

	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>20 October 2021</p>
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Report Title:	Establishing a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP)Team
Cabinet Portfolio	Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard McCauley
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	x
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	x
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	x
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	x
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	x
	Be a responsible Council	x

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has made a significant commitment to accelerate delivery and growth. This report proposes the creation of a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team to accelerate the delivery of the Borough's significant and ambitious growth plans whilst securing benefits for local communities and tackling the boroughs inequalities.
- 1.2 The report proposes a bespoke model for the GDP Team in St. Helens, informed by customer engagement and learning from other authorities. The aim of the team is to maximise outcomes and enhance service delivery and also create opportunities for staff development across the Strategic Growth Department.
- 1.3 The proposals have been developed to utilise and repurpose existing human resources wherever possible to minimise the initial financial implications. Beyond the accelerated delivery of the existing ambitious growth programme, the proposed GDP Team will also improve the borough's prospects of further sustained investment over the longer-term through an enhanced reputation for positive direct delivery by the Council or for delivery facilitation.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Note the establishment of a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team within the Strategic Growth Department in accordance with the details set out herein.**
- ii) Agree to a Cabinet report that will consider the funding mechanisms for the proposed GDP Team across the financial years 2021/22 - 2023/24 as set in Section 9.7 of this report.**
- iii) Note that a review of the GDP Team model be conducted as part of the budget process for 2023/24 pursuant to the consideration of future years funding mechanisms as may be appropriate following the review.**
- iv) Note the need for a recruitment campaign to promote the opportunity and attract applicants.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to establish a dedicated team to accelerate the delivery of the Borough's ambitious growth plans. The Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP) Team would be responsible for accelerating delivery of the priority place-based growth projects, with a focus on securing shared prosperity outcomes, environmental enhancements and tackling the boroughs existing inequalities.

4. Background / Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 The Borough Strategy has established a clear vision and set of priorities for the period 2021 – 2030 and place-based regeneration programmes will play an important part in helping the Borough achieve our ambitious plans for growth that benefits the people of the borough.
- 4.2 The Borough Strategy is further supported by the Economic Reset and Recovery Plan, this plan recognises that the geography of St. Helens provides significant place-based opportunities to accelerate recovery from the effects of the covid pandemic and to reset our economy to ensure the Borough grows back greener.
- 4.3 In addition, the positive progress of the Local plan: Building a Better Future towards formal adoption puts in place a strong strategic Framework to set housing and employment development targets.
- 4.4 These strong strategic and planning foundations have created an extensive programme of growth opportunities that include, but are not limited to:
- Town Centre Regeneration
 - St. Helens town centre regeneration (multi-phased projects)
 - Earlestown town centre regeneration (multi-phased projects)
 - Implementation of the Town Investment Plan (7 substantive programmes 15 Individual Projects)
 - Town Deal Acceleration Fund and progression of Chalon Way Meanwhile use.
 - Economic Development
 - Glass Futures Phase 1
 - Glass Futures Phase 2
 - Foundation Industry masterplan
 - Parkside Link Road including M6 J22 improvements.
 - Parkside West including JV relationship with Langtree
 - Parkside East Including Engagement with National Infrastructure bodies
 - Parkside Freeport Programme
 - Omega Zone 8
 - Housing Delivery
 - Bold Forest Garden Suburb
 - Cowley Hill Works redevelopment
 - Moss Nook redevelopment
 - Area based small site redevelopment
 - Environmental Improvements and supporting Infrastructure
 - Bold Forest Park
 - New Carr Mill Railway Station

- Earlestown Station enhancements
- St. Helens Junction to St. Helens Central Railway reinstatement
- St. Helens Interchange Transport Investment
- Routes to Regeneration (St. Helens Northern Housing Access) Transport Investment
- M6 J23 'Haydock Island' improvements
- St. Helens Southern Gateway – Improving access to Lea Green Station
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- LCR Digital Infrastructure

