

Central Area Growth Board Report

14 February 2023

Central Area Branding

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1. Recommendations

1.1 That the Growth Board agree that:

- a) Leaders note the update provided by Whistlejacket at the 14 February meeting.
- b) In light of the findings, that a second stage of the naming and branding work is undertaken to rebrand the area of the six unitary authorities with a new name.
- c) The new name and brand should constitute a clean break from previous titles.
- d) The branding work should conclude as quickly as possible, noting the SEMLEP close date of the end of March 2024.
- e) That a Leaders meeting is arranged before the end of February for Whistlejacket to present the next stage of the branding working.
- f) If the new brand is not ready by March 2024, that a fall back position of using the current 'South East Midlands' branding, be investigated.

2. Background

2.1 At the 19 October meeting of the Central Area Growth Board, Leaders agreed that the Central Area Growth Board should appoint external branding consultants to provide advice on the future branding of economic work across the Central area/South East Midlands.

2.2 As host authority for the Central Area Growth Board secretariat, Milton Keynes City Council ran an invitation to quote process in November 2023. Three agencies specialising in place branding were approached directly with a scope of works agreed with West Northamptonshire Council. Whistlejacket London were successful in this process and were appointed in November 2023.

- 2.3 Whistlejacket London have since undertaken a period of engagement with each local authority and the LEP, engaging with Leaders and Chief Executives across the Central Area, to build an accurate picture of each partner's position and thoughts with regards to the future branding of the Growth Board and services previously delivered by the LEP. Whistlejacket have also engaged with the Chambers of Commerce in the area, the Federation of Small Businesses and further business representatives.
- 2.4 The initial findings of this exercise are being shared at today's (14 February) meeting of the Growth Board for update and for comment. Leaders are asked to note the update, and provide guidance on a number of issues to Whistlejacket so that branding work can progress to the next stage.
- 2.5 The branding work is due to conclude by 31 March 2024, but it is recognised that colleagues at West Northamptonshire Council would benefit from timely decision on the future branding approach at today's meeting, in order to ensure a subsequent identity for the services can be developed alongside the smooth transfer of people and assets. . A number of transitional activities are also dependent on the future branding direction including (but not limited to) branding, website (domain names), staff email addresses, and social media accounts which will become difficult to progress if a decision is not arrived at in a timely manner.