

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee held at the Sandy Park Conference Centre, Exeter at 11.45am, Friday 27th September 2019.

Attendance

Voting Members:

Pamela Woods	Chair of Dartmoor National Park Authority
Cllr John Hart	Leader of Devon County Council
Cllr Ben Ingham	Leader of East Devon District Council
Cllr Philip Bialyk	Leader of Exeter City Council
Cllr Andrea Davis	Deputy Chair of Exmoor National Park Authority
Cllr Ros Wyke	Leader of Mendip District Council
Cllr Bob Deed	Leader of Mid Devon District Council
Cllr David Worden	Leader of North Devon District Council
Cllr Tudor Evans	Leader of Plymouth City Council
Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts	Leader of Somerset West & Taunton Council
Cllr Val Keitch	Leader of South Somerset District Council
Cllr Gordon Hook	Leader of Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Steve Darling	Leader of Torbay Council
Cllr Anna Dart	Leader of Torridge District Council
Cllr Neil Jory	Leader of West Devon Borough Council

Substitutes present:

Cllr Liz Leyshon	Assistant Portfolio Holder for Enterprise & Finance for Mendip District Council
Cllr Gill Slocombe	Deputy Leader of Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Alistair Dewhirst	Deputy Leader of Teignbridge District Council
Cllr Ken James	Deputy Leader of Torridge District Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott	Deputy Leader for Somerset County Council
Cllr Malcolm Prowse	Deputy Leader of North Devon District Council

Officers present:

Phil Norrey	Chief Executive - Devon County Council
Alex Parmley	Chief Executive – South Somerset District Council
Pat Flaherty	Chief Executive - Somerset County Council
Scott Wooldridge	Monitoring Officer- Somerset County Council
Lindsey Tawse	Clerk - 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 - Torrridge District Council
Stuart Brown	Chief Executive - Mendip District Council
Doug Bamsey	Corporate Director - Sedgemoor District Council
James Hassett	Chief Executive Designate - Somerset West & Taunton Council
David Ralph	Chief Executive - Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
Suzanne Bond	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Michael Titchford	Head of Place - North Devon Council
Eifion Jones	Chief Operating Officer – Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
Paul Johnson	Devon CCG
Sophie Hosking	Chief Executive – South Hams & West Devon Councils
Sue Rose	Policy Lead – Devon County Council
Nathanial Lucas	Senior Economic Development Office – Somerset County Council
Ian Gent	Peninsula Enterprise

Apologies received from:

David Fothergill	Leader of Somerset County Council
Duncan McGinty	Leader of Sedgemoor District Council
Steve Hindley	Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
David Hall	Cabinet Member, Economic Development, Planning & Community Infrastructure for Somerset County Council
Darren Callow	Deputy Leader of Torbay Council
Andrew Cooper	Dartmoor National Park Authority
Judy Pearce	Leader of South Hams District Council
Ian Collinson	Homes England

2. Declarations of Interest

2.01 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. Cllr Gill Slocombe declared a personal interest as a Member of Bridgwater Town Council.

3. Minutes

3.01 The Minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 12 July 2019 were confirmed and signed as correct.

4. Public Question Time

4.01 There were no public questions.

5. Chair's Update

5.01 The Vice-Chair Cllr Evans reported on developments since the last Joint Committee meeting, referring to:

- This being an extraordinary time for the country
- There has been a new Prime Minister and Cabinet since we last met (Theresa May stepped down on 24 July 2019)
- Parliament is still dominated by Brexit
- Reflected in the agenda today – BROG – potential damage of a No Deal Brexit
- Through our own councils and collectively through the Joint Committee we need to maintain focus on the day-to-day business of running public services
- We need to make sure we keep the pressure on Government – e.g. Delivering Housing/ tackling the Climate Change agenda/driving Inclusive Growth
- There is still no announcement on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – which leads to uncertainty on how we can put together the funding for delivering the Productivity Strategy and LIS
- We have managed to secure some funding into the region since we last met
- I'm pleased to confirm that a number of areas got through to the next round of the High Streets Fund – Barnstaple, Bideford, Newton Abbot, Paignton, Yeovil, Taunton and Plymouth,
- We've also had some Town Deals announced through the Town Deals Fund for Bridgwater, Mendip and Torquay.

