

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee held at the Padbrook Park Hotel, Cullompton at 11.00am, Friday 29th March 2019

Attendance

Voting Members

Cllr John Hart	Leader - Devon County Council
Cllr James McInnes	Substitute - Devon County Council
Cllr David Fothergill (Chair)	Leader - Somerset County Council
Cllr Tudor Evans	Leader - Plymouth City Council
Cllr Ian Thomas	Leader - East Devon District Council
Cllr Peter Edwards	Leader - Exeter City Council
Cllr Clive Eginton	Leader - Mid Devon District Council
Cllr Des Brailey	Leader - North Devon District Council
Cllr John Tucker	Leader - South Hams District Council
Cllr Jane Whittaker	Leader - Torridge District Council
Cllr David Hurley	Substitute - Torridge District Council
Cllr Philip Sanders	Leader - West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Val Keitch	Leader - South Somerset District Council
Cllr John Williams	Leader - Taunton Deane Borough Council
Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew	Leader - West Somerset Council
Cllr Bill Hitchens	Chair - Dartmoor National Park Authority
Cllr Andrea Davis	Chair - Exmoor National Park Authority

Non-Voting Members

Steve Hindley	Chair - Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
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Officers

Phil Norrey	Chief Executive - Devon County Council
William Rawlins	Devon County Council
Pat Flaherty	Chief Executive - Somerset County Council
Julian Gale	Strategic Manager/Partnership Governance - Somerset County Council
Peter Stiles	Clerk to the Joint Committee - Somerset County Council
Tracey Lee	Chief Executive - Plymouth City Council and Senior Responsible Officer
Alison Ward	Regional Portfolio Manager - Plymouth City Council
Steve Parrock	Chief Executive - Torbay Council
Karime Hassan	Chief Executive - Exeter City Council

Stephen Walford	Chief Executive - Mid Devon District Council
Ken Miles	Head of Corporate and Community - North Devon Council
Phil Shears	Chief Executive - Teignbridge District Council
Jenny Wallace	Head of Paid Service - Torridge District Council
Stuart Brown	Chief Executive - Mendip District Council
Doug Bamsey	Corporate Director - Sedgemoor District Council
James Hassett	Chief Executive Designate - Somerset West and Taunton Council
Kevin Bishop	Chief Executive - Dartmoor National Park Authority
David Ralph	Chief Executive - Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
Ian Collinson	Homes England
Suzanne Bond	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Apologies

Cllr Jeremy Christophers	Leader - Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Harvey Siggs	Leader - Mendip District Council
Cllr Dawn Hill	Substitute - Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Jo Roundell-Greene	Substitute - South Somerset District Council

1. **Declarations of Interest**

- 1.01 Details of councillors' appointments to local authorities were displayed in the meeting room and therefore there was no need to verbally declare these as personal interests. There were no other declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes**

- 2.01 The Minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 25 January 2019 were confirmed and signed as correct.

3. **Public Question Time**

- 3.01 There were no public questions.

4. **Chair's Update**

- 4.01 Cllr Fothergill reported on developments since the last Joint Committee meeting, referring to:

- the busy agenda reflecting current priorities
- the positive discussions continuing in key areas such as housing with Homes England and the work of Peninsula Transport where considerable 'traction' was apparent after just two meetings with opportunities presented to move forward with some very significant road schemes that would provide the infrastructure required to deliver improved productivity
- the Delivery Plan for the Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy as the main item of business, being significant in scope and reflecting the many themes that would be the focus of the work of the Joint Committee and the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership into the future
- the receipt of a formal response from The Rt Hon James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to the Joint Committee's letter seeking more information and support on preparations for EU withdrawal. Although the reply had not given any new information it would provide a framework for Agenda Item 8 on proposed 'asks' of Government post Brexit
- the disappointment at the £33m allocation for the South West from the Government's new £1.6b Stronger Towns Fund and the intention that the Joint Committee should continue to make the case to Government for the South West to receive fair financial settlements appropriate to its needs and circumstances.

