

**Possible LEP Geographies**

Outlined below is a summary of the possible strengths and weaknesses of a range of potential LEPs that Central Bedfordshire could consider. In addition to those geographies presented it is understood that there could be additional variations, for example including North Hertfordshire within a Bedfordshire LEP and additional district councils within MKSM. In both cases this would not fit with current Government views on the need for partnerships of upper tier authorities.

This analysis does not consider the range of functions or importantly structure of a LEP. For example effective governance arrangements for all LEP options will be essential. Governance issues may be more complex if a number of upper and second tier authorities are partners within a LEP, given the effective scale and remit of the differing organisations. Furthermore, depending on the structure of a LEP, i.e. strategic partnership or more delivery based, governance and accountability will again become critical factors, for example Central Bedfordshire leadership should be represented on the LEP board and potential sub committees. Regardless of the final LEP, it will be important for Central Bedfordshire to play a proactive role, promoting the economic development needs of the area.

**1. MKSM**

**Strengths**

- Scale: significant population (1.692 million 2009) and business (63,445 Enterprise count 2009) base. Would allow for comparability with major cities and other LEPs in any bidding/ competitive process for funding.
- Existing working arrangements (Collaborative Working Agreement) would support deliverability of LEP proposal
- Track Record of Delivery (of individual local authorities, partnership working and housing and jobs growth) and mksm brand
- Similar Levels of economic prosperity
- Existing Business relationships (such as The Chamber of Commerce SEMCA activities)

**Weaknesses**

- Limited functional economic links across the entire area
- The recent proposed National Insurance stimulus package in the Coalition budget would only be eligible in Northamptonshire and not other parts of MKSM, potentially creating competitive differences.
- Would need enhanced sub-structures to support localism
- Some authorities are investigating alternative LEPs which include parts of some upper tier authorities and it is unclear if this is applicable under Government guidelines

## **2. Bedfordshire and Luton**

### Strengths

- Historical working relationships and recognition.
- Existing joint structures, such as European Co-Financing arrangements, Total Place and tourism development delivered at a Bedfordshire level
- Many external bodies, such as BRCC, Chamber of Commerce, VCS arrangements operate at a Bedfordshire level.
- High level of functional economic linkages
- Business support, particularly through the Chamber of Commerce
- Central Bedfordshire could play a pivotal role

### Weaknesses

- Scale (605,200 people and 20,640 business) may not be of sufficient size to compete nationally
- There are functional economic linkages with surrounding authorities, particularly with Milton Keynes and North Hertfordshire

## **3. Two Existing Delivery Areas (Bedford/ North central Bedfordshire and Luton/South Central Bedfordshire)**

### Strengths

- Historical working relationships and structures in place

### Weaknesses

- Lack of significant scale for delivery of services/ efficiency of scale
- Does not fit with requirement for groups of upper tier authorities to work together
- Does not fit with existing Local Authority boundaries
- Existing structures would need enhancing to support enhanced democratic accountability
- Does not reflect the full functional economic linkages with surrounding areas

## **4. Central Bedfordshire alone**

### Strengths

- Local democratic accountability
- Processes and working structures (including planning and transport powers) already in place

### Weaknesses

- Lack of scale at a national level
- Does not fit with requirement for groups of upper tier authorities to work together

- Does not reflect the full functional economic linkages with surrounding areas

**5. MKSM Variant- this could include additional local authorities or not include existing members depending on their views on alternative LEPS**

Strengths

- As original MKSM area strengths plus
- May increase scale and impact of LEP
- May better reflect functional economic linkages
- May support improved partnership working

Weaknesses

- Same weaknesses of MKSM, plus
- Timescales- exact scope and geography of LEP will need to be detailed for 6<sup>th</sup> September submission
- May include parts of upper tier authorities and it is unclear if this is applicable under Government guidelines

**6. East of England Region**

Strengths

- Existing RDA, Government Office and Local Government Association structures and relationships
- Significant scale, population and business

Weaknesses

- Does not reflect functional economic links
- Significant differences in economic performance and priorities
- Apparent lack of desire for a historical regional scale tier of working as this does not reflect the localism agenda