



CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY BOARD	AGENDA ITEM No: 3.1
25 MARCH 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME – APPROVAL OF MASTERPLANS FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1. The Combined Authority is working closely with Town Councils, District Councils, the County Council and local partners across Huntingdonshire, Fenland 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 the 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 'Prospectus for Growth' Market Town Masterplans produced for the Huntingdonshire towns of St Ives, Huntingdon, and Ramsey.

<u>DECISION REQUIRED</u>	
Lead Member:	Mayor James Palmer
Lead Officer:	John T Hill, Director for Business & Skills
Forward Plan Ref: 2020/015	Key Decision: Yes
The Combined Authority Board is recommended to: (a) Approve the Huntingdonshire 'Prospectus for Growth' Market Town Masterplans produced for St Ives, Huntingdon and Ramsey.	Voting arrangements Simple majority of all Members

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A third of our population 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 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 the county 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 is 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 masterplans for a further 10 key market towns within the CPCA area at the Board meeting held on 28 March 2018. The 11 Market Towns are: St Neots, 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.

Huntingdonshire Prospectus for Growth Market Town Masterplans

- 2.9. The master planning project for Huntingdonshire was given a working title of 'Prospectus for Growth' which linked the proposed growth of the local market towns. The project was developed alongside a team of Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) officers.
- 2.10. Following the successful St Neots pilot project, a procurement exercise was undertaken to appoint economic specialists to help deliver a 'Prospectus for Growth' Market Town Masterplan for St Ives, Huntingdon, and Ramsey. Metro Dynamics were appointed having demonstrated substantial masterplanning 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).
- 2.11. 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.
- 2.12. 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 stats
- 2.13. The information was collated to produce an interim report for each of the towns which were discussed with each town team.
- 2.14. Once the interim reports were agreed and published, public consultation was carried out through face to face interaction at public events. Stakeholders and wider town teams 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.
- 2.15. The Huntingdonshire Prospectus for Growth market town masterplan programme has the potential to drive a re-branding exercise for the area following successful delivery of the pilot masterplan for St Neots, where it has helped to drive economic growth, and to strengthen the business case for the Future High Streets Fund town bid.

- 2.16. The Huntingdonshire Prospectus for Growth Market Town Masterplans outlines several proposals to drive economic growth whilst celebrating the unique character and strengths of each individual town and local area.
- 2.17. Funding opportunities will be sought from the Combined Authority and other sources to deliver the proposals outlined in the masterplans. Delivery will be further improved through attracting external funding to deliver the outlined projects whilst linking with other initiatives being delivered in the local area.
- 2.18. The final Masterplan reports are attached as Appendices 1 to 3.

3.0 CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL COUNCILS

- 3.1. The individual masterplans were consulted with councils, local businesses, community groups, and Councillors. Three town team meetings were held for each town:
- The first meeting was principally to gather information on the town, and included a walk around the town centre to gather impressions;
 - The second meeting featured presenting back initial analysis of the town, bringing together the previous discussion with available data at the town level. It also set out initial ideas to respond to local challenges for discussion;
 - The third meeting was held with Mayor James Palmer, where the groups talked through a first draft of the report to get the views of everyone gathered.
- 3.2. The Prospectus for Growth masterplans have all been approved by Huntingdonshire District Council.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There is £5m Combined Authority capital within the Medium Term Financial Plan (Market Towns Pump Priming) to support the implementation of the approved Market Town Masterplans. The development of masterplans is funded from revenue budget.
- 4.2. The Combined Authority 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, town teams and local authority leads will be invited to submit bids. All funding applications will be independently assessed in accordance with specific call specifications & criteria (including match funding and value for money), and against delivery of approved Masterplans.
- 4.3. The £5m Combined Authority funding will be shared equally across the 10 market towns, with town teams and local authority leads able to bid for up to

£500k of capital funding. Consideration will be given to a variety of funding proposals and applicants will have the opportunity to bid for one or few many investments or may want to fund several smaller scale interventions. Further details regarding the funding call will be made available before the end of May 2020.

5.0. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. 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.

6.0. OTHER SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.0. APPENDICES

Appendices to follow:

- 7.1. Appendix 1 – St Ives 'Prospectus for Growth' Market Town Masterplan.
- 7.2. Appendix 2 – Huntingdon 'Prospectus for Growth' Market Town Masterplan.
- 7.3. Appendix 3 – Ramsey 'Prospectus for Growth' Market Town Masterplan.

<u>Background Papers</u>	<u>Location</u>
CA Board 28 March 2018 – reports	<u>CA Board 28 March 2018</u>