

Agenda item 7

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) - Advocacy Plan, Communications & Engagement Approach

Report Author: Forogh Rahmani, Director Hertfordshire Growth Board

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report presents proposals for the Hertfordshire Growth Board's (HGB) Advocacy Plan and engagement approach to promote the county's opportunities and challenges to the next government.
- 1.2 It provides proposals for establishing a coherent narrative that members of the HGB can collectively advocate for, particularly with local MPs, the civil service and Government.
- 1.3 The paper also summarises the proposed approach to promote and raise awareness of the work of the HGB with residents, communities and stakeholders.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Growth Board support the proposed Advocacy Plan, Communications and Engagement Approach.

3 Background

- 3.1 To support the implementation of the HGB's Missions, an Advocacy Plan has been produced setting out the proposed key growth and infrastructure opportunities and challenges facing the county that require investment or policy changes at national level to meet the needs of the county.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Plan is to highlight Hertfordshire's offer and asks with a clear unified pitch across the county to the next government and to engage local MPs on, that the boroughs, districts, county council and business working together can collectively promote, lobby and advocate for, helping to ensure that the HGB's Vision for good growth can be fully realised.
- 3.3 The Plan aligns to and supports the Herts Invest Plan led by Hertfordshire Futures (formerly the Hertfordshire LEP), which promotes the county's key sites and opportunities to prospective private investors. The Advocacy Plan has also been informed by views of the Hertfordshire Economic Board.

- 3.4 With implementation of the Missions underway, the proposed approach to communicate the work of the HGB will help to ensure residents, communities and stakeholders are informed of relevant actions and understand the impact of the HGB.

4 Issues to consider

Context

- 4.1 The Government has set out its priorities for the parliamentary term, with commitments that align well with the HGB's six Missions, presenting opportunities to engage newly elected MPs, civil servants, and government on how Hertfordshire can deliver against national ambitions, whilst meeting its local needs.
- 4.2 Hertfordshire is an engine for growth. It is home to 1.2m people and growing, with 70,000 businesses contributing £40.7 bn per annum (greater than major cities - Cardiff Capital Region (£38.7 bn) and Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority (£38.5 bn)). We have a strong track record of innovation, with leading clusters in defence and space (1/3 of world's satellites built here), in biosciences (number 1 cluster in cell and gene in Europe); and in creative sector (centre of UK's film production industry).
- 4.3 Hertfordshire pioneered the first garden cities and new towns and is already committed to building an additional 100,000 new homes and generating 100,000 new jobs in the next 10 years.
- 4.4 Hertfordshire is facing barriers to further growth. These include population growth with pressure from London and other nearby developments such as Ox-Cam Arc; housing affordability - house prices are over 11 times as high as annual earnings in the region, and there is deprivation within communities in relation to skills, work, and health.
- 4.5 Hertfordshire is significantly impacted by climate change with scarce water supplies and power supply challenges already constraining business expansion and housing developments. There is significant congestion on the road network, with poor east-west connectivity by passenger transport and limited options for active travel choice.
- 4.6 The new Government could unlock these barriers through a strong devolution deal so we can tailor interventions to the needs of local residents and businesses.
- 4.7 Hertfordshire must ensure economic growth is inclusive and sustainable; that the county gets high quality, sustainable housing growth in the right places; and that

the county's outstanding natural landscapes including our globally significant chalk streams are protected.

- 4.8 To do this, Hertfordshire needs more local powers and funding over skills, business support, regeneration, housing and strategic planning, transport, sustainability, energy and digital infrastructure.

Hertfordshire's Offer

- 4.9 With a fairer consolidated multi-year funding settlement, and less top-down and costly competitive bidding of siloed budgets, Hertfordshire will work with Government to:
- Deliver 100,000 new and social homes, creating quality, sustainable, healthy and safe communities comprising new garden villages such as Harlow Gilston Garden Town as well as urban extensions, and the potential for new settlements.
 - Enhance our world class economy, creating 100,000 jobs, bolstered by innovation and employment growth in world leading clusters, and best in class connectivity; continue to grow highly skilled talent to meet the needs of business, boosting the potential of all our residents to improve their life chances and succeed.
 - Deliver a safe and more integrated low carbon transport system to better connect communities and unlock growth so that residents and businesses thrive.
 - Be a prosperous low carbon, green growth, sustainable county improving biodiversity, protecting our natural resources and environment, and increasing the percentage of economic activity and growth coming from green sectors.

Engagement & Communications Approach

- 4.10 The proposed engagement approach for the Advocacy Plan includes engagement at political level between Leaders and local MPs, including the suggestion for a Hertfordshire event in Westminster as well as MP visits to showcase opportunities and highlight key areas of growth and economic need. It is also proposed that political engagement is supported by officer level engagement with the civil service via the Chief Executives Coordinating Group (CECG).
- 4.11 The outcome of the Advocacy Plan is to influence policies at national level as they develop, provide solutions to the next government, and to secure a fairer multi-year funding settlement/ deal for Hertfordshire that supports the county's delivery of strategic schemes, plugging the infrastructure gaps for good growth so that all residents and businesses can thrive.
- 4.12 The communication strategy is designed to align with the growth board's Vision, Missions and Advocacy Plan by:

- Supporting and promoting the fulfilment of the Vision and Missions, and advocacy lobbying.
- Cultivating a culture of good growth amongst MPs, leaders, partners, communities, and businesses.
- Maintaining and enhancing our reputation as a county of good growth.

4.13 To attain these objectives, the Board's strategy will encompass the following approaches:

- Amplifying the scope, reach, and effectiveness of growth communications, prioritising activities outlined in the HGB Vision and Missions.
- Integrating growth messaging seamlessly into broader corporate communications plans.
- Identifying and categorising key audiences likely to be receptive to, or in need of, growth communications.
- Adopting an evidence-based approach to communications, emphasising measurable outcomes through surveys and behaviour change comms.

4.14 By implementing these strategies, we aim to foster understanding, engagement, and alignment with Hertfordshire's vision for sustainable growth, ensuring its benefits are realised by all.

4.15 Key activities and events will include the engagement of local MPs, members and partners with residents and businesses, for example:

- Site visits to key sector businesses: Airbus, Autolus, Sky Studios, Warner Bros.
- Blogs and interviews through HGB channels and paid media (Inspire Magazine)
- Case studies with CEXs and businesses across Hertfordshire

Next steps

	Activities	Original Milestone	Completed/ Comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree Advocacy Plan and Approach at HGB 	17 July 2024	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Statement on behalf of HGB via Chair and Vice Chairs 	Post HGB Meeting on 17 July	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to MPs re advocacy and invitation for visits/ a joint Hertfordshire event 	End of July	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement between Core Group of CEXs and civil service supporting HGB Leaders 	Aug/ September	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hertfordshire event/ visits 	Autumn/ Winter	