

Draft Notes of the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Steering Group Meeting held on 28th November 2013

Attendees:

Cllr Bob Price, Oxford City Council (Chair)
Dr Phil Clare, University of Oxford
Michael Crofton-Briggs, Oxford City Council
David Edwards, Oxford City Council
Dr Tom Flanagan, Oxfordshire County Council
Ian Francis, City of Oxford College
Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership
Tom Morris, Oxford City Council
Richard Rosser, In Oxford Group / B4
Richard Venables, ProOxford Group and VSL & Partners
Dave Waller, Oxfordshire County Council (Invest in Oxfordshire)

Apologies:

Simon Cox, Centrica
Giles Ingram, Experience Oxfordshire
Mark Jaggard, Oxford City Council
Gordon Reid, Oxfordshire County Council / Oxford City Council / Town Team
Nigel Tipple, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Dr Stuart Wilkinson, University of Oxford

1. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed, there were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Action Plan

Robert Hetherington introduced the final action plan which had been circulated with the papers. Robert reported that the City Council's Economic Development Team will be focussing on four key areas:

- Delivering the broadband and wireless infrastructure project
- Build stronger relationships with the private sector and key businesses and employers
- Ensure new jobs created in the city are accessible to local people
- Ensure that the provision of work space across the city matches the working requirements of our businesses

It was noted that there is a fast pace of change at the moment with key negotiations, reports and strategies being published that impact on the economy of the city including the University of Oxford and Science Oxford commissioned Oxfordshire's Innovation Engine Report, the City Deal, The Strategic Economic Plan and the European Structural Investment Fund.

A number of areas were discussed and the following key points made:

Business Engagement (page 4 of the Action Plan)

- Bob Price expressed a view that business engagement and visiting key businesses and is a top priority. He confirmed his commitment to being fully involved in face to face meetings
- Reference was made to the list of key employers for review under item 5 that are being targeted for face to face meetings
- Dave Waller commented that the LEP has a number of meetings lined up and businesses are also being engaged through the Business Support Programme (web portal, account managers and ambassadors) that is being developed
- A strong Chamber of Commerce does not exist for Oxford/Oxfordshire. Need to try to establish a network of networks and ensure that partners (LEP, City, County, B4 etc.) are joined up and working from a combined list.

Employment Land and Housing (page 7 of the Action Plan)

- Bob Price commented that the pressure of housing is a key issue. In addition, employment land and the development of key sites such as Oxpens is also a key issue. Bob reported that he has met with the Vice Chancellor at Oxford University and key land owning colleges to talk about key employment sites and the bigger picture for the health of the university and the wider city.
- David Edwards reported that discussions with partners had been positive and in addition to current sites the Osney Mead Industrial Estate may provide an opportunity for joint working with the University and partners and development of a master plan
- Richard Venables commented that innovation is nebulous and we shouldn't be too prescriptive on employment sites
- David Edwards also reported that he was requesting greater recognition in the City Deal for the housing pressure in Oxford/Oxfordshire
- Michael Crofton-Briggs reported that the first community workshop on Northern Gateway had been held last and feedback on the event had been positive

Importance of Transport in the City – Westgate (page 14 of the Action Plan)

- Bob Price commented that working on transport in the city is key to ensure that Westgate footfall is maximised
- Tom Flanagan reported that the County Council will be consulting in early 2014 on the Oxford City Transport Strategy – it was suggested that regular conversations and meetings are required between partners
- It was reported that the Broad Street Trust is making progress with University surveyors on a plan for east of Broad Street

3. Short Updates

3.1 Local Enterprise Partnership Update

Dave Waller gave an update on the City Deal negotiations. Cabinet Office is keen for text to be finalised soon. Leaders from local authorities and universities met with three ministers and it was viewed as a very positive meeting. No news yet on a date for the Ad Hoc

Ministerial meeting. Expectation is that announcement will be made as part of the Autumn Statement. If not then it will slip into the New Year.

Dave reported that consultations are currently taking place on the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF). First draft of the SEP needs to be submitted to Government by 19th December 2013.

3.2 BioEscalator and Magnet

Phil Clare gave a short update and reported that the BioEscalator is included in City Deal discussions and the University is working on getting private sector funding into the project.

Michael Crofton-Briggs reported that he had chaired a meeting with key stakeholders of the Magnet. The new Chief Executive of Science Oxford is reviewing the position and options with respect to the Magnet. It is understood that the Regional Growth Funds secured for the Magnet will be returned as the funding will not be spent by the March 2015 deadline.

