

Growth Board Update to Vale of White Horse District Council 10 February 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.

Low-carbon affordable housing webinar a success

Nearly 100 people learned more about delivering low-carbon affordable homes in Oxfordshire as part of a special webinar.

The virtual event, hosted by Oxfordshire Growth Board, brought together expert speakers to showcase exemplar developments, discuss local and national policy and how to meet the challenges for delivery.

The session also highlighted the fact that if new houses are not built to zero-carbon or better standards now, the homeowners will almost certainly have to then pay for an expensive retrofit later, at significantly greater cost.

Special Infrastructure and OxPlan2050 Subgroup Briefing

Councillors who are members of two of the growth board subgroups attending a session about the alignment between the Plan, Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The slides are now available to all at:

<https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Joint-subgroup-presentation-Jan-2021-FINAL.pptx>

One issue of concern is that Government agencies do not appear to see cycle or other active travel infrastructure as helping to unlock housing development whereas they do see road building as doing so. This contradicts and undermines the general message from Government that it supports Active Travel and makes it harder to tackle climate change.

Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

The consultation on the Strategic Vision closed on 4 January, with over 100 responses (including one from Vale Councillors and Officers). Officers are working through all the consultation responses with the aim of bringing the final version of the vision to the Growth Board in March for approval.

Working to improve public Health

The Growth Board endorsed a Public Health Toolkit for use across Oxfordshire to help councils build health into new and existing developments. Training for officers is being held shortly on how to use the toolkit.

Growth Board members are meeting with the Health and Wellbeing Board members on 22 Feb to discuss shared objectives and collaboration as continue to battle Covid and look ahead to economic and community recovery from the pandemic.

Letter on Community Led Housing

The Growth Board agreed to write to government about financial support for community led housing schemes.

Scrutiny Panel Recommendations

The panel asked and growth board agreed to lobby government for more funding for flood alleviation and for the Environment Agency.

Environment workstream

Officers are working on how to establish an environment workstream for the Growth Board (to mirror the environment group that operates at Arc Leaders level). There was a workshop with stake holders and Councillors about creating a Local Nature Partnership which will be very positive, but we are conscious that work to address climate change and other environmental issues that are not being coordinated across Oxfordshire already may need to be coordinated on a county basis. There is a balance to be struck between not duplicating effort and ensuring nothing falls through the cracks.

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