

**QUESTION(S) FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**Wednesday, 13 July 2016**

**1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VINT**  
**Re: EU Funding**

How much funding does Devon and its small and medium-sized enterprises receive from the EU via the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and other funding sources - and how (and by whom) is the likely impact on Devon of any changes to funding following the EU referendum being evaluated? How could this affect the HOTSW Devolution Bid?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

*As Councillor Vint acknowledges, the majority of EU funding received in Devon comes through a variety of EU funds and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) also has an ESIF Strategy for determining how the existing €137m allocation for Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset will be invested for the current budget period 2014-2020. However, while that programme has started and applications have been issued or submitted there are no definitive funding agreements yet. There are also some centrally-administered EU programmes which can benefit businesses and economic activity in Devon but information about any activities funded through those is not readily available. For these reasons, it is not easy to determine the precise levels of funding which have gone to businesses in Devon in the time available, but I will ask Officers to prepare a summary of whatever information they have, which may give him an indication of how businesses in Devon have benefitted.*

*As to the second part of the question it is far too early to say with any certainty what the impact of the referendum will be on the Council going forward and I am not prepared to speculate on what may or may not happen over the coming months and years.*

*The strength of the Heart of the South West Devolution Partnership is the commitment of all to work together to bring powers and decision making closer to local people. The ability to show consensus through this process, at a time when many other areas have fractured, was the main reason why colleagues and I were recently invited to a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss terms on taking our bid forward. The partners believe that showing unity and providing local leadership during this period of uncertainty is as important as ever to protect the interests of local people. In essence we are stronger together to campaign as a single voice for our area and our people over the coming years.*

**2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VINT**  
**Re: Hinkley Point C**

What is the Council's (or HOTSW's) latest assessment of the likelihood of the Hinkley Point C project proceeding as originally envisaged in the HOTSW Devolution Prospectus? Is there a "Plan B" if the proposed "Enterprise Zone" at "Huntspill Energy Park near Bridgwater to support the growth of a new nuclear cluster catalysed by investment in Hinkley" cannot proceed, and are discussions now underway or planned with RegenSW about other ways of retaining and creating local employment in the energy sector in Devon?

## REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

*My response to the previous question equally applies. I am not prepared to speculate on what decisions the Government may or may not take over the coming months and years and how that may impact on this or other major projects planned for the south west.*

*The Heart of the South West Devolution Partnership is a long term programme that will look at the opportunities for the area over a 30 year trajectory. As part of this work the Partnership will be developing a Productivity Plan that will explore all options and opportunities to improve the productivity of this part of the South West as one of the key economic challenges of our area and the country as a whole.*

### 3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR VINT

#### Re: The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership

According to the latest “Cities and Local Growth” Report of the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (pp14-16) “the Federation of Small Businesses raised concerns with us that LEPs can be dominated by vested interests, and that there is insufficient involvement of the small business sector” (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/296/296.pdf>).

To provide assurance that this has not occurred in Devon and Somerset has the HOTSW LEP published a conflict of interest policy and does it publish a register of interests of its Board of Directors and of members of its sub-groups, as recommended by this Report?

## REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

*Cabinet Members can only reply to questions about matters for which they have responsibility and, however one may wish, the County Council is not responsible for the management and administration of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. However, and having been in touch with the LEP, I can confirm that as an independent community interest company it has adopted an open-style Board recruitment policy, consistent with Nolan Principles and has a Conflicts of Interest policy and makes public the declared interests of its Board Directors which is available on its website at:<http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/board-members%E2%80%99-conflicts-interest>.*