

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 6.45 PM ON THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER 2016

THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK,
CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present:

Paul Harrison (Chairman)

Jeannette Matelot (Vice-Chairman), Charles Bailey, Joan Bland, Felix Bloomfield, Kevin Bulmer, Steve Connel, John Cotton, Margaret Davies, Pat Dawe, Anthony Dearlove, Stefan Gawrysiak, Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Tony Harbour, Stephen Harrod, Lorraine Hillier, Elaine Hornsby, Sue Lawson, Lynn Lloyd, Imran Lokhon, Jane Murphy, Anthony Nash, Toby Newman, Richard Pullen, Bill Service, Robert Simister, David Turner, Margaret Turner, John Walsh and Ian White

Apologies:

Anna Badcock, Nigel Champken-Woods, David Dodds and Alan Thompson tendered apologies.

Officers: Gerry Brough, Pat Connell, Steven Corrigan, Andrew Down, David Hill, William Jacobs, Margaret Reed and Deidre Smith

25 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

26 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them as such.

27 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman provided housekeeping information. He welcomed the council's new chief executive, David Hill, to his first Council meeting.

28 Questions from the public and public participation

The Chairman reported that the following would address Council on agenda item 9 – OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan:

- Dr Richard Harding on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire
- Dr Sue Roberts of Ecomorph
- Mr Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership

29 Questions under Council procedure rule 34

None.

30 Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan

Council considered the recommendation of Cabinet, made at its meeting on 6 October 2016, to make the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for South Oxfordshire.

Council noted that it had a duty to make the neighbourhood plan part of the development plan unless the making of the plan would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). The neighbourhood plan was compatible with the current EU obligations and therefore Council should ‘make’ the neighbourhood plan part of the council’s development plan.

Councillors welcomed the neighbourhood plan and thanked the community for their work in progressing the plan.

A number of councillors raised concern that recent planning applications had been approved contrary to the provisions of neighbourhood plans approved at a referendum. This undermined the neighbourhood plan process.

In response John Cotton, Leader of the council, stated that planning applications are determined in accordance with approved neighbourhood plans and any other material considerations including the lack of a five year land supply.

RESOLVED: to make the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for South Oxfordshire.

31 Treasury management outturn 2015/16

Council considered Cabinet’s recommendation, made at its meeting on 6 October 2016, on the outturn performance of the treasury management function for the financial year 2015/16.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the treasury management outturn report for 2015/16;
2. approve the actual 2015/16 prudential indicators within the report.

32 OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan

- A. Dr Richard Harding, on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire, addressed Council and spoke to the following statement circulated to councillors prior to the meeting:

We welcome the decision taken at the Vale and South Joint Scrutiny Committee Meeting, endorsed by Cabinet last week that the revised SEP Refresh should be considered at Full Council. We have for some time demanded that our locally elected representatives have the opportunity to consider this most important of issues.

Today, local councillors have the chance to engage in robust debate on the revised SEP Refresh. We urge you take this final opportunity before the SEP Refresh is signed off, to seriously consider the impact that this plan will have on the future of Oxfordshire.

Need not Greed Oxfordshire believe the time has come for our Local Authorities to take full responsibility for the overall growth figures in the revised SEP 2016.

We are deeply concerned at the 'pass-the-parcel' game being played by OxLEP and our district and county councils, with each blaming the other for the inflated and unrealistic targets for employment and housing.

We believe this plan sets very damaging and unrealistic growth targets which would radically change Oxfordshire's communities and environment - today, you - our elected representatives, have the opportunity to have your say.

- Do you genuinely believe we can create 85,000 jobs by 2031?
- Do you genuinely believe we can build 100,000 houses by 2031? Are you prepared for the consequences when this target isn't met and we see an increase in the speculative development that is already blighting so many of our communities?
- Do you genuinely think the development currently proposed will solve the affordable housing issues we have in the County?
- Do you genuinely think that Oxfordshire, the most rural county in the south-east, is the right place to accommodate a 30% increase in population by 2031?

