



Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Wednesday, 12 October 2016

Present:

Daryl Turner (Chairman)

Hilary Cox, Richard Biggs, Andy Canning, Ronald Coatsworth, Mervyn Jeffery, Mike Lovell and
William Trite

Members Attending

Robert Gould (Leader of the Council) and Trevor Jones (Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee).

Paul Kimber attended for minutes 17 and 18.

Officer Attending: Mike Harries (Director for Environment and the Economy), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), David Northover (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Matthew Piles (Service Director - Economy) and David Walsh (Economy & Enterprise Team Leader Economy).

Lorna Carver, Director of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and James Weld, Vice-Chairman of the Dorset LEP attended by invitation.

Public Speaker

Richard Brown, Dorset and East Devon National Park Team – minute 17a.

Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on **Wednesday, 25 January 2017.**)

Apologies for Absence and Acknowledgements

12 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Byatt and Margaret Phipps.

The Chairman took the opportunity to welcome Councillor William Trite to the Committee and paid tribute to the contribution made by the late John Wilson to the work of the Committee.

Code of Conduct

13 There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

14 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2016 were confirmed and signed.

Public Participation

15 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing

Order 21(2).

Petitions

Consideration of Petitions was now the responsibility of a Petitions Panel.

Local Enterprise Partnership and Growth Board

- 16 The Committee received a presentation from representatives of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Lorna Carver, its Director, and James Weld, its Vice-Chairman, who explained what the LEP was, its purpose and how it operated.

The Committee's attention was drawn to how the LEP's Board was composed and operated, what their responsibilities and objectives entailed - in promoting economic growth and jobs - and how the value of the organisation was of benefit to the whole of Dorset. The importance of housing, infrastructure, planning, employment and productivity in actively contributing to fulfilling economic prosperity was acknowledged. The significance of skills being realised was essential in fulfilling potential, in being best placed to meet economic challenges and for Dorset to be competitive - locally, nationally and globally. It was considered that there should be focus on how Dorset could be best placed to be competitive in its own right, rather than there being competition within the County.

In order to achieve this, the LEP had developed a Strategic Economic Vision to determine the quality and importance of sectors, to be used as the basis to establish criteria on which the assessments of bids would be based, in order that improvements were realised and targets met.

Mr Weld used the principle of destination management to explain the evaluation, analysis and assessment of bids submitted was the core business of the LEP, in acting as a means of determining which bid should benefit from funding in order that the strategic economic objectives were met and projects delivered meaningful and positive outcomes. Projects had to be assessed as being viable, deliverable and beneficial in order to succeed.

The Committee was informed what the Growth Deal process entailed, how the Dorset Growth Deal was evaluated and implemented and the benefits the Growth Deal Achievements already realised brought to Dorset. Whilst Growth Deals 1 and 2 had been seen to benefit the south east conurbation mainly, with big ticket items such as the A338 resurfacing improvements, Bournemouth International Growth Programme around the airport and its associated infrastructure and the Port of Poole benefitting from this, Growth Deal 3 submissions were hoped to predominantly attract funding for projects in the rural west of the county. Mr Weld stressed that the importance of unlocking the potential of the Airport and its enterprise zone was critical in benefitting opportunities throughout Dorset.

The principles of the Growing Places Fund was explained, this being a loan scheme which allowed investment to be made in those projects in order for them to be able to start. The Growth Hub provided a means for penetration into the each district so that the most rural areas benefited too.

The LEP emphasised that there were opportunities for any project to submit a bid to attract funding and benefit from the Growth Deal or Growing Places fund and actively encouraged applications for this to be made. Part of the bidding process was to demonstrate how the project would deliver beneficial outcomes. Positive examples of what progress could be made in this regard was the Western Dorset Growth Corridor, Jurassica and the AgriTech initiative at Kingston Maurward College. Other delivery mechanisms designed to ensure that funding was allocated to those projects which would deliver optimum benefits were highlighted.

