

# **Heart of the South West (HotSW) – Joint Committee – Council Update**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In January 2018, the HotSW Joint Committee was formally established by the councils and organisations involved since 2015 in the devolution partnership. The Committee is tasked with improving productivity across the HotSW area in collaboration with the HotSW LEP and other organisations as necessary.
- 1.2 The Committee has met formally three times in 2018, in March, June and October. In addition to this there is a management structure that sits behind the Committee which involves Chief Executives and senior officers from across the partnership. The Committee is chaired by Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council and the Vice-Chair is Cllr John Tucker, Leader of South Hams District Council.
- 1.3 This report summarises the progress made by the Committee over recent months and sets out next steps for the coming months.

## **Recommendations**

That Council:

- a) Note the progress report setting out the work of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee since its establishment in March 2018;
- b) Agree to delegate the development and endorsement of the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to the HotSW Joint Committee (noting that final approval of the HotSW LIS rests with the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Government);
- c) Note the Budget statement for 2018/19 set out in Appendix B, and that in accordance with the decisions taken at the time the Committee was established, the Council will be asked to make an annual budgetary provision to meet the support costs of the Joint Committee in line with the 2018/19 contribution. Final clarification on any additional 2019/20 budget requirement will be provided following the completion of the review of the Joint Committee's role, function and management support arrangements and development of its work programme for 2019/20;
- d) Agree the Budget and Cost-sharing Agreement set out in Appendix B to this report.

## **2. Key achievements**

- 2.1 At each of the meetings the Committee has been briefed on recent inward investment successes achieved through the work of the local authorities.

(a) Influencing government

The partnership's original focus in 2015 was to explore opportunities on offer through devolution to improve productivity. Since the Committee was created the influencing role has continued to be central to the work of the Joint Committee and recent months have seen successes in this area. Government policy changes and Brexit have required the partnership to be flexible to present a united front to Government and respond to the changes. As an example, the Government has increasingly moved away from its devolution policy approach of 2015 and the partnership is now engaged in more flexible and targeted dialogues with Government. This approach is proving successful so demonstrating the benefits of presenting a single compelling partnership vision between the business and public sectors. The Committee is keen to demonstrate its ability to deliver Government objectives as well as local priorities so accessing help beyond our boundaries is critical to the success of the partnership. It is already apparent that the Joint Committee/LEP Partnership carries a critical mass that the Government is responding to through policy announcements and on-going dialogue with Government officials. The most significant announcement is the recent inclusion of the HotSW LEP area in wave 2 of developing Local Industrial Strategies (LIS). This success is due in large part to the close alignment of the Joint Committee and the LEP on the Productivity Strategy [see (b) below]. Much of the activity detailed below has resulted directly from discussions with Government.

**(b) Approval of the HotSW Productivity Strategy**

- (i) In March the Committee and the LEP Board agreed a challenging HotSW Productivity Strategy which set an ambition of “Doubling the size of the Heart of the South West’s economy over 20 years” with a vision of “Productivity and prosperity for all”.
- (ii) The Strategy identifies three strategic themes to improve productivity by strengthening and developing:
  - a. the leadership and ideas within businesses in our area
  - b. the housing, connectivity and infrastructure our people and businesses rely on for living, moving goods, accessing jobs and training, and exploiting new opportunities.
  - c. the ability of people in our area to work, learn and improve their skills in a rapidly changing global economy, and to maximise their economic potential.
- (iii) In addition, there are three cross-cutting themes, referred to throughout the Strategy:
  - a. Inclusive growth for our people, communities and places
  - b. Capitalising on our distinctive assets
  - c. Maximising the potential from digital technology

The Strategy can be viewed at:

<https://heartofswlep.co.uk/about-the-lep/how-we-work/productivity-strategy/>

- (c) Endorsement of the Delivery Plan.** This document is key to the delivery of the Productivity Strategy and will be further developed as explained below. It is a live action plan that will be used to track performance locally and may also form the basis of annual progress reports to Government, as required under the recent national review of LEPs. It is broadly divided into two sections – a ‘core offer’ focussing on programmes that deliver Business Support and Employment and Skills, as well as ‘enablers’ including housing delivery, transport, and other infrastructure that is essential to support economic growth. These activities apply across the whole of the HotSW area. A further section focuses on programmes of activity linked to the agreed set of ‘opportunities’ that are specific to the HotSW area. The Plan incorporates current as well as future, planned activity, and is being produced in stages depending on how well developed the programmes of activity for each theme are. The current version features the opportunities that are at the most advanced stage, namely: Digital (Photonics); Advanced Engineering (marine and nuclear); High Value Tourism; Farming, Fishing and Food. By spring 2019 it will be expanded to include: Healthy Ageing; further Digital (Creative and Big Data); Advanced Engineering (aerospace); Construction; and Defence. Place markers have also been

included for inclusive growth and natural capital to be developed as part of the next phase of work. The current version of the Delivery Plan can be viewed at:

