

Business Board		Agenda Item
13 May 2024		9
Title: Economic Growth Strategy Implementation Plan Update		
Report of: Steve Clarke, Senior Responsible Officer Local Growth Fund, Market Insight and Evaluation		
Lead Member: Al Kingsley, Chair of the Business Board		
Public Report: Yes		
Key Decision: No		
Voting Arrangements: No vote required		

Recommendations:

A	To note the progress contained of the Economic Growth Strategy Implementation Plan
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Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

X	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
X	Achieving good growth
X	Increased connectivity
X	Enabling resilient communities
X	Achieving best value and high performance

1. Purpose

1.1	At its meeting on 13 th March 2023, the Business Board endorsed the Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) Implementation Plan and recommended its approval to the Combined Authority Board.
1.2	At the Combined Authority Board meeting on 22 nd March 2023, the EGS Implementation Plan was approved.
1.3	This report provides the Business Board with a strategic overview of progress made in delivering the EGS Implementation Plan.
1.4	This report also sets out a draft timeline for a potential refresh of the Economic Growth Strategy into a new Local Growth Plan.

2. Progress Update

2.1 Programme and Project level delivery

Delivery progress across the programme has been collated via a monitoring report gathering exercise. The Appendix to this report shows the reported progress of the projects within the programme.

Delivery has progressed across several projects and programmes contained within the implementation plan, some recent examples to highlight include:

- The completion to convert part of the former Spencer Mill site into business space. Future phases will see collaboration with a FE college to develop this into an adult education site.
- CPCA performing 7th out of the 21 DfE grant funded local areas for Wave 3 of the Skills Bootcamp.
- Our target to deliver 1,457 affordable homes is progressing, with completions at the Alconbury Weald site. A few more units have been handed over from the BSW site and a Topping Up ceremony for Northminster was held at the end of February 2024.
- The Climate Action Plan 2022-25 was updated at the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee on 11th March 2024. The Committee also agreed to consider a four-year climate programme budget at its June 2024 meeting. The Climate Action Plan will undergo a full review during 2024 to extend it for another three years, based on updated evidence.
- £492,000 LEVI (Local Electronic Vehicle Infrastructure) Capability funding has been approved for the Electronic Vehicles charging project.
- A Transport Summit will be held on 7th June to launch the inter-related Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.
- Allia has established a Future Business Centre for social enterprises and start-ups on the Ground and 4th floor of the Guildhall. This includes providing office space to 13 companies, as well as an independent tourist information centre and café on Peas Hill. The former TIC space is being used as a conference room and is regularly utilised by businesses, charities and other groups, as well as for delivery of Allia's own venture support workshops. We have also established a new co-working space on the 4th floor providing ad hoc and more regular hotdesking space for businesses.

2.2 Strategic level delivery

Implementation of the agreed plan to recruit key new resources within the Economy and Growth Directorate has been progressing to support strategic delivery of the EGS, particularly the implementation of priority sector strategies and their recommendations.

Current recruitment activity has successfully appointed the following roles:

- Life Sciences Sector Champion
- Advanced Manufacturing Sector Champion
- Decarbonisation and Greentech Sector Champion

Recruitment of the remaining three roles continues as current rounds of interviewing have not yet resulted in suitable candidates to appoint and further promotion of vacancies continues, including now using recruitment agency.

Alongside this report on delivery progress across programmes and projects, Officers will provide reporting on the strategic outcomes as per the outcome indicators list approved within the EGS and its Implementation plan later this year in the next version of this report to the board.

2.3 Funding to support delivery

The funds available for local government to locally determine investment into skills and economic capital has reduced since the end of the Local Growth Fund. Two new allocations of funding budget were approved to be added to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in January.

The Strategic Growth Fund of £20 million is intended to mitigate current shortfall and fund both direct construction as well as enabling infrastructure on projects which can deliver key inclusive growth. The fund is phased to increase each year in anticipation of growth in the economy. Final award allocations from this fund are to be shortlisted and proposed by the Business Board to the Investment Committee.

