

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO**

**14**

**3 OCTOBER 2019**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>VISION 2050 SEVERN VALE DELIVERY BOARD</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To set out the background to the setting up of the Gloucestershire Vision 2050 Severn Vale Board, to agree the Terms of Reference for the Board set out at Appendix 1 and the participation of Stroud District Council in the activities of the Board.
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RECOMMENDS to Council that:</b>  <b>(1) The Terms of Reference for the Severn Vale Board set out at Appendix 1 are agreed; and</b> <b>(2) Stroud District Council participates in the activities of the Board.</b>
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Consultation on a Vision 2050 for Gloucestershire was carried out in 2018, and in the same year the public sector organisations that make up Leadership Gloucestershire agreed to a vision underpinned by eight ambitions, and to a concordat to set up three Boards to deliver the vision and ambitions.
<b>Financial Implications and Risk Assessment</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from participating in the membership of the board.  Any future projects to be led by the board which may require funding would be reported at point in which funding is needed.  Andrew Cummings, Interim Director of Resources & S151 Officer Tel: 01453 754115 Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk">andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk</a>
<b>Legal Implications</b>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.  Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: <a href="mailto:patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk">patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</a>
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<b>Options</b>	The Council is a partner in Leadership Gloucestershire, which itself has no decision-making powers. These remain with the constituent public sector organisations. While the Council does not have to agree to participate in the Severn Vale Board and agree to its Terms of Reference, if it does not do so it will lose the opportunity to strategically influence the work of the Board and benefit the residents of the district.
<b>Performance Management Follow Up</b>	The progress of the Severn Vale Board will be overseen by Leadership Gloucestershire and reported back to this Committee as appropriate.
<b>Background Papers/ Appendices</b>	Vision 2050 and Concordat 2018 Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

## 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A project to develop a vision for Gloucestershire began in 2016. In 2018 Leadership Gloucestershire ran a county-wide conversation to explore ideas to shape the long-term future. The consultation ran from 1 February 2018 to 31 July 2018 and approximately 2,500 responses were received. Following this, a vision and a concordat were developed. The purpose of the concordat was to record the commitment of Leadership Gloucestershire to develop work to actively create a positive future for the county, and the Council, alongside all councils and other public sector organisations in Gloucestershire, agreed to welcome and note both the vision and concordat.
- 1.2 The vision endorsed by Leadership Gloucestershire is ‘Gloucestershire: a great place to live, work and do business, with a thriving future.’
- 1.3 The thriving future is underpinned by eight ‘ambitions’:
- a) **An inclusive county:** we will ensure that the economic and social benefits of growth are felt by all.
  - b) **A magnet county:** we will see a growing working age population, by keeping and attracting more 18-40 year olds with high level qualifications, who want to live and work in the county.
  - c) **An innovative county:** we will see more businesses starting up, growing, and investing in research and innovation.
  - d) **A skilled county:** we will see more people with high-level skills and jobs in skilled occupations.
  - e) **A prosperous county:** we will see rising productivity and household income, offering higher living standards.
  - f) **A healthy, happy and safe county:** we will ensure people have a good work/life balance and see improved health and wellbeing.
  - g) **A connected county:** we will see improved transport and internet connections so that people and businesses can connect with each other more easily.
  - h) **A sustainable county:** we will see more efficient use of resources and more use of sustainable energy.

- 1.4 The 2018 concordat set out that Leadership Gloucestershire agreed to scope further the establishment of Boards for three projects. Each Board was to consider how to frame its scope so that it best delivered against each of the above eight ambitions.
- 1.5 Further discussions on establishing the three Boards have been held during the course of this year. The three Boards are:
- Central Gloucestershire Board
  - Rural Ambitions Board
  - Severn Vale Board
- 1.6 The purpose of the Central Gloucestershire Board is to provide the vision and strategic context for the area currently covered by the Joint Core Strategy: this includes Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Borough. The concordat states that it is important that this vision covers all aspects of community life and business ambition, rather than just a development focus.
- 1.7 The concordat sets out that the Rural Ambitions Board should be looking for a positive vision of a vibrant rural economy, which allows market towns and villages, communities and businesses to be as proud of their contribution to Gloucestershire as they are already proud of their landscape. It should be looking at ways in which a vision for our rural assets compliments the vision for growth elsewhere in the County.
- 1.8 Stroud District Council is likely to be asked to participate in all three Boards, with a leading role in the Severn Vale Board.

