

Briefing to constituent authority members

May 2018

Heart of the South West Joint Committee

- The inaugural meeting of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee was held on 23 March 2018 at Plymouth City Council offices.
- Councillor David Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Joint Committee and Councillor Paul Diviani, Leader of East Devon District Council, appointed Vice-chairman.
- The Committee is the vehicle through which the constituent authorities and partner organisations across Somerset and Devon will work together to improve productivity and continue to work with government under the devolution and other government policy agendas to push for freedoms and flexibilities and possibly additional funding to enable the partnership to achieve its goals.

Productivity Strategy

- The Joint Committee and the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership Board unanimously endorsed their new **Productivity Strategy** in March. The Strategy sets out the ambition to “Double the size of the Heart of the South West’s economy over 20 years” and a vision for “Productivity and prosperity for all”.
- The Strategy identifies three strategic themes to focus the Partnership’s activity to improve productivity. We will strengthen and develop:
 - the leadership and ideas within businesses in our area
 - the housing, connectivity and infrastructure our people and businesses rely on for living, moving goods, accessing jobs and training, and exploiting new opportunities.
 - the ability of people in our area to work, learn and improve their skills in a rapidly changing global economy, and to maximise their economic potential.
- In addition, there are three cross-cutting themes, referred to throughout the Strategy:
 - Inclusive growth for our people, communities and places
 - Capitalising on our distinctive assets

- Maximising the potential from digital technology

Discussions with Government

- Following a meeting with Jake Berry MP (Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth) in September 2017, Leaders from across the Partnership have had fruitful meetings with key civil servants and monthly meetings with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are in the pipeline, demonstrating the power of the Partnership.
- Officials have praised the approach taken by the Partnership and have given encouragement to continue. They were particularly struck by:
 - the unity and clarity of purpose of the Partnership,
 - the productive relationship between the public and private sector, illustrated by close working with the LEP
 - clear leadership and governance arrangements which provide reassurance of our commitment and capacity to deliver
 - the ambitious vision set out in the Productivity Strategy, building on our strengths
- The work streams and associated outcomes emerging from these discussions with the Cities and Local Growth Unit will form part of the Delivery Plan for the Productivity Strategy as follows:
 - **Transport**
Work is progressing between the local authorities of Devon, Plymouth, Torbay, Somerset, Cornwall and potentially Dorset (following their reorganisation) and the Department for Transport on the establishment of a South West Peninsula Sub-National Transport Body. This would complement the establishment of a neighbouring 'Western Gateway' STB covering the West of England authorities of BANES, Bristol City, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Poole and Christchurch. The South West is one of only two areas of the country not yet covered by sub-national transport bodies. These bodies are considered to be important strategic structures to engage with Government on future transport priorities and investment opportunities.
 - **Rural Productivity**
Government will identify senior representatives to attend the SW LEPs Rural Productivity Steering Group and help to develop new ideas for transforming rural productivity
 - **Coastal Productivity**
Government recognises the specific issues facing England's coastal areas and will work with the HotSW partnership to explore ways of addressing them
 - **Housing**
We want the Government to work with us on an innovative Housing Deal potentially covering a high growth corridor and rural housing.

To understand more about the housing challenges and opportunities across the whole of the HotSW area, we will be conducting an audit to gauge where councils are in their Local Plan process; to assess overall housing targets in plans, and current delivery rates; to identify who

has received funding (HIF bids, OPE, plus other funding awards); and where Homes England are intervening directly in local areas.

It is intended that all HotSW authorities participate in the audit so that the Joint Committee can get a true picture of housing delivery across the region and gain a better understanding of the barriers that are stopping or hindering house building in some areas.

The findings from the audit will help inform the agenda for the HotSW housing summit which will be held later in 2018. Potential objectives for the summit are:

- To reach agreement on the current picture across HotSW
- To raise the profile of the work with Government and Homes England and open up new opportunities
- To agree the value of working together towards a single strategic view that identifies opportunities and infrastructure investment priorities (bottom up, evidence led)
- To consider what resources and governance arrangements might be needed to guide and progress the work

○ **Digital Connectivity**

We would like the Government to provide support for our plans for urgent acceleration of digital connectivity, recognising its vital importance in our productivity and growth plans.

○ **Strategic Planning**

We have asked the Government to support the National Infrastructure Commission to undertake a growth corridor study similar to the Oxbridge Arc study.

○ **Ideas**

Government supports the development of a delivery plan for the Memorandum of Understanding with Innovate UK

○ **Employment, Learning and Skills**

We are seeking Government support for our Institute of Technology proposal as well as support for the early establishment of a Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) as part of the national roll out. We also want Government to allow us to retain and have flexibility over the use of the ESF allocation.

Bringing together a consortium of five of the region's colleges (Exeter, PETROC, City College Plymouth, Bridgwater and Taunton, and Truro and Penwith); our two universities (Exeter and Plymouth), and five core business partners (Babcock, TDK Lambda, Met Office, Watson Marlow and Oxygen House), the South West Institute of Technology (SWIoT) seeks to secure designation for an distributed IoT model to be rolled out across the HotSW area from 2019, focusing on enhancing digital and advanced engineering / manufacturing skills.

A successful SWIoT bid will enable the development of six interlinked training centres across the peninsula, delivering a range of tailored provision to businesses and individuals within our golden opportunity sectors and beyond. Co-located with and complementary to our existing college and university offer, the new provision would be industry led, incorporating the latest in process and digital content, as well as drawing upon the experience of key industrial partners from across the area.

○ **Local Industrial Strategy**

Government supports the HotSW area to be an early pilot to develop a Local Industrial Strategy as an example in a complex, two-tier city/urban/rural/coastal geography

Next Steps

- The Partnership is now working with the LEP and developing the Delivery Plan to support the Productivity Strategy. This will incorporate the work streams from our

discussions with Government within a number of programmes under each Strategic Theme. The Plan will remain agile in order to respond to new funding streams and opportunities.

- An Investment Framework will be developed alongside the Delivery Plan for the Strategy and the Finance Officers from each constituent authority will be involved in this work. The Framework will not create a new single funding pot. As priorities for delivery and project opportunities are identified, it is proposed that a cocktail of investment from a range of sources will be blended together and this will help inform partners and other stakeholders on opportunities..

Background Information

- Somerset County Council is acting as the host of the HotSW Joint Committee and meeting agendas and further information can be found at:
<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=357&Year=0>
- The Joint Committee's meetings are open to the public.
- The partners that make up the HotSW Joint Committee are: Dartmoor National Park Authority, Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, Mendip District Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon Council, Plymouth City Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, South Hams District Council, South Somerset District Council, Torbay Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torridge District Council, West Devon Borough Council, and West Somerset Council. Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), NHS Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group, South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group, and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group also attend meetings but are not members of the Joint Committee.