6. HotSW Joint Committee - Senior Responsible Officer's update and position statement

6.01 The Joint Committee received a verbal report by Tracey Lee, Chief Executive, Plymouth City Council and Senior Responsible Officer.

6.02 Tracey Lee indicated that:

- As SRO she focuses on the 3 pillars of the partnership to ensure they are balanced: strategy; maintaining a dialogue with Government; Governance
- We have a single **strategy** – with the productivity strategy as our foundation - and a range of delivery channels like the Local Industrial Strategy; housing; transport; digital; skills, rural delivery etc.
- The Joint Committee is working hand in hand with the LEP on the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which is an important delivery channel to increase productivity for our region and which is co-designed with and will be signed off by Government. We shouldn't underestimate what a

great achievement it is to be amongst the first few areas nationally on this.

- We maintain a **dialogue with Government** – we started a great conversation with senior MHCLG civil servants in May following our letter to the Secretary of State. Despite lots of changes in roles and other pressures, we're still developing those relationships. We're definitely regarded by Government as an area that's united and keen to work as a testbed. We'll continue to promote our asks with Ministers and to raise our profile. Evidence of this is that we're looking to sign off 2 letters to Ministers today on Housing and Brexit.
- We make sure our **Governance** is strong and appropriate so that we can work effectively together.
- We have a report on the agenda today to agree some changes to our arrangements and to agree a sustainable budget for the partnership going forward.
- We are all taking a report through all our councils that provides an update on the work of the Joint Committee and seeks agreement on important changes to our arrangements concerning the LIS and on expanding the scope of our work programme.
- At the last meeting, we asked for you're the Committee's views on the priorities for the Joint Committee's work programme going forward. Housing was clearly important and we have an update of the reconvened Housing Task Group later in the agenda.
- We're also looking at how we can work together on the Climate Change Emergency agenda which was another priority theme.
- A further theme was about 'left behind' urban, rural and coastal communities. At our last meeting we had a report about Coastal Communities. The conclusion was that further work was needed involving a wider group of councils. This could take the form of a workshop later in the autumn and we'll update you on that in due course.
- We've also had a discussion session today on inclusive growth and how we can mainstream that into our economic growth - and clearly Brexit is an ongoing work stream.
- At our November meeting we'll look at the progress we've made in delivering the Productivity Strategy since the Delivery Plan was signed off in March this year – and we'll be considering an investment framework that will sit alongside the Delivery Plan.

7. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Update

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

- An AGM meeting will be held next week. All are welcome to attend and the focus will be on clean growth.
- The LEP is held to account by the government twice per year and judged on 3 parts: governance; delivery; strategic approach. No compliance issues have been identified; some governance changes are being recommended. Regarding delivery, 76% of funding is now committed placing the LEP in the 'good' category indicating average performance. A large piece of work is being completed to assess outcomes and a second impact assessment will be completed shortly. Spending needs to be completed by March 2021; 8 projects are not yet contracted. there is a need to demonstrate impact. With regard to strategy, the LEP is working with partners to produce a quarterly bulletin. This should be a useful tool which can be made available to the Committee. Big issues for business include access to labour and brexit.
- LEP Scrutiny is also carrying out a review of their performance.
- The LEP has been going through a process of recruitment and some changes will be made to the Board this autumn.
- The LEP has received good feedback regarding the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and is now moving to submit this formally.
- It is recognised that the LEP has a leading role to bring the region together.

8. Housing Task Force Update

- 8.01 The Joint Committee considered a verbal update on the work of the Housing Task Force presented by Stephen Walford, Chief Executive, Mid Devon District Council.
- 8.02 The Committee were informed that the Housing Task Force had met in Yeovil in September and had elected Cllr Tudor Evans as Chair.
- 8.03 The Task Force discussed current issues including:
- The restructuring of Homes England and how this is likely to impact on housing authorities. This could become another centralisation of efforts and further communication should be received shortly.
 - Wanting to strengthen our voice on what constitutes affordable housing and concerns about the Right To Buy scheme.
 - The delivery of social housing
 - The availability of construction skills
- 8.04 During discussion, it was agreed to circulate membership of the Task Force to all Committee members.
- 8.05 RESOLVED

The Committee wrote to the Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in April 2019 but has yet to receive a response. It was,

therefore, proposed to write again to the Minister and to include the issues and concerns raised above by the Task Force. The wording of the letter was circulated electronically to Committee members ahead of the meeting and agreed with no changes.

