

LOCAL MEETINGS – OUTCOME REPORT AUGUST 2020

1. In June 2017 the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC) agreed that the two 'stand alone' Committee meeting dates in February and October would be held at one of the six district council offices (arranged on a rotational basis).
2. This aimed to provide an opportunity for each authority to present to the Scrutiny Committee an overview of the economic growth related issues in their area, and for all members of the respective district to attend the meeting and present questions on local issues.
3. In addition, the Scrutiny Committee would aim to gain a better understanding of the issues impacting the economic growth agenda for each district and consider how engagement between the GFirst LEP, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC), the GEGSC and District Authorities might be improved.
4. The final of these meetings was held on 26 February 2020 and following this, a report was produced to provide the Committee with a summary of points and issues raised at all six local meetings (appendix 1).
5. This report was received as an information item at the Committees' meeting on 2 July 2020. Members noted the report and were asked submit, via email, any comments or observations which would be collated and submitted to the following bodies:
 - a) The GEGJC (via Cllr Cromwell as Scrutiny Chair);
 - b) Gloucestershire County Council (via the scrutiny update report to full council);
and
 - c) All six District Authorities (via their local representatives on this Committee).
6. The following observations were received:

Cllr Gina Blomefield

"Last year I attended the Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at Stroud District Council. I thought it was very professionally run, incredibly interesting and I learnt a great deal from the experience.

I certainly support the idea of 'visiting' other Gloucestershire satellite councils in this way as I think it not only gives a greater democratic width to the process but also gives those councils a platform on which to present items of particular interest to their community."

Cllr Brian Robinson

"Looking at the reports they seem to describe a snapshot in time that developed along with economic issues as the meetings progressed. They also demonstrate

to me how different each district is with ambitions developed from their own circumstances. The exception being Tewksbury, Cheltenham and Gloucester that have developed a common joint local plan. However within these differences all areas were also seeking economic growth.

As a member of the Forest of Dean District I did not feel the session based in the Forest put sufficient weight on improving educational outcomes for young people at 16 or the opportunity arising from Hartpury University based in the district. This demonstrates how the challenge of economic growth in any place can be described through different lens so that education, housing, transport, funding, planning can all bring a different perspective on the challenge and possible solutions. It feels quite often that we are shaping the economic needs to capture a possible funding pot or large employer needs or simply to deliver external targets on housing. This is practical particularly because some fundamental problems such as traffic congestion or inadequate schools can only be resolved with national funding.

As a result I do not feel the experience of the meetings allow me to draw any firm conclusions. It would suggest however that a one size fits all strategy for Gloucestershire is unlikely to meet the needs of all the district areas. It could be seen as an urban v rural issue but many people live in rural areas and choose to work in cities, and leisure activities draw people in the opposite direction so these economies are mutually dependent on each other. For most people the Local Authority borders are insignificant and they would be largely unaware they had crossed from one to the other than the colour of their waste bin. Clearly there is a lot going on in each district and the LEP is tasked with developing a Gloucestershire wide strategic plan for the economy but for me the impact of meeting in different locations highlighted the different paths each council is on rather than common goals.

Rather than repeat the process of meeting at each location I would prefer to see topics we cover at Scrutiny given a local lens so we can see what impact would be on different areas. This is however only one view it might still make sense to look across different views based on deprivation, ethnic minority or age opportunities. Each district is fortunate enough to have a representative at our meetings. This does not necessarily apply to the other groups."

7. On suggestion by the Chair, the Committee have agreed that going forward; there will be a standing item on the Committee's agenda to give district members an opportunity to feedback on key economic growth points/issues/actions from their respective councils, with a view that this would allow the Committee to continue to understand and be mindful of economic growth issues within the districts.