



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2019
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
Subject	OXFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD REVIEW
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr James Mills, Leader and Cabinet Member for Oxfordshire Growth Board. Email: james.mills@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: 01993 861658 Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider a response to the Oxfordshire Growth Board's review
Annexes	Annex 1 - Summary of the Growth Board's role and operation Annex 2 – Themes and Questions to Guide the Review
Recommendation	That the Committee makes such comments as are considered appropriate.
Corporate priorities	Working in partnership with other authorities and organisations supports the Council's aim to maintain and enhance West Oxfordshire as one of the best places to live, work and visit in Great Britain and to deliver the Council's priorities.
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Oxfordshire Growth Board was established in 2014 as a partnership between the six principal Councils of Oxfordshire working together with partner organisations from across the county and further afield. Formally, it is a joint statutory committee of the six principal Councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners.
- 1.2. The representatives of the six principal Councils are the voting members of the Growth Board. They work alongside non-voting members from organisations such as the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, the Environment Agency, Homes England, Oxford's Universities, and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 1.3. The purpose of the Oxfordshire Growth Board is to build collaboration across the county on economic development, strategic planning and growth. It is responsible for oversight of several programmes, including the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal. The Board has no direct decision-making powers in relation to planning and development, which is carried out by the elected councillors at the District and City Councils.
- 1.4. The Growth Board played a key role in helping the councils in Oxfordshire negotiate the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal with Government, which is worth £215 million to Oxfordshire. The Growth Deal was subsequently approved at council meetings at all of the partner councils.
- 1.5. As a consequence of the Growth Deal the Growth Board arrangements were modified in 2018 to add a Scrutiny Panel and Sub-Groups dealing with Infrastructure, Affordable Housing, and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This has enabled a wider number of members to engage directly with the work of the board.
- 1.6. Growth Board and Scrutiny Panel meetings are held in public, and agendas and minutes for these meetings are available on the board's website at <https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/>. Notes of the Sub-Groups are included with the agendas for the Growth Board and Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.7. West Oxfordshire District Council is represented on the Growth Board by the Leader, Councillor James Mills, who also chairs the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sub-Group. The Council has three representatives on the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel, Councillors Derek Cotterill, Ted Fenton and Julian Cooper. The Council is represented by Councillor Jeff Haine on the Infrastructure, Affordable Housing, and Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sub-Groups.
- 1.8. A summary of the Board's role and operation can be found at Annex I.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. On 24 September 2019, the Oxfordshire Growth Board agreed to carry out a review of its operation. As part of the review, the Board is asking for feedback on all aspects of the Growth Board, from how it is perceived, its priorities and membership, to the communication methods and meeting format.
- 2.2. As part of this process, the Board is currently undertaking an on-line survey to inform the review which is scheduled to close on 26th November 2019. Once the survey has closed, the responses will be collated and a summary report prepared. It is expected that the report will be presented to the Growth Board in early 2020.

2.3. The survey can be found on the Growth Board's website at <https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/oxfordshire-growth-board-review/> and Members may complete the survey individually should they so wish.

2.4. There is also an opportunity for Members to provide direct feedback as part of a Councillors workshop session. There is a workshop session on the 26th November 2019 (6:30pm – 8pm at Meeting Room 1, 135 Milton Park, Didcot). Councillors can register for this by emailing oxfordshire.growthboard@southandvale.gov.uk.

2.5. The Growth Board review is addressing the following themes:

- Role and function
- Capability and resources
- Process and structures

Role and function

2.6. There is a general lack of awareness and sometimes a misunderstanding in the community about why the Board exists, and what it is able to do. The review will consider how the Board's role could change to benefit Oxfordshire and its residents and businesses, and how it can communicate and interact with the community better than it has. This will include an opportunity to look at the Board's objectives and how it tells the Oxfordshire community about these objectives.

Capability and resources

2.7. The Board relies mostly on support from the councils in Oxfordshire to provide resources to allow the Board to work. There are now some specialised, fixed-term staff in place to help the Board's work. The review will assess whether the current set-up is sufficient to enable the Board to carry out its existing and future work. The Board's membership has evolved over time and so a fresh look will be taken about the role of the Board's voting and non-voting members as well as considering whether or not the membership should be different.

Process and structures

2.8. The Board's governance structure will be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and supports our joint working objectives. This will include identifying how councillors and members of the public and stakeholders engage with the Board's work.

2.9. The Committee is invited to consider whether it would wish to formulate a collective response to the consultation.

2.10. Attached at Annex 2 is a document prepared by the Growth Board which sets out themes and questions intended to guide the review.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. Not applicable

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None arising directly from this report, although the work of the Growth Board may do so.

7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

7.1. Members may make such comments as are considered appropriate.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1. None