

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE

SCRUTINY QUESTIONS – 3 JUNE 2020

Question 1: Cllr Brian Robinson	Response:
<p data-bbox="107 300 685 331">Agenda Item 5: Governance arrangements.</p> <p data-bbox="107 368 1055 499">The report states the resource implication of extending the arrangements by 18 months are set out in the body of the report. However, the report does not indicate the financial cost or the human resource commitment either for individual councils or in total.</p> <p data-bbox="107 539 1055 635">How can committee members agree to this step without being informed of the cost? There is also no reference to the achievements over the past five years that would support an extension.</p>	<p data-bbox="1090 300 2047 499">The inter-authority agreement between the Councils provides for the administration costs of the GEGJC (capped at £5,000) to be paid from the Strategic Economic Development Fund. It is for the individual partner authorities to pay for their members' expenses through their existing authority's arrangements for Members' expenses together with the Officer time involved with supporting the Joint Committee.</p> <p data-bbox="1090 539 2047 635">The Joint Committee has provided a range of benefits for Gloucestershire authorities to work together to promote and improve Gloucestershire's economic wellbeing.</p> <p data-bbox="1090 675 1469 707">Examples of the benefits are:</p> <ul data-bbox="1137 746 2047 1372" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1137 746 2047 938">• Reviewing the work of the LEP to achieve the objectives of the Gloucestershire SEP and enabling the Joint Committee to consider and support county wide bids for central government funding through the Growth Deal. These projects have enabled strategic investment to provide growth in employment, housing and development of skills across Gloucestershire.<li data-bbox="1137 946 2047 1106">• Establishment of the Strategic Economic Development Fund to enable the Joint Committee to consider financial revenue funding for several key Gloucestershire strategic infrastructure projects including the Cyber Central Project, the Rail Investment Strategy and Junction 10 Improvements.<li data-bbox="1137 1114 2047 1305">• Enabling a county wide forum for consultation on the County's strategic infrastructure and skills programmes; including the Rail Investment Strategy, the Fastershire Broadband Programme, the Local Transport Plan, the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Board, Gloucestershire's Strategic Planning and the Climate Change Summit.<li data-bbox="1137 1313 2047 1372">• Providing a county wide scrutiny function in relation to the LEP and the Joint Committee.

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Question 2: Cllr Brian Robinson	Response:
<p data-bbox="107 300 1003 363">Agenda Item 9: Covid-19 Response - Planning for Gloucestershire's Economic Recovery</p> <p data-bbox="107 403 1055 534">The organisation and delivery of an emergency response to the Covid 19 emergency has been very effective allowing Gloucestershire to respond to the emergency. Ensuring keys services were delivered and everyone was supported.</p> <p data-bbox="107 571 1048 735">The three stages of response beyond the immediate emergency are based on an assumption and applied generally across sectors. In reality for some sectors the will be no second or third new normal. The damage is terminal. Others may bounce back and for some such as food retail, business has boomed.</p> <p data-bbox="107 775 1025 940">While the desire to have a planned, coordinated response across Gloucestershire is well understood quite what can be done to achieve this is not clear. Major sectors like aerospace will take their lead from international or government cues. Small business innovation will follow the market in whatever direction that leads.</p> <p data-bbox="107 979 1037 1110">What practical difference is a response plan likely to have? Would it make more sense to continue with the existing longer term projects that were in place before Covid and not waste time trying to second guess areas we have little expertise in?</p>	<p data-bbox="1090 300 2056 534">As outlined in the briefing paper for the GEGJC meeting, a multi-layered approach to Gloucestershire's recovery is emerging from Districts as well as the County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership. Each of these organisations has been supporting businesses over the past 10-weeks, hearing first-hand of the challenges of sectors and individual businesses. This local intelligence informs new policy setting which can enable the business environment if done effectively.</p> <p data-bbox="1090 571 2040 770">Sharing this local intelligence through the recovery plans will be valuable to ensuring that future funding from government, initiatives at a County level and investment is made in the right sectors and localities to build on existing strengths and emerging opportunities. Key to using this information effectively is the coordination and leadership required to support businesses and residents.</p> <p data-bbox="1090 807 2056 1007">This intelligence will also be helpful at a practical level for future planning within individual councils. For example, through planning policy to determine the future need for commercial workspace or retail space as work patterns shift and consumer habits change. It will also be valuable for informing place-shaping requirements around high streets and market towns.</p> <p data-bbox="1090 1043 2063 1347">While businesses will indeed take a steer from their sector, there remains a competitive element to their own recovery and to innovate away from their competitors. In relation to links to government, this may be true of large businesses, but there are significant numbers of sole traders and SMEs who do not have these links. This relationship is held at a council or LEP and will turn to those organisations for their support needs. The council role will then turn to one of lobbying on behalf of businesses as has been seen with the hospitality and leisure sector and requirements around business rate relief and the furloughed workforce.</p>

