



OxLEP Board Meeting
14th September 2021
5:00pm – 8:00pm

Via Microsoft Teams Platform

MINUTES

Board Directors Present:	Jeremy Long (Chair - JL), Nigel Tipple (NT), Alistair Fitt (Deputy Chair - AF), Angus Horner (AH), Penny Rinta-Suksi (PRS), Phil Southall (PSo), Miranda Markham (MM), Peter Nolan (PN), Jacqui Canton (JC), Cllr Sue Cooper (SC), Cllr Emily Smith (ES), Cllr Barry Wood (BW), Cllr Michele Mead (MM), Cllr Susan Brown (SB), Cllr Liz Leffman (LL), Wendy Hart (WH), Ariana Adjani (AA)
Board Directors Apologies:	Patrick Grant (PG), Bindu Varkey (BV), Jayne Norris (JN)
Minutes:	Sadie Patamia (SP)
In attendance:	Ahmed Goga (AG), Richard Byard (RB), Rob Panting (RP), Sarah Watson (SW), Lyn Davies (LD), Kathy Wilcox (KW), Ross Burton (RBu), Lorna Baxter (LB), Emily Cashen (EC)
Item	Action/Responsible
Item 1 – Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	
Apologies were accepted from Patrick Grant, Bindu Varkey and Jayne Norris. JL noted that BV was retiring from the Board so wished to record thanks to her for all her work.	
Item 2 – Minutes	
To approve <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes of Board Meeting 27 (June 2021)	Approved
To note <ul style="list-style-type: none">Finance and Audit Committee minutes (June 2021)Nominations and Personnel Committee minutes (May 2021)	Noted Noted
Items for Decision – Confidential Papers for approval as detailed Committee/Sub-Group recommendation (Exempt Information¹)	
Item 3 – Corporate Governance (LD) ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Board Appointmentsb. Approval of revised Articles and By-Lawsc. Approval of revised Local Assurance Frameworkd. Approval of updated strategic risk register	
Item 4 – Financial Updates (LD/NT) ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Approval of Audited Financial Statements 2020/21b. Q1 2021/22 Outturnc. Approval of bank mandate changesd. Update on revolving loan facility agreemente. Operational Budget Planning	
Item 5 – Capital Programme Updates (LB)¹	
Item 6 – Programme Sub-Group Update Presentation (PRS)¹	
Item 7 - LEP Review and Ox-Cam Arc Update (NT/JL)¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none">LEP Review ProgressGrowth Body Relationship	
Public Invited to Join the Meeting	
AGM 18.50 – 19:00 : See separate Minutes	

Board Meeting Part Two – Items for Decision/Information

**Item 8 – Questions from the public arising from the Agenda
(Max 3 mins per question – notified in advance in writing)**

There were no questions received from the public.

Item 9 – Economic Recovery Plan – Progress Update (AG)

AG presented an update paper drawing particular attention to Annex 1 which detailed both the ERP Programme and operational updates against a RAG rating. He noted that the paper would be going to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting (Growth Board) on the 20th September and that prior to this the paper would be reviewed by the FOP scrutiny panel.

The paper sets out those projects which had been progressed, those which are coming forward with support from partners utilising where possible existing approved and allocated resources capable of being repurposed to support activity. The final category was those projects which were developed but awaiting funding, these would need particular attention and work across the system to identify opportunities now and in the future to secure the funds necessary to support delivery.

He noted the recent CRF and Levelling up fund application process which had included a number of project submissions aligned to the ERP but that greater joint working and whole system commitment would be needed if we were to build a strong case for investment under future government funding rounds.

AG highlighted some of the socio-economic factors which were beginning to impact Oxfordshire; unemployment generally continues to fall but there remain challenges across the county with matching vacancies/skills and those available for work. Youth unemployment figures remain high, as do those identified as NEET (Not in employment, education and training) work continues to address these challenges across Oxfordshire but again whole system working will be key to identifying resources and capability to support these groups.

He noted the increase in the availability and take up of apprentices though much remains to be done to return to pre-pandemic levels and he noted that the furlough scheme comes to an end in September. This will impact the labour market particularly the Visitor Economy which shows the highest remaining levels of furloughed staff across the county.

