

NOTICE OF MEETING & AGENDA

Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee

AGENDA SETTING – THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2025 AT 3.00 PM

(For Joint Committee Thursday 27 March 2025 at 2:30- 4:30 pm)

This meeting will be held by remote participation via MS Teams. Invitations have been issued.

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MzcxNjZlOTAtYWY1Yi00ZWl3LTk3YmMtN2ZkNTFkODE4ZGZh%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22ae8c4625-6448-4d14-b856-67b7e052d4b0%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22328d49e0-2aca-4555-8500-c960410b08f6%22%7d

Neil Harman, Head of Regional Project Management Office

City Region Deal Regional Programme Management Office | Old Viewforth | Stirling FK8 2ET |

E: citydealrpo@stirling.gov.uk

W: <https://www.stirclacksdeal.com/>

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1.0	Apologies and substitutions	-
2.0	Declaration of interests Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.	-
3.0	Urgent business	-
4.0	Previous minutes	
4.1	Minutes of the Meeting of the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee – 31 October 2024 (Copy attached)	5 – 18
5.0	Items for consideration	
5.1	Report – Stirling Digital Hub - <i>submitted by Kelly Mathewson, Economic Development Project Manager, Stirling Council</i> (Copy attached)	19 – 24

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Joint Committee Membership

Clackmannanshire Council (Chair)

Councillor Ellen Forson

Stirling Council (Vice Chair)

Councillor Gerry McGarvey

University of Stirling

Mr Graeme Duff

Clackmannanshire Council

Councillor Martha Benny

Stirling Council

Councillor Neil Benny

University of Stirling

Ms Eileen Schofield

Clackmannanshire Council

Councillor Janine Rennie

Stirling Council

Vacancy

University of Stirling

Professor Leigh Sparks

Substitutes (appointed by Council)

Clackmannanshire Council:

Councillor Denis Coyne

Councillor Graham Lindsay

Councillor Kenneth Earle

Stirling Council:

Councillor Jen Preston

Councillor Elaine Watterson

Vacancy

If a Member who is a representative of the University of Stirling is unable to attend a meeting of the Joint Committee that Member may arrange for a substitute representative of the University of Stirling to attend.



MINUTES

MINUTES of MEETING of the STIRLING AND CLACKMANNANSHIRE CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, KILNCRAIGS, ALLOA and by MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY 31 OCTOBER 2024 at 2.30 pm

Present

Councillor Ellen Forson, Clackmannanshire Council (Chair)
 Councillor Neil Benny, Stirling Council
 Councillor Martha Benny, Clackmannanshire Council
 Graeme Duff, University of Stirling
 Councillor Scott Farmer, Stirling Council
 Professor Malcolm MacLeod, University of Stirling (S)
 Councillor Gerry McGarvey, Stirling Council (S)
 Eileen Schofield, University of Stirling

In Attendance

Caroline Sinclair, Chief Executive, Stirling Council
 Nikki Bridle, Chief Executive, Clackmannanshire Council
 Jane Burridge, Lead Transformation Officer, Clackmannanshire Council
 Sally Dimeo, Chief Finance Officer, University of Stirling
 John Craig, Head of the City Region and Growth Deal Programme, University of Stirling
 Professor Iain Docherty, University of Stirling, Chair of Regional Economic Advisory Group
 Emma Fyvie, Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change, Stirling Council
 Kevin Wells, Strategic Director, Clackmannanshire Council
 Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer- Infrastructure & Environment, Stirling Council
 Lauren Gonzales, Programme Officer/Analyst, Regional Programme Management Office
 Lena Schelling, Programme Officer/Analyst, Regional Programme Management Office
 Charlie McShane, City Region Deal Skills Lead, Clackmannanshire Council
 Jillian Schofield, Service Manager – Culture, Events and Tourism, Stirling Council
 Lee Robertson, Senior Manager, Legal and Governance, Clackmannanshire Council (Clerk)
 Helena Arthur, Solicitor, Legal and Governance, Clackmannanshire Council (Depute Clerk)
 Melanie Moore, Committee Services, Clackmannanshire Council
 Gillian White, Committee Services, Clackmannanshire Council



Recording of Meeting started

Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillor Forson, as Chair of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was advised that the meeting was being broadcast live via Clackmannanshire Council's website and that a recording of the meeting would also be made publicly available on the website following the meeting.

The Chair noted the recent sad death of Councillor Margaret Brisley, Stirling Council, who had recently been appointed as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee.

CRD34 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Professor Leigh Sparks submitted his apologies and Professor Malcolm MacLeod attended as substitute for Professor Sparks. Councillor Gerry McGarvey attended as substitute for the late Councillor Brisley.

CRD35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Stirling Councillors Neil Benny and Gerry McGarvey, declared a non-financial interest in Item 6.4 CHT Programme as they had been appointed by Stirling Council as trustees of the Smith Art Gallery and Museum.

CRD36 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business brought forward.

