

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Performance Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Councillor Jason McLellan, Leader &amp; Lead Member for Economic Growth &amp; Tackling Deprivation</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<b>Emlyn Jones, Head of Planning, Public Protection &amp; Countryside Services</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Economic and Business Development Team</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Denbighshire Economic Strategy and Action Plan</b>

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

1.1. The development of a new Economic Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

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

2.1. To provide information on the development of the draft new Denbighshire Economic Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

2.2. To explain how the previous and new strategies link with the work of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Welsh & UK Governments, and other economic development partners to support the economy in Denbighshire.

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

3.1. That the Committee confirms the following:

- 3.2. It is satisfied that the draft new Economic Strategy and accompanying Action Plan will contribute to the Corporate Plan and has effectively engaged with members, officers, partners, and local business communities.
- 3.3. It agrees that sufficient thought has been given to how the new Strategy and Action Plan will continue to link with the work of key economic partners.

## **4. Report details**

- 4.1. *Background and details of work undertaken.*
- 4.2. The Economic & Business Development (EBD) Team were charged with leading on the development of the new Economic Strategy, as part of the 'Prosperous Denbighshire' corporate priority, developing a brief (Appendix 1) which led to the appointment of SQW to assist with the work.
- 4.3. The purpose of the Economic Strategy is to deliver on the "Prosperous Denbighshire" element of the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council wants to support economic recovery, capitalising on opportunities to enable residents to access decent employment and income. There is also a desire to use economic growth as a driver to reduce inequality and poverty.
- 4.4. A Task and Finish Group was formed to support the development, including members representing each of the Member Area Groups and relevant officers. The Group held its inaugural meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) outlines the scope of the Group's work and includes, agreeing the development approach; supporting development; and ultimately, agreeing the final draft documents before a Cabinet decision.
- 4.5. The development is split into three stages:
- 4.6. Stage 1 – understanding the County's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This is an important part of the work, as it gives us an understanding of the issues at play and provides a clear rationale for developing the Strategy. This stage involved 1-2-1 discussions, placed-based workshops, and a final workshop with officers and external stakeholders.

- 4.7. Stage 2 – development of the actual Economic Strategy (Appendix 3). This involved the development of a ‘strategic framework’ as informed by DCC’s original six priorities and the SWOT stage. This involved consultations with strategic leads and two workshops with members and relevant internal and external stakeholders. SQW were clear that the strategic framework needed to be impactful and concise, concluding that six of the original priorities could be distilled into four ‘strategic’ areas, with linkages also made to existing strategies and policies.
- 4.8. Stage 3 – development of the Action Plan, as part of the Economic Strategy document, providing direction to the Council on how to execute the Strategy’s objectives. A high-level Action Plan has been produced (Appendix 3), following a session with the Task and Finish Group on 10<sup>th</sup> February. The stage is ongoing and will involve further dialogue with action leads to develop specific and deliverable actions which will include cost estimates where possible.
- 4.9. *Next steps*
- 4.10. Finish the development of the Action Plan, to include considerations on delivery, budgetary requirements, and governance & monitoring arrangements.
- 4.11. Meet with the Task and Finish Group to agree the final draft Economic Strategy and Action Plan.
- 4.12. Attendance of full Cabinet to approve the final Strategy and Action Plan to enable implementation and delivery. This is currently scheduled for April 2025.
- 4.13. *Links with economic partners*
- 4.14. The new Strategy will reinforce the need for DCC to continue linking and dovetailing into the work of economic partners, as with the previous Economic and Community Ambition Strategy. Examples of the previous Strategy’s links with economic partners, include:

- a) Informing DCC's early discussions with Ambition North Wales and the Growth Deal, particularly in issues relating to transport and key employment sites.
- b) Pursuing discussions and opportunities with the Welsh Government (WG), particularly in relation to St. Asaph Business Park and their Transforming Towns agenda, resulting in a number of Town Centre regeneration investments.
- c) Working with the UK Government, resulting in three successful Levelling-up Funding bids and accessing Shared Prosperity Funding.

4.15. Our approach to working with economic partners in relation to the new Strategy is still in development, but there has been comprehensive engagement with a range of economic partners during development, including: Ambition North Wales; WG; Town and City Councils; Town Centre Business Groups; North Wales Business Council; Grŵp Llandrillo Menai; Wrexham University; Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC); Cadwyn Clwyd; Town Square; Federation of Small Business (FSB); and a number of local businesses.

4.16. Working with regional and national partners has been identified as a key priority within the draft Strategy to help develop Denbighshire's economy, and forms part of the 'Team Denbighshire' approach under the high-level Action Plan. Action leads will help to give further detail on this as the Action Plan continues to be developed as part of the ongoing stage 3 development.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?**

5.1. The new Economic Strategy and Action Plan will directly contribute towards 'A Prosperous Denbighshire' within the Corporate Plan, through supporting economic growth; developing a plan to grow Denbighshire's businesses in the future; and providing advice and support for business growth and helping local communities to thrive.

5.2. It is expected to have a positive contribution to the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive by 2030, as the Strategy will have links to the Climate and Nature Strategy.

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

6.1. The cost of developing the Economic Strategy and Action Plan is being met by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, with staff time being the only cost.

6.2. The Action Plan once developed, will detail cost estimates where possible, for each of the agreed actions, allowing for the Council and key partners to begin understanding the budgetary implications.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1. The Well-being Impact Assessment workshop took place on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 with the conclusions to be compiled, week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025.

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

8.1. The work is yet to be completed, but as part of this work, there has been comprehensive engagement internally with members and officers via the Task and Finish Group, as well as external partners, as noted under 4.15.

8.2. There has been a thorough Wellbeing Impact Assessment process with 14 internal and external stakeholders invited to participate in a discussion on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

8.3. The development team also attended Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on 6<sup>th</sup> March to discuss progress and update on the next steps.

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

9.1. N/A

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

10.1. Key economic partners do not engage with the Council on the agreed Strategy and Action Plan. This is unlikely, due to high levels of engagement during the development process.

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

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7.4.1 of the Council's Constitution sets out Scrutiny's power with respect of policy development and review.