

[Shadow] Oxfordshire Growth Board

Thursday 20 November 2014, 14:00

Committee Room One, West Oxfordshire District Council Offices

Present:

Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council
Councillor John Cotton, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Bob Price, Leader of Oxford City Council
Councillor Barry Norton - Chairman, and Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of Cherwell District Council

Non-voting Members:

Adrian Shooter, Chairman Oxfordshire LEP
Alistair Fitt, Universities Representative, Oxford Brookes
Adrian Lockwood, Business Representative, Oxfordshire Skills Board
Lesley Tims for John Mansbridge, Environment Agency
David Warburton, Homes and Communities Agency

In attendance:

David Neudegg, West Oxfordshire District Council (representing Oxfordshire Chief Executives)
Andrew Tucker, West Oxfordshire District Council
Paul Staines, Growth Board Programme Manager
Calvin Bell, Cherwell District Council
Anna Robinson, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
David Edwards, Oxford City Council
Nigel Tipple, Local Enterprise Partnership
Val Johnson Oxfordshire Partnership Manager

Apologies:

Andrew Harrison, Business Representative
Phil Shadbolt, Business Representative
Jon Mansbridge, Environment Agency
Sue Scane, Oxfordshire County Council

1. Introductions and Welcome

Barry Norton welcomed Members, Officers and members of the public to the meeting. He explained that the Board continued to meet in shadow form as not all constituent authorities had completed the necessary formalities for it to be constituted as a statutory joint committee. It was expected that it would operate as a full Board from the next meeting. Those present then introduced themselves.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Andrew Harrison and Phil Shadbolt, Business Representatives, and from Sue Scane of Oxfordshire County Council. Lesley Tims attended in place of John Mansbridge representing the Environment Agency.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be considered at the meeting.

4. Minutes of the Shadow Growth Board held on 12 September 2014

The minutes of the meeting of the Shadow Health Board held on 12 September were received and agreed as a correct record. David Neudegg advised that the actions identified therein had been carried out or were included on the current agenda. It was confirmed that updates on the progress of transport schemes would be submitted to future meetings of the Board.

5. Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme

David Neudegg introduced the report outlining the post SHMA strategic work programme. The report sought endorsement of the key principles that should underpin future post SHMA work together with the scope and timetabling of that work enabling all authorities to work together in a collective and collaborative way. The principles set out at paragraph 7 of the report reflected previous decisions and took account of the feedback received from 'critical friends'. David explained that the Work Programme was not a detailed programme plan. This was to be developed by the Growth Board Executive Officer Group which would also identify the resources necessary to meet the plan, the detailed costs and their allocation across the authorities.

Barry Wood noted that agreement of a timeframe and the allocation of resources between authorities would require good, strong partnership working. Matthew Barber advised that his authority expected to adopt its Local Plan in October 2015 and Ian Hudspeth suggested that in-house expertise should be utilised in preference to the employment of consultants where possible.

The Shadow Board –

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the principles set out in the proposed strategic work programme be endorsed.
- (b) That each member council be requested to identify the necessary resources for this collaborative work.
- (c) That a report from the Growth Board Executive Officer Group be presented to the next Growth Board outlining the project plan and resourcing arrangements for the strategic work programme.

6. Report on Cambridge Visit and Implications for Oxfordshire

Nigel Tipple introduced the report which outlined some of the key lessons learnt from the Cambridge visit. He noted that the Universities were keen to work with local partners to support economic growth and had established a working group to drive progress forward. Nigel also drew attention to the proposed submission of a comprehensive A34 improvement programme to Government.

Whilst expressing support for the improvement of the A34, Matthew Barber suggested that it would be more appropriate for the matter to be considered in greater depth at the next meeting when the Growth Board would be fully constituted rather than operating in shadow form.

Bob Price questioned whether there was any realistic prospect of securing Government funding outside the current LGF round. In response, Nigel indicated that it was thought prudent to take the earliest opportunity to commence a dialogue with Government as to the significance of investment in this project.

Making reference to the initial paragraph at page 14, John Cotton noted that the SHMA represented evidence that informed the Local Plan process; not figures to which authorities had made a commitment. He also referenced the caveat applied by the universities in terms of their own educational and charitable requirements and expressed the hope that they would act in the wider interests of the community. John went on to question whether there had been a shift in priorities with greater emphasis being placed upon the universities. In response, Nigel indicated that this was not the case. The universities were closely involved in the existing sites and the current proposals sought to strengthen their involvement.

Ian Hudspeth indicated that it was important that Oxford did not undersell its own achievements and suggested that transport infrastructure was the most significant issue facing the county. He went on to caution against raising expectations of significant Government funding for such works.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the report and growth implications and the need to support the universities in developing their growth approach be noted.

(b) That a further report on the submission of a comprehensive A34 improvement programme to Government be presented to the next meeting.

7. Growth Board Work Programme

David Neudegg introduced the report which provided the Growth Board with an update on its work programme. In response to a question from John Cotton, Andrew Tucker advised that the reasons for the reduced trajectory of housing delivery varied from district to district but that factors such as the completion of S106 agreements were significant. David Neudegg indicated that some elements of the City Deal had failed to materialise but that the reasons underlying the reductions were complex. The Officer group was to examine the reasons in greater detail. Barry Norton suggested that it would be helpful to agree a protocol for Section 106 Agreements to ensure that delivery of approved schemes was not delayed. Ian Hudspeth emphasised the need to be robust in securing developer contributions for infrastructure improvements and drew attention to the progress of transport schemes. Barry Wood noted that the rate at which developers built out approved schemes was governed by economic factors and suggested that it would be useful for the Board to receive periodic updates on housing delivery. It was agreed that updates would be provided.

In response to a question from Bob Price, Nigel Tipple explained that the commitment towards partnership working with the Public Service Transformation Network had been introduced into all City Deal agreements at a late stage. This sought to specify how partnerships were to provide information to Government but details were unclear and clarification of expectations was being sought.

RESOLVED: That the report and the current position be noted.

8. City Deal Finance Summary

The Shadow Board received a report summarising the financial position of various City Deal Projects. Nigel Tipple advised that efforts were being made to secure approval of a single reporting format for submission to all Government departments.

RESOLVED: That the report and the current position be noted.

9. Local Transport Board Update

Bev Hindle emphasised the importance of the clear prioritisation of schemes. Existing projects were being reviewed and re-prioritised with clear, consistent business cases being developed for these schemes. Regular meetings were being held with the local Growth Fund Team.

RESOLVED: That the report and the current position be noted.

10. LEP Update

Nigel Tipple advised Members that arrangements for the formal signing of the Local Growth Deal Round 1 by the Minister were under discussion. He also advised that discussions with Government regarding Round 2 were on-going and it was expected that the level and scale of funding available would be established within the next week. The robustness of the partnership's approach had been well received by Government and business plans were now being prepared. Fortnightly meetings were being held to review existing business cases and consider new projects were being held to ensure these were ready for consideration following the next general election.

David Neudegg stressed the importance of ensuring that business plans were accessible to Board Members.

11. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was to be held on 26 February 2015.

12. Any Other Business

No other matters were raised by those present.

The meeting finished at 2:45 pm