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	<p>The long-term projects that were in place before Covid will also be key to sustainable growth and recovery, assuming there is still a market or a need. This will require an evidence base that will confirm where investment is needed to deliver the long-term vision.</p>
<p>Question 3: Cllr Brian Robinson</p>	<p>Response:</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6a: SEDF Funding Proposal: Central Gloucestershire City Region Board</p> <p>What is the reason for merging the three birds in to one? Will this now lead to a loss of focus on rural issues?</p> <p>The components projects that make up the £1.95m are simple one line statements with very round numbers attached. £50k here £100k there. Where is the business case to underpin these projects to demonstrate value for money to councillors and local taxpayers.</p> <p>Why does the report front sheet say there are no resource implications to a decision to allocate £2m? How can the committee make this allocation when it seems to be underpinned by very flimsy information?</p>	<p>The three 2050 Boards were established under the auspices on Leadership Gloucestershire, the partnership body upon which all local authorities in Gloucestershire and GFirst LEP are represented at Leader level. Leadership Gloucestershire considered a report in February 2020, which set out the reasons why it would be more appropriate to have a single City Region Board which covered the whole of the County. In summary these are as follows:- .</p> <p>By definition a ‘City Region’ comprises urban and rural areas that act together as a single functional economic area. It was considered by Leadership Gloucestershire that, to a large degree, in terms of land use planning, transport plans and economic strategy and activity, this applied to the County and therefore all districts should be included. Furthermore, coordination of strategic climate change responses are also being developed on a county basis which will have major influence on future transport, especially public transport provision. In addition, Leadership Gloucestershire agreed that a single county approach to growth will coordinate the engagement with the Western Gateway Powerhouse and national government more effectively.</p> <p>Leadership Gloucestershire considered that a major element of the work of the Severn Vale Board, investigation of a third Severn Crossing, had been effectively completed and the remaining work, concerning growth would be more effectively undertaken by a City Region Board.</p> <p>It was recognised by Leadership Gloucestershire, that the work of the Rural Ambitions Board was valuable, but it was agreed that this could be</p>

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undertaken within the structure of the City Region Board. The City Region Board has been asked to review its governance structures to take account of these changes and to determine how the work of the Rural Ambitions Board can be continued effectively. This work is underway.

After consideration, it was agreed by Leadership Gloucestershire to form a single City Region Board for the whole of the County and dissolve the other two 2050 boards.

The list of 'projects' in the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool Mid-Year Update report are given as an initial list of examples to demonstrate the extent of potential work facing the City Region Board partners. It serves to demonstrate the need to ensure that the City Region Board has the necessary funding to undertake its important work to benefit the whole of the County.

Having considered this, Leadership Gloucestershire have requested that the Joint Committee set aside an 'allocation' of £2million within the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) to be available for the City Region's work.

However, the funds will remain within the SEDF and can only be drawn on the approval by the Committee of the detailed assessment of individual projects. This is the case in respect of the request for funds to undertake the Multi-Modal Transport Study set out in the report.