

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	4 September 2019
Subject:	Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme
Report of:	Programme Director
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Built Environment
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the status of the Tewkesbury Garden Town programme and provide information about the recent success of the West Cheltenham Garden Village bid, made jointly with Cheltenham Borough Council.

Tewkesbury Garden Town

In April 2019, the government - via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) - awarded the Garden Community status (Town) to Tewkesbury Borough Council, based upon the development in the Ashchurch area of 10,195 homes and approximately 100 hectares of employment land.

A report was taken to Council in May 2019 and it was resolved at that meeting that programme updates would be reported to the Executive Committee.

The programme has progressed via a number of workstreams. This report gives updates on progress including resourcing, communications, discussions with Homes England and the related Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) for a new bridge at Ashchurch. The report also proposes that the current Junction 9 Area Member Reference Panel, as approved on 15 October 2014, is disbanded and that a new Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel be established in its place.

The successful Garden Town bid was categorised by Homes England as a transformational project in that the development is not simply a new town but provides the opportunity to 'transform' the existing town of Tewkesbury. It is recommended therefore that a new Member Reference Panel is created to reflect the future programme and this wider area.

West Cheltenham Garden Village

Members will be aware, in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council, a bid was also submitted to the Garden Community Scheme for the West Cheltenham Joint Core Strategy strategic allocation and associated safeguarded land. In July, the Councils were informed of the success of this bid. The award came with joint capacity funding to the value of £150,000.

The report makes proposals for delegation of authority to Lead Officers for the efficient development of the Garden Village programme.

Recommendation:**That the Executive Committee:**

1. **NOTES** the progress made to date on the Tewkesbury Garden Town programme.
2. **DISBANDS** the Junction 9 Area Member Reference Panel.
3. **APPROVES** the creation of a new Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel together with the draft Terms of Reference included at Appendix 2.
4. **NOTES** the progress to date on the West Cheltenham (Cyber Central) programme including the award of Garden Village status.
5. **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Members for Built Environment and Finance and Asset Management and the Head of Finance and Asset Management, to agree and enter into appropriate arrangements and other partnership documentation to progress the West Cheltenham Garden Village programme on terms approved by the Borough Solicitor.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

To update the Executive Committee on the programme progress to date and make new arrangements for the efficient progression of the two garden communities programmes.

Resource Implications:

There are no specific resource requirements outlined within this report.

There is a risk related to commitments made using the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Garden Communities funding of £750,000. To ensure the success of the programme, the new staffing resources referenced in this report are recruited on permanent contracts and therefore the funding that has been received to date will cover these resources for an initial period of approximately two years only.

Presently it is not known whether there will be further funding to support staffing resources in future years. Discussions are ongoing with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in respect of further funding support; however, in the event that this is not forthcoming at any time, alternative sources of funding, including the Council's own resources, will need to be considered. Clearly, without funding delivery of the programme could be put in jeopardy. In addition to funding from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, options for funding in future years will be investigated as part of this project.

Also, within the Ashchurch bridge project, funds are being spent in advance of the agreement with Homes England being signed. Once the agreement is signed the Council will receive £466,000 to cover these costs. The Executive report dated 6 March 2019, allocated the Borough Growth Reserve of £417,900 from which this initial expenditure will be funded.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications:

In terms of the termination and creation of the Member Reference Panel, there are no risks of note. The wider programme, however, has various risks and these are further detailed under each of the specific workstreams. Risks will be monitored closely as part of programme management arrangements.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Performance will be managed by the aforementioned Member Reference Panel as well as Tewkesbury Borough Council's Programme Management Board.

Environmental Implications:

The termination and creation of the Member Reference Panel has no environmental implications.

However, the overall development programme for housing and employment will assess and seek to secure high quality developments which take full account of environmental impact and mitigate any environmental implications as part of the master planning and planning application processes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The government through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, opened up the Garden Community Scheme to a further round of bidding in 2018. As part of the Council's spatial planning work under the JCS, a concept masterplan had been generated to review development opportunities in the Ashchurch area and so a bid for Garden Town Status was submitted based upon this concept plan.
- 1.2** The bid was successful, and, in April 2019, the Council was awarded the Garden Town status for a scheme delivering 10,195 homes and approximately 100 hectares of employment land in the Ashchurch area. Importantly, the Garden Town approach, approved as part of the bid, is that the programme will not just concern the area of new development, but will be of a positive 'transformational' nature to the existing town and its communities. The briefing note at Appendix 1, Tewkesbury Garden Town – dated June 2019 - gives a summary of the bid.
- 1.3** Since the award in April 2019, work has focussed on key work streams. These include:
- the Ashchurch rail bridge project;
 - resource recruitment;
 - liaison with Homes England to define and agree the programme workstreams;
 - land assembly discussions;
 - governance;
 - communications strategy;
 - proposals to undertake master planning; and
 - major strategic transport infrastructure - the off-line A46 and the rail strategy.
- 1.4** This report updates the Executive Committee on programme status for each of the key workstreams and then sets out a proposal for the first level of the governance structure, the Tewkesbury Garden Town Reference Panel.

