

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013

**Lead Member / Officer:** Councillor Hugh Evans, Cabinet Lead for Economic Development, Councillor Huw Jones, Cabinet Lead for Tourism, Leisure & Youth (including Rural Development)

**Report Author:** Siân Morgan Jones

**Title:** Consultation on European Structural Funds 2014–2020: West Wales & the Valleys and the Common Agricultural Policy Reform Rural Development Plan 2014-2020: Next Steps

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### **1. What is the report about?**

The report is about the Denbighshire County Council responses to the Welsh Government Consultations on the new European Funding Programmes for 2014-2020.

### **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

Key Denbighshire County Council Officers and Members including members of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Rural Development Plan Partnership and Local Action Group have provided a draft response to the Welsh Government Consultations on the new European Funding Programmes for 2014-2020. Cabinet is requested to confirm support for these responses on behalf of the County Council.

### **3. What are the Recommendations?**

To confirm support for the Denbighshire County Council responses to the Welsh Government Consultations on European Structural Funds 2014–2020: West Wales & the Valleys; and the Common Agricultural Policy Reform Rural Development Plan 2014-2020: Next Steps.

### **4. Report details.**

In January 2013 Welsh Government launched parallel public consultations on both the Structural Funds and Rural Development Programmes for 2014-2020.

The consultation documents contain a proposed programme strategy, investment priorities, cross-cutting themes, explores some of the key implementation and delivery issues and includes the evidence base. The proposals for the new Structural Fund programmes have been developed with a focus on growth and jobs, which is in

line with Welsh Government policy, and the Europe 2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

For the programming period 2014-2020 it is expected that West Wales and the Valleys will qualify as a “less developed region”: the highest level of support available under the next round of Structural Funds programmes.

The actual amount of EU funding that will become available during the next programming period is subject to the outcome of negotiations on the EU budget by the European Council and the European Parliament.

Responses to the consultation questions will play an important part in the preparation of the final text of the Operational Programmes, which WG will submit to the European Commission later in 2013.

Denbighshire County Council has responded to the consultations in order to ensure that in addition to aligning with WG and EU policy the final Operational Programme documents enable us to deliver actions within Denbighshire’s Corporate Priorities. DCC Responses will also be included in a Regional response drafted on behalf of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and will also be submitted to the WLGA to form part of their all Wales response.

The DCC Consultation responses are attached to this report as annexes.

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

The Corporate Plan identifies developing the economy as a priority. The Structural and Rural Development funds are key tools that will allow the County to deliver on this ambition.

The new programmes include opportunities to develop a high quality skilled workforce, network infrastructure improvements including digital and transport connections, job opportunities, business support and advice services

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

There are no costs arising directly from supporting the consultation responses for either Structural Funds or the Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 nor are there any consequences for other services. Any of the resulting projects or partnerships proposed which have not already been agreed previously will need to be considered through relevant statutory or business planning processes at the appropriate time.

## **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.**

A Key Member and Officer group have discussed the consultation responses outlined in this report.

Further consultations exercises as funding opportunities begin to be developed will be undertaken.

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

A workshop was held for officers and members on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2013 to outline EU policy developments to date and potential impacts for Denbighshire of EU Budget negotiations; and taking into consideration this policy context, outlining the purpose and importance of responding to the WG consultations on the new EU Programmes 2014-2020.

Key officers and Members including members of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Rural Development Plan Partnership and members of the Rural Local Action Group took part in the workshop session.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not Applicable

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

The risks associated with not submitting a response to the WG Consultations are

- Failure to ensure EU Operational Programmes are able to deliver against identified local priorities
- Potential uncoordinated development of projects with little or unclear local benefit

## **11. Power to make the Decision**

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council the power to do anything which it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.