

## **Draft notes of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group Meeting**

Venue: Andrew Wilkes Building, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### **Attendees:**

Cllr. Bob Price, Leader Oxford City Council  
Richard Venables, ProOxford Group and VSL & Partners (Vice Chair)  
Andrew Baxter, Oxford Brookes University  
Hayley Beer-Gamage, Experience Oxfordshire  
Richard Rosser, The In Oxford Group / B4  
Matt Peachey, Oxford City Council  
Helen Brind, City of Oxford College  
Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates  
Nick Scott-Ram MBE, Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network  
David Edwards, Director Oxford City Council  
Tom Morris, Oxford City Council  
Dawn Pettis Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)  
Anthony Mtitimila, Oxford University and LEP  
Phil Clare, University of Oxford

### **1. Welcome and apologies**

Cllr. Bob Price welcomed everyone. Apologies of absence were received from:

Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership  
Laurie-Jane Taylor, City Centre Manager  
Llewelyn Morgan, Oxfordshire County Council  
Anne Augustine, Low Carbon Hub  
Robyn Bourne, Federation of Small Businesses  
David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University  
Lynn Shepherd, Executive Chair of Venturefest  
Nigel Tipple, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

The notes of the last meeting which had already been circulated and were agreed as accurate with no amendments made.

#### **2a) Capital of Innovation Bid**

Matt Peachey provided a brief report of the bid which has now been submitted and thanked the organisations who helped to contribute to the bid. The narrative focused on the well-established heritage of innovation in Oxford and the sub-region. It highlighted the opportunities that a successful bid would allow to scale-up some of the existing projects and

the prospects of engaging better with Europe to transfer knowledge. The submission video is available to view on YouTube. The key themes centred on STEM education; Innovation spaces; low-carbon technology, smart-city solutions around health, transport (Mobox) and widening access to social enterprise opportunities. The next steps are that a short-list of the bids is expected to be announced end of January, then in February the 9 cities short-listed will be invited to Brussels for the Bid Team to answer questions on their individual bids. The winning bid will be announced in March 2016. If the Oxford bid goes forward to the next round there will be a need to put together a Bid Team, so the question is who should be part of the Team.

**Bid Team:** Phil Clare congratulated those involved as part of the Working Group in putting together a strong bid. The University of Oxford are very supportive and it was suggested that **Prof Ian Walmsley** should be asked to be part of the Bid Presentation Team. Bob Price felt the timing of the bid was very important with Oxford and the sub-region about to experience significant economic growth and a major period of innovation, which will offer opportunities to scale-up employment levels. Therefore more education and training is required to ensure that these employment opportunities are available to the local workforce. It was suggested and agreed that experts in the theme areas within the bid should accompany Bob to the hearings. This team should be based on knowledge rather than seniority.

For example, health innovations will be related to the new models proposed through Devolution that will focus on smarter health solutions, therefore Nick-Scott Ram may be a worthy advocate. Nick however suggested that **Dr Bruno Holthof**, Chief Executive of the OU Hospitals NHS Trust would raise the profile for health and has experience working in Europe; together with **Professor John Bell**. **Issues to be aware of:** It is worth being aware of the **political dimension** that may impact on any bid recent example in Manchester; other factors to consider health safety, cyber-security, lifestyle/home security and scrutiny of data. (Jonathan Riggell). Oxford is largest and most forward looking ‘**quantum-hubs**’ in UK (Phil Clare). Good European citizens, studentships, exchanges should be highlighted (Nick). Important to consider the impact of the bid on the **wider society**, which could be emphasised through the Social Enterprise and Health elements of the bid (Andrew Baxter). Even if this bid is not successful there was an agreement around the table that the content should be updated and refined so that it can be used to inform future bids (All). The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) refresh is about to be commissioned shortly and so is timely; the information in this bid should be incorporated as part of the evidence base (Bob Price).

**Action: If the bid is successful then a Bid Team, comprising experts in their field, needs to be prepared quickly together with a timetable / programme. (Economic Development Team to co-ordinate)**

### **3. Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan**

Matt Peachey provided a 6 month update on the Action Plan and thanked others for the comments received.

**Strategic context:** The loss of the Business Growth Service as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review is unfortunate.

**Local context:** One of the key elements of concern in the local economy is around supply issues, particularly skills and training and the need for the city to increase the take-up of apprenticeships and employability programmes.

**Promote Regeneration and employment sites:**

**Osney Mead:** The University of Oxford have discussed the future regeneration of Osney Mead with planning colleagues. The future redevelopment of Hythe Bridge Street has now been re-invigorated through recent sale of some properties owned by Christchurch to Nuffield. There is now a real opportunity for Nuffield to bring forward a range of sites in this area under their ownership for development and to promote the linkages between the social sciences and business clusters.

**Start-up / Grow-on space supply:** A meeting will be arranged in the New Year to bring a range of key partners together to discuss what each partner is doing presently both in terms of the provision and management of existing space. The aim being to see how the supply can be increased for existing providers, such as Oxford Innovation and University of Oxford and the scope for additional provision from the private sector. Bob Price confirmed that there may be some opportunities to address the supply issue and provide support for innovation through future devolution proposals. Richard Venables considered that this is a 'difficult circle to square' since owners of land are always seeking 'best value' for their premises. Richard also considered that some of the office space coming on the market is not always either in ideal condition and or suited for office use.

**Action: Meeting to be arranged with key partners to discuss the potential opportunities to increase the supply of start-up and grow-on space office space in the City centre.**  
**(Economic Development Team)**

**Additional demand:** Helen Brind explained that through her recent discussions with Land Securities on the Westgate it was evident that some future occupiers such as John Lewis had some significant demand for office accommodation for staff training prior to the opening of the store. In addition there is a need for associated hotel accommodation requirements for future staff.