2.0 Tewkesbury Garden Town - Programme Status Updates

2.1 Ashchurch Rail Bridge Project:

This project is progressing on two fronts, the first being the grant funding contractual arrangements with Homes England and the second the design process including the necessary approvals with Network Rail. Conditions for the award are now being finalised and the next step is to move to grant funding contract completion in the next few weeks.

Once the contract has been signed and certain information secured from the site owners stage 1 will proceed to seek an initial drawdown of £466,000, which has been requested to support the design and planning approval process of the bridge. This work is being coordinated with the support of Gloucestershire County Council and their consultants Atkins. Work being undertaken by Atkins includes, defining the location of the bridge, work with Network Rail in respect of necessary approvals, and submission of the associated planning application.

As part of the planning approval process, the detailed transport assessment of the impact of the bridge/car journey flows will be completed and subsequently assessed and ultimately approved by the two highways authorities: Highways England and Gloucestershire County Council - the latter element of the work has not yet commenced.

2.2 Liaison with Homes England:

The Senior Planning Manager at Homes England (HE) has been nominated as the Homes England project lead. The Garden Town Officer Working Group, led by the Chief Executive, has recently completed a Project Delivery Plan (PDP) which defines the main workstreams and key actions associated with the Tewkesbury Garden Town programme. This document is required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and its approval is a key part of the programme performance monitoring system. Future Garden Town funding is likely to be based on performance and thus successful approval of the PDP funding is a key milestone. The Tewkesbury Team is the first of the six new Garden Towns announced in April to complete this task.

2.3 Land Assembly:

A key part of the discussions with Homes England to date have been the opportunity to review land assembly within the Garden Town and these discussions are ongoing. As this matter progresses, further reports will be brought to the Executive Committee and/or Council as required.

2.4 Staff Resources:

Recruitment of the Garden Town Officer Team has now commenced using the capacity funding. The post of Garden Town Programme Director has been established and an appointment made. The new postholder takes up the role on 1 September 2019. The Garden Town Team staffing structure includes a further three posts reporting to the Programme Director. These include a Project Manager, Community Engagement Officer and a Garden Town Officer. Recruitment to the remaining posts will commence without delay.

In addition to the in-house team, the support of a specialist consultant has been secured to act as strategic advisor to the project. The cost of all posts is being met from the capacity funding.

2.5 Governance:

Effective governance structures will be required to coordinate and lead the Garden Town programme. These structures will set out how stakeholders will be engaged in the programme, including communities, businesses, developers and agencies. Further reports will be forwarded in respect of governance proposals once these have been considered further. Proposals in respect of Member engagement in the governance arrangements are set out in section 3 of this report.

2.6 Communications:

This workstream is crucial to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the overall aims of the programme, what is happening to deliver it and how they can be involved. To date a range of events have been held to raise awareness of the Garden Town Programme for Parish Councils and businesses and Officers have also attended a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launch event to brief Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on progress made to date. Future work will include the development of a communications plan which can be monitored by Members and Officers.

As part of the developing communications plan a 'prospectus' will be developed with supporting literature, exhibition materials and website/social media outlets. This will take some time to complete and so an initial website has been developed by the in-house team to provide immediate information about the Tewkesbury Garden Town programme.

2.7 Masterplanning:

In 2017 Build Design Partners (BDP) were commissioned to support the Council in developing a concept masterplan for development in the Ashchurch area. The concept masterplan was completed and published as part of the Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation in November 2018. Further work has been undertaken by Build Design Partners to take the concept masterplan to a more detailed stage and this will be forwarded to Members on completion for consideration.

Further detailed masterplanning work is required to go beyond the Build Design Partners work and set out the nature of the Garden Town development as a masterplan document, as opposed to a concept document. This will need to involve local communities and Parish and Town Councils as well as businesses and other stakeholders. It is an important and extensive piece of work and will need Member involvement in the commissioning process.

2.8 J9/A46 Off-Line Improvements:

Officers have developed a close partnership with Gloucestershire County Council colleagues in respect of infrastructure projects associated with the Garden Town programme. A major element of this is work to review options for an off-line solution for the A46 and a new M5 junction.

Officers and Members have maintained membership of the A46 Partnership, the local authority pressure group to secure improvements to the A46 cross country route. Work has also been undertaken with the Midlands Sub-National Transport Body, Midlands Connect, to promote the importance of route improvements at Ashchurch.

Furthermore, it has been agreed with County Council colleagues that a bid should be made to the Department of Transport (DfT) Large Local Major Road Fund, via the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, for the necessary road improvements at Ashchurch. Western Gateway has given the project high priority following submissions from the County Council.

The County Council has agreed to undertake extensive route planning work required to make the bid and it is expected that a Strategic Outline Business Case for the road improvements will be submitted to Western Gateway in December 2019.

