

**Report to:** **Overview Committee**

**Date of Meeting:** 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None

**Review date for release** None

**Agenda item:** 7

**Subject:** **House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities**

**Purpose of report:** To inform the Committee of the Select Committee's report findings.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. To note the content of the report and where appropriate that the Select Committee's report recommendations and the Government's response are fed into the Council's forward planning process including service plans.**
- 2. To use the Select Committee recommendations and Government responses where possible to inform funding bids and influence among third parties such as HotSW LEP, MHCLG or Lottery Fund.**
- 3. That the Committee may wish to recommend that the Select Committee's report and the Government's response be referred to the Housing Review Board and Devon County Council members as the report makes significant reference to housing, education and skills.**

**Reason for recommendation:** The East Devon District Council response to the House of Lords Select Committee call for evidence was an opportunity to outline the challenges and opportunities facing East Devon's coastal communities. Whilst not experiencing the scale of some of the very acute social and economic issues affecting many of England's coastal communities, the Council has always been very aware that the unique mix of coast and countryside that makes East Devon so very special also presents a unique set of challenges in terms of policy, service delivery and intervention. The Select Committee's report recommendations and the Government's subsequent response highlight both current and emerging key policy and initiatives in relation to coastal communities.

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**Financial implications:** There are no direct financial implications resulting from the recommendations in this report.

**Legal implications:** There is no specific legal comment at this time. Advice on specific issues which may arise in the future can be provided at that time.



**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

This is an update regarding The House of Lords Select Committee's findings on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities and the Government's response.

**Links to background information:**

- [Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities](#)
- [East Devon's submission to the House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities](#)
- [Report: The future of seaside towns \(PDF\)](#)
- [Written evidence volume: The future of seaside towns \(PDF 7.56 MB\)](#)
- [Oral evidence volume: The future of seaside towns \(PDF 3.67 MB\)](#)
- [Government response to the Report of Session 2017-19 of House of Lords' Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Select Committee, on The Future of Seaside Towns](#)

**Link to Council Plan:** Outstanding place, communities and environment – highlighting the issues affecting our seaside towns and communities, particularly the extent of demographic change.

Outstanding level of economic growth, productivity and prosperity – stressing the importance of robust and diverse economies for our coastal towns.

Outstanding council and council services - sharing our knowledge and experience of Regeneration and place shaping in our coastal towns and communities.

## Report in full

The House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities was appointed by the House on 17 May 2018.

The remit of the Committee is “to consider the regeneration of seaside towns and communities”.

The Committee explored a number of key issues in detail and issued a public call for written evidence to a list of questions.

A number of seaside towns are located along the East Devon coastline, namely the principal seaside towns of Exmouth (East Devon's largest town) and Sidmouth, together with the seaside towns of Seaton and Budleigh Salterton. Having an extensive coastline and an understanding of

the challenges faced by coastal communities, East Devon District Council and partner organisations have considerable knowledge and experience to respond to the call for evidence.

Following the input of Members by the Overview Committee and the endorsement by Cabinet on 5 October 2018. East Devon District Council submitted evidence to both The House of Lords Select Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> October and to the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group workshop on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

### **House of Lords Select Committee**

The Select Committee's report was published on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

The main findings and conclusions from the report include:

- The challenges of peripherality in coastal areas can be overcome by improving digital connectivity. The Government should promote initiatives to support digital connectivity in coastal communities specifically. It should engage with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and businesses in remote coastal communities to understand how better digital connectivity, such as high-speed broadband, can be delivered.
- Limited access to education, particularly to FE and HE institutions, is severely curtailing opportunities and denting aspirations for young people in some coastal areas. The Government needs to facilitate partnership working between the FE and HE sectors, and local business and industry, in coastal and other isolated areas.
- Poor-quality housing is a significant problem for many seaside towns. The Committee recommends a package of measures for housing to help tackle perverse financial incentives to offer poor accommodation, ease the pressures on inspection and enforcement regimes, and to support more regeneration of existing housing.
- Inadequate transport connectivity is holding back many coastal communities. The Government should prioritise improvements to the coastal transport network when it takes decisions on planning and investment. This should be informed by a detailed review of the coastal transport network.
- Many seaside towns feel left behind by national strategies aimed at increasing economic growth and productivity. Local Industrial Strategies present a key opportunity for renewed focus on addressing the skills gaps, low-wage economies and aspiration challenges faced by many coastal communities. As LEPs develop these strategies, the Committee recommends that they are given a specific requirement to consider the needs of deprived seaside towns and communities.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is set to replace EU funding after Brexit, is an important opportunity to help support coastal business development, and to tackle deprivation in coastal communities. The Government must be clear about how coastal areas will benefit from the Fund. The Fund should prioritise solutions for areas where there has been persistent deprivation, including disadvantaged coastal communities.
- The Coastal Communities Fund is viewed as too small scale to support sustainable regeneration. The Government should review the Fund's effectiveness. If it is making a positive impact, then it should continue with it and increase the Fund's resources.
- The Committee strongly supports the Grimsby town deal, involving a strategic approach between national and local government, and LEPs. The Committee recommends that the Government should secure town deals with other coastal towns. Given that issues relating to housing and deprivation in Blackpool are well-recognised as being some of the most significant in the country, the Committee recommends a town deal is secured with Blackpool first.
- A variant of Enterprise Zones designated specifically for coastal areas could offer seaside towns a package of place-based interventions. This could support long term, sustainable change. The Committee recommends that new Enterprise Zones be created in coastal locations, and that the support offered should be tailored to meet the specific needs of seaside towns.

