
DRAFT SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

17 JUNE 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress being made in the development of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy and seeks agreement to support the planned consultation on the draft Strategy (see Appendix 1).**
- 1.2 The draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy has been developed by the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP). The REP aims to ensure that there is a strong strategic direction for the economic development of the South of Scotland that aligns partner activities with those of the South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). The REP comprises members drawn from the public, private, voluntary, and community sectors from across the South of Scotland. Councillor Rowley currently chairs the REP and Scottish Borders Council's other REP members comprise Councillors Haslam, Mountford and Bell with Councillor Robson as a substitute.
- 1.3 The first main task of the REP has been leading and overseeing the development of a South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy. The draft Strategy shown in Appendix 1 provides a vision for the next 10 years together with a set of six themes and associated priorities. These will provide the ambition and intent for the development of a three year delivery plan that is updated on an annual basis. It is proposed that draft Strategy goes out for public consultation and comes back for the Council's approval at its meeting on 27 September 2021. The delivery plan will be developed in the next two months in tandem with the proposed public consultation on the draft Strategy. It is planned that a member briefing takes place before the end of June 2021 to gather views on the draft Strategy.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council:**
 - a) Endorses the draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy in Appendix 1 and agrees to support the planned consultation on the Strategy.**
 - b) Agrees to receive the final consulted South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy at the Council meeting on 27 September 2021 for review and approval.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 31 October 2019, Scottish Borders Council agreed to support the establishment of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP). Briefly its aims are to ensure that there is a strong strategic direction for the economic development of the South of Scotland that aligns partner activities with those of the South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), and to effectively link into the Convention of the South of Scotland.
- 3.2 The REP comprises members of Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE, together with appointed members from business, communities, social enterprise, registered social landlords, and representatives from colleges, universities and public bodies including the Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, and VisitScotland
- 3.3 The membership of the REP from Scottish Borders Council comprises Councillors Haslam, Rowley, Mountford and Bell with Councillor Robson as a substitute. The chair of the REP rotates annually between Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) and Scottish Borders Council (SBC). Currently, Councillor Rowley chairs the REP. Its main task has been leading and overseeing the development of a South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy.
- 3.4 As indicated in the report to Scottish Council's Executive on 15 September 2020 the first full meeting REP was delayed until September 2020. The reason for the delay in starting was the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement to re-focus staff resources for to meet the immediate needs of businesses.

4 DRAFT SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

- 4.1 The main task of the REP is to set the strategic direction for the regional economy in the South of Scotland by developing the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy. At its initial meeting the REP expressed a strong desire to see this Strategy developed as quickly as possible. The consultants RSM were commissioned by SOSE, DGC and SBC together with Scottish Government to support the production of the Strategy.
- 4.2 This work on the Strategy commenced in early December 2020 and has involved a considerable amount of engagement with community and voluntary organisations, public and private organisations and the wider public. There have also been comprehensive analyses of economic, social and other data and other studies pertaining to the South of Scotland. The REP has met regularly and initially on a monthly basis to oversee this work, supported by a smaller Reference Group chaired by Councillor Rowley.
- 4.3 The draft Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 is a ten-year strategy. It seeks to maximise the economic opportunities in the South Scotland, whilst taking account of its key challenges. It is shaped by the engagement of organisations and people across the region together with the members of the REP. Its vision recognises the unique strengths of the South of Scotland in relation to its natural capital, the quality of its communities and cultural identity and looks to increase the working population and attract visitors to the region. Inclusivity, sustainability, innovation and creativity, and making the most of everyone's potential have been key elements in influencing the draft Strategy's proposed vision, themes and priorities.

- 4.4 From this vision the Strategy identifies six themes. These are:
- Skilled and Ambitious People
 - Innovative and Enterprising
 - Rewarding and Fair Work
 - Cultural and Creative Excellence
 - Green and Sustainable Economy
 - Thriving and Distinct Communities
- 4.5 These themes will provide the ambition and intent for the development of a three year delivery plan comprising actions by REP partner organisations and others based on the priorities identified under each theme. It will also set out a number of performance targets through which progress can be measured from a baseline position. The delivery plan together with a measurement framework is to be worked up in parallel to consultation on Draft Strategy over the next two months. The intention is for the delivery plan to be in place alongside the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy. The plan will be updated on an annual basis. It is planned that a member briefing takes place before the end of June 2021 to gather views on the draft Strategy.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

The Council has supported the development of the Strategy and is contributing to the consultancy work of RSM consultants through the Economic Development budget.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) The South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy will make a vital contribution vital to the economic development aspects of strategic planning in Scottish Borders that is taken forward by Scottish Borders Council and the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership. Without the Strategy there would be a significant strategic policy gap.
- b) There is reputational risk for the Council in not strongly supporting the draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy. Working with our partners, Scottish Borders Council has played a key role in the draft Strategy's development.
- c) Partnership working is critical to the success of economic development. The draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy is aimed at ensuring public, private, community and voluntary bodies work together with a common purpose.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

Inclusive Growth and equality matters are at the heart of the development of the draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy has a major focus on sustainable economic growth linked to the SDG.

5.5 Climate Change

The draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy is predicated on a zero carbon approach and is expected to have positive implications for reducing carbon emissions.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

The draft South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy is about improving the competitiveness and sustainability of its constituent rural economies.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There will be no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals set out in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, Chief Legal Officer (and Monitoring Officer), Service Director HR & Communications, Clerk to the Council, and Communications Team have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

6.2 The Corporate Management Team has been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council 31 October 2019 and Scottish Borders Council Executive Committee 15 September 2020.

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