

# Cabinet



Date of meeting: 11 August 2025

Title of Report: **Defence Partnership and City Centre Regeneration Programme Update**

Lead Member: Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Leader)

Lead Strategic Director: Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)

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Your Reference:

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

The report provides an update on the investment by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in the City. It sets the context of the strategic importance of Plymouth in delivering the Continuous at Sea Deterrent (CASD). This is a national security endeavour. It aligns with the concentration and pace of innovation in Marine Autonomy, which has resulted in Plymouth being designated as the National Centre for Marine Autonomy. The Council is working in partnership to support the growth dividend and needs to realign its delivery to support defence growth.

A key element of supporting the growth, is ensuring we have a City Centre which is an attractive place to live and work. Changing the image of the City and providing the homes and transport network needed for a future workforce requires masterplanning and new strategic partnerships with key players (such as the MoD and Babcock), alongside key government departments (including Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government).

The report provides an update on the city centre regeneration programme, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Homes England to work together on ambitious plans to deliver a 'new town in the city' of 10,000 homes in and around the city centre.

The report sets out the Council's engagement with the Governments New Towns Taskforce through the call for evidence process. The new towns programme aims to maximise the provision of new homes, accelerate delivery of new homes and diversify the housing market.

The report sets out the next steps in the regeneration programme including seeking approval to receive funding, to commence procurement of masterplanning and technical studies and to delegate award of contract to the Strategic Director for Growth.

## Recommendations and Reasons

1. Endorse the partnership working with the MoD, MHCLG and Babcock as set out in the report to drive the delivery of a sustainable growth dividend from defence investment in Plymouth.

*Reason: To demonstrate the Cabinet's endorsement of the work of the defence partnership and support efforts to realise the growth dividend by delivering the following aims: 'Strong Foundations; Drive economic growth; Regeneration and attraction; Break down barriers to opportunity.'*

2. Notes the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Homes England to progress ambitions to deliver 'a new town in the city' of 10,000 new homes within the city centre and surrounding area.

*Reason: For Cabinet to mark this major milestone in the Plymouth city centre regeneration programme.*

3. Notes the engagement by the City Council with the New Towns Taskforce call for evidence as set out in the report and endorses further discussions with Government on the programme as necessary.

*Reason: For Cabinet to be aware of the discussions to date regarding the City Council's engagement with the emerging new towns programme and allow further more detailed discussions with Government to take place.*

4. Accepts up to £1 million of external funding for the procurement of technical studies and masterplanning work as set out in the report and delegates the award of contracts to the Strategic Director for Growth where they do not already have the authority to do so.

*Reason: To comply with City Council regulatory procedures in accepting external funding and to allow the procurement process to commence at the earliest opportunity.*

### **Alternative options considered and rejected**

1. Do not engage with the emerging new towns programme. The Government's new towns programme is likely to be a major delivery vehicle for new homes across the Country. There is a close alignment between the intent of the MoU with Homes England, to deliver a 'new town in the city' of 10,000 new homes and to drive transformational regeneration in and around the city centre, and the criteria set out in the New Towns Policy Statement. Engagement with the programme at this early Call for Evidence stage is non-binding on the Council or Government. To not engage with the new towns programme at this early stage would represent a missed opportunity to potentially secure support from Government for delivery of the ambitions set out in the MoU. For this reason, the option is rejected.
2. Do not receive funding, do not commission masterplanning and technical studies and rely on existing masterplans and Local Plan. The existing masterplans and Local Plan remain relevant and provide a positive and pro-growth policy framework under which to consider applications for new development. However, the existing masterplans are now over eight years old and do not fully reflect the challenges and opportunities of today or the opportunity presented by the strategic partnership with Homes England to drive delivery. Without the new technical studies, the partners will not fully understand the potential capacity of the area. This could lead to a less coordinated approach to new development, consideration of proposals on a site-by-site basis, and sub-optimal outcomes for the City. For this reason, the option is rejected.

### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan**

#### **Corporate Plan**

**Democracy** – the work to be commissioned will include specialist community engagement experts to develop and deliver a full programme of engagement to ensure communities can have their say.

**Responsibility** – the work to be commissioned will create a framework for future decision making about development in the City Centre.

Fairness – the work to be commissioned will aim to ensure that development in the City Centre benefits all of society and helps to overcome inequity in access to high quality and affordable housing, employment opportunities, shops and services.

Co-operation – the work to be commissioned is part of strategic partnership with Homes England.

Build more homes – the engagement with the New Towns Taskforce and the work to be commissioned will identify sites and opportunities for many more new homes including affordable homes.

Trusting and engaging our communities – the work to be commissioned will deliver a programme of community engagement on the future of the City Centre.

### **Plymouth Plan**

Growing city – the work to be commissioned will help to set a framework for growth in the area.

Regional city - the work to be commissioned will define the future economic role for the City Centre.

Growth Area – the work to be commissioned seeks to enable the growth aspirations for the City Centre & Waterfront Growth Area

### **Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

The masterplanning and technical studies are to be fully funded by external partners (Homes England/ MHCLG).

Plymouth City Council will commit staff resources to procure, appoint and manage the consultancy contract(s) and resource a full programme of stakeholder and community engagement activities.

Plymouth City Council will commit staff resources to further any discussions with Government on the emerging new towns programme.

### **Financial Risks**

Risk that funding for masterplanning and technical studies is not approved. This risk is mitigated by seeking funding commitment prior to entering any contract(s) with suppliers.

Risk that tender returns exceed available funds or suppliers cannot meet the conditions of the funding. This risk is mitigated by the scope of services being informed by market intelligence from Homes England derived from similar commissions through their professional services framework. The procurement process will enable consideration of proposals in terms of quality and cost. The terms and conditions of the funding will be embedded into the terms of the contract with appointed suppliers.

### **Legal Implications**

(Provided by Liz Bryant)

The Memorandum of Understanding between PCC and Homes England is a set of high level principles and guidelines that set out how the two organisations will work together with no legal implications.

### **Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

The masterplanning and technical studies commission will set the development framework for growth and new buildings in the City Centre. It will have environmental benefits by:

- focusing development needs on sustainable brownfield land where the environmental benefits of compact urban living can be realised and releasing development pressure on less sustainable and greenfield sites;
- ensure best use of existing infrastructure to support growth rather than building new;
- ensuring new buildings are built to high environmental and energy performance standards;
- utilise and help deliver carbon-saving infrastructure and technology such as heat-networks;
- ensuring high quality green space and urban tree planting and landscaping.

### Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The masterplanning and technical studies commission will include dedicated project management resource to ensure that compliance with statutory requirements are met and that risks are identified and managed effectively throughout the work.

The masterplanning and technical studies commission will include communications and engagement specialists to ensure meaningful engagement with stakeholders and communities. As set out in the Equality Impact Assessment, this engagement will be designed and delivered in ways which must ensure equitable access for all including harder to reach demographics.

### Appendices

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	City Centre Briefing Report							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment							

### Background papers:


*\*Add rows as required to box below*

*Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.*

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 31/07/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) (approved by email 01/08/2025)  Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Leader)    Date approved: 31/07/2025											