

FULL COUNCIL - 26 FEBRUARY 2019

PART I - DELEGATED

5. SOUTH-WEST HERTS PARTNERSHIP – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (CED)

1 Summary

1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise the Council on the work being carried out by the South West Herts Partnership (SWHP) Leaders and Chief Executives to prepare for future challenges and opportunities facing the sub-region.

1.2 It seeks Council approval to sign the Memorandum of Understanding attached to this report.

2 Details

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 The discussions between the respective 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.

2.6 The 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.

2.7 A similar approach to the SWHP is now being commenced by the NE Herts 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 HCC, Cllr David Williams.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The recommendations reflect the need for a broader Council commitment to continue in this collaborative exercise. Alternatively, the Council could choose not to participate in the evolving Partnership. This would leave the Council as an isolated voice within the context of a developing Regional Growth Board and an emerging partnership in North East Hertfordshire.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 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'.

4.2 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.

5 Financial & Legal Implications

5.1 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.

5.2 There are no specific legal issues at this time. This is a voluntary and co-operative undertaking that any signatory can withdraw from.

6 Equal Opportunities Implications

6.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No
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7 Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

7.1 None specific.

8 Recommendation

8.1 That Council 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.

Report prepared by: Steven Halls, Chief Executive.

Background Papers

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT USED TO PREPARE THIS REPORT

Document Title:	Filed at:
Hertfordshire Fit for the Future – A collaborative ambition for sustainable growth and thriving communities.	

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Proposed Memorandum of Understanding for endorsement

South West Herts Partnership
Memorandum of Understanding

between

Hertsmere Borough Council

St Albans District Council

Three Rivers District Council

Watford Borough Council

Dacorum Borough Council

Hertfordshire County Council

1. Background

- 1.1 The South West Herts Partnership (SWHP) group of councils has been considering the challenges and opportunities ahead for their part of Hertfordshire. These include developing spatial strategies, social and affordable housing, the green belt, employment and external investment, the role of central government as a key partner in realising economic and infrastructure objectives. The combined authorities are seeking to respond to such challenges within existing borders and beyond, recognising that shared resources and a combined voice representing over 500,000 residents is more effective, powerful and cogent than the voice of any single authority.
- 1.2 To explore the potential for collaborative working further, the Council Leaders and Chief Executives have been meeting every fortnight since September to assess whether a partnership could be established among willing partners. Representatives from the County's political administration and officers were also present to make their contribution. Parallel to these developments, the HCC has now established a Growth Board for the region that includes all the local authorities' Leaders and Chief Executives, as well as the LEP. The Eastern Region is also beginning to explore its own discrete partnership similar to the SWHP.
- 1.3 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 time frame is accordingly medium to long-term up to 2050. The LAs acknowledge the pressing needs of their communities to be able to live and work in areas that support a good quality of life, leisure, educational and employment opportunities.
- 1.4 The SWHP will both work together as a distinctive voice for the South West while also collaborating with the emerging agenda of the Hertfordshire Growth Board, the LEP and local business. The SWHP acknowledges this approach will provide challenges at the political and organisational levels that are new, uncharted and challenging. However, we consider that by working in an open collaborative manner we can apply

our local knowledge and skills to taking our own agenda forward. We are therefore adopting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will be a declaration of intent and an important building block for each authority involved and the wider region.

1.5 This MoU sets out:

- a) The core purpose and aims of the SWHP
- b) The principles of collaboration

2. Core Purpose and Aims

2.1 The core purpose of SWHP is to provide place leadership for South West Herts recognising that through our collaborative approach we will be best placed to develop and deliver a vision for the SWHP area up to 2050, promoting healthy sustainable growth for our communities.

2.2 SWHP will focus on the strategic opportunities to influence and secure the strategic infrastructure that will help our individual areas to flourish and realise their full economic and social potential. This is regardless of individual local authority boundaries.

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

- Leadership: creating the place narrative, political relationships & agreements
- Development: creating a joint spatial plan to that meets our housing and employment space 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

3. Principles of Collaboration

3.1 Our collaboration will be focused on three key areas:

- Tackling problems we can't solve individually
- Creating collective scale and impact
- Providing the place leadership to promote the SWHP proposition

3.2 The Authorities agree to adopt the following principles in working together:

- We will establish an effective political and officer forum for effective joint working
- We will seek to formalise our joint working through a S101 formal committee or other structure
- We shall develop and share opportunities together
- We will 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 need to be a voice for South West Herts.

4. Term and Termination

4.1 This MoU shall commence on the date of the final signature by all Authorities, and shall expire if the SWHP dissolves.

5. Variation

5.1 The MoU can only be varied by written agreement of all the Authorities.

6. Charges and liabilities

6.1 Except as otherwise provided, the Parties shall bear their own costs and expenses incurred in complying with their obligations under this MoU.

7. Status

7.1 This MoU cannot override the statutory duties and powers of the parties and is not enforceable by law. However, the parties agree to the principles set out in this MoU.

Signed by

Local Authority	Leader	Chief Executive	Date
Hertsmere Borough Council			
St Albans District Council			
Three Rivers District Council			
Watford Borough Council			
Dacorum Borough Council			
Hertfordshire County Council			