

Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) Progress Report

Report Purpose

- 1) At the Growth Board in May 2016, the Board approved the commissioning of an Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS).
- 2) This report, for information updates the Board with progress with this project

Recommendation

That the Growth Board:

- I. Notes progress with OXIS.*
- II. Approves a supplementary budget allocation of up to £19,500 to cover the additional costs of OXIS and authorise EOG to engage with the consultants to finalise the additional costs within that cap.*

Background

- 3) At the Growth Board in May 2016, the Board received a report proposing that they commission an Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy or OXIS.
- 4) The report set out the advantages of developing such a strategy as a supporting document for Local Plans, a collation and summation of growth and infrastructure decisions taken and a county wide base-line from which new growth and related infrastructure decisions could be based.
- 5) The report also stated that the intention was that OXIS should also be designed to be able to fully integrate with the proposed development of sub-national/ regional planning. The intention being to put Oxfordshire in the best possible position to ensure that its interests are explicit, up to date, presented in a way that is relevant to that sub-national/regional work and with the most potential to influence its outcomes.
- 6) The report also stated that OXIS should be developed with key stakeholders and be the subject of public and stakeholder engagement so as to ensure wide ownership and understanding.

Progress to Date

- 7) Following approval of the brief, the Growth Board Executive Officer Group (EOG) approved the establishment of a partnership Project Steering Group; a task and finish group to oversee the completion of the project, chaired by the County Council as agreed lead authority for the project.
- 8) A detailed project brief was drawn up and a tender process followed that resulted in the appointment of consultants, AECOM to complete the project.

9) The project is broadly split into three separate sections, these are

- A completion of a base line report, called a Stage One Report that sets out all the infrastructure proposals, intentions and challenges drawn from across all Growth Board partners and other key stakeholders. This report was completed in April 2017 and is available on the Growth Board web pages. <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/growthboard>
- A detailed engagement process, to test the information in the report and its assumptions and conclusions. This is discussed later in this report.
- The completion of a final OXIS report for consideration by the Board in September 2017.

Communications and Engagement

10)The Board will recall that a key commitment of the OXIS project was to engage with stakeholders, interested parties and the general public in the process of finalising the report for the Board.

11)Officers have been working on how best to achieve this commitment and have drawn up a brief communications and engagement plan, attached as an appendix to this report.

12)The plan sets out three methods of future engagement, these are:

- For infrastructure providers who have already fed into the preparation of the stage 1 report via attendance at workshops; a mail out with all relevant information inviting comments and informing them of the dates when material will be available online for the public to feedback.
- For interested parties; the intention of the Project Steering Group is to host a drop in session to which they will be invited. The session will have information about the project available to view and officers will attend with the consultants to answer questions and collect comments
- For the wider public; a press release and an upload of information onto the Growth Board web pages with an opportunity to comment via a response tab.

13)The intention is that the engagement will offer an opportunity to share the methodology behind the project and understand any issues and concerns before the strategy is finalised.

Next steps

- 14) Upon completion of the engagement exercise the consultants will draw together the feedback and build it into a final report for the Board. It is anticipated that this final report can be presented to the Board at its September meeting.

Budget

- 15) When the Board approved the OXIS project it also approved a budget of £120,000, with an agreed split of £20,000 from each authority.
- 16) The cost of the successful tender from AECOM was £109,605. However additional work has been required of the consultants by the steering group and the consultants have lodged a supplementary request for a further £19,500. The Steering Group have received a detailed submission from the consultants, outlining the additional costs incurred and at the time of writing this report are in negotiation with the consultants over the additional costs. However the Steering Group accept that much of the additional costs have been incurred as a consequence of additional project requirements.
- 17) Accordingly, the Board are accordingly asked to approve a cap for the additional costs of OXIS up to £19,500 to meet agreed additional costs, apportioned at £3,250 per authority and to delegate to EOG the task of finalising.

Conclusions

- 18) When the project was initiated it was anticipated that the completion date would be April 2017
- 19) The project has however experienced delays. These have largely been due to partners being unable to resource the project to the required manner as several of them have worked through various stages of their local plans. This offers a timely reminder to us collectively of the limitations of the current working arrangements when attempting to deliver complex partnership projects.
- 20) Notwithstanding this, the project is nearing completion and the Steering group are confident that the Board will receive the final report for approval in September 2017.

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