

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 July 2020
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Local Growth Funded Workspace Projects

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Local Growth Funded Workspace Projects report
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Economic Development
Corporate Priority:	Foster an Inclusive Economy
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 06 July 2020, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Local Growth Funded Workspace Projects.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Economic Development, for presenting the report and answering questions. The Committee would also like to thank Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager, and Andrew Humpherson, Regeneration Manager, for compiling the report and supporting the meeting.

Summary and recommendation

3. Leader of the Council, Councillor Susan Brown introduced the report. The funding described in the report provided a timely opportunity to refurbish some of the Council's city centre commercial properties which were in urgent need of attention. This would, among other things, support the Council's ambition to support small local businesses and start ups at a time when the economic situation was severe.
4. Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager, said Oxford's city centre business growth lagged behind some comparable city and town centres. This was probably partly attributable to its dependence on just three sectors, education, retail and tourism, the latter of which likely to suffer particularly as a result of Covid-19. Encouraging a more diverse range of enterprises was therefore important and this in turn required the development of flexible and accessible work spaces of good quality that were relatively affordable. The funding sought by the report would unlock the potential of the sites described in the report. Preparatory work was well advanced and the projects were achievable in the timescales demanded by the conditions associated with the funding.

The Committee welcomed the report presented. In its scrutiny the Committee's discussion mainly concerned timescales for spending, the size of the market for such workspaces and whether Covid would be likely to increase entrepreneurship or decrease it, and means of safeguarding current tenants at Cave St.

5. It makes one recommendation around clarifying plans for the Standingford House Development.

Potential Options for the Standingford House Development

6. In discussion of the proposed Standingford House development it was recognised that the plot sits adjacent to other, currently unused, Council-owned land and which might be suitable for consideration for residential use. Reference in the Cabinet report to the 'adjacent land' was suggested to be unclear whether it referred to the car parking area for Standingford House, or the unused area.
7. It was confirmed to the Committee that the potential development plans for Standingford House included both the car parking area and the unused land, and that the brief for the options appraisals includes consideration of residential as well as commercial uses. However, in the absence of this being contained within the report, it was requested that written confirmation be provided.

Recommendation 1: That the Council confirms that the brief for the development at Standingford House, Cave St includes the adjacent Council owned land and that it is registered as being for mixed business/residential use.

Further Consideration

8. It is likely that Scrutiny will wish to consider any update report sent to Cabinet on the progress of this item. However, no further scrutiny is expected in the current civic year.

Report author	Tom Hudson
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252191
e-mail	thudson@oxford.gov.uk

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 06/07/2020 concerning the Local Growth Funded Projects report

Response provided by Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Economic Development, Susan Brown

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
That the Council confirms that the brief for the development at Standingford House, Cave St includes the adjacent Council-owned land and that it is registered as being for mixed business/residential use.	Partially	The Council's plans do include the land adjacent to the Standingford House site. The land is, at present, registered as commercial (not mixed use). A change to mixed residential/commercial use is being considered as one option. It is contingent upon a full appraisal of the options and subject to planning permission, and would include no loss of commercial space.