## **2. THE SEVERN VALE BOARD**

- 2.1 The concordat sets out that the Severn Vale Board should consider infrastructure and connectivity of the vale beyond the county including such issues as rail improvements, M5 corridor upgrade (and particularly junction capacity at 12, 13 and 14) and wider national transport links. It should also consider all aspects of community life and business ambition rather than just focus on infrastructure.
- 2.2 In addition to upgrading existing infrastructure, Vision 2050 considered the potential role of a third crossing of the River Severn between the Forest of Dean and Stroud districts.
- 2.3 The focus of the embryonic Severn Vale Board has shifted with the launch of 'A Powerhouse for the West' at the House of Lords on 8 July 2019. In terms of developing connectivity, the launch document refers to a third Severn estuary crossing at Lydney/Sharpness to improve rail resilience. Gloucestershire and in particular the Severn Vale is geographically pivotal (a conduit) to the east-west and north-south connectivity of the Western Powerhouse. The Severn Vale Board therefore needs to aim to position itself to derive maximum mutual benefit for local communities and the Western Powerhouse in terms of strategic and local connectivity, prosperity, sustainable tourism and clean growth.

- 2.4 Subsequently, further discussions have been held to scope the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Severn Vale Board. These discussions have been led by the Leaders and Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service of Stroud and Forest of Dean District Councils, charged by Leadership Gloucestershire with establishing this particular Board.
- 2.5 The 'Powerhouse for the West' report directly mentions the possibility of a third Severn estuary crossing at Lydney-Sharpness to improve rail resilience, given the potential risk of inundation of the Severn tunnel in the event of pump failure and the inability to electrify the line that passes under the Severn. Electrification of the railway lines that link London and the different parts of the Great Western Powerhouse through to South Wales is important to regional economic growth and carbon reduction.
- 2.6 Work to explore the feasibility of a rail crossing has been incorporated into the brief for the GCC Rail Investment Strategy, with funding from the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pilot Pool likely to be agreed by the County Council next month. The role of the County Council as strategic transport authority necessitates close involvement in the Severn Vale Board.
- 2.7 A rail bridge might also present an opportunity to provide better pedestrian and cycling links between existing / new communities on either side of the Severn. The bridge's potential to harness natural energy (tidal, wind and solar) could be explored given the strategic and local emphasis on clean energy and working towards carbon neutrality by 2030 / 2050 in the wake of declared national and local climate change emergencies.
- 2.8 A road bridge is not currently under consideration. The Halcrow report that was jointly commissioned by GCC, SDC and FODDC to explore the potential of a third Severn crossing road bridge identified that the need for a road bridge to solve an existing problem was at best unclear. While the bridge was advocated on the basis of creating opportunities through infrastructure investment, this is clearly not how funding flows. The likely cost of the bridge would necessitate levels of development which while untested would be likely to be at a level that would be unpalatable to councils and communities on both sides of the river if not physically unachievable.
- 2.9 The emerging view is that the Severn Vale and Gloucestershire more generally should seek to derive maximum benefit for its communities from improved strategic connectivity through the activities of the Severn Vale Board. This is in terms of improving local connectivity to link either side of the Severn, as set out above, and also in terms of an increased emphasis on improving local public transport to facilitate improved prosperity and reduced isolation for local people, as well as a focus on clean growth and sustainable tourism. A focus on relieving current congestion at Chepstow would provide improved connectivity into and out of the Forest of Dean and look to maximise opportunities arising from the removal of the Severn Bridge tolls. Joint work is already underway between GCC, Monmouthshire CC and FoDDC using the Welsh Government's weITAG/WebTAG methodology.

- 2.10 The river itself can be regarded as a major asset and resource as much as a barrier to connectivity and growth, not just because of its energy potential but also its role as a rich ecological resource and tourist destination in itself. An innovative bridge design could add to that.
- 2.11 There is a potential overlap between the ambitions of Vision 2050 and the evidence-based statutory plan-making process which the work of the Gloucestershire Planning Co-ordinator seeks to bring together in a series of evidence-based 'Statements of Common Ground' in accordance with the revised NPPF. This provides a potential mechanism for agreeing and implementing a Gloucestershire-wide spatial commitment beyond the JCS authorities.
- 2.12 Current statutory evidence-based plan-making work across the county is likely to support the ambitions of Vision 2050 and will be important in the delivery of a number of them, not least the strategic infrastructure required to deliver improved connectivity. The Severn Vale Board aims to complement rather than duplicate existing work.
- 2.13 The Terms of Reference for the Severn Vale Board drafted at the meeting of the embryonic Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> September are set out at Appendix 1. It is proposed to set up further meetings to establish the Board and make further progress.

### 3. **CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Members are asked to recommend to full Council that Stroud District Council participates in the work of the Severn Vale Board and endorses the Terms of Reference for the Board drawn up at the meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019.