

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 4 March 2019

Report author: Deputy Managing Director

Title: South-West Hertfordshire Partnership – Memorandum of Understanding

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise the Cabinet on the work being carried out by the South West Herts Partnership (SWHP) comprising The Watford Elected Mayor, Leaders and Chief Executives to prepare for future challenges and opportunities facing the sub-region.
- 1.2 It seeks Cabinet approval to sign the Memorandum of Understanding attached to this report.

2 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
The council not having a voice in the regional and sub regional context.	This will likely affect future funding opportunities to secure essential infrastructure across Herefordshire	Collaboration to understand and work toward solutions to deal with common issues related to growth	3	3

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet endorse the Memorandum of Understanding, in order to provide place leadership for South West Herts and to develop and deliver a vision for the SWHP area up to 2050, promoting healthy sustainable growth for our communities.

Contact Officer: Nick Fenwick Deputy Managing Director

Report approved by: Manny Lewis, Managing Director

4 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 The Elected Mayor for Watford, The Leaders, and Chief Executives of five local authorities, Hertsmere Borough Council; St. Albans District Council; Three Rivers District Council; Watford Borough Council and Dacorum Borough Council have for some time come to the view that existing mechanisms and approaches have not delivered the strategic responses needed to deal with the major cross-border challenges facing the whole area. There has been a growing recognition of the opportunity for strategic place-shaping and infrastructure-planning across a broader spatial canvas. From this, potential benefits such as increased access to infrastructure funding, devolved powers from government and delivery of sound and legally compliant local development plans might be realised. The group agreed to work together to explore what their collective ambition for the place is, to identify shared growth priorities and strategically important infrastructure challenges.
- 4.2 Accordingly, the group members have attended a programme of fortnightly workshops from September 2018 to January 2019. The workshops have been independently facilitated, time-bound, and designed to create a shared understanding of key imperatives followed by a long term-ambition. This is to support the leadership in creating joint working arrangements that will be needed to move forward specific proposals and programmes, particularly the Planning and Infrastructure demands of the Government's housing targets. Hertfordshire County Council has also participated fully at member and officer level in these discussions and is therefore included in the partnership.
- 4.3 The dialogue to date has identified many common challenges, particularly around housing affordability, housing supply, employment, travel to work area, transport and other infrastructure. The SWHP considers that, by presenting a common voice and working together, there is a greater chance of successfully addressing these challenges strategically. The SWHP will work as a distinct voice for the area while maintaining the sovereign position of each authority.

4.4 The aims of SWHP will be to focus on 5 strategic priorities

- Leadership: creating the place narrative, political relationships & agreements
- Developments that meet our housing and employment needs
- Connectivity: ensuring our places are accessible & sustainable
- Well Being: planning and designing our places for healthy living
- Public Services: enabling a greater influence on outcomes and being more self-sufficient in energy, recycling, housing mix and jobs.

4.5 The discussions between the respective Elected Mayor/Leaders and Chief Executives have focused on areas that cannot be addressed individually, identifying areas where our collective voice and resources can have a greater impact and enabling the Partnership to promote a common proposition within and beyond the region to potential stakeholders such as government.

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5.1 The Elected Mayor/Leaders have agreed to adopt the following seven principles:

- We shall establish an effective political and officer forum for effective joint working
- We shall seek to formalise our joint working through a S101 formal committee or other structure
- We shall develop and share opportunities together
- We shall build our governance incrementally – learning from the lessons from other places who are more advanced
- Through our collaboration we should be gaining something, not losing something
- Local identities will not be lost
- We shall be a voice for South West Herts.

5.2 A similar approach to the SWHP is now being commenced by the North East Hertfordshire grouping of authorities. In parallel, and in a complementary fashion, all councils in Hertfordshire have agreed to participate along with the LEP in a Regional Growth Board which is chaired by the Leader of Herts County Council, Cllr David Williams.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

6.2 The recommendations in this report enhance the Council's agreed policy to develop its Local Plan. There are no financial implications at this stage because the Council has already agreed to contribute £5,000 along with all other Herts LAs (and matched with £50,000 from HCC, to support resources working through the Growth Board

and the emerging sub-regional partnerships. It is envisaged that, as part of the work to develop an investment strategy and Joint Strategic Plan, this will include consideration of any further funding including contributions from the LEP, LGA, EELGA and the Growth Fund as part of the business rates pilot'.

- 6.3 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the key objective which is to develop a vision and Joint Strategic Plan for the SWHP area up to 2050 that promotes healthy sustainable growth for our communities. Alongside will be developed an Investment Strategy.
- 6.4 As above at present. Once the Investment Strategy has been developed, the financial implications will be identified across all the LAs in the partnership and will be agreed as part of the LAs budget processes.

7 Legal Issues

There are no specific legal issues at this time. This is a voluntary and co-operative undertaking that any signatory can withdraw from. There is also a MOU relating to how the Councils will work at officer level. A statement of Common Ground is being prepared which will have contractual commitments that the parties will need to agree to.

8 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

N/A at this stage

9 Staffing

None specific.

10 Accommodation

10.1 N/A

11 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

11.1 N/A

12 Sustainability

12.1 The work emanating from any joint arrangements will need to ensure that it fulfils legislative requirements and outcomes will be expected to factor in sustainability measure

Appendices

Proposed Memorandum of Understanding for endorsement. Appendix A

Background papers

Hertfordshire Fit for the Future – A collaborative ambition for sustainable growth and thriving communities.