



**To:** Oxfordshire Growth Board  
**Date:** 27 November 2018  
**Report of:** Growth Board Scrutiny Panel  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 22 November 2018

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<p>To present Scrutiny Panel recommendations concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Expressway, and mismatch between this and the JSSP timescales</li> <li>• Improving communication between the Growth Board and its Scrutiny Panel and the Board’s sub groups</li> <li>• Increasing transparency around decision making and public engagement</li> <li>• Energy Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.
<p><b>Recommendation: That the Oxfordshire Growth Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b></p>	

<b>Appendices</b>
Appendix 1 – Draft Growth Board response to the recommendation

**Introduction and overview**

1. At its meeting on 22 November 2018, the Scrutiny Panel considered the Growth Board’s agenda for its meeting on 27 November 2018, in addition to considering in detail the Draft Energy Strategy. There were also a number of other items for discussion on the Scrutiny Panel’s agenda including the Oxford / Cambridge Expressway and officer recruitment for the Growth Deal.

2. The Panel was also pleased to welcome public contributions at its meeting, which it is hoped will continue from a wide range of people. Where these raised matters for the Growth Board rather than the Panel the summary addresses and relevant questions are in the appendix.
3. The Panel would like to thank Caroline Green (Interim Deal Director), Paul Staines (Growth Board Partnership Manager), Sue Halliwell (Oxfordshire County Council, Director for Planning & Place), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council, Head of Planning and Strategic Housing) and Dawn Pettis (Oxfordshire County Council, Communities: Planning & Place) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

### **Establishing ways of working**

4. As the Scrutiny Panel's position within the Growth Deal governance structure beds in, so will its ways of working. The way the Panel chooses to deliver its recommendations to the Growth Board, and require its responses, will set a precedent for future ways of working. For these, the first recommendations, the Panel wishes to present its recommendations in the form of a brief report with an accompanying rationale. The purpose of this report is to summarise the narrative and discussion of the Panel, and how it reached its conclusions. The Chair of the Panel will act on its behalf in producing and presenting its reports.
5. Where recommendations are made, the Chair of the Panel intends to provide a quick turnaround in producing these reports, to allow sufficient time for the Growth Board to consider and respond to the issues raised. The Scrutiny Panel asks that going forward, the Growth Board provides written responses to any of the Panel's recommendations put forward, which can be published and presented at the Growth Board meeting in the week following the Scrutiny Panel's meeting.
6. It is critical that the presentation of recommendations, and their accompanying narrative, is presented to the meeting at which a relevant decision is to be taken. For the benefit of the public, and to promote openness and transparency, the Panel asks that the Growth Board gives full consideration and written responses to the recommendations made, addressing not only the recommendation, but also the rationale and context as provided in these reports going forward.
7. A suggested template response form is attached (Appendix 1) which the Growth Board can use to record its responses. It is requested that once a draft response is completed (preferably by the Growth Board Chair in liaison with officers) that this document is published as a supplement to the Growth Board's agenda or minutes, and the Board will be asked to give its full endorsement or otherwise to the draft response and decision in relation to any recommendations.
8. Under the current meeting arrangements, the Scrutiny Panel would hope to circulate its report and recommendations to the Growth Board on Friday or Monday after its meeting, and hope to publish this together with the Growth Board's draft response on the morning of the day the Growth Board is due to

meet (Tuesday). The response(s) will also be reported back to the Scrutiny Panel at their next meeting.

**Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board considers and adopts the principles of responding to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations set out in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 above.**

### **Expressway and Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) timescales**

9. One of the biggest challenges identified as part of the Growth Deal process, as already highlighted by the JSSP Advisory Sub-Group, is the misalignment of Highways England's timescale for the Expressway and the development of the JSSP.
10. The Growth Deal requires that each of the Oxfordshire Council's submit their Local Plans no later than 1 April 2019. However, Central Government Planning Inspectors have not accepted two neighbouring Local Plans (Aylesbury Vale and Vale of White Horse district councils) at least partially on the basis that they do not take account of the Oxford / Cambridge expressway in their housing forecasts; an expressway which does not yet have an assigned route, nor detail of its precise function. Public consultation on the route options is not due to take place until autumn 2019, with a preferred route being announced in 2020.
11. This conflict between deadlines suggests that the planning process for these significant projects is not well aligned.
12. It is noted that if the Local Plan submission deadline of 1 April 2019 is recognised as a first draft stage, and open to review beyond this deadline, then there is less concern about needing to take account of the JSSP and the Expressway in the plans before further material details are announced.
13. The Panel noted that officers and Leaders had already raised these concerns with government departments and Highways England (HE) and discussions about aligning timetables and deadlines were ongoing.
14. The Panel also expressed disquiet about the statement in minute 24 of the Growth Board minutes of 25 September 2018 which could be read as conveying rather more support for the expressway than may have been intended, given the level of uncertainty around the proposals from HE.

**Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board takes further steps to raise concerns with Central Government about the timing of the JSSP submission deadline, and individual Local Plan submission deadlines, in April 2019 as required by the Growth Deal, without first understanding more details about the impact of the proposed Oxford Cambridge Expressway.**

**Recommendation 3: That in light of the continuing uncertainty about the route choice and its impact on the communities affected and the wider**

**county, the Growth Board clarifies its rationale and evidence base for endorsing the expressway.**

### **Improving communication between the Growth Board and its Scrutiny Panel and the Board's Sub groups**

15. The Panel noted that communications between the Growth Board's Sub-groups and Scrutiny Panel were still being established, as was communication between these groups and the Board.
16. The Panel noted that there was considerable overlap and interdependence between the different Deal strands and also with the Board's other work. Good communications between the groups and project planning was needed to avoid duplication of work between groups, and to ensure that all the groups and the Panel understood the terms of reference of each other's' work.
17. The Panel noted that recruitment of two dedicated Board staff (a democratic support officer and a programme manager) would assist with this, and that South and Vale District Councils were recruiting to a post to provide scrutiny support which is to be provided by the authority holding the role as Chair of the Growth Board.
18. The Panel discussed considering one of the Deal strands in detail at each meeting, and that it would therefore be helpful to have the key officers and the Chair of that sub-group in attendance at the Panel meeting. Attendance and appropriate contributions by at least one member of the Growth Board at each Scrutiny Panel meeting would help communication between the Panel and the Board. It is also important that the Panel equally holds local leaders to account, as it has until now only scrutinised officer's that support the Growth Deal.

**Recommendation 4: At least one member of the Growth Board should attend each Scrutiny Panel meeting to answer questions about the Board's work. The Chair of one of the Sub-Groups should attend in rotation to discuss the work of their Sub-Group.**

**Recommendation 5: Officers working on the Deal's strands as part of the Deal team and the Lead officer for the councils should attend the Scrutiny Panel as appropriate to answer questions and discuss their work.**

### **Increasing transparency around decision making and public engagement**

19. The Panel noted its own and all three public speakers' concerns over what appeared to be a lack of transparency around decision making, remoteness of the Growth Board from grass-roots bodies and representatives, and a lack of ability to influence and understand the rationale for major decisions.
20. This is a perennial issue for the Growth Board and has been raised by the speakers in different forums. These concerns covered lack of transparency at the

Board meetings; being unable to contribute to or see development of the high-level strategies prepared by OxLEP and the Board;

21. There was also concern about the lack of information-sharing and consultation around the Expressway (including some parish councils not receiving an invite from HE to information events for all parish councils). While acknowledging that the Growth Board was not responsible for arranging those information events, the Panel asks that officers involved in arranging events could ensure or request that first and second tier councillors be invited to events run for parish and town councils. The discussions there would inform their own positions and allow them to better represent their residents.
22. The Panel noted that although information was available on the Growth Board's website this was not always the most obvious site for either elected members or the public to view frequently and so key information could easily be overlooked.
23. The Panel discussed, from their position as newcomers to the Board's processes, improving the Board's transparency and engagement.

**Recommendation 6: That the Growth Board establishes a clear pro-active process for informing district, county and parish councillors about their work and future consultations and decisions. This may take the form of a circulated newsletter or bulletin sent out by the Board's programme officer, and should not rely solely on the information posted on the Board's website.**

**Recommendation 7: That the Growth Board takes formal votes on all items for decision, and records in the minutes each Leader's individual vote, to increase transparency about decisions and each Council's stance.**

**Recommendation 8: That the Growth Board remains fully committed to encouraging public engagement in the Board's work.**

### **Energy Strategy**

24. The Panel discussed the draft Energy Strategy. They asked to consider the action/delivery plan at their January meeting. They noted a number of places in the Strategy where targets were defined or presented differently, particularly in relation to carbon and energy reduction.
25. They noted the very ambitious targets of reducing emissions substantially while also increasing housing and employment, and of retrofitting 4000 homes. Officers themselves acknowledged these were extremely ambitious targets. The Panel were concerned that the contribution made by vehicle emissions remained high in recent years, and would continue to do so.

**Recommendation 9: That the Energy Strategy Action Plan is revised to ensure it contains SMART targets and clear and measurable objectives.**

**Further Consideration**

26. As well as reviewing the Growth Board's response to these recommendations at its next meeting, the Panel will also be considering in detail:
- a. how the Growth Board can involve the public in its work
  - b. the Energy Strategy Delivery Plan
  - c. a briefing on the affordable housing strand of the Deal in advance of fuller consideration at the Panel's March meeting.

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## Growth Board response to recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel

### Recommendations made on 22 November 2018

### Draft response provided by [date]

The growth Board is requested to provide a draft response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel, to be published as a supplement collectively with the Scrutiny Panel's report, for decision at its meeting on 27 November 2018.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board considers and adopts the principles of responding to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations (set out in the report of Panel from 22 November)	<i>Does the Growth Board agree with the recommendation?</i>	<i>The Growth Board is requested to provide a rationale for its decision to accept or reject the recommendation.</i>
Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board takes further steps to raise concerns with Central Government about the timing of the JSSP submission deadline, and individual Local Plan submission deadlines, in April 2019 as required by the Growth Deal, without first understanding more details about the impact of the proposed Oxford Cambridge Expressway.		
Recommendation 3: That in light of the continuing uncertainty about the route choice and its impact on the communities affected and the wider county, the Growth Board clarifies its rationale and evidence base for endorsing the expressway.		

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<p>Recommendation 7: That the Growth Board takes formal votes on all items for decision, and records in the minutes each Leader's individual vote, to increase transparency about decisions and each Council's stance.</p>		
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<p>Recommendation 9: That the Energy Strategy Action Plan is revised to ensure it contains SMART targets and clear and measurable objectives.</p>		