CRD37 MINUTES – STIRLING & CLACKMANNANSHIRE CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE – 18 APRIL 2024

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee held on 18 April 2024 were submitted for approval.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of 18 April 2024 as an accurate record of proceedings.

CRD38 FORWARD PLANNING

(a) JOINT COMMITTEE ROLLING ACTION LOG

The Joint Committee Rolling Action Log was submitted for review.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed to note the content of the Rolling Action Log and that there were currently no open actions.

(b) JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

Lena Schelling, RPMO, advised that the Joint Committee forward plan will be submitted in January 2025 for review.



CRD39 CITY REGION DEAL AUDIT PLAN 2024-2030

The Chair advised that there had been a bit of a mix up with this item of the Agenda and handed over to Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer- Infrastructure & Environment, Stirling Council, to provide an explanation.

The Chief Operating Officer explained that the way the paper has been set out is that it's asking for approval from the Joint Committee on the Audit Plan. However, in terms of the situation with the grant offer and deal arrangements with government, the approval of the audit position sits with Stirling Council as the lead authority, explicitly the Internal Audit Team.

However, he reassured the Joint Committee that the Audit Plan as set out in the Appendix had been drafted and approved by the Audit Manager at Stirling Council and had been discussed with the Chief Officer Group. He advised that the purpose of the paper really is to let Joint Committee know that the Audit will be undertaken. The outcome of the Audit will be brought to Joint Committee in March 2025, led by the Internal Audit Manager at Stirling Council. The only change, rather than seeking approval, is that the report is for noting only.

The Chair questioned whether the Joint Committee has any ability to influence what goes on the audit.

The Chief Operating Officer responded that the terms and conditions of grant are clear that the Internal Audit service must be provided in compliance with Public Sector Audit Standards. The Audit must be independent from those that are within the three partners delivering on the deal. What would happen with the audit is the audit team will identify any improvement actions and then through the Chief Officers' Group (COG) those actions would be agreed across the partners. The purpose of the Audit being brought back to Joint Committee is for Committee to question and seek assurance on any of the actions that come out of it and note any actions that have been agreed.

The Chair questioned that if the Joint committee decided that there was an area they specifically wanted to look into or delve in a little bit more, was there an avenue for that to happen.

The Chief Operating Officer advised that he saw it as similar to when Clackmannanshire Council and Stirling Council at their committees when the outcomes of reports come forward for scrutiny and for reassurance and challenge. He advised that if there was an area where Joint Committee felt that partner responses to the audit findings weren't strong enough or there are areas of further work, then that would certainly be the time for Joint Committee to ask both the audit team undertaking audit, but also the Deal partners collectively and individually. He also advised that if there are any other areas where the Joint

Committee didn't feel the audit outcome and the responses actually addressed the issues in the audit finding then this could be challenged. He suggested, following a discussion with the Audit Manager, that a briefing at that time could be provided for the Joint Committee. He appreciated that the way the audit is done for university partners will be different from what they're used to, as it is aligning with local government Acts



Professor MacLeod stated that one of the things that came across to him was the focus on external factors, such as the role of inflation and the risk that has for the City Deal funding. He wondered if reassurance could be given that the internal factors will also be considered. In particular, the pace of which projects are being put forward, or the lack of pace thereof. He suggested that this is also a risk and which also interacts with external factors such as inflation pressures.

The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that yes, the audit itself will effectively audit delivery against the deal and that would be both internal and external factors. He highlighted that this is an audit of the partnership and there's all the processes within each of the individual partners to look at including internal delivery challenges or factors. This will look at those internal partnerships rather than delve down into any of the individual areas. The Audit will make comment and recommendation and it will be analysed through the Chief Officer Group to identify what they feel are the mitigating measures or actions that need to be taken.

Decision

On the basis of the explanation provided by Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer, Stirling Council, the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed to note the City Region Deal Audit Plan 2024-2030, as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2.

CRD40 STIRLING AND CLACKMANNANSHIRE CITY REGION DEAL ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The report by the Regional Programme Management Office (RPMO) presented a review of the third year of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, and a forward look to the year ahead. The draft of the Annual Report had been subject to annual conversation in April 2024 and sought approval from the Joint Committee. Approval of the Annual Report would allow the RPMO and Communications Team to publish and make the report available to the public, as well as share it with Scottish and UK Government.

The Chair, in relation to the Benefits Realisation Plan and the Japanese Gardens, suggested that there are a number of measurements with criteria to be clarified and given that the project has been ongoing for 2 years, she suggested that measurements should have been clarified by now and, as the money has been spent, queried when the Joint Committee would see that clarification.

The Strategic Director (Place) explained that there are now a series of measurable outcomes, which refer back to the original plan that was granted. These are currently being collected as part of the benefits realisation work, which will be reported to the Joint Committee.

The Chair thought that explanation probably answered some of the other questions she had around how the Joint Committee has the opportunity to delve further into the information particularly around the benefits that have been realised. The Chair took assurance that there will be a future report that will allow the Joint Committee to do that.



