

## Invitation to Tender for Services

### SPECIFICATION

#### **Introduction and Context**

Denbighshire County Council (DCC) is a local authority, administrating the county of Denbighshire in North-East Wales. As a unitary authority, it is responsible for providing nearly all local government functions in the area. The County covers an area of 844 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of circa 95,000.

The economy of Denbighshire is diverse. In the more urban north of the county, the seaside towns of Rhyl and Prestatyn are the dominant conurbations with retail, leisure and tourism sectors remaining major employers. Also in the north, however, is St Asaph Business Park - home to a growing opto-electronics cluster and a strategically important business park within the region, offering opportunities for high growth.

Further south, Denbighshire is predominantly rural in nature, characterised by a network of small towns and villages situated within a picturesque landscape environment. Tourism and agriculture are key sectors. Smaller industrial and business parks provide space for light industry and businesses across the county. We believe that Denbighshire's natural environment is an important economic strength and asset for the county.

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2022-2027 has recently reaffirmed the Council's commitment to creating and maintaining "A Prosperous Denbighshire". 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. Emerging from this is the development of an Economic Strategy for the County which will:

1. Grow Denbighshire's green economy.
2. Support rural businesses.
3. Regenerate town centres.
4. Enhance the tourism offer.

We have also added two additional themes which have recently emerged and need to be considered within the Economic Strategy:

5. Improve procurement opportunities within the County.
6. Strengthen & mobilise the Denbighshire workforce.

In line with this approach, DCC is seeking to appoint a suitably experienced consultant to oversee the development of the Economic Strategy, which will include reviewing relevant economic information and policies; analysis of economic data; and engaging with the identified stakeholders to understand the current state of play and identify measurable objectives and actions to successfully build upon the six identified themes.

The work will lead to the development of a concise Economic Strategy document, and associated Action Plan for the Council to implement. It is an expectation that the completed Economic Strategy will influence future DCC operations and activities as well as influencing how DCC resources and external funding is used to further the growth of the County's economy.

#### **Denbighshire's Key Economic Priorities/Themes**

Below is some context for the six key economic priorities or themes which will form the basis of the Economic Strategy:

### **1. Grow Denbighshire's green economy.**

Denbighshire has the ambition to become a Net Zero Carbon County by 2030, as well as to enhance, preserve and improve its natural assets to support biodiversity. Some of the ways the Council is looking to do this, includes through:

- Increasing renewable energy capacity in buildings the council owns and operates.
- Reducing carbon emissions from the Council's supply chains.
- Offsetting carbon emissions through tree planting and other measures.

With the above in mind, there is an opportunity to encourage the wider economy to become greener, leading to them becoming more sustainable, whilst reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, the County has well established energy infrastructure, including wind turbines, most notably Brenig, Clocaenog and Rhyl Flats' windfarms. Given the County's geographic scope and natural resources e.g., rural and coastal areas, we feel that there is an opportunity to further exploit these strengths for economic growth.

There is also potential for the County to further develop related industries within the supply chains, particularly given opportunities within the wider region i.e., North Wales region hosts 37% of Wales' renewable energy capacity (1,183 MW) and circa 17,800 low carbon projects active across the region, of which, 85% were for solar energy.

### **2. Support rural businesses.**

Denbighshire is predominantly a rural County, whereby circa 98.5% of businesses are micro in size. Most of the towns and employment sites in Denbighshire can be considered rural in nature, so our understanding of rural businesses is quite broad. In recent years, the leading seven sectors in terms of employment in Denbighshire comprise health, retail, accommodation & food services, manufacturing, education, Business Administration & Support Services and Public Administration. Together, these seven sectors account for approximately two thirds of the workforce. Nevertheless, the sectoral make-up of rural businesses in the context of the Economic Strategy, should also include community businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises.

Previously within rural Denbighshire, an active Rural Development Plan partnership was in place to target opportunities arising from rural European Union funds. Wide ranging rural development programmes were implemented which included support to rural businesses. We understand now that the WG is developing a new plan for rural business development, and it is important that the Council aligns itself with this and the opportunities it may offer.

### **3. Regenerate town centres.**

Regeneration of our town centres is central to DCC's plans, as the towns represent our biggest conurbations with historic and cultural significance, but not only that, we understand that it will lead to economic benefits across the whole County. Town centres have faced significant challenges in recent years, further exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. DCC is committed to looking at new opportunities for its town centres to remain economically relevant, to include supporting current businesses and their social environments. This is also recognising that each town/city has its own unique character and attractions.

