

To: Council

Date: 8th February 2016

Report of: Regeneration and Partnerships

Title of Report: The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide members with an update on the work of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership including its changing role, recent strategic developments, and impact on funding attraction and delivery.

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price

Policy Framework: The Corporate Plan

Recommendation:

1. That the report be noted.

The role and context relating to the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

1. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) is responsible for facilitating the strategic development of the Oxfordshire economy and is now well established as a key strategic partnership within the economic growth agenda. The Partnership appointed a Chief Executive, Nigel Tipple, just over 2 years ago, and he is supported by a team of direct staff, seconded employees, and wider Oxfordshire County Council staff and services.
2. Nationally, over the past four years the Government has set a path for greater devolution of decision-making to a local level. This has, to varying degrees, taken place through the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in conjunction with local authorities, business and educational institutions that also comprise the LEP's key members (see Point 9).
3. There have been adjustments to the LEP's structure and membership in the last year. OxLEP is now a Limited Company with not for profit status, a change enacted due to the move from loose partnership to one making impactful decisions, with enhanced responsibility around funding. Councillor Bob Price, Leader of Oxford City Council, remains as the City Council's representative. Cllr Price is also a representative of the LEP on the Oxfordshire Skills Board. Richard Venables, Managing Partner of VSL Ltd, is still representative of the Oxford City business community, nominated by the Oxford Strategic Partnership. OxLEP is due to appoint a new chair, with Adrian Shooter CBE stepping down late in 2015.
4. Key Outcomes – in the last year the LEP has:

- a. Renewed its strategic investment plans across key sectors that underpin the evolving Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)
 - b. Attracted significant funding for growth and infrastructure, progressing to delivery phases on City Deal, Growth Deal and European Structural Funds projects
 - c. Played a coordinating role developing and negotiating a draft Devolution Deal with Government.
 - d. Enhancing the business support and skills related support available to local business utilising European and national funds
 - e. In line with the above outcomes, it has helped to create a closer working partnership and shared agenda between key stakeholders.
5. Strategy and Investment Planning: OxLEP's Strategic Vision remains the same; *'By 2030 we will have strengthened Oxfordshire's position as a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy, driven by innovation, enterprise and research excellence.'* The four key themes that drive the SEP are Innovative **People, Place, Enterprise and Connectivity**. Whilst the overarching themes are still relevant, the LEP has recently appointed consultants to refresh the Strategic Economic Plan. This is in response to a need to; check and evolve the vision over time, consult more widely, reflect an altered national context, and meet the investment needs identified in each of the SEP's five Strategic Investment Plans. These plans include:
- a. Innovation Investment Plan (in development)
 - b. Oxfordshire Skills Strategy (published and led by Oxfordshire Skills Board)
 - c. Strategic Environment and Economy Investment Plan (published)
 - d. Creative, Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Investment Plan (published in draft)
 - e. Connecting Oxfordshire (led by Oxfordshire County Council).
6. The role of the Investment Plans is to articulate in detail the projects and programmes that will deliver the aim of growing the Oxfordshire economy. The Investment Plans are intended be evidence-based and identify specific projects to be delivered. The intention is for these plans to allow agencies to react quickly when funding becomes available. The SEP refresh will consult widely with key stakeholders and is programmed for completion in the summer, which approximately coincides with the devolution timetable.
7. Funding: A key role of the LEP is securing and distributing resources for delivery of the SEP through a variety of means:
- a. In 2014 Oxfordshire was awarded £55.5m through the City Deal, this programme that is now being delivered across Apprenticeships, business support, infrastructure and innovation centres, focusing on the Oxfordshire 'Knowledge Spine' of Bicester – Oxford – Science Vale.
 - b. OxLEP is also now delivering a €19.3m Implementation Plan that sets out the process for the delivery of the priorities it articulated in the [Oxfordshire European Structural Investment Fund \(ESIF\) Strategy](#). This particular programme is overseen by the Oxfordshire ESIF Shadow Committee. Numerous funding calls are being delivered for business support, innovation and low carbon activity. The European Social Fund element has

- been delayed at a national/EU level. Funding support for employability training, aimed at NEETS and long-term unemployed has, however, been awarded with Big Lottery Fund matching this.
- c. Furthermore, OxLEP, through the current [Strategic Economic Plan](#), negotiated a £208.5 million [Oxfordshire Growth Deal package](#) for a range of transport/connectivity, business support and other projects to be delivered over the next few years.
 - d. Local Growth Fund 3 bids and Devolution related Infrastructure funds have been prepared ahead of any call to ensure a pipeline of investment ready strategic projects is in place. Oxford has several key projects including the Station, Osney Mead Knowledge Park, and Park & Ride expansion at draft business case stage.
 - e. Notable funding that has benefitted Oxford in the report period includes:
 - i. Northern Gateway -£6M Local Growth Funds
 - ii. Oxpens - £3.5M Local Growth Funds (LGF)
 - iii. £15.2m of LGF funding will go towards two innovation centres based at Oxford University: the Begbroke Innovation Accelerator at Begbroke Science Park (Cherwell) and the Oxford BioEscalator at the University's Old Road Campus.
 - iv. £26M towards the Western Flood Relief Channel.
 - v. Access to Headington - £8.2m.
8. Delivery and Coordination: The LEP has moved beyond its strategic and funding role into delivery and coordination phases. For example;
- a. Invest in Oxfordshire: Targeted to support 120 (117 to date) foreign investment enquiries per annum and improve its conversion rates, the team has prepared a suite of technical, sector focussed marketing propositions for key sectors. 23 successes were recorded to January 2016, supporting 430 jobs.
 - b. Oxfordshire Apprenticeships: The skills element of City Deal includes a commitment to deliver 525 new apprenticeships for young people, 300 Apprenticeship Grants for Employers and a new body that will support young people as they transition into the world of work through a number of mechanisms – namely Oxfordshire Apprenticeships. £1.5million of funding was allocated with targets to increase Apprenticeship and Traineeship uptake across Oxfordshire over the 3 years from April 2014 to March 2017. Targets are broadly being met or exceeded. Oxford has the fewest resident apprentices of any Oxon district. However, the majority, 26%, of apprenticeships are located in Oxford City businesses, despite having the fewest resident apprentices. This is partly reflective of our job density and high in-commuting figures.
 - c. Business Support Service: The service is acting as an overarching hub for business support including start-ups, established SMEs and innovation focussed business. A team of sector specialist 'Network Navigators' is leading on supporting key knowledge sectors from digital, life science, social enterprise, space and satellites, cryogenics and investment. Following the closure of the Business Growth Service, the offering will become a greater focal point for public sector funded business support.
 - d. European Capital of Innovation Shortlisting: The LEP has supported this work in terms of funds and expertise.

- e. Resilient Cities: The LEP has supported Oxford City Council and the County Council to bid for funding to the Rockefeller Foundation to bid for a Chief City Resilience Officer to plan against shocks and stresses that impact on city's ability to function. If successful, Oxford will join a network of 100 major cities globally.
- 9. Devolution Deal Progress: On 4th September, the Leaders of the six Oxfordshire Authorities submitted an expression of interest to government setting out initial proposals for devolution in Oxfordshire for discussion with government. These proposals were developed together with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Clinical Commissioning Group and outlined proposals for greater local control over £4bn of funding for transport, skills training and health services. As this process continues, the LEP has been coordinating with all districts and the county to maximise the business case including a set of key asks and expected long-term economic benefits.

Financial Implications

The City Council has not currently committed any financial resources to the Oxfordshire LEP, although there is a commitment in terms of member and staff time for attending meetings, coordination and communication of decisions, and matching existing staff costs of European Funded programmes related to business support. In addition the previous Economic Development Manager is funded one day per week to work for OxLEP.

There are no additional financial implications as a direct result of this report

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

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List of background papers:

Further information can be found on the web site link below.

<http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/>