



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Name and date of Committee | Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Thursday 8 April 2021 |
| Report Number | Agenda Item No. 8 |
| Subject | Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2019/20 |
| Wards affected | ALL |
| Accountable member | Councillor Jeff Haine, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning Email: jeff.haine@westoxon.gov.uk |
| Accountable officer | Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Tel: 01993 861686 Email: Chris.Hargraves@publicagroup.uk |
| Summary/Purpose | To consider the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report for 2019/20. |
| Annex | Annex A – Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2019/20 |
| Recommendation | That the content of the Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report be noted. |
| Corporate priorities | The Annual Monitoring Report is purposefully structured around the six main themes of the Council Plan (2020 – 2024). |
| Key Decision | No |
| Exempt | No |
| Consultees/ Consultation | None. |

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Members will be aware that under current legislation, the Council is required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which provides an update on the following matters:
 - Progress of the Local Plan and any other related documents against agreed timetables;
 - Implementation of Local Plan policies;
 - Neighbourhood Planning;
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where this has been introduced; and
 - How the Council has fulfilled its obligations under the Duty to Co-Operate.
- 1.2. The AMR must be made available on the Council's website, at its main offices and any other appropriate locations.
- 1.3. Attached at [Annex A](#) is a copy of the Council's AMR which covers the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. A brief overview of the main points arising is provided below.

2. AMR 2019/20 - OVERVIEW

- 2.1. The AMR is structured in line with the six main themes of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan (2020 – 2024).
- 2.2. Under each theme, the AMR provides relevant contextual/background information before considering what has happened during the monitoring period 2019/20 and then summarising what's on the horizon in terms of future Council activities and actions.
- 2.3. Set out below is a brief summary overview for each theme.
Climate Action
- 2.4. The AMR demonstrates a positive, yet gradual decline in CO₂ emissions across the District, increasing prevalence of renewable energy installations, increases in the number of public electric vehicle charging points and a general decline in the amount of residual household waste.
- 2.5. There has been a small decrease in the number of priority species and overall priority habitat and countywide work has commenced on a Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire to identify places where wildlife can be helped to return.
- 2.6. Looking forward, the District Council will take forward its Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy and continue to work with partners to further develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 2.7. There may be an increase in household waste as a result of residents spending more time at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Healthy Towns and Villages
- 2.8. The AMR includes a range of contextual information demonstrating that on the whole, West Oxfordshire performs better than, or similar to the national average on most indicators for health and wellbeing.
- 2.9. During the monitoring year, there has been a small amount of additional healthcare permitted together with some additional leisure floorspace. Visitor numbers to the District's main leisure centres have been much lower than usual as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 2.10. Good progress has been made in respect of various transport improvements across the District including the proposed park and ride site at Eynsham and associated improvements to the A40 corridor including access to Witney at Shores Green.
- 2.11. Looking forward, work will soon commence on a new Playing Pitch Strategy along with a Built Facilities Strategy and there will be a roll out of a new Health Impact Assessment (HIA) toolkit across the County to help create healthy, more resilient and sustainable communities.
- 2.12. There will be further public engagement in respect of the various A40 improvements including improved access to Carterton.

A Vibrant District Economy

- 2.13. The AMR demonstrates that West Oxfordshire has a strong and diverse economy and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country with particular potential for growth in engineering, motorsport and food production. The District's Town Centres continue to face challenges with Witney in particular having experienced an increase in vacant town centre units.
- 2.14. In 2019, there were 57,200 employees, 6,100 more than in 2018, with the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identifying specific opportunities for new strategic employment growth at the Garden Village and at Carterton.
- 2.15. During the monitoring year, 41,646m² of employment floorspace was permitted but there was a loss of 8,513m² as a result of permitted changes of use to residential. Fibre access has now been provided to 4,006 of 4,788 properties in the District, with the project due for completion in November 2020.
- 2.16. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the District Council has processed 2,095 successful COVID grant applications valued in excess of £25,030,000 and a working group has been established to support the safe reopening of the Districts high streets.

Strong Local Communities

- 2.17. The AMR identifies that the proportion of people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood' (90.2%) is higher than the Oxfordshire average (86.5%) and that on the whole, the District remains largely within the least deprived local authority areas in the country.
- 2.18. During the monitoring year, two public houses were added to the West Oxfordshire List of Assets of Community Value (AVC) and three neighbourhood plans were formally adopted or 'made' (Hailey, Shilton and Eynsham). In addition, over £3m was collected by the District Council through Section 106 planning obligations including £1.2m for affordable housing.
- 2.19. Looking forward, the AMR identifies that the Council's CIL charging schedule will be submitted for examination and that further progress will be made on the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) along with continued Council support for the various neighbourhood plans that are currently in progress.

Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population

- 2.20. The AMR shows that there are around 49,000 households in West Oxfordshire, with around 2,042 households on the housing waiting list. Since 2011, there have been 4,437 new homes completed, an average of just under 500 per year.
- 2.21. During the monitoring year, 1,086 new homes were completed, of which 325 were on allocated sites with the total number of affordable homes completed being 454 (42%). 335 dwellings were granted planning permission of which 23% were on previously developed (brownfield) sites.

- 2.22. The supply of deliverable housing sites currently stands at 5.4 years, in excess of the national five-year minimum requirement.
- 2.23. Looking forwards, the Council will update its Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and progress the Area Action Plan for Salt Cross together with its other various supplementary planning documents.
- 2.24. A review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 will commence in autumn 2021.

Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance

- 2.25. The AMR demonstrates that the Council remains committed to delivering excellent services to its local communities with over 80% of planning applications having been determined within target timescales over the last 5 years and over 1,000 building control applications processed each year.
- 2.26. Within the monitoring year, good progress has been made in respect of the Salt Cross Garden Village AAP along with supplementary planning documents for the other strategic site allocations, a developer contribution SPD and an affordable housing SPD.
- 2.27. In respect of the duty to co-operate, the District Council has continued to actively engage with the other Oxfordshire Authorities and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on various spatial planning and infrastructure matters including the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and delivery of all other components of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
- 2.28. Looking forwards, in accordance with the principles of the One Public Estate Programme, feasibility work on partnership owned sites will take place with a draft scoping exercise with input from partners to be undertaken.

Cabinet consideration

- 2.29. This report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 17 February 2021 and in response to the points raised, a number of minor changes to the AMR were made including additional reference to partnership working with the Environment Agency and Thames Water on water related issues, additional labelling on Figure 6 to improve clarity and a minor error corrected regarding the amount of net employment land permissioned.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The AMR raises no specific financial implications.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Preparation of the AMR is a legal requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The AMR raises no significant risks.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The AMR reports on a number of climate action related issues in accordance with the Council Plan 2020 – 2024.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1. None.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1. None.