

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 24 January 2024  
**Report of:** Head of Regeneration and Economy  
**Title of Report:** Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To seek endorsement for the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Inclusive Economy
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	<b>Note and endorse</b> Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2023-2033; and
2.	<b>Delegate authority</b> to the Head of Regeneration and Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, to agree the SEP Action Plan including Oxford City Council's role in supporting the delivery of actions within existing committed budgets and legal and constitutional constraints.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan
Appendix 2	Risk Register

## Introduction and background

### Context for the Strategic Economic Plan

1. In January 2023, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) commissioned SQW – working with Oxford Brookes Business School and glass.ai – to prepare a refreshed Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for Oxfordshire, the previous plan having

been launched in 2016. For details of the previous SEP please see:  
<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/our-strategic-economic-plan-sep>

### Headline Conclusions of the Strategic Economic Plan

2. Consistent with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Strategic Vision for long term sustainable development, the ambition which sits at the heart of the Strategic Economic Plan is summarised as follows:

*'By 2033, people and communities across Oxfordshire will be benefitting from new opportunities which are created sustainably through local enterprise and innovation. These will enhance further their wellbeing in an outstanding local environment. They will also underpin, complement, and support a wider innovation ecosystem which will continue to be of global significance, transforming for the better the lives of people across the world.'*

3. In addition, four objectives are identified. The SEP will seek to advance all four, working in concert with other strategic processes across and beyond Oxfordshire:
  - Enable Oxfordshire's businesses to thrive and encourage pervasive innovation.
  - Widen access to current opportunities and equip people and places as jobs change over the next decade.
  - Secure resilient infrastructure for planned growth, consistent with Oxfordshire's commitment to net zero carbon by 2050.
  - Ensure that Oxfordshire's places are sustainable and inclusive, and that local communities flourish
4. To read the full document and for more information about the SEP, please see Appendix 1.

### Engagement and consultation process for the Strategic Economic Plan

5. To inform the SEP, an Independent Economic Review (IER) for Oxfordshire was also launched which sought to engage both with the business community, local people, and public sector partners. This involved:
  - a **call for evidence** – which generated submissions from stakeholders across Oxfordshire and was structured to map onto the Deep Dives.
  - **six workshops**, which were held in Spring 2023, focused specifically on key areas of evidence in relation to each of the Deep Dives.
  - **bilateral discussions**, focusing especially on the four Deep Dives.
  - a broader **review of key evidence and literature**, in part structured by the Deep Dives, but also in relation to more general trends and drivers.
6. Oxford City Council officers attended the workshops and provided evidence including from Oxford's Economic Strategy and Oxford Local Plan. In addition to the above engagement OxLEP established a working group that met monthly throughout the development of the SEP. This included officer representatives from each of the Oxfordshire councils as well as representatives from both Universities, local colleges, and departmental representatives of Government. This process has informed the SEP. In November 2023, 11 documents that form the IER and Evidence Base were published. Details can be found at: [Publications | OxLEP \(oxfordshirelep.com\)](https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications).

### Governance and accountability for the Strategic Economic Plan

7. The SEP follows and builds on strategies that Oxford City Council had previously endorsed such as the Economic Recovery Plan (2020), the Industrial Strategy (2019), and the previous SEP (2016). The SEP also reinforces the priorities of key OCC (Oxford City Council) strategies such as Oxford's Economic Strategy (2022-32) and its recommendations are being fed into the Oxford City Council's Corporate Objectives esp. Inclusive Economy and Local Plan 2040 both of which are undergoing consultation currently.
8. It was commissioned by OxLEP independently and not in response to an ask from national government and has been overseen by key partners represented in the SEP Working Group which included Oxford City Council officers.
9. The SEP progress has been reported by OxLEP throughout to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) and will go to FOP post-OxLEP Board approval. During the period of this SEP development, the Leader of the Council has also been the Chair of FOP as well as a Director and Board member of OxLEP. The Leader and City Council officers attended workshops and fed into the plan on behalf of the City Council.
10. The final draft version of the Strategic Economic Plan (v4) was approved by the OxLEP Board on 12 December 2023. The accompanying Action Plan is underway and is anticipated to be finalised during January 2024
11. Council officers have participated consistently in the SEP Working Group and commented on, shared concerns, and provided content for the SEP which have been incorporated as revisions to the strategy.

