

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee held on Thursday 19 May 2022 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Rowena Hay	Cllr Tony Dale (Chair)
Cllr Rob Bird	Dev Chakraborty
Cllr Richard Cook	Cllr Bernie O'Neill
Cllr Doina Cornell	Cllr Philip Robinson (Vice-Chair)

Substitutes:

Apologies:

In Attendance:	Mike Dawson (TBC)	Gareth Edmundson (CBC)
	Simon Excell (GCC)	Paul James (CDC)
	Simon Harper (GCC)	Andrew Knott (FDC)
	Gillian Parkinson (GCC)	Pete Carr (GFirst)
	Luisa Senft-Hayward (GCC)	
	Orlagh Stoner (GCC)	Laura Gaiger (SGS)
	Katherine Martin (GCC)	Pat McLeod (SGS)
	Kathy O'Leary (SDC)	Peter McCaffery (RAU)
	Andrew Cummings (SDC)	Graham Pollard (RAU)

Attendance via Video

Conference:	Steve Mawson (GCC)	Cllr Matt Babbage (GCC)
	Laura Powick (GCC)	Lisa McCance (Shared Intelligence)

341. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies from Committee members.

342. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr Tony Dale, Cotswold District Council, was elected as Chair of the GEGJC for the 2022/23 Civic Year.

343. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Cllr Philip Robinson, Gloucestershire County Council, was elected as Vice-Chair of the GEGJC for the 2022/23 Civic Year.

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344. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

Gillian Parkinson, Assistant Director of Legal Services, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) advised that Gloucester City Council had formally agreed to the extension of the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) until 1 April 2023, and therefore all arrangements were now in place.

345. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

346. BUSINESS RATE POOL

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources, Stroud District Council, provided the Committee with an update on the position of the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).

Members were advised that £109k remained in the SEDF. The expected gain for the SEDF for 2021/22 would be just over £800k, and this would be confirmed in the next few weeks. Therefore the allocations agreed from the SEDF at this meeting were conditional on the final confirmation of that gain by the S151 Officer Group.

It was also noted that £1.59m remained within the City Region Board fund.

A full update report on the Business Rate Pool and position of the SEDF would be presented at the next GEGJC meeting.

347. SEDF BID - LOW CARBON AND SKILLS TRAINING CENTRE

Laura Gaiger and Pat McLeod, SGS College, attended the meeting to present their SEDF bid for the Low Carbon and Skills Training Centre.

Pat McLeod explained their vision for a facility that would have a leading role in the development of green skills in the region. Training for such skills was currently limited across the country, and they envisaged a centre of excellence at Berkeley that would pilot provision of training, write and test courses, and provide world class training facilities, in the hope that this training could then be offered by other colleges across the county and region.

He continued by explaining the benefits of Berkeley's location for the training centre, and that it would be a unique opportunity for Gloucestershire's ambition to lead on climate change and net zero carbon.

One member queried how the project would be funded after the first two years. In response it was explained that funding would not be an issue for the continuation of

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the project beyond two years in terms of provision, however capital investment was required initially to establish the training facility.

In response to a further question, it was acknowledged that there was no direct involvement with South Gloucestershire on this project.

Cllr Doina Cornell, Stroud District Council, which was sponsoring the bid, added that the district council would be exploring beyond two years how it could ensure long term sustainability for the project. She noted, as an example, that there was significant demand in the county to retrofit houses, however there was currently a lack of capacity and skills to meet this demand.

There were a number of comments that supported the expansion of these training opportunities across Gloucestershire.

Pat McLeod asserted that the gain for this investment was not just physical infrastructure but intellectual that could be shared across colleges.

Mike Dawson, Chair of the GEGJC Senior Officer Group (SOG) stated that the SOG recognised the importance of green skills for Gloucestershire's economy and was supportive of the project as a whole. He added that Stroud District Council would work with the college to monitor progress with the project, particularly in terms of sustainability and wider engagement, and would report back to the GEGJC.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED to

Approve the allocation of £450k SEDF funding to the Low Carbon and Skills Training Centre Project, as outlined in the detailed bid to the GEGJC, subject to confirmation of the 2021/22 SEDF allocation from the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool.

