

Agenda item 6

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) Delivery Plan and Budget

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This paper sets out the core areas of activity and associated budget for 2026-27, leveraging the Growth Board's role as a key advocate for place. This activity will maximise the opportunities presented by Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution, using the key components of the emerging Local Growth Plan and the wider growth agenda as a structured framework for engagement with Government, investors and partners.

2 Background

- 2.1 LGR is the Government's preferred mechanism for unlocking devolution, with key milestones providing important opportunities to engage, influence and shape future arrangements. Alongside this structural timetable sits a substantial and growing portfolio of investment, housing delivery, development and economic activity. Together, these strands form a coherent growth narrative that strengthens the county's advocacy position with Government and national bodies.
- 2.2 Over the past year the Growth Board has played a pivotal role in positioning the county for success, utilising these key milestones and events to demonstrate the county's shared ambition and how a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) can accelerate delivery.
- 2.3 The table in Appendix 1 sets out some of the planned activity over the remainder of this financial year. While not directly delivered by Hertfordshire Growth Board taken together this activity helps to make the case for devolution. Collectively they evidence economic momentum and effective cross-system collaboration, positioning Hertfordshire as a credible partner for deeper powers and investment.
- 2.4 To support this activity, this paper suggests some low-risk actions that could be mobilised over the next three months ahead of the pre-shadow phase for the new unitaries, subject to board agreement and working within tight budgetary and capacity constraints.

3 Demonstrating Devolution Readiness

- 3.1 As Local Government Reorganisation progresses, Hertfordshire increasingly needs to operate and present itself as a coherent place-based system. The Growth Board is operating as the county's strategic advisory forum for the development of the Local Growth Plan, providing a shared space to align priorities, evidence and engagement across partners.
- 3.2 In doing so, the Growth Board is already demonstrating elements of devolution readiness: convening at the right scale, coordinating activity across economic growth, placemaking and investment, and offering Government and investors a clear, consistent point of strategic engagement for Hertfordshire as a place.

- 3.3 The activity set out in this delivery plan supports that role — helping to strengthen collective leadership, test ways of working and thinking and ensure Hertfordshire is well positioned to respond to future devolution opportunities as formal arrangements develop.

4 Structural Alignment and Practical Considerations

- 4.1 As Hertfordshire moves along the devolution pathway, there is a need to focus on practical, low-risk actions that support readiness, coherence and visibility, without pre-empting future governance arrangements. This will demonstrate that Hertfordshire can operate, and be understood, as a coherent place with a clear strategic direction and credible delivery narrative.
- 4.2 Hertfordshire Growth Board provides a stable and credible platform through which partners can align activity and present a single, consistent interface to Government, investors and national bodies. This includes not only elected Members, but also key system partners such as the NHS, Homes England, Hertfordshire Futures and the University of Hertfordshire. By bringing this mix of partners together, the Growth Board helps galvanise a shared voice for Hertfordshire, ensuring priorities are understood and articulated as a collective, place-based ambition.
- 4.3 Alongside this convening role, there are a number of practical, low-risk steps that support coherence and visibility during transition. These include:
- Using the HGB website as the central public repository for Local Growth Plan documents and supporting strategies, providing a single source of truth during the transition.
 - Establishing a clear Local Growth Plan landing page that explains purpose, scope and milestones, without pre-empting formal governance outcomes.
 - Ensuring consistent language and framing across all outward-facing materials, so Hertfordshire presents a coherent growth narrative throughout the devolution process and demonstrates the scale of collective ambition.
 - Using the development of the Local Growth Plan as a practical tool to facilitate engagement and discussions on key growth issues.

Evolving the Missions framework

- 4.4 The existing Mission-based framework provides a strong foundation but should now evolve to support a more explicitly devolution-aligned approach. Rather than operating as fixed thematic priorities, the Missions can increasingly be reframed as strategic workstreams that organise activity, evidence and engagement around the Local Growth Plan. This evolution will help:
- strengthen alignment between strategy, delivery and advocacy;
 - reduce fragmentation and duplication across activity; and
 - reinforce a place-based narrative that reflects Hertfordshire's direction of travel.
- 4.5 Alongside digital and narrative alignment, there is an opportunity to strengthen practical engagement with Government departments through targeted site visits linked to priority sectors, strategic growth locations and placemaking activity, helping officials, MPs and Ministers see delivery on the ground.

