

To: Council
Date: 03 October 2022
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of report: Partnership report: Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Report to update Council on the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formerly the Oxfordshire Growth Board)
Key decision:	No
Cabinet member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader, and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
Corporate priority:	Inclusive Economy, Zero Carbon Oxford, Deliver More Affordable Housing, Support Thriving Communities
Policy framework:	N/A

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Future Oxfordshire Partnership Annual Report

Introduction and background

1. This report provides an overview of the progress against different workstreams overseen by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP), formerly known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board, up to and including July 2022. It is based on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Annual Report (Appendix 1) but includes a focus on Oxford and includes Oxford City Council views. Details of other partnership arrangements and delivery with which the FOP has engaged, are also included.
2. In July 2021, the Oxfordshire Growth Board formally changed its name to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, in response to feedback received during a wide-ranging review of its work in 2019. The change in name is intended to better reflect the role and function of the partnership, highlighting that growth does not take priority over interests such as improvements in the natural environment and carbon neutrality.
3. The FOP is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners. Each constituent authority retains all non-executive and

executive functions in relation to economic development, housing provision, strategic spatial planning, and strategic transport planning.

4. The role of the FOP is as follows:
 - a. Coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.
 - b. Support the development of local planning policy that meets the UK Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050, and contributes towards biodiversity gain, whilst embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world.
 - c. Seek to secure funding in the pursuit of these aims and oversee the delivery of related work programmes delegated to it by the joint committee's constituent local authority members.
5. All six local authorities continue to have an active role in driving the agenda of the partnership forward, to support in achieving improved outcomes aligned to the [Oxfordshire Strategic Vision](#).

Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

6. The FOP oversees the delivery of the [Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal](#) ('the Deal'), which was agreed in 2018, and secured £215m of Central Government investment to advance housing delivery, and boost economic productivity in the county. There are four key workstreams within the Deal, listed below:
7. The Homes from Infrastructure Programme (Hfi)
 - a. A £150m investment in strategic infrastructure to support the acceleration of at least 6,549 already planned houses in Oxfordshire, over a five-year period from 2018/19 to 2022/23.
 - b. Oxfordshire County Council is the lead delivery partner for the majority of the infrastructure element of the Hfi programme, which it delivers through its capital projects governance framework.
 - c. It is currently anticipated that the target for accelerated homes will be reached within the original 5 years of the Housing and Growth Deal. A review will be reported to Oxfordshire County Council cabinet in the autumn.
8. The Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Programme (OAHP)
 - a. Initially, a £60m investment over three years to support the delivery of at least 1,322 affordable homes. However, Government reduced this to £35.5m in the final year of the Deal.
 - b. The OAHP completed in March 2022. At that date, the partners had delivered 936 additional homes, of which 428 were delivered by Oxford City Council. In addition to those monies provided through the Deal, the Council has drawn on other sources of capital to fund affordable housing delivery.
 - c. It is hoped that the OAHP will still achieve the target of 1,322 units, subject to the usual assessment and due diligence of proposals.

- d. Oxford City Council's contribution to this programme is material with 428, i.e., just under 50% of the total directly funded from the OAHP, and a potential total of 789 homes either funded or enabled by the OAHP.
 - e. A Housing Advisory Sub-Group oversees the delivery of housing within the FOP programme (chaired by Cllr Susan Brown).
9. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050
- a. Oxford City Council was disappointed to see the collapse of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan, given the significant amount of important work that has gone into it which would be relevant to our own Local Plan 2040. There was plenty of positive work that emerged from the plan-making process which will still be of use, such as the Oxfordshire Vision that focuses on environmental sustainability. Each council is now working to bring forward a Local Plan that reflects this vision. The Local Plan process involves continued cooperation among the councils, and we have already agreed to continue working closely with Cherwell District Council, whose own Local Plan update is timed alongside ours. We're also keen to work with any other Districts willing to take a collaborative approach.
10. A Productivity workstream led by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)
- a. Central to this workstream was the development and implementation of a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and investment plan, to map out the long-term vision and activity for growth.

Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

- 11. The original Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) was endorsed by the then Oxfordshire Growth Board in November 2017. OxIS has supported to secure significant investment for infrastructure in Oxfordshire, particularly for transport schemes being funded through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (i.e., Hfl) and the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).
- 12. As part of the Deal, there is a commitment to update OxIS. A refresh of OxIS offers the opportunity to update infrastructure requirements to reflect submitted and approved local plans, together with proposals identified by third party infrastructure providers such as utility companies and health partners.
- 13. The OxIS update is divided into two parts, firstly a refreshed method for the assessment of infrastructure schemes, enabling us to rank or prioritise them according to the ambitions enshrined in the Strategic Vision and those of the six councils, notably active travel, environmental sustainability, and addressing the climate change emergency. Secondly, the use of that agreed method to assess the infrastructure implications and requirements of the Oxfordshire Plan as it arrives at its conclusions; with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 programme now closed, the scope of part 2 of the OxIS update will need to be reviewed with the FOP.
- 14. The first stage of the OxIS update was completed in early 2022, and after endorsement by FOP, adopted by Oxfordshire County Council as their infrastructure assessment method. Officers are now working in partnership to develop a toolkit for all councils to use this method. Additional information on the

OxIS update is available within the [agenda pack for the January 2022 FOP board meeting](#).

Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Advisory Group

15. In March of 2021, the then Oxfordshire Growth Board supported the establishment of an Environment Advisory Group (EAG), following a review of the Board's operating arrangements in 2020, which indicated its work would benefit from an increased focus on environmental issues, to support county wide progression towards a zero-carbon future, a key ambition of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision.
16. EAG acts in an advisory and consultative capacity to the FOP, providing strategic oversight in the development and delivery of key projects and programmes aligned to the environment agenda. It facilitates increased engagement and ownership throughout the delivery lifecycle of projects, programmes, and activity, and serves as a key enabler in identifying areas of joint working and policy development. EAG is made up of member representatives from the respective local authorities, and is supported by council officers, thus offering an excellent opportunity for environment leads around the county to work together and share knowledge, whilst developing and promoting the environment recovery agenda.
17. EAG is distinct from the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP), with the advisory group focussing on activity which is aligned to delivering a zero-carbon future, and the LNP concentrated on activity to enhance the natural environment and ecological resilience. Naturally, there will be areas of shared interest, with activity to address carbon neutrality, linked to improvements in the natural environment, however, the groups will work to prevent duplication, and benefit from a representative attending both partnership groups.
18. The LNP is a distinct partnership with its own board on an equivalent footing to the Local Enterprise Partnership, recognised by Government. The purpose of the LNP is to enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it is given. The LNP will be leading work on the development of a Nature Recovery Strategy and Natural Capital Investment Plan for Oxfordshire.
19. EAG is acting as the sponsoring and oversight body for [Climate Action Oxfordshire](#), the joint consumer-facing campaign all six Oxfordshire councils are actively engaged with. The communications calendar, subject matter and materials for the campaign are being coordinated by a joint officer group, chaired by Oxfordshire County Council.
20. EAG has also commissioned work following the [Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire report](#), produced by Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute with input from all councils). This work includes the creation of a zero carbon roadmap for Oxfordshire funded by a £7k contributions from each council. City Science is the consultancy undertaking the work, and we have provided them with all of the details within our own ZCOP carbon roadmap for Oxford. While net zero carbon is considered achievable in the city by 2040, the roadmap target date for net zero countywide is 2050. This reflects the greater complexity involved in decarbonising agriculture, airports etc.
21. No countywide equivalent of the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership has yet been established, but it is anticipated this may happen in due course – potentially with

ZCOP morphing into a countywide body. In the meantime, Oxfordshire County Council is already a member of ZCOP and the District leads on EAG are invited to attend some ZCOP meetings and events.

Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership

22. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) was launched in March 2021, with the core objective of bringing together partners from across Oxfordshire, to support the development of a more inclusive local economy, with a focus on enhancing opportunities and skills for the benefit of local residents and employers, to aid in addressing complex system challenges and inequality across the county. The Partnership aims to highlight and seek support to amplify existing successful initiatives, as a way to build on what works and scale where needed.
23. The OIEP was endorsed by the FOP in 2022 and agreed that the FOP would provide an oversight function to the work delivered by the OIEP and its subgroups. The work of the OIEP is aligned to, and supports delivery against the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, by working to enable a local economy which is globally competitive, sustainable, diverse, and inclusive.

Joint Future Oxfordshire Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board Meetings

24. A workshop event was hosted for members of the FOP and the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board in October 2021. The event provided an informal opportunity for system leaders to discuss priorities and explore areas of common interest, enabling discussions regarding collaboration to address shared challenges. The workshop also provided a forum in which to brief key stakeholders on the strategic landscape with respect to the Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, local recovery from the pandemic, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, and the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.
25. Discussions between system leads identified the interrelated and cross-cutting nature of personal health and wellbeing with healthy place shaping. It was agreed that healthy and resilient communities are more likely to thrive where they have easy access to high quality green space, clean air, and integrated active travel options, developed through a planning system that prioritises healthy place shaping principles. This was identified as the golden thread which runs through the ambitions of both committees, and is featured throughout the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and NHS/County Council Prevention Framework. The workshop further identified the need to continue to lobby HM Government for greater freedom and flexibility re: improved building standards, land use planning, and truly affordable housing.
26. It was agreed that the continuation of joint meetings between the two formal committees on a bi-annual basis would be beneficial in enabling joined-up delivery between interrelated areas of work; a second meeting of the two committees was hosted in March 2022 and focused on the climate challenge and obesity.

Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit

27. In January 2021, the FOP (known then as the Oxfordshire Growth Board) approved the use of the [Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment \(HIA\) Toolkit](#) by all six Oxfordshire local authorities. The HIA toolkit is a resource which can be used to understand and map the health impacts of a plan or project, to enable the

development of recommendations which maximise the positive impacts, and minimise the negative, whilst maintaining an emphasis on addressing health inequalities within local communities. The use of the Oxfordshire HIA toolkit during planning is key to delivering sustainable growth within the county. This resource equips key stakeholders, including land agents, developers, planners, and policy makers, with a mechanism by which to embed healthy place shaping principles within regeneration and development schemes, considering the wider determinants of health, both for existing communities and new settlements. More information regarding the use of the Oxfordshire HIA toolkit is available on the [FOP website](#).

Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan

28. The Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) is part of an Oxfordshire ‘whole-system’ approach to tackling the impact of COVID-19 in the county. It sits alongside other plans and emergency response measures introduced by Oxfordshire partners to support residents, businesses, and communities to recover and adapt to the pandemic, and impacts arising from the EU exit.
29. The ERP comprises a range of interventions to support the local Oxfordshire economy. Activity in the ERP is centred around three strategic themes: reskilling people, resilient businesses, and reviving places; rebuilding connectivity through ensuring the infrastructure to link people, places and assets, both digitally and physically, acts an enabler across the three themes.
30. A range of projects within the ERP are in delivery, including the Green Construction Skills Centre, apprenticeships and vocational training programme, and the Energy Systems Accelerator Pilot. Information on progress against the ERP is available within the June 22 FOP public agenda pack. Several key areas within the ERP, which are ready to commence delivery, still require resourcing to progress forward; continued system-level working will be critical in the funding and mobilisation of these.
31. The ERP task group are actively supporting the development of programme submissions for both Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (competitive), and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (allocated funds), to enable a co-ordinated package of project submissions which will potentially include infrastructure, public realm, and business and skills support aligned to programme priorities.

Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study

32. In June 2018, the then Growth Board approved the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study (ORCS) project remit and financial contribution, enabling Department for Transport (DfT) funding to be released. Undertaken by Network Rail, the ORCS considered and assessed the anticipated impact of planned growth in employment and housing on Oxfordshire’s rail system, to better understand the invaluable role the rail network can play in supporting and enabling the delivery of planned growth.
33. Now complete, the ORCS identifies that Oxfordshire’s rail system, which serves as a strategic hub for local, regional, and national passenger services and freight, possesses little capacity to accommodate further growth, and fails to connect growth hubs both within, and outside of the county.

34. Strong progress has been made in delivering some of the key priorities within the study. This month, the final funding required to deliver introduction of a new track and platform and entrance as well as wider track improvements that will boost the number of passengers the station can serve from 2024 including accommodating new services such as East West Rail and freight and improving the accessibility of the station.
35. A key intervention proposed within the ORCS, and now encompassed within Oxfordshire Connect (an integrated strategy for aligning the major rail programmes that are seeking to introduce new services into Oxford) is the re-opening of the Cowley line to passengers. Funding was secured to progress the Outline Business Case. This is almost complete and was used to inform a funding bid for Levelling Up Funding, which was submitted on 2 August. The next stage of funding is needed to enable a Full Business Case to be developed. If funding is secured by January at the latest it will enable the information to be ready in time for a decision in spring 2024. If a positive decision and funding is then secured passenger services could be delivered from 2026.
36. Joint working between Network Rail and local authorities on wider transport integration and connectivity to new stations introduced is also underway.

Focus for the year ahead

37. The FOP will continue to provide an oversight and decision making function for the remaining elements of the Housing and Growth Deal.
38. A review of the Partnership's governance will be undertaken to ensure all FOP members share a clear understanding of the agreed governance arrangements, and that decisions are made in accordance with the Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding.
39. With the Deal coming to a close, the FOP will proactively develop its work programme in line with the nine outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, the central framework for shaping the FOP's delivery. Through the provision of oversight and guidance to projects the councils of Oxfordshire wish to deliver collaboratively, the FOP will ensure collegial working and delivery which is joined-up, inclusive, and reflective of the different needs and views across the county.
40. A key focus for future work will be the development of performance measures to enable the FOP to monitor the direction of travel against the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, and further integration of the Vision within relevant plans and strategies at both a local and regional level, to enable progression towards the co-produced ambitions.
41. The FOP will continue to play an active role in representing a collective Oxfordshire voice on matters of regional and national interest, lobbying HM Government as the partnership deems appropriate, for the benefit of the county's residents, businesses, and the local environment.

Financial implications

42. There are no financial implications; costs arising from the Council's involvement in these initiatives are approved and budgeted for separately.

Legal issues

43. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Equalities impact

44. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

Carbon and environmental considerations

45. Not applicable (for key decisions only).

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Background papers: None