

Addendum to Oxford City Council Report 20 July 2020– OXLEP Update since March 2020

Mitigating the negative economic impacts of the COVID19 lockdown and resultant closures, as well as planning for economy recovery, have increased the importance and intensity of the City Council's work with OxLEP.

Both partners immediate response to COVID has been focused on coordinating and engaging extensively with businesses to identify their concerns, needs and gaps in support schemes and lobbying government to respond to these needs. We have also focused on raising awareness of the different government business support grants and get them paid out to all eligible businesses as quickly as possible. As we move into transition phase we have developed an economic recovery strategy with a focus on supporting local businesses back into operation but also building on our economic strengths for a future economy that is inclusive and sustainable as key priorities of a new economic development strategy.

Our city-side strategy will be aligned to an Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan, led by the LEP with council input at senior level, as a means to secure strategic investment. We have already worked with LEP and partners to ensure a strong business case for investment in the Oxfordshire economy with a portfolio of shovel ready capital projects submitted to Government for potential investment in the next 3-21 months. Government remains interested in the opportunities of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, and particularly now its part in a national economic recovery strategy.

In particular we are working with OxLEP on the following Economic recovery actions across aligned phases

During the reset phase we will continue to;

- Work with OxLEP to monitor local labour market impacts and manage rapid structural change. This might involve promoting redeployment, changing training and skills offerings, and identifying opportunities to generate jobs through procurement, contracts and local supply chains
- Continue work with OxLEP on the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan to promote Oxford and Oxfordshire's role in the response to COVID (via health sciences) and the national economic recovery.
- Re-engage partners including OxLEP the OSP Inclusive Economy Commission and work-streams. Inequality is likely to be exacerbated if service sectors do not bounce back quickly.
- Engage in resumption of Arc-wide discussions with Government about investment in the region's economic potential as part of the national recovery strategy

The recovery phase of our joint work will focus on finding ways to respond to the changes in the city/county economy, supporting job creation and business start-up and growth;

- Work with OxLEP to reframe their brokerage, employability training and skills support package in light of increased levels of unemployment & intelligence from business stakeholders

- Engage OxLEP and business stakeholders on potential areas of innovation to help re-start the economy, support entrepreneurship & community wealth building
- Restart and promote meanwhile or longer-term use of our assets to help re-start the economy by provided physical space to support small businesses, entrepreneurship & community wealth building.

Our work on the longer term renewal phase will include;

- Work closely with OxLEP and industry to develop a new apprenticeship programme focusing on new careers in growth sectors post COVID19
- Ensure OxLEP buy-in to the oxford Economic Strategy City Centre Vision & Action Plan
- Progress major strategic development projects: Oxford Station; West End Innovation Quarter, Northern Gateway and South Oxford Science Village
- Through our Economic Development Strategy - position Oxford to build on its core and emerging strengths for further clean energy / green economy initiatives, industries, life sciences and creative industries. A re-focussed vision for the Visitor Economy will be needed.
- Work with Growth Board partners, including the LEP and government to secure investment in local infrastructure priorities (including digital infrastructure), support for innovation and, devolution of funding for skills and business support, based on the refreshed Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan and the Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan.
- There is support in place through eScalate, an EU funded OxLEP support programme. We will discuss with OxLEP, and other partners how this might be done for the longer term building on their eScalate programme which supports social entrepreneurs, enterprising charities and other purposeful businesses committed to enabling positive social and environmental impact.
- Officers are also planning working to embed a Community Wealth Building approach with local anchor institutions to boost demand side potential for the sector, and opportunities for local people.