

Growth and Innovation Group: Proposed New Terms of Reference

Proposed Terms of Reference for New Growth and Innovation Group:

It is the intention that this new Group will replace the existing West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group.

Purpose

1. The prime purpose of the Growth and Innovation Group is to develop and push thinking by considering other best practice and using personal insights to inform debate on issues relating to the Councils' Growth agenda. It is not a decision making body nor a duplicate of Cabinet decision making. The Group will through debate and discussion inform Portfolio Holders' recommendations to both Cabinets on strategy and policy.
2. They may assist the Cabinets through:
 - Participating in strategic workshops and the development of new thinking on key growth issues which respond to Growth outcomes in the Strategic Plan and beyond.
 - Help shape the development of key strategies and policy documents which flow from the Strategic Plan such as the Investment and Housing Strategies as well as the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan.
 - Considering government consultations and assisting in developing potential responses to these.
 - Support the Councils' ambition in being trail blazing authorities in developing new and innovative ways to contribute to the Growth agenda.
 - Monitoring how the Councils and key stakeholders are delivering key growth priorities of the Councils.

Membership

3. There is no defined membership of the Growth and Innovation Group. Agenda topics will be given to all members, who may attend wherever the subject matter is of interest to them. The following members would be expected to attend meetings on a regular basis:
 - FHDC and SEBC Portfolio Holders
 - SEBC's informal Assistant Portfolio Holders for Planning and Growth, and Leisure and Culture
 - FHDC and SEBC Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Development Control Committees

4. Members who wish to attend meetings are expected to be informed of the key issues at stake, through having read key strategy and policy documents in advance of meetings, and undertaken necessary research or background reading (for example, through reading government white papers). Officers will assist members through providing links to key research materials in advance of meetings.

Facilitation

5. Meetings shall be facilitated by the Portfolio Holders for Growth and lead officers for the subject area. The Portfolio Holder members will be responsible for steering the agenda for discussion at these meetings in consultation with the lead officers.

Decision Making

6. The Growth Group is not a decision making body. Members are expected to express views, and be challenged on these. Robust discussions may take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect following "Chatham House" rules. Facilitators will be expected to draw conclusions from debate to facilitate Growth and Housing Portfolio Holders to take appropriate recommendations back to the Cabinets. Growth Group members should be aware that Cabinet may not draw the same conclusions as the Growth Group on matters under consideration.
7. Formal minutes of Growth Group meetings will not normally be taken. Officers will capture key actions and conclusions from debates.

Confidentiality

8. As a non-decision making, forming Group, meetings shall not be open to the public. Where appropriate, officers and the Portfolio Holders may request that other stakeholders attend meetings.
9. Wherever matters under discussion are confidential, officers will endeavour to make this clear to members and similarly, members will be expected to maintain the confidentiality of the discussions that take place in line with the Code of Conduct for members.
10. Issues under consideration will obviously become public when they reach a formal decision-making stage, and be subject to all the normal transparency and scrutiny rules in the Constitutions at this point.

Quorum

11. As an informal, confidential non-decision making body with no defined membership, there is no defined quorum as such; however, a minimum of three members from each authority will be its recognised quorum.

Sub-Groups

12. Some aspects of the Group's work may require the formation of sub-groups to assess detailed proposals. It is expected that members of both Cabinets should be briefed by the Portfolio Holders on the purpose of any sub-group and terms of reference, which will require both Cabinets' endorsement and approval.

13. In certain circumstances, such as when consideration of development plan documents are required, it may be more appropriate for the sub-group to operate in traditional committee format, with nominated members, a chair, voting arrangements and operate to the standard Councils' rules of debate. Such sub-groups shall be formally constituted by the Cabinets.

Review

14. As a Group appointed by the Cabinets, its role, remit and responsibilities will be subject to annual review at the Cabinets' first meeting of each municipal year as part of the composite review of all Cabinet Working Parties, Panels and Other Groups. Such reviews, which are subject to Cabinet approval, assess whether each body remains fit-for-purpose and whether they should continue to operate in their current or a revised form. Interim reviews may be undertaken at any other time of year as the Cabinets see fit.

For information: Existing Terms of Reference for West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

1. *To consider and advise the Cabinets of Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) on:*
 - (a) *creating the conditions to encourage and support sustainable growth across the whole of the West Suffolk area;*
 - (b)
 - (i) *common planning policy affecting both districts;*
 - (ii) *planning policy specifically associated with the individual districts*
 - (c)
 - (i) *common strategic housing policy affecting both districts*
 - (ii) *strategic housing policy specifically associated with the individual districts;*
 - (d) *the strategic investment in infrastructure, transportation and highway matters that are of more than local significance ;*
 - (e) *monitoring the delivery of the West Suffolk Six Point Plan for Jobs and Growth;*
 - (f) *the formulation of a West Suffolk Local Plan for Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough; and*
 - (g) *environmental management issues*
2. *Recommendations to Cabinet (and Council, where appropriate) for a decision to be made, will be reported in the normal manner. Reports for information, the purpose of which will be to provide a brief summary to Cabinet of the outcomes from the Group, will be included on the next available Cabinet agenda, following each meeting of the Steering Group;*
3. *Agendas will include the Work Programme of the Steering Group as a 'Standing Item', The content of the Work Programme to be agreed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman and the Portfolio Holders for Planning and Growth and Housing, prior to inclusion within the agenda papers.*

4. *The Steering Group comprises 12 Members, six from each Council. The Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship will rotate annually between the two Councils.*
5. *Membership of the Steering Group to be politically balanced, and each Council must ensure that its Development Control Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, FHDC's Local Plan Working Group (whilst it remains in operation), are represented, alongside Members of the two Cabinets.*
6. *Two Substitute Members to be appointed by each local authority, having regard to the political balance of each authority.*
7. *The quorum of the Steering Group be specifically defined as three Councillors from each Council (six in total).*
8. *The Group is given the flexibility to directly co-opt up to two voting or non-voting external representatives to its membership, in such a manner as it sees fit.*
9. *Meetings will be governed by normal Access to Information rules (The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012) in both Councils.*
10. *Frequency of meetings will be every other month, but this will be reviewed in the light of workload.*
11. *Meetings will be held on Mondays at 4.30 pm unless otherwise agreed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Venues for meetings to alternate between FHDC's District Offices and SEBC's offices at West Suffolk House, unless an alternative venue is agreed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.*