

Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

Report for O&S – 26 February 2018

Thursday 22nd February was the second in the series of outvisits, this time to The Cotswolds. Remember, we will be coming to Cheltenham in October.

The format was the same, with the home district starting proceedings with a 30 minute presentation on the Cotswolds Local Plan. Their plan is further advanced than Cheltenham, it has been approved by the Inspector for some months now.

To be honest, the Scrutiny group was rather underwhelmed. I felt that The Cotswolds was relying on its pre-eminent tourism reputation. (In terms of brand recognition, the top three places in the UK, by a considerable margin over the rest, are London, The Cotswolds, Stratford Upon Avon.)

There was some disquiet amongst the Cotswolds councillors, that they had a plan, but there was no action to make anything happen. The rest of the meeting was taken up with questions from Cotswolds councillors' to the G First LEP.

I had the sense that about a dozen members of the Scrutiny group had simply facilitated a meeting between The Cotswolds and G First LEP. I wasn't overly impressed with the Cotswolds Local Plan, it seemed very parochial. There was no mention of Vision 2050 or of partnership working. Their plan did have a SWOT. I saw no evidence that Cotswolds had looked at their weaknesses and then tried to find neighbours with compensating strengths or that they were pro-actively offering their strengths and opportunities to others to work together.

Tewkesbury were bullish, outgoing and keen to play their part in developing Gloucestershire. By contrast Cotswolds seemed very introspective and not taking ownership of their problems. Moaning to us about fly-tipping was a case in point.

I don't really want to say more until the group has had a proper chance to review the meeting which it will do at the next meeting in March.

All the above said, I do feel I am getting a far better appreciation of the various Districts in Gloucestershire and their strengths and weaknesses.

Councillor P McCloskey