

**5a****Leicestershire  
County Council****SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 12 JULY 2021****LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH  
STRATEGY****MINUTE EXTRACT**

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive to be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting in July 2021 regarding the consultation draft of the Economic Growth Strategy prepared by Cambridge Econometrics on behalf of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). A copy of the report and the draft Strategy marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr P. Bedford CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Covid Recovery and Ways of Working and the County Council's representative on the LLEP Board, to the meeting.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- (a) The Strategy would be an important document given the significant impact of the pandemic on businesses in the area. There was currently no single strategy for the subregion which set out clearly the sectors priorities or vision for the local economy and members agreed that the Strategy would help fill that void;
- (b) The observations detailed in paragraph 32 of the report were strongly supported though some felt the Council's response should be more robust;
- (c) A Member questioned the lack of reference to the planned Freeport and how this might affect jobs and skills requirements in the area. It was noted that the establishment of a Freeport was predominantly being led by the relevant local authorities and private landowners, not the LEPs, and the Chief Executive confirmed that reference to this could be added to the Council's response to the draft Strategy;
- (d) A Member raised concern that the impacts of Brexit and how these might be managed to support local businesses had not been addressed in the draft Strategy. It was suggested that these could fundamentally affect trade nationally and locally for some time to come and so should be referenced;
- (e) There was currently a mismatch between the number of jobs available in Leicestershire and the number of people available locally who were appropriately skilled to fill those positions. A member raised concern that this would likely result in an increase in demand for housing in areas already

under pressure. It was agreed that this emphasised the importance of skills and training and the need to ensure that when vacancies arose, measures were in place to support local people not in work to access those positions. It was suggested that the Strategy should demonstrate a closer alignment to the Leicester/Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan to 2050;

- (f) A member suggested that whilst the Strategy referred to inclusivity this did not seem to capture businesses in rural areas which had been significantly affected by Covid. A request was made for this to be strengthened and, in particular, for reference to be added to the 'Sustainable' leg of the Strategy Framework set out in paragraph 28 of the report which currently only referenced 'sustainable places, city and town centres';
- (g) A particular concern was raised about the negative affect the City Council's Transport Strategy and workplace parking levy proposals (currently the subject of public consultation) might have on those commuting to work in the City from rural areas of the County and how this could disproportionately affected young people in lower paid jobs. Members emphasised the need for the Economic Growth Strategy to take an overarching view of the wider implications of such local policies to ensure these dovetailed to support those seeking work across County, City and other regional boundaries. This was considered necessary to facilitate the growth planned across the region;
- (h) Concern was raised that the Strategy was too repetitive and backward looking and not sufficiently clear about future plans and the allocation of resources. As the Strategy would run to 2030 it was suggested that this need to be much more forward looking;
- (i) A member suggested that the Strategy was too high level with no clear tangible outcomes identified. It was emphasised, however, that the Strategy covered a wide geographical area which had a vast and diverse local economy with each area having its own strengths and priorities. It was also highlighted that much depended on other national and local plans which were yet to be determined (e.g. HS2, Devolution White Paper and Planning legislation). This therefore limited the degree of clarity that could be included and inevitably led to some generalisations;
- (j) Members acknowledged that the Council's observations set out in paragraph 32, provided a fair summary of many of the issues now raised and if addressed, would strengthen the Strategy and ensure this was more reflective. Members agreed that the development of an action plan, as proposed by the County Council in its response, would be vital in providing the necessary detail and clarity sought;
- (k) A member stressed the importance of partnership working and the need to ensure there was shared ownership of the Strategy across the region by all private and public sector representatives on the LLEP Board to improve the economic viability for the area.

RESOLVED:

That the comments now made be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July for consideration.

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