

COUNCIL MEETING – 27 SEPTEMBER 2018

Recommendation to Council from the General Purposes Committee held on 23 August 2018

GPC/18/15. Central Area Growth Board Terms of Reference

The Executive Member for Regeneration brought to the attention of the Committee a recent article posted on social media which referred to various bodies including the Central Area Growth Board and its terms of reference. He felt the article had been misleading as it suggested that membership of the Growth Board would mean major infrastructure decisions would be made undemocratically. The Executive Member reminded the Committee that the Central Area Growth Board would be composed of elected members from a number of district, unitary and county councils. He also pointed out that a number of other factual errors were contained within the article.

The Committee considered the report and Members noted the recommendation to include the Central Area Growth Board and its Terms of Reference in the Council's Constitution had been considered and supported by the Executive at its meeting on 7 August 2018. The Committee also noted that the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was encouraging all local authorities within the growth corridor to strengthen structures for collaborative governance and collective decision making.

Points and comments were as follows:

- that the Growth Board would function as a Joint Committee but that no decision making powers would be ceded to it. All decisions would be made at and by the individual local authorities as part of their standard decision making process.
- the Committee was advised that the Council's representative would be the Executive Member for Regeneration and the agenda and minutes of the meetings would be within the public domain except for that relating to any exempt information as defined under the relevant legislation.
- concern was expressed that the proposed Central Area Growth Board arrangements would be undemocratic in nature and membership, and would result in Central Bedfordshire merely ratifying the decisions approved by the other constituent councils.
- it was emphasised that if Central Bedfordshire did not participate in the Growth Board other councils would be in the position to make decisions on its behalf.

The Committee noted that Central Bedfordshire Council was already engaging with the local councils on other matters and it was important to be involved in the Central Area Growth Board in order to be part of the decision-making process.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that the proposed additions to the Constitution with regards to the Central Area Growth Board and its Terms of Reference be approved as set out at Appendices A and B to the minutes and the Constitution be amended accordingly.