

# Central Area Growth Board Report

2 August 2023

## Committee Matters 2023/24

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### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That members appointed by each Local Authority on the Central Area Growth Board as set out in 3.1, be noted.
- 1.2 That Central Area Growth Board representatives on regional bodies, as set out in 6.2 are agreed, and further nominations for vacancies are also agreed.
- 1.3 That the Central Area Growth Board be renamed South East Midlands Authorities (SEMA) as of 2 August meeting.

### 2. Purpose of the Central Area Growth Board

- 2.1 The purpose of the Central Area Growth Board is set out in its Terms of Reference, which were last updated in October 2021 and subsequently taken through the relevant governance processes at each member Local Authority.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 details the purpose of, and tasks of, the Growth Board in full.

### 3. Membership of the Growth Board for the 23/24 municipal year

- 3.1 Local Authorities have made the following nominations to the Growth Board for the 2023/24 municipal year:

Local Authority	Leader/Mayor
Bedford Borough Council	Councillor Jim Weir (Deputy Mayor)
Central Bedfordshire Council	Councillor Adam Zerny (Leader)
Luton Borough Council	Councillor Hazel Simmons (Leader)
Milton Keynes City Council	Councillor Pete Marland (Leader)
North Northamptonshire Council	Councillor Jason Smithers (Leader)
West Northamptonshire Council	Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Leader)

#### **4. Chairing of the Growth Board meetings**

- 4.1 The Central Area Growth Board works on a municipal year basis. To date, the Growth Board has worked on a Co-Chairing basis, with co-Chairs nominated at the start of each municipal year. The May 2023 Local Elections have led to changes in leadership at two member authorities, the Elected Mayor of Bedford is now Mayor Tom Wootton, and Central Bedfordshire saw a change in control of the Council, with Councillor Adam Zerny elected as Leader.
- 4.2 At this meeting of the 2 August 2023, the Growth Board will need to elect a Chair and Co-Chair for the 2023 / 24 municipal year.

#### **5. Renaming of the Central Area Growth Board**

- 5.1 The government has indicated a 'minded to' decision that would bring economic support currently delivered by Local Enterprise Partnerships under local democratic control. Whilst it will not deliver services itself, there is a clear need for the Central Area Growth board to show leadership over economic issues across the South East Midlands area.
- 5.2 Leaders therefore may wish to consider the current branding of the growth board, and whether using the existing brand of the 'South East Midlands' would serve the area better than using 'central area.' This will improve national positioning, giving the area a clear brand unrelated to its positioning within the Arc.

#### **6. Nominated representatives from the Central Area Growth Board for 23/24**

- 6.1 The Central Area is entitled to a number of political representatives within regional bodies.
- 6.2 It is asked to confirm the following representatives for the 23/24 municipal year:
  - a) Oxford – Cambridge pan regional partnership

The Central Area is entitled to two political representatives on the Oxford-Cambridge pan regional partnership

X1 Chair of Central Area Growth Board
X1 Co-Chair of the Central Area Growth Board

The Central Area also is entitled to representation on three pan-regional partnership workstreams:

- i) Innovation and Economy group

X1 Political representative – Currently vacant
x1 Officer representative - Currently the Head of Economic Development at MK City Council

ii) Environment group

Currently, most Local Authorities in the Central Area are represented on this group, which has a large membership. The growth board has not yet been asked to nominate representatives to this workstream.

iii) Identity and branding (Communications) group

X2 representatives from the Central Area to sit on the steering group

X1 Political representative – currently vacant
x1 Officer representative – currently vacant

(b) England's Economic Heartlands

All six local authorities in the Central Area are members of England's Economic Heartlands (EEH) and entitled to a place on the Strategic Transport Leadership board as a result.

The Central Area Growth Board is also an associate member of the Transport Leadership Board, and entitled to send a representative as a result – to be noted that this associate member would not have voting rights.