9. Brexit Opportunities & Resilience Group (BROG)

9.01 The Joint Committee considered a verbal update presented by Phil Norrey, Chief Executive, Devon County Council.

9.02 The update included:

- All Members of the Committee have a place on the BROG Group.
- The Group focuses on identifying critical issues to enable the Committee to lobby and communicate effectively with the Government and on developing relationships to enable us to respond effectively.
- There is serious concern about the impact of a no deal brexit on agricultural sector. This is a cross-departmental issue and it was, therefore, proposed to send a letter to Michael Gove MP to ask for a cross-government response on this issue. The wording of the letter was circulated electronically to Committee members ahead of the meeting and agreed with no changes.

9.03 During discussion, it was agreed that the letter would be sent on Monday and that there was no reason why members could not make an additional local representation if they wished.

9.04 RESOLVED

“ Joint Committee and LEP are co-signatories to a letter, seen by all Joint Committee leaders and signed off by the Chair, to Michael Gove MP raising the issue of the cumulative impacts on our economy and the wellbeing of people in the event of a significant economic shock in the farming, food and drink sector and advises the Committee how it intends to take cross-department action to address the issues raised by the sector in the event of a No Deal outcome.”

10. HotSW Joint Committee Governance Report Update

10.01 The Joint Committee considered a report presented by Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager – Governance & Risk Monitoring Officer, Somerset County Council.

10.02 The report referred to:

- Clarification that the earlier request received from the Devon & Somerset Associations of Local Councils (DALC & SALC) was for one single, non-voting representative on the Joint Committee.

- The need for the Committee to move to a more sustainable financial position by increasing constituent contributions for the 2020/21 budget. It was noted that representation had been received from the National Park Authorities outlining their difficulty in increasing their contribution and requesting that their contribution be capped at the current rate.
- The need to review the appointment of the Administering Authority to the Joint Committee as the current appointment is due for renewal in January 2020.
- A review of the proposed meeting dates for the Joint Committee in 2020.

10.03 RESOLVED

(a) To co-opt a single joint representative of DALC/SALC as a non-voting member of the Joint Committee with immediate effect;

(b) To recommend to the Constituent Authorities

(i) that the Joint Committee budget contributions for 2020/21 should be set at the following levels:

- County Councils - £21,000
- Unitary Councils - £8,000
- District Councils and National Park Authorities - £2,800

(ii) to reappoint Somerset County Council as the Administering Authority to the Joint Committee for the period 22 January 2020 to 21 January 2022.

(c) agree the Committee's proposed meeting dates for 2020 as set out in paragraph 4.4.1 of the report.

11. Great South West Update

11.01 The Joint Committee considered a verbal update presented by David Ralph (Chief Executive – HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership) and Steve Hindley (Chair of the HotSW Local Enterprise Board).

11.02 The update indicated that:

- Great South West (GSW) is a partnership between Dorset, HotSW and Cornwall LEP's focused on developing a regional programme.
- GSW has been invited to submit a proposition, championing the priorities of the area.
- There is an existing steering group for GSW including 8 authorities and administered by Cornwall Council.
- All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) meetings have taken place with a purpose of giving a script of what we would like to see. The current language from Government is about 'levelling-up' and setting out what two or three things we want to do first.

- Very few MP are attending APPG's, especially Somerset MP's. There is currently no date set for the next APPG meeting but this will be circulated once known
- It is paramount to have a very clear proposition. The Northern Power House have a very clear proposition about connecting and improving links between northern cities to improve productivity. The Midlands also have a clear proposition about the area being the heart of manufacturing. The GSW proposition centralises on clean growth, particularly in rural areas and the next step is to submit our business case by Oct/Nov.

11.03 During discussion:

- Members questioned whether District Councils could be included within the membership. It was clarified that the existing steering group already has local authority membership. The suggestion will be considered, however, the difficulty is that neither Dorset or Cornwall have District Councils.
- Concern was expressed about an emerging north/south divide. We need to be clear that we are the South West, not the South and that we have very real need. We are often treated as a corridor and ignored as a region.

11.04 The Committee noted the update.

12 . Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting will be held on Friday 29th November 2019 at 10.00am – venue to be confirmed.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other urgent business.

(The meeting ended at 12.56 pm)