If your answer to any of these questions is NO, we urge you to speak out against OxLEP's Strategic Economic Plan as currently drafted at today's meeting.

Need not Greed Oxon want to see an alternative approach to growth in our county.

We are calling for a review of the economic growth figures and by association the housing figures, for the county outlined in the revised SEP Refresh, in the light of:

1. The implications of Brexit.

2. The social and environmental constraints - ie not just 'how much growth can we get' but also 'how much growth can our infrastructure, services and environment absorb'.
3. A re-consideration of the priorities for action - ie how to provide affordable housing for existing local residents, rather than seeking to attract ever more people into the area making the jobs versus housing balance worse.
4. Genuine public consultation on the future vision for Oxfordshire.

Our question to you today is:

As our elected representative, will you take a stand today and help force re-consideration of these overly aggressive and unrealistic growth targets that make no allowances for Brexit and that take little account of environmental and social impacts?

B. Dr Roberts of Ecomorph made the following points:

- The extra housing resulting from unrealistic growth figures in the SEP Refresh will produce further unsustainable development
- The requirement for sustainable building of homes to Code Level 4 is not currently achieved. Councils should insist on these levels of sustainability - but they do not. Development underway is unsustainable as it is not built to this required standard.
- Wiltshire County Council require higher energy efficient homes and the Mayor of London has stated that all new homes should be zero carbon. Unless new homes are zero-carbon, they increase our carbon emissions. If development increases our carbon emissions, it is not sustainable.

C. Mr Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership, addressed Council on this item. He undertook to provide a written response to the questions raised in paragraph 10 of the Cabinet report for inclusion in the minutes (see appendix).

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 6 October 2016, on the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) Strategic Economic Plan. As part of that report Cabinet considered and supported the Joint Scrutiny Committee request that Cabinet defer its response to the SEP pending its consideration by Council.

The following points were raised during the discussion:

- The map detailing Oxfordshire's growth corridors (Figure 10) was unhelpful since it covered most of the county apart from Thame and Chinnor.
- The plan is housing led with aspirational employment figures.
- Development would impact on the countryside and threaten the green spaces between the villages and larger towns particularly around Didcot.
- The plan should focus more on supporting self employment.
- The continuing problems of broadband connectivity had not been addressed.
- The increase in house building without a commitment to renewable energy/zero emissions will increase carbon emissions and prove unsustainable.
- A risk register should be included as an appendix to the SEP.

- Oxford City Council continued to allocate land for employment whilst failing to provide housing which compounds the current housing shortage and transport problems.
- Affordable housing/social housing – there was a lack of suitable accommodation for key workers and those on lower incomes.
- Infrastructure – the document should address the infrastructure problems (particularly transport connectivity).

A number of councillors remained sceptical that the SEP had a plan to address weaknesses and respond to threats and was not sufficiently strategic or visionary. It remained inward looking and provided an Oxford-centric perspective rather than addressing county-wide issues.

RESOLVED: to endorse the decision of Cabinet to:

1. welcome some of the changes made to the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan which seek to make it “shorter and clearer”, and acknowledge that this has largely been achieved;
2. support the broad thrust of the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan document in terms of the stated vision, identified strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and proposed actions; and
3. believe the document would be more robust if it:
 - more fully addressed the issues highlighted in the body of the Cabinet report, and
 - more clearly linked actions to identified issues, and confirmed where responsibility lies for implementing these various actions,

and to note that the Leader will take account of points raised at Council in responding to the consultation.

33 Report of the Leader of the council

John Cotton, Leader of the council, provided a number of updates as detailed below:

Growth Board – he reported that at its meeting on 26 September 2016, the Oxfordshire Growth Board considered the apportionment of the agreed working figure for the unmet housing need for Oxford. He had resisted the 5,000 figure proposed for South Oxfordshire and requested Oxford City review its own capacity to deliver housing and include its own housing target.

Local Plan – further consultation expected in November.

Devolution – the Oxfordshire Growth Board agreed a motion that the district councils, Oxford City and county council would work together to realise savings and improve public services.

