

HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST – ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMITTEE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Report of the County Solicitor

Recommendation: that the report be noted, including Governance arrangements for the Joint Committee, particularly in relation to adherence to Codes of Conduct and high standards of ethical behaviour.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been produced to brief Members of the establishment of a Joint Committee, commencing in January 2018, in relation to the Heart of the South West Devolution activities and highlighting the Governance arrangements in place.

2. Background / Scope

2.1 Since August 2015, Devon and Somerset County Councils, all Somerset and Devon Districts, Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council, Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the three Clinical Commissioning Groups have worked in partnership to progress towards securing a devolution deal for the HotSW area, focusing on delivering improved productivity.

2.2 On 16 February 2017 (Minute 86 refers) the Council gave 'in principle' approval to the establishment of a HotSW Joint Committee, subject to approving the Joint Committee's constitutional arrangements and an inter-authority agreement necessary to support the Joint Committee.

2.3 Later in 2017, representatives of HotSW met Jake Berry MP, Minister for Devolution and had a very positive meeting that Government would welcome a bid from the partnership to progress those ambitions around improving productivity. One of the previous barriers had been the requirement to have an elected mayor for Devon and Somerset as a condition of any deal, but the Minister confirmed there would be no such requirement.

2.4 The Joint Committee would provide the ideal governance framework to take forward the devolution and productivity dialogue with Government.

3. Joint Committee

3.1 The key role of the HotSW Joint Committee is to develop, agree and ensure the implementation of the Productivity Strategy. The Strategy will agree a common vision for increased prosperity through economic growth informed by a local evidence base and engagement with local stakeholders. It will also link to Government policy initiatives, particularly in relation to the Industrial Strategy, and will form the basis of developing the collective 'ask' of Government.

4. Governance

4.1 The documents approved at the Council meeting on 7 December 2017 detailed the Administering Authority functions in support of the operation of the Committee, including the provision of financial, legal, constitutional and administrative support to the Committee.

4.2 In the event the remit of the Joint Committee expands to take on more decision-making responsibilities and functions of the constituent authorities, the Arrangements and Inter-Authority agreement would be revisited to ensure it remained fit for purpose and proportionate. Also, such expansion of functions / responsibilities would require the approval of the constituent authorities.

4.3 The Joint Committee may also propose amendments to the Arrangements document, but it needed the approval of all Constituent Authorities.

5. Members Conduct

5.1 The Report outlined that all Members of the Joint Committee would observe the “Seven Principles of Public Life” (the ‘Nolan’ principles) and would be bound by their own authority’s Code of Conduct in their work on the Joint Committee.

5.2 Joint Committee members / representatives would also be subject to the Code of Conduct for elected members adopted by the Constituent Authority that nominated them to be a Joint Committee member or to the conduct requirements of the organisation that appointed them. This included the requirement to declare relevant interests at formal meetings of the Joint Committee.

5.3 Members were also expected to act in the interests of the Joint Committee as a whole, except where this would result in a breach of a statutory or other duty to their Constituent Authority or would be in breach of their Constituent Authority’s Code of Conduct.

6. Summary / Conclusion

6.1 In summary, the Committee is asked to note the Report and be assured that Members of the Joint Committee are expected to adhere to the requirements of the ‘Arrangements’ document, as agreed by the Council on 7 December 2017 and that Members are expected to maintain high ethical standards of actions and behaviours.

JAN SHADBOLT

[Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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<u>Background Paper</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>File Reference</u>
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Nil