

**HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST (HOTSW) LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
(LEP) JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

13 October 2022

Present:-

Councillors J Brook (Chair), R Chesterton, I Roome, N Bye, C Penberthy, Clist, Ewings and N Cavill

Apologies:-

Councillors M Douglas-Dunbar

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor J Hodgson

* 24

Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022 be signed as a correct record.

* 25

Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* 26

Local Enterprise Partnership Next Steps, Including Devolution Deal

(Councillor Hodgson attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 (2)(a) and spoke to this item).

Members received a presentation on the future of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the outlook of a potential devolution deal for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. This was in the context of the Government's refreshed approach to devolution across England which was published in the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022.

Negotiations were proposed by the Government for autumn 2022, with a view to implementing the first wave of devolution deals from April 2023. Local partners in the South West were pursuing a Level 2 type deal (non-mayoral) led by a cabinet of 4 Leaders (Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and the rotating leader of the Devon Districts group).

Somerset, which was currently included in the Heart of the South West LEP, was not being included in the Combined Authority plans. This was owing to its

development into a unitary authority and uncertainty on whether Somerset would wish to be involved in the future or follow alternative devolution plans.

The LEP and its existing functions were planned to be integrated into the Combined Authority alongside additional control over powers and funding that were at present nationally held, as well as further control over public transport commissioning and infrastructure funding. Under the proposals, the strength of scrutiny and voice of business were both intended to be expanded and strengthened.

Members were advised that business cases had been prepared and that officers were ready to enter negotiations with Government to secure a deal.

Member discussion included:

- how the proposed leadership arrangements would address things such as population differences in the area (for instance, Devon having the largest population). Members were advised that there were many considerations, and the Combined Authority would look to ensure that all areas involved have significant power in decision making while also reflecting to some degree differences between the areas;
- the consideration of environmental concerns within any potential deal. Members were advised that capital had been provided for decarbonisation, and control over other environmental / climate provisions had already been incorporated in the asks that would be submitted when entering into negotiations; and
- the role of scrutiny, which was planned to be expanded in any outcome when compared to the current relationship between scrutiny and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

* **27** **LEP Performance Update**

(Councillor Hodgson attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 (2)(a) and spoke to this item).

Members received an update from the Chief Operating Officer of the Local Enterprise Partnership on the performance of the LEP including developments from the last meeting of this committee, and the LEP Annual Report (which was made available [here](#)).

The Committee was advised that several aspects of the national economic picture had been impacted by COVID in the long-term such as a tightening labour market and increasing levels of debt. Progress had been made, but recent economic uncertainty had negatively effected business confidence in the area.

The funding that had been assigned to the LEP, totalling approximately £1billion of public and private sector money, had mostly been spent with a small number of capital programmes due to be completed in the near future.

Members discussed the development of carbon-free energy such as Langage Green Hydrogen hub and Hinkley Power Plant. With reference to Langage, the LEP was working with Carlton Power to develop their business plan to help ensure that the demand for hydrogen met the supply. Hinkley Power Plant, and the importance of reducing carbon emissions (such as by moving transport from road to rail) was also discussed.

Members also explored the future role of the LEP in relation to the Devolution Deal. It was explained that the LEP was looking to identify key areas of focus that could be considered alongside the Greater South West counties (namely, including Cornwall and Dorset) to raise the profile of the region, particularly based around the green and blue economy (environment and marine) and social mobility.

* **28** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

(Councillor Hodgson attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 (2)(a) and spoke to this item).

RESOLVED that the following be added to the work programme:

- Combined authority arrangements for Scrutiny, considering lessons learnt and principles going forward
- Housing delivery particularly social and affordable housing.
- Social mobility masterclass

* **29** **Dates of Future Meetings**

Dates of Future Meetings were noted as 8 June 2023 and 9 February 2023

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 3.56 pm