4.5 In addition to this existing programme, there are several imminent and substantial future funding opportunities. The ability to secure external funding is critical to accelerate delivery and it is clear by our recent success that if the right resources and expertise is applied to the borough's opportunities, we will be successful in a competitive funding environment. The current and future initiatives include:

- LCR Sustainable Transport Fund
- LCR Strategic Investment Fund
- Shared Prosperity Fund
- Levelling Up Fund Round 2
- Home Building Fund
- Restoring Your Railways Fund
- Access for All Fund
- Community Renewal Fund
- LCR Housing Brownfield Fund

4.6 In 2020 the Council recognised the need to secure capability and capacity to support and improve the delivery of services within the Place Services Directorate, importantly the delivery of key projects to deliver the council's priorities. Accordingly, Phase 1 and 2 senior management restructures have been implemented (as approved by Cabinet in December 2019). This investment has paid significant dividends to date, and significant progress has been made in the achievement of the Council's priorities. The new management team has been able to secure significant external funding, with £36m secured to date for economic development, town centre regeneration and transport funding. A further £31m of external funding bids are currently pending.

4.7 In addition to the management team the restructure led to the creation of a Planning & Regeneration Service within the Strategic Growth Department. However, the Regeneration function currently has limited human resource below the Head of Regeneration & Growth role, and therefore if we are to convert financial success into economic delivery and success then further programme specific and technical human resource and intervention is required.

5. Proposal to create a Growth Delivering Prosperity (GDP)Team

5.1 The extensive growth programme, combined with the prospects of further success with external funding opportunities, demonstrates the need to create technical resource capacity. This will act to secure accelerated delivery in accordance with the Council's growth objectives.

5.2 The current Planning & Regeneration Service is currently resourced to fulfill its statutory functions rather than to take a proactive and intervention approach to growth. In the absence of appropriate human resourcing, the Council will fail to deliver and maximise opportunities thereby increasing the risk that government, partners, developers, and employers may choose to invest elsewhere. There is also a significant risk that the expectations of our business and

residential communities, together with partners/stakeholders, will not be realised thereby causing reputational harm to the Council. This risk has been identified on the Corporate Risk Register, with a current rating of High.

- 5.3 The authors of this report have direct experience of instigating such arrangements, which is recognised as a leading initiative. Importantly, learning from this example and from other local authorities who have done similar has helped inform and refine the specific format in St. Helens with the aim to create a new exemplar. The intention is to create additional resource in a collaborative environment that not only facilitates acceleration of projects for which the team have direct responsibility but also support other priorities across the Council – ensuring everyone will have the opportunity to play their part.
- 5.4 The proposed GDP Team will manage and ensure that the delivery of the significant work programmes identified in Section 4 above are accelerated. However, accelerated delivery is not the only intent of the team proposal. It will be further distinguished through a focus on securing shared prosperity outcomes and environmental enhancements as an integral benefit of growth. In doing so this will help to secure support from local communities to the Council's ambitious growth agenda through local meaningful and demonstrable engagement and the delivery of physical and economic benefits. This approach is in full accordance with the #St. Helens-Together ethos.

6. Community Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no direct community impact assessment implications arising from this proposal. The individual programmes that are facilitated or delivered by the proposed new team will be subject to separate community impact assessments and reporting arrangements.

7. Consideration of Alternatives

- 7.1 Do-nothing or do-minimum alternatives have been considered but failure to invest additional resources would put at risk the considerable growth opportunities currently available to St. Helens Council and the borough as a whole. Consideration has also been afforded to precisely replicating the arrangements introduced by other local authorities, learning has informed an adapted model version that is bespoke to St. Helens and its Place Directorate.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The proposed new GDP Team will provide a significantly enhanced service to deliver Borough priorities, enable key investors and developers engage and collaborate with stakeholders and partners helping the Council to accelerate the delivery of projects and programmes. In doing so it will improve the boroughs prospects of further sustained investment over the longer-term through an enhanced reputation for delivery be that by the Council or enabling and facilitating others to develop in the Borough.

9. Implications

9.1 Legal Implications

- 9.1.1 There are no legal implications associated with the proposals set out in this report.