AG the reminded the Board of the importance of the Visitor Economy to the County, noting the sector employs over 40,000 people, is the largest employer of women, part time/short term staff and remains susceptible to economic shocks. The view is it could take 2-3 years for the VE to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Furthermore noting the Christmas period could cause a large uptick in economic activity but the key will be sustaining this through the new year and into the spring when hopefully we will begin to see some sustained growth. Noting that many businesses still needed significant help and additional resource to survive the next 6 months.

JL stated it was difficult to anticipate how significant the end of furlough will be on levels of unemployment and job numbers. NT reflected on the wider market impacts being felt including logistics, public transport and the health sector, he advised that there were separate conversations being progressed with each sector but that again access to

resources and advice ever going to be critical in helping to mitigate the impact of covid on the economy and sectors such as these specifically.

Recommendation

That the Board:

- notes the progress being made in delivering the Economic Recovery Plan (as set out in Appendix One) and the key issues facing the economy; and
- endorses the need for continued whole-system responses in concert with Oxfordshire authorities, through the Economic Task Group, to the economic challenges faced in Oxfordshire and the co-ordination of resources across partners to drive delivery and secure further investment to support businesses and local communities

Noted

Endorsed

Item 10 – Business Investment Fund (BIF) Update Presentation (RB/WH)

RB took the Board through a presentation highlighting the progress made to date, the selection process and status of grant allocation to date. He noted the first claim period for funded programmes was due at the end of September, good progress was being made to date on both the projects and claims process. He reminded the Board of the scale of the programme (£2.2m) and that there were 36 businesses currently being supported. As with all programme there were some delays and two projects had been withdrawn at the Business case assessment stage either due to eligibility or deliverability checks. In this regard, project funding originally allocated has been awarded to ranked pipeline projects and these are now being contracted.

RB went on to demonstrate the geographic and sectoral spread of the projects supported showing a broadly even spread but importantly underpinned by strong business cases. The report also highlights performance against contracted outputs/outcomes, of these the two contracted metrics of job creation and safeguarding were showing exceptionally strong performance as was performance across the Kick Start programme. Two additional measures (not contracted) were being tracked, these included Apprenticeship and traineeship starts, both were tracking slightly under our own targets but it was anticipated these would begin to recover as business confidence increased.

BW asked if it was true that there were labour shortages within the agriculture sector (specifically fruit and vegetable picking). RB confirmed the impact was being seen in these sectors following the EU Exit and the recent impact of Covid, indeed there were many labour shortages being recorded including HGV, delivery and bus drivers in particular. It was noted this was a national as well as local challenge and that a national policy response was needed to help address and reverse the emerging labour shortages.

LL sought clarification on the number of Traineeships and Apprenticeship placements available at this time. RB confirmed that there were broadly similar levels of vacancies across Oxfordshire as pre-pandemic levels. He cited the impact of the current kick-start programme and the hope that this could continue to encourage further training and development opportunities.

SB stated she felt that many of these issues were closely aligned to the lack of affordable housing in the county. She cited the fact that rents were so unaffordable that professional people were now living in shared houses, increasing pressure in the rented sector and in many cases causing those looking for work to commute from outside the county.

Item 11 - Chief Executives Report (NT)

- **Annex 1 Communications Update**
- **Annex 2 OxLEP Corporate Plan**
- **Annex 3 Government/Government Departmental Updates**

NT presented the paper drawing attention to the Annual Event which will be scheduled to take place on the 7th October.

AG updated the Board on latest COP26 proposition. Unfortunately, our proposal conditionally approved for the Glasgow Green Zone had been de-prioritised along with a number of other geographic locations though we had been encouraged to explore collaboration with the SE Energy Hub partnership. The ambition is to form a comprehensive Oxfordshire Programme with partners to showcase in the Regional events programme and whilst details are still to finalise, we remain confident that we have a strong proposal and that this will feature in the regional event.

NT highlighted the significant amount of work being carried out by the Skills and Business Teams, including work with schools, driving opportunities for improving inclusivity and supporting business to respond positively to the impacts of Covid. Noting also the significant levels of Investment successes supported by the Internationalisation team over the last 12 months. Noting this performance compared well against national performance figures recently published.

He also confirmed that the updated Delivery Plan was now live on the website and that other documents such as the Local Assurance framework had been updated and were being uploaded to the company web site ensuring compliance with the requirements of the National Assurance Framework.

Recommendation

That the Board:

- Notes the report, annexes 1-3 and activity supported to date

Noted

Item 12

The meeting closed at 7.50pm