

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Joint Committee

Terms of Reference June 2023

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners working together to deliver the bold and ambitious outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development.
- 1.2** Oxfordshire's growing economy is set to create challenges and opportunities for the County related to housing, infrastructure, public services and the environment. These issues will best be addressed through joined up planning between local councils which prioritises sustainable development and quality of life. Collective planning, where it makes sense to do so, will be the most effective means of minimising the unwanted impacts of a growing economy, whilst leveraging the maximum benefit from the opportunities it brings for our existing and future communities.
- 1.3** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership ("Joint Committee") will:
- 1.4** Coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits;
- 1.5** Support the development of local planning policy that meets the UK Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050, and contributes towards biodiversity gain whilst embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world; and,
- 1.6** Seek to secure funding in the pursuit of these aims and oversee the delivery of related work programmes delegated to it by the Joint Committee's constituent local authority members.

2.0 Membership

- 2.1** The Joint Committee's core membership includes the local authorities within Oxfordshire comprising, Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. Voting rights are reserved to local authority members only.
- 2.2** It also includes co-opted associate members from those organisations listed below:
 - Chair of OxLEP
 - Chair of the Oxfordshire Skills Board
 - Universities Representative
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Bicester
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Oxford City
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Science Vale
 - Homes England Representative
 - DEFRA Agencies Representative
 - Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board Representative

- 2.3** When considering transport infrastructure matters, Network Rail and National Highways will have the right to attend as associate members. As the Joint Committee is constituted to be able to discharge executive functions if delegated to it by the constituent authorities, then the appointed person must be from the Executive of the constituent authorities. There should be one member from each constituent authority.
- 2.4** Each constituent authority shall appoint a substitute (also being an Executive member). The substitute member shall have the same rights of speaking and voting at the meetings as the member for whom the substitution is made.
- 2.5** The Joint Committee, with the agreement of the local authority members, may co-opt other associate members to its membership where it is considered conducive to the effective consideration of any matter.
- 2.6** The Joint Committee may appoint representatives to the other outside bodies for which the Committee has membership.

3.0 Governance

- 3.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a Joint Committee under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 3.2** Notwithstanding the above each constituent authority will retain all non-executive and executive functions generally and specifically in relation to economic development, housing provision, strategic spatial planning and strategic transport planning.
- 3.3** The Joint Committee will meet in public subject to the provisions of s100 LGA 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. The Joint Committee will be hosted under local government arrangements and chairing will be rotated between the local authorities on an annual basis in line with the arrangements at 9.1.
- 3.4** The policy advice and support will be provided by the Joint Committee's Executive Officer Group (Chaired by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director), Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, reporting to the Local Authority Chief Executive Group.
- 3.5** The resources and capacity required to deliver the Joint Committee's work programmes, and the work of any associated advisory groups, will be agreed by the Chief Executive Group.

4.0 General functions

- 4.1** To facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities and key partners to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

- 4.2 To facilitate strategic alignment of spatial, economic and infrastructure plans in a way that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable in order to safeguard Oxfordshire's unique historical, cultural and environmental character.
- 4.3 To facilitate collective engagement of Joint Committee Partners with other national, regional and sub-regional bodies on matters concerning the environment, infrastructure and strategic planning and where relevant, comment on wider proposals and decisions from national agencies, where these have a strategic impact on Oxfordshire.
- 4.4 To act as the voice of Oxfordshire to Government and other national and Sub National bodies to ensure Oxfordshire's infrastructure and housing needs are recognised in future investment priorities and funding.
- 4.5 To provide a strategic partnership forum for the identification and development of sustainable strategies and plans for Oxfordshire related to the environment, spatial planning, economic development, housing and transport.
- 4.6 To coordinate the prioritisation of funding from devolved funding sources for infrastructure schemes, where this funding is not already within the remit of the Local Transport Authority, to ensure that decisions are made in one place and supported by all relevant partners and stakeholders.
- 4.7 To oversee the delivery of detailed work programmes as delegated to the Joint Committee by the constituent authorities, as set out under specific functions at 5.0.
- 4.8 To bid for the allocation of resources and investment to support the above purposes.

5.0 Specific Functions

Strategic Planning

- 5.1 To oversee joint work on cross border issues to ensure partners meet the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate under S33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and wider national planning policy.
- 5.2 To assess whether strategic spatial planning, infrastructure and public services are integrated and delivered in a sustainable way, and to make recommendations to encourage this, while recognising the sovereignty of individual Local Plan processes.
- 5.3 To appoint representatives on behalf of the Joint Committee to other partnerships as required, including the Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership and England's Economic Heartland.

The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

5.4 To oversee and facilitate delivery of remaining elements of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (“the Deal”), noting that:

- Oxfordshire County Council as accountable body shall, acting reasonably at all times and in consultation with the Joint Committee, take any decisions regarding the inclusion, timetabling and delivery of schemes in the Homes from Infrastructure programme
- the City and District councils shall provide information on housing numbers relating to this programme to Oxfordshire County Council in a timely manner in order to enable the accountable body to fulfil its reporting obligations to central government.

