



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	7 September 2022

BRIEF REPORT:

A number of reports were received for information:

1. Gloucestershire's role in Western Gateway's growth agenda

James Cooke of the Western Gateway Partnership gave a presentation reminding the committee of the partnership, its opportunities and challenges, key missions and key projects.

The pan-regional Western Gateway Partnership serves 4.4m people living in 2 countries, 8 cities and 3 city regions, and its Board is made up of local authority leaders, representatives from the city regions and Combined Authorities, LEPs and academic institutions.

Whilst the area has a £110bn economy, centred on advanced manufacturing, green and cyber technology, there are productivity and export gaps compared to the rest of the UK regional and Welsh economies, as well as pockets of deprivation and some of the least well-connected cities in the UK. There are some opportunities and ambitions particularly around a green energy super cluster concentrating on a hydrogen ecosystem and potentially tidal capacity of the Severn, and key projects in train include the Severn Edge STEP nuclear fusion project – we are down to the final 5 and expecting to hear soon.

2. Statement of Common Ground

Tracey Birkinshaw of Cheltenham BC advised the committee that the Statement of Common Ground (SCG), which helps fulfil the local plan duty to co-operate requirement with neighbouring councils, had been signed by the county council, the LEP and all the district councils except for Tewkesbury BC, which now has that scheduled.

There is an ambition to develop an action plan to deliver on some of the strategic objectives of the SCG, including cross-cutting issues such as climate change, although the lack of resource to deliver that means that the Senior Officers Group will now work on developing a bid to SEDF to fund the development of an action plan. There was some debate about the length of time it had taken to prepare the SCG, whether it would have an enduring purpose subject to planning reforms and whether all councils would be able to agree on an action plan / funding one.



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER REPORT

3. GFirst LEP Update

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

1. Progress made on capital projects, principally the opening of the Applied Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College and Hartpury University's Digital Innovation Farm, and the completion of the West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme to accelerate the release of employment land for the Cheltenham Cyber Park (using £23.6m of Growth Deal funding).
2. Inward investment project – progress made on 'Invest in Gloucestershire'.
3. The successful launch of the 'Made in Gloucestershire' initiative.

4. Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool Update

Andrew Cummings reported that the Gloucestershire S151 Officers had confirmed the business rates pool funding was available to fund the SEDF bids that had been agreed at the last meeting subject to the funding being available at outturn (Berkeley Low Carbon Training Centre and development of a project to create a World-leading Innovation Centre at the Royal Agricultural University).

The total growth in business rates funding was £12.87m for 2021/22, a reduction on the previous year where growth had been £13.85m. The reduction was mainly due to a large business rates appeal in TBC's area. The pooling system allows the total growth to be combined and a pool levy to be calculated, with a lower level of growth returned to Government than would be the case without pooling. This resulted in a pool gain of £3.9m in 2021/22 (as compared to £3.57m in 2020/21). Of this, £638k went into the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) administered by this committee, £2.04m went to the district councils and £51k to the county council.

The forecast for the pool gain in 2022/23 is currently £3.886m which will be revised and updated throughout the year. DLUHC has written to local authorities requesting proposals for pooling arrangements in 2023/24 which indicates that it is considering extending pooling into 2023/24 although this is not yet confirmed.

5. UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Lisa McCance of Shared Intelligence, who provide economic development consultancy support to GCC and had prepared an evidence base for the bids, updated the committee on the two UKSPF bid streams:

- a. Multiply, the £2.7m countywide programme to deliver adult numeracy improvements over the next 3 years, which had received full support following its June submission. and



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER REPORT

- b. Core UKSPF to each district, totalling just over £7m. Districts updated to say that each had submitted its investment plan by the deadline of 1 August and we are now awaiting the outcomes.

The four rural districts in the county had just received news of a further allocation of funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, with bids to be submitted by the end of November as an addendum to the UKSPF bids already submitted. SDC has received a further allocation of £400,000 to be spent in the two years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

6. Covid-19 and Economic Intelligence Dashboard

Kate Martin of GCC tabled an update on GCC's Economic Dashboard which was taken as read.

7. Forward (Work) Plan

There was some discussion about bringing forward some of the unscheduled items on the work plan related to the poor rural bus service, namely 'Use and Access to Public Transport in Gloucestershire', 'The impact of the shortage of bus drivers on the local economy' and 'Addressing economic inactivity in Gloucestershire, how to encourage young people to stay and work in the county, and helping vulnerable communities become more resilient'. This resulted in the majority of the Members present voting to take all 3 items off the work plan and instead ask for an item to cover them at the Economic Growth Joint Scrutiny Committee, which SDC did not support.

FUTURE MEETINGS	16 November 2022 9 February 2023
REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Cllr Catherine Braun, Leader Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive
DATE	7 September 2022