

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 29 April 2019  
**Report of:** Assistant Chief Executive  
**Title of Report:** Update on Partnerships - Oxfordshire Growth Board Partnership

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To provide members with a partnership update report on the Oxfordshire Growth Board
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Executive Board Member:</b>	<b>Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All Corporate Plan priorities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Corporate Plan
<b>Recommendation(s):</b> That Council	
1.	notes the Oxfordshire Growth Board update report.

## Introduction

1. This year has seen the development of the Growth Board partnership in the context of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (“the Deal”) and opportunities arising from Government’s interest in the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor/Arc. The City Council has played a key role in coordinating activity to ensure successful delivery of the first year of the Deal and liaising with government departments during its implementation. We have also sought to encourage the development of initiatives to support the ambition for good growth in Oxfordshire. This paper updates on achievements this year and areas for future focus.

## Background – membership and purpose of the Oxfordshire Growth Board

2. The Growth Board provides leadership and governance for partnership working and collaboration on spatial planning, economic development, housing, transport, and general infrastructure across Oxfordshire. This includes oversight of investment funding streams for example the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, City Deal and the Local Growth Funds.

3. The Growth Board is a Statutory Joint Committee with a core membership (with voting rights) comprising Leaders from each of the Oxfordshire local authorities. The Board also includes non-voting members representing the following organisations
  - Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
  - Highways England
  - Network Rail
  - Environment Agency
  - Homes England
  - Oxford Universities
  - Oxfordshire Skills Board
  - Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
4. Growth Board meetings are held every two months. The meetings are administered and hosted on a rotation basis and currently South Oxfordshire DC is the chairing authority.
5. The Growth Board is supported by a scrutiny panel of 18 members drawn from across the 6 councils and three advisory sub groups focused on infrastructure, housing and joint spatial planning. These groups were newly established in 2018 to reflect the expanded responsibilities of the Growth Board for oversight of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
6. The members representing the City Council on these groups are:

Growth Board	Cllr Susan Brown
Scrutiny Panel	Cllr Andrew Gant (Chair) Cllr Craig Simmons Cllr John Tanner
Housing Sub Group	Cllr Susan Brown (Chair) Cllr Mike Rowley
Infrastructure Sub Group	Cllr Linda Smith
Oxfordshire Plan 2050	Cllr Alex Hollingsworth

7. In recognition of the Board's responsibility for oversight of the Deal, Bev Hindle has been appointed as Growth Board Director. His focus will be on delivery of the deal and other major funding streams, promoting Oxfordshire's role in positively planning for sustainable growth and in securing future arrangements to ensure our growth plans are supported by others including Government. The Board's work is also supported by the Chief Executives, a programme manager and an executive officer group of senior officers from the six member local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Homes England, the Environment Agency and other partners.

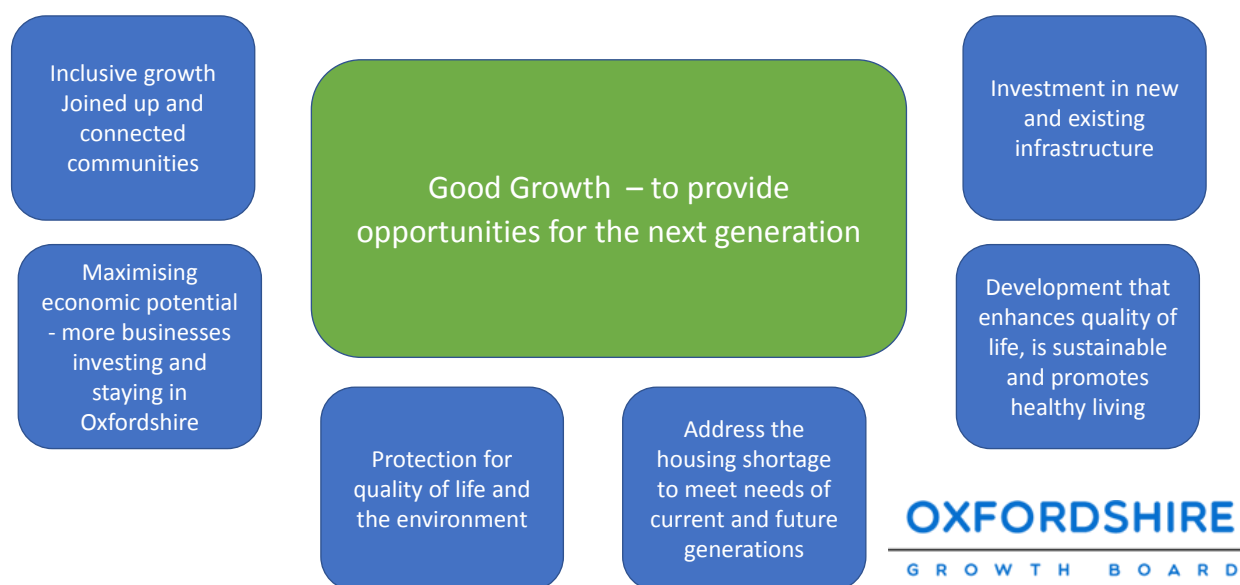
### **Growth Board ambition for good growth**