3.3 Westgate, Oxpens, Station, Northern Gateway and Barton

David Edwards reported as follows:

- Westgate – likely to go to Planning Committee in February 2014.
- Oxpens – Supplementary Planning Guidance signed off. Likely to take 12 months from now. British Rail Residual Body (BRRB) land is a key element and transfer of this land is in the current City Deal document.
- Station – master planning exercise completed. Preferred option is new station, new bridge, decked car parking and bus station and release of some area for commercial development. Likely time line is five years. Infrastructure funded for development but funding gap exists
- Barton – out for first phase development and hopefully in the new year house builder will be nominated
- Northern Gateway - first community workshop on Northern Gateway had been held last and feedback on the event had been positive

3.4 East West Rail

Tom Flanagan circulated a Project Progress Update (30th October) and reported that that the Grain Silo has now been removed from the Water Eaton site.

3.5 City of Oxford College Development

Ian Francis referenced page 12 of the Action Plan and the list of major developments taking place at the College. These include the new Engineering and Innovation Centre at the Blackbird Leys site which is due to begin in summer 2014 and finish in summer 2015. Other developments include the College being a pathfinder along the lines of the University Technical College with 60 students in specific sectors – engineering and construction. The College is also working with Oxford City Learning on a direct entry project for 14 year olds based at the Blackbird Leys site.

Ian also reported that the College is holding focus groups with young people to identify what the college should look like in the future. From next summer the college will be open and operating seven days a week.

The College has met with the Westgate developer and is keen to move bridge to better utilise the river frontage / walkway.

3.6 Oxford Super Connected Cities Project

Sebastian Johnson provided an update on the project and confirmed that £4.8m has been allocated to Oxford as one of 22 cities to have been successful in bidding for funding. £3.1m is for a voucher scheme to support SME connection costs to faster broadband connectivity – a voucher of up to £3k will be available for capital connection costs. The Scheme will be launched in March 2014.

A further £1.7m has been allocated for wireless projects to develop a free wireless city centre and provide free wireless on all buses operating in the city. Both these projects are subject to state aid regulations.

In addition, Sebastian reported that he is making a bid to the Local Enterprise Partnership for £300k capital grant from the Growing Places Fund to support the development of free wireless hot spots in free to use museums, galleries and other public buildings. It is hoped that a decision will be made before the end of the year. If successful then BDUK have indicated that they may agree to vire money across from a project to support wider hot spot development in public buildings (e.g. Town Hall, County Hall, libraries, leisure centres).

3.7 City Centre Management

Michael Crofton-Briggs provided a brief update and reported that following the resignation of the City Centre Manager both the City and County Councils are exploring options for the role and support provided to the Town Team.

4. Discussion Topics

4.1 Starter Units

Tom Morris presented the Starter-Unit Review Report that had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. In discussion, the following key points were made:

- Bob Price commented that the report was excellent
- Phil Clare reported on some things going on in London, e.g. Somerset House – IT and design innovation centre
- David Edwards reported on discussions with Said Business School
- Ian Francis suggested that the City of Oxford College might be able to discuss with partners doing something with students and an incubator space
- Richard Venables raised the issue of “lower tech” space rather than higher – innovation, engineering, retail etc.
- Dave Waller suggested that “grow on” space is a key requirement as well

- David Edwards suggested that we set a target and in six months we review the pipeline

The recommendations in the paper were endorsed. It was suggested that there be a launch and PR to ensure that the message gets out to the business community. The Steering Group will review progress in six months.

4.2 Business Engagement

Robert Hetherington presented the list of key businesses / employers in the city provided by the Invest in Oxfordshire Team. He explained that those highlighted in are the businesses that the City Council's Economic Development Team will target as a first tranche of engagement in 1st quarter of 2014.

This approach was agreed. It was also agreed that the team would continue to liaise with the Invest in Oxfordshire Team over business engagement.

4.3 Business Event, 23rd April 2013

Richard Rosser presented the outline of the proposed business event to be held at the Said Business School on 23rd April 2014 and commented that this is very much open for discussion and input. In discussion, the following key points were made:

- Bob Price and others commented that this is very exciting and thanks Richard for his work on it so far
- The aim of the event was discussed and agreed as i) to inform; and ii) to engage and learn how they can be engaged in an Oxford Business voice
- Richard Venables suggested that the Town Team may have a prominent role to play
- Richard Rosser commented that content will be key to the success of the event
- The title was agreed as "Business in Oxford 2014 - City and County"
- Target audience will be commercial organisations and SMEs in and around the city
- Richard outlined the sponsorship opportunities and partners were asked to consider sponsoring the event. David Edwards confirmed that the City Council will be sponsoring the event.
- Tom Flanagan reported that the LEP draw up a calendar of events to promote and this should be included
- Suggested speakers included John Bell or Andrew Hamilton or a major author linked to the opening of the Story Museum.

It was agreed that a sub group be formed to support Richard in developing the event. The following volunteered – Richard Rosser, Richard Venables, Sebastian Johnson, Bob Price and David Edwards.

5. Future meeting dates

Sebastian Johnson confirmed future meeting dates as follows:

- Tuesday 11th March 2014. 10am
- Thursday 12th June 2014, 10am
- Wednesday 10th September 2014, 10am
- Thursday 11th December 2014, 10am