

Draft notes of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group Meeting

Venue: Town Hall, Oxford City Council

Date: 11th March 2015

Attendees:

Cllr Bob Price, Oxford City Council (Chair)
Richard Venables, ProOxford Group and VSL & Partners (Vice Chair)
Dr Phil Clare, University of Oxford
Helen Brind, City of Oxford College
David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University
Robert Hetherington, Oxford City Council
Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership
Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates
Richard Rosser, The In Oxford Group / B4
Anne Augustine, Low Carbon Hub and Network Navigator
David Hawes, Federation of Small Businesses
Tom Morris, Oxford City Council
Nigel Tipple, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
Nick Scott-Ram, Oxford Academic Health Science Network
Lynn Shepherd, Oxford Instruments and Chair of Venturefest
Laurie-Jane Taylor, City Centre Manager (City / County Councils)
Michael Crofton-Briggs, Oxford City Council
Simon Cox, Centrica
Lewellyn Morgan, Oxfordshire County Council
Mark Fransham, Oxford City Council
Zach Wilcox, Centre for Cities

1. Welcome and apologies

Cllr. Bob Price as chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The notes of the last meeting which had already been circulated were agreed with no amendments made. There was then an update on the work being undertaken both on the Oxford Smart City Project and the Super Connected Oxford Project by Sebastian Johnson. A brief summary of the key points is set out below:

Oxford Smart City Project: SJ explained that since the last OEGS meeting a report setting out the scope and vision for the project had been taken to the Oxford Strategic Partnership Board. The broad approach and vision were endorsed by the OSP it was agreed that the Smart City website would go live at the end of March 2105 and that detailed work on the implementation of this project would be taken forward. On behalf of the Oxford Smart City Project Board SJ thanked the assistance already provided by some key partners such as the University of Oxford, Brookes University, County and City Councils, the LEP and Nominet. Private sector engagement has been positive with potential

opportunities of working with companies including Siemens, Schneider, Amey and Bosch who have expressed an interest in actively taking part in this project. Oxford is considered to be an ideal city of the right size and with a range of issues and interests to be able to 'pilot' some key individual projects around for example transport, security, housing stock, and retail (through the Town Team Partnership) that could showcase the benefits of a 'smart city approach' through the sharing of data. The Chair (BP) fully supported the work already undertaken but emphasised the importance of moving forward quickly on this project, since other cities would not be standing still. Oxford is well placed to take a lead on this work given the presence of the two Universities in the city and potential opportunities to work with companies to trial some key projects in the city.

Actions:

- For the Oxford Smart City Project Board to bring an update report back to OEGS Group, setting out a detailed strategy to take forward the project, which will be presented to the meeting in September 2015.

Super Connected Oxford: SJ provided an update on the work of Super Connected Oxford and reported that the Wi-Fi Hotspots Project had made significant progress with Wi-Fi provided by BT now being made available in a large number of the 40 'free to enter public buildings' being targeted including the University museums, visitor information centre, libraries, Park and Ride waiting rooms. Wi-Fi on Public Transport had received support from both of the two bus companies; the Oxford Bus Company met the requirements of State Aid and therefore benefited from Government funding to provide free Wi-Fi on their buses. Stagecoach unfortunately did not meet the State Aid requirements but are still making a substantial investment of towards the provision of free Wi-Fi on their buses. Wi-Fi in public spaces will be delivered through a "wireless concession" and procurement is planned to take place in the summer with the project live by the end of the year. Finally the Broadband Voucher Scheme - the take-up has been slow since Oxford is already well served with relatively good speeds. The poor taken up has been reflected around the country and so the Government have agreed to extend the voucher scheme for a further 12 months and applies to areas within 5 miles of the city. It is likely that this will be extended further to apply to the wider LEP area. Nigel Tipple (LEP) explained that Culham and projects around E-Data would be included within Round 3 of the Local Growth Fund bids; there were also opportunities around Experience Oxfordshire to benefit as well. In the meantime Harwell have agreed with Vodafone for the provision of 4G.

Actions:

- David Hawes (FSB) confirmed that they would work better with the Institute of Directors (IOD) to ensure that the opportunities presented by the Broadband Voucher Scheme would be highlighted more actively to businesses and companies in the area.

3. Cities Outlook 2015

Zach Wilcox from the Centre for Cities research group provided a detailed presentation from their 'Cities Outlook 2015' with a particular focus on Oxford. Some key headlines were as follows:

- The Centre for Cities is a charitable organisation that undertake research focused on 64 cities throughout the UK. Their independent research does help to inform Government decisions;
- These presentations do however provide an excellent opportunity to hear from the cities themselves and better understand whether their findings fully reflect local circumstances;
- These cities provide 72% of high skilled jobs in the country and therefore are a key driver in the nations economy;
- Oxford tops the list of cities surveyed in having the highest number of Knowledge Intensive Businesses jobs; one of the lowest JSA counts; during 2004-2013 has shown considerable growth in population (9%) and business growth (22%); poor standard of school achievement in state schools; due to the high house prices is less affordable than London to live-in; and public sector / private sector jobs ratio 1:1 (64th place)
- The cities are assessed according to the extent of their administrative boundaries;
- In the future the Centre for cities may seek to introduce some research assessments based on the functional economic areas of cities, which would extend beyond their present urban areas;
- Other projects are likely to assess the relationship between transport provision / hubs and economic growth;

