

To: Council
Date: 30 November 2020
Report of: Assistant Chief Executive
Title of Report: Update on Partnerships - Oxfordshire Growth Board

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To provide members with a partnership update report on the Oxfordshire Growth Board
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member with responsibility:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	N/a
Policy Framework:	N/a
Recommendation: That Council	
1. notes the Oxfordshire Growth Board update report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Growth Deal Housing from Infrastructure Programme- Oxford
Appendix 1	Oxfordshire Draft Strategic Vision

Introduction and background

1. This report provides a summary of the key milestones that have been reached in the delivery of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, as well as wider advances that have been made over the past year through the Oxfordshire Growth Board collaboration. The Council continues to have an active role in the partnership which oversees the delivery of key projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver collaboratively in the fields of economic development and strategic planning.

Growth Board role and remit

2. The Growth Board is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners. Whilst voting rights are retained for local authority members only, the Board's membership also includes co-opted associate members listed below:

- Chair of OxLEP
 - Chair of the Oxfordshire Skills Board
 - Universities Representative
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Bicester
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Oxford City
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Science Vale
 - Homes England Representative
 - DEFRA Agencies Representative
 - Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Representative
3. The Growth Board is supported by a scrutiny panel of members drawn from across the 6 councils which is currently chaired by Cllr Andrew Gant and three advisory sub groups focused on infrastructure, housing and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.
4. Earlier this year the Growth Board undertook a review of its role and function to ensure that the most pragmatic and effective arrangements for partnership working are in place. The public review, which received nearly 300 responses from a wide range of respondents, found that there have been a series of successes and opportunities realised through the Growth Board collaboration and the duty to cooperate, including securing over £500m of investment in Oxfordshire in recent years. It also identified communication and greater integration of environmental issues as areas for improvement within the Board's work.
5. Having considered the feedback from the review, each of the Oxfordshire Local Authorities agreed a revised [Terms of Reference](#) for the Board in Summer 2020. The Board now has a clear purpose from the outset, with an emphasis on inclusive and sustainable development, the pursuit of a zero-carbon future, and the oversight of delegated programmes of work within this remit. The new purpose states that Growth Board will:
- 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 Board's local authority members.

Part 1: The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

6. The Growth Board oversees and monitors delivery of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal ('the Deal') which was agreed in 2018 and secured £215m of Central Government investment to advance housing delivery and boost economic productivity in the area. Within the Deal are four distinct workstreams.

- The Homes from Infrastructure Programme (Hfi) - £150m investment in infrastructure to support the acceleration of already planned housing in Oxfordshire over a five-year period from 2018/19 to 2022/23.
 - The Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Programme - a £60m investment over three years to support the delivery of at least 1322 additional affordable homes, using a range of tenures including social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership.
 - A county wide Strategic Development Plan, known as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, to support a more coordinated approach to long term spatial planning across the County. This was supported by additional time limited planning freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities to protect against unplanned development.
7. Productivity which is being led by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). At the centre of this work is an ambitious Local Industrial Strategy and associated Investment Plan for Oxfordshire.
 8. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a picture was emerging in Oxfordshire of a housing market delivery trajectory that was slipping due to issues such as local plan delays and weakening developer confidence in certain areas of the Oxfordshire housing market. Within that overall picture however, those sites that were supported by the Housing and Growth Deal through infrastructure investment generally maintained their delivery trajectory. During the Summer peak of COVID-19 cases, all major development sites halted production. Most have now resumed work, but we are already seeing in Q2 of 2020/21 that completed local authority trajectories are slowing in all districts except Oxford, where delivery remains robust.

Looking forward, officers have been involved in discussions with HM Government over potential changes to the timescales of the £215m Deal, recognising some historic delivery issues and the impact of the COVID pandemic. HM Government have agreed to extend some elements of the Homes from Infrastructure and Affordable Housing programmes in light of these challenges.
 9. Under the revised Affordable Housing Programme, including an additional fourth year presents a healthy picture. Partners now anticipate being able to deliver both the budget and numeric targets agreed in the Housing Growth Deal by drawing upon a proposed programme of 1410 units, bolstered by a contingency programme, from which we can draw should schemes fail to materialise as anticipated that totals 521 units.
 10. Financial challenges to this programme remain, but these have been offset by the ability to flex grant and the addition of local top up grant. The current programme agreed with partners envisages just over £5 Million of local Top up Grant.
 11. Oxford's contribution to this programme is material with a total of 550-600 homes anticipated across the four years and a drawdown of just over 30 million or 50% of the OAHP budget. In addition, we will seek to contribute an additional £2.5 million of s106 grant to match fund OAHP grant (to be agreed on a site by site basis) - in addition to the near £139 million of HRA borrowing investment supporting these schemes. This additional grant supports exceptional; site costs and the council's ambitions to deliver low and zero carbon housing totalling 233 units.

