

SUBJECT:	National Infrastructure Commission Central Area establishment of Growth Board and Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge Corridor update
REPORT OF:	Leader of the Council
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Director of Services
REPORT AUTHOR	Steve Bambrick
WARD/S AFFECTED	All

1. Purpose of Report

To agree the proposal to establish a Growth Board for the Central Area contributing to the wider economic ambitions for the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge corridor. To also agree that the Council will play an active role in the Growth Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Agree to the establishment of a Central Area Growth Board in the form of a Joint Committee and to work with partners with the aim of accelerating and increasing growth and securing investment in infrastructure across the area;**
2. **Agree the draft Terms of Reference for the Central Area Growth Board, attached as Appendix 1 and authorise the Director of Services in consultation with the Leader to agree any final wording**
3. **That pursuant to s101 (5) and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, s9EB of the Local Government Act 2000 and (where applicable) to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012 the Council agrees to participate in the Central Area Growth Board Joint Committee and to delegate its executive functions in so far as they relate to accelerating and increasing growth and securing investment in infrastructure across the Central Area**
4. **Agree that the Leader, or another member of the Cabinet nominated by the Leader should represent the Council at future meetings of the Growth Board; and**
5. **Note the current position with regards to whole corridor (Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge and the Bucks Growth Strategy**

2. Reasons for Recommendations

The recommended options are preferred as this will place the Council at the heart of the decision making and influence regarding future growth strategies for the area and will also enable the Councils to have an influence on future proposals to Government for investment in essential infrastructure.

3. Content of Report

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was established by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in October 2015 with Lord Andrew Adonis appointed as its Chair.

On 16 March 2016, the Chancellor asked the commission to:make recommendations [to government] to maximize the potential of the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor as a single, knowledge intensive cluster that competes on the global stage, whilst protecting the area's high quality environment and securing the homes and job the area needs. The commission would look at the priority infrastructure improvements needed and assess the economic case for which investments would generate the most growth.

An interim report was published in November 2016 with a final report published in November 2017. The central finding of which was that a lack of sufficient and suitable housing presents a fundamental risk to the success of the area. Without a joined-up plan for housing, jobs and infrastructure across the corridor, it will be left behind by its international competitors. By providing the foundations for such a strategy, new east-west transport links present a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure the area's future success.

The Commission identifies opportunities to create well-designed, well-connected new communities and deliver **one million new homes** and jobs in the area by 2050, while respecting the natural environment and without making changes to existing Green Belt protections. Doing so would help create vibrant new towns, including the first new towns in the UK for 50 years.

Central to achieving this vision are completion of the new East-West Rail line connecting Oxford and Cambridge by 2030 and accelerating the development and construction of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. In the short term, new rail services to Cowley in South East Oxford by 2019 and the opening of a new station at South Cambridge by 2022 are also proposed alongside long-term local transport plans for other key towns and cities in the corridor.

The NIC report calls for a new deal on infrastructure and housing between local authorities in the corridor and central Government, including:

- New powers giving councils greater certainty over future investments, and allowing them to fund and raise finance for major infrastructure improvements that deliver new homes;
- A jointly agreed plan for new and expanded housing settlements, supported by New Town Development Corporations and new infrastructure design panels; and
- New statutory spatial plans and investment strategies for each sub-region should be developed, as part of a 50-year vision for the corridor as a whole.

Crucially, the NIC report calls on the Government to intervene and impose appropriate governance structures to achieve these new powers if by April 2018 the local authorities in the corridor are unable to reach agreement.

For the Buckinghamshire authorities, there are broadly 3 areas of influence that are relevant to this issue:

- a) The whole corridor (Oxford to Cambridge);
- b) The 3 constituent parts of the whole corridor; and
- c) Buckinghamshire

a) The whole corridor

This is an area that currently includes all upper and lower tier authorities and LEP's covering the administrative areas of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. In total, around 40 authorities.

At the moment there are no formal governance arrangements in place for the corridor although discussions continue to determine what the future governance arrangements might be.

b) The constituent parts of the corridor

At either end of the corridor, there are established and functioning Growth boards or Combined Authority arrangements. i.e. in Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The Central Area however does not currently have any governance arrangements.

The Central Area includes all authorities and LEP's from Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire. Buckinghamshire County Council currently does not recognise the legitimacy of the Central Area and therefore whilst invited, does not participate in any of the meetings, choosing instead to only attend whole corridor meetings.

