

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET**

**Date** 8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2017

1. **HEADING** Keele University – ambitions for growth
- Submitted by:** Executive Director, Regeneration and Development
- Portfolio:** Policy, People and Partnerships
- Ward(s) affected:** Keele primarily, with borough-wide implications

**Purpose of the Report**

To set out the wider context for Keele University's development and growth plans and to consider endorsing the University's direction of travel.

**Recommendations**

- (a) That members note the information provided.
- (b) That members resolve to support the University's ambitions and plans for growth, as framed by the Keele Deal and the University's Growth Strategy, thereby contributing to the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the borough.
- (c) That members authorise officers to take all reasonable, proportionate and appropriate steps to facilitate and enable growth of the University and environs including the shaping of future strategies, policies and plans of the Council (including any in which the Council is a strategic partner).

**Reasons**

To reflect the importance of the University and that of the Keele Science and Business Park to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough and to demonstrate the linkages between the various strategies and initiatives which place the University's growth plans in a more strategic context.

1. **Background**

- 1.1. Keele University has ambitious plans to expand and strategic partners are supportive of this ambition. Given the importance of both the University itself and that of Keele Science and Innovation Park to the economy and life of the Borough, officers consider it to be of the utmost importance to the Borough Council that it is able to work alongside the University in developing and supporting its plans for growth. This report reviews at a summary level a variety of initiatives and development plans which are under development or have been completed recently. Such plans have either been initiated by the University itself or provide context for the University's growth plans and is intended to clarify the relationship between these and to demonstrate how the direction of travel is very much aligned to sub regional strategies.

- 1.2 Later this year a report will be made to Cabinet on the emerging Newcastle West Masterplan (see further below), which will set out a vision for the wider area that would enable the further development of the Keele University campus too, subject to any formal proposals which may emerge in the forthcoming Local Plan. This report shows how that body of work is rooted within a coherent and clear economic context. That said it is important to note the Council should not take any steps in its capacity as land owner that could be regarded as prejudicial to due process in the Local Plan preparation or be pre-emptive of the outcome of it.

## 2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The Council has set out its ambitions and objectives in terms of economic growth in the current Economic Development Strategy; the importance and value of the University, along with its Science and Innovation Park, to the sub-regional economy is evident in this Strategy. This is further amplified in the Council Plan and provides a strong dimension of the corporate priority around “Borough of opportunity”.
- 2.2 In order for the University’s objectives for growth to be optimised it is important for the Council to review the various plans and strategies and consider whether it wishes to support them, at least in principle. In the following paragraphs the report summarises the suite of relevant documents in this regard (including existing and emerging strategic Council policy documents). Members will note that the list of documents are grouped into those which are University-led and those which are prepared by the Council or other organisations or partnerships.

### **Keele University’s 2015-20 Strategic Plan.**

- 2.3 This was adopted in 2015 and sets out the university’s strategic aims, setting out its ambitions toward building the University’s research base and reputation, building on the University’s ‘distinctive curriculum’, contributing positively to the society, economy, culture, health and well-being of the communities which the University serves, and promoting environmental sustainability in all that the University does. This Plan provides the context for the next three documents.

### **Keele University campus masterplan (emerging)**

- 2.4 The University’s short term growth objectives (up to 2020) are largely considered capable of being delivered within the existing Planning policy framework (including the relevant policies of the North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy – see 2.12). Nevertheless the University has commissioned the preparation of this Masterplan to provide a clear, comprehensive and coherent spatial framework to demonstrate how the Growth Strategy’s physical development requirements would be most effectively delivered. At the time of writing it is anticipated that this document will be used by the University to contextualise individual schemes coming forward through the Development Management process.

