

To: City Executive Board
Date: 29 January 2015
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxfordshire Growth Board

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee following an update on the work of the Oxfordshire Growth Board

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price, Executive Member for Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning and Oxford City Council's representative on the Oxfordshire Growth Board

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018

Recommendations: That the City Council's representative on the Oxfordshire Growth Board conveys the following suggestions to the Board and reports back to Scrutiny:

1. That the Growth Board takes a more holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that it is a key consideration in all planning and development activities.
2. That the Growth Board considers whether it can and should have a wider brief in order to achieve greater benefits from collective working. This could include having scope to promote innovative ways of delivering new affordable housing, and further joint lobbying to Government.
3. That all reports to the Growth Board are available in document form.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the agenda reports pack and minutes of the most recent meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, which was held on 20 November 2014. The Committee would like to thank Councillor

Bob Price and Paul Staines, Programme Manager, for attending the Committee meeting and supporting this discussion.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Scrutiny Committee noted the need for a common approach to delivering growth, with high levels of co-operation between local partners and stakeholders. The Committee heard that there is a willingness on all sides to co-operate, as well as a duty to co-operate.
3. The Committee noted the importance of ensuring that developments take place in sustainable locations. New housing developments should be close to jobs and sustainable transport links. The Committee suggested that the Growth Board could take a more holistic approach to sustainability. For example, environmental impacts and mitigation should be forefront in proposals to increase road capacity. The Committee heard that the Growth Board was providing an accurate, comprehensive evidence base to inform new developments and that sustainability was an important part of this.

Recommendation 1 – That the Growth Board takes a more holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that it is a key consideration in all planning and development activities.

4. The Committee highlighted the urgent need to prioritise and incentivise new affordable housing, and noted that the borrowing limit on Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts is a significant barrier to financing more affordable housing.
5. The Committee questioned whether the Growth Board should have a broader remit, with scope to incentivise the provision of new affordable housing, and the use of empty rooms. The Committee heard that the Growth Board is not a planning authority and could not impinge on the sovereignty of Local Authorities.

Recommendation 2 – That the Growth Board considers whether it can and should have a wider brief in order to achieve greater benefits from collective working. This could include having scope to promote innovative ways of delivering new affordable housing, and further joint lobbying to Government.

6. The Committee noted that some verbal reports appeared on the last Growth Board agenda, and suggested that all reports to the Board should be available in document form.

Recommendation 3 – That all reports to the Growth Board are available in document form.

Further consideration

7. The Scrutiny Committee requested additional information about the County Council's vision for Park and Rides.
8. The Committee will continue to monitor the work of the Growth Board.

Director and Board Member Comments

The Committee's proposals are very much in line with Oxford City Council's strategic approach to the role of the Growth Board and I am happy to adopt them in the Board's future deliberations.

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List of background papers: None

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