

Report To: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting: **27 September 2016**

Lead Member / Officer: **Cllr Hugh Evans, Leader
Rebecca Maxwell, Corporate Director: Economy & Public
Realm**

Report Author: **Iwan Trefor Jones, North Wales Economic Ambition Board**

Title: **Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales**

1. What is the report about?

This report sets out the result of recent discussions at regional level about opportunities to significantly grow the economy in North Wales, resulting in the preparation of a shared Growth Vision document to be used in negotiations with UK and Welsh Governments.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To approve the “Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales” as the basis for negotiations with the UK and Welsh Governments over a Growth Deal Bid for the region.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Cabinet is invited to

- approve the “Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales” (attached at Appendix 1) and endorse its use as the basis for negotiations by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board with the UK and Welsh Governments over a Growth Deal Bid for the region, and
- note that any formal Growth Deal Bid arising will be presented for decision by Council prior to any commitment being made by Denbighshire County Council.

4. Report details

Attached to this report is the “Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales” document. It sets out clearly the Strategy, Priorities and Action Plan of Strategic Projects to deliver sustainable economic and employment growth across the region.

The “Growth Vision” document provides the strategic framework and context for strategic partners, particularly the UK and Welsh Governments, to collectively guide investment to North Wales and pool resources to fund strategic projects.

It also sets out a clear ambition for North Wales, especially in relation to infrastructure development, skills and employment, and business growth. If funding is secured to deliver the action plan of projects, the region will experience sustainable economic growth and the value of the North Wales economy will grow from £12.8 billion in 2015 to £20 billion by 2035. Such growth rate will generate at least an additional 120,000 new employment opportunities.

A theme that constantly underpins the “Growth Vision” document is collaboration and partnership working, with a strong private sector involvement and a “Team North Wales” approach. This builds on the strong alliances and joint planning that has taken place recently in the region through the work of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

There has been extensive consultation during the process of preparing the “Growth Vision”. Organisations such as Bangor University, Glyndwr University, Grwp Llandrillo-Menai, Coleg Cambria, Cheshire & Warrington LEP, Enterprise Zone Boards, Mersey Dee Alliance, Welsh Government, UK Government and others have been involved and engaged with the work over the last couple of months.

A significant contribution has come from the private sector through the North Wales Business Council. They have taken a pro-active approach, playing a significant role in the formulation and development of the Growth Vision and Strategy. At its meeting on the 4 July, 2016 the Business Council approved the “Growth Vision” and endorsed the Action Plan.

The involvement of the Local Authorities has also been crucial. The Leaders and Chief Executives of six Local Authorities met on the 15 July, 2016 and supported the “Growth Vision” for submission to the UK and Welsh Governments.

There has been positive engagement with the new Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure of the Welsh Government. He has given his informal support to the concept of a “Growth Vision” for North Wales, which is integrated with North West England and connected to the wider UK economy.

Positive discussions have also taken place with the Secretary of State for Wales and the Under-Secretary of State at the Wales Office.

The document was officially approved by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board at its meeting on the 1 August, 2016.

There is therefore a broad base of support across the various sectors of the region to the “Growth Vision”. Given this base and strength of support there will no doubt be collectivism and momentum in the delivery of the Strategy.

We are now seeking formal approval of the six Local Authority Cabinets in the region for the vision and strategy.

The intention thereafter is to hold discussions and negotiations with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Wales Office and Welsh Government, especially in relation to a potential investment programme to deliver the action plan of projects. It is also intended to hold discussions about a possible “Growth Deal” for North Wales. The Growth Deal is considered as one of the vehicles to secure investment to achieve the aims and aspirations of the “Growth Vision” from now until 2035.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Developing the Local Economy is a priority within the Council’s current Corporate Plan. While much work can be undertaken on this at a local level, there is no doubt

that strengthen the regional economy is also essential. The work to establish a shared Vision for Economic Growth for North Wales is a core component and it is anticipated that developing a formal Growth Deal Bid may be one route to achieving the regional growth vision.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no additional costs as a result of this report. The Council currently contributes £30K to the projects being undertaken by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. This funding is topped up by contributions from Welsh Government and North Wales Business Council. As the negotiations on a potential Growth Deal Bid develop, the need for additional funding may emerge but are unknown as yet. The terms of any Growth Deal Bid itself will determine any further contributions the Council may be asked to make. These will be subject to further debate and formal decision by the appropriate governance structures of the Council before any firm commitments are made.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report

No Equality Impact Assessment has yet been carried out. This will be undertaken by North Wales Economic Ambition Board for the region as a whole as the terms of any formal Growth Deal Bid are developed.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

As noted in the report, extensive consultation has been carried out at regional level. Locally, Councillors have been provided with a briefing at Council Briefing. Members of Denbighshire's Economic Ambition Programme Board have received updates as regional discussions have taken place.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Approval of the strategic Growth Vision does not require the council to commit any additional funding. The future development of the strategic framework may require funding or resource from the council but decisions would be subject to existing internal governance and approval arrangements before commitments are made

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The Growth Vision document does not present any particular risks in itself. As it develops into an implementation plan, including negotiations for any formal Growth Deal Bid, financial, operational and reputational risks will emerge. These will be considered as part of the regional work to deliver against the Vision Document and will be reported to Council in due course when any formal commitment from Denbighshire County Council is required.

As with any economic development activity, there is an inherent risk that the market does not respond and economic growth does not materialise. As mitigation, the Growth Vision is based on detailed discussions and a professional assessment of the North Wales economy, and its strengths, weaknesses and potential to grow.

11. Power to make the Decision

s2 Local Government Act 2000