

Spatial Planning & Infrastructure Partnership Full Partnership Meeting

Minutes

28 JUNE 2010

Council Chamber

Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House

Bodicote OX15 4AA

Attendee:	Organisation:
Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
Mary Harpley	Cherwell District Council
John Hoad	Cherwell District Council
Cllr Ian Hudspeth	Oxfordshire County Council
Huw Jones	Oxfordshire County Council
Dave Waller	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Barry Norton	West Oxfordshire District Council
Andrew Tucker	West Oxfordshire District Council
Mel Barrett	Oxford City Council
Mark Jaggard	Oxford City Council
Cllr Tony de Vere	Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Angela Lawrence	Vale of White Horse DC (OHP lead)
Anna Robinson	Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Ann Ducker	South Oxfordshire District Council
Kevin Clarke	South Oxfordshire District Council
Jodee Katalanos	Homes & Communities Agency
David Edwards	Homes & Communities Agency
David Doughty	Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
Warren Ralls	SEEDA
Chris Woolf	Government Office for the South East
Mark Dillon	Oxfordshire PCT
Anthony Powell	Highways Agency
Apologies	
<i>Cllr Bob Price</i>	<i>Oxford City Council</i>
<i>Chris Farthing</i>	<i>GOSE (Chris Woolf attended)</i>
<i>John Disley</i>	<i>OCC (Huw Jones attended)</i>

1. Minutes of meeting 22 April 2010

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

2. Matters arising

The Chairman noted two matters arising:

- **High Speed 2:** The terms of reference and remit for HS2 were currently being revised to consider possible links to Heathrow Airport. This had led to a delay in the proposed consultation process, and prevents reconsideration of this item in the near future. It was

agreed that this matter should be carefully watched. It was possible that the revised remit would lead to consideration of a more westerly route with a greater impact on Oxfordshire.

- **Oxfordshire 2030 Refresh:** More time was required for consideration of this item taking account of the recent change in Government and possible implications for partnership governance in the County.

3. Local Investment Agreement: Jodee Katalanos (HCA) & John Hoad (CDC)

Jodee Katalanos summarised the current position on the Single Conversation and the Local Investment Agreement (LIA). The version of the LIA presented with the report was now largely complete and agreed. There were a number of outstanding details to be finalised (these were: paragraphs 7.3.1, 7.6, 7.9, 9.2, 9.3 and Section 13). It would also be necessary to undertake a final legal check with the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) legal department. It was noted that finalisation of the Agreement could be dealt with under a delegation to the Chairman in consultation with local authority Leaders.

In discussion the Chairman asked for an HCA view on how the Single Conversation and Local Investment Plan (LIP) / LIA pilot would be viewed in the context of the new Government's approach to public sector investment. David Edwards (HCA) responded by explaining that the Agency still faced an uncertain future in terms of the Government's funding intentions. However, he took the view that the work on the Single Conversation would be very valuable in dealing with prioritisation in a world where resources were to be further limited. The LIP/LIA work undertaken in Oxfordshire was seen as putting the Oxfordshire local authorities in a good position to make the best of a period of funding austerity. The effectiveness of the work would, however, depend on its support through continued local partnership working. Jodee Katalanos (HCA) noted that the Oxfordshire work on the Single Conversation is recognised as good practice in terms of local initiative in governance of complex funding decisions. This is a view which looked certain to be carried forward under a new Government.

In discussion the following points were also made:

- Work on the LIP/LIA could be used as a surrogate 'spatial planning' process during the period of uncertainty whilst the Government finalised its changes to the statutory planning system. The LIP/LIA is an indication of Oxfordshire's local intent to plan for a reasonable level of housing growth in future.
- The value of the LIP/LIA work would be reinforced if SPIP could follow through with effective negotiation of future funding awards for Oxfordshire. HCA advised that this would start with the forthcoming consideration of in-year allocations of remaining funding once the Government's current review was complete. This would be a topic to be picked up in detail in the Executive Group and reported back to the Partnership in coming months.

AGREED:

- It was agreed that the Partnership should enter into the LIA – subject to a delegation to the Chairman, in consultation with Council Leaders, to agree any final drafting changes that are necessary.

4. Economic Development Strategy Commissioning: Dave Waller (OCC)

Dave Waller introduced the report, highlighting the content of the Oxfordshire Economic Assessment Pre-Strategy Report.

It was noted that there is, as yet, no clear view on how the Strategy work should be commissioned. This is because there are major uncertainties about the future of economic development institutions, structures and working methods. The Report recommended a pause whilst the Government's policy approach firmed up.

The Chairman noted that it is indeed a difficult time for decisions about how to proceed on economic development, but that it would be important to set a programme and deadlines for future consideration of this issue. This consideration should be centred on the likely invitation from Government to local interests to make proposals for Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). A Government letter on this matter is imminent. Huw Jones (OCC) suggested that SPIP should have a clear lead role in presenting a proposal for an LEP. He suggested that Oxfordshire could build its own proposal for an LEP based on the functional economic area of Oxfordshire.

Warren Ralls explained that SEEDA would be closing by March 2012 at the latest. In the meantime there would be substantial reductions in funding, but some organisational capacity would remain to provide advice and assistance to the formation of LEPs. It was also noted that the Government are likely to propose economic growth hubs (Oxford would be one) and that this initiative should be considered in any thinking about LEPs. It was possible that there would be some associated funding, but that this would be unlikely to offer more than a small 'pump-priming' incentive.

