

Growth and Innovation Group: Terms of Reference

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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.