

SOLENT GROWTH FORUM

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Solent Growth Forum held on Wednesday, 28 March 2018 at 7.25pm at the Council Chamber, Fareham.

Present

Councillors Sean Woodward
Simon Letts
Mark Hook
Caroline Horill, Winchester CC

Ex-officio John Henderson, Highways England
Guy Hembury (for G Galbraith) University of Portsmouth
Tim Houghton, Community First

Standing Ex-officio Members/Officers

Stuart Baker and Marc Griffin, Solent LEP
James Fitzgerald (for C Ward) Financial Adviser

Also in attendance

David Williams (Portsmouth CC) and Roger Testall (Test Valley BC)

16. Introductions and Apologies for Absence and appointment of Chair for the meeting

At the start of the meeting David Williams asked for nominations in the absence of Cllr Cheshire for the chairing of the meeting; Councillor Mark Hook was duly nominated by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor Horrill and elected to chair this meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from:

Councillors - Mike Cheshire, David Stewart, Guy Shepherd, Roy Perry and Keith House.

Also from Graham Galbraith, Anne-Marie Mountifield, Di Roberts, Fiona Dalton, Mike O'Neill and Sophie Mallon.

17. Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

18. Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 16 October 2017

The minutes of the previous Solent Growth Forum meeting held on 16 October 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by Councillor Hook.

19. Local Growth Deal (LGD) Programme Update

Marc Griffin, Head of Capital and Infrastructure Solent LEP, explained that in response to previous SGF discussions, invitations were being extended to project leads whose schemes had been (or are being) funded by the LEP. Therefore a presentation was being made by BAE representatives at this meeting on the Solent Test Bed project.

The report, circulated with the agenda, summarised the position as the third year of a very successful programme was finishing. Marc Griffin reported that earlier in the day the contract had been signed with Southampton Solent University for the Warsash School of Maritime Science & Engineering project. Future programmes are expected to include major transport works associated with Junction 10 of the M27 and the Welborne development. It was asked if all landowners had signed the S106 Agreement for the North of Whiteley development? Stuart Baker, Head of Local Growth, Solent LEP, advised that whilst progress on signatures is being made the LEP had not received confirmation that this process was complete.

A presentation was given by Robin Abbott from BAE on the 'Solent Test Bed' autonomy project, which had been funded through the Local Growth Deal. To develop the Solent as an international centre for autonomy the Solent LEP had invested £456,633 to bring forward the Solent Test Facility (formerly BAE Systems Marine and Maritime Autonomy Test Bed) in the Solent. This investment, in partnership with industry, will bring forward world-leading test facilities (including Air and Surface test vehicles, a Secure Maritime Communications Network, Mobile Control Centre and a range of Solent based test sites).

Robin Abbott reported that this funding had been secured in March 2017 and the presentation illustrated the wider use of unmanned vehicles and how these could be applied and the associated benefits, e.g. for casualties to be taken off a battlefield and clearance of mines reducing the danger to human life. Services would be offered in the future, such as for monitoring of oil-spills, aerial filming of major events.

Robin stressed the importance of the LEP grant, which had been passed through BAE to the supporting SMEs. Robin stated that without this the grant from the Solent LEP the project would not have been developed. He then showed a video of the launch day of the Solent Test Facility.

Questions were asked on the speed of development and constraints upon the testing and areas of application for autonomy. Robin responded that whilst it was harder to detect obstacles at sea, laser technology was being developed to see through waves. Areas of application could also be disaster relief. Members were mindful of the impact on jobs and cyber threat security if container shipping became autonomous.

Councillor Hook thanked Robin Abbott for his very interesting presentation.

The LGD programme update report was noted.

20. Strategy Update (revised item)

Stuart Baker, Head of Local Growth at Solent LEP, presented and expanded upon his report that had been circulated with the agenda. He reported that 2017 had been a significant year for the LEP with a number of impressive milestones achieved and the 2018 was expected to be a key year with a key workstreams such as a new Strategic Economic Plan and Local Industrial Strategy to be developed.

Milestones included:

Solent LEP, working in partnership with Maritime UK has commissioned Cebr consultants to produce a report on the economic impact of the Solent maritime sector. This estimates that £5.5bn GVA is generated by the Solent maritime sector, which equates to a fifth of the Solent area economy. In addition, the sector has 120,000 jobs linked to it with circa 36,000 directly employed in the sector. Stuart Baker reported that the full report is expected to be published at a launch in May.

Stuart also updated that the LEP had secured funding from BEIS to develop an energy strategy and action plan. A small workshop had been held to identify strategic priorities and an interim report was expected shortly. It was noted that the Solent area came under the South West regions for BEIS funding.

Stuart's presentation expanded on the Strategic Economic Plan, outlining the ambition and mission "*to create a dynamic, vibrant, inclusive and internationally competitive region*".

A wider consultation exercise would be undertaken to seek views, with a separate workshop planned for Leaders and Chief Executives of LEP member authorities in the summer. This was welcomed by members of the SGF. It was noted by a member that the workshop should be truly interactive, seeking the views of member authorities.

Local Industrial Strategy - 3 pilot areas have been announced, and it is hoped that the Solent LEP will be included in the next wave. It is expected that the Local Industrial Strategies will set out local area specialisms and comparative strengths.

For future discussion at the summer workshop:

- (i) It was suggested that whilst the Solent LEP had been placed in the South West Energy Hub, there is the need to ensure connectivity links to London are not overlooked. Stuart Baker responded that the LEP is part of the Transport for South East Shadow Sub-National Transport Body and that the Solent does share a range of synergies with areas in the South West,
- (ii) The importance of deep water frontage was also noted as important to ensure appropriate marine employment space is made available.

(iii) The effectiveness of the Solent Growth Forum itself was also raised. It was accepted that these meetings are not always well attended, and that their scheduling after PUSH meetings, whilst intended to incentivise attendance, did not appear to be having the desired effect. It was agreed that the effectiveness of the SGF should be reviewed and this should include timing and scheduling.

21. Forward Plan

Another presentation on the Solent Growth Deal could be invited on the Cancer Immunology Centre. It was noted that the Forward Plan would be considered alongside the review of the SGF.

22. Any other business and close

Marc Griffin announced that it was his last meeting as he was leaving the Solent LEP and he thanked the membership for their contributions, and was in turn thanked for his support.

The meeting concluded at 8.25 pm.

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Chair