

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee held at the Holiday Inn, Junction 25 M5, Taunton at 11.15am, Friday 12 July 2019.**

**Attendance**

**Voting Members**

Cllr John Hart	Leader - Devon County Council
Cllr David Fothergill (Chair)	Leader - Somerset County Council
Cllr Ben Ingham	Leader – East Devon District Council
Cllr Andrea Davis	Deputy Chair – Exmoor National Park Authority
Cllr Tudor Evans	Leader - Plymouth City Council
Cllr Philip Bialyk	Leader - Exeter City Council
Cllr Ros Wyke	Leader – Mendip District Council
Cllr Bob Deed	Leader – Mid Devon District Council
Cllr David Worden	Leader – North Devon District Council
Cllr Judy Pearce	Leader – South Ham District Council
Cllr Val Keitch	Leader - South Somerset District Council
Cllr Gordon Hook	Leader – Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Steve Darling	Leader – Torbay Council
Cllr Anna Dart	Leader – Torridge District Council
Andrew Cooper	Chair of Audit & Governance Committee - Dartmoor NPA
Cllr Gill Slocombe	Deputy Leader – Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Alistair Dewhirst	Deputy Leader – Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Ken James	Deputy Leader – Torridge District Council
Cllr Marcus Kravis	Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development - Somerset West & Taunton

**Non-Voting Members**

Steve Hindley	Chair - Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
Cllr Liz Leyshon	Assistant Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and Finance - Mendip District Council
Cllr Malcolm Prowse	Deputy Leader – North Devon District Council

**Officers**

Phil Norrey	Chief Executive - Devon County Council
Pat Flaherty	Chief Executive - Somerset County Council
Julian Gale	Strategic Manager/Partnership Governance - Somerset County Council
Tracey Lee	Chief Executive - Plymouth City Council and Senior Responsible Officer for the Joint Committee
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
Phil Shears	Chief Executive - Teignbridge District Council
Jenny Wallace	Head of Paid Service - Torrington District Council
Doug Bamsey	Corporate Director - Sedgemoor District Council
James Hassett	Chief Executive - Somerset West and Taunton Council
Michael Tichford	North Devon District Council – Head of Place
Suzanne Bond	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Mark Williams	Chief Executive – East Devon District Council
Sophie Hosking	Chief Executive - South Hams & West Devon District Councils
Tony Bray	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Peter Doyle	Devon County Council
Alan Denby	Director of Economic Strategy, Torbay Council.
Eifion Jones	Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership

## Apologies

Pamela Woods	Chair - Dartmoor NPA
Cllr Duncan McGinty	Leader - Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts	Leader - Somerset West & Taunton Council
Cllr Neil Jory	Leader - West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Rachel Sutton	Deputy Leader - Exeter City Council
Ian Collinson	Homes England

### 1. **Apologies for absence**

Details of apologies received were recorded as set out above.

### 2. **Election of Chair**

Having been nominated and seconded Cllr David Fothergill was duly elected as Chair of the Joint Committee.

### 3. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Having been nominated and seconded Cllr Tudor Evans was duly appointed as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

- 4.01 Details of councillors' appointments to local authorities were displayed in the meeting room and are attached for information as appendix A. There were no other declarations of interest.

#### **5 Minutes**

- 5.01 The Minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **6 Public Question Time**

- 6.01 There were no public questions.

#### **7 Chair's Update**

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

- SCC starting construction of the iAero centre this month at Leonardos, Yeovil
- The work of the Devon Climate Change Emergency Group chaired by Phil Norrey to which the Somerset authorities have been invited to join. A range of stakeholders are involved including Exeter University – who have also put in some funding. It was suggested and agreed that an update be brought to the next Joint Committee meeting.
- There has been a big rise in the take up of superfast broadband services under the Connecting Devon and Somerset programme. Take-up is now around 60%, higher than the national average and a 5% rise on the previous quarter, which means around 180,000 homes and businesses are now using superfast services over new or improved networks funded by CDS.
- The HotSW Digital Skills Partnership has secured £255k as one of the 4 national pilots from Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport for developing local digital skills.
- The Department for Education Pilot around Careers and Training, which has provided training to 600 local people over the past twelve months is nearing completion and indications are that we are likely to be the most successful of the 5 national pilots.
- Taunton and Yeovil have successfully made it to the shortlist for high street funding. Unfortunately, none of the Devon authorities have made it to this stage.

7.02 At Cllr Fothergill's invitation, Eifion Jones, HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), gave an update on the activities of the LEP since the last meeting, referring to successes and other local developments as follows:

- There are 2 European Funding Grants available.
- Tourism Sector Deals are up and running with 5 national Heritage Action Zones for historic town centre status.
- The Stonehenge report is due for the duelling of the A303. The cost is around £1.6 billion.
- The Sparkford enquiry has now been closed.
- The work on the A358 on Junction 25 of the M5 is now in the public domain.

## **8 Draft HotSW Local Industrial Strategy**

8.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Tracey Lee, Chief Executive, Plymouth City Council and Senior Responsible Officer for the HotSW, on the Local Industrial Strategy.