- 4.6 Together, these practical considerations support Hertfordshire's ability to operate as a coherent place, reinforce credibility with Government, and ensure a smooth pathway into future governance arrangements once they are confirmed.
- 4.7 Some of the Missions will require a review of their governance arrangements. In the case of Digital Hertfordshire it makes sense for this to sit with Hertfordshire Futures as it so closely aligned to the delivery of the [Economic Strategy – see Priority One](#).
- 4.8 The Sustainable County Mission continues to evolve alongside the wider LGR and devolution agenda, building on the ambitions set out in the Hertfordshire LGR Submission and increasingly embedding sustainability and green growth across emerging governance and delivery arrangements.
- 4.9 From the outset of the Missions, sustainability and health were framed to act as “golden threads” running through the programme, extending beyond their original positioning within the Economy, Growth and Devolution strand into wider system planning and delivery. This is now being reflected operationally through the establishment of a Resilience & Sustainability sub-workstream, helping to integrate priority areas such as retrofit, green growth, strategic energy planning, healthy places and heat networks into mainstream planning and investment activity aligned to the Local Growth Plan.
- 4.10 Remaining Mission funding will most likely be directed towards a further retrofit intervention, building on £500,000 secured from the MCS Foundation (over three years).
- 4.11 Indicative timeline for Local Growth Plan strategies and supporting documents:

Towards a Local Growth Plan

Economic Strategy	Investing in Hertfordshire's Future: Turning strategy into action (Hertfordshire Futures delivery focused event)	9 June 2026
Digital Strategy	Reviewed by HGB, Hertfordshire Futures and HCC ahead of publication in the Autumn.	October 2026
Local Transport Plan	Public consultation Formal Adoption (Part 1 (Vision, Objectives and Policies) and Part 2 (current major schemes, 4-year programme and definition of priority programmes) Part 3 Part 3 (which will include new major schemes) will be developed in conjunction with the SDS.	Oct-Nov 2026 February 2027
Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)	Evidence gathering Draft SDS completed Draft SDS public consultation Submit and examination Final SDS consultation	All of 2026 March 2027 Summer 2027 Early 2028 Late 2028

- 4.12 In this evolving context, the Hertfordshire Growth Board has a clear and continuing role to play as the county's strategic advocate for place. Specifically, the Growth Board is uniquely positioned to:

Act as custodian of the place-based narrative, drawing together economic, spatial, infrastructure and skills priorities into a coherent proposition rooted in the Local Growth Plan.

Bridge strategy and delivery, ensuring that emerging plans such as the Economic Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Digital Strategy and Spatial Development Strategy are mutually reinforcing and articulated as a single offer to Government and investors.

Provide a focal point for engagement with Government, MPs and national agencies, particularly during a period when formal governance arrangements remain in transition.

Support devolution readiness, by aligning evidence, priorities and advocacy to the expectations of Government and helping demonstrate Hertfordshire's capacity to operate at scale.

Maintain momentum during transition, sustaining forward-facing activity while statutory arrangements and responsibilities are confirmed.

- 4.13 By evolving the Missions framework into devolution-aligned strategic workstreams, the Growth Board enables Hertfordshire to organise activity, evidence and engagement in a way that reflects both current delivery and future governance. This ensures that Hertfordshire continues to present itself as a coherent, investable place with a clear sense of direction, regardless of structural change.

5 HGB Budget

- 5.1 Funding for HGB is drawn from the 2019 Hertfordshire Business Rates Retention Pilot Growth Reserve committed for use by the HGB, the fund generated £4.2m.
- 5.2 The budget position as of April 2026 shows that by the end of the 2025-26 financial year HGB has spent £518,579. The table in Appendix 2 shows final year spend against budgeted costs. This leaves £498,939 available in the Hertfordshire Business Rates Retention Pilot Growth Reserve.
- 5.3 The HGB forecast budget for 2026-27 is £410,681 as shown in the table in Appendix 3, noting that:
- Staff salaries will potentially increase in line with NJC increases
 - Staffing arrangements for the 2026-27 financial year remain broadly the same with a variation on FTE for the Director of HGB and Director of Advocacy and Partnerships.
 - Some funding for the Mission Development Fund has been rolled forward into the 2026-27 financial year
- 5.4 This forecast spend for the 2026-27 financial year is within the remaining Hertfordshire Business Rates Retention balance of £498,939, leaving an expected balance of £88,258 remaining. Any use of the remaining balance will need to factor in liabilities such as legal fees or redundancy payments if HGB were to be wound down.
- 5.5 Appendix 3 sets out how the proposed 2026–27 budget underpins the delivery plan activity, supporting the Growth Board's coordination, advocacy and engagement role and enabling development of the Local Growth Plan.

