

THE OXFORD ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN UPDATE AND REPORT – JUNE 2014

Purpose of this paper:

- To provide a summary update against the actions in the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan and a more detailed narrative against each action
- To recommend a refresh of the Economic Growth Strategy and a more detailed future plan for the Steering Group

Introduction

The Oxford Economic Growth Strategy was adopted by the [Oxford Strategic Partnership](#) (OSP) Board in January 2013 and an Action Plan was adopted later in 2013. The Action Plan supports the Oxford Strategic Partnership's Strategy for Economic Growth and demonstrates how we will achieve the vision. It brings together existing and new projects that are focused on delivering economic growth for the City. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all activities, but it is a selection of key actions delivered by the members of the Partnership that have the potential to deliver the greatest impact. The actions are set out under the 11 elements identified in the Strategy. The Economic Growth Strategy can be downloaded at <http://www.oxfordpartnership.org.uk/vision-priorities-2013.asp>.

Summary of key achievements

Significant progress has been made against the 11 key elements of the action plan with highlights including:

General

- City Deal agreed in January 2014. The Strategic Economic Plan and the European Structural Investment Fund Plan submitted to Government in early 2014

Business Engagement

- Improving business engagement through a mix of events and meetings including a Leaders Summit held in March and the Business in Oxford 2014 event held in April. Proposal for Oxford Voice developed.

Employment Land and Strategic Sites

- A Strategic Employment Land Availability Assessment (SELAA) was completed and published in April 2013.
- Starter Unit Review Report: Prepared in November 2013 and provided the first accurate assessment of the amount, type, range and occupancy levels of accommodation in Oxford.
- Northern Gateway Options Document consultation held, draft Area Action Plan being prepared for July 2014
- Funding secured for both the Begbroke Accelerator and BioEscalator through the City Deal and through matched funding from the University of Oxford.
- City of Oxford College new campus at Oxpens progressing and funding in place for Phase 1 of the Technology and Innovation Centre at its campus in Blackbird Leys which will be up and running by September 2015

- Oxford Brookes University completed new (award winning) Abercrombie and John Henry Brookes buildings at Headington Gypsy Lane site

Housing

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment completed and published in March 2014
- Outline planning permission granted for 885 new homes at Barton Park in September 2013. Total of 1204 residential units, with 614 of them being affordable housing approved that month

Retail

- Westgate Shopping Centre – outline planning permission granted
- City Centre Manager recruited and in post in July 2014 to support Town Team and city centre retail

Tourism

- Three year business plan approved by the Experience Oxfordshire Board – incorporating the organisation’s approach to developing Oxfordshire as a visitor destination in partnership with businesses, local authorities and other organisations.
- Planning permission granted for four new hotels in the city and extension and refurbishment of a further two existing hotels. Additional hotel accommodation included in the Oxpens and Station sites.
- Visit numbers for 2012 show increase of 1.4% overnight stays (2.6million) with spend by staying visitors up by 4% (£609million)

Education and Skills

- Evaluation of literacy project to be completed in June 2014
- Housing scheme to attract teachers/leaders in schools agreed with Catalyst
- Digital inclusion project being developed with University of Oxford
- Linking skills, training and employment opportunities with major developments

Broadband and Wireless

- Government allocated just under £5m to the Oxford Super Connected Broadband and Wireless projects
- £325k secured from LEP towards the wireless hotspots in public buildings project
- Broadband Voucher Connection scheme launched in March 2014
- Wireless projects – concession (outdoors), hotspots and public buildings – out for procurement or contract June/July 2014
- Countywide Better Broadband project progressing ahead of projected milestones

Environmental challenges

- Oxford/Oxfordshire has secured £930,000 of European grant funding for a £1.24m programme to develop local renewable energy and energy efficiency projects (OXFUTURES)
- Review of Oxfordshire’s Low Carbon Economy and opportunities for growth in the sector being undertaken with report to be launched at Venturefest in July 2014
- Low Carbon Hub is near to completing an investment and contract readiness process to develop its finance/business models to secure up to £5m of investment for a revolving construction finance fund

Transport

- Atkins has been appointed to undertake the Oxford Transport Strategy commission – the OTS will pull together strategies for the city centre, North Oxford, and the Eastern Arc (principally Headington and Cowley) and provide an over-arching framework covering the whole city.
- Frideswide Square Scheme approved, enabling works due to start in September 2014

- Access to Headington baseline report completed April 2014
- Cycling Strategy part one completed June 2014
- North Oxford Transport Study (NOTS) completed June 2014
- Rail developments progressing through early stages of development including East West Rail, new station at Water Eaton (Oxford Parkway) and new station for Oxford and electrification of the line.

Detailed report by action

Appendix one provides a narrative update against each of the 11 elements in the action plan. Attached alongside this report as appendix two is the Action Plan with some changes highlighted using tracked changes following review and update by partners.

Recommendations

There has been significant development in the 18 months since the Economic Growth Strategy was adopted and the action plan written. These include the City Deal agreement, the development of the draft Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and the draft European Structural Investment Fund Strategy by the LEP and partners during 2013/14. In October 2013 there was the launch of the *Oxford Innovation Engine* report commissioned by University of Oxford and Science Oxford, and Sir Andrew Witty’s review of universities and growth was published. The broadband and wireless projects are being launched and there are a number of other “Smart City” initiatives taking shape with partners across the city.

1. Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Refresh

We therefore propose that we commission consultants (ideally the original authors of the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy) to carry out a review and refresh of the Economic Growth Strategy and Action Plan with a suggested timeline as follows:

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| 14 th July 2014 | Develop a clear brief for the work by to be overseen by a small task and finish group (picked from the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group) |
| 15 th August 2014 | Engage consultants to commence the work and hold inception meeting and agree full time and workplan |
| 10 th September 2014 | Initial report and discussion with the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group |
| 13 th November 2014 | Initial presentation to the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) Board |
| 11 th December 2014 | Draft final report to Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group for sign off |
| 15 th January 2015 | Presentation of revised Economic Growth Strategy to OSP Board for adoption |

2. Future Plan for the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group

We propose that we take up to two items for detailed reporting and discussion at future Steering Group meetings. These will either be focussed on an element / action within the Economic Growth Strategy or focussed on a sector or network important to the city and the wider economic are. This will give the meetings a focus and forward plan that will enable better discussion and the opportunity for wider attendance relevant to and depending on the subjects for discussion.

It would be good to move the venue around the city so that we can showcase organisations and projects in and around the city and learn about (or even see) the opportunities and challenges they face.

For example a future plan might be:

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| 10 th September 2014 | Environmental: Reporting on the Review of Oxfordshire’s Low Carbon Economy (Low Carbon Oxford) Transport: Update on the Oxford Transport Strategy (County Council) |
| 11 th December 2014 | Knowledge Economy: key projects and progress (Universities?) Broadband and Wireless: Report on Oxford Super Connected City (City Council) The Publishing Cluster: report on the cluster and the challenges and opportunities |
| Future meetings March 2015 June 2015 Sept 2015 Dec 2015 | Housing: update on housing policy, numbers and pressures (City Council) Education and Skills: Report on the priorities and focus of the Skills Board Retail: Report from the Town Team and city centre retail initiatives (including presentation on Westgate) Tourism: Report from Experience Oxfordshire on tourism in Oxford and the wider sector Bioscience Network: Report from OBN and the state of the sector and opportunities and challenges Health Science – Oxford University NHS Hospitals Trust Professional Services - Pro Oxford Business Networks - CBI, IoD, CoC, FSB |

Ideas and thoughts from partners together with offers to host the meetings will be welcomed and appreciated.

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