8.02 The report provided an update on the development of the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) being prepared on the back of the HotSW area being given the opportunity by Government to be part of the Wave 2 areas developing Local Industrial Strategies. The aim of reaching agreement of the Strategy with the Government and publication in late September will enable us to develop our propositions for investment and submit bids as soon as funding streams are announced, as well as feeding proposals into the Comprehensive Spending Review process.

8.03 RESOLVED unanimously to:

- (a) Agree the overall direction of the draft Local Industrial Strategy;
- (b) Agree that the draft version should be shared with Government to form the basis of the next stage of co-development;
- (c) Agree that the draft is published for information on the Joint Committee and LEP websites (following the LEP Board meeting on 23 July and subject to approval of the same recommendations at that meeting);
- (d) Agree to support targeted engagement with key stakeholders and promote wider awareness of the Local Industrial Strategy.

## **9 HotSW Housing Task Force**

9.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Stephen Walford, Chief Executive, Mid Devon District Council on the Housing Task Force. The report argued the case for the continuation of the Housing Task Force established

previously by the Joint Committee and sought agreement to a revised membership.

9.02 Nominations from the membership were invited noting that ideally there would be a spread of representation across the area and of political representation. Nominations were received from – Cllr Judy Pearce, Cllr Bob Deed, Cllr Ros Wyke, Cllr Gill Slocombe, Cllr Ken James, Cllr Val Keitch and Cllr Tudor Evans. Officers were asked to form a Housing Task Force taking into consideration geography and political balance.

9.03 It was agreed the Housing Task Force Terms of Reference would be reviewed and brought to the next Joint Committee meeting.

9.04 RESOLVED unanimously to:

(a) Renew the Housing Task Force in light of significant changes in membership following the local elections in May 2019.

## **10 Brexit update – Submission to the Treasury Committee Regional Imbalances in the UK Economy**

10.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Phil Norrey, Chief Executive, Devon County Council setting out a proposal to submit a response to the Treasury Committee Inquiry: Regional Imbalances in the UK Economy Inquiry. The proposed response built on the work of the Joint Committee in preparing for the impacts of Brexit and was an opportunity to further lobby Government on the economic opportunities that exist in our area and which could be realised with the devolution of appropriate powers and funding.

10.02 The following points were raised in the debate on the proposed contents of a response:-

- Reference was made to the need for more clarity from Government on the Comprehensive Spend Review (CSR). It was agreed that reference to the CSR, levels of funding local government and more broadly public services, could be included in the submission. This was appropriate as an area our economy is more heavily reliant than is the norm on the public sector and it would be preferable if this wasn't the case.
- Reference was made to the Government's plans to charge VAT on solar panels and how this will impact on our ambitions for clean growth. It was suggested that this should be picked up in the response. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to refer to this in the response given the Committee's focus on clean growth and making best use of the assets in the region. The Committee's work on Brexit had focused on opportunities presented by Brexit and the response could justifiably incorporate some sort of incentive for investment in green technology, which would probably be of more benefit to the HotSW than other regions.

10.03 RESOLVED unanimously to:

- (a) Approve the development of a Heart of the South West Joint Committee response to Treasury Inquiry subject to engagement through the Chief Executives of Constituent Authorities;
- (b) Authorise the Brexit and Resilience and Opportunities Group to draft the response;
- (c) Authorise the Chair of the Joint Committee to sign off and send the response subject to the draft being shared with all Leaders for final comment;

## **11 HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership – Coastal Productivity Plan**

11.01 Steve Parrock, Chief Executive of Torbay Council introduced the background to the Coastal Productivity Plan. He highlighted that:

- The development of a Strategy had been encouraged by Government officials and discussions had taken place with ministers and the House of Lords Select Committee to discuss the challenges faced by coastal areas.
- Torbay Council had volunteered to take the lead on this and assurance was given that there was a commitment to ensuring that the content represents all areas, not just Torbay. He gave the example that the Greater Grimsby Town government funding announced in 2018, match funded by authorities and businesses which proved that the Government was serious about committing to tackling the issues of coastal areas.
- Through the establishment of a Coastal Action Zone there would be opportunities to pursue the re-introduction of local enhanced capital allowances for coastal businesses, enhanced digital skills through LIS and growth of higher value apprenticeships.
- It is estimated that there will be a £3.14 return for every £1 of public money spent in investment which will result in a £700m gain in terms of productivity over the next 10 years.

11.02 Alan Denby, Director of Economic Strategy, Torbay Council introduced the detail of the Coastal Productivity Plan.

11.03 The Plan highlighted that:

- Coastal towns are low in productivity, high in costs and have high poverty and low unemployment, as well as being low pay areas.
- Challenges identified include: deprivation, challenge of demographics (aging population and young people leaving area) and dependence on the visitor economy which affects productivity, housing, infrastructure.
- 5 of the 10 local authorities in the South West have a coastal line, with 3 of them being in the HotSW area.

