

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2023

Report Title	CONTINUATION OF THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE (GEGJC)			
Purpose of Report	To consider a request to extend the operation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) beyond 31 March 2023 for a further temporary period and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to amend the Inter-Authority Agreement (dated 4th September 2014) accordingly.			
Decision(s)	<p>Subject to agreement being reached at the GEGJC on 9 February 2023, Council RESOLVES:</p> <p>a) that the GEGJC will continue to operate from 31 March 2023 for a further temporary period as agreed at the GEGJC meeting on 9 February 2023, and</p> <p>b) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree the length of the extension and complete the appropriate legal documentation to allow the Inter Authority Agreement to be extended beyond 31 March 2023.</p>			
Consultation and Feedback	Gloucestershire Chief Executives and Leaders Group Leaders and Policy Committee Chairs GEGJC			
Report Author	Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive Tel: 01453 754780 Email: kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	To not agree to extend the IAA to enable the Joint Committee continuing beyond 31 March 2023. However this will result in there being no other formal joint decision-making arrangements in place across Gloucestershire local authorities to promote economic development.			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	None			
Implications (further details at the end of report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 4 September 2014, all Gloucestershire Authorities entered into an Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) to establish the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC). The purpose of the GEGJC was to work collaboratively on economic development across the county and to administer the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF), created from Business Rates Pooling arrangements. The initial term for the GEGJC was five years to end in September 2020.
- 1.2 In July 2020, the Strategy and Resources Committee considered and approved a report to extend the operation of the GEGJC for a further period of 18 months to expire in March

2022. The decision in 2020 removed the requirement for 12 months' notice for any future changes to the IAA.

- 1.3 Members will recall that a year ago, on 17 February 2022, Council considered and approved a report to extend the operation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) for another year to 31 March 2023.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The further one-year extension period agreed a year ago was to allow Gloucestershire local authorities to continue to work collaboratively together on Gloucestershire's economic development through the Joint Committee.
- 2.2 Implicit in both the previous extensions agreed was the need to review the operation of the GEGJC and whether it remains the appropriate forum to consider joint working on economic development and managing the funds held for that purpose generated by the Business Rates Pooling arrangements in the county.
- 2.3 Gloucestershire Local Authorities considered the future governance arrangements for leading economic growth in the county at its Leadership Gloucestershire meeting in June 2021 and has progressed discussions at subsequent meetings in 2021 and 2022. Those discussions have been shaped by first the delayed publication of the 'Levelling Up' White Paper (eventually published in February 2022) and subsequent Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently progressing through Parliament.
- 2.4 Future arrangements centre on the Gloucestershire City Region Board, which has never yet actually met, partly due to protracted discussions about governance arrangements.
- 2.5 However, at the time of writing this report, it is anticipated that the GEGJC will consider and agree outline governance arrangements for the Gloucestershire City Region Board and administration of the SEDF at its meeting on 9 February 2023 and establish a timetable for replacing the GEGJC.
- 2.6 Whilst a future report to Council will set out the new governance arrangements for agreement, this report seeks only to extend the life of the GEGJC by a further temporary period to allow arrangements to be finalised. This is likely to be for a further six months. A resolution from each local authority will be required for a further extension prior to the end of March 2023.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Subject to the outcome of discussions at the GEGJC on 9 February 2023, the further extension of the IAA for a further temporary period is recommended to Council. This will enable the GEGJC to continue beyond 31 March 2023 until the governance arrangements in respect of the Gloucestershire City Region Board and future economic agenda for Gloucestershire have been finalised. A future report to Council will detail and seek agreement to those arrangements.

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.

One Legal Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

4.3 Equality Implications

There are no specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant environmental implications arising from this decision.