	<p>The Levelling Up Fund of £10 million is proposed to enable both local match funding for projects which will leverage significant external funding as well as the opportunity to expand the current market towns programme into other large non-market town settlements in the area enabling the delivery of much-needed public realm improvements. Final award allocations from this Fund will be considered for recommendation to the Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee and approved by the Combined Authority Investment Committee.</p> <p>An update on both these funds and planned next steps is contained in paper 3.3 to this Business Board Meeting.</p> <p>Also included in the MTFP approved in January by the Combined Authority is an allocated budget of £9 million capital for a climate fund to be led by the Place and Connectivity Directorate team in the Combined Authority. The Combined Authority published a Climate Action Plan in 2022, which set out a wide range of recommendations to ensure the region can deliver on its net zero goals. While full delivery of the Action Plan requires action from across the private and public sector, this allocation (along with a corresponding £2.4 million revenue allocation as well) will facilitate the Combined Authority's delivery of its part of the Plan. Examples of projects that this fund will be used for include understanding the economic impact of, and exploring innovative solutions for, drought damaged roads in the Fens and Peterborough, supporting constituent councils with new requirements regarding biodiversity, decarbonisation of public sector buildings as well as other actions which have, or will, emerge from the Local Area Energy Plans developed by our constituent councils. Final allocations from this Fund will be consulted with constituent councils and other key stakeholders, considered for recommendation to the Board by the Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee and approved by the Investment Committee.</p>
2.4	<p>Local Growth Plan</p> <p>The EGS was approved in 2022 and Implementation plan approved in March 2023, so whilst the strategy and its implementation plan are still relatively young in delivery timeframe and impact and outcome reporting cycles, Officers would like the Business Board to consider and advise on proposed timing of a refresh of the EGS and giving consideration to developing it into a new Local Growth Plan.</p> <p>The other driver to develop the EGS onwards into a Local Growth Plan is the need to be in a state of readiness for a new Government later this year and the potential proposal of a Statutory obligation on all combined authorities and counties with devolution deals to develop a Local Growth Plan based on those functional economic geographies which identifies economic clusters and sets out their plans to build on their local advantages, the key binding constraints of their local economies and how they will use the powers devolved from central government to support local growth.</p> <p>Factors to consider before revision are analysis of other activities currently underway within the CPCA, for example the Shared Ambitions work, and the State of the Region report, these will inform some of the focus for a new Local Growth plan, but importantly a more robust and recent evidence base may be required akin to the previous Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review.</p> <p>The timeline for undertaking a full consultative refresh, revision and translation of the EGS into a new Local Growth Plan would be governed by the Shared Ambitions and State of Region work completing this summer, consultants being procured to assist with both the evidence base and also the development of the new Local Growth Plan. Agree the approach and project plan with consultants to begin gathering and analysing the data and evidence before the first rounds of consultation and engagement during the autumn period.</p>

3. Background	
3.1	<p>The EGS Implementation Plan sets out the intended governance, reporting and accountability arrangements to ensure that the CPCA holds itself as its partners to account for the successful delivery of the plan.</p> <p>The EGS was written to be intentionally flexible and was to take account of projects and programmes already budgeted and in delivery but with opportunity to add and flex the longer-term objectives as newer policy and strategic opportunities present themselves for example a deeper devolution agreement with Government.</p> <p>It recognises that long term evaluation is important, whilst also capturing a real time understanding of actual outcome performance of delivery actions.</p>

4. Appendix

4.1 Appendix A - EGS Implementation Plan - Project Progress Report

5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1 The EGS implementation plan primarily covers actions that are already agreed and funded from within existing resources. It does not therefore commit significant new resources itself.
However, there is noted in the paper a proposed plan to refresh and rewrite the EGS into a new Local Growth Plan later this year and any additional budget required to undertake this work will need to be approved by the Combined Authority or agreed by an Officer with delegated authority.

Legal Implications

5.2 There are no legal implications.

Public Health Implications

5.3 There are no direct public health implications. The EGS is designed to support the Combined Authority's wider strategy to improve health inequalities, through inclusive growth, that will increase wages and opportunities for residents.

Environmental & Climate Change Implications

5.4 There are no direct environmental and climate change implications. The EGS is designed to support the Combined Authority's wider strategy to support the environment and protect natural capital.

Other Significant Implications

5.5 None.

Background Papers

5.6 [Economic Growth Strategy Implementation Plan - 13th March 2023](#)
[Economic Growth Strategy - 9th May 2022](#)