

LEP PLACE LEADERSHIP GROUP – 10AM 3 JULY 2014

MEETING AT WESTWARD HOUSING ASSOCIATION OFFICES, NEWTON ABBOTT

ATTENDEES

Barbara Shaw	Westward Housing Association/HoTSW LEP Board
Stephen Bird	South West Water/ HoTSW LEP Board
Tim Jones	HoTSW LEP Board
Chris Garcia	HoTSW LEP
Paul Hickson	Somerset County Council/ HoTSW LEP
Pete Ashton	FSB
Derek Phillips	South West Chambers of Commerce
Mike O'Dowd Jones	Somerset County Council
Mark Robins	Somerset LNP
John Tucker	Devon Districts
Doug Bamsey	Somerset Districts
Jonathan Bell	Plymouth City Council
Barbara Richardson	Yarlington Housing Association
Judith Gannon	HoTSW Business Forum
Pat Steward	Torbay Council

NOTES AND ACTIONS

1 – Notes of 11 March meeting

The notes of the first meeting of the group on 11 March were agreed as an accurate record.

Actions arising relating to the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) had been addressed as part of the drafting process.

Outstanding action: Paul Hickson to revise the terms of reference based on discussion at the 11 March meeting.

2 - LEP Strategic Economic Plan and Growth Deal

Chris Garcia updated the meeting on the negotiation progress with Government about the HoTSW LEP's SEP submission and proposals for the first Growth Deal. Since the submission of the SEP and Growth Deal proposals to Government on 31 March 2014 the LEP has been asked to provide a number of clarifications to Government about the contents of both and to undertake a rapid prioritisation

exercise across its financial asks for the Growth Deal. At the time of the meeting a formal announcement from Government was imminent.

Chris explained to the Group that the LEP's SEP submission was seen as robust by Government and expected to be endorsed in full. The LEP's asks for financial support in the Growth Deal via the single local growth fund have largely been focussed on transport and skills infrastructure, recognising that the bulk of the funds allocated by Government for the Growth Deal have come from DfT and the skills function of BIS. The indications from the Government negotiating team are that this is a prudent strategy and that LEPs that have taken a different approach are finding the negotiations more challenging. The Growth Deal will be framed around the following themes:

- Jobs, growth and prosperity linked to the development of Hinkley Point C;
- Maximising productivity, employment and innovation (investment in science park and innovation centres, skills infrastructure, continuation of the business growth hub)
- Improved transport and connectivity (local transport improvements, mobile and 4G infrastructure)

The LEP's Growth Deal submission also included a set of non-financial asks of Government. There is less clarity about these from Government as it has not yet had the time to work through the details of these and formulate a response. Likely that the Growth Deal will include some form of commitment for Government and the LEP to work in more detail on these. A good example of this would be flood resilience where the Government through Infrastructure UK can be expected to facilitate work with the LEP and agencies including the EA, Highways Agency and Network Rail to more closely align investment and secure best value from this.

The timeline for the Growth Deals indicated a full announcement from Government on 7 July after which a full outline of the HoTSW Deal would be on its website.

The group then discussed in more detail the potential outline of the Growth Deal and its main implications from a place/infrastructure perspective. Key points discussed included:

- importance of recognising that Hinkley Point C is of significance to the broader LEP area as well as specifically to Somerset – eg the 90 minute travel to work area defined by EDF Energy includes northern Devon
- the status of strategic connectivity issues – eg A303 connectivity. Chris Garcia explained that while these would not be a part of the local growth fund settlement they formed part of the non-financial asks in the Deal and that the “mood music” from Government was appreciative of the importance of strategic connectivity to economic growth and resilience in the South West
- the critical need to ensure that the Deal is backed up with effective delivery arrangements so that we can realise the benefits and demonstrate our credentials to Government. Chris Garcia explained that the LEP Board and management team were looking as a priority at how the programme is delivered and putting in place mobilisation arrangements for this.

The group discussed the importance for the LEP's place theme to monitor closely and understand progress with the delivery of the transport infrastructure improvements funded by the Growth Deal and understand progress with wider transport infrastructure issues for the LEP area. It was agreed that there should be a standing item on the group's agenda for this and that Ian Harrison, the LEP's transport policy advisor, be asked to present an update note for the September meeting of the place leadership group. **Action: Paul Hickson/Ian Harrison.**

3 - Local Growth Focus – Plymouth

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.

Jonathan Bell therefore made a presentation to the group about the growth vision for Plymouth. Jonathan explained that the starting point for this was the business led Mackay vision established for the city in the early 2000s. This envisaged an ambitious growth agenda for Plymouth, reversing population decline and growing the scale of the city to 300,000 – 350,000 people. Plymouth's Local Economic Strategy developed through the Plymouth Growth Board is in line with this vision and identifies three growth and regeneration areas:

- City centre and waterfront regeneration area – intensifying the use of city centre spaces, unlocking the potential of under-utilised brownfield spaces eg Millbay and achieving mixed use development/redevelopment, including additional homes and business activity
- Northern corridor area – significant provision for new homes and business activity, including in the Derriford area. This needs to be accompanied by significant infrastructure improvements to facilitate and accommodate growth
- Eastern corridor area – significant provision for additional housing growth, with accompanying infrastructure improvements. This includes the new settlement of Sherford.

