

**REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE GROWTH PLAN****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Committee feedback and endorsement of the final version of the Nottinghamshire Growth Plan, following its public consultation.

**Information and Advice**Background

2. The Nottinghamshire Growth Plan was initially developed during the summer of 2012, following targeted consultation with business leaders and stakeholders which helped to shape the first draft of the plan. The draft Growth Plan was launched for consultation in October 2012. The County Council facilitated this process, and also sought pledges towards the plan from key Nottinghamshire business leaders. The final version of the plan includes a list of the respondents to the consultation.
3. The Growth Plan consultation was publicised through the local media and on the County Council's website. In addition, targeted consultation took place through the Nottinghamshire Business Engagement Group (NBEG); Invest in Nottingham Club; Chamber of Commerce; Employment and Skills Board and Federation of Small Businesses. In terms of stakeholders, the Growth Plan was considered at the Nottinghamshire Leaders' meetings and the Chief Executives' Forum. A presentation on the Growth Plan was also given to the Cabinet of Gedling Borough Council at their request. The consultation process concluded in January 2013 with a dinner hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council for business leaders, which was attended by representatives of over forty of the County's most important companies.
4. Feedback to date has broadly welcomed the development of a Nottinghamshire Growth Plan, and the County Council's leadership in this regard. The final version of the plan being considered today incorporates much of the feedback, where practicable, and also sets out to present the County's growth opportunities with more ambition and energy. The plan retains its structure around the three key themes of Competitive Business Growth, Connectivity and Aspiration and Talent. Issues relating to confidence in the Nottinghamshire economy and promotion of the positive opportunities here are addressed throughout, as feedback suggested that they should be 'cross-cutting'.

### Key objectives from the Growth Plan

5. Under the **Competitive Business Growth** theme, priorities relate to access to information and support and also access to finance, critically focussed on the new-start, micro and small end of the business spectrum. The County Council is already developing several activities in this area, including support for new-start businesses and entrepreneurs; micro-loan finance and peer-to-peer funding schemes and, on a much larger scale, the Nottinghamshire Investment Fund, which will deliver over £35 million of equity investment to companies in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire over the next seven years.
6. In addition, the concept of Nottinghamshire Business Investment Zones has proved popular through the consultation. The intention with this work is to identify a small number of development sites across Nottinghamshire that have the potential to deliver significant jobs growth and that are attractive to key growth sectors. These will then be collectively promoted through an investment campaign, building on the work already done to support the Enterprise Zone. County Council support for the proposed development at the Rolls Royce site in Hucknall is a practical example of how Business Investment Zones could be facilitated. This is subject of a separate report to the April County Council meeting.
7. An addition to this theme that came out of the consultation process was the potential for more concerted effort across the public and private sectors on the County's sporting potential. The Council's proposals for investment at Trent Bridge and Holme Pierrepont, alongside its Olympic legacy initiatives, were held up as potential foundations for a 'Sporting Quarter' alongside the Trent in the south of the County. This is explored further in the final version of the Plan.
8. The County Council's investment in infrastructure features strongly in the **Connectivity** theme of the Plan. Whilst feedback praised the County Council's investment to date in infrastructure projects, there was also a sense that businesses and stakeholders could not afford to sit back now that some major projects have got the go ahead. Investment in broadband was highlighted as a critical priority, and this will be delivered by the end of 2015 through the Council's Superfast Broadband programme. Encouraging business take up and more innovative use of broadband services is retained in the Plan, as it will be key to driving higher levels of growth, particularly in knowledge-based sectors.
9. Significant successes in terms of rail and road infrastructure were highlighted in the consultation version of the Plan. However, as with the above, feedback encouraged the County Council and partners to continue to push for greater investment, particularly in cross-County routes (i.e. Nottingham-Lincoln rail link; A57 improvements in Bassetlaw; A617 between Newark and Mansfield). The announcement on the HS2 station at Toton will enable major redevelopment and investment opportunities in the south-west of the County. Whilst there is a very

long lead-in time for HS2, work can begin in the short-medium term on connections to the new station and employment land opportunities surrounding it.

10. The Plan outlines priorities around **Aspiration and Talent** which include ensuring that skills provision delivered by FE colleges and training providers can meet the needs of the future economy and deliver a workforce that adds to Nottinghamshire's wider offer. This work links directly to that of the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, which is itself developing a D2N2 Skills Plan. Proposals in the Lord Heseltine Review on growth suggested that LEPs should be given direct control over funding for skills, and the Nottinghamshire Growth Plan will be a key lever for the County should this proposal be implemented.
11. More practical actions in this theme include extending the County's network of Work Clubs into more libraries; delivering a new Enterprise Club model; delivering above average growth in the number of apprenticeships being taken up and ensuring that the Nottinghamshire Youth Employment Strategy decisively tackles the problem of long-term unemployment in young people.
12. The Growth Plan itself contains further detail on the above and on other specific objectives and actions which are considered likely to enable growth in the medium term.

#### Resourcing the Plan and next steps

13. The County Council invests significantly in growth related projects across the County. Major schemes such as the A453 widening; broadband infrastructure; Mansfield and Worksop bus stations and Hucknall Inner Relief Road have all been enabled through capital contributions by the County Council. In addition, the Council has agreed a budget allocation in 2013-14 of £500,000 to support initiatives contained within the Youth Employment Strategy.
14. It is important, however, to recognise that the Nottinghamshire Growth Plan is a plan for businesses and stakeholders across the area, and not simply a plan for the County Council to deliver. The Council may need to play a leadership role in getting some new initiatives off the ground, but the expectation is that Government, European and business / partner resources will also be committed to driving the growth agenda in the County. To this end, a recent Economic Development Committee meeting approved expenditure of the Economic Development budget in 2013-14 on activities aligned with the Nottinghamshire Growth Plan.
15. Subject to Policy Committee endorsement, the Growth Plan will now be finalised and a more detailed action plan drawn up that will identify lead agencies / partners, resource implications and delivery milestones against the Plan's priorities.

## **Financial implications**

16. Economic Development Committee considered its budget setting priorities in January 2013, and confirmed decisions which aligned investment priorities in 2013-14 to Growth Plan objectives and actions.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that:

18. Committee note the County Council's contribution to elements of the Growth Plan through its economic development, infrastructure and young people's activities;

19. Committee endorse the final version of the Growth Plan for publication;

20. Committee approve the development of a Council response to the Nottinghamshire Growth Plan which will form the Council's Economic Development Strategy.

## **Report of the Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Celia Morris Tel: 0115 977 72043**

## **Finance comments [TMR 09.04.2013]**

The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **Constitutional comments [SHB 09.04.2013]**

Committee have power to determine the Recommendations.

## **Background Papers**

Nottinghamshire Growth Plan.

Economic Development Committee report on budget, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All