

Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Group
29 November 2017
Update for O&S

Further to my previous report, which took place just after our ground-breaking visit to Tewkesbury Borough Council, the minutes of that meeting are now to hand. The section on the TBC presentation and discussions can be found here:

<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=18700>

The section on Outcomes gives a very good summary, and an insight into the sort of issues discussed. Item 'h' in the Outcomes refers to modular housing. Attached to this report are two photos of 'modular houses'. These are factory built, and then installed very quickly once the groundworks are completed. Four houses, just like the ones photographed, were 'built' over one weekend. So, the potential for productivity improvement and dramatic increase in the supply of new affordable houses is huge.

Much work is going on in preparation for the launch of Vision 2050. Hopefully all O&S members will have attended the Members Seminar on Tuesday 9th January.

Gloucestershire Connections Study (Edited section of the minutes from 29th November)

Agenda Item *To receive a presentation on the GCC commissioned study looking at the future role for road and rail in support of improved strategic connectivity in Gloucestershire by 2050.....*

Minutes: *Members received a [preliminary] presentation from Martin Revill, Project Director, SYSTRA, on the Gloucestershire County Council commissioned study looking at the future role for road and rail in support of improved strategic connectivity in Gloucestershire by 2050. It was explained that the study was focussed on external connectivity, and considered a number of important corridors to and from Gloucestershire.... The work consisted of a narrative based on the views of stakeholders, policy and literature review, and analytical work to identify the GDP uplift of improving connectivity to and from Gloucestershire within the six [Bristol, Cardiff, Malvern, Birmingham, Oxford and Swindon] identified corridors.*

i.e. if we want to improve productivity in Gloucestershire, how important are these external links, and do they need to be improved? Sadly, this presentation occurred just a couple of days after the Govt announced the creation of the 'Brain Belt' from Oxford to Cambridge. An updated report should emerge sometime in the new year. The report used data from the 2011 census to assess the number of work-related journeys undertaken. To my mind, more detailed analysis will be needed using current and forward-looking datasets.

A lot of work has also been going on regarding 'Education, Employment and Skills'. Much work has been undertaken using European Social Fund (ESF) money. Two fascinating presentations were given which showed how the money was being used:

- 1) **Learn Direct** – Natasha Panchbhya – which focused on the support and training being given to people with disabilities to help them get into/back into work.

- 2) **South Gloucestershire & Stroud College** – Sara-Jane Watkins – showcasing the work being done to extend the apprenticeship schemes up to and including degree-level qualifications, undertaken part-time whilst in employment.

Both these projects had preliminary funding, with the intention of applying to the ESF for ongoing finance once proof of principle had been achieved.

***[Minutes]** [These] projects, one contracted via DWP directly and managed by learndirect (the Workstart project) and one social inclusion and employability project contracted via Big Lottery and managed by a combination of Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire Gateway Trust (the Going the Extra Mile or GEM project). Contracts for these two projects are £1,215,000 and £3,100,000 respectively.*

Both the employability and the social inclusion & employability projects were intended by GFirst LEP and GCC as initial investments in these areas of work with further ESF funding to be invested once the success of these two projects had been monitored and reviewed. Currently, GFirst LEP and GCC are unable to progress these 'next phase' investments because of the Brexit decision and a lack of further information from DWP as the managing authority and Big lottery as the opt-in partner organisation.

If GFirst LEP and GCC are unable to commission these two follow-on projects then Gloucestershire residents will miss out on a further £3.35m investment of ESF funding. (£1,763,000 of ESF funding direct through the DWP employability contract and a further £1,597,400 via Big Lottery.)

If these two projects (and several others) run onto the sand because of lack of funding, it would be a great pity.

Agenda item 10 of the GEGJC highlights the fact that a Job Description and Person Spec has been agreed for the recruitment of a **Strategic Planning Coordinator for Gloucestershire**. See here:

<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s42455/STRATEGIC%20PLANNING%20IN%20GLOUCESTERSHIRE%20inc%20appendixv2.pdf> The post is being recruited now.

The Scrutiny Group work plan should be finalised at our next meeting and we already have a good idea of our priorities for the coming year.

Our next meeting will be in The Cotswolds. Since the last meeting, it has been confirmed that the next out-visit will be to Cheltenham on 31st October. Preparations are already underway. Hopefully all councillors will attend.

Cllr Paul McCloskey
Cheltenham Rep on GEGSG
1st January 2018

