

Strategic Economic Plan

Purpose of Report

Creating the Environment for Growth: Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire – Consultation Draft (SEP Refresh)

Recommendations

The Growth Board is asked to:

- a) Consider the implications and comment on the SEP Refresh within the context of its on-going joint statutory work, including in particular its work on planning for infrastructure development in the medium to long term
- b) Make comments on the SEP structure, priorities to 2020 and the identified commitments under each theme
- c) Note the timetable for the consultation period and the finalisation of the SEP Refresh
- d) Note the governance arrangement for delivering the SEP Refresh

Background

1. In March 2014 the Oxfordshire LEP (OxLEP) published the Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire in response to a call from Government. The SEP outlined Oxfordshire's ambitions for economic growth which formed the backbone of a bid for a proportion of the national c£2billion Local Growth Fund for local infrastructure projects in the period 2015/16. In the event, Oxfordshire was successful in attracting:
 - £8.9m to support Technology and Innovation Centres
 - £35.95m to support the Western Conveyance Channel/Flood Storage
 - £4.49m to support the Centre for Applied Superconductivity
 - £58.52m for infrastructure
 - £10.6, Local Transport Board agreed allocation
2. The 2014 SEP achieved a great deal and continues to be endorsed. We are now taking steps to refresh the SEP that:
 - Reflects new evidence and insight that has become available in the past two years

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- Embraces a number of investment plans and strategies that have been completed (or are on-going) within the county for skills, innovation, creative, cultural, heritage and tourism sectors, and the environment
- Acknowledges the changing wider context for Oxfordshire's continued prosperity – and particularly the far greater global economic uncertainty that is likely to define the next five years
- Responds to substantial engagement from the county's business, universities, research institutions, local authorities, voluntary and community sectors, and many of its residents
- Anticipates that the process of local government devolution will progress over the months and years ahead and that the SEP will be updated and aligned over time to reflect this

3. Compared to the original SEP, the refreshed version:

- Has a greater focus on medium term priorities and very much less emphasis on 'projects'
- Is shorter – with an emphasis on the strategy (not the details of delivery)
- Is clearer – particularly in explaining the relationships with other processes, especially the primacy of strategic planning.

4. The preparation of the SEP Refresh document, entitled '*Creating the Environment for Growth: Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire – Consultation Draft*' has been overseen by a Steering Group. This consultation draft was developed through:

- Targeted interviews throughout January and February with key partners in Oxfordshire, including the Universities, colleges, local authorities, business representative organisations, the voluntary and community sector, the CPRE and various environmental groups such as TOE2;
- Three public workshops held in Oxford and in south and north Oxfordshire on 26 and 29 February, and on 1 March.

5. The document was published for public consultation on 21 April for a period of 5 weeks. We have sought to reach as many businesses, organisations and individuals for their views through:

- Press releases and radio interviews with Jack FM and the BBC
- 10,000 leaflets posted to libraries and to all parish, town, city and district councils and the county council
- Our business and academic networks including the Oxfordshire Town Chamber Network and B4, IoD, FSB etc
- Direct email to over 2,500 contacts on our communications database, including to local authority Members
- A social media campaign on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn

6. We have asked the following questions as well as providing a free text box for responders to make comments as they see fit:
 - I. Does the SEP capture the main characteristics of the Oxfordshire economy, its challenges and opportunities? If not, what else could be included?
 - II. People – do we have the right priorities and commitments in place? If not, what is missing?
 - III. Place - do we have the right priorities and commitments in place? If not, what is missing?
 - IV. Enterprise - do we have the right priorities and commitments in place? If not, what is missing?
 - V. Connectivity - do we have the right priorities and commitments in place? If not, what is missing?
 - VI. Does the SEP articulate clearly the roles and responsibilities of OxLEP – both in itself and in relation to other processes?
 - VII. Please feel free to make any additional comments in the box below.

Overview

7. The SEP refresh, which includes an Executive Summary, is attached to this report. There are aspects of the refresh to note in particular.
8. The SEP is framed by the Vision (see page 9) which remains the same as for the 2014 SEP:
 9. **‘By 2030, Oxfordshire will be recognised as a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy, driven by innovation, enterprise and research excellence’.**
10. This vision is the starting point for the SEP refresh on the basis that Oxfordshire is set apart by the excellence and scale of Innovation, Enterprise and Research. By harnessing these three overarching drivers, the aim is to ensure that by 2030 Oxfordshire’s economy is recognised to be Vibrant, Sustainable, Inclusive and World Leading. These drivers then flow through the four programmes that provide the framework out of which emerges the LEPs medium term priorities to 2020, and on-going commitments for the longer term horizon to 2030 and beyond:
 - People
 - Place

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- Enterprise
- Connectivity

11. The SEP Refresh clearly sets out a profile of Oxfordshire's economy today, including the key assets, opportunities and challenges (see pages 10 to 13), before moving on to provide more detail around the four programmes (pages 14 to 33) and how we will meet the priorities to 2020 by utilising (for example) Oxfordshire's £19.3m European Structural Investment Fund allocation, and up an coming funding streams including Local Growth Fund.

12. The SEP Refresh is careful to set out clearly the relationships to the on-going work of the statutory Oxfordshire Growth Board (Joint Work Programme including the Spatial Options for Oxford's unmet need, and the County, City and District Councils (LTP, Local Plans, Infrastructure work) - see page 34. We would particularly welcome the Growth Boards' views on this section and how it could potentially be strengthened.

13. We would also welcome the Growth Boards views on:

- The overall structure of the SEP refresh
- The medium term priorities to 2020 and the identified longer term commitments under each of the themes
- The 'feel' of the document, i.e. is it positive, confident and clear on what it is trying to achieve?

Next steps

14. Once the consultation period closes on 27 May, we will analyse the results and prepare and publish considered responses to the comments made during the consultation. We aim to do this during June, but precisely when will be dependent on the total number of responses we receive, and the time needed to read them thoroughly.

15. We will then develop the SEP further during the summer to be signed off by the OxLEP Board in September. We intend to hold a SEP launch event for late September.

Dawn Pettis
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