8. Over the last two years, the City Council, has taken an active role in developing the Growth Board partnership and articulating an ambition for good growth in Oxfordshire. This is in recognition that the City Council's priorities of tackling problems of housing shortages and affordability, supporting a vibrant and inclusive local economy, promoting low carbon transport and good quality environments, require us to work closely with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders across Oxfordshire. We recognise that to meet our infrastructure and housing needs we

will need to take a collaborative, long term approach to securing investment in infrastructure and planning to support economic growth. The interest from government in the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor/Arc as an area for growth presents a current opportunity for a different conversation with government about investment in infrastructure and housing development. We need to respond to this opportunity and ensure that it can support high quality, sustainable development that improves quality of life of existing and future residents.

9. With our Growth Board partners, we have been working to articulate an ambition for growth in Oxfordshire and developing programmes of work to take forward that long term strategic approach. That ambition is articulated in the diagram below.

## Our ambition for Growth in Oxfordshire



### Achievements in 2018/19

#### a) Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

10. A major area of work for the Growth board in 2018/19 has been the implementation of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (“the Deal”) which was negotiated and agreed with Government during 2017/18 when the City was chairing the Growth Board. The Deal is the first of its type in the Country and when announced in the Autumn Statement 2017, described by the Chancellor as a “down payment” on future investment to support growth.
11. The Deal provides for up to £215m of new funding over 5 years in order to support Oxfordshire’s ambition to plan for and help to support the delivery of the 100,000 homes by 2031 that are articulated in Oxfordshire’s Local Plans. Of this total, £150m of this funding focuses on infrastructure delivery that will help us to accelerate the delivery planned homes over the five years. A further £60m is ring fenced to deliver a programme of up to 1320 additional affordable housing units by March 2021. The deal

also includes a commitment to develop (and capacity funding to support) an Oxfordshire-wide joint spatial plan (now known as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050); a programme focussed on productivity (of which the key component is the Local Industrial Strategy); opportunities to work with Government to explore further opportunities to drive innovation in partnership, design and construction and to secure additional investment to support growth.

12. At the time of writing, though subject to confirmation with Homes England through an end of year reporting process, the partnership is on course to achieve the milestones agreed for year one of the deal programme. This includes £30 million infrastructure investment, accelerated delivery of more than 414 homes, more than 148 additional affordable homes (actual total 206), the submission of all Local Plans and completion of the first stages of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050; and submission of a draft Local Industrial Strategy (one of three trailblazers across the county).

13. For the City achievements in year one of the Deal include:

- 53 additional affordable homes (contractual start on site)
- £11.9m in infrastructure schemes in the City in 2018/19
- The submission of the Oxford Local Plan 2036
- Council approval of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 initial stage documents and the first stage of consultation.

14. In addition to the deal milestones, the collaborative work on the deal has strengthened partnership working between the authorities and facilitated exchange of good practice.

#### **b) Housing and Infrastructure Bids**

15. During the year, the collaborative approach demonstrated by the Growth Board also strengthened Oxfordshire's position for further investment through Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bids submitted by Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Transport Authority. In March, this resulted in the announcement of £218 million for the Didcot Garden Town HIF bid and we are awaiting the outcome of a further HIF bid for West Oxfordshire Garden Village.

#### **c) Oxford to Cambridge Arc**

16. During the year, the government has confirmed its ambition to unlock potential of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc as an economic asset of international standing to benefit the national economy, local businesses and communities. Government has acknowledged this will require a long term view and a different way of working with local partners to ensure benefits are realised locally. Arc wide groupings of Leaders and Chief Executives have been established to engage with Government on developing the long term vision. Oxfordshire is fully engaging with these discussions and the Arc-wide leader's group is chaired by Cllr Barry Wood, Leader of Cherwell District Council. A number of work streams have been established, looking at strategic planning for place, transport and connectivity and economy and productivity. Moving forward, there will be an increasingly important role for the Growth Board in facilitating collaboration from Oxfordshire partners to ensure Oxfordshire's ambitions for sustainable growth are influential in these discussions.

17. The Government's proposals for the Oxfordshire to Cambridge Expressway continue to be a significant issue for Oxfordshire. The

engagement process and decision making is being led by Highways England. In discussions at Growth Board, Cllr Susan Brown has represented the City Council's position as agreed by Council on these issues. Though Growth Board partners have different positions about the Expressway, the Growth Board has expressed its concern to Government about engagement in decision making; lack of clarity about the route and its impact on local communities. The Growth Board agreed a set of principles that any decisions on the expressway should be based on. These say that any decision on the Expressway should: help secure a more sustainable and integrated Oxfordshire Transport Network by strengthening public transport links such as integrated bus, rail and Park and Ride facilities and enhancing local connections to reduce transport pressures on local roads; minimise its environmental damage and avoid sensitive areas such as areas with SSIs and protected habitats; support growth options identified through Joint Spatial Plans; and be future-proofed, in terms of taking account of modal shift and innovation such as the rise of autonomous vehicles.