<http://www.hotswjointcommittee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HotSW-Draft-Delivery-Plan-October-2018.pdf>

- (d) An Opportunities Prospectus has been extracted from the Delivery Plan and will be used with local MPs, Ministers and senior Government officials as part of continuing to raise the profile of the HotSW area at a critical time ahead of the 2019 Spending Review and the anticipated launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund towards the end of 2019. The document will be circulated to MPs prior to the Chancellor's autumn statement as part of the influencing approach. To ensure that the Prospectus document has some longevity, the key strategic 'asks' of Government have been set out in a covering letter, jointly signed by the Chairs of the Joint Committee and the LEP. As we develop the Delivery Plan, further asks will emerge and be submitted to Ministers. The list of asks submitted in October is attached as Appendix A to this report. The Prospectus document can be viewed at:  
<http://www.hotswjointcommittee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HotSW-Opportunities-Prospectus-October-2018.pdf>
- (e) Housing is a key enabling opportunity for the Joint Committee. Following a housing audit to gauge Local Plan progress on targets and delivery rates, a HotSW Housing Summit was held in September with key agencies including Homes England. The outcome of this successful event was an agreement to work closely with Homes England to develop a bespoke package of offers and asks with Government which will help us to successfully deliver the ambitious housing programmes we have across our area. A Housing Sector Task Force of strategic leaders and officers has been established to develop our proposition to Government and to work with Homes England which will report to the Joint Committee.
- (f) National Infrastructure Commission (NIC)  
The Joint Committee is seeking to secure a growth corridor study following helpful discussions with the NIC. Initial discussions with the Chair of the Commission were well received and the Joint Committee was encouraged to submit a business case to the Chancellor who will ultimately make a decision as to whether to fund a study. A proposal was submitted to the Chancellor in October. The study would be similar to the one conducted by the NIC for Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford. It would help the HotSW partnership to better understand the constraints to higher levels of productivity by highlighting where investment in strategic infrastructure could unlock faster growth over the long term. The initial focus for the study would be along the A38/M5 transport spine, recognising that investment would have benefits for the whole of the HotSW area and wider south west.
- (g) Brexit Resilience Opportunities Group. The Joint Committee has consistently lobbied Government that any powers that move back from the EU under Brexit must not stop at Whitehall. This senior officer group was established by the Joint Committee to research and advise on the opportunities and risks to the HotSW. The Group has been collating evidence on some of the key risks and opportunities for our unique economy and has conducted research in the following areas: workforce, construction industry, agriculture and land management; food and farming, fisheries and post Brexit funding to support the economy. The Group is also collating the risk and impact analysis of Brexit on local government such as service delivery and community resilience. The Group has fed directly into the Local Government Association briefing papers and to key Government departments to raise the profile of the area. With the Brexit departure date looming and several 'deal' scenarios still possible, this work has become ever more important. A Brexit

Joint Regional Sounding Board event planned, as part of the 12<sup>th</sup> November LEP Conference, will be an opportunity for business and public sector to engage with Government representatives from Defra, BEIS, and MHCLG on preparedness. The Group is working with Cornwall on issues of mutual interest and concern.

- (h) Sub-National Transport Body. Linked to the Joint Committee's work on infrastructure is the imminent establishment of a South West Peninsula Shadow Sub-National Transport Body (covering Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay) which will develop a sub-national Transport Strategy to work with Government to deliver investment in our major transport infrastructure. In the short-term this will be an informal partnership, however a current 'ask' of Government is that they endorse the creation of a statutory Sub-National Transport Body for the Peninsula, and a separate body for the South West around the east of the region. These two new transport bodies will provide a platform for strategic discussions with Government on priorities for the region over the long term.

