

Cherwell District Council

Executive

4 June 2018

Central Area Growth Board

Report of Executive Director for Place and Growth

This report is public

Purpose of report

To seek approval for Cherwell District Council to join the Central Area Growth Board, a newly established body which has been created by local authorities involved in the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor to assist coordination of activities aiming to support the development of the corridor.

1.0 Recommendations

Within the context of the National Infrastructure Commission and Government's work on the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor, the meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To agree that the Council becomes a full member of the Central Area Growth Board, adopting the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To agree that the Council commits to an associated contribution of £5k of ongoing revenue to support the work of the Growth Board.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 To demonstrate its commitment to regional working and to be an active partner within the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor, Cherwell District Council has been actively engaging in discussions to establish a Central Area Growth Board across the 'middle' of the corridor. This will sit alongside the arrangements already in place for Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire.
- 2.2 Establishing a Growth Board demonstrates to government that authorities across the South East Midlands area, based on the SEMLEP footprint, of which Cherwell District Council is a member committed to delivering a step change in sub-regional collaboration. The Growth Board will allow the area to speak with a single voice to government on cross-boundary issues, matters of sub-regional importance and coordinate any 'Housing and Growth deals' agreed across the sub region.

- 2.3 This report recommends that Cherwell District Council becomes a full member of the Central Area Growth Board, outlining the Terms of Reference (annexed) for adoption and committing to the relevant ongoing contributions for the approval of the Executive and recommendation to each Council.

3.0 Report Details

Background

- 3.1 The National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) Interim report on the Cambridge-MK-Oxford growth corridor identified that one factor holding the area back from achieving its full potential as the UK's 'Silicon Valley' is the lack of joined-up planning of housing, jobs and infrastructure across traditional local authority boundaries. Both the NIC and Government propose that the corridor plans for an additional one million new homes up to 2050.
- 3.2 Current governance mechanisms are not sufficient to deliver the step- change in strategic leadership and collaboration needed... and will require a fundamental shift in the scale at which local authorities collaborate on planning and infrastructure.
- 3.3 In its final report on the Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor, 'Partnering for Prosperity: a new deal for the Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford arc', the NIC encouraged authorities within the central section of the arc to "strengthen structures for collaborative governance and collective decision making" and referenced the work ongoing in the central area to establish a growth board.
- 3.4 Government, in its initial vision for the Corridor published at the Autumn Budget in November 2017 stated that "it will be necessary for authorities to work together much more closely going forwards."
- 3.5 Within the Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor, formalised stronger regional working arrangements have been established at either 'end' of the corridor through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Oxfordshire Growth Board. Establishing a Growth Board for the 'Central Area' allows Cherwell/South Northants and its partner authorities to meet the challenge of councils working together closely in the future.
- 3.6 Cherwell has been actively engaging since last summer on closer regional working with the 17 local authorities within the South East Midlands and Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) footprints that are locally defined as being within the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor, with the exception of Buckinghamshire County Council. Partners have agreed in principle to formally establish a Growth Board, constituted as a joint committee, to coordinate cross-boundary working within the central area.
- 3.7 The establishment of a Growth Board in the centre of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes- Oxford corridor also allows the central area to be an active participant in the cross corridor working arrangements currently being established across 22 Councils. A number of Councils have already adopted the attached Terms of Reference.

- 3.8 The Growth Board will be a single coordinating voice for the region (between Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire) with central government. No powers are being ceded from member authorities to the Growth Board. If members of the Growth Board agree to vest powers into it, this would be agreed by individual councils via their decision-making processes. Hence Cherwell/South Northants will only cede powers to the Growth Board if it and all other member authorities choose to.
- 3.9 In the visioning document 'Helping the Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford corridor reach its potential' published at the Autumn Budget in November 2017 government announced its ambition to work with the central area on housing and growth deals throughout 2018. Whilst any potential housing and growth deals will not cover the whole geography of the Central Area, the Growth Board will have an important role to play in coordinating these at the sub-regional level. It is anticipated that three growth deals will cover West Northants, North Northants, the four Unitary Councils together with Aylesbury District, aligned with the Growth Deal already agreed for Oxfordshire.
- 3.10 The Central Area Growth Board is based on the Oxfordshire Growth Board which has successfully operated for a number of years and recently secured the £215 million Growth Deal for Oxfordshire, the first of its kind in England.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Internal briefing: Councilor Clarke, Lead Member for Planning

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following options are open to Members but are not recommended for the reasons as set out below:

Option 1: Not to approve joining the Board

Establishing joint working at the two ends of the corridor (ie: Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire) has played a significant role in securing investment, flexibilities and commitments from government. Doing nothing would mean that South Northants would not have a voice in similar regional discussions.

Additionally, for Cherwell, as both East-West rail and the proposed Expressway are likely to pass through Cherwell into Aylesbury District, there is merit in participating in a Board which brings together the Councils which lie to the east of Oxfordshire.

Option 2: Become a full member of the Central Area Growth Board

Working in partnership is an important means by which the Councils priorities are secured. Collaborating and proactively planning for growth through the forum of a Growth Board will allow regional partners to proactively shape the future growth of their areas, rather than having growth imposed from above.

By becoming a full member of the Central Area Growth Board, the Council will be an active participant in contributing to the agenda for strategic planning, economic

development and infrastructure planning in the central part of the corridor which is taking shape.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 By joining the Central Area Growth Board Cherwell DC is committing to an ongoing annual £5k commitment to support its work and to fund officer roles to support its operation. Further contributions may be sought for specific pieces of work

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 The Growth Board will be set up as a joint committee under Section 101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 and section 9EB of the Local Government Act 2000 and pursuant (where applicable) to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 7.3 Whilst no powers have been vested in the Growth Board, as a joint committee, it will exercise any powers which members agree to vest in it on a unanimous basis under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 insofar as they relate to the promotion of development or economic growth or matters ancillary to this. These powers will be exercised concurrently with the constituent members and members will unanimously decide the voting mechanism for exercising powers. This excludes ceding the decision-making powers on planning matters, which will remain vested with the Local Planning Authorities, as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 7.4 With the Growth Board acting as a Joint Committee under the relevant legislation, meetings will be held in public and are subject to legislation ensuring meeting documents are published in a timely manner. The work of the Growth Board at the point of formal establishment will be subject to FOI legislation.

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: Yes

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

This report directly links to all four of the corporate priorities and objectives set out in the Cherwell District Council Business Plan 2018-19 as follows:

- Protected, Green and Clean
- District of Opportunity
- Thriving Communities and Well-being

Lead Councillor

Councillor Colin Clarke – Lead Member for Planning

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Central Area Growth Board Terms of Reference
Background Papers	
None	
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