



Report to Cabinet

This report has been submitted under 3.46a of the Cabinet Procedure Rules as consideration of this item was requested after the publication of the 28 day notice, and is required in response to the assessed responsibilities and protection of the interests of the Council.

Date:	28 September 2021
Title:	Buckinghamshire County Deal Proposals
Cabinet Member(s):	Martin Tett, Leader of the Council
Contact officer:	Lisa Michelson, Service Director – Economic Growth and Regeneration
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	Cabinet is recommended to support the ongoing negotiations with central government to secure a county deal for Buckinghamshire based on the priorities and proposals set out in our Recovery and Growth Proposition
Reason for decision:	A county deal is an opportunity to secure additional government investment and opportunities for the county to support our recovery and growth ambitions

1. Executive summary

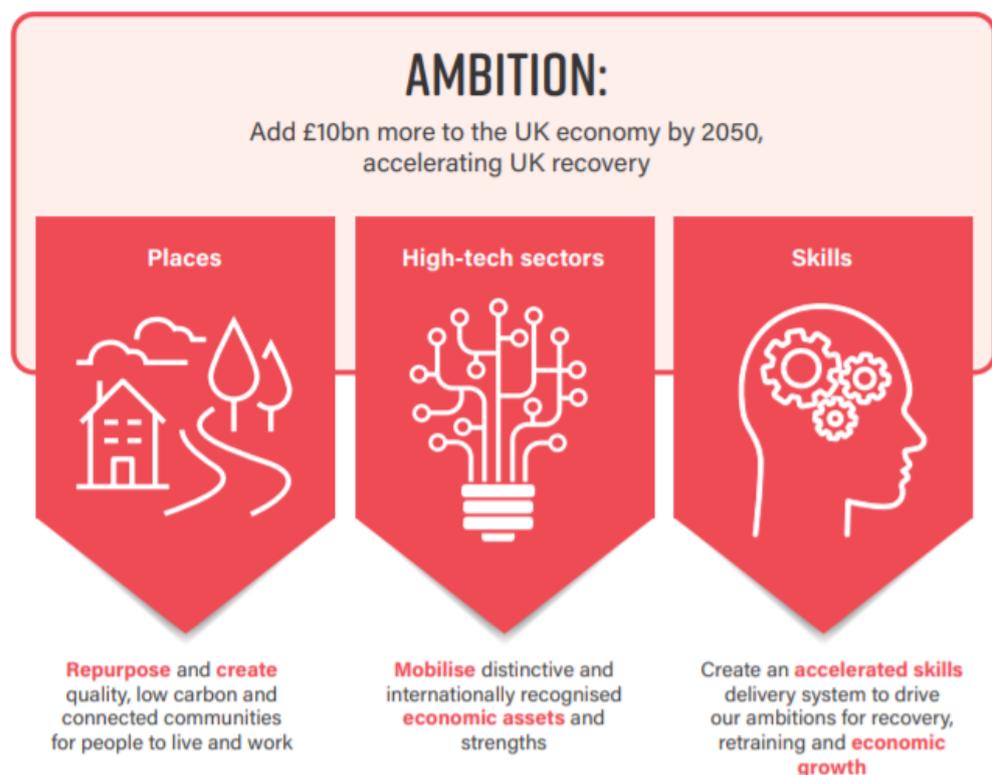
- 1.1 During 2020 through the Buckinghamshire Growth Board (comprised of elected members and representatives from health and business) the council and its partners developed proposals for a Recovery and Growth Deal building on the unique strengths, partnerships, and opportunities within the County. In November 2020 Cabinet agreed the deal proposition and supported engagement with government with the aim of securing investment in the county.

- 1.2 In July the Prime Minister set out his vision on how the government would level up the UK. As part of this he announced plans to take a more flexible approach to devolution through the creation of new 'County Deals'.
- 1.3 Expressions of interest were invited from upper tier local authorities interested in pursuing discussions with government to develop a County Deal.
- 1.4 To confirm our intention to submit a bid the Leader of the Council wrote to the Minister in August this year.

2. Our County Deal proposal

- 2.1 Buckinghamshire's proposition: *Succeeding as a place, succeeding as a country* was supported by Cabinet in November 2020 and shared with Government Ministers and their departments in January this year. It is available on the council's website here: <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/4516606/recovery-and-growth-proposal.pdf>
- 2.2 This document stimulated positive engagement with a number of government departments and has enabled Buckinghamshire to make a strong case for investment through ongoing discussions with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and other government departments.
- 2.3 Although there is no template for an application, the Government has indicated that County Deals will be guided by some key principles. These were set out in a letter from the Secretary of State to council Leaders, Chief Executives and Mayors in July:
 - Strong local leadership will be fundamental
 - County devolution should operate across a sensible economic geography of a suitable scale and one based on local identity, bringing local partners together and with powers exercised at the right level to make a difference for local communities.
 - The nature and appropriateness of proposed governance structures will impact on the nature of the deal and the types of powers and flexibilities provided in a deal. We will expect demonstrable improvements in governance, efficiency and local service join-up as part of the deal that support the delivery of levelling up.
 - Deals to include significant reform proposals, including ways to achieve greater financial efficiency, administrative streamlining and / or more joined up services in an area.
- 2.4 **Summary of our proposition**

- 2.5 We believe that we are well positioned for a County Deal as we have a strong local leadership through the council and the Buckinghamshire Growth Board, a clear set of ‘asks’ and positive support from our key partners. Following the move to unitary local government in the county we have the advantage of strong local alignment and the most coterminous county structure in England as all our key partner organisations share our county geography.
- 2.6 Our County Deal proposals are focused around our vision for Places, our High-tech sectors and Skills.
- 2.7 Through a combination of direct project investment, broader investment funds and specific freedoms and flexibilities to enable us to deliver services more efficiently and effectively locally we will be able to drive economic recovery and growth.



3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 At this stage there are no legal or financial implications however if we are successful in securing a County Deal for Buckinghamshire there will be significant investment in the county through the council as accountable body and likely governance requirements for the council and Growth Board to consider.

4. Corporate implications

- 4.1 There are no direct corporate implications at this stage, however should our discussions progress into Buckinghamshire becoming a pilot County Deal area we will establish clear delivery arrangements across the Council and wider partners.

5. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 5.1 Elected members have been kept updated in relation to the discussions to date. Further discussions will take place with local members and community boards on the implications for the deal should we be announced in the first wave of successful bids.

6. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 6.1 Through the Growth Board partners have been involved in the development of the Recovery and Growth proposals that form the basis of our County Deal offer to government. These were published on the council's website earlier in the year and are available for people to see.
- 6.2 Further discussion and communication plans will be developed depending on the progression of negotiations with central government.

7. Next steps and review

- 7.1 We anticipate feedback from Government on our County Deal proposals in the near future as it is expected that the pilot areas for the new deals will be announced alongside autumn funding announcements and the Levelling Up White Paper.
- 7.2 Cabinet will updated on the outcome of our expression of interest and ongoing discussions.

8. Background papers

- 8.1 Buckinghamshire's Recovery and Growth Proposition *Succeeding as a place, succeeding as a country* can be viewed here
<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/4516606/recovery-and-growth-proposal.pdf>

9. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 9.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team on 01296 382343 or democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk