

## BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Councillor Ellen Jolly – Executive Member for Income and Prosperity

**To:** Cabinet - 14 July 2015

**(Author:** Julie Kennealy - Executive Director Commercialisation)

**Subject:** Supporting Successful Growth in Thetford and surrounding Villages

**Purpose:** To support the establishment of the Greater Thetford Development Partnership and nominate an elected representative. To recognise the contribution made to date from the Moving Thetford Forward Programme and consider the merits of an alternative single outside consultative and advisory body to support planned growth in and around Thetford.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1) That the Cabinet support the establishment of the Greater Thetford Development Partnership (GTDP) as a formally recognised outside body contributing to successful planned growth in and around Thetford and nominates a Breckland Council Executive Member representative to the GTDP.
- 2) That the Cabinet notes the valued contribution made by the Moving Thetford Forward Programme to date and thanks all participants.
- 3) That in light of the changing funding landscape the Council agrees to earmark any residual funding from the MTF programme to direct towards significant projects that increase economic activity and opportunity in the Greater Thetford Development Partnership area.
- 4) That the Moving Thetford Forward Board is dissolved and that Moving Thetford Forward's role in attracting inward investment for economic development is an integral element of the new GTDP's Board's remit. The GTDP will be consulted by Breckland Council, as the accountable body on proposals relating to allocation of any residual Growth Point funds,

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 Thetford was given Growth Point status in 2006 and received notification of the award of Growth Point Funding in 2007. The informal partnership of the Moving Thetford Forward local delivery vehicle was set up under a memorandum of understanding dated 15 May 2008. The aim was to develop the programme of works and attract match funding to enhance the value of the programme. As at 31/5/2015 £1.3m match funding has been brought into the programme. The total value of the capital projects is £7.2m and revenue projects £1.3m.

### **1.2 Developing a place based approach**

1.2.1 A number of organisations and departments are involved in delivering a range of

projects and investments across the Greater Thetford area. Each project, whatever its scale or scope, is naturally the focal point for those involved and is rarely delivered in isolation as delivery demands some elements of crossover between, for example, developers, planners and the various funding bodies. The present approach focuses on inter-organisational communication around individual projects, and consultation with, and the influence of, the community is often limited to a smaller specific project based area and not the whole place.

1.2.2 Delivery in some areas is currently fragmented and complex.

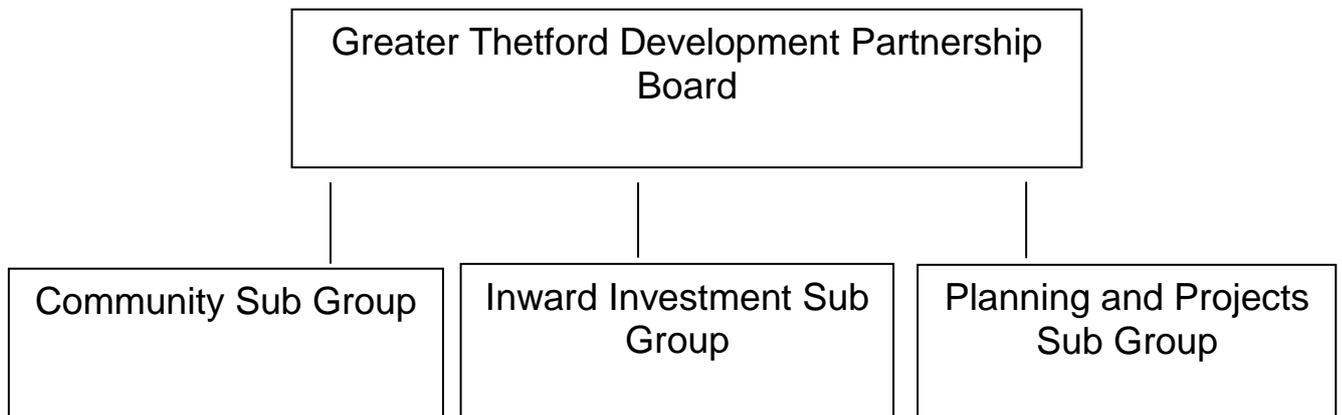
1.2.3 The Council wishes to address this through a wider place based approach and are keen to support the implementation of a new governance model that enables the bigger picture to be taken into account and the wider community to be more integral to growth delivery.

1.2.4 Adopting a wider place based strategic approach can realise a range of added benefits, in addition to those achieved by multiple, individual programmes. It is not the intention to add layers of bureaucracy or complexity, quite the opposite is true by seeking to ensure delivery of important strategic components in a speedy, co-ordinated way to provide maximum benefit. Collectively individual development components are prioritised within organisations who may not naturally view them as a priority. Viewed in the round investment is more likely to be forthcoming. For example, marketing of housing can only be enhanced by attractive wider community benefits such as transport, health and education. The Council will offer much needed fast tracked and prioritised decision making for key elements of a cohesive wider programme.

### 1.3 Purpose of the GTDP Board

1.3.1 The primary purpose of the partnership board is to bring together key influential voices from the broad collective of organisations whose decision making can and does affect places, communities and as such quality of lives for the people who currently live in areas of planned growth and those who will do so in the future. The decision making of the respective member organisations is not in any way diluted by the presence of the partnership board, it is simply more informed. The partnership board itself does not have any direct executive decision making functions. The principle of equity will apply and on that basis every elected body member will have an equal voice including the County, District, Town Council, and affected parishes.

1.3.2 The model of the proposed partnership is illustrated below.



1.3.4 To date two meetings have been held, one in September 2014 when broad agreement for the principles of place based governance were agreed and one in February 2015 at which broad agreement was reached on initial Board representation to allow the project to move forward. This report seeks nominations from Breckland Council for its representative on the GTDP Board

1.3.5 In summary, The Partnership will be governed by a board comprising representatives of key influencers of sustainable growth within the town. Including, County, District, Town and Parish Council elected representatives alongside Landowners and representatives from Education, Health, Police and Economic development.

1.3.6 Three sub groups are proposed and each sub group will elect a chairman who will also have a place on the overarching partnership board. The sub groups all have a different focus and specialism, and will report into the main partnership board on key issues and areas of activity within their remit.

1.3.7 The detail of the sub group's terms of reference will be the Board's decision to take, broadly the activities fall into three categories around People, Money and Place.

#### 1.4 Moving Thetford Forward (MTF) Growth Point Status

1.4.1 In February 2008 Cabinet approved the Shadow Growth Point Local Delivery Vehicle Structure Model as set out in the initial governance and delivery of the Thetford Growth Programme in the short term. Cabinet recommended that Council approved that the Leader and Executive Members representing the Council on the GP Board be given the necessary legal and corporate constitutional delegated powers available to make decisions on behalf of the Council and commit budgeted resources outside the normal Committee process but remaining subject to the Councils normal call in procedures.

1.4.2 Moving Thetford Forward has provided significant funding for local projects brought forward by a number of groups as illustrated below:

##### Communities:

- Homework Hub Moving saw MTF fund the provision of laptops, broadband, printers for pupils without computer access to undertake homework and learning activities in a safe environment.
- The Pine Close and Ash Close programme saw improvements to community facilities, car parking and landscaping meeting a local need.
- The Thetford Park Run. Moving Thetford Forward provided all the funding required getting the event going and which has gone from strength to strength with 223 runners at one event in April.

##### Local Organisations:

- The Thetford Festival in 2011. Moving Thetford Forward was the sole sponsor of this popular local event enabling it to go ahead and achieve success in subsequent years.

- The META Citizen Shop which is a face to face information and support service in Thetford staffed by migrant workers and the Breckland Council Service Connector team. The service exists to help mobile communities settle down quickly and effectively.
- Green Bikes – in partnership with Keystone Development Trust, Moving Thetford Forward helped create a bike recycling and repair centre bringing bikes donated by the public back into use.

#### Public Sector bodies:

##### NCC

- Minstergate Bus Interchange - this £4.009m project has refurbished an endangered listed building and brought it into public ownership for its future protection. The Bus interchange itself has been very well received by bus operators who went to the local press to express this and has been well received by the travelling public.
- Haling Path – a key link from London Road into the town which was in danger of falling into the river was reconstructed and agreement was reached with NCC for them to carry out future maintenance to prevent this happening in the future.
- Croxton Road improvements the provision of a road crossing to help pupils, parents and teachers access the Thetford Academy safely.
- Butten Island improvements to this essential town centre open space.

##### NHS

- Thetford Healthy Town – Moving Thetford Forward was a major funder of this initiative which has been regionally and nationally recognised and forms the basis of a wider rollout of Healthy Town programmes.

##### Thetford Town Council

- The newly completed Thetford Skate park.
- The Town Council was given £700,000 for a town centre grants scheme, empty shop improvements and the new town square with its bespoke water feature clock and seating.
- The programme has also secured the release of the Bridge Street site for the £8m redevelopment as a mixed use hotel, cinema and leisure development.

## **1.5 The Case for Change**

- 1.5.1 The current arrangements need to be reviewed to support the wider growth agenda, to develop new funding streams and partnerships to deliver the infrastructure that Thetford requires for sustainable growth. Whilst the MTF programme has clearly made a positive difference to the Town and surrounding areas the following issues are

important elements to consider.

1.5.2 Significant developments and wider infrastructure utility, housing, employment growth which will contribute to the development of Thetford are currently outside the existing Moving Thetford Forward programme.

- There is a need to encompass all local growth priorities into one programme to meet the New Anglia LEP strategic economic plan (SEP) and attract inward investment projects
- On completion of the bus interchange residual capital funding will become available for projects to promote and deliver economic activity. This funding will need to be allocated to projects that can benefit the wider economy and growth agenda.
- Place based governance arrangements are being established to bring forward growth in a collaborative arrangement and the Greater Thetford Development Partnership is due to have its inaugural meeting in the near future.

## **2.0 OPTIONS**

2.1 Option 1 (recommended). That the Cabinet support the establishment of the Greater Thetford Development Partnership (GTDP) as a formally recognised outside body contributing to successful planned growth in and around Thetford and nominates its representative.

Then agree to formally dissolve the MTF board and recognise that Moving Thetford Forward's role in attracting inward investment for economic development is an integral element of the new GTDP's Board's remit. Consult the new GTDP Board on investment proposals for any residual growth point funding not yet allocated by MTF.

This provides a platform for a move to a contemporary model of place based governance that has proved successful in other areas, for example Norwich. The establishment of the sub groups will ensure strong community representation at board level.

By consulting with the new GTDP about spending proposals for any residual funding the council ensures compliance with the decision making processes required of it as accountable body for growth point funding and its own internal financial regulations.

There is a risk that some bids have been submitted to MTF for consideration and are awaiting the outcome of any request for funding. This risk can be mitigated by ensuring the new GTDP is consulted on any such outstanding proposals and considers the extent to which any such funding requests might be supported by the partnership through a wider range of funding opportunities open to it than had been available to MTF.

2.2 Option 2 Continue with the existing Moving Thetford Forward arrangements in addition to the new GTDP arrangements. The current arrangements are out of scale with the remaining programme and the remit of the Moving Thetford Forward Board does not encompass the wider infrastructure and growth. The MTF funding arrangement was always time limited and the formal agreement is now out of time.

The wider growth agenda critical to the sustainable future of the town and surrounding villages are outside the existing Moving Thetford Forward programme.

- 2.3 Option 3 Do Nothing. This does not overcome the current difficulties associated with multi-agency engagement in the wider growth agenda for the town.

### 3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The funding landscape has changed and without a collaborative multi agency approach we may not secure the inward investment required to deliver the infrastructure pre-requisite to sustainable economic growth.

### 4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

- 4.1 The Council's corporate plan sets out our priorities 2015 – 2019. Against our priority of “developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth”, the document reflects with pride the councils support to date for MTF and the delivery of the growth point initiative. Our priority relating to “supporting Breckland to develop and thrive” sets out specifically a new commitment to adopting an integrated approach to area and place based development to deliver significant growth with full community involvement.
- 4.2 Option 1 enables us to deliver the new priorities as set out in the corporate plan.

### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

- 5.1.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

#### 5.2 Constitution & Legal

- 5.2.1 Moving Thetford Forward is a non-legal entity there are no legal or constitutional issues with dissolving the Moving Thetford Forward Board and Breckland Council remains as accountable body for funding with the associated risks and governance.
- 5.2.2 The purpose of the Greater Thetford Partnership Board is to bring together key Influential voices from the broad collective of organisations whose decision-making can and does affect places, communities and as such quality of lives for the people who currently live in areas of planned growth and those who will do so in the future. The decision-making of the respective member organisations is not in any way diluted by the presence of the Partnership Board, it is simply more informed. The Partnership Board itself does not have any direct executive decision-making functions.

5.2.3 The authority to make decisions sits with Breckland's Executive Members. Consultation with representatives appointed to the Greater Thetford Development Partnership Board as an advisory body will be undertaken; however, as the accountable body formal decision-making for funding allocation remains the remit of Breckland's Executive Members.

### 5.3 **Contracts**

5.3.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

### 5.4 **Corporate Priorities**

5.4.1 This is addressed within section 4 above.

### 5.5 **Crime and Disorder**

5.5.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

### 5.6 **Equality and Diversity / Human Rights**

5.6.1 GTDP is a placed based governance body and as such enhances local accountability and has no adverse impact on equality/diversity or the Human Rights Act.

### 5.7 **Financial**

5.7.2 The Council has committed to funding an independent chair for the GTDP through the organisational development reserve. Whilst the final remuneration package is yet to be decided it is anticipated to be no more than £3k per annum. All associated expenditure will be reported through the council's regular budget monitoring process.

5.7.2 Growth Point/MTF Capital funding received equals £6,326,821  
Expenditure as at 31st May is £5,248,936  
Expenditure not yet allocated to projects equals £450,044  
There may be additional funds to be returned from ongoing projects which will also be available for reallocation.

5.7.3 Breckland Council remains the accountable body for growth point funding and as such the allocation of funds is an Executive Member function. Funding decisions will need to be undertaken in accordance with the constitution and published. The GTDP, as an advisory body, will act as consultee on funding applications, to which due regard will be paid, having undertaken the appropriate due diligence and following Breckland Council's procurement and reporting rules.

5.7.4 The original Growth Point funding programme was due to end in March 2011. Due to delays in allocating funding, the programme end date has still not been reached. The Homes and Communities Agency in November 2010 confirmed that there would be no clawback of funding regardless of whether the funding was committed at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 and they also confirmed that the funding was un-ring-fenced and as such the accountable body can spend funds as it sees fit.

5.7.5 The Moving Thetford Forward Board on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 delegated authority to the Chairman of the MTF Programme Delivery Group in conjunction with the Chair of

the Moving Thetford Forward Board to allocate the balance of unallocated funding at that time to the wider Town Centre Regeneration (Riverside and Bus Interchange). The £450,044 mentioned above formed part of the delegated authority.

5.7.6 On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014 the MTF Board was reviewed and a decision was taken as follows:

1. DECISION: To continue with a board structure until such time as all MTF funding has been claimed.
2. The Board to oversee the remaining capital projects, Bus Interchange, Charles Burrell, Nunn's Bridges Path and the skate park.
3. The Board to allocate remaining capital funding.
4. Revised terms of reference to be drafted and circulated within one month of this meeting.
5. Wider role for group post funding to be defined.

Therefore, the previous delegations of September 2011 and January 2014 to allocate remaining funds would be overtaken by this decision and funding would be allocated by the Council

## 5.8 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.8.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

## 5.9 **Risk Management**

5.9.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

## 5.10 **Safeguarding**

5.10.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

## 5.11 **Staffing**

5.11.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

## 5.12 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.12.1 This report forms part of the on-going development process of GTDP and the associated consultations. All members of the MTF board have been contacted and will receive a copy of this report. To date the outcome of our consultation with numerous groups about the principle of GTDP has raised a number of issues around historic relationship tensions between respective groups.

## 6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 Thetford, Croxton and Brettenham and Kilverstone.

## 7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 SEP strategic economic plan. MTF Moving Thetford Forward, GTDP Greater Thetford Development Partnership, LEP Local Enterprise Partnership

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Background papers:- None

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**Key Decision:** Yes

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**

**Appendices attached to this report:**

None.