4.02 At Cllr Fothergill's invitation, David Ralph, Chief Executive, HotSW LEP, gave an update on the activities of the LEP since the last meeting, referring to successes and other local developments as follows:

- announcements by The Rt Hon Chris Grayling, MP, Secretary of State for Transport about: a £22m + Government investment towards the Forder Valley Link Road providing better access from the east of Plymouth to the north of the city; a Government investment of up to £80m towards the building of a new, more resilient sea wall at Dawlish
- the start of work to upgrade Junction 25 on the M5 at Taunton to improve traffic flow, ease peak hour congestion and unlock land for employment
- the Government's decision to retain Royal Marine bases at Norton Manor Camp, Taunton and Chivenor, North Devon, originally earmarked for disposal, under adjustments to the Defence Estate Optimisation Programme, and the intention to retain 3 Commando Brigade in Plymouth when it left Stonehouse Barracks
- the announcement by Chris Skidmore, MP, Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, that up to £50,000 had been awarded to the University of Exeter and partner organisations from the Strength in Places Fund - this was to develop a full stage bid to support a £30m programme for an Environmental Intelligence Accelerator (to make environmental data more accessible for decision-making)

- the successful bid by the HotSW Digital Skills Partnership for a £255,000 share of the £1m national Digital Skills Innovation Fund to deliver a new Digital Momentum project
- a successful bid by Devon County Council to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund resulting in £55m for highway improvements etc to facilitate development around south west Exeter
- the planned launch on 30 April 2019 of an All-Party Parliamentary Political Group for the South West at Westminster chaired by Sir Gary Streeter, MP for South West Devon
- the receipt of £75,000 funding from the Department for Education to help establish the HotSW Skills Advisory Panel
- the joint endorsement by the HotSW LEP and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of 14 bids from the HotSW area to the Government's Future High Streets Fund launched in January 2019
- HotSW Local Transport Board funding approval for the proposed new railway station at Marsh Barton, Exeter
- awards from the National Lottery Coastal Communities Fund Round 5 - West Somerset (£5m); North Devon (£1.5m); and Torridge (£1.2m)
- Foreign Direct Investment down 30% nationally but the HotSW area still bucking the trend, with possibly up to 900 jobs being created next year.

5. Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy Delivery Plan

5.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Tracey Lee, Chief Executive, Plymouth City Council and Senior Responsible Officer, on the latest version of the Delivery Plan for the HotSW Productivity Strategy.

5.02 Tracey Lee indicated that:

- while the first iteration of the Delivery Plan jointly endorsed by the Joint Committee and the HotSW LEP Board in October 2018 had covered roughly half of the areas of activity to deliver on the ambition described in the Productivity Strategy, the latest version of the Plan now contained all current and future (pipeline) activity under all sections.
- in the updated Delivery Plan activities were colour-coded in the tables as green for current and blue for future, every existing section had been brought up to date and new areas had been developed to complete the set of 'Opportunities', specifically under Creative; Big Data; Aerospace; Healthy Ageing; Defence; and Construction - thus presenting a comprehensive picture of the diverse activity across the HotSW area that was delivering on the ambition in the Productivity Strategy
- the LEP had led on developing the Plan and had supported this with dedicated resource that would continue through to Autumn 2019
- the latest Delivery Plan had the same structure as the first iteration with two broad sections - the core offer concentrating on Business Support, Skills and Infrastructure, and a section focusing on the Opportunities specific to the HotSW area

- the Delivery Plan was a 'live' document and would continue to evolve as the actions were funded and delivered
- while the Productivity Strategy and the Delivery Plan were jointly owned by the LEP and the Joint Committee and each body had particular areas of expertise and responsibility, in terms of resourcing, it was proposed that the LEP would be the primary lead body for the themes of 'Business Leadership and Ideas' and 'Employment, Skills and Learning and that the Joint committee would lead on 'Housing, Connectivity and Infrastructure'
- the Delivery Plan would be published online via the Joint Committee's and LEP's websites and a revised set of key messages would be developed identifying the 'asks' from Government from the range of activity underway
- the Delivery Plan would feed into the Local Industrial Strategy as one of many channels that would be pursued to drive implementation and raise productivity
- further work would be undertaken on the Investment Framework, based on the principles agreed by the Joint Committee in January 2019, that would sit alongside the Delivery Plan
- performance would be monitored and reported to the Joint Committee
- the Delivery Plan would be maintained and updated and a review would be carried out in 6 months' time.

Points made during discussion - to which Tracey Lee and Steve Parrock, Chief Executive, Torbay Council responded - included: the role of local authorities in delivery, particularly in relation to housing; timescales for delivery; and communication.

5.03 RESOLVED

- (a) to endorse the latest version of the Delivery Plan
- (b) to recognise and acknowledge the contribution of a wide range of partners across the area in developing the Plan (it was noted that the Joint Committee Chair and the LEP Chief Executive would write to thank partners)
- (c) to note the request for feedback by 17.00 on 3 April 2019
- (d) to note the ongoing work to resource the Delivery Plan
- (e) to authorise Tracey Lee as Senior Responsible Officer to make minor amendments to the content
- (f) to authorise the Chair to make significant amendments to the content following consultation with officers.

