

Agenda Item 9.

CENTRAL AREA GROWTH BOARD – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cabinet Member: Cllr Katrina Wood, Leader

Ward(s) Affected: All

Officer contact: Susan Bolter (Corporate Director (Growth & Regeneration))

PROPOSED DECISION

To support the proposed formation of a Central Area Growth Board as the principal means of governance for strategic decisions about transport, infrastructure and housing investment proposals in the central area of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor and to note in principle the broad themes in the terms of reference for the Central Area Growth Board as set out in appendix to this report. If the Terms of Reference (TOR) are subject to change a further update will be provided to Cabinet .

Reason for Decision

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was invited by the Government to make recommendations about infrastructure and housing investment needed across the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor in the period to 2050. The NIC has produced its report highlighting the need for long term infrastructure investment in projects such as East-West Rail to unlock the growth potential of the corridor. The Government has asked the Councils and LEPs across the corridor to come forward with agreed governance arrangements. The 24 Councils and 2 LEPs in the Central Area propose to set up a single Growth Board as the principal conduit for strategic discussions and communications with Government. Individual Councils and LEPs are asked to endorse this proposal and agree the terms of reference.

Corporate Implications

The Council would be represented on the Growth Board by the Leader or her appointed deputy. Decisions taken by the Growth Board would use simple majority voting. However, Councils will retain a veto in relation to proposed housing allocation numbers within their area of administration.

Executive Summary

The NIC has produced its [report](#) on the future plans for growth in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor. The Government has produced its initial [response](#) to the NIC report and now wishes to agree arrangements whereby future investment in Strategic Infrastructure can be discussed and agreed with local authorities. The formation of a Central Area Growth Board has been proposed and Council approval is therefore sought for setting up a Growth Board with the attached terms of reference.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

Long term investment in infrastructure is needed to accommodate pressures arising from forecast population growth and to boost economic productivity. The government has decided that there should be a particular focus on the Cambridge –

Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor as there is an opportunity for the corridor to drive knowledge based economic growth for the UK building upon the important University and Industrial assets across the corridor. Wycombe District enjoys a good strategic location in close proximity to London, Heathrow, and the Thames Valley. The planned improvement of east-west road and rail links and new housing in the Cam – MK – Ox corridor will further strengthen the District’s economic attractiveness and contribute to the corporate plan objectives for people, place and prosperity.

Background and Issues

The NIC was asked by government to investigate how the economic growth potential of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor could be realised through strategic investment in enabling infrastructure. The corridor is expected to need an additional 100,000 homes by 2050. East-West rail and road links also need substantial investment to improve labour mobility and open up new sites for housing development.

Consultation

There has been preliminary consultation with local authority Leaders and Chief Executives on the NIC Study report and its recommendations. Ongoing consultation with government about agreed priorities for infrastructure investment will be conducted primarily through the medium of the proposed Growth Board and also across the wider corridor with the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Options

The proposed Central Area Growth Board has been agreed by a meeting of Leaders from the local authorities across the area and includes local authorities from Northants, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. A proposal for an individual Growth Board at the Buckinghamshire level was rejected by all local authorities except Buckinghamshire County Council. A Growth Board has already been established for Oxfordshire and in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the Combined Authority is the relevant decision making body.

Conclusions

There is a need for decisions about infrastructure investment affecting a large number of local authority areas to be discussed and prioritised across the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor. The Central Area Growth Board set up on the attached terms of reference is the recommended approach.

Next Steps

If the decision proposed in this report is approved by the Council, the Leader, or an appointed deputy, will represent the Council’s view at future meetings of the Central Area Growth Board and report back on the work of the Growth Board and key decisions.

Background Papers

- National Infrastructure Commission Study Report

- Government's initial response to the NIC