6 Implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Endorsement of the Strategy carries no legal or financial commitments.

- 6.3 Any future proposals requiring financial support will be brought to HGB for consideration as individual projects are developed.

7 Recommendation

- 7.1 That the Growth Board notes and agrees the proposed Delivery Plan for 2026-27 and Budget, including the practical approach to supporting devolution readiness, Local Growth Plan development and coherent place-based advocacy.

Appendix 1: Planned Activity

What	Description	Current status
AI Growth Zone	Hertfordshire is seeking Government designation as an AI Growth Zone to accelerate its rapidly expanding digital and data centre cluster (including Google and DC01). The designation would help address grid capacity, planning and environmental constraints, unlocking public and private investment and ensuring productivity gains across multiple sectors at time when digital sovereignty is becoming critical for UK resilience.	EOI submitted in Feb 2025. No official response. Dedicated data-centre workstream established. Ongoing engagement with industry and Government through roundtables and HGB-led advocacy at regional and national forums. Activity demonstrates need for coordinated place leadership on a live national policy and investment ask.
Creative - UK Screen Investment Programme	The UK Screen Investment Programme (UKSIP) is a national initiative supporting growth, collaboration and investment across the UK screen sector. Hertfordshire is a significant contributor to this sector and has an established leadership role within the programme, providing opportunities to shape national discourse and outcomes. £20k has been nominally set aside to support this activity in the HGB Budget, subject to ratification.	The programme provides multiple, structured opportunities to engage collectively with HM Government, including DCMS, DBT, HMT and the Office for Investment, through its industry-led steering group and national/regional events. Key milestones in 2026/27 include: • Investment Dinner – 15 September (The Londoner) • UK Screen Investment Summit – 19 November (BAFTA) • FOCUS – December (county-led complementary activity)
Hertfordshire Film and TV Festival	A proposed county-wide Film and TV Festival pilot centred on Watford and Elstree, with wider cultural, education and community outreach across Hertfordshire. The Festival is intended to strengthen the screen sector ecosystem, support skills development, and enhance Hertfordshire's profile as a place for creative production and investment.	Phase 1 (feasibility and funding) underway from April to September 2026 seed funded by Watford Borough Council. Activity is focused on confirming scope, delivery model and funding partners, including engagement with national bodies (e.g. BFI/National Lottery), corporate sponsors and developers through social value contributions. Progression to delivery will be subject to a robust economic and business case. Proposed dates: 2 – 4 and 9 – 11 July 2027
Inward Investment - Delivery Pipeline	Invest Hertfordshire maintains and promotes a rolling investment prospectus of investor-ready and strategic opportunity sites and provides a single interface for Government and investors. Regional, national/international real estate and investment forums provide a competitive environment to interact and influence live policy issues, demonstrate devo readiness and progress investment opportunities. HGB has a clear leadership role as evidenced in previous engagement at previous high profile events.	Ongoing. Key milestones include: • UKREiiF: 19-21 May 2026 and May 2027 • Expo REAL: 5-7 Oct 2026 • MIPIM: March 2027
High value sectors	Hertfordshire has assets across seven of the eight Industrial Strategy (IS-8) priority sectors, including life sciences, digital and AI, advanced manufacturing, space and defence, clean growth, creative industries and professional services. Activity focuses on positioning Hertfordshire	Ongoing. Sector engagement is coordinated through a number of forums, including the Pharmaceutical Industry Networking Group (PING) and BioIntegrates for life sciences, Space East and Airbus-led programmes for space, defence and advanced manufacturing as well as the UK Screen Investment Programme for creative industries. These are complemented by targeted

