

## BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Executive Member Growth and Commercialisation, Philip Cowen

**To:** Council 6 April 2017

**(Author:** Robert Campbell, Inward Investment Manager)

**Subject:** Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor (CNTC)

**Purpose:** To accept a £200k award from the Norfolk Business Rates Pool (BRP) on behalf of the CNTC Partnership as part of a funding package to support a two year CNTC delivery programme.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) That the BRP award of £200k, to support the delivery of the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor delivery programme, be accepted.
- 2) That the Council allocate up to £37.5k from the Organisational Development Reserve as a contribution to the match funding required to draw down the BRP award.
- 3) That subject to the satisfactory completion of all necessary legal and contractual due diligence, any negotiation with the funding body that arises from that process, and being satisfied that the project remains in the best interests of the Council and Breckland District, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader be given delegated authority to sign the grant award contract and proceed with the project.
- 4) That Breckland Council agree to finance manage the programme, up to a programme budget of £600k, on behalf of the CNTC Partnership.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Liz Truss, Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor, hosted the official launch of the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor, a 15 year vision to create £558m in economic growth at key locations along the A11 between Cambridge and Norwich.
- 1.2 The Tech Corridor was established to address three priorities:
  - To encourage collaboration between existing communities of expertise within the corridor: digital, agri-tech/food, bio-tech and advanced engineering and manufacturing.
  - To proactively market key employment and housing sites along the A11 corridor between Cambridge and Norwich.
  - To attract Government funding to further enhance and consolidate the Corridor as an attractive destination for hi-tech companies and investment.
- 1.3 Breckland Council is a founding member of the CNTC Partnership which now comprises:
  - Breckland Council
  - Cambridgeshire County Council

- East Cambridgeshire Council
- Forest Heath Council
- Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP
- New Anglia LEP
- Norfolk County Council
- Norwich City Council
- South Norfolk Council
- St Edmundsbury Council
- Suffolk County Council

1.4 Within Breckland, the Tech Corridor will directly support the marketing of key employment and housing sites, including:

- Thetford Enterprise Park (TEP)
- Thetford Urban Extension (SUE)
- Snetterton Heath Employment Area
- Attleborough Urban Extension (SUE)
- Attleborough Employment Area

There will be additional benefits with the creation of employment throughout the District.

1.5 Rational for Technology Corridors

The Government's new Industrial Strategy recognises the importance of capitalising on our centres of innovation and technical excellence, and the barriers which the UK's relatively poor transport infrastructure and low volume of housebuilding cause when attempting to bring together larger areas within a technology cluster or corridor.

Despite the enormous investment required, other corridor 'brands' such as the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor are already attracting significant additional investment, coordinated by the Government's new National Infrastructure Commission. This is opening up new funding opportunities beyond the 'traditional' funding routes such as Growth Deals.

Breckland sits geographically midway between Cambridge and Norwich along a road and rail corridor whose connectivity improved significantly with the completion of the A11 dualling.

One of Breckland's major economic challenges is to transform from a low productivity, low wage economy into a knowledge rich economy where our manufacturers can benefit from a high value supply chain and the attracting of new companies with active and successful R&D programmes and significant levels of investment.

Traditionally these 'knowledge rich' companies have tended to cluster around high tech but increasingly expensive locations such as Cambridge. The Tech Corridor will provide lower cost locations, including in Breckland, to provide well connected but more affordable alternatives.

1.6 In order to take this programme forward and on behalf of the CNTC Partnership, Breckland Council led on an application to secure £200k of Norfolk Business Rate Pool monies. This application has been successful.

1.7 The £200k BRP monies will be matched with contributions from Norfolk CNTC partners to create a £400k (Norfolk) CTNC operating budget, with a further £200k being sought from partners within Suffolk and Cambridgeshire (the CNTC now covers parts of these three

counties) towards a total operating budget of £600k. This will support a two year delivery programme.

