

Notes and Actions from the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Steering Group Meeting, 28th August 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
Giles Ingram, Experience Oxfordshire
Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership
Simone McCarthy, Oxfordshire County Council (Invest in Oxfordshire)
Tom Morris, Oxford City Council
Gordon Reid, Oxfordshire County Council / Oxford City Council / Town Team
Richard Rosser, The In Oxford Group / B4
Richard Venables, ProOxford Group and VSL & Partners
Dave Waller, Oxfordshire County Council (Invest in Oxfordshire)

Apologies:

Simon Cox, Centrica
Mark Jaggard, Oxford City Council
Nigel Tipple, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Dr Stuart Wilkinson, University of Oxford

1. Welcomes and apologies

Bob Price welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked people for committing the time. The apologies above were noted.

Bob outlined the purpose of the Steering Group which in essence is to review progress on draft action plan and the roles and responsibilities of partners against the 11 elements of the Economic Growth Strategy and provide challenge and ideas where appropriate.

2. Update on developing the action plan

2.1 Projects Update

David Edwards provided an update on key projects as outlined in the paper distributed prior to the meeting. Key headlines included:

- Westgate – due to start on site next year; completion in 2017
- Discussions with University of Oxford and key colleges has led to the drafting of a strategic vision. This will be shared with others and developed further
- Bob Price and neighbouring District Council Leaders meeting with Nick Boles (Planning Minister) in October to discuss housing development and green belt.
- Barton development progressing – 800+ new homes
- City Deal – presentation to Ad hoc Ministerial Group set for 24th October. Bid currently includes BioEscalator, Magnet, Begbroke, Oxpens and housing expansion in the city

- New City Council Economic Development Manager, Robert Hetherington will be starting in September 2013

2.2 Broadband and Wireless – Oxford Super Connected Cities Project

Sebastian reported that Oxford has been awarded a grant allocation of just under £5m from the Government as part of the Urban Broadband Fund and referred to the outline report on the award that had been circulated with papers for the meeting.

Dave Waller suggested that work on demand stimulation for ultrafast broadband vouchers be linked to work on the potential vouchers that the LEP will be delivering on skills, apprenticeships and innovation. Dave will ensure Sebastian is linked into this work.

Tom Flanagan reported that European funding coming into the LEP from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) could be used for demand stimulation work.

Further updates will be provided as the project progresses.

2.3 Element Four – Retail Action Plan and Town Team update

Gordon Reid tabled a draft action plan for the retail element of the Economic Growth Strategy.

Gordon outlined the ideas and plans to incentivise using retail loyalty. A discussion took place and the following actions were agreed:

- Tom Flanagan mentioned possible links with smart card and Department for Transport discussions and funding could be explored further
- Giles Ingram would like to be further briefed and involved from an Experience Oxfordshire perspective
- Phil Clare will introduce Gordon to key University contacts including potential spin out company who can discuss and explore the technology solutions.
- Explore opportunities of further support from the University through students as consultants and interns through the Careers Service; Oxford Entrepreneurs Society.
- If Gordon supplies a written brief then Phil will circulate and see if someone in the University can link in to this work

Other discussion points included:

- Tom Flanagan reported that research indicated that footfall in Cornmarket is higher than centre of Manchester
- Giles reported that a national group working with Visit England and Government is looking at creating Tourism BIDs (Business Improvement Districts)
- Gordon reported that the Town Team exists as a group of businesses based in or trading in the city centre and that Seamus Donald (Regional MD, Newsquest) will chair the group

2.4 Element Five – Tourism

Giles Ingram gave a brief overview of the work of Experience Oxfordshire – leading on visitor economy and promoting the cultural sector (Oxford Inspires) and *Meet Oxfordshire* the conference offer.

A draft action plan had been circulated with papers and the following points were discussed:

- Development of the Destination Management Plan is likely to be end of year rather than the Autumn and will capture within the earlier conversations around the LEP and skills
- Hotels - occupancy rates are high. Michael Crofton-Briggs reported significant interest in hotel development and one is included in the Barton Planning application. Sites for them in the city centre is the challenge
- Oxpens development offers an opportunity for new facilities for conferences and hotels
- Key question around conference offer is “what are we aiming to provide?” and “What’s Oxford’s role in the market?” - we need to identify the niche
- Giles agreed to put the following issues/questions on a future Experience Oxfordshire Board agenda:
 - o Let’s understand the question or brief for conferencing – stay niche, small and high value or scale up to the next level
 - o How do we market the Oxfordshire economy to conference delegates – who provides that? Who is the “go to” person?
 - o Event managers – who are they and where do we find them?

2.5 Element Six – Education and Skills

Bob Price gave a brief update on the educational attainment programme in the city and reported that it is rolling forward successfully. He also reported on the ambitions outlined in the City Deal around skills and apprenticeships – focus on more high tech.

Dave reported on the work that colleagues at the County Council (Paddy Paterson) have been leading on “apprentice shops” over the summer.

The development of the University Technical College (UTC) through the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College was welcomed.

2.6 Element Seven – Housing Development

David Edwards gave a brief update and reported that the Strategic Housing Management Assessment (SHMA) is in progress at the moment and the report and findings should be published in the autumn.

Tom Flanagan reported that economic forecasting is taking place alongside the SHMA.

3. Account Management, business engagement and liaison – discussion

Dave Waller and Simone McCarthy outlined the work that the Invest in Oxfordshire team have been doing to identify the leading business organisations in the County. A list of 170 organisations has been compiled and these have been shared with the District Councils. The Oxford list was circulated as part of the pack of the papers for the meeting.

Key points from the discussion included:

- A virtual team – made up from Invest in Oxfordshire, LEP, District Councils – with an identified lead from each will oversee the account management function.
- Simone and Phil Cimet will lead on this and the “clearing house” is Invest in Oxfordshire
- A CRM system has been purchased and the plan is for District Councils to have access and input account management records – working towards good infrastructure at the back office. Dave reported that it will all come together in the next few months
- Bob asked what Simone and Dave would like from colleagues? The reply was:
 - o Any business contacts that colleagues have that we should be talking to
 - o Details of growing technology firms
- Phil Clare suggested that there is an opportunity to work closely with the University on business development to identify the companies who are fast growing
- Phil also suggested that large organisations such as the University might need to be broken down into divisions and departments as business and support needs and issues will vary within the organisation

It was noted that there is an appetite to progress the account management and business engagement work and ensure that systems are in place to deliver it.

4. Business Event and Business Voice for Oxford

Richard Rosser presented thoughts and ideas based on discussions with stakeholders around a business event, business voice for Oxford and a business survey as outlined in the paper circulated prior to the meeting.

It was agreed that Richard would continue to work with Sebastian and David to design and plan a business event (targeted particularly at SMEs) in and around Oxford. This will provide an opportunity to present the vision for Oxford as well as promote the work and support that key partners such as the universities, LEP and local authorities can provide to business.

It was agreed that this event will be in addition to the already planned Business Breakfasts and noted that the recent event held at the Four Pillar in the evening was a success and the sense was that the business breakfast events might be best moved to evening slots in the future.

It was agreed that any survey work should be undertaken through the existing LEP / Withy King partnership. Dave Waller will welcome any suggestions and areas for survey.

5. AOB

Small Business Saturday UK will take place on 7th December – Gordon Reid is co-ordinating and this is being discussed at the next Town Team Board meeting.

6. Future meeting dates

It was agreed that the group will meet again at the end of November and quarterly thereafter. Sebastian will circulate dates.