He welcomed David Hill as the council’s new chief executive.

He advised that a Didcot Garden Town meeting was scheduled for Monday 17 October at Cornerstone in Didcot.

34 Motions under Council procedure rule 41

None.

35 Exclusion of the public including the press

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- i. it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- ii. the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

36 Application of restrictions imposed by Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985 in South Oxfordshire - consideration of the local government ombudsman's report

At its meeting on 26 September 2016 the Joint Audit and Governance Committee considered the further report of the local government ombudsman on two complaints from South Oxfordshire residents concerning a restriction on the sale of properties under s157 of the Housing Act 1985. The committee resolved not to accept the local government ombudsman's recommendations and referred them to Council for consideration. Counsel's confidential advice on this matter was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting.

Andrew Down, Head of HR, IT and Technical Services, introduced the report and officers from the legal team responded to questions.

Council noted historically there has been a lack of consistency in the council's policies on these covenants and how they have been applied, and that the Cabinet will therefore be considering a review of the policy at its December meeting to provide clarity going forward.

Council resolved to attempt to settle the matters with the complainants.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm

Chairman

Date

Strategic Economic Plan – revised following public consultation

South Oxfordshire DC – responses to the points raised in the report to Cabinet 6 October 2016

LA	Comments and decision	Response
South Oxfordshire DC Cabinet – 6 October 2016	<p>It was RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse the decision of Cabinet to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome some of the changes made to the SEP which seek to make it ‘shorter and clearer’ and acknowledges that this has largely been achieved; • Support the broad thrust of the SEP in terms of the stated vision, identified SWOTs and proposed actions, and; • Believe the SEP would be more robust if it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More fully addressed the issues highlighted in the report (see below). - More clearly linked actions to identified issues, and confirmed where responsibility lies for implementing these various actions • Note that the Leader will take account of points raised at Council in responding to the consultation. <p>SODC Cabinet agreed that the revised draft of the SEP be subject to Council debate before the Leader submitted his formal response to the consultation.</p> <p>Report excerpts:</p> <p><i>SODC consider that the SEP would have been stronger if:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More detail had been provided to indicate how the strategy intends to build</i> 	<p>We thank South Oxfordshire District Council for their considered response to the Strategic Economic Plan – Draft revised following public consultation.</p> <p>We have responded in turn to each of the points made by SODC.</p> <p>Overall the responses received indicate that we need to more clearly articulate what the SEP is for and how it should be used by businesses, communities and organisations to help meet their social, economic and environmental objectives.</p> <p>We will revisit each of the programme sections to</p>

