

Minutes of a meeting of the OXFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD on Thursday 30 November 2017

Voting members of the Committee present:

Councillor Bob Price	Chair - Leader of Oxford City Council
Councillor John Cotton	Vice- Chairman - Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Barry Wood	Leader of Cherwell District Council
Councillor Ian Hudspeth	Leader of Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Matthew Barber	Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council
Councillor James Mills	Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council

Non-Voting members of the Committee present:

Professor Alistair Fitt	Universities Representative
Andrew Harrison	OXLEP Business Representative – Science Vale
Catherine Turner	Homes and Communities Agency Representative
Veronica James	Environment Agency Representative

Officers:

Paul Staines	Oxfordshire Growth Board Partnership Programme Manager
Patsy Dell	Head of Planning, Sustainable Development & Regulatory Services, Oxford City Council
Caroline Green	Assistant Chief Executive, Oxford City Council
Gordon Mitchell	Interim Chief Executive, Oxford City Council
Andrew Down	Head of Devolution and Government, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
Yvonne Rees	Joint Chief Executive of South Northamptonshire and Cherwell District Councils.
Caroline Gore	Strategic Director, West Oxfordshire District Council
Adrian Colwell	Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy South Northamptonshire and Cherwell District Councils
Nigel Tipple	Chief Executive, OXLEP
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council
Bev Hindle	Environment and Economy, Oxfordshire County Council
Jennifer Thompson	Committee and Members Services Officer, Oxford City Council

Apologies:

Apologies were received from:

Jeremy Long	Chairman of OXLEP
Adrian Lockwood	Vice Chairman and Skills Board Representative
Phil Shadbolt	OXLEP Business Representative – Bicester

39. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations or interest.

40. Minutes of the last meeting

The Board confirmed as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board held on 30 October 2017.

41. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

42. Public Participation

In accordance with the public participation scheme the Chair invited those who submitted addresses and questions to speak to the Board.

The Board heard:

- A question submitted and read out by Colin Thomas on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire asking for confirmation that Leaders of the Local Authorities will create a full statutory public consultation process at which the environmental and social costs of the Growth Corridor can be compared objectively against the potential economic benefits envisaged and will openly call upon Government to conduct a Public Inquiry on the need for and choice of corridor.
- An address submitted and read out by Michael Tyce on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire in opposition to the high rate of planned housing and population growth in Oxfordshire.

Full details of the question, response, and address are in the supplement to these minutes.

43. National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) Oxford -Cambridge Corridor - presentation

Alastair Gordon, from the National Infrastructure Commission, gave a presentation on the proposed new deal for the Cambridge to Oxford Arc.

The presentation is available as a supplement to the minutes.

In summary he made the following points during the presentation and in answer to questions:

1. The three cities in the arc drove prosperity in the sub-region and this mattered to the country as a whole, making a substantial contribution to the UK economy. Making

the arc work better would therefore have significant national and regional economic benefits. However realising these required the provision of housing and infrastructure at a scale that necessitated both a different approach and a new deal between central government and local areas.

2. The fundamental challenge was the lack of sufficient and suitable housing to meet the need both for local residents and new employees. The shortfall pushed up prices: and placed pressure on the limited supply: this impacted access to labour and labour costs. Consequently firms then went elsewhere or struggled to attract staff. The NIC calculated that by 2050 the rate of housebuilding must provide a million new homes. The challenge was also to build new towns with good community and high quality of life, not just add low density urban extensions. The vision was for about half of the growth on existing and half on new towns. There was no shortage of innovative ideas for new towns as a recent design competition has shown.
3. The NIC report concluded that poor east-west links prevented mobility between the hub cities and made commuting between areas difficult. Consequently East-west rail links should be developed as quickly as possible, with limited numbers of stations to increase transit speed. The NIC's conclusion was that the Expressway should also traverse the same corridor to allow the development of high-quality well-connected new towns along a single connected route. There was no existing or long-term funding planned for infrastructure projects but this may come through bespoke deals, statutory levies from land value uplift, and local strategic levies.
4. Broadband provision was also vital to national economy and the NIC had addressed improved digital capability as a national issue.
5. There would need to be consultation to identify locations and options and to reach agreement on, not stall, delivery. This would be achieved through the planning process with full consultation although the NIC report noted that for national schemes the Secretary of State had reserve powers to designate new settlements.
6. Bringing this forward at a good pace required public and private large scale investment and planning: statutory development corporations are the most appropriate delivery vehicle.
7. The work of the NIC would be handed to the Cities and Local Growth Unit within DCLG to progress. Once government had formally responded to the NIC's recommendations, the NIC had a role in holding government to account for progress on these.

Councillors commented that a positive response and engagement was necessary and high-quality delivery was essential. The dilemma was in capturing an appropriate contribution from increased land value as this funded the infrastructure key to making a success of the required increased housebuilding. The report set out a huge opportunity but progress was held back by past slow development: large sites took many years to bring forward. They looked forward to the results of the place-making design competition.

The Board noted the presentation and comments.

