

CENTRAL AREA GROWTH BOARD

When: Tuesday, 14 February 2023 at 10.00 am

**Where: Suite 1.02, Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes,
MK9 3EJ and on [Youtube](#)**

Members of the Central Area Growth Board

Councillor Marland (Chair)

Councillors R Wenham (Vice-Chair), Hodgson, Councillor J Nunn, Councillor H Simmons
and Councillor J Smithers

Enquiries

Please contact Peter Brown on 01908 253671 or peter.brown@milton-keynes.gov.uk

For more information about attending or participating in a meeting please see overleaf

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We use our best efforts to stream meetings on YouTube. From time to time there are technical problems which could mean we are unable to stream the meeting. When this happens, our meetings will continue, and we will do our best to upload a recording of the meeting after it takes place. Meeting minutes form the formal record and are published after every meeting.

For those registering or entitled to speak, facilities will be in place to do so in person or via video / audio conferencing, but this is not guaranteed. From time to time there are technical problems which mean we are unable to enable remote participation. When this happens our meetings will continue, although we will try to provide alternatives options, for example through a telephone call as opposed to a video call.

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Agenda

Agendas and reports for the majority of the Council's public meetings can be accessed.

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Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Disclosures of Interest

Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests, or non-registerable interests (including other pecuniary interests) they may have in the business to be transacted, and officers to declare any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

3. Update on Devolution

(Pages 5 - 8)

To consider the update on devolution.

4. Update on Oxford - Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership

(Pages 9 - 14)

That Leaders note the update, from Cherwell District Council, on the Oxford – Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership.

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Central Area Growth Board

14.02.2023

Devolution Deals

1.0 Levelling-Up White Paper

- 1.1 In February 2022 the Government published the Levelling-Up White Paper. This set out the Government’s ambition to reduce spatial disparity by developing a long-term plan of action to tackle differences in infrastructure, skills, innovation financial resources and the strength of communities.
- 1.2 One of the key policies set out in the White Paper was the aim to empower decision makers in local areas with a new framework to deepen and simplify local devolution in England. The aspiration is that by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution with a simplified long-term funding settlement.
- 1.3 The White Paper set out an initial **devolution framework**, indicating the types of powers that will be considered at each devolution level. It was further stated that these are not minimum offers. Some powers may only be available to certain authorities or geographies. There will also be scope to negotiate further powers, and an opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to address specific challenges and opportunities – for example, the improvement of health and social care outcomes.

Devolution Framework

Level 3 – A single institution or County Council with a directly elected mayor (DEM), across a Functional Economic Area (FEA) or whole county area

Level 2 – A single institution or County Council without a DEM, across a FEA or whole county area

Level 1 – Local authorities working together across a FEA or whole county area e.g. through a joint committee

Function	Detail	L1	L2	L3
Strategic role in delivering services	Host for Government functions best delivered at a strategic level involving more than one local authority e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Opportunity to pool services at a strategic level	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to deliver action on climate change and the UK’s Net Zero targets	Yes	Yes	Yes

Supporting local businesses	LEP functions including hosting strategic business voice		Yes	Yes
Local control of sustainable transport	Control of appropriate local transport functions e.g. local transport plans*		Yes	Yes
	Defined key route network*			Yes
	Priority for new rail partnerships with Great British Railways – influencing local rail offer, e.g. services and stations			Yes
	Ability to introduce bus franchising		Yes	Yes
	Consolidation of existing core local transport funding for local road maintenance and smaller upgrades into a multi-year integrated settlement			Yes
Investment spending	UKSPF planning and delivery at a strategic level		Yes	Yes
	Long-term investment fund, with an agreed annual allocation			Yes
Giving adults the skills for the labour market	Devolution of Adult Education functions and the core Adult Education Budget		Yes	Yes
	Providing input into Local Skills Improvement Plans		Yes	Yes
	Role in designing and delivering future contracted employment programmes			Yes
Local control of infrastructure decisions	Ability to establish Mayoral Development Corporations (with consent of host local planning authority)			Yes
	Devolution of locally-led brownfield funding			Yes
	Strategic partnerships with Homes England across the Affordable Housing Programme and brownfield funding			Yes
	Homes England compulsory purchase powers (held concurrently)		Yes	Yes
Keeping the public safe and healthy	Mayoral control of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions where boundaries align^			Yes
	Clear defined role in local resilience*		Yes	Yes
	Where desired offer MCAs a duty for improving the public's health (concurrently with local authorities)			Yes
Financing local initiatives for residents and business	Ability to introduce mayoral precepting on council tax			Yes
	Ability to introduce supplement on business rates (increases subject to ballot)			Yes

