

Draft notes of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group Meeting

Venue: Plowman Room, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford

Date: 8th December 2016

Attendees:

Cllr Bob Price, Leader Oxford City Council (Chair)

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

Helen Brind, Activate Learning (City of Oxford College)

Richard Byard, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)

Dr Phil Clare, University of Oxford

David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University

Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership

Nick Jones, PwC's Public Sector research Centre

Llewelyn Morgan, Oxfordshire County Council

Anthony Mtitimila, University of Oxford and OxLEP

Matt Peachey, Oxford City Council

Fiona Piercy, Oxford City Council

Tim Pope, PwC

Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates

Lynn Shepherd, Executive Chair of Venturefest Oxford

1. Welcome and apologies

Cllr. Bob Price welcomed everyone. Apologies had been received from Tom Morris, (Oxford City Council), Hayley Beer-Gamage (Experience Oxfordshire), Richard Rosser (B4 / The InOxford Group), Laurie-Jane Taylor (City Centre Manager), David Edwards (Oxford City Council), Peter Reynolds (City of Oxford College), Dr Nick Scott-Ram MBE (Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network), Nigel Tipple, (OxLEP) and Dr Stuart Wilkinson (University of Oxford).

2. Presentation from [Nick Jones, PwC on the Good Growth for Cities 2016](#) Report

Nick Jones Director from PwC's Public Sector Research Centre, presented the PwC and Demos Good Growth for Cities Report, and the accompanying presentation is attached separately. Nick explained the rationale behind measuring 'good growth' factoring in how people feel about the economy, rather than more blunt measures (at a local level) such as GDP or GVA. This led to variance in methodology and findings from other city based growth studies, through the aggregate ranking individual's views on what was important to them from a basket of factors and then applying the respective weight of importance to the published data available. Oxford was top of the league, closely followed by Reading. Oxfordshire was top LEP area. Key points of note are highlighted below:

- Jobs, health, income and skills matter most to people who were surveyed.

- Oxford's improvement was greatest on 'income distribution' whilst one of the worst areas was 'work-life balance', perhaps an issue for employers to consider. This perceived lack of balance was not related to transport directly although it was discussed that certain factors do have dependencies such as housing and income, or transport and work-life balance.
- Oxfordshire scored lower than Oxford and lower than average for 'transport', as one of the few differences between city and LEP area rankings
- It was noted that cities such as Wakefield, Stoke and others were working on actions to increase their good growth related measures, but that there is a lag in the period between action and the data changing
- The key consideration for Oxford going forward is how do we maintain this success and stay at the top of the rankings

3. Update from the OxLEP

Richard Byard provided an update on the following items:

Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) Refresh: The refreshed SEP will be published imminently, marking around a year of work to get to this point. The group welcomed this development.

Local Growth Fund (LGF) Growth bid: An imminent announcement is also expected on LGF3 funds, albeit it is known the allocation is lower than we would have hoped.

MIPIM UK: The LEP (supported by districts, city and the development sector) took part in the MIPIM UK, the international property expo, to profile the county's development offer to occupiers, developers and investors, and found this was a worthwhile experience. It was to be able to articulate the collective offer within Oxfordshire. There was a discussion about whether this should be done again, whether as part of Thames Valley, or as an Oxfordshire approach. This will be considered further.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF): The LEP and ESIF Steering group were moving the available funds through from call to award as quickly as possible. Of €19.3M, around half was allocated for European Regional Development Funds and European Social Funds with a small rural allocation. Funds for business support and start-ups were now contracted with the Innovation support for business and low carbon economy funds going through DCLG at present, worth circa €7m.

It is hoped a call for social enterprise will fund Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership, but match funding is a collective challenge for the project sponsors. There is the possibility that access to finance funding could be used to bring SMEs and social enterprises together to fund new ventures locally.

Autumn Statement: The Government has announced that Oxfordshire has been selected as one of the next regions to conduct a science and innovation audit (SIA). The SIA will focus on

four key areas for Oxfordshire: autonomous vehicles, space-led data applications, digital health, and technologies underpinning quantum computing.

Also in the autumn statement the government accepts the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendations to fund the next phase of East West Rail and the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

Devolution: It was reported that areas that had progressed devolution and committed to combined authorities and elected mayors had been more successful in LGF allocations. At the recent LEP board meeting, local government re-organisation and devolution was discussed and a commitment made by the local authorities to work quickly towards a combined authority and elected mayor.

4. Updating the Oxford Economic Narrative:

Matthew Peachey outlined a proposal to update the Oxford Economic Narrative, requesting input from the group on the aims and objectives, creating and owning the narrative.

The following key points were made:

- Much had changed internally and externally (e.g. OSI investments, Chiltern Rail, Westgate, BREXIT) so it was right to update the narrative
- Once the evidence is reviewed, we also need to consider in-turn how we review the Economic Growth Strategy, and in particular the 11 point plan.
- Richard Venables pointed to space shortages in the city centre but a potential shortage on the ring road. Joining up key locations and making them generally more attractive to employers and workers may need attention here. Transport, Park and Ride are important in this context
- Responding to the evidence within the Employment Land Assessment will be important. Also, there is a need to consider the real impact of permitted development rights.
- Continued focus on delivering the key sites for growth.
- Affordable housing policies - consider what really works in terms of social and economic need within the labour market
- Retail economy changes need close attention as Westgate's launch filters through
- Experience Oxfordshire as the DMO needs to strengthen with support from its partners. We may well see more overseas tourists so we need the level of service to support the visitor demand for information and coordination across the wider destination.
- There is need to consider the wider county narrative. How does Oxford fit in with Bicester and Harwell etc? Think beyond district and city boundaries in economic narrative development and planning

