

Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 13 April 2021

Tel: 01993 861522
e-mail democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

CABINET

You are summoned to a meeting of the Cabinet which will be held remotely, via Cisco Webex on **Wednesday, 21 April 2021 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Cabinet

Councillors: Councillor Suzi Coul, Councillor Merylyn Davies, Councillor Jeff Haine, Councillor David Harvey, Councillor Norman MacRae MBE, Councillor Michele Mead and Councillor Toby Morris

Due to the current social distancing requirements and guidance relating to Coronavirus Regulations 2020 – Part 3 – Modification of meetings and public access requirements this meeting will be conducted remotely using Cisco Webex.

Members of the public will be able to follow the proceedings through a broadcast on [West Oxfordshire District Council Facebook account](#) (You do not need a Facebook account for this).

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the start of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Notice of Decisions**
To receive notice of the decisions taken at the meeting held on 24 March 2021.
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations from Members of the Committee on any items to be considered at the meeting.
4. **Participation of the Public**
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.
5. **Receipt of Announcements**
Purpose:
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council or Members of the Cabinet.
6. **Allocation of Parking Funds (Pages 5 - 8)**
Purpose:
To seek approval of proposals for the allocation of the parking fund to specific projects highlighted in the Council's Parking Strategy.
Recommendations:
 - (a) That the commitment to Oxfordshire County Council of the offer of up to £10,000 in relation to Church Green and/or Corn Street Witney be re-stated; and
 - (b) That the remaining proposed allocations from the fund explained in the report and set out in the [table under paragraph 2.6](#) be approved.
7. **Publica Business Plan 2020-22 (Pages 9 - 28)**
Purpose:
To consider the Publica Business Plan 2020-22, first approved in June 2020, to note progress and recommend that the Leader approves the Plan.
Recommendation:
That Cabinet recommends that the Leader (as Shareholder) approves the Publica Business Plan 2020-22 subject to any comments it wishes to make.
8. **Environmental Services In-Cab Technology System (Pages 29 - 34)**
Purpose:
To present Cabinet with a business case on the costs, benefits and risks of procuring an Environmental Services In-Cab Technology system and seek approval to proceed in procuring the system using the capital budget of up to £140,000, which is set aside in the 2021-22 capital programme.
Recommendations:
 - (a) That the business case be supported and approval granted for the allocation of up to £140,000 set aside in the capital programme for 2021-22, to be used to procure and implement the Environmental Services In-Cab Technology system from Yotta

(including software licences and maintenance costs in year 1); and

- (b) That it be noted that a proportion of the revenue savings in the Ubico contract costs of at least £50,000 p.a. will go to fund the software licences and maintenance costs of £34,103 per annum in years two to four inclusive of the contract.

9. **Oxfordshire Strategic Vision (Pages 35 - 80)**

Purpose:

To approve the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, in light of the consultation.

Recommendations:

- (a) That the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire be approved; and
- (b) That Officers be requested to consider how to embed the Vision's ambitions for Oxfordshire in future plans and strategies of the Council.

10. **Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group (Pages 81 - 100)**

Purpose:

To consider the establishment of an Environment Advisory Group of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, including terms of reference, and endorse the Oxford to Cambridge Arc environment principles and support the development of an Arc Environment Strategy.

Recommendations:

- (a) That the establishment of a Growth Board Environment Advisory group be supported;
- (b) That the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles be endorsed, as set out at Appendix 3, recognising that this statement of ambition applies to a diverse range of urban and rural communities, and that further evidentiary work will be required at a local level to understand their longer-term implications; and
- (c) That the development of an Arc Environment Strategy, which will provide for how the principles can be delivered, be supported.

11. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

In view of the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item/s of business.

12. **Call-In of Salt Cross Decision**

Purpose:

To consider the recommendations from the Finance and Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the Call In of Cabinet Decision – Garden Village Design Works (Min No. 124)

(The decision of the Committee will be circulated following the meeting on 14 April 2021)

13. **Investment Property - Acquisition (Pages 101 - 116)**

Purpose:

Decision to acquire three long leases of investment property on a sale and leaseback basis

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

- a) agrees to acquire the leasehold for the reasons set out in the report;*
- b) that funds be released for due diligence and, if appropriate, subsequent purchase;*
- c) delegates to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Head of Legal and the Cabinet Member for Finance, the final terms for the acquisition in line with the Heads of Terms.*
- d) That for the reasons explained in the report, and in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and with the consent of the Chair of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the foregoing decisions be implemented immediately.*

(END)

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	Cabinet: Wednesday 21 April 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 6
Subject	Allocation of Parking Funds
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Norman MacRae Cabinet Member for Environment; Email: norman.macrae@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Maria Wheatley, Parking Manager Email: maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To seek approval of proposals for the allocation of the parking fund to specific projects highlighted in the Council's Parking Strategy.
Annexes	None
Recommendations	(a) That the commitment to Oxfordshire County Council of the offer of up to £10,000 in relation to Church Green and/or Corn Street Witney be re-stated; and (b) That the remaining proposed allocations from the fund explained in the report and set out in the table under paragraph 2.6 be approved.
Corporate priorities	Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Portfolio Holder, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Group manager

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The district council is responsible for parking in the off-street car parks that it owns or manages and the county council is responsible for on-street parking throughout the district. The district council carries out enforcement on-street on behalf of the county under an agreement but Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), which set out the parking rules, are still the responsibility of the county.
- 1.2. The district council adopted a parking strategy in 2016 which identified two key issues; a growing demand for additional parking capacity and a need for changes to parking regulations on-street in a few key locations. The county council has limited resources available to undertake on-street reviews so cabinet previously agreed to allocate funding of £35,000 to support the delivery of reviews in the district. The council has taken a lead in driving these reviews forward, organising and delivering the public consultations but working in partnership with the county. There is a statutory process for changing a TRO and following consultation, a detailed proposal would be formulated and the TRO process followed. This stage has to be processed by the county council's highways and legal teams.
- 1.3. A review of on street parking at Church Green and Corn Street, Witney was undertaken by the parking team. The results of the review were considered by Cabinet in November 2018, and an amount of £10,000 was committed to support the recommendations. A formal letter was sent to the county council with the recommendations and the financial offer. No response has been received to date.
- 1.4. Responses to the consultation carried out on parking in Woodstock were considered by Cabinet in December 2020. It was agreed that no further action be taken other than to advise the county council of the outcome of the survey. No allocation from the fund was made.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The balance on the fund remains at £35,000 with no deductions, however commitments have been made as follows;
- 2.2. The commitment of £10,000 to the County Council for Church Green and Corn Street.
- 2.3. Officers have identified a total of £2,000 worth of WODC officer resources was spent on the Church Green and Corn Street review, and a total of £5,000 worth of time spent on the Woodstock review.
- 2.4. With reference to the two key issues raised through the parking strategy of, 'a growing demand for additional parking capacity and a need for changes to parking regulations on-street in a few key locations'. The issue of demand for parking may be different post COVID-19 however the need for changes to the parking regulation on-street will remain.
- 2.5. The few key locations identified in the Action plan were Witney, Woodstock, Burford, Chipping Norton and the railway villages, (Charlbury and Long Hanborough). Two out of the five locations have been reviewed. One of the locations has had funding committed to date.
- 2.6. The following further allocations from the £35,000 fund are recommended:
 - Officer resources of £2,000 be allocated for the Church Green and Corn Street review
 - Officer resources of £5,000 be allocated for the Woodstock review.
 - An allocation of £7,000 be considered to support Woodstock Town Council for on-street improvements

- The remainder of the fund is allocated to the Town councils of Burford, Chipping Norton and Charlbury, and to Hanborough Parish Council.

Opening balance of Fund	£35,000
Church Green & Corn Street - committed to County Council - recommended allocation for staff resources	£10,000 £ 2,000
Woodstock - recommended to Woodstock - recommended allocation for staff resources	£7,000 £5,000
Burford - recommended to Burford Town Council	£4,000
Chipping Norton - recommended to Chipping Norton Town Council	£4,000
Charlbury and Long Hanborough - recommended to Charlbury Town Council - recommended to Hanborough Parish Council	£1,500 £1,500

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The recommendations in this report require no funding additional to the current fund balance, which will be fully utilised if the recommendations are approved.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There is a risk that this report may raise expectations of further financial support for on-street improvements from towns and parishes within the district.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. For any changes to the on-street Traffic Regulation Orders the County Council will carry out equality impact assessments.


7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1. Cabinet could decide not to allocate any of the funds or make different allocations to those recommended.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1. None.

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>Cabinet: Wednesday 21 April 2021</p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p>Agenda Item No. 7</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>Publica Business Plan 2020-22</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council: Email: Michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861000; Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report authors</p>	<p>Bill Oddy, Group Manager – Commercial Development Email: bill.oddy@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the Publica Business Plan 2020-22, first approved in June 2020, to note progress and recommend that the Leader approves the Plan.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A - Publica Business Plan 2020-22 Annex B - Infographic</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That Cabinet recommends that the Leader (as Shareholder) approves the Publica Business Plan 2020-22 subject to any comments it wishes to make.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publica Board • Cotswold District Council • Forest of Dean District Council • Cheltenham Borough Council

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1. As part of the establishment of Publica a number of items were identified as reserved matters for council approval to ensure that shareholder councils retained an element of control over their company. The reserved matters were approved in October 2016 as part of the governance principles underpinning the establishment of Publica.
- I.2. The reserved matters decisions fall to the shareholder representatives to determine. For each partner Council this is the Leader of the Council. To assist the Leader in reaching his decision the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet reviewed the Draft Business Plan in 2020 and were invited to suggest appropriate amendments before it was adopted.
- I.3. In 2020 all of the Shareholder Councils adopted the two year business plan (2020-22) which is contained at [Annex A](#) and this contains four priorities which are:
- Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions
 - Get commissioning right
 - Be a great service provider
 - Be a great place to work
- I.4. The Business Plan provides the vehicle to carry forward and address the issues identified in the Managing Director’s assessment. The priorities in the plan are focused on supporting the partner councils to deliver their priorities, improve Publica’s approach to commissioning, continue to improve services and customer experience using digital technology, and investing in staff and managers.
- I.5. A set of action plans support the four business plan priorities and strategic actions. Progress is monitored by the Publica Board and progress will be reported to each Shareholder Council as part of their scheduled scrutiny committee programmes.
- I.6. Although progress has been made with the delivery of the business plan action plans (<https://www.publicagroup.uk/media/1546/publica-business-plan-2020.pdf>) during the last year, in some areas this has been held back as a result of the response to the coronavirus pandemic, which has dominated much of Publica’s work on behalf of the partner councils during the last year. The table below outlines some examples of progress that has been made under each priority:

Priority	Progress Update
Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adoption of a Carbon Action Plan 2) Adoption of a Covid Recovery Plan 3) Delivery of affordable homes target 4) Work to support businesses and clinically extremely vulnerable residents during the pandemic - Outlined in appendix B 5) Adoption of an Investment Strategy
Get commissioning right	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Awarding contract extension to Ubico to deliver waste and grounds maintenance contract across West Oxfordshire 2) Launch of Members’ Portal to provide support to councillors 3) Production of Commissioning and Procurement User Guide and training for all staff

Priority	Progress Update
Be a great service provider	4) Launch of new council website and automation of basic enquiries 5) Implementation of replacement Revenues & Benefits system 6) Adoption of an Agile Working Strategy 7) Making data and business information live
Be a great place to work	8) Implementation of the new pay and grading structure 9) Introduction of new staff appraisal framework 10) Introduction of a new benefits platform 11) Registration for Investors in People accreditation and employee survey carried out 12) Commenced implementation of a leadership development programme

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The focus of the business plan is on supporting the partner councils to deliver their priorities, improve Publica's approach to commissioning, continue to improve services and customer experience using digital technology, and invest in its employees' development. Collectively, the fourteen strategic actions that support the business plan priorities form a cohesive programme achieving sustainable and embedded change over the business plan period.
- 2.2. The benefits of adopted a two year business plan were to enable a sustained focus on the priorities and the longer horizon fits better with the nature of the plan and priorities.
- 2.3. The current business plan is now a year old and half way through its life and the Publica Board reconsidered the priorities when it met on the 1 February and they believe they remain relevant and appropriate for the next year. The business plan is being presented to the Cabinet for consideration, recommending that it recommends to the Council Leader (as Shareholder representative) to give formal agreement to continuing with the current plan and priorities.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings are included in line with the Publica business case approved in October 2016. Publica is required to deliver these savings and Strategic Action 6 in the business plan outlines a commitment to deliver these.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. This Business Plan has to be adopted in accordance with The Members' Agreement for Publica Group Limited.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There are no specific risks in adopting the Publica business plan as it is based upon the principles and targets set out in the business case approved by the Council in 2016 and the approval of this business plan in 2020.

- 5.2. If the Council does not approve the plan there is a risk that the company will not be able to commence some of the activities necessary to deliver the savings set out in the business case and Council's MTFS.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The business plan has a priority to 'Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions' which includes the work to deliver the Council's Climate Action Strategy.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The report has no specific implications for any particular equality strand.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. The Cabinet is free to make comments in relation to the Plan, and proposed amendments will need to be agreed by the other partner councils.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Report 69 to Cabinet dated 19 October 2016 and associated minutes
- recommendations made by the Cabinet to Council on 26 October 2016 and associated minutes
- Report 117 to Cabinet dated 18 March 2020 and associated minutes

- 9.2. These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Woodgreen in Witney during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.

PUBLICICA

Delivering Local Priorities and Improving Services

BUSINESS PLAN 2020-22



FOREWORD

Publica has now reached an important milestone. The underlying business case for the partnership continues to be sound, providing scope for efficiencies, economies of scale and capacity for self-improvement which individual councils alone may not be able to achieve. Much has already been achieved in terms of budget savings, but the expectations and service requirements of our partner councils and residents have changed in the years since the decision was taken to establish the company and we need to continue to evolve to meet these changes.

In a report to the Publica Board in December 2019, the new Managing Director presented an assessment of 'the state of Publica', with a number of high-level recommendations for moving the business forward over the next two years. This Business Plan – deliberately short and concise – aims to convert these recommendations into four priorities and a number of key strategic actions to drive the business forward.

This year we will focus on supporting the partner councils to deliver the priorities set out in their Corporate Plans, improve our approach to commissioning, continue to improve services and customer experience using digital technology, deliver efficiency savings, and invest in our employees.

Collectively, the strategic actions that support the Business Plan priorities form a cohesive programme to achieve sustainable and embedded change over the Business Plan period.

This Business Plan has been adopted in accordance with The Members' Agreement for Publica Group (Support) Limited.

Information about Publica is available on its website (www.publicagroup.uk)

Cllr Rowena Hay
Leader
Cheltenham Borough
Council

Cllr Joe Harris
Leader
Cotswold District
Council

Cllr Tim Gwilliam
Leader
Forest of Dean District
Council

Cllr Michele Mead
Leader
West Oxfordshire District
Council

Sally Walker
Chair
Publica Group (Support)
Limited

Jan Britton
Managing Director
Publica Group (Support)
Limited

WHAT IS PUBLICA?

Publica is a council-owned not for profit company which delivers services for Cotswold, West Oxfordshire, and Forest of Dean District Councils and Cheltenham Borough Council. Publica additionally provides services to the Cheltenham Trust, Cheltenham Borough Homes and UBICO (an environmental services local authority company).

Each of the councils and clients retain their independence and identity but by working together and sharing resources, seek to maximise mutual benefit, leading to more efficient, effective delivery of local services.

During the last year Publica has supported the councils to deliver their priorities, implemented new digital capabilities and implemented new organisation-wide ways of working.



STRATEGIC FINANCIAL CONTEXT

Our partner councils have set out ambitious plans on behalf of residents in their new Corporate Plans. Climate change, affordable housing and creation of infrastructure relating to jobs and economic development are all priorities. These ambitions will need to be supported by significant investment programmes at a time when funding for local government remains under pressure, and customer expectations continue to increase. This will require us collectively to be creative and innovative in order to deliver our councils' ambitions within the resources available.

After a decade of austerity, local government finances are not as strong as we would like. The Local Government Association has identified a shortfall of £3.1bn in local authority funding and this is anticipated to rise to £8bn as spending pressures rise over the next few years. Many of these pressures fall on authorities with social care responsibilities, and the government has indicated this as their priority for funding.

As a consequence, district and borough councils in particular face a tightening financial position. Incentive-based funding schemes derived from house building are being replaced by other streams that are broader and less district focused.

Our partner councils are facing extreme funding pressures as set out within their published medium-term financial strategies. They have collectively identified potential budget gaps of over £15m over the next three years – in the order of 15-20% of gross revenue budgets.

This pressure on local government funding comes at a time when residents' expectations are rising and each partner council has ambitious plans to make a positive impact on their area.

Filling this funding gap after ten years of reduced spending on local services will be challenging in light of increased service expectations and will require us all to become more commercial in our outlook. Efficiencies and additional shared services will not fill this gap alone, and run the risk of removing resources needed for partner councils to deliver their priorities. We will, therefore, need to support our partner councils with their commercial ambitions and plans to increase earned income, and keep a sharp focus on existing and new revenue streams through the development and implementation of commercial strategies.



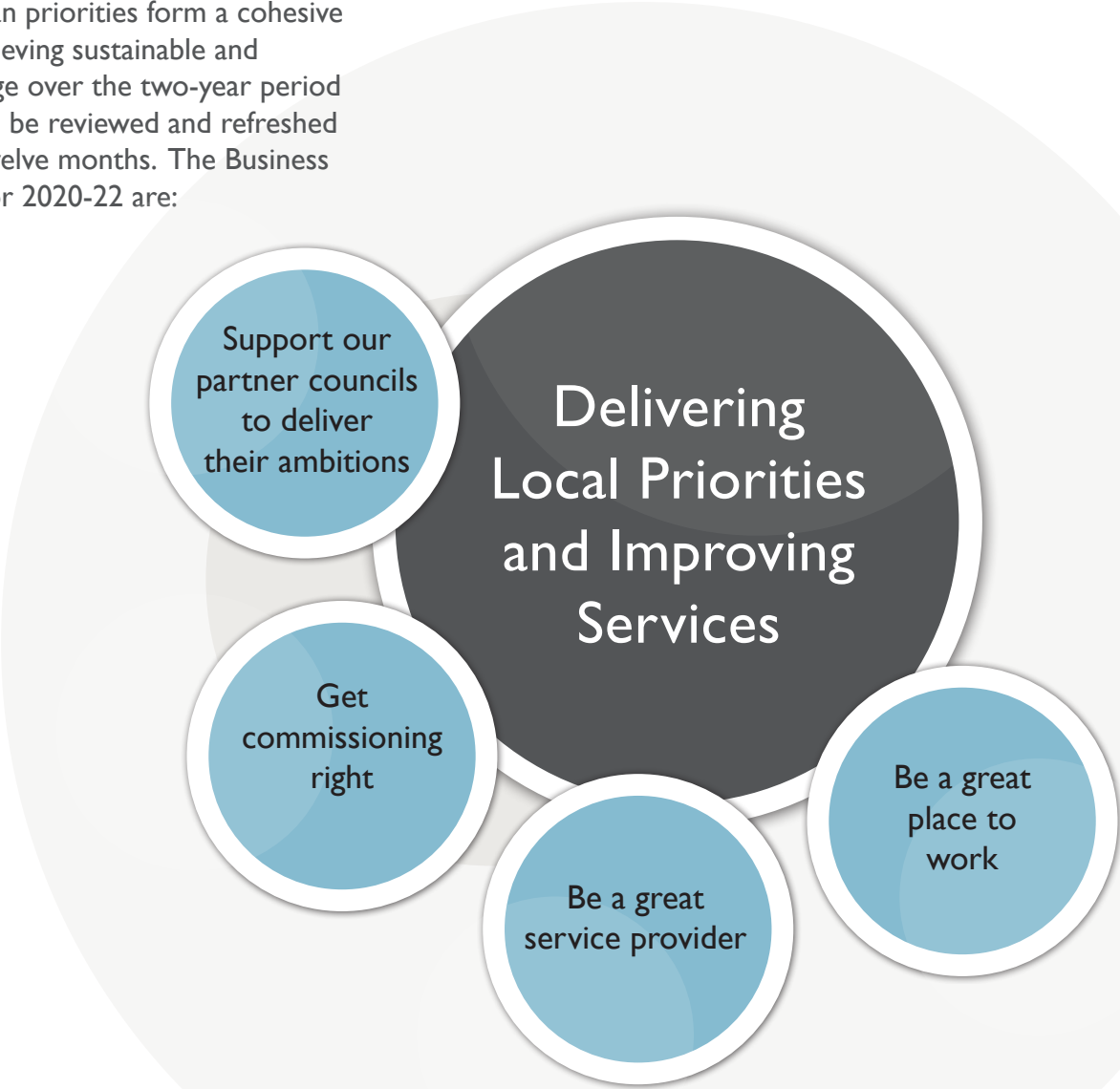
BUSINESS PLAN PRIORITIES

This Business Plan provides the vehicle to carry forward and address the issues identified in the new Managing Director's report over the next two years. The focus of the plan is on supporting the partner councils to deliver their priorities, improve our approach to commissioning, continue to improve services and customer experience using digital technology, deliver efficiency savings, and invest in our staff and managers. Collectively, these priorities form our vision:

Delivering local priorities and improving services

The Business Plan priorities form a cohesive programme, achieving sustainable and embedded change over the two-year period 2020-22 and will be reviewed and refreshed after the first twelve months. The Business Plan priorities for 2020-22 are:

Each of the strategic actions will have an action plan that will sit beneath this business plan to ensure the outcomes and benefits are delivered and there are clear milestones and measures of success. These plans will each have a Sponsoring Director and Lead Group Manager who, along with a core delivery team, will be responsible for developing and delivering the strategic actions. A framework will be put in place to allow the partner councils and the Publica Board to monitor progress.



