

Title:	Gloucestershire City Region Board Overview – Inaugural Meeting
Reporting to:	Gloucestershire City Region Board (GCRB)
Date:	7 June 2024
Chair:	Cllr David Gray
Presenting Officer:	Gareth Edmundson – Chief Executive, Cheltenham Borough Council
Purpose of report:	To provide an overview of the Gloucestershire City Region Board for its inaugural meeting
Background documents:	<p>Gloucestershire City Region Board Report agreed by each respective Gloucestershire Local Authority.</p> <p>For example Cheltenham Borough Council’s Cabinet Report can be found here: Gloucestershire City Region Board - report.pdf (cheltenham.gov.uk)</p> <p>Please refer to each Gloucestershire authority’s respective website for individual authority decisions re the GCRB.</p>
Summary:	This report provides an overview of the GCRB including its agreed function (as agreed in the Terms of Reference) as well as setting out the principles for the allocation of the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).
Anticipated Outcomes:	To set a clear role and framework to support the operation of a successful GCRB.

1. Background

- 1.1 Historically, Gloucestershire local authorities have worked jointly together through membership of several Boards (Severn Vale, Rural Ambitions and Central Gloucestershire City Region) together with the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) for several years. Following a review of the joint working arrangements, Leadership Gloucestershire agreed that the three boards and the Joint Committee should be merged into a single forum under the name of Gloucestershire City Region Board (GCRB) serving the whole of the county. This provided a more streamlined governance, reducing duplication to represent the functional economic area of Gloucestershire which also provides a platform through which opportunities for further devolution to Gloucestershire can be considered and discussed. The overall aim of the new Board will be to develop and deliver a vision

for the future growth and economic success for the whole of the Gloucestershire economic area. City Regions include urban and rural areas that have inter-related economic activities which have the potential for increased success through coordinated interventions which benefit the whole. Gloucestershire is a county with significant ambitions which integrate with and support the national and regional economic agendas.

- 1.2 To align with the agreement to create a City Region Board, a new Gloucestershire Economic Strategy has been developed and is in the process of being agreed. When agreed, this will become the key strategic document for the GCRB. However, it is recognised that the GCRB will refer to and complement other key strategic documents within Gloucestershire.

2. **Functions of the GCR Board**

- 2.1 Each of the Partner Authorities empowers the GCR Board to:
 - 2.1.1 engage in strategic discussion and act as the primary consultative forum to set a dynamic vision for Gloucestershire and to present and discuss issues relating to the following:
 - (a) economy and growth;
 - (b) funding and bids;
 - (c) devolution; and
 - (d) skills and employment;
 - 2.1.2 develop and support a shared vision for strategic growth and economic success for the County of Gloucestershire;
 - 2.1.3 champion that shared vision and its delivery with a single voice inside and outside Gloucestershire, including with strategic partner organisations such as the Western Gateway Partnership.
 - 2.1.4 lobby and bid for funding and support via government growth programmes and Western Gateway Partnership and other partners to support the delivery of the GCR Board's ambitions;
 - 2.1.5 promote the success of the Gloucestershire City Region and its strengths to attract inward investment and growth;
 - 2.1.6 work closely with all sections of the Gloucestershire City Region communities, businesses and agencies to engage them in the generation and delivery of the vision;