- Some towns have boosted regeneration by cultivating their local creative industries. The Committee supports this arts-led regeneration and wishes to see other towns diversifying their economies and enhancing their local cultural assets in this way.

It should be noted that the Select Committee specifically noted in its report that it was encouraged by East Devon District Council's Leadership in Regeneration and, picking up on the report positively when they interviewed Wayne Hemingway, BBC Radio Devon highlighted East Devon District Councils' work in Exmouth.

The published report has received considerable media coverage. The Select Committee has rightfully highlighted the acute social and economic issues affecting many of England's coastal communities.

The Chairman of the Committee, Lord Bassam of Brighton, said:

"For too long, seaside towns have been neglected. They suffer from issues rooted in the decline of their core industries, most notably domestic tourism, but also in fishing, shipbuilding and port activity, and from their location at the 'end of the line'. The potential impact of Brexit on these towns, particularly the hospitality sector, also remains an open question.

"A single solution to their economic and social challenges doesn't exist. What is needed is a package of strategic initiatives and interventions where national and local government work together to address issues such as transport, housing, post-school education and high-speed broadband.

"Places like Brighton and Bournemouth have shown that 'the seaside' can successfully reinvent itself. The Committee is confident that if our recommendations are pursued seaside towns can once again become prosperous and desirable places to live in and visit."

## **Government Response**

On 4 June 2019 the Government published its response. The report is wide ranging and states that 'The Great British Coast has enormous potential and this Government is determined to see it thrive all year round. We are committed to support coastal communities to unlock barriers to their development and growth, and to strengthen their appeal as places to live, work and visit'.

### *The economy of seaside towns – Capital Investment*

It stresses the importance of investment in the economy of seaside towns and highlights that the government has updated the statutory codes allowing local authorities to use commercial structures to kick start local economic regeneration to respond to local market failures or to deliver services more effectively.

### *Tourism Sector Deal and Coastal Action Zones*

The Government launched the Tourism Sector Deal in June 2019. The aim is to boost the productivity of our tourism industry, the implementation plan is set out below; however, there seems to be some slippage in terms of the proposed timetable in relation to Tourism Action Zones

### *Other commitments in the Tourism Sector Deal include:*

- More than 130,000 new hotel rooms are set to be built across the UK, with 75% being built outside of London. £250,000 to improve broadband connectivity in conferences centres across the UK for business visitors.

- The deal also outlines the government's ambitions for the UK to become the most accessible destination for disabled visitors, through improvement of disabled facilities and access to destinations across the country.
- 10,000 employees in the sector to benefit from new mentorship schemes.
- A new government strategy to grow the number of Business Events and Conferences, helping to drive off-season visitors.

## Implementation plan

Date	Milestone
June 2019	Tourism Sector Deal launched
June 2019	The UK government's International Business Events Action Plan launched
August 2019	Competition for improved broadband at conference centres
December 2019	Tourism Zone details published, with applications open – Note: No details currently announced
March 2020	Announcement of successful Tourism Zones
Summer 2020	Annual Review of the Sector Deal including considering further measures as appropriate

### *Local Skills*

The Government's response states that it is working in partnership with places to develop Local Industrial Strategies to set out priorities for how all places, including coastal communities, can contribute to and benefit from growth. Each Local Industrial Strategy will include a People chapter, which building on the national Industrial Strategy, will focus on generating good jobs and greater earning power for local people through employment and skills policy.