OUR VALUES

Everything we do will be built on the following values:

Authentic

We act genuinely and transparently. We do the right thing for our customers, our organisation and each other.

Modern

We are not set in our ways. We are constantly looking to find ways to innovate and do things smarter.

Flexible

We are agile - adapting how and what we do to meet the demands of our customers, our colleagues, our local communities and the needs of the modern world.

Thoughtful

We take pride in delivering a great service, taking the time to understand and care about our customers and their needs.



SUPPORT OUR PARTNER COUNCILS TO DELIVER THEIR AMBITIONS

Our primary medium-term objective in relation to this priority is to develop Publica’s Management Team and focus Executive Directors and Group Managers on working with partner councils to lead Publica’s strategic, organisation-wide response to the priorities set out in the partner Councils’ Corporate Plans. This will extend to other managers within Publica and retained employees within the councils.

It is central to the aims of the councils and also the future success of Publica that the efforts of our senior team should align with the priorities set out in the partner councils’ Corporate Plans. These high-priority projects include climate emergency, affordable housing and growing commercial income. Other strategic priorities include commissioning, performance and resource management.

We are committed to supporting each partner council to deliver a number of significant projects, these include:

- The roll-out of Cotswold District Council’s new waste and recycling service
- Cheltenham Borough Council’s Corporate Plan priorities with effective and efficient business support services
- Forest of Dean District Council’s regeneration of Lydney Docks
- West Oxfordshire District Council’s Garden Village

We are also working with Ubico, a local authority owned waste company delivering services for the partner councils to implement an improved customer experience for residents using technology.

In our new approach, one of Publica’s Executive Directors will act as the Relationship Lead, working with each council and will be responsible for co-ordinating and leading our work to deliver that council’s priorities, as outlined in the table below.

Cheltenham Borough Council	Managing Director
Cotswold District Council	Executive Director (Commissioning)
Forest of Dean District Council	Executive Director (Services)
West Oxfordshire District Council	Executive Director (Finance)



Cllr Suzanne Williams (Cheltenham Borough Council) with volunteers at the Springbank Community Food Bank.

The following strategic actions will be delivered to support our partner councils deliver their ambitions:

Support our partner councils to deliver their ambitions

We will help our partner councils deliver their priorities by:-

We will help our partner councils deliver their priorities by:-

- Preparing climate change strategies and actionable proposals that will deliver against those strategies
Executive Director (Services)
- Assessing how we might deliver additional affordable homes and bring forward delivery proposals
Executive Director (Commissioning)
- Preparing strategies to support the local economy, employment and develop investment proposals
Executive Director (Commissioning)
- Supporting our partner councils with modernisation, improvement of services, and commercialisation
Executive Director (Finance)
- Effectively manage waste and recycling contracts, and ensure they are meeting the needs of residents
Managing Director
- Ensuring an effective parking infrastructure to support the local economy is in place
Managing Director
- Develop an effective performance and accountability framework
Executive Director (Commissioning)
- Ensuring high quality leisure provision is in place, and the councils work effectively in partnership to ensure the health and well-being of residents
Executive Director (Services)

1

Support our partner councils to deliver their ambitions

2

We will improve engagement with cabinet members, chairs of committees and key partners to translate council priorities into action plans to deliver their desired outcomes. Specifically, we will implement a structured, regular briefing programme to ensure that cabinet members and chairs of committees are fully briefed on plans, programmes, opportunities and risk.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Commissioning)

3

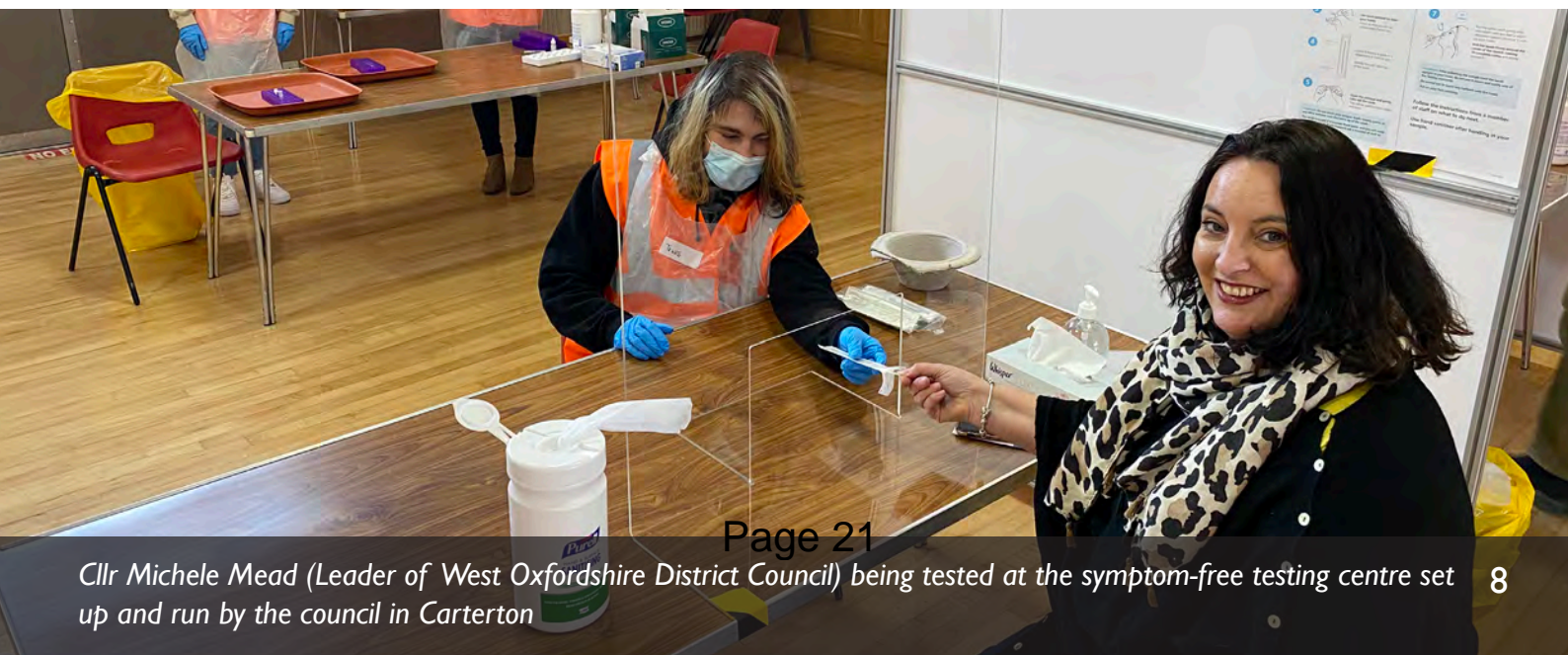
We will increase residents' awareness of the outcomes and benefits that the partner councils deliver by working with each partner council to develop effective communication strategies and plans.

Sponsoring Director:
Managing Director

4

We will assist our partner councils to achieve financial sustainability and deliver their medium term financial strategies by working with them to develop commercial plans to increase their revenue income.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Finance)



GET COMMISSIONING RIGHT

Publica is responsible for delivering the majority of services provided by Cotswold, West Oxfordshire and Forest of Dean District Councils. Cheltenham Borough Council, Ubico, Cheltenham Borough Homes and the Cheltenham Trust also receive business support services from Publica. For example, our Human Resources and Information Technology Teams continue to support Cheltenham Borough Council in delivering their Modernisation Programme. Publica is also responsible for commissioning other services; for example, leisure centres and waste collection, acting as a client agent for the partner councils.

As both service provider and commissioning agent, Publica must provide its partners with robust performance information and analysis so that they can hold both Publica and other third party service providers to account for the services we provide.

A high level statement on commissioning was produced in November 2019 and sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of the Councils' Heads of Paid Service and other statutory officers, shareholder representatives, Publica's Executive Director (Commissioning), and other senior staff within Publica. We will ensure that Publica conforms to the requirements of this statement.

We will support our partner councils to plan, procure, deliver and evaluate the services they provide, using a recognised commissioning cycle to deliver the most appropriate service and allow each partner to make informed decisions about commissioning.

We will develop a new performance framework, including quantitative and qualitative performance indicators together with an honest and transparent assessment of how Publica is performing against the councils' priorities. We will ensure that our governance arrangements are open and transparent, and allow the councils to properly hold Publica to account.

In addition, a new Programme and Project Management Framework will be implemented to ensure proper rigorous governance arrangements are in place for all major projects carried out on behalf of the partner councils, and to provide assurance that progress is being made as expected in delivering against each Council's high-priority projects.



The following strategic actions will be delivered to get commissioning right:

Get
commissioning
right

5

We will enable our partner councils to properly hold Publica to account for the services we provide on their behalf. By implementing the high level statement on commissioning, which sets out roles and responsibilities in the commissioning function, and producing a robust and transparent performance management framework.

Sponsoring Director:
Managing Director

6

We will work effectively with partner councils to drive efficiency savings and increase their income by securing, managing and monitoring contracted services to enable them to deliver their medium term financial strategies.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Finance)

7

We will ensure that each partner council's high-priority projects are delivered as expected by implementing stronger project governance arrangements for all significant projects, in line with the new Programme and Project Management Monitoring Framework.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Commissioning)



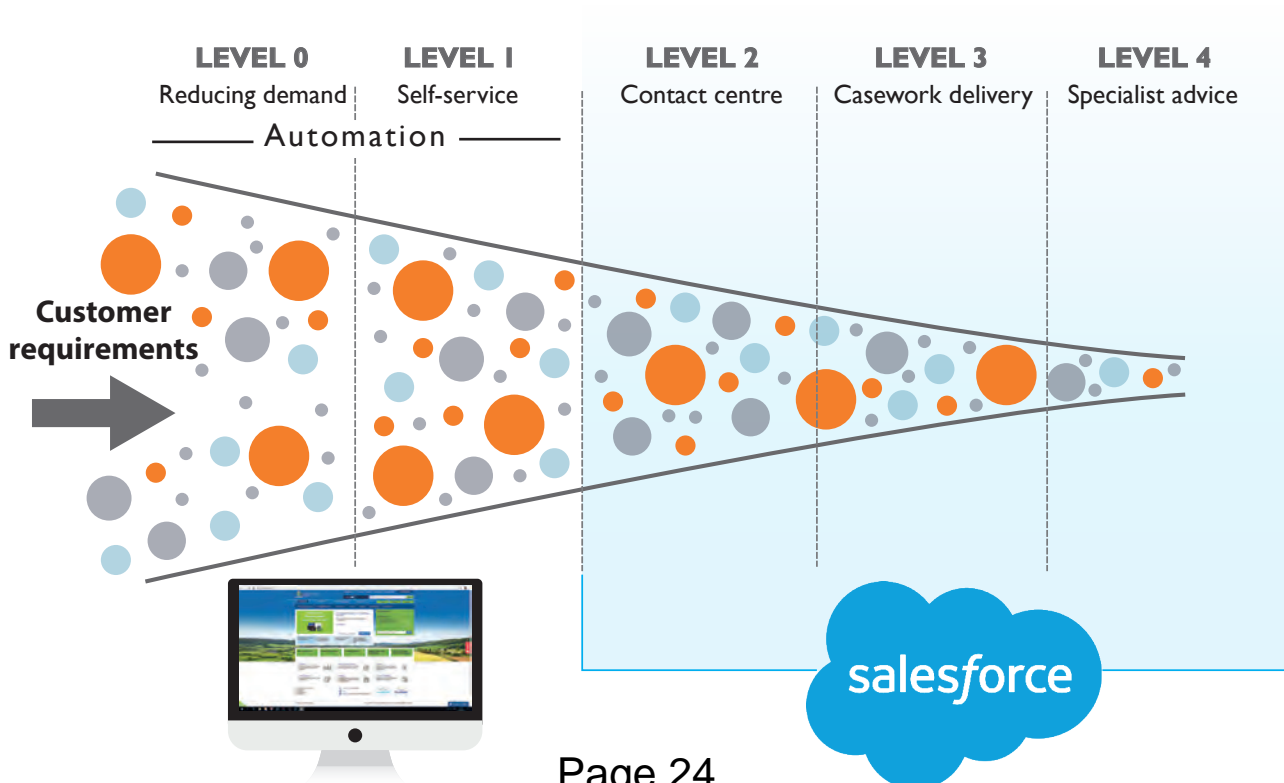
BE A GREAT SERVICE PROVIDER

We are committed to providing a positive customer experience in the delivery of services for the partner councils. Over the last year, we have obtained feedback from over 7,000 customers, and this has enabled us to determine more clearly what they expect from their council. This information has enabled us to identify six promises that will ensure customers have a great experience. These are:

- Easy access to services when it suits them
- To be kept informed of our progress with their case
- To listen to their feedback and act on it
- To receive a good quality service
- Prompt delivery of services
- To know who is dealing with their case, and for it to be dealt with in a consistent way

To meet the expectations of our partner councils' customers, we need to deliver on these six promises. This will involve making the best use of our skills and resources, and organising ourselves more effectively to ensure customers receive a great service.


We will provide modern digital services that meet customers' needs quickly and deal with customer issues before they have to contact the council, for example by allowing customers to track progress with their case. We are implementing an operating model using the Salesforce platform which in addition to the new websites at Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils, will enable us to deliver on the six promises. This work will be coordinated by a Service Improvement Group. The diagram below illustrates how we intend to manage demand from the councils' customers. Managing demand in this way will ensure that cases are dealt with quickly (Level 0 - 2), referring only the most complex cases to caseworkers and then specialist employees (Level 3 - 4), and using automation where it is appropriate.



Ensuring that customers have a consistently great experience is at the core of how we work. To achieve this we will make improvements to our services, including the introduction of new digital capabilities, that will improve the experience of council customers. We also recognise that not all residents want to use online digital solutions, so we will maintain our high-performing contact centre and reception areas for those customers who prefer to use more traditional methods of communication and engagement, whilst nudging those, who are willing, towards the internet.

We will also improve how we organise ourselves, modernise our outdated processes and develop a customer-centric culture to ensure that all of our staff and services are focused on meeting the needs of council customers.

The following strategic actions will be delivered to support being a great service provider.



Be a great service provider

8

We will create an environment, supported by robust and effective processes, where we look to maximise the potential value of all procurement opportunities by fully understanding the local supplier base / economy, utilising economies of scale and adopting innovative routes to market.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Commissioning)

9

We will provide a positive customer experience in the delivery of services for the partner councils by implementing the customer promise through delivery of the Salesforce Operating Model and improving outdated processes.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Finance)

10

We will improve how we organise ourselves, manage our resources and develop a customer-centric culture to ensure that we are focused on meeting the needs of the councils' customers.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Finance)

BE A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

We want Publica to be a great place to work, and to become an employer of choice that people are proud to work for, delivering great public services for our partner councils and local communities. It is our absolute conviction that our employees should be proud to work for the council or councils they serve, and proud to work for Publica. There is no contradiction, we succeed together.

If our employees feel well-led, supported, rewarded, safe, and empowered within a healthy workplace culture, we will have created the right conditions for high performance and productivity and excellent service delivery. In turn, this should improve our ability to attract and retain high quality employees whose commitment and effort are essential to our continual improvement of customer-focused services.

We will encourage and support all of our employees to do their job brilliantly, providing every person with the tools, support and development opportunities they need to excel at the role they perform. This will include regular appraisals to ensure all employees have clear objectives and an understanding of how their work supports our partner councils' priorities and the delivery of this Business Plan.


Publica will also ensure our commitment to health and safety not only meets, but exceeds relevant standards, and will put the welfare of employees at the forefront of what we do. We will work with the recognised trade unions to help refresh our approach to health, safety and welfare, as we have done with the implementation of new terms and conditions of employment for staff who transferred from our partner councils.

To enhance our reputation as an employer of choice, and support our partners and communities, we also need to demonstrate a clear commitment to our social and environmental responsibilities and make a meaningful impact in these areas. We will implement our Corporate Social Responsibility policy and develop a carbon reduction (climate action) plan for Publica that complements and extends the climate action plans of our partner councils.

We will use the Investors in People (IiP) framework to guide our strategic approach to becoming an employer of choice, by delivering our People Strategy aspirations:

IiP Framework	Publica People Strategy Aspirations
Leading: Leading and inspiring people Living our values and behaviours Empowering and involving people	Great Leadership: Our leaders will be inspirational role models ensuring we make the lives of residents and businesses easier with services that our staff are proud to deliver.
Supporting: Managing performance Recognising and rewarding high performance Structuring work	Great People: We will attract and retain talented people, develop their strengths and provide excellent opportunities for personal, professional and career development through ongoing investment in them.
Improving: Building capacity Delivering continuous improvement Creating sustainable success	Great Culture: We will aspire to deliver services that are responsive, flexible and focused on our customers' needs. We will create a climate of well-being/support/inclusion so that each individual feels valued and listened to. We will work to create one team, working collaboratively to support our partner councils' priorities.

The following Strategic Actions will be delivered to support being a great place to work



Be a great
place to
work

11

We will attract and retain high quality employees by ensuring that they are trained, appraised, recognised and rewarded fairly, working in a safe environment with the highest standards of welfare and support. We will achieve this by implementing our People Strategy and working closely with our recognised trade unions.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Services)

12

We will implement the pay and grading framework, working closely with our recognised trade unions to ensure the approach is fair, modern, flexible and reflects the diverse nature of the roles performed by Publica employees, to recognise and reward existing employees and help attract high quality individuals.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Finance)

13

We will inspire, motivate and empower employees by implementing a Leadership Development Programme, based on the principle of “leadership at all levels” including political and commercial awareness.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Services)

14

We will create the right conditions for achieving continuous improvement, high performance and productivity, by improving our HR practices using the Investors in People (IiP) framework and attaining IiP accreditation.

Sponsoring Director:
Executive Director (Services)

During the COVID-19 crisis, we've been busy supporting residents, businesses, and local people, and in 2020 we provided the following services:



1,260

Residents given emergency support via the Help Hub



69,501

Telephone enquiries dealt with by the Council during COVID-19 lockdown



£34.9M

Total amount in business grants paid out by West Oxfordshire District Council



£17.5M

Total amount in rate relief to businesses paid out by West Oxfordshire District Council



748

Extra tonnes of recycling collected as compared to April - December 2019




481

Extra tonnes of food waste collected as compared to April - December 2019



745

Extra tonnes of garden waste collected as compared to April - December 2019

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	West Oxfordshire District Council
Name and date of Committee	Cabinet: Wednesday 21 April 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 8
Subject	Environmental Services In-Cab Technology System
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Norman MacRae, Cabinet Member for Environment; Email: norman.macrae@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Scott Williams, Business Manager – Waste Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To present Cabinet with a business case on the costs, benefits and risks of procuring an Environmental Services In-Cab Technology system and seek approval to proceed in procuring the system using the capital budget of up to £140,000, which is set aside in the 2021-22 capital programme.
Annex	None
Recommendations	<p>(a) That the business case be supported and approval granted for the allocation of up to £140,000 set aside in the capital programme for 2021-22, to be used to procure and implement the Environmental Services In-Cab Technology system from Yotta (including software licences and maintenance costs in year 1); and</p> <p>(b) That it be noted that a proportion of the revenue savings in the Ubico contract costs of at least £50,000 p.a. will go to fund the software licences and maintenance costs of £34,103 per annum in years two to four inclusive of the contract.</p>
Corporate priorities	The proposal contained within this report supports the Council priority: Climate Action - Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity.
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Councillor Norman MacRae and Senior Council and Publica Officers.

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Ubico Ltd which performs the environmental services (waste, recycling, trade waste and container deliveries) on behalf of the Council uses mainly manual processes to support them in undertaking their duties. These manual processes are resource intensive and there is the opportunity for mistakes to happen which affect the service received by our customers and add to the costs being paid for by the Council – such as returning to missed collections.
- 1.2. A piece of work was commissioned by Cotswold District Council in 2018 on behalf of a number of partners including West Oxfordshire, to examine the business case for procuring an Environmental Services Management System with In-Cab Technology.
- 1.3. Following the completion of the initial procurement exercise, further partners wishing to procure the system are able to call-off a contract on the same terms, rather than having to complete a separate procurement with increased cost and time.