- 1.8 The budget will support the recruitment of up to three full time CNTC staff plus monies to support external marketing costs.
- 1.9 It is expected that the new delivery team will be managed by the New Anglia LEP but this is still subject to final negotiations.
- 1.10 The key activities of the CNTC delivery team will be to:
  - Promote key employment and housing sites along the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor to potential investors, including private investors, institutional investors and hi-tech companies looking for high quality locations to set up and grow.
  - Building relationships with a range of private and institutional investors and other organisations which operate within the investment supply chain.
  - Construct specific proposals against requirements received from potential investors.
  - Support the conversion of these proposals into secured investment.
  - Build the UK and International reputation of the CNTC as desirable investment location, especially for high tech sectors, through a well-planned marketing and communications programme.
  - Represent the CNTC Partnership as key events such as MIPIM.
  - In partnership with the LEPs and local MPs, support representations and lobbying to Government in order to raise additional infrastructure and investment funding.
  - Run an events programme aimed at supporting key sectors within the Tech Corridor, especially those working in high growth sectors, including agri-tech, bio-tech and advanced engineering & manufacturing.
  - Coordinate activities with partners to ensure that investment enquires are dealt with in a well-coordinated manner.

## 2.0 **OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Approve the recommendations in full.
- 2.2 Approve the recommendations in part.
- 2.3 Reject the recommendations.

## 3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 The £200k BRP award provides an opportunity for the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor Partnership to commence a two year delivery programme.

3.2 Breckland has the single biggest concentration of employment and housing sites within the Tech Corridor and stands to benefit substantially in terms of bringing investment to those sites.

#### 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 Marketing of key Breckland employment and housing sites within a brand with strong associations to the knowledge rich centres of Cambridge and Norwich.

4.2 Direct support to existing Breckland technology, engineering and manufacturing businesses.

4.3 Allows Breckland to be part of a growing tech corridor with aspirations to become a recognised global destination for tech businesses – building on the foundation of Cambridge’s global reputation.

4.4 Provides a means to lobby and propose to Government for additional infrastructure and technology investment – aligns with the Government’s new Industrial Strategy.

4.5 Provides part of the foundation for the transformation of Breckland towards a higher added value, higher wage and knowledge based economy.

4.6 The Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor will generate a significant local supply chain which can benefit companies all across Breckland.

#### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

##### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 There will undoubtedly be environmental issues associated with employment-related development in Breckland. However, these will be addressed as a component of the planning processes associated with individual developments.

##### 5.2 **Constitution & Legal**

5.2.1 Sections 1 – 8 of the 2011 Localism Act give authorities a general power of competence.

##### 5.3 **Contracts**

5.3.1 Any contracts arising from the accepting of this award will be procured according to the standing orders and financial regulations of the Council.

##### 5.4 **Corporate Priorities**

5.4.1 This proposal clearly supports our corporate plan objectives of developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth.

## 5.5 **Financial**

- 5.5.1 All costs expended during the two CNTC two year delivery programme will be funded by the Partnership budget. There is no planned financial expenditure by the Council beyond the £37,500 contribution requested.

## 5.6 **Risk Management**

- 5.6.1 The CNTC delivery programme team will be managed by one CNTC partner organisation with additional oversight by the CNTC Partnership Board.
- 5.6.2 It is proposed that Breckland Council manage the finances of the delivery programme through its Financial Management team with support from the Inward Investment team.

## 5.7 **Staffing**

- 5.7.1 The Economic Development Service will support the project from a Breckland perspective from existing resources.
- 5.7.1 The Council's Finance Team will manage the budget on behalf of the CNTC Partnership from existing resources.
- 5.7.2 The Council will not be required to employ any of the new staffing for the CNTC delivery programme. This will be undertaken by one of the other CNTC partners.

## 5.8 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

- 5.8.1 Quarterly meetings of the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor Partnership board have been undertaken.
- 5.8.2 Presentations on the Tech Corridor have been made to business forums covering Thetford, Snetterton and Attleborough. These briefings will continue as the project progresses.
- 5.8.3 A major business consultation was undertaken in November 2016 with Thetford based Industrial businesses. This was part of the Thetford Enterprise Park consultation and included a detailed briefing on the Tech Corridor project.
- 5.8.4 Briefings on the Tech Corridor project have taken place during the Council's regular meetings with the major Snetterton land owners (initiated as part of the Snetterton Electricity Upgrade project).

## 6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

- 6.1 Directly affected :- All Saints & Wayland; Attleborough, Burgh and Haverscroft; Attleborough, Queens & Besthorpe, Harling & Heathlands, Thetford Boudica, Thetford Burrell, Thetford Castle, Thetford Priory and Forest.
- 6.2 Indirectly affected :- all wards in terms of strengthening the local economy.

## 7.0 **ACRONYMS**

- 7.1 LEP : Local Enterprise Partnership

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Background papers:- Burton Knowles – A11 Feasibility Study

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**Key Decision:** No

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**

**Appendices attached to this report:** Proforma B, Financial Comments & Appraisal.