

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

2 November 2018

Present:-

Councillors J Brook (Chair) Y Atkinson, R Hosking, L Leyshon, M Lewis, R Williams, S Darling, G Derrick, J Morris, N Cavill and N Thwaites

Apologies:-

Councillors J Mathews, C A Paul and C Lewis

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor J Brazil

* **1** **Election of Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor J Brook be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

* **2** **Election of Vice Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor R Williams be elected Vice Chair for the ensuing year.

* **3** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **4** **Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships**

The Committee considered the Report of the County Solicitor (CSO/18/31) which outlined the detail contained within the recently received Government guidance relating to 'Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships'.

The Committee was also asked to consider this in light of its agreed terms of reference, which were attached at appendix 1 to the Report.

The Report highlighted there was a lack of detail within the guidance about how any local arrangements should operate, but the review documentation did recognise the role of local authorities in scrutinising LEPs and also the recommendations of the Mary Ney Report.

It further outlined some suggested reporting links between the Heart of the South west Joint Scrutiny Committee (LEP), the LEP Board and also the Heart of the South West Joint Committee.

The Committee considered the importance of reviewing the operation and effectiveness of the Joint Scrutiny Committee and suggested an evaluation took place several months after its initial meeting.

Discussion points with Members included:

- the need for the Committee to review strategic decisions of the LEP and to conduct proactive and pre-decision scrutiny by contributing to strategy rather than just reviewing decisions retrospectively; and

- ensuring that the cycle of the Committee was in line with the decision-making timescales of the LEP Board to allow Members to pro-actively input into strategic decisions.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brook **SECONDED** by Councillor Williams and

RESOLVED

(a) that the Committee's progress to date regarding the implementation of a Joint Scrutiny function (Committee) for the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Terms of Reference and Operating Procedures as outlined in appendix 1 of Report CSO/18/31, be noted;

(b) that the recently issued Government Guidance 'Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships' be noted and that current processes in relation to Scrutiny are fit for purpose; and

(c) that the Committee review and evaluate its operation in twelve months time to assess effectiveness and added value and consider whether any changes are necessary noting, that any changes proposed would be subject to the approval of the Constituent Authorities and may require wider consideration across the Heart of the South West Councils.

* **5** **Introduction from Mr Ralph - Chief Executive of Heart of the South West LEP Board**

The Chief Executive of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board outlined the role of the Board and the benefit and value of joint working between the LEP Board and Scrutiny Committee.

Key points raised during the presentation and in discussion with Members included:

- The LEP Board was four years into a programme of delivery with most of the funds allocated to 67 projects;
- All of the HotSW LEP funds were held by local authorities, predominantly by Somerset County Council, who hold the Board to account through its Standing Orders and S151 Officer, as well as being internally and externally audited;
- A LEP Review had been conducted following concerns raised nationally around the accountability of LEPs, ultimately leading to the Mary Ney Review and the need for greater governance of LEPs, with Scrutiny playing a large part in this;
- The aim of the HotSW LEP was to drive economy in the area and to raise local productivity levels – however it was noted that the South West could never match the same productivity levels as London due to the different structural makeup. On average, the South West performed at 75% of national productivity levels and the LEP Board was looking at ways to change this;
- The LEPs Strategic Economic Plan included areas such as job growth, increasing knowledge and upskilling workers, increasing broadband connectivity, delivering new housing and raising productivity and wages;
- Future focus of the Board was on an aging population, business start ups, innovation, connectivity and increasing wages to keep young people in the South West;
- The impact of Brexit on the economy of the South West, including EU Workers and inward investment;
- Funding streams – such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- The necessity for superfast broadband and infrastructure to help support small local businesses and new housing developments; and
- The essential need for affordable housing for young people in the south west, and the current disparity between wages and house prices, forcing many families out of the area and ultimately affecting economic growth.

The Chair thanked Mr Ralph for attending the Committee and for his informative presentation on the work of the LEP Board.

A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.

* **6** **Scrutiny Processes and Operation - Presentation by the Head of Scrutiny**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Scrutiny at Devon County Council on Scrutiny processes and operations, including why (motivation), how (processes) and what (product) Scrutiny did to make better decisions and how this was achieved by being transparent, active, gathering evidence and making recommendations for change.

The four principles of good Scrutiny included:

- providing a critical friend to challenge executive policy and decision-makers;
- enabling the voice and concerns of the public;
- being carried out by independent minded councillors, and
- driving improvement.

It would be important for this new Scrutiny Committee to consider and review its impact on decision making.

A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.

* **7** **Devon Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/2018**

The Committee noted Devon's Scrutiny Annual Report for 2017/18.

* **8** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

In considering the work programme, it was **RESOLVED** that the work programme be agreed with the addition of items added at the meeting including:

- Digital activity
- Review of completed projects and lessons learned
- Emerging local industrial strategy
- Performance of the LEP
- Inclusive growth

A copy of the work programme is attached to the minutes.

* **9** **Dates of Future Meetings**

Dates of future meetings were noted as follows.

Thursday 14 February 2019
Thursday 20 June 2019
Thursday 17 October 2019
Thursday 13 February 2020

All meetings to start at 2.15pm with Masterclass sessions at 10.30am.

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 4.40 pm