#### **d) Engagement and communication**

18. With the expansion of the Growth Board's programme and the opportunities presented by the Housing and Growth Deal there has also been a focus this year on increasing communication and engagement with members, stakeholders, and the public to increase awareness and understanding of the Growth Board's work and its ambition for good growth. This includes information on how investment is being spent on new transport and community infrastructure and affordable housing projects; awareness and involvement in the development of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan; and associated strategies.

19. This has been achieved by:

- Development of a new Growth Board website <https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org> which includes information about the Growth Board, latest developments and details of the projects being supported under the Deal (which will continue to be developed over time as more projects come on stream).
- Regular partnership updates on progress with the Deal work programmes
- Regular press releases on key developments
- Briefing sessions for members

20. A particular focus has been given to engagement with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. As is required for a Statutory Planning Document, there is a formal Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that sets out how the Board will engage with communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure which has been agreed by all of the Oxfordshire authorities. To date, engagement and communication on the plan has involved:

- Development of a bespoke website <https://oxfordshireplan.org>
- Member briefings for all Councils
- Stakeholder event with more than 80 delegates (December)
- First stage consultation events including a bus roadshow and exhibitions in towns across Oxfordshire
- Children's drawing competition

## **e) Governance**

21. As part of the requirements under the Growth Deal, the Growth Board reviewed its governance structures in 2018 and the 3 advisory sub-groups and scrutiny panel outlined above were introduced in Autumn 2018 to broaden member engagement with and oversight of and to enhance scrutiny of the Growth Board's work.
22. This is the first time that there have been formal structures that bring together members from each of the Oxfordshire authorities in thematic groups to discuss strategic issues relating to growth in Oxfordshire. It is early days for the development of the groups; however they are already adding value, particularly to the development of the Oxfordshire Plan and sharing good practice on housing delivery.
23. The Scrutiny Panel have met 4 times since September 2018 and have considered and made recommendations to the Growth Board on:
  - The Oxfordshire Plan 2050
  - Affordable housing
  - Growth Board Communications and engagement
  - Development of an Oxfordshire Energy strategy
  - Oxford to Cambridge Expressway
24. The Growth Board has also sought to increase engagement from other partners in supporting the Oxfordshire Growth agenda and has received presentations on this from Homes England, Environment Agency and the Universities.

### **Focus for the year ahead**

25. Oversight of delivery of the Growth Deal will continue to be an area of focus for the Growth Board in the next year, and will require all the Local Authorities to prioritise delivery of their commitments under the Deal.
26. We will also continue to encourage a longer term focus on investment and strategic planning. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will be a big project, requiring significant engagement and involvement activity and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (which identifies infrastructure needs across the county) is due to be updated this year. We are also working with Growth Board partners to develop a delivery plan for the 100,000 homes in local plans and identifying what action could be taken collaboratively and with government to assist in delivery of these homes.
27. Engagement in the discussions with government and other local authorities in developing an ambition for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc will also be a key area of work for the Growth Board's work in the coming year. As the Chancellor's Spring Statement (and accompanying statement on the Arc) made clear, Government are focusing considerable attention on developing a long-term strategic approach to releasing the economic potential of the Arc. We will work with Growth Board partners to ensure that Oxfordshire's interests are reflected, For example to make the most of opportunities to highlight the importance of local transport improvements such as the Oxfordshire rail study, the Cowley Branch line and Oxford Station to the work on connectivity; that the economic analysis reflects the need for investment in skills and recognises the unique economic assets in Oxfordshire; and that as they are developed, approaches to sub-regional planning reflect the work and extensive public engagement that will take place on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

28. We hope to see the Board focusing on developing its strategic role as a champion of good growth in Oxfordshire. The Board has already agreed to encompass a focus on healthy place shaping across all areas of its work and it will be important to ensure this takes place. We would like to see the Growth Board partners working together to explore opportunities to promote models of sustainable and inclusive growth. There is an opportunity, given the scale of growth to engage with developers, construction industry and investors in a strategic conversation to help us to build the capacity to make a step change in delivery, works with us to enable innovation to achieve this ambition.

29. Meanwhile, we will publicise the Growth Deal-funded affordable housing and infrastructure developments in the City to ensure residents are sighted on the benefits it is bringing.

### **Financial implications**

30. The City Council are directly involved in the delivery of affordable housing through its HRA and its housing company Oxford City Housing (Development) Ltd, with contractual start on sites attracting Growth Deal grant of £2.15 million in 2018-19. In addition work on the Oxfordshire Local Plan and coordinating work on the deal is supported by a capacity fund from Government and responsibility and resources for delivery of the commitment under the deal is located in the partner authorities. All the Local Authorities contribute to the costs of the Growth Board secretariat and this is provided from existing resources and budgets.

### **Legal issues**

31. There are no legal implications to this report.

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