Councillor N. Benny felt that the point raised is really important in the context of projects which have already been delivered. Ensuring benefits realisation is actually going to be really important, especially the Japanese garden and certainly Active Travel. He advised that he would like to see those benefits realisation reports coming to Joint Committee fairly soon and on a regular basis and would like to see a work plan for when the Joint Committee should be expecting those to come forward.

The Strategic Director (Place) advised that in terms of the benefits realisation, it's certainly a topic that's been discussed as part of the Chief Officers' Group programme and they are pulling that together to be able to look at the benefits realisation across the deal. He advised he will ensure that's shared with Joint Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Chief Operating Officer added that it states explicitly in one of the programmes that Councillor Benny raised, around travel, that there is a need to bring those forward as these projects are complete, but actually on the benefits realisation, in active travel, a number of them are programme time scales rather than individual ones. He suggested that when business cases for approval are brought forward, it needs to be made clear to Joint Committee exactly when the benefits realisation reports will come forward. He suggested that for some of the projects benefits realisation will be seen almost immediately after completion, things will start to happen, but particularly for the active travel, the Joint Committee won't start to see the overall partnership benefits until there's more bits in the network in place.

Councillor Neil Benny suggested that it's almost a living document as while there are those projects that are finished, there are also projects which will be problematic initially such as the Aquaculture centre and some of the projects around the Environmental Innovation centre; these are long term projects where the benefit realisations won't come in for many years to come. It's about making sure that living document is updated to state when the Joint Committee are likely to see benefit realisation reports coming in, which is reactive to changes in those programmes as they evolve going forward once they get past the delivery stage, almost like a built in scrutiny plan for benefits realisation. He thought it really important that this work is continues after the projects have been delivered and are in that phase where they're actually starting to deliver for communities.

The Chair agreed and thought that it's a good opportunity for the Joint Committee to be able to check that benefits are being realised. She appreciated that some of the projects are over a 10 year period, but if you get to year five and there's been nothing delivered, the Joint Committee must start asking questions around when it is going to be delivered in terms of are we expecting this to all come at once or actually are we going to achieve any benefits out of it at all. That's the sort of thing she felt the Joint Committee needs to keep an eye on and to be able to dig underneath these targets. She gave the example of perhaps having 30 employment opportunities per annum with a certain kind of characteristics – the Joint Committee need to be able make sure that's been delivered and that the figures supplied are delivering what we expect it to.



Lena Schelling, RMPO confirmed that there is work ongoing with partners and the delivery teams to make both the reporting and the tracking and monitoring of benefits more systematic. She advised that it's not in a place where it's ready to present at Joint Committee, but in future that living document will be available in terms of being able to capture those more nuanced benefits that are less about the wider trends the monitoring framework would be tracking, these are more of the immediate benefits.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed to:-

1. Approve the Annual Report in line with the Stirling and Clacks City Region Deal Framework, thereby enabling its publication and circulation to Governments and to the public domain, via the City Region Deal website.

CRD41 CITY REGION DEAL FLEXIBLE SKILLS PROJECT

The report by Charlie McShane, City Region Deal Skills Lead, Clackmannanshire Council, and introduced by Emma Fyvie, Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change, Stirling Council provided the Stirling Clackmannanshire City Region Deal (CRD) Joint Committee with an update on the work of the Flexible Skills Project (FSP) as a component of the overall CRD programme. This included the development of CRD Project Skills Pathway Plans to assist projects in the planning and delivery of skills and employment opportunities as a contribution to the CRD Inclusive Growth objectives.

The report also sought approval from the CRD Joint Committee on the establishment of a Flexible Skills Grant Fund that will be available to CRD projects to support them develop a range of skills and employment opportunities from CRD Project investment (see Appendix 1).

The Joint Committee were also asked to note that the FSP will be seeking to realign its timeline and budget to maintain its support across CRD projects over the remaining years of the City Region Deal. This realignment will form a part of proposed adjustments to the overarching CRD Implementation Plan for 2024/2025 and extend the FSP from its original completion date of March 2026 to March 2029.

The Chair, when considering the £1.5 million spend by 2026, queried how the Joint Committee can be sure that the programme and the money that's being spent is aligned to the projects that have been delivered. It seems to be very general and providing a lot of employability skills rather than being focused on the areas of the projects. She used the example of the SIEC where here vision was that the flexible skills programme would be used to upskill people from general unemployment opportunities to take advantage of the kind of more high quality, higher paid jobs that were coming through as a result of that specific programme. She was concerned that the funds would be spent ahead of the job opportunities being delivered and there wouldn't be the funds to upskill the people using the skills programme.



