

**OxLEP Board Meeting**  
**7<sup>th</sup> March 2017**  
**17.00 – 19.00**  
**Activate Learning, City of Oxford College**

**MINUTES**

<b>Board Directors Present:</b>	Jeremy Long (JL) (Chair) , Adrian Lockwood (AL) (Deputy Chair), Cllr Matt Barber (MB) Bob Bradley (BB), Sally Dicketts (SD), Alistair Fitt (AF), Cllr Ian Hudspeth (IH), Cllr James Mills (JM), Cllr Bob Price (BP), Phil Shadbolt (PSh), Phil Southall (PSo), Richard Venables (RV), Ian Walmsley (IW), Cllr Barry Wood (BW), Nigel Tipple (NT)
<b>Board Directors Apologies:</b>	Penny Rinta-Suksi, Cllr John Cotton (dialled in for item 9 only), Andrew Harrison
<b>Minutes:</b>	Rebecca Harrhy
<b>In attendance:</b>	Hollie Steele (DCLG), Lorna Baxter (OCC/accountable body), Rob Granger (OxLEP), Gerry Brough (South and Vale), David Hill (South and Vale), Bev Hindle (OCC), Cllr Jane Murphy (SODC), Peter Sloman (Oxford City Council) (joined at 18.10 for Item 9)
<b>Item</b>	
<b>Action</b>	
<b>Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>	
Apologies – apologies were noted as above Declaration of Interest – Agenda Item 5 - Councillor Ian Hudspeth and Phil Southall	<b>Noted</b>
<b>Minutes of Board meeting / Finance and Audit Committee Meeting</b>	
Both sets of minutes were agreed by the members of the Board.	<b>Agreed</b>
<b>Items for Decision</b>	
<b>Item 06 The Science Vale Oxford &amp; Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise zones Implementation Plan</b>	
Item 6 was brought forward in the meeting. Chris Hale (CH), EZ Manager has joined the meeting to present this item.  CH noted that following successful application by the OxLEP in partnership with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse DC a second EZ ‘The Didcot Growth Accelerator’ which includes land within both South and Vale was approved effective from April 2016. The paper seeks the board’s approval of the implementation plan before submission to DCLG and to note progress on market development work stream and website.  DCLG require the implementation plan to be submitted by the 31st March. CH requested that any revisions are forwarded urgently to enable the submission deadline to be met. The implementation plan covers both EZ allocations with a joint Board Sub-Group. NT confirmed that Councillor Barber will be chairing this group going forward.  BP sought clarification of the number of enquiries received in respect of the EZ, CH confirmed that approximately half of the 62 enquiries that came through the UKTI pipeline in this particular period landed in Science Vale Oxford EZ1.  BP also asked whether there were any potential impacts from the European Space Agency’s (ESA) status as a European Union institution. CH suggested that there are none currently as ESA is not a formal part of the EU structure.	

<p>In relation to this item, BP also sought clarification in respect of the availability of skilled labour. CH advised that Oxfordshire has an offer that is second to none for graduate level entrants and that substantial effort was being made to raise the profile and opportunities available through both the Oxlep Skills Team and Businesses with a particular focus on raising the profile for the 14-19 cohort.</p> <p>AL questioned how much of a challenge was the delivery time frame vs demand? CH confirmed that the team are working with the site developers to encourage the acceleration and balance of supply across the EZ's.</p> <p>PSo noted the importance of public transport to the success of these developments and wanted to see a more integrated approach and recognition of the value of accessibility via public transport. CH confirmed this was recognised and would be picked up as part of the wider Didcot Garden Town development.</p> <p>RV noted the impact EZ benefits have on smaller businesses, particularly the business rate relief of £55k a year for 5 years. CH noted and advised that developers are trying to respond to the market subject always to demonstrable demand. He noted that one of the challenges we face is delivering the wider that SME's require, Housing, Infrastructure and skills.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>1) The Board approves the Implementation Plan for submission to DCLG, and</b>  <b>2) Notes progress on market development and website.</b></p>	<p>Agreed Noted</p>
<p><b>Item 03 Bylaws Changes</b></p>	
<p>NT presented the paper noting the proposed changes to the By-Laws. This followed an operational review at the end of the first full year activity since incorporation. The paper highlighted a number of minor changes in the document which sought to tighten up the provisions; issues associated with meeting procedures and quoracy be made.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p><b>That the Board:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agree the proposed amendments to the OxLEP Ltd By-Laws</b></li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><b>Item 04 Chief Executive's Decision Report</b></p>	
<p>NT presented the paper setting out for the benefit of the Board the range of decisions they were being asked to consider; these are as detailed at annex 1-5 attached to this paper .</p> <p>Each item has been subject to detailed review and agreement via the respective committees namely Finance and Audit Committee as well as Nominations and Personnel Committee. They are presented therefore as recommendations from respective committees at this meeting for approval. The communications strategy being the only exception which has been subject to Board and Executive Team input.</p> <p>There was a discussion round whether there is communications plan in place for the launch of the SEP. NT confirmed that the press event is jointly being run with the university with a social media strategy running alongside this and interviews with the press. The launch of the SEP is taking place at Begbroke.</p>	

<p>The chair thanked Rob Granger for bringing all of this work together since joining the team and Alistair Fitt with his help on getting these documents into shape.</p> <p><b><u>Recommendation</u></b></p> <p><b>That the Board:</b>  <b>Notes the report and approves the following items,</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annex 1 – Financial Regulations</b></li> <li>• <b>Annex 2 - Communications Strategy 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>Annex 3 – Assurance Framework 2017</b></li> <li>• <b>Annex 4 – Budget and Operating Plan 2017-18</b></li> <li>• <b>Annex 5 – Nominations and Personnel Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Terms of Reference</b></li> <li>○ <b>Company Expenses Policy</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed 1-5 (Inclusive)</b></p>
<p><b>Item 05 Connections to Oxford Station: Stage 1 - Queen Street Pedestrianisation</b></p>	
<p>Declaration of Interest –Councillor Ian Hudspeth and Phil Southall did not take part in the discussion or decision making process.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to seek the Boards approval for changes to the project to which we previously awarded £1.3m from the LGF 2 programme in Summer 2016. The changes are proposed in response to consultation undertaken in Autumn 2016.</p> <p>As Chair of the Transport Subgroup, PSo requested that project is monitored by the transport subgroup via its quarterly meetings.</p> <p><b>Action: Add this item to the next transport subgroup agenda</b></p> <p><b><u>Recommendation</u></b></p> <p><b>That the Board note :</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>In response to consultation feedback on the original proposals to close Queen Street to buses, the county council is now taking a more flexible approach by introducing a closure initially on an experimental basis.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Many of the measures proposed as part of the original proposals were designed to provide benefits other than simply facilitating the closure of Queen Street, notably improving bus flows and adding bus stop capacity to cater for growth in passenger numbers, including those arising from the Westgate development. The revised proposals place a greater emphasis on these bus stop and flow improvements, as these will remain beneficial even if buses return to Queen Street following the experimental closure period.</b></li> </ol> <p><b>That the Board approve:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <b>The changes to the project outlined in this report and confirm that the £1.3m funding originally allocated remains available for this project in two phases.</b></li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Noted</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Noted</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Noted</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Agreed</b></p>
<p><b><u>Items for Information</u></b></p>	
<p><b>Item 07 Building our Industrial Strategy – consultation response</b></p>	
<p>NT presented the green paper response submitted to government and encouraged Board directors to share this with their networks to canvass comment and share views on this draft response. HS endorsed the approach, noting that government are looking for comprehensive engagement, therefore sharing through as many networks as possible was</p>	



BW asked whether EZ's are exempt from business rate reset in 2020. RV and Lorna Baxter confirmed that they sit outside the general business rate system and are ring-fenced for 25 years.

**Recommendation**

**That the Board:**

- **Notes the report and,**
- **Overall progress made to date against the operating plan attached at Annex 1**
- **The forecast financial outturn position to March 2017 attached at Annex 2**
- **The Updated forecast/Actual Business rate income to March 2017 attached at Annex 3**

**Mayoral CA/ Unitary Council Updates**

Jeremy opened up the discussion by setting the scene of the current situation regarding this item, and referred to his email sent yesterday on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

Nigel spoke through the paper (item 9) and annexes and explained that following the OxLEP Board meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 we were tasked to continue the work we were doing and to continue the work in the devolution steering group which has had a lot of involvement from LA officers.

The 3 work streams are included in the annex.

There was a comment from Adrian Lockwood that we have already lost out on LGF rounds due to not having a structure agreed in place.

Cllr Matt Barber spoke to the briefing papers which were circulated by his office yesterday. He explained that over the last year his views have changed as things have progressed. Cllr Barber suggested that the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal took quite a step forward however the new 'Better Oxfordshire' proposal has changed quite a lot. Some of these changes include:

1. Recognising the unique value of Oxford City.
2. Want to retain the housing stock.
3. Council's tax
4. There's a lot of work around area executive boards and the powers / functions of these boards
5. Delivering the support for business
6. Status quo in Cllr Barber's view is the biggest risk

Cllr Barber suggested that there is an opportunity now for additional partners to join the bid and progress the detail of this.

Cllr Hudspeth referred the group back to the devolution deal that we had back in December 2015.

Cllr Cotton suggested that this isn't about a particular council winning or losing, it is about the councils working together to create something new. Cllr Cotton referred the group to the email from Nigel last night and explained that having the weight of the LEP behind the bid would really help.

Cllr Barry Wood – Barry spoke to group and asked that he remind the group of the exam question which is ‘Should this board fundamentally say that we are supporting this unitary.’

Cllr Wood does not think the group should support this and should treat all partners as equal partners. He made it clear that if this Board supports the Better Oxfordshire proposal the Board would be abolishing the 3 other DC’s who are not supportive of this. Barry spoke regarding Cherwell District Council and its successes.

Cllr Price – as pointed out in the beginning we agreed to go forward with the CA proposal and the devolution steering group have been doing work on this.

Cllr Price does not think that the SoS will back the Better Oxfordshire proposal with 3 LA’s against it. Bob quoted the SoS and spoke that devolution is not dead and CA is still an option.

Cllr Mills –followed up on the point about devolution being dead, speaking with lord porter he was quite clear on the two separate issues, devolution and local government reform.

Cllr Mills feels it would be the wrong point in time to take a position on this, and this doesn’t have all the support from the MPs.

It was mentioned that Section 14 of the act would allow district councils to put forward a devolution deal.

Peter Sloman – declared an interest. Peter confirmed that they received the Better Oxfordshire document on Monday formally by letter. Peter has established to do some due diligence work on the proposals, it is around 150 pages. Peter suggested to all business members on the board that they wouldn’t approve anything else like this without carrying out due diligence work. Peter stated that they have asked the county and other DC’s for the last 8 weeks to do this due diligence work.

Comments from Adrian Lockwood – declared an interest. Adrian shared messages from the business people with some sharing support for the unitary and some suggested that they just want this to move forward.

Adrian suggested that if nothing is going to happen, something needs to change. Adrian is clear from a business perspective that this has been going on a long time.

Ian W – the point that Adrian has made that we have responsibility for the economic plan and that therefore we do need progress. University has set up meetings in the next few weeks to discuss this. Ian does not feel tonight that he would be ready to make a decision on this at present.

Sally Dicketts – emphasised the point that our role is to ensure we have a prospective Oxfordshire.

Bob Bradley –Bob suggests this is outside of our remit and it would be inappropriate to make a decision here tonight. The only comments he has received from businesses are against the unitary bid.

Richard Venables – central government will not help us to make up our mind, but Richard feels we do need to do something as it has been going on a long time and a lot of money

has been spent. Views of the public are looking to politicians to get on with this now. Richard does not feel he is in position at the moment to support this document however expressed how this really needs to move forward.

Phil Shadbolt expressed his views that this has been going on for a long time and would like politicians to make a decision. If the LA's do not make a decision the business members need to do something.

Alastair Fitt – echo a lot of the comments made, feel that Bob, Barry and James made some powerful comments. However, the current system does not work and we need some sort of change. The problem with a CA it includes the power of veto (only on a county wide basis section 14). Alastair does have sympathy however we have to ask ourselves why we are here and therefore agrees that it isn't the LEPs correct function to take a view on something where we have imperfect information.

David Hill responded to the comment from Cllr Wood regarding the job losses, David confirmed that the Better Oxfordshire proposal does suggest the job losses and this has not been hidden.

David suggested that the Board are being asked if nothing else to take a view on a proposal, from conversations with civil servants and others that the routes to devolution deals are being closed. The Better Oxfordshire proposal gives you a basis for a proposal that could be taken forward.

Cllr Barber does recognise that this is a difficult position for the LEP Board. Cllr Barber stated that the business members are not being asked to make a decision, they are being asked to take a view, the decision with the SoS.

Cllr Barber confirmed that this proposal will be submitted to government later this month.

Jeremy suggested that anybody could seek a resolution and seek for it to be voted on tonight at the table. Jeremy expressed his personal view that he would not seek this resolution tonight and it can be done virtually or another meeting can be arranged.

All members agreed that this is not for a discussion over email.

Sally Dicketts – Sally asked for clarity what happens either way if no decision is made tonight. She also mentioned the use of facilitation which may help in a future meeting.

Business members strongly expressed that this is a partnership.

Nigel – The work streams 1, 2 and 3 that we all support this proposition and piece of work.

Jeremy – feels that as a board we are unable to put this as a resolution tonight and are not taking a vote on this tonight. We are clear on the view that has been expressed that this has been going on for too long even though we have not formally voted.

Jeremy brought the meeting to a close and summed up the discussion for this item. There was a suggestion that a meeting is put in place which is facilitated to take this forward to involve all of the 6 LA leaders.

**AOB**

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