

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

Venue: St. Aldates Room, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017

### **Attendees:**

Cllr Bob Price, Leader Oxford City Council (Chair)

Rachel Williams, Team Leader Oxford City Council

Sarah Harrison, Principal Planning Officer, Oxford City Council

Dawn Pettis, OxLEP

Richard Rosser, The In Oxford Group / B4

Dr. Nick Scott Ram MBE, Oxford Academic Health Science Network

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

Dr. Stewart Wilkinson, University of Oxford

David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University

Lynn Shepherd, Executive Chair of Venturefest Oxford

Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership

Matt Peachey, Oxford City Council

Tom Morris, Oxford City Council

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

Cllr. Bob Price welcomed everyone. Apologies had been received from Hayley Beer-Gamage (Experience Oxfordshire), Laurie-Jane Taylor (City Centre Manager), David Edwards (Oxford City Council), Peter Reynolds (City of Oxford College),

### **2. Local Plan and Preferred Options - Economy and Employment**

Rachel Williams provided a detailed presentation exploring some of the issues for the next Local Plan 2036 and in particular the potential alternative options that will need to be considered for the economy and employment prospects. Some of the key points expressed by the Group were as follows:

- Innovation Districts should not be too restrictive
- Science Parks already comprise a diverse mix of uses
- The Government's Industrial Strategy needs promote 'flexibility' and the respond to 'global competition'
- The University of Oxford should be encouraged to look for space beyond the City centre
- Future employment allocations should accommodate all stages of a companies' growth, from start-up to grow-on and potential expansion
- Need to understand fully where the employment growth is likely to come from and in which key sectors

- Knowledge of high-growth businesses is crucial to be able to understand their space requirements
- Some new companies to the city such as Trip Advisor are hi-tech but not really 'innovative' businesses
- Significant new employment-led sites are likely to come forward within the city in the near future such as Northern Gateway and Osney Mead
- How do you 'anchor' a business
- There is a shortage of Innovation type space within the city. This can take two principal types 'office' spaces comprising workshop on ground floor with offices above and 'shed' space larger industrial / office space
- Options need to recognise that Oxford sits within a wider sub-regional economic area that includes neighbouring areas such as Kidlington
- Key drivers for growth include land prices, accessibility and finance
- New developments will only come forward through closer working relationships with potential investors. There is however continued interest in office space in Oxford, with demand failing to meet supply. Whilst there has been some modernisation of premises within the City centre little new office development has come forward since the development in Park End Street 15 years ago
- a number of small businesses would like to be based in the City centre
- Important to promote intensification of the use of land and greater density in the City and District centres to make best use of the limited land available
- Maybe worth considering allocating key employment sites on a site by site basis proposing both primary and secondary uses

Finally the Preferred Options stage of the Local Plan will go out for public consultation for eight weeks from 28<sup>th</sup> June to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2017.

**ACTION: For members of the Group to contact Planning Policy colleagues with any further views on the Preferred options for the Local Plan and then actively take part in the Public Consultation event.**

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting, matters arising and short updates – Paper 1**

**Start-Up/Grow-on space:** Matt reported that the Oxford Trust scheme at Stansfeld in Headington has now been granted planning permission. Construction work to provide the 'grow-on' office space and educational centre will start shortly. In the Town Hall IT are currently vacating some space that will be for office use. The analysis of the amount and use of innovation space prepared by SQW for OxLEP in Oxford and wider sub-region will be made available soon. Richard Venables (VSL) has undertaken some additional research which includes the 'serviced office' accommodation, which shows overall that there is some

500,000 sqft of flexible space in Oxfordshire of which 250,000 sqft is in Oxford. It was however recognised that the big challenge is the provision of 'grow-on' space.

**ACTION: Richard Venables to circulate his research paper and Dawn Pettis (OxLEP) and Stuart Wilkinson (University of Oxford) to circulate the SQW report on 'innovation space.'**

**Smart Oxford Competition:** Sebastian provided an update on the competition with funding now secured and the projects are moving forward and the judging panel has been selected. The winning competition project will be announced at the end of the Summer.

**Membership:** The thoughts on increasing membership include Grant Hayward (Social Enterprise Navigator), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Chambers of Commerce (CoC).

#### **4. Updating the Oxford Economic Narrative**

Matthew Peachey introduced the 'economic narrative' but making clear that it was a 'live document' and would benefit from additional input from the Group. Comments were invited on whether the topics chosen were the right ones and any general feedback welcomed. The following comments were made:

- Cllr. Bob Price considered it a good piece of work that had helped to provide evidence to support a number of key issues important to Oxford's economy. These included: the potential impact of 'Brexit', the need to support and retain existing employers, the effect on the tourism and hospitality market, the industrial strategy and Oxford's role within the UK, international opportunities, the role of the National Infrastructure Commission and a recognition of economic contribution from the wider sub-region;
- David Hartley welcomed the research undertaken but was keen to understand what this really means?

**ACTION: The Economic Development Team agreed to present a further paper taking 10-12 key questions highlighted in the Narrative and then briefly explain what this does really mean for the city**

#### **5. Update from OxLEP**

- Innovation and Skills Strategy: A Steering Group has been set up by OxLEP to provide a response. A first draft has been prepared by Professor Ian Walmsley and Sally Dickets, with a deadline of 17<sup>th</sup> April;
- Industrial Strategy: OxLEP are preparing a response to Government setting out the importance of Oxford's role in driving forward research and development, through collaboration.

## **ACTION: OxLEP to circulate draft responses amongst the Group**

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

**Business in Oxford 2017 – 11<sup>th</sup> May:** Richard Rosser updated the Group. The event will be at the King's Centre on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and is going well in terms of sponsorship. Some 400 people have registered already but really need another 400 to ensure the success of the event. Any further support and ideas for speakers would be gratefully received.

**Venturefest:** Lynn Shepherd confirmed that this year's event on the **21<sup>st</sup> June** would take a different approach using longer sessions. There would be a focus on in depth subject areas including life sciences, social enterprise, science and innovation, together with access to funding and finance.

**Oxford Business Forum:** Tom Morris reported that the dates for the next events in 2017 have now been fixed and will include:

- 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017 (Evening: at the Four Pillars Abingdon Road, Oxford)
- 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (Evening: at the Four Pillars Abingdon Road, Oxford)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 (Early Morning: at Blake Morgan's Offices, Seacourt, Botley Road, Oxford)

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. Phil Clare suggested Professor Steve New (Said Business School) would be a good speaker on business processes and what makes firms excel above others.

### **7. Any Other Business**

The invitation from Glasgow to collaborate in further innovation work was mentioned briefly but was not discussed in detail.

### **8. Next meetings**

The dates for the next meetings are as follows:

- 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017 (*since moved to 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017*)
- 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017
- 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017