

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee held on Wednesday 26 January 2022 commencing at 2.00 pm at the Virtual Meeting - Web ex meeting.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Rowena Hay	Dev Chakraborty
Cllr Rob Bird	Cllr Bernie O'Neill
Cllr Richard Cook	Cllr Philip Robinson (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Tony Dale (Chair)	Cllr Catherine Braun

Substitutes:

Apologies:

Officers in attendance:

Colin Chick (GCC)	Jon McGinty (Glos City)
Steve Mawson (GCC)	Paul James (CDC)
Simon Excell (GCC)	Gareth Edmundson (CBC)
Angela Presdee (GCC)	Sandra Ford (TBC)
Gillian Parkinson (GCC)	Andrew Cummings (SDC)
Katherine Martin (GCC)	Peter Williams (FODDC)
Laura Powick (GCC)	Pete Carr (GFirst LEP)
Cllr Matt Babbage (GCC)	Lisa McCance (Shared Intelligence)

320. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies at the meeting from Committee members.

321. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

322. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

323. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

At its meeting on 17 November 2021, the Committee received a number of presentations on modern methods of construction, as part of a series of sessions on the topic. It was hoped that a report would be presented to the GEGJC on the findings of the Scrutiny Committee at a later date.

At its meeting on 19 January 2022, the GEGSC received a presentation on the Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund Programme, as well receiving an update on strategic planning in the County.

One member asked whether the GEGSC had developed any specific proposals relating to modern methods of construction in Gloucestershire? In response, Cllr Babbage explained that no proposals had been developed. However what had been emphasised to the Committee was that despite modular methods of construction being more costly than normal methods, modular constructed houses were much more energy efficient, and therefore when you factored in the costs to get a normal house to the same standard, the difference in costs was minimal.

One member commented that modular methods of construction worked best for large scale developments, which may not be viable for Gloucestershire.

324. GEGJC GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Sandra Ford, Head of Development Services, Tewkesbury Borough Council, introduced the proposal regarding GEGJC governance, on behalf of Mike Dawson, Chair of the GEGJC Senior Officer Group (SOG).

Members were informed that at the Leadership Gloucestershire meeting on 13 January 2022, partner authorities, which included Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire District authorities, agreed to extend the Inter Authority Agreement for the Joint Committee until 1 April 2023, pending further consideration of the Government's Levelling Up white paper once it was published.

Clarification was sought as to whether this meant the Committee would continue in its current form up until 1 April 2023, regardless of when the white paper was released. Following a brief discussion it was understood that this date had been set to provide flexibility and to enable the thorough consideration of the white paper when it was published.

The Committee was advised that this proposal would be taken away by each partner authority for consideration and agreement through their formal decision-making processes.

325. EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Pete Carr, Director of Employment and Skills, GFirst LEP, provided the Committee with a presentation on the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy.

Members were provided with an overview of the aims and ambitions of the strategy, which included linking with existing plans and strategies, and acting as a 'hook' for

funding. The strategy addressed the delivery of skills that meet the needs of local businesses, such as cyber and digital skills, as well as skills that supported individuals to achieve their potential.

The strategy aimed to maximise local employment opportunities presented by local developments, such as by promoting good practice of the use of Social Value and S106 funding, as well as aiming to coordinate and collaborate to simplify the local employment and skills landscape, such as by working with employers and individuals using 'one front door'.

One member queried why apprenticeships in specific sectors, such as aerospace, were not referenced in the strategy? In response it was explained that the strategy aimed for better alignment from providers with County priorities, such as cyber and digital, and green skills.

In response to a further question on how district authorities could work more in partnership with the LEP on employment and skills, it was understood that the county-wide strategy aimed to work alongside different local priorities, and that the challenges and opportunities identified by partner authorities had been highlighted in the strategy. Additionally, regular meetings took place between the LEP and economic development leads from the district and county local authorities.

The Committee noted the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy.

326. GCC COVID-19 ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

Katherine Martin, Data and Analysis Manager, GCC, provided the Committee with an update on GCC's Covid-19 Economic Dashboard. The Economic Dashboard was attached to the agenda papers for this meeting.

One member queried, in relation to data on the Kickstart Scheme, why Cinderford had been used to identify the location of starts, rather than the Forest of Dean as a whole. In response, it was explained that this was due to the way the Department for Work and Pensions collected this data.

It was requested that, as the furlough scheme and the immediate response to Covid-19 had now ended, that the economic dashboard be revised going forward. This might include looking at data relating to skills in the County.

Another question was raised regarding the increase in economic inactivity, particularly amongst those aged between 40 and 60 years old, and whether this Committee should be looking at how to help vulnerable communities become more resilient. It was suggested that an item on this topic be added to the work plan for future consideration by the Committee.

One member commented that it would be useful to consider how to encourage young people to stay and work in Gloucestershire, whilst another stated they would welcome the opportunity to consider other economic indicators in the County, such as health.

One member commented that levelling up applied not only in terms of geography, but also by age, noting the disadvantages that could be experienced by young people in the County. It was queried why the under 19s age group was bucking the trend in terms of apprenticeship starts? In response, it was explained that the decline in apprenticeship starts for this age group could be seen prior to the pandemic, and this was also being seen at a national level. It was suggested that a wider conversation needed to be had on the issue, involving providers.

327. GFIRST LEP UPDATE

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

In particular, members were informed that it was disappointing that the white paper on levelling up had still not been released. It was understood that the timescale for release had now been pushed back until February.

Members were advised that the LEP review was tied in with this white paper. Funding for LEPs had been confirmed until 31 March 2022, and verbal reassurance had been given that core funding would be received for the next year.

An update was provided on the Getting Building projects. It was understood that two of the projects were now complete, with the remainder to be completed by early summer.

The Committee noted that Phil Clement had been appointed as the new Head of Inward Investment responsible for the Invest in Gloucestershire project. It was understood that he would be a key driver in seeking new investors and promoting Gloucestershire's offering. It was noted that he was currently working his way around the seven authorities in the County to meet with their economic leads.

Finally, the Made in Gloucestershire initiative task force would be meeting on 8 February to consider the budget for its launch, which could require a SEDF bid.

328. FORWARD (WORK) PLAN

It was suggested that a presentation reflecting on the first year of the Skills Hub's operation be added to the work plan for consideration by the Committee later on in the year.

There was a discussion around what could be done to support bus services in light of delayed or cancelled services due to a shortage of bus drivers, which impacted on the ability of members of the public who took the bus being able to get to work.

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

As such, it was suggested that an item on the impact of the shortage of bus drivers on the local economy be added to the work plan. In response to this suggestion, Colin Chick, Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, explained that they needed to get to the other side of the Bus Service Improvement Plan before a report could be brought to the Committee. He also explained that it was difficult to reverse the downward trend of bus service use, as people continued to avoid using the buses due to Covid-19, which then meant services were cancelled due to lack of demand, which then meant using the bus became less attractive.

Members were encouraged to complete the GCC survey on bus services that was open until 30 January.

Additionally, it was requested that an item on the provision of sustainable transport, particularly in rural areas, be added to the work plan.

329. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee dates for the remainder of 2022 would be circulated to Committee members after the meeting.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 3.35 pm