Environmental Services System with In-Cab Technology

- 1.4. In-Cab Technology is a widely used system available on the market which allows live data to be viewed and updated by teams involved in delivering environmental services. The driver of a waste collection round would use a touch-screen display with clear, simple icons to view everything the crew needed to know about their route. The built-in GPS provides vehicle tracking and also ensures the display shows only the premises/jobs of immediate interest. The round each crew collects from is pre-loaded onto the system and the crew then have to click to confirm they have completed collections from each location.
- 1.5. Each individual property is listed, i.e. houses 1 – 20 on The High Street using the Local Land Property Gazetteer (LLPG) unique property reference numbers, which enables crews to indicate if a property has not presented waste, a bin is contaminated, side waste has been left etc.
- 1.6. Assisted collections can be highlighted and where there have been problems i.e. a repeat missed collection, an address can be flagged and crews can be required to positively mark that they have collected from that property before the screen allows them to move onto the next location.
- 1.7. Crews benefit from faster round completion by having an on screen map of roads & properties to collect from, which is particularly useful for drivers/crew members who are unfamiliar with the round and/or agency staff covering holidays/sickness. The system reduces the need for local knowledge and prevents a large amount of human error which results in recalls for missed collections decreasing. In addition, the system eliminates large amounts of paperwork having to be completed by drivers such as vehicle check sheets and round problem sheets, as everything can be done using the tablets.
- 1.8. Back-office staff see information reported from the In-Cab tablets in real time, not needing to wait until the end of day when round problem sheet paperwork is returned and entered on to the system manually. This means that they can respond quickly to customer services and provide feedback on customer requests or complaints, a stage that is frequently missing at present. Customers receive a much improved level of service, missed collections significantly reduce which lowers call volumes and as a result, and costs to the Council are also significantly reduced.

- 1.9. Using bespoke software designed for domestic waste, crews can view and complete their daily work, job by job. Changes to a crew's work plan can be made "on the fly" allowing jobs to be quickly reassigned from crew to crew during times of vehicle breakdown for example.
- 1.10. On screen information is also available about gate access codes, multiple bins, other special arrangements and important health and safety guidance. This is all linked in real time to the back office system which has in built navigation, complete with low bridge, weight/width restrictions alerts, guides the crew through their working day to tipping points, depots and other key locations.
- 1.11. Crews can quickly record completed work, service exceptions such as bins not out, contamination, blocked access to streets/premises and this is relayed straight to the Salesforce system at the Council and the Ubico depot. This is as opposed to the current method of recording everything manually on problem sheets which are handed in at the end of the day.
- 1.12. Pre-set and ad-hoc messages can be sent between the crews from the In-Cab computer to the back office team and vice versa.
- 1.13. In addition to information being recorded about the service, vehicle safety inspections can be completed and the crew can electronically record minor and major defects and log rectification times. They can also record start and end of day time and mileage readings to assist with periodic rounds optimisation initiatives.
- 1.14. The waste and recycling services utilises over thirty operational vehicles, most of which would benefit from using an In-Cab system. The system is web-based and customer services teams can see live data, see where crews are and the time they were at each location (with usually just a short delay).

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. Cotswold District Council (CDC) has procured and implemented an Environmental Services Management System with In-Cab Technology from Yotta.
- 2.2. The CDC system was integrated with Salesforce this year and is now in the process of enabling the benefits to be realised as outlined in the business case. This means there is now the opportunity for West Oxfordshire District Council to purchase the system, using the set aside capital funding of £140k.
- 2.3. The implementation of this system would offer a number of financial, service related and carbon reduction benefits to the Council and Residents as follows:

Benefits to the Customer:

- Fewer missed collections as a result of more accurate information to direct the crews; this is particularly the case if agency crews are covering annual leave, staff sickness, or if crews are redirected to complete another round due to vehicle breakdown etc.
- Fewer missed collections for vulnerable residents with health or mobility issues requiring Assisted collections, which will be specifically identified on the Mobile tablet that the crews will use.
- Customer can view, via the online form (or Customer Services can advise), why their bin was not collected, which will display a red flag against the reason for non-collection e.g. broken lid, bin not presented.
- The Customer receives a quicker response to their enquiry or service request as Customer Services have access to more accurate and more up-to-date

information (the Mobile digital Tablets sync with Alloy, the back office system, every 15 minutes).

Benefits to Ubico:

- Crews have accurate, up-to-date information on collection rounds, issues and special requirements such as assisted collections or coded access for communal bin stores. This greatly reduces the risk of missed collections occurring.
- Accurate up-to-date information promotes continuity of service where crews may be unfamiliar with a particular round e.g. covering for annual leave and/or sickness, or if agency crews are required.
- Reduction in mileage completed, as the system guides crews precisely around their collection route. This will have a direct benefit in reducing fuel used, vehicle wear and tear and associated reduced carbon benefits.
- Reduction in spurious missed bin reports, as non-presented bins, lockouts etc. will be supported with photographic evidence; this will reduce the incidence of return journeys to collect (genuine missed bin reports may be more easily discerned).
- Reduction in 'missed misses' – in some cases, properties are particularly difficult to locate, these can be accurately plotted on the Mobile system to guide a crew to precise locations.
- Locations where particular care is required can be easily added to the system e.g. close to schools, blind corners, reversing manoeuvres.
- Crews' reliance on paper based recording largely eliminated as all information for completion of rounds will be carried on the digital tablet. This will reduce the risk of driver/crew error.
- Two-way communication between crews, back office and Customer Services.

Benefits to the Council:

- Reduced missed collections – increasing customer satisfaction and reducing the significant operational cost (staff time, fuel etc) of returning for missed collections. Estimated at c£50k p.a. if missed bin return journeys are reduced by 75%.
- Fewer calls to Customer Services – as a result of fewer missed collections
- Fewer 'missed bin' reports from the customer, as the online form will clearly state why a container has not been collected e.g. broken lid, bin not presented. This should result in a reduction in spurious missed bin reports.
- Customer Services will have quicker access to information regarding waste collections e.g. that a bin was contaminated, not presented, that the crew is delayed etc. This will help to resolve more enquiries at first point of contact without the need to contact Ubico or Waste Services' back office staff or call the customer back.
- Two-way communication between crews, back office and Customer Services.

2.4. To achieve the financial and non-financial benefits of introducing the system, the Council will need to adopt a policy of not returning to collect missed bins/recycling containers due to lack of presentation by the householder. Whilst the current Environmental Services Policy does put the onus on residents to present their waste and recycling containers by 6am on their correct scheduled collection day, it does

not explicitly state that collection crews will not return to properties where they have not been presented on time. In support of introducing an In-Cab System, this stipulation would be added as part of updating the Environmental Services Policy.

- 2.5. The Publica Technical Design Authority (TDA) reviewed the proposal as part of the procurement exercise and concluded that 'the Yotta In-cab solution has good APIs (application programming interfaces) for integration'. They felt that 'whilst there would be the requirement of integration investment to link the solution to Salesforce, from a technical perspective they are happy with this solution'.
- 2.6. This report is due to be considered by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 15 April, and Cabinet will be advised of any views arising from that meeting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. A full EU compliant procurement process was completed by Cotswold District Council, which named West Oxfordshire District Council as a potential future partner wanting to procure the same system, and so there is a facility in place for contract call-off, without the need to complete a separate procurement.
- 3.2. Officers have set out the proposed Council requirement for refuse, recycling, food, garden waste and trade refuse collections and container deliveries to Yotta and they have provided a quote based on the same terms as the CDC procurement of **£229,900** over a four year contract period.
- 3.3. This cost is made up of a one-off capital cost of **£127,591** in year 1 for the hardware and software needed to set the system up and the licences, then **£34,103** revenue for each of the following three years for maintenance and licences to operate the system totalling **£229,900**.
- 3.4. In the period 1 January to 31 December 2019 (pre-pandemic), the Council received 4,471 reports of missed collections from residents.
- 3.5. Ubico has calculated a round trip from the Downs Road Depot to Witney is four Miles = £19.11 in operating costs. Downs Road to Great Rollright (Round Trip of 40 Miles) = £127.38. The average of these = £73.24.
- 3.6. Taking account of the fact that a large proportion of missed collections are returned to while collection crews are out completing their rounds, it is sensible to take a conservative estimate of each missed collection costing the Council £15 and on the basis that a large proportion will be prevented, it would equate to an estimated saving of approximately £67,000 p.a.
- 3.7. By comparison, if 75% of missed collection return journeys were eliminated then the estimated saving would be £50,000 p.a.
- 3.8. Comparing this whole-life system cost £229,900 including a small contingency of £10,100 (£240,000) and offsetting the anticipated saving of eradicating a large proportion of missed collections (£67,000), the estimated payback period of procuring the Yotta system would be approximately **4 years**, so it would be fully paid back within the life of the contract.
- 3.9. If 75% of missed bins were eradicated, then the comparison anticipated saving of £50,000 would result in an estimated payback period of **8 years** because of having to take into account the annual software licences and maintenance costs of £34,103 p.a.
- 3.10. However, both costs estimates are based on each missed collection costing the Council £15 currently and in addition, it's likely that further savings could be made

by realising process efficiencies which if cashable, would benefit in accelerating the payback period or providing additional savings in time/resources.

- 3.11. For the purposes of presenting a conservative cost/benefit analysis, these potential savings have not been taken into account. Following implementation of the In-Cab system, a systems and process review would be completed by officers to identify the secondary benefits and opportunities available.
- 3.12. The Council experienced significant problems during the waste service operational and contract changes in October 2017, which highlighted the need to track services and effectively manage missed collections. Whilst services have improved since that implementation, an In-Cab system provides the opportunity to further improve service standards for residents and reduce the cost of failure for the Council.
- 3.13. Once the system was in place and the benefits realised, there may be further opportunities such as integrating the street cleansing or grounds maintenance services, but given the significantly smaller resources used in these areas, this would be presented as a separate business case, with a full appraisal of the costs versus benefits.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Any legal implications associated with this proposal are covered in the Council's finance and procurement regulations.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. All risks surrounding the implementation of the Environmental Services System with In-Cab Technology for Cotswold District Council were fully mitigated and the system was successfully integrated with Salesforce and launched, so as the Council uses the same system (Salesforce) and the same service provider (Ubico), there is no reason to assume that any risks couldn't be similarly mitigated.
- 5.2. If approval is provided for the Yotta system to be procured, then a dedicated Project Board (supported by a Project Team) will be configured to provide the necessary governance for the implementation and identify, oversee and manage any risks accordingly.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS


- 6.1. The introduction of an In-Cab system would reduce the mileage required to be completed by Ubico, because it would guide the crew around their collection route and would largely eliminate mistakes. This would have a direct benefit in reducing the fuel used and associated carbon usage. In addition, it's likely that the Council would see missed collections reduce meaning that return journeys to collection areas would not need to be made, which would again contribute in lowering the fuel and carbon usage.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1. The alternative to procuring an Environmental Service In-Cab Technology system would be to continue with the current method of service delivery.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1. None.

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	Cabinet: Wednesday 21 April 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 9
Subject	Agreeing the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: 01993 861000; Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	<p>This report introduces a final version of the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision) attached as Appendix 1. Cabinet will recall that it previously considered and supported a version endorsed by the Growth Board (the Board) for consultation</p> <p>The report updates Cabinet on the consultation process, results and briefly summarise 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.</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 - Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Growth Board Report on Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Strategic Vision Consultation summary</p>
Recommendations	<p>(a) That the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire be approved; and</p> <p>(b) That Officers be requested to consider how to embed the Vision's ambitions for Oxfordshire in future plans and strategies of the Council.</p>
Corporate priorities	The Growth Board brings together all of the Principal Councils in Oxfordshire, together with other key partners, to work cooperatively on strategic issues. As such it is relevant to all of the key priorities identified in the Council Plan.
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The Growth Board carried out a public consultation on the Strategic Vision and the final version includes changes in response to comments made.

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Cabinet will recall that it received a report in December 2020 detailing the Board's ambition to develop a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision).
- 1.2. 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 (OxPlan), 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.

2. MAIN POINTS

Consultation on the Vision

- 2.1. The Vision approved by Councils and the Board last year was for consultation and engagement, both with key growth board partners and wider public and stakeholders.
- 2.2. Accordingly, comprehensive consultation and engagement process were held over November and December of 2020. This consultation included a report and presentation to Cabinet in December 2020 and a member workshop.
- 2.3. 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 provides detail on the responses.
- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. 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.
- 2.7. The Vision has developed because of this consultation exercise. Officers 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.
- 2.8. 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

- 2.9. 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 in March and subsequent agreement by all partners needs to be in place before this consultation begins in the summer.

Next steps for the Vision

- 2.10. 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.
- 2.11. Officers 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
- 2.12. 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.

Conclusions

- 2.13. 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.
- 2.14. 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.
- 2.15. The Growth Board considered the revised Vision at its meeting on 22 March. The Board endorsed the Vision and asked that each partner considered agreeing to the Vision.
- 2.16. Accordingly, Cabinet are requested to consider and agree the Vision as attached at Appendix I to this Cabinet report

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. None.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Oxfordshire Growth Board is a Statutory Joint Committee. As such, agreement to the Strategic Vision is an executive function which falls to the respective local authority Cabinets to agree.

5. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

5.1. Cabinet could chose not to approve the Strategic Vision.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE

6.1. The Strategic Vision recognises that climate changes is an important issue for Oxfordshire. It therefore provides high level support for the actions being taken in West Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development

Our Vision for Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is a unique location: what we do here matters, not just for the benefit of our residents and communities, but also for the wellbeing of the UK and communities across the globe.

We are at the frontier in addressing and solving the most pressing challenges facing humanity. We want Oxfordshire to thrive so that the lives of current and future generations are improved.

To achieve this will require bold, collaborative, and inclusive thinking to deliver real and lasting change in ways that build resilience and enhance environmental, social, and economic wellbeing. We will draw on our world class economy, our spirit of discovery and Oxfordshire's global reputation to power this change through the adoption of clean and sustainable technology.

Our aim is to utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire to realise sustainable growth, and shape healthy, resilient communities in which it is possible for all residents to thrive and which can be an exemplar for the rest of the UK and other locations internationally. If we are successful, by 2050 Oxfordshire will:

- have achieved carbon neutral status, and be accelerating towards a carbon negative future, removing more carbon than it emits each year. Energy production will be sustainable.
- be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than that in which we found it. The natural environment will be more biodiverse, support social, economic and ecological resilience and have the capacity to adapt to change.
- have a healthier and happier population with better physical and mental health. Young people will feel confident, positive and excited about their future and people will spend more of their later life active, in good health and with care available in their communities to meet their changing needs.
- be a globally competitive economy which is sustainable, diverse and inclusive, generating high quality, productive and knowledge-based employment for our communities. It will utilise the county's strengths and resources, including its world-class universities and world-leading research, innovation and technology assets. There will be improved educational attainment and a skills system aligned to the needs of business and communities, helping to provide the conditions in which all Oxfordshire's people can benefit and thrive.

continued ...

- be a more equal place, supported by inclusive growth that gives everyone a fair chance in life to prosper. Deprivation and disadvantage will have been tackled wherever it manifests itself in our urban and rural areas, and discrimination will have been removed.
- enjoy a built and historic environment which is rich and diverse, comprising high quality places where people want to live, work, visit and invest. Our rich and distinctive internationally recognised heritage assets, visitor economy and vibrant cultural offer will have been further enhanced and there will be improved access to them.
- have energy efficient, well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of our growing economy, young people, residents and future generations.
- have transformed movement and connectivity within the County and beyond. There will be greater digital connectivity and physical mobility in and between places in ways that enhance environmental, social and economic wellbeing, with an emphasis on sustainable travel, including walking and cycling.
- have flourishing, diverse and vibrant communities rooted in pride with our local, national and international connections and a strong sense of civic identity. Individuals and families will support each other in partnership with sustainable public services, a thriving voluntary and community sector and be connected to dynamic and socially responsible businesses.

This Strategic Vision has been prepared by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Growth Board comprises the six councils of Oxfordshire and key strategic partners. It facilitates collaborative efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

The six Oxfordshire Councils are Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council & Oxfordshire County Council.

The Growth Board's key strategic partners are Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Oxfordshire Skills Board, Oxford Universities, Homes England, DEFRA, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Network Rail & Highways England.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. It has beautiful countryside, high quality landscapes and areas important for nature conservation, and rich and diverse built and historic environments formed from the fabric of its market towns and villages and the vibrant, diverse cultural offer and historic environment of the City of Oxford.
- 1.2 It is home to a cross-section of world leading institutions and global innovators which help power an extraordinary and unique economy of national and international significance. It is at the frontier in tackling the most difficult challenges facing humanity: from the isolation of penicillin and advancement in surgical technologies which save lives, the revolution in human communications through the creation of lithium-ion batteries, to the development and manufacturing of a vaccine for the world in the fight against COVID-19, and identifying solutions focused on the long-term societal challenges created by climate change.
- 1.3 These characteristics, together with its proximity and connections with other places, are key reasons why people choose to live, work, visit and invest here.
- 1.4 But there are also challenges. Oxfordshire is one of the fastest growing economies in the UK, powered by its dynamic and innovative businesses which are pioneering across a range of sectors, but it is a County with significant and persistent inequalities. There are also challenges linked to congestion, housing affordability and the natural and built environments. All these impact on Oxfordshire's residents and businesses.
- 1.5 Oxfordshire is facing significant changes. Some of these are the results of global trends such as climate change and the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other changes reflect Oxfordshire's status as an international centre of world leading research and innovation with a hive of knowledge-intensive economic activity at the universities and science, technology and business parks. And, we form part of the network of places that together form the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – a key national economic priority.
- 1.6 We also now have a better understanding that decisions made as a result of emerging plans and strategies for Oxfordshire have the potential to, and very probably will, impact (positively or negatively) on local, national and global emissions in the short, medium and long-term. The pandemic has shown how people in Oxfordshire come together to support one another in their communities, has demonstrated the importance to people's health, of easy access to nature and high quality green space. It has given us a glimpse of a world less dependent on personal travel and one more reliant on digital connectivity.
- 1.7 Recognising these opportunities and challenges leads us to want to ensure that Oxfordshire's plans, strategies and programmes are ambition-led and outcome focussed. Accordingly, we believe it is timely for Oxfordshire to set out its common and shared Vision for the future based on our unique, special assets and heritage.
- 1.8 Our Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire sets out what the county should look like and how we can achieve it. The outcomes we are seeking are set out on the

first two pages of this document. They will form the basis against which we measure progress. We hope this Strategic Vision will be read by residents and partners within and beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it.

- 1.9 We know from public consultations and stakeholder engagement that within Oxfordshire there is an appetite to see a different approach to place-shaping: one that is more ambitious, radical, innovative and creative¹, embracing social, economic and environmental wellbeing to achieve a happier, healthier, greener future². We have bold and dynamic economic ambitions³ brought to life in an investment plan⁴, and innovative work on inclusive growth⁵ has highlighted a need to actively recognise and address the inequalities of our success and ensure all communities have a stake in the future prosperity of Oxfordshire.
- 1.10 This Strategic Vision has been shaped by public discussion and debate. Engagement with our communities and stakeholders revealed strong and wide support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire and for the broad intent of the ambitions set out in an engagement draft document. We have used the detailed feedback we received to further refine and strengthen our Vision.
- 1.11 This Strategic Vision is intended to be transformative. Addressing climate change and the health and quality of our natural environment, our globally significant economy will improve the wellbeing of our communities; an exemplar to the rest of the UK and other international locations. It considers wellbeing in the round based on an understanding that the different dimensions of wellbeing are intrinsically linked.
- 1.12 We want to facilitate a step-change in our approach to planning for and delivering sustainable development for Oxfordshire, challenging the norm and drawing on new ways of thinking to provide the best possible future for our residents. For this reason, our Strategic Vision is positive and optimistic, and we have set our ambition high.
- 1.13 Our Strategic Vision is high-level. We fully recognise the rich variety of places that make up Oxfordshire. We value the character of these different settings – our city, towns and villages and our natural and historic environments – and recognise that delivering our shared Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect local circumstances, as well as the nationally significant role Oxfordshire plays in the success of the UK.
- 1.14 Activity to achieve ambitions for zero-carbon and increased biodiversity will need different design solutions in the high-density environments of the city and urban areas than in rural settings. This happens best through inclusive

¹ Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Part One) Consultation Report, June 2019

² One Planet Oxfordshire: Our Shared Vision, Bioregional, 2019

³ Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy, 2019

⁴ Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan, 2020

⁵ Led by Oxfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership under Oxfordshire's 'Social Contract' and by the City of Oxford

processes and a detailed understanding of places and communities to arrive at solutions that work for them.

- 1.15 This Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the vision for any of our communities or partner organisations but instead provide a balanced framework through which these can be developed.
- 1.16 This Strategic Vision is overarching. It cuts across many sectors and is designed to inform a range of plans, strategies and programmes. It complements the plans and strategies already in place and agreed by our partner organisations and the Growth Board. It also forms part of the informal interface between national and local policy, helping to deliver national objectives and priorities, as well as helping to maximise the benefits to Oxfordshire of decisions made by others.
- 1.17 Finally, the Strategic Vision recognises that positive change will evolve and take time. Some of what we are seeking to achieve is beyond our direct control. This Strategic Vision is a pathway for long-term change towards a more sustainable future. While our priorities are unlikely to alter over the short to medium-term, our approach needs to be resilient to change over time. Although there is a high level of uncertainty over a 30-year period, particularly around external factors including climate and technological change, new opportunities to align environmental, social and economic needs to deliver sustainable development in different and better ways will emerge. This will position Oxfordshire to challenge and capitalise on the scope for innovation over the longer-term.

