

17<sup>th</sup> October 2012**REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP  
STRATEGY FOR GROWTH WHITE PAPER****EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None

**PURPOSE**

To outline to Members the contents of the GBSLEP Strategy for Growth White Paper and the consultation arrangements and to seek delegated authority to respond on behalf of the Authority.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. That Cabinet endorse the White Paper and give delegated authority to the Director Communities Planning and Partnerships in conjunction with the Head of Planning and Regeneration to formulate and agree a response with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development before submitting to the GBSLEP;**
- 2. Endorse the proposed local engagement arrangements to seek further responses to the GBSLEP;**
- 3. Endorse current GBSLEP related projects taking place in Tamworth.**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) is a business led partnership of business and local authorities which represents the functioning economic geography of this area.

The GBSLEP is preparing to consult on an Economic Strategy. The Strategy is based on the three pillars of Business, People and Place and identifies 5 key issues to be addressed: business support; key sector leadership; skills; connectivity; and, assets and environment.

The Strategy for Growth White Paper reflects and supports the local approach to Economic Development in Tamworth and it is recommended that a positive response to the consultation is made. This report details some locally specific issues that we would like the Strategy and Action Plans to address.

The LEP is proposing to consult widely on the Strategy using a questionnaire (Appendix B). This is to be publicised by the LEP itself in some high profile events with businesses and partners and through a 'soft' media launch with a press release and interview, along with the possibility of round table 'Challenge' sessions for specific sectors, commentators and partner organisations. It is proposed that the Borough Council supports the proposed arrangements and also asks the GBSLEP to ensure consultation takes place with neighbouring LEPs. The Borough Council can further support this consultation through promotion using local channels such as the Business and Economic Partnership (BEP), Think Local 4 Business portal, the Tamworth Strategic Partnership, Destination Tamworth etc as well as our own Communications Team.

A number of projects and activities which are directly or indirectly supporting growth and

economic development across Tamworth are already taking place due to our involvement in the GBSLEP.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no identified resource implications as it is proposed to utilise existing networks and events to promote the consultation.

## LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

There are no identified legal / risk implications

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no identified sustainability implications

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership

The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) was formed in October 2010. It is a partnership of businesses and local authorities across the natural economic geography of the area. It encompasses the Local Authority areas of Birmingham, Solihull, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Tamworth, Cannock Chase, Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest. The Partnership is one of the largest in the country, encompassing a population of over two million people, and 840,000 jobs.

The Government expect LEPs to bring together public and private partners, under business leadership and at a local level, to develop strategies and take action on a range of issues such as promoting a more entrepreneurial culture; encouraging and supporting business start ups; helping existing businesses to survive and grow; encouraging networks and mentoring; and, developing the infrastructure for successful business communities.

The GBSLEP has agreed that a Economic Strategy was needed to set out how the GBSLEP would tackle these and more local issues.

### 2. Strategy for Growth White Paper

The GBSLEP has been working for a number of months on producing a draft economic strategy. The GBSLEP has produced a White Paper (see Appendix A) that sets out the priorities that the GBSLEP would like to focus on to secure increased enterprise and investment that will drive the productivity improvements the GBSLEP seeks, and greater opportunities for all.

The draft White Paper represents an amalgamation of the ideas suggested to date, created within the framework of Business, People and Place. It aims to build on work that has already been completed around the LEP local economy (including AWM's Economic Strategy). Under these three pillars of Business, People and Place are 5 key issues that must be addressed to unlock growth:

- A new ecosystem for **business support**, enabling businesses to start and grow with locally relevant support and finance (Business);
- Clear **leadership in key sectors** where the LEP has existing strengths and opportunities (Business);
- An overhaul of the **skills** profile across the GBS LEP, creating a UK-leading talent pool (People);
- Substantially improved **connectivity**, within the LEP, the UK and to international markets (Place);
- Better use of our physical **assets and environment**, supporting the development of

vital housing and employment land (Place).

Underpinning each of these issues is a separate action plan which itself is prioritised into High, Medium or Low.

With any strategy operating at such a large geographic scale there are few specifics which focus on Tamworth itself. However, it is felt that White Paper complements the ambitions of Tamworth and our own Economic Strategy well and that our response to the consultation can highlight the issues experienced in Tamworth which we feel the Strategy can look to address. These include:

- **Business Support:**
  - Development of a better coordinated and more easily accessible business support system through the Business and Economic Partnership (BEP) and Think Local 4 Business.
  - Provision of more localised business support services tailored to the needs of local businesses, either through the BEP, partner organisations/partnerships or businesses themselves.
  - Better intelligence on the make up and plans of local businesses.
  - Further business engagement through the BEP to ensure local business needs and issues are being addressed, including larger, more strategic businesses
  - Provision of more flexible office and workshop space for start up and early stage growth companies, along with more conference and meeting facilities.
  - Encouraging the development of local supply chains and business opportunities, in particular through Think Local 4 Business and linking up with similar initiatives across the LEP.
  
