



Cabinet

Tuesday, 13 June 2023

Rushcliffe Growth Boards Review Process

Report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor A Brennan

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Rushcliffe Growth Boards were established in 2015, following a report to Cabinet in December 2014, and a further report in January 2015. The Boards were then reviewed in September 2017 and again in July 2019.
- 1.2. As it is now eight years since the Boards were established and four years since the last review, it is timely to review the Boards again to ensure they are still fit for purpose and delivering for Rushcliffe residents and businesses.
- 1.3. This report sets out the proposed process for a review of the Growth Boards, providing some background information, including the original objectives and the work done to date, wider context and proposed next steps.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) endorses the work of the Growth Boards to date;
- b) supports the proposal to take a report to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group to review options and identify a new approach; and
- c) agrees that a further report be brought to Cabinet in November 2023, detailing the outcome of the review and the Scrutiny Group discussions.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. As it is now eight years since the Boards were established and four years since the last review, it is timely to review the Boards again to ensure they are still fit for purpose and delivering for Rushcliffe residents and businesses.
- 3.2. In addition, since 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact which has accelerated changes on high streets everywhere. This is now being exacerbated by the cost of living pressures, which is further impacting our residents and businesses. It is important, therefore, that the Council takes this

proactive step to review the existing structure of the Boards and develop this as required to meet the new challenges.

4. Supporting Information

Background

- 4.1. The Growth Boards were established in 2015, following a report to Cabinet in December 2014, and a further report in January 2015. The original proposal included the Strategic Growth Board, the West Bridgford Growth Board, a Board covering Bingham and Radcliffe on Trent, and the continuation of the Cotgrave Growth Board, which focussed on the housing development and the redevelopment of the town centre. The local Growth Boards all reported into the Strategic Growth Board.
- 4.2. The report set out that the Strategic Growth Board would be a cross party member group chaired by the Leader based on proportionality rules. Membership of the Group is considered and agreed at Annual Council. Proposed membership of the other Boards was also included in the appendices of the report and included County, Borough, and Parish (where appropriate) representatives as well as local businesses, health etc. The further report to Cabinet in January 2015 established the proposed terms of reference for each of the Boards.
- 4.3. The Boards were established according to the membership specified in the Cabinet report and began meeting quarterly with terms of reference agreed and associated work plans developed.
- 4.4. The Boards were then reviewed in September 2017, following the appointment of a new Leader and Cabinet, with a further report to Cabinet. At this point it was agreed to:
 - Separate the Bingham and Radcliffe on Trent Boards due to the differing priorities of the areas
 - Establish a Growth Board for East Leake
 - Share the responsibility for chairing local Growth Boards amongst Cabinet members (had previously been the Portfolio Holder for the Business that was chairing them all).
- 4.5. These actions were followed up with the first meeting of the East Leake Growth Board taking place in September 2017, the first meeting of the Bingham Growth Board in November 2017 and Radcliffe on Trent December 2017. It was at this point that the Cotgrave Growth Board stopped meeting as the development was complete and the Board was no longer required.
- 4.6. The Growth Boards were then reviewed again in July 2019, to ensure they remained effective. At this point it was agreed that:
 - A new Board would be established for the Fairham development

- The Radcliffe on Trent and East Leake meetings be reduced to two per year (these had been quarterly).

4.7. The Boards have remained the same since then and are as follows:

- Strategic Growth Board – meets quarterly
- Bingham Growth Board – meets quarterly
- East Leake Growth Board – meets twice a year
- Fairham Growth Board – meets quarterly
- Radcliffe on Trent Growth Board – meets twice a year
- West Bridgford Growth Board – meets quarterly.

4.8. As it has been four years since the last review, it is timely to review the boards again. Since the last review, the country has been through Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and, more recently, the on-going cost of living pressures. All of this has had a significant impact on the economy and businesses continue to face a challenging environment for trade. In many cases there has been a disproportionate impact on high street and hospitality businesses with the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, accelerating existing changes in consumer behaviour.

4.9. This review of the Boards will ensure that any proposed new structure continues to support local town and village centres to survive and thrive. Whilst, to date, the impact on Rushcliffe's high streets and town centres appears to have been minimal in terms of vacancy rates and business closures, the Council cannot afford to be complacent.