2. Achieving our Strategic Vision through Good Growth

- 2.1 Our Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's future is driven by improvements to people's wellbeing. This is reflected in our definition of what 'good growth' will look like in Oxfordshire.
- 2.2 National planning policies require Oxfordshire to plan positively for growth in ways that achieve the three overarching objectives of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Growth can be defined narrowly in terms of expansion in numbers of homes and jobs and economic output. But growth can also encompass progress based on improvements in circumstances for individuals and society and in the quality of our environmental assets and natural resources. Rather than seeing economic, social and environmental objectives as competing demands that need to be balanced, our approach for Oxfordshire is to align and integrate these priorities, so that economic progress benefits business, society and the environment. The economy, environment, connectivity, community assets, housing and public services are all key factors in giving Oxfordshire's residents – current and future – the best opportunity to prosper and thrive.
- 2.3 We think this is more in line with sustainable development principles and thinking and a better approach to achieving transformative and long-term sustainable development. This is how we will approach growth, delivering change that is distinctively 'Oxfordshire'. Good growth will focus on progress in improving health and wellbeing, look to decouple growth from the consumption

of finite resources and transition to a low carbon future, address inequalities and prioritise our natural and built environment, alongside greater resilience to climate and economic change. We also want this good growth to be genuinely inclusive which means inequality – a pervasive determinant of wellbeing – must be addressed wherever it exists in our diverse county. We will need to tackle deprivation and disadvantage in whatever form throughout the county, be it in the City of Oxford, our towns or in our rural areas.

- 2.4 Oxfordshire's economy represents a crucial and unique attribute. The County's position as a global innovation hub brings important opportunities both to local communities and to the future of the UK. We recognise the positive benefits that economic prosperity can bring and the critical interdependencies between a flourishing economy and successful outcomes for local communities, public services and the environment.
- 2.5 Economic prosperity is an important part of the roadmap to achieving our ambition for Oxfordshire and business a key strategic partner. Business creates employment opportunities for our residents, including our young people. Business also creates the wealth which sustains and supports public services, and the technological innovation that can be increasingly transformational in shaping places and building sustainable communities. Finally, because so much of Oxfordshire is rural, we must not lose sight of the particularly important role the agricultural sector can play in helping deliver our biodiversity and climate ambitions and in advancing new technologies and innovation in sustainable farming.

'Good Growth' in Oxfordshire will:

- Be **clean and green**, placing the county at the leading edge of UK and global de-carbonisation efforts by maximising all opportunities to significantly reduce Oxfordshire's carbon footprint, and increasing natural capital across the county.
- Be **sustainable**, focusing development in ways that enhance quality of place and at locations which enable people to live and work nearby, improving digital connectivity and avoiding unnecessary travel in the first instance, but using opportunities to increase movement by sustainable and active modes of travel when needed.
- Embrace **innovation** based on our technology sectors and knowledge-intensive activity, and develop new innovative solutions for working, learning, mobility, health care, resource management, sustainable design and improved public services.
- Be **healthy and inclusive**, with all development addressing inequalities and contributing positively to the overall health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire's communities, environment and economy.
- Facilitate **environmental improvements** and make **efficient** use of Oxfordshire's natural resources and land.
- Enhance and expand access to the county's internationally significant **historic environment** and **cultural** and **heritage assets**.
- Support diverse, accessible employment, generating a highly productive and **inclusive economy** based on our world-class research, innovation and technology.
- Build **resilience** to change, with growth planned in ways that: build on strengths and assets to support communities during periods of change; support economic diversity and can accommodate changes in technology; recognise changes in the way that people live and work and changing demographics; and respond to global impacts, particularly from climate and economic changes.
- Expect **high-quality** development which will have a positive impact on communities in terms of design, energy and water efficiency and public realm, utilises low impact building and construction methods and materials, and is properly supported by the necessary infrastructure including excellent digital connectivity. Everything we build or design in Oxfordshire will be fit for purpose in the world of 2050, respond to different circumstances, contribute to Oxfordshire's sense of distinctiveness and rich variety, and support connected communities.

- 2.6 Our definition of 'good growth' forms the basis for a set of **Guiding Principles**. Taken together, our outcomes, the definition of 'good growth' and the guiding principles, form the foundation for our overarching approach to long-term sustainable development for Oxfordshire, and for developing our plans, strategies and programmes.

Guiding Principle 1: We will reverse the impacts of climate change

We will reduce the impacts of climate change by making climate action a top priority in our decisions. We will maximise opportunities through our plans, strategies and programmes, to reverse the impacts of climate change, demonstrating leadership in carbon reduction, developing nature-based solutions to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, championing more sustainable ways to improve connectivity and supporting emerging transformative technologies and sectors. Our aim is that Oxfordshire will be carbon neutral by 2040, or earlier if possible, and by 2050 will be moving towards a carbon negative future.

Guiding Principle 2: We will create the conditions to support a world leading and innovation rich economy which is clean, prosperous, diverse, inclusive, successful and sustainable

We will work collaboratively with partners to ensure that our spatial, infrastructure and economic priorities are strategically aligned to deliver a globally leading economy, for the benefit of our communities which is pioneering, diverse and high in productivity and which meets the needs of our priority sectors, including our world-leading universities and delivers successful outcomes for the environment, communities and our public services. We will ensure there is improved physical and digital connectivity, and that the right type of premises, land and infrastructure are provided in the right places for businesses to thrive. Inequalities in employment opportunity and access to education, skills and training will be addressed, and life-long learning will be a priority. The aim will be to build a skilled population which has a stake in the future prosperity of Oxfordshire, ensuring that growth is inclusive and supports the health and wellbeing of local communities, whether current or future generations.

Guiding Principle 3: We will improve our overall health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities

We will place overall health and physical and mental wellbeing at the forefront of our decision-making. We will seek to deliver a net increase in the health and wellbeing of people in all our place-shaping decisions and activities, reducing inequalities and helping to enhance the overall quality of life, health and happiness of existing and future residents, recognising the diverse needs within our communities. This will include providing public services to support excellent physical and mental health outcomes, homes to meet all people's needs, jobs to support livelihoods, enhanced access to public and private green spaces, better access to sustainable, inclusive and resilient active and low carbon transport and improvements in air quality. We have access to some of the greatest health care facilities and minds in the world in Oxfordshire and through

working closely with the universities and health organisations, we will ensure we are leading on prevention and healthy place-shaping.

Guiding Principle 4: We will enhance our natural environment

Key sources of natural capital in Oxfordshire include biodiversity, water, soils, landscape character and tranquillity. Natural capital contributes to a wide range of social, economic and environmental services. It is a key reason why many people choose to live here, many businesses choose to locate here, and tourists choose to visit here. We will grow our natural capital through our plans, strategies and programmes, recognising the significant contribution natural capital makes to our quality of place, the health and wellbeing of our communities, and their value in building resilience to climate change, reducing flood risk, increasing biodiversity and boosting economic productivity. We will value Oxfordshire's countryside, our important habitats and species, our agricultural land, our parks and open spaces, the River Thames and our other rivers, canals, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, wetlands and aquifers. We will protect and restore our valuable habitats and species and improve resilience by creating ecological networks. We will improve the quality of our waterways and water bodies and reduce levels of water stress in Oxfordshire. We will protect where necessary and seek new opportunities to add to and enhance our highly valued countryside, landscape and the greenspaces and environmental assets, including those areas within our city and towns that provide valued recreation space and vital green lungs.

Guiding Principle 5: We will reflect our distinctive and diverse communities and places

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes reflect the unique and distinctive qualities of places within Oxfordshire, maximising opportunities to deliver the development needed, embracing innovation while enhancing our valuable assets and recognising the diversity of our city, towns and villages, the quality of the historic, natural and built environment, our rich internationally significant cultural and heritage assets, the importance of local identity and the needs of our diverse communities. While we are the most rural county in the South East, most of our population lives in our city, towns and villages. The diversity of our settlements, the synergy between urban and rural and the benefits both bring are critical to our success.

Guiding Principle 6: We will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations

We will promote the development of new homes that will add to the vitality and vibrancy of our communities while positively contributing to our collective wellbeing. We will tackle the significant challenge of housing affordability in Oxfordshire by delivering more truly affordable homes both for rent and home ownership, and we will deliver homes that allow people to live healthily, happily and independently in their old age. The emphasis will be on place-shaping.

Guiding Principle 7: We will embrace technological changes

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes are sufficiently agile to embrace the potential offered from new and evolving technology in creating better opportunities and outcomes for people, in addressing inequalities, and in its impact on mobility, communications, energy and water supply, waste management, models of construction and increasing economic productivity.

Guiding Principle 8: We will expect high-quality development

We will expect all new development to be of the highest sustainable design and construction standards, with particular support given to resilience to climate change, innovative building solutions, sustainable use of natural resources and construction methods, and development that improves the overall built environment and embeds healthy place-shaping principles, promoting good physical and mental wellbeing. New development will contribute to connected communities and improve the local environment.

Guiding Principle 9: We will help people to help each other by supporting communities and individuals to achieve positive change for themselves

We will help communities to be more cohesive and better able to adapt to change, based on accessible and quality key services and infrastructure, excellent digital connectivity and strong community networks. Communities will be supported and empowered to do the things that matter to improve their health and wellbeing.

Guiding Principle 10: We will maximise the benefits of strong collaboration within Oxfordshire

We will build stronger collaboration with our partners to secure a plan-led approach to good growth, delivering strategic development opportunities that are aligned with our shared ambition and long-term investment priorities, particularly where these provide opportunities to enhance our strategic connectivity. And, we will create the conditions where people feel involved and empowered, embedding a culture of meaningful involvement and enabling communities to inform and shape local decisions.

Guiding Principle 11: We will proactively and positively engage and collaborate beyond Oxfordshire

We will foster links with neighbouring areas to facilitate the delivery of good growth through mutually beneficial relationships. Key to this will be ensuring that our strategic priorities inform regional and sub-regional priorities, including the emerging Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

- 2.7 All the Guiding Principles articulate how Oxfordshire will change as a place over the period to 2050 and all will shape our overarching approach. Individual Guiding Principles have not been weighted. Rather, because we are seeking to drive improvements to environmental, social and economic wellbeing in ways which build resilience, and because most of our Guiding Principles are relevant to more than one of our outcomes, the Guiding Principles form an inter-related set of equally important ground rules.

3. Next Steps – Delivering the Strategic Vision

- 3.1 The collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board has developed this Strategic Vision. However, 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.
- 3.2 As a first step in delivering the Strategic Vision, we have identified two work streams:
 - Measuring what matters
 - Developing plans, strategies and investment priorities.

Measuring What Matters

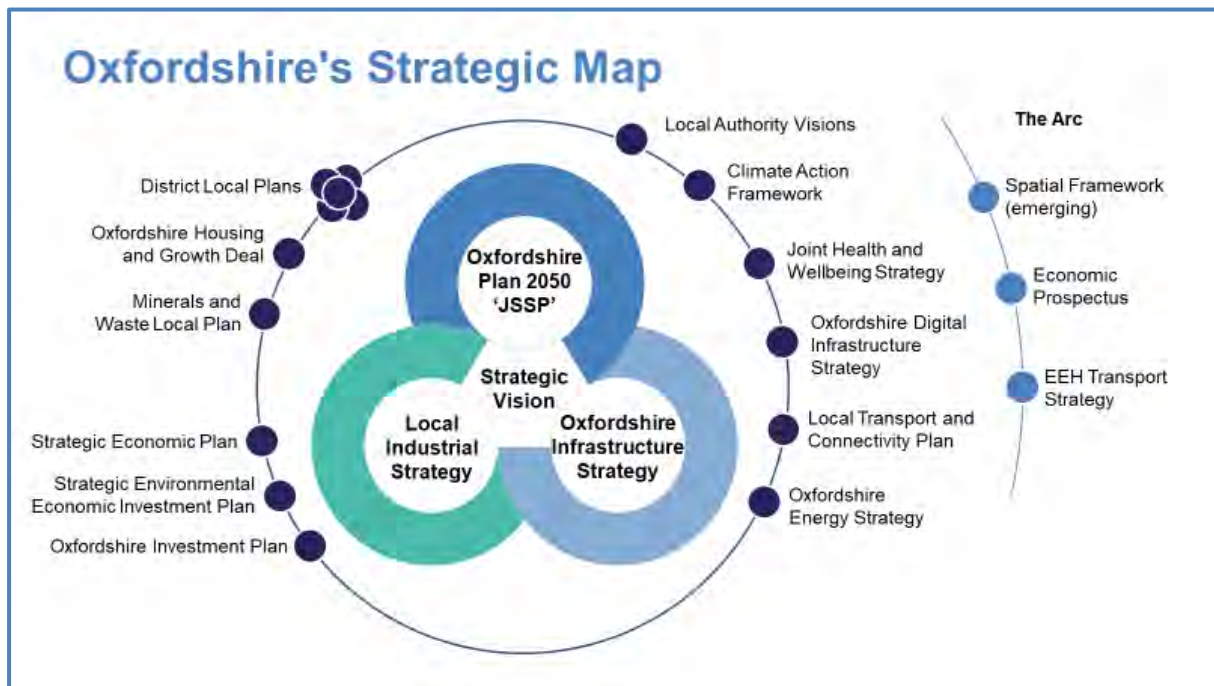
- 3.3 The ambition, outcomes and priorities set out in the Strategic Vision have been explicitly designed for the long-term. They are unlikely to change over the short to medium-term and it is not anticipated there will be a need for frequent reviews. To achieve the outcomes we have identified by 2050, will require some trends to be reversed, while for some other trends, where progress is already being made, there will need to be an increase in the pace of change.
- 3.4 Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed to achieve continual improvement, will be an important part of our approach to delivering the Strategic Vision. It will also provide a robust basis on which Oxfordshire's communities and stakeholders may hold the Growth Board to account. We will measure what matters, based on the strategic outcomes and the definition of Good Growth set out in the Strategic Vision.

Developing Plans, Strategies and Investment Priorities

- 3.5 Our wellbeing goals are ambitious. Achieving them will require all those who make future decisions about investment and those planning for and delivering place-making across Oxfordshire to maximise impact by working collaboratively, based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions.
- 3.6 The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire will be delivered by a wide range of plans, strategies and programmes. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050⁶ is one important example, but not all the outcomes will be within the sphere of influence of the Oxfordshire Plan. That Plan will deliver parts of the Vision, but as a statutory planning document, it cannot address all aspects involved in delivering this Vision. Local Plans, infrastructure plans, economic strategies and associated plans and programmes will also have important roles to play, responding to different local circumstances and, in some cases, reflecting wider considerations such as economic growth, health and wellbeing and infrastructure that impact on place-making in Oxfordshire. At an Oxfordshire-wide level they include the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS), the Local Industrial Strategy, Oxfordshire Investment Plan and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, while sub-nationally the spatial

⁶ The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan being prepared by the local authorities in Oxfordshire.

framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy will have important roles to play.



- 3.7 There is also an important role for residents and business leaders to help deliver this Strategic Vision.
- 3.8 It is vital that we have an agreed set of long-term, strategic economic, infrastructure and environment investment priorities aligned to the outcomes we are committed to. This will help us to ensure that we are investing in the right infrastructure and other assets in a timely way, maximising the benefits of that investment, and avoiding unnecessary expenditure. It will also better position Oxfordshire to influence the priorities of other relevant organisations. By providing clear strategic leadership and direction through this Vision, we aim to increase public confidence in the delivery of long-term priorities.
- 3.9 Oxfordshire's Growth Board will seek that those preparing relevant strategic-level plans, strategies and programmes consider how their policies, proposals and investment decisions deliver against this Strategic Vision. Future responses to these plans, strategies and programmes from the Growth Board will take these into account.

Annex 1: Strategic Influencers

- A1.1** A key role for this Strategic Vision will be to help align long-term spatial, economic and infrastructure investment priorities across Oxfordshire. There are already other plans, strategies, policies and investment programmes (in existence or emerging), as well as legislative requirements, that will influence place-shaping in Oxfordshire, including where development in Oxfordshire should take place and where investment should be focussed. Oxfordshire will be shaped by these 'strategic influencers' to varying degrees over the next 30 years.
- A1.2** Most of the strategic influencers have been, or are being, developed at an Oxfordshire-wide level, or relate to sub-national geographic areas, or are UK-wide. Many have a direct relationship with Government policy or legislative requirements. We have not attempted to present an exhaustive set of influencers. Rather, we have captured those which we consider to be the most significant and most relevant at the strategic level, while acknowledging that some of these will have a greater impact than others.
- A1.3** The strategic influencers will continue to evolve – some will change, and other new influencers will emerge as plans and strategies for Oxfordshire are developed, national policy changes and sub-national frameworks take shape. Some parts of this evolving context of strategic influencers will be more within the control of the partnership organisations than others. But in most cases, the relationship is a two, rather than one-way, process and there is an opportunity to influence and shape the priorities, plans, strategies and investment decisions of others, particularly in the longer-term – a means of 'influencing the influencers'. Our Strategic Vision can help maximise the benefits of decisions made by others, as well as helping to mitigate the impact of decisions outside the partnership's control.
- A1.4** The key messages from the strategic influencers are summarised in the following table.

Key Messages for Oxfordshire from Existing Plans & Strategies	Strategic Influencers
There is a commitment to deliver homes in sustainable and high-quality developments, including maximising the potential of existing urban areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing & Growth Deal ▪ Local Plans ▪ National Planning Policy Framework (2019) ▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan

Key Messages for Oxfordshire from Existing Plans & Strategies	Strategic Influencers
<p>Development should enhance the natural environment, improve access to the countryside and increase its natural capital, recognising its valuable role in supporting clean growth and improvements to health and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Green Future: 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment ▪ Local Plans ▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition ▪ Oxfordshire's Draft Nature Recovery Network ▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Energy Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy
<p>Strategic transport investment priorities should aim to enhance Oxfordshire's strategic connectivity value.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 ▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition ▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan
<p>Long-term strategic investment decisions should be responsive to climate, demographic and technological change, building resilience in the economy, transport infrastructure and the physical and natural environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government's Clean Growth Strategy ▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 ▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Investment Plan ▪ Oxfordshire Energy Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan ▪ UK Industrial Strategy
<p>The priority is to invest in strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, particularly in the areas that have potential to support a transition to a low carbon economy, facilitate mobility changes away from the private car and where there is potential to support key sectors (especially in the science, technology and innovation sectors).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition ▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 ▪ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Investment Plan ▪ Oxfordshire Energy Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan ▪ UK Industrial Strategy

Key Messages for Oxfordshire from Existing Plans & Strategies	Strategic Influencers
<p>Economic growth should be driven by innovation and higher productivity, should be 'clean', should focus on supporting clusters and corridors of economic activity and should reflect Oxfordshire's national and international role and profile. Economic growth should be more inclusive, with the benefits shared more equitably so that they reach all communities, including socially disadvantaged groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition ▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 ▪ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Investment Plan ▪ Oxfordshire Energy Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan ▪ UK Industrial Strategy
<p>Improvements to health and wellbeing should be at the heart of all decisions around place-making and infrastructure investment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Plans ▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy ▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan
<p>Delivering the right type of housing, which is built to a high quality and design and is affordable, is as important as increasing overall supply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Plans ▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy

To: Oxfordshire Growth Board
Title: Oxfordshire Strategic Vision
Date: 22 March 2021
Author: Paul Staines – Interim Head of Programme

Executive Summary and Purpose:

This report presents the Growth Board with a final version of the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's Long-Term Sustainable Development (the Vision) - attached as Appendix 1. This follows the Board's endorsement of an earlier draft for public engagement.

The report reminds the Board of the purpose of the Vision and provides a thematic summary of the consultation and our response - with a detailed engagement report provided in Appendix 2.

Finally, the report proposes the next steps to embed the Vision, subject to endorsement, in any future plans and strategies and measure against progress.

Recommendations:

That the Oxfordshire Growth Board:

- (i) Endorses the Revised Strategic Vision attached as Appendix 1.*
- (ii) Asks all members of the Growth Board to consider their respective organisations agreeing the Vision as the basis for informing future plan and strategy development.*
- (iii) Request officers to develop a communications strategy for the Vision and a suitable approach to measuring success in delivering the Vision.*

Appendix 1:

Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development

Appendix 2

Strategic Vision Engagement Summary

Introduction

1. The Board will recall that they received a report in October 2020 introducing the Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision).
2. This draft Vision was prepared in response to feedback to the Board and partners via consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan that plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire needed to demonstrate an approach to planning for growth that was ambitious, outcome focussed and that aligned the priorities of Oxfordshire. Specifically, feedback suggested that there was an appetite for an approach that:
 - is more Oxfordshire-specific and reflects local people's opinions and priorities.
 - prioritises climate change.
 - focusses on social, economic, and environmental well-being, not solely on a narrow definition of growth.
3. This feedback echoed the sentiments that recently led to revised Growth Board Terms of Reference and a belief that the Board could articulate Oxfordshire's common and shared ambition in a long-term Vision for our county.
4. The Strategic Vision will establish this common and shared ambition and provide an overarching framework for future plans and strategies – but it is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of our individual communities or partner organisations. The Board fully recognises that delivering the Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect circumstances.
5. The Board will recall that when it endorsed the draft Vision for consultation it recognised that whilst the genesis of the Vision was a recognition that an overarching strategic framework was considered important to guide the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (the OxPlan), the Vision's relevance and use goes well beyond the OxPlan.
6. Accordingly, the Board agreed that to be most helpful both to the OxPlan and other emerging plans and strategies, the Vision should be considered on its own merit – first through endorsement by the Oxfordshire Growth Board after a period of public engagement and then agreed by our individual organisations across the Growth Board.
7. The Board also noted that the timing of the Vision's endorsement is important. There are several reasons for this:
 - For the Strategic Vision to play its role in supporting the OxPlan, agreement will need to be no later than Spring 2021- ahead of the pre-election purdah period before the May elections. This will then allow the Vision to play its appropriate role in helping shape the next stage of OxPlan ahead of the Regulation 18 consultations timetabled for Summer 2021.
 - The OxPlan is also supported by two other emerging strategies that need to be in place by the time the OxPlan heads to Examination. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Both also will need to draw upon the Vision as the framework for their conclusions as they head towards consultation later this year.

