

To: Oxfordshire Growth Board
Date: 28 January 2020
Report of: Growth Board Scrutiny Panel
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 23 January 2020

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 23 January 2020 to the Growth Board.

Lead Member Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the 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 James Mills (Leader – West Oxfordshire District Council and Chair of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Advisory Sub-group), Bev Hindle (Growth Board Director), Stefan Robinson (Growth Board Manager), Craig Bower (Digital Infrastructure Programme Director), John Disley (Infrastructure Strategy & Policy Manager- Oxfordshire County Council), Caroline Green (Assistant Chief Executive – Oxford City Council), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive - West Oxfordshire District Council), Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnerships Manager- South and Vale district councils) and Anita Bradley (Monitoring Officer - Oxford City Council) for attending the meeting to answer questions.
2. The Panel welcomed Councillor James Mills as the Chair of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 sub-group to update the panel on the wider consultation plans for the Plan with agencies, local authorities, young people, public experts and the prescribed list of statutory bodies. Councillor Mills also updated the panel on the challenges faced in consulting young people from primary school to university age groups. The Panel discussed the advantages of aligning of local plans to better fit with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timelines. In addition, the Panel discussed the uncertainty over the government’s decision on the Oxford - Cambridge expressway route which had been delayed due to general election pre-election period.

Recommendation 1: The Scrutiny Panel supports the principle of aligning the Local Plans timelines after the current round, i.e. from the mid-2030s with the revised Oxon plan 2050 timelines and recommends that the Growth Board take steps to ensure this dialogue is instigated with the local planning authorities.

Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board urgently seek clarity on the Government's plan on the Ox-Cam expressway by inviting Highways England for an update at the Growth Board meeting on 11th March 2020.

3. The Panel support the Growth Board Review's statement of common purpose to support sustainable development advocating zero carbon and carbon positive developments. In addition, the Panel discussed the need to look beyond modular housing and setting even higher standards by learning from Greencore Development sites at Southmoor and Cumnor Hill.

Recommendation 3: The Scrutiny Panel supports the Growth Board Review's statement of common purpose (pg. 140 para 28 of Growth Board papers Supplementary Agenda). However, the Panel asks that the Growth Board revise part b of para 28 to read the following: "*Support the development of local planning policy that meets the UK Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050, and contributes towards biodiversity gain whilst embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world.*" The Panel also ask that the Greencore Site Developments at Springfield Meadows - Southmoor and The Acre - Cumnor Hill are used as case studies to progress this ambition.

4. The Panel discussed at length the Growth Board Review and its conclusions regarding the Scrutiny Panel membership; the Panel agreed not to support the reduction in membership as this would have a likely impact on political and geographical balance, the Panel also discussed Councillor diary commitments and the impact of this reduction increasing the risk of Scrutiny being inquorate at meetings.
5. The Panel also agreed not to support a mandatory seat for Local District Council Scrutiny Chairs to be a part of the membership due to the differing political make up of Scrutiny within local authorities and consequently not taking away the power to choose their own representation. However, the Panel acknowledges the experience it would be bring to the Panel.
6. The Panel agreed to support the Growth Board Review's recommendation for the Scrutiny Panel to focus in greater detail to scrutinise the Housing and Growth Deal.

Recommendation 4: Growth Board Review – Scrutiny

i) That the Growth Board does not reduce the overall membership of the Scrutiny Panel.

ii) That the Growth Board does not make provision for a mandatory seat for Local Scrutiny Chairs on the Scrutiny Panel. The Panel is not averse to

the idea, but this decision should lie with local authorities to decide their representation.

iii) That the Growth Board make the provision for the Scrutiny Panel to focus in greater detail to scrutinise the Housing and Growth Deal.

iv) That the Growth Board support as a longer-term development opportunity the establishment of Scrutiny Panel Task & finish groups to undertake more detailed review of specific issues by communicating this to the Growth Deal teams for producing key reports.

7. The Panel also considered the Digital Infrastructure Strategy on the deployment of full fibre broadband not only for residential areas but also to serve as the backbone for network rail, highways agency and other commercial operators. The Panel acknowledged the significant reduction this could potentially bring in work related journeys.

Recommendation 5: That the Growth Board consider formulating a strategic plan on how to progress the Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

Future Work

8. The Panel also considered a report setting out the conclusions and recommendations of stage one of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study and the scope of stage 2 requiring further detailed options work. The Panel acknowledged the rail connectivity challenges Oxfordshire faces and the need for much greater rail infrastructure investment. The Panel looks forward to review the outcome of the work being undertaken.
9. As well as reviewing the Growth Board’s response to these recommendations at its next meeting on 4 March 2020, the Panel will also be considering in detail:
 - The 2019/20 Quarter 3 progress report for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
 - The zero-carbon housing report.
 - The quarterly financial summary of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

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