### **The ‘Keele Deal’ (January 2017)**

- 2.5 This is a strategically important document which has emerged from an informal but strategic sub-regional partnership between the University and

some its key partners including the NHS, the University Hospitals of North Midlands, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council to generate long term economic growth for the region through £70m of investment in research-led innovations over the next five years. A copy of the Keele Deal summary brochure is attached at Appendix 1. As members will see it sets out eight main priority themes as follows:

- Priority 1 – Keele Research and Innovation Support Programme(KRISP)
- Priority 2 – Mercia Centre for Innovation Leadership (MCIL)
- Priority 3 – Smart Energy Network Demonstrator
- Priority 4 – An NHS-University-Industry collaboration
- Priority 5 – Harnessing global reach and visibility for local economic impact
- Priority 6 – A strategic site of the Northern Gateway Development Zone
- Priority 7 – Higher-level educational provision
- Priority 8 – A spatial masterplan for the University campus and local areas

- 2.6 The Keele Deal, which has been endorsed by senior representatives at Keele University, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, as well as the Borough Council, was formally launched on 20 January 2017. Priorities 6 and 8 are of greatest direct interest to the future actions of this Council as summarised below. When implemented the overall programme of activities is expected to achieve a range of outcomes including the creation of at least 700 high value jobs and injecting £0.21 billion into the local area.

#### **The Mercia Centre and Innovation Centre 6**

- 2.7 This is a planned Staffordshire County Council development at Keele Science and Innovation Park and will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet.

#### **Newcastle West Masterplan (emerging)**

- 2.8 This emerging masterplan will consider the development potential of land to the west of Newcastle including the former Keele Municipal Golf Course. The masterplan will seek to respond to the likely development needs to be identified in the forthcoming Local Plan Spatial Options report. It is to be prepared by specialist consultants for future consideration by the local planning authority as part of the emerging Local Plan process.

- 2.9 It is intended that a report on this matter will be made to a future meeting of Cabinet; likely to be around summer 2017. Subject to the outcome of the Local Plan Spatial Options process, noting that much of the land in this area is designated as Green Belt, it is envisaged that the report and masterplan will set out the schematic proposals to address both known development needs and development that will enhance the University's growth potential and economic impact. In addition it will explain the arrangements for consulting stakeholders including the two affected Parish Councils as well as local residents and others.

#### **Keele Neighbourhood Plan (emerging)**

- 2.10 The 2011 Localism Act introduced the concept of 'neighbourhood planning' and gave parish councils the power to prepare their own neighbourhood

plans. Keele Parish Council has begun this process to frame the relatively short term future development of Keele Parish (next 5 years). The Plan will need to consider the University's growth ambitions.

#### **Newcastle Borough Council – Council Plan (2016 to 2018)**

- 2.11 The Council Plan states that the Council will work with partners to maximise investment in the Borough and encourage enterprise and employment generating activities that will create opportunities for improving prosperity, as well as improving the well-being of our communities. It goes on to say that the Council will work with partners to ensure effective and efficient development and delivery of key projects including the development of the Keele Masterplan to maximise the opportunities whilst reducing any negative effect to the borough. Working with the University to help promote the further growth of the University and its Science and Business Park fits this objective closely, most particularly the work which has gone into the preparation of the Newcastle West Extension Masterplan (see 2.5 above).

#### **North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy (adopted 2009)**

- 2.12 This Strategy provides the main planning policy context for the local planning authority's consideration of development proposals relating to the University. It is considered to provide adequate policy direction to facilitate the University's Growth Strategy 2015-20.

#### **Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Local Plan (to 2031)**

- 2.13 This is the emerging Local Plan and will be informed by the range of documents referred to in this report as well as key elements of the evidence base (e.g. the Employment Land Review). This plan is being prepared jointly by the two local planning authorities and will set the planning context for development in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle under Lyme for the next 15 years.
- 2.14 A report will be made to a future meeting of Cabinet (likely to be early summer 2017) to consider the "Spatial Options" for the Plan (of where major housing and employment proposals are being considered) and it is anticipated that a Draft Local Plan will have been completed by the end of 2017 with a view to final Plan adoption by early 2019 (subject to the timing of any Examination in Public during the latter part of 2018). As part of this process it will be necessary for the University (with support from its key partners) to articulate the perceived economic benefits arising from future development relating to its core activities.

