



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB  
Telephone 01453 766321 • Facsimile 01453 750932  
www.stroud.gov.uk

## STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBER/OFFICER REPORT

<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY</b>	<b>Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)</b>
<b>DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED</b>	15 September 2021
<b>BRIEF REPORT:</b>	
<u>Gloucestershire's Farming and Food Sector</u> <p>An update was provided to the committee from the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership. The update focused on what is being achieved by partners working together but also the challenges being faced by the sector, in particular the uncertainties around loss in subsidy payments post Brexit. The agri-food sector in Gloucestershire employs 50,000 people and generates 8.8% of the County economy. The Committee also heard that spending on local providers generates more jobs than spend with large supermarket chains. The current changes in farming are creating a trend towards larger farms which is the opposite of what is needed to combat the climate and nature emergency. The partnership is looking to work with Councils to use their expertise in;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procurement</li><li>• Infrastructure</li><li>• Skills, knowledge and networks</li><li>• Retaining spending in County supply chains</li></ul> <p>The Committee was also keen to hear about how local graduates in agricultural skills could be retained to work within the County. As part of the discussion the partnership were incited to come and speak with colleagues at SDC which was accepted.</p> <u>Covid-19 Economic Recovery</u> <p>Colin Chick, Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, gave an update on Covid-19 recovery work. As part of this work an employment and skills hub is being created as a "single front door" offer with the LEP, educational establishments, the DWP and others. It was noted that there are a number of factors in September which are likely to greater demand for these services including the closure of both the furlough and self-employed income support schemes. Job postings have increased but so have planned redundancies. The economic dashboard produced by the County Council shows that at the end of July 12,600 people were furloughed in the County and 14,060 people were claiming employment related benefits. These numbers have reduced but are still significant. Job postings are up 30.1% on Feb 2020 which is a good sign of recovery.</p>	

All districts presented updates on economic recovery and there were common themes. Those who have applied for levelling up funding have not yet heard of the results. Anecdotal evidence suggests that moving funding applications to Councils rather than LEPs has led to BEIS being overwhelmed with the numbers. Members of the Committee were concerned about the challenges presented by shortages of HGV drivers in the County and Colin Chick was asked to come back to the next committee with a further update.

#### GFirst LEP Update

Ruth Dooley has been appointed as the new chair of the LEP as Dr Diane Savory OBE has stepped down after ten years.

Tyler Attwood, Joe Rovers, Nicola Bird and Matt Charman have also been appointed to the Board.

The scheme to give grants to small businesses to increase their online visibility, funded by District Councils through the additional restrictions grant (ARG), has been successful. In Stroud District grants have been given to 18 businesses totalling £48,689. A proposal to expand the scheme has been developed and discussions are beginning with District Section 151 Officers.

#### Business Rates Pool

The pooling arrangements generated a gain of £3.6 million in 2020/21 of which £731k was payable to the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).

A gain of £4.2 million is currently anticipated in the 2021/22 financial year of which £848k would be payable to SEDF.

The unallocated balance on the SEDF is currently £1.1 million.

<b>FUTURE MEETINGS</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
<b>REPORT SUBMITTED BY</b>	Cllr Catherine Braun Strategic Director of Resources