Authorities from the Central Area have now reached a point where draft Terms of Reference for a new Growth Board for the Central Area have been endorsed by the Leaders and recommended for each constituent authority to take through its internal governance processes. A copy of the Terms of Reference are attached to this report at Appendix 1.

It is proposed that each authority in the Central Area will be represented on the Growth Board and it is proposed that each Council will have an equal vote on all matters. Additionally, it is proposed that each local authority has a veto over the following areas:

- Additional housing allocations numbers
- Footprints of statutory spatial plans
- Statutory spatial frameworks

c) Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire strategy towards growth and Infrastructure provision is largely lead by the Bucks and Thames Valley LEP (BTVLEP). The Leaders from each of the local authorities in Bucks are all represented on the LEP board.

In 2017, the BTVLEP board agreed and published the Bucks Growth Strategy as a basis for establishing the aspirations of the area to 2050. The intent behind publishing this document was to feed into the discussions at both the Central Area and whole corridor meetings, particularly regarding growth aspirations and infrastructure asks.

The Council has not formally considered or agreed the Growth Strategy and currently there are no plans to do so.

A Central Area Growth Board

The discussions, negotiations and emerging vision for both the whole corridor and the Central Area have been guided by the NIC report. This sets out very clearly that there will need to be formal governance across the corridor. It is also accepted by most authorities within the corridor that in order to actually deliver growth across the whole corridor, the 3 constituent parts (Oxford, Cambridge and Central Area) are likely to be the appropriate delivery vehicles and therefore establishing a Growth Board in the Central Area will be an important first step towards securing Government confidence in the ability of the authorities to work together on common and shared objectives..

Cabinet will see from the draft Terms of Reference that the central purpose of the Growth Board will be to accelerate and increase growth across the area as well as working together with partners to secure necessary investment. The scale and location of future growth, both housing and economic growth, across the area is to be determined and will of course firstly depend on the ability of each constituent authority to deliver that growth but also importantly, will depend on the nature of any deal the area is able to strike with Government on the level of investment in infrastructure.

The Central Area Growth Board will have a significant input to the Oxford – Cambridge corridor discussions, but will also have influence over other aspects of economic growth for the area. Therefore establishing a Growth Board now is an important first step in meeting the expectations of the NIC and Government. The draft Terms of Reference for the Growth Board are also to be welcomed and it remains important given that both Chiltern and South Bucks districts act as a gateway from the Oxford – Cambridge corridor to Heathrow and the London economy, that the two districts continue to play an active role in this Growth Board and forward the case for investment in the area.

In due course, a governance proposal for the whole corridor is also likely to emerge. The Council will be represented in those discussions by the Leader and as and when a proposal is agreed then this will be the subject of a future report.

4. Consultation

Not Applicable

5. Options

The option of not participating in the Central Area Growth Board has been considered. This is not recommended because only through participation in the Growth Board will the Council have control over future growth requirements in the area and crucially will be able to act with partners to lever investment into essential infrastructure

7. Corporate Implications

The budget of the Growth Board will be set each year and each member authority will be expected to make an equal contribution. At the time of establishment of the growth board, the annual contribution will be £5,000. If the Growth Board wishes to seek additional contributions for any further work, proposals will be referred to partners for decision making.

7.1 The Council has power to promote economic development and growth both within and outside the District under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (power of general competence). This is an executive (Cabinet) function under the Local Government Act 2000 and it includes powers to carry out ancillary activities such as participating in Growth Boards. Cabinet will note that the Central Area Growth Board is to be constituted as a Joint Committee with each of the participating members having a voting representative. It is proposed that Milton Keynes BC will be the accountable body providing section 151 officer and monitoring officer oversight, as well as the committee secretariat. The Committee's Chairman and Vice-Chairman will rotate annually between the participating members. Cabinet has power under section 101 and 105 of the Local Government Act 1972, section 9EB of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge Functions) Regulations 2012 to delegate their functions to a Joint Committee.

7.2 There are no other corporate implications at this stage

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Establishing a Central Area Growth Board will contribute directly to the shared objectives of Chiltern and South Bucks Councils of:

- Working towards safe and healthier local communities; and
- Striving to conserve the environment and promote sustainability.

9. Next Step

Subject to agreement of Cabinet and the agreement of each of the other constituent authorities, the Central Area Growth Board will be established and the Leader, or their nominated representative will attend to represent the Council at future Growth Board meetings.

Background Papers:	None
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