

Meeting: Council

Date: 23 February 2017

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Heart of the South West Devolution – Update and Appointment of Joint Committee

Is the decision a key decision? Yes

When does the decision need to be implemented? June 2017

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1. Proposal and Introduction

1.1 This report provides an update following the July 2016 ‘in principle’ Council approval to progress negotiations for a devolution deal and the establishment of a Combined Authority.

1.2 This report also outlines proposals for the:

- Preparation and approval of a Heart of the South West (HotSW) Productivity Plan to take forward the HotSW Prospectus for Productivity which was prepared in support of the partnership’s aspirations to secure a devolution deal and approved by the councils in February 2016.
- Creation of a formal HotSW Joint Committee of the local authorities, national park authorities and partners to take forward the Productivity Plan.

1.3 The proposals outlined above are covered by common recommendations in this report to be considered by all of the councils during February/March 2017.

2. Reason for Proposal

2.1 The urgent and essential need to improve productivity across the HotSW area is the driver for the recommendations in this report.

2.2 The Productivity Plan will replace the Local Enterprise Partnership’s Strategic Economic Plan. It will be the key strategic document for the partners to engage

with Government on a range of investment opportunities and powers emerging from the Industrial Strategy and the National Infrastructure Fund.

- 2.3 The recommendations also reflect the position reached with the Government on the Combined Authority / devolution deal matters. With no agreement in sight on either issue the Leaders wish to put in place an alternative formal collaboration arrangement at HotSW level to maintain and take forward the momentum achieved by the partnership.
- 2.4 The HotSW Joint Committee will provide a formal strategic partnership to complement and maximise the ability of local sub-regional arrangements to deliver their aspirations. It will allow the partners to collaborate to agree and deliver the Productivity Plan as well as engage effectively with the Government, other deal areas and other LEPs on a range of policy agendas. It will allow the partnership to test and improve its ability to work together as a potential precursor to the establishment of a Combined Authority at some point in the future. It will also provide a mechanism to work alongside and influence the LEP on strategic investment decisions affecting the HotSW area and to secure improvements to LEP governance and accountability.
- 2.5 Without a Joint Committee in place at this time at a strategic level, the HotSW area is likely to find itself disadvantaged in terms of taking advantage of Government policy initiatives and new funding opportunities compared to those areas that have and are establishing formal strategic partnerships. Although a Joint Committee cannot undertake the full range of functions of a Combined Authority, it would provide a mechanism towards the establishment of a Combined Authority if deemed appropriate, including the potential to operate as a shadow Combined Authority at some point in the future.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the update about the HotSW Combined Authority / devolution deal proposals (including that a Joint Committee, if established, will have responsibility for developing future 'deal' and combined authority proposals for recommendation to the constituent authorities) be noted.
- 3.2 That the proposals for the HotSW Productivity Plan preparation and consultation (including noting that a Joint Committee, if established, will have responsibility for approving and overseeing the implementation of the Productivity Plan) be approved.
- 3.3 That it be agreed 'In principle' that a HotSW Joint Committee be established with a Commencement Date of Friday 1 September 2017 in accordance with the summary proposals set out in this report.
- 3.4 That the 'in principle' decision at (3.3) above be subject to further recommendation and report to the constituent authorities after the County Council elections in May 2017 and confirmatory decisions to: approve the establishment of the Joint Committee; a constitutional 'Arrangements' document; an 'Inter-Authority Agreement' setting out the support arrangements; appoint representatives to the Joint Committee; and appoint an Administering Authority.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Supporting Information and Impact Assessment