

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee held on Wednesday 7 September 2022 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Rowena Hay	Dev Chakraborty
Cllr Rob Bird	Cllr Philip Robinson
Cllr Richard Cook	Cllr Catherine Braun
Cllr Tony Dale (Chair)	

Substitutes:

Apologies: Cllr Bernie O'Neill

In Attendance:	Simon Excell (GCC)	Paul James (CDC)
	Gillian Parkinson (GCC)	Peter Williams (FDC)
	Katherine Martin (GCC)	Jon McGinty (Glos City)
	Angela Presdee (GCC)	Alistair Cunningham (TBC)
	Laura Powick (GCC)	Pete Carr (GCC)
	Kathy O'Leary (SDC)	James Cooke (Western Gateway)
	Andrew Cummings (SDC)	
	Tracey Birkinshaw (CBC)	

Attendance via Video

Conference: Cllr Matt Babbage (GCC)
Lisa McCance (Shared Intelligence)

357. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Bernie O'Neill.

358. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

359. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

360. GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S ROLE IN WESTERN GATEWAY'S GROWTH AGENDA

The Committee received a presentation from James Cooke, Western Gateway, on Gloucestershire's role in Western Gateway's growth agenda.

Members were informed that Western Gateway had become a formal entity in 2019, and had continued to grow despite the context of the pandemic, holding its inaugural conference in March 2022 and doubling its staffing between 2021 and 2022. Western Gateway had also recently received confirmation of a £1million three-year settlement from Government.

Members noted that Western Gateway worked across both Wales and England, covering 8 city regions as well as rural regions, and being home to 4.4million people. The area's economy was worth £110billion, and featured clusters of strength, such as in cyber, advanced engineering and green energy. In particular, the partnership was working on a hydrogen project, and would be looking into the tidal capacity of the River Severn.

There were also a number of challenges affecting the region, including a skills challenge, particularly in South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, and pockets of deprivation within cities.

The Committee was presented with the 5 key missions of Western Gateway for the area, which included adding £34billion to the economy; connecting communities; attracting investments and growing exports by £4billion; unlocking innovation; and decarbonising the economy.

Members were advised of the 4 key approaches to working with partners within the region, which included leading on projects, such as on the Strategic Rail Vision; collaborating on projects, such as launching the Hydrogen Ecosystem project; convening partners; and advocating for partners.

James Cooke provided further details on the projects Western Gateway was leading on, in particular the Severn Edge STEP Fusion Project.

One member sought further details on the partnership's renewable energy projects. In response, it was explained that hydrogen was the focus as a starting point, as well as considering the use of the Severn Estuary and tidal power to meet the energy challenge. It was noted that the partnership was keen to support conversations between partners on green energy projects.

One member asked for further details on the sites shortlisted for the STEP Fusion Project by Government. Members were advised that the final contenders included Gloucestershire, Cornwall, Cumbria, Nottingham and Scotland.

There was a query as to Western Gateway's strategic relationship with Oxford and Cambridge, and how Gloucestershire could better access transport links in Oxford. In response, it was understood that Western Gateway would be keen to have strategic conversations across a wider geographical area.

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

A question was asked relating to the future of the Severn conductor industry given the current situation in the Ukraine and shortage of mineral supplies.

There was also a query as to whether Western Gateway could play a facilitation role within Gloucestershire on destination management and tourism. In response, James Cooke welcomed the opportunity for further conversations with partners in the County on future opportunities.

361. STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND UPDATE

Tracey Birkinshaw, Director of Community and Economic Development, Cheltenham Borough Council, presented the report on the current position of the Statement of Common Ground.

Members were informed that all local authorities in Gloucestershire, including Gloucestershire County Council and the GFirst LEP, had formally committed to the Statement. Tewkesbury Borough Council was in the process of arranging a date to formally sign-off the Statement.

Members were advised that the purpose of the Statement was to set out the common principles for planning which all local authorities in the County could work towards, and that the intention was for an action plan to be developed to act as a delivery tool for the Statement. An action plan would also enable links to be made to other key outcomes, such as climate change.

It was proposed that the GEGJC Senior Officer Group (SOG) be tasked with considering an application for SEDF funding to resource the delivery of an action plan. The GEGJC SOG, following any approval of funding, would then propose a lead partner to support the delivery of the action plan.

The Committee discussed the issues raised in the report.

A question was raised as to the economic value of the action plan. A further question was asked as to the purpose of the action plan.

