



Heart of the South West

Devolution and Combined Authority

Latest Government thinking

The new Government's preference for a single point of accountability in the form of an elected mayor is apparent. It has been confirmed that devolution deal proposals including a mayor will receive priority and the best deals in terms of receiving additional Government funding. Government is focusing on getting mayoral deals that are in the pipeline finalised first so they can be announced in the Autumn Statement and the 2017 Budget.

The new Industrial Strategy is seen as key to Government's aspirations around growth and this links closely to local plans to improve productivity across the country.

With this in mind, the partnership proposes to establish a Joint Committee covering the HotSW area to formalise the current informal arrangements involving Leaders and Chief Executives. The Committee will drive the development, approval and delivery of the Productivity Plan.

Productivity Plan

Low productivity in the Heart of the South West has been a perennial challenge, although some areas do have very high productivity. A new Productivity Plan will be produced before the middle of next year to link our ambitions to the Government's emerging Industrial Strategy. Central to this is the need for all partners and stakeholders to share the vision and own the plan.

This is an ambitious project which will develop a collective and long-term vision for the future prosperity of our area. It will:

- Refresh the Strategic Economic Plan including links to key public service reform.
- Describe what we need to do to deliver our objectives, when and where.
- Set out what we can do ourselves, and where we need Government support.
- Create a solid foundation for future discussions with Government.

Work to develop the vision and evidence base has begun, including consultations and engagement. There will be many opportunities to get involved in this project and all stakeholders are encouraged to help develop and deliver the plan.

Eifion Jones (Eifion.Jones@heartofswlep.co.uk) is Programme Manager for development of the Productivity Plan.

Joint Committee

On 14 October Leaders agreed in principle to establish a formal Joint Committee of the 17 constituent councils. At this stage in the development of the partnership a formal Joint Committee has several advantages over continuing with the existing informal arrangements including:

- Placing the Productivity Plan at the heart of the partnership's work and providing a formal governance platform to drive this work on behalf of councils and partners.
- Providing a formal platform for the partners to continue discussions and negotiations with the Government over wider (than just devolution) public sector reform opportunities, and allow partners to respond promptly to opportunities that arise from these discussions.

- Providing a low risk, low cost option to take the development of the partnership forward and give the work of the Leaders and partners real status and credibility.
- Allowing the partnership more time to determine the best options for a Combined Authority without committing them to establishing one.
- Providing opportunities for streamlining current arrangements and giving partners a stronger voice. One area to be explored is the relationship between the local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Draft terms of reference and operational arrangements for the Joint Committee are being written now for further discussion. A formal decision to establish the Joint Committee will be required by all 17 councils.