Housing from Infrastructure

12. The table at appendix A shows Oxford's contribution to the Housing from Infrastructure programme, totalling 652 accelerated homes derived from infrastructure investment of £41,720,129.
13. The extension to the Hfl programme referred to in paragraph 10 allows an additional sixth year- with a possible further extension into a seventh year on a scheme by scheme basis to enable the relevant infrastructure to be completed.

The Oxfordshire Plan 2050

14. A new timetable for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 has been developed following recent conversations with HM Government about the overall Deal Programme. Government have agreed that full use can now be made of the 5-year Deal period for the production of the Plan. This is a significant shift in position, instead of being limited to simply the first 3 years of the Deal, there is now an opportunity to utilise the full 5-year period to produce the best Plan possible. The Growth Board will be asked to endorse this revised programme at its meeting on [24 November](#).
15. In the last quarter [Oxfordshire Open Thought](#) was launched. This was designed to be an additional informal public engagement exercise to broaden the reach of the project, gain new policy ideas, and to energise stakeholders and that wider community ahead of next formal consultation. This website was launched in June and it asked people to consider the future challenges and opportunities for Oxfordshire and submit their ideas around three key topics: living and working; connectivity; and climate change. The webpage was visited by over 2,300 people and analysis has shown that across nearly 300 submission, we achieved a broader demographic reach of engagement with the Plan. In the next quarter officers plan to launch phase 2 of Open Thought.
16. Much of the work in quarter two has focussed on the delivery of the technical evidence base. A range of technical studies have been commissioned to provide baseline information, data, mapping and projections of various types. Each commission has involved the input of all the authority partners from scoping, through interviewing, selection and co-ordination, via a steering group set up to oversee the work and provide the link with the consultancies. The emerging outputs of these studies are being used to inform the selection of options that will be presented for consultation in the next published Plan (Regulation 18 part 2) document. Each of the evidence base studies will be published alongside the Plan consultation document so that those engaging with the process can understand the work that has informed its drafting.

Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

17. This new programme has also included drafting of an Oxfordshire Strategic Vision document ahead of the next Plan consultation. The concept of this overarching Vision is that it should help to inform the development of the Oxfordshire Plan, but also assist more broadly in developing other strategies and projects that the local authorities are seeking to deliver in a collaborative way.
18. The Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of the individual councils or partner organisations. The Vision has a specific role and a

clearly defined non-statutory status. While it is similarly looking to 2050 and intended to support the development of the Oxfordshire Plan indirectly, it is not part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 itself. It explicitly does not deal with the quantum of housing or economic growth for Oxfordshire, nor direct where it should go. It recognises that those are matters more appropriately dealt with through other plans and strategies (eg. Oxfordshire Plan 2050, Local Industrial Strategy, Local Plans). However, it is envisaged that the Vision could play an important role in seeking to drive improvements to environmental, social and economic well-being which may be reflected in emerging plans, strategies and programmes. Delivering the Vision will require long-term collective commitment and investment by the partners that make up the Growth Board but also, crucially, by a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partnerships.

19. A separate report on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision was considered by the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel and by the Growth Board on 30th October which endorsed it as a draft to go out to engagement. A further report will go to each local authorities' Cabinet as part of a wider engagement exercise taking place before the end of 2020 and will be considered by the City Council Cabinet on 9th December. The intention is to have produced a revised Vision for the Growth Board to consider endorsing in March 2021. A copy of the Draft Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.

Part 2: Wider Growth Board Programmes and Partnership Work

The Oxford to Cambridge Arc

20. The Oxford to Cambridge Arc (the Arc) has been described by HM Government as a key economic priority owing to the area's existing economic strengths in terms of the science, technology and advanced manufacturing sectors and the long-term potential to transform the Arc into a world-leading economic area, acting as a testbed for innovation and encouraging international investment and exports to benefit both local businesses and the national economy.
21. Since the last update to Council, the Arc has progressed to establish a set of working Groups made up of representatives of Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Universities and Local Nature Partnerships, working collaboratively across geographical, political and thematic boundaries. The Groups aim to steer and guide the Arc collaboration to ensure that local and strategic interests are understood at a national level.
22. An Arc Leadership Group consisting of these organisations meets twice each year to set a forward plan and guide this work. A smaller Arc Leadership Executive Group made up of three Council Leaders appointed from each Growth Board within the Arc (including key economic, university and health leads) meets more regularly to ensure that the Arc Leadership Group's work is being delivered effectively, and to engage with HM Government to ensure that local and strategic interests are understood and delivered.
23. The Growth Board's nominated representatives on the Arc Leadership Executive are: Councillor Emily Smith (Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council and Growth Board Chair), Councillor Barry Wood (Leader of Cherwell District Council

