

GLoucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 21 September 2023 commencing at 10.00 am at the Tewkesbury Borough Council.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Angus Jenkinson	Cllr Paul McCloskey
Cllr Johnathan Lane	Cllr Lorraine Campbell
Cllr Robert Vines	Cllr Chris McFarling
Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Matt Babbage (Chair)	

Substitutes: Cllr Cate Cody substituted for Cllr Matt Dimond-Brown

Remote Attendance: Cllr John Bloxsom

Apologies: Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Vernon Smith and Cllr Matt Dimond-Brown

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th July 2023 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

4. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE UPDATE

4.1 Georgia Smith, High Street Heritage Action Zone Programme Manager, was invited to give a presentation on Tewkesbury's High Street Heritage Action Zone(HSHAZ). She was supported by Andy Sanders, Head of Community and Economic Development. The following points were highlighted:

- The HSHAZ project was created as a partnership between Historic England and Tewkesbury Borough Council to improve Tewkesbury town centre with a particular focus on protecting the heritage and history of Tewkesbury.
- The programme received just under £2million of funding with £937000 from Historic England, £150000 from Tewkesbury Borough Council and £600000 from an S.106 agreement.
- The improvement activities were organised into key themes: shop façade and upper floor grants, public realm enhancements, promotion of traditional skills and Healing's Mill. Please view the report pack for more information on the work carried out under these themes.

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

- It was noted that HSHAZ planned end date would be the 31st March 2024 and it was stated that there was still a lot of ongoing work. A masterplan was being created to keep the focus on protecting Tewkesbury's heritage for when the project ends. It was identified that two further tranches of S.106 funding would be used to further the projects identified in the masterplan and that further bids for funding would be made if available to continue the projects.

4.2 In response to a question about tensions between heritage buildings and climate change, the officer confirmed that whilst there were no policies to deal with the tension, it was going to be included in the masterplan. It was emphasised that the majority of Tewkesbury town centre's buildings were listed and so they had to be in line with regulations but where they could, they used sustainable options particularly in buildings where the windows were not listed.

4.3 A member asked if the repairs and building work were being future-proofed. The officers stated that they were doing what they could to future proof the buildings but that it was not an easy task. They emphasised that the masterplan would include more about the protection and future proofing of the buildings. The officers also confirmed that it was very important that Tewkesbury retained its heritage especially because this made Tewkesbury a better place to live, while also bringing more tourism to the town. The Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Cabinet member for Environment and Planning highlighted that Stage 7 of the Tour of Britain cycle race had started in Tewkesbury. The event was emphasised as showcasing the importance of heritage and tourism for Gloucestershire's economy.

5. GARDEN TOWN UPDATE

5.1 Brendan Walsh, Interim Director of Place, was invited to give an update on Tewkesbury's Garden Town. He was also supported by Colin Chick, Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure at Gloucestershire County Council. The key information highlighted was:

- There was a plan for a garden town to be created in Tewkesbury with the first phase being concentrated around Junction 9 of the M5. The garden town would create 10000 additional homes and infrastructure for new places of employment. It was emphasised that this was one of the biggest home building projects in the country.
- Tewkesbury Borough Council created a Gateway Review Team under the company, Cratus to create a report which outlined recommendations for what Tewkesbury Borough Council would need to do to make the project happen. The report contained 17 recommendations which had begun being implemented.
- The members were informed that a Local Plan had to be created to encompass how the garden town would fit with the rest of Tewkesbury. It was stated that this would take 3 years to complete and was pivotal to the garden town being created.

5.2 Responding to a member question about the inclusion of green and blue infrastructure, it was explained that 'Green infrastructure' meant the use of soft areas such as plants, trees, and greenery and 'Blue infrastructure', the use of water courses such as ponds, lakes and storm drainage. It was stated that there were 9 guiding principles for garden towns which included a key focus on the living environment and making sure that the

town would be a great place for people to live and work which would have to include green and blue infrastructure. The Blenheim Estate was given as an excellent example of this. It was emphasised that creating a vibrant local economy was also important, so the garden town would include space for new businesses. The purpose of garden towns was to be built with the latest sustainable technology, one of the plans mentioned was to include a solar farm on the outskirts of the garden town.