#### **Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)**

- 2.15 The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan sets out how the LEP will develop Staffordshire's economy over the next 20 years. This will be used as a basis for prioritising resource allocation, including any available funding secured from Government, such as Growth Deal monies and The Growing Places Fund to invest in the local economy. The further growth of Keele University and the "high tech" businesses which could be attracted to Keele Science and Innovation Park is seen as one of the SEP's priorities. A refresh of the currently approved SEP is currently taking place.

**Northern Gateway Development Zone (NGDZ) emerging Growth Strategy (up to 2040)**

- 2.16 This Partnership will provide an economic growth strategy for the South Cheshire / North Staffordshire sub-region in the context of the major economic stimulus which will be provided by investment in HS2 and a new rail hub to be located near to Crewe. The further growth of Keele University along with the Science and Innovation Park and its environs is seen as a major component in this.

**University Town (“Studentification”)**

- 2.17 On a broader level, the borough council has begun to engage a range of partners and stakeholders to promote awareness and stimulate actions in order to create a greater sense of Newcastle under Lyme being a University Town. Members will be aware that a number of accommodation blocks are being constructed by a range of providers and this will provide opportunities for businesses (as the providers of goods and services) to differentiate their offer to meet the future demands and needs of student tenants (thereby improving the resilience and vitality of the town centre economy). In addition it is important that students’ experiences are positive both from the University’s perspective but also from a longer term economic viewpoint because it helps to strengthen the prospects of graduate retention and promotes return visits to the town’s environs.

**3 Options**

- 3.1 Do nothing / do minimum – the Council could decide to take no form of action or merely note the various strategies and plans.
- 3.2 Or the Council could consider making a formal decision to either support or object to the University’s growth strategy and related plans/documents.

**4 Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 The principal issue is for the Council to consider whether it wishes to not only acknowledge the role that Keele University plays in the local economy (providing both direct and indirect employment, supporting supply chain spending, teaching, undertaking research, providing a key opportunity for inward investment, promoting local aspiration) but whether it wishes to formally endorse the direction of travel by taking steps to align relevant strategies, policies and plans for which it has the sole or contributory responsibility.
- 4.2 Your officers consider that to support the University’s growth ambitions, at a level of principle, would be wholly consistent with both the Council’s strategic objectives relating to economic growth and the associated existing and emerging strategies across the sub-region. The proposal is therefore to record the Borough Council’s broad support for the University’s growth plans where they are consistent with the current strategies and plans of the Council and its partners. Whilst with regard to long term plans it is recommended that officers be authorised to work with the University to ensure that the Council is well placed to consider and influence future policy alignment where appropriate. On a point of detail it is important to note that this in-principle support would not bind the Council’s hands as local planning authority in

making decisions on individual planning applications. Each individual scheme would need to be determined on its own merits against all material Planning considerations at the time of any such decision (e.g. the Development Plan, site-specific constraints or technical issues, as well as key strategic policy documents).

5. **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

5.1 Economic Development is one of the Council's key corporate objectives and as Keele University and its Science and Innovation Park is a key driver to the economic growth of the Borough so it is considered vitally important that the Council identifies ways in which to support such growth as a matter of principle.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Council is not under any statutory duty to act. However it has powers under the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There is no identified differential impact resulting from this decision.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this decision. There are, of course, staff implications arising from staff investing time working alongside colleagues at the University in helping to develop and shape their emerging development proposals. For reasons explained earlier this is considered appropriate in view of the likely economic benefits to be derived.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 There are no major risks directly arising from following this decision, however it should be noted that should the Council cease to support Keele University then there will be an adverse impact on the future employment opportunities in the Borough and the economy in general. In the future there will be risks arising from specific investment decisions and planning matters and these will be assessed and reported in later reports.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 This is not a key decision; the report does not require additional Council resources and does not directly affect more than 2 wards.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

11.1 The approach to joint commissioning of the Keele University / Newcastle West Masterplan was approved by Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014.

12. **List of Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1 – copy of the Keele Deal summary brochure.

13. **Background Papers**

- 13.1 The published reports discussed above are available on a variety of websites; these can be signposted by contacting the Economic Development Team.