9.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

9.2.1 Social Value

9.2.1.1 A primary aim of the proposed GDP Team is to secure and maximise shared prosperity from the growth programme, ensuring that local communities benefit directly from social value outcomes. In the absence of appropriate levels of human resource there is a risk that social value opportunities may not be fully realised, thereby limiting the growth benefits.

9.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

9.2.2.1 The proposals will positively support sustainability and the environment, with the proposed team having a focus on ensuring environmental enhancements are secured as an integral benefit of growth projects.

9.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

9.2.3.1 Acceleration of the investment and growth programmes secured by the proposals set out within this report will have positive health and wellbeing implications for St Helens communities. These benefits can be maximised through the provision of suitable human resources.

9.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

9.2.4.1 There are no direct equality and human rights implications associated with this proposal. Any implications associated with individual projects within the growth programme will be subject to separate reporting where appropriate.

9.3 Customers and Resident

9.3.1 The proposals set out within this report are driven by a desire to accelerate delivery and the realisation of benefits and outcomes from the Councils ambitious growth agenda. With a focus on shared prosperity, and inclusive growth the proposed team will seek to maximise these benefits for all our customers, residents, and businesses.

9.4 Asset and Property

9.4.1 The success of the proposed Team will lead to the creation of new, improved and highly valued assets across the Council in private, public and community ownership.

9.4.2 The core of the proposed team will operate primarily from within the Planning & Regeneration Service and integrate with the Councils new Ways of Working model. Once the team has been engaged there will be further opportunity to consider future alignment with partners such as the Chamber of Commerce to help create a further enhanced Inclusive Service for business, investors and developers.

9.5 Staffing and Human Resource

9.5.1 The proposed structure comprises 22 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts. It is anticipated that 9 of these posts will be filled by existing, equivalent post-holders within the structure, through direct assimilation or the repurposing of existing resources.

9.5.2 There are several new posts within the proposed structure. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will be drafted, assessed, and evaluated by the Council's Job Evaluation Team. These tasks will require dedicated support from the Human Resources Service to expedite implementation of the GDP Team.

- 9.5.3 In addition, the employment market in this area is highly competitive and therefore there will be a need to take a proactive approach to recruitment if we are to attract candidates of the right caliber with appropriate knowledge, experience and skills. This will therefore require additional HR, communications and marketing support.
- 9.5.4 In addition to the creation of the GDP team, it is proposed to review the current resources, within the Economy Service to ensure the right balance between the two teams is maintained and its retained resource to be repurposed to focus on inward investment and key client management activities.
- 9.5.5 In the short term, it is proposed that technical support for functions such as planning, and highways, finance and legal will remain within existing teams and will be commissioned as appropriate from within those teams. This will promote the collaborative culture of the organisation and will be monitored to ensure it remains the best deployment of resources to meet priorities.
- 9.5.6 The proposed structure requires the deletion of one existing post (Transport Officer) within the Planning Service, this post has recently become vacant and therefore the deletion of this post will not involve redundancy proceedings.
- 9.5.7 The proposed structure includes for a Graduate Infrastructure Officer post, this will be a repurposed resource that allows the service to start to have a managed succession strategy
- 9.5.8 Consultation will take place with staff and Trade Unions. The new structure will be implemented following this consultation process and recruitment to those posts will commence immediately following the end of the consultation period. It is anticipated that the recruitment will be completed with the new team fully in place by January 2022 with interim agency appointments being facilitated due to current high demand across a range of projects.
- 9.6 Risks
- 9.6.1 Implementation of the proposed new team will ensure that the Council is able to be proactive, innovative, and collaborative in meeting its growth delivery needs alongside those of business and investors across St. Helens. The increase in technical resource capacity will ensure that the appropriate scale of technical expertise is in place to enable the GDP Team to promote forward delivery in achieving the Council's key priority for accelerating the delivery of growth across the Borough.
- 9.6.2 Failure to invest in these additional resources would put at risk the considerable investment opportunities currently available to the Council through a range of funding streams. Such opportunities would be slowed or at worst, lost, which would have an impact on the Council's future financial sustainability due to lost income and opportunities.
- 9.6.3 Failure to invest in this team would put at risk the significant work undertaken in recent years to bring forward the extensive growth programme identified in Section 4.
- 9.6.4 The new capacity will enable the Council to be far more proactive and solution focused with partners in identifying new opportunities and in bringing forward new physical development, natural capital, employment, and shared prosperity opportunities.
- 9.6.5 There is a risk that recruitment to posts could be unsuccessful; therefore, investment in a positive national recruitment drive will help mitigate this issue.

