

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	22 February 2022
Subject:	Continuation of Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee – To 31 March 2023
Report of:	Chief Executive
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

To consider a request to extend the operation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) until 31 March 2023 and to delegate authority to the Borough Solicitor to amend the associated Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) (dated 4 September 2014) accordingly.

Recommendation:

The Council RESOLVES that:

- 1. the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee continues to operate with the Council's participation as a member authority, from 4 March 2022 until 31 March 2023, under the terms set out in the associated Inter Authority Agreement, and**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Borough Solicitor to agree and complete the appropriate legal documentation to allow the Inter Authority Agreement to be extended until 31 March 2023.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

To allow the continuation of the GEGJC for a further year pending a review of governance arrangements.

Resource Implications:

None, the administration costs of the GEGJC are met from the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).

Legal Implications:

The IAA no longer includes a provision requiring 12 months' notice being served by any of the partner authorities to any proposal to extend the life of the committee. Therefore, it is permissible to extend the agreement if all the Gloucestershire local authorities agree.

Risk Management Implications:

The risk of not extending GEGJC would leave the county with no joint administrative body for the management and allocation of the SEDF established under business rates pool arrangements. The proposed extension of the IAA until 31 March 2023 to enable the Joint Committee to continue to operate until that date does not present any particular risks to the authority.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Further reports in respect of the future of GEGJC and county wide economic governance arrangements will be forwarded to Council as required.

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** In July 2020 Council considered a report and resolved that the operation of the GEGJC should be extended for a period of 18 months to expire on 4 March 2022. Similar extension approvals were granted at that time by all the other Gloucestershire local authorities that together make up the membership of the GEGJC. The collective decision in 2020 removed the requirement for 12 months' notice for any future changes to the agreement.
- 1.2** The 18-month extension period was agreed to allow Gloucestershire local authorities to continue to work collaboratively together on Gloucestershire's economic development through the Joint Committee. At its June 2020 meeting, the Joint Committee also identified that it would be supporting the economic recovery of the county because of the economic impact of COVID-19. The 18-month extension was to enable the Joint Committee to oversee the strategy development and delivery, as the principal partnership based economic co-ordination forum.
- 1.3** GEGJC is the joint administrative body that manages and allocates funding from the Gloucestershire SEDF which is part of the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool arrangements. Without a joint administrative body capable of making joint decisions, the SEDF could not function.
- 1.4** All GEGJC member authorities recognised that a review of governance arrangements relating to economic strategy coordination should be undertaken at the appropriate time to avoid duplication and ensure best fit with government agendas. It was anticipated that this would be undertaken in the 18-month extension period, but this has not been achieved.

2.0 THE CURRENT POSITION

2.1 Leadership Gloucestershire considered the future governance arrangements for leading economic growth in the county at its meeting in June 2021. Leadership Gloucestershire was mindful that the government would be publishing the DLUHC 'Levelling Up' White Paper which will potentially impact the future governance and partnership arrangements. It was anticipated, at that time, that the White Paper could be available before Christmas 2021 which would allow Officers and Members time to consider the issues raised by its proposals and develop governance proposals in respect of the future economic agenda for Gloucestershire.

2.2 Unfortunately, the anticipated White Paper was delayed and has only recently been published. Consequently, at its meeting in January 2022 Leadership Gloucestershire considered three options in respect of the continuation of GEGJC pending publication of the anticipated White Paper:

1. Do nothing and let GEGJC terminate in March 2022 – this will mean there is no formal partnership decision making body on economic issues and specifically no joint administering body for the SEDF. Unless alternative governance arrangements were established for the SEDF, the funds would need to be handed back to the business rates pool authorities.
2. Extend the life of the GEGJC for say 12 months or for as long as needed and carry on as at present. This is the simplest option and will not require significant work to amend the IAA. It will simply require a resolution from each local authority before 4 March 2022 to continue GEGJC for the period agreed.
3. An alternative to option 2, would be to extend the life of the GEGJC, but limit agenda items to SEDF decisions. The Gloucestershire City Region Board could then be used for all other strategic discussion, offering a wider partnership forum for these items. This option could be delivered by simply managing the GEGJC agenda and could be done without the need for significant amendments to the IAA.

2.3 Leadership Gloucestershire agreed that option 2 was the simplest and least disruptive option. It was agreed therefore that:

- The GEGJC IAA is extended until 31 March 2023 to enable the GEGJC to continue until that time.
- A review of the governance arrangements in respect of the future economic agenda for Gloucestershire is undertaken in that time, taking into account the Government's proposals in the Levelling Up White Paper.
- All GEGJC member authorities are therefore requested to formally approve the extension of the GEGJC IAA.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 Included in the report.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Leadership Gloucestershire.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Council Plan and Covid 19 recovery Plan, Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities – Levelling Up White Paper: February 2022.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 None.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 None.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 None.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 Council Resolution to extend the GEGJC IAA – July 2020.

Background Papers: Report to Council 28 July 2020 : Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee - Extension of Operating Period

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Appendices: None.