

		<p>(b) With regard to para. 7.20, an additional pledge was agreed: 'Support the people of Oxfordshire to achieve a healthy and positive old age, concentrating on the groups in greatest need';</p> <p>(c) Jackie Wilderspin undertook to write an explanation about how the pledges contained within the chapter relating to Inequalities would translate into the Delivery Plan;</p> <p>(d) To request Claire Evans to ensure that the terminology used in para. 7.21 in relation to Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour' and in para.8.14 relating to water usage; refers to the appropriate 'quartile'; and</p> <p>(e) Subject to the above changes, to agree the Oxfordshire 2030 Partnership Plan and the Delivery Plan.</p>	<p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>Claire Evans</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p>
6.	Oxfordshire Data Observatory	<p>Members of the Partnership thanked Ben Smith, Manager of the Data Observatory, OCC, for his very useful presentation.</p> <p>At the request of the Partnership, Mr Smith undertook to take action to give a higher profile to the valuable work of the Observatory.</p>	<p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>Ben Smith</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p>
Updates from partner organisations			
7.	Progress report on the local transport plan	<p>Owen South, Senior Transport Planner, OCC, was thanked for his very useful presentation.</p> <p>Members of the Partnership raised a number of issues in relation to this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of particular service change, such as the closure of the Radcliffe Infirmary, on concessionary fares; • The effect of obesity on people's life span, and the need for people to take exercise; • The question of volunteer drivers not being awarded travel expenses for travel to somebody's home in order to pick them up. <p>It was AGREED that the next phase of the Local Transport Plan be brought to a future meeting of the Partnership in order that members can understand the framework and to think about</p>	<p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>Huw Jones</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p> <p>)</p>

OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP - 26 NOVEMBER 2008

Support for the Oxfordshire Economy – Agenda Item 4

Bullet points

Local Government

- Oxford City has a large community leadership role and is working with local businesses to assist them with a combination of micro/macro measures. There is significant business representation within the Partnership - OCC could have a similar role;
- Some regeneration investment programmes, such as some for social housing, have been brought forward, Oxford City Council are taking the opportunity to identify and develop suitable sites for those that are to be brought into the City;
- Whilst the paper is to be welcomed, there is a need for somebody to co-ordinate all information that is gathered together in order to avoid duplication;
- The paper is based on narrow perspectives, for example, there is no mention of the need for a strong service sector. A skilled workforce is required, and re-skilling will be necessary. It is clear that OEP have an important part to play working in partnership.

Environment

- There is a strong environmental knowledge base in Oxford, and a growing business base. We are trying to put investment processes in place with entrepreneurs, who would then put it together;

Private Sector

- It should be recognised that our economy is strengthened by some hubs of growth, for example, the global science spike, and therefore there is a need to recognise, invest in, and give speedy support. We have a world class city, with great strengths and good opportunities, for example, Bicester Village is a world renowned hub for retail. For businesses to survive, it is necessary to be quick to look after their customers. The more we can do to reduce costs to help us to deliver value to our customers, the more it will assist us to shore up against a recession.

Voluntary & Community and Faith Sectors

- The voluntary sector, as employers, will be hit, OXFAM are already consulting on redundancies;
- Grant-making Trusts have less funding – and thus fewer grants are being awarded to voluntary and community groups;
- The future situation with regard to immigration and the financial situation cannot be known. Some Polish immigrants are now returning home. Oxfordshire have already

begun to lose some of the major tiers of support that such groups provide to the Oxfordshire economy;

- There is a role for advice agencies, staffed by volunteers, in Oxfordshire.

Learning, skills and education

- The LSC's National Capital Committee has paved the way forward to enable the FE sector to extend the period of time with which to look at colleges. The sector is a major contributor to employment within the county;
- 'Train to Gain' allows much flexibility within the current situation;
- There was an endorsement for the comments made with regard to immigration/migration. There was a need to get to grips with the underlying demographics for the area;
- There is significant development which is to go ahead in the area, for example, projects for the Oxford Brookes development over the next 2-4 years; the plans for the Radcliffe Infirmary; Witney College and possible Abingdon College development;
- There is a need to get ahead of the curve in respect of changes in the pattern of downturns to services. Oxford Brookes, for example, offer career counselling events, which can be offered at a fairly low cost

Health

- The paper rightly concentrates on causal issues. We must look at our service provision and maybe re-jig them, if necessary, to meet expected demands. We may require more services for stress and mental health problems. There will also be an impact on services for older people in the communities

BME Sector

- Welcomed the reference to the Cowley Road small businesses within the presentation, adding that some specific help should be given to those that may be struggling in this current climate;

Responses to Questions contained within the presentation

Q1 Do we need an Oxfordshire Economic Forum?

- The Chairman, in summing up the feeling expressed in the above discussion, by stating that a Forum was not desired by members of the Partnership. However, a task force could be set up to focus on short term, tactical activities to be undertaken. It was therefore

AGREED that the OEP be requested to set up a Task Group as soon as possible and that Mr Nigriello be asked to keep the members of the Partnership informed with regard to membership.

Q2 Do we need a Market Towns Forum?