The Strategic Director (Place) (Clackmannanshire Council) explained that in terms of the profile set out in the report (paragraph 29), it outlined what the original profile would have been. The actual implementation plan and the profiling of what was spent to date and including what's allocated for this fiscal year is somewhere in the region of £425,000. He advised that the re-profiling of the money, which is the vast majority of the money allocated to the skills programme, into the remaining years, will be allocated to this skills fund which each of the projects as part of the Deal programme will bid for. Money is linked to developing skills and employment opportunities directly to those particular projects. It will include enhancement and some of that will build upon the pathway programmes outlined within the deal programme. He advised that the vast majority of the fund is still there to be utilised for enhancing the skills and employment opportunities.

The Chair remained unconvinced, and thought that this is an area where she would like to know about the benefits realisation report fairly quickly, just to make sure that money is being spent in the best way possible and that where possible it is aligned to the specific projects. She suggested that it's all very well delivering the general employability, but a lot of the skills projects that have been delivered so far are very low level, rather than that next higher level up that would be expected and which is probably outlined in the heads of terms.

The Strategic Director (Place) advised that in terms of that benefits realisation, that most of the programmes that ran previously have been linked to other funding streams and not necessarily that funding stream in terms of spend and it's how it interlinks with other funding sources around the employability agenda and that will be part of the skills fund going forward.

Councillor N Benny commented that he doesn't get a clear sense of what it is being done here, as it feels that this is supplementing the skills and training projects that the employability partnerships at both Stirling and Clackmannanshire in regards to people who are far away from the workforce, rather than necessarily taking people who are closer to workforce and upskilling them into these sectors. He would like to see how it interrelates to the other employability work that goes on within the two authority areas. He thought in terms of the amount of cash and work that goes on from DWP monies and Scottish Government monies in terms of long term and short term unemployment alleviation, which is quite significant amounts of money in terms of those projects which are bid for.

The employability partnerships do not work to take people from being very, very far away from the workforce to being closer to the workforce. What he saw was the CRD effectively replicating that and would like to understand how this adds value rather than just displaces work that would otherwise be going on within those projects. He would like to see that mapped across what other things are the CRD are doing as he knows that there's ongoing projects especially when you're talking about health and social care, hospitality and tourism, construction sector work and also in terms of some of the areas that people who are in the target population groups such as inactive young people, those leaving the care system, and criminal justice service users where there are significant projects already there for that. He wanted to make sure that these are not replicated as it would mean that Councils no longer need to spend money on that because the city region is spending money on that.



He felt the City Region money should be adding value and sought assurance that that's the case. He felt the issue was similar to the issues raised by the Chair, but that it's more specific about how this interrelates with the current work on employability.

The Strategic Director (Place) advised that in terms of the programme, he is happy to come back in terms of some of the mapping around this work which is about interlinking it with the other programmes that value is being added. That particular fund will be looking to bridge that work from what is already on the ground and what potential and there is from the other deal projects specifically to the skills and opportunities that would be required as part of the programme.

Emma Fyvie, Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change, Stirling Council, advised that she felt the programme is a very small part of a much wider skills ecosystem and its there to serve particular target groups. She confirmed that it should not replicate what's happening in existing employability schemes. One of the key roles of the skills matching scheme of the City Deal is to identify those gaps that aren't already being filled and fill those with this funding, which is very limited, but nevertheless, either to add additionality to existing activity or to fill gaps that are there. As part of that wider ecosystem of skills, they've got the whole regional skills team and we've also got the projects themselves, which already have their own skills plans and that's what the skills pathways plans do. They are already progressing with skills programmes to ensure that our local people are getting upskilled to take on all levels of jobs including the higher level ones.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed to:-

1. Note the update on the Flexible Skills Project activities;
2. Note the developing Skills Pathway Plan approach;
3. Note the proposed realignment of the Flexible Skills Project timeline and budget will be a component of the City Region Deal Implementation Plan 24/25; and
4. Approve the establishment of a Flexible Skills Grant Fund

CRD42 CULTURE HERITAGE AND TOURISM PROGRAMME: UPDATE AND RECOMMENDATION OF PRIORITY PROJECTS

Stirling Councillors Neil Benny and Gerry McGarvey, declared a non-financial interest in this item of business as they had been appointed by Stirling Council as trustees of the Smith Art Gallery and Museum. They remained in the Council Chamber and participated in this item of business.

The report, submitted by the RPMO, and introduced by Emma Fyvie, Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change, Stirling Council, provided an update on the activity of the Culture Heritage and Tourism (CHT) Programme Board in ensuring adequate consideration is given to key decisions and



recommendations from the programme, as well as providing the Joint Committee with a list of recommended projects for endorsement, as set out in Appendix 1.

Following assessment of these projects and discussion with officers from Stirling and Clackmannanshire Council, funding allocations for each of the projects was recommended as detailed in Appendix 1, noting that for 5 of these projects, the proposed funding would not be sufficient to fully delivery the scheme, and other match funding will be required to be secured by the partners to enable the projects to progress.

The endorsement of these recommendations was a key decision stage for the CHT Programme as a whole, notwithstanding the pressures of deliverability of the overall programme within the lifespan of the City Regional Deal.

