



REPORT TITLE: Gloucestershire Economic Strategy – approval to commence seven-week public engagement.

Cabinet Date	19 July 2023
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Leader of the Council
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	To seek approval to commence with a seven-week public engagement period on the draft Gloucestershire Economic Strategy.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) approves the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy public engagement document set out in the Appendix.(b) approves a seven-week public engagement period from 31 July 2023 to 15 September 2023.(c) agrees that a further report setting out the engagement results and final recommendation on the adoption of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy is brought back to Cabinet for approval in early 2024.
Reasons for Recommendations	The current county-wide Economic Strategy was produced by the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in 2018. Work on the LEP's Local Industrial Strategy was paused due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and was never formally approved. There is a need for a new strategic economic document to provide a clear narrative through both a short-term lens, considering the priorities of the next 5-years, and a long-term perspective which takes a view to 2050.
Resource Implications	External consultancy support has been procured to lead on the production of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy and the separate Public Engagement document - all of which is funded from existing revenue budgets.
Background Documents	<p>Draft Local Industrial Strategy https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/gloucestershire_draft_local-industrial-strategy_2019-updated.pdf</p> <p>Strategic Economic Plan for Gloucestershire 2.0 https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2018/sep-2-update2018v3.pdf</p>
Statutory Authority	National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

Divisional Councillor(s)	All
Officer	Name: Ben Watts Tel. no: 01452 425771 Email: ben.watts@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31 July 2023 – Commence public engagement.• 15 September 2023 – Public engagement concludes.• September-October 2023 – deliver a series of workshops to feedback engagement responses and develop individual strategy topics.• October-December 2023 – full drafting of economic strategy to deliver a suite of documents which represent the core topics and an overarching summary and action plan for delivery.• January-March 2024 – formal adoption of the strategy.

Background

1. There is a need for an updated economic strategy to fill the void caused by Government not formally approving the LEP's draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) in 2020. Production of the LIS was halted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and, since then, by the changes in Government priorities regarding economic growth. The new Gloucestershire Economic Strategy will be a joint LEP / GCC strategy that builds on the priorities set out in the draft LIS and the earlier GCC Strategic Economic Plan. It will provide a clear narrative through both a short-term lens, considering the priorities of the next 5-years, and a long-term perspective which takes a view to 2050.
2. It will provide a strategic overview of the county's economy and develop a set of county-wide priorities and actions to deliver a strong and inclusive economy. It is intended to support the development of economic policy documents, support the local plan making process, set the strategic direction for county-wide funding, and clarify the long-term vision for inclusive growth across the county. Progressing this long-term document has clear links to economic growth by providing businesses and investors with confidence of how the county's employment and infrastructure offer will develop in the long-term. It will also reflect the ambitions of the recently approved Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground.
3. Once the strategy is completed it will include an action plan that will clearly articulate delivery priorities and thereby enable a way to monitor progress. The aim is to have the strategy substantially completed by December 2023 and will seek formal adoption in early 2024.
4. A robust project governance structure has been implemented to oversee the production of the strategy. This includes a project Task Group consisting of GCC officers, project consultants and two officers from the district authorities. This group is responsible for the production of the strategy. A Steering Group consisting of senior GCC officers with Senior Responsible Officer responsibility for overseeing the project delivery, the project lead officers from the Task Group and the Director of Strategic Growth from the GFirst LEP. This group is responsible for strategic oversight of the strategy. In addition, throughout the life of the project there will be regular member briefing sessions, updates provided to the GFirst LEP Board, updates at the county Chief Executives group and monthly updates through the county-wide Economic Development Officers group.
5. Following initial research and a series of conversations with county and external stakeholders, a set of topics around which the strategy will be formed has been developed. These topics represent what is in scope of the strategy and will feature in both the public engagement document and the final strategy. Each topic will be presented under two overriding headings covering Place and People. These include:
 - **Zero carbon** and the ambitions of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire which relate to the economy.
 - **Inclusive growth** to ensure every resident and business has equal access to opportunities.

