



**Leadership Gloucestershire – 4 March 2021**

**Remote meeting via GCC WebEx**

**1 Welcome, introduction and apologies**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Apologies</i>
Cllr Mark Hawthorne (Chair) Pete Bungard	Gloucestershire County Council	
Kathy O’Leary	Stroud District Council	Cllr Doina Cornell
Cllr Richard Cook Jon McGinty	Gloucester City Council	
Cllr Chris McFarland Pete Williams	Forest of Dean District Council	Cllr Tim Gwilliam
Cllr Rowena Hay Tim Atkins	Cheltenham Borough Council	Gareth Edmundsen
Cllr Joe Harris Rob Weaver	Cotswold District Council	
Cllr Rob Bird Mike Dawson	Tewkesbury Borough Council	
Richard Bradley	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)	PCC Martin Surl
	Gloucestershire Constabulary	CC Rod Hansen
Dr Andy Seymour	NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	Mary Hutton
David Owen Diane Savory	GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	
Karen Leigh	Area Lead for Gloucestershire, Cities and Local Growth Unit	
Sarah Scott Colin Chick Simon Harper	Gloucestershire County Council	

## **1 Action notes**

The notes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 were agreed.

## **2 COVID-19**

Sarah Scott noted that there had been a significant reduction in Covid rates with the current rate 35.3 per 100,000 people. With the lower rates, local outbreaks in a particular district resulted in a significant percentage change which failed to reflect the overall position. She provided detailed information on testing in Gloucestershire including changes to asymptomatic testing. The plan was to set up asymptomatic testing facilities in each district. She recognised that good communication was required to help local people understand the new arrangements. She said that the county was ready should there be a need to introduce surge testing to identify people with Covid variants. This was already happening in parts of South Gloucestershire and the county was learning from the experience there and elsewhere.

Dr Andy Seymour provided updates on the vaccination programme, virtual Covid wards and the introduction of a Long Covid Clinic. Vaccinations through the centres across Gloucestershire had progressed well with 230,000 vaccinations provided so far. Subject to the supply of vaccine, the county was on target to vaccinating 520,000 people in the over 50 and vulnerable categories by mid-April. It was recognised that there was a need for strong communication messages to counter some of the 'fake news' regarding the vaccine that was circulating on social media channels. This was particularly important in ensuring that younger people came forward for the vaccine.

Virtual wards had been introduced by the hospital to allow the oxygen levels of higher risk people to be monitored twice a day. Over 1,000 people had been part of the programme and it had been particularly successful in providing early treatment for people who were suffering with low levels of oxygen. This often prevented people from being admitted later and having to be treated in intensive care.

A multi-disciplinary Long Covid Clinic had been introduced for GPs to refer patients to as necessary.

## **3 Western Gateway**

Pete Bungard provided an update on the latest position. Stage 1 of an independent economic review had been completed and would be presented to the Western Gateway Partnership Board later in March. A public webinar would follow shortly afterwards. The review told the story of the area and identified opportunities for economic growth. Stage 2 of the review would follow to provide a complete picture and provide the basis for future funding

bids. The Government had that week awarded the Western Gateway £800,000 to support its initial work.

Cllr Rowena Hay as Leader of Cheltenham BC had been appointed as the District Council representative on the Western Gateway Board from Gloucestershire. The Board was currently in the process of identifying suitable business representatives to sit on the Board. Diane Savory was involved in this work with Katherine Bennett, Chair of the Board.

Project work currently focused around a Freeport for Newport, tidal energy in the Bristol Channel and a groundbreaking bid for a fusion power plant at Berkeley and Oldbury. Major infrastructure schemes such as the A417 Missing Link at Birdlip would come under the remit of the Partnership.

District leaders in Gloucestershire had been invited to a meeting with Katherine Bennett. This was likely to be held on either 9 or 11 March 2021.

#### **4 Gloucestershire City Region Board**

Mike Dawson reported that at the Economic Growth Joint Committee held on 20 January 2021 had approved a bid for £50,000 from the Strategic Economic Development Fund to produce a prospectus for the City Region Board.

The Chief Executives' Group would be considering a discussion paper relating to the governance arrangements around economic growth. It was recognised that there was a potential for overlap between different bodies and there might be opportunities to rationalise the current arrangements. Further reports would be made to Leadership Gloucestershire and other bodies with an interest in economic development.

*Action – Mike Dawson*

#### **5 Project Fusion**

Colin Chick provided details of the project based at the former nuclear plant sites at Berkeley and Oldbury to build the world's first fusion power plant. The bid was supported by the Western Gateway and was being led by Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council and South Gloucestershire Council with significant input from Horizon and Magnox. The first part of the project was to create a technical centre and science park to take fusion technology forward. The plan was to have a reactor in place to generate energy by 2040. Fusion was a clean, green and safe technology without any of the concerns associated with nuclear fission. Fusion provided the heat to drive turbines to generate electricity with hydrogen and helium produced as a by-product of the process. Both gases could be captured and used in other renewable energy processes.

The Berkeley and Oldbury sites were ideally located on the banks of the Severn Estuary with a plentiful supply of water. The site was at a crossroads which supported the Government's 'levelling up' programme. Steel for construction would be supplied from South Wales, industry from the Midlands Connect powerhouse was well placed to provide a range of materials, Cornwall had a plentiful supply of sustainable lithium and the key knowledge base for fusion was at the Culham Laboratory in Oxfordshire. In addition, staff at the Berkeley and Oldbury sites provided an ideal skills base and Gloucester and Forest of Dean had been identified by the Government for potential funding through 'levelling up'.

The deadline for initial bids was 31 March 2021. Bids were expected from other parts of the country but none were likely to be able to show the same level of connectivity to surrounding areas. At some point in the future a political decision would need to be made on successful bids and Katherine Bennett, Chair of the Western Gateway Board, was helping with the appointment of lobbying firms.

Pete Williams noted how close the sites were to the Forest of Dean and noted that raw materials for construction were likely to be sourced from the district. He hoped that appropriate links could be put in place across the river to save a journey of at least an hour by road.

Colin Chick undertook to circulate a recent PowerPoint presentation to County Council members which provided more detailed information on the technology and plans for the project.

*Action – Colin Chick*

## **6 One Gloucestershire – Integrated Care System**

Dr Andy Seymour stated that the consultation and engagement process had been completed and the decision making business case would shortly be presented to the Boards of the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Board and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). A stakeholder briefing would be circulated in the next week.

Following the consultation and engagement on a new community hospital in the Forest of Dean, the CCG Board had approved the business case for locating the hospital in Cinderford. This would open in 2023 and be run by the Gloucestershire Health and Care Partnership. He said that the CCG was engaging with communities in the south of the Forest relating to concerns regarding access to health services.

He said the ICS would become a statutory body with commissioning functions. There was a commitment that all CCG staff below Board level would have their jobs protected. Careful consideration would need to be given to the

relationship with local authorities, particularly with bodies such as the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **7 2021 meetings**

The date for the next meeting in June 2021 to be rearranged as there was a clash with a meeting of the District Council Network.

*Action – Simon Harper*

Remaining dates for 2021:

Thursday, 30 September at 10am

Thursday, 2 December at 10am

## **8 Additional items**

### **8.1 Relocation of Government departments**

In light of recent announcements that particular Government departments would be moving away from London, Karen Leigh noted the interest of Gloucestershire as a potential location for future moves.

*Action – Karen Leigh*