Professor MacLeod, referred back to the annual report, which emphasised there is a whole issue about consolidation for impact. He wondered to what extent in terms of what's being proposed for CHT if following that maxim, in terms of consolidating of what's been done in order to get the greatest impact. He asked for an explanation of the advantages of having these, what seem to be quite disparate projects, rather than what the mantra is in the report about that consolidation and strength of consolidating activity.

The Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change explained that that a range of projects were invited to come together to submit applications. Particularly within the Stirling area, there's felt to be a relationship between the projects that will enhance the visitor activity and bring up the cultural event scene and increase visitors and spend. She advised that that was the purpose behind the objectives that were set out in there. She advised that there's been no firm consolidation exercise undertaken and no assessment of regional impact. Each project was required to set out specifically what the regional impact would be as part of the proformas. These were assessed and scored on that regional impact and consolidation was taken into account, but there is no specific bit of work that answered that question raised by Professor MacLeod.

Professor MacLeod followed up regarding the importance that's been attached to consolidation, and asked whether there's any room for considering how these various projects could be consolidated and under what themes rather than simply just generating more activity. He questioned whether there would be the possibility of doing that work.

The Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change confirmed that could be done and it could also form part of the benefits realisation too.

The Chief Executive (Clackmannanshire Council) made the point that the Joint Committee had previously had a conversation about the Clackmannanshire project some time ago, as that does actually consolidate a number of projects from across the deal. The Alloa Heritage and Enterprise Centre is consolidated alongside other projects from the deal, which are the digital hubs, Scotland's International Environment Centre and ILIH was previously consolidated alongside the SIEC work. She advised that was actually a very considered attempt to try and play into that space of consolidation given everything said about the deal and to maximise the impact. She advised that it was actually quite difficult bidding into just this fund, which was for the CHT purposes, because there was a discussion at



the Joint Committee previously about whether or not to disaggregate the CHT element from that consolidated proposal. She thought that more could be done in terms of the consolidated regional impact, in particular in terms of the benefits derived from this fund and that it would be good to develop through the business case process.

Councillor N Benny raised in terms of the well made consolidation point, one of the issues within the report (page 125) is if you look at the looping in of additional funds, the Albert Halls project, Bannockburn House project, Smith Art Gallery Project, and the Alloa Heritage and Enterprise Centre ones are bringing in three times what the smaller projects are. Stirling City Park and the Stirling Wayfinding projects are effectively not looking for any external funding. He wondered why it's not possible to do that or has it not been looked at because he was concerned that those are the ones that are being directly funded

Jillian Scofield, Service Manager – Culture, Events and Tourism, Stirling Council advised that with regards to the two smaller projects, there had been a lot of discussions around the specific spend profile in order to commit some of the funding. Looking at potential for match funding for those projects would be particularly challenging given the nature of the projects versus the other projects which will be seeking match funding from likes of Historic Environment Scotland, and looking to approach the National Heritage Lottery Fund. In terms of sourcing and match funding, that's where the larger projects are better placed than the smaller projects. The two smaller projects could potentially be delivered within the next nine months or so.

Councillor Farmer, in terms of the Stirling projects, raised the issue of the Smith Art Gallery as it seemed when looking at the spend profile, there has been a lot of concern how we can meet the targets. There is also the concern that a significant proportion of that funding declining in real terms due to inflationary pressure. He felt that 18 months seems a long time. He acknowledged that a business plan will come forward, but it seemed to be like an aspirational wish list of what is proposed in terms of outcomes. He questioned whether 18 months is realistic in terms of keeping to a spend profile that could be attained if it transpired that match funding wasn't forthcoming, and wondered when other options would be considered in terms of how that money is spent.

The Chair commented that she was going to ask a question that was quite similar around if at the end of the 18 months, match funding isn't achievable, what will happen.

The Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change confirmed that in the report it sets out that it's up to 18 months and close discussions will be held with each of the projects to ensure that they're doing everything they can. She advised that if it became obvious that there's a major issue with funding, then there would be a discussion sooner. The process will have governance around it, that the CHT Programme Board would be reconvened to discuss the projects to highlight any that aren't going to be taken forward or perhaps changed. Then there would be another process for the programme with scoring and recommendations to the Chief Officer Group and Joint Committee.



It would have to be done very quickly and expedient because of the time left to deliver on the deal.

Councillor Farmer felt that the Joint committee should be given the earliest opportunity to be made aware if there are problems becoming apparent in any of the projects where match funding has been sought.

The Chief Operating Officer sought to give Councillor Farmer reassurance, that a number of discussions have happened around what is the best approach to maximise the delivery as it heads towards that 10 year end of the deal and 18 months is a long period. The reason for that was in discussion with the others within the group and that were assessing these projects is thinking about funding time scales for the partners of which these projects will be bid into and the fact that we're halfway through an existing financial year and the processes need to go through there. The expectation would be that the business case processes would be running in parallel because as well as securing the funding from the partners, these projects all need, with the exception of the two for the smaller Stirling ones that are under the thresholds, that all these undergo the full business case process, which would be full exposure to this committee in terms of outline business case and then full business case, but also to government. He advised that one of the key elements of the business case journey would be the projects demonstrated to the Joint Committee and to government that those external funds have been secured. He also advised that if the report was approved today, engagement would take place with the potential funding partners almost immediately because they want to see the delivery within the timescales. He felt that 18 months was realistic enough but not to put it under too much pressure. All partners are working hard to make sure that the projects are brought to the business case milestones for this Joint Committee, securing those funds as soon as possible.

