

Cherwell District Council

Executive

2 October 2023

OxLEP's Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan 2023 - 2033

Report of Assistant Director - Growth and Economy

This report is public.

Purpose of report

To consider Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership's (OxLEP's) Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire (SEP) 2023 – 2033, providing an update on the progress to date in drafting the document. The report will also outline the SEP's forward trajectory, explaining the path it will follow both through Cherwell District Council's democratic processes and through other organisations involved. This includes, for example, the OxLEP Board; other local authorities (reporting through their respective democratic processes) and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP).

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To endorse OxLEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2023 – 2033.
- 1.2 To delegate to the Corporate Director – Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, to engage in the development of the detail of the SEP, including any future action plans which might emerge.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The new Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) has been led by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) to *“update and replace Oxfordshire's previous economic strategies. Informed by a county-wide conversation, it provides a post-pandemic statement of economic priorities for Oxfordshire. It charts a positive economic future for the county, and it sets out a strategy to 2033.”*
- 2.2 OxLEP sought to engage, both with the business community and public sector partners, via a series of workshops between March and June 2023. The Council's officers attended workshops at Oxford Brookes, Milton Park and Kidlington in order to input and contribute to the formulation of the draft SEP.
- 2.3
- 2.4 Throughout this period, a series of monthly 'working groups' were also attended by the Council's officers and comments were submitted to the consultants, in order to

ensure that the interests of the Council and the businesses and residents of Cherwell were relayed. Stakeholders also included universities, colleges, health bodies and departmental representatives of Government.

3.0 Report Details

3.1 The guiding principle for the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is provided by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's **Strategic Vision**:

'We want Oxfordshire's people, places and environment to thrive so that the lives of current and future generations are enhanced.'

3.2 The SEP will be one of a suite of strategies supporting the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Strategic Vision.

3.3 The SEP provides an evidence base to understand Oxfordshire's post-pandemic economy, exploring opportunities and understanding challenges.

3.4 The evidence base has informed the creation of (i) an ambition; (ii) objectives; and (iii) themes:

- The **ambition** is that through the SEP:

"...by 2033, people and communities across Oxfordshire will be benefitting from new opportunities which are created sustainably, supporting the journey to Net Zero through investment in local enterprise and innovation. These will enhance further their well-being in an outstanding local environment. They will also underpin, complement and support a wider innovation ecosystem which will continue to be of global significance, transforming for the better the lives of people across the world."

- The **objectives** are to:

- *Enable Oxfordshire's **businesses to thrive** and encourage **pervasive innovation**.*
- ***Widen access** to current opportunities and **equip people and places** as jobs change over the next decade.*
- ***Secure resilient infrastructure** for planned growth, consistent with Oxfordshire's commitment to net zero carbon by no later than 2050.*
- *Ensure that Oxfordshire's **places are sustainable, distinctive and inclusive**, and that **local communities flourish**.*

- The **themes** are:

- *Recognising our assets and using them well (productivity)*
- *Creating new horizons (innovation)*
- *Advancing Oxfordshire globally*
- *Strengthening our communities globally*

3.5 The **delivery** of the SEP over the next decade is expected to focus upon four main routes:

- *attracting private sector investment.*

- *working collaboratively across (and beyond) Oxfordshire and through wider partnerships.*
- *leveraging the development processes.*
- *bidding effectively for funding when opportunities present themselves.*

3.6 The **governance and oversight** of SEP will be for OxLEP's Board to:

- Oversee the SEP and Action Plan delivery.
- Provide regular updates to the FOP on progress.

3.7 The future of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) is currently being reviewed by Government, with an indication that core funding will cease and responsibility be transferred to upper tier levels of local government (i.e. Oxfordshire County Council locally). Typically, in the past, the Government (top-down) has requested that LEPs produce economic plans/strategies for their area (e.g. the Local Industrial Strategy). The drivers for this SEP are manifold - most of which are 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' – because the partners want to do this for their own localities, rather than being instructed to do so by Government.

3.8 The resultant Plan will be considered at a future meeting of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. It is anticipated that action plans will follow the adoption of the SEP and it will be necessary to understand the resources required to deliver the proposed actions.

3.9 The recent and imminent timeline for the Strategic Economic Plan is:

September

- Present draft Final SEP to OxLEP Board for endorsement (19/09/23).
- Present draft Final SEP to FOP for consideration only (14/09/23 to Scrutiny, then to Partnership on 26/09/23) .

October

- Review feedback/comments received from meetings.
- Revise content.

November

- Produce a draft final document.
- Further Board review workshop.

December

- Final SEP approval by OxLEP Board (23/12/23).

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The SEP will contribute to the delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Strategic Vision. It provides a ten-year framework to maintain the conditions for growth, regeneration, attracting new inward investment and enabling opportunities for jobs to be created for local residents.

4.2 In proposing a collective vision for the future of the County's economy, the SEP is currently in draft form. The Council's officers have been engaged as a consultee during its development.

- 4.3 A draft version of the SEP is attached as Appendix One. For any matters arising, please contact the Council's economic growth officers (details below).

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Relevant Council officers have attended each of the OxLEP strategy development workshops and have subsequently provided additional feedback to ensure that the interests of Cherwell-based businesses and residents are included.

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: To adopt the emerging Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan. This was rejected, because it would be premature at this stage and it is possible, despite officers' best efforts, that the final version of the Plan might not sufficiently address issues and opportunities relating specifically to Cherwell district.

Option 2: Not to endorse the emerging Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan. This was rejected because it would contradict the Council's interests to support the broad partnership framework proposed by the Plan.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 At this stage, there are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any costs arising from this report will need to be contained within the services budget.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director – Finance, 01295 221845,
Michael.Furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 7.2 At this stage, there are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, 01295 221808,
shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no significant risks arising directly from this report. Any strategic risks arising through commitment to deliver actions will be managed corporately and any local operational risks will be managed within the service area.

Comments checked by:
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, Tel: 01295 221556,
Celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 There are no equalities issues arising from this report. Collective action guided by the Strategic Economic Plan could enhance the Council's leadership on inclusivity matters.

Comments checked by:
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, Tel: 01295 221556,
Celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

- 7.5 The Strategic Economic Plan recognises the key importance of a sustainable economy and therefore could provide the framework for collaborative action to follow.

Comments checked by:
Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 07900 227103
jo.miskin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Wellbeing Implications

- 7.6 The Strategic Economic Plan has the potential to provide positive support for the wellbeing of individuals and households through skills development and work. It has the potential to assist OxLEP and other strategic partners to engage further with district initiatives – for example, the Brighter Futures in Banbury programme.

Comments checked by:
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Housing Services, 01295 221724,
nicola.riley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

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

The OxLEP Strategic Economic Plan closely aligns with the strategic, corporate and local priorities contained within both the Council's Business Plan and Delivery Plan

2022-2024, in particular the Council's key priorities of: 'An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres' and 'Supporting environmental sustainability'. This would more specifically help to 'Support business retention & growth', 'Work with partners to support skills development & innovation', 'Work with others to support growth', 'Promote the green economy', and 'Work with partners to promote the district as a visitor destination and attract investment in our town centres'.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Donna Ford - Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 - Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan – Draft v2

Background papers

None

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