

Draft notes of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group Meeting

Venue: City of Oxford College, Oxford

Date: 11th December 2014

Attendees:

Cllr Bob Price, Oxford City Council (Chair)
Richard Venables, ProOxford Group and VSL & Partners (Vice Chair)
Dr Phil Clare, University of Oxford
David Edwards, Oxford City Council
Dr Tom Flanagan, Oxfordshire County Council
Ian Francis, City of Oxford College
David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University
Robert Hetherington, Oxford City Council
Giles Ingram, Experience Oxfordshire
Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership
Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates
Richard Rosser, The In Oxford Group / B4
Barbara Hammond, Low Carbon Oxford
Anne Augustine, Low Carbon Oxford
David Hawes, Federation of Small Businesses
Tom Morris, Oxford City Council
Nigel Tipple, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
Dr. Hugh Aldridge, Oxford University
Llewelyn Morgan, Oxfordshire County Council
Pro Alistair Fitt, Oxford Brookes University
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)
Tony Hart, LEP Navigator (Digital and Media)
Dr. Bryan Marshall (Nominet)

Apologies were received from:

Robyn Bourne, Federation of Small Businesses
Michael Crofton-Briggs, Oxford City Council
Simon Cox, Centrica

Bob Price welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Ian Francis and his staff at City of Oxford College for providing the venue and hosting the event.

1. 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. Amongst the matters arising was an action for Bob Price to provide a brief report to the Group on a recent visit to Cambridge to look at enterprise / innovation development and their Science Parks. Bob explained that they looked at a range of sites that have contributed to economic

growth. Following on from the visit there is a subsequent meeting planned with John Bell and Keith Mitchell as key members of the Oxford Innovation Group that will aim to steer themes to provide advice to Local Authorities and the Universities on how to drive forward innovation and growth. The Growth Board has now been set up comprising the County and all Districts, which will act as a joint strategy body to deliver economic growth. The key focus of the Growth Board will be to implement and deliver the City Deal; Growth Fund allocations (Capital Projects) and implement the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).

2. Oxford Smart City Vision

Dr. Hugh Aldridge on behalf of the Smart Oxford Project Board provided a presentation on the Smart City vision and what it might mean for Oxford. The key headlines of the presentation were as follows:

- Oxford faces many challenges...but is not alone a number of these are global issues;
- Cities need to evolve twice as fast as competitors to gain advantage; standing still is not an option;
- Solutions exist. Technology does provide the means to manage cities; but so far this approach alone has not been successful in creating truly 'smart cities;'
- 'People' need to be at the heart of the smart city concept for Oxford;
- Oxford needs to think clever;
- The concept should not be confined to Oxford but recognise that the city is part of a wider 'ecosystem';
- All smart cities so far have been driven solely by technology with projects largely serving an academic function only;
- Oxford and its surrounding area is already a 'smart city', which is demonstrated by the range of projects and programmes that are currently being undertaken; but lacks the clear narrative;
- Collaboration with key companies will be the key to success, but local politics has been the main reason for lack of engagement in this concept;
- Initial approaches to major companies have shown an appetite to get involved and work with Oxford to pilot schemes / projects;
- Marketing and branding are important in attracting investment and Oxford is well placed and respected on the global stage;
- So far none of the cities have either considered the benefits of long-term projects where the results can be monitored to provide an analysis over time; or assessed their impact of the future growth of cities.

Discussion

The presentation provided a very useful platform for a wider discussion within the group. These were some of the main issues raised as follows:

- **Framework:** The framework for the smart city concept would need to be developed. But important to recognise that a city is complex so in practice there will be a number of

different projects, which could be measures analysed and monitored; such as those around traffic and air quality. (Bryan Marshall)

- **Protocol:** Important to establish a clear protocol, with agreed values and terms of reference with partners, particularly important to establish with companies to provide clear direction; (Bryan Marshall)
- **Data collection:** This provides the evidence base from which an integrated system can be created to monitor, manage and plan for the future growth of a city. This shared intelligence can be used to inform decisions on the development of policies and programmes. (Hugh Aldridge)
- **Use of data:** Often it does already exist but its collection and interpretation should be focused on a specific project where the results will clearly add value. So far open data has not been widely used since its relevance to the public has been questionable. (Hugh Aldridge)
- **Branding:** There is a need to market this project to ensure that using Oxford's global reputation this offers a real opportunity for recognition.
- **Commercial interest:** Initial contact with companies suggest there is genuine interest in concept but requires a 'narrative'. However it will be important to agree protocol, rules and agreed values and clearly define context of project;
- **Funding:** Critical to have funding and appropriate companies lined up and in place. Real strategic opportunity for Oxford to realise this vision; (Phil Clare)
- **Concept and approach:** Oxford is the right size for to launch a 'smart city' project and the timing is right. Supports approach people are important and there are links with this project to the skills agenda; and transport and promoting 'smart' travel options; (Tom Flanagan)
- **SME's:** Support approach and opportunities for SME's to contribute and collaborate in this concept (David Hawes);
- **NHS:** Could be real opportunities to engage with the NHS on projects such as those around the elderly population and encouraging people to be able to stay in their home. Key opportunities should be focused on cost savings and greater efficiencies; (Nick Scott Ram)
- **Local Enterprise Partnership:** The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) has a number of key themes (People, Place, Connectivity and Innovation) that could be used to develop projects directly linked to the smart-city concept. These could potentially include projects around skills, energy, low-carbon, transport, innovation and infrastructure that could all benefit from a 'smart integrated systems approach'. A number of projects are either underway or being scoped out through the SEP that would be suitable and could potentially attract funding (Nigel Tipple)
- **Eco-system:** Oxford is a relatively small city with a diverse range of urban issues but is typical in terms of size and issues to be representative of an average English city; as such it would provide a good opportunity to develop and test new projects. The city does however clearly sit within a wider 'eco-system' for potential projects that is greater than Oxford itself; (Bob Price)
- **GVA uplift:** Difficult to calculate accurately, however through systems improvements and better management it could amount to some efficiency gains in the order of 10-15%; (Hugh Aldridge)