Private Sector

- The Market Towns Network, together with the Oxford Town Chambers Network could do the job of linking the partnership together to encourage people to take action as quickly and effectively as possible. There are a large number of initiatives and projects already taking place giving financial means of support.;
- The obstacles sometimes experienced, predominantly from regional bodies, around payment of funding could be set aside in the current financial circumstances.

Rural Communities

- The Market Towns Network primarily works primarily with SEEDA's list of market towns. There is no mechanism to take account of the large market towns with this kind of focus except via the Town Chambers network. The representatives on this network could be asked what would be the most useful to them.

Local Government

- There is a need for a Forum – there are premises in towns and the city that are not being let. A talking shop is not required – action and a co-ordinated approach is needed as a positive way forward;
- There is not a need for another body, a duplication of lobbying should be avoided. More grant funding should be diverted to bodies such as the CABs in order that good debt advice and information can be given;
- How would such a forum operate, given that the district councils already work locally with partners to promote business within the communities? Care would have to taken to avoid a climate of competition amongst the towns. The OEP could pick it up as the next step in what they are doing;
- There is a need for stronger partnerships to engage with the retail sector, and the establishment of a forum would dilute this too much. The idea for a strong focus on market towns and the need for district councils to look at what each other are doing in this sphere is a good one;
- SODC had just consulted with the business sector and had doubled their numbers of staff working on economic development. There was money in their budget to help and action plans were currently being drawn up. It was agreed that local officers should meet to share ideas, but that 'one size does not fit all'.
- Discussion at the City Council/OCC Bilateral meetings had established a close working relationship with each other and a commitment to respond to the needs of city centre businesses at this time. A review was being conducted on how to go about this. Businesses were keen to work much more closely with the City Council and 'Transform Oxford' – there was thus a need to get this logged into the plan;

- More local authority funding to information and advice centres was vitally important for input to Oxfordshire's economy;
- If this had not been implemented already, local authorities could pledge practical assistance to local trade by, for example, speedier payment of local invoices. More discussion with local businesses about how they could get into contracting and purchasing with local government.
- The paper did not quite reflect the amount of work that is being done in this sphere. It may be useful for a couple of the district councils to work on a comprehension exercise and then to take it forward with Frank Nigriello;
- It would be useful to evaluate other county procurement initiatives. A number of counties had taken up the Derbyshire model. A local index of every public procurement contract going out could be an inexpensive and a relatively easy job to do. Another partner within the OP could undertake this task – this could be discussed at the Oxfordshire Leader's Group. It was suggested that this could be undertaken via connection with website portals.
- Each market town is very different in term of place and need and one set of solutions might not fit all. Measures that are put in place to help towns such as Bicester, and lessons learned should be shared

Voluntary, Community & Faith Sectors

- There is a danger of missing the humanitarian issues when the economy drives everything. Having a focus on the quality of life is important;

The Chairman summed up a general recognition that there was much that was being done and which could be done in the future to help the County's market towns, but that there was no wish to form a forum. He added that it was evident that there was an appetite to share information around the 3 tiers of local government and the business sector. He informed the meeting that OCC's Imran Alvi, Policy & Review Officer, Corporate Core (imran.alvi@oxfordshire.gov.uk - tel: 01865 810822) was the lead officer on a local economy review on market towns and partners were urged to link into this piece of work which could be to everybody's benefit.

Do we need a review of Planning Policies?

Private Sector

- the planning process reflects the needs of local businesses. The OEP can act as a voice, but does not wish to engage in the planning process, other than dealing with complaints;

Local Government

- The role of the local councils has changed and would change further in the future. The LDF and the new Government system has engendered a more open, inventive, clear and proactive culture. This makes for a good dialogue with businesses;

- There is a need for good transport planning;
- The job of the local authority is to make developments happen by promoting a proactive planning service and area reviews. Oxford City Council would be happy to talk with the partnership to secure this objective. Oxford City Council was looking for a more comprehensive pre-application service, which would be less costly for businesses.
- United pressure should be applied on regional and national planning authorities to speed up the planning process;
- There are now planned policies in place which are based on consultation. One cannot change them overnight due to economic crisis. If the economy should get worse, then the Government might have to take dramatic action and build in the countryside.

Rural Communities

- A number of businesses are home-based, particularly in rural areas and these have the potential to grow just as much as the larger ones. There is a tendency for planning policies to protect the economy and to give a lower profile for the environment.

It was generally AGREED that a Forum was not appropriate as a conduit for discussion by participant organisations, but that OEP would take the lead in the organisation of a single, multi-agency conference engaging people in the planning communities.

Q How do we drive up skills? Should we try to increase benefit take-up?

Local Government

- A letter regarding Job Clubs from Tony Baldry MP was to be discussed at the Oxfordshire Leaders Group next week.
- all the local authorities could collectively give publicity for this area in their local magazines.
- CABs across the county had seen a 10% increase in demand for information and advice already. This is a testament to the good support that the district councils are giving to the bureau. A County Consortium had been formed recently. A significant issue is whether there is an increased capacity in Oxfordshire for local volunteers to match demand.'

FE & Higher Education sector.

- Job Centre + , together with the principals of the colleges had agreed to put a representative from Job Centre+ into the colleges – and training could be discussed at the same time. This combination of benefits and training was a solution well worth thinking about in broad terms.

It was AGREED to note the actions being taken to date in this field.