

Communications update

1. Communications strategy

We continue to ensure that we are capitalising on two areas of development through our communications work:

- **Making full-use of several third-party reports that highlight how successful Oxfordshire's economy is – the narrative includes:**

Growth:

- Oxford has the second fastest-growing economy of all UK cities (report – Irwin Mitchell)
- PWC's '**Good Growth for Cities**' report places Oxford as one of the two highest-performing cities in the UK

Industrial space:

- Oxfordshire's industrial market is thriving – highest half-year figures for business space demand since 2013 (report – Bidwells):
- Oxfordshire is the most successful LEP at attracting office occupation in England (report – CoStar Group):

Smart cities:

- Oxford named as one of the top 10 smart cities anywhere in the UK (report – Juniper Research):

Small business:

- According to Nesta's '**State of Small Business**' report – South Oxfordshire has one of the highest five-year 'survival rates' for SMEs in the UK:

Inward investment:

- According to Nesta's '**State of Small Business**' report – Oxford is one of only two non-London Boroughs in the UK's top-10 for inward venture capital investment

- **Ensuring that we fully-capitalise on Oxfordshire being 'front and centre' of major government announcements – including the autumn budget, NIC report on the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor and the Industrial Strategy, promoting our 'global significance'.**

The cornerstone of our PR work will continue to be centred on three key messages:

- *OxLEP champions Oxfordshire's economic potential, acting as a catalyst and convenor to drive growth*
- *OxLEP embraces business growth, innovation and inward investment for the benefit of Oxfordshire*

- OxLEP empowers people and employers to develop their skills

2. Success of communications strategy and plan

The focus for the Communications Manager and retained PR agency continues to be to deliver quality, 'key message' coverage.

Between 1 May and 31 December 2017, we continued to see a climb in overall key message coverage being achieved – with a minimum estimated audience reach of **3,925,678 people** via **221 different items**.

Based on our agreed key messages, 73% of press coverage was 'on-message' between May and December.

Month	Items in month	Cumulative key message percentage since May
May	11	0%
June	23	22%
July	15	35%
August	33	58%
September	26	92%
October	30	76%
November	36	72%
December	47	89%
Total – May to December	221	73%

During January, our level of 'on-message' coverage continued to be at a good level:

Month	Items in month	Cumulative key message percentage since May
January	48	68%

3. Other key headlines

New corporate website:

The new corporate website was set to live on 19 February – primarily, it will allow us to communicate our messaging in a much clearer way, but also promote Oxfordshire and our 'world-class' economy much more accurately.

It also allows us to promote our OxLEP, OxLEP Business and OxLEP Skills 'brands' much more clearly and concisely.

We are very confident that the new site's structure, navigation and overall layout will also ensure we are able to go 'above and beyond' in response to the Mary Ney Review and general LEP transparency.

The website will immediately enter a ‘phase two’ development stage which will further ‘future-proof’ us against Mary Ney recommendations, particularly regarding transparency around LEP committees and sub-group activity and ongoing search engine optimisation (SEO).

Branding:

The new OxLEP logo, OxLEP Skills and OxLEP Business will now ‘go live’ across the organisation, in-line with the new website going online. An implementation timeline has been developed to phase out existing branding.

All partner websites (OBS, Oxfordshire Apprenticeships etc.) will be switched-off in the next two to three months, with resources to be taken from those sites and added to main OxLEP site where they add value.

PR agency recruitment:

Our existing 12-month contract with Tala ends on 3 April – therefore, to align with our procurement process – we have gone back out to tender for PR agency partnership.

Top-line tender details are as follows:

Recruitment of retained PR agency support from April 2018 to April 2019 inclusive.
Through a retained contract, promote a narrative of Oxfordshire being a key driver behind ‘UK PLC’ and as a strategic stronghold/‘world-class’ asset for the UK economy.
Build-on and further develop key stakeholder relationships with high-level influencers at a national and international level.
Promote our vision for Oxfordshire as a: ‘<i>vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world-leading economy</i>’ through creative and integrated campaigns.

To date (21 February), 11 agencies – two from Oxfordshire (including the incumbent) and nine from across the UK – have registered in interest in responding.

We will work to the following timeframe:

Monday 12 February	Tender document launched on OxLEP website and publicised accordingly
Friday 2 March (5pm)	Closing date for tender responses
Monday 12 March	All agencies who responded to be notified of success/non-success of tender response – a minimum of three agencies to be shortlisted for face-to-face interviews
w/c 19 March	Shortlisted agencies interviewed by OxLEP panel
Monday 26 March	Winning agency and unsuccessful agencies to be notified

Q&A event – ‘People’:

The first of our Q&A events took place on 22 January at British Bakels in Bicester, with a focus on our priority of *‘People’*.

Key details of the event included:

Attendance:

- A total of 53 people attended the event (out of 72 who registered)
- The feedback was very positive:
 - 100% either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement: *‘Overall – I am pleased that I attended the event’*
 - 100% either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement: *‘I found the content at today’s event useful’*
 - 92% either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement: *‘I am likely to attend the next Q&A event’*

Media coverage:

Good regional and local coverage achieved, with articles in The Oxford Times, Oxfordshire Guardian, Bicester Advertiser and Jack FM, as well as high-levels of engagement on social media.

The next event is on 25 April at MEPC, Milton Park with a focus on *‘Place’*.

PR and Communications Apprentice recruitment:

We have successfully recruited a PR and Communications Apprentice to the team, who will be completing the PRCA Level 4 Higher Apprenticeship in PR.

A structured work plan – working across all teams to meet the apprenticeship framework is being developed ahead of their start date of the 26 February.