- The Government has recently announced detail of its ambitions to develop a spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Oxfordshire will want to be well-positioned to influence the Framework as it gathers momentum and the Vision will provide a framework for our contribution to this emerging work.
8. The Board will also recall advice from officers 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 officers have incorporated all relevant comments in the attached final version of the Vision.

Public Engagement on the Vision

9. Following endorsement by the Board of a draft Vision for public engagement, a period of public and stakeholder engagement ran from mid-November 2020 to early in 2021.
10. Due to concerns with COVID-19 and recognising a need to reach as wide a cross-section of respondents as possible, it was agreed that the focus of the consultation would be the Oxfordshire Open Thought digital engagement platform, a platform that has already proved very helpful in engaging on wide-ranging topics and long-term thinking for the OxPlan.
11. Officers were broadly pleased with the engagement that this platform generated, summarised as:
 - There were 1,265 users accessing the website and 3,759 page-views during the engagement period.
 - There was good response from several key stakeholders outside of those represented on the Growth Board, for example CPRE.
 - Overall, we received 113 responses through the platform, a number of these being from organisations with multiple representation, together with 28 email responses, including 9 member organisations of the Growth Board.
12. A detailed breakdown is provided in Appendix Two.
13. One aspect of the consultation to highlight is the work on engaging with young people following a Board request that officers prioritise their engagement. Officers responded to this by focusing upon this easily accessible digital engagement platform bolstered by giving wide publicity to the Vision engagement on social media.
14. In addition, officers arranged several workshops in conjunction with local colleges of further education and Oxford Brookes University. These workshops were well attended and engendered good engagement. Again, Appendix Two provides detail on these.

Engagement Summary

15. Whilst the engagement report contained in Appendix Two provides full detail on the engagement, this report provides the Board with a broad flavour of what

officers consider to be the main themes and how these have influenced the revised draft.

General comments

16. Overall, officers believe that the Board can be pleased with the supportive responses to our engagement exercise. Respondents commented that the Vision was both welcome as a “good starting point” and essential for clarifying what the collective ambitions for Oxfordshire should be. Very few responses suggested that the establishment of the Vision would be detrimental and many recognised that it was a genuine attempt to frame required growth in a constructive and sustainable way.
17. Many also considered that the document achieved the balance that the Board is aiming for across the priorities, albeit with some noting what they considered to be the inherent tensions between them.
18. Consequently, the Board will note that although changes to the Vision have been made in response to the engagement, as detailed below and in Appendix 2, large parts of the document were supported and remain unchanged or have merely benefitted from clearer or more concise language.

Document structure

19. In considering the layout and structure of the vision, there were some comments that the Vision was too lengthy and repetitive, though this conflicted with the view also expressed that the document required greater detail, referencing and specificity.
20. Officers reflected on this feedback and in response the revised Vision has a slightly different structure which officers believe is more logical. The Board will note that the Vision now comprises three components - these being:
 - A statement of what the Vision for Oxfordshire is – these are the outcomes that Oxfordshire is seeking to achieve
 - A statement of what constitutes the ‘Good Growth’ that will deliver the Vision
 - A set of principles that will guide Oxfordshire in achieving ‘Good Growth’.
21. Officers have also edited the Vision to make it more readable and succinct and consequently it is some 15% shorter than the original draft.

The components and overall balance of the Vision

22. As stated earlier, overall, the ambitions of the document received broad support with many respondents noting that they were hard to disagree with and had captured the correct priorities.
23. Where respondents did not agree with the consultation draft these broadly fell into two categories.
 - That the document has not provided enough balance in certain areas – most notably climate change, carbon reduction, the positioning of the economy as a driver for social and economic wellbeing and increased emphasis for tackling inequalities.
 - That the document was not ambitious enough- for example, our ambition for carbon reduction.

24. In response to these comments the Vision has seen revisions to the text designed to clarify and enhance key messages without losing the overall balance. Thus, in the revised Vision enhanced language has raised the profile of the importance of Oxfordshire as a place both nationally and internationally as well as reinforcing messages on, for example mental health, active travel, the need for digital connectivity, the heritage of Oxfordshire and the need for affordable housing.
25. We have also added a new Vision Outcome for a more equal place supported by inclusive growth, reflecting the point about equality and a statement about the role of Oxfordshire's economy in creating prosperity and furthering social, environmental, and economic wellbeing.
26. Officers believe that these revisions have strengthened the Vision and provided appropriate profile for several key components, whilst maintaining the overall balance of the document.

Creating a Vision that is Oxfordshire Specific

27. Many respondents commented that although they agreed with the Vision, it could, they felt, relate more to Oxfordshire rather than just a series of generic statements. Consequently, officers have revised the draft to make it more Oxfordshire specific, examples include highlighting aspects of the Oxfordshire economy, natural assets and heritage that makes Oxfordshire unique. We also sought to highlight both the urban city and rural aspects of the county, including the importance of the rural economy in the most rural county in the South East.

How to measure achievement of the Vision

28. Finally, several respondents, whilst supportive, questioned how we will implement the Vision, what success would look like and how we will measure it. This issue is the subject of officer consideration and highlighted in the next steps section of this report below.

Next steps

29. Upon endorsement of the Vision, officers will turn their attention to the development of a communications plan by relevant officers drawn from across the Growth Board organisations to launching the Vision.
30. The Board will then need to consider how to embed the Vision in plans and strategies, 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 wider stakeholders, in the first instance the ask the Board to recommend to its partner organisations that they individually consider and agree the Vision, thereby giving it the profile required within their respective organisations.
31. The next steps will then be consideration of how we will measure progress against the ambitions of the Vision. 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.

(Appendix 2 - Growth Board Report)

Legal Implications

32. Although the Vision is explicitly non statutory, the Board will recall that in the October report introducing the Vision, officers suggested that the relationship between the Vision and OxPlan may require legal opinion to ensure that it strengthens our approach to strategic plan-making. Once the Board endorses the Vision officers leading the OxPlan will consider whether commissioning this advice is appropriate and report any conclusion through reports on the Oxplan.

Financial Implications

33. The Vision has been prepared and consulted upon from existing resources. Officers will reflect upon any resource implications of developing the Vision further as outlined in the next steps section and report as appropriate.

Conclusions

34. The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire marks a significant development for Oxfordshire as a comprehensive articulation of what future growth in Oxfordshire should look like based on enhanced social, environmental and economic wellbeing. It is hoped that this balanced statement of ambition reflecting the priorities of the county will become the cornerstone of all future plans and strategies for Oxfordshire.
35. The report asks the Growth Board to agree the recommendations set out at the start of this report.

Background Papers

None

Report Author:

Paul Staines Interim Head of Programme- Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

Contact:

Paul.staines@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire Strategic Vision

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED

February 2021

Contents

Part 1: Introduction

Part 2: Status and Intent of the Vision

Part 3: Strategic Vision Outcomes

Part 4: A definition of Good Growth

Part 5: Strategic Vision Guiding Principles

Part 6: Oxfordshire's Diversity and The Need for Specificity

Part 7: Delivery and Evaluation

Part 8: College Engagement

Part 9: Limitations and learnings

Part 10: Conclusions

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides a summary of the responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision public engagement exercise which began on 16 November 2020 and ended on 4 January 2021. The purpose of the engagement exercise was to gather the views of members of the public, councillors, stakeholders and partner organisations concerning the content of the Draft Vision, enabling a wide range of voices to influence and shape a revised document.
2. In total, 113 responses were received to an online public survey carried out through [Oxfordshire Open Thought](#), together with 28 email responses, including 9 member organisations of the Growth Board. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person engagement activities were unable to take place. However, virtual workshops were held with the City of Oxford College and Abingdon and Witney College, and 76 follow up responses were received after those events. A further workshop was held with Oxford Brookes students.

BACKGROUND

3. The Oxfordshire Growth Board was established in 2014 as a Joint Committee¹ of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners. Its role is to coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits. It does this by overseeing the delivery of cross-county projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver in a collaborative way – between local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partners and stakeholders.
4. Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. It is also facing significant change, but with change comes the opportunity for progress based on new ways of thinking. Conversations between Growth Board partners and the public, and innovative work on economic inclusivity, have shown that there is a desire to see a different approach to planning for the future of Oxfordshire. Through the Growth Board, the councils have collectively expressed their desire for plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire to be ambition-led and outcome-focussed. Achieving these ambitions will require all those who make future decisions about investment, and those planning for and delivering place-making across Oxfordshire, to maximise impact by working together based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions. Developing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire is a unique opportunity to respond to this challenge.
5. Building on the success of recent engagements and consultations, the Growth Board partnership wishes to consider in a positive, open and transparent way what the ambition for Oxfordshire should look like and how it can be achieved by drawing on new ways of thinking about sustainable development. The Draft Vision is intended to be the start of a conversation with our communities to build consensus around a common set of goals for Oxfordshire, strengthening and improving the Vision. In doing so, the Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of our individual communities or partner organisations. The Vision should also be read by partners beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it.

¹ under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.

6. The Vision has a specific role and a clearly defined non-statutory status, as is the status of its engagement exercise. While the Draft Vision is looking to 2050 and is 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. The Vision can however 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. A copy of the Growth Board's pre-engagement report and draft of the Strategic Vision can be found [here](#), first considered on 30 October 2020.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Design

7. When considering the design of the engagement process, it was important to create something highly accessible that was able to gauge the sentiment of the public towards the draft Vision while allowing room for comments, challenges and suggested amendments. In order to focus responses on the key elements of the Vision, the draft text was broken down into more digestible sections, particularly highlighting "our ambition", "our desired outcomes", "definitions of good growth", "our guiding principles". A simple form was designed with a consistent 'agree, challenge, comment' format towards each section.
8. One objective of the engagement was to explore 'how far and how fast' people wanted to proceed with each of the outcomes and consider how to prioritise outcomes given the likelihood of competing commitments. As such, open questions allowed respondents to suggest how success could be measured, what targets could/should be set and how quickly they could/should be reached. Respondents were then given a ranking system between 1 and 3 for each outcome as to how high they should be prioritised, before a final open question allowing any further comments and a tool for uploading any additional statements or evidence.

Delivery

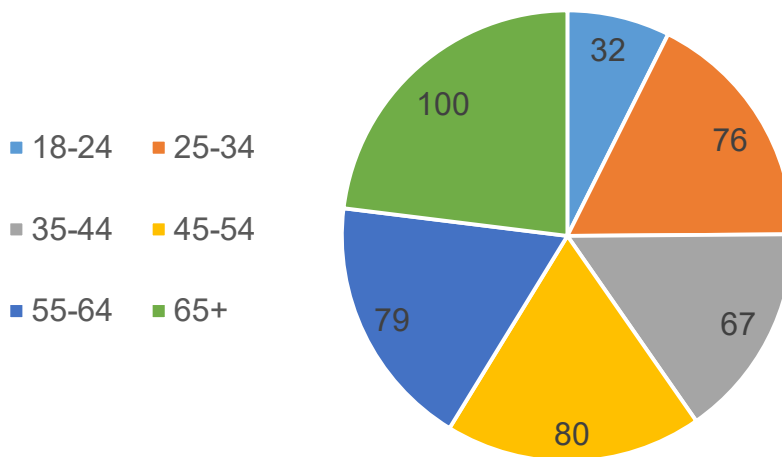
9. Following its previous success in not only generating significant engagement, but also appealing to younger harder-to-reach-demographics, it was decided the Oxfordshire Open Thought platform – a bright, accessible user-friendly website - would be the most effective and efficient way to deliver the engagement exercise. The draft Vision was deconstructed into easily digestible sections and presented in a dynamic fashion that was both simple to navigate and attention-grabbing. Hyperlinks were positioned at regular intervals on the website that took the user directly to the online form allowing respondents to give their views at any point of the Vision content.
10. The draft Vision content went live on Monday 16 November 2020. A direct mailout with a link to the site was sent to all subscribers on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 mailing list (approx. 1,400 people). A press release was published on the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Oxfordshire Plan 2050 websites. There was a co-ordinated comprehensive six-week social media campaign across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn – posts were shared by key partners to increase reach. The engagement was promoted internally via newsletters and senior council officers. Briefings were given to Oxfordshire's local authorities and key strategic partners such as the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The deadline for submissions was Monday 4 January 2021.

11. Throughout the process, there has been an ongoing commitment to engage with young people, recognising they will be the ones who benefit from our planning most in the future. As such, two college engagement sessions were held – one with business students from Oxford City College and one with student representatives from Abingdon and Witney College, while another session was held with Oxford Brookes students. An online survey was also sent out via Voice of Oxfordshire Youth to its members for complete in their own time.

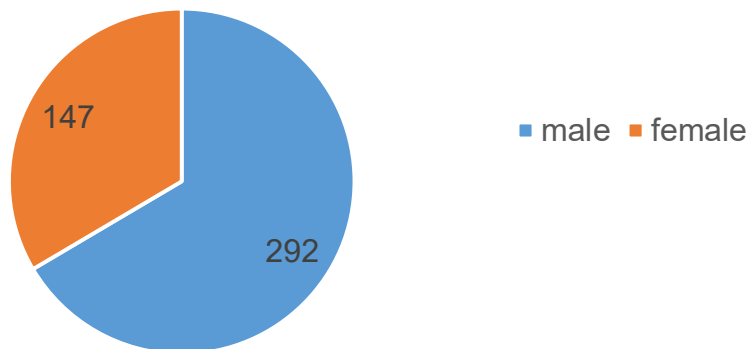
Analytics

12. Across the Open Thought platform, there was plenty of interest shown in the draft Strategic Vision with 1,265 users accessing the website and 3,759 page views during the engagement period (Monday 16 November 2020 to Monday 4 January 2021). Users spent on average 2.5 minutes on the site. 113 responses were received via Open Thought. Below are breakdowns of age and gender based on those recorded via Google Analytics – 34% and 35% of overall respondents respectively – rather than those who submitted a response.

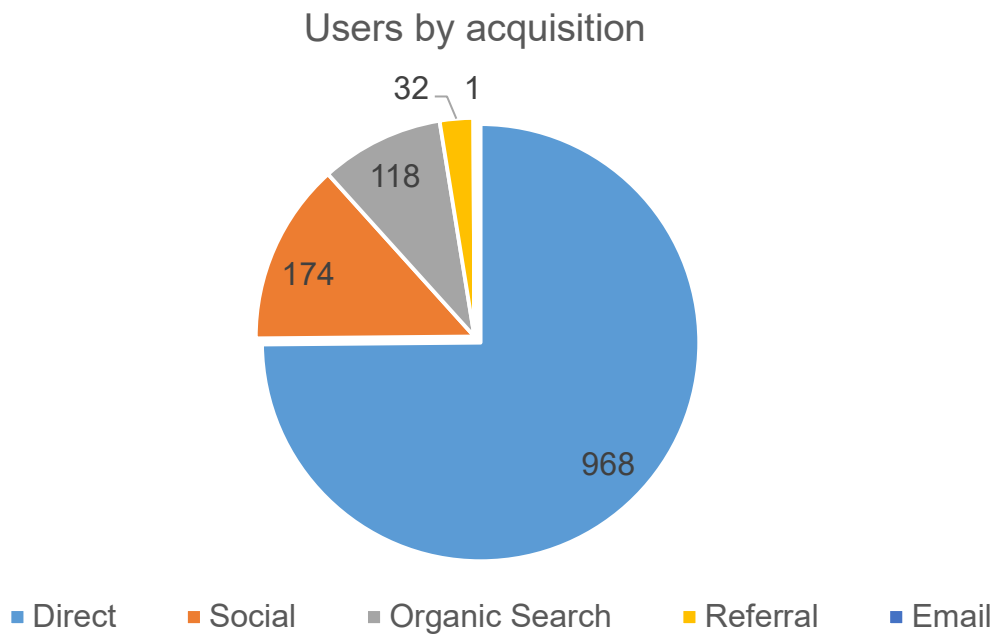
User age
(Of those recorded via Google Analytics)



User gender
(Of those recorded via Google Analytics)



13. Analytics demonstrate the effectiveness of direct mail to subscribers, with the majority of users coming from this source, while social media was also vital in bringing people to the site [please note “email” is not direct mailing]. As well as those submissions received via Open Thought, some 28 were sent directly via email.



PART 2: STATUS AND INTENT OF THE VISION

14. This engagement exercise set out to ask respondents about their views on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. Whilst terminology and the strength of sentiment differed between respondents, a significant majority offered strong and broad support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and for the ambitions set out within the document. Across each of the specific engagement sections related to Outcomes, Guiding Principles and Good Growth, there was also wide-ranging support. Within the support offered however, there were some specific caveats or conditional red lines, which often concerned redistributing the weight or emphasis given to specific themes within the document (e.g. climate change, economic development and tackling inequalities). Several responses identified great value in long-term strategic planning through the Vision, particularly concerning the need to plan for net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and to support wider spatial planning including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Many welcomed the Draft Vision as a positive step in planning for Oxfordshire’s future.
15. Some felt that the document should be more ambitious in specific areas, while noting that the broad intent was right. A significant number of respondents however said there was an appropriate balance through the document. Some commented that the Vision was overdue and welcomed the document as a “good starting point” and essential for clarifying what the collective ambitions for Oxfordshire should be. Indeed, respondents who offered stronger criticisms of the document acknowledged that the overall ambitions were hard to disagree with. Their concern often related to the challenges associated with measuring and evaluating the delivery of high-level strategic intentions. They accompanied this critique with suggestions that the Vision should either provide more detail about how it will deliver and measure success or be clearer from the outset about the status of the document and

how it will be used. Some also commented that the vision was too lengthy and repetitive, though this conflicted with the view that the document required greater detail, referencing and specificity.

16. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the overall intent of the vision are set out below.

- *We believe it (the Vision) can play an important role in helping to articulate the vision of the Growth Board partners to local communities, residents and businesses.*
- *We fully support the draft Strategic Vision and endorse its high ambitions for the future of Oxfordshire.*
- *The Principles are coached[sic] in such vague but positive terms that it is impossible not to support their pious and laudatory intentions.*
- *Yes, we are in general agreement that the outcomes you have identified are the correct ones as high-level objectives, I can support them. At a practical, day to day level, I remain to be convinced.*
- *(We) support the intent of the draft vision as an expression of the collective ambition of partners to enhance the well-being of people in Oxfordshire.*
- *The targets you have set out are pretty good already. The challenge will be making these strategic and ambitious goals effective at a grassroots level.*
- *The Vision is balanced between environment, wellbeing and growth/infrastructure, and should stay that way.*
- *In general, I agree with the desired outcomes.*

17. Some respondents recommended that the Vision should have a clear and unambiguous statement about its intent and status, and its relationship with other key strategies and plans. The requirement for such clarity was implicit in some responses, as a small number of respondents misunderstood the broad intent of the Vision. For example, some thought the Vision should identify housing numbers and areas for development, which is not the intention for this work.

18. Respondents highlighted that without clarity there will be inherent tensions between this Vision and other strategies across partner organisations. The Growth Board's Scrutiny Panel similarly recommended that careful consideration is given to continuity between this Vision and other policies and plans, and other respondents echoed this sentiment. The relationship of this vision with the Oxford 2050 Vision (Oxford City Council), University Sustainability Strategies and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, for example, were all suggested to need recognition in the document, as a way of better explaining the Vision's status. An accompanying communications strategy was also suggested as a way of widening local understanding of the Vision's role.

19. Notwithstanding the need for clarity, some respondents went further to suggest that the Draft Vision had the potential to conflict with other existing plans and strategies. Some suggested the Vision should identify how it will manage conflict when it arises between the ambitions of the Growth Board partnership, and individual member organisations. Similarly, several submissions sought to understand how the Vision will manage conflict when the Guiding Principles, or outcomes of the Vision, might conflict in specific circumstances. Some suggested, for example, that not giving priority to carbon neutrality over ambitions for economic development and housing development might hinder that outcome, though others disagreed.

20. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the Vision's purpose and usability are set out below.
- *The high-level outcomes identified address the three tenets of sustainable development, as defined in the NPPF. The challenge is of course delivering these outcomes simultaneously, and determining, where conflicts arise, which outcome (or outcomes) should take priority.*
 - *(There is a need for) clarity about the relationship between the Vision and Oxfordshire Plan 2050.*
 - *Economic growth and combating climate change are uneasy bedfellows.*
 - *There will be inherent tensions and choices to be made in balancing the aspirations in the document, for example, achieving economic ambition set out in the Local Industrial Strategy and supporting significant housing growth whilst enhancing the natural environment and achieving carbon reduction.*
 - *There is a need for a strong communication strategy and consideration needs to be given to how that will evolve over time.*
 - *The document says nothing about what happens when these principles are in conflict, and how that conflict will be resolved, to ensure that the Vision is resilient. The same point applies where the Vision may be in conflict with existing plans and strategies that exist across Oxfordshire.*

PART 3: STRATEGIC VISION OUTCOMES

21. The Open Thought engagement exercise asked contributors to give their views on whether the outcomes in the Vision were the right ones for Oxfordshire. While respondents gave mixed and competing views on the extent to which specific outcomes should be emphasised or prioritised over one another, there was broad support for the seven outcomes. Many commented that the Vision had struck the right balance in seeking to deliver long term sustainable forms of development and create the environmental, social and economic conditions in which Oxfordshire can thrive. There was a strong sense from some contributors that certain outcomes should take priority over others, most often tackling climate change, though there was no universal view on which outcomes should take priority. This section of the report summarises feedback under three thematic areas which elicited the greatest level of response: Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality, Inequalities, and Transport and Digital Connectivity.
22. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the overall outcomes identified in the Vision are set out below.
- *We have to create neighbourhoods and towns which are inclusive, have access to services and open space. Never has environmental, social and economic wellbeing been more important. It is essential that we create places which properly intertwine those three aspects*
 - *Some of the outcomes are obviously the right ones, but not all. Others leave important questions unanswered. This is why I have had to say no, I do not agree with them].*
 - *Your strong emphasis on improving the ecology, strengthening local communities, decreasing inequalities and combating climate change with local solutions is ambitious and necessary.*
 - *The outcomes outlined in the engagement draft of the Vision statement rightly reflect the need for enhanced wellbeing, carbon neutrality and preserving the natural environment.*

Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality

23. The strongest theme to emerge among these responses concerned the importance of planning for a sustainable future in which Oxfordshire reaches carbon neutrality as soon as possible, while simultaneously making systemic changes to how we live and work in order to protect and enhance the natural environment, reduce waste and increase biodiversity. The strength of conviction and sentiments expressed with regards to climate change and environmental sustainability and renewal were significant. Contributors welcomed the prominence of these issues within the Vision, while some felt it needed more emphasis and ambition in this area. Respondents often noted that environmental sustainability and recovery was integral to the success of other outcomes within the Vision, particularly relating to health and wellbeing. Some pointed to the value of employing circular economics - keeping resources in use as long as possible - as a means of reducing waste, reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable living.
24. Numerous submissions referred to the importance of meeting HM Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050 as a minimum, and as many also called for much earlier local targets, as soon as 2025. Respondents explained that this was not a choice, but more an absolute necessity to preserve Oxfordshire's future. The responses also illustrated confusion and misunderstanding about what Oxfordshire's specific ambitions were relating to carbon neutrality. Those seeking emphasis said there should be greater references to withdrawing carbon from the atmosphere (sequestration) and planning for a carbon negative future. Some commented that tackling climate change should not be perceived as stifling economic development, and instead advocated that it provides an avenue for economic growth and innovation through zero carbon technology. Some however expressed that the economic ambitions within the vision were incompatible or fractious with the environmental ambitions.
25. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality are set out below.
- *If we don't tackle the ecological and climate crises then everything else becomes, at best, a lot worse.*
 - *Emphasis should be given to reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, banning fossil fuels and removing atmospheric carbon dioxide by, among other measures, natural sequestration.*
 - *It is refreshing to see natural capital being taken seriously.*
 - *It is considered that climate change is of the utmost importance... It is critical that we give people the opportunity to change the way we live.*
 - *The key statement in all the notes for me is that of looking to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state for our children than how we found it.*
 - *Becoming carbon neutral is no longer optional given the context of climate chaos.*
 - *The natural environment is not a luxury... These objectives, particularly, those relating to the countryside and carbon neutrality, play strongly to that end.*
 - *Natural capital should quite rightly be part of the approach to tackling climate change.*
 - *We should be more ambitious, looking at bio abundance and net carbon reduction.*
 - *Not tackling climate change equals disaster. At the same time, measures that reduce climate change can also create a healthier, more pleasant environment and way of life for all. The vision recognises this.*

Economic, Health and Social Inequalities

26. Another strong theme from the feedback concerned the need for the Vision to give greater emphasis to the need to tackle economic, health and social inequalities. Some respondents expressed how large inequality gaps were stifling opportunities for people in accessing suitable housing, education and employment, and to predetermining a series of poor quality of life outcomes. One recent example given concerned the inability of some families to access appropriate online learning facilities for their children during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was also a strong desire to ensure that economic development happens in a way that is fair and inclusive of everyone.
27. Many responses highlighted that inequalities were universal across Oxfordshire in both rural and urban settings, while specific localities experienced this to a greater extent than others. Areas of deprivation, poverty and homelessness were all highlighted as areas of serious concern. Some highlighted that inequalities were an influential factor in determining health and wellbeing outcomes, and it should therefore take higher priority within the document, given how acute these challenges are for Oxfordshire. Amid these submissions was a broad desire to see the removal of discrimination within society and to improve equality for all.
28. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning inequalities are set out below.
- *There is a correct and important stress on environment climate activity. However, poverty and inequality should be given a higher profile as they are the key drivers of public health. Digital connectivity is also vitally important.*
 - *Inequality, as a factor which is so pervasive and determinative of achieving the overall outcome of enhancing well-being, requires greater emphasis throughout the vision.*
 - *Whatever targets you set you should aim to address issues of inequality more rapidly than the others.*
 - *We would wish to see greater emphasis on economic development and tackling inequalities throughout the document.*
 - *Include more emphasis on ensuring no one in our communities is left behind.*
 - *Gross inequality of income and wealth and of worsening inequity is putting many households at the margins of our society in terms of quality of life.*
 - *Inclusivity is key. I want to see Oxfordshire be inclusive to everyone.*
 - *The document should also include reference to effective social care being vital to reduce inequalities.*

Transport and Digital Connectivity

29. A final key theme in the feedback related to the importance of planning for a more connected society. Specifically, complementing responses concerning climate change, many asked for the Vision to increase emphasis on reducing the demand for personal car use, while simultaneously encouraging zero carbon and active forms of transport. Respondents made numerous references to the importance of digital connectivity in bringing people, businesses and communities together, particularly considering the shift to virtual meetings and social events as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, there were several explicit requests to give digital connectivity a higher profile within the Vision.
30. Some commenters expressed that the Vision needed a high-level strategic approach to ensure that developers built houses close to sites of employment, and that the Vision

should encourage working from home opportunities. The emphasis was principally about reducing the demand on physical transport infrastructure and boosting digital capacity and capability. Respondents mentioned that access to key services should be available through virtual means, and there should be improvements to access to the natural environment. Some also considered the development of autonomous and electric vehicles to be important for the future, though this was at odds with requests to reduce personal car use.

31. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning transport and digital connectivity are set out below.

- *In light of the opportunities arising from the response to and recovery from COVID 19 and local efforts to encourage more active travel as a means of reducing congestion and carbon emissions whilst improving health and well-being, the Vision should include greater emphasis on creating the conditions to facilitate more walking and cycling.*
- *I don't agree that physical connectivity and mobility is what we should be highlighting - what about digital connectivity and the ability to both live and work in diverse and flourishing communities?*
- *(We) support improvements in digital connectivity which enable an increasing proportion of activities to be undertaken virtually, reducing the costs and adverse effects of physical transport.*
- *The importance of digital connectivity should be emphasised. The rural areas in particular need better access to fibre to enable businesses to flourish and to better enable home working thus reducing car usage, which is high in the county in part due to the rural nature of the county.*
- *(A) highly relevant example is the delivery of better public transport and active transport options to facilitate the move away from private transport as the dominant mode.*

PART 4: A DEFINITION OF GOOD GROWTH

32. The engagement exercise asked respondents whether they agreed with the definition of Good Growth contained within the Draft Vision. Most indicated that they agreed with the definition provided often with specific minor amendments or changes in emphasis. Contributors welcomed the definition as a positive step towards better defining what they saw as a complex and sometimes contentious concept. Many responses said the definition achieved a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Most respondents described the definition in positive terms by most respondents such as “common sense, laudable and reasonable,” while a minority of views suggested that it “lacked detail, should be abandoned or is too vague.”

33. The strongest theme emerging from the responses concerned the importance of preserving and improving the natural environment. Many respondents emphasised that growth must not have a negative impact on the environment, and that it should be used as a vehicle to improve the environment through, for example, biodiversity net gain (leaving habitats in a better state in which they are now). Accordingly, while some felt that the principles of sustainability were suitably engrained in the definition, others requested more emphasis on the importance of sustainable development and protecting the natural environment, such as ambitions for zero-carbon homes. Some submissions also said that quality of life and equality should have a greater emphasis within the definition. Another key theme was the importance of circular economics (maximising the service life of local resources), as explained earlier in this report. Many suggested that the Vision should embrace circular

economics as a way of mitigating environmental impacts and increasing economic inclusivity within Oxfordshire, with some providing links to studies and books on the subject.

34. There were also recurring themes, which are covered in more detail elsewhere in this summary. For example, several submissions explained that it was difficult to object to the definition because it offered a broad and positive view of growth, though a lack of measures to effectively evaluate how this growth is achieved was criticised. Some suggested that the definition of Good Growth or the concept of growth more generally created tension and friction between the Vision's outcomes, particularly with regards to carbon reduction and environmental enhancement. A few said the two were incompatible altogether. Among alternative terms to substitute for growth were prosperity and sustainable development. There were also suggestions that the Vision should take a similar approach in defining sustainability and resilient communities.
35. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the definition of Good Growth are set out below.
- *The definition implies a balance between economic growth and a positive social impact which seems a very laudable objective.*
 - *The definition of good growth covers the 'triple bottom line' of positive economic, environmental and social outcomes.*
 - *Yes, I agree. Good growth has to be genuinely socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable embodying the principles of the circular economy.*
 - *We have to move away from the emphasis of growth meaning more of the same, as in more material, consumption-based growth. We need growth to be associated with thriving - thriving communities with thriving people.*
 - *I'd like to see a circular economic model which links in with your sustainability objectives but doesn't fully embrace them.*
 - *It strikes the right balance while addressing a sustainable balance and growth.*
 - *Whilst growth provides the opportunity to improve the living standards of all, ideally those most disadvantaged, doing it at the expense of the natural environment benefits nobody*

PART 5: STRATEGIC VISION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

36. The engagement exercise asked respondents whether they agreed with the 11 Guiding Principals set out in the Draft Vision, and for their wider views on their appropriateness for Oxfordshire. Respondents noted that the guiding principles were wide ranging and agreeable, and most responses indicated that they were the 'right' ones. However, as with the support offered to other sections of the Vision, there were often caveats and requests for emphasis. Many strongly supported the guiding principles, and in some cases, respondents said they aligned with the ambitions of other organisations responding to the engagement exercise. Some were more brief in suggesting that the principles "seem right" or "sound good."
37. Contributors spoke of the need to balance the principles in a pragmatic way to ensure that the Vision did not pursue one at the expense of another. There were also suggestions for additional or stronger guiding principles related to transport, sustainability and the natural environment. Some asked that the Vision used more active language to promote delivery against the principles, and this was most often linked to the natural environment. For example, one person said, "*there should be a principle to be active in promoting nature recovery not just valuing the 'natural capital' we have already.*" Another added that "*the Guiding Principles should seek not only to enhance Oxfordshire's natural capital assets, but*

also to grow them.” The emphasis was to be bolder and more ambitious in the language used throughout the principles. As a cross cutting theme in the responses, several contributors said it was hard to quantify and measure achievements against these principles because of their abstract or broad nature. This summary covers the issue of measurability and evaluation later.

38. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the Guiding Principles are set out below.

- *They reflect current and contemporary concerns on a wide scale, but can also be addressed and personalised on a small scale which makes them inclusive and facilitates greater involvement and ownership.*
- *Seem reasonably well balanced, would like even greater focus on solving the biodiversity and climate crisis.*
- *We particularly support the guiding principles that expect high-quality development and will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations.*
- *The references to wellbeing are supported, particularly the importance of mental wellbeing in Guiding Principle 2, given the current situation pertaining to the pandemic.*
- *They are well thought out and address the needs of the population whilst striking the balance of protecting the natural environment and resources.*
- *They offer a route to a happier and healthier lifestyle, that is sustainable both economically and environmentally.*
- *They reflect national and international concerns such as climate change, equality and diversity, mental health, community, economy and homelessness. They also interlink and connect with each other so there's cohesiveness.*

Examples of alternative guiding principles offered by respondents

- *We will safeguard and promote accessibility while diminishing the adverse effects of transport.*
- *We will reduce emissions within the county to net zero by 2030 - making efforts to reduce 'imported' emissions.*
- *We will manage the location and design of new developments including supporting facilities so as to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to promote the use of shared and active modes.*
- *We will continue to manage road space to give priority to the needs of sustainable modes.*
- *We expect to manage the introduction of autonomous vehicles so as to improve the overall efficiency and safety of traffic movement and reduce inequalities amongst people and places otherwise experiencing limited accessibility.*

PART 6: OXFORDSHIRE'S DIVERSITY AND THE NEED FOR SPECIFICITY

39. There was a strong and overarching feeling from respondents that the Vision needs to be more Oxfordshire specific. Responses highlighted that Oxfordshire is an inspiring, diverse and unique place in many respects, having world leading strengths, but also facing some significant place-based and socio-economic challenges. The county has wide-open spaces and dense urban areas, each home to sites of international importance. Respondents felt that the Vision needed to better reflect the diversity of the urban and rural environments, increasing specificity about Oxfordshire, its assets, and the diversity of its people and institutions.

40. As one respondent summarised: *“Having a Strategic Vision for a place which reflects the particular characteristics of the place is more likely to be useful.”* Another suggested that the Vision should still be identifiable as Oxfordshire when it removes all references to the county, as a test to ensure specificity. At the centre of these responses was an acknowledgement that a fuller understanding of the county’s specific circumstances, strengths and challenges should lead to a more tailored and focussed Vision.

Rural and Urban Spaces

41. Several responses said the vision should include greater reference to the City of Oxford, as a dense urban area with a unique historic core, rich natural environment and vibrant cultural offer. The city also has greater ethnic diversity among its population than neighbouring districts, as well as a significant student population, who attend world leading research institutions, which in turn employ a significant proportion of the county’s population. Submissions highlighted that the Vision celebrate this and ensure it has a role in shaping a more specific place-based vision for Oxfordshire.
42. A similar balance was given in responses asking for the Vision to celebrate the rural character of the county and distinguish its importance. As one respondent explained: *“As Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South-East Region, it would be helpful to recognise the challenge this provides in terms of our rural population’s accessibility to services and facilities.”* Other contributors similarly echoed this view. Across rural and urban spaces, some respondents also wanted the Vision to recognise the unique historic assets that exist within the county, and their relationship with the natural environment and local economy.

Businesses and education

43. Some representations drew out the importance of local businesses and education institutions, their diversity, and in many cases, world leading significance; recent successes with the Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine being one of many examples. Comments highlighted a relative absence of references in this regard. Responses were unequivocal that the Vision should specifically refer to, and situate, Oxfordshire as a place of global significance. Some respondents were clear however that a focus on world leading innovation should not imply exclusivity. Respondents highlighted that these assets make Oxfordshire incredibly unique, important to the national economy, and a place to be celebrated. One submission pointed out the capacity for local businesses and institutions to help Oxfordshire meet the ambitions of the vision.

Challenges and Opportunities

44. Contributors explained that drawing out Oxfordshire’s diversity and assets would help to better contextualise the acute challenges and opportunities that exist for the county. Accordingly, this would support a stronger and more robust rationale for the Vision’s outcomes. There were several strong responses asking for increased emphasis on providing high quality, efficient and affordable homes, in the right places for residents; a challenge that is more critical for Oxfordshire than in many other areas. Some expressed that this challenge was particularly sharp for younger people and older people, and that the vision should focus on addressing the challenges for future generations.

45. Respondents raised the strain placed on road infrastructure and the need to reduce congestion as a specific challenge for the area, together with the emissions and wider disbenefits generated from personal car use among a large commuter population. Again, respondents expressed this to be a more significant challenge for Oxfordshire than in other areas. Many emphasised however this issue provided a real opportunity to rethink our approach to movement, travel and connectivity in Oxfordshire. This included creating the conditions to facilitate more walking and cycling, reduce travel times, and prioritise public transport while discouraging car use. At the same time, responses highlighted challenges relating to broadband access and speeds for both rural and urban communities, stifling opportunities to develop a better digitally connected society and economy.
46. As a strong theme explored elsewhere in this summary, comments repeatedly referenced economic, health and social (including education) inequalities as serious challenges for Oxfordshire's future, which often linked to challenges with housing affordability and availability. Respondents expressed wealth and health disparities across the county were severe and called for greater economic inclusivity and access to opportunities for all. In addition, comments often referenced inequality of access to green open spaces, leisure facilities, and Oxfordshire's unique natural and cultural heritage assets. Respondents highlighted several other thematic challenges were as Oxfordshire-specific by respondents, included funding for public services, caring for and housing an ageing population and utility stress.
47. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement asking for the Vision to be more Oxfordshire specific are set out below.
- *I am surprised at how little attention is given to the role of the City of Oxford. It clearly has a functional economic area surrounding it that is long established and of national importance. The new Plan should seek to build on that success, not ignore it.*
 - *There is no mention of the historic environment, the county's architectural and archaeological heritage, the vernacular architectures of our towns and villages.*
 - *Oxfordshire is an important and productive farming area yet is not mentioned even once in the document... the rural economy is ignored.*
 - *The outcomes are positive in principle but come across as quite generic and could be more spatially specific and related to strategic issues that Oxfordshire faces.*
 - *The present draft is not embracing and building clearly on Oxfordshire's unique national and international assets and is, therefore, indistinguishable from any other area... Equally, the draft omits in any meaningful way Oxfordshire's position as a global innovation hub and the opportunities this brings.*
 - *The most important outcome is to deliver homes in sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of residents.*
 - *The document must include more references to Oxfordshire's educational assets such as its world class universities and the schools in the county.*
 - *(I) would like to see more specific reference to 'diversity' in all senses.*
 - *We are very concerned that the present draft does not reference nor acknowledge businesses.*

PART 7: DELIVERY AND EVALUATION

48. The Open Thought platform asked contributors how they would want to see progress measured against the outcomes identified in the Vision, and the speed at which to meet targets. There was a strength of feeling that success against the Vision's ambitions would

be difficult to quantify and evaluate because of their broad and abstract nature in some instances. Several comments suggested how this might be done.

49. There was a slight balance in favour of taking a quantitative approach to measuring success. For example, many asked for key metrics and performance indicators. Some however said that a qualitative approach would be best, based on measuring public opinion. Despite the challenges identified in evaluating the Draft Vision, respondents gave numerous examples given of quantitative metrics that the Vision could use, and that it could review on an annual basis. There was an emphasis on using measures that were SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely), already established within the county, and recognised as universal indicators globally.
50. Some asked for a more nuanced approach to measuring success. Many advocated that the best way to measure success would be through asking residents directly for their views. Specifically, a few suggested that citizen assemblies, focus groups and neighbourhood forums would be a good way of understanding local satisfaction against the Vision's ambitions. Commenters expressed matters of wellbeing and happiness to be complex and multifaceted issues which through key performance indicators might not reasonably measure. One respondent suggested monitoring how the Vision has influenced wider plans and strategies to measure progress, and another said progress should be categorised under the parameters of human, environmental and economic welfare.
51. Typical examples of the responses received concerning delivery and evaluation of the Vision are set out below.
- *It will be very difficult to quantitatively measure but qualitatively you will know by the satisfaction of new residents and if people are travelling sustainably.*
 - *There is a need for a qualitative assessment of happiness of communities.*
 - *Index the number of homes with solar panels, the number of electric car charging points, air quality, broadband speed, school class sizes, child poverty / food bank usage, and average commute times.*
 - *The Vision should be measured qualitatively through neighbourhood and citizens' assemblies.*
 - *We should include a metric on the impact on future generations.*
 - *Digital connectivity is urgent and could be easily measured.*
 - *Defra metrics e.g. farmland and woodland bird index, butterfly index, extent of priority habitats in good condition or re-created.*
 - *Publishing KPIs that are evaluated and reviewed on a 5-year rolling basis.*
 - *Set clear goals i.e. annual carbon emissions measured against targets, put resources into properly quantifying biodiversity values (i.e. species diversity and abundance) and measure annually against net gain targets.*

PART 8: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Colleges

52. Alongside Open Thought, officers made special effort to engage with young people on the Strategic Vision. Working with staff from City of Oxford College and Abingdon and Witney College, officers devised a targeted and tailored workshop that sought to inform young people on the Vision and gauge their thoughts on the document. Students at City of Oxford College took part in the 45-minute workshop, held virtually with on December 11. Abingdon and Witney College students participated on January 19. A remote survey version of the session was also distributed to members of Voice of Oxfordshire Youth – a countywide

forum of young people aged 11 – 18 and up to 25 with additional needs. In total, 76 young people responded.

