

TORRIDGE LOCALITY (COUNTY) COMMITTEE

27 April 2018

Present:-

Devon County Council:-

Councillors A Saywell (Chair), L Hellyer, T Inch and B Parsons

Torrige District Council

Councillor J Whittaker

Devon Association of Local Councils

Councillor A Hewitt

Apologies:-

Councillors D Hurley and A Eastman

* **11** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017 be signed as a correct record.

* **12** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **13** **Terms of Reference for County (Locality) Committees and Appointments**

The Committee notes its Terms of Reference as detailed in the County Council's Constitution available at:

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=416&MId=2487&Ver=4&info=1>

* **14** **The Role of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Economic Development Opportunities in Torridge**

(Mr C Garcia, LEP Chief Executive attended and spoke to this item at the request of the Committee)

The Committee received the Heart of the South West (LEP) Annual Report 2017.

The Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (Devon County Council) with the LEP Chief Executive explained the role of the LEP known as the Heart of the South West (incorporated as a Community Interest Company (CIC)). In discussion with Members the following points and comments were made:

- the LEP was a partnership across the public and private sectors, with a small core team and supported by local authority officers; and the LEP Board comprised Devon and Somerset County Councils, Torbay and Plymouth Councils, District Councils, private sector representatives, Universities and an FE College representative;
- to achieve mutual economic aims, it had: identified common priorities, attracted resources and investment all to make a difference to prosperity;
- the Productivity Strategy covered three elements: Leadership and Ideas; Housing Connectivity and Infrastructure; and Employment, Skills and Learning;

- Devon County Council was taking the lead on Employment, Skills and Learning, promoting skills and employment and social inclusion, and engaging with all FE providers including PETROC, the DfE, Job Centre Plus for example, and driving technical skills and qualifications across the LEP area;
- the local Member for Bideford East referred to the skills shortage in East of the Water, Bideford in meeting the demands of a local company (which wanted to employ local labour) and enquired how could PETROC provide the appropriate vocational training; Mr Garcia undertook to assist the local member in this regard with the LEP's connections with the College;
- the current capital programme with Growth Deal packages including, treasury, European and public and private sector funding was worth £735 million up to 2020;
- the latest packages were for ten strategic projects detailed in the Annual Report, including Rural Productivity with other LEPs through the South West Rural Productivity Commission to explore the challenges and opportunities around rural productivity and growth; and Connecting Devon and Somerset - providing superfast broadband to premises with the final 5% not served via the private sector with the aim to increase superfast coverage in the HotSW to 100% by 2020;
- the funding streams were due to finish in 2020 and key strategies and themes were being developed in accordance with the Productivity Strategy and would include a delivery plan and investment framework;
- the Government's criteria for funding was normally on a 'per capita' basis with all LEPs, (including the large metropolitan areas from the 'Midlands Engine' and the 'Northern Powerhouse') in competition with each other for the capital resources available. This presented difficulties for the LEPs in more rural areas in putting forward portfolios which would attract funding, and with limited revenue funding available there was little capacity to undertake larger scale feasibility studies;
- Government also appeared to favour unitary or combined authorities in attracting additional funding for the LEPs (rather than bids from LEPs comprising two tier authorities, such as in Devon and Somerset);
- there was however opportunity for a bid for some feasibility study funding from resources available via the Business Rate Relief programme for which the County Council was a pilot, but noting this would be available for one year only; and the Head of Service undertook to provide 'Devon Funding News' published by her section to the Chair (to assist his efforts in gaining feasibility study funding for a Cable Car project in Torrington);
- the Chair of the LEP was aware and very cognisant of issues faced by rural communities/areas in Devon and Somerset in attracting funding based on the needs of these small and disparate communities; and
- the LEPs from the more rural areas were working together to lobby Government to 'rural proof' funding criteria or provide 'ring fenced' resources (as advocated by the CLA) for the rural areas.

Members discussed the need for a unified strategy to promote fairer funding for future LEP projects beyond 2020 and for effective lobbying jointly by all of Devon's and Somerset MPs to achieve sufficient 'ring fenced' resources or 'rural proofed' funding criteria for rural LEPs. Members noted that the support and advice of the Head of External Affairs in this regard should be sought.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Parsons, **SECONDED** by Councillor Saywell and

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be asked to agree that that the Chair (in conjunction with the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills and the Head of External Affairs) draft a letter to all Devon and Somerset MPs to promote a unified approach to achieve fairer capital funding resources for the Heart of the South West LEP to meet the needs of rural communities in the region.

Councillor Parsons reported that he was pleased to inform Members that the NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group had requested North Devon Hospital Trust to implement a programme to re-open the in-patient-beds at the Hospital on a temporary basis. Running parallel there would be a CCG-led engagement process with local people to consider the long-term future of services in the area.

(b) Pynes Community Infant & Nursery and West Croft Junior Schools

The Chair reported on the amalgamation to form a large 600 place Primary School and the Headteacher's work to establish a Youth Council for primary Schools in Bideford. Members suggested that the Headteacher should liaise with the Devon Youth Council.

(c) Devon District Council Forum

Councillor Whittaker reported that Torridge District Council would be Chairing the Forum during the next municipal year.

(d) Cable Car Project: Torrington

The Chair reported that he was seeking contributions for a feasibility study for this proposal from local interested parties such as the Town, District and County Councils and local businesses.

* **16 Council/Cabinet Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Committee noted that Council's Cabinet Forward Plan and the Scrutiny Work Programme was available at: <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

* **17 Dates of Future Meetings**

24 July (in Holsworthy), 16 October 2018 and 26 February 2019

The County Council Calendar of meetings available on the website:

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.10 pm