

Report To: Council

Date of Meeting: 9th July 2013

Lead Members: Councillor Hugh Evans, Lead Member Economic Development

Report Author: Rebecca Maxwell, Corporate Director: Economic & Community Ambition

Title: Denbighshire's draft Economic & Community Ambition Strategy – Public Consultation

1. What is the report about?

A Task & Finish Group has been working since February to develop Denbighshire's first Economic & Community Ambition strategy in line with the Corporate Plan priority of developing the local economy. Work is now complete and a final consultation draft has been prepared.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The Task & Finish Group has produced a draft Strategy and is proposing public consultation on it before formal adoption of the Strategy and supporting Delivery Plan by Council in October. Approval is sought for the draft Strategy to be made available for public consultation as set out in the report.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council notes the work undertaken by the Task & Finish Group to prepare the draft Economic & Community Ambition Strategy as attached at Appendix 1 and approves it for public consultation over the summer as set out in Appendix 2.

4. Report details.

4.1 The Corporate Plan identifies Developing the Local Economy as one of its 7 corporate priorities. Revitalising the local economy was named as a key concern by residents during development of the Corporate Plan and seen as a means of achieving a sound base for all other developments.

4.2 Since February, a Task & Finish Group of Members and Officers has been meeting to develop Denbighshire's Economic & Community Ambition Strategy. The Strategy aims to explain how the Council will meet its corporate objective for developing the economy. The Task & Finish Group met 11 times between February and June. Membership achieved a reasonable spread of representation from Councillors

across political groups and MAGs. Details of the Task & Finish Group are attached at Appendix 3 for reference.

- 4.3 The draft Strategy has been developed with a focus on benefits and outcomes. The Task & Finish Group agreed that the overall benefit to be achieved by developing the local economy should ultimately be felt by local residents. The overall outcome behind the strategy has been defined as:

Denbighshire is a county with high levels of employment and good levels of income in all of its towns and communities

- 4.4 From this, the Task & Finish Group created the following Vision Statement for Denbighshire's Economic & Community Ambition:

Developing Opportunities, Creating Confidence

Working together to make Denbighshire a place where:

- ***Businesses, established and new, grow and flourish***
- ***Our towns and communities are vibrant and prosper***
- ***Residents enjoy a good quality of life and can participate in the local economy***

- 4.5 Achieving this vision will require a range of core factors to be addressed. These have been identified as priority areas for action and form the core structure of the Strategy. They are:

- ***The right Infrastructure for Growth***
- ***Businesses that are Supported and Connected***
- ***Maximised Economic Strengths/Opportunities***
- ***A High Quality Skilled Workforce***
- ***Vibrant Towns and Communities***
- ***A Well Promoted Denbighshire***

- 4.6 For each factor, desired outcomes, issues and challenges that will need to be addressed and areas for action have been identified, together with indicators of success against which impact and progress can be assessed. An initial 4 year indicative Delivery Plan has also been developed that aligns with the timescale for delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Strategy itself, however, has a longer timescale and covers the period 2013 – 2023.

- 4.7 The Task & Finish Group has concluded that the outcomes identified and the areas for action highlighted offer the best means of delivering the ambition of both the Strategy and the Corporate Plan. It recommends that these are now tested through consultation with Denbighshire's communities and businesses before the Strategy is presented for formal adoption by the Council in the autumn.

- 4.8 It is proposed that the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan attached at Appendix 1 are made available for public consultation during July & August through a range of opportunities. Details are set out in Appendix 2.
- 4.9 Consultation will take the form of a mixture of direct approaches and more open, drop-in and focus group events. Target audiences will include local businesses and their representative groups/networks, local residents, Town & Community Councils, schools and young people, and partner organisations.
- 4.10 Specific consultation events will be arranged to explore in detail the Strategy in relation to a) Tourism, b) Priority Sectors for Growth, and c) Rural Economic Development. These will be complemented by more generic consultation events arranged on a geographic basis across the county.
- 4.11 The three key questions the consultation will seek to test opinion on are:
- a) Are the Vision, intended outcomes and underpinning principles broadly appropriate for Denbighshire?
 - b) Does the Strategy capture the important issues, challenges and opportunities affecting Denbighshire's local economy?
 - c) Will the headline actions in the Delivery Plan achieve the right impact?
- 4.12 The results of the consultation will be considered by a final meeting of the Task & Finish Group before the final Economic & Community Ambition Strategy, Delivery Plan and Performance Framework are presented to Council for formal approval in October.
- 4.13 Once the Strategy has been approved, oversight of delivery will be provided by the Economic & Community Ambition Programme Board. It will monitor progress and impact, help to resolve problems and barriers to delivery and will recommend changes as necessary during the lifetime of the Strategy to ensure the desired impact can be achieved. A key role for the Programme Board will be to ensure projects and activities deliver their intended benefits. Further information on the proposed composition and role of the Programme Board, and the overall accountability and governance arrangements, is set out in the draft Strategy.

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

Developing the Local Economy was identified as a key corporate priority in the Corporate Plan. The draft Economic & Community Ambition Strategy sets out in more detail how the Council intends to address this priority.

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

The Corporate Plan identified £2M as an indicative allocation towards meeting the costs of implementing the Corporate Priority for the Economy. £160K was allocated in the 2013/14 budget. This was in addition to previous allocations for Regeneration and Town & Area Plans. This new funding, together with existing service budgets and opportunities for external grant funding, will provide the majority of funding required for implementation. As projects and initiatives are developed, full costs will become clearer and can be considered within the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

7. What consultations have been carried out and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?

The draft Strategy has been prepared through the cross party Task & Finish Group. Early consultations were also held with a cross section of local businesses. Feedback from the public on development of the Council's Corporate Plan highlighted the importance of developing the local economy to Denbighshire residents.

The report and Appendix 2 set out proposals for formal consultation on the proposed Strategy and Delivery Plan.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out over the summer.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Developing the Economy in Denbighshire has been identified in the Corporate Plan as one of the Council's priorities and funds have been set aside to begin projects. Any expenditure needs to be contained within these funds or existing budgets.

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

A risk assessment on delivery of the Strategy will be carried out over the summer. The Economic & Community Ambition Programme Board will oversee management of the Risk Register that emerges.

10. Power to make the Decision

Section 2, Local Government Act 2000

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