- **Key Sectors:**
  - Better intelligence on the potential growth sectors in Tamworth and their supply chains, and the needs of these sectors and supply chains.
  - Assessment of the potential for the growth of medical technologies on the back of the National Defence Medical Services development at Whittington.
  - Further development of the visitor economy sector with a particular accent on leisure tourism, maximising the potential of Tamworth's leisure offer, as well as business tourism. This will include the continued regeneration and promotion of Tamworth town centre and the promotion of sustainable business uses within the centre.
  - Ensuring our manufacturing sector continues to link up to supply chain opportunities of major investments in the LEP area (e.g. JLR) and business support initiatives (e.g. ERDF, Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative)
  - Bringing forward quality commercial development opportunities and existing site regeneration to provide key sectors with appropriate and accessible business premises (e.g. Bitterscote, Amington)
  - Clear articulation of the local business offer to potential investors and indigenous businesses, tailored to individual sectors where necessary and which clearly links to and compliments the wider activity of the LEP.
  
- **Skills:**
  - Continued raising of residents' aspirations, knowledge of local job opportunities and how to access these.
  - Better dialogue between skills and training providers and the local business community
  - Better intelligence on the skills needs of businesses, and particularly where there are skills gaps.
  - Clear and easily accessible system for businesses to receive information on skills development and training opportunities.

- Connectivity:
  - Ensuring the M42 Gateway concept considers the impact on Tamworth and seeks to maximise the benefits to Tamworth
  - Ensuring funding is drawn down to deliver infrastructure improvements in Tamworth such as the A5 junctions, Anker Valley Link Road, Ventura Park, facilities at the two train stations and train services to and from the two stations.
  - Ensuring connectivity to the two HS2 stations is achieved
  - Ensuring the improvement of services on the existing West Coast Mainline
- Assets and environment:
  - Support for bringing forward key housing and employment sites and overcoming barriers
  - The roll out of funding programmes to help stimulate housing and mixed-use development on public land
  - Ensure the LEP recognises Tamworth's key assets and sectors
  - Ensure support for developing Tamworth's Cultural and Leisure offer

### 3. Consultation Programme

The 'Strategy for Growth White Paper' is currently undergoing final refinements by the LEP Secretariat in consultation with the LEP Board and Steering Group partners, before it is published in a format for more general consultation with local partners, and businesses in particular, a process which will last for 6 weeks.

This process will begin in the first half of October and will consist in the main of a questionnaire to be completed (appendix B – questionnaire). This questionnaire will be made available in an easy to complete, electronic format accessible via the LEP website, with local partners directing businesses and partners in their networks to this central point.

In addition, consideration is also being given to the staging of high profile, stand alone consultation events for businesses and partners in locations spread around the LEP geography. We have supported this idea and suggested Drayton Manor as a suitable venue for a Southern Staffordshire wide event, this having already been successfully used for LEP consultation events in the recent past.

The LEP is also planning 'soft' media launch for the consultation process, with a press release and interview, along with the possibility of round table 'Challenge' sessions for specific sectors, commentators and partner organisations.

In addition to the above, LEP partners have been asked to give thought as to how the consultation process can be supported through local channels. Tamworth has suggested the following:

- Business and Economic Partnership (Tamworth and Lichfield) – our public-private sector partnership to support the local economy.
  - Business Networks Forum meetings.
  - Business E-Brief newsletter – sent to over 2,800 businesses across Tamworth and Lichfield by email.
  - BEP web portal ([www.bep4business.co.uk](http://www.bep4business.co.uk)) currently under construction and due for launch mid October
  - Social media postings (Twitter and Facebook) linking to questionnaire
- Think Local 4 Business ([www.thinklocal4business.co.uk](http://www.thinklocal4business.co.uk)) – procurement and business networking portal covering all of Staffordshire.
  - News item and link onto the site to the questionnaire.

