



# Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee

Agenda Item

# 11

**12 June 2023**

Title:	Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework
Report of:	Lead Member for Climate and Environment
Lead Member:	Cllr. Bridget Smith
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	Yes KD2023/022
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of voting Members

## Recommendations:

A	To agree the scope of activity to inform a Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework
B	To allocate the budget of £130k in 2023/24 to the Non-statutory Spatial Framework Approved Budget line of the MTFP to progress this work

## Strategic Objective(s):

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

	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
X	Achieving good growth
X	Increased connectivity
X	Enabling resilient communities

## 1. Purpose

1.1	There are known and emerging physical infrastructure issues that will impact on the achievement of the Strategic Objectives of good growth, connectivity and resilient communities. A workstream is proposed to enhance the evidence base on physical infrastructure and provide a platform to consider and advocate for appropriate strategic interventions. This supports the achievement of individual Councils growth plans and falls within the Combined Authority's Non-statutory Spatial Framework (NSSF) function. The output would be in the form of a Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework (SIDF), which would be a dynamic ongoing process.
1.2	This report asks the Committee to agree the SIDF approach and to allocate budgeted NSSF funding to undertake this activity.

## 2. Proposal

2.1	It is proposed to develop a dynamic evidence base and framework that assists in the identification of physical infrastructure challenges to achieving sustainable growth, and proposals to tackle those challenges. Over a 12 month period the SIDF would draw together existing infrastructure evidence, identify gaps and interdependences, and scope interventions. Within the first 6 months a baseline position will be established on a selected range of infrastructure themes. External capacity would be commissioned to support the workstream, funded from the allocated NSSF revenue budget.
2.2	The SIDF programme delivers to the Strategic Objectives of good growth, connectivity, and enabling resilient communities. There are already examples (energy and water supply) where sustainable growth ambitions are being adversely impacted in the area. It will enable the Combined Authority to build with partners the case for investment and interventions for creating sustainable places. This is within the wider context of meeting growth needs and the capacity of land to accommodate and adapt to the challenges of growth, taking account of other aspects such as legal duty to enhance biodiversity and the national legal duty to cut emissions.

### 3. Background

3.1	The Combined Authority has Corporate Objectives for sustainable growth and resilient communities. Achieving sustainable growth in the area will only happen if supporting infrastructure (such as transport, energy or water) is provided at the right time and scale. Provision needs to consider both existing issues and future challenges. Although infrastructure issues are considered through the review of Local Plans and their associated Infrastructure Delivery Plans, actual delivery is the responsibility of a range of organisations under different regulatory approaches. Currently these infrastructure issues are not brought together at the strategic level nor the interdependencies fully explored. This can make it difficult to 'unlock' specific blockages that can delay growth or identify where proposals might be accelerated.
3.2	The Devolution Deal established a role for the Combined Authority to produce a NSSF. Phase 1 of the NSSF was approved in 2018, setting out principles for sustainable growth, including provision of physical infrastructure. Subsequent phases of the NSSF were paused as the government initiated work on a statutory land-use plan for the OxCam Arc, which included the Combined Authority area. The government has since withdrawn its statutory plan approach. This has been replaced with Local authorities leading a Pan-Regional Partnership with an initial focus on the environment and economic issues. This leaves a gap in considering strategic infrastructure needs for the Combined Authority area.
3.3	The Place Advisory Group (as established under revised governance agreed at Board March 2023 with senior officer membership from all Councils) discussed the work needed to scope the main infrastructure challenges and develop a process for keeping that up to date and promoting interventions. This would take the form of a SIDF. It would draw together evidence on the infrastructure challenges (including evidence relating to planned strategic housing sites), look at potential to accelerate solutions and identify gaps where more work is required. In concept it is similar to work by Greater Manchester Combined Authority on their Infrastructure Framework 2040 ( <a href="#">link</a> ).
3.4	Place Advisory Group have recommended an outline scope for the SIDF, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use existing approved growth (or draft Plans proposed by authorities) as a baseline, extrapolated if needed to assess potential infrastructure barriers over appropriate investment planning cycles;</li> <li>b. Focus on selected priority infrastructure themes (to deliver early recommendations):</li> <li>c. Coordinate with reviews of strategic policy (e.g thematic strategies such as LTCP, Economic Strategy);</li> <li>d. Be resourced with additional capacity;</li> <li>e. Engage with a Task &amp; Finish working group of relevant officers across constituent authorities to progress alongside external support. Place Directors would be the sponsor group.</li> </ul>
3.5	The SIDF would consider the following priority infrastructure themes in its initial phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Energy</li> <li>b. Water (public and commercial needs), water environmental quality, and managing flood risk</li> <li>c. Green/Blue Capital</li> </ul>

	<p>d. Connectivity (digital)</p> <p>Other infrastructure needs are considered through existing thematic work, for example transport connectivity is a key infrastructure issue but is articulated in the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, that has just gone through its formal process of evidence assessment and interventions development. Similarly the Integrated Care Board is looking at health and care infrastructure. These other strategies would feed into the SIDF to provide the overarching framework.</p>
3.6	Although the scope is on physical infrastructure themes, the SIDF is not limited in terms of appropriate interventions and therefore can consider behaviour change or demand management responses.
3.7	The SIDF is envisaged as tackling infrastructure barriers to sustainable growth (as defined in the Corporate Strategy Objectives). The SIDF process would therefore include impacts across the Six Capitals.
3.8	The scope of evidence would include both immediate/short term infrastructure issues that we are already aware of that have the potential to adversely impact growth (such as the water supply for Greater Cambridge or the energy grid capacity/energy security in the Fens) and longer-term issues to require advance planning (flood resilience, low carbon transition). Local Plans have different end dates. The longer-term horizon should at least cover the period to 2041, but 2050 would provide consistency with the national legal duty to reach Net Zero. Policy on the amount and distribution of future growth is not within scope of the SIDF, as that remains the core function of Local Plan reviews.
3.9	A core outcome of the SIDF is to go beyond the identification of infrastructure issues to influence the acceleration of actual infrastructure solutions. These 'system-change' aspects (including funding, procedural or capacity-building) would also provide evidence for the advocate role of the Combined Authority, working alongside public and private sector partners, and feed into discussions on future devolution opportunities. It will complement the Corporate Strategy action to refresh the evidence base through a state of the region review.
3.10	Delivery mechanisms would take account of the Combined Authority's Single Assurance Framework and prioritisation of the Combined Authority's own projects.

## 4. Appendices

4.1	None.
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## 5. Implications

### Financial Implications

5.1	The MTFP has £130k in the NSSF Subject to Approval revenue budget line for 23/24 available for this programme.
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### Legal Implications

6.1	None.
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### Public Health Implications

7.1	Delivery of sustainable growth has major public health benefits (including as a result of access to housing, enhanced employment opportunities and improved environment).
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### Environmental & Climate Change Implications

8.1	Strategic Infrastructure solutions can have wider environmental and other benefits, including flood resilience, water management, carbon sequestration and storage. The transition to a low carbon future requires system-change in terms of major utilities, particularly the production and use of energy. The SIDF will explore these issues.
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### Other Significant Implications

9.1	None
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Background Papers	
10.1	Towards a Sustainable Growth Strategy (NSSF Phase 1), <a href="#">link to document</a>