	as a strong, diverse and resilient economic geography, capable of supporting national growth priorities.	roundtables, case study development and participation in national and international events. Together, this activity supports regular dialogue with Government departments and national partners, monitors sector confidence and constraints, and informs wider policy, investment and growth discussions.
Placemaking	This focuses on strengthening Hertfordshire's approach to place-based growth by aligning policy, planning and delivery at scale. This includes the Healthy and Safe Places Framework, which provides a consistent, evidence-led approach to embedding inclusive growth into spatial and economic decision-making. Major growth locations, such as Harlow Gilston Garden Town and Hemel Garden Communities, continue to demonstrate delivery of high-quality place-making in practice. Together, this activity supports coherent place leadership, consistency across planning and regeneration, and engagement with communities, investors and partners around long-term growth.	Ongoing. The Healthy and Safe Places Framework continues to attract national and regional interest and is being profiled through professional, policy and investment forums during 2026, including UKREiF and Local Government East networks, and has been shortlisted for the Planning Awards (Partnership Working category). The progress of nationally significant developments such as Harlow Gilston Garden Town reinforce the importance of Hertfordshire's strategic location. Local events such as A Meet the Developer event, planned for Autumn/Winter 2026, support community and stakeholder engagement and provide greater transparency around the scale, phasing and long-term objectives of development.
Employment Skills and Social Value	Employment, Skills and Social Value activity demonstrates how place-based growth and development can be aligned with social outcomes through coordinated partnership working. This includes the Employment, Skills and Social Value (ESSV) pilot in Watford, led by Hertfordshire Futures, which is focused on improving the consistency and coordination of employment, skills and social value outcomes linked to development activity. Alongside this, the VolkerWessels / Teens Unite project in Broxbourne provides a tangible example of social value delivery in practice. Teens Unite has secured a 1.6-acre site and planning permission for England's first dedicated retreat for young people recovering from cancer, with VolkerWessels UK project-managing construction and engaging local businesses to support delivery. Together, these activities demonstrate how social value can be embedded across development, commissioning and local partnership models at a place level.	The ESSV service in Watford is scheduled to launch in June 2026 as a Year 1 pilot, enabling live learning and refinement of the model, with the potential to expand to other districts and the County Council over time. The Teens Unite retreat project is ongoing, with planning permission secured and construction support being led by VolkerWessels UK. There is an identified opportunity for the Hertfordshire Growth Board or HIDB to convene a roundtable with partners and local businesses to support delivery and demonstrate leadership on social value, partnership working and place-based outcomes.

Appendix 2: HGB Budget Summary 2025-26 financial year

This table presents the HGB's spend against the budget for financial year 2025-26. This leaves £498,939 remaining in the Business Rate Retention Pilot Fund.

Item	Budget Forecast 2025-26	End of Year Spend 2025-26
Growth Board Dedicated Team:		
Director (0.4 FTE)		
Head of Strategy and Programmes (0.7 FTE now deleted)		
Director of Advocacy and Partnerships (0.6 FTE)		
Growth Programme Manager (0.8 FTE)		
Programme Manager (0.3 FTE)		
Programme Officer (1 FTE part mat leave)		
Communications Officer (0.1 FTE)		
Total	£379,416	£278,202
HGB forecast funding		
Invest Herts/ UKREiiF 2026 contribution	£50,000	£18,810
Towards Digital Growth	£100,000	£100,000
HGB Mission Development Fund (£100K per/yr)	£150,000	
Healthy and Safe Places		£48,373
Sustainable County		£43,070
Right Homes, Right Places		£12,905
Transport		
Total	£300,000	£223,158
Other		
Growth Board joint committee secretariat & support costs	£2,000	£850
Website development and hosting, marketing and engagement	£10,000	£8,839
Room bookings, ancillary costs	£5,000	£7,529
Total	£17,000	£17,219
Grand Total	£696,416	£518,579

* It is noted that the Transport for Hertfordshire Mission has not yet used any of the mission funding previously agreed and wish to carry this forward to 2026-27. Right Homes, Right Places, and Sustainable County wish to carry the remainder of the Mission funding into 2026-27.

Appendix 3: HGB proposed spend for 2026-27 financial year (subject to approval)

Item	Budget Forecast
Growth Board Dedicated Team:	
Director of HGB (0.2 FTE)	
Director of Advocacy and Partnerships (0.8 FTE)	
Growth Programme Manager (1 FTE)	
Project Manager (0.3 FTE)	
Programme Officer (1 FTE part mat leave)	
Communications Officer (0.2 FTE)	
Total	£267,486
Communications and Advocacy	
UKREiiF contribution	£10,000
UKSIP contribution	£20,000
Round table Local Government East: Healthy and Safe Places	£2,000
Inspire magazine	£2,000
Website development and hosting	£4,000
Marketing and engagement	£5,000
Total	£43,000
HGB Mission Development Fund	
Transport Mission	£50,000
Right Homes, Right Places	£37,095
Sustainable County	£6,100
Total	£93,195
Other	
Growth Board joint committee secretariat and support costs	£2,000
Room bookings & other costs	£5,000
Total	£7,000
Grand Total	£410,681