



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	9 February 2023

BRIEF REPORT:

A number of reports were received for information:

1. GEGSC recommendation on Food and Farming in Gloucestershire

Ben Dent of the Food and Farming Partnership gave a presentation previously received by the Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee about the partnership, launched last year, and in particular, a proposal to find integrated solutions to policy changes to promote economic development in the food and farming sector. Given complex structures, the proposal is to apply for Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) money to undertake a collaborative mapping exercise.

Cotswold DC and Forest of Dean DC highlighted that similar things were happening in their districts so it was agreed that these would need to be looked at and a funding proposal brought forward to a future meeting, which it was confirmed would need to be proposed by one of the voting members of the GEGC Board.

2. GEGJC Governance Arrangements

Gareth Edmundson, CE of Cheltenham BC, updated the committee on proposals to replace the GEGJC with the City Region Board. There had been further engagement with Leaders since the last meeting which was reflected in his update paper.

Essentially the forum for economic development would be retained under the banner of the City Region Board, which would be chaired by GCC, would oversee SEDF proposals and anticipate any county deal which may later be agreed.

To ensure a smooth transition there would need to be a further extension of GEGJC by about 6 months to enable details to be agreed (see report to Council on 16 February).

3. Strategic Economic Strategy

David Owen, now Director at GCC as well as CE of the LEP, reported that the LEP's draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) had been stalled by Covid and that the new partnership of GCC and the LEP was leading on the preparation of a Strategic Economic Strategy which would have an overarching executive summary and a 5 year action plan. There would be detailed plans for each of 11 priorities, outlined as: local economy, inward investment,



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business support, skills & employment, sustainable growth, physical connectivity, digital strategy, rural economy, transition to a low carbon economy, a 2050 vision and then an overarching strategy.

A timetable was set out as follows:

- Jan- Feb – scope project, agree governance arrangements, stakeholder mapping, and agree areas to be covered within the themes.
- March-June – Stakeholder engagement, prepare consultation material and carry out external peer review.
- July – September – 6 week consultation.
- Oct – Dec – prepare detailed strategy documents and carry out external peer review prior to completion.

4. Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool Update

Andrew Cummings reported that there would be a pool gain of £3.5m, slightly lower than previously predicted, to be confirmed in the Summer as councils complete their year-end processes. He sounded a note of caution on the need for all local authority audits to be completed. Following this SEDF allocations of £710,000 could be confirmed.

As 2023-24 will be a revaluation year, this should lead to an increase in business rates although for councils this will be revenue neutral. It has been confirmed by Government that pooling will continue. Any changes are likely to be beyond the next General Election and so a projected allocation of £700,000 for 2024-25 had been included.

The estimated balance of SEDF is £889,000, with £710,000 already allocated and £179,000 currently unallocated for the year ahead.

5. GFirst LEP Update

David Owen gave a progress update, and highlighted that LEP funding for 2023-24 had not yet been confirmed.

6. Covid-19 and Economic Intelligence Dashboard

Kate Martin of GCC tabled an update on GCC's Economic Dashboard. She highlighted economic inactivity data from the census, the reasons for this increasing in the over 65s are quite varied, including that this is a very wide age group with many retired, in ill-health and / or studying. Gloucestershire is below both the national and South West average for economic inactivity.



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There has been a small increase in those claiming unemployment benefits, the first since March 2021, mostly in the 16-24 age group but it is uncertain whether this is a trend or a blip.

FUTURE MEETINGS	15 March 2023
REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Cllr Catherine Braun, Leader Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive
DATE	1 March 2023