

This report is public	
Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee Terms of Reference	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	3 March 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Leader of the Council, Councillor David Hingley
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	17 February 2025
Report of	Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll

Purpose of report

The concluding stages of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal require adjustments to the working arrangements of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership for 2025 and a change of name for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. This report proposes corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference and the Memorandum of Understanding between Cherwell District Council and the other five Oxfordshire councils party to the Partnership.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 A number of factors have come together to cause members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) to take stock and consider a significant reset. These were set out in a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting of 26 November 2024, when Members asked officers to draft some proposed revised Terms of Reference.
- 2.2 The **Terms of Reference** (ToR) were originally drafted in 2014 at the formation of what was then known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board, and have subsequently been updated on a number of occasions.
- 2.3 The amendments now proposed for the ToR are described in this report.
- 2.4 The **Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU) was introduced in 2018 as a requirement of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, and sets out operational aspects of decision making and responsibilities in relation to the deal.

- 2.5 Although the Housing and Growth Deal is now largely complete, there are still projects in train which have received growth deal funding, and officers therefore recommend that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be retained for the time being. No substantive changes are proposed to the MoU, though it will be updated to reflect the new name of the joint committee.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	<p>There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the ToR. The service currently makes a contribution of £100k to FOP annually and this is not expected to increase as a result of this change</p> <p>Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer), 4 February 2025</p>			
Legal	<p>There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the ToR. The joint committee structure is unaltered and there is no change to decision-making powers.</p> <p>The Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding are matters reserved for decision by each local authority's Cabinet / Executive.</p> <p>The proposed changes were endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting on 28 January 2025 and are now coming for decision to each authority's Cabinet / Executive.</p> <p>Indicative dates for these governance updates to be considered by individual authority's are as follows:</p> <p>Cherwell District Council – 3 March 2025 Oxford City Council – 12 March 2025 Oxfordshire County Council – 25 February 2025 South Oxfordshire District Council – 6 March 2025 Vale of White Horse District Council – 7 March 2025 West Oxfordshire District Council – 12 March 2025</p> <p>Shiraz Sheik, Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer), 14 February 2025</p>			
Risk Management	<p>There are no risk implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the ToR.</p> <p>Shiraz Sheik, Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer), 14 February 2025</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is				N/A

delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact				N/A
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	The priority work areas set out in the revised Terms of Reference are closely aligned to the priorities set out in the Council Plan, particularly around the environment, net zero aspirations, inclusive economy, community and connectivity.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 As set out in the Executive summary

4. Details

Name and membership

4.1 Members of the FOP agreed at its meeting on 26 November 2024 to refocus the identity and purpose of the partnership. The revised ToR therefore propose a new name – the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee – and membership limited to the six constituent authorities.

- 4.2 Although in practice the committee seldom takes formal decisions, there is still some residual capacity funding from the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal which requires a collective process for decision making as set out in the MoU. It is therefore proposed that this aspect of the joint committee should be left unchanged.
- 4.3 A further benefit of retaining the formal status of the joint committee may be felt in future, depending on the progress of discussions relating to devolution and local government reorganisation. It is possible that a formal joint committee might be required and it is therefore prudent to retain the existing framework rather than risk the possibility of putting additional time and resource into recreating it at a future date.
- 4.4 It is recognised that this position may change as the government's programme becomes clearer. The ToR and MoU can be revisited at a future date if further amendments are required.

End of the housing and growth deal

- 4.5 The Oxfordshire housing and growth deal is now in its final quarter for expenditure on the infrastructure programme, and the other programmes are complete. As agreed by the FOP in November, the revised ToR have therefore removed the advisory groups and the scrutiny panel that were associated with the requirements of the deal.
- 4.6 As noted at paragraph 2.5, there remains a small quantity of uncommitted capacity funding which still requires joint decision making.
- 4.7 It is appropriate that projects which have been jointly funded from the capacity fund and which are still in progress should be reported to the joint committee on a regular basis. Examples including local area energy planning are identified in the proposed ToR.

Decision making powers

- 4.8 No new decision making powers are proposed for the joint committee at this time.
- 4.9 While there is uncertainty surrounding Oxfordshire's timetable and government requirements for devolution and reorganisation, it makes sense to retain the joint committee structure and the possibility of decision-making powers being delegated should they be needed at a future date, subject to agreement by the constituent authorities at the time.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Do not endorse the revised TOR or MOU

Not endorsing the new TOR or MOU will exclude Cherwell District Council from the Leaders Joint Committee and thereby disadvantage it from the collaborative joint working that it facilitates.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The proposed changes to governance documents arise from the principles agreed by FOP members at its meeting on 26 November 2024. The changes have been discussed by the Oxfordshire Councils' Monitoring Officers.
- 6.2 Executive is recommended to approve the proposed changes.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Terms of Reference
Appendix 2	Memorandum of Understanding
Report Author	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Report Author contact details	ian.boll@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Report of Corporate Director for Communities