

# HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

26 July 2023

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## Membership of Solent Cluster

### RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Lloyd

**Key Decision:** No

**Report number:** HBC/025/2023

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### 1. Purpose

- a. This paper seeks Cabinet approval to recommend to Full Council that Havant Borough becomes a member of the Solent Cluster.

### 2. Recommendation

- a. Cabinet recommends to Full Council that Havant Borough becomes a member of the Solent Cluster.

### 3. Executive Summary

- a. The Solent Cluster is a new partnership launched in 2022 that aims to make the Solent 'a leading centre for low carbon investment that will grow the regional economy, protect skilled jobs, and create new employment opportunities in the energy technologies and industries of tomorrow.'
- b. The Solent Cluster brings together a significant number of high-profile members, this regional partnership aims to drive low carbon investment and innovation, which should capture up to 3.2million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.
- c. Signing up as members requires the Council to sign up to the vision of the cluster (Solent Cluster Charter). Further details of the vision are

contained in Section 5 as well as the supporting appendices, which includes a full list of current members. Current members of the Solent Cluster include private, public and non-governmental organisations which wish to collaborate to decarbonise the Solent region.

#### **4. Additional Budgetary Implications**

- a. None

#### **5. Background and relationship to Corporate Strategy and supporting strategies and policies**

##### *The Solent Vision*

- a. The Vision of the Solent Cluster is to become a leading centre for low carbon investment that will grow the regional economy, protect skilled jobs and create new employment opportunities in the cleaner energy technologies and industries of tomorrow.

##### *Our Climate Change and Environment Strategy*

- b. Havant Borough Council has a Climate Change and Environment Strategy which was adopted by Full Council in September 2021. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a clear statement of the Council's climate change and environment objectives and identify priorities that will drive action and promote accountability.
- c. We recognise that we are all partners in the delivery of this strategy as individuals, families, communities, organisations, schools and businesses across the borough.
- d. Our strategy provides a vision for Havant Borough Council and its priorities over the next few years. The strategy describes high level objectives to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 and to protect and enhance the local natural environment. It covers spheres of

influence to drive change and lift the level of ambition for a future where people and nature thrive. We want to take an inclusive approach, so everybody takes action to tackle the climate crisis.

- e. Membership of the Solent Cluster aligns with our Corporate Strategy in particular commitments around supporting growth in our area and improvements to our area by making Havant Borough a great place to live, work and enjoy.

## **6. Options considered**

- a. The preferred option is to sign up as a member of the Solent Cluster in order to work collaboratively with the wide range of partners, recognising that we are all partners in the delivery of effecting real change in energy production and consumption.
- b. An alternative would be to not sign up to the Solent Cluster and to continue to deliver our Climate Change and Environment Strategy. However, this would potentially result in us as an organisation missing out on opportunities of working with a wider group of public, private and non-profit organisations and missing out on highlighting to our businesses opportunities around decarbonisation plans and funding.

## **7. Resource implications**

### **a. Financial implications**

- i. There are no financial commitments of joining the Solent Cluster. Our commitment will be to work with the Cluster to help deliver its vision. If in the future the Cluster requires a financial commitment to continue Membership or formalised resource commitment then this will be considered and brought back to Cabinet for review.

## **Section 151 Officer comments**

There are no initial financial implications (positive or negative) from joining the Solent Cluster. It is unlikely that there will be any future negative financial implications, but it could put us in a place to access specific funding at some point in the future (or rather, not joining could preclude us from accessing funds). Therefore I fully support this proposal.

### **b. Human resources implications**

- i. None

### **c. Information governance implications**

- i. None

### **d. Climate and environment implications**

- i. As discussed in this report, the opportunity of joining the Solent Cluster would provide a platform for Havant to access opportunities to help deliver low carbon investment in the borough, potentially bring in new jobs and investment for the benefit of our communities and help us to make a major contribution in the move towards net zero.

### **e. Other resources implications**

- i. By signing up to the Cluster we would look at engaging with the Cluster in particular to support efforts in making the area a leading centre for low carbon investment. This work would likely involve our Economic Development team working with the cluster to help drive local economic growth, protect skilled jobs and look at the creation of new employment opportunities, through signposting opportunities that the cluster identifies

## 8. Legal implications

- a. There are no legal commitments of becoming members of the Solent Cluster. Our commitment would be to sign up the Vision, which as per the detail in the report, already aligns with our existing Corporate Strategy and Climate Change and Environmental Strategy.

### **Monitoring Officer comments**

The are no legal commitments or obligations arising from membership of the Solent Cluster. The Council may resolve to become a member.

## 9. Risks and mitigations

- a. Three possible risks have been highlighted in terms of becoming members of the Solent Cluster and these are articulated below which accompanying mitigations.
  - i. There is a risk that we as a borough are aligning with organisations who may not have the interests of Havant Borough residents at the forefront of their plans. Joining any group of public, private and non-profit will carry this risk. However, we recognise that in order to achieve our climate ambitions we cannot work in isolation and being part of a group with such a large membership will potentially bring about opportunities which Havant can explore.
  - ii. A second risk covers funding as at present there is no cost of membership. The Solent Cluster is currently being funded from private sector and there is potential that this funding may stop and request made to all members to contribute or that the funding will result in particular focus that does not match our ambitions. This is mitigated by the approach that the Cluster is taking at looking at other funding sources, in particular government funding in order to drive forward decarbonisation plans. In addition, if we are asked to contribute to membership this will be considered by Cabinet.

- iii. A third risk covers commitments that the Cluster may require on us as a council. As a new organisation the Solent Cluster is still exploring how best to deliver its vision and this may result in request to members that do not align with priorities. However, the only commitment at present is to sign up to the Cluster vision and our commitment will be to help support the Cluster, for example through signposting businesses in our area that may benefit from decarbonisation plans. If we feel that commitments from the Cluster cannot be met then we would be free at any time to remove our membership.

## **10. Consultation**

- a. Discussions have taken place with the Solent Cluster team on requirements to join and we have briefed relevant Cabinet leads.

## **11. Communications**

- a. At this stage there are no further communications plans other than confirming our membership.
- b. There is the potential for further communications around potentially highlighting the benefits of being members to our area and/or signposting our businesses to the Cluster and how they could become involved, in particular around future decarbonisation plans/access to funding.

## **12. Appendices**

- a. Solent Cluster Charter
- b. The Solent Cluster Brochure including membership

## **13. Background papers**

- a. None

**Agreed and signed off by:**

**Cabinet lead:** Cllr Lloyd 13 July 2023

**Executive Head:** Alex Robinson 12 July 2023

**Monitoring Officer:** Jo McIntosh 17 July 2023

**Section 151 Officer:** Steven Pink 12 July 2023

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