

GESSC Report January 2024

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This will focus on the most salient points.

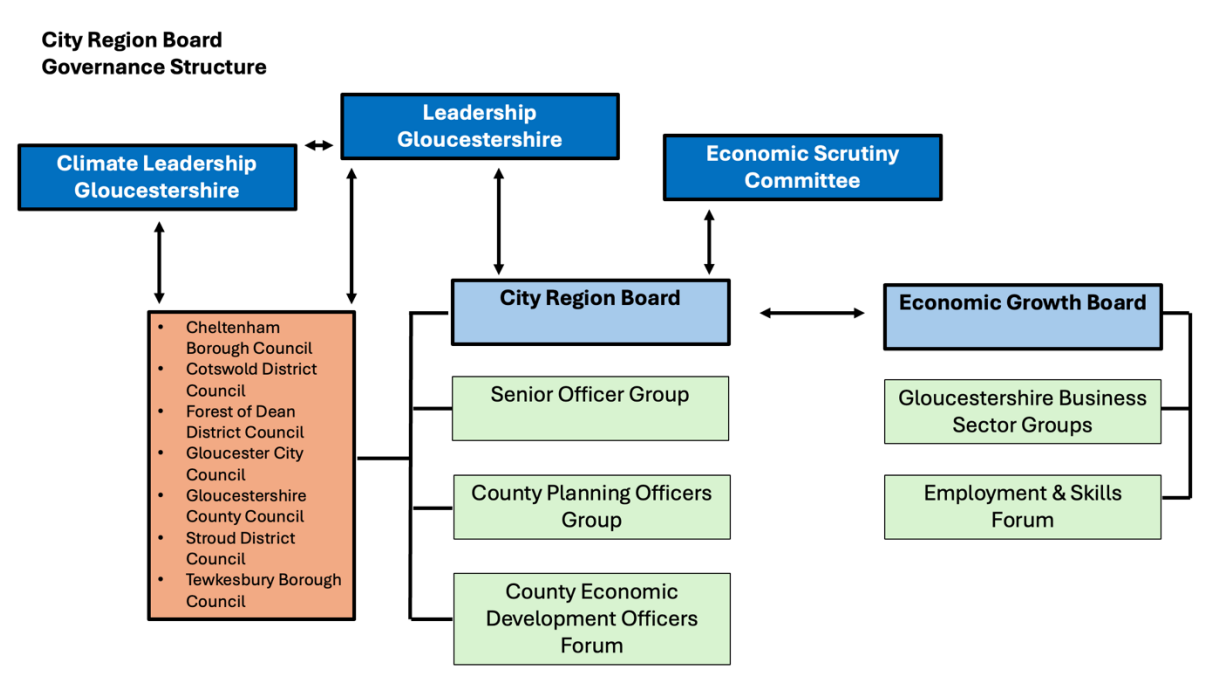
Well the agenda was slim, some significant discussion took place. Representatives from the districts are generally united in making positive recommendations for change.

There had been another gap and cancelled meeting following the general election. The last meeting was in September.

1) Minutes and Actions

Questions arose in response to the minutes and actions (which are now being monitored and reported on.)

- i. Action: To confirm whether the terms of reference need amending to include a reference to the {whole of Gloucestershire] Economic Strategy. We were assured that CRB is a Whitehall name because it considers Gloucestershire to be a City. That produced a hoot and “scream” — it suggests lack of comprehension. There had also been an opaque understanding of how the various bodies related, partially clarified on further examination, but further clarity has been requested. The diagram below has since been sent and will need consideration.
- ii. City Region Board Governance Structure



- iii. There was a question about the benefits of merging the economic and environment committees given how often they crossover but the conclusion

was that having a core focus in each was a good thing. I don't yet know how we (CDC) participate in the Environment Scrutiny committee.

- i. Minutes and discussion confirmed some aspects of the *Local Growth Plan Update and Review of Stakeholder Engagement Process in the Creation of the Gloucestershire County Council Economic Strategy*. The City Region Board agreed in September to endorse the expression of interest in a devolution deal from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG). They had also agreed to note the GCC Economic Strategy and approved its use to inform the priorities of the City Region Board. The county strategy was shared with districts in March 24. Authority was delegated to the chief executive. It has not yet been approved by all of the districts. As the economic strategy has not yet been approved by all of the districts, there are elements that cannot be commented on. This includes the resilience focus and mass transportation.
- iv. The county is now working on a growth strategy. It had a consultation event in November with a total 118 participants from three locations. Groups not represented included education, healthcare, rural, and young! The focus was therefore an established business.
- v. **The following action has been completed:** To include agricultural technique as well as agricultural technology in the annual performance report, including a case study of the Cotswold to highlight agricultural technique in Gloucestershire. There was an agreement to form a group within the county officers to focus on agritechnique, alongside Agri tech, which they do in partnership with the vice chair of Hartpury University.

2) Review of the current THE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND (SEDF) bid process, in particular how social value, climate & ecology, EDI etc

- i. The Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool (GBRP) was originally set up to maximise the business rates income retained within the county by implementing a 50% rates retention system. The resulting Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) is allocated through a bidding process to support economic growth activity across Gloucestershire. It is focused growth.
- ii. The fund has a limited life given it is or shortly will no longer be topped up.
- iii. The scrutiny committee recommended that the current focus on growth that could be quantified simply in economic terms should be widened. A broader set of economic ecosystem benefits should be included. The value of volunteers and their NGO organisations to the county economy was emphasized, including for example Cotswold Friends. It was recommended that ways of assessing this should be developed, with a fund created, and that the importance of these aspects in the totality of economic well-being should be included. [See you also the next topic.]

3) GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC EVIDENCE BASE

- i. The interest and limitations of this database and the reports presented from it was indicated in the previous report following September 2024. The data presented is from 2022 and its granularity is limited. For example it reports that the dominant economic element of the Cotswold District is Insurance and Finance but cannot list companies. (None of the strategic companies in the district is in the sector.)
- ii. On the various economic indicators, the Cotswold District normally does best. However job growth has declined (2022 data).
- iii. The committee challenged this reporting as a mere collection of data points without strategic usefulness. The data was not related to economic policy nor economic policy to the data. How such data could be used was then discussed. As an example, housebuilding should be related to work opportunities. The need of people for employment and the need of employers for employees should be an important aspect of spatial planning.
- iv. It should focus on strategic issues, such as strategic development sites.
- v. The reporting cannot easily deal with such facts as: 43% of those employed living in the Forest of Dean work outside the district. Therefore reporting on the economic base of the district doesn't take notice of why it is a desirable place to live but not to work. That would be important for any economic development plan. It is relevant to the consideration of economic ecosystem benefits.
- vi. The committee recommended that county should inform government on the need for an empirical base for current planning and development, given that this is now a priority of the government.
- vii. It also recommended a strategic review of data and policy priorities in combination.
- viii. Would you like a copy of this report? It is available on the public reports site. The database is also accessible.