Denbighshire has 8 town/city centres, which include:

- Corwen
- Denbigh
- Llangollen

- Rhuddlan
- Rhyl
- Prestatyn
- Ruthin
- St. Asaph (city)

The Welsh Government's principle of 'Town Centres First' acts as the overarching policy driver for how local authorities' approach town centre regeneration in Wales. The WG also makes significant amounts of funding and resources available for this task via its Transforming Towns programme. In order to access funding going forward, all Local Authorities will need to develop Town Centre Placemaking Plans, with the guidance of the Design Commission for Wales. DCC is currently embarking on this journey, albeit via a phased approach which alongside partners, can initiate regeneration, leading to growth and prosperity, benefitting the whole county.

It is envisaged that the individual Town Centre Placemaking Plans will give a detailed understanding of the needs for each town centre, and provide bespoke action plans, bringing focus and potential funding to tackle key issues. However, the Council sees an opportunity to formally reference this in one document, as well as understanding how it can give adequate strategic oversight of these plans, alongside understanding ongoing issues affecting all UK town centres and continued structural changes, amongst other things.

#### **4. Enhance the tourism offer.**

Tourism is an important part of Denbighshire's economy, contributing circa £552m to the economy and supporting over 6,470 jobs in the County in 2019 (STEAM Data). The County is also host to many tourist sites and attractions, including:

- Rhyl and Prestatyn seaside resorts
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), including the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site
- Llangollen
- The Vale of Clwyd

Furthermore, the tourism themes across the County are diverse, including:

- Sustainable Adventure Tourism
- Historic Towns & Heritage Tourism
- Food and Drink Tourism
- Picturesque Landscapes

There are four priorities within Denbighshire's Tourism Strategy:

1. People visit Denbighshire throughout the year
2. People stay in Denbighshire longer
3. People spend more money in the County
4. People have their expectations exceeded as a result of our coordinated approach at the destination

As such, the Council needs to understand how best to fulfil these priorities by continuing to capitalise on its current offer (i.e., enhancing & widening it.) whilst looking for new sustainable growth opportunities.

#### **5. Improve procurement opportunities within the County**

The Council spends in the region of £130 million a year with private and third sector organisations on the goods, services and works needed to deliver public services and achieve Council objectives. The Council published a Procurement Strategy back in 2016 which sets out seven key principles, to help guide all

procurement and commissioning activity and ensure that it is undertaken legally, transparently and with a proper understanding of the impact on our local communities. The latest Strategy is currently being finalised to fully reflect upcoming changes in Public Procurement.

The strategy has a specific outcome around achieving value for money through our procurement and commissioning activity, and outlines how we will consider different delivery models, review our processes, and use technology. Furthermore, it recognises the impact the money the Council spends on the local economy, ensuring that businesses continue to provide employment for local people, and provides them with the opportunity to grow and create new jobs in the County. As a Contracting Authority we have a Socially Responsible Procurement Duty to consider, and show we consider, social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts arising out of spend and procurement.

It is a key priority that the Council, where possible, buys in services and goods locally and improvements have been made which has been acknowledged by partners. Nevertheless, despite these improvements, the Council still only buys in around a third of its good and services from local organisations – therefore, it is imperative that the Council understands how it can continue to build on these improvements, to increase how much it purchases & commissions locally. This will include building capacity and confidence in our local market to encourage engagement with the public procurement process.

## **6. Strengthen & mobilise the Denbighshire workforce.**

Recent data has suggested that Denbighshire is in the top 3 counties in North Wales for employer demand for employees. The demand for employees can be further demonstrated through the 2021 Denbighshire Business Survey, where some businesses highlighted concerns with recruiting for positions – although this may have been in part from the effects of the Covid pandemic.

In 2022, Denbighshire were reported to have 1,980 people claiming Universal Credit. This amounts to 3.5% of the Denbighshire population, higher than the Wales average of 3.3%, but lower than the UK average of 3.7% (NOMIS, August 2022.). For those in work, the median Gross Weekly Pay of Denbighshire residents is £538.80, the lowest in Wales (NOMIS, 2023). As of May 2023, the DWP tells us that there are 3,539 Denbighshire residents in-employment and claiming Universal Credit to top up their earnings and the majority (65%) of those claimants are female.

It is important to note that Denbighshire also has examples of communities, where unemployment and levels of poverty are much higher than the Welsh averages, according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation – these include the two wards in Rhyl West.

The Council wants to continue enabling residents to access decent employment and income, with a desire to see an overall reduction in inequality and poverty. To achieve this, clearly, there needs to be support for businesses to grow within the County – and in part, this is making sure that there is a well-trained workforce in the County with the correct skills allowing for businesses to undertake its operations. Denbighshire County Council is committed to its Working Denbighshire service, which is supporting its residents into education, employment and training. The service provides coordination and delivery of the employability and skills support through a robust infrastructure of communication, marketing, and evaluation and monitoring.