The Director emphasised that whilst the LEP provided the mechanism for projects to attract funding and be developed, the part that the County Council played in enabling projects such as the A338 improvements to be delivered was significant and should not be underestimated. He was pleased that the County Council had such a positive working arrangement with the LEP in delivering projects.

Critical to the work of the LEP being successful was the partnership and collaborative arrangements they had in place with local authorities, other public stakeholders and, in particular, the Dorset Local Nature Partnership. To this end, members were informed of the considerable collaborative work being undertaken with partners to ensure that the county was as competitive as it could be and the County Council's inward investment team contributed significantly to this. Having a joint economic vision with the Dorset Councils Partnership was an essential contributory factor in this being realised.

The Service Director – Economy saw these relationships as being essential in benefitting economic growth throughout Dorset and considered that this was more readily achievable and likely to be successful on a macro scale, in order to attract the necessary funding and cooperation.

The Leader of the Council, who represented the County Council on the LEP Board reaffirmed that close working with the LEP through a countywide cohesive strategy was essential in ensuring that Dorset realised its full potential. He reassured the Committee that a more balanced portfolio of investment around the County would soon be evident.

The Committee took the opportunity to ask Mrs Carver and Mr Weld the following questions about the work of the LEP:-

- What emphasis and encouragement was being placed on training and relation in employment access?
The LEP emphasised that it was fully committed to the skills agenda in ensuring that employment needs were fulfilled and that readily available access to those jobs was key to this being achieved. Skills were being identified at an early stage, with schools being visited to explain what career opportunities were available. The creation of a careers and enterprise company for Dorset was well advanced.
- Given the perception from the LEP's website that those projects benefitting were eastern/urban centric, how could rural parts of Dorset be reassured that their needs were being met?
The achievements from which the west had already benefitted were reiterated and it was explained that the website reflected those successes already delivered. These included the realisation of more readily achievable successes. The LEP anticipated that successes in the rural areas would be similarly reflected in time.
- What considerations were being given to projects on the perimeters of the County and how might these be realised given the geographical constraints within which the LEP had to work?
Whilst the geographical constraints were determined by the DCLG and designed to attract European funding, how the funding was allocated and what criteria was met for bids to be successful was determined by the LEP and due consideration would be given to the merits of all applications, irrespective of where they originated.
- What plans were in place to liaise with the Combined Authority?
The importance of the Combined Authority, and any Unitary Authorities, was

well understood as it was felt that the strategic arrangements of these were well placed to work collaboratively with the LEP on a strategic scale, taking into account the cohesive approach required for housing, planning and infrastructure strategies to succeed.

- What considerations were being given to the environmental assets in Dorset? The environment was acknowledged as a critical asset to Dorset and that was why the collaborative work with the Dorset Nature Partnership and the local authorities was essential in maintaining this. Working with landowners in managing this valuable asset was essential. The part any proposed National Park could play in helping to manage this was seen to be a positive move.
- What impact Brexit was seen to have on the thinking of the LEP? As elsewhere, Brexit was seen to bring both risks and opportunities and it remained to be seen how government was to manage these. On that basis, the LEP remained committed to ensuring that as many positive outcomes as practicable were achieved.

The Committee also considered that the LEP could play a part in acknowledging the need for affordable housing and how second homes were managed, the need for infrastructure to attract business into western Dorset and recognise what Portland had to offer. Mr Weld understood the importance of infrastructure in unlocking potential and he felt that there could maybe be a case made for the Weymouth Western Relief Road to be given further consideration in this regard.

The importance of digital infrastructure and its availability in order to access opportunities was seen to be essential in economic growth being successful and every effort should continue to be made to facilitate the provision of Superfast Broadband throughout the County. The County Council had demonstrated its continued commitment towards this and it was acknowledged that universal provision of Superfast Broadband was critical to the future economic prosperity of Dorset.

