

The Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee

Terms of Reference January 2025

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The Oxfordshire Leaders is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire (“Constituent Authorities”) formed to enable and facilitate the Constituent members working together to deliver the bold and ambitious outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development.
- 1.2 Oxfordshire’s growing economy is set to create challenges and opportunities for the County related to housing, infrastructure, public services and the environment. These issues will best be addressed through joined up planning and delivery between the Constituent Authorities which prioritises sustainable development and quality of life. Collective planning, where it makes sense to do so, will be the most effective means of minimising the unwanted impacts of a growing economy, whilst leveraging the maximum benefit from the opportunities it brings for our existing and future communities.
- 1.3 The Oxfordshire Leaders (“Joint Committee”) will:
 - Be a forum for the Constituent Authorities to work collectively to deliver the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision
 - Be a forum for discussion to generate a collective Oxfordshire voice on engaging with government on their devolution and growth agenda to promote a successful, inclusive and sustainable economy
 - Work collectively on thematic priorities to address the strategic challenges and maximise opportunities for investment and funding in Oxfordshire.

The joint committee will focus on the following, non-exhaustive, areas of business:

- A forum for discussing and where agreement is achieved coordination of functions and collective working on matters relating to devolution, economic strategy, sub-regional spatial planning and growth plans
- Preparation of a strategic infrastructure strategy
- Preparation of Local Area Energy Plans
- Oversight of the Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan and associated partnership

2.0 Membership

- 2.1 The Joint Committee is formed of the Constituent Councils, being the six councils of Oxfordshire: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.
- 2.2 As the Joint Committee is constituted to be able to discharge executive functions if delegated to it by the Constituent Authorities, then the appointed person must be from the Executive of the Constituent Authorities. There should be one member from each Constituent Authority (“Members”).
- 2.3 Each Constituent Authority shall allow a substitute (also being an Executive member) in the event that the Member is unable to attend. The substitute member shall have the

same rights of speaking and voting at the meetings as the member for whom the substitution is made.

- 2.4 The Joint Committee may agree to co-opt other organisations to it, which will be “Associate Members”, where it is considered conducive to the effective consideration of any matter. Associate Members will not have voting rights.
- 2.5 The Joint Committee may appoint from the Constituent Authorities representatives to the other outside bodies it is a member of, for example England’s Economic Heartland.

3.0 Governance

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Notwithstanding the above each Constituent Authority will retain all non-executive and executive functions generally and specifically in relation to economic development, housing provision, strategic spatial planning and strategic transport planning.
- 3.3 The Joint Committee will meet in public subject to the provisions of s100 LGA 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. The Joint Committee will be hosted under local government arrangements and chairing will be rotated between the Constituent Authorities on an annual basis in line with the arrangements at 9.1.
- 3.4 The policy advice and support will be provided by the Joint Committee’s Executive Officer Group, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, reporting to the Local Authority Chief Executive Group.
- 3.5 The resources and capacity required to deliver the Joint Committee’s work programmes, and the work of any associated advisory groups, will be agreed by the Chief Executive Group.

4.0 General functions

- 4.1 To facilitate and enable collaboration between Constituent Authorities and key partners to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.
- 4.2 To facilitate strategic alignment of spatial, economic and infrastructure plans in a way that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable in order to safeguard Oxfordshire’s unique historical, cultural and environmental character.
- 4.3 To facilitate collective engagement of Joint Committee partners with other national, regional and sub-regional bodies on matters concerning the environment, infrastructure and strategic planning and where relevant, comment on wider proposals and decisions from national agencies, where these have a strategic impact on Oxfordshire.

- 4.4 To act as the voice of Oxfordshire to Government and other national and Sub National bodies to ensure Oxfordshire's infrastructure and housing needs are recognised in future investment priorities and funding.
- 4.5 To provide a strategic partnership forum for the identification and development of sustainable strategies and plans for Oxfordshire related to the environment, spatial planning, economic development, housing and transport.
- 4.6 To coordinate the prioritisation of funding from devolved funding sources for infrastructure schemes, where this funding is not already within the remit of the Local Transport Authority, to ensure that decisions are made in one place and supported by all relevant partners and stakeholders.
- 4.7 To oversee the delivery of detailed work programmes as delegated to the Joint Committee by the constituent authorities, as set out under specific functions at 5.0.
- 4.8 To bid for the allocation of resources and investment to support the above purposes.

5.0 Specific Functions

Strategic Planning

- 5.1 To oversee joint work on cross border issues to ensure partners meet the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate under S33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and wider national planning policy.
- 5.2 To assess whether strategic spatial planning, infrastructure and public services are integrated and delivered in a sustainable way, and to make recommendations to encourage this, while recognising the sovereignty of individual Local Plan processes.
- 5.3 To appoint representatives on behalf of the Joint Committee to other partnerships as required, including England's Economic Heartland.

