



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

Report to the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

Title:	Growth; Is the Council Ready?: 6 Month Recommendation Review
Committee date:	Tuesday 17 July 2018
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Cabinet Member sign-off:	Cllr Bill Chapple, Planning & Environment

Purpose of Agenda Item

The purpose of this item is to provide a six monthly update to the growth inquiry recommendations presented to Cabinet in September 2017. This item was previously scheduled for report in May 2018 but was postponed at the request of the Select Committee until July 2018.

Background

The Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee received a presentation at its meeting on the 7 March 2017 on the overview of growth proposals for Buckinghamshire, as outlined in the emerging District Councils' Local Plans. Recognising that the scale of housing growth would have an impact on County Council services the Select Committee resolved to lead a scrutiny inquiry to assess the adequacy of the Council's strategic plans for addressing the growth agenda in Buckinghamshire and to invite the other Select Committees to also participate in this inquiry, in relation to their respective areas of remit.

Summary

Buckinghamshire County Council is experiencing significant increases in service demand as a result of growth pressures attributed to increases in population and housing growth in Bucks. The emerging District Local Plans set out an agenda for housing growth in Bucks over the next 15-20 years and as they become adopted, provide a spatial framework for growth across the County and more certainty in preparing for growth through a plan-led rather than reactive approach to housing growth in Bucks. County Council services have



been actively consulted throughout the Local Plan process and informed the spatial principles for growth which were agreed by Cabinet in July 2017. The corporate working group has assisted services in preparing for growth through sharing information, co-ordinating and collating consultation responses to the emerging Local Plans and more recently, reviewing population forecasts and recommendations from the National Infrastructure Commission on housing growth proposals.

Services have been actively engaged in preparing for growth in Bucks, particularly since the 2017 Select Committee Growth Inquiry and all business unit plans are now required to take account of growth in Bucks in their service planning. This process is now embedded across the County Council as part of business insight and service planning and is informed through the corporate working group. Members and officers receive regular updates on growth proposals, both in terms of the emerging District Local Plans and also in terms of nationally strategic infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of Heathrow and the proposal for a Western Rail Link to Heathrow. The Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan is recognised by the County Council and Districts as the County wide programme for strategic infrastructure across Bucks and County officers are working closely with the Districts in understanding critical infrastructure needs, dependencies and obtaining funding agreements. The corporate working group continues to meet in order to raise awareness and understanding across services in preparing for growth and is in the process of review in order to enable more agile responses to managing services through more collaborative working with the Districts.

Key issues

Buckinghamshire is experiencing significant growth pressure from housing growth, set out in the emerging District Local Plans and highlighted in terms of infrastructure investment through the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Programme. Considerable progress has been made across the County Council both in terms of service planning and influencing for growth in Bucks towards more integrated working across County Council services, key agencies and the District Councils. This is being co-ordinated through the corporate working group which is undertaking a comprehensive review. The need for better collaboration between the County and District Councils is recognised at the highest level in Bucks and underlined by a commitment to work “Better Together” to deliver the best outcomes for Bucks residents and businesses. This programme is monitored through the Bucks CEX group and aims to promote more agile service responses and place-shaping, to maximise outcomes through housing delivery.

Resource implications

There are no resource implications.



The Growth Agenda could have significant impact on financial position of the Council in relation to the revenue budget, if demand for services exceeds projected growth in Council tax and Business rates, and in relation to the Capital budget around the need to fund (either through existing sources or by leveraging new funding) the strategic infrastructure required.

Next steps

Comments on the progress against the recommendations, appended are invited. A further update on progress will be presented to the TEC Select Committee in November 2018.

