

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
DATE: WEDNESDAY, 26 JUNE 2013
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT
SUBJECT: MERSEY DEE ALLIANCE - PROGRESS

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of progress regarding the work of Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA).

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The MDA is a Key Strategic Partnership that involves:

- Flintshire County Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Wrexham County Borough Council
- Denbighshire County Council
- Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
- Welsh Government
- Mersey Travel
- Glyndwr University
- Taith
- University of Chester

2.02 The MDA is managed by a Board, with FCC represented by a Cabinet Member and senior officer. The formal agreement, setting out administrative and governance arrangements has previously been agreed by the Council

2.03 The MDA has developed in recognition of the fact that the economy operates across the Wales - England border. The programme for the MDA is clearly focused on the need to address matters affecting efficient operation of the economy across the border, in particular the coordination of investment in infrastructure and the need for a cross border approach to labour market planning.

2.04 The MDA area is unique in the UK, in that it is a cohesive economic sub-region with a population of nearly 1 million people, which is divided by a national boundary. This boundary is one that is not recognised by local businesses or local communities in day to day life.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The work of the MDA brings together strategy developed by Welsh Government, the North Wales context (particularly the work of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board) with that of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership. The development of new approaches to economic development in both Wales and England make the cross border 'integration' ever more important. As a major economic area crossing national and sub-regional boundaries, the Board recognises that decisions made on one side of the border will have implications on the other, therefore mature cooperation is essential to safeguard the interests of the sub-region.

3.02 The MDA has developed a business plan which will:

- Build on the area's competitiveness;
- Develop effective partnership approaches to local needs, to make best use of local assets and resources;
- Create a clear identity for the sub-region;
- Strengthen existing communities and centres both sides of the border;
- Enhance external competitiveness by maintaining and supporting local services and by widening our economic base;
- Develop labour market planning across the sub region;
- Enhance and improve our local environment, in particular the Dee Estuary and the development of a linear park along the course of the River Dee;
- Promote and develop an integrated transport system for the sub-region, particularly linking people with jobs better, with an important role for public transport.

3.03 The MDA Business Plan has been developed in agreement with all member organisations. It is intended to address key strategic matters which are largely of sub regional, rather than local importance. It is fully in line with existing Council policy and strategies.

3.04 The following are the key MDA work areas:

i) The Dee Region – bid for City Region status

There is growing recognition of the role of medium sized cities/city regions play in regional and national economic growth. The MDA was invited by WG to submit a bid for City Region status for the 'Dee Region'. The bid for full City Region status has not been accepted, but the Minister does accept the need for greater formalisation of the cross border working arrangements in the MDA. Discussions are ongoing.

ii) M56/A55/Innovation Corridor

A study of the potential for a 'North Wales/North West England

'corridor' based on the better integration of service and advanced manufacturing assets has been prepared. A range of high tech/R&D facilities are in place, for example the Daresbury Service Campus, Glyndwr and Chester Universities, OpTic at St. Asaph, the Advanced Composites Centre at Hawarden, and increasingly, Bangor University. The sub-region also has substantial assets in advanced manufacturing in the aerospace, automotive, electronics, creative and fibre optic sectors. Bringing these assets together can both develop a 'brand' for the sub-region, as well as making better use of what is currently in place.

iii) MDA 'Think Tank'

Understanding local needs, both current and emerging, is critical. Key regional employers are being approached with a view to forming an economic 'think tank', to advise on issues that are affecting the area's competitiveness. This work is being encouraged by WG.

iv) Strategic Transport issues

The two strategic public transport organisations (Taith and Mersey Travel) are both MDA members and this is helping to develop a better understanding of cross border transport needs, together with finding solutions for them.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the report be noted.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 Membership of the MDA is £5000 p.a. and provision is made within the Directorate's base budget.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The maintenance of prosperity and targeted approaches to the needs of deprived communities are both key MDA objectives.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 The protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment is a key principle which underlies all MDA strategy.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The maintenance of prosperity and targeted approaches to the needs of deprived communities are both key MDA objectives.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None directly from the report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Not applicable.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Not applicable.

12.00 APPENDICES

None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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