6. Acceleration of Housing Delivery in the Heart of the South West

- 6.01 The Joint Committee considered a progress report on the work of the Housing Task Force which was presented by Cllr Tudor Evans, Leader, Plymouth City Council (on behalf of Cllr Harvey Siggs, Leader, Mendip District Council).

6.02 At its January 2019 meeting, the Joint Committee requested the Housing Task Force it had established following the HotSW Housing Summit in September 2018 to develop a HotSW-wide approach to housing 'asks' from Government and ambition for action. The Task Group was asked to recommend a package to accelerate the delivery of housing - which was a key priority of the Hot SW Productivity Strategy, being essential for employment and growth - through further investment.

6.03 The report covered:

- the context, referring to other areas that had successfully negotiated funding and support from Government for housing development (West of England; West Northamptonshire; and Oxfordshire) and opportunities to align with funding announcements and national initiatives such as those announced in the Chancellor's Budget last year, including an increased Housing Infrastructure Fund; bank guarantees for smaller housebuilders; and the Government's Future High Streets Fund
- progress and achievements, including having already set up the Housing Task Force as a sign of the Joint Committee's commitment to drive the initiative forward; local authorities working together on long-term local plans across housing and economic areas; with the over-arching governance already in place to provide assurance on any deal with Government, HotSW being in a good position to move forward, although this would require some willingness on behalf of Government departments and agencies to work with the Task Force/HotSW. There was concern that funding to secure better places for HotSW communities was being channelled to other parts of the country and that funding commitments already given for housing infrastructure seemed now to be at risk
- the approach being proposed by the Housing Task Group, comprising a bold programme of ambition focused on the following three stands that needed to be addressed to accelerate the delivery of quality housing and quality places across the HotSW area:
 - resourcing of a strategic delivery team (capacity funding)
 - a major infrastructure delivery fund to unlock growth
 - a small schemes liquidity fund to unlock growth

and a range of other issues identified in Appendix 1 to the report based on discussions involving the Housing Task Force and input from local authorities across the HotSW area.

6.04 Points made by Joint Committee members during discussion, with responses/contributions from Chief Executives and the Homes England representative, included:

- concern that the initiative might: duplicate existing mechanisms for securing funding to support housing delivery; dilute the strategic

message from Homes England; lead to confusion; and result in local authorities being 'penalised' by Government

- the view that a collective HotSW approach could instead be focused on regional transport infrastructure
- the need for greater publicity regarding the constraints to delivering housing and greater investment
- suitable and genuinely Affordable Housing being critical for supporting the growing elderly population (in accordance with the Healthy Ageing element of the Productivity Strategy)
- the initiative being a good example of the collaborative working that Government were seeking to encourage
- frustration regarding progress on the delivery of housing in the HotSW area and the need to take advantage of an opportunity for a new approach seeking greater support and intervention from Government
- having readily accessible funds would put local authorities in a strong position to get things moving and provide better bargaining power when negotiating with developers
- additional 'tools' such as greater CPO powers were needed to facilitate site assembly etc
- a collective HotSW approach and a package of measures was vital if the region was to receive a similar scale of investment to other areas.

Cllr Tudor Evans emphasised that the purpose of the HotSW approach to 'asks' was that this should build on, and not replace, the existing relationships and activity at sub-regional level. In no way was it intended to usurp the role and responsibilities of individual local authorities relating to housing development and any conversations they might have with Government and other agencies.

6.05 RESOLVED

(a) that the Joint Committee pursue an area-based package to accelerate housing delivery which, at headline level, should include:

- resourcing of a strategic delivery team (capacity funding)
- a major infrastructure delivery fund to unlock growth
- a small schemes liquidity fund to bring forward stalled sites

(b) that the proposed package set out in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed as an appropriate package to accelerate housing delivery across the HotSW geography

(c) that the proposed package set out in Appendix 1 to the report be used by officers as the basis for future engagement with Central Government and its agencies in seeking to secure a bespoke deal for the HotSW area to structurally embed collaboration with Central Government on housing delivery

(d) that the Housing Task Force seeks to now engage with senior figures within both Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Growth and Delivery Unit to understand their appetite for driving

growth and willingness to work with the Joint Committee on some kind of housing deal

(e) that the Task Force brings back any updates or progress to the Joint Committee to consider in due course.

7. Exiting the EU (Supporting the Heart of the South West) - 'Asks' of Government

7.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Phil Norrey, Chief Executive, Devon County Council on proposals by the Brexit Resilience and Opportunities Group (BROG) for a list of 'asks' from Government to assist preparations to cope with the consequences of the Brexit decision and to enable the HotSW to take advantage of any policy opportunities post Brexit.

