

VALE LEADER'S REPORT – COUNCIL 12 DECEMBER

I wrote to Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State for Housing regarding the housing growth in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor and he replied on 11 October 18. Essentially, a public consultation will be held in late 2019 to inform a decision on the route within the selected corridor. A preferred route will then be selected, which will be followed by a further opportunity for public consultation.

On 15 October I participated in the ‘Oxfordshire Partnership’ meeting at Oxfordshire County Council which received reports from:

- Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Safeguarding Children Board;
- Safeguarding Adults; Safer Oxfordshire;
- Thames Valley Emergency Services;
- Stronger Communities Alliance;
- Growth Board;
- Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Environment Partnership;
- Strategic Schools Partnership.

As Vice-Chairman of the Growth Board I hosted a forum for developers and registered providers of social housing which explored the opportunities to help deliver Affordable Housing. We want this programme to be a beacon of success and a step change in delivering affordable housing in Oxfordshire. The target is 148 in year one and 1320 in the three-year programme.

I note that Oxford City, Liberal Democrat Councillor Andrew Grant attacked the City’s lack of building affordable housing, saying, “Neighbouring Vale of White Horse District Council built at almost six times the rate with over 2,000 completions”.

I wrote to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government on 26 October asking for a ‘review’ of the definition of ‘Affordable Housing’ as agreed at council on 10 October. That letter was In Focus and on the website. On 10 December I received a reply, dated 29 November, which will be placed on the council website.

On 29 October, as cabinet member for planning, I critically examined the Vale council Quarter 2 Planning Performance Review. The illustrative slides giving the overall situation were placed on the website and were sent to all councillors.

On 30 October the council received a letter from the Inspector of Local Plan Part 2 stating he was satisfied that Plan met the duty to co-operate but did not meet the test of soundness without some modifications; his letter is in the public domain.

You will recall that cabinet met on 16 November to endorse recommendations in the report and that council endorsed that recommendation unanimously on Monday 19 November. As an aside, I noted that the Joint Scrutiny Committee roundly praised our Housing Allocations Policy which we have now consulted upon.

That same evening the Chairman and I represented the council at the South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Annual Awards ceremony at Pembroke College, for an awards presentation by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen, that included a British Empire Medal to a lady from Milton Heights.

Wednesday 31 October saw the launch event for the combined South and Vale Business Awards 2019 at Cornerstone, intended to build on the huge success of last year's Vale4Business event.

Closer to home, I participated in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Action Group on 8 November, the most active Neighbourhood Action Group in the region. Thus, I have met with the whole gambit of Thames Valley Police top brass: The Chief Constable, our Area Commander and Neighbourhood Commander, all in one month.

On 14 November Cllr Alice Badcock and I each presented a certificate to each of the winners of six categories in the council's senior citizens 'Go Active' scheme, from across both South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale.

On 15 November I hosted an Oxfordshire Growth Deal Partnership officers' workshop for 120 delegates from all six councils who participated in study groups focused on:

- Infrastructure;
- Joint Statutory Spatial Plan;
- Affordable Housing;
- the Local Industrial Strategy.

There was a Highways England drop in session to brief members on the Expressway options on 16 November. The information covered was published In Focus on 26 November which contained a link to Highways England website and a map.

A joint South and Vale Renewable Energy Workshop for Neighbourhood Development Planning groups was attended by 30 people on Wednesday 21 Nov 18.

At a meeting of the Oxford Flood Scheme Sponsoring Group on 22 November, members were updated on the progress of the various aspect of the scheme, further details can be found on the Environment Agency website.

At the Growth Board on 27 November, I was pleased to see that all the minor and presentational changes to the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan Local Development Scheme and Scoping document, submitted by the Vale, had been agreed by the Heads of Planning of the other five councils, which was a point raised at full council.

On Saturday 1 December I had the pleasure of singing as a member of the Cotswold Voices community choir with Wantage Silver Band at a joint concert in the Beacon, our excellent and well used community facility.

The Didcot Garden Town Board re-convened on Monday 10 December, when it progressed the various aspects of work intended to facilitate that project. A press release will be issued on 13 December.

Following the Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership Annual General Meeting at Harwell Campus on 25 September, which was a public meeting, the main OxLEP Board met yesterday and considered its: Operating plan; Budget; Quarter 2 Report; and the latest draft of the Local Industrial Strategy.

I congratulate you Chairman for hosting your Staff Christmas Reception today when you had the opportunity to thank officers for their work this calendar year. I would like to do likewise tonight, as this is the final meeting of full council for the 2018 calendar year.