

**DELEGATED DECISIONS BY DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL,
WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT
AND FUTURE GENERATIONS**

18 JULY 2024

**Delegated Authority to Approve Local Area Energy Planning
Contract**

Report by Chief Executive

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to

- a) **Approve delegated authority to the Director of Economy and Place to award a contract for Local Area Energy Planning, pending the decision by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) on the 30th July to allocate budget from the Housing and Growth Deal Fund, and a subsequent procurement exercise.**

In the event the Economy and Place position is vacant at the award date, agreement is requested for the delegation to move to the Chief Executive.

Executive Summary

1. As part of Oxfordshire's work to meet our 2050 net zero target for the wider county and to support addressing grid constraints, Oxfordshire County Council (the Council) is working on a programme with Oxfordshire District Councils to develop Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs).
2. The work is taking place under the FOP. The FOP will meet at the end of July 2024 to consider a report on this programme and allocation of funding from the Housing and Growth Deal.
3. The Council will then follow a process to lead on the procurement of the LAEPs in line with our procurement and contract management processes. The procurement process will comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Following the outcomes of this exercise, officers are seeking delegated authority to award the contract in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

Procurement of Local Area Energy Plans for Oxfordshire

4. The Council is convening all Oxfordshire District Councils in the development of the LAEPs. This project falls under FOP governance and Housing and Growth Deal funds (held by the Council on behalf of FOP) will be used to fund the work. A consultancy contract will be tendered to create district level LAEPs. The Council will be the lead and contracting organisation.
5. An Outline Business Case for the LAEP programme has already been endorsed by the FOP LAEP Executive Steering Board, FOP Executive Officer Group, Chief Executives Group and the FOP Infrastructure Advisory Group. A decision by FOP to allocate the funds will be made on 30th July, after which the open procurement will commence.
6. Delegated Authority is sought for the Director of Economy and Place (currently vacant) to award the contract. In the event the Director of Economy and Place post is vacant at the award date, the delegation is requested to be transferred to the Chief Executive.
7. The delegation is being sought at this stage owing to no meetings scheduled in August. This will allow Officers to start work on procurement in a timely manner pending any agreement by FOP on 30th July. Should agreement to the budget not take place, officers will re-review options to take this work forward. Following a full tender we anticipate contract award in November 2024.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

8. The Oxfordshire LAEP programme directly supports the Council's vision to be a Place Shaper and Partner of Choice. It also supports the following Corporate priorities:
 - Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
 - Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.
 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
 - Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.
 - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.

Financial Implications

9. As long as there is no decision to commit the Council to contract prior to the formal approval of the additional funding by FOP due on the 30th July, there are no financial implications associated with the report recommendation. The funds related to the delegated authority to award the Oxfordshire LAEP contract are FOP Housing and Growth Deal Funds held by the Council on behalf of FOP. If no additional funding is approved, the contract will not be awarded. The Council already has the staff resources in the Climate Action Team to manage the procurement and ongoing contract management.

Comments checked by:

Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
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Legal Implications

10. The Council will be procuring consultancy services for the Oxfordshire LAEP programme on behalf of FOP and in collaboration with all the Oxfordshire District Councils. Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by the Council and the Districts stipulating areas of joint and separate responsibility. The contract will be a light touch regime tender compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Marina Lancashire, Lawyer – Contracts,
Marina.Lancashire@Oxfordshire.gov.uk (Legal)

Staff Implications

11. The recommendations have no staffing implications. The granting of delegated powers to the Director of Economy and Place will enable a timely decision on the contract award. The Climate Action Team currently has sufficient resource to client and project manage the proposed contract.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

12. A summary Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the Outline Business Case. A more detailed Equalities Impact Assessment will be produced as part of the Full Business Case.

Sustainability Implications

13. Indirectly the recommendation in this paper will result significant positive implications, enabling the Council to have clarity on the path to net zero by 2050 and the, the projected cost of the associated projects and how best they can be delivered. A Climate Impact Assessment will be produced as part of the Full Business Case.

Risk Management

14. FOP have established a specific officer working group and senior officer steering board for the LAEP programme. This governance is responsible for

identifying and managing all risks associated with the development and delivery of the programme.

Consultations

15. Consultation on the Oxfordshire LAEP programme has been with the key stakeholders Oxfordshire District Councils, all 3 Distribution System Operators (Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, UK Power Networks, National Grid Electricity Distribution), Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership, Low Carbon Hub and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub). Wider consultation will take place as part of the LAEP development.

Martin Reeves Chief Executive

Annex: Nil

Background papers: Nil

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