

# Council

Monday, 22 July 2019

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## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Michael Chalk, Salman Akbar, Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Joanne Beecham, Juliet Brunner, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Ann Isherwood, Wanda King, Anthony Lovell, Gemma Monaco, Mike Rouse, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, David Thain, Craig Warhurst and Jennifer Wheeler

### Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Jayne Pickering

### Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

## 37. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

### Local Enterprise Partnership Membership

A motion in respect of the Council's membership of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) was proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer. This Motion was seconded by Councillor Bill Hartnett.

In proposing the Motion Councillor Dormer explained that the matter needed to be considered as urgent business as a decision needed to be taken before the following meeting of Council, which was scheduled to take place in September 2019. Unfortunately, if a decision had not been taken by the Council in respect of LEP membership, it was possible that a decision would have been imposed on the authority. Members were informed that the Council's position continued to be a preference to remain in both the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and the Worcestershire LEP (WLEP). However, should the Council be required to opt for membership of one LEP then the decision needed to be based on an understanding of the local economy and local businesses, which were more likely to work with businesses in Birmingham and the West Midlands rather than the rest of Worcestershire and therefore continuing membership of the

.....  
Chair

GBSLEP rather than the WLEP would be the preferred option for Redditch.

In seconding the Motion Councillor Hartnett explained that the review of LEP membership had been taking place over the previous two year period. During this time it had been clear that Redditch had received good funding settlements from the GBSLEP, the various Chairs of the GBSLEP Board had visited the Borough and meetings of the Board had taken place in Redditch. As the GBSLEP represented the larger urban economies within the West Midlands region Councillor Hartnett suggested that it had greater economic influence than the WLEP. Therefore, should the Council be required to opt to remain a member of one LEP only, it would be in the economic interests of Redditch to remain in the GBSLEP.

Following the presentation of the Motion Members discussed the subject of the Council's LEP membership moving forward. There was general consensus that should the Council be required to choose between remaining a member of one LEP or another the local authority should opt to stay in the GBSLEP.

## **RESOLVED that**

**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"

The Meeting commenced at 7.05 pm  
and closed at 7.53 pm