The Service Manager – Culture, Events and Tourism , advised that while 18 months seems like a long time, actually fundraising terms, it is quite a tight period of time due to the nature of these large scale applications. It's a very lengthy and competitive process with a lot of red tape for the various applicants to go through. She advised that while 18 months is actually quite a tight turn around, they would try to progress these quickly.

In terms of the Smith Art Gallery, Bannockburn House and the Albert Halls, initial conversations have already taken place with partners. If a decision is taken by the Joint Committee, funding applications can be progressed.

The Chair, commented that with the exception of two projects, every single one of the other projects does require significant match funding. Perhaps there is an expectation that will come from other public sector bodies in relation to match funding, but it should be borne in mind that the whole ethos of the city deal is to encourage private sector investment. She queried what is being done to try and engage with the private sector to see if they would invest in any of these projects. Historically from Clackmannanshire, it has been very difficult getting the private sector to the table. She was concerned that some deal outcomes might not be met if the private sector are not being encouraged to come forward and invest in these.



The Head of Economic Development, Planning & Climate Change advised that while some projects may be limited, the private sector benefits that will follow from them are really significant in terms of the benefits that will be realised. The potential for private sector funding will be investigated as much as possible. She confirmed that a variety of different sectors and types of funding will be sought.

The Strategic Director (Place) advised that there are some issues in terms of the one project that we have for Clackmannanshire in terms of CHT private sector funding around some of the concepts that are present which is being explored.

Councillor N Benny wondered if there'd been any discussion at the Regional Economic Advisory Group (REAG) and what their thought had been around these projects.

Professor Iain Docherty, University of Stirling, Chair of Regional Economic Advisory Group advised that the REAG had not yet had that discussion as the group was due to meet shortly after the Joint Committee meeting to reflect on the papers and the position the Joint Committees has taken on these projects. He advised that at the last meeting he updated the members on the recent working meetings of the group and after they had presented their overview paper on priorities for the deal, the next phase of the work that they'll undertake will be to explore the potential for private sector linkages that they think is there in the region. From the Joint Committee meeting outcomes, the group will convene in the next 2-3 weeks to start those discussions and they have been having bilateral meetings with Scottish Enterprise mainly to take their view on who the most appropriate private sector contacts to approach first will be.

The Chief Executive, Clackmannanshire Council, commented on the Clackmannanshire project advised that they are looking to develop a formalised investment strategy around this and work had already commenced on that. They had reached out informally at this stage to potential investors to gauge levels of interest before we looked at finalising any sort of consolidation of the project just to see would there be an appetite from an investment point of view for that type of work. She advised that there had been some initial, albeit informal favourable comment on that.

Part of the next steps would be to engage REAG. She added that when council governance was secured over that particular project, one of the things that was highlighted as a specific risk was that if we were foreseeing any difficulties in securing that external funding, it would be reported straight back into Council and the Joint Committee to look at what needed to be done.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee:-

1. Agreed that the projects listed in Appendix 2, as recommended by the Culture, Heritage and Tourism project board, are progressed as the priority projects within the CHT programme;



2. Agreed that the proposed project funding allocations as set out in Appendix 2 are applied;
3. Agreed that project owners are required to secure the remaining project funding and to provide a business case for approval by Committee, within 18 months.

CRD43 STIRLING AND CLACKMANNANSHIRE CITY REGION DEAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2024/25

The Joint Committee as representatives of the partners to the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Regional Deal, were asked to review and approve the Implementation Plan (set out in Appendix 1B), in accordance with the existing Stirling and Clackmannanshire Financial Plan. Approval of the Implementation Plan would enable the RPMO to establish a baseline to share with UK and Scottish governments, as an accurate representation of the City Region Deal delivery and financial status, enabling partners to continue to make funding claims, in accordance with the terms of the annual grant offer letter.

The report by the Regional Programme Management Office (RPMO), and presented by Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer, Stirling Council raised awareness that the Implementation Plan is a live document subject to change, with future changes being progressed through change control and continuous impact assessment. Changes will be communicated through the Chief Officer Group for their approval through the existing financial reporting practices. Moreover, continuous assessment and mitigation of delivery and financial risk will be managed by the Chief Officer Group with support from the RPMO through active monitoring and review of an existing risk register. The work is ongoing, and risks were summarised in Appendix 2 of the report.

The Chair, in terms of a political risk with the recently published UK Government's budget and the forthcoming Scottish Government's budget, queried if there had been any indication that City deal funding would be affected by that.

