



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER/OFFICER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	20 January 2021

BRIEF REPORT:

There were six update reports presented for information, and one report for decision. The six update reports were:

1. Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee Update

Cllr Kevin Cromwell gave a verbal update on the last Scrutiny Committee.

2. Taxi Licensing Scrutiny Task Group Report

Cllr Kate Haigh presented the Task Group's recommendations in respect of working towards a common set of standards, sanctions, fees and guidance for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing for all local authorities in Gloucestershire. There were four recommendations for District Licensing Committees and the Gloucestershire Licensing Group:

- i) To sign up to and implement the National Register of Refusals and Revocations (NR3) for the respective authorities if they have not already done so.
- ii) To draw up a comparison of policies and licensing standards across all authorities and explore how vehicle standards and enforcement can be aligned and organised jointly. This may be done through a transition period of implementing new standards gradually.
- iii) To agree and implement a joint training offer on safeguarding and disability awareness for licensing committee members and drivers.
- iv) To work towards a common approach to the use of CCTV in taxis and private higher vehicles across the County by 2024, noting the recent Statutory Guidance which identifies the benefits of using this technology and of a common approach to adopting changes to the licensing regime.

There were a further two recommendations to the Transport Planning and Integrated Transport Unit:

- v) To work together with District Licensing Committees and the GLOG to ensure that planned changes to infrastructure such as electric charging points and projects such as the community transport pilot take taxi and private hire vehicles into account, particularly for those operating in rural areas.

vi) To sign Gloucestershire County Council up to and implement the National Register of Refusals and Revocations (NR3) if they have not already done so.

There were also two further recommendations to District Licensing Officers and the GCC ITU:

- vii) To collaborate on a countywide awareness raising media campaign to improve public awareness of the differences between hackney and private hire vehicles.
- viii) To run annual countywide surveys for drivers and the general public via the District Licensing Authorities to monitor progress and effectiveness of recommendations. The responses from this are to be discussed between District Licensing Committees, GLOG and ITU at a joint annual meeting.

3. Cyber Growth

Tim Atkins of Cheltenham BC gave a presentation and update on cyber growth, incorporating the launch of the Golden Valley development and the Golden Valley Garden Community proposal. This is central to the future of Gloucestershire and at the heart of the City Region's growth, and was described as 'the cradle of cyber innovation'. See funding request at item 10 on the agenda.

4. Strategic Planning – Statement of Common Ground Update

Mike Dawson of Tewkesbury BC, presented an update report on the Statement of Common Ground. A strategic planning framework for Gloucestershire is being taken forward through the preparation of a Statement of Common Ground (SCG) between the 6 districts, County Council and GFirst LEP, which will be the first step in developing an agreed long-term view of growth in the county to help shape plans.

At the meeting a revised recommendation to refer the Draft Statement of Common Ground to the Leaders Board was agreed, at the request of the Leader of Tewkesbury BC. It will then be brought back to GEGJC for endorsement and recommendation to the seven local authorities in Gloucestershire for consideration and approval. The GEGJC would then receive an update once it had been considered by the seven councils and the LEP, and receive an Action Plan within 6 months to advance agreements outlined in the draft SCG.

5. Gloucestershire Covid-19 Economic Recovery Planning Update

Colin Chick of GCC and Mike Dawson of Tewkesbury BC and gave an update in respect of collaboration across Covid-19 economic recovery plans in the county, which the Senior Officer Group had been working on since the emerging plans were reviewed at earlier GEGJC meetings in July, September and December and GCC's Road to Recovery strategy was tabled in December, setting out the short, medium and long-term actions and how progress would be measured in respect of the three drivers of recovery:

- People, place and connectivity
- Skills and employment
- Infrastructure, economy and growth.

In particular, Colin Chick highlighted progress made on tourism and that the successful Innovation Lab at Coleford would be rolled out to a hub in each district. It has been successful in advancing the digital skills of children, young people and SMEs and helping with training and placements, including through DWP. There is ambition to widen scope to Adult Education.

Mike Dawson also highlighted the work of the LEP and councils to progress some of the other drivers, see G First LEP update below. A full report would be provided to the March meeting. Steve Mawson, who chairs the county Recovery Group, highlighted that we would need to think about when recovery really starts as we have been pitched back into responding to the pandemic and prioritising vaccination, and we have yet to understand exactly what we are recovering from.

6. GFirst LEP Update

Dev Chakraborty gave a quarterly update to the meeting in December, and as this is an additional meeting, flagged one issue for information only, about the possibility of pooling part of the Additional Restrictions Grant (Discretionary Scheme), for which permission would be needed from MHCLG. The idea of pooling ARG to benefit recovery activity on a countywide basis is being explored by the County S.151 Officers' Group which meets weekly, in discussion with the LEP team which has come up with three ideas:

i) Helping to get more SMEs online

This would involve employing a project manager to draw together all the current free support available to help get businesses online, develop a virtual training and event programme and oversee a Growth Hub business navigator and an administrator, with a view to training business owners and giving them small grants of up to £3,000 which could be made available to help SMEs set up new / enhanced websites to trade online. The three posts, programme and 100 grants would cost a total of £362,000 or £60,333 for each of the 6 districts.

ii) Set up an apprenticeship clearing house

This would be a one stop shop for apprentices, matching trainees with businesses and increasing the number of apprenticeships in the county and employer engagement. This would require two full-time and one part-time employees, website creation and hosting a free phone number at a total cost of £250,000 for a two-year period, or £41,667 per district council.

iii) 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign

The GFirst LEP has been running a 'Think Gloucestershire' campaign since June 2020 using different adverts. This proposal would extend and increase the profile of the campaign from February to September 2022, and would also look to promote the night-time economy. A 9-month campaign would cost £90,000, or £15,000 per district council.

MHCLG has confirmed that the only one of the three that potentially they would support pooling for would be the first of these, as the intention of Additional Restrictions Grant (Discretionary Funding) is to provide direct grant funding to businesses themselves wherever possible. This will be explored further with the County S.151 Officers' Group.

The one report for decision was:

Business Rate Pool including SEDC funding requests

Andrew Cummings gave a verbal update on the Business Rate Pool and introduced reports on two Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) funding requests:

i) from the City Region Board for a City Region Prospectus

Mike Dawson outlined that an appropriate specialist company would be engaged to produce a prospectus, for use on websites and social media, to launch, publicise and promote the City Region. This would aid collaboration and help position the county in the Western Gateway and attract inward investment. £50,000 was agreed to progress this.

ii) From CBC to lead on Cyber and Digital Growth in Gloucestershire

Tim Atkins outlined that in November 2019 GEGJC approved £200,000 to support the 'development and promotion of Gloucestershire as the UK home of cyber tech industry'. This has been successful in promoting the county's leading role in the cyber and digital industries, and following the launch of the Golden Valley Development in Cheltenham, further one-off funding of £200,000 was agreed to drive forward promotion and growth, working with the Senior Officers Group.

iv)

FUTURE MEETINGS	10 March 2021 9 June 2021 15 September 2021 17 November 2021
REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Kathy O'Leary
DATE	20 January 2021