

Growth Board Update to Vale of White Horse District Council 24th March 2021

The Growth Board is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners. It has been set up to facilitate and enable joint working on economic development, strategic planning and growth. It does this by overseeing the delivery of projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver collaboratively in the fields of economic development and strategic planning. This includes monitoring and implementation of the Housing and Growth Deal.

Councillor Emily Smith is Chair of the Growth Board this year.

This report aims to ensure that all Vale councillors are up to speed with the issues being addressed.

Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

As a result of a consultation period that ended in January, some changes were made to the Vision and a final version of the document was endorsed by the Growth Board on 22nd March. A one-page summary version will be created and circulated. The vision will be used to guide the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and other strategic documents created by the growth board partners in coming years.

Enhanced Focus on Environment

As well as the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision treating the environment as a priority, a number of other environmental initiatives are taking place too:

- The Growth Board agreed to establish a new Environment Advisory Group. This will be similar to the subgroups on affordable housing and infrastructure, with a cabinet member from each council along with reps from various local environmental groups. They will report into the Growth Board and advise on matters related to climate and environment.
- A Local Nature Partnership will also be established as a forum for partners to work together across the county on nature recovery and provide advice to the board and others.
- The Board endorsed the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Leaders Environment Principles, which have been written by council leaders, Environmental NGOs, LEPs and others across the Arc region in response to governments plans for an Arc wide Spatial Framework (which will form part of national planning policy) [Nature's Arc response to OxCam Environment Principles \(rspb.org.uk\)](https://www.rspb.org.uk/nature-arc-response-to-oxcam-environment-principles)
- The development of an Arc Environment Strategy was also supported, which will expand on how the principles will be delivered and measured as the Arc project progresses.

Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study

A report on the outcomes of Stage 1 of the ORCS set out the increasing need for investment in rail locally to support new housing and the local economy. The need for East-West Rail was highlighted as was the need for Grove Station. Stage 2 will be about attracting funding for the enhanced infrastructure and services and ensuring these are in the Network Rail pipeline.

OxPlan 2050 sub group

The group has been working through a number of options in key areas as part of the development of the plan.

Topics looked at during February and March include:

- Addressing climate change
- Improving environmental quality
- Providing homes and creating jobs
- Creating strong and healthy communities
- Planning for sustainable travel and connectivity

Discussion has covered such issues as the need for ambitious targets to increase biodiversity, the need for better coordination across the county in relation to energy efficiency, management of water resources and alleviation of flood risk.

The subgroup has also been briefed on the engagement programme undertaken with local college students and VOXY (Voice of OXfordshire Youth).

Housing sub group

We have an extra year to deliver projects, due to COVID-19. Another development in the city has become available which may mean there are too many sites. SODC are keen to keep the first eligible sites that they have identified.

Infrastructure subgroup

The new OXIS criteria have now been consulted on and the actual criteria will come out of that. The timeline has been synchronised with OxPlan2050.

Letters

As Chair of the Growth Board, Councillor Emily Smith has written a number of letters to ministers about funding for flood defences, community led housing and zero-carbon standards for homes. You can read the letters and responses at: [News - Oxfordshire Growth Board](#)

Councillor Emily Smith, Councillor Catherine Webber, Councillor Judy Roberts and Councillor Neil Fawcett.