The Committee understood the importance of the relation between employment; housing; skills; infrastructure and the environment in enabling economic growth and success being realised. Whilst sophisticated technological business played a critical part in how economic growth might be achieved, including the essential part advanced engineering, financial and business services, manufacturing and the creative industries played, there was recognition too of the importance of tourism, agriculture, marine, fishing, mineral extraction and quarrying, and oil exploration and production in playing their significant part in benefitting the economy. Dorset LEP recognised the importance of this too.

Given the various means by which the County Council could play its part in facilitating economic growth across the County, the Committee acknowledged that there were significant opportunities for Dorset to achieve its aim of stimulating the local economy in order to galvanise its prosperity.

The Committee acknowledged the part that the Dorset LEP played in influencing economic growth and what benefits this brought and, on behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mrs Carver and Mr Weld for joining the meeting to provide them with a better understanding of what the LEP did and providing some meaningful answers to members questions.

Noted

Motions referred from County Council

17 The Committee considered the following Notices of Motion from Councillor Paul

Kimber, County Councillor for Portland Tophill.

Economic Opportunities for Dorset and East Devon

17a The Committee was informed that a motion proposed by Councillor Paul Kimber which supported the idea of a National Park had been submitted at the County Council meeting on 21 July 2016, resulting in the matter being referred to the Economic Growth and Overview Scrutiny Committee for their consideration. Accordingly the Committee now considered the motion asking 'that the Council ensures that the proposed National Park be seriously considered as part of discussions on local government re-organisation'.

Members were informed that a locally-led group has been established to campaign for the establishment of a Dorset and East Devon National Park based on, but not restricted to, the area covered by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the East Devon AONB and the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. An application had been made to Natural England, the Government's statutory adviser on protected landscapes, to consider the establishment of a National Park on this basis and who were expected to give the proposal further consideration in due course.

The Service Director's report set out the purpose and role of National Parks and the process of designating them, what evidence was taken in to consideration in doing this, potential benefits and concerns over their establishment and what tests needed to be met in the consideration of this.

were detailed, with the Service Director – Environment explained that the consideration given to this would be evidence based to ensure that, on balance, it brought value to the county and was an asset to Dorset. Whilst the County Council would not be responsible for making the decision on this, their contribution to the process would be much valued. He looked forward to further constructive dialogue with those proposing it.

Councillor Kimber presented his motion, outlining the basis for this and what it entailed. He explained that the economic advantages regarding the national park should be explored and was happy to be involved in any investigations. He considered that the formation of a national park would provide an economic stimulus for Dorset in terms of tourism, housing, skilled employment and would be seen as a means of enhancing and protecting the environment. The provision of affordable housing was an essential component for the park. He considered that the positive evaluations made for the Park's viability was evidence that it would be an asset for Dorset. Speaking as a Portland Town Councillor he confirmed that the Town Council welcomed the idea and would be happy to be a part of it. The National Park brand was highly prestigious and would play its part in helping to foster economic wellbeing and vitality.

Mr Richard Brown, of the Dorset and East Devon National Park team, considered that as the environment was Dorset's greatest economic asset, a National Park would help to maintain its value given the duty it had to conserve and enhance. He considered that it would bring significant benefits economically, culturally and environmentally and would contribute towards tourism fulfilling its potential. He felt that evidence of what the South Downs National Park had achieved demonstrated how progressive national parks could be and what they could do, being realistic about what rural life entailed and understanding the balance between economic and environmental needs. As such, the provision of affordable housing was seen to be essential in attracting and retaining young families and key workers. As a planning authority in its own right, this would be given dutiful consideration by any park authority. In seeking to foster economic and social well-being of local communities it was considered that the Park would be good for the prosperity of Dorset and the County Council was being asked to play their part in seeing this come to fruition.

Some concern was expressed by members at the potential for local authority planning controls to be eroded by this proposal but were assured that a National Park, in having a vested interest in what was best for the County, would use the planning process as a means of achieving this. Parish Council involvement would ensure that local needs and concerns were met and as national policies on housing did not apply, control on development would be better regulated. In allaying fears that areas outside of the designated park area would shoulder the burden of that share of housing stock, there was a commitment to affordable housing being developed in the park and that such a scenario had not be borne out in South Downs.