- 2.1.7 build upon the inter-related strengths of the communities of the Gloucestershire City Region to fulfil the ambitions of each place and maintain their identities;
 - 2.1.8 create a positive vision for vibrant rural communities, businesses and infrastructure to maximise their contribution to Gloucestershire;
 - 2.1.9 work with partners to ensure the Gloucestershire City Region Vision can guide and integrate with future strategic spatial and infrastructure plans;
 - 2.1.10 ensure the development of a Gloucestershire Vision complements other visioning and strategic plans in the County of Gloucestershire;
 - 2.1.11 aim to create, through the Gloucestershire City Region Vision, a special county which has uniquely attractive offers as a place to live and visit and a vibrant economy firmly based on modern commercial activity, built on the strengths of our communities;
 - 2.1.12 discharge on behalf of Partner Authorities the power to do anything it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic wellbeing of the area of Gloucestershire together with such additional functions as the respective constituent Councils may determine from time to time;
 - 2.1.13 facilitate and enable collaboration between the Partner Authorities on economic development, employment and skills, and associated activities;
 - 2.1.14 formulate and agree the Gloucestershire County Economic (GCE) Strategy from time to time and other plans and strategies related to economic growth, and to work jointly to ensure their delivery;
 - 2.1.15 lobby and carry out other activities that help achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic wellbeing of the area of Gloucestershire;
 - 2.1.16 promote the vision contained in the GCE Strategy;
 - 2.1.17 seek the allocation of resources to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic wellbeing of the area of Gloucestershire; and
 - 2.1.18 ensure a co-ordinated approach to and liaise with such relevant Groups/Boards as the Partner Authorities and/or the Senior Officer Group may determine from time to time.
- 2.2 To provide political and democratic accountability by:
- 2.2.1 monitoring the delivery of each priority, plan, project or programme included in the GCE Strategy and by ensuring that action is taken to review and prepare revised action plans as necessary;
 - 2.2.2 monitoring the Annual Budget;
 - 2.2.3 advising and making recommendations to the Partner Authorities;

2.2.4 providing Leadership Gloucestershire with regular updates in respect of the work of the GCR Board and (where appropriate) the governance of the GCR Board.

3. Principles of Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF)

3.1 The Gloucestershire local authorities established the Business Rates Pool which enabled part of the Pool to create the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF). The former GEGJC administered the fund through an approved eligibility and project approval process in November 2018.

3.2 The GCRB will now administer and take decisions on the allocation of SEDF.

3.3 As part of the development of the GCRB a review was conducted of SEDF with the ambition of improving its effectiveness in supporting the economic success of the Gloucestershire economy. Following a review, updated principles for the fund were developed and included within the GCRB reports agreed by each respective Gloucestershire Local Authority.

3.4 The principles for the SEDF are set out below:

3.4.1 To establish two calls for funding bids in a financial year – for 2023/24.

These are currently proposed as November 2023 and April 2024. This will enable the Senior Officer Group and Gloucestershire City Region Board (GCRB) to have a pipeline of projects to consider at any time.

3.4.2 The Fund to remain open to other partners and organisations, as well as all the Local Authority Partners, and LEP successor. Any potential bids will still need to have a Local Authority or LEP successor project sponsor in order for it to be submitted and considered.

3.4.3 Strategic Alignment/Fit – important that any funding requests align with strategic priorities, as the basis for filtering those bids that can be considered and assessment through the SEDF process. SOG recommend using the strategic priorities in the emerging County Economic Strategy.

3.4.4 To maximise the impact of the funding, projects need to demonstrate their reach and benefit to as many districts/areas and local communities as possible.

3.4.5 Projects/bids will need to be able to demonstrate clearly the leverage and impact that any SEDF funding would achieve in particular the economic & social benefits and outcomes. Projects/bids that identify/secure other direct

match funding will be viewed favourably. • Financial sustainability is an important factor, and any projects or bids would need to provide details as part of an exit strategy, to show how they will be financially sustainable once any SEDF funding awarded has been spent.

