

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

21 February 2024

Present:-

Councillors J Brook (Chair), I Roome, Y Twelves, M Ewings, I Tuffin, S Clist and G Yardy

Apologies:-

Councillors S Darling

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councilor C Leaver

* **49** **Chair's Announcements**

There were no announcements made by the Chair.

* **50** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* **51** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **52** **Integration of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership**

(Councillor C Leaver attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 (2) and spoke to this item with the consent of the Committee).

Members noted the consideration of this matter at Devon County Council Cabinet meeting of 9th February 2024 ([Minute *477](#) refers), including the consideration of the Report of the Interim Director of Performance and Partnerships, (PP/24/1) on the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership and Integration thereof. The Committee also noted in particular the resolution by Cabinet at that meeting “that the dissolution of the HOTSW LEP Joint Scrutiny Committee, by the end of March 2024 [...] be approved.”

This matter was considered in light of the dissolution of Local Enterprise Partnerships as directed by Government and the transition of LEP powers to

upper-tier local authorities. The Committee were told that there were three broad Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions that had been identified by Government which required integration into the appropriate authority, who had worked with the Heart of the South West LEP to develop a transition plan of said functions. Each upper-tier authorities' leadership, and the Heart of the South West LEP itself, having endorsed the integration plan. The transition of LEP functions into local authorities was planned for the end of March 2024.

Members heard that the assets related to live projects that required transition totalled approximately £25 million. It was clarified that this was committed money, so did not represent an income stream for any authority.

Overall, officers were confident of the integration of LEP functions by the end of March 2024, notwithstanding some final details that had to be considered before that time.

Discussion points between members and officers included:

- The human impact of transition, namely redundancy implications and the importance of trying to protect jobs where possible;
- The meeting of the LEP board which was planned for 11 March 2024 to finalise decisions on the transition of assets away from the LEP's responsibility, with it expressed that documentation on this would be useful for the information of members, notwithstanding the cessation of this committee;
- The arrangements for transition of the LEP's loan fund, in relation to which repayments were expected post-transition; and
- Possible future scrutiny arrangements relating to an eventual combined authority of Devon and Torbay.

* 53

LEP Impact

(Councillor C Leaver attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 (2) and spoke to this item with the consent of the Committee).

Report of the Chief Executive of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, and appendices. The report explained that the LEP had commissioned Hardisty Jones to complete an impact report of the LEP Local Growth Funding, Getting Building Fund and Growing Places Fund. The full report by Hardisty Jones was attached as an appendix.

The Chief Executive of the LEP highlighted that the vast majority of the projects undertaken by the LEP had been completed, and that it was

anticipated that all projects would be completed by March 2025. The Government would continue to monitor the projects that would continue post-dissolution. Also highlighted was that there were some projects, such as those related to infrastructure that, although technically completed, would represent (hopefully significant) economic impact in the future by their very nature.

Members were particularly interested in lessons learned in relation to some infrastructure projects that had not delivered the economic benefit or employment figures that were anticipated upon originally bidding for these projects. It was explained to the Committee that this was partially due to national economic factors, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic; but that the Chief Executive felt that the mechanisms for bidding for growth deals acted to incentivise over-ambition, as bodies were more likely to maximise potential benefits of their planned projects in order to improve their chances of securing funding. It was posited that Government did not have robust procedures in place to monitor this, and that taking this lesson forward could be difficult were Government not to develop better protections against this.

Other discussion points included:

- The importance of local authorities finding ways in the future to incorporate business voice into strategic decision making in the absence of LEPs;
- Other work being done on lessons learned from the LEP, including work with the County Councils Network (CCN) by the HotSW LEP, and Government evaluation of LEPs; and
- Social mobility, in particular as it relates to rurality and peripherality, and to infrastructure (particularly transport).

* 54 **Scrutiny Work Programme and Dates of Future Meetings**

As it had been agreed by Devon County Council Cabinet that this Committee should cease by the end of March 2024, there were no future dates noted or items added to the work programme.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive of the LEP, David Ralph, and the former Head of Scrutiny at Devon County Council, Camilla de Bernhardt Lane, for their attention to and support of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members thanked Councillor Brook for the manner in which he had undertaken his responsibility as longstanding Chair of the Committee.

HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST (HOTSW) LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) JOINT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21/02/24

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

The Meeting started at 12.00 pm and finished at 1.14 pm