### **Aims of the Project**

This tender is to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to develop a smart and concise **seven-year** Economic Strategy, to include an Action Plan and summary document.

It is an essential requirement that the Economic Strategy holistically addresses all six themes as outlined earlier in the document: 1. Grow Denbighshire's green economy; 2. Support rural businesses; 3.

Regenerate town centres; 4. Enhance the tourism offer; 5. Improve procurement opportunities within the County and 6. Strengthen and mobilise the Denbighshire workforce.

There is an expectation that many issues/areas will come out during the initial raking & analysis as part of the development process – however, the Council also has a list of benefits that it would like to see occur as part of its ‘prosperous’ work, that need to be considered as part of the identified themes, including:

- An increase in the average gross annual pay for people who live in the area.
- Improved stakeholder perception about Denbighshire’s economy, and the availability of skills, jobs and income.
- Securing greater external funding for economic development.
- Increasing the economic impact of Tourism in the county.
- Increasing the number of thriving businesses in the county.
- Lowering the claimant count rate.
- Increasing the number of work experience opportunities provided by the council.
- Increasing local expenditure by the council.
- Greater community benefits from large contracts.

### **Outputs / Objectives**

1. Completed review of the current Economic and Community Ambition Strategy.
2. Evidence of raking, baseline information and document search.
3. Evidence of relevant public, internal and external stakeholder engagement.
4. Presentation of a draft **seven-year** Economic Strategy to outlined DCC members and senior officers.
5. Completion of a final **seven-year** Economic Strategy and associated Action Plan with measurable objectives and actions
6. Preparation of a summary Economic Strategy document which can be made available to the public.

In achieving the above outputs / objectives, the successful contractor would also be expected to:

- Have a demonstrable history of developing strategic-level documents satisfying specific criteria, preferable for a Local Authority, with experience in developing economic strategies.
- Be able to employ a creative approach to engagement and dissemination of information in various formats to ensure maximum engagement.
- Adopt a holistic approach in scoping, reviewing and referencing all relevant local, regional and national strategies, policies, plans and economic data sets, in the development of the Economic Strategy.
- Develop a smart Economic Strategy which is concise, straightforward and to the point.

Suggested stages for the development of the Economic Strategy are as follows but the methodology followed will be based on the approach proposed by the appointed consultant:

### **Stage 1: Review previous Economic and Community Ambition Strategy**

The Council’s current ten-year strategy sets out the ambitions for Denbighshire's local economy and benefits that we expect to achieve for our residents between 2013-2023. This Strategy is now coming to an end but needs to be reviewed and evaluated, thus forming a basis for the new strategy. Part of this process will involve reviewing any outstanding actions from the current strategy.

### **Stage 2: Review current state of play - our economic strengths, challenges, and opportunities**

This will involve reviewing a range of internally and externally collected data & evidence. Some of the data/evidence we have access to, includes:

- Town Centre footfall data

- Town Centre vacancy rates
- Town Centre health checks
- Labour market intelligence
- Biennial council business survey
- Endole company data
- Employment land studies

**Stage 3: Carry out mapping and analysis of other key documents/policies:**

In continuing to set out the context for the Economic Strategy, the consultant will be expected to map and analyse/review relevant documents/policies. Some examples of DCC documents, include:

- DCC Economic Business Development Team’s Operational Plan
- DCC Economic and Community Ambition Plan
- DCC Corporate Priorities
- DCC Tourism Strategy
- DCC’s Climate and Ecological Change Strategy

**Stage 4: Identify Internal and External stakeholders.**

1. Attend a DCC Councillors’ working group, which is envisaged to have the following functions:
  - Agree the structure and agenda of all workshops.
  - Attend and contribute to the workshops.
  - Review and provide feedback on the draft Economic Strategy.
  
2. Identify key business groups and stakeholders who can be represented at the workshops.

**Stage 5: Engagement – workshops**

This will need some consideration by the consultant, but should include the following:

- Presentation of baseline information to stakeholders at a workshop(s)
- Engagement with stakeholders on key issues, needs, opportunities and future aspirations.

NB: The appointed consultant will be closely supported by the Economic and Business Development Team in undertaking stages 4 and 5.

**Stage 6: Development of the actual Econ Strategy and associated Action Plan**

Having completed the previous suggested stages, the Strategy should then be developed, which could include the following sections:

1. A detailed explanation of methodology.
2. Outline of Denbighshire’s Economy in Context, including challenges, incorporating a social-economic baseline from the economic data analysis and with a comprehensive overview of the local and national policy context.
3. Feedback on the stakeholder engagement.
4. Presentation of an overall vision, setting out the strategy (including justifications.) for developing the economy around the four identified priorities/themes, to include measurable objectives and actions.
5. A concise Action Plan for implementation by the Council.