- 5.3 When asked about the risk of flooding in Tewkesbury and if this would affect the garden town, the officer confirmed that reports had been created to demonstrate that the area being used for the garden town would not flood but he did identify that more needed to be done to prove this to residents.
- 5.4 Responding to a question about the infrastructure work that would need to be done to improve Junction 9 of the M5, the officer confirmed that for the garden town to be successful, the M5 Junction 9 had to be improved. It was emphasised that these improvements were at the forefront of the planning for the garden town.
- 5.5 In response to a member question about governance arrangements for the garden town project, it was stated that this was something that had been identified in the Gateway Review as needing improvement. Work had been undertaken on governance and a report would be given to Tewkesbury Borough Council's council meeting on Tuesday 26th September 2023. For full details of this meeting please [click here](#).
- 5.6 When asked about how the garden town fitted with the design code for Tewkesbury, it was stated there had been descriptions of what was going to be built in the new garden town but that the list needed updating. It was emphasised that more work needed to be done to decide what types of industries and employment should be included in the garden town and then the schools would need to be informed so that the necessary skills were being taught in the hope that it would increase the retention of young people in the area.
- 5.7 A member asked about the capacity to improve rail connections to Ashchurch station to increase access to public transport in Tewkesbury. The officers confirmed that in May 2023, there was only one train every two hours into Ashchurch station, he stated that there were now three. It was stated that the officer was currently in talks to get the new Cardiff to Bromsgrove service from Transport for Wales to stop at Ashchurch which would mean five trains would run through Ashchurch every two hours. It was emphasised that they were making sure that a good rail transport system would be in place before the garden town's first residents had moved in.
- 5.8 When asked about how the decarbonisation of transport was being included in the plan for the garden town, the officers stated that the focus of the town was to create a place where there was a focus on walking and cycling rather than car use. It was emphasised that this would only happen if the infrastructure for public transport and sustainable transport options was in place before the first people moved in. The garden town's aim would be to have everything a person would need no more than a 15 minutes' walk away so that it encouraged them to walk or cycle rather than take a car.
- 5.9 It was stated that whilst this was the first garden town, to fulfil the county's housing requirements, another 6-7 would need to be created in the county.

6. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND / RURAL FUND UPDATE

6.1 Andy Sanders, Head of Community and Economic Development, was invited to give a presentation on Tewkesbury's use of the UK Shared Prosperity fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The following information was highlighted:

- The UKSPF was created as part of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda. The purpose was to provide allocated funding to all areas of the UK with the focus on boosting productivity, spreading opportunities and public services and restoring a sense of community. The REPF programme was complementary to the UKSPF agenda but focused on strengthening rural economy and communities.
- Tewkesbury received £1 million from the UKSPF and £400000 from REPF. A UKSPF Programme Officer had been appointed to make sure that the programme's deadlines were being met as it was emphasised that Government Projects required a lot of feedback. It was stated that most of the programme delivery would be in 2024 and 2025.
- The projects in Tewkesbury had been split into 4 different streams.
 1. Supporting Businesses
 2. Community and Places
 3. People and Skills in 2024/2025
 4. Rural ProsperityFor more information on what the funding would be spent on, please refer to the agenda report pack.

6.2 A member asked about whether Tewkesbury Borough Council found that the rural funding could be used for what it was intended for. The officer confirmed that the rules for where the rural funding could be used were very prescriptive which included a map of where it could and could not be used. It was emphasised that this had been difficult, but they had made sure that where the REPF couldn't be used, they tried to make the UKSPF available instead.

6.3 It was stated that green sector skills were being promoted in the productivity section of the funding. It was emphasised that focus was also being placed on reducing the number of economically inactive people in Tewkesbury which they believed would improve productivity. They believed that to do this, they needed to support businesses to encourage them to develop and grow which they did through the Tewkesbury Growth Hub.

6.4 On being asked about what advice the officer would give to other councils obtaining the UKSPF/REPF, the officer advised that listening to what people wanted and need was one of the most fundamental elements and to understand the needs of the local people. Although he was quick to highlight that they had only just started their UKSPF/REPF programme, so still had a lot to do and to learn.

