

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee held on Thursday 9 February 2023 commencing at 10.00 am at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Richard Cook	Cllr Philip Robinson
Cllr Tony Dale	Cllr Catherine Braun
Cllr Bernie O'Neill	

Substitutes: Cllr Max Wilkinson substituted for Cllr Rowena Hay

Apologies: Cllr Rob Bird
Dev Chakraborty

Attended via Video

Conference: Steve Mawson
Benjamin Dent

In Attendance:	Jon McGinty (GCC)	Colin Chick (GCC)
	Gareth Edmundson (CBC)	Kathy O'Leary (SDC)
	Angela Presdee (GCC)	Gillian Parkinson (GCC)
	Peter Williams (FODDC)	Will Wheatley
	Katherine Martin (GCC)	Alistair Cunningham (TBC)
	Pete Carr (GCC)	Andrew Cummings (SDC)
	Paul James(CDC)	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Rowena Hay, Cllr Rob Bird, and Dev Chakraborty. Cllr Rowena Hay was substituted by Cllr Max Wilkinson.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 16th November 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. GEGSC RECOMMENDATION - FOOD AND FARMING IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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4.1 Benjamin Dent, Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership (GFFP), gave a presentation on Gloucestershire's food and farming sector. This included the Partnership's new membership of the Sustainable Food Places Programme, the food and farming sector's impact on Gloucestershire's economy, health and environment, and the Partnership's ability to support private and public sector organisations to make the most of these opportunities. Made in Gloucestershire was cited as an example of a SEDF funded initiative that had been helping to support local businesses and drive economic growth in the food and farming sector over the last year. It was explained that the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership were planning to work closely with policy makers to deliver initiatives that capitalised on economic growth opportunities in the County whilst maximising environmental, social and health benefits of better food policy and practices.

4.2 In response to questions about initiatives that were already ongoing across the County, it was explained that the Partnership would work closely with District officers to understand what was already in place and avoid duplication of work.

4.3 Members gave their support for the work that was planned by the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership's and noted that its aims and objectives aligned closely with District policies.

4.4 Members welcomed a future bid from the GFFP to this committee.

5. GEGJC GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Gareth Edmundson, Chair of the GEGJC Senior Officer Group, gave a report on the future governance of the GEGJC. It was explained that the planned Gloucestershire City Region Board would be chaired by Gloucestershire County Council and that existing GEGJC members would be retained with equal voting rights. An extension of this Committee for approximately 6 months was being proposed to work on the necessary governance and agreements to allow for the transition to the City Region Board. It was also explained that governance arrangements were decided by Leadership Gloucestershire and Local Authorities, and this was presented to the GEGJC as an update rather than a voting item.

5.2 A member raised concern over the title 'Gloucestershire City Region Board' and that it might not work as well for Districts and other Local Authorities. The officer explained that the title had been previously agreed by all Districts and the County Council and that it would align with the wider national growth agenda.

5.3 Concern was also raised over the chairing of the Gloucestershire City Region Board. It was explained that upper tier Authorities had been placed in the leading role as part of the Levelling Up Bill. Gloucestershire County Council was committed to engaging with District Authorities whilst having Chairing responsibilities.

5.4 A member highlighted some contradictions over the stage of readiness of the report but acknowledged that this was just an update and not a final decision or outline. A

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member also asked for more clarity moving forwards as to how the Gloucestershire City Region Board would work alongside Leadership Gloucestershire.

5.5 It was explained that there was still uncertainty as to what the County Deal would look like but that the Chair and Vice Chair of the LEP board were engaged with governance developments so far and were happy with what plans were in place.

6. STRATEGIC PLANNING IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

6.1 The report was noted by the Committee.

7. STRATEGIC ECONOMIC STRATEGY

7.1 David Owen, Director of Economy and Environment, presented the development of a new Economic Strategy for Gloucestershire. The project was a partnership between the LEP and the County Council and the scoping for each focus area was given. The plan was for this to be paired with a 5-year action plan as well as a 2050 plan. The full strategy and documents would be worked on from March.