44. Budget 2017 - implications for Oxfordshire

Gordon Mitchell gave a presentation setting out the main points to note from the Autumn Budget statement not covered elsewhere on the agenda; then Councillors asked questions and commented.

The presentation is available as a supplement to the minutes.

In summary the presentation and discussion covered:

1. There was increasing pressure on local authorities to plan at ambitious levels, and changes to the planning regime including a review and further relaxation of planning constraints.
2. The real issue was delivery: there was extant land and permissions although the land supply was sometimes tight.
3. On current progress, at least two council areas would fail to deliver the proposed housing delivery rates and these would just be met county-wide. Many large schemes would be delivered over time and developers were keeping to the approved schedules in planning consents.
4. While there were proposals to lift the HRA cap in areas of high demand, there were no details.
5. Changes to CIL and S106 were proposed along with a new Strategic Infrastructure Tariff, but these may not have the ability to provide large sums without changing the methodology of calculating land values or viability. There was a likely initial uplift in land values along the corridor.
6. Gordon Mitchell concluded by noting the scale of the budgets proposals and the potential for Oxfordshire but noted the need for sufficient officer capacity to deliver the requirements of the Growth Deal and the changes proposed.

The Board noted the presentation and comments.

45. Housing and Growth Deal

Caroline Green gave a presentation setting out the main points from the Housing and Growth Deal announced in the Autumn Statement then Councillors asked questions and commented.

The presentation is available as a supplement to the minutes.

In summary the presentation and discussion covered:

1. The deal provided £215m subject to meeting milestones in an agreed delivery plan. There were commitments required from both sides.
2. Both the NIC and the National Industrial Strategy were developing plans for the Oxford-Cambridge corridor.

3. The Board would need to discuss and agree a framework for key elements of growth, maximising funding and sourcing new funds, and setting up a pipeline of ready-to-go infrastructure schemes. The agreed OXIS plan was key to managing this.
4. The initial terms of the deal set out a requirement for a high-level agreement between DCLG and the six councils and OxLEP and a delivery plan to be agreed by 31 January 2018. This was a very ambitious timetable.
5. Discussions on the content and details of the delivery plan (and the capacity, resources and governance requirements for each stage) were already underway with Leaders and senior officers of all councils.
6. The HCA (rebranding as Homes England) would work with the Board to secure the delivery plan..
7. The location, delivery and associated planning for the headline number of 100,000 homes would be through a joint statutory spatial plan (JSSP). This will set the strategic framework within which local plans will demonstrate how the homes will be delivered.

The Board noted the presentation and comments.

46. Matters arising from OXLEP

Nigel Tipple gave an update on the work of OxLEP in particular in response to the National Industrial Strategy.

In summary he outlined:

- The key points of the industrial strategy and OxLEP's response including working on a delivery-focused response and bidding for funds to develop skills and career paths and underpin STEM skills at all levels.
- Proposals to secure funding to attract substantial inward investment, and five principal areas for growth.
- The key themes for improving productivity including support for growth hubs; engagement with the Department for Education to provide apprenticeships and vocational training; and increasing skills to fill skills-gaps in the workforce.

The Board noted the update.

47. Sub-national Transport Body

Bev Hindle gave a presentation setting out the main points about the proposed Sub-National Transport Body (STB) then Councillors asked questions and commented.

The presentation is available as a supplement to the minutes.

In summary the presentation and discussion covered:

1. The setting up of an STB and how this would link into, but not replace, cross-regional discussions across the rest of the corridor.
2. The need to work with England's Economic Heartland Alliance, to take up both available seats on this body, and to receive updates.
3. Whether cross-corridor governance could be entirely contained within the remit of the STB or, if this was not the correct form to manage all aspects of cross-corridor decision making, how duplication could be reduced.
4. The fact that in officer's opinion funding for transport improvements in an area was likely to be contingent on its membership of an STB.
5. The necessity of developing relationships with neighbouring STBs and those responsible for major trunk routes like the A34.

Cllr Barber asked that the STB include Swindon given the links developing between there and Vale of White Horse district.

The Board noted the presentation, comments and the recommendations in the presentation:

That the Board:

1. writes to England's Economic Heartland to provide support for the current and future work being undertaken to form a Sub-National Transport Body for the area covered by the Heartland's member authorities
2. recognising the transport nature of this emerging body, encourage as wide a definition of connectivity as possible to include digital connectivity for the region;
3. fully participates in the Strategic Transport Forum, alongside the County Council as Local Highway Authority, to ensure we have as much influence as possible on the development of a robust Sub-National Transport Body; and
4. seeks regular updates from County Council and Growth Board officers on the progress being made

The Board agreed to invite Swindon to join the proposed Sub-National Transport Body.

48. Growth Board Forward Plan

The Board noted the report setting out their Forward Plan.

49. Oxfordshire Local Plans progress report - November 2017

The Board noted the report setting out progress towards the adoption of Local Plans across the county.

50. Updates on matters relevant to the Growth Board

There were no updates.

51. Dates of next meetings

The Board noted the meeting dates.

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.05 pm

Chair

Date: Thursday 1 February 2018

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