

# Minutes of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group Meeting

Venue: Oxford BioMedica, Transport Way, Oxford OX4 6LT

Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018

## Attendees:

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

Hayley Beer-Gamage, Experience Oxfordshire

Richard Byard, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)

Tom Morris, Oxford City Council

Matt Peachey, Oxford City Council

Grant Hayward, OSEP Board Member and OxLEP Network Navigator for Social Enterprise

Dr Phil Clare, University of Oxford

Ian Gray, Interim Regeneration and Property Manager, Oxford City Council

Peter Nolan, Oxford BioMedica

## Apologies:

Bob Price, Leader Oxford City Council

David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University

Anthony Mtitimila, University of Oxford and OxLEP

Peter Reynolds, City of Oxford College

Lynn Shepherd, Executive Chair of Venturefest Oxford

Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive OxLEP

Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates

Richard Rosser, The In Oxford Group / B4

Dr Nick Scott Ram MBE, Oxford Academic Health Science Network

Dr Stuart Wilkinson, University of Oxford

Llewelyn Morgan, Oxfordshire County Council

## 1. Welcome and apologies

Peter Nolan welcomed everyone to BioMedica offices and provided a brief overview of the work of the company, which specialises in gene therapy, an in particular paediatric leukaemia. BioMedica has been a research and development spin-out company from the University of Oxford. The developments of new drugs have now been approved in America and are attracting significant interest. The company currently employs about 330 staff but has plans for expansion to new premises on the Business Park and will grow to about 400 employees by the end of this year. BioMedica also have another facility in Yarnton, which is focused on manufacturing.

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting, matters arising and brief updates

**Minutes:** The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

**Matters arising:** There were no matters arising from the last meeting and the key actions are covered by agenda items for this meeting.

**Housing and Growth Deal:** this deal was highlighted in the Autumn Statement and since then discussions between Districts, County and OxLEP have been taking place with Central Government to agree the terms. Key milestones will be in mid-February when all the Districts will have a special meeting to confirm their agreement in principle to taking forward the Deal, which will provide significant funding £215m to the Districts for new housing, infrastructure and affordable housing to deliver 100,000 new homes in Oxfordshire.

**Regeneration and Programme Update:** the Westgate Shopping Centre is now open and has been well received attracting significant levels of footfall. The units in the Centre have been well taken up and will be fully occupied by May 2018. There are some vacant units within the City centre as a whole but it is acknowledged that there will be a 'transitional' period. Richard Venables pointed out that there was a real coffee-war over prices going on amongst competitors in the City centre seeking business. The Covered Market is experiencing changes with some of the older established retail occupiers moving out. The City Council are however currently reviewing the present Covered Market Leasing Strategy to ensure that it properly reflects the needs of the retail and service market.

The Local Plan 2036 has consulted on the possible range of key options, the Planning Policy Team are currently working on the emerging policies, which will go out to public consultation in the late Summer. The Oxford Station Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has now been adopted and further discussions are taking place with key partners, such as Network Rail to progress the proposals for a new Station and supporting commercial development.

**Start-Up and Grow-On and Innovation pipeline:** Richard Venables confirmed that there is a real interest in the property market from companies in the start-up / innovation sector seeking premises. This included interest in the former Natural Motion premises, from 'serviced office' providers and hi-tech companies who want more space. The difficulty is that the amount of office space currently on the market in Oxford is very limited particularly in the City centre. Whilst there are some major developments coming forward in the near future, such as Oxpens and the Station site these will not be available in the short-term.

**Action:** Richard Venables will provide a briefing note about Natural Motion and outline the reasons for their departure from Oxford.

**Smart Oxford Update:** Funding from ERDF of £250,000 has been secured from Government to support the recruitment of a 2 year post to focus on Smart Oxford. The role will be to work with business and partners to bring forward new Smart Oxford projects.

### **3. Update from OxLEP**

Richard Byard provided a comprehensive overview on the current work of OxLEP (see attached slide deck). Recent independent published evidence has confirmed that Oxfordshire is a successful economy. Oxford is recognised as one of the top 10 cities for investment. The approach therefore continues to be to build on economic success, but there is a need for more premises to be made available. The two key changes to the economic landscape which will significantly impact on future housing and employment growth are the Housing Growth Deal with Government and the Industrial Strategy. Oxfordshire along with Birmingham and Manchester have been chosen as 'pilots' for the implementation of their Local Industrial Strategy, which provides a great opportunity to showcase its economic success. The full details of Richard's presentation are to be circulated with these minutes.

#### **4. Business Engagement and Events**

**Business in Oxford Event:** This event will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 at the Kings Centre. It was agreed that in Richard Rosser's absence this item will be discussed in detail at the next meeting. Richard Venables agreed to explain how this event will be used to act as a 'platform' for the 'business voice.'

**Action:** Item to be discussed further at the next meeting in March

**Venturefest 2018:** This year's event, 'Venturefest20: Back to the Future' will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at Oxford Brookes new Business School at Headington Campus. It will focus on technology sectors in Oxford that have the transformative potential for the local, UK and world economies: Digital Health\Life Sciences, Quantum Technologies, Space and Autonomous Vehicles/Robotics. The event will showcase the technologies, the application and the opportunities within these sectors and will engage big business and investors in celebrating the potential of our county.

**Business Leaders Roundtable Update:** Matt reported that this was well attended by 23 senior representatives from key companies that are based in Oxford. The key areas of discussion were around the emerging Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, the Vision for Oxford 2050. The leaders felt that it was important to make sure that the deal was agreed and made to work. The delivery of more housing was much needed, along with key infrastructure projects such as the Station and the opening of the Cowley Branch line to passenger use. Attendees were supportive of the visioning process and to provide their views on key issues around work and learning, transport and affordable housing. There was particular interest around the development of new ideas aimed at seeking to deal with transport congestion in Oxford. Current demand management approaches being considered by the County Council, as Highway Authority were discussed briefly, include congestion charges and work place parking levy, but there will be extensive consultation with the public and businesses to explore their views on all the options being considered.

**Oxford Business Forum Events:** the dates and content for future events during 2018 are currently being arranged by the Economic Development Team.

**Oxford Business Guide 17-19 and 'it's Local' Oxford:** 'Hard' copies of the Oxford Business Guide were made available to members of the Group present at the meeting. Electronic copies have already been circulated widely both amongst the Steering Group and those on the database for the Oxford Business Forum database. The ItsLocal directory of business aimed at stimulating B2B and B2C connections locally now has 1710 companies featured.

## **5. Proposed revised terms of reference for the Economic Growth Steering group**

- Terms of Reference discussion paper
- Future Chair and Membership discussion
- OSP Task & Finish Approach - Ideas

There was only a brief discussion on this item due to time constraints at the meeting.

**Action:** The terms of reference will be discussed further detail at the next meeting in March.

## **6. Oxford Economic Narrative**

This item was discussed briefly. The purpose of this detailed piece of work is as an evidence base to be used by partners, and to inform the refreshed Oxford Economic Strategy

**Action:** This Economic Strategy will be discussed in detail at the next meeting in March.

## **7. Any other business and future meeting dates**

The dates for the next meetings are as follows:

- A suggested date for the next meeting will be circulated, prior to the meeting in March.