The Chief Operating Officer advised that there has been no indication at all either as a partnership or directly through each of the individual partners.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed:-

1. To approve the Implementation Plan as a realistic snapshot of the current delivery and financial profile of the City Regional Deal, in line with existing governance and government requirements for submission;
2. That the Implementation Plan, subject to the outlined associated risks in Appendix 2, is shared with UK and Scottish Governments to enable partners to continue to secure claims in delivering the City Regional Deal portfolio of projects and programmes.



CRD44 STIRLING AND CLACKMANNANSHIRE CITY REGION DEAL PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR 2025 - 2026

The report by Lee Robertson, Senior Manager, Legal and Governance, Clackmannanshire Council advised the Joint Committee that the current schedule of Joint Committee meetings would end with the meeting scheduled to take place on 27 March 2025. After the March meeting, the Chair of the Joint Committee will revert to Stirling Council in line with the Joint Committee Standing Orders. The report asked Joint Committee to agree to a proposed draft schedule of meetings for the 2025 – 2026 term when Stirling Council has the Chair.

Decision

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed the proposed schedule of meetings for 2025 – 2026 as follows:

- **Thursday 19 June 2025, 2.30pm**
- **Thursday 18 September 2025, 2.30pm**
- **Thursday 15 January 2026, 2.30pm**
- **Thursday 26 March 2026, 2.30pm**

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.30pm

REPORT

Joint Committee 27 March 2025

Agenda Item 5.1

Stirling Digital Hub

Executive summary

The purpose of this paper is to present for review and approval, the Stirling Digital Hub Business Justification Case ("BJC") found at Appendix 1. The Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal Joint Committee (the "Joint Committee") has been delegated power by both Councils to make decisions on project business cases within the City Region Deal remit.

The BJC seeks approval for up to £2 million of City Region Deal ("CRD") funding to develop the Stirling Digital Hub (the "Hub"). The Hub aims to build on the local successes in the digital sector, and to support and enable the further growth of local digital companies, while attracting inward investment opportunities.

The BJC presents the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management cases for the Hub. The BJC has been reviewed by Scottish Government which has provided a letter of comfort that the BJC will be approved when tenders are returned and final costs are known. The letter of comfort is attached as appendix 2.

Approval of the BJC by Joint Committee will be followed by a report to Stirling Council's Finance, Economy and Corporate Services Committee seeking approval to procure the works. It is expected works will be completed by the end of 2025.

Kelly Mathewson, Economic Development Project Manager

Email address: mathewsonk@stirling.gov.uk Telephone number: 07385 429 770

[ENTER RPMO contact: Job Title]

Email address: [ENTER DETAILS] Telephone number: [ENTER DETAILS]



Recommendations

Joint Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and approve the Stirling Digital Hub Business Justification Case.
 2. Note that following approval of the business case, a report will be taken to Stirling Council's Finance, Economy and Corporate Resources Committee in April, seeking approval to commence the procurement process.
-

Legal & Risk Implications and Mitigation

There is a risk to the Council that there is limited supplier interest in carrying out the proposed works, or that the contractor may be unable to deliver in accordance with the required timescales and budget. This risk will be mitigated through early market engagement, the use of pre-existing frameworks to shorten procurement timescales and contract conditions to ensure timeous completion of the works.

There is also a risk that the Hub fails to attract tenants after the construction is completed. This has been mitigated through early engagement with potential commercial tenants.

Background

The Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal document, signed in 2020, provisionally allocated £2 million to establish a new digital hub in Stirling, building on recent local successes in the digital sector and enabling further growth of local digital companies.

In 2017, CodeBase began operating Stirling's first Digital Hub from the Municipal Buildings in the city centre. This initiative has been very successful, driving the development of the region's wider Digital District, including the expansion of Regional Digital Hubs and the creation of the Stirling Digital Hub.

The Hub aims to provide new space for businesses that have outgrown the incubator space at Codebase, supporting their growth potential, retaining their operation in Stirling and securing employment in the local area. Additionally, without such a space, Stirling risks losing out on inward investment opportunities.



In 2020 Stirling Council commissioned EKOS to produce an Office Accommodation Report to inform future decision making on expanding office provision in Stirling. This was refreshed in 2023 to take the impact of the pandemic into account.

This report (2023) found that overall, demand for office space in Scotland is lower than it was pre pandemic. This is due to the rise in homeworking in the main. However, there remains a case for investment in Stirling's office accommodation within specific business sectors. There has been a lack of investment in new or refurbished office space in Stirling over the last 15 years and therefore much of Stirling's office stock is old and not suitable for modern digital technology business's needs.

The report also found that whilst overall demand for office space has fallen post pandemic, existing demand is interested in high-quality office space. Employers who want to attract workers are keen to have high-quality office facilities and amenities. This has led to rising vacancy rates amongst older, lower quality office space, whilst demand is stronger for new modern office space.