X 2 representatives from the Central Area

X1 Political representative – Currently vacant
x1 Officer representative – currently the Chief Executive of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership

## **Appendix 1 – Stated Purposes and Tasks of the Growth Board (extract from Terms of Reference)**

### **3 PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTRAL AREA GROWTH BOARD**

3.1 The Growth Board will only exercise the relevant functions which have been delegated to it by each constituent authority. Consequently, and without prejudice to the generality of this, the decision-making powers on planning matters, will remain vested with the Local Planning Authority for each constituent authority, as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

#### **Purpose**

3.2 The purpose of the Growth Board is to work towards the following outcomes in relation to the Central Area:

- a) Accelerate the delivery of planned growth across the area, where this is enabled by investment in infrastructure and services.
- b) Provide the strategic leadership that will enable existing mechanisms and processes to plan for, and realise an economic transformation across the area.
- c) Secure long term benefits and opportunities for local communities, and
- d) Attract increased private sector investment.

#### **Main Tasks**

3.3 The Growth Board does not have any formal allocation of functions from constituent authorities, however its main tasks relate to the exercise of the constituent authorities' powers 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 in the Central Area, and in relation to the matters listed below:

- a) To apply for central government funding in the name of the Central Area Growth Board, and if received, to determine priorities for expenditure and direct such expenditure and direct the Accountable Body or other constituent authority to implement these.
- b) To respond to consultations, express views and make recommendations to Government and others, including partners, on matters of general importance to the Central Area. This will all be in the name of the Central Area Growth Board. This will include on:
  - i) Proposals for major development, including local plans.
  - ii) Proposals for major infrastructure.
  - iii) Funding submissions to Government or its agencies.
  - iv) Economic plans and strategies

#### **Other Tasks of the Growth Board**

3.4 To provide the strategic leadership by representing the Central Areas as a whole, which will enable the constituent authorities to plan for, and realise, an economic transformation across the Central Area, speaking to Government and its Agencies with one co-ordinated voice and encouraging private sector investment.

- 3.5 To seek to establish Common Planning Areas to produce an integrated and holistic approach to strategic planning for employment, housing and infrastructure that builds on Local Plans, Local Transport Plans and Economic Plans and Strategies.
- 3.6 Coordination in reviewing whether spatial planning, infrastructure and public services are integrated and make recommendations to encourage this.
- 3.7 To accelerate and increase the delivery of planned growth across the area, where this is enabled by investment in infrastructure and services.
- 3.8 To work to influence the route planning options, in order to realise the opportunity for the area in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes- Oxford growth corridor, (road and rail) and other associated linkages that may be delivered.
- 3.9 To approve and monitor the implementation of Central Area programmes of work including those flowing from any Place Deals, Economic Plans and transport strategies and other relevant infrastructure programmes as agreed. (This is not an exhaustive list and may be expanded by agreement of the Growth Board).
- 3.10 To bid for and secure investment, including from Government and external sources of resources to support the above purposes.
- 3.11 Advise partners on matters of collective interest.
- 3.12 Commission and share research and analysis in support of the preparation of statutory and non-statutory plans and strategies (including local plans and economic plans). This will include work designed to assist compliance with the duty to cooperate in connection with plan-making.
- 3.13 Lead and coordinate the Homes England liaison process on Central Area wide regeneration and housing issues and contribute to any related interaction with Government agencies.
- 3.14 Provide a forum for partnership working and collaboration on spatial planning, economic development, housing, transport, and general infrastructure issues.
- 3.15 Input into delivery of a local Industrial Strategy for the Central Area.
- 3.16 Engage with and represent the Central Area to the Sub-national Transport Body covering the Central Area.
- 3.17 Wherever possible, the Growth Board will aim to streamline existing processes.
- 3.18 To contribute and be an active member of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc governance arrangements.
- 3.19 These tasks will be exercised concurrently with the constituent members' own primary exercise of responsibilities in these area, and subject to the primary responsibilities. This means that even where the Growth Board has resolved that a certain course of action be followed, one or more of the constituent authorities may then decide to take a different approach.