

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

Venue: Blavatnik School of Government, Walton Street, Jericho OX2 6GG

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016

### **Attendees:**

Cllr Bob Price, Leader Oxford City Council (Chair)

Richard Venables, VSL & Partners and Oxford Business Representative on OxLEP Board (Vice Chair)

Hayley Beer-Gamage, Experience Oxfordshire

Hugo Bessis, Centre for Cities

David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University

Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership

Llewelyn Morgan, Oxfordshire County Council

Tom Morris, Oxford City Council

Anthony Mtitimila, University of Oxford and OxLEP

Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates

Richard Rosser, B4 / The InOxford Group

Dr Nick Scott-Ram MBE, Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network

Paul Swinney, Centre for Cities

Nigel Tipple, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)

Dr Stuart Wilkinson, University of Oxford

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

Cllr. Bob Price welcomed everyone. Apologies had been received from Lynn Shepherd (Executive Chair of Venturefest Oxford), Laurie-Jane Taylor (City Centre Manager), Matt Peachey, David Edwards, Fiona Piercy (Oxford City Council), Dr Phil Clare (University of Oxford), Richard Byard (OxLEP) and Peter Reynolds (City of Oxford College).

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as correct

### **3. Matters arising and short updates**

#### **3.1 Start-Up/Grow on space**

The setting up of the Start-Up and Grow-On Group, comprising key partners, has provided a useful platform to discuss the supply and demand for space within the city and has made partners themselves consider whether they make the best and most efficient use of their sites and property.

Oxford Science Innovation has recently acquired space at King Charles House and will be able to accommodate up to 15 – 20 new businesses.

The Oxford Centre for Innovation (OCI) is developing a co-worker offer based on re-using their space better to release some accommodation for co-worker use. The Oxford Trust has purchased a site in Headington Quarry known as the Stansfeld Centre, where a scheme is being developed to create some new Grow-on business space and educational facility, which will allow some of the larger businesses within the OCI to relocate to this proposed new building and thereby release space in New Road. A planning application is being prepared and the drawings for the scheme considered by the Design Review Panel. The application is likely to be submitted to the City Council at the end of September.

The City of Oxford College is now making better use of one of their vacant buildings. The OxLEP have recently moved into part of the premises and considering more space up to 3,000 sqft. OxLEP are also in discussions with the College to see whether there is any potential in modernising and releasing the whole building (30,000 sqft) for other occupiers through the new Innovation Space Study being developed by OxLEP to increase the supply of available office space in the City centre.

Nigel Tipple mentioned that he had been approached by some tenants from the Jam Factory, Park End Street whose leases are being terminated; and were seeking new replacement premises. Hayley Beer-Gamage had similarly been told of tenants in the 'Island Site' who were in the same position and looking for alternative accommodation.

The City Council are looking at some spare office space within the Town Hall to be potentially refurbished and let out for start-up businesses and co-working space. A report seeking approval of the proposal has been prepared and will shortly go to City Council's Executive Board.

Peter Brett Associates is considering releasing part of their new office space in Cambridge Terrace for spin-off businesses / data / GIS or land development companies and are keen to be told of any interested businesses.

The 'Oxford Foundry' initiative supported by Reid Hoffman (co-founder of LinkedIn) is being taken forward by the Said Business School. Discussions are currently on going with Nuffield College to see whether space is available within the Island site.

['Openworks'](#) have set up a new office space at Angel Court (First Floor) 81 St. Clements, which just opened this week. Their vision is to support entrepreneurs and freelancers by providing workspace in an informal setting.

Richard Venables confirmed that the issue of office space within the city was important but different depending on the requirement. The problem for small units was particularly acute in the City centre where demand is significant but supply limited both in terms of quantity and quality. There are however larger amounts of floorspace becoming available on the edge of the city, such as the Science Park as a result of companies either moving from

Oxford or existing occupiers consolidating and as a result reducing the amount of floor space they require.

Action: The Economic Development Team was asked by the Chair to liaise with OxLEP to help assist those businesses either at the Jam Factory or Island site who are being displaced and try to find alternative accommodation. A meeting of the Start-Up and Grow-On Group should be convened in October to review progress being made to increase the supply of office space within the City. An update will be provided at the next Steering Group meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016

### **3.2 Fast Growth Cities Group:**

Oxford is part of the Fast Growing Cities Group along with Swindon, Cambridge, Norwich and Milton Keynes. The City Council is working with the other cities to help define the challenges and barriers to growth together with the key sectors and clusters for each respective economy. Going forward there is an agreement amongst the Group that it does need to focus on key projects and initiatives to show Government how it is continuing to generate economic growth and what measures might be taken to accelerate delivery if further funding is provided to address key barriers.

