemes could be made by partners in tidal Thames areas given the mutual benefit that upper Thames schemes could provide.

There was a link between flood alleviation schemes and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, (OxIS) and the ranking mechanism for the scheme would need to reflect this.

The Chair thanked Joe Cuthbertson for his presentation.

11 Presentation from Thames Water - Supporting Growth in Oxfordshire

The sub-group received a pre-circulated presentation from Alex Nickson, Water Resources and Resilience Lead at Thames Water on the contribution Thames Water could make in supporting growth in Oxfordshire in the context of a projected water supply deficit in the future.

Points raised during the presentation included:

- Water supplies would be under pressure in the future as demand increased with population and the climate changed.
- Rain fall patterns were changing with more rain falling in the winter, but less in summer.

- A water supply deficit in the future was expected across the South East and planning by Thames water to mitigate and develop new resources were outlined as well as sewage capacity issues.
- Potential measures and schemes to develop new strategic water resources by 2030.
- Measures to tackle leakage and manage demand.
- Long term planning for water and sewage needed to feed into the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 evidence base and development of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc conversation.
- Thames Water had to work with its regulator Ofwat for approval of its plans.
- Need for HM government to make changes to building regulations around water savings.

In discussion, it was noted that it was difficult for Thames Water to plan for the future and have confidence in going ahead with the provision of water infrastructure given the challenges in predicting which planning permissions would be implemented. It was questioned what consideration was given in the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) to water and sewerage issues and the sub-group was informed that there was not covered in the current version the water industry had expressed its views to HM Government, particularly with regard to problems around different timelines.

The Chair thanked Alex Nickson for his presentation.

12 Q2 Growth Deal Delivery Report

The sub-group held a discussion on the progress of Year 2 of the Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme. Key points included:

- Progress was on track for Q1, but focus had now shifted from planning to the delivery of projects to meet the target spend of £30m for the financial year. To maximise spend, consideration was being of the potential to bring forward some Year 3 schemes into Year 2.
- Increased officer resource within the team to support the delivery of the infrastructure programme was now largely in place. However, given the specialist nature of the skills required recruitment and retention remained challenging.
- WS Atkins had been commissioned to provide assurance that the priorities and estimates within the Infrastructure Programme were the right ones. Feedback so far was positive.

In discussion, the time taken to bring forward a scheme in a phased manner from initial idea to feasibility, detailed design and delivery was acknowledged.

13 HIF Verbal Update

The sub-group was provided with an update on bids to HM Governments Housing from Infrastructure Fund, (HIF).

A40 SMART Corridor

The business case for the related A40 Science Transit scheme had been submitted in June, and currently going through clarifications with DfT. The A40 HIF clarification stage and moderation now complete. The next step would be a cross departmental government assessment panel, but the bid was considered to score highly.

Didcot Garden Town

Sign off of the approved bid is currently expected in September/October.

14 Any other urgent business

South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan

At the suggestion of the Chair, the sub-group had a discussion around the possible impact on prioritised infrastructure if South Oxfordshire District Council withdraw their submitted local plan.

ARC/Comprehensive Spending Review, (CSR) Items

MHCLG was encouraging bids relating to potential ARC related infrastructure schemes for consideration as part of the HM Government CSR process expected in the autumn. Schemes with elements relating natural capital were particularly encouraged. Officers were investigating and the Oxfordshire Industrial Strategy, (OxIS) provided a basis for developing potential schemes.

Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study Update

An update on the study was expected to be presented to the Growth Board in September which would include the Cowley Branch line.

15 Date of next meeting

It was note that it had become necessary to reschedule the date of the next meeting of the sub-group from Monday 9 September to Wednesday 18th September.