- Promotion at Think Local 4 Business Show, 29<sup>th</sup> November – large business to business exhibition attracting 56 exhibitors and over 600 visitors,
- Social media postings (Twitter and Facebook) linking to questionnaire
- Tamworth Strategic Partnership.
  - Mention in run up to and at November Board meeting.
  - Email circular to all partners to point to questionnaire.
- Destination Tamworth Partnership.
  - Email circular to all partners & businesses on database to point to questionnaire.
- Retailers forum.
  - Email circular to all businesses on database to point to questionnaire.
- Town centre landlords and agents forum.
  - Email circular to all partners to point to questionnaire.
- Planning policy database of land owners, landlords and agents.
  - Email circular to all partners & businesses on database to point to questionnaire.
- Tamworth CVS (voluntary sector network).
  - CVS message to its network of voluntary sector organisations and social enterprises.
- Tamworth Borough Council corporate communications.
  - Local press release.
  - Citizens' panel.
  - TBC Twitter account (currently over 1,750 followers).

The Borough Council will also encourage Staffordshire County Council and the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP to engage with the consultation. The Borough Council will also ask the GBSLEP to ensure that the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP and other neighbouring LEPs are consulted on the Strategy.

Following the 6 week consultation process consultation, it is anticipated that a further 3 weeks will be required to summarise the findings and make further edits to the Strategy, after which it will be presented to the Board for final endorsement (anticipated around mid December if the consultation process starts in mid October).

#### 4. Current projects supporting growth and economic development in Tamworth

Through the LEP, there are a number of projects and activities which are directly or indirectly supporting growth and economic development across Tamworth, and which have been either supported or influenced by our local economic development partnerships and activities, and in particular the BEP. These are as follows:

- We have been part of a joint LEP bid for ERDF funding to support business development projects in SMEs across the LEP, with grants of £10K-£15K available for businesses creating or safeguarding jobs. There is also a high growth coaching and mentoring programme built into this project. Total value is £8.3m over the next 3 years, starting in September 2012.

- Lichfield, Tamworth, East Staffs and Cannock have also worked alongside colleagues at Solihull to bring forward an ERDF programme of enterprise (start up) support for local people. Anticipated value is £1.5m and tenders for the service procurement in the Southern Staffordshire districts are about to be released.
- Think Local 4 Business, our procurement and business opportunities portal, has received £10K of LEP 'Start Up' funding to improve its functionality. This project has recently been transferred to be run by a private sector company, with Tamworth Borough Council as a Founder Shareholder and Director.
- The LEP has secured and supported a variety of projects through Regional Growth Funds in all of the rounds (1 - 3). Whilst there have been no projects directly delivered in Tamworth as yet, the economic benefits of some of the high profile successful bids, such as the A45 to allow Birmingham Airport runway extension and JLR's apprenticeships programme will be felt across the LEP area. In addition, the LEP led the development of the £25m Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative, which has been rolled out nationally to leverage in a further £100m of RGF, and which Tamworth manufacturers can apply for. Finally, in the latest bidding round (round 3) there are 2 bids that will apply across the LEP: Green Bridge (£75m to support the green economy SME supply chain) and Empty Buildings scheme (£26m to assist businesses in bringing empty property back to good use). There are also a variety of equity and loan finance schemes (e.g. £230m West Midlands Fast Growth Partnership).
- The City Deal process will leverage in further central government funding to support the LEP, including £8m for a Translational Medicine Research facility, which although Birmingham based, could link up with the Defence Medical Services Centre at Whittington Barracks, further strengthening our medical technologies sector and reputation. In addition there will be £500K to support skills capacity building initiatives, including the fledgling local Employment and Skills Board for Southern Staffordshire.
- On Business Support, we have worked within the LEP to develop the 'Business Hub' concept based out of Baskerville House, leading to the development of the new LEP wide business support and access to finance portals, which are about to be rolled out.
- On inward investment and 'place marketing' generally for business, we are seeing the start of conversations with Marketing Birmingham on how the Southern Staffordshire offer could play into the wider city region offer to inward investors and growing businesses. This is potentially a huge opportunity to tap into the extensive resources of Marketing Birmingham, as well as the undoubted profile of Birmingham as a global city.
- On reducing red tape and regulation, the LEP is a pilot for the Local Better Regulation Office initiative and regulatory colleagues across the LEP local authorities and regulatory bodies are working together to develop initiatives to make the area more business friendly.
- Finally, we will continue to ensure that those local initiatives that we have designed to engage with local businesses and ensure that business support and engagement is more accessible and better coordinated across Tamworth continue to link to and compliment LEP offers and initiatives. In this context, the BEP and Think Local 4 Business are the main local projects that are delivering on this agenda.

## REPORT AUTHOR

Matthew Bowers, Head of Planning and Regeneration (x276)  
James Roberts, Economic Development Manager (x382)

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

### APPENDICES

- Appendix A** - Strategy for Growth White Paper
- Appendix B** - Consultation Questionnaire