



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 7 DECEMBER 2020
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 7
Subject	GREEN ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr. Tony Dale - Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills Email: tony.dale@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Paul James - Economic Development Lead Tel: 01285 623558 Email: paul.james@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider adopting the Green Economic Growth Strategy, to guide the District Council's activities to support economic growth in the district in line with Council Plan priorities over the next four years.
Annexes	Annex A - Green Economic Growth Strategy Consultation response summary.
Recommendation/s	<i>a) That the Green Economic Growth Strategy is adopted;</i> <i>b) that Cabinet note the responses to the consultation and the amendments to the Strategy document made as a result;</i> <i>c) that authority is delegated to the Interim Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, to make any further minor amendments to the document prior to its publication, including finalising performance measures;</i> <i>d) that the creation of a Cotswold Economic Advisory Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy is endorsed.</i>
Corporate priorities	Delivering Green Economic Growth.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Consultation has taken place over a four week period, both on the Council's website and directly with key stakeholders.

1. BACKGROUND

The Administration has set a Corporate Plan priority of 'Delivering Green Economic Growth'. At the Cabinet meeting on 5th October 2020, the Draft Green Economic Growth Strategy was approved for consultation.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The Administration's ambition is to nurture a dynamic, vibrant and balanced economy in the Cotswolds, growing high value, highly-skilled, low environmental impact businesses in our district. The adoption of a Green Economic Growth Strategy to guide the Council's work in this area is crucial to this.
- 2.2. A position of Economic Development Lead was created following the budget approved in February 2020. The current postholder took up the position in July 2020 and has worked closely with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills to formulate the strategy.
- 2.3. Consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders during the formulation of the strategy but it was felt that a wider consultation exercise needed to take place to ensure the buy-in of key organisations, businesses and individuals.
- 2.4. The Draft Green Economic Growth Strategy document was put on the Council's website and a survey devised to gain key information on people's views on the strategy. The results are shown in Appendix 1. There was also an opportunity for people to make specific comments and these are also summarised in Appendix 1, together with the Council's proposed responses. In addition to being put on the Council's website a press release was issued, supported by social media activity and a link to the document and survey was sent to all town and parish councils and key groups, businesses and individuals in the District. It was also included in the Council's Business Matters newsletter which is emailed out to a large number of businesses and was also included in the newsletter of the Gloucestershire Nature Partnership.
- 2.5. As a result of internal and external conversations, additional text has been added around Natural Capital and details of the Cotswold Challenge have been added to the section on innovation. The section on the visitor economy has been amended following comments from colleagues at Cotswolds Tourism. Twenty responses to the survey were received which contained some very constructive, helpful and detailed comments. It is felt that this represents a robust consultation.
- 2.6. In addition, an email offering broad support was received from the Chief Executive of Gfirst LEP who said:

"GFirst LEP welcomes the development of the strategy and in particular the strong links to the Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

I believe that the focus set out in the GEGS is clear and compelling in presenting an ambitious set of goals and actions that will further enhance and develop the economy of the Cotswolds and of Gloucestershire. In particular, it is very positive to see the clear relationship between LIS goals around development of the cyber industry, growth of agri-tech, green growth and a more flexible approach to our economy highlighted in the GEGS.

The strategy correctly identifies the challenges: housing affordability and availability; skills development; and availability of employment land – and clearly identifies a path for beginning to address those challenges.

GFirst LEP is strongly supportive of the GEGS and very much look forward to working with the District Council as you move to delivery.”

- 2.7. The County Council’s Interim Economic Development Team Leader has also responded positively, saying:

“I am fully behind the vision of “a dynamic vibrant and balanced economy in the Cotswolds, growing high value, highly skilled, low environmental impact commerce” and agree enabling a vibrant economy should be continue to be a district priority. I am pleased to see close alignment with existing strategies, particularly with the priorities set out in the county council’s corporate strategy “Looking to the Future” and with Gloucestershire’s Local Industrial Strategy. I look forward to the county council playing its part in delivering this strategy.”
- 2.8. A representation was made on behalf of RAF Fairford, raising some specific points and opportunities, which have been incorporated within the Strategy document. A letter has also been received from Ridge & Partners on behalf of the Royal Agricultural University in relation to the Strategy’s reference to the RAU’s Triangle/University Gate site. It is broadly supportive of the wording contained in the document but asks for a degree of flexibility to enable them to respond to market conditions. The wording of the action contained within the Strategy is consistent with the Local Plan policy and the existing consent for the site. It would not be appropriate for the Strategy to depart from this as this is a matter for the planning process.
- 2.9. Much informal feedback has been received including a comment from the Director of Business West Gloucestershire, who said in his newspaper article that the strategy was “excellent”.
- 2.10. The responses were largely supportive of the Strategy and the Council’s approach, with the main areas of concern being about the Government’s proposed increased housing delivery numbers for the Cotswold District, which the Council itself has opposed, and the Council’s direct investment in the local economy. There was some concern that the Council was going to be “picking winners”, but that is not the approach set out in the Council’s Recovery Investment Strategy.
- 2.11. The Green Economic Growth Strategy and its associated Action Plan by its nature will be living documents and the Council needs to be flexible in its approach to respond to changing circumstances and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. However, it is recommended that the Green Economic Growth Strategy is now formally adopted. A number of changes have been made to the strategy document and a tracked version is attached in Appendix 2. However, it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills to make any further minor amendments as a result of Cabinet’s comments and to finalise the performance measures.
- 2.12. The suggested performance measures were broadly supported, with all except the delivery of housing growth being supported by a majority of respondents. While it

is a measure that the Council is statutorily required to report on, it is accepted that it is not necessarily a reflection of the performance of the local economy. In addition, the quantum of Council direct investment and town centre car park occupancy were supported by fewer people than the other suggested measures. While we recognise the limitation of these measures, this is data we would collect anyway and helps to build a broad, balanced picture. A number of other measures were suggested, including the value of the visitor economy and the number of apprenticeships. These are accepted. Other measures suggested can be considered but not all will be readily measurable.

- 2.13. In terms of next steps, it is proposed to establish a Cotswold Economic Advisory Group, to bring together key individuals and organisations from across the District to advise, oversee and challenge the implementation of this strategy. It is envisaged that this group will meet no more than four times a year and its role will be advisory rather than having any decision-making powers. It will, however, provide a link to the main institutions and the wider business community in the District and encourage a sense of ownership of the Strategy.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The actions contained within the Economic Growth Strategy will be financed from existing budgets. Where possible, external funding will be brought in from other partners. Investment opportunities identified to meet the economic growth objectives of the Council will need a Business Case to satisfy the criteria in the Recovery Investment Strategy and if successful will contribute to the Council's revenue budget.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There is a risk that the actions set out in the strategy may not be delivered due to resource constraints or a downturn in the economy. This risk will be mitigated by being focused on key priorities and seeking to lever in funding and other resources from partners.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. The Green Economic Growth Strategy seeks to deliver inclusive growth which benefits all people within the Cotswold District.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Strategy seeks to grow the environmental technologies sector in the district, including renewable energy and the retrofitting of energy saving measures in homes and commercial buildings, and to encourage businesses to embed climate change objectives within their operations. All of this will have a positive impact on emissions and the district's wider climate change objectives.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. The District Council could choose not to have an Economic Development function and simply allow the free market to work. This is likely to mean that opportunities are missed and benefits to the local economy and local people would be lost. The benefits of being seen to be a supportive and business-friendly local authority are significant.
- 8.2. The Council could also choose not to have an Economic Growth Strategy and could simply work on a reactive basis. This would not represent the best use of resources. Neither of these options is recommended.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. None.

(END)