	<p><i>on strengths, address weaknesses, exploit opportunities and responds to threats,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The proposed actions were more directly linked to the identified SWOTs</i> • <i>A clear indication was provided of where the main responsibility lies for implementing those proposed actions, and</i> • <i>The spatial dimension was articulated in more detail to provide a more county-wide perspective, rather than the current Oxford-centric perspective</i> <p><i>During the course of the SEP consultation process, South and Vale officers raised a number of issues relating to the draft version of the SEP document. Some of these have been addressed completely, some partially and some have been ignored. Additionally a number of further issues were highlighted during the discussion at Joint Scrutiny Committee. As a result, the proposed final version of the SEP does not address the following issues:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The need to produce a less Oxford-centric document and to see greater recognition of, and detail concerning, the R&D hubs of Culham, Harwell, Howbery</i> 	<p>ensure that the Priorities and Actions flow from the SWOT. The SEP is however a Strategic Document not a delivery plan and therefore does not focus on detail resulting in a 'shorter and clearer' document which SODC have clearly welcomed. Detail is included in the subordinate delivery plans/strategies.</p> <p>See above</p> <p>This information will be included in the SEP Monitoring and Impact Plan. As above, the SEP remains a strategic document shaping and positioning intervention.</p> <p>We will include other strategic spatial dimensions where it is appropriate to do so, i.e. the work on regenerating Berinsfield (with SODC input) and WODCs work on the regeneration of Carterton.</p> <p>All comments received during the consultation were considered carefully. None were 'ignored'. As with any consultation on a complex document, not all comments received can be accommodated or are appropriate to the exercise.</p> <p>We do not agree that the SEP is Oxford-centric. Harwell is mentioned 16 times throughout the document, Milton Park 6 times, Culham 13 times. Detailed delivery or implementation strategies sit</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>There are three identified hubs in Oxfordshire, Bicester, Oxford and Science Vale, however equal weight has not been given to these and the SEP fails to recognise that if employment growth were to be spread more around the county then the pressures on the roads, on Oxford itself and the green belt, would be greatly reduced</i> 3. <i>More emphasis should be placed on the potential contribution Oxfordshire's Enterprise Zones and Garden Towns can make to future economic growth</i> 4. <i>There is still little reference to how the LEP is going to improve the conversion of R&D into private sector business growth</i> 5. <i>In considering Oxfordshire's strengths the document should also look at sectors that are doing less well and indicate which companies are leaving the county and why</i> 	<p>below the SEP and contain project and programme specific reference. These include the CCHTIP, EEIP, ESIF, Innovation Strategy and Skills Strategy. We will make sure to mention Howbery Park in the Economic Assets section.</p> <p>This is a local planning matter addressed by the Growth Board and individual Local Plans. The SEP is not a land use planning tool, nor does it shape planning allocation/decisions.</p> <p>EZs are mentioned 4 times and Garden Towns 2. We will look at consolidating the text and perhaps include an EZ as a case study.</p> <p>The detail is in the Innovation Strategy already consulted upon and will be launched prior to Christmas. Again, we have the innovation "hooks" in the plan and the specific strategies will support project delivery. It is also worth reflecting on the Business/Innovation support available through OBS already.</p> <p>Again this is work being undertaken at an operational level by LA/University and LEP staff as part of our joint business support work. That is one of reasons for the CCHTIP and SEEIP work streams.</p>
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	<p><i>6. The Oxfordshire economy is dominated by companies of under 20 employees. This is more pronounced than other high tech economies. However, there is no aspiration to try and redress the balance by nurturing the growth of high potential companies and high value sectors</i></p> <p><i>7. There is only passing reference to self-employment, which is one of Oxfordshire’s fastest growing employment forms. Trends towards self-employment and home working needs to be analysed and an assessment made of the types of support required</i></p> <p><i>8. There is little reference to the high proportion of public sector jobs in Oxfordshire or any consideration of how this imbalance can be redressed</i></p> <p><i>9. It would be useful if more detail were provided on forecast jobs growth in the core economic growth areas of the districts, such as in Science Vale for example, and the issues and constraints faced by businesses in these particular areas</i></p>	<p>We do not agree – Cambridge is similar in its business make-up. Oxfordshire Business Support targets high growth businesses for support and along with the skills strategy supports business growth, cross sector and high growth /Scale-up support. We have embryonic discussions with the Scale up Institute and Said Business school about support for Growth.</p> <p>We already support a wide range of business and start up activity. Self-employment is an important aspect of the economy and the support available through OBS, Regional and National Offers is available to all.</p> <p>This point is not valid. Oxfordshire has a large public sector due to its role as an international centre for excellence in higher education and health – an essential element of our local economy. However, jobs growth in the economy, currently tracking at over 7000 jobs per annum predominantly private and cross sector. Again OBS and the national programmes are available to support this activity.</p> <p>The SEP responds to the forecast growth, the SHMA, associated economic assessment and local plan allocation process. As before we are working through the Growth Board and Executive Officer group to better understand predicted</p>