Actions: There was a discussion around the proposed recommendation but questions were raised about the timetable and funding requirements necessary. In these circumstances the Chair (Bob Price) proposed that the matter should be referred back to the Working Party with a view to the need for a Business Case to be prepared setting out a firm proposal to be brought back to a future Economic Growth Strategy Group meeting. The Business Case should provide sections on protocol; appropriate themes; portfolio projects; partners; links to skills; creating the brand and Governance. Once these principles have been set out and agreed this provides a good platform for further discussions to take place with selected companies.

3. Business engagement

- As a result of a range of events and 1.2.1 meetings with the business community three key issues of concern have emerged. These include housing; transport; and skills. The proposal is by creating a 'Voice for Oxford' that is representative of the business community within the city this will help to focus on these key issues that have been identified. Earlier in the year the City Council worked with B4 to stage a major event at the Said Business School, which proved to be very successful. (Bob Price)
- The development of an Account Management System to record the regular meetings with companies and businesses within the City has been well received. The problem in the past has been that Oxford is a diverse economy with a range of different companies, which has diluted the traditional business networks. Nevertheless there are a number of different networks that still exist and represent particular sectors so it is key to build on these and through some larger events, such as B4, to bring them together when the opportunity arises; (Richard Venables)
- Whilst politics is a factor, if the business community within Oxford do continue to engage with the public sector the 'Voice of Business' can influence political decisions and future funding priorities. Therefore a clear vision and narrative in and around Oxford is key to engaging with business; (Bob Price)
- Political boundaries do not mirror geography or even accurately reflect economic boundaries. The development of the Town Team has proved to be very successful being driven forward by the new City Centre Manager. (Richard Venables)
- Laurie-Jane Taylor then explained the role of the Town Team and the six sub-groups that have been created. The Town Team comprise principally retailers, but also include businesses, hoteliers and those associated with the tourist sector within the City centre. The visibility has been increased and now includes a Steering Group (18 members) together with 6 Themed Delivery Sub-Groups. The proposal is through continued engagement with retailers and business to develop and take forward a range of initiatives. Amongst these are plans to develop a Charter and in the longer-term the development of a Business Improvement District (BID) for the City centre; (Laurie-Jane Taylor)
- David Hartley confirmed that he had been behind the Coventry BID and is therefore willing to provide support and advice for any future Oxford BID;
- Oxford Business Festival is going to run between the Business in Oxford Event (30th June) and Venturefest (8th July). Whilst the programme of events is still being developed there are potential opportunities to include the Woods Award (sponsored by the Oxford Trust)

together with visits to key companies such as BMW, Oxford Instruments, and the Diamond Light Project. (Lynn Shepherd)

- There is a Life Sciences 2 day event setting out the benefits to the region and inward investment collaboration opportunities. Whilst suggested dates have already been planned there may be a possibility in the future to try to link it with any other Business Festival weeks that may be organised (Nick Scott-Ram)
- The Oxford Business Festival Week would provide the chance to invite UKTI and showcase what Oxfordshire has to offer emphasising the inward investment and collaboration opportunities. (Tony Hart)
- Similarly invitations could also go out to BIS (Tom Flanagan)
- Venturefest itself is planned to be a more 'sustainable' event rather than a one-off. It will include key themes around the various stages of the development of a business such as birth, adolescence etc. One idea is to include an Oxford / Cambridge debate to close the event. (Lynn Shepherd)

Actions:

- Further work is to be carried out by Richard Venables on the Business Engagement Report;
- Lynn Shepherd, Richard Rosser and Sebastian Johnson will continue to take forward the programme for the Oxford Business Festival with assistance from other partner organisations as required;
- All partners are encouraged to suggest potential events that could form part of the festival (RR, LS and SJ will provide a template form for event details to be submitted for consideration)

4. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Update

Nigel Tipple (Chief Executive of the LEP) provided a brief overview of the vision for Oxfordshire set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and the commitments made to Government in the City Deal. The recently formed Growth Board has been set up with the aim of implementing and delivering key projects and programmes concerned with the key themes of the SEP: People, Place, Enterprise and Connectivity. The main funding sources comprise the European Structural and Investment Fund together with the Local Growth Fund.

Action:

- Nigel agreed to circulate the presentation itself to all Steering Group members to read through in detail.

5. Any other Business

- David Hartley reported that Professor Alistair Fitt will be the interim Vice Chancellor at Oxford Brookes University and that the recruitment process for a permanent new VC has begun.
- Ian Francis reported that the City of Oxford College has experienced difficulty in recruiting engineering lecturers. So would welcome any offers of secondment arrangements from those within business who would be willing to provide some support.

Next meeting

- The next meeting will be held on the **11th March 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 were confirmed as follows:
 - Thurs 11th June 2015, 10.00-12.00
 - Wed 16th Sept 2015, 2.00-4.00pm
 - Thurs 10th Dec 2015, 10.00-12.00