

Membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum

Cabinet

Date: 11th July 2018

Author: Leader of the Council
Interim Chief Executive

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report seeks authority from Cabinet that the Leader of the Council be authorised to confirm that SBC membership of England's Economic Heartland (EEH) Strategic Transport Forum (STF) will continue with the intention of becoming a subnational transport body by 2021/22.
- 1.2 Although Council has already given permission to the Leader to join EEH STF (Full Council, 19th April 2018) and to meet the relevant annual subscription, Cabinet is asked to agree that SBC confirm its intention to participate in EEH through its progression into a subnational transport body. This would strengthen integration of strategic transport and infrastructure development and make the case for sustained levels of investment in infrastructure and services in response to pressures arising from economic success and to provide the capacity for economic growth.
- 1.3 Continuing as a member of this strategic alliance would contribute towards delivery of the Council's Vision priority to: "improve infrastructure and housing to support a low-carbon economy."

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree that the Leader of the Council be authorised to confirm in writing, as required by the Department for Transport, SBC's participation in the emergent statutory subnational transport body (STB), comprised of the member authorities of the EEH Strategic Transport Forum.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 The England's Economic Heartland (EEH) is a strategic alliance of the local authorities within in arc of the south Midlands extending from Oxfordshire in the west to Cambridgeshire in the east. The Strategic Transport Forum (STF) has been established as the focus for taking forward an overarching transport and connectivity strategy for the EEH sub-region. It consists of Highways Authorities

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and Local Enterprise Partnerships across the area alongside national transport stakeholders.

3.2 Cabinet resolved (Cabinet Minute 91, 2017/18, 14th March 2018)

3.2.1 That Council be recommended that the Leader of the Council be authorised to accept an invitation to join formally the England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum; the benefits for Swindon are associated with the development of what has become known as the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor.

3.3 The Strategic Transport Forum's work with the National Infrastructure Commission, Highways England, and Network Rail has secured investment for the East-West Rail and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway schemes, which aim to improve transport connectivity across the region significantly.

3.4 The benefits for Swindon of membership the Strategic Transport Forum are focused on the ability to work with EEH partners to improve connectivity between Swindon and the South Midlands/East of England, specifically by providing opportunities to:

3.4.1 Raise Swindon's transport issues and opportunities with national stakeholders at the sub-regional scale to influence infrastructure investment decisions,

3.4.2 Influence the franchise specification for East-West Rail and to influence the case for the westward extension of East-West rail services towards Swindon and Bristol,

3.4.3 Influence the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway corridor route selection, with the aim of ensuring that Swindon enjoys maximum benefits from improved connectivity to the East of England and to press the case for further investment in the A420 corridor, and

3.4.4 Work collaboratively across the EEH sub-region on strategic transport issues that would potentially improve connectivity between Swindon and several key growth areas.

England's Economic Heartland Subnational Transport Body

3.5 On 8th May the Secretary of State for Transport confirmed a financial contribution of £1m for EEH in the year ahead: this was in line with the assumption made in preparing the Business Planning framework considered by the EEH Leaders' meeting on 6th April.

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- 3.6 Of the £1m awarded to England's Economic Heartland, half is available immediately, with the remainder once the membership of the emergent Subnational Transport Body have been confirmed in writing. DfT officials have encouraged clarity on this issue by the summer recess.
 - 3.7 As the work to develop the detailed proposal for the Subnational Transport Body is taken forward there will be a need for each partner, at various stages, to consider and confirm their support for the proposal through its normal democratic processes.
 - 3.8 It is anticipated that the EEH Programme Director write to each partner setting this out and seeking confirmation of their participation in the emergent Sub-national Transport Body.
 - 3.9 Once partners have confirmed their participation it will be this partnership that will be used as the basis to develop the Subnational Transport Body proposal to government.

Sub National Transport Bodies

- 3.10 The Local Transport Act 2008 confers powers upon the Secretary of State for Transport to establish Sub-National Transport Bodies (STB) for specified geographic areas comprising a number of Local Transport Authorities.
- 3.11 Transport for North's status as a statutory body came into effect from 1st April. Both Midlands Connect and Transport for the South East are – like England's Economic Heartland – committed to developing their own proposals.
- 3.12 To give examples of the function and status of a Subnational Transport Body, Transport for the North through its status as an STB has assumed functions comprising:
 - 3.12.1 Developing a Strategic Transport Plan for the North, coordinating investment and work across the region to drive economic growth;
 - 3.12.2 Coordinate and deliver one smart, integrated ticketing system across the North.
- 3.13 Transport for the North will work together with the Department for Transport to:
 - 3.13.1 Agree objectives for the region for Network Rail and Highways England to ensure that their priorities are driven by the needs of the North;
 - 3.13.2 Share responsibility for managing the TransPennine Express and Northern rail franchises, with an emphasis on investment and long-term planning.

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- 3.14 It is anticipated that EEH Subnational Transport Body will consider similar interventions through its business planning process and strategic transport plan, both of which are under way as part of the function of the EEH Strategic Transport Forum.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Swindon could continue to engage with the Forum as a partner with significantly less influence than other members along the corridor and opportunities for joint strategic working and joined up funding bids

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 A £30,000 per annum membership was agreed by March Cabinet. Aside from this, financial and procurement implications will arise from the transport and infrastructure programme activity which is undertaken by SBC as part of the strategic transport work; this will be subject to individual Cabinet approvals.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the proposals within this report are compatible with Convention Rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 This report has no specific implications other than referred to in the report.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment is required in relation to this report as the recommendations would not affect any particular service users.

Risk Management

- 5.5 Risk is assessed as an ongoing activity as part of the Corporate Scorecard and Risk Register process.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Council's Report Writing standard requires authors to consult appropriate Corporate Directors, Directors or Heads of Service, other officers and relevant partners on the purpose, content, and recommendations of the report before it is presented for decision. In respect of reports to Cabinet, authors are also required to consult the relevant Cabinet Member.

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7. Background Papers

7.1 None

8. Appendices

8.1 None

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme

9.1 This is not a Key Decision