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	<p>10. <i>There is insufficient reference to the importance of suitable business accommodation and available land for housing. The lack of suitable business space and accommodation for key workers is often sighted by companies as a reason for choosing alternative locations elsewhere. The SEP should include actions to support the needs of growth companies</i></p> <p>11. <i>The SEP could better outline actions for encouraging the adoption of energy efficient approaches and other means of improving productivity. Our broadband roll-out for example is already well behind the performance required by business, yet this issue is given little prominence and objectives for this crucial area are weak</i></p>	<p>growth and impact. Forecasting of job growth will form part of the work on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy.</p> <p>We have already identified this matter in the delivery strategies and supporting documents. Again the SEP is not intended to be a delivery strategy but does set the framework within which the mapping and grow on space work is already taking place. There is also a need for the local plan development to recognise and allocate land to support this ambition. We have been very successful already in bidding for challenge fund investment to support incubation/grow on space across the county.</p> <p>The SEP sets the strategic context and delivery will be articulated in the delivery plans such as Innovation, CCHTIP, EEIP etc. The Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme continues to roll out superfast broadband in rural areas. We can and will continue to flag the importance of this investment and need to invest in the network to create future resilience.</p>
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	<p>12. <i>The SEP is too narrowly focussed, failing to take into account the impact of major developments close to but outside Oxfordshire, i.e. Haddenham and Princes Risborough</i></p> <p>13. <i>The map detailing Oxfordshire’s growth corridors (Fig. 10) was unhelpful since it covered most of the county apart from Thame and Chinnor</i></p> <p>14. <i>The continuing problems of broadband connectivity in districts has not been addressed, and this is a potentially severe impediment to small business growth and an increased level of homeworking</i></p> <p>15. <i>The response rate from the business sector to the document has been extremely disappointing and, although separate additional consultation events were held involving businesses, the overall level of business participation is disappointing</i></p> <p>16. <i>A risk register should be included as an appendix to the SEP</i></p>	<p>The SEP focuses upon Oxfordshire and supports the local plan ambitions. As such it has not identified locations specifically outside the county. However, we do work through partnerships with other LEPs to address cross boundary issues such as infrastructure including England’s Economic Heartland Alliance, Greater Thames Valley or Motorsport Valley.</p> <p>This is a county council map. We will revisit all maps and illustrations in the SEP to ensure they are all up to date.</p> <p>See response to point 11</p> <p>It is worth reflecting on the reach and engagement with business representative organisations (over 4000 businesses consulted) including stakeholder engagement as distinct from the number of written submissions received. We continue to work with representative groups and engagement through Board sub-groups – see page 45. We will articulate this in the Delivery section of the SEP.</p> <p>We agree and we will include a Risk Register.</p>
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	<p>17. <i>Future educational infrastructure requirement should have been addressed in more detail; especially in connection with how this infrastructure can support the job market and future skills agenda</i></p> <p>18. <i>The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy is not due to be produced until the spring of 20-17, whereas members of our scrutiny committee questioned whether a robust SEP could be produced without a critical underpinning strategy</i></p> <p>19. <i>The SEP should include proposals for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Converting R&D to technology readiness and manufacturing</i> - <i>Altering the balance between micro-businesses and medium/large enterprises</i> - <i>Undertaking a review of funds and support for high growth businesses, in order to harness scarce resources as effectively as possible</i> - <i>Developing an Oxfordshire-wide strategy for schools and further education to better support the local economy</i> - <i>Integrating skills and business development programmes to improve the coherence of the Oxfordshire offer to business</i> 	<p>Whilst the SEP makes clear the need for and approach needed to support growth, it is not the document within which we develop the specific response. This is addressed both in the Skills Strategy refresh and also the emerging Infrastructure Strategy being led through the growth board and feeds into the LGF challenge fund bids both capital and revenue.</p> <p>The SEP sets the strategic direction and supports the SHMA and Local Plan ambitions, the strategy will inform future iterations of the plan and will along with the suite of other implementation/strategy plans feed into the SEP going forward.</p> <p>These are valid points but not for the SEP to address in any detail, we have a strong suite of supporting plans which address some of the issues raised and others such as the alignment of skills and business support very much part of the work we are currently undertaking across the LEP family. The Innovation Strategy and work we are doing on Business Growth/Scale-up through OBS will support many of the issues raised here. The SEP again is not an implementation plan it is a strategy within which we develop delivery/implementation plans responding to Oxfordshire need.</p>
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