**City Centre Strategy:** In relation to planning there will be a new City Centre Strategy emerging as part of the refresh of the Local Plan, which will also consider the performance and future policy framework required for the District centres. These are now subject to

some significant changes that are effecting the operation of present policies, and will require a review of the function and role of District centres in the future.

**Skills:** The Economic Development Team have been working with the City of Oxford College, County Council and DWP to promote the take-up and implementation of Employment and Skills Plans, which are now termed 'Community Employment Plans (CSP's)'. A paper prepared by Tom and Helen seeking support for CSP's from the City and Districts has now be approved by the Growth Board and will provide the basis for embedding them within new Local Plans. John Lewis is already actively starting to consider their staff requirements some 18 months before the opening of their store. Jonathan Riggell highlighted the 'corporate responsibility' that companies operate under in seeking to use the local workforce wherever possible.

**Increasing housing development:** West Oxfordshire is likely to be receiving a letter from the Inspector at the Examination before Christmas about their projected housing numbers, which appear to be too low. The Vale has reached the second stage of their Local Plan process but does not appear to include any provision for the City's unmet housing need. The Housing Bill is going through the House of Commons at the moment and is likely to present some considerable challenges for the provision for social housing in the future.

**Broadband:** There is now just one phase left of the Super-Connected City Project (public space wi-fi provision). Smart Oxford Project has been successful particularly working alongside Nominet UK and a new private / public collaboration (MobOx) developing new transport solutions.

#### **4. Tourism and the Visitor Economy**

Hayley Beer-Gamage (Experience Oxfordshire) provided an excellent presentation on the Visitor economy in Oxfordshire. This will be circulated to all the members of the group. Some of the key highlights were as follows:

- The term 'Visitor economy' helps to widen the impact that tourism has on the local and national economy;
- Experience Oxfordshire (EO) is the local Destination Management Organisation (DMO), which has now moved from a membership organisation to a 'partnership';
- But the DMO is now focussing on collaboration, co-ordination and working with partners to deliver a better 'visitor offer;'
- Some facts, there were 26.7m visitors to Oxfordshire in 2014 who spent some £1.86m; which supports some 32,000 jobs within the County;
- In Oxford those from overseas staying over were responsible for generating the greatest amount of expenditure;

- Oxford City experienced a 4% increase in income generated compared with the previous year;
- The key message from this recent Economic Study was to encourage visitors to 'stay longer and spend more';
- Oxford as a tourist visitor destination is now ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in UK; as a destination for domestic visitors within the UK it is however not in the Top 20; whilst as a business destination it is in the Top 5;
- Experience Oxfordshire is now working towards a 'Destination Management Plan', which will set out its vision for the future and an Action Plan. This will provide an opportunity to seek funding from DCLG;
- EO is encouraging all the hotels and guest-house operators to complete details of the occupancy levels on a regular basis starting in January 2016. This data will then be benchmarked with comparable historic cities in the UK to allow comparisons of performance to be made.

**Action: Experience Oxfordshire have updated their website but there may still be some refinements required. The preparation of a Destination Management Plan setting out key priorities and actions for delivery and opportunities to secure future funding will provide the key focus going forward. (Hayley-Beer Gamage)**

## **5. LEP Update**

**Devolution:** Dawn Pettis (DP), substituted for Nigel Tipple and explained that the proposed devolution deal was being progressed with discussions with Government Ministers being positive in principle. The proposed deal focusses on some key elements of delivery concerned with infrastructure; transport; skills and housing. The outcome is likely to be clearer in the New Year.

**SEP Refresh:** DP explained that the Top three short-listed consultants will be interviewed next week. The successful consultant will then be given a contract for the work with a timetable to start in January 2016. A Steering Group will be appointed and a programme for public consultation. Suggestions were invited on who should be asked to make up the Steering Group. Richard Venables noted that those proposed in the accompanying paper did not include many representatives from business. Bob suggested that it might be an idea to include a sub-group of business representatives who could provide comments on the direction and content of the SEP refresh. The intention is for the SEP to be 'signed off' in June.

**Action: The LEP will update the group at its next meeting on the progress on the devolution deal and the SEP refresh.**

## **6. Business Engagement**

**a. Business in Oxford:** Richard Rosser confirmed that good progress has been made on the preparations for this event, with most sponsorship places taken. Getting the programme tied down and high numbers of delegates in place early will be vital. If there is anyone that members consider to be suitable as a guest speaker then ideas would be welcome. It was suggested that maybe the Minister for Business should be approached to give an opening address. Local celebrities involved in the business world could also be approached and any contacts welcome.

**Action: Suggestions for speakers and or local celebrities welcome (All)**

**b. Business Leaders Roundtable Meeting:** Those on the Group that attended this event confirmed that it had been very successful and well organised by Sebastian Johnson. Lord Drayson's contribution to the discussions proved to be insightful.

**c. Oxford Business Voice:** Richard Venables reported that the focus recently had been on the Capital of Innovation bid however there was still an appetite for an Oxford Business Voice. Bob suggested that the B4 event in April offered the opportunity for an announcement to be made on how this could be taken forward.

**Action: An announcement on the formation of this group to be made at the Business in Oxford event in April**

**d. ESIF:** Dawn reported that there was some £2.6m which was now available for bids to be made. The suggestion was that there would be more benefit in having a small number of larger bids which could then really make a difference. Past experience suggests that the spreading the funds widely amongst smaller projects would dilute the impact.

**Action: Any ideas for funding bids should be discussed initially with Dawn Pettis**

## **7. Next meetings**

The precise dates for meetings in 2016 have yet to be confirmed yet however it was agreed that they would held in:

- March;
- June; and
- October.