



CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY BOARD	AGENDA ITEM No: 3.3
29 JANUARY 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME – APPROVAL OF MASTERPLANS FOR FENLAND

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1. The Combined Authority is working closely with town councils, district councils and local partners across Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire to deliver 11 key market town masterplans. The Market Towns Programme is supported by revenue investment from the Combined Authority for each market town to commission new research and analysis required to deliver the bold growth ambitions.
- 1.2. The purpose of this paper is to request Combined Authority Board approval of the four Growing Fenland masterplans produced for the towns of March, Wisbech, Chatteris and Whittlesey.
- 1.3. Furthermore, the Combined Authority Board is asked to note the accompanying Strategic document produced to support mobilisation of the four masterplans and against which future investment proposals will be made.

<u>DECISION REQUIRED</u>	
Lead Member:	James Palmer, Mayor
Lead Officer:	John T Hill, Director for Business & Skills
Forward Plan Ref: 2019/068	Key Decision: Yes
The Combined Authority Board is recommended to: (a) Approve the four Growing Fenland market town masterplans produced for March, Wisbech, Chatteris and Whittlesey. (b) Note the Overarching Growing Fenland Strategic Report for the Fenland district (referenced in paragraphs 2.21 – 2.25).	Voting arrangements Simple majority of all Members

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A third of the population in the Combined Authority's area lives in market towns, with nearly as many again living in surrounding areas and although links with our core cities are vital – investment and attention has often favoured cities and forgotten the role that market towns play for our region. Alongside this under-investment towns are facing many external pressures like the declining town centres and high streets, an ageing population, and a reduction of in-town job opportunities leading to more outward commuting.
- 2.2. The Combined Authority is committed to the future prosperity and success of every market town in its area and is investing in making this a reality by supporting market towns as economic and social hubs. This approach gives each town its own starting point, and the evidence base in order to tailor and customise interventions to meet the distinctive needs of each local economy.
- 2.3. There is no one-size-fits-all solution – and the Combined Authority is providing investment that adds value by helping towns clarify and reassess their priorities for future growth. In this way the identity and role of each town will be brought to prominence and enable each town to grow their economies and contribute to the overall doubling of our gross value added (GVA) over the next 25 years.
- 2.4. The strategic need, economic and commercial case for the projects will be examined and a programme of proposed interventions will be presented to the Combined Authority Board for each town. The Combined Authority are providing additional capital investment to mobilise each town masterplan and to act as a funding catalyst to securing additional investment
- 2.5. Following this process, the Combined Authority retains a strategic partner role – ensuring that county-wide decisions meet the needs of each town masterplan, and lobbying Government for further resource to deliver high-growth towns (and to promote the concept of place-based interlinked growth strategies).
- 2.6. This focus on market towns has been heralded by Government, by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Commission, and by other partners as a bold and progressive step towards inclusive growth.
- 2.7. Following a successful pilot scheme undertaken in St Neots, the Combined Authority Board agreed to provide funding to create a masterplan for 11 key market towns within the Combined Authority's area at the Board meeting held on 28th March 2018. The St Neots Masterplan has been completed and implementation is underway as the pilot. The remaining market town masterplans include: St Ives, Huntingdon, Ramsey, March, Wisbech, Chatteris, Whittlesey, Ely, Littleport and Soham.
- 2.8. With the aim of bringing jobs, infrastructure and growth, the masterplans would enable each town to become and remain "vibrant and thriving places" whilst helping to boost the local and regional economy. A commitment of £50k

revenue support was made by the Combined Authority to produce a masterplan for each of the key towns.