## **Next steps**

2.2 In addition to what is outlined above, the Joint Committee / LEP partnership will:

- (a) Develop an Investment Framework for the Delivery Plan so that priorities for delivery and project opportunities can be delivered via investment from a range of sources.
- (b) Review the roles and functions of both bodies through a governance review to acknowledge the revised and enhanced focus given to LEPs by the Government. This work will include a review of the management support arrangements. The Joint Committee and the LEP will continue to share responsibilities across the Productivity Strategy and the Delivery Plan with the LEP leading on areas closely linked to the LIS and the Joint Committee leading on other areas such as housing and infrastructure. The need for close collaboration between the two has never been more important as we look to further influence Government policy and actions over the next 12 months and beyond.

## **3. Local Industrial Strategy**

- 3.1 The inclusion of the HotSW LEP area in the second wave of areas to benefit from working with the Government to develop their Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) is a considerable achievement for the Joint Committee and the LEP. The first wave 'trailblazers' were the urban conurbations of Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford. The partnership had been pushing to be in the second wave and had raised the ask with Government Ministers and officials over a number of months. It was therefore very welcome that HotSW was announced in July as being part of wave 2.
- 3.2 By working closely with Government to develop our Local Industrial Strategy we will be able to jointly agree the long term transformational opportunities that will help deliver the asks specific to our area and influence wider Government policy and delivery.
- 3.3 Local Industrial Strategies will focus on the foundations of productivity and identify transformational opportunities with partners across Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place. The Strategy will be led by local people and businesses, allowing local leaders to harness the strengths of their own areas; ensure that the benefits of growth are realised by all; and provide the right conditions for improving the prosperity of communities throughout the area.

- 3.4 Ultimate approval of the LIS rests with the LEP in collaboration with the Government. The LIS guidance requires the LEP to collaborate on the development of the LIS with a range of stakeholders including the local authorities and other partners.
- 3.5 The LEP's proposed timetable is to have the final LIS agreed between the LEP and the Government by June 2019. Fortunately, HotSW partners are better placed than many areas to meet this timetable as the work done by the Joint Committee and the LEP to build and test the evidence base for the Productivity Strategy and Delivery Plan has set the foundation; the LIS will be a natural extension of this.
- 3.6 The Joint Committee is ideally placed to provide both collective and council level input into the development of the LIS, although final approval rests with the LEP. The validity and positioning of the document would be immeasurably strengthened by the involvement and general endorsement of all the constituent authorities, and by other partners including the business community. To enable the development of the LIS to be taken forward at pace, and to demonstrate alignment with partners across the area, it is proposed that local authority input is developed, coordinated and signed off by the Joint Committee. The powers of (and delegations to) the Committee are tightly focussed around the Productivity Strategy under the current governance arrangements, so approval needs to be sought from the constituent authorities to formally delegate the Council's responsibilities for contributing to and signing off the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to the Joint Committee. The recommendations provide the opportunity for the Council to influence and shape the LIS as well as provide content. To ensure that there is wide buy-in to the development of the LIS across the constituent authorities, a portfolio holder engagement event is planned for 23 November 2018

#### **4. Budget and Cost Sharing Agreement**

- 4.1 The Joint Committee has been kept informed of its budgetary position to provide assurance that it is operating within its budget. This section of the report includes:
- (a) a summary of the Committee's current budget position for 2018/19 is at Appendix B
  - (b) a Budget and Cost Sharing Agreement (B&CSA) which is a development of the Inter-Authority Agreement agreed by the constituent authorities at the time the Committee was established – Appendix B
  - (c) An indicative budget request for 2019/20 to the constituent authorities.
- 4.2 Appendix B - summarises the position on the operating and support budget of the Committee. It shows a variation of the income for 2018/19 expected at the time of the Committee's establishment with a larger than anticipated underspend carried forward from the work on devolution during the 2015 to 2018 period. This together with the contributions agreed by the constituent authorities have given the Committee a larger than anticipated budget for 2018/19.
- 4.3 In terms of the anticipated spend for 2018/19 the current position suggests that the Committee will be able to operate within budget and should achieve an underspend to be carried forward to 2019/20 to help offset the future budget requirement for the Joint Committee. The current underspend is around £33k. It should be noted however that not all commitments for 2018/19 have yet been identified.
- 4.4 At the time of the Committee's establishment the Inter Authority Agreement referred to the development of a B&CSA and included some headings to be included within it. Appendix B sets out the draft B&CSA. It is a relatively simple document proportionate to the small size of the budget and the limited financial risk to each constituent authority. It explains the role of the administering authority as well as the responsibilities of the constituent authorities. The Joint Committee has approved the B&CSA and all Section 151 Officers of the constituent

authorities have been consulted on its contents. The document now requires the formal approval of the constituent authorities.