11.04 The following points were raised in discussion:

- Coastal towns depend highly on tourism and holiday home ownership impacts on the local economy throughout the winter.

- South Hams, Sedgemoor and East Devon coast lines are not mentioned in the Plan.
- A checklist would be helpful when going to government with issues.
- There was a suggestion to form a Coastal Communities Task Group in order to develop an agreed approach and share what needs to be discussed with government.
- It is hoped to use the weight of the Joint Committee and LEP to influence government to explore different funding models.
- There is merit in having a distinctive funding stream so coastal areas are not competing with other areas.
- The Plan needs to cover all of the HotSW councils with a coastal line.
- It may be prudent to concentrate on the areas that are most challenged as these are more likely to secure government funding.
- The need for joined up thinking and collaboration so coastal areas are not competing against each other.

11.08 RESOLVED to agree the direction of travel set out in the report and specifically to:

- (a) Recognise the issues which are slowing growth in HotSW coastal towns and resorts.
- (b) Seek Government support to pilot a Coastal Action Zone (CAZ) in Heart of the South West.
- (c) Develop of and piloting a Digital Business Academy.
- (d) Seek support to extend Higher Value Apprenticeship Pilot across the coastal towns and resorts of HotSW.
- (e) Support development of a proposition for HotSW as a Tourism Zone, potentially with neighbouring LEP areas.

The recommendations were agreed subject to a report to the next meeting to consider the proposal to set up a Coastal Communities Task Group.

## **12 HotSW Joint Committee Governance Update Report**

12.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Julian Gale, Strategic Manager – Partnership Governance, Somerset County Council who gave an update on the Joint Committee Governance arrangements. The update covered changes required to the Committee’s Arrangements document as a result of decisions made at the last meeting of the Committee. It also provided details of the revised management support arrangements and the Committee’s budget position. It was noted that delays to the work programme meant that it was highly unlikely that there would be a further budget request of the Constituent Authorities in 2019/20.

12.02 As part of his presentation Julian informed the Committee that a formal request had been received from the Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) and the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) to have a joint non-voting

co-opted member on The Joint Committee. The Committee debated this proposal and agreed to defer consideration to the next meeting to request further information, including whether it would be more appropriate to have two representatives (one for each Association) rather than one.

12.03 RESOLVED to:

- (a) Recommend the changes to the Committee's list of functions in the arrangement document as already agreed by the Joint Committee and the updated budget arrangements for endorsement by the Constituent Authorities as required.
- (b) Defer the decision on the request for a non-voting co-opted member from DALC & SALC to the next meeting.

### **13 Great South West**

13.01 The Joint Committee received verbal updates on this initiative from Eifion Jones and Steve Hindley, HotSW LEP.

13.02 Great South West is an informal collaboration of peninsula LEPs including Cornwall, Dorset and the Isle of Scilly. It is focused on areas of common interests and to add value to the work of the individual LEPs. It will build on the emerging Local Industrial Strategies and will focus on clean growth to differentiate it from other areas. A Great South West All-Party Parliamentary Group has been established. In response to a Ministerial request a Great South West proposition is being developed over the summer and will be submitted to Government before the summer parliamentary recess.

13.03 This work had been given added impetus by the announcements made by the Great Western powerhouse spanning the M4 corridor from Swindon to Swansea and including Gloucestershire. This area's prospectus had been launched at an event at Parliament focusing on economic potential this added to the urgent need for the Great South Area to be able to compete.

### **14 Peninsula Transport Board Update**

14.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Julian Gale, Strategic Manager – Partnership Governance, Somerset County Council.

14.02 The Peninsula Transport Board had its third meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019. As the sub-national transport body for the area including the its key functions are to engage with Government on strategic transport investment priorities and develop a transport strategy for the area.

14.03 The Board's focus to date has been to develop and submit bids under the Large Local Majors (LLM) and Major Road Network (MRN) bidding schemes. Through these submissions the Board is seeking government funding for strategic highways network road schemes for the 2020-2025 period. This a competitive process and local areas have to provide match funding at 15%. The schemes agreed for submission are listed in the officer's report.



- 14.04 Cllr Davis, Chair of the Peninsula Transport Task Force, gave an update on rail developments including in relation to the rail links between Okehampton and Exeter and the Tarka Line now known as the North Devon Line. Devon County Council had invested significant resource into the Sunday service on the Okehampton to Exeter line for the benefits of local business. A new rail timetable would be going live on the 19<sup>th</sup> December which would provide 42000 extra seats daily across the South West.
- 14.05 The Board was presented with detail of Bristol Airport's growth plans against a picture of strong demand in the region to grow the airport through to 2050. It is already the largest single site employer in North Somerset, with a further increase in jobs and GVA (gross value added) forecast.

**15 Date of next meeting**

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 10.00am – venue to be confirmed.

**16 Any Other Business**

Cllr David Fothergill announced the retirement of Julian Gale after over 40 years working for Somerset County Council and commended his work, professionalism and diplomacy. The Joint Committee wished Julian all the very best and thanked him for all his support.

(The meeting ended at 12.53 pm)