

## **Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee – March 2018**

The review of the effectiveness of the last two out visits is scheduled for the September meeting.

The March meeting focused on three items from that morning's meeting of the Steering Group (Minutes not yet available from this meeting):

### **Presentation from Highways England**

Highways England had taken over from the Highways Agency. It operated on a five year cycle – cycle one being 2015 to 2020, cycle 2 - 2021 to 2025. Money to do the feasibility work on the A417 was approved in 2014 to go into cycle 1 (this is the money being spent now to determine the preferred route), the actual funds for the build phase were earmarked for cycle two, so construction would not start until 2021.

Andrew Page-Dove, SW Regional manager of Highways England gave a fascinating presentation. They have an annual budget of about £4Billion, but they also have finite resources so additional funding would not necessarily result in more activity. It was also explained that every junction on the M5 is suffering from 'concrete cancer', so a significant slice of their budget would be going towards maintenance for the next ten to fifteen years.

There was agreement that Gloucestershire's priorities were the A417 missing link, Junction 10 and Junction 9 – in that order. Stroud, whose Local Plan had been approved some time ago were feeling somewhat aggrieved. A number of project included in their approved local plan included significant infrastructure spend. It had become clear that just because a Local Plan had been approved, it should not be assumed that Highways England would be starting work.

One outcome of the discussion with Highways England was that a number of one on one meeting would take place, not least with Cheltenham regarding Junction 10 and the Cyber Park. Another item to note was that Highways England was only interested in the strategic road network. They had no view on a third crossing over the Severn (part of Vision 2050) – and by implication, no money to support such a project. At least people knew where they stood.

### **Vision 2050**

Dr Matthew Andrews from the University was scheduled to attend the meeting, but this has now been rescheduled for our September meeting. There was a wide-ranging discussion about the Launch event, and the need to ensure that young people (i.e. those who might still be around in 2050) were heavily involved. (I suspect that much thought has actually been given to engaging the next generation in this project, but lack of detailed knowledge never seem to stop people expressing opinions.)

## Brexit

Back in December it was suggested by the district leaders that *'the council should be doing more to analyse the potential impact of Brexit with regular updates provided to members'*. Attached to this document is a briefing paper that went to the main committee. It does give some thoughts, and there are some links to more detailed background papers.

## Future Work Plan

The draft work plan (more of an organic, living document) can be found here:  
<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s44170/Work%20Programme%202018%20-%202019.pdf>

The Committee were surprised to be asked to scrutinise the Vision 2050 proposal to change the Cotswolds AONB into a National Park. Hopefully, clearer Terms of Reference will be available in time for the June meeting. That said, some preliminary work has already been started:

### **Work Programme: Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee**

*At the Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 March 2018, members were advised of a proposal from the Economic Growth Joint Committee, requesting that the Scrutiny Committee consider undertaking a piece of work on the anticipated economic implications of an aspiration by the Cotswold Conservation Board to achieve National Park (NP) status for the Cotswold AONB (Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).*

**Questioning the origin of the proposal, the committee agreed that, (prior to consideration of the request at the scrutiny committee meeting on 20 June 2018): -**

- 1. A letter be issued to the District Council's within the proposed area of the National Park, seeking approval that the proposed work be undertaken as a collective joint scrutiny exercise in association with the affected authorities;*
- 2. Clarification on the ambitions for the review be sought from the Economic Growth Joint Committee, (in the form of a one page strategy scoping document);*
- 3. A briefing note on the proposal by the Cotswold Conservation Board to be circulated as background information;*
- 4. The Cotswold Conservation Board to be invited to the scrutiny committee meeting on 20 June 2018 to present information on the proposed bid. (Subject to the committee's agreement, this could be supplemented by invitations to other stakeholders, including representatives from other local authorities and authorities already holding AONB status).*
- 5. Since the committee meeting on 14 March 2018, a one page strategy, (produced by the Chairman of the Joint Committee), was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 23 March 2018, forming part of the Economic Growth's Scrutiny Committee report to**

**OSMC. The one page strategy was to advise OSMC of the proposed work item and seek a steer on the request from the Economic Joint Committee.**

6. *At the request of the Chairman of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee, it has been requested that environment scrutiny committee members be involved in the review, (Cllrs Kevin Cromwell and Stephen Hirst are members of both committees).*

**No decision on the request from Economic Growth Joint Committee has been made. [There are those that wonder why Cotswolds isn't taking the lead on this subject.]**

**It is proposed that the scrutiny committee make an informed decision at the committee meeting on 20 June 2018, following the committee's discussion on the outcomes of the committee meeting on 14 March 2018, and following a presentation from the Cotswold Conservation Board.**

**Subject to the committee's decision on 20 June 2018, it will be necessary to submit the agreed one page strategy to OSMC for approval.**

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There is lots more background documentation, should anyone require further details.

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