

To: Oxfordshire Growth Board
Date: 2 June 2020
Report of: Growth Board Scrutiny Panel
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 28 May 2020

Purpose of report:	To present recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 28 May 2020 to the Growth Board.
Scrutiny Lead:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.
Recommendation:	That the Oxfordshire Growth Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank Councillor Ian Hudspeth (Leader – Oxfordshire County Council and Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Sub-Group), Bev Hindle (Growth Board Director), Stefan Robinson (Growth Board Manager), Andrew Down (Acting Deputy Chief Executive – South and Vale District Councils), Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnerships Manager - South and Vale District Councils), Paul Staines (Housing and Growth Deal – Service Delivery Manager), James Gagg (Infrastructure Strategy Team Leader – Oxfordshire County Council) for attending the meeting to answer questions.
2. The Panel discussed the Growth Board’s Response to Scrutiny recommendations from the previous Growth Board meeting held on 11th March 2020. On recommendation 2, the Panel considered the positive response from the Growth Board concerning having elected councillors represented in the Oxford – Cambridge Arc governance structures. The Panel further clarified its support for wider engagement with non-local authority groups but only as non - voting members.

Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board confirms that the emerging governance structures within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc concept will ensure that matters retained for local authority decision making will remain

reserved and within the responsibility of locally elected council leaders; accepting that there is value in engaging with wider non-local authority members such as local enterprise partnerships, health and environmental groups but in a non-voting capacity.

3. The Panel also received a report on the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The Panel considered the need for a seven-month extension on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timeline and accepted the officer recommendation that this would be a modest assumption of the required extension needed for the Plan. The Panel asked however that the Growth Board seek agreement with Central Government to this extension as soon as possible.

Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board agrees to endorse a seven-month extension to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timetable as proposed in the Covid-19 Impact Report, whilst also urging Central Government to respond to its previous request for an extension and to make clear a definitive timeline.

4. The Panel reflected on a previous request for information it made on 19 September 2019 on the progress and delivery of Infrastructure projects to support homes as part of the Homes from Infrastructure Programme. The Panel also noted that officers had previously explained that a review of infrastructure projects was ongoing, however the Panel considered it was important to reiterate the significance of this request through a recommendation to the Growth Board.
5. The Panel considered an update from Councillor Ian Hudspeth – Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Sub-group with regards to the work of this group. The Panel considered updates on specific projects on rail, cycling routes and highways, and discussed the funding dependent nature of these projects. The Panel discussed the need for rural transport infrastructure and the use of smart technology to provide access to transportation in rural areas.

Recommendation 3: That the Growth Board commission officers to produce a Gantt chart or table showing progress against delivery of investment in infrastructure to support homes (as part of the Homes from Infrastructure workstream within the Housing and Growth Deal), including any available information on the likely impact of Covid-19 on these projects.

6. The Panel considered a report from James Gagg – Infrastructure Strategy Team Leader, which set out the scope of a review to the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) with regards to timescale, governance and funding. The Panel discussed the significance of the strategy to be reviewed based on need rather than being funding led.
7. The Panel also discussed the adopted channels of communication by the Growth Board to Local Authorities and the Scrutiny Panel with regards to openness and transparency in the process undertaken to review OxIS. The Panel also endorsed para 8.1(4) of the report; which in part said that the refreshed scoring matrix of Oxfordshire's emerging infrastructural priorities being led by environmental factors.

Recommendation 4: That the Growth Board clarify the channels of democratic accountability and oversight to ensure there is openness and transparency in the process undertaken to revise the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

Recommendation 5: That the Growth Board ensures that projects in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy are based on locally identified need as opposed to being funding led, and commission officers to provide project schedules and progress reports.

8. The Panel also thanked Paul Staines (Housing and Growth Deal Service Delivery Manager) for a comprehensive briefing paper on definitions of affordable housing adopted by Local Authorities based on the National Planning Policy Framework.

Future Work

9. As well as reviewing the Growth Board’s response to these recommendations at its next meeting on 15th September 2020, the Panel will also be considering in detail:
 - The Growth Board Review
 - Supporting Oxfordshire’s Tourism and Visitor Economy
 - Oxford-Cambridge Arc Update
 - Q4 Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report and Financial summary
 - Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Update
10. The Panel noted that there may be a need for an additional Growth Board meeting in July 2020 and has asked officers to find a suitable meeting date for the Panel in advance of that meeting, to undertake overview and scrutiny in the usual way.

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