2.9 Rail Strategy:

To date work has been commissioned with specialist consultants SLC Rail to define the strategy for the station and rail services at Ashchurch. This recommended a number of steps, the first being lobbying with Department of Transport and the relevant franchisees to increase the number of stops at Ashchurch. This work is ongoing with a schedule of 2021 for the franchises to be issued. If successful, further steps would then include a proposed name change for the station, further parking capacity and improved facilities, for example secure cycle storage.

In addition, Officers have supported, and are engaged in a recent commission for a Gloucestershire Rail Strategy which is being commissioned by the County Council.

3.0 Member Reference Panel – Creation of a Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel.

3.1 In October 2014, the Executive Committee established the Junction 9 Area Member Reference Panel to work with Officers to support the development options for the Ashchurch area.

3.2 The Panel has functioned successfully and has steered the existing programme for development in this area, overseen the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) award for £8.1 million to construct a bridge over the railway at Ashchurch to support development in this area and then the application and subsequent award of the Garden Town status for this wider development – two major successes for the Panel and the Council.

3.3 In reviewing the Panel, and the needs of the Tewkesbury Garden Town programme, the area of the Garden Town requires a broader membership. It is therefore proposed to terminate the current Junction 9 Area Member Reference Panel and to create a new Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel with the updated Terms of Reference as included in Appendix 2.

3.4 The new Member Reference Panel will include the existing Members as well as those from the Tewkesbury area to better reflect the Garden Town transformational programme and the opportunities for the town as a whole.

4.0 West Cheltenham – Garden Village Award and Programme Status

4.1 In partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council, a bid for Garden Community Status was submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in respect of the Joint Core Strategy strategic allocation and safeguarded land at West Cheltenham. This includes the important Cyber Central commercial park. The size of this development incorporates up to 3,000 new homes and therefore was of Garden Village status within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government scheme. In July 2019 the two Councils were informed that the bid had been successful.

4.2 Whilst work specific to the Garden Village has not yet progressed in detail, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government /Homes England induction meeting is scheduled for September 2019. Considerable work has been undertaken in respect of the Cyber Central commercial element.

- 4.3** Land assembly is a key part of the Garden Village and Cyber Central programme. Cheltenham Borough Council has recently announced the purchase of land valued at £37.5million to facilitate the development of the Cyber Central digital park. Discussions with Home England are ongoing for further land assembly to assist in the delivery of the housing sites. As these progress further updates will be brought to the Executive Committee.
- 4.4** Masterplanning work, including the preparation of a draft Supplementary Planning Document, is underway and specialist contractors Avison Young have been commissioned to support this work. The cost of this work is shared between this Council and Cheltenham Borough Council and is funded from the growth fund reserve.
- 4.5** The development of a masterplan for the Garden Village will require full engagement with local communities, businesses and other stakeholders. Events to start this process are currently being planned.
- 4.6** A governance structure is currently under development with Cheltenham Borough Council, based upon a partnership agreement between the two Councils. The details of this are still to be finalised. A joint West Cheltenham Garden Village Programme Board has been established to monitor the progress of the programme. This Council is represented on the Programme Board by the Lead Member for Built Environment and the Chief Executive. Specific Officer Working Groups have also been established to take forward the various workstreams and this Council's Officers are engaged in these where appropriate. Details of the governance structure will be reported to Executive Committee once the proposals are complete. At that point the need to establish any internal Member structures will be considered.
- 4.7** Funding for the workstreams involved in the Garden Village programme is currently being made from the growth fund reserve under delegated authority.
- 4.8** As the governance and workstreams develop at this early stage it will be necessary to enter into agreements with partners to take forward the West Cheltenham Garden Village programme. These are likely to involve governance arrangements and work items which require funding support. To facilitate the efficient delivery of these arrangements it is proposed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to enter into agreements on behalf of the Council in respect of the West Cheltenham Garden Village programme.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1** Other governance structures have been considered; however, based upon the success of the original Panel - and accepting the need to make some minor changes - it is recommended that the new Panel be created.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1** None required.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 7.1** Joint Core Strategy and the Joint Core Strategy Review.

8.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 8.1** National Planning Policy Framework.
National Planning Practice Guidance.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

9.1 Whilst the report recommendations have no resource implications, with respect to the overall programme there are points to note which are covered in detail under section 2.3.

To support the Garden Town programme delivery the following roles are being resourced:

Programme Director, Programme Manager, Community Officer and Garden Town Administration Officer.

10.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

10.1 None.

11.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

11.1 None.

12.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

12.1 None.

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- Background Papers:**
1. Executive Committee report 15 October 2014 – M5 junction 9 Area Growth;
 2. Council report 20 February 2018 – Government Housing Infrastructure fund (HIF) – Funding Award for bridge over Rail Line at Ashchurch;
 3. Executive 6 March 2019 – Borough Growth Reserve;
 4. Council report 28 May 2019 – Garden Community programme – Garden Town status for Tewkesbury at Ashchurch;
 5. Executive report 12 June 2019 – Government Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) - Funding Award for bridge over Rail Line at Ashchurch.

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- Appendices:**
- 1: Tewkesbury Garden Town – Homes England Briefing Note – June 2019.
 - 2: Tewkesbury Garden Town Member Reference Panel - Terms of Reference.