

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive - Partnerships

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To: CABINET

Dates: 8 April 2021 (South), 9 April 2021 (Vale)

Strategic vision for Oxfordshire

Recommendations

That the Cabinet:

(a) Agree the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire

(b) Ask that officers consider how to embed the Vision's ambitions for Oxfordshire in future plans and strategies of the council.

Purpose of report

1. This report introduces a final version of the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision) attached as Appendix 1. Both Cabinets previously in December 2020 considered and supported a version endorsed by the Growth Board (the Board) for consultation
2. The report updates Cabinet on the consultation process, results and briefly summarises the main changes to the Vision, with the detail provided in the appendices. Finally, the report presents a final version of the Vision for consideration and agreement.

Corporate objectives

3. The outcomes described in the Strategic Vision are closely aligned to several of the strategic themes in the two councils' corporate plans including for South:
 - Protect and Restore our Natural World
 - Action on the climate emergency
 - Improved economic and community well-being
 - Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs.
4. Similarly for Vale:
 - Providing the homes people need
 - Tackling the Climate Emergency
 - Building healthy communities
 - Working in partnership.

Background

5. Both Cabinets received a report in December 2020 detailing the Board's ambition to develop a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (The Vision).
6. The report detailed the background behind the decision to develop the Vision and advised that whilst the genesis of the Vision was the need to develop an overarching framework for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, the wish was for the Vision to have a wider remit and serve as an overarching Vision 'umbrella' under which both the Board and partners could develop the future plans and strategies for their communities that articulate and plan for the future of Oxfordshire.

Consultation on the Vision

7. The Vision approved by The Board in the autumn was for consultation and engagement, both with key growth board partners and wider public and stakeholders.
8. Accordingly, we held comprehensive consultation and engagement process over November and December of 2020. This consultation included a report and presentation to cabinets in December, following a member briefing on 23 November.
9. The results of the consultation were positive, especially as it was held during the pandemic that limited engagement options to online engagement and specific meetings. The report attached at Appendix 2 and consultation summary at Appendix 3 provide detail on the responses.
10. Of particular note is the innovative work done by OxPlan officers to engage with young people through the use of social media and college based workshops, as a consequence of the stated wish of the Board that the Vision should be influenced by younger age groups for whom it will have the greatest impact longer term.
11. Overall, the results of the consultation were supportive of the draft Vision, both as a concept and a document. Of the comments received most were constructive and positive.

12. Of those that responded there was broad support for the range of ambitions highlighted in the Vision. Inevitably perhaps in a document that is attempting such a wide reach there were responders who felt that their interests, whilst included did not have the weight or profile that they should whilst others commented that the document needed to be more Oxfordshire specific.
13. The Vision has developed because of this consultation exercise. We have reflected upon the responses and without changing the overall balance of the document have offered additional phraseology to highlight the importance of, for example the need to address inequalities, the role of the of Oxfordshire and its place as a national and international centre of excellence. Issues such as the need for inclusive growth have also been strengthened in the revised text and finally various changes to make the document more Oxfordshire specific have been included such as references to our rural landscape, countryside and the importance of the rural economy.
14. Finally, the Board proposed that alongside the public consultation, officers would commission consultants to reflect upon the draft Vision and offer informal sustainability advice, specifically whether the draft Vision was consistent, both within the document and when compared to the OxPlan and whether there were any gaps in the sustainability issues identified. This commission was completed, and all relevant comments incorporated in the attached final version of the Vision.

Timescales for the vision

15. The timing of the Vision's agreement, both by the Board and partners is of great importance. This is because Vision has an important role to play in shaping the first phase of the Oxplan as it heads towards consultation in the summer. To play this role, endorsement by the Board was required ahead of the pre-election period and subsequent agreement by all partners needs to be in place before this consultation begins in the summer.

Next steps for the vision

16. Upon agreement of the Vision by the Board and partners, officers will turn their attention to the development of a communications plan by relevant officers drawn from across the Growth Board organisations to launch the Vision.
17. We will then need to consider how to embed the Vision in plans and strategies beyond the OxPlan 2050, both within the Board and wider stakeholders. Two proposals are:
 - That the Vision becomes a reference point for all future plans and strategies and all reports to the Board will be expected to formally set out in summary form how the recommendations in the report will support the ambitions of the Vision.
 - For council and other Board partners that they individually agree the Vision, thereby giving it the profile required within their respective organisations and then consider how to embed the Vision in their plans and strategies.
18. A third action will then be consideration of how the Board will measure progress against the ambitions of the Vision. Growth Board Officers intend to develop a business case for this next phase of the project over the summer of 2021. This will include agreement of how we measure success, appropriate reporting of these and when it would be appropriate to review and update the Vision, something that was supported in the engagement process.

Financial implications

19. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

20. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

21. The development of a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, which encompasses the shared ambitions of local councils and key organisations, provides a unique opportunity to bring together a clear and unambiguous statement about what it is we want to achieve in Oxfordshire.
22. Following the consultation exercise, both the officers and members who have reflected upon the consultation and revised the Vision believe that the Vision has improved because of the consultation. The document now has a bolder more ambitious narrative that articulates in a balanced way what our collective ambitions for what Oxfordshire should be in 2050, both societally, economically and as a place to live work and to thrive.
23. The Growth Board considered the revised Vision at its meeting on 22nd March. The Board endorsed the Vision and asked that each partner considered agreeing to the Vision.
24. Accordingly, Cabinet is requested to consider and agree the Vision as attached at Appendix 1 to this Cabinet report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire.

Appendix 2: Growth Board report on Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire

Appendix 3: Strategic Vision consultation summary