### *Housing*

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government is committed to making the housing market work for everyone, and that means understanding local places and building communities. This place-based approach is well evidenced by many funding streams, and by Homes England, who operate many of these housing funds on the Ministry's behalf.

### *Good Design*

The National Planning policy framework and associated design guidance should be taken in to account to ensure that development and planning processes not only offer protection, but also take the opportunity to improve public realm and the wider economy. The national Planning Policy Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities, and that planning policies and decisions should establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

### *Support for regeneration – funding and delivery*

Local Industrial Strategies will set out the spatial impacts of national and local policy: informing priorities and choices and demonstrating how they will allow all communities to contribute to, and benefit from, economic prosperity.

Local Enterprise Partnerships play an active role in coastal regeneration through delivering funding programmes and setting plans for regeneration, this includes supporting coastal areas through Local Growth Fund and engaging with Coastal Community Teams and coastal local authorities in the design of local strategies. Some Local Enterprise Partnerships also have dedicated coastal working groups as part of their Governance structures.

### **Coastal Community Fund**

The response does not provide clarity as to the future of the Coastal Community Fund after 2021. It stresses that the Coastal Community Fund has, in places, provided significant and sustained funding to areas/ projects that deliver sustainable economic growth and jobs.

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

The Government has confirmed that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will support people to benefit from economic prosperity, especially in those parts of the country whose economies are furthest behind. It recognises that many coastal areas face economic disadvantage, including physical isolation, high deprivation levels and reliance on low wage, low skill and often seasonal employment. **DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED.**

### **Implications for East Devon**

As previously stated, the Select Committee's report focuses upon the most challenged coastal locations and whilst much of the local picture supports a degree of affluence across the East Devon District particularly when considering average house prices and the economic position. As stated in East Devon District Council's submission to the Select Committee, the coastal towns of East Devon (Exmouth, Budleigh Salterton, Sidmouth and Seaton) in common with many other coastal areas have an older age profile. An ageing population will have an impact on the provision of health care, housing requirements, the labour market and economic growth.

Two Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Exmouth are in the most deprived 30% of all areas across England (Knowing East Devon, Release 4 – source: Office for National Statistics: LA Summaries ID 20102012). This may be partly a function of the housing type and tenure within those predominately urban areas, with their coastal location not being a direct causal factor. However, similar to rural areas, communities in coastal locations may experience challenges in relation to accessing employment and training opportunities and to key services.

East Devon District Council has, for some time, recognised the importance of ensuring that our coastal communities remain economically sustainable and has supported a balance of development including a mixed housing offer, appropriate employment space, visitor accommodation and coastal infrastructure.

The report's authors applaud the efforts of seaside towns that have demonstrated ambition and focus and have tackled and/or headed off the decline of their traditional industries. East Devon has done this and we must continue to ensure that our seaside towns remain prosperous by seeking and supporting appropriate economic investment and strive for inclusive growth to flow from this.

## **Local Industrial Strategy**

The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP) are currently producing a Local Industrial Strategy for the sub-region. In addition to the primary Local Industrial Strategic document, a sub group has been put together to develop a coastal productivity plan. East Devon District Council have commented on the draft. At the time of writing this report (December 2019) our overriding observation is that the draft plan does not fully convey the diversity of our coastal towns and the many and differing productivity challenges/ opportunities that they face and that there is perhaps a lack of ambition, for our coastal towns, as to how they can contribute to raising productivity in the HotSW LEP sub-region.

There is reason to be optimistic that our coastal locations can become better connected and drivers of place shaping and prosperity. Our coastal communities have already led the way in rising to the challenges and opportunities that they face, whether it be by a whole host of unique events i.e. Budleigh Literary Festival, Sidmouth Folk week and Seaton's Grizfest (to name just a few). In addition we are witnessing innovative and ambitious investment in tourism and leisure infrastructure i.e. the new Seaton tramway terminal and Grenadier's investment in the Sideshore Watersports facility in Exmouth, new visitor accommodation as well as the establishment of co-working spaces in Exmouth and Sidmouth supporting entrepreneurs and creatives.

It is unlikely that East Devon will be able to attract significant external funds to support its efforts and our prosperity strategy needs to reflect this. Broadly this could mean the Council continuing to support and/ or directly make strategic investments in the local economy.