The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

- 5.4 To oversee and facilitate delivery of remaining elements of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal ("the Deal"), noting that:
 - Oxfordshire County Council as accountable body shall, acting reasonably at all times and in consultation with the Joint Committee, take any decisions regarding the inclusion, timetabling and delivery of schemes in the Homes from Infrastructure programme
 - the Housing Authorities shall provide information on housing numbers relating to this programme to Oxfordshire County Council in a timely manner in order to enable the accountable body to fulfil its reporting obligations to central government.

6.0 Voting

- 6.1 Constituent Authorities (via Members or their substitutes) are voting members and

shall be entitled to one vote on items of business considered by the Joint Committee.

- 6.2** A majority vote shall be required, though the Constituent Authorities agree that where possible matters should be decided on a unanimous basis. In the event of there being an equal number of votes for and against a particular proposition, a casting vote by the Chair (or Vice-Chair) may be exercised.

7.0 Quorum and Safeguard

- 7.1** The quorum for a meeting shall be four Constituent Authorities.
- 7.2** Where the effect of a particular proposition, if adopted by the Joint Committee on a majority basis, would give rise to policy, contractual or financial implications for a constituent authority that it does not support, that Constituent Authority may opt out of participation in that proposition in so far as it affects their authority before any vote is taken but this will not prevent the other parties proceeding with the proposition. In respect of other matters, all other voting will be on a normal majority basis.
- 7.3** Normal rules as to declarations of interest are to be applied the Members and their substitutes in accordance with the respective Constituent Authority's Code of Conduct.

8.0 Accountable Body

- 8.1** The Accountable Body for the Joint Committee is Oxfordshire County Council. It will provide Section 151 and Monitoring Officer roles to the Committee in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between Oxfordshire County Council and the Joint Committee.
- 8.2** The County Council's Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) will provide the Joint Committee with quarterly financial reports for funding that has been allocated directly to Oxfordshire County Council as the Accountable Body. These reports will provide the Joint Committee with an overview of the funds spent and funds committed against funds allocated.
- 8.3** For those programmes and funding streams where another local authority is the Accountable Body, the relevant Section 151 Officer will provide the financial and performance information to the County Council's Section 151 Officer, for integration into the quarterly reporting process.

9.0 Meetings

- 9.1** The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee will be elected at the first meeting each year, which runs from 1 June to 31 May.
- 9.2** The Joint Committee's Director shall be responsible for convening meetings in consultation with the Chief Executive of the authority which holds chairing responsibilities.
- 9.3** Meetings shall usually be held six times each year. However, meetings may be called by the Chair, Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive Group, or any three Constituent Authorities, in circumstances where business cannot be reasonably deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

9.4 Agendas and minutes will be published, and meetings held in public, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. A Forward Plan of items to be considered will be published online each month, and included with each agenda.

9.5 Public participation will be managed according to a separate protocol as agreed by the Joint Committee.

10. Task and Finish Groups

10.1 The Joint Committee may establish Task and Finish Groups to oversee specific work programmes or broader thematic areas as required. Any such groups, reporting into the Joint Committee, will be managed in accordance with separately published terms of reference as agreed by the Joint Committee.

10.2 The role, remit and membership of Task and Finish Groups will be reviewed regularly.

11. Scrutiny Arrangements

11.1 In the event that decisions delegated to this committee require it, a Joint Scrutiny Committee consisting of each Constituent Authority's Chair of its Scrutiny Committee, may be convened. In any case, decisions of the Joint Committee may be scrutinised by each Constituent Authority as part of its own arrangements.

12. Funding Contributions

12.1 The budget for the Joint Committee's administration will be endorsed no later than 1 December of the preceding financial year by the Joint Committee. The cost of meeting the expenditure planned in the budget shall, to the extent not met from other sources, be divided equally amongst the Constituent Authorities.

12.2 The budget endorsed by the Joint Committee will subsequently be recommended to each Constituent Authority for approval during the February budget setting process.

13. Withdrawal

13.1 If any Constituent Authority determines that they no longer require membership to the Joint Committee, they may give written notice to the Joint Committee's Chair and Director no later than 1st January preceding the financial year to which the budget will apply. Unless they withdraw that notice in writing, they shall cease to be a member from 1st April of that year. Any Constituent Authority which has not given due notice shall be obliged to pay its subscription for the next year.

14. General principles

14.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose and flexible to meet the requirements of ongoing and future work. Any changes to the Joint Committee's powers or functions will be a matter for each Constituent Authority to agree via its Executive/Cabinet.

14.2 In adopting these terms of reference, Constituent Authorities agree to support the purposes of the Joint Committee by ensuring that in their decision making, they:

- Collaborate and cooperate with each other
- Are open and accountable to each other
- Adhere to all relevant statutory requirements
- Deploy appropriate resources
- Act in good faith

14.3 These principles are not intended to be legally binding, and no legal obligations or rights shall arise from this.