

Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group – Update and Report to the OSP – July 2015

Purpose of this paper

To provide an update and report on the work of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group with the following focus:

- A report and presentation on the results from the Business Survey carried out by Ipsos MORI in February and March 2015
- To provide a summary update on the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan and proposed revision of priorities
- To report on business engagement with a focus on the Business in Oxford 2015 event, the plans for the creation of the “Oxford Business Voice” Group.
- To report on progress on Town Team and Smart Oxford projects

1. Introduction

The Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group (OEGSG) includes representation from key organisations in the public and private sectors including local businesses, local authorities, universities and members of the LEP. The Steering Group meets quarterly and last met in June 2015. Most recently agreed Terms of Reference and all papers from the meetings can be viewed on the OSP website at <http://www.oxfordpartnership.org.uk/OEGSG/index.asp>.

2. Business Survey

In February and March 2015 Ipsos MORI conducted a survey with just under 400 businesses in and around Oxford on behalf of the City Council and the OSP’s Economic Growth Steering Group. The objectives of this research were to understand

- Location priorities;
- The characteristics of their supply chain;
- Their growth ambitions; and
- Their recruitment and retention challenges.

A copy of the summary report is attached as appendix one. Nicola Moss from Ipsos MORI will present the findings from the survey to the OSP Board on 9th July and this will be followed a short Q&A and discussion. The results were first presented to the Economic Growth Steering Group on 11th June.

In summary there are positive messages:

- High future growth projections, particularly in the information / communication / financial / real estate and administrative sectors and among larger SMEs;
- Overall, businesses appear financially secure with two-thirds not needing access to short term finance;
- Eight in ten say they will definitely be in the Oxford area in 5 years time;
- Almost two-thirds are currently or planning to recruit in the next 2 – 3 years; and
- SMEs are embracing flexible working practices.

But some clear challenges:

- Housing costs, transport and commuting costs a lack of suitable premises and business rates are all reasons cited for not being in the Oxford area in five years;
- More than half of employers find it difficult to recruit the right people into their organisation
- Key reasons are finding the right skill set and/or experience
- insufficient affordable housing
- a lack of local employees and transportation issues
- Whilst only one fifth of Oxford businesses have retention issues affordable living and commuting issues are the main barriers
- Currently, two fifths of SMEs rely on employees living and travelling from outside of Oxford
- Companies with a high commuter workforce are more likely to be flexible about their future business location

The information from the survey will be used to inform Oxford's longer term planning including the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan, and other key policies. The results will also be used for lobbying locally and nationally for funding and investment so that Oxford's growth opportunities are realised barriers to growth are addressed.

3. Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan

An update on the Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan with proposals for revised priorities is attached as appendix 2. This was discussed at the Economic Growth Steering Group in June 2015 and the revised priorities agreed. The Economic Development Team is updating the full Action Plan document and circulating to members of the Economic Growth Strategy Steering Group for comment.

In summary the revised priorities are:

1. Deliver regeneration and employment sites that will support technology and knowledge based economic growth linked to our sector strengths and the global connections of Oxford's Universities.
2. Effective business engagement and support for Oxford's business voice
3. Develop a holistic city centre strategy, building upon the on-going 'strengthening the city centre retail offer'
4. Expanding the value of Oxford's tourism across the region
5. Continuing to improve education and skills attainment to support future economic growth opportunities
6. Increasing the annual rate of housing development in locations which are easily accessible to the city centre and other main employment areas by cycle, bus, and rail
7. Ensuring continuing investment in broadband, mobile infrastructure and new Smart Oxford initiatives for the benefit of all who live, work and visit the city
8. Achieving the opportunities presented by sustainable economic growth.
9. Investing in the physical and transport infrastructure to enable economic growth
10. Working in partnership to meet the growth and devolution opportunities for the city and wider region.

4. Business Engagement

A successful business event (part of the Business Breakfast series) with a focus on retail was held at the Oxford Spires Four Pillars Hotel in early June 2015 with over 70 attendees.

On 30th June over 250 people representing business and key organisations in the city attended the [Business in Oxford](#) event at the Said Business School. The OSP was a sponsor with Sebastian Johnson involved in the planning and organisation of the event. The event included a range of keynote speeches (including ones from Cllr Bob Price and Richard Venables and LEP colleagues) and 16 PODs (workshops) mostly business led. The event was a success with very positive initial feedback from participants particularly with respect to information sharing and networking.

The Business in Oxford event kicked off the Oxfordshire Business Festival – a week of events showcasing Oxfordshire business and enterprise – more details can be found at <http://www.oxfordshirebusinessfestival.com/>. The festival will close with Venturefest on 8th July. The OSP has supported this first attempt at the festival with Sebastian Johnson on the Steering Group alongside Richard Rosser (B4) and Lynn Shepherd (Venturefest Chair).

As part of Business in Oxford, Richard Venables launched the “Oxford Business Voice” initiative. Richard is the Oxford Business representation on the LEP and vice-chair of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group. He has called on businesses to sign up to a business only group that will meet to discuss and agree priorities for the city and offer guidance in his role as Oxford business rep on the LEP. He will feed in views from business to the Oxford Growth Steering Group and the LEP Board. Further updates will be provided as this progresses.

A further meeting of the Leaders Group in the form of a roundtable discussion is being planned for October 2015.

5. Town Team

The Oxford Town Team Partnership has recently visited cities including Bath and Reading to explore how Business Improvement Districts (BID’s) have been successfully developed. Discussions and training organised by a leading BID consultant has taken place with key members of the Town Team to make them aware of the challenges ahead both in terms of resources and timing.

Further discussions are taking place within the Town Team about the BID and the likely timetable. Shamus Donald, Chair of the Town Team will provide a short update on the Town Team’s work at the OSP meeting on 9th July.

6. Smart Oxford

A Partnership Project Board made up of the city and county councils, both universities, the LEP and Nominet has been driving the development of the Smart Oxford vision and working on projects and initiatives, a few of which are briefly profiled below. The Board has engaged

widely with businesses (local, national and international) that are interested in Smart City initiatives and has been successful in generating interest and commitment to working in Oxford. The Board has identified nine cross cutting themes based on key challenges in and around the city where problem statements are being developed and then projects identified to deliver solutions. These are:

- Energy
- Environmental Sustainability
- Health and Wellness
- Education
- Security & Safety
- Retail
- Culture and Tourism
- Housing & Regeneration
- Mobility

MobOx (The Mobility Oxford Project - <http://mobilityoxford.com/>) is one of the flagship Smart Oxford projects. MobOx is developing innovative and integrated transport solutions using Oxford as a living laboratory. Using a collaborative approach MobOx aims to transform the way we use transport, technology and infrastructure by proving operational benefits initially within Oxford then in other cities. MobOx is a joint public / private partnership and has recently been incorporated as a Community Interest Company (CIC).

DEOx (Digital Environmental Oxford) is a partnership of businesses, academics, community groups exploring the environmental challenges and responses and solution using digital technology. Examples include the already established Oxford Flood Network (<http://oxfloodnet.co.uk>) and work spinning out of the Environmental Change Institute on energy management, monitoring and behavioural change.

Smart Oxford Challenge (<http://smartoxfordchallenge.uk>) - Nominet is hosting the first Smart Oxford Challenge in partnership with W3C (world Wide Web consortium) on the 18th of September 2015. Much of the earlier smart cities work has been about establishing datasets and now we are looking at tackling the next phase of this movement, by developing solutions around the real needs of the citizen. We think Oxford is an ideal place to learn about and test these ideas which can then be replicated elsewhere especially in light of the Smart Oxford initiative. We have invited ideas and applications for a connected product or digital service that will make Oxford a better, smarter city.

More details on Smart Oxford can be found at <http://oxsmart.city/>. A full presentation on Smart Oxford and a range of projects will be given at the next Economic Growth Steering Group meeting on 16th September 2015.

SJ/MP/TM
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