

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17 FEBRUARY 2022

Report Title	Continuation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) - Until 31 March 2023			
Purpose of Report	To consider a request to extend the operation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) until 31 March 2023 and to delegate authority to the Head of Paid Services to amend the Inter - Authority Agreement (dated 4th September 2014) accordingly.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES: a) that the GEGJC will continue to operate from 4th March 2022 until 31 March 2023, and b) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree and complete the appropriate legal documentation to allow the Inter Authority Agreement to be extended until 31 March 2023.			
Consultation and Feedback	Gloucestershire Chief Executives and Leaders GEGJC			
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Options	To not agree to extend the IAA to enable the Joint Committee continuing until 31 March 2023 will result in there being no other formal joint decision-making arrangements across Gloucestershire local authorities in place to promote the economy and support the economic response to COVID19.			
Background Papers	Continuation of the GEGJC sept 2020 – March 2022			
Appendices	None.			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Members will recall that the Strategy and Resources Committee considered and approved a report in July 2020, extending the operation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) for a period of 18 months to expire in March 2022. A copy of the report is set out in the background papers. Members will note that the decision in 2020 removed the requirement for 12 months' notice for any future changes to the agreement.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The eighteen-month period was to allow Gloucestershire local authorities to continue to work collaboratively together on Gloucestershire's economic development through the Joint Committee. At its June 2020 meeting, the Joint Committee also identified that it will be supporting the economic recovery of the County because of the economic impact of COVID19. The 18-month extension was to enable the Joint Committee to oversee the strategy development and delivery, as the principal partnership based economic co-ordination forum.
- 2.2. Implicit in the previous extension was the need to review the operation of the GEGJC and whether it remained the appropriate forum to consider joint working on Economic Growth and managing the funds held for Economic Growth generated by the Business Rates Pooling arrangements in the County.
- 2.3. Gloucestershire Authorities considered the future governance arrangements for leading economic growth in the County at its Leadership Gloucestershire meeting in June 2021. Leadership Gloucestershire was mindful that the government would be publishing the CLUHC 'Levelling Up' white paper which will potentially impact the future governance and partnership arrangements. It was anticipated, at that time, that the White Paper could be available before Christmas which would allow Officers and Members time to consider the issues raised by its proposals and develop governance proposals in respect of the future economic agenda for Gloucestershire.
- 2.4. Unfortunately, the anticipated White Paper was delayed and was made available early in February 2022. Consequently, at its meeting in January 2022 Leadership Gloucestershire considered three options in respect of the continuation of GEGJC pending publication of the anticipated White Paper:
 - Do nothing and let GEGJC terminate in March 2022 – this will mean there is no formal partnership decision making body on economic issues and specifically no joint administering body for the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF). Unless alternative governance arrangements were established for the SEDF, the funds would need to be handed back to the business rates pool authorities.
 - Extend the life of the GEGJC for say 12 months or for as long as needed and carry on as at present. This is the simplest option and will not require significant work to amend the IAA. It will simply require a resolution from each local authority before 4th March 2022 to continue GEGJC for the period agreed.
 - An alternative to option 2, would be to extend the life of the GEGJC, but limit agenda items to SEDF decisions. The GCRB could then be used for all other strategic discussion, offering a wider partnership forum for these items. This option could be delivered by simply managing the GEGJC agenda and could be done without the need for significant amendments to the IAA.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Gloucestershire Authorities at the Leadership Gloucestershire meeting favoured option 2 as the simplest and least disruptive. The further extension of the IAA to be capped to continue until 31 March 2023 to enable the GEGJC to continue until that time, and review

of the governance arrangements in respect of the future economic agenda for Gloucestershire to take place as soon as the Levelling Up White Paper was available.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

The inter-authority agreement between the Councils provides for the administration costs of the Gloucestershire Economic Joint Committee (capped at £5,000 per annum) to be paid from the Strategic Economic Development Fund. Direct cost to this Council is limited to members' expenses to attend meetings, if claimed, together with providing the Officer time involved with supporting the Joint Committee and the Senior Officer Group.

Stroud District Council provides the support for the administration of the Business Rates Pool, including attendance at GEGJC. Again, the cost of this is limited to officer time.

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4.2 Legal Implications

The IAA no longer includes a provision requiring 12 months' notice being served by any of the partner authorities to any proposal to extend the life of the committee. Therefore, it is permissible to extend the agreement if all the Gloucestershire local authorities agree.

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4.3 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category however, the GEGJC must recognise that economic growth now has to be considered in the context of declared climate emergencies by the constituent Gloucester authorities.