

Torbay Council representative on the Heart of the South West Joint Committee – Councillor David Thomas

Update for Council meeting held on 19 April 2018

Joint Committee

- The inaugural meeting of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee was held on 23 March 2018 at Plymouth City Council offices.
- The Joint Committee is made up of Council Leaders and other lead representatives of county, unitary and district councils across Devon and Somerset along with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, the Local Enterprise Partnership and local Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- Councillor David Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Joint Committee and Councillor Paul Diviani, Leader of East Devon District Council, appointed Vice-chairman.
- The Committee will be the vehicle through which authorities and organisations across Somerset and Devon work together to improve productivity and continue to work with government under the devolution and other government policy agendas to push for freedoms and flexibilities and possibly additional funding to enable the partnership to achieve its goals.

Productivity Strategy

- The Joint Committee unanimously endorsed the Productivity Strategy which sets an ambition of “Doubling the size of the Heart of the South West’s economy over 20 years” with a vision of “Productivity and prosperity for all”.
- The Board of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership had previously signed up the Productivity Strategy.
- The Strategy identifies three strategic themes to focus the Partnership’s activity to improve productivity. We will strengthen and develop:
 - the leadership and ideas within businesses in our area
 - the housing, connectivity and infrastructure our people and businesses rely on for living, moving goods, accessing jobs and training, and exploiting new opportunities.
 - the ability of people in our area to work, learn and improve their skills in a rapidly changing global economy, and to maximise their economic potential.
- In addition, there are three cross-cutting themes, referred to throughout the Strategy:

- Inclusive growth for our people, communities and places
- Capitalising on our distinctive assets
- Maximising the potential from digital technology

Next Steps

- Work is continuing on a number of workstreams which have flowed from the Partnership's discussions earlier this year with Government officials.
 - We are working towards establishing a South West Peninsula Sub-National Transport Body to facilitate investment in our major transport infrastructure.
 - We will be undertaking a housing audit to gauge where councils are in their Local Plan process; to assess overall housing targets in plans, and current delivery rates; to identify who has received funding and where Homes England are intervening directly in local areas. This will be followed by a Heart of the South West Housing Summit later in the year.
 - A bid has been put forward for a South West Institute of Technology which will bring together a consortium of five of the region's colleges, our two universities and five core business partners. This will focus on enhancing digital and advanced engineering / manufacturing skills.
 - Torbay Council is leading the workstream on improving Coastal Productivity and we will be looking to work with partners both across the region and the country to deal with the specific issues facing England's coastal areas
- In addition, the Partnership is developing the Delivery Plan to support the Productivity Strategy. This will incorporate the work streams from our discussions with Government within a number of programmes under each Strategic Theme. The Plan will remain agile in order to respond to new funding streams and opportunities.
- An Investment Framework will be developed alongside the Delivery Plan for the Strategy and the Finance Officers from each constituent authority will be involved in this work. The Framework will not create a new single funding pot. As priorities for delivery and project opportunities are identified, it is proposed that a cocktail of investment from a range of sources will be blended together.