In response, it was explained that the action plan would take forward and deliver on the principles contained within the Statement. Responsibility for actions would also be identified within the plan, and would enable links to be made with other key cross-cutting priorities, such as the environment, in addition to housing and employment.

It was queried how it would be perceived by an inspector should an action plan not be developed.

Several officers welcomed the proposed development of an action plan, which could be used proactively and collectively to benefit future planning within the County, and could be used by the City Region Board to shape the strategic plan for Gloucestershire.

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

Several members also commented that the logical next step was to develop an action plan, which could be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee agreed for the GEGJC SOG to take away the recommendation to develop a SEDF funding bid and to develop proposals for developing an action plan going forward. The bid and proposals would then be brought back to a meeting of the GEGJC for its consideration.

362. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

Lisa McCance, Shared Intelligence, provided a verbal update on UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) submissions.

The Committee was informed that a business case for the Multiply programme for adult numeracy had been submitted in June by Gloucestershire County Council.

Local investment plans had been developed by the district councils for the second part of the UKSPF, which were submitted by 1 August. In support of this process, Shared Intelligence had prepared an evidence base.

A meeting between districts would be held in the next few weeks to share best practice and learning and to see where collaboration could be possible.

Lead officers from the district councils provided verbal updates on their UKSPF submissions. It was understood that 4 of the districts had welcomed additional funding for a rural element. It was also noted that districts were awaiting the outcome of their submissions, the details of which would hopefully be released in time for further updates to be provided at the Committee meeting in November.

There were several comments relating to the usefulness of the evidence base produced by Shared Intelligence.

An item on the UKSPF would be included on the agenda for the November Committee meeting.

363. GFIRST LEP UPDATE

Dev Chakraborty, Deputy Chief Executive of the GFirst LEP, presented the Committee with an update on the work of the GFirst LEP.

Members were informed that a number of capital projects had come to fruition, including the launch of the Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College, the opening of Hartpury University's Digital Innovation Farm, and the completion of the West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme.

Members noted that the Inward Investment Team had attended a number of events to showcase the county to international businesses. The Team had also launched a

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

new advanced engineering and manufacturing proposition, promoting Gloucestershire as a key location for businesses.

An update on the Made in Gloucestershire scheme was also provided. The scheme had launched successfully in July, with 53 local businesses having already signed up to it.

364. BUSINESS RATE POOL

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources, Stroud District Council, provided the Committee with an update on the Business Rate Pool, including the current position of the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).

Members were advised that all SEDF funding bids conditionally approved at the GEGJC meeting in May had now been confirmed, following confirmation of funds available.

It was noted that business rates growth for the 2021/22 financial year was just over £12.8m, and the total pool gain was just under £3.2million. This was slightly less than the previous financial year.

Current estimates for 2022/23 were for a pool gain of around £3.8million. However, it was recognised that, given the national picture, it would be a difficult year for local businesses and there could be significant change to the current estimates.

The Committee was advised, in terms of the future of the business rates pool, that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had written to local authorities requesting proposals for pooling arrangements for 2023/24.

Finally, it was noted that £200k currently remained unallocated in the SEDF.

365. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Cllr Matt Babbage, Chair of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC), provided the Committee with an update on the activities of the GEGSC.

Members were informed that at their last meeting, the GEGSC had received a presentation on Zero Carbon Visioning and proposals for a Mass Rapid Transport system from Luisa Senft-Hayward and Dr David Land, Gloucestershire County Council.

At its next meeting, the GEGSC would consider an update on the Golden Valley Development Project, and an update on the issues relating to the Statement of Common Ground.

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

Members were also reminded that a report from the GEGSC detailing their findings on Modern Methods of Construction had been shared with them via email.

366. GCC ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

The Committee noted the GCC Economic Dashboard, which was attached to the agenda for the meeting.

367. FORWARD (WORK) PLAN

One member proposed that the unscheduled items relating to bus services and public transport access included on the work plan be scheduled for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

Another member countered that it would be more appropriate for the GEGSC to consider these items from an economic perspective.

On being put to a vote, the Committee agreed to recommend to the GEGSC that it consider an item on Bus Services, including current issues and bus driver shortages; the impact of these issues on the economy and vulnerable people; and the vision for bus services in Gloucestershire and how to bridge the gap.

368. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the meeting dates for the remainder of 2022 and for 2023.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 11.35 am