



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	17 November 2021

BRIEF REPORT:

1. Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Matt Babbage reported back on meetings held including one on the Local Transport Plan. He flagged that there would be a report coming to GEGJC on Future High Streets funding.

2. Employment and Skills

Pete Carr, Director of Employment and Skills at the GFirst LEP updated the meeting on:

- The skills landscape and emerging policy changes
Business West is leading on a Local Skills Improvement Plan, a trailblazing pilot to put employers at the heart of the skills system, which is concentrating on the health and social care and highly skilled manufacturing sectors.
Education recovery funding is still a priority, helping young people catch up, and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee provides opportunities for courses for others.
Green skills – there is a lack of translation into new apprenticeships and qualifications, and work to do with colleges.
- The Gloucestershire Employment and Skills strategy
The structure has been shared and a draft is due in December.
- The upskilling and employment of local people, and how this is being achieved
Information is being pulled into one place on the Skills Portal, with up to date access links from training providers.
Careers advice is being delivered in 49 schools and organisations, and support being given to them in the form of a career coaching tool linked to live local job opportunities. In addition the Employment & Skills Hub, a joint enterprise between GCC and the G First LEP is up and running.
- An analysis on the shortage of delivery / HGV drivers in Gloucestershire.
There are currently 580 job postings. The Gloucestershire driver testing centre closed 10 years ago meaning the nearest centres are in Swindon and Bristol, and training providers link with those centres – pressure is being put on the DVLA to provide additional testing capacity by reversing that decision or making additional provision.

3. Review of Gloucestershire Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plans

Colin Chick of GCC led an update in respect of collaboration across Covid-19 economic recovery plans in the county, with each District, the County and the GFirst LEP giving a verbal update on progress. Headlines included:

- All three county Levelling Up Fund bids had been successful, totalling £52.8m; Gloucester City and Forest of Dean are both priority 1 areas and had received £125,000 funding to help prepare their successful bids for city centre regeneration and employment-ready skills development respectively, and GCC's Sustainable Travel Improvements bid was also successful (Stroud District is a priority 2 area and did not receive any funding, and is working on a second round bid).
- Berkeley and Oldbury is in the shortlist of 5 for the UK Nuclear Fusion project, which is expected to be whittled down to the top 3 by next June
- The county is becoming part of the Patent Library Network this month which will help SMEs and others with Intellectual Property rights
- Forest of Dean DC is working on a directory for remote workers, places they can work away from the home
- The GFirst LEP has awarded 117 digital recovery grants and is considering a second scheme focusing on sustainable grants
- SDC updated on the new Council Plan and its links back to the Recovery Plan, the emerging Economic Development Strategy and Canal Strategy, Market Towns initiative and LGA One Public Estate Zero Carbon project funding.

Kate Martin of GCC gave an update on GCC's Covid-19 Recovery Dashboard. Headlines included:

- The Gloucestershire economy is recovering more quickly than the national average
- The claimant count is falling after rising during the pandemic, during which existing trends had been magnified, with the biggest increase in claimants 18-24 year olds
- There are high numbers of job vacancies
- When furlough ended in September, 8,500 workers (down from 10,000) had been furloughed, with the numbers of workers in wholesale and retail being the highest, a switch from accommodation and food services earlier in the pandemic.

4. Forest of Dean Biosphere Reserve proposal

Forest of Dean DC is consulting on a proposal to make the Forest of Dean a UNESCO biosphere reserve. The inclusion of the Severn estuary may have implications for riverside development proposals in Stroud District in future years if it goes ahead.

5. Strategic Planning in Gloucestershire

An annual report on the status of the county's plans was given.

6. GFirst LEP Update

Dev Chakraborty gave an update, the highlights of which were:

- The LEP is promoting a Made in Gloucestershire campaign
- There is still no news on the Government's LEP review, and the LEP will have unknown core funding from April 2022.

7. Business Rate Pool update

Andrew Cummings gave an update on the Business Rate Pool covering the 2020/21

financial year and early projections for 2021/22. GEGJC was asked to note the forecast position of the Business Rates Pool and estimated balance for the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF). The growth in business rates pool is estimated at just over £4m.

The Committee supported a request for £65,000 from the SEDF to fund a feasibility study for a multi modal transport link between Kemble and Cirencester.

FUTURE MEETINGS	16 March 2022 with an additional meeting likely to be arranged for January 2022 to discuss the GEGJC's future, as currently it will end in March 2022
REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Kathy O'Leary
DATE	19 November 2021