

# Agenda item 6

## Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) – County Deals Update

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### 1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update the Board on any matters arising since Hertfordshire's County Deal expression of Interest letter was submitted on 13 August 2021.
- 1.2 A copy of the letter to the Secretary of State is attached at Appendix A.

### 2 Background - Levelling Up and County Deals Background

- 2.1 The potential for County Devolution Deals was announced by the Prime Minister through his Levelling Up speech on 15 July 2021 and this was further elaborated on in a subsequent letter from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Robert Jenrick. On 27 July 2021, Local Government Minister Luke Hall and Neil O'Brien MP also held a webinar briefing session for Local Government Leaders and Chief Executives.
- 2.2 The Government will be publishing a Levelling Up white paper this autumn and ambitions for greater devolution within county areas in England will be addressed in that paper. However, areas with the 'clearest, most innovative, readily deliverable proposals that support levelling up' were asked to indicate their interest in being a County Deal pilot sooner.
- 2.3 As understood so far, County Deals require strong, visible local leadership and areas will be expected to demonstrate efficiencies in local service delivery. There is no pre-requisite for unitarisation, and the deals process is to be led by upper tier authorities working with their districts as appropriate. The Government is said to be open to a range of governance models and the nature and appropriateness of the governance structure will determine the types of deal and powers, flexibilities and funding ultimately provided in successful areas.
- 2.4 It was expected that there will be no more than a handful of pilots chosen (3 – 5 max), to be announced later in the year. Areas wanting to bid to become County Levelling up pilots needed to submit an expression of interest (EoI) letter by 13 August 2021.

### 3 Hertfordshire's County Deal initial Expression of Interest

- 3.1 There are many reasons why Hertfordshire would be an exemplar for two-tier collaborative governance incorporating strong local leadership that is already delivering levelling up.

- 3.2 Investor confidence in Hertfordshire's key sectors and as a place to invest and do business is significant<sup>1</sup> supported by our demonstrable local political/civic/business leadership alignment and collaboration through our Growth Board.
- 3.3 Government has confidence in Hertfordshire's capacity to deliver as a place, seen in previous funding support that has come to Hertfordshire<sup>2</sup>. Hertfordshire has the scale of place, local identity and history, economic geography and visible, accountable local leadership that know our place and its communities intimately. There is effective collaboration and strong, long-term visible place leadership and joint working as demonstrated through the Growth Board and pandemic responses.
- 3.4 The Growth Board is a statutory joint committee made up of the Leaders of the eleven Councils in Hertfordshire. The County Council Leader is also the chair of the Growth Board and Hertfordshire has a coterminous LEP boundary with the Chair of the LEP a member of the Growth Board.
- 3.5 Hertfordshire has demonstrable maturity and continuity of political ambition, cooperation and stability over time and place as well as established and positive working relationships with Government Departments and Agencies. The Growth Board brings political, civic, business and soon health leadership, working together in a collaborative, systematic way locally.
- 3.6 Hertfordshire has an innovative work programme in place focussed upon agreed local priorities and strategic issues for Hertfordshire – such as investment and recovery, housing delivery and sustainability and achieving net zero. The Board is clear about the issues that need to be dealt with in Hertfordshire.

## **4 Implications**

- 4.1 There are no adverse legal, financial, equalities, environmental, sustainability or other implications arising from this report and its recommendations which support the ongoing work and priorities of the Growth Board. Full risk analysis and risk management assessment will be undertaken at appropriate stages as this work progresses.

## **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Growth Board are invited to note the Expression of Interest letter and any matters raised in oral updates at the Board on the 7 September 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> 2020 - Sky Comcast at Borehamwood £3bn, 2021 - GSK £400m and Airbus £35m at Stevenage, Sunset Studios £700m Broxbourne

<sup>2</sup> LEP – Local Growth Funding of £221m, Enterprise Zone at Herts IQ, Housing Infrastructure Grant £171m for Harlow Gilston Garden Town, £37.5m Town Deal for Stevenage, £10.6m Accelerated Housing at Welwyn Hatfield, £23.5m Salix Funding