- 3.4.6 For those more commercially focussed projects, to consider on a case by case basis, the potential to recover a proportion of any SEDF awarded – use of a super profits clause (as per Local Growth Deal funded contracts).
- 3.4.7 To establish a more robust monitoring regime to assist with the testing of the value for money, and demonstrating the added value and impacts against envisaged benefits and outcomes. This would also assist officers with spotting worthy proposals and bids for future consideration. The scale of monitoring required will also be commensurate to the value of the funding sought/awarded. We would expect more monitoring of a £200k project compared to a £20k project. Officers will amend the current Expression of Interest form, and add an evaluation section for applicants to complete that identifies SMART measures such as amount of public/private sector leverage, job creation/retention, number of beneficiaries, geographic areas that have benefitted.
- 3.4.8 To retain the current eligibility criteria, and officers to review the current guidance on the nature and type of projects that could be eligible for funding, and review and revise the current assessment template including the criteria, which translates into a point system.
- 3.4.9 To investigate and put in place a light touch independent/external appraisal for any project that makes it through the initial pipeline shift process, for consideration for funding by the Senior Officer Group (SOG) and GCRB. This approach has been in place previously for the LEP Growth Deal and Get Britain Building Fund, as well as the GIFF loan funding.

4. Senior Officer Group

- 4.1 The work of the GCRB will be supported by a Senior Officer Group (SOG) comprised of representatives of Senior Officers from each member authority.
- 4.2 The Partner Authorities agree that the SOG shall have the following roles and responsibilities:
 - 4.2.1 to ensure that the legal duties and statutory functions of the Partner Authorities delegated to the GCR Board in accordance with the Terms of Reference/Constitution are being discharged effectively in accordance with relevant legislation and with due economy, efficiency and effectiveness;

- 4.2.2 to review the GCE Strategy and make recommendations to the GCR Board for any changes it deems necessary (acting reasonably) prior to submission to the GCR Board for approval;
- 4.2.3 to review the Annual Budget prepared by the Administering Authority's s151 Officer and where relevant make recommendations to their respective Partner Authority for any changes it deems necessary (acting reasonably) in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Terms of Reference/Constitution before submission to the GCR Board and each Partner Authority for approval;
- 4.2.4 to consider the reports submitted by the Senior Manager regarding the performance of this Agreement;
- 4.2.5 to review the effectiveness of the GCR Board in:
 - (a) helping each Partner Authority to meet its statutory and local targets; and
 - (b) achieving efficiency savings on behalf of all of the Partner Authorities, following which it shall report and, where appropriate, make recommendations to the Partner Authorities on the effectiveness of the GCR Board and any changes or amendments necessary to improve the effectiveness of the GCR Board.
- 4.2.6 to communicate the strategic direction of the Partner Authorities to the GCR Board;
- 4.2.7 to support and further the management and implementation of the GCE Strategy to achieve its aims and objectives and support the achievement of the functions of the GCE Strategy.

5. **Economic Growth**

- 5.1 While a core function of the GCRB is to support economic prosperity and the success of the region, through engagement with members as part of the development of the GCRB and associated scrutiny arrangements, it was raised by some members that economic growth needs to be viewed in a wider context and the potential risk that economic growth can have a detrimental impact on the climate, the resources of the planet or that growth can fail to be inclusive should be better understood and considered.
- 5.2 To address this, the GCE Strategy has included cross cutting themes relating to climate change and the environment, which includes the shared commitment to achieving net zero as well as a theme of achieving inclusivity, supporting everyone in

Gloucestershire to benefit from and positively contribute to the economy.

- 5.3 The GCRB also aims to be complementary to other key Gloucestershire wide forums such as Climate Leadership Gloucestershire.
- 5.4 In addition, the work of the associated Scrutiny committee may elect to scrutinise the work of the GCRB and how economic success and prosperity can be achieved in a way where potential impacts are mitigated or minimised.
- 5.5 These measures provide a robust structure through which Gloucestershire's economy and the delivery of the GCE Strategy can be considered and supported.

6. **Scrutiny Arrangements**

- 6.1 The activities of the previous GEGJC were scrutinised by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC). This was a County Council scrutiny committee whose membership comprised seven County Councillors and 6 Co-opted District Councillors. Through consultation with all Gloucestershire authorities, it has been agreed that a joint scrutiny function will continue to exist to scrutinise the work of the GCRB. As before each local authority will be able to nominate a representative to that committee. The new scrutiny arrangements are likely to come into effect in the late summer of 2024 following the creation of the GCRB.