WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee** **Thursday 27 January 2022**
Report Number	**Agenda Item No. 8**
Subject	**Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2020-2021**
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@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To note the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report for 2020-2021, agreed by Cabinet on 15 December 2021.
Annex	Annex A – Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2020-2021
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.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Members will be aware that under current legislation, the Council is required to prepare a monitoring report 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 monitoring report 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 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which covers the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. A brief overview of the main points arising is provided below.

2. AMR 2020-2021 - 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 reporting what has happened during the monitoring period 2020-2021.

2.3. The AMR is intended to complement the Annual Statement on the West Oxfordshire Council Plan.

2.4. Set out below is a brief summary overview for each theme.

Climate Action

2.5. The AMR demonstrates the results of the Council's carbon emission calculations, reporting that carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) emissions have decreased by 24% between 2019-20 and 2020-2021.

2.6. It should be noted that the decrease in carbon emissions can be attributed in part to the Covid-19 pandemic. The significant shift in the number of staff working from home is considered to be the reason for electricity usage in Council offices falling by 22% and business travel falling by 68%. The reduced activity of the District Council's leisure centres has also contributed to a significant reduction in gas and electricity consumption at these sites.

2.7. There has been a small decrease in the number of priority species but an increase in overall priority habitat.

2.8. A notable decrease in average levels of Nitrogen dioxide at both the Bridge Street, Witney AQMA and Horsefair, Chipping Norton AQMA is considered a consequence of reduced travel patterns arising from the pandemic Lockdowns. Nitrogen dioxide levels in Bridge Street, Witney continue to exceed the national air quality objective.

2.9. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) mechanism was put into operation from April 2020, requiring major (and some minor) applications to demonstrate development proposals secure a positive contribution to biodiversity. In the first year of operation 15 applications were submitted with BNG calculations. Of these applications 3 secured BNG onsite and 2 offsite. The other 10 are either pending or were refused.

Healthy Towns and Villages

2.10. 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.

2.11. During 2020/21 the leisure centres were opened only for approximately 5 months (under Covid-19 protocols with increased space, reduced numbers, bubbles etc.) due to the 3 National Lockdowns in April, November, and January. This led to a total attendance at the District's main leisure centres (Windrush, Chipping Norton, Carterton, and Bartholomew) of 111,622 visits which equates to 12% of the number of centre visits when compared to 2019/20.

2.12. Consultants were appointed to develop a Built Leisure Facilities Strategy / Accessing Need and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) in March 2020 and significant progress towards this has been made during this AMR period. It is anticipated that the Strategy will be adopted by the Council in early 2022.

A Vibrant District Economy

2.13. The AMR demonstrates that West Oxfordshire has a strong and diverse economy and lower than average unemployment rates. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic and the actions taken to contain it had a significant impact on the local economy, businesses, households and outlook of the district's towns and villages.

2.14. In June 2019, the unemployment claimant count was 730 and exactly a year later, the unemployment claimant count peaked at 2,500.

2.15. In October 2020, the council published the West Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery Plan with aims to guide resource investment across four themes; Economy, Climate and Council, Service Delivery and Finance.

2.16. 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.

2.17. During the monitoring year, 8,320m^2 (6,625m^2 net) employment floorspace was permitted. 466m^2 employment floorspace was lost as a result of permitted changes of use to residential.

2.18. The Council's contract with Gigaclear to bring fibre access to 4,788 of properties across West Oxfordshire was successfully fulfilled shortly after the AMR period in June 2021.

2.19. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the District Council has paid a total of £39,595,446 in grants to local businesses.

2.20. The Council worked to implement measures to support the safe reopening of the district's high streets. These included pavement widening, pedestrianisation, and changes to licensing, helping businesses to operate in compliance with Government directives.

Strong Local Communities

2.21. 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.

2.22. In the year 2020/21, four further assets were added to the West Oxfordshire List of Assets of Community Value (ACV). These are: Public open space adjacent to Riely Close, Long Hanborough; Rose & Crown Public House, Shilton; The White Horse Public House, Stonesfield; and Cassington Allotments, Cassington.

2.23. In addition, nearly £1m was collected by West Oxfordshire District Council through Section 106 planning obligations in 2020/21, the majority (c. £600k) was collected towards sports, recreation and play facilities.

2.24. The Council awarded a total of £363,793.53 in grant funding in 2020/21, roughly half and half awarded by way of Community Revenue Grants and Community Facilities Grants respectively.

Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population

2.25. The AMR shows that there are around 49,000 households in West Oxfordshire, with around 2,375 households on the affordable housing waiting list as of 31 March 2021.

2.26. Since 2011, there have been 5,305 new homes completed, an average of just over 500 per year.

2.27. During the monitoring year, 868 new homes were completed, of which 352 were on allocated sites with the total number of affordable homes completed being 335.

2.28. 223 dwellings were granted planning permission. The breakdown of residential permissions by property size revealed a higher proportion of 1, 2 and 4+ bedroom properties compared to the Local Plan's indicative housing mix guidelines.

Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance

2.29. The AMR demonstrates that the Council remains committed to delivering excellent services to its local communities with just under 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.

2.30. Within the monitoring year, good progress has been made in respect of the Salt Cross Garden Village AAP along with a Developer Contributions supplementary planning document (SPD) and an Affordable Housing SPD.

2.31. 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.

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.