

Membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum

Cabinet

Date: 14th March 2018

Author: Leader of the Council
Chief Executive
Wards: All
Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report seeks authority from Cabinet to recommend to Council that the Leader of the Council be authorised to accept a formal invitation to join the England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum.
- 1.2 Although Council has already given permission to the Leader to attend meetings (Full Council, 22nd February 2018), authorisation is required from Council to join an outside body, Cabinet approval would be necessary to permit payment of the relevant subscription.
- 1.3 Joining 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 submit to Council:

- 2.1 That the Leader of the Council be authorised to accept an invitation to join formally the England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Forum.

Subject to Council's approval of recommendation 2.1:

- 2.2 Authorise the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercialisation to identify budget for the subscription fee, which is expected to be £30,000 per annum. This will be invoiced in due course for the 2018/19 financial year period.

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 70, 2015/16, 10th February 2016)

3.2.1 (1) That the action taken to date in furtherance of the Government's initiative to enable local authorities to explore opportunities for further devolution to groupings of local authorities, be noted and endorsed.

3.2.2 (2) That the Chief Executive Designate, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to continue discussions with other Councils and the Government in relation to the devolution agenda and to develop proposals for submission to Cabinet and Council in due course.

3.3 Swindon Borough Council has been formally invited by the EEH Chair to join the Strategic Transport Forum and it is proposed that this invitation be accepted; the Leader has attended the Forum as an observer and there are benefits for Swindon associated with the development of what has become known as the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor.

3.4 The Strategic Transport Forum comprises the following members:

3.4.1 Bedford Borough Council

3.4.2 Buckinghamshire County Council

3.4.3 Cambridgeshire County Council

3.4.4 Central Bedfordshire Council

3.4.5 Luton Borough Council

3.4.6 Milton Keynes Council

3.4.7 Northamptonshire County Council

3.4.8 Oxfordshire County Council

3.4.9 Peterborough City Council

3.4.10 Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership

3.4.11 Oxfordshire Growth Board

3.4.12 Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

3.4.13 South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership

3.4.14 Civil Engineering Contractors Association

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Philippa Venables, 07824 550469, pvenables@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.4.15 Department for Transport
- 3.4.16 Highways England
- 3.4.17 Network Rail
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 The benefits for Swindon of joining 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:
 - 3.6.1 Raise Swindon's transport issues and opportunities with national stakeholders at the sub-regional scale to influence infrastructure investment decisions,
 - 3.6.2 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,
 - 3.6.3 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
 - 3.6.4 Work collaboratively across the EEH sub-region on strategic transport issues that would potentially improve connectivity between Swindon and several key growth areas.
- 4. Alternative Options**
 - 4.1 Swindon could decline the invitation and continue to engage with the Forum as an external partner with significantly reduced influence.
- 5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**
 - Financial and Procurement Implications
 - 5.1 As stated in paragraph 2.2 an annual subscription fee of c.£30,000 is payable.

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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 Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

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