**Stage 7: Present draft and agree final strategy and summary documents**

The consultant will present the draft Strategy to the Members' Working Group and senior officers, allowing for the final strategy and summary documents to be drafted.

### **Timetable**

The successful applicant will include as part of their proposal, a breakdown of timings and dates of relevant milestones that will need to be met and work to this agreed timescale. All works relating to this commission must be completed and invoiced for in full by **March 2024**.

### **Other Requirements**

#### **Assumptions**

- Any stakeholders that wish to contribute using Welsh will be supported to do so - in this case interpretation services will be provided by Denbighshire County Council.
- Once the Economic Strategy has been completed, it will be owned by Denbighshire County Council. It will be up to DCC to decide how the Action Plan will be taken forward, if resources will be allocated and manage outcomes.
- All events and publications will be branded in line with the branding requirements of Denbighshire County Council and the Welsh Government as required.
- Denbighshire County Council will provide all existing plans and documents that are relevant to this project. A list of key stakeholders can also be provided.
- The EBD Team will support the appointed consultant in organising the workshops and other administrative tasks.
- All final reports and documentation should be provided in digital and print formats.

#### **Project Quality Expectation**

The Council's expectation for this project is that it should produce a set of documentation that is supportable and usable by the Council as the principal strategy for developing the County's economy inline with the Council's Corporate Priorities.

### **Procurement and Contractual Requirements**

#### **Procurement Timetable**

<b>Advertisement and Invitation to Tender</b>	<b>08/09/2023</b>
<b>Deadline for Submission of Tender</b>	<b>08/10/2023</b>
<b>Evaluation of Tenders Complete</b>	<b>13/10/2023</b>
<b>Contract Award</b>	<b>30/10/2023</b>

#### **Scoring Submissions**

Denbighshire County Council will conduct a qualitative and financial evaluation of the Tenders received and the Contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender and in accordance with the methodology.

Please see the "Evaluation Methodology and Criteria" document for more detail.

#### **Contract Terms and Conditions**

This contract will be with Denbighshire County Council and the appointed consultant will be required to agree and complete a standard Council contract to guide and control the commission. This will include the items contained herein including inter alia:

- i.* Professional indemnity
- ii.* Intellectual property
- iii.* Prior approval for any change of sub-contractor or project team
- iv.* Notice for termination

## **Payments**

Bidders should note that this is a fixed fee commission. The price quoted in any submission will cover all fees, expenses, disbursements and any payments to sub-contractors arising from the work. Fee proposals should be set out clearly using the pricing schedule, please provide a full breakdown of costs for each stage of the project.

Payment for works completed will be staggered and structured to reflect the project stages. The consultant will have input in the development of the stages prior to them being agreed. Payments will be made on satisfactory completion of each agreed stage.

Sign off for each Stage will be completed by DCC based on monitoring, quality assessments and reports prior to the next stage commencing.

Denbighshire County Council reserves the right to withhold payments for any work considered unsatisfactory in quality or content, and the right to terminate the contract at any time in the event of unsatisfactory performance, including not meeting agreed timescales.

## **Contact**

All enquiries relating to this commission should, in the first instance, be addressed to:

<b>Name:</b>	James Evans
<b>Position:</b>	Economic and Business Development Manager
<b>Service Area:</b>	Economic and Business Development
<b>Telephone:</b>	01824 708414
<b>Email:</b>	james.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk

On appointment, the contractor should also identify a project manager and main point of contact who will be responsible for the work.

## **Confidentiality**

Please treat all information contained within this specification as private and confidential. All data of a sensitive nature should be handled in accordance with GDPR.

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

The contract will be monitored in line with DCC contract monitoring framework. There will be one point of contact within Denbighshire County Council's Economic and Business Development (EBD) Team. The contractor shall produce regular progress updates to the Council's point of contact.

A schedule of project team meetings will be organised. Regular correspondence and update will be expected throughout the project. Reports will be received from the contractor on completion of each agreed stage, this will be assessed by the EBD Team before payments are released.

## **Background Documents**

- [DCC Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#)
- [Economic and Community Ambition Strategy 2013 - 2023 \(denbighshire.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Denbighshire County Council Tourism Strategy 2019-2022 \(denbighshireambassador.wales\)](#)
- [Denbighshire County Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy 2021/22 to 2029/30](#)
- [North Wales regional economic framework \(gov.wales\)](#)

## **Deliverables**

The core activity of this project will be to design and develop an Economic Strategy. The anticipated outputs from the project are:

- Evidence of raking, baseline information and document search.
- Evidence of relevant public, internal and external stakeholder engagement.
- Completed review of the current Economic and Community Ambition Plan.
- Completion of Economic Strategy, Action Plan and summary document.