

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 December 2023

Subject: Approval of the Inter-Authority Agreement for the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Joint Committee

Portfolio Holder: Cllr N Bedford

Recommending:

(1) That the Inter-Authority Agreement for the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Joint Committee be approved.

1. The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town aims to coordinate and enable delivery of 16,000 homes by 2033, with another 7,000 planned beyond this. To bring these homes forward the Garden Town will require over £1.7billion of infrastructure investment into transport, education, healthcare, emergency services, community facilities, open space, sports and leisure, utilities and flood defences. 3,900 of these homes are allocated within Epping Forest District, making up over a third of the District's allocated housing to be built to the TCPA's Garden City Principles.

2. The growth will cross the boundaries of the five council Partners (which comprise East Hertfordshire, Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils, and Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils) and the Garden Town initiative was originally established under the 'Duty to Cooperate' arrangements to reach common agreement between those partners.

3. At the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town Board meeting on 17 July 2023, a report was considered that set out the future governance and partnership framework for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT). This report recommended that a Joint Committee (JC) be established to deliver locally led leadership, provide programme oversight and to formalise audit functions and risk-sharing equally between all partners, whilst ensuring all decisions are democratically accountable and transparent.

4. This follows agreement by Leaders & Lead Members at the HGGT Board meeting in June 2021 that the current board model of informal, duty to cooperate led collective decision-making in cross boundary HGGT matters, needed to evolve as the HGGT project moved from policy and plan making to project delivery. At the meeting on 17 July 2023, Board members endorsed the proposal to establish a Joint Committee, and the matter has now been referred to the governing bodies of the respective five partner authorities for ratification.

5. At its meeting on 13 November 2023, the Cabinet considered a report regarding the establishment of a constituted Joint Committee for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The Cabinet agreed to the establishment of the Joint Committee for the HGGT and endorsed the Inter-Authority Agreement. However, due to the £2million capital expenditure threshold within the Agreement, the Cabinet felt

that final approval of the Agreement should be undertaken by the Council. The Inter-Authority Agreement is attached at Appendix 1 of this report, and the Council is requested to give final approval for the Agreement.

6. Please note that this would not include any planning or highways decision making powers, which will remain with the relevant local authority.

7. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.