Terms of Reference, Membership and what has been achieved

4.10. The Growth Boards each have their own terms of reference and action plans, which are reviewed at meetings. The remit of each group therefore differs slightly as each Board focusses on the identified priorities for that area. The overarching priority for the Boards though is to proactively plan and manage growth in the area to ensure the opportunity that the growth provided is maximised and that consideration is given to the impacts on local infrastructure.

4.11. The Fairham Growth Board is slightly different to the others as it has a very clear focus on the new housing and employment development on the A453. This will see the construction of 3000 homes and 20ha of employment land developed. The Board provides the opportunity for the developer to update local stakeholders and engage them in each stage of the development.

4.12. Membership of the local Boards is largely similar with representation from:

- Cabinet Portfolio Holder (Chair)
- Nottinghamshire County Councillor with appropriate portfolio / areas of responsibility
- Two Ward Members
- Parish/Town Councillor and Clerk

- Local business representatives.
- 4.13. Additional members on Boards are identified according to the priorities of the Board. This includes, for example:
- Education
 - Health
 - Local developers.
- 4.14. Over time, the membership of the Boards has changed including some Boards not including local ward members (Bingham) and, in most cases, business representation being non-existent despite numerous attempts to engage businesses. The review should include consideration of bringing consistency to Board membership whilst ensuring that this includes the right local stakeholders, with the right expertise and influence to ensure the objectives of the Boards can be achieved.
- 4.15. The Boards were intended to be action focussed and over the last eight years they have achieved a lot including:
- Brilliant Bingham Masterplan
 - Radcliffe on Trent Economic Masterplan
 - Retail reviews in all Growth Boards areas to help inform action plans and areas of focus.
 - Engagement of Severn Trent Water in East Leake, which will result in significant investment in the area
 - West Bridgford Commissioners report and supporting action plan
 - Establishment of West Bridgford Way website and social media channels
 - Shop Front Improvement Grant scheme providing financial support to approx. 30 high street businesses across the Borough
 - High Street Digital Grant in response to Covid-19, which has provided financial support to around 35 high street businesses across Rushcliffe
 - Central Avenue accessibility study
 - Financial support for East Leake Village Market
 - Public realm and Grange grounds improvements in Radcliffe on Trent
 - Supporting local groups including Ruddington Village Centre Partnership with the running of their market and other events
 - Appointment of a temporary Town Centre Manager to deliver events and support to high streets across the Borough.

Additional and related areas of work

- 4.16. When considering the review of the Growth Boards it is important to include other related areas of work for the Economic Growth Team as well as other departments of the Council. This section of the report provides a high-level overview of some of that work.
- 4.17. Newton Community Partnership Board has recently been established, which will operate in a similar way to the Fairham Growth Board. The formation of the

Board is a requirement contained within the S106 Agreement associated with the development and there is a small amount of funding to support the work of the Board. It has been agreed this Board will meet quarterly and administrative support will be provided by the Borough Council.

- 4.18. The redevelopment at Ratcliffe on Soar is a major project involving a Local Development Order, the establishment of the East Midlands Development Corporation and East Midlands Freeport. A Member Working Group was established, which met quarterly and provided a cross party Member Group with the opportunity to hear updates on the various programmes and provide input. This is not included for 2023/24 meetings, but updates could be picked up through the Strategic Growth Board. In addition, a Parish Update meeting is also held quarterly to update local stakeholders on the various programmes.
- 4.19. The Borough Council has received an allocation of £2,571,462 UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) and £596,193 Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF) from Government to be spent over three years (2022 to 2025). This must all be spent by the end of March 2025, previous reports on this have been brought to Cabinet most recently in February 2023. The funding supports three priority themes:
 - Communities and Place
 - Business Support
 - People and Skills.
- 4.20. All three themes link closely with the work and aspirations of the current Growth Boards. Some of the work being commissioned or planned for the current financial year (2023/24) could help inform future work of the Boards including a retail review of all of our town and village centres. Whilst the programme management of UKSPF and REPF is resource intensive it provides an opportunity for the Boards to consider future projects and initiatives.
- 4.21. The Rushcliffe Business Partnership is supported by the Borough Council and runs monthly networking for local businesses as well as a programme of quarterly events covering different topics. Some members of the Partnership are involved in the Growth Boards, and they provide useful insight into the local business community. The vast majority of businesses who engage with the Partnership are not high-street businesses and, therefore, bring a different perspective and expertise to Growth Board discussions. The Partnership also creates a database of over 1000 local businesses that can be engaged with as required to support the Boards.
- 4.22. As referenced earlier in the report, the Strategic Growth Board funding allocation allowed for the appointment of a temporary Town Centre Manager. One of the things that was implemented as an outcome of this work was High Street Groups in some of our town centres. These are more active in some areas than others, but all have a method of communication between businesses as a way to try and encourage greater collaboration for the benefit of all. Officers from the Council support these Groups sharing information on support available and attending meetings and events.

