

Heart of the South West

12 November Heart of the South West Meeting

At this meeting in Exeter, the Heart of the South West Leaders and Chief Executives – the LEP, all 19 authorities as well as Clinical Commissioning Group representatives – looked at the early thoughts from each of the theme leads, talked about the shared ambition for our detailed proposals, and agreed to move forward.

Each of the theme leads gave a short presentation followed by a question and answer session. Broad agreement was reached on each theme. The objectives for each are summarised below:

Health, care and wellbeing

In order to enable people to live longer, healthier lives whilst making health and social care services sustainable, outline proposals aim to:

- Commission services around people and the places where they live
- Join-up health and social care
- Better regulate the system to help it improve
- Embed prevention and support for healthier lifestyles
- Ensure financial sustainability

Connectivity and resilience

To support stronger economic growth, productivity and resilience, this theme proposes:

- A long term focus on strategic infrastructure
- Commitments to existing and new infrastructure
- A focus on broadband and mobile connectivity
- Developing road, rail, air, and sea connectivity
- Action on flood and coastal protection, prevention and resilience
- Support to develop energy grid and supply

Housing and planning

Proposals will enable accelerated delivery on housing and employment sites using tools and powers devolved from government. This will:

- Support economic growth and increased employment
- Reduce risk and increase flexibility to attract developers
- Challenge the lack of affordability
- Address rural issues and enhance local objectives

Employment and skills

This theme focuses on six key areas, designed to increase skills, support people into employment and enable increased productivity and economic growth:

1. Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance
2. Meeting local skills requirements
3. Apprenticeships
4. Adult skills
5. Employment support
6. A focus on graduate support and retention

Business support

To address the productivity gap between the Heart of the South West as a whole, and the national average, and deliver an even opportunity for growth across functional economic areas, this theme is looking to:

- Increase take-up of business support
- Bring about better coordination
- Deliver bespoke support for key sectors in our area

Governance

In order to fully define and understand the opportunities available, it was agreed to produce an options appraisal of potential governance arrangements within the next week and discuss it in depth at the 25th November meeting alongside the single draft that brings all the themes together and adds more detail.

The national picture and ministerial challenge

Andrew Campbell from the LGA also gave a presentation updating us on activity elsewhere in England, the current state of government thinking, and what we can expect in future negotiations. His key messages were:

- Three more deals have been recently announced, all in the north. Others are close to completion. Ten more areas are likely to have Ministerial “Challenge Sessions” with government before the end of the year.
- Key areas of interest for government at the moment are money, governance and geography. Government will also be interested in how areas are engaging with stakeholders.
- Negotiations with ministers tend to be friendly and informal rather than aggressive, and discussions are built around economic growth and public sector reform.
- Each conversation is different however issues to be discussed are likely to include:
 - What are the problems we are seeking to fix and how will devolution help do it?
 - What other outcomes can be expected?
 - Where will savings be made?
 - How will we deliver a deal?
 - How will accountability work?
 - How are we working with partners?

Next steps

This key meeting will now be followed with more detailed working up of proposals, and production of a first draft for consideration by partners and

discussion at our next devolution meeting on the 25th November. Improving the proposals and developing the draft will happen in parallel.