Outcomes

53. The workshop asked young people how much they agreed with each of the seven outcomes. There was broad support for all of the outcomes, with having a “happier, healthier and more equal” society and “greater connectivity and mobility” scoring the highest. The session then asked students to rank the outcomes in terms of importance. Improving our natural environment ranked highest, with creating a healthier, happier and more equal society second highest. Creating a strong sense of community and greater connectivity and mobility ranked least important. When asked if there was anything young people believed was missing from the outcomes, many responded that mental health needed to be a prominent part of our outcome looking at health. This included the provision of support and education around mental health issues. They also mentioned more job opportunities and housing availability for young people.



Which outcomes are most important to you? (Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)

57. Final thoughts submitted by the young people reiterated the need for more mental health support, creating a more equal society through eradicating homelessness and poverty and everyone being able to access the same opportunities, and providing stability in the future. Respondents appreciated that they had the opportunity to give their views and hoped officers would consider their views as part of revising the final Vision.
58. The impact of Covid was clear in young people's responses. The biggest message was that mental health needed to be a central part of the Vision. This included providing more support for mental health, more education around mental health, and ensuring access to green spaces and the ability to exercise to help improve mental health. Linked to this was the over-riding feeling that young people wanted stability in the future, understandable given the huge disruption in their lives. The Vision provides an opportunity to offer them the positivity they crave for their futures, with the promise of a stable job, access to affordable housing and being able to socialise with friends and family.

University

59. In addition to the college sessions, officers held a special virtual workshop with students from Oxford Brookes University on November 5. The students came from two courses: BA Planning and Property and BA Urban Design, Planning and Development. They were all third-year undergraduates doing the Strategic Planning & Policy module and in total about 50 students joined the session.
60. Officers asked the students to discuss and feedback on the following questions:
1. Are these the right outcomes for Oxfordshire?
 2. What needs to be done to achieve these outcomes?
 3. What should our targets look like – how far & how fast?
61. The overall priorities were creating places that allow healthy lifestyles (in the widest sense and including because it reduces demands on public services), an economy that provides good job prospects, and a green economy with a reduction in carbon emissions and congestion.
62. Students thought high-quality community green space was really important, along with quality public space in the built environment. Some mentioned the importance of mental wellbeing and mindfulness in this context. The students also linked green infrastructure with physical exercise, biodiversity and food production (allotments, private gardens). The right mix of housing in terms of tenure, type and size was important, with affordable housing a priority, along with a need for homes for the elderly. The need to improve space standards was strongly emphasised.
63. Respondents thought smaller communities were better in terms of creating a sense of community. Homes needed to be fit-for-purpose for the long-term (e.g in terms of climate change and adaptability as people's need change). There were lots of references to the importance of community assets. The students thought it important that planning of places and services was long-term, co-ordinated, clean and green. In terms of reducing carbon emissions, the students suggested there was more scope to reduce reliance on the private car and/or to use electric vehicles, improve fast broadband, and use principles from the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.

PART 9: LIMITATIONS AND LEARNINGS


The draft Strategic Vision is a high-level overarching document considering the kind of place that Oxfordshire should be over the next 30 years. Context is also vital when considering the number of responses. We are in the middle of a pandemic that has seen huge shifts in lifestyle and uncertainty over both people's short and long-term future. In such circumstances, the initial challenge is cutting through the Covid coverage to make people aware of the draft Vision and the engagement exercise. There is clearly also difficulty in asking them to consider a wide-ranging document that looks decades into the future while many are struggling to simply get by day-by-day.

64. A combination of pandemic restrictions, timeframes and efficiency meant officers hosted and promoted the engagement exercise online. This unfortunately results in excluding those who are either not able to get online or who are not comfortable using IT. Statistically these are likely to be older people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the responses received.
65. While direct emails were the largest source of users to the Open Thought site, analytics show about 45% of all subscribers opened the email inviting them to take part in the draft Strategic Vision engagement, and about 17% clicked on the link to take them to the site. Future work is needed in establishing what can be done to increase both of these rates to further the reach of our engagement.
66. Similarly, there were 1,839 views of the online form on the Open Thought website, and 708 starts, but 115 responses (including two tests) meaning a response rate of 16%. Timeframes meant extensive testing and refinement of the form was not possible, however there is clear room for improvement in future engagement exercises to increase the response rate.
67. There were a handful of respondents who appeared to confuse questions and responses, as well as a small number who it seems attributed low scores to outcomes they wanted to prioritise the most, rather than a high score. These anomalies are negligible in regards to altering the wider interpretation of responses in the engagement, but quantitative measurements have not been included in the report as a result. They will also be considered in the evaluation of the online form.

PART 10: CONCLUSIONS

68. The Strategic Vision engagement exercise set out to ask the public and partners for their views on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The feedback demonstrates strong support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and for the ambitions set out within the document. This includes support for the Outcomes, Guiding Principles and definition of 'Good Growth.' There were however a range of suggestions for increasing emphasis and ambition, most often in respect of tackling climate change, protecting the environment and tackling inequalities.
69. Respondents wanted to see the Vision take a more tailored approach to the challenges and opportunities facing Oxfordshire, and for it to make more of the unique people, places and assets within the county. A significant number of responses indicated concern over how the Vision would be evaluated and delivered, most often because the Vision's intent was considered broad and wide ranging, and therefore difficult to measure. Finally, many said

that there needs to be greater clarity about the Vision's status, and its relationship with other organisational strategies and plans; particularly where tensions might arise between the two. A small minority of responses had more fundamental critiques of the Vision, most often related to deliverability and the perceived tensions between delivering good growth and the environmental ambitions within the document.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>Cabinet: Wednesday 21 April 2021</p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p>Agenda Item No. 10</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: 01993 861000; Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>This report sets out a recent proposal, which was agreed by the Growth Board on 22 March 2021, to establish an Environment Advisory Group, together with a set of Terms of Reference. Wider information is also provided concerning the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire, and the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>Appendix 1 - Committee on Climate Change Spheres of Local Authority Influence Appendix 2 - Environment Advisory Group Terms of Reference Appendix 3 - Shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>(a) That the establishment of a Growth Board Environment Advisory group be supported;</p> <p>(b) That the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles be endorsed, as set out at Appendix 3, recognising that this statement of ambition applies to a diverse range of urban and rural communities, and that further evidentiary work will be required at a local level to understand their longer-term implications; and</p> <p>(c) That the development of an Arc Environment Strategy, which will provide for how the principles can be delivered, be supported.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>The Growth Board brings together all of the Principal Councils in Oxfordshire, together with other key partners, to work cooperatively on strategic issues. As such it is relevant to all of the key priorities identified in the Council Plan.</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>The Growth Board carried out a review of the Growth Board with public consultation and one of the themes identified was the need for greater focus on the Environment. The Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles</p>

	were developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders including relevant Council officers.
--	--

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Growth Board's review of its own operating arrangements in 2020¹ concluded that its work would benefit from a greater consideration of environmental issues by strengthening the Board's structure and networks through an environmental 'work stream.' Since then, the Chair of the Oxfordshire Environment Board now sits on the Growth Board's Executive Officer Group to offer advice in the developmental stages of Growth Board programmes.
- 1.2. Work has also been underway to establish a Local Nature Partnership to guide nature recovery in Oxfordshire and the Growth Board has also endorsed a revised Terms of Reference which raises the priority of environmental considerations within its work, reflecting the commitments made by the constituent local authorities and partners concerning the climate emergency. The Board has also recently engaged on a draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, which commits specifically to protecting and enhancing our natural environment, whilst pursuing a zero-carbon future. Finally, similar steps are also being taken at the Oxford to Cambridge Arc level, and a copy of the recently established Arc Environment Principles are included in this report for endorsement.
- 1.3. The Growth Board's Executive Officer Group has held a series of facilitated discussions to identify an approach and purpose for better integrating environment considerations into the Board's structure, whilst ensuring visibility and transparency in the work undertaken. Building on the improvements that have already been made in this area, the establishment of an Environment Advisory Group represents a natural and needed evolution of this work in order to support ambition and delivery in this space.
- 1.4. Through this process, it has been clear that the scale of ambition among the Growth Board's partners to address the ecological and climate emergencies (informed by the 6th carbon budget) is significant and could be leading in many respects. The draft Strategic Vision sets environmental aims that will need to be supported by an appropriate group which can advise on cross-sector strategy and delivery of this work. Whilst more informal officer and member working groups have existed for some time with respect to environmental planning, the growing expanse of local and national policy developments (over 30 different statutory instruments/legislation covering net zero, natural resources, planning and Environment and Agriculture Bills) in this area requires a more structured partnership arrangement to ensure the Growth Board is on the front foot in responding to emerging opportunities and challenges they present.

2. MAIN POINTS

An Environment Advisory Group

- 2.1. It is recognised that additional capacity is needed where partners wish to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies in a collective and partnership led way. Whilst a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) will substantially increase capacity for nature's recovery, it will not practicably be able to cover all issues and topics under the environmental umbrella. It is therefore considered that an Environment Advisory Group of the Growth Board offers a visible and transparent approach to meeting this challenge.

¹ See report to the Oxfordshire Growth Board, 28 January 2020.

- 2.2. Since the three existing Growth Board Advisory Sub groups (Housing, Infrastructure and Oxfordshire Plan 2050) were established in June 2018, positive feedback has consistently been given concerning their value in bringing together strategic cross-local authority conversations within their remit. Whilst these advisory groups have been tasked with overseeing detailed elements of the £215m Housing and Growth Deal, they also represent a useful space for wider discussions to help inform joint work. These groups are made up of executive councillors from each of the six councils of Oxfordshire, whilst the Infrastructure Sub group also has representation from the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Forum.
- 2.3. In the first instance, it is recommended that the Environment Advisory Group be set up to broadly mirror the well-established Terms of Reference and membership arrangements of the existing sub-groups, being constituted as a sub-group of the Growth Board, with membership of the lead executive members from each local authority with environmental responsibilities. Unlike the other sub groups however, its remit would extend beyond the Housing and Growth Deal to cover the Growth Board's wider remit and work plan in line with the emerging Strategic Vision (across sectors), given that the Housing and Growth Deal is time limited. A report is was received by the Growth Board on 22 March and this endorsed the Terms of Reference for this group.

A cross cutting, integrated and partnership led approach

- 2.4. The role of the group would be “to act in an advisory and consultative capacity to the Growth Board and provide strategic environmental oversight in the development and delivery of key projects and programmes within its remit”. The Group would be expected to shape and prioritise its own work programme, and is encouraged to engage with partners and experts, and make use of co-option to strengthen its knowledge base and representation. Notes of each meeting would be published and reported to the Growth Board in the normal way. It is expected the Terms of Reference for this group ([Appendix 2](#)) might evolve over time to be more flexible to meet the needs of the Growth Board's work (e.g. membership, remit etc.), as with the other sub groups. Any changes in this respect would come back to the Board for consideration.
- 2.5. The cross cutting and broad remit of the group will necessitate operating in an inclusive, flexible and prioritised way, whilst ensuring that wider partners and experts are engaged with as required to inform the work. The Group will have an important role in taking a whole system approach and embedding critical environmental thinking across the Growth Board's programmes (e.g. healthy place shaping). It must link closely with the existing sub groups and wider partnerships (such as the Local Nature Partnership) to ensure work is integrated and complementary to theirs. It should provide advice in aligning strategic environmental policy across local partners to ensure that net zero and ecological ambitions are harmoniously optimised. In demonstrating the breadth of the issues that might be considered, some non-exhaustive examples are listed below:
- air quality management (atmosphere)
 - water quality management, supply and blue infrastructure (hydrosphere),
 - nature recovery, biodiversity, biodiversity/environment net gain
 - green space and green infrastructure
 - agriculture
 - forestry, woodlands and trees
 - waste management
 - energy production and supply
 - transport
 - buildings– net zero carbon and retrofit

2.6. The Committee on Climate Change recently identified where the greatest influence can be leveraged among local authorities to seek environmental improvements.² It identified six spheres of influence as follows: direct control, procurement, place shaping, showcasing, partnerships and communicating and engaging. It is expected that these areas for action will be a key part of the Group's focus in advising the Growth Board. The full diagram can be found at [Appendix I](#).

A Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire

2.7. Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) provide a joined up and strategic forum to help guide nature recovery in an integrated way to produce multiple benefits for local people, the economy and the environment. They are designed to promote a more formalised, systematic and collaborative approach to the management and enhancement of the natural environment and encompass a broad range of local organisations and people who are committed to this aim.

2.8. The Growth Board has previously provided its support for establishing a LNP for Oxfordshire to guide work on nature recovery and link in with wider regional discussions concerning the natural environment. Oxfordshire is one of the few areas not to have an LNP, and the only area not to have an LNP within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. Following a stakeholder engagement process, an initial workshop of interested parties took place in December 2020 and this confirmed strong support for an Oxfordshire LNP from a wide range of stakeholders. A small working group then got together to develop proposals further, and the outcomes of this work were reported to a second stakeholder workshop on the 11th March where again there was strong support. The details of LNP Board membership are under development and the current aim is to establish the LNP Board in time for a first meeting in September 2021.

Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles

2.9. In 2020 the Arc Leadership Group Environment Working Group agreed to produce a set of Arc-wide Environment Principles. The principles are attached at [Appendix 3](#). They are the result of a collaborative piece of work led by a range of partners and stakeholders including:

- Environmental NGOs (who drafted the first document)
- Local Nature Partnerships
- Local Government environment and planning policy representatives (we received responses from c. 20 local authorities, with representation from across the Arc)
- DEFRA
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- MHCLG (planning policy lead)
- University representative from the Universities' Environment Group
- A LEP representative
- Anglian Water
- An Energy Hub representative

2.10. The document at [Appendix 3](#) has been endorsed by the Arc Leadership Group Plenary on 09 March 2021. It is hoped by having developed consensus and support for these principles, including direct engagement with HM Government, that these will be used to support emerging environmental policies within the emerging Arc Spatial Framework. The agreed principles will be strengthened further after being publicly considered by every

² Committee on Climate Change, 2020. Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget. Available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Local-Authorities-and-the-Sixth-Carbon-Budget.pdf>

partner organisation. This information will be shared as part of a standard report to be used by all councils or LEPs in seeking local endorsement.

Status of Principles

- 2.11. The principles are not formal policy but rather a shared statement of ambition for the Arc. They are intended to:
- support our position with respect to the environment policies emerging from the Arc Spatial Framework
 - allow use of the Arc as a place for DEFRA to test and apply its 25-year plan and funding through pilots and projects
 - support Local Planning Authorities with a frame of reference to further develop the principles through Local and Strategic Plans at a local and sub-regional level.
- 2.12. The Arc Leadership Group will next be developing an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide the route map to delivering against these ambitions, including trajectories for meeting ambitious future performance targets. There are five overarching principles:
- To target net zero carbon at a pan-Arc level by 2040;
 - To protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats through the implementation of the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, mitigate, compensate and gain;
 - To be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government's 25-year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach. We will aim to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development;
 - To ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc;
 - To use natural resources wisely.
- 2.13. Each theme has several sub-principles which describe further the outcomes we aspire to. Some of the sub-principles will evolve further as we develop our thinking (for example, a waste/circular waste principle).

Next steps

- 2.14. Having been endorsed by the Plenary, the Arc Environment Principles will be shared amongst a wider audience including the development community to gain support and buy-in. It is intended that each partner organisation will now proceed to take these through local decision-making processes to provide even more support for the shared principles. The next piece of work for the Arc Environment Working Group is to develop an Environment Strategy which will set out a comprehensive plan for how the principles will be delivered in the Arc. It is likely that the strategy will take 12-18 months to complete.
- 2.15. Concerning the Growth Board's Environment Advisory Group, subject to endorsement of the proposed Terms of Reference at [Appendix 2](#), the next step would be to return to the Growth Board at its next meeting in June to confirm the final membership, chairing and resourcing arrangements for the Group. The Executive Officer Group will ensure that all the necessary preparatory arrangements are made to allow the Advisory Group's work to launch formally soon after.

Conclusion

- 2.16. This report summarises some of the many changes that are taking place among Growth Board partners to drive forward positive change with regards to the climate and ecological

emergencies. A specific action requests Cabinet endorsement of the Arc Environment Principles set out at [Appendix 3](#).

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The financial and resourcing implications of establishing both a Local Nature Partnership and an Environment Advisory Group will need to be considered by each local authority at the appropriate level.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None.

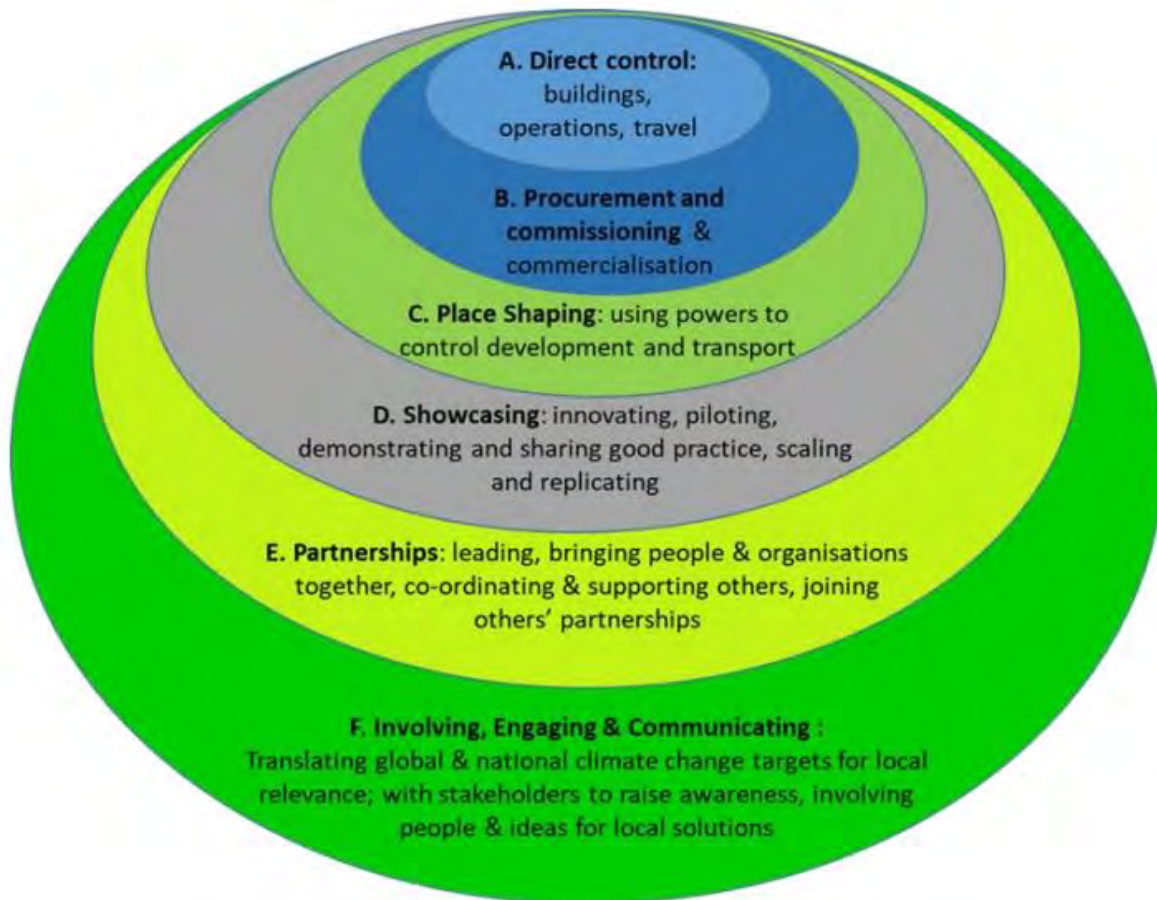
5. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 5.1. Cabinet could chose not to support the establishment of a Growth Board Environment Advisory group, and not to endorse the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE

- 6.1. The establishment of a Growth Board Environment Advisory group and the endorsement of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environment Principles will support the actions being taken in West Oxfordshire on climate change and biodiversity.

Committee on Climate Change Spheres of Local Authority Influence Diagram¹



¹ Committee on Climate Change, 2020. Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget. Available at: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Local-Authorities-and-the-Sixth-Carbon-Budget.pdf>

Oxfordshire Growth Board Environment Advisory Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and Objectives

- 1.1 The purpose of the Environment Advisory Group is to act in an advisory and consultative capacity to the Growth Board and provide strategic oversight in the development and delivery of key projects and programmes within its remit.
- 1.2 The Advisory Group will work on the principle of consensus in advising the Growth Board, whilst at the same time each member will act as the individual lead and conduit, both to and from the authority and sectors they represent.
- 1.3 The Advisory Group will operate within the remit set by the Growth Board. Their role is to:
 - 1.3.1 Broaden engagement and involvement of the constituent councils in key areas of the Growth Board's work and ownership of each constituent council's part in the delivery of Growth Board programmes.
 - 1.3.2 Provide strategic oversight and advice in the development and delivery of the Growth Board's programmes, helping to align cross cutting activities and priorities across.
 - 1.3.3 Provide a councillor forum in which to examine and discuss strategic environmental issues in more detail and develop understanding and knowledge, drawing on opportunities to co-opt and engage with wider partners and sector experts to inform Growth Board programmes.
 - 1.3.4 Horizon scan across the breadth of environmental issues, enabling the identification of gaps in the Growth Board's approach to its climate and ecological ambitions, and to advise in addressing those gaps.
 - 1.3.5 To develop areas for joint work across the Growth Board partnership to address key growth challenges and inform policy development.
- 1.4 As an advisory body, the group does not have decision making powers but will advise and make recommendations to the Growth Board on the areas outlined

2. Membership and appointments

- 2.1 The Advisory Group will comprise of at least one executive member from each of the partner authorities which has relevant responsibilities, plus a chair appointed by the Growth Board. The partner authorities are as follows:
 - Cherwell District Council
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - Oxford City Council
 - South Oxfordshire District Council
 - Vale of White Horse District Council
 - West Oxfordshire District Council

- 2.2 The Chair of the Advisory Group will be drawn from the voting membership of the Growth Board.
- 2.3 Each partner authority shall appoint one executive substitute member for each Advisory Group, who can substitute for their member as required. The substitute member shall have the same rights as the member for whom the substitution is made.
- 2.4 Given the breadth of issues under the environment umbrella, it is expected that the group will engage, and operate in partnership with, wider partners and experts as required.
- 2.5 Co-opted non-voting members may be appointed for specific items or a period of up to a year by the Advisory Group with the agreement of the voting membership of the Growth Board.
- 2.6 Where the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, but still wishes for it to progress, the Group may elect a Chair for that meeting only.