and Chair of the Arc Leaders group) and Councillor Ian Hudspeth (Leader of Oxfordshire County Council – with local transport authority responsibility). Councillor Susan Brown was also appointed as the Growth Board’s standing deputy in respect of the above appointments which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

24. The Arc Leadership Group is aiming to inform and influence Government’s work and investment decisions, including through the recently submitted [Economic Prospectus](#), which articulates the group’s vision for the Arc a “*world leading place for high-value growth, innovation and productivity. A global hub where ideas and companies are generated and thrive, home to exemplary models of 21st century development, with a high quality environment and outstanding quality of life, and with a strong economic focus that drives inclusive clean growth*”.
25. HM Government announced in March 2020 their intention to develop, with local partners, a long-term Spatial Framework to support strategic planning across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. It is anticipated that there will be a formal launch and a more detailed statement regarding their ambitions in December 2020 or early in 2021. HM Government officials are currently developing an engagement strategy and testing new digital engagement tools to support Arc engagement in the new year.
26. The Arc is not a formal statutory body and works to ensure that decision-making and action occurs at the most appropriate level. The Arc has no formal central administration and most of its resources and support come from the collaborating partner organisations. There has however been a recent appointment of an Arc Director, Bev Hindle, to support the Arc Leadership Group and Executive. Regular written updates on the work of the Arc are provided at [Growth Board meetings](#).

The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy and Investment Plan

27. Launched in September 2019, the ambition for the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), which was published jointly with HM Government, is to position the county as one of the top-three global innovation ecosystems, highlighting our world-leading science and technology cluster and to be a pioneer for the UK. The LIS directly responds to the UK Industrial Strategy – launched by the Government in November 2017 – which aims to increase economic growth and productivity across the country and create more prosperous communities.
28. In August 2020 OxLEP published the next stage of the Strategy, the Oxfordshire Investment Plan. The Investment Plan translates the ideas and aspiration of the Local Industrial Strategy into a programme of delivery and action over up to 2030. It highlights priority projects for investment including several in and around Oxford such as the Global Health and Life Sciences Cluster in Headington, expansion of Oxford Science Park, the West End Global Innovation District and redevelopment of Oxford Station. The Investment Plan sits alongside other critical strategies which are in development, including: the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, Oxfordshire Plan 2050, the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy Delivery Plan, a new Local Skills Plan, and the emerging Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan. Like the Economic Recovery Plan, the LIS Investment Plan responds to the economic challenges which COVID-19 is creating for businesses, supply chains and the workforce, drawing out the importance of building an inclusive economy that focuses on

developing zero carbon products, solutions and services. The full LIS Investment Plan can be found on the OxLEP [website](#).

Zero Carbon Housing

29. Earlier in 2020, the Growth Board commissioned a [report](#) which set out the current systemic challenges to accelerating the development of low and zero carbon homes, alongside collective actions that could be taken between local authorities to press for and implement change. On 24 November, the Growth Board received an update on progress against agreed actions. There are a range of opportunities in this area including housing delivery through new settlements and Garden Towns, promoting sustainable living under the Living Oxfordshire Programme of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and the potential for investment and policy flexibility in delivering low carbon housing across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.¹

30. On 9th December, the Growth Board is hosting an online webinar on low carbon homes with input from housing and energy officers across all authorities. The event aims to raise the profile of Oxfordshire's low-carbon agenda within the context of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The event is expected to be held before the end of the year, dependent upon the timing of the Comprehensive Spending Review. It will also provide an opportunity to brief attendees on the Deal programme extension, new grant flexibilities and a desire to prioritise low/zero carbon schemes within the Affordable Housing programme. A more detailed report on the actions being undertaken through the Board with respect to zero carbon homes can be found in the Board's [agenda](#) for 24 November.

Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan

31. The Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan (ERP), which aims to respond to the economic challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, is being led by OxLEP with input from all Oxfordshire authorities and will be overseen by its Board, which includes the Leaders of each of the Councils. To ensure that a collaborative approach is taken in the Plan's development, a dedicated ERP Task and Finish Group has been set up with senior representation drawn from Local Authorities and Universities, which has met several times already and will continue to do so. This will be a standalone overarching economic plan for Oxfordshire, recognising that the response on the ground (locality/District/City) will need to be tailored to support specific circumstances.

32. While the precise detail of the ERP is in development, the Growth Board will receive updates on this work at key intervals. The ERP is expected to set out a programme of measures to support the Oxfordshire economy, based on a sound and robust analysis of the economic landscape and an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the County's labour market, business base and key economic sectors and clusters. The ERP will focus on actions which will support the near-term recovery and renewal of the Oxfordshire economy over the next three years. It will need to complement the longer-term proposals developed under the Oxfordshire Local

¹ For a comprehensive summary of the challenges and opportunities for zero-carbon building compliance, see Zero Carbon Housing report of 11 March 2020. Available at: <http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/documents/s19019/9.%20OGB%20report%20Zero%20Carbon%20Housing%20March%202020.pdf>

Industrial Strategy Investment Plan. Preliminary economic impact findings were reported to the Growth Board on 22 September 2020, and a presentation on this work can be found in the Growth Board's [agenda](#).

England's Economic Heartland Draft Transport Strategy

33. England's Economic Heartland (EEH) is the 'emerging' Sub-national Transport Body for the area stretching from Swindon to Cambridgeshire. It includes the Oxford to Cambridge Arc area but extends to also include Swindon and Hertfordshire. EEH recently consulted on its Draft Transport Strategy. Whilst some local authorities, including the City Council prepared their own response to that consultation, a joint high-level response was also agreed through the Growth Board. This response sought to compliment local submissions by commenting specifically on the nature and extent to which the Strategy impacts on Growth Board programmes (Oxfordshire Plan 2050, Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, etc.).
34. As a strategic partnership response, there were two main areas of the consultation that were focussed on: the proposal to establish a statutory sub-national transport body and, the Strategy itself. On the former, there were concerns about the transition to a statutory body and the nature and language of the Strategy itself. HM Government also similarly expressed concerns with this, confirming that there were no current plans for EEH to take on a statutory role. On the latter, there were several areas of the Strategy which were commented on. This included the need to ensure alignment with the Emerging Arc Spatial Framework and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, and the need for the Strategy to be bolder and more ambitious with respect to climate change. There were also noticeable absences of major economic and transport hubs in Oxfordshire, such as Oxford Station within the Strategy, and a lack of visible priority given to major infrastructure challenges such as the A34. The full response can be found in the [agenda](#) for the Growth Board meeting on 22 September 2020.

Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study (OCRS)

35. The Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study assesses the impacts of economic growth on Oxfordshire's rail system and identifies the role the system can play to manage this. It looks at the movement of people and goods across the rail network in Oxfordshire, with emphasis on how rail can support development across Oxfordshire and the wider region and will inform strategic investment decisions. The Study is being jointly funded by the Department for Transport (DfT), Oxfordshire Growth Board and other partners, and is being undertaken by Network Rail. The Growth Board approved the project remit and financial contribution in June 2018, enabling DfT funding to be released.
36. Findings from the first stage of this work were [reported](#) to the Growth Board in January 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This work concluded that there is a clear requirement for an uplift in services across the network and significant additional capacity is required to relieve congestion on Cross Country services north and south of Oxford (and therefore through the station), plus additional capacity for Oxford-Didcot corridor. East West Rail Phase 2 (Oxford to Bedford and Milton Keynes) will also significantly increase demand at stations including Bicester Village, Oxford Parkway and Oxford. Network Rail have identified the Oxford Station Phase 2 works as the critical next step in boosting rail capacity, frequency and

connectivity in the county and across the region and has submitted the Outline Business Case for Phase 2 to Government for funding approval, with a decision expected shortly. The Growth Board will consider a letter of support to the Chancellor and DFT Secretary of State at its meeting on 24th November.

Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS)

37. The original Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) was approved by the Oxfordshire Growth Board in Autumn 2017. The Strategy built on an extensive evidence base to set out the core projects and investment seen as required to support the sustainable development in Oxfordshire. It identified and prioritised infrastructure across a range of sectors to support known local plan housing and employment development and outlined where funding was required to help deliver this. OxIS has been an important piece of work in supporting the development of subsequent funding bids and agreements, helping to secure funding for schemes through the Housing and Infrastructure Fund and the Deal.
38. As part of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal agreed in 2018, there is a commitment to update the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS). In particular, updating OxIS aligns to the requirements of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 by providing an up to date infrastructure picture that complements the agreed trajectory and direction of the Plan, taking into account the latest policy and funding picture.
39. The OxIS update will be carried out in two stages with Stage 1 delivered in 2021 to support the Regulation 18 (Part 2) Oxfordshire Plan consultation, and Stage 2 delivered later to support the Regulation 19 consultation. This will allow for OxIS and the Oxfordshire Plan to develop iteratively with increased transparency and integration. The Growth Board's Infrastructure Advisory Sub-group currently operates as a member steering group for this work, involving the Cabinet leads from each authority. The most recent [update](#) on this work can be found in the Growth Board's agenda for 2 June 2020.

A Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire

40. The Growth Board has taken an active approach to improving its connections with the environmental sector, following a refreshed and prioritised focus in this area. The Board's Executive Officer Group has welcomed the Chair of the Oxfordshire Environmental Board into its membership. The Board has also offered its support for the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Oxfordshire, which would provide a strategic forum to help manage the natural environment in an integrated way, to the benefit of local people, the economy and the environment. Whilst an LNP would be a separate entity to the Growth Board, it could feasibly link in with the Board's wider discussions concerning the natural environment in the future.
41. Since the Board offered support for the establishment of an LNP earlier this year, an independent facilitator has started a stakeholder consultation which involves a mixture of virtual interviews, surveys and focus group meetings. This exercise will focus on gathering feedback on a range of issues associated with establishing an LNP (i.e objectives, membership and governance). It is expected that this process will be completed by the end of 2020, with the ambition of having a basic structure

in place for the LNPs operation later in 2021. It is hoped that the establishment of an LNP will enable closer and more structured collaboration across the Arc, such as with the emerging [Arc Local Natural Capital Plan](#). More detail on the establishment of an LNP and the Arc Local Natural Capital Plan can be found in the [agenda](#) for the Growth Board meeting on 22 September 2020.

Part 3: Focus for the year ahead

- 42. With its newly reviewed focus on sustainability, inclusivity and planning for a zero-carbon future, we should increasingly expect to see the Board’s work reflect these principles through its work programme and the strategies and programmes it oversees.
- 43. Oversight of the delivery of the Housing and Growth Deal will continue to be an area of focus for the Growth Board in the next year as we progress towards key milestones in the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The Plan’s development alongside OxIS will require significant engagement and involvement with the Council. Ahead of that, the Council will submit views on the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire in advance of consideration at the Board in March 2021. Engaging and influencing the work on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, including the Government’s forthcoming Arc Spatial Framework will be a key area of work for the Growth Board and individual partners in the next year.
- 44. In the new year, the Growth Board will also be presented with a Joint Statement of Intent on climate change for endorsement, which will operate as a call to action on tackling the climate emergency. This is a developing piece of work between the lead local authority councillors with environmental/climate change responsibilities. A public version of the Board’s [Forward Plan](#) of work is updated each month on the Oxfordshire Growth Board website which provides a useful reference point for the timetabling of key work.

Financial implications

45. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal implications

46. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

47. None

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Appendix A- Growth Deal Housing from Infrastructure Programme- Oxford

Zone	Infrastructure linked to Zone	Total accelerated homes
North	Banbury Road Woodstock Road Cowley Branch Line Connecting Oxford Oxford Station Ped/Cycle City Wide Schemes	175
Central	Banbury Road Woodstock Road Cowley Branch Line Connecting Oxford Oxford Station Ped/Cycle City Wide Schemes Oxpens Road Enhancements Botley Road Oxpens Bridge	215
South	Cowley Branch Line Connecting Oxford Oxford Station Ped/Cycle City Wide Schemes Knights Road Riverside Routes Boundary Brook Littlemore Park – Rosehill Kennington Slips Newman Road	29
West	Cowley Branch Line Connecting Oxford Oxford Station Ped/Cycle City Wide Schemes Oxpens Road Enhancements Botley Road Oxpens Bridge	134
East	Access to Headington Cowley Branch Line Connecting Oxford Oxford Station Ped/Cycle City Wide Schemes Colinwood Rd Crossing Cuckoo Ine to Headington Hill Barton West School Marston Rd Crossing Warenford Meadow A40 to JR via Northway Parks Cycle Route	100
Total		652
	Total GD Infrastructure Contribution	£41,720,129

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