348. SEDF BID - CENTRAL GLOUCESTERSHIRE MASS TRANSIT SCHEME

Simon Excell, Gloucestershire County Council, presented the bid for the Gloucestershire Mass Transit Scheme. It was noted that the bid for the scheme had been rejected at the last GEGJC meeting, however the bid had since been redeveloped. The bid was also now requesting funds from the City Region Board.

He continued to explain that the Mass Rapid Transit Scheme would benefit the whole of the county, including rural areas, enhance the local economy, increase access to jobs, reduce CO2 emissions, and help address climate change.

A number of members indicated their support for the scheme, particularly now that it was clear the whole of Gloucestershire could benefit, and that a solution for the funding had been identified.

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There was a comment that a significant amount of SEDF funding was being allocated to transport, and it was suggested that a strategy be developed going forward as to what the Committee should be funding. The member added that they were conscious the allocation of this funding would not necessarily ensure the scheme was delivered, and suggested a plan be considered to improve public transport in the shorter term.

Mike Dawson advised that the SOG recognised this bid was a huge investment, but that the scheme had the potential to be the shift in transport for Gloucestershire. It was noted that progress on the scheme would be reported back to this Committee or its successor.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED to

Approve the request for £850k of funding from the City Region Board to support the development of an Options Appraisal Report (OAR) and Appraisal Specification Report (2022-23) and a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) (2023-25); and for regular updates on progress to be provided to the GEGJC or its successor.

349. SEDF BID - THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY'S 'INNOVATION VILLAGE' PROJECT

Peter McCaffery and Graham Pollard, Royal Agricultural University (RAU), provided a presentation to the Committee on their SEDF bid for the RAU's 'Innovation Village' Project.

They provided an overview of the RAU's credentials and ambitions and introduced their plans for the development of the 'Innovation Village' to address the issues of food security and climate change, by driving debate and facilitating the delivery of solutions.

The presentation detailed the plans for the development, which included facilities for teaching and research, as well as conference facilities, a small hotel, farm shop and restaurant to also make it a place to visit and to support its integration within the wider community.

The Committee was advised that the RAU was requesting funding to allow for external experts to be brought in to turn the concept into a fully designed project.

The LEP indicated their support for the scheme, and a number of members asked questions of the bid.

One member queried how the project would provide local people with the skills to produce their own food. In response, Peter McCaffery explained that locally they were trying to cater to all the different needs and groups, and that they wanted children to learn the skills through primary schools.

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There was a question as to where the RAU would secure funding from, following the SEDF bid, to continue with the project. In response, members were advised that the University would continue to invest, they hoped to attract developers and investors through a development campaign, and they would also look towards national government funding pots.

One member queried how children from districts other than Cotswold District could benefit from the project. In response, it was explained that the RAU would need to reach out to businesses and communities across Gloucestershire, and that project management support would help with that.

Mike Dawson advised that the SOG recognised the importance of agritech to Gloucestershire's economy and the importance of the RAU as a major player in that field. It was noted that a progress report would be brought back to the Committee or its successor, which would include details on how the project would benefit communities across Gloucestershire.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED to

Approve the bid for £100k from the SEDF for the current financial year for project management support for the Royal Agricultural University's 'Innovation Village Project, subject to confirmation of the 2021/22 SEDF allocation from the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool; and for regular progress updates, including how the project will benefit Gloucestershire as a whole, to be provided to the GEGJC or its successor.

350. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Cllr Matt Babbage, Chair of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC), provided the Committee with an update on the activities of the GEGSC.

He informed members that at their last meeting, the GEGSC considered the economic impacts of climate change. This included how businesses could best work to address net zero commitments.

