

GLoucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 30 March 2023 commencing at 10.00 am at the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Cheltenham Borough Council.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr John Murphy
Cllr Matt Babbage (Chair)	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Paul McCloskey	Cllr Paul Baker (Vice-Chair)

Substitutes: Cllr Patrick Coleman

Cabinet Members: Cllr David Gray
Cllr Philip Robinson

Apologies: Cllr Robert Vines, Cllr Nicky Packer, Cllr Alastair Chambers, Cllr Stephen Hirst, Cllr Vernon Smith and Cllr Lorraine Campbell

2. MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meetings held on 18th January 2023 and 22nd November 2022 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 No declarations of interest were received.

4. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE UPDATE

4.1 Cllr Tony Dale, Chair of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee, gave a verbal update from the two recent Joint Committee meetings (9th February and 15th March 2023).

4.2 A member asked about the economically inactive statistics and wondered how issues like rising childcare costs could contribute to younger people not being in work. It was explained that a detailed understanding of the make-up of the economically inactive cohort would be important. A primary concern was around those younger residents of Gloucestershire who could be working, but reasons such as childcare were getting in the way.

5. CBC SLT VISION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND GOLDEN VALLEY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE

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

5.1 Gareth Edmundson, Chief Executive Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC), gave a presentation outlining Cheltenham Borough Council's corporate plan for economic growth and highlighted 3 key priorities:

1. Enhancing Cheltenham's reputation as the Cyber Capital of the UK.
2. Increasing the number of affordable homes through a £180 million investment plan.
3. Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefitted from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity.

The Golden Valley Development was also outlined in the presentation. The first phase was planned to be delivered in 2026 with a planning forecast to be submitted in late summer 2023.

5.2 A key focus in the presentation was how to ensure that the benefits of economic growth and prosperity were extended to all Cheltenham residents. A member asked whether they were learning from other areas of the country where these kinds of projects had been undertaken. It was explained that Henry Boot Development (HBD), CBC's partner company for the Golden Valley Project, had looked at several projects across the UK and internationally to learn best practices for creating successful development and to achieve the vision.

5.3 Another member asked whether some kind of Cheltenham Bond could be offered to encourage local investment from local sources. It was explained that Cynam, a membership organisation that represented and supported the cyber ecosystem, was exploring ways of increasing investment by connecting companies with potential investors.

ACTION – Gareth Edmundson to ask Cynam for an update on local investment opportunities.

5.4 A member raised a concern about developing more jobs in Gloucestershire when job postings were at an historic high. The member also noted that a significant issue was young people leaving Cheltenham once they had left school and suggested bringing this presentation to schools to demonstrate local opportunities. The officer agreed with the member and explained that significant thought was going into how to engage communities and children to build a strong pipeline of talent, and he was happy to share ideas that were being looked at as they were developed.

ACTION – Gareth Edmundson to keep members updated with how the CBC and partners work to engage young people around career opportunities within cyber tech.

5.5 It was also explained that, from consultation conducted so far, the responses from residents surrounding the Golden Valley Development Project had been broadly positive and feedback had been constructive.

6. CITY REGION BOARD AND FUTURE GEGJC GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 Gareth Edmundson presented the report, detailing the process of transfer from the GEGJC towards a Gloucestershire City Region Board. It was explained that membership would be carried through from the GEGJC and that the role of the GEGSC would be to scrutinise the new City Region Board.

6.2 The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport raised that it was the County Council's view that the option for the County Council Leader to chair the City Region Board should remain open. The decision about the Chair was still to be made but given that the current leader had the Cabinet portfolio for growth, it was unclear to him why the Leader should not chair the Board. There was further discussion about chairing responsibilities with members expressing their satisfaction with the current GEGJC chair and expressing concern over conflicts of interest should the GCC leader Chair the City Region board. The officer explained that issues around chairing would likely come out through the process of ratification that was required from each Local Authority. It was also explained that various responsibilities were yet to be defined and there would be the opportunity for amendments.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

7.1 Members had been encouraged to submit written questions in advance to assist officers with having the right information to hand. Written questions and written answers are attached as an appendix.

7.2 There was some discussion about Cabinet member attendance at scrutiny meetings.

ACTION – DSU to share clarification with the Committee membership.

7.3 In response to a question about section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, it was explained that there had been discussions between Local Authority Chief Executives and the conclusion was that all Local Authorities should work proactively and positively together. Simon Excell, Assistant Director of Planning and Economic Development GCC, was in the process of appointing two new officers in his section 106 team and they would be working to enhance engagement with all Districts to overcome future section 106 related difficulties. Cotswold District Council had set up a new bidding system for infrastructure providers to bid into the CIL pot and that was welcomed by the County Council. Similar systems were being explored and set up for the other Districts. It was highlighted that it was down to each District to decide what system they wanted.

7.4 There was further discussion over whether the CIL processes were being set up adequately and it was explained that the spirit of discussions was much better than it had been last year, and they would continue to work to improve relations.

7.5 in response to a question about Ash Die Back, it was explained that references to 'treatment' to Ash Die Back trees meant that the trees were felled.

7.6 In response to a question about waste management of tyres now they could no longer be brought to Household Recycling Centres, it was explained that tyres could be disposed of at garages or tyre dealerships.

7.7 In response to a question about the timescale for the rollout of the extension to the Honeybourne cycle path, it was explained that that was a Great Western Railway project and not operated by the County Council. However, officers' understanding was that GWR were aiming for a late summer or early autumn completion. That said, it was their understanding that Department for Transport (DfT) approval was yet to be secured and contractors had not yet been appointed.

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7.8 In response to a question about E-scooter trial evaluation, it was explained that there was ongoing evaluation from the DfT, and the e-scooter company Zwings were sending the DfT monthly reports on adherence to the DfT's safety conditions.

ACTION – DSU to circulate data from the December DfT national evaluation of E-scooters and the Zwings customer evaluation survey with the published minutes.

7.9 In response to a question about the 'Mini Holland' scheme it was explained that feasibility work had been completed and a funding bid had been submitted to Active Travel England for funding for the whole project. There would be a further public engagement exercise once that funding had been secured.

7.10 There was also some discussion about the nature of the GEGSC meetings that were held at District and Borough Councils. There was uncertainty whether non-Committee Councillors of the hosting Authority were to be included in those meetings. Concern was also raised whether the location of this meeting had been sufficiently broadcast.

ACTION – DSU to clarify and update members about the involvement of non-Committee Councillors and to improve dissemination of information about meetings, particularly for the meetings held at District and Borough Councils.

8. PERFORMANCE DATA - Q3 2022/23

8.1 The report was noted by the Committee.

9. WORK PLAN

ACTION – DSU to add SIL Section 106 update to the work plan.

ACTION – DSU to ensure recently elected Councillors from Districts are ready in time for the 25th May meeting.

ACTION – DSU to move the 'Reflection on the LEP's delivery against the Strategic Economic Plan' item planned for May to the November meeting.

10. FUTURE MEETINGS

10.1 The Committee noted the dates of future meetings and the Tewkesbury location planned for the 21st September meeting.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 11.52