**LEP PLACE LEADERSHIP GROUP – 1PM 1 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**MEETING AT SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICES, COUNTY HALL, TAUNTON**

**ATTENDEES**

Barbara Shaw Westward Housing Association/HoTSW LEP Board

Tim Jones HoTSW LEP Board

Chris Garcia HoTSW LEP

Paul Taylor HoTSW LEP

Ian Harrison HoTSW transport advisor

Paul Hickson Somerset County Council/ HoTSW LEP

Sue Williamson FSB

Kat Deeney HoTSW LNPs representative

John Tucker Devon Districts

Barbara Richardson Yarlington Housing Association

Judith Gannon HoTSW Business Forum

Pat Steward Torbay Council

Joe Keech Devon County Council

Mike O’Dowd Jones Somerset County Council

Andy Wood Exeter and East Devon Growth Point

**APOLOGIES**

Doug Bamsey Somerset Districts

Jonathan Bell Plymouth City Council

**NOTES AND ACTIONS**

**1 – Notes of 3 July 2014 meeting**

The notes of the first meeting of the group on 3 July were agreed as an accurate record subject to the addition of Joe Keech of Devon County Council to the list of meeting attendees.

Actions relating to the formation of the task and finish groups reporting to the place leadership group had been progressed and were to be discussed as later items on the agenda. The terms of the reference for the place leadership group remain in draft and the action to finalise these will be covered as part of shaping the governance arrangements for the LEP Growth Deal.

**2 - Local Growth Focus – Exeter**

It was agreed at the first meeting of the group that to assist the group in its role of advising the LEP about place and infrastructure priorities there should be a programme of presentations about the growth agendas for different parts of the LEP area.

Andy Wood from the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point therefore made a presentation to the group about the growth vision for the Exeter sub region. Andy explained the success of Exeter in delivering growth and new job creation. Over the period 1999 – 2008 Exeter achieved a 32.7% increase in employment compared to a 14.6% average for the HoTSW area and was in the top 2% nationally in terms of its rate of new job creation. Exeter also outperforms the HoTSW area as a whole on prosperity measures such as GVA and earnings per capita and is delivering a significant amount of new homes, both within the City Council boundaries, on urban extension sites reaching into adjoining Districts and through the new community of Cranbrook to the east of Exeter. Therefore Exeter can be seen to be delivering on its vision “to realise the full economic potential of Exeter and East Devon and provide a range of employment opportunities alongside a self-sufficient new community where people will have the ability to live close to where the majority of jobs will be.”

Andy described the key role of the Exeter and East Devon growth board in bringing together the local authorities and the private sector and as a result providing strategic leadership and co-ordination to infrastructure delivery and facilitating growth. He also outlined the significant programme of implemented and planned projects across the growth point, focussing on new housing and employment developments, accompanying infrastructure and the planning and delivery of the new community of Cranbrook. Andy outlined the importance of revolving infrastructure funding to unlocking the early delivery of enabling infrastructure across the growth point, financed from the proceeds of growth through S106, community infrastructure levy (CIL), New Homes Bonus and retained Business Rate mechanisms. Andy also highlighted the value of a “sturdy partner” from Government, providing long term commitment and working alongside to the local stakeholders to plan and facilitate strategic delivery. Can the LEP assist in this role in the future?

The group welcomed Andy’s presentation. Key question and points that emerged from discussion included:

* The degree of commitment to green infrastructure as a component of growth and in response to climate change. The Exeter and East Devon growth point has a green infrastructure plan in place involving 160 hectares of planned green infrastructure of which firm plans are in place for the delivery of the first 70 hectares of this, including the Clyst Valley country park.
* Deliverability of key infrastructure via revolving financial instruments – critical to enabling growth but requires political will to take the long term perspective and strong partnership given that the proceeds of growth may be collected in a different local authority area to the location of the enabling infrastructure
* importance of strategic connectivity across the LEP area to link other settlements to the growth success of Exeter and address the skills shortages in the Exeter labour market
* Within the Exeter success story community engagement still is an evident challenge eg large number of objections received by the local planning authority to Cranbrook. There is a need to dispel negative perceptions of growth eg that new homes will be taken up by “outsiders” not borne out by evidence that 90% of Cranbrook occupiers moved from elsewhere in Devon
* Exeter is an example of the value of long term thinking and proactive spatial planning. Development delivered in recent years is the culmination of strategic planning undertaken through the past two decades. Exeter has clear plans for future growth until 2026 but equivalent plans will be need to be developed for the longer term