- 4.23. Cotgrave, Fairham and Newton developments have, or have had, Growth Boards, which are focussed on a specific development. Bingham Growth Board receives updates in relation to the housing development taking place there, but the remit of the Board is broader than that and so the development does not get the same level of focussed attention from local stakeholders. In addition, there are other strategic sites that are already delivering or will be in the coming years including Sharphill and Gamston. It may be that Boards for these larger developments are considered to be beneficial to keep local stakeholders engaged. In recent months stakeholder meetings have been held about the Sharphill development, which have included local Councillors and community groups. Whilst this is a different format to the Growth Boards they have served as a way to keep the local community informed and respond to issues that have arisen.
- 4.24. Each of the strategic development sites referenced above has employment land allocated as well as the housing land allocations. Whilst much of the housing is progressing well, development on the employment land has been slower. It has, therefore, been identified that bringing together local commercial landowners, agents and developers in a Forum would be useful. This would be an opportunity to hear updates on the employment land allocated and identify ways in which the Borough Council may be able to support in bringing forward development on those sites. It is intended that this Forum will meet before the end of the year.

Next steps

- 4.25. A large number of stakeholders have been involved in the Growth Boards over the last eight years and it is important that their views are reflected in any review that takes place. It is, therefore, proposed that a short survey is developed to be sent out to all Growth Board members to inform the review recommended to take place via the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group.
- 4.26. It is proposed that a report be prepared to go to Growth and Development Scrutiny Committee to present some options for the future of Growth Boards in Rushcliffe. The Group will have the opportunity to review and shape these, identifying a preferred option to be reported back to Cabinet later in the year.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

- 5.1. The Boards could be left to operate as they currently do. Whilst the Boards are effective and have achieved a lot as outlined in the report, due to the impact of changes over the last few years it is felt that a review is needed to ensure the Boards continue to add value.
- 5.2. The Boards could be removed completely. It may be that it is agreed that some of the Boards are removed as an outcome of the review; however, it is recommended that the review happens first to ensure the right decision is made when all available information has been considered.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

There is a risk that by not reviewing the Boards they will become ineffective and be a waste of time for all. The Council wants to ensure that they continue to serve a purpose and are responsive the changes in our communities and for our businesses over the last four years.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications of this report, the review will be conducted by officers of the Council. The Strategic Growth Board was allocated a budget of £100k in April 2022 and, to date, approximately £55k has been spent.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act implications of this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The Growth Boards were established to facilitate working with local stakeholders to proactively plan for and manage growth in Rushcliffe. Ensuring local communities and businesses are supported as they grow ensures that the quality of life is maintained.
Efficient Services	There are no links to this priority in this report.
Sustainable Growth	The Growth Boards were established to facilitate working with local stakeholders to proactively plan for and manage growth in Rushcliffe. This includes ensuring the opportunity that this growth provides is maximised for the benefit of our local town centres and businesses.
The Environment	There are no links to this priority in this report.

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) endorses the work of the Growth Boards to date;

- b) supports the proposal to take a report to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group to review options and identify a new approach; and
- c) agrees that a further report be brought to Cabinet in November 2023; detailing the outcome of the review and the Scrutiny Group discussions.

For more information contact:	Catherine Evans Service Manager Economic Growth and Property 0115 914 8552 cevens@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Growth Boards Report to Cabinet in December 2014 Growth Board Terms of Reference report to Cabinet in January 2015 Growth Boards Review report to Cabinet in September 2017 Growth Boards Review report to Cabinet in July 2019
List of appendices:	None