

CABINET
12 MAY 2016

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT WORKING

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer: Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning & Regeneration

REASON FOR REPORT:

To consider the case for closer working with other authorities within the same sub-regional 'Greater Exeter' area, particularly in respect of strategic growth and the economy.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That it be agreed to explore opportunities for joint working in partnership with East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council.**
- 2. That the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Leader and Deputy Leader be given delegated authority to sign the Memorandum of Understanding once finalised.**

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Corporate Plan contains priorities of homes, community, economy and environment. Exploring collaborative working with other Councils on a sub-regional basis will enable enhanced delivery of these priorities.

Financial Implications: None at this 'in principle' stage. The cost of any specific proposals arising from collaborative working and the assessment of options will be reported separately to a future Cabinet meeting.

Legal Implications: The Memorandum of Understanding is not intended to be legally binding although signatory Councils will use reasonable endeavours to comply with its terms, spirit and honour any obligations arising. Any party may terminate their involvement in the Memorandum of Understanding at any time by giving written notice.

Risk Assessment: Entering into the Memorandum of Understanding does not commit the authority to make any formal partnership, governance or structural changes. The commitment is to consider options and work collaboratively across this strategic geography. Given the commonality in economic functional area and housing market area, a collaborative approach is likely to reduce future risk through developing a shared sub-regional vision and a more effective response to the planning and funding environment than might be possible by Councils working individually.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The local authorities covering Mid Devon, Exeter, East Devon and Teignbridge have a longstanding history of joint working in respect of economic**

development and tourism promotion under the umbrella of the 'Heart of Devon' as well as in collaboration over the production of certain pieces of strategic evidence for planning purposes - such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

- 1.2 These four authorities share not only geographical proximity but also a wider synergy in economic fortune associated with a shared housing market area and single functional economic area as illustrated by travel to work patterns derived from the 2011 Census.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Teignbridge, East Devon and Exeter City Councils have already started to explore the opportunity for greater collaboration and alignment of strategic objectives to address the effectiveness and efficiency of promoting economic development within the wider economic functional area and to address the challenging infrastructure, planning and funding environment to service the future needs of the area within which they operate. These authorities have adopted a 'Greater Exeter' spatial approach and formalised their intentions to work collaboratively by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Being located within the same functional economic area, Mid Devon has been invited to share in this collaborative approach and also and enter into an (updated/revised) MoU.
- 2.2 The MoU seeks to establish a shared vision for the Greater Exeter sub-regional area to drive growth and economic prosperity. The MoU will provide confidence to consider options for making improvements to existing governance structures and arrangements in order to enhance economic growth and delivery. The MoU does not intend to create one Council or establish any form of partnership or joint venture between the parties. The collaborative focus will be primarily on economic development and housing enablement together with strategic planning. Its impetus is to unlock the potential for accelerated economic growth and provide long-term confidence in the economy and long term planning on a sub-regional scale.
- 2.3 An MoU for these purposes, to include Mid Devon District Council is in the process of being drawn up. Agreement to explore these opportunities for joint working across this sub-regional Greater Exeter area with these three Councils is sought, together with delegated authority as set out in the second recommendation for the signing of the MoU once it has been finalised.

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Background papers: None

Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton, Members of Cabinet, Management Team