

Cherwell District Council

Executive

3 July 2023

Updates to Terms of Reference of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Report of Monitoring Officer

This report is public

Purpose of report

To set out and approve adjustments to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference following recent changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal is entering its final phases, and the governance documents for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) now need to be updated to reflect the current position.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference were originally drafted in 2014 at the formation of what was then known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board and were last subject to substantive change in 2020 following a review. Since then there have been minor drafting changes reflecting the change of name to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 3.2 The Memorandum of Understanding 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. As with the Terms of Reference,

the last substantive change was made in 2020 and subsequent updates have replaced references to the Growth Board with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

- 3.3 Three particular areas of change have arisen which are described in the following paragraphs.

Cessation of Oxfordshire Plan 2050

- 3.4 Following the decision in August 2022 to cease work on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, it is proposed to remove references to that work programme from the Terms of Reference.

Homes from Infrastructure Programme

- 3.5 The final tranche of funding for the Homes from Infrastructure Programme, the last remaining major element of the Housing and Growth Deal, is subject to a number of governance and reporting requirements which were set out in a letter dated 5 December 2022 from the then Housing Minister.
- 3.6 These requirements and their implications were described in detail in a report presented to the 20 March 2023 meeting of the FOP by the Director of Finance, Oxfordshire County Council, and are not repeated here. Oxfordshire County Council has subsequently written to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Homes England confirming acceptance of the final funding and agreement to the associated governance and reporting requirements.
- 3.7 The changes which are proposed to the Terms of Reference are intended to reflect the new requirements from government which have now been agreed.
- 3.8 Corresponding changes are proposed to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which sets out responsibility for decision making on matters of funding and work programmes. Although it is now a requirement that Oxfordshire County Council should be held accountable for delivery of the remaining programme, the MoU sets out some commitments to positive partnership behaviour and in particular to consultation with partners over any proposed changes to the programme of infrastructure delivery.
- 3.9 It should be noted also that the district councils are expected to provide quarterly updates to the county council regarding housing delivery on sites which benefit from this investment in infrastructure. In turn the county council will provide the data to DLUHC as part of its quarterly reporting regime.

Adoption of the Strategic Vision

- 3.10 Finally, an overhaul of the Terms of Reference provides an opportunity to include reference to Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development which was endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting of 22 March 2021, and subsequently in April 2021 by each individual council.
- 3.11 It was agreed that the Strategic Vision should be a basis for informing partners' future work planning and strategy. It is therefore appropriate to make reference to this document in the Terms of Reference for the partnership, without seeking to repeat details which are contained in the vision document itself.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The revised governance documents are required to set out how the councils in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership will meet the requirements set out in the DLUHC letter dated 5 December 2022, securing the final £30 million of funding for infrastructure to support the accelerated delivery of new homes.
- 4.2 The Executive is asked to approve the proposed changes.

5.0 Consultation

None

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: Do not approve the adjustments to the Terms of Reference. Rejected as it would not meet the requirements set out by central government to secure the funding for infrastructure. It would mean that the Council would not benefit from the opportunities that are presented from joint working with other councils in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference or Memorandum of Understanding.

Comments checked by:

Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering and Controls – Finance, 01295 227098, leanne.lock@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference. At its March 2023 meeting the members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agreed to accept the final instalment of Housing and Growth Deal funding, and these amendments are required to capture the new governance and reporting obligations.

Comments checked by:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law, Governance and Democratic Services, 01295 221651, shiraz.sheikh@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no immediate risks associated directly with this report. Any arising risks will be managed through the service operational risk and raised to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader 01295 221556,
celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities implications

- 7.4 There are no direct equalities and inclusion implications as a consequence of this report.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, Tel: 01295 221556
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Sustainability Implications

- 7.5 There are no direct sustainability implications as a consequence of this report.

Comments checked by:

Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 01295 221748,
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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Business Plan 2023 – 2024: Housing that meets your needs, supporting environmental sustainability, an enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres, healthy, resilient and engaged communities

Lead Councillor

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 - Future Oxfordshire Partnership Joint Committee Terms of Reference 2023
- Appendix 2 - Future Oxfordshire Partnership Memorandum of Understanding 2023

Background papers

None.

Report Author and contact details

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