7.2 In response to a question about the work done as part of the Local Industrial Strategy Draft, it was explained that the plan was to build on the work that had already been done and that resources and officers from different partners would be utilised. It was also explained that the Local Nature Partnership would be involved.

7.3 There was some discussion as to whether the Economic Strategy was too broad and ought to be narrowed in its focus.

7.4 There was also discussion about the 2050 vision and how it would fit in with previous plans. The officer explained that much had changed since the original 2050 vision and that it would be the principles around the 2050 outcomes that would be evaluated, not the projects.

7.5 Concern was raised that transport and long-term transport were not addressed in the document and that public transport was struggling significantly across Gloucestershire, particularly in rural areas. This was acknowledged by officers, and it was explained that the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan had been recently adopted, but that a review was on hold pending upcoming government guidance for Local Transport Plans.

7.6 It was also raised that the report did not mention the future of town centres.

8. BUSINESS RATE POOL

8.1 Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources, presented an update on the Business Rates Pool. It was reported that not much had changed since the last meeting. The pool gain had decreased slightly to £3.55 million, and this would lead to SEDF

allocation of £710,000 which would be confirmed in the summer. 2023/2024 was a re-evaluation year which would cause an increase in business rates income though this would be experienced as revenue neutral for the Councils due to various offsetting mechanisms. Pooling was reported to continue next year as part of the Local Government Settlement and would likely continue the year after. A growth allocation of £700,000 had been allocated for next year and it was anticipated that the growth rate would be similar for the year after.

8.2 It was explained that all commitments that had been proposed and agreed had been met and the funding had been allocated. There was £179,000 that was unallocated.

8.3 It was clarified that LEP funding for the coming year had not been allocated by central government yet.

9. GFIRST LEP UPDATE

9.1 This report was noted by the Committee.

10. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

10.1 The GEGSC update was to be circulated as a written update after the meeting.

ACTION – DSU to circulate the GEGSC written update

11. GCC ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

11.1 Katherine Martin, Data and Analysis Manager, gave a brief highlight of the Gloucestershire Economic Dashboard particularly focusing on updated data about economic inactivity in Gloucestershire. It was reported that 38% of Gloucestershire's population were classed as economically inactive and this had increased from 35% in 2011. It was also reported that 18.3% of the economically inactive had never been in employment.

11.2 It was explained that Gloucestershire had slightly lower economic inactivity than the Southwest and the National average but that Gloucestershire's reasons for economic inactivity did differ from other areas.

11.3 It was also explained that there was a focus on the economically inactive retired to explore whether they were open to re-joining the workforce and what would attract them to do so. Some of the money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would also be directed to developing training and support for those who wish to return to work after retirement. There was also an initiative being launched that would set up work experience for those over 50 to help redirect them to new work.

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11.4 There was also some discussion over the term economically inactive and whether this was truly reflective of people that weren't contributing to the local economy. It was explained that it was a national and international term that encompassed those who weren't working or looking for work and whilst it does have its limitations, it was what was used for national reporting.

11.5 A member suggested that it could be that the rise in economic inactivity was being driven by employer practices. Officers explained that the Growth Hub were working with businesses to help improve inclusive hiring practices. They were still evaluating whether this support was impacting overall figures.

11.6 Clarity was asked for in terms of how data was gathered around those that are economically inactive with the suggestion that if data was being gathered solely through those who were accessing the growth hub, then that would be a biased sample. It was explained that efforts were made to gather data from members of varying groups that lie in the economically inactive umbrella.

11.7 An example was also given of a project in Wiltshire which got 50% of an unemployed cohort into the workforce by focusing on working with employers. It was agreed that supporting employers and overcoming their resistance would be an important part of the solution.

12. FORWARD (WORK) PLAN

12.1 The committee noted the Forward (Work) Plan.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS

13.1 The Committee noted the date for the next arranged meeting and understood that future meeting dates would be arranged to cover the GEGJC extension period.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 11.09

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