The city centre area is wholly within the geography of Plymouth City Council. The northern and particularly the eastern corridors extend beyond the administrative boundaries of the City Council, requiring a "joined-up", sub-regional approach to spatial policy. Other challenges to delivery include unlocking housing delivery (the city has unimplemented planning consents for circa 6000 dwellings) and how planning policies and developers adjust to the changed climate for development finance post 2008. The City Council's Local Plan is consistent with the growth vision and is being updated to further reflect this.

The group welcomed Jonathan's presentation. Key points that emerged from discussion included:

- The importance of engaging business in the planning process and encouraging business to articulate the case for growth. The need for mechanisms to capture this voice in the planning process. Plymouth Growth Board seen as a good model for this
- The importance of driving housing delivery forward. The group identified the role of small sites as part of the housing mix and as a means to reduce the dominance/reliance on the large scale developers who control the delivery of most strategic housing sites
- The importance of sub regional co-operation across administrative boundaries. LEPs can have a role to play in brokering this.

4 - Local environment and economy toolkit

Mark Robins introduced the findings contained in the report from a workshop of LEP and Local Nature Partnership (LNP) stakeholders in the HoTSW area undertaken using the Local environment and economy toolkit methodology promoted by DEFRA. The toolkit and workshop followed the ecosystem services framework which is recognised best practice in considering the environment/economy relationship. The report summarises a number of options to help realise the opportunities and mitigate the threats identified in the workshop. This is relevant to the delivery of the LEP's SEP and EU structural and investment fund strategy.

Mark acknowledged the value of the report and challenged LEP stakeholders to think more rigorously about the inter-relationship between environmental and economic issues. From his perspective the SEP provides a good "starting point" narrative about this but the real measure of success will be how this translates into delivery. He also suggested that embracing this agenda, given the particular environmental assets and challenges of the HoTSW area, represented a real differentiator for our LEP.

The group discussed this and agreed to establish a task and finish group to examine the issues in further depth and advise the Place Leadership group of its findings. It was agreed that the task and finish group should focus upon resilience issues, the delivery of green infrastructure as a component of growth and environmental impact mitigation. **Actions: Mark Robins agreed to develop a terms of reference for the task and finish group and in addition to Mark volunteers for the group included Stephen Bird, Tim Jones, Jonathan Bell and Pat Steward.**

5 - Marine sites – taking forward post the City Deal

Paul Hickson explained that the City Deal prospectus had included the ambition to unlock the development of a number of marine sites across the HotSW (and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly) LEP area. This theme also formed part of the growth priorities identified by the LEP in its SEP. While realistically there was unlikely to be any financial resource for this via the Growth Deal the EU structural and investment fund strategy included this issue as a delivery theme. Paul further explained that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) had agreed to make some staffing resource available to work with the LEP partners to review and develop the site prioritisation

exercise from the City Deal and facilitate the development of delivery plans for prioritised sites.

6 - Housing

Paul Hickson explained that the HoTSW area was likely to see a good outcome in the Growth Deal with four potentially successful bids to the Local Growth Fund (housing infrastructure), which provides revolving finance to bring forward housing schemes. LEP partners had worked closely with the HCA to promote the fund and had overseen a “light touch” assessment process prior to LEP endorsement decisions of prospective bids which had been recognised as good practice by the HCA.

This was recognised as a good result for our LEP; equally there was discussion that viability issues for a number of sites mean that revolving fund mechanisms are not a universal solution to accelerating housing delivery.

Chris Garcia explained that accelerating the number of new homes completed in the HoTSW area is a key target in the SEP and that housing delivery is seen by Government as an important issue for LEPs to address. For these reasons it has been proposed that Place Leadership Group establish a housing delivery task and finish group to examine this issue and advise about recommendations to the LEP Board. Barbara Richardson volunteered to act as the lead for this task and finish group and to develop a terms of reference for its work. Others expressing an interest in participating in the task and finish group included Tim Jones, Judith Gannon, Doug Bamsey, Jonathan Bell, Pat Steward and Joe Keech. **Actions: Barbara Richardson to draft a terms of reference for the housing delivery task and finish group; Paul Hickson to provide support, including contacts**

7 - Future meetings

Next meeting – 1pm 1 September 2014 (County Hall, Taunton)

Meeting planned for 29 October 2014 changed to 10am 3 November 2014 (Yarlington Housing Association offices, Yeovil)

The meeting closed at 12.05pm.