7. GROWTH HUB UPDATE

- 7.1 Katie Power, Growth and Enterprise Manager, was invited by the chair to give a presentation on Tewkesbury's Growth Hub. She was supported by Andy Sanders, Colin Chick and David Owen, Director of Economy and Environment.
- 7.2 The Tewkesbury Growth Hub was created five years previously and was part of Gloucestershire's Growth Hub Network, a group of seven organisations in the public and private sector, who supported local businesses and the economy. It was stated that they supported businesses across all sectors, sizes and stages. For more information, see the agenda report pack.
- 7.3 When asked if other authorities had Growth Hubs, the officer confirmed that there was a hub in each district and that all local authorities had put their UKSPF into their local Growth Hubs. Within Gloucestershire, there was a Growth Hub in each district and 31 access points in the county's libraries, which gave the county good coverage.
- 7.4 Responding to a member question, the officer confirmed that they measured successful outcomes by set key performance indicators. It was emphasised that they monitored the work outcomes in terms of turnover, productivity and jobs created or safeguarded but it was highlighted that this could not be shared due to confidentiality reasons, so instead they used the figures to provide an overview of successful outcomes.
- 7.5 An officer highlighted that an independent study had been undertaken which went into detail on the Growth Hub's capital investment and revenue and particularly measured the successful outcomes. The report would be circulated.

ACTION – Democratic Services

- 7.6 When asked for advice on engaging with the local business community, the officer stated that she believed that being based in Tewkesbury and talking to local businesses about the types of service they provided was vital to their success. These success stories allowed for the usefulness of the Growth Hub to be spread via word of mouth. However, she emphasised that the UKSPF funding was important for the further development of the Growth Hub because it would allow them to work with businesses for a longer time and allow for more marketing including a new website.
- 7.7 On being asked about what the Growth Hubs do to continue to develop, the officer stated that they were constantly learning from different businesses. It was mentioned that they worked with a large number of partners and if they could not answer a business' question, they would use their partners to find someone to connect that business with. She emphasised that this connection with the other Growth Hubs was what made their Growth Hub so successful.

8. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- 8.1 The report was taken as read and the members had thirty minutes allocated for questions which were answered verbally by Colin Chick and David Owen.

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

- 8.2 Responding to a member's question, it was stated that recruitment was underway for an interim Head of Environment and Waste and it was hoped that someone would be in place by October 2023 but it was confirmed that until then, David Owen was responsible for the leadership of the environment and waste service lines.
- 8.3 On being asked about the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), it was hoped that it would complement the County's 2022-25 Interim Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Strategy. However, it was confirmed that until the ETS was released, the potential impact on the residual waste contract currently held was not yet known but that it would be worked through by GCC and their contractor, Urbaser Balfour Beatty, when more was known.
- 8.4 When asked about what GCC were doing to help Stroud get their Local Action Plan accepted, the officer stated that GCC were helping where they had been asked to by Stroud District Council. GCC had asked Atkins and Sultans to provide quotes for the cost of the work that needed to be undertaken but it was emphasised that the key focus was on getting the Inspector to change their view that the plan should be withdrawn.
- 8.5 In response to a member's concern that Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were not progressing, the officer confirmed that the team had gone through a process of significant change. It had taken time to build a strong team which had therefore caused a backlog of TROs which had caused the slow progression.
- 8.6 A member asked for the link to the 'Cheltenham Parking Zone 15 FAQs' because the link in the agenda report pack did not work, the officer confirmed he would provide the link.

ACTION – Colin Chick

9. PERFORMANCE DATA - Q1 2023/24

- 9.1 The report was taken as read and the questions were answered by Colin Chick.
- 9.2 On being asked about what could be done about GCC's failure to mitigate and adapt to a more volatile climate (page 44 of report pack), the officer confirmed that GCC or Gloucestershire could not improve our risk score to green by ourselves. It was stated that there needed to be a different approach which would include the Department of Transport (DfT). He emphasised that the earlier we act, the better things would be, and he believed that incentivising people to use public transport in order to decarbonise transport was a key way to do that. A member asked about creating a workshop for members and officers to look at the risk score in more detail and the officer confirmed that he would be happy to facilitate a workshop, but it would be better placed for environment scrutiny. The officer confirmed that due to his department's workload and staff vacancies, he would not be able to facilitate this until early next year.

ACTION – Democratic Services

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

10. WORK PLAN

10.1 Considering the future work plan, members suggested the following future items:

- Strategic planning – a wider meeting with district officers including a look at potential garden town locations.
- Contribution that Green and Circular Economy make to Gloucestershire's prosperity in early 2024
- An update from Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership in mid-2024
- An officer requested that the LEP Strategic Plan is moved from the November workplan to January 2024

ACTION – Democratic Services

10.2 When asked about which district council could hold the March and September meetings in 2024, members from the Forest of Dean (FOD) and Cotswold District Councils volunteered their councils.

ACTION – Democratic Services

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 13.29.