4.5 In terms of the Joint Committee's budget for 2019/20 the work programme is unknown at this stage although a busy year is expected for the Committee to respond to Government policy initiatives and to support the Delivery Plan. To assist the constituent authorities to plan budget commitments for 2019/20, the minimum contribution levels for 2019/20 are set out below and are at the same level as for 2018/19. It is believed these contributions will generate sufficient budget to cover the costs of the administering authority to service the Joint Committee and leave a small surplus. Every effort will be made to contain costs within budget but if work is subsequently identified for 2019/20 which cannot be met within budget or from another source, a further request for funding may be made to the constituent authorities (including in-year in exceptional circumstances) but only against a costed proposal or plan of activity and after all other potential sources of funding have been exhausted..

- County Councils - £10,500
- Unitary Councils - £4,000
- District Councils and National Parks £1,400

## **5 Consultation, communication and engagement**

5.1 Under the Communications and Engagement Plan, members of the constituent authorities, partners and the public have been kept informed of developments with the Joint Committee through newsletters published after each formal meeting and press releases on significant issues of interest. As we move towards Christmas, the Committee's engagement plans include seeking the support of relevant Ministers and all local MPs for the Communications document and specifically our 'asks' of Government. This engagement campaign will continue and accelerate as we move into 2019.

5.2 In addition the Committee has a website providing background information, links to latest news and publications and details of the membership. This can be accessed at: <http://www.hotswjointcommittee.org.uk/>

## **6. Equality Considerations**

6.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups.

## **7. Public Health Considerations**

7.1 There are no direct public health impacts of these recommendations. However, public health considerations will be an important consideration in the development of the LIS recognising that there is a strong correlation between economic prosperity and health of the population.

## **8. Risk Management Considerations**

8.1 Given the participation in the Joint Committee as one of the constituent Local Authorities, the main risks are around failing to participate actively in this or any other related process, thus manifesting a failure of sub-regional or regional awareness of the Council's specific economic and productivity concerns. The risk from failing to participate is most likely to be a loss of the Council's influence at regional level and an inability to draw attention to the area's economic needs (across such areas as productivity, skills, infrastructure and related inward investment). It would also weaken the wider partnership proposition, so affecting the ability of the HotSW partnership to speak with one voice and influence Government policy for the benefit of the wider area and including our residents, businesses and visitors.

## **9. Legal Considerations**

- 9.1 The HotSW Joint Committee is a Joint Committee of the local authorities across Devon and Somerset that comprise the HotSW area and established under Sections 101 to 103 of the Local Government Act 1972 and all other enabling legislation to undertake the following:
- 9.2 The key purpose of the Joint Committee is to be the vehicle through which the HotSW partners will ensure that the desired increase in productivity across the area is achieved.
- 9.3 The Committee is a single strategic public sector partnership providing cohesive, coherent leadership and governance to ensure delivery of the Productivity Strategy for the HotSW area. The specific objectives of the Joint Committee are to:
- Improve the economy and the prospects for the region by bringing together the public, private and education sectors;
  - Increase our understanding of the economy and what needs to be done to make it stronger;
  - Improve the efficiency and productivity of the public sector;
  - Identify and remove barriers to progress and maximise the opportunities/benefits available to the area from current and future government policy.

## **10. Financial Considerations**

- 10.1 The direct costs to the constituent authorities are set out above and in Appendix B. In addition to this the constituent authorities and partners continue to input considerable amounts of officer time into the partnership on an 'in kind' basis. The LEP continues to make a significant contribution to the work of the Committee and has met some direct costs.
- 10.2 The constituent authorities are reminded that the Joint Committee continues to provide a relatively low-cost option to meet the partnership's objectives compared to the Combined Authority alternative.

## **11. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion**

- 11.1 It is essential that the local authorities contribute to the development and approval of the LIS working in collaboration with the LEP. The LIS will be a natural development of the Productivity Strategy and Delivery Plan for which the Joint Committee already has delegated authority, and therefore it would seem appropriate to formally extend this authority to the development and approval of the LIS to the Joint Committee on behalf of the constituent authorities.
- 11.2 It is important that the constituent authorities are kept up to date on the Committee's budget situation and make provision for the 2019/20 budget commitment. It is also important that the Budget and Cost Sharing Agreement is formally agreed by the constituent authorities as part of the Committee's governance arrangements.

## **Background Papers**

South Somerset District Council: 23 February 2017 (Minute 106 refers)  
South Somerset District Council: 18 January 2018 (Minute 97 refers)