### How much the SEP conforms with Oxford City Council policy and strategy

12. The Oxfordshire SEP provides a strategic countywide vision for Oxfordshire's economy but will also provide alignment to and be supported by the delivery of more local policies such as the Oxford City Council's Corporate Objectives, the Oxford Economic Strategy, the City Centre Action Plan and Local Plan 2040, among others.
13. Oxford City Council's participation in the delivery of the SEP Action Plan will enable us to continue to highlight issues and promote actions required to mitigate them in areas such as infrastructure, skills and inclusivity, an example of which is the role of affordable workspace in addressing the skills gap and inequalities in specific geographies of the city.
14. Overall, it should be noted that the SEP very closely conforms to important pillars in Council adopted documents, such as the Local Plan 2040 and the Oxford Economic Strategy (2022-32). Key examples are:
  - Oxford City Council's Corporate objectives review in 2024/2028, especially 'enable an Inclusive Economy', 'pursue net zero' and promote thriving communities' and
  - 'Oxford's Economic Strategy 2022-32', building on the priorities set out in all three pillars of 1. Net Zero, 2. Global City and 3. Inclusive Economy, aspects of the 'City Centre Action Plan 2021-30' and the 'Net Zero Oxford Action Plan (2040)'

- Oxford City Council’s strategies relating to ‘Housing, Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy,’ ‘Citizen Experience Strategy,’ ‘Thriving Communities,’ ‘Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy’ though less explicitly, will arguably also benefit from a robust and countywide Strategic Economic Plan being delivered in alignment.
15. The SEP therefore elevates numerous important Council policies to a county-wide and regional level, which may be valuable for future collaborations, partnerships, and inward investment opportunities in Oxford.
16. The recommendation to Cabinet is therefore option to endorse the SEP in principle and request that Cabinet delegate to head of Service, Regeneration and Economy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council as Cabinet Member to subsequently agree the practical implementation steps. This would include:
- contributing to OxLEP’s creation of the action and delivery plan for the SEP;
  - agreeing appropriate resource and capacity on behalf of the Council, ensuring any commitments are within the budget and timescale commitments of the current medium term financial strategy and are subject to review in accordance with it.

### **Other implications**

#### **Financial implications**

17. There are no identified financial implications of endorsement of the SEP in principle and the financial implications of participation in delivery of the SEP as part of the recommendations will be to agree our involvement with the Leader within our existing budget envelopes.

#### **Legal issues**

18. There are no identified legal implications arising from this decision. Any steps Oxford City Council takes in support of the delivery of the SEP Action Plan will be subject to the Council’s usual governance requirements.

#### **Level of risk**

19. The risks are assessed in the risk register at Appendix 2. While a number of risks will need to be managed by OxLEP and partners overall in the delivery of the SEP, the risk register for this Cabinet Report restricts itself to the risks to Oxford City Council that would result in participation in the delivery of the SEP. These include the Council’s ability to resource its participation in delivery, in terms of funding and/or officer capacity, ensuring strong partnership working and ensuring long-term alignment between the economic aims of Oxford City Council’s Corporate objectives and those of the Strategic Economic Plan. Mitigations have been put forward for each risk.

#### **Equalities impact**

20. No disproportionate direct positive or negative impact on protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010 identified because of the decisions being made because of this report.

21. No disproportionate negative impact on Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010, Section 149) identified because of the decision that is being asked for.
22. It is probable that the various areas and strands of work within SEP will have equalities related consequences and as such its recommended that full Equality Impact Assessments are embedded, monitored and reviewed in these areas of work, if not already there, by the wider SEP Partnership. The responsibility of embedding and monitoring equalities impact for the delivery agreed to by Oxford City Council will lie with Oxford City Council as a public sector body when that delivery is subsequently agreed but not at this stage.

## Conclusion

23. The conclusion of the Cabinet Report is to recommend that Oxford City Council endorse the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan in principle, while delegating a future implementation plan to the Head of Regeneration and Economy, in consultation with the leader of the Council. The implementation plan would need to be clear on the Council's role and responsibilities in relation to the delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan and ensure that any resource and capacity needs stay within the approved medium term financial strategy and are subject to review in accordance with it.

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<b>Background Papers:</b>
None

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