

Executive – 10 June 2010

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING ON PLYMOUTH ECONOMIC GROWTH AGENDA – A REFORM OF GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Strategic Director (Community)**

**Statutory Powers:** Local Government Act 2000, Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Democracy and Economic Development Act 2009, and various Housing Acts.

**Financial Implications:** None specifically arising from this report.

### **Purpose**

To advise Members of the decision on 13 April 2010 by Plymouth City Council's Cabinet which gave 'in principle' approval for revised sub-regional arrangements in terms of partnership working and governance. Plymouth City Council has been considering a change in the current approach to enable partners to more effectively engage in sub regional issues. On 26 April the City Council formally wrote to both South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils to invite the participation of the two authorities as key partners in the delivery of the sub regional growth agenda.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Executive RESOLVES to recommend to Council that an appointment be made to authorise a Member to serve on the Portfolio Holders Board to represent economic development, strategic housing and planning issues affecting the area.**

### **Background**

1. There are currently estimated to be over 80 partnership groups involved in the growth agenda across Plymouth and the wider sub-region. There is no clear framework defining their inter-relationship or the role that each performs to support the strategic objectives. It is generally felt that this has resulted in diluted strategic leadership, lack of clarity around governance, lack of focus, prioritisation and accountability for delivery and duplication of time and energy for the different agencies. In turn this has contributed to the lack of comprehensive attendance at some key meetings, including the Eastern Corridor Board, which was set up by the District Council to establish cross boundary and inter agency coordination to secure the delivery of Sherford and Langage and the required wider strategic infrastructure.
2. Plymouth City Council has for some time been considering a new approach to enable partners to more effectively support the growth agenda across the city and the sub-region. The objective behind the proposed restructure appears to be to ensure that the various strategic proposals are more comprehensively coordinated and that each partner has a stronger more unified voice, locally, regionally and nationally.

3. Plymouth City Council have led informal discussions about the difficulties, resulting in proposed new governance arrangements suggested to start later this year.

## **Proposal**

4. The full report considered by Plymouth City Council's Cabinet on 13 April is available as an attachment on the internet version of this report. The Executive summary and recommendation are however attached to this report as a paper copy as Appendix A. The key elements of the proposed structure are as follows:

- **Portfolio Holders Board**

The remit of this group is to deliver better coordination of policy and strategy at the sub-regional level. The City Council propose that each partner Council nominates one Member ( i.e. one member from SHDC and one member from WDBC) who is able to represent strategic planning, economic development and housing issues, while also having an awareness of strategic transportation matters. It is anticipated that the Board will meet twice a year. The Board will not have Executive powers. To ensure wider understanding by each partner council's membership, the City Council's report suggests that as part of regular briefings of the work of the proposed Board to other members, there will be an opportunity to include invitations to other councillors of partner councils to address specific cross border issues.

- **Growth Board**

The remit of this group is to make strategic decisions to ensure delivery of key growth agenda interventions, including the unblocking of obstacles to delivery. The City Council propose that the Board has Chief Executive or Director level representation from the partner councils to enable it to function as anticipated. The Regional Development Agency and Homes and Communities Agency would also be represented on the Board. It is anticipated that the Board would meet four times a year. It is anticipated that the Growth Board will form task and finish groups to deal with specific issues.

- **Various Programme Boards**

The remit of these groups is to drive the delivery of the various defined projects. The City Council propose that these are officer level meetings which will include representation from external partners. The programme of meetings will vary and the level of seniority of participants will also vary, depending on what is most appropriate to enable the work to be delivered. Of the suggested eight Boards the two most significantly affecting South Hams and West Devon are the Eastern Corridor Programme Board, with key projects identified as the transportation major scheme bid, Sherford and Langage and the Northern Corridor Programme Board with key projects identified as the transportation major scheme bid and the Derriford Area Action Plan.

5. The City Council report indicates that the details of the arrangements will be subject to further refinement and agreement with key partners. It is not expected that Members or senior managers will generally be required to sit on the Programme Boards or the task and finish groups that the Portfolio Holders or the Growth Board establish. The suggestion is that issues and updates will be fed back through the structure so that Members and senior officers are kept aware of progress and challenges.

### **Implications for South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council**

6. Members in all of the constituent authorities have been keen to rationalise existing partnerships to secure efficiencies and an early task for the new Boards will be review all the existing arrangements. Once the two main Boards are fully operational, all groups will be reviewed with a view to disbanding, time limiting or merging them. Membership will also be reviewed.
7. The following partnerships and meetings are likely to be disbanded:
  - Plymouth Sub-Regional Economic Partnership
  - Plymouth, South West Devon and South East Cornwall Sub-Region Strategy Steering Group
  - Plymouth South East Cornwall and Environs Transport Study Steering Group
  - Regional Spatial Strategy Officer Group (sub-regional)
  - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Steering Group
  - Eastern Corridor Board.
8. Examples of groups that could become task and finish groups of the Board in an amended form could include:
  - Joint Member Panel for Plymouth Urban Fringe Development Plan Document
  - Plymouth Local Transport Plan 3 Steering Group
  - Housing Market Area Steering Group
  - Sherford Board
  - Langage Steering Group
  - Green Infrastructure Steering Group
9. In principle there is clearly merit in an objective to clarify and streamline current arrangements, subject to our two Councils being satisfied that they continue to have a strong voice in determining the priorities across the sub-region within the new structure. Given that the aim of the proposed change is to improve strategic partnership working, it is anticipated that through effective cooperation and engagement this could be achieved more effectively than occurs through many of the current arrangements. It will be essential that the new arrangements are closely monitored to ensure that improved outcomes are achieved for both South Hams and West Devon and to ensure that any necessary adjustments to the structure are made to reflect emerging challenges.

### **Risk Assessment**

10. The following are the key risk issues:

Strategic Opportunities	Issues / Obstacles	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for South Hams and West Devon to have greater influence on the strategic growth agenda across the sub-region.</li> <li>• Potential to clarify and improve strategic partnership working.</li> <li>• The proposed arrangements could free up time for Councillors, senior managers and partners to focus on agreed priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rural aspects of South Hams and West Devon diluted in the context of the scale of the challenges and the urban focus.</li> <li>• South Hams and West Devon may lose 'control of the current agendas' by disbanding existing partnership meetings that have a clear focus on projects affecting the specific Councils' areas.</li> <li>• Potential for reduced engagement of the wider membership in the new arrangements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Hams and West Devon able to shape emerging ideas/ initiatives rather than react to proposals developed by other agencies.</li> <li>• Joined up approach to policy and strategy development across local authority tiers and organisational boundaries.</li> <li>• Reduces the number of meetings and groups that need to be resourced, which should ensure more effective strategic engagement from key organisations.</li> </ul>

**Conclusion**

11. Officers conclude that while there are risks associated with these proposals, existing arrangements have not always worked effectively to secure the best interests of South Hams and West Devon. The new arrangements provide an opportunity for more significant engagement in cross cutting strategic agendas.

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**Background Documents:**

Report to Plymouth City Council 13.4.2010