- **Skills and employment** drawing on the existing work of the county council, the district councils and LEP to reduce skills gaps by securing the supply of workforce skills.
 - **Supporting sustainable growth** drawing on need for a county-wide spatial development strategy as outlined within the approved Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground.
 - **Business support** ensuring a futureproofed offer which takes account of the changing landscape and needs of businesses.
 - **Inward investment** to drive financial investment, employment, and opportunities to local places.
 - **Digital** - maintaining infrastructure delivery which improves access and availability to all.
6. There are three stages of stakeholder engagement planned during the strategy production process. Stage 1 (which has now been completed) consisted of a series of stakeholder interviews and review of relevant policy documents. Stage 2 consists of the planned public engagement outlined within this report and includes production of a high-level summary document that outlines the key themes of the emerging economic strategy. Stage 3 consists of a series of stakeholder workshops to feed back public engagement responses, develop the individual topics (listed above) and formalise the delivery priorities.
7. The structure and content of the public engagement document is provided in the Appendix. The final version of the document will be designed to be compliant with corporate standards. The format is intended to maximise accessibility and will include the following structure:
- Introduction – outlining the basis of the strategy and the long-term vision.
 - Evidence led summary of the Gloucestershire economy.
 - Summary of the various strategy topics outlined in para 5. This includes a topic summary, identification of the relevant key themes, a long-term vision for 2050, summary of the existing issues and proposed actions.
 - How to respond including the link to the online engagement questionnaire on the county council's website.
8. The public engagement document will primarily be available digitally with the option of viewing or downloading the document from a dedicated section of the county council's website and the GFirst LEP website. Printed copies will be provided upon request. Members of the public wishing to share their views will be asked to do so using the county council's online consultation tool. To ensure that there is a high-level of awareness of the engagement document, GCC and GFirst officers will contact stakeholders identified during Stage 1 of the stakeholder engagement process with the request of distributing information of the public engagement using their stakeholder lists. A variety of communications methods will be used to target stakeholders accordingly including media release, stakeholder newsletter, social media, web content etc.
9. Following the public engagement concluding, a summary report will be produced outlining the trend information captured through the process. This will be reflected upon by officers, before being discussed at a series of stakeholder workshops (stage 3

of the stakeholder engagement process). The feedback received from these sessions will then be presented to the project's Steering Group where the focus of the strategy content will be agreed prior to finalising the strategy. It is proposed that the final strategy considered for adoption will be considered by Cabinet in early 2024.

Options

10. Not to commence with a seven-week public engagement period on the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy. This option was rejected as it is considered good practice to invite comment on emerging strategy proposals. It is important to provide the opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to have their say on the direction of the future economic strategy for the county before it is finalised.

Risks

11. There is a risk that an insufficient number of people engage in the process. The engagement document will be actively promoted using social media and on the county council and GFirst LEP websites. Information on the engagement process will be distributed on behalf of the county council by stakeholders contacted during the Stage 1 using their contact lists. Multiple reminders will also be issued during the seven-week engagement period.

Financial implications

12. External consultancy support has been procured to lead on the production of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy and the separate Public Engagement document. All these costs will be covered by existing resources within the Economic Development team's budget.

Climate change implications

13. The move towards a net carbon zero economy is one of the overarching principles of the Economic Strategy and is considered within each of the strategy topics. The final strategy will be produced with support and input from Climate Leadership Gloucestershire where it has been agreed that a single climate vision for the county will be developed.
14. The transition to the green economy is an urgent priority for Gloucestershire and this needs to be achieved meeting our 2045 net zero emissions while simultaneously promoting economic growth. The zero-carbon section of the strategy outlines the opportunities for this transition, with a particular focus on:
 - Green skills and green jobs – to bridge the green skills-jobs mismatch.
 - Business support – to supply small and medium-sized enterprises with the necessary support and information to transition to zero carbon.
 - Agriculture – to keep growing the agri-tech sector and give farmers more support in the transition to zero carbon.
 - Biodiversity recovery – to improve the natural environment and protect what is already there.

- Energy – to keep investing in the low carbon and renewable energy sector and investigate new forms of energy.

Equality implications

15. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed.
16. Cabinet Members should read and consider the EIA in order to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

17. A The public engagement survey will not request the names and contact details of respondents, therefore a DPIA is not required for this decision. As free text boxes are used to capture feedback on the draft proposals a statement has been included asking respondents to avoid including information about themselves. Should any personal details be provided as part of a response this would be subject to the Data Protection Act and handled accordingly.

Social value implications

18. None.

Consultation feedback

19. None at this stage of the process.

Officer recommendations

20. That Cabinet approves the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy public engagement document set out in the Appendix and approves a seven-week public engagement period from 31 July 2023 to 15 September 2023. It also agrees that a further report setting out the engagement results and final recommendation on the adoption of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy is brought back to Cabinet for approval in early 2024.

Performance management/follow-up

21. Feedback from the engagement will be evaluated and will be incorporated within the final Economic Strategy where appropriate.

APPENDIX