Questions:

There then followed some questions and a discussion arising from each. These are some of the subjects explored as follows:

Business Start-Up rates: The high growth in Oxford partly reflects 'timing' issues of data sourced but also a recognition that it was starting from a low base. Many of the starts not captured may well be from outside the city (BP). There is an issue for Oxford around 'scale-ups' and ensuring that there are sufficient sites for companies to move into when they expand, which Cambridge appear to offer greater opportunities.

Combined authorities: This is an area of work that the Centre for cities will be looking to provide some research around in the future. It will provide an opportunity to consider City-regions and the functional economic boundaries of areas. This does however introduce other more difficult areas around boundary changes, and unitary status that may prove more politically contentious.

Housing, Transport and Jobs: How can the links between these various land use allocations and infrastructure provision be better understood and are they dependent. Transport does play an important part in unlocking housing and employment sites. The Centre for Cities has done some recent research on the development of economic growth in City centre and the important part played by providing better transport links.

Tourism: How important is the 'visitor welcome' to the economy. In Oxford there is considerable pressure from tourism on the City centre and therefore key focus is management and ensuring hotel accommodation needs matches visitors expectations. The City's priorities are around People: ensuring that skills gaps and recruitment meet the needs of the Tourist and service sector; Place: improving the urban environment / streetscene, pedestrianisation opportunities in City centre and the role of travel and transport, Marketing: marketing and information are key priorities for the future.

Skills: There is a real skills challenge in Oxford given the tight labour market, JSA count lowest in the country and the prospect of significant economic growth up to 2030. The development of the Westgate Shopping centre will create significant opportunity for 3,000 new jobs but it will be important to consider the effects of existing shops from Cornmarket Street and Queen Street being attracted to this new centre.

Housing affordability: This represents probably the greatest challenge for the city, which impacts on both retaining and attracting staff to Oxford. Need to consider policy responses to the provision of staff accommodation for the main employers such as the University and Hospital employees.

Actions: Zach Wilcox (Centre for Cities) had agreed after the meeting to have 1.2.1 interviews with individual members of the EGSG to explore particular points in more detail.

4. Town Team Report

The City Centre Manager (Laurie-Jane Taylor) provided a detailed presentation on the work of the Town Team Partnership. The key aims of the Town Team are:

- To develop Oxford's City centre through helping to improve the public realm, increasing footfall and growing and growing business revenues;
- To represent the interests of businesses throughout OX1 and to support their needs and objectives; and
- To foster strong, fruitful relationships with public and private sector organisations involved in the development of Oxford City centre

Town Team

The Oxford Town Team comprises a Steering Group which was formed in 2012 and meets on a quarterly basis. Following the appointment of the new City centre Manager six Delivery Groups has been set up that focuses on the following key areas of work:

- Retailing
- Evening and Night Time Economy
- Environment, Safety and well-being

- Events and Marketing
- Data Sharing and
- Communication

Each of these Delivery Groups has specific objectives. The Partnership is now being fully supported by a representative range of retailers and businesses operating in the City centre and has created a real momentum for change and a desire for effective management of the City centre. To this end there is a real interest in developing a Business Improvement District (BID) for the City centre which if approved would provide the necessary funding from a levy on the commercial business that would be used to finance these improvements.

6. Business Engagement

Business Leaders Roundtable: Cllr. Bob Price provided a summary of the roundtable event which was held last week and was very well attended by some of the key leaders of the business community. The items discussed included the Visitor Welcome; Oxford Transport Strategy; and an excellent presentation from Keith Mitchell from the Oxfordshire Innovation Engine Steering Group who provided a very useful update on their work and an insight into future plans.

Oxford Business Voice: Richard Venables reported that there will be an event to be held prior to the B4 Event in late June to develop the Oxford Business Voice concept and to gauge the appetite of the business community to take it forward.

Business in Oxford 2015 and Oxfordshire Business Festival Week: Richard Rosser (B4) provided an update on the B4 event taking place on 30th June 2015. The take-up for this event is progressing well and is on target. The B4 event will launch the start of the Oxfordshire Business Festival Week, which will run from the 30th June to Venturefest on 8th July. Richard reported that the Steering Group have now identified a number of events for this week; but if there are any others in the wider Oxfordshire area that could be tied into this week then please contact either Richard, Sebastian Johnson or Lynn Sheppard.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on the **11th June 2015 from 10.00am – 12.00**. The venue will be confirmed nearer the time but any offers for hosting are welcome.

Other meeting dates in 2015 are as follows:

- Wed 16th Sept 2015, 2.00-4.00pm
- Thurs 10th Dec 2015, 10.00-12.00