3. Role of the Chair

- 3.1 The Chair must act in an independent and facilitative capacity to organise the Group's activities in support of the objectives of the Growth Board. At all times, the Chair must use their discretion to act in the interests of Oxfordshire and the Growth Board, and not of their own political group or local authority area.
- 3.2 The Chair will manage meetings in accordance with the Group's terms of reference, and provide leadership and direction to the Group in an open and transparent manner.
- 3.3 The Chair will report directly into the Growth Board on the work of their Group as agreed. In reporting to the Growth Board, the Chair will present the views of the Group, and not necessarily their own views.
- 3.4 The Advisory Group is not a decision making body, and the Chair should aim to reach a consensus on matters under discussion. Where a consensus cannot be reached, the Chair shall present the split views of the group to the Growth Board.
- 3.5 The Advisory Group should be mindful of the work of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel and any other Advisory Groups to avoid any duplication of work. The Group should also be mindful of any work it may require of officers, and the impact this may have on existing priorities.

4 Role of Members

- 4.1 In addition to contributing to the overall role of the Advisory Group, members will be a proactive conduit between the work of the Group and their respective council. This might include, for example, providing regular updates to their own council on the work of the Group.

5 Meeting Arrangements

- 5.1 The Advisory Group will meet in accordance with a schedule of meetings that satisfies the requirements of the relevant programmes of work. The notes of a meeting will be drafted and included in the agenda for the next available Growth Board meeting.
- 5.2 Meetings may be rearranged, cancelled or additional meetings scheduled with the agreement of the Chair of the Advisory Group.
- 5.3 The quorum for a meeting shall be three members. Non-attendance of partner authorities shall not affect the legitimacy of an Advisory Group's conclusions. However, where the effect of a particular consideration would give rise to contractual or financial implications for a partner authority that is not in attendance, or if their views cannot be obtained, then this fact will be reported to the Growth Board.

6 Access to information

- 6.1 It is expected that the Advisory Group will have the right to see the same information as that of the Growth Board when advising on any given issue, in order that an informed view can be made.
- 6.2 The Advisory Group will meet in private and the meetings will not be subject to the provisions of s100 of the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. However, the conclusions of the Advisory Group shall be conveyed in public to the Growth Board at each of its meetings, except in circumstances where the matter under consideration contains exempt or confidential information, as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
- 6.3 The Advisory Group's agendas and associated written reports will be circulated to the members of the Advisory Group, and the designated officer of the respective partner authorities, at least three clear working days before the meeting. Non adherence to this principal however will not invalidate a meeting.
- 6.4 The work of the Advisory Group will not be subject to scrutiny by the Joint Scrutiny Panel, although their notes will be available to Scrutiny to comment on as published reports to the Growth Board.

7 Work Plan

- 7.1 The Advisory Group will establish a forward Work Plan of matters to consider, which will be reviewed at each meeting. The development and management of the Work Plan will be led by the Chair, having regard to the requirements of the Growth Board, the advice of the Housing and Growth Deal Programme Board and Executive Officer Group, and the wishes of the Advisory Group.
- 7.2 The Work Plan will set out the matters to be considered, and the date at which they are to be considered. Through its work plan, the Advisory Group will have a specific role in:
 - a) Horizon scanning, seeking to identifying opportunities for collaboration on joint projects and programmes which support the delivery of the Board's Vision, and specifically its environmental ambitions.

- b) Providing advice concerning the delivery of the Oxfordshire Growth Board's programmes.
- c) Provide advice on strategy and vision, and how this translates into the delivery of the Growth Board's work
- d) Acting as a conduit for new innovative thinking, sharing best practice and catalysing partnership working.
- e) Advising on and involving external environmental contributions to the Growth Board's work
- f) Acting as a sounding board in the development of Executive Officer Group proposals for the Growth Board
- g) Providing advice to the Growth Board concerning forthcoming issues, acting in support of the objectives of the Growth Board, and considering any additional matters that the Growth Board requires of them.

7.3 In prioritising its work plan, the group should consider the full breadth of environmental issues. This includes, but is not limited to, for example: air quality, water, woodlands and trees, agriculture, nature recovery, waste, transport, green space, carbon reduction, energy, retrofitting buildings and biodiversity.

8 General principles

8.1 Each partner authority agrees to support the purposes of the Group by ensuring that in their own decision making, they collaborate and cooperate with one another in an open and accountable manner in the interests of the whole of Oxfordshire, whilst acting in good faith. The Group will be formally constituted as a sub-group of the Growth Board.

8.2 The joint management of the Advisory Sub Groups will be conducted in such a way that no authority's capacity to deliver day to day services is disadvantaged more so than another through their commitment to the Advisory Sub Groups.

8.3 The normal rules as to declarations of interest will be applied to local authority members in accordance with the respective Council's Code of Conduct.

8.4 The Growth Board may amend these Terms of Reference or discontinue the work of the Advisory Sub Group at any time.

Shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the **Oxford-Cambridge Arc**





Contents

Foreword	3
The joint declaration	4
The Arc vision	5
The Principles	7

Foreword

The days when we could take our environment for granted are long gone. We must now seek out every opportunity we can to protect and enhance what we have left and ensure that we do everything we can to ensure that the Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a place where we can all work and live truly sustainably.

Both the Arc Leadership Group’s OxCam Arc Economic Prospectus and the Government’s publication, planning for sustainable growth: introduction to the Arc Spatial Framework has given top billing jointly to the economy and the environment. It is now our job to ensure that the environment is at the centre of everything we do and every decision we take.

The work of the OxCam Arc Environment Working Group has been focused on putting forward this set of principles that will allow us to be outstandingly ambitious and aspirational for the OxCam Arc. If we can get this right then the world will look to our ‘Green Arc’ as an internationally significant exemplar for the very best in sustainable living and working, for practical ways to doubling nature, and innovative solutions to energy and water shortages as well as stimulating a green economy.

These principles will form the basis for the creation of an OxCam- wide Environmental Strategy that will embrace everything from green spaces, to housing standards, to sustainable transport, energy generation and transmission and water management and conservation.

It is vital, as we and government move forward with the OxCam Arc, that we take the people already living here with us. We can do this by committing to greener transport, by doubling the number of trees and acreage of accessible managed green spaces, by protecting our chalk streams and supporting local green energy production to name but a few.

If we are to double economic growth along the OxCam Arc then as a minimum we must be doubling nature and ensuring that the Arc leads the way in the zero carbon living and working of the future.

Councillor Bridget Smith,
Leader South Cambridgeshire District Council,
Chair Arc Environment Working Group

Left
Paragliding off the
Dunstable Downs Chiltern
Hills in Bedfordshire



In March 2019, Government and local partners set out their ambition for the Arc in a joint declaration¹:

“We want better places to live, which are beautiful and inspiring, to benefit the Arc’s residents today as well as tomorrow. The Government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England’s 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. We want new developments to use intelligent and sensitive design to create or enhance habitats and improve habitat connectivity, in situ and in the surrounding area. We also want to improve access to the environment for existing and new communities in order to improve health and wellbeing.”

“Conserving and enhancing the natural environment is at the heart of Government’s ambitions for the Arc. The 25 Year Environment Plan also sets out our comprehensive approach to improving landscapes and habitats, and

the aspiration to move to a policy of net environmental gain. We expect the policy for the wider Oxford-Cambridge corridor to embody this approach.”

An Environment Working Group (EWG) has been established to take forward the environmental pillar outlined within the joint declaration. The EWG will work with partners in the Arc, including those responsible for the other pillars, to ensure that the protection and enhancement of the environment is at the heart of decision-making and any actions are based on a clear and agreed evidence base.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

In October 2020 an economic prospectus for the Arc was published jointly by local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnerships within the Arc. It outlines the following vision:

“By 2050, the Arc will be 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.”

The environmental principles supporting this vision are set out in this document. They are ambitious and will require the collective effort of all partners in the Arc if they are to be delivered.



Above
Sunrise at Willen Lake in Milton Keynes.

Right
Elmsbrook eco-town - Bicester.



The principles address how we will tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time: achieving net zero carbon, climate resilience, biodiversity net gain, environmental net gain, doubling the area of land actively managed for nature, restoring, protecting and enhancing the natural environment and ensuring renewable natural capital (resources derived from living things that if properly managed can be replenished) remains available for future generations.

The principles

Page 00
The regional principles have been written and agreed by the Arc's local partners and stakeholders. They are informed by Government policy. They are a clear statement of regional intent that will help to clarify the commitment to adopting an approach that results in environmentally sustainable economic growth. This includes the protection, restoration and enhancement of the environment (air, water, land, soil, biodiversity), net biodiversity and net environmental gain, net zero carbon, the sustainable use of resources.

The principles align with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan² and the commitment in the joint declaration to embody the 25 year plans goals and ambitions.

We will also take account of other appropriate government strategies, plans and guidance. Our aim is for the principles to inform and become an integral part of developing plans and statements in relation to the Arc, local plans, local council activities and the plans and activities of activities and delivery programs for all bodies operating in the Arc. It is also our ambition to see universities, private sector developers and third sector organisations adopt these principles.



Above
Cotswolds Hills Countryside in the area of outstanding natural beauty.

Right
Autumn view of the river Nene Valley, near Castor village, Cambridgeshire.

²A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environmentfile/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

The Arc partners will seek to:

1.

Work towards a target of net zero carbon at an Arc level by 2040.

This will include:

- a. Ensuring all **decisions about development and new infrastructure support this goal.**
- b. Working with Government to **enhance building regulations and planning policy to actively reduce the carbon footprint of, and energy consumption in, new buildings.**
- c. Pursuing a **major programme of transformation** in existing settlements and infrastructure to reduce energy intensity and carbon emissions.
- d. Construction, operational and transport activities.

2.

Protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats, and links between them. We will implement the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, minimise, remediate, compensate and gain. This will include:

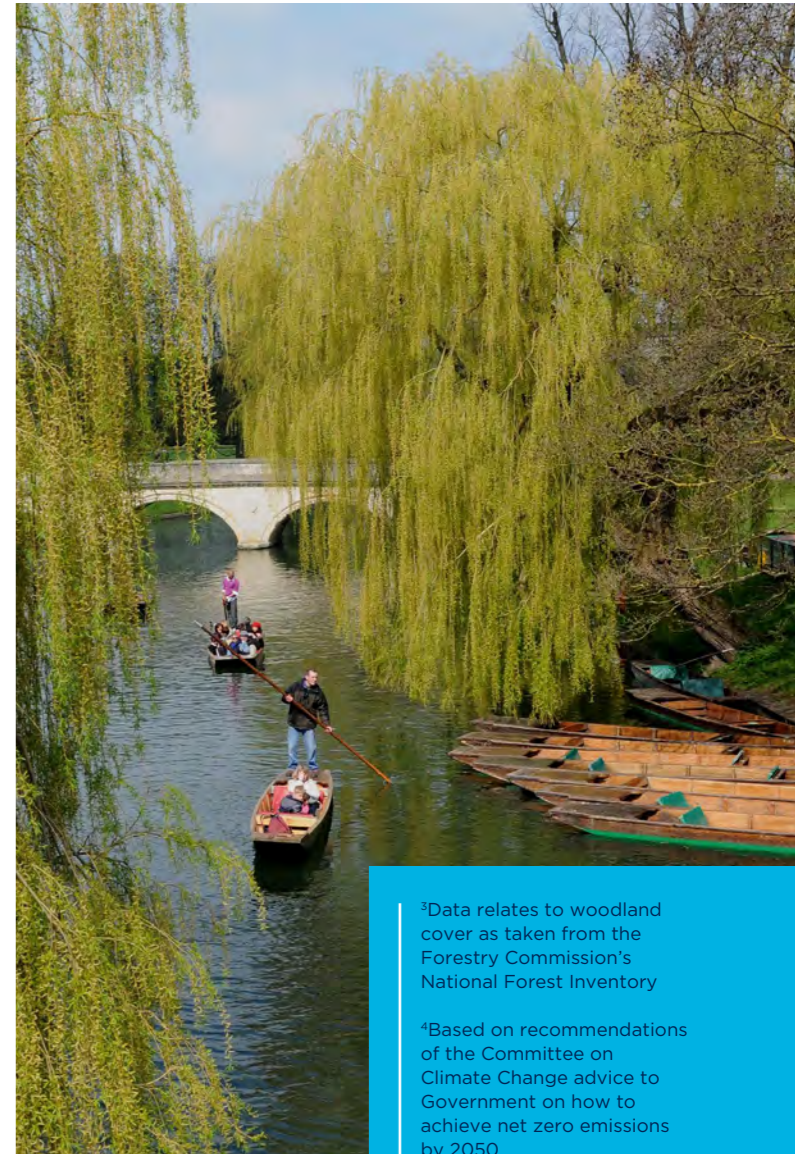
- a. Doubling the area of land managed primarily for nature in the Arc (**'Doubling Nature'**). To contribute to Government's commitment to protecting 30% of land for nature conservation by 2030. We will seek to maximise public, private and third sector funding opportunities **to protect, restore and enhance the natural environment** and maintain existing, and increase investment in, natural capital assets, working with partners including major landowners and our important agriculture sector across the Arc.



Above
Heron Valley, Rushmere
Country Park, Leighton
Buzzard.

Right
Punting on the River
Nene, Peterborough.

- b. Coordinating work on local nature recovery strategies and the Arc's contribution to **the Nature Recovery Network for England** by creating more, bigger, better-connected places, in the required condition, for nature including landscape scale interventions.
- c. Delivering **biodiversity net gain for Town & Country Planning Act developments of 20%**. This is above the 10% Government mandated minimum to reflect the Arc's world leading environmental ambitions.
- d. Delivering **biodiversity net gain for all developments of 20% with a minimum requirement of 10%** including Nationally Significant Infrastructure and projects brought forward outside of the Town & Country Planning Act. This is to reflect the Arc's world leading environmental ambitions.
- e. **Working with Government to develop a suitable net environment gain metric that** incorporates biodiversity net gain and, once available, to set an ambitious target to reflect the Arc's world leading environmental ambitions.
- f. Establishing **human and nature mobility corridors** across the Arc – using existing or new transport corridors for maximum environmental benefit/gain.
- g. **Increasing tree and woodland cover across the Arc from 7.4%³ to 19%⁴.** This is in recognition of the ability of trees and woodlands to deliver a wide range of environmental, health, social and economic benefits. We will ensure the right trees are planted in the right places.
- h. Protecting and enhancing protected landscapes. Enhancing landscape character areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the wider countryside.



³Data relates to woodland cover as taken from the Forestry Commission's National Forest Inventory

⁴Based on recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change advice to Government on how to achieve net zero emissions by 2050

3.

Be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government's 25 year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach and will fully recognise the associated health and wellbeing benefits. We will aim to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development. This will include:

Page 97

All new settlements, urban extensions and infrastructure contributing to the achievement of delivering net biodiversity gain, net environmental gain, and net zero carbon both in site and route selection and in the design of settlements and transport corridors. In addition, areas of tranquillity will be protected and measures taken to avoid light pollution and protect dark sky areas. Making cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel and investing in zero emission public transport of the future.

- b. **Understanding the impact of development on the natural environment**, including cumulative and indirect impacts (taking into account associated housing and other forms of development), so that these can be addressed in line with the mitigation hierarchy, and carrying out environmental and strategic assessments as appropriate for the type and scale of development programmes including options and proper community consultation.
- c. Understanding the Arc's environmental capacity to accommodate different levels of growth and development in different locations and **ensuring that planned growth and development remains well within environmental capacity limits.**
- d. Working with Government to **enhance the building regulations and the role of planning policy so that they align with sustainability principles, and actively reduce the carbon footprint, water and energy consumption** in new and existing buildings. We will encourage Arc local partners to exceed the minimum standards required by building regulations.
- e. Promoting the switch to renewable and other sustainable energy supplies, improving travel choices, and supporting changing working practices. This will enable **improvements to the design and development of sustainable communities and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.**

Right
People walking in open spaces.

4.

Ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc including through:

- a. **Maximising the health and wellbeing benefits of nature** by providing sector-leading areas of accessible nature-rich greenspace in, and accessible to, new settlements, urban extensions and commercial zones and increasing and enhancing greenspace, and access to it, for existing settlements in the Arc.
- b. **Promoting and increasing equality of sustainable access to nature and its benefits** by investing in, increasing and enhancing nature-rich greenspace in the places and communities where it is most lacking. We will improve access to greenspace and nature, ensuring Natural England's Access to Natural Greenspace standards, and (once available) Green Infrastructure Standards, are maximised for existing housing and delivered for future developments.



5.

Use natural resources wisely by:

- a. Working to address existing **water resource, water quality and flood management** issues and through an integrated approach across the water agenda ensure future issues and risks are managed, including in the context of climate change, with a focus on nature-based interventions.
- b. Ensuring that soil quality is properly protected and improved including within development, infrastructure and agricultural activities.
- c. Making **more efficient use and management of waste and resources**, working towards a circular economy with no net waste and promoting the use of sustainable building materials and construction guidelines.
- d. Working with local authorities to share best practice and coordinate action being taken on local **air quality management plans** including addressing emissions from agriculture and from installations regulated by the Environment Agency.
- e. Supporting the development of interventions that reduce the **impact of agriculture on the environment** and support productivity.
- f. Helping to build collaboration between farmers to generate catchment and landscape scale environmental improvement under the **Environmental Land Management Scheme**.
- g. Ensuring that the required mineral resources for the Arc are sourced in an environmentally sensitive manner and that mineral sites are restored in a coordinated manner to after-uses that benefit nature and people, as well as helping to provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water management.

We will continue to work with the other Arc pillars to develop appropriate environmental principles for incorporation within these workstreams.

We will review and update the environmental principles in the light of developing policies, practices, evidence, experience, knowledge and governance arrangements.



Resourcing our ambitions

To achieve delivery of these principles we will need to work collaboratively across the public, private and third sectors. Some resources are already in place and there are many more that we will need. As a starting point we will:

- Build on the work of the Arc Local Natural Capital Plan and the associated work in the 5 counties to **make publicly available, agreed baseline maps for natural capital and ecosystem services across the Arc**. Resources will be required to maintain the data and make it accessible.
- Work with the statutory agencies and with local councils to ensure ready **access to the wide range of environmental data** currently collected by them.
- **Work with government to agree methodologies** for both net biodiversity gain and net environment gain for use within the Arc. We will establish a technical group(s) to assess net gain propositions on behalf of local planning authorities and provide planning committees with independent advice.
- **Support and promote a 5 yearly environmental census** across the Arc including promoting public engagement through citizen science approaches.
- Use **evidence on health, deprivation and ecosystem services demand** (e.g. for air quality improvement) to inform planning for greenspace, habitats and **natural capital assets**.
- Work with all those that fund nature improvement work across the Arc including the Defra Group, water companies, environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, local councils, catchment partnerships, housing and commercial property developers and infrastructure providers, together with those allocating Environment Land Management System funding, and private investors to **take a more efficient and effective systems based approach to natural capital and ecosystem systems based interventions**. We will seek to ensure that funding is used strategically and not in a piecemeal way.
- **Invest in projects that deliver natural capital and environmental benefits**, such as carbon sequestration, pollinator habitats, soil improvement, flood alleviation and water resource resilience, and establish Arc-wide and more local Natural Capital Investment Plans to inform and support the emerging Arc Spatial Framework.

Monitoring

We will pursue our commitment as outlined within these principles and will work with government and local partners on the development of associated metrics and targets in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan, carbon reduction commitments and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Engagement

We will engage and consult with communities, residents and people working in the Arc, as well as businesses, other organisations and NGOs, on the vision and ambitions for sustainable environmental growth in the Arc.

This document is supported by the Arc Leadership Group, Arc Universities Environment Group, Arc Local Enterprise Partnerships, England's Economic Heartland, and has been drafted with input from the Arc Local Nature Partnerships whose members include representatives from environment NGOs, local councils, LEPs, developers, businesses, business representation bodies, the Environment Agency, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission and important contributions from central government departments, other environment NGOs and businesses.





Below
Sunrise panorama at
the Campbell park in
Milton Keynes.

Published by the
Environment Working Group,
Oxford-Cambridge Arc
Leadership Group: March 2021



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank