

**EXECUTIVE DECISION OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
10 MARCH 2025**

**OXFORDSHIRE LEADERS JOINT COMMITTEE TERMS OF
REFERENCE**

Report by the Director of Economy and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Leader of the Council is **RECOMMENDED** to
 - a. Approve the revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding for the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee, set out in Appendices 1 and 2. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.

Executive Summary

2. The new focus on devolution and the winding down of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal have prompted a reset and change of name for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. This report proposes corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Introduction

3. A number of factors have come together to cause members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) to take stock and consider a significant reset. These were set out in a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting of 26 November 2024, when members asked officers to draft proposed revised Terms of Reference (ToR).
4. The existing ToR were originally drafted in 2014 at the formation of what was then known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board. These have subsequently been updated on a number of occasions.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding was introduced in 2018 as a requirement of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, and sets out operational aspects of decision making and responsibilities in relation to the deal.
6. Although the Housing and Growth Deal is now largely complete, there are still projects in progress which have received growth deal funding. Officers therefore recommend that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be retained for the time being. No substantive changes are proposed to the MoU, though it will be updated to reflect the new name of the joint committee.

7. The revised ToR and MOU are set out in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. In addition, Appendix 1a is provided showing the changes from the previous ToR as tracked. The only change to the MOU is the name change and therefore a tracked version is not provided. The substantive changes to the ToR are described below.

Name and Membership

8. Members of the FOP agreed at its meeting on 26 November 2024 to refocus the identity and purpose of the partnership. The revised ToR therefore propose a new name – the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee – and membership is limited to the six constituent authorities.
9. Although in practice the committee seldom takes formal decisions, there is still some residual capacity funding from the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal which requires a collective process for decision making as set out in the MoU. It is therefore proposed that this aspect of the joint committee should be left unchanged.
10. A further benefit of retaining the formal status of the joint committee may be felt in future, depending on the progress of discussions relating to devolution and local government reorganisation. It is possible that a formal joint committee may be required and it is therefore prudent to retain the existing framework rather than risk the possibility of putting additional time and resource into recreating it at a future date.
11. It is recognised that this position may change as the government's programme becomes clearer. The ToR and MoU can be revisited at a future date if further amendments are required.

End of the housing and growth deal

12. The Oxfordshire housing and growth deal is now in its final quarter for expenditure on the infrastructure programme. Other programmes are complete. As agreed by the FOP in November 2024, the revised ToR have therefore removed the advisory groups and the scrutiny panel that were associated with the requirements of the deal.
13. As noted above, there remains a small quantity of uncommitted capacity funding which still requires joint decision making.
14. It is appropriate that projects which have been jointly funded from the capacity fund and which are still in progress should be reported to the joint committee on a regular basis. Examples, including local area energy planning, are identified in the proposed ToR.

Decision making powers

15. No new decision-making powers are proposed for the joint committee at this time.
16. While there is uncertainty surrounding Oxfordshire's timetable and government requirements for devolution and reorganisation, it makes sense to retain the joint committee structure and the possibility of decision-making powers being delegated should they be needed at a future date, subject to agreement by the constituent authorities at the time.

Next steps

17. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding are matters reserved for decision by each local authority's decision-making structures.
18. The proposed changes were endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting on 28 January 2025 and are now coming for decision through each authority's decision-making structures. Indicative dates for these governance updates to be considered by individual partners' agreed decision-making bodies are as follows:

Authority	Decision date
Cherwell District Council	3 March 2025
Oxford City Council	12 March 2025
Oxfordshire County Council	10 March 2025
South Oxfordshire District Council	6 March 2025
Vale of White Horse District Council	7 March 2025
West Oxfordshire District Council	12 March 2025

19. The proposed changes to governance documents arise from the principles agreed by FOP members at its meeting on 26 November 2024. The Leader of the Council is recommended to approve the amended ToR and MoU as set out at Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

20. The priority work areas set out in the revised Terms of Reference are closely aligned to the nine outcomes set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development, particularly around the environment, net zero aspirations, inclusive economy, community and connectivity. Working in partnership through the Vision significantly contributes to the council's delivery of its own priorities, as set out in [Our Strategic Plan 2023 to 2025](#)

Financial Implications

21. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

22. The Oxfordshire Leaders is a Joint Committee under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.
23. The changes have been discussed by the councils' Monitoring Officers. There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference. The joint committee structure is unaltered and there is no change to decision-making powers.

Comments checked by:

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Robin Rogers
Director of Economy and Place

Appendix 1: Leaders Joint Committee Terms of Reference
Appendix 1a: Leaders Joint Committee Terms of Reference – tracked changes
Appendix 2: Leaders Joint Committee Memorandum of Understanding

Background Papers: ["Partnership Reset", report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, 26 November 2024](#)

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