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PRESS RELEASE

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Oxfordshire asks Government to consider £4bn investment deal

Public bodies in Oxfordshire have today, Friday 4 September, 2015 jointly submitted an expression of interest to Government that asks for greater local control over £4bn of funding for transport, skills training and health services.

The six Oxfordshire councils, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group jointly submitted the expression of interest, which was also endorsed by the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University.

It was submitted in response to a call by government for local areas to propose new ways of working that will increase economic growth and improve services for residents. In return, government is prepared to devolve power and funding to local areas as has already happened in greater Manchester.

Oxfordshire has a globally significant economy that has grown rapidly over the past few years, particularly in science and technology. But major transport bottlenecks, difficulties in recruiting skilled staff and housing affordability are major local challenges.

The initial set of ideas submitted to government set out how Oxfordshire partners will work together to address these issues in return for long-term government funding and more local powers. The four main themes of the expression of interest are:

- Delivering the infrastructure – particularly the roads network – that is required to support economic growth
- Helping people to get the necessary skills and benefit from good jobs created in hi-tech industries
- Tackling housing shortages and affordability
- Ensure health and social care services meet growing demand as the population ages and funding to public services is reduced.

These ideas build on the success of £56m City Deal and £118m Growth Deals agreed with Government last year and will strengthen the work that is already being undertaken to deliver Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan.

The expression of interest also proposes to build on the effective joint working arrangements that already exist in Oxfordshire and to deliver better services for residents, including greater local control over health budgets.

The document provides a possibility for a review of the way organisations work together and take decisions. It also recognises the importance of a transparent overview of all the budgets and resources included within any future agreement.

Next steps will include further discussions between Oxfordshire partners and government departments to broker the deal. Any final deal will be subject to public consultation and compliance with the full democratic process of each council

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