5.5 To approve and monitor the implementation of work programmes for the delivery of the Deal (including infrastructure and capacity funding).

5.6 To oversee the delivery of a productivity stream work programme to be delivered by OxLEP.

5.7 To support an Advisory Group to oversee delivery of work programmes to meet the agreed milestones and targets set out in the Deal relating to Infrastructure.

5.8 To receive and publish quarterly performance and finance monitoring reports as set out in the Deal Delivery Plan.

6.0 Voting

6.1 Only local authority Members (or their substitutes) shall be designated as voting members and shall be entitled to one vote on items of business considered by the Joint Committee, although members intend to agree matters on a unanimous basis where possible.

6.2 A majority vote shall be required. In the event of there being an equal number of votes for and against a particular proposition, a casting vote by the Chair may be exercised.

7.0 Quorum and Safeguard

7.1 The quorum for a meeting shall be four voting members.

7.2 Where the effect of a particular proposition, if adopted by the Joint Committee on a majority basis, would give rise to policy, contractual or financial implications for a constituent authority that it does not support, that authority may opt out of participation in that proposition in so far as it affects their authority before any vote is taken but this will not prevent the other parties proceeding with the proposition. In respect of other matters, all other voting will be on a normal majority basis.

7.3 Normal rules as to declarations of interest to be applied to local authority members in accordance with the respective Council’s Code of Conduct.

8.0 Accountable Body

8.1 The Accountable Body for the Joint Committee is Oxfordshire County Council. It will provide Section 151 and Monitoring Officer roles to the Committee in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between Oxfordshire County Council and the Joint Committee.

8.2 The County Council's Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) will provide the Joint Committee with quarterly financial reports for funding that has been allocated directly to Oxfordshire County Council as the Accountable Body. These reports will provide the Joint Committee with an overview of the funds spent and funds committed against funds allocated.

8.3 For those programmes and funding streams where another local authority is the Accountable Body, the relevant Section 151 Officer will provide the financial and performance information to the County Council's Section 151 Officer, for integration into the quarterly reporting process.

9.0 Meetings

9.1 The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee will be elected at the first meeting in each Future Oxfordshire Partnership year, which runs from 1 June to 31 May.

9.2 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director shall be responsible for convening meetings in consultation with the Chief Executive of the authority which holds chairing responsibilities.

9.3 Meetings shall usually be held six times each year. However, meetings may be called by the Chair, Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive Group, or any three voting members of the Joint Committee, in circumstances where business cannot be reasonably deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

9.4 Agendas and minutes will be published, and meetings held in public, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. A Forward Plan of items to be considered will be published online each month, and included with each agenda.

9.5 Public speaking procedures will be established in line with a separate protocol as agreed by the Joint Committee.

10. Advisory Groups

10.1 The Joint Committee will establish Advisory Groups to oversee specific work programmes or broader thematic areas as required. Advisory groups, reporting into the Joint Committee, will be managed in accordance with separately published terms of reference as agreed by the Joint Committee.

10.2 The role, remit and membership of Advisory Groups will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain flexible to the demands of ongoing and new programmes of work.

11. Scrutiny Arrangements

11.1 A non-statutory Scrutiny Panel with a cross party membership of councillors from each constituent local authority reviews decisions and actions taken by the Joint Committee. The Scrutiny Panel is managed in accordance with separately published terms of reference.

11.2 The Scrutiny Panel is non-statutory and not strictly constituted in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. The Panel's function therefore

complements, rather than replaces, the statutory overview and scrutiny duties of the constituent authorities, as set out under the Local Government Act 2000.

12. Funding Contributions

- 12.1 The budget for the Joint Committee's administration will be endorsed no later than 1 December of the preceding financial year by the local authority membership of the Joint Committee. The cost of meeting the expenditure planned in the budget shall, to the extent not met from other sources, be divided among all members of the Joint Committee, with discretion to vary fees between associate and local authority membership.
- 12.2 The budget endorsed by the Joint Committee will subsequently be recommended to each Local Authority member for approval during the February budget setting process.

13. Withdrawal

- 13.1 If any member determines that they no longer require membership to the Joint Committee, they may give written notice to the Joint Committee's Chair and Director no later than 1st January preceding the financial year to which the budget will apply. Unless they withdraw that notice in writing, they shall cease to be a member from 1st April of that year. Any member which has not given due notice shall be obliged to pay its subscription for the next year.

14. General principles

- 14.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose and flexible to meet the requirements of ongoing and future work. Any changes to the Joint Committee's powers or functions will be a matter for each constituent authority to agree.
- 14.2 In adopting these terms of reference, members of the Joint Committee agree to support the purposes of the Joint Committee by ensuring that in their decision making, they:
- Collaborate and cooperate with each other
 - Are open and accountable to each other

- Adhere to all relevant statutory requirements
- Deploy appropriate resources
- Act in good faith

14.3 These principles are not intended to be legally binding, and no legal obligations or rights shall arise from this.

Appendix 1 – Future Oxfordshire Partnership High Level Governance

