

Report To: Council

Date of Meeting: 5th November 2013

Lead Members: Councillor Hugh Evans, Lead Member Economic Development

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

Title: Denbighshire's Economic & Community Ambition Strategy – Final Draft

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. A formal period of consultation took place between July and October enabling the completion of a final draft.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The Task & Finish Group has reviewed the consultation feedback and produced a final draft of the Strategy and Delivery Plan and now seeks formal approval.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council notes the work undertaken by the Task & Finish Group to prepare the Economic & Community Ambition Strategy and Delivery Plan as attached at Appendices 1 and 2, and approves them for implementation.

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, Officers and Partners has been developing Denbighshire's Economic & Community Ambition Strategy. The Strategy aims to explain how the Council will meet its corporate objective of developing the economy.
- 4.3 The Task & Finish Group met eleven times between February and June, with many practical workshops feeding into the identification of

issues to be tackled. Membership achieved a reasonable spread of representation from Councillors across political groups and MAGs.

- 4.4 In July the Council approved a consultation draft of the strategy and an accompanying consultation plan. Following requests, the consultation deadline for City, Town and Community Councils was extended to mid-October, with the Task & Finish Group meeting on a further two occasions to take account of the consultation feedback received.
- 4.5 Feedback from businesses, residents and partner organisations has been positive, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the Vision, Principles and Themes in the strategy are the right ones to pursue. A number of useful comments and suggestions gathered through the consultation process have enabled the Task & Finish Group to refine the proposed actions and improve the strategy further. The strategy consultation feedback and Task & Finish Group response to this is attached at Appendix 3.
- 4.6 Key changes to the Strategy post consultation include:
- Emphasis on partnership working has been strengthened
 - Welsh language and culture has been added as an underlying principle and commentary on impacts and opportunities inserted throughout the Strategy
 - Recognition of Denbighshire's natural environment as an economic growth asset
 - Stronger reference to regional and national infrastructure initiatives
 - Addition of Agriculture, Creative industries and Health & Care as opportunities for growth to be explored
 - Revision of actions in Theme 4: High Quality Skilled Workforce
 - Reduced number of themes / actions in Theme 5 and strengthened reference to the Rural Development Plan Partnership
 - Review and re-write of Theme 6 to improve clarity of purpose and actions
 - Changes to governance of the Economic & Community Ambition Programme Board to include a representative from each of the 3 Scrutiny Committees
- 4.7 The Strategy has been developed with a focus on measurable 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 confirmed as:

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

- 4.8 The Vision Statement for Denbighshire's Economic & Community Ambition has also been confirmed as:

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***

- 4.9 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. Following consultation they are confirmed as:

- ***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***

- 4.10 For each factor the issues, challenges, actions and desired outcomes have been identified along with indicators of success. A detailed report has been compiled to accompany the Strategy, publishing the suite of performance indicators and measures against which its success will be measured. Appendix 4 summarises the report, highlighting outcomes, their associated indicators and our aspirations in each of these areas.

- 4.11 The accompanying Delivery Plan (Appendix 2) will be used by the Economic & Community Ambition Programme Board to organise and direct the programme of projects and activities set out in the Strategy. The Delivery Plan sets out the following information for each of the 66 actions in the Strategy:

- Brief description
- Priority
- Named DCC Lead
- Outcomes supported by the action
- Expected Benefits
- Initial resource requirements
- Identified partners in the action
- Indicative timescales for the action

- 4.12 Oversight of delivery will be provided by the Economic & Community Ambition Programme Board. Monitoring and evaluation will be a live activity that provides information to inform decisions and allow changes to be made as required. Throughout its life, an annual review of the Strategy, its implementation and its impact will be produced to assess

progress and identify any changes that may be required to ensure the overall Ambition is realised.

- 4.13 The key role for the Programme Board is to ensure that projects and activities are designed and managed to deliver their intended benefits.

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 final 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?

- 6.1 Overall consultation feedback has highlighted that this is an ambitious Strategy, with some questions raised about the resource capability of the Council to deliver it.

- 6.2 The Corporate Plan identified £2M as an indicative allocation towards meeting the costs of implementing the Corporate Priority for the Economy with £160K 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 through EU Structural Funds and the Rural Development Plan, 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?

Feedback from the public on development of the Council's Corporate Plan highlighted the importance of developing the local economy to Denbighshire residents. Following development by a cross party / area Task & Finish Group which also involved a number of partner organisations the draft Strategy was formally consulted upon between July and October. This included a wide range of opportunities for engagement and breadth of stakeholders. A separate Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared, including the results of an external critique commissioned to support the Council in increasing the positive impact of the Strategy on the Welsh Language. This is attached at Appendix 5.

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?

The main risks associated with delivery of the Economic & Community Ambition Strategy are:

- Lack of time and resources (both human and financial). This has been reduced through inclusion of local economic development as a Corporate Priority.
- That projects and activities do not deliver the intended benefits. This will be mitigated through Programme Board use of the corporate project management methodology and regular reviews of progress / adjustments to activity where necessary. The Programme has a risk management strategy in place and risks will be entered into the Programme Risk Register.
- Partners may not participate in its delivery. This has been mitigated to an extent by stakeholder engagement / consultation activity undertaken to date. Feedback from this has shown a positive response and appetite for involvement in delivery. Ongoing stakeholder engagement activity forms part of the Economic & Community Ambition Board member and programme manager responsibilities.
- Reliance upon favourable changes in the national economy. This is largely beyond our control, however economic monitoring activity will enable the Board to make informed decisions about whether or not certain projects / activities should be commenced, thus limiting risk.

10. Power to make the Decision

Section 2, Local Government Act 2000

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Appendices:

- 1 - Strategy Document
- 2 - Delivery Plan
- 3 - Consultation Response Document
- 4 - Measuring Economic & Community Ambition document summary
- 5 - Equality Impact Assessment