

Redditch Borough Council

22nd July 2019

Item 11: Urgent Business – General (If Any)

Motion on Notice

1. Local Enterprise Partnership Membership

Proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer, seconded by Councillor Bill Hartnett.

“Members will be aware that currently Redditch Borough Council sits in 2 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and the Worcestershire LEP (WLEP).

In 2018 the Government published the “Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships” review which sought to bring forward reforms to the leadership, governance and accountability of the 38 LEPs – this included the review of overlapping geographies and sought to remove them – meaning that Councils could only be a member of one LEP.

In the “Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships” review it stated that:

“Government will:

- Ask Local Enterprise Partnership Chairs and other local stakeholders to come forward with considered proposals by the end of September on geographies which best reflect real functional economic areas, remove overlaps and, where appropriate, propose wider changes such as mergers.”

The submissions made to Government in September 2018 highlighted that there was no agreement locally as to how this should best be resolved. The position of the GBSLEP and indeed this council has always been that overlaps should be allowed to remain and that Councils should be allowed to stay in 2 LEPs. This is because overlaps have been the solution to the local issue of economic geographies and administrative boundaries not aligning, rather than a problem in themselves. Unfortunately this position was not shared by the WLEP.

It has become increasingly clear that central government will insist upon the issue of overlapping geographies being resolved and if it isn't resolved locally they will impose a solution possibly as soon as in the next few weeks.

The clear preference of this Council is still to remain in 2 LEPs, however we believe that if overlaps have to be resolved then this is a decision that needs to be taken locally by local elected officials rather than imposed on us.

Redditch is clearly part of the functioning economic geography for both GBSLEP and WLEP however without doubt the main economic geography is to the north and GBSLEP.

Therefore Council resolves that if overlaps have to be removed that Redditch Borough Council:

1. declares that GBSLEP is its preferred LEP as this reflects the functioning economic geography (in line with central government guidance on the basis for LEPs)
2. gives notice to WLEP of its intention to leave the partnership
3. writes to the Secretary of State to inform Central Government of the decision”