

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 29 July 2020	AGENDA ITEM NO: 4
Report title: Review of the Bicester Strategic Delivery Board	
Author: Dean Fischer, Interim Bicester Delivery Team Email: dean.fischer@cherwell-dc.gov.uk	

1. Purpose

The purpose is to undertake a fundamental review of the Bicester Strategic delivery Board (SDB). This document sets out the scope for the review of the SDB so-as-to consider whether changes, if any, need to be made to its current membership, role and function. It also considers what the key themes of the review will be, and what will not be included in the review. It also provides an overview of who will be involved in the review and how. The Strategic Delivery Board is asked to approve the review scope, subject to any agreed alterations.

2. Recommendation:

That the Growth Board approves the scope and approach to the review of its role and functions as set out in this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The SDB (formerly the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board) was established in March 2010. It was set up to facilitate and enable joint working and oversight on matters concerning sustainable growth, development and planning within Bicester.
- 3.2 The SDB has now been operating for just over 10 years and its role and function remains largely unaltered.
- 3.3 The SDB has been a fulcrum to promote collaborative working and brings together Cherwell District Council (CDC), Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), key community and business organisations and government agencies which collectively oversee and direct Bicester Garden Town initiatives.
- 3.4 The current core membership of the SDB currently includes:
 - CDC (3 members): Leader, Lead Member for Planning, Lead Member for Estates and Economy (a member for Bicester)
 - OCC (3 members): Leader, Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families
 - Bicester Town Council (3 members): Chairman of Policy Committee, Chairman of Planning Committee, one other to be agreed

- Ministry Homes, Communities and Local Government (1 member)
- Bicester Vision (1 – or possibly 2 member (s)): Chairman
- Homes England (1 member): Head of Area
- Environment Agency (1 member): Regional Director
- Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (1 member): Chief Executive
- Bicester Chamber of Commerce (1 member)
- Guests may also be invited by the SDB to attend meetings to present papers and give updates as necessary.

3.5 The SDB was established as an informal partnership with no executive powers or budget of its own. It operates on-the basis of consensus and influence and meets on a quarterly basis.

4. Scope of the Review

4.1. Officers supporting the SDB have devised a scope for the review based on engagement with the Growth Board's membership and having regard to feedback received from various stakeholders, to date. The scope is presented within this report for SDB's consideration.

- Focus on project management and delivery – concentrating on critical workstreams.
- Focus on inward investment into Bicester (to include both public and private investment) and ongoing bids / grants. This is to ensure CDC is 'tapping-in' to all available funding streams.
- Focus on the membership of the Board – for example, does the CDC/OCC Chief Executive need to have a role / oversight in the Boards work?

4.2 It is important that the role of local partnerships is considered in the long term and the role the SDB could play in that context. Accordingly, membership, format and function of the SDB will be revisited to consider how the SDB's work might better engage with non-local authority partners who also have a key role in shaping Bicester as a place, particularly in the context of Garden Town.

4.3 The review will test whether the current arrangement is fit-for-purpose and valid and, if any suitable adjustment needs to be made. All options will be considered.

4.4 With the primacy of Garden Town, it is important that the Governance arrangements are up to date and appropriate and the roles and responsibilities are clarified.

4.5 The review will seek to ensure the SDB is able to provide appropriate governance, oversight and leadership. It will ensure that the good aspects of the current arrangements are retained.

4.6 The SDB will require membership of 'decision makers' with a breadth of knowledge and experience which will reflect the multitude of workstreams undertaken within Bicester.

4.7 The review will seek to incorporate the views of Bicester area Councillors at all levels, strategic partners and stakeholders.

4.8 It will also examine how the SDB feeds into and interacts with, respectively CDC's Executive and OCC's Cabinet.

4.9 An options appraisal will also be undertaken.

5 Approach to the Review

5.1 The Review will be managed by the Assistant Director – Growth and Economy supported by the Bicester Delivery Manager in line with the agreed scope. Subject to approval by the SDB the review will be divided into three distinct themes; role and function, capability and resources, and process and structures.

5.2 Within these themes a set of questions will be developed which will help guide the review. These questions will be designed to provide a thematic framework for; assessing how effective the Board is in its role, a structure for inviting contributions to the review and presenting conclusions. This framework is based in part on existing public sector guidance on well-led governance reviews. A summary of the three themes for the review is set out below:

5.3 Role and Function

5.3.1 There should be a fundamental review of the SDB's role and how it might change. Consideration should also be given to what the Board's role could be going forward, how it communicates those objectives, and how aligned or otherwise they are with existing workstreams and commitments.

5.3.2 The Garden Town status has brought new responsibilities and funding and it needs suitable oversight arrangements to be put in place and clarification about what the SDB's role in that is essential. There may also be a role to play in understanding the Growth Deal as it affects Bicester and its environs.

5.3.3 The SDB has limited decision-making powers, but it can facilitate local debate and collaboration on issues for which each member may exercise their local influence over. Any revised role will require the Board's Terms of Reference to be updated and agreed.

5.4 Capability and Resources

5.4.1 The review should consider what capacity the SDB has available to deliver its objectives and fulfil its current role, and what capacity it might need in the future to address any functions it undertakes. The SDB is supported mainly by CDC officers but it may be that OCC colleagues should also play a greater role, as well, reflecting the closer partnership working between OCC and CDC.

5.4.2 The SDB's membership has evolved over time and so has its areas of focus. A fresh look should be taken as to the role of Board members, and whether the membership could be different or more fluid to meet the demands of its current role, or any new direction.

5.5 Process and Structures

5.5.1 The Board's governance structure should be reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

5.5.2 The production of reports and the schedule of meetings requires review to ensure that information is produced in a timely manner, with enough time made available for the public, councillors and officers to prepare for those meetings.

6 Timescales

SDB meets	29 July 2020
Establish Task and Finish Group	29 July 2020
Review of membership, role, function & outputs	NLT 1 October 2020
Initial findings presented to SDB	During October 2020 (at SDB)
Seek further SDB members comments / input	NLT 1 December 2020
Final report presented to SDB for consideration	During January 2021 (at SDB)
Establish SDB in line with approved recommendation of January 2021 SDB / revised ToR's (to be approved by the SDB)	January 2021