

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Report of: Strategy and Review Business Manager	WARDS AFFECTED
Report Author: Steve Daniels, Economic Development Officer Tel no. 01865 252164 Email: sdaniels@oxford.gov.uk	ALL
Lead Member Responsible: Councillor Turner	
Scrutiny Committee Responsibility: Community Scrutiny Committee	
Key Decision: Yes	

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is a follow up to the report to Executive Board in early October on the Oxford City Futures study, and seeks approval to an economic development strategy for Oxford. The draft strategy, attached to this report, has been drawn from a set of objectives which were included in the Oxford City Futures study as a suggested strategic framework.

The strategic objectives set out in the strategy also reflect other points made by the study regarding mechanisms to develop the strategy with partners, and action areas to be addressed and developed with partners.

The strategy will help to focus a strategic objective of the Council's overall vision, namely to create local prosperity and sustain full employment. A key part of this is not wishing to see Oxford stand still whilst wealth creation goes elsewhere.

The strategy can also help the Oxford Strategic Partnership in taking the Oxford Community Strategy forward and developing its role in relation to one of its principal themes, namely supporting a vibrant and inclusive economy.

The report does not itself have direct financial implications. The extent to which the economic development strategy can be implemented and is translated into actions will be managed according to partner involvement, involvement across the Council's Business Units, and

existing budget provision within the Strategy and Review Business Unit budget.

There are no immediate staffing implications with adopting the strategy. A pragmatic approach will be adopted using the existing staff resource. The strategy relates to a 15 year period and there are likely to be opportunities to review the position over this period.

Given this pragmatic approach, and the input which it is hoped potential partners can bring, partners are being sounded out regarding identifying one or two priorities selected from the strategy to focus on initially in the first year or two. Meetings with potential partners are continuing to take place and an update on this will be presented verbally to the Executive Board.

The Executive Board is therefore asked to endorse the following recommendations:

- a) That the attached draft strategy is approved as Oxford's economic development strategy;**
- b) That the strategy provides the focus for identifying, developing, and carrying out actions with partners;**
- c) That two first year priorities are identified from the strategic objectives for referral to the Oxford Business Network;**
- d) That the vision set out in the strategy is referred to full Council for addition to the Council's overall vision for Oxford where the strategic objective of creating prosperity and sustaining full employment is concerned;**
- e) That the strategy and its vision are commended to the Oxford Strategic Partnership as a key means of addressing the vibrant economy theme of the Community Strategy.**

1. This report seeks approval to an economic development strategy for Oxford which is attached to the report.
2. It also refers to the progress in meeting with potential partners and stakeholders to identify support for the strategy.
3. This report and the presentation which took place on November 25 are important in that they inform all Members that the completed Oxford City Futures study has been used as the basis for preparing a draft economic development strategy for Oxford. They provide Members an early opportunity to offer thoughts regarding initial priorities which can be fed into the Oxford Business Network.

Background

4. The Oxford City Futures study was referred to and endorsed by the Executive Board last month as a key assessment of Oxford's economic profile. It provides the assessment and rationale underpinning the draft economic development strategy and has provided the opportunity for a slim-line strategy to be separately prepared as a result.
5. The study also referred (including within the executive summary) to some suggested action areas for development as an action plan. These will be discussed and developed with potential partners once the Council has agreed to the strategy. It also makes sense for views arising from the proposed Oxford Business Network to be fed in to this as well.

The Strategy

6. The attached strategy incorporates the Oxford City Futures **vision** for Oxford's economic development. This vision reflects the preferred future development scenario of managed economic growth.

7. The **vision** in full is to:-

“Enable the city to realise the economic potential of its world class universities, its knowledge based industries and its unique character in order to promote a stronger economic role within the local, regional, national, and international context. This will be achieved by sustaining local business diversity and by managed economic growth supported by improvements in integrated transport to assist social inclusion, conserve local heritage and secure environmental enhancement.”

8. The strategy sets out seven strategic objectives which have been built on the strategic framework suggested by the Oxford City Futures study. These objectives are very much inter-related and feature some additional elements which recognise the need to develop and maintain mechanisms for coordinating and focusing a partnership approach, and key supporting work. A couple of others have also been included which draw on the Oxford City Futures references to undertaking promotion as an important part of follow-on action plan development.

9. The **strategic objectives** of the strategy are :-

1. To encourage growth in business turnover and productivity
2. To promote Oxford's regional and national role
3. To stimulate and support business investment across key sectors of Oxford's economy in order to maintain both competitiveness and a range of employment opportunities
 - a) promote Oxford as a location for inward investment
 - b) sustain a diverse local economy, adaptable to change
 - c) promote development in high growth sectors and clusters

- d) promote development in high productivity sectors and clusters
 - e) encourage business networking and technology transfer
 - 4. To seek a supply of sites to accommodate new investment, and to support small business development
 - a) ensure adequate provision of business sites and premises
 - b) assist business start-up and small firm development
 - 5. To help businesses to better meet their workforce needs and to improve employment prospects for all
 - a) assist education and skills training to meet business needs
 - b) assist full employment across the local workforce
 - c) promote flexible working and reduce commuting
 - 6. To set up, support and maintain a partnership approach to developing and delivering the overall strategy
 - a) establish and service an Oxford Business Network
 - b) coordinate Council support for the strategy
 - c) maintain an understanding of the effect of local economic change, and an awareness of Government policy relating to economic development and business issues
 - d) identify, develop and monitor a range of performance indicators
 - 7. To ensure that this strategy takes proper account of a range of other considerations important to Oxford's well-being
10. As set out in the introduction to the strategy, managed economic growth includes reference to new physical development. It is therefore worth noting that there are two important land use planning factors having a bearing on managed economic growth. Firstly accommodating physical growth will be in accordance with the local planning framework. Promotion of Oxford as a business investment location will be attuned with this framework. Secondly the potential for formal recognition of an Oxford City-Region may generate provision for new business investment. The South East England Regional Assembly is currently preparing the South East Plan 2001 to 2026 which, once approved by the Government, will establish the Regional Spatial Strategy. This document will contain a sub-regional strategy and spatial policies for the Central Oxfordshire sub-region. The scale and location of any growth is not clear at the moment although the City Council is lobbying for greater recognition of the role the City and its immediate environs could play in the economic growth of the Region.

Working with Others

11. The strategy has been prepared with a view to working closely with other bodies able to subscribe to and support economic development in Oxford. These bodies include the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA), Oxfordshire County Council, Business Link, Oxfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University, Oxfordshire Business Enterprises Ltd, OX1(Oxford City Centre Management Company), MKOB Learning and Skills Council, and the Oxford Trust.

12. It was agreed at the October meeting that the Executive Board would also be informed of progress in discussing with partners the commitment they are prepared to provide in helping to take a strategy forward.
13. Meetings have so far taken place at officer level with Business Link, Oxfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Oxfordshire County Council, and SEEDA. They are supportive of the suggested strategic framework in the Oxford City Futures study and are prepared to help the Council in taking a strategy forward. Meetings have also been arranged so far with Oxford Brookes University, Oxford University, Oxfordshire Business Enterprises Ltd, and OX1.
14. The strategy comprises a number of objectives concerning a wide range of activity and also relates to a fifteen year period. Therefore, given that a pragmatic approach to applying it is being adopted, external bodies have been or will be asked at these meetings what they perceive should be first year priorities for initial focus. These perceptions will be conveyed verbally at the meeting. The intention will be to invite the Oxford Business Network (see paragraph 16) to firm up on which priorities are to be initially focused on.
15. Close cooperation with the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership and neighbouring local authorities across the economic development agenda can also help in considering matters of mutual interest or concern.
16. Corporate commitment in terms of subscription to the strategy across all Council business units will also be key. As with external bodies the initial commitment is largely likely to be a combination of identifying what is currently being done together with work of a more developmental nature. This approach reflects the current need for the Council to make financial savings across the board. However as business planning is rolled forward and developed for future years much more can be considered in order to strengthen subscription to the strategy.
17. The intention to set up an Oxford Business Network or Group with an Oxford focus is a key undertaking. This is seen as having scope for overseeing the economic development strategy, functioning as a means of helping to strengthen links between the Council and businesses, and advising the Oxford Strategic Partnership regarding economic development and business matters. It also needs to take account of engaging with and building on business community interest which came forward during the Oxford City Futures consultation workshops. Proposals for how this would work are under consideration and will be tested at an initial meeting of external body and consultation workshop representatives in January.

Council Vision

18. At present the Council vision refers to “Creating prosperity and supporting full employment” as a strategic objective. Underpinning this is the statement “We do not believe that Oxford can stand still while wealth goes elsewhere”. It is suggested that the vision which has emerged from the Oxford City Futures

study and which is included in the draft economic development strategy could be added to this objective. This would help further underline that the Council fully recognises the importance of local economic performance.

Oxford Community Strategy – economy theme

19. The strategy and its vision could also help the Oxford Strategic Partnership in developing the vibrant and inclusive economy theme in the Oxford Community Strategy. The strategy represents a key element, if not the key element, of this theme. This would help, as referred to in paragraph 16, with the involvement of the proposed Oxford Business Network or Group in the aims of the Oxford Strategic Partnership as it provides a stronger focus on business development matters and economic performance which the Network or Group will be far better able to relate to. It is therefore suggested that the strategy and its vision are commended to the Oxford Strategic Partnership for adoption as the Community Strategy is reviewed.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY
THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
BUSINESS MANAGER, STRATEGY AND REVIEW
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (Alan Flockton)
LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (Lindsay Cane)
BUSINESS MANAGER, PLANNING SERVICES

Background papers : Oxford City Futures study report

