

**Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee
(GEGSC)
Summary of Virtual Meeting Held on
Thursday 2nd July 2020**

1. Verbal Update on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) Meeting

Cllr Patrick Molyneux (Chair of GEGJC) provided the following update on the GEGJC virtual meeting held on Wednesday the 3rd June 2020:

- There have been discussions about how both the GEGJC and GEGSC could work together to help the COVID recovery plan for Gloucestershire.
- Committee governance has been extended by eighteen months from September 2020 to ensure the committee can legally proceed with its work.
- There were two approved funding bids from the Strategic Economic Growth Development Fund (SEDF). One to establish the Gloucestershire City/Region Board and the other from the multi modal transport group. He said there is lots of information available regarding these two bids online.
- The work of the Strategic Planning Manager was approved to continue and would be brought in-house.
- There was also a GFIRST LEP update – more on this later in this meeting.
- The key item in the meeting was the COVID 19 response. This is currently very fluid with a lot of things out of Gloucestershire’s hands.
- The GEGJC would be taking a co-ordinating role in the county council’s response to COVID – working with the LEP, District and Borough partners. The aim is to have a united approach across the County and to try to ensure there are no gaps in the response.
- There will be an additional meeting of the GEGJC later on in July 2020 to look at how the COVID recovery plan is progressing.
- COVID 19 has rapidly changed the way people work and how the economy looks.

2. GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Verbal Update

Dev Chakraborty (LEP Deputy Chief Executive) provided an update on the work of the GFirst LEP in the following areas:

- a. Growth Deal Projects**
- b. County's Inward Investment Project**
- c. A New Funding Pot from Government**

a. Growth Deal Projects

Dev said growth deal projects include:

- West Cheltenham Transport Scheme
- West Cheltenham Walking and Cycling Schemes
- Airport Schemes
- Gloucestershire Railway Station

The LEP has been making sure that these projects continue - working on due diligence and getting funding agreements signed off.

b. County's Inward Investment Project

Dev explained that this is where the LEP attempts to attract foreign owned companies into the county. However, one of the results of COVID was that all major national and international events were cancelled. So, for the time being, that project has come to a halt.

The team responsible for this project has been redeployed onto COVID 19 and recovery planning. The majority of this team have been making calls to the largest companies in the county to find out how COVID 19 has affected their business. This information has been fed into the LEP's own recovery planning and their daily calls to central Government.

c. County's Inward Investment Project

Dev stated that it is sensible to have a live project pipeline (an "Investment Portfolio") just in case central Government provide a new funding source.

He went on to explain that the LEP were given 6 days notice by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government who asked what projects were available that satisfied strict criteria.

They projects had to be:

- Shovel Ready
- Able to be Completed by December 2021
- Recovery and Job Creation Theme focused
- And have "Green Credentials"

Fifteen projects were submitted from the county to central Government with a projected cost totalling £52 million. The projects were from every part of the county.

Dev said that central Government this week announced £900 million would be available for the whole of England. He explained that Gloucestershire represents about 1% of the economic output and 1% of the population for the whole of England. So, it's anticipated that Gloucestershire is likely to get a figure of about £9 million.

The most important projects that satisfied the above criteria and were put on that list were:

- King Square in Gloucester
- Tewkesbury Garden Town
- Cheltenham to Gloucester cycle highway
- Bishop's Cleeve to Cheltenham cycle highway

He emphasised that the LEP's Local Industrial Strategy's priorities of Cyber, Environment and Agri-tech remain. There is also a need to keep young people in the county.

Dev said that he hopes to know the actual figure that Gloucestershire will receive from government next week.

Full business cases will be submitted to Government by mid-July.

d. General Information

Dev said that some of the inward investment projects are confidential but details would be made available to the GEGSC outside of this meeting.

The LEP's recovery plan proposes a "Think Gloucestershire" campaign that would encompass:

- "Staycations" to support the visitor economy and the tourism sector
- Supporting shopping locally as opposed to using online services such as Amazon
- Supporting local procurement for all sectors including the public sector

There will be at least seven recovery plans for the county so all the districts and the boroughs are producing their own place-based recovery plan. The LEP will produce an economic sector based business plan

There are 76,300 people in the county who are being furloughed.

3. COVID-19 Response – Planning for Gloucestershire’s Economic Recovery

Colin Chick (Director of Economy, Community & Infrastructure) explained that:

- The role is leadership, co-ordination and qualitative analysis. The aim is to ensure the county is moving in the “correct direction”.
- There was a need to make sure that the skills training that's going to be offered aligns with the LEP and also enables people to be re-skilled so they could enter a different career.
- Research shows that the people who are going to be most affected by COVID are the 17-24 year olds – those without work experience.
- Those with a degree will find it difficult to obtain work. However, it's even worse for those that haven't attained that level of qualification. There is therefore a need to manage this problem and help and assist. In summary, it's a broad-based coordination leadership, evidence-gathering role - supporting and working with the LEP and districts.
- Although everyone wants to be seen to do something straight away, we don't know the size of the problem or even know where the problem currently is because all the government grants, the furlough scheme and other forms of assistance are potentially covering up a “multitude of sins”.
- There are probably companies that under normal circumstances and without COVID and associated assistance would have dissolved by now. For that reason, Colin said we should not get into localised business support because if we do we may end up supporting businesses that may easily fail.
- As a consequence of the above, we need to go for a sector based approach - looking at the weaknesses in the sectors and see how these sectors can be strengthened and supported in future. We must take a sector and/or geographical based approach.

Cllr Simon Pickering (responsible for Strategic Infrastructure) then added that:

- Before COVID 19 struck in March 2020 there had been good news from the Government with the approval of the:
 - o A417 missing link
 - o M5 Junction 10
 - o M5 Junction 9
- Unfortunately, the onset of COVID 19 had a significant impact on all of the major infrastructure schemes - not only those specified above.
- Some of the schemes have been delayed:
 - o The public inquiry for the Gloucester Southwest bypass has been delayed
 - o The A417 missing link has also been delayed by between eight and twelve months
- However, M5 Junction 10 is being progressed to hopefully enable the drawdown of £220 million pounds by late summer/early autumn.
- Also, the business case for M5 Junction 9 is being worked on with the aim of submitting it to the Department for Transport next year.
- Construction has already started on phases 1 and 2 of the West Cheltenham transport improvement scheme at the Arle Court roundabout
- The County Council are doing their best to progress all the planned schemes.

Cllr John Murphy – July 2020