The GEGSC also received an update on youth unemployment following the pandemic, which identified a higher claimant count in the older age ranges.

There would be a joint GEGSC session with the Environment Scrutiny Committee at the County Council next week to consider transport decarbonisation, and at their meeting in May, the GEGSC would receive the final presentation on modern methods of construction, before considering bringing a report on the topic to the GEGJC.

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There was a question as to how scrutiny would look following the potential changes to the governance arrangements for the GEGJC. It was understood, in response, that scrutiny arrangements would need to be reviewed.

351. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

Lisa McCance, Shared Intelligence, provided the Committee with an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), including opportunities for Gloucestershire.

Members were informed that there were two parts to the programme: Multiply, the adult numeracy programme, for which GCC was responsible for submitting an investment case; and the Core UKSPF, which had three themes including communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills (which would come into effect from 2024/25 onwards).

For the Core UKSPF, each district in Gloucestershire had been given an allocation, and had been tasked with developing an investment plan to be submitted by 1 August 2022.

It was understood that Shared Intelligence had been commissioned by GCC to develop an evidence base, a review of strategies across Gloucestershire, and the development of a local investment framework at a county level to support GCC's Multiply business case, as well as the districts' submissions for the Core UKSPF.

It was requested that members and stakeholders be engaged with as part of the development of the investment cases.

There was a request from the LEP for the districts to provide a steer on three projects it was leading on, in terms of their potential for UKSPF funding.

It was acknowledged that there would need to be cross-district conversations to coordinate work where appropriate.

It was commented that the timeframe for UKSPF submissions was a challenge, and that there were a lot of onerous requirements as part of that for not a lot of money.

It was clarified that the work being carried out by Shared Intelligence was about gathering evidence to support the work of the councils, and not about making decisions on the business cases.

352. TRANSPORT DECARBONISATION

Luisa Senft-Hayward, GCC, gave a presentation to the Committee on transport decarbonisation. The presentation was attached to the agenda for the meeting.

It was noted that a Transport Decarbonisation Forum was being held in July 2022, for which invites had already been sent out.

353. GCC ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

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Katherine Martin, Data and Analysis Manager, GCC, provided the Committee with an update on GCC's Economic Dashboard. The Dashboard was attached to the agenda for the meeting.

There was a query as to why individuals in the middle age groups had encountered more difficulties as a result of the pandemic. In response, it was suggested that the younger age groups may have been protected by staying in education and relying on parents, whilst older people may have taken early retirement.

It was queried which sectors had been impacted the most by the pandemic, having an impact on those in their 30s or 40s, and which areas there were opportunities.

Another member asked whether there was data for the numbers receiving long term sick pay or off work for health conditions? In response it was explained that some of that information was available, however some data was held by employers and not held collectively.

It was also queried whether the data on those claiming benefits could be broken down by gender, to which it was confirmed it could.

354. GFIRST LEP UPDATE

Dev Chakraborty, Deputy Chief Executive of GFirst LEP, presented the Committee with an update on the work of the GFirst LEP.

An update was provided on Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects. It was noted that nearly all projects were nearing completion, with just two projects, the Minster Exchange and Gloucester Railway Station, outstanding.

In an update on the Inward Investment Project, it was understood that the cyber high potential opportunity had launched two days previously, which had showcased the cyber opportunities in Gloucestershire to 80 British Embassies around the world. Feedback received on this had been positive.

The Inward Investment Team had also produced an 'Invest in Gloucestershire' promotional film, and it was requested that council marketing teams help promote the video.

It was also noted that the LEP's annual review event would be taking place on 15 June at Cotswold Airport.

355. FORWARD (WORK) PLAN

It was suggested that it would be useful to schedule a date for the RAU to report back on its project.

It was also requested that an item on food security and its impact on the economic community be added to the work plan.

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356. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the meeting dates for the remainder of 2022.

The Committee also thanked Mike Dawson, who would soon be retiring, for the support and guidance he had provided the Committee over the years.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 12.35 pm