

## **Future Oxfordshire Partnership report to Vale of White Horse District Council - October 2021**

The Oxfordshire Growth Board has been renamed The Future Oxfordshire Partnership to reflect the change in priorities agreed by its constituent councils.

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a joint committee of the six principal councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners. Following an extensive public review in 2020, the Partnership has adopted a new purpose to:

- Coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits;
- Support the development of local planning policy that meets the UK Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050, and contributes towards biodiversity gain whilst embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world; and,
- Seek to secure funding in the pursuit of these aims and oversee the delivery of related work programmes delegated to it by the joint committee's constituent local authority members.

The Partnership meets six times each year to discuss issues facing Oxfordshire's future, most often in a non-decision-making capacity. It is supported by four Advisory Sub-Groups (Infrastructure, Environment, Housing and Oxfordshire Plan 2050), a Scrutiny Panel and a small team of officers.

The current Chair is Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council.

### **Partnership News**

The Partnership wrote to the Secretary of State offering strong support for HM Government regulations to ban the installation of fossil fuelled gas boilers in new and existing residential property as soon as possible, in favour of more sustainable alternatives.

This followed the publication of an independent landmark study undertaken by the University of Oxford which underlined the urgent need to replace our heating systems which rely on gas and oil if we are to meet our net zero carbon commitments. This unparalleled report makes clear that to lead the way nationally and meet net zero 2050, there must be no new gas boilers installed across our building stock from 2025 and no new homes in Oxfordshire being connected to the gas grid.

The partnership also called for the significant challenge of retrofitting to be addressed head on. All pathways to net zero 2050 will involve a major programme of

retrofit for existing homes and nondomestic buildings, led by strong and consistent national policy including significant subsidy.

The Partnership ran a consultation on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) during the summer, to feed into the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 process.

A new development of 80 Extra Care Housing apartments started in July at Great Western Park, Didcot. The scheme is partly funded through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. 60 rented and 20 shared ownership apartments will be delivered by the scheme, with a café/bistro, hair salon and other communal facilities on-site.

The Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study was published in June, partly funded by the Partnership. The study highlights opportunities to expand Oxfordshire's railway network.

The study was produced by Network Rail with oversight from the Partnership, in collaboration by industry partners and the County and City Councils, to help develop an overarching strategy for rail development.

The potential for a station at Grove was included in the report.

### **Housing Sub group**

Quarter 1 Growth Deal progress – the delivery programme has fallen further behind. There has been an agreement that Homes England will take over all the outstanding projects that were scheduled for year 4 so that the tight deadlines will no longer have to be met. This shouldn't affect either the Heylo or OCLT schemes in the Vale as they should be delivered by the March deadline.

Lessons Learnt – That it has pooled the knowledge across the five districts and good practise has been shared. The criteria that were accepted with the Deal have been very challenging. Within the time scales set, all the projects took time to work up and therefore the delivery was always going to be near the deadline.

The Community Led housing only delivered one project. This was mainly due to the government requiring RP status before the public money was not "at risk". Only one organisation will achieve that before March 2022.

### **Infrastructure Sub Group**

There has only been one meeting in May as the September meeting was cancelled.

This dealt with an update on the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 5 with the feedback from the consultation.

The current status of the Growth Deal delivery plan. The Milton Enterprise Bridge is more expensive but should make the deadline. The Rowstock roundabout improvements may well be outside as CPO's may be needed.

Task& Finish group from the City on Private Investment in Public infrastructure concluded that some small schemes have been viable but PWLB funding is usually cheaper and doesn't have so many restrictions as private investors. The sub group will consider the recommendations that are in the Growth Board paper.

The sub group agreed to co-opt a member from the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum for the forth coming year 2021/ 2022.

**Councillor Neil Fawcett, Councillor Emily Smith & Councillor Judy Roberts.**