7.02 The report referred to: a recent further meeting between BROG and officials from several Government departments to share findings and views from across the Joint Committee area and for escalation to Government; the ongoing Parliamentary debates and votes and continuing uncertainty regarding Brexit and the form it would take, with 'no deal' remaining possible.

7.03 The 'asks' would be accompanied by an offer for the Joint Committee to work with Government, providing local capacity and expertise in key areas of policy and service, to enable a smooth transition and capitalise on the opportunities for communities and businesses in the HotSW area.

7.04 The 'asks' covered the following:

- transfer of key powers
- co-design of 'Stronger Places' proposal
- post-Brexit funding
- post-Brexit funding model for local areas
- New Burdens funding
- Government moves away from London-centric base
- support for businesses
- proposals for use of Departmental Underspend for opportunities in fishing and agriculture
- port opportunity
- Border Inspection Points (Plymouth and Roscoff)
- legislative change post-Brexit
- housing delivery
- commitment to Interreg and other European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programmes.

7.05 During discussion, Phil Norrey:

- referred to a potential further 'ask' involving a Tourism Zone designation bid for the Torbay area under the 'Stronger Places' proposal, to reinforce 'Coastal Communities'

- acknowledged the importance of opportunities in fishing and agriculture, in response to concern expressed about the perception created by the proposed use of department underspends
- undertook to ensure that the 'ask' about commitment to Interreg and other ETC programmes should reflect the importance of maintaining funding for scientific research and development.

7.06 RESOLVED

(a) subject to the points arising from discussion, to approve the list of 'asks' of Government provided by BROG as set out in Paragraph 5 of the report and authorise the sending of a letter to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government outlining the agreed 'asks'

(b) to authorise the Chief Executives, working through BROG, to establish a Task and Finish Group to develop a 'Stronger Places' proposal as part of a 'Brexit Dividend' approach to support areas that could be significantly worse off as a result of Brexit and the loss of EU funding.

8. **Peninsula Transport Update**

8.01 The Joint Committee considered a progress report by Julian Gale, Strategic Manager - Partnerships Governance, Somerset County Council on the work of the Peninsula Transport Board.

8.02 The report indicated that:

- the Board had met formally for the second time on 1 March 2019 and the meeting had been well attended, included by co-opted members from the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Highways England
- the Secretary of State for Transport had written to the Chairs of the Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway Boards welcoming the establishment of the partnerships but also confirming his preference for a single sub-national transport body for the South West and that there would be no Government funding at this stage for the two bodies
- although disappointed with the Minister's response, the Board's focus remained on working closely alongside the Western Gateway Board accepting that in the short-term the budget shortfall was likely to compromise the work of both Strategic Transport Boards unless additional funding was made available
- the Peninsula Transport Board's key focus was on completing the Regional Evidence Base and prioritising road scheme proposals for submission to Government under the Major Road Network (MRN) and Large Local Major (LLM) Programmes. These needed to be completed side by side and submitted to Government by July 2019. This followed the Government's publication in December 2018 of Investment Planning Guidance
- the potential reward was Government funding over the 2020 - 25 period from the new National Roads Fund for schemes that were capable of

being constructed during this period. The Government would contribute between £20m - 50m for MRN schemes and £50m + for schemes under LLM subject to the proposals being sufficiently well progressed to be able to be constructed between 2020 - 25 and 15% of the total cost being raised locally

- the report listed 7 MRN schemes and 4 LLM schemes that were agreed by the Board for prioritisation, stakeholder engagement and the development of Strategic Outline Business Cases, and referred to the processes involved
- beyond July 2019 the Board's focus would turn to developing the Strategic Transport Strategy for the Peninsula, although without additional funding it would not be possible to progress this work as quickly as the Board would wish
- the Peninsula Transport Board would work with the Western Gateway Board to speak with one voice on strategic matters and maximise investment opportunities for the region. The next 12 - 18 months would be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the joint working arrangements with the ambition of persuading Government to put both sub-national transport bodies on a sustainable financial footing.

8.03 The Joint Committee noted the current position.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 24 May 2019 (10.00am), subject to review in the event that the UK is involved in the European Election on 23 May 2019 - Venue to be confirmed.

10. Work Programme for 24 May 2019

It was noted that this would include:

- Local Industrial Strategy - for consideration
- Housing update
- Coastal Communities proposal
- Peninsula Transport update.

11. Any Other Business

Elections

Cllr Fothergill thanked those Members who were standing down at the forthcoming District and Unitary Council Elections on 2 May 2019, or who were not re-elected, for their participation in the Joint Committee and wished them the best for the future.

(The meeting ended at 12.23 pm)