*Note: A briefing paper on the current work and focus of the Fast Growth Cities is being circulated with these minutes for information*



### **3.3 National Infrastructure Commission (NIC)**

Bob Price reported that in response to the NIC requests for comments to be made on the Cambridge - Milton Keynes – Oxford “Growth Corridor”, the City Council had submitted a detailed response. Nigel Tipple reported that OxLEP has submitted a response together with a joint response with a number of other neighbouring LEP’s. Oxford University has also submitted a response and it is understood the Colleges have also submitted a response. Nigel and Bob reported that there was a good alignment between the comments made by those key stakeholders represented by this Group who had been invited to comment. Following a discussion at the meeting it was suggested that all responses submitted by members of the Steering Group be circulated for information. The City Council response will be circulated to all members of the Group with the minutes and will be published on the City Council’s website.

The Report from the NIC is expected to be considered by Government before the Autumn Statement.

The subsequent discussion highlighted a number of local concerns such as the traffic and congestion problems experienced in travelling the 'last mile' into Oxford. The bus priority routes were considered to be important for Oxford but in the absence of any funding it is difficult to see how the improvements would be achieved in practise. Some of the issues are as much around the A420 as the A40, for example BMW MINI Plant regularly transports goods and materials between Oxford and Swindon via A420 which now suffers from significant traffic congestion.

[Action: To circulate all the responses sent to the National Infrastructure Commission from the City Council, OxLEP and the University.](#)

[City Council response attached here:](#)



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Council response to N

### **3.4 Local Plan**

The timetable for the preparation for the Local Plan 2036 has been set and initial consultation on visioning and objectives now completed. But if any member of the Group or business they are in touch with wishes a 1.2.1 with the Planning Policy Team the offer is there, members should contact Sebastian Johnson to arrange a meeting. In addition if individual members have further comments to make about the issues raised following the presentation at the last meeting please send them on. The next key stage is the development of preferred options which will go out to public consultation in the June / July 2017.

### **3.5 Smart Oxford Competition**

Sebastian Johnson reported that good progress had been made on securing the funding for a competition to highlight benefits of smart city technology, the internet of things, data and community involvement and engagement. £45,000 is now committed from a range of public and private sector sponsors alongside some support in kind. A well respected and high profile business and political figure has been approached to chair the judging panel and has agreed in principle and we are awaiting formal confirmation before releasing details. Sebastian commented that as we approach meeting our fundraising target the hard work begins of developing and running the competition and invited any offers of help and support.

## **4. Centre for Cities Presentation**

Hugo Bessis (Researcher) and Paul Swinney (Principal Economist) were welcomed. Hugo led in providing a presentation (*to be sent out with the minutes*) on Oxford's economic

performance both present day and in the context of historical trends. The evidence provided as benchmarked against 63 UK cities together with some early insights on research comparing UK cities with 267 European cities. Based on the measures looked at by Centre for Cities, similar comparable cities to Oxford across Europe have been identified as Nijmegen (Netherlands), Groningen (Netherlands), Würzburg (Germany), Poitiers and Uppsala (Sweden). The content of the presentation and data sets will be circulated with these minutes to allow all members of the Steering Group the opportunity to assess the information in more detail. The following note therefore only highlights some of the key issues arising from discussion:

**Information gathered:** The Centre for Cities used administrative boundaries to collect the data, since this corresponded with the nature in which the information is gathered by the supplier. It does allow for direct comparisons to be made between all the cities. There was a recognition that this does not cover the functional economic area, which in Oxford's case could make a difference. The presenters agreed that the raw data could be shared with the Group and would be sent on to allow further analysis to take place.

**Key issues:** The presentation highlighted one of the key challenges for Oxford to be housing supply which needed to be increased to meet significant demand. Affordability was also closely linked to this issue which does impact on the ability to attract and retain staff.

**Productivity:** The Group considered that the issue of productivity, which did appear from the figures to be an area for improvement, did largely reflect the stage of growth of the local companies. It may also be affected to a degree by the fact that the figures only cover the city as opposed to the wider functional economic area. Groningen was identified as a city with high productivity but it is often difficult to fully understand the reasons behind this figure.

**Patents and Business Stock:** On the European city comparators these two areas were discussed as Oxford was significantly higher on patents (illustrating innovation strength) but significantly lower on business stock per 10k population against the five identified cities and the European city average.

**Implications of Brexit:** Concern was expressed through the discussion that the high job growth currently experienced in some of the key sectors such as research and development will be adversely effected by Brexit. This may well impact on the Universities who attract workers from within Europe to work on key projects which are also dependent on external funding. High performing students who are normally attracted to the UK in general or the USA but now may well go elsewhere. Other important local companies such as BMW MINI Plant are reliant on the free movement of skilled labour with 40% of their workforce coming from other European areas.