The Committee appreciated that collaborative working arrangements throughout Dorset were critical to any proposed park being a success, but asked what scope there was for the designated area to not just accord with the Dorset (and Devon) AONB but embrace the whole of Dorset.

Mr Brown confirmed that discussion of the perimeters of the Park was to be discussed based on evaluation of its value and merit. The AONB area proposal was considered to be a starting point which could well be adapted to encompass a larger area, if this was considered appropriate and the necessary criteria was met. Portland Town Council's request to be included within the submission could be looked at on that basis.

In thanking the local group for bringing the issue to their attention, the Committee acknowledged the principle of establishing a National Park across Dorset and the perceived economic and environmental benefits this would bring and agreed that the matter should remain under consideration.

Resolved

That the proposal for the establishment of a Dorset and East Devon National Park and the evidence assembled in relation to this be noted and the matter being kept under review.

Reason for Decision

The proposal for a National Park could potentially support the County Council's corporate outcomes in relation to a healthy and prosperous Dorset. However, the proposal was still at a developmental stage and, as Dorset County Council would not be the key decision-maker in whether or not a National Park was established, no decision was required at this point beyond noting the evidence assembled to date and agreeing to keep the issue under review.

Independent Co-operative Businesses

18 The Committee was informed that a motion proposed by Councillor Paul Kimber which supported the idea of independent Cooperative businesses had been submitted at the County Council's meeting on 21 July 2016, resulting in the matter being referred to the Economic Growth and Overview Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

Councillor Kimber presented his motion, explained what cooperatives entailed and how they operated and encouraged the adoption of the cooperative ethos for Dorset, especially in relation to rural communities. He considered that this model was able to achieve outcomes that might otherwise be unable to be achieved particularly relating to affordable housing needs, economic prosperity, education, skills and employment. The social values and principles promoted by cooperatives accorded with community initiatives and enterprise and a sense of collaboration and unity towards a common goal. He considered that existing co-operative good practice within the Council should be better publicised and that there should be the opportunity for local co-operatives to

have better access to participate in the work of the Council.

The Service Director - Economy explained that the Council's Enabling Economic Growth Strategy sought to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship, and highlighted the link between economic prosperity and health and well-being. Support was given to a platform of generic business support initiatives to encourage start-ups and the growth of fledgling businesses. It was anticipated that this would be enhanced in 2017 as European Union structural funds became available to enhance the services offered by the Growth Hub, the Dorset Mentoring scheme, and specific support for communities and social enterprises.

Whilst this support was not focussed specifically on the development of co-operatives, they did provide a business model which could be used and provided an opportunity to explore how this might be achieved, should this be seen to be the most appropriate and viable business model to pursue.

As detailed in the Service Director's report, the Committee understood the principle of what a co-operative was designed to achieve and recognised the benefits that they could bring to communities. The benefits which might be generated by the European funding in 2017 was seen to be positive. The Committee was informed that an event was to be arranged to coincide with the appraisal of final funding, to highlight opportunities for social enterprises and how they might benefit from this.

Resolved

That work be continued to create an environment within which a range of social and other enterprises can prosper, to support the delivery of community services and create sustainable economic growth.

Reason for Decision

A prosperous, growing and diverse economy was essential to achieve the four corporate objectives of making Dorset and its residents safer, healthier, and more independent and prosperous.

Progress on Scrutiny Items

- 19 The Committee received a series of updates from lead members on current scrutiny activities and saw that the commitments made at the previous meeting on 15 June 2016 to make progress on establishing certain groups to review matters were being fulfilled. Summaries in relation to recent scrutiny activities are shown below from 19(a) to 19(d).