Chris Woolf noted that there would be a Government White Paper issued over the summer covering economic development and related matters. This would effectively support the Government's forthcoming letter inviting expressions of interest in forming new LEPs.

David Edwards noted that LEPs may begin to emerge from the former spatial planning 'growth' areas. He referred to the early examples in the South East as being PUSH – South Hampshire, and MKSMS – Milton Keynes & South Midlands.

Mary Harpley pointed out that it was unlikely that small scale LEPs would be accepted. Oxfordshire would need to look for a place in a wider partnership at the same time as considering the way it wished to organise locally.

Cllr Ann Ducker suggested that SPIP should be taking a lead in suggesting a future approach to economic development work in Oxfordshire.

AGREED:

- The Partnership noted and endorsed the Oxfordshire Economic Assessment pre-strategy report as a basis for consideration of future directions on economic development work;
- The Executive Group was asked to make an initial proposal for future economic development partnership working arrangements in Oxfordshire. This should include a case for a LEP for Oxfordshire alone, but also prepare for participation in a wider sub-regional LEP. The proposal should take account of:
 - The priorities for achieving economic development in the County (strategy);
 - How to make the best of existing local partnership working whilst allowing for integration with wider area partnerships (structures);
 - A future leadership role for SPIP.

5. Local Transport Plan 3 Update: Huw Jones (OCC)

Huw Jones introduced a report, noting that there are considerable uncertainties on funding and institutional and planning procedures for transport following the election of the new Government.

The County Council's intention is to move to a long-term aspirational form of plan, with few specific funding and scheme commitments and considerable flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances. This will mean there will be some re-thinking of the planning and consultation process as previously presented. There will be less opportunity for consideration of scheme specifics, other than the LIP priorities already identified.

It was also noted that there would be a short-term priority to ensure that maintenance of the existing infrastructure received sufficient funding.

There was some discussion of the implications of the revised approach. Whilst the pressures on County funding were appreciated there were concerns that the relationship of proposals to long-standing commitments and development pressures remain important. The specific, locality-based, role of planning agreement funding was noted.

AGREED:

- The update report was noted and a further report was requested as soon as the County Council had established its way forward.

6. Local Reactions to Proposed Abolition of Regional Planning: John Hoad (CDC)

John Hoad and the Chairman introduced this item as a topic to note from the perspective of future partnership working and possible development of new local planning arrangements.

There was some discussion of the likely new Government planning system and the role of financial incentives to encourage housing delivery.

David Edwards advised on the HCA perspective. This was that reduced local targets do, in fact, fit the current economic circumstances and priorities. He felt that the LIP priorities would be a good basis for future planning under a regime of 'localism'.

Chris Woolf pointed out that it was expected that further Government advice would be emerging over the next few weeks.

AGREED:

- That the Partnership reconsider this matter when further information was available from Government on how the planning system would operate in future. The Executive Group are asked to check the position on a regular basis and report back as soon as sufficient information is available.

7. Proposals for use of LAA2 Reward Grant: Anna Robinson (OHP)

Anna Robinson introduced the report and explained that the Executive Group were commending the proposals set out by the Oxfordshire Housing Partnership for use of reward funding. These were due to be considered by the Public Services Board (PSB) where a view would be taken on the appropriate use of this funding in the light of recent Government decisions to limit further reward grant payments. There was a need for SPIP to take a view on the proposals to feed into the PSB's consideration.

A recent meeting of local authority Leaders had indicated that the likely view to be put to the PSB would be that there should be an overall reduction of 50% in the funding available to all the partnerships charged with delivery. There was some discussion of the importance of this funding to employment of an Oxfordshire Housing Partnership and SPIP support officer. The report explained that an appointment process was currently held pending the PSB decision on funding.

AGREED:

- That the Partnership notes the importance of the projects proposed for Oxfordshire Housing Partnership reward grant funding;
- That no action be taken at this point on the appointment of an OHP/SPIP support officer.

8. National Performance Indicator Monitoring / LAA Target Renegotiation: John Hoad (CDC)

John Hoad introduced this report explaining that the Partnership needed to formally note the (former) Government's agreement to revised Local Area Agreement (LAA) housing delivery targets.

The targets were now of limited interest, however they may provide a basis for future local planning and monitoring on housing delivery.

AGREED:

- That the renegotiated targets be noted and taken into account in any future consideration of housing delivery issues for Oxfordshire.

9. Partnership Handover (Work Programme and Meetings Forward Plan): John Hoad (CDC)

John Hoad introduced the report, explaining that this would be the last meeting of the Partnership under Cherwell's Chairmanship. The work programme and meetings forward plan provides a handover list of work items in hand. The Chairman asked if there were any items that the Partners wished to add to the work programme. There were no new items.

AGREED:

- That the current work programme and meetings forward plan be noted as a basis for handover of Partnership business to the County Council.

NOTE: There was some discussion of options for future meeting venues. The County Council suggested that they would be happy to use a number of different Council office locations for meetings, rather than hold all meetings at County Hall in Oxford. This approach was supported by the Partnership.