- Working alongside LEP and the new business voice (to be announced) in terms of partnership arrangements is important
- The effectiveness of businesses account management has been proven and should be built upon county-wide. Wider business representation on the EGSG should be sought.
- Feeding into and responding to the 'National Industrial Strategy' is a key opportunity for using the narrative
- Play in the 'Science and Innovation Audit' and innovation strategy to understand and articulate technology developments that may lead to growth locally and nationally.
- Smart City efforts will play a greater role. How does the city ensure the best and avoid the worst from disruptive business models enabled by technology?
- Broad growth scenarios might be articulated based on available evidence. How are employment and the nature of employment going to change?
- A statement of our ambition was also needed. We can use the narrative to shape the way our city is viewed as an investment by the markets we need to appeal to
- The story around business starts and scale ups versus straight numbers in the data is important to get right. Proper analysis of the various data and information needed.

Action: Draft version of the updated Oxford Economic Narrative to be tabled ahead of the March 2017 meeting. The team will look to engage a focus group thereafter on reviewing the action plan.

5. Matters arising and short updates

Start-Up/Grow on space

The sub-group met in October and considered its effectiveness and purpose. It was agreed the group needed to continue its efforts to coordinate on increasing the supply of space and understanding the needs of the market locally. OxLEP has commissioned a study to audit provision of innovation and incubation spaces across the county, considering gaps in provision and future actions. The group were variously providing their own evidence to this piece of work. The group had also noted its limitations in looking at city centre spaces. There is only so much that can be done in existing spaces owned by the public sector.

Options:

- Ensure the supply based work through efficient and pro-active use of space in the city is included
- Respond to any specific findings in the OxLEP study
- Update the Oxford Economic Narrative in a way that also articulates the many opportunities in terms of technology and sector that will impact on demand for start-up and grow on space. The 'opportunity' element needs attention as well as the threat. There is also a need for a greater understanding on how the city centre

contributes within the wider county economy and knowledge spine, defining its role as an engine of ideas and growth.

- Feed these findings into those leading on the longer-term regeneration sites and developments sites that won't start releasing space until around 2018, recognising that the need to plan for the real injection of employment space which will follow.

In terms of new spaces, there is work on-going with the co-working space launched at OCFI, to be supplemented with a new space at Oxford Town Hall (timing TBC, likely April). Stansfeld Park is going through planning and still likely to be just under a year away. Possible options at Cave Street and George Street may also come forward. Said Business School is still planning the Foundry.

Fast Growth Cities Group

Following the previous briefing, the group has been focussing on the National Infrastructure Commission with consistent messages around housing, infrastructure and the need for local powers, certainty of funds and exemption from certain aspects of the Housing Bill.

National Infrastructure Commission (NIC)

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor Interim Report had now been published, a week ahead of Autumn Statement. Positives included funding of £110m for East West Rail (Western and central sections) and £27M for the Expressway feasibility work to be taken to the next stage. There was recognition that housing was a central issue and also city centre (last mile) transport strategies were needed that was credible and deliverable. Governance structures and collaboration will also be shaped by the next phase of the report taking place over the next year. The report can be downloaded [here](#).

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. £71,000 is now committed from a range of public and private sector sponsors alongside some support in kind. Lord Heseltine has agreed to chair the judging panel. SJ is in the process of contracting an experienced organisation to work with Smart Oxford on the competition which will be launched in February 2017.

6. Business Events and Engagement Updates

Venturefest: Lynn Shepherd highlighted the success of Venturefest, held this year at the King's Centre, which worked well. There were 900 delegates and many stayed into the afternoon, helped get and keep people there.

The date for next year is 21st June 2017. There will be a focus on showcasing many of the sectors highlighted in the Science and Innovation Audit (Culham and Harwell etc.). The theme will be 'start-up to scale up'.

Pitchfest has been successful with 23 local businesses taking part in the last one at Unipart, with the next one at Oxford Brookes University. Investors from wider locations such as London and Norwich were taking part.

Business in Oxford 2017 – 11th May: Business in Oxford was launched at the Ashmolean to a group of local businesses and partners. The event will be at the King's Centre on 11th May 2017 and is going well in terms of sponsorship. There is a need to make a real effort on growing the numbers attending and increasing the quality and profile of speakers.

Action: RR/SJ to provide update at next meeting. All on Steering Group to identify speaker ideas and opportunities and share with RR/SJ

Oxford Business Forum: The last event was held on November 18th at Blake Morgan, attended by around 50 local business representatives. A good presentation was delivered by Oxford Economics on the macro-economic situation going forward, post BREXIT and Trump. Both City and County Councils outlined their budget and spending priorities for the next year and the LEP highlighted the focus on the economy going forward.

It was agreed the next forum should focus on 'boosting productivity' as part of a focus on supporting this locally through our business engagement activity. Sub themes around automation, use of data analytics, smart technologies and disruptive business models were suggested. Given the level of content, it was asked whether the forum should expand to a half day seminar. Phil Clare suggested Professor Steve New (Said Business School) would be a good speaker on business processes and what makes firms excel above others

Action: TM to propose date format for the Productivity related event. Approach Steve New.

Account Management Update: This update will be held over until a future meeting.

6.4 Talk of the Town: Update held over until a future meeting in LJ's absence.

7. Any Other Business

Action: SJ to consider ways of improving private sector membership or engagement with the EGSG.

8. Next meetings

The date for the next meeting is confirmed for 9th March 2017, 10-12. Any offers of a venue will be welcomed.