Residents Parking Strategy

- 20 The Committee received a summary of the meeting of the Working Group held on 23 August 2016 to review the Resident's Parking strategy and consider new proposals for Dorchester, as promoted by Councillors Canning and Biggs. Councillor Biggs was pleased to report that progress had been made in achieving a solution for Resident's Parking Zone D, with a rationalisation of parking arrangements in that area to accommodate local parking needs. There was an acknowledgement that the resident's parking policy as a whole required rationalisation and modernising to meet the parking needs of today and the strategy to complement this had to be relevant and fit for purpose.

The Service Director – Economy explained that there was a need for the Dorset Council's Partnership to play their part in a joint approach on how to manage parking needs in the town, taking into account how both on and off street parking was managed. The model which was designed to take account of parking allocation needs was complicated, having to take into account hospital parking, and would need to be refined to meet with success.

As parking was seen to be a key economic driver, the Committee agreed that this issue should be added to its Work Programme in scrutinising what the strategy needed take into account to be meaningful, how the policy should be reviewed to apply to the parking needs of today and what success was being seen in managing parking outcomes.

Resolved

That the review of the County Council's Parking Strategy and Policy be added to the Work Programme.

Reason for Decision

To address the Corporate Aim of Enabling Economic Growth.

Commercial Investment Aspirations / Opportunities incl. Investment Working Group

- 21 The Committee received an oral update from the Chairman on a meeting by the Commercial Investment Aspirations / Opportunities incl. Investment Working Group held on 14 September 2016, promoted by Councillors Byatt and Cox. Further work would ensue and this Group would evolve in time.

Noted

Policy Development Panel on HGV Management

- 21a The Committee's attention was drawn to a summary of considerations at meetings of the Policy Development Panel on HGV Management held on 30 June and 27 September 2016. As before some success could be reported on how HGV's were proposed to be managed but it was acknowledged that there were limitations to what could be achieved.

Those involved in the PDP took the opportunity to thank Councillor Ian Smith for the instrumental part he had played in its work and in doing all he could to resolve a particular local issue in Ferndown. The Service Director - Economy used this PDP as a good example of what could be achieved when working with communities.

Noted

Task and Finish Group on Bus Subsidies

- 22 The Committee received the notes of a meeting of the Bus Subsidies Task and Finish Group held on 28 September 2016 which had been promoted by Councillors Cox and Canning. This detailed what work had been done in terms of identifying alternative community transport options, how decisions had been taken, what should be investigated further, what was working well and not so well and how progress could be maintained. Councillor Cox explained that this review was being linked to the principles of the Corporate Plan and members were pleased to see the positive start being made.

Work Programme

- 23 The Committee considered its Work Programme and members had been actively encouraged to give prior consideration to what issues they thought could benefit from scrutiny. The following items were identified:-

- Members agreed, at minute 19(a) above, that the review of the County Council's Parking Strategy and Policy be added to the Work Programme.

- The Committee agreed that given the importance of connectivity to future economic growth, the status of the Digital Strategy including Broadband should be raised as a priority to Priority 1, for consideration at the next meeting in January 2017.

In order to complement previous work undertaken, the Service Director – Economy intended to report to the next meeting on what digital connectivity achievements had been made to date and how these successes had been realised – including the way in which improvements had been made to broadband provision at Ridge and Pulham. Members asked that BT, Open Reach, BDUK, local parish communities and school pupils be invited to attend the meeting to share their experiences so that the Committee might have a better understanding of what access to broadband meant to them; what progress was being made in the roll out programme and what obstacles were seen as preventing this. Understanding this more clearly would better inform the Committee on how full connectivity for the whole of Dorset might be finally achieved and by what means this might be.

The Committee saw this as a constructive process involving the community in helping shape and scope how this could be achieved and that Dorset Media be invited to actively draw the attention of the press to what the Committee were trying to do at that meeting.

The Committee were also provided with useful hyperlinks relating to the responsibilities of the Committee so that they might have a more meaningful understanding of what these entailed.

Resolved

That the Work Programme be updated, taking into account the items identified above.

Reason for Decision

To involve communities directly with the democratic process and to meet the Corporate Aim of Enabling Economic Growth.

Questions from County Councillors

24 No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.20 pm

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