**Further research:** There was a need to understand in greater depth the ‘fiscal landscape’, using tax data referred to in the presentation. The availability of this data would be invaluable in considering future local options for devolution. Comparisons with other European cities would also be of interest. The Centre for Cities confirmed that Cities Outlook Report is available on their website and the raw data for the UK and European cities could also be made available to allow further analysis to be undertaken.

**Swindon success:** This city is fortunate in having large amounts of land and ideally situated next to the M4. As such it has been able to attract significant inward investment and over recent years has been one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. Whilst employment rates have been high the city has experienced issues around high levels of in commuting and a decline in activity in the City centre.

**Action:** The Centre for Cities agreed to send links to the Cities Outlook and provide some of the raw data behind the presentation figures to allow further research to be carried out. This would allow analysis to include the wider functional economic area of Oxford and Devolution plans.

## 5. Update from the OxLEP

**Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) Refresh:** Nigel Tipple provided a detailed presentation about the public responses received to the SEP refresh. The document has therefore been amended and the key themes of People, Place, Enterprise and Connectivity include revisions to explain further what progress has already been made and how further aspects such as other key sectors (Culture and Tourism) will be included. The SEP refresh also looked at the importance of ensuring that economic growth positively responded to the environment in a sustainable way. Going forward however it was recognised that it is important for an Oxfordshire Business Voice to be fully represented to support the case for economic growth. The full details of the presentation are provided in an accompanying attachment.

**LGF Growth bid:** OxLEP have been responding to Government on two different scenarios. This includes one around Post Brexit and what that might mean for making quick decisions to deliver growth. The bids made to Government are all supported by robust Business Plans for each project. The overall ask was £382M, the fourth highest in the country. However the LEP has provided reduced delivery scenarios as it was asked to by DCLG.

**Creativity, Culture, Heritage and Tourism Investment Plan (CCHTIP):** Hayley Beer-Gamage reported that she was working with OxLEP colleagues to set up a Steering Group that would be a sub-group of the Experience Oxfordshire Board. The role of this new group would be to lever some finding to start to deliver the projects identified in the Investment Plan. The Arts Council are launching a scheme based around ‘Great places’ which offered a potential source of funding.

**European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF):** This was spread over two themes – supporting innovation and business support; and social inclusion and skills development - and offered a pump-priming opportunity to fund projects. In addition there is £1-2m for the development of rural tourism.

**Innovation Sub-Group:** This new Group which will be chaired by Professor Ian Walmsley will be meeting shortly to take forward the development of the Innovation Strategy.

## **6. Business Events and Engagement Updates:**

**6.1 Venturefest:** In Lynn Shepherd's absence it was noted that Venturefest 2017 was a great success and the Kings Centre had worked very well as a venue.

**6.2 Business in Oxford 2017 event:** Richard Rosser circulated a discussion document outlining his thoughts for 2017 and the likelihood that it would be held next at the King Centre owing to the limited availability of the Said Business School. Ideas for future PODs and speakers were welcomed. Jonathan Riggall suggested an Urban Optimism POD looking at the key physical developments in the city. Richard presented plans to host an event at the Ashmolean in October/November where business leaders and high profile individuals will be invited and encouraged to support and get involved in speaking at Business in Oxford 2017. A draft list of invitees was shared and a request to add names was made to all members of the Steering Group.

**Action:** Ideas and thoughts to be sent to Richard Rosser

**6.3 Oxford Business Forum:** The last event was held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June at the Four Pillars Hotel in Abingdon Road with the theme 'The future of transport in Oxford'. It was very well attended with some 80 people present. There was an excellent range of speakers including the County Council on the Oxford Transport Strategy, Network Rail, Chiltern Railways and the Bus Company setting out their plans for future investment. Other speakers provided insights into some new innovative projects from MobOx, Zipabout, Cycleland and Freight Delivery, which were well received. The next meeting to be held this evening (8<sup>th</sup> September) is about 'the Strategic Planning for Oxford and the wider sub-region.'

**6.4 Talk of the Town:** Richard Venables provided a brief summary of the positive work of this Group.

## **7. Any Other Business**

David Hartley reflected on the launch event for the Oxfordshire Innovation Engine Update where it was suggested that businesses create a fighting fund to support the development of an Oxfordshire business voice (similar to the Cambridge Ahead model). David asked if

any progress had been made. Nigel Tipple reported that he is working on this with others and will report on progress in due course.

#### **8. Next meetings**

The date for the next meeting is confirmed for 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016, 10-12. Any offers of a venue will be welcomed. Dates for 2017 will be set and circulated.