



Report to:	Council	22 September 2022
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council	
Lead Officer:	Liz Watts, Chief Executive	

Oxford-Cambridge Arc - Update

Executive Summary

1. This is the regular update on the work of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

Recommendations

2. That Council notes the report.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. To ensure that Council is sighted on the work of the Arc as it transitions into the proposed pan-regional partnership.

Details

4. At its Plenary on 24 June the Arc Leadership Group considered a proposition to support the creation of a pan-regional proposition. While there was a great deal of support for working in collaboration generally, and many spoke in favour of the proposition as proposed, there were also a number of local leaders who did not support the recommended approach. On the basis of proceeding only where we have significant consensus, it was clear in this case we should not be proceeding on the basis as recommended.
5. The Chair, the lead Chief Executive and Executive Director met with Government officials in early July. At that time, while there was still support for our work from officials, it was not considered possible to attain the funding needed to keep moving forward. However, on change of Secretary of State this position was reconsidered and DLUHC officials were able to confirm money could be available if there was still sufficient local support to keep going. To this end, Cllr Wood, Chair of the Arc Leadership Group, in early August, wrote to all Leaders and Chairs to confirm the Secretary of State's position and to seek a steer on whether and how to continue. All local partners responded before the end of August as requested and all but two were supportive of carrying on (albeit many expressing this needed to be on a different basis than had been in the June proposition).

6. Representing South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Leader's position has always been clear that we should seek to secure the benefits from working regionally, and also to ensure that we are in a position to influence decisions.
7. The Chair has since written back to DLUHC to confirm that substantial local support exists to continue seeking consensus and that we will immediately re-engage to move some of our key project work forward, whilst in parallel develop alternative options to gain greater consensus for the pan-regional partnership.
8. DLUHC have confirmed willingness to provide interim funding to support some of our key projects moving forward whilst also providing some time to seek an agreed governance and operational model for a pan-regional partnership. Initial funding of up to £250,000 is available and if we are successful in developing an agreed pan-regional model, there would be the opportunity to request a further £250,000 for the remainder of this financial year subject to continued local contributions, in-kind and financial. We expect that there would be scope to seek higher levels of Government funding in the next two years, potentially up to c. £1m per annum. This is on the basis of a work programme and project governance arrangements being in place as soon as possible and that spend or commitment to spend is in place by 31 October.
9. The Government's offer of short-term funding is to allow focus on project deliverables and would support a light touch governance model to oversee this, assuming it still included local leadership, local business and university representation on it and ideally led by an independent Chair.
10. For the short-term period to November, the funding offered should focus on projects that are capable of being started and delivered this financial year but would also form part of a medium-term programme of delivery. Other project work can be developed in parallel for example interest from the Strategic Planning Working Group to look at how the Environmental Principles can be further developed to support Local Plans or the Infrastructure Working Group looking at opportunities for joint working on areas of common interest.
11. Based on the recently confirmed support of all but two local leaders and chairs to continue to explore collaboration (albeit with a lighter touch governance and operational arrangement), and given Government wishes to see a focus on project deliverables, a "programme-based" collaboration arrangement is proposed to be developed. The next Arc Plenary is on 30 September, at which this approach will be confirmed.

Options

12. To note the report.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

13. The Arc should contribute to three of the Council's priority areas, through growing the local economy, providing increased affordable housing, and ensuring that the

Arc is a Green Arc and meets the aspirational environmental standards set out in the Environment Principles.

Report Author:

Liz Watts – Chief Executive
Telephone: (01954) 712926