Growing Fenland Market Town Masterplans

- 2.9. In Fenland, the four market towns include Wisbech, Chatteris, March and Whittlesey as part Fenland master planning project.
- 2.10. The master planning project was given a working title of 'Growing Fenland' which linked the proposed growth of the local economy to our important agricultural heritage.
- 2.11. In August 2018, a procurement exercise was undertaken to appoint economic specialists to help deliver the Growing Fenland market town project alongside a team of Fenland District Council (FDC) officers. Metro Dynamics were appointed having demonstrated substantial master planning experience. They also had in depth knowledge of the local area having been the lead consultant for producing the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER).
- 2.12. Town Teams were convened for each market town, including representatives from Town, District and County Councils as well as community and business representatives, and students from local high schools.
- 2.13. The Town Teams were asked about the strengths in their towns and what improvements could be made. Metro Dynamics also carried out extensive research and data collection in relation to various factors including:
 - Population demographics
 - Retail information (including vacancy rates on the High Street)
 - Transport connectivity and commuter information
 - Occupation categories
 - Housing numbers and planned developments
 - Access to the countryside
 - Educational attainment
 - Job opportunities
 - Health statistics
- 2.14. The information was collated to produce an interim report for each of the towns (except for Wisbech) which were discussed with each town team.
- 2.15. Once the interim reports were agreed and published, public consultation was carried out through face to face interaction at public events and through online surveys except for Wisbech (due to ongoing consultation already being carried out as part of the 'I Love Wisbech' project). Stakeholders were also engaged through themed meetings and telephone interviews. The results of the consultation were used to further tailor the reports to ensure that they reflected the views of the local community.

- 2.16. The final Growing Fenland market town masterplans are attached as Appendices 1 to 4.
- 2.17. The Growing Fenland market town masterplans outline several proposals to drive economic growth whilst celebrating the unique character and strengths of each individual area.
- 2.18. The Growing Fenland market towns programme has the potential to drive a re-branding exercise for the Fenland area following success in other districts, where it has helped to drive economic growth.
- 2.19. Funding opportunities will be sought from the Combined Authority and other sources to deliver the proposals outlined in the masterplans. This will include staff resources to manage the projects and link to other initiatives being delivered in the local area.
- 2.20. Fenland market towns will be improved through attracting external funding to deliver the outlined projects whilst linking with other initiatives being delivered in the local area.

Overarching Growing Fenland Strategic Report for the Fenland District

- 2.21. In addition to the four Growing Fenland market town masterplans, Metro Dynamics have also produced an Overarching Growing Fenland Strategic Report for the Fenland District which outlines proposals to tackle some the issues that are common to more than one Fenland market town.
- 2.22. This report is an independent think piece by Metro Dynamics and is submitted to the Combined Authority for their consideration. The report is attached as Appendix 5.
- 2.23. The themes included in the Overarch Strategic Report are:
- Infrastructure, transport and housing
 - People, education and health
 - Jobs and enterprise
- 2.24. Proposals include large scale projects which are already in train (e.g. Wisbech Garden Town, A47 dualling) along with new ideas such as a Health Action Area. The report also recommends the implementation of a Mayoral Task Force which would have the drive and resources to spearhead the delivery of these large scale and wide-reaching projects.
- 2.25. Assuming approval of the four Growing Fenland market town masterplans, funding opportunities will be sought from the Combined Authority and other providers to deliver the projects outlined in the Masterplans.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are Programme funds of £5m capital within the MTFP (Market Towns Pump Priming - subject to Board approval) to support implementation of the Market Town Masterplans across the additional 10 market towns. The development of the masterplans are funded from approved revenue budget.
- 3.3. The Programme funds are allocated to Market Towns but will be subject to a call process and made available for bidding from June 2020. In order to secure funds, local authority leads will be invited to submit funding applications against approved Masterplans. The process which will be published in due course, and all funding applications will be independently assessed in accordance with the call specification and recommendations made to the CA Board for approval.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Market Town Masterplans are a key priority within the Combined Authority's Business Plan 2019-20 and the Constitution reserves to the Combined Authority Board decisions on the adoption, withdrawal or amendment of Market Town Masterplans.

5.0 CONSULTATION WITH TOWN COUNCILS

- 5.1. The individual Growing Fenland market town masterplans were tabled at local Town Council meetings as outlined below. The masterplans were either approved at the meeting or follow up emails were received stating that the reports had been agreed in the weeks following the meetings:
- Chatteris Town Council - 1 October 2019
 - March Town Council - 7 October 2019
 - Whittlesey Town Council - 9 October 2019
 - Wisbech Town Council – 21st October 2019

6.0 APPENDICES

- 6.1. Appendix 1 – Wisbech Growing Fenland Market Town Masterplan
- 6.2. Appendix 2 – March Growing Fenland Market Town Masterplan
- 6.3. Appendix 3 – Chatteris Growing Fenland Market Town Masterplan
- 6.4. Appendix 4 – Whittlesey Growing Fenland Market Town Masterplan
- 6.5. Appendix 5 – Overarching Growing Fenland Strategic Report for the Fenland District

<u>Background Papers</u>	<u>Location</u>
List background papers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER)	List location of background papers. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• http://www.cpier.org.uk