It is within this commercial property context that Stirling Digital Hub is being developed. It seeks to address the needs of the sector in growing a local highly skilled digital technology workforce, whilst also unlocking the demand for modern commercial property space.

The objectives of the hub are:

- To ensure growing businesses have access to good quality digitally enabled flexible space in Stirling. *100 Full Time Equivalent roles will be based at the Hub within 12 months of opening*
- To provide supportive and collaborative business environments that enable sustainable technology businesses to succeed in growing, and attract investment to Stirling. *The Hub will be open in January 2026 and is anticipated to operate above 80% occupancy.*
- To contribute to inclusive growth by optimising contributions to skills and inclusion through business support. *Strong skills pathways will be developed to ensure that our most excluded communities can access a streamlined journey and inclusion support to realise their potential*

Considerations



An options appraisal was conducted to assess suitable premises and locations in Stirling for the Hub. Options were scored against spending objectives and Critical Success Factors. The findings are presented in the Economic Case within the BJC. The top-scoring option and preferred way forward is the refurbishment of an existing office block at the newly acquired ex-MOD site at Forthside.

The Forthside area is currently being redeveloped and will host Stirling Studios, a significant new development expected to unlock substantial investment, job opportunities, and a range of economic and social benefits. Locating the Hub on this site is particularly attractive to digital businesses within the film, animation and creative sector, with several companies already expressing interest in the space.

Designs for the building have been informed by businesses in the sector and are presented in the Economic Case. The designs include:

- Full refurbishment – a mixture of open plan workspaces, break out areas, flexible meeting spaces and small private rooms supported by upgraded WCs, server rooms and plant space.
- Improved accessibility throughout with installation of a lift, addition of ramps at all external doors for safe entrance and escape and improved accessible sanitary facilities.
- Thermal upgrades to improve energy efficiency including replacement of all windows and upgrades to the roof.
- Replacement of all building services to meet current standards, including a more sustainable heating source.
- External improvements including a dedicated car park with electric vehicle charging stations.

The project has been costed and is deliverable within the funding limits, as shown in the Financial Case. This includes the design and development fees also. The Stirling Digital Hub project has £2m funding allocated during financial year 25/26 within the CRD in the Implementation Plan spend profile, with a requirement for this to be spend by end of March 2026. The project is on track to deliver within this timescale.

To meet current commercial demand and align with the Stirling Studios project, the project must progress swiftly. Stirling Council has appointed a multidisciplinary contractor for full design, project and cost management. On approval of the BJC, the current consultant's scope will be widened to manage the project through delivery. A works contractor will be procured through Stirling Council procurement processes, and will be subject to a report to Stirling Council's Finance, Economy and Corporate Resources Committee in April 25, seeking approval to progress to the procurement stage of the project.



A Client Manager from Stirling Council will oversee progress, and this will be reported through established CRD processes and committees. Works are due to start on the hub May 2025 and be completed before the end of the year.

Resource Implications

Financial Details

The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes

Finance Officers have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

Staffing

The full implications on staffing are set out in the report. Yes

Exempt Reports

Is this report exempt? (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

Equalities Impact

Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations? Yes

Legality

It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Joint Committee is acting within its legal powers. Yes

Sustainability and Environmental

It has been confirmed that sustainability and environmental issues have been considered within the report. Yes "



Policy Implications

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal outlined that through innovation and enterprise we will maximise our key regional strengths and assets will ensure a ready supply of high quality, high value jobs creating a diverse regional economy. The City Region Deal outlined a need to create a digitally and physically connected infrastructure across the region that enables these higher value, skilled jobs to be retained within the region. Investment from the City Regional Deal in digital entrepreneurship will help diversify the regional economy via the Stirling Digital Hub and Regional Digital Hubs enable local digital companies to stay local, grow and create exciting job opportunities throughout the region.

The City Region deal highlighted that future growth of our economy will increasingly depend on the success of our digital sector and the skills needed for these businesses to innovate locally. The Stirling Digital Hub will support greater and more inclusive learning and development opportunities of digitally-focused skills as well as directly supporting Stirling Council's policies including:

Thriving Stirling: Stirling Council's 10 Year Strategy to 2030, which highlights the need for Stirling to adopt automation, data security and digital inclusion as a core aspect of its approach to digital technology.

Stirling Economic Strategy 2022-2030, which sets out a bold vision for the future of Stirling's economy. It is structured around three core themes: to support an economy that is thriving, sustainable and inclusive. Support for our local businesses to grow, attract jobs and investment, tackle inequality, and support the transition to net zero. The strategy highlights the importance of growing the digital economy with Stirling's digital sector doubling in size since 2015 and employing 3,000 people.

Consultations

Forthside Masterplan and Design Framework – Public Consultation

Consultation with Stirling Council Planning and Building Standards Service

Appendices

Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

1. Appendix 1 – Stirling Business Justification Case
2. Appendix 2 – Government letter

Approved by:

Brian Roberts , 07/03/25

Emma Fyvie, 07/03/25