9.7 Finance

- 9.7.1 The total cost of the proposal set out in this report is estimated over two years as summarised in the table below – this excludes costs for additional specialist external commercial finance and legal support, which will be commissioned as required for major complex projects and charged to those accounts wherever possible. A considerable amount of external funding has been secured to support the creation of the team this year as detailed below.
- 9.7.2 It has been assumed that vacancies for the new posts are filled with effect from January 2022 with interim agency appointments being facilitated due to current demand across a range of projects. The additional cost of the interim agency arrangements to the commencement of the new posts in January 2022 is £ 0.245m.
- 9.7.3 Accordingly, the cost of the team for the partial year 2021/22 is circa £ 0.430m (including £0.245m interim agency arrangements) and this is to be allocated from the following sources:

Funding	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	Total £m
Additional Cost of GDP Team	0.430	0.738	0.553	1.721
Financed by:				
LCR Capacity Funding	0.200			0.200
Town Deal Capacity Funding	0.049			0.049
Town Deal Business Case Funding	0.039			0.039
St. Helens Interchange Programme Management Support funding	0.071			0.071
St. Helens North Housing Access	0.071			0.071
Flexible Capital Receipts		0.738	0.553	1.291
Total	0.430	0.738	0.553	1.721

- 9.7.4 During the period it is possible for further capacity funding to be identified within additional funding streams and/or partnership arrangements that could be applied to reduce the call on the flexible use of capital receipts.
- 9.7.5 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-2024 includes provision for a level of growth in Council Tax and Business Rates income over the period. The proposed Team will have a significant impact on growth which is likely to result in additional Council Tax and Business Rates income for the Council and provide opportunities for the Council to further invest in support of its priorities and/or reduce the forecast funding gap. However, delays to the Government's review of the Business Rates retention system and the wider system of local government financing provide a level of uncertainty as to the extent to which locally driven growth can be retained by the Council in the future.
- 9.7.6 It is anticipated there will be additional future planning income generated from the planned major developments that the Team will deliver (e.g. planning application fees, performance planning agreements and transport related income such as Section 38 and Section 278 income). These could potentially result in funding levels above current income budgets to sustain the team beyond the initial two-year period.
- 9.7.7 Whilst the proposed posts in the new team will be established on a permanent basis, the funding identified at this stage is for an initial two-year period. Although internal candidates may fill these, at this stage, costings have been produced on the basis that the resulting vacancies will be filled, though this may not be the case as and when the individual resulting

vacancies are considered and reviewed.

9.7.8 Continuity beyond the initial 2-year period would be subject to an analysis of the impact of the Team's work, including an analysis of matters such as partner, investor and developer feedback, council tax receipts, business rates income and planning fee levels. This will be subject to a further report in 2023. In the absence of specific additional funding streams, base revenue funding may need to be identified to resource a reviewed GDP Team beyond this two-year period and further Council-wide savings or cost reductions needed as part of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.8 Policy Framework Implications

9.8.1 The proposals set out within this report have been generated in direct support of the Council's Policy Framework pursuant to their accelerated delivery, having particular regard to the Borough Strategy, Economic Reset and Recovery Plan and the Local Plan.

10. **Background papers**

10.1 Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030

10.2 Economic Reset and Recovery Plan

10.3 Reorganisation Phase 1 and Phase 2

11. **Appendices**

11.1 None