**3 - LEP Growth Deal**

Chris Garcia updated the meeting on progress with Government about the HoTSW LEP’s first Growth Deal. The LEP received a good outcome when details of the Deal were announced in July 2014 with a significant number of our priority infrastructure projects being endorsed by Government for funding from the Local Growth Fund. Since the announcement Chris and the LEP management team have begun planning the implementation of the Growth Deal programme of 2015/16 projects and this “mobilisation” phase will continue in the run-up to 2015/16. No offer letter or indications of terms and conditions linked to the Growth Deal have yet been received from Government although a meeting had been called by DfT about the transport schemes in the programme for 2 September.

Guidance is expected from Government in September about the next round of Growth Deals centred on 2016/17. The first set of Growth Deals included a substantial “tail” of commitments in 2016/17 and later years. This means that there is uncertainty about the amount of funding remaining available for new commitments in this round of Growth Deals.

Pat Steward asked about the extent of co-operation between LEPs on common agendas for Growth Deals. Chris responded that this is indeed developing, reinforced by recent dialogue. Examples of areas for collaboration included agritech and strategic connectivity (with Cornwall and Isles of Scilly) and skills, aerospace and nuclear (with West of England).

**4 – Transport update**

Ian Harrison presented an update to the leadership group about the LEP’s priorities and work programme for transport infrastructure. For strategic rail connectivity, priorities for the LEP and its partners include influencing consultations about the Great Western franchise and Network Rail’s western route study, which is part of the national review of rail market trends to 2043. For strategic road connectivity, key issues include the A303 (making the case for the Government to commit to improvements in the Autumn Statement), the delivery of the Highways Agency’s pinchpoint schemes programme for 2014/15 and the progress of M5 route based strategy. Road and rail resilience issues are of significance to the LEP given the prevalence of flooding and extreme weather events in recent years. Rail resilience issues include the Dawlish additional routes study, the Somerset Levels and the Yeovil Junction to Exeter diversion route. Government has committed £31 million of funding to infrastructure schemes to mitigate the impact of the 2012/13 floods and build future resilience. This has been augmented by additional funds for flood measures for the Somerset Levels via the Growth Deal. Ian also outlined the details of the local transport schemes in the Growth Deal and the next steps with this programme.

**5 – Housing task and finish group**

A copy of the draft terms of reference for this group was circulated and introduced by Barbara Richardson who will be chairing the group. The draft was endorsed by the leadership group and first meeting of the task and finish group will be convened to commence its work.

**6** – **Environmental resilience** **task and finish group**

Kat Deeney outlined the proposed terms of reference for this group on behalf of Mark Robins who has agreed to convene the group. A first meeting of the group has been arranged for 3 October.

**7 – Growth Deal priorities**

Chris Garcia and Paul Hickson explained that the LEP Board would soon have to consider what its next priorities to address through future Growth Deals would be. This will require the Board to take a view across the place, people and business themes of the LEP’s strategic economic plan. The Board will be looking for advice from the leadership groups about the priorities from each perspective.

In anticipation of this the leadership group undertook an informal exercise to assess the balance of “place” priorities from the strategic economic plan. From this the following priority themes were identified:

* Transport and accessibility
* Digital infrastructure
* Sustainable solutions to flood management
* Strategic employment sites

In terms of balance of expenditure across these priorities the exercise indicated:

* Transport and accessibility – 35%
* Digital infrastructure – 30%
* Sustainable solutions to flood management – 15%
* Strategic employment sites – 20%

The group recognised that this was a starting point for discussion rather than a robust or conclusive exercise. Equally the themes were inter–related eg transport infrastructure expenditure could unlock delivery of employment sites.

**8 - Future meetings**

Next meeting – 10am 3 November 2014 (Yarlington Housing Association offices, Yeovil)

**9 – Any other business**

No items of additional business were discussed.

**The meeting closed at 3.45pm.**