* refers to functions which are only applicable to combined authorities

^ refers to functions which are currently only applicable to mayoral combined authorities

1.4 The White Paper states the powers and functions set out in the Table above represent progress in devolving decisions and funds. This framework is designed to be dynamic and be informed by devolution deal discussions over the coming years.

2.0 Recent Devo deals and what they have secured for their areas

2.1 All recent Devolution deals have used the framework set out in the White Paper. They have seen the Local Authorities involved agreeing to a democratically elected mayor - a level 3 devolution agreement.

2.2 Government has confirmed discussions will take place to identify potential candidates for the next set of new devolution deals starting in early 2023. It will likely prioritise areas which are interested in exploring a democratically elected Leader/Mayor (level 3), and it is uncertain what appetite there will be for level 1 and 2 deals.

3.0 LEP Integration

3.1 At the end of March 2022, government wrote to set out two future pathways for integrating LEPs into Combined Authorities or other institutions with devolved powers. The government wants to ensure that businesses are still able to access the support, insights and representation that LEPs currently provide. Central Area leaders have previously expressed support for the idea of LEP functions being under local democratic control.

3.2 For an area where there is currently no Combined Authority or Devolution Deal under negotiation, LEPs continue to operate. Once a devolution deal is agreed, measures are then put in place to integrate the LEP Board with the Combined Authority. LEP functions and roles should complement and add value to the wider powers devolved to local leaders.

3.3 A Combined Authority would have the flexibility to preserve the current LEP Board as a sub-board or merge the LEP board into an existing or new internal business board. Local leaders will be able to adjust the membership of the newly integrated business board including by inviting the participation of local economic partners outside the business community and can re-brand as necessary. The Business Board should be consulted on all relevant economic decisions.

4.0 Consequences for SEMLEP

4.1 SEMLEP will shortly be setting a budget for 2023/24 and the next couple of years during this period of transition, whilst any devolution deal is negotiated. SEMLEP, like all Local Enterprise Partnerships, is currently waiting for a decision from Government on funding for 2023/24. It seems unlikely at this stage that the Government will increase the funding for LEPs compared with 2022/23. This, together with the loss of other sources funding such as European Funds, means that SEMLEP will need to consider the size and structure of the organisation going forwards.

4.2 The SEMLEP Board, taking account of the advice from Government, has proposed that in future, the work of the LEP will focus on three areas:

- Supporting businesses to strengthen resilience and success;
- Securing skills for productive employment; and
- Providing evidence and analysis for strategic growth.

5.0 Recommendations

- That Central Area Leaders note the above update on the Devolution agenda and the future of the LEP
- That officers in Central Area authorities investigate and seek clarity on the government's Devolution agenda in line with the Central Area's priorities

Cherwell District Council**Update on Oxford – Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership****Purpose of report**

Proposals for a locally led Partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge region have been formally approved by government. The Partnership's role will be to champion the region as a world leader in research and innovation in hi-tech, high-performance technology and manufacturing, acting to achieve environmentally sustainable and inclusive growth. It will strengthen cross-boundary collaboration among its partners to focus on tackling the issues that matter to the people who live and work in the region.

The Partnership's initial programme is to:

- develop a set of propositions to attract international investment and profile the region on a global stage; and
- continue the work underway to embed shared Environment Principles.

The Secretary of State Rt Hon Michael Gove MP has confirmed support following a proposal submitted to government by leaders from local councils, local enterprise partnerships, the Arc Universities Group and the area's transport body, England's Economic Heartland. Backing for the pan-regional partnership unlocks access to up to £2.5million government funding for the Partnership, with £500k in year to support activity to deliver an Investment Prospectus & Atlas, a significant Environment Programme 1. Nature Recovery Strategy Support 2. Minerals & Waste Restoration Environmental Gain 3. Regional Energy & Water Strategy Scoping) and a Data Observatory & Innovation Network

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to agree that:

- 1.1 Cherwell District Council to be part of the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership as it becomes formally recognised and funded by Government as a Pan-Regional Partnership (PRP);
- 1.2 The Leader is appointed as the Council's representative on the PRP. The Leader was appointed the ARC representative in June 2022.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Oxford to Cambridge Partnership is a collaboration amongst willing Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and universities from across the Oxfordshire to Cambridgeshire region. The Partnership is not a formal committee in Local Government terms but as a condition of gaining Government support and funding, it is required to have the following:
 - a constitution which includes clarity on governance, membership, openness and transparency, which sits as part of a wider performance and assurance framework which covers financial and risk management
 - a committed work programme which builds on the Partnership's consensus in terms of priorities, objectives and expected outcomes

- as part of the governance arrangements there needs to be a representative Board from across the Partnership including an Independent Chair

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 On 18th January 2023, Secretary of State Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP endorsed the proposition to set up a pan regional partnership for the Oxford to Cambridge geography. Letter attached at appendix 1.
- 3.2.1 The overall purpose of the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership will be to champion the Oxford to Cambridge region as a world leader of innovation and business, acting on shared interests in delivering environmentally sustainable economic growth that brings benefits to communities now and in future.
- 3.2.2 The Partnership will strengthen cross-boundary collaboration so that joint working is locally-led and focused on the issues that matter to people who live and work in the region. The Partnership will define the outcomes it seeks to achieve but it does not have delegated authority or any formal or legal decision-making powers from any of its partner members.
- 3.2.3 Currently, the priorities of the Partnership are focussed on supporting delivery of clean, green and inclusive economic growth as well as delivering increased environmental gain and benefits from this growth for our communities now and in the future.
- 3.2.4 Government endorsement of the Partnership unlocks the opportunity of up to £2.5million for the remainder of the current Spending Review period (to 2024/25).

Governance

- 3.5 A Shadow Board is in place to oversee an initial partnership programme and agree governance and funding arrangements. The Shadow Board will be in place until the initial conditions and milestones have been met (i.e. constitution in place, Independent Chair selected). It is anticipated the Board will meet outside of shadow form by June 2023.
- 3.6 Members of the Shadow Board are:
- Cllr Barry Wood, Leader Cherwell District Council sitting as Interim Chair of the Shadow Board.
 - Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council, representing the Future Oxfordshire Partnership as current Chair
 - Cllr Pete Marland, Leader of Milton Keynes City Council, representing the Central Area Growth Board as current Co-Chair
 - Cllr Richard Wenham, Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, representing the Central Area Growth Board as current Co-Chair
 - Cllr Anna Smith, Leader of Cambridge City Council and currently Acting Mayor, representing the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
 - Professor Alistair Fitt, Pro-Vice Chancellor Oxford Brookes University representing the Arc Universities Group as current Chair

- Peter Horrocks CBE, Chair of SEMLEP, representing Chairs of LEPs and Business Boards and, sitting as interim Chair of the Economy Sub-Group.
- Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader South Cambridgeshire District Council sitting as interim Chair of the Environment Sub-Group
- To be confirmed, Representative from England's Economic Heartland

3.8 Once fully operational, there will be three main layers to the governance model: an overarching Plenary group which includes all partners which will meet at least annually; a main Board which will oversee governance, work programme delivery and communications; Sub-Groups which are themed groups (currently economy and environment) which focus on specific project delivery. All groups will be supported by a small operational team as well as an Accountable Body.

3.9 The Oxford to Cambridge Partnership Board will succeed the shadow board to oversee the work and operations of the Partnership, as agreed by its members. Representation on this Board will include:

- An Independent Chair;
- One Chair from each of the member Growth Boards or equivalent sub-regional groups (plus an additional Co-Chair from the Central Area Growth Board);
- One Chair representing each of the Board's Programme Sub-Groups;
- One Chair each from the main constituent stakeholder groups: one on behalf of all Local Enterprise Partnerships, one on behalf of the Arc Universities Group, and one from England's Economic Heartland.
- A minimum of two Independent Stakeholders (NEDs) as selected by the Board
- Senior Government representatives (whilst the Board is in receipt of core Government funding).

Accountable Body

3.7 Cherwell District Council is currently the Accountable Body for the Partnership. Such a body is required for the Partnership given direct public funding from partners and Government. This role involves the Council having oversight and responsibility for ensuring proper governance, financial and risk management is in place and operational. This will involve officer support principally in the areas of legal, finance, human resources and from the Chief Executive and senior team.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 Cherwell District Council supports partnership working locally, across Oxfordshire and beyond as there are real benefits to be achieved through potentially more efficient working, effective delivery at scale as well as access to additional funding and strength in working with and influencing central Government.

4.2 The Oxford to Cambridge region is an area of economic success and will continue to be so. It has been the consistent view of the Council to try its best to positively influence that growth and seek the greatest benefits for our communities. By working with other sector partners, as well as key stakeholders who directly influence that economic growth but who also seek to gain benefits for our local natural environment, we can benefit from sharing

best practice, learning and also engage directly with those who have the most influence on our places and people. For these reasons it is recommended the Council continues to not only remain as a local partner, but to actively engage and where beneficial to the district, to lead wider partnership activity.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to be part of the PRP. This was rejected as the ability to positively influence collaboration across this geography and the access to resulting additional funding would be lost, to the detriment to the communities of Cherwell District Council.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 The Oxford to Cambridge Partnership currently has transition funding of £250,000 from Government with access to a further £250,000 this year plus local partner contributions. This money is being committed to support the transition programme of delivery, recruitment of the Chair and to support a small transition team until the Partnership is formally set up.

7.2 There is commitment from Government for access to a further £2,500,000 over the next two financial years, subject to business case being agreed. As part of accessing this funding local contributions are required, both in officer time and in cash contributions. This financial year's contribution was £4,000. This contribution has been provided for within the Council's 2023/24 proposed budget. The Council also receives a payment in recognition of acting as the Accountable Body.

Comments checked by:

Legal Implications – Mandatory paragraph

7.4 The Council is the Accountable Body and will have specific obligations in connection with the operational management including risk management and governance. The PRP constitution is being drafted which will set out the principles and rules governing it. There will also be a formal partnership agreement between the partners.

Comments checked by:

Risk Implications - Mandatory paragraph

7.5

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

7.6

Sustainability Implications

- 7.5 The priorities of the Partnership are focussed on supporting delivery of clean, green and inclusive economic growth as well as delivering increased environmental gain and benefits from this growth for our communities now and in the future.
The implications of supporting the Partnership would be to benefit from a wider, strategic approach to delivery of its sustainable, climate impact reducing priorities.

Comments checked by: Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Ian.Boll@cherwell-dc.gov.uk;

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision (Executive reports only; state N/A if not Executive report)

Financial Threshold Met